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Support for Taiwan in the US House of Representatives: A New Look at US–China–Taiwan Relations

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(Received 12 May 2022; revised 16 March 2024; accepted 30 April 2024)

Abstract

US legislators show a remarkable variation in how many bills and resolutions they sponsor and cosponsor to support Taiwan. I argue that legislators' perception of China and their partisan identity play a crucial role in shaping their support for Taiwan. To test my hypotheses, I conducted a quantitative analysis of all Taiwan-specific bills and resolutions introduced from the 110th to 116th House of Representatives. The results indicate that legislators who view China as a security threat to the US or a non-democracy and a human rights violator exhibit a higher level of support for Taiwan. However, seeing China as an economic challenger has the least significant effect. Furthermore, although there is a general consensus that Taiwan is a bipartisan issue in Congress, my research demonstrates that Republicans display a greater level of interest in supporting Taiwan compared to Democrats.

Keywords: Taiwan; US House of Representatives; China; support; security; democracy; partisan identity

Introduction

Taiwan today remains a crucial issue in US–China relations and the security of East Asia. In 1979, The US government severed diplomatic relations with the Republic of China (i.e., ROC or widely known as “Taiwan”) when establishing ties with the People’s Republic of China (PRC). In the US–PRC Normalization Communique, the US recognized PRC as the sole legal government of China and acknowledged the Chinese position that there is but one China and Taiwan is part of China. This statement eventually became a pivotal document in shaping the US government’s “One-China Policy” (Bush 2017). Since 1979, the US government has maintained robust unofficial relations with Taiwan and members of Congress have proposed many bills and resolutions to voice their support for the island. Besides constantly reaffirming US commitment to the Taiwan Relations Act, which assures US support for Taiwan’s security, US legislators have expressed support for Taiwan on many

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other issues, such as high-level visits of officials between the two sides should be encouraged, the US should help Taiwan join in international organizations where statehood is not required, and the US should bolster Taiwanese self-defense capability to deter Chinese pressure.

Nevertheless, US legislators show a remarkable variation in how many measures they sponsor and cosponsor to support Taiwan. A quick look at the number of bills and resolutions (hereafter collectively referred to as bills) that legislators sponsored and cosponsored from the 110th to 116th Congress reveals that, on average, 72 percent of House Representatives proposed zero Taiwan-specific bills in a two-year congressional term. Another 22 percent joined in proposing one or two. Only a small fraction of legislators authored or co-authored three or more.¹ What explains this wide variation in the count of bills that legislators advocated supporting Taiwan? Why are some lawmakers very active while others remain reticent?

I theorize that US legislators' support for Taiwan is influenced by how they view China and their partisanship. I test my predictions based on an analysis of all Taiwan-specific bills and resolutions from the 110th to 116th House of Representatives. To preview, my findings show that legislators who perceive China as a security threat or a non-democracy and a human rights violator are more likely to support Taiwan while perceiving China as an economic competitor has the least significant effect. In addition, despite the widely held belief that Taiwan is a consensus issue between the two parties, my research reveals that Republicans have a higher level of interest in supporting Taiwan than Democrats.

My findings contribute to existing research in four ways. First, Congress wields an independent influence over US foreign policy through direct and indirect channels (Lindsay 1992; Carter and Scott 2009), including over issues related to US–China–Taiwan relations (Guo 2022). Beijing often criticizes the pro-Taiwan legislation in Congress, regardless of whether and how the executive department implements them. A more comprehensive understanding of US lawmakers' attitudes towards Taiwan will allow us to better grasp the dynamics of the trilateral relationship. Second, although there remains a consensus that on the macro level, the US government consistently adopts friendly policies towards Taiwan, the same question has not been examined on the micro level. This paper examines the factors associated with support for Taiwan at the level of the individual legislator and contributes to better understanding and anticipating shifts in US policy. Third, while the US–China bilateral relationship has become increasingly tense in recent years, there is a variation of tension across issues. Depending on the specific area, Washington and Beijing enjoy varying degrees of cooperation, competition, or confrontation. Which issue is more closely related to US legislators' support for Taiwan is an important question, as it will help us understand how the change of the bilateral relationship in one area may contribute to the stability or tension across the Taiwan Strait. Finally, and more broadly, this study adds to the existing literature on the determinants of legislators' foreign policy preferences and US foreign policy formation in Congress.

I proceed as follows. In the next section, I briefly review the discussion of US policy towards Taiwan and congressional support in existing literature. In the third section, I lay out my theoretical foundation and hypotheses regarding the explanatory factors of lawmakers' support for Taiwan. The section that follows sets out a research design for testing my hypotheses. The fifth section presents empirical findings. Finally, the sixth section discusses and concludes.

US policy towards Taiwan and Congressional support

Taiwan's significance to the US is multi-faceted. It serves as a symbol of democracy and a source of inspiration for the rest of the world, making it crucial in US efforts to maintain the international order (Rigger 2011). Additionally, the island's strategic location is seen as critical in countering China's salami slicing tactics in maritime disputes (Sutter 2015). Furthermore, Taiwan's leadership in semiconductors, primarily spearheaded by the Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC), makes it a crucial partner for the US in enhancing secure supply chains for the transition to 5G (Glaser, Bush, and Green 2020).

Since 1979, the US approach to Taiwan has been based on the "One-China policy," which is defined by several elements, such as US adherence to the three US–China Communiqués of 1972, 1978, and 1982, the implementation of the Taiwan Relations Act of 1979, and the "Six Assurances" conveyed to Taiwan in 1982. In addition, the US maintains an abiding interest in the peaceful resolution of cross-strait differences, while opposing any unilateral changes to the status quo and not supporting *de jure* independence of Taiwan (Bush 2017).

Despite the absence of formal diplomatic relations, US and Taiwan maintain a strong unofficial relationship, particularly with regards to security cooperation. The issue of US arms sales to Taiwan has been a contentious point in the US–China relations over the decades. The Taiwan Relations Act specifies that it is the US policy, among the stipulations: to consider any nonpeaceful means to determine Taiwan's future "a threat" to the peace and security of the Western Pacific and of "grave concern" to the US and "to provide Taiwan with arms of a defensive character." Section 3(a) states that "the United States will make available to Taiwan such defense articles and defense services in such quantity as may be necessary to enable Taiwan to maintain a sufficient self-defense capability" (*Taiwan Relations Act 1979*).

In recent years, as the military capabilities of mainland China and Taiwan have continued to diverge, the security ties between the US and Taiwan have grown increasingly close. This deepening relationship is evidenced by a range of factors, including an increase of arms sales, officials' interactions, and US naval transits through the Taiwan Strait. Nevertheless, as Kastner (2022) observes, the US security commitment to Taiwan remains informal and more ambiguous than most other US security commitments across the globe. In addition, the extent of this commitment is partially dependent on Taiwan's own actions.

The US Congress has played a significant role in shaping the country's policy towards Taiwan. In 1979, Congress passed the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) due to dissatisfaction with the Carter administration's handling of normalization with the PRC and concerns about abandoning a longstanding ally (Goldstein and Schriver 2001). The TRA ensures that Congress has a role in overseeing Taiwan policy (Rigger 2019). Section 3 of the TRA states that Congress plays a role in arms sales to Taiwan.² Furthermore, the law directs the president to inform Congress of "any threat to the security or the social or economic system" of Taiwan and states "the president and the Congress shall determine, in accordance with constitutional processes, appropriate action" (*Taiwan Relations Act 1979*).

Despite not formally recognizing Taipei, members of Congress have proposed numerous measures to enhance US–Taiwan relations across various domains, albeit only a small percentage become laws. Some of the recent laws enacted to reinforce the relationship include the 2018 Taiwan Travel Act that encourages visits between US

and Taiwanese officials at all levels, the 2019 Taiwan Allies International Protection and Enhancement Initiative (TAIPEI) Act that helps Taiwan bolster diplomatic relationships and partnerships worldwide, and a Senate bill aimed at directing the Secretary of State to develop a strategy to obtain observer status for Taiwan in the International Criminal Police Organization. Former Chair of American Institute in Taiwan Raymond Burghardt bluntly said in 2014 that “in some respects [US–Taiwan] relations are even stronger than before 1979 when Washington broke official diplomatic ties with the nation” (Lowther 2014).

Several scholars have conducted detailed analyses of congressional support for Taiwan. For instance, Kastner and Grob (2009) focus on the Congressional Taiwan Caucus (CTC), a congressional organization that explicitly aims to strengthen US–Taiwan relations. Their study reveals that left/right ideology, district demographics, and engagement with human rights issues are crucial determinants of CTC membership. In contrast, districts’ economic ties with China do not appear to be significant factors. Additionally, Wu (2009) finds no relationship between US exports to Taiwan and congressional support. Other scholars, such as Chen (2007) and Lin (2006), study the role of the Formosa Association for Public Affairs (FAPA), a Washington DC-based Taiwanese organization that advocates for closer US–Taiwan relations, in shaping US support for Taiwan. Finally, according to Xie’s study (2009), which examines the roll call votes of House Representatives on two pro-Taiwan bills, the military–industrial complex at the state level does not appear to influence lawmakers’ voting decisions. In addition, the study finds a negative correlation between exports to China and support for Taiwan.

However, there is currently no existing literature that has undertaken a comprehensive quantitative analysis of US legislators’ support for Taiwan based on all Taiwan-specific legislation. This raises the question: why do certain members of Congress propose more bills to support Taiwan than others? The next section puts forth my theory, and the subsequent section outlines my research design.

Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses

I posit that US lawmakers’ support for Taiwan is affected by their perception of China and partisanship.

Perception of China

The rise of China has led many to question whether the American era is coming to an end (Nye 2020). Washington’s policy analyses frequently portray China as a significant challenger to US national interests. In fact, the 2021 US Annual Threat Assessment identifies China’s push for global power as the top threat to US national security (Office of the Director of National Intelligence 2021). The idea that China poses a major challenge to the US is so widely accepted by US lawmakers that the media has even concluded a hardline stance on China is “one of the few truly bipartisan sentiments in the deeply divided US Congress” (Zengerle and Martina 2021).

The view that China is a major challenger of the US has significant implications for how US lawmakers deal with Taiwan. For many lawmakers, Taiwan may be the first and most vulnerable target of China due to its geographical closeness to Beijing,

especially given China has not ruled out the use of force to achieve unification and the expanding military imbalance across Taiwan Strait. House Representative Michael McCaul considers Taiwan as “a neighbor to China and stalwart ally of the United States,” “facing the most immediate threat from an increasingly aggressive CCP” (McCaul 2019). Additionally, Taiwan is a critical part of US strategy in East Asia, whose goal, according to some, is to contain China. Former US Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Daniel Russel was outspoken about Taiwan’s importance to the US, saying that, for many Americans, Taiwan is an “offshore rebuke to the PRC” and a “blunt instrument used to harass and discomfit the Chinese Communist Party” (Russell 2020). The Biden administration’s Indo-Pacific Strategy explicitly stated that the efforts to build a free and open Indo-Pacific region require strengthening relationships with partners such as Taiwan (White House 2022). Furthermore, by committing to supporting Taiwan, the US indicates to the world the strength in its capability and resolve to protect its allies and the international system (Rigger 2011). As Richard Bush replied when asked why Taiwan matters: “how the Taiwan Strait issue is resolved is an important—perhaps the most important test—of ... how the US will play its role as the guardian of the international system” (Rigger 2011, 193).

Different perceptions of China, such as those of economic competitor, non-democracy and human rights violator, or a security threat, can result in varying levels of support for Taiwan. As Representative Rick Larsen aptly notes: “In Congress there are national security hawks on China, trade hawks on China, and human rights hawks on China” (Girard 2019). Each group may harbor negative sentiments toward China for different reasons, and these can shape their stance on Taiwan. Legislators who view China primarily as an economic rival may not have a strong incentive to support Taiwan as a solution to economic frictions with China. This is because Taiwan, like China, runs a trade surplus with the US. In 2020, the US goods trade deficit with Taiwan increased by \$7.4 billion, reaching \$29.9 billion, which represents a 32.8 percent increase compared to 2019.³ In 2020, the US Department of Treasury added Taiwan to its monitoring list of major trading partners due to a significant expansion in Taiwan’s trade account surplus (Sutter 2020). In 2021, the Treasury initiated talks to develop a plan with specific actions aimed at addressing the underlying causes of Taiwan’s currency undervaluation. In addition, US exporters often face difficulties with Taiwan’s trade barriers, including tariffs, non-tariff barriers, intellectual property protection, and investment barriers. Of these barriers, the exportation of US pork and beef is especially contentious (Glaser, Bush, and Green 2020). The Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) suspended trade talks with Taiwan under the Trade and Investment Framework Agreement in 2007 and did not resume them until 2013. Such trade talks stopped again in 2016 and did not occur at all during the Trump administration. In addition, many Taiwanese products exported to the US are manufactured in China.⁴ Supporting Taiwan by, for example, expanding US–Taiwan economic ties may further contribute to China’s trade surplus with the US.

The perception of China as a human rights violator and non-democracy may prompt US legislators to explicitly support Taiwan. Friedberg (2005) points out that if the US is more likely to be hostile toward China because it is not a democracy, it is also more inclined to assist perceived democratic polities threatened by China, even if such action may not align with a realpolitik calculation of its interests. An example of the US linking China’s undemocratic behavior to support for Taiwan is when a group

of pro-democracy activists in Hong Kong were arrested in 2021, and the State Department announced plans to send the US Ambassador to the United Nations to visit Taiwan, calling it “a reliable partner and vibrant democracy that has flourished despite CCP efforts to undermine its great success” (US Department of State 2021). Today, US officials widely perceive Taiwan as a democracy. However, the contrast in regime types between China and Taiwan raises concerns about the survival of Taipei. House Representative Donald Manzullo refers to Taiwan as “one of the few beacons of freedom and democracy in a very dangerous neighborhood” and says that “[US] support for Taiwan must remain strong and steadfast.”⁵ Moreover, supporting Taiwan may prove to the world, especially to those who live in mainland China, that democracy is compatible with Chinese culture (Christensen 2002). At a committee hearing on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Taiwan Relations Act in 2004, House Representative James Leach commented that Taiwan’s democratic transition is of great importance to residents in mainland China “who have yet to enjoy the political freedoms many Taiwanese now take for granted.”⁶ This approach could potentially pave the way for democratization in China, especially considering previous studies have shown that economic sanctions have not effectively improved the human rights situation in the country (Drury and Li 2006). Lastly, Taiwan’s democratic success is a powerful example of the resilience of democratic values amidst competition between US-led democracy and Beijing’s autocracy.

Perceiving China as a security threat should also be influential on US lawmakers’ support for Taiwan. When viewed as a non-democracy and human rights violator, China’s intentions to affect Taiwan’s democracy are concerning to lawmakers. However, it is China’s growing security ambition and capability that leads lawmakers to believe that China could actually carry out such actions. Moreover, the increasing military imbalance across the Taiwan Strait raises concerns that Taiwan’s survival is in jeopardy. Lawmakers often point to China’s expanding military strength as a reason for advocating for greater US support for Taiwan and for abandoning the “strategic ambiguity” approach.⁷ For example, House Representative Ted Yoho argues that the strategic ambiguity approach “has failed to deter the China of today from building up an immense military presence along the Taiwan Strait and repeatedly threatening military confrontation” (Yoho 2020). Recently, multiple House Representatives introduced the Taiwan Peace and Security Act in the 117th Congress (2021–2022), which aims to enhance US support for Taiwan on a range of issues, including bolstering deterrence against a cross-strait conflict. Representative Steve Chabot, one of the original cosponsors, stated that he is “particularly concerned about the military dimension, and the increasing likelihood of a PRC miscalculation or, even worse, an invasion” (Bera 2021).

Lawmakers’ concerns about the increasing military disparity between Taiwan and China and its potential impact on Taiwan’s security are consistently reflected in the annual National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) and other national security legislation. For instance, the 2015 NDAA required the Secretary of Defense to report to Congress on the Chinese People’s Liberation Army’s potential impact on Taiwan’s maritime and territorial security. The 2021 NDAA stated that it is US policy that China’s increasingly coercive and aggressive behavior towards Taiwan runs counter to the expectation of the peaceful resolution for Taiwan’s future. The 2018 Asia Reassurance Initiative Act explicitly stated that the President should conduct

transfers of defense articles to Taiwan regularly, which are customized to address the current and future threats from China. Therefore,

Hypothesis 1: US legislators who perceive China as a security threat or a human rights violator and non-democracy should be more supportive of Taiwan, whereas viewing China as an economic challenger has the least significant effect.

Partisanship

Taiwan is essentially a foreign policy issue. Drawing from issue ownership literature, I argue that Republican lawmakers are expected to care more about Taiwan because their party “owns” the issue. According to Egan (2013), issue ownership “describes the long-term positive associations between political parties and particular consensus issues in the public’s mind—associations created and reinforced by the parties’ commitments to prioritizing these issues with government spending and lawmaking” (156). His empirical analysis shows that during a four-decade period, unified governments under Republican control enacted a greater number of important laws than Democrats on foreign policy. In addition, Republican control of the government is accompanied by a net increase in federal funding on foreign policy. While why Republicans have formed this tradition is beyond the scope of this paper, Egan’s research shows that Republicans are more likely to prioritize foreign policy issues than Democrats.⁸

Egan’s focus on the partisan priorities when defining issue ownership is supported by the legislative record, as [Table A1](#) shows that of the 65 Taiwan-specific pieces of legislation introduced from 2007 to 2020, 54 were introduced by Republicans and only 11 by Democrats.

Other scholars have also observed a positive association between the Republican party and foreign affairs in the minds of voters (Craig and Cossette 2020) and party elites (Fagan 2021). The association can have different meanings in different contexts, such as the amount of attention given to foreign policy by different parties or which party is perceived as being better able to handle foreign policy.

By emphasizing foreign policy issues such as Taiwan through the introduction of relevant legislation, Republicans can strengthen their reputation as a party that prioritizes US foreign policy. This could potentially be an effective strategy during election campaigns. When attacking their Democratic opponents, Republican candidates may criticize their lack of foreign policy proposals as a sign of weakness on foreign policy. Therefore,

Hypothesis 2: Republicans are more supportive of Taiwan than Democrats.

Research design

Measuring lawmakers’ support for Taiwan

There are various ways for lawmakers to show support for Taiwan. I focus on the number of bills and resolutions that lawmakers sponsor and cosponsor during a two-year term in Congress, with a higher count indicating greater levels of support. Only legislation with “Taiwan” or “One China Policy” in their titles were considered as they indicate a direct and strong interest in the issue.⁹ While some other legislation may include “Taiwan” in their texts, the Taiwan-specific articles may only be a small

portion, making it difficult to determine lawmakers' level of interest in the issue. I only examined the House of Representatives, recognizing that support for Taiwan in the Senate may differ from that in the House. [Table A1](#) lists all Taiwan-specific legislation from the 110th to 116th House of Representatives. [Table A2](#) shows the majority party of each House of Representatives and the Taiwan-specific bills sponsored by Republicans and Democrats. [Table A2](#) reveals that Republicans have proposed more Taiwan-specific bills than Democrats in each Congress, regardless of which party is in the majority in the House.

Roll-call votes are often seen as an intuitive way to determine the position of lawmakers, but they have several limitations. First, voting on bills related to Taiwan is uncommon. In [Table A1](#), only 16 out of 65 Taiwan-specific measures received House floor action. Of those 16, only 4 bills received a roll-call vote, and out of those, only one bill had an opposing vote.¹⁰ Therefore, there is little variation to be explained between legislators. The remaining 12 bills received a voice vote, making it difficult to count the number of "yeas" and "nays."

Second, voting restricts lawmakers from choosing other than "yea" or "nay," a pair of dyadic alternatives that most legislators have no part in shaping (Schiller 1995; Talbert and Potoski 2002). It is important to recognize that not all lawmakers who vote "yea" on a bill necessarily have the same level of support for the issue. For instance, imagine three legislators who all voted "yea" on a Taiwan-specific bill. Legislator A might not have a strong interest in the Taiwan issue but voted "yea" simply to avoid being one of the few dissenting voices. Legislator B may prefer a bill that expresses stronger support for Taiwan but voted "yea" because they think the current bill is better than having no bill at all. Finally, legislator C voted "yea" because they genuinely believe that the bill aligns with their stance on how the US should deal with the issue. Thus, the dichotomous nature of voting may mask the nuanced motivations of lawmakers.

To overcome the limitations of roll-call voting, I used the number of Taiwan-specific bills and resolutions that lawmakers sponsor and cosponsor during a two-year term of one Congress as a measure of their support for Taiwan. In Congress, only one legislator can claim sponsorship of a measure, but the number of cosponsors is unlimited. Sponsoring and cosponsoring are better indicators than roll-call votes. First, they are less constrained by party leaders and more directly reflect lawmakers' preferences (Alemán et al. 2009). Additionally, lawmakers can introduce an unlimited number of bills in a single congressional term, which allows for a better reflection of the level of support they have for Taiwan. Thus, sponsoring and cosponsoring can not only indicate a lawmaker's stance on an issue but also demonstrate the intensity of their preferences (Rocca and Gordon 2010).

Some may argue that most bills and resolutions are introduced by lawmakers for symbolic purposes and are not intended to pass, which undermines the value of studying them. However, previous research shows that sponsors provide a significant push on the majority of proposed measures (Krutz 2005). Another worry is that cosponsoring is cheaper than sponsoring, and lawmakers do not take it seriously. Although cosponsoring is "less costly, it is not costless" (Wichowsky and Weiss 2021, 641). Members of Congress have limited resources to advance their goals (Hall and Deardorff 2006). They face an opportunity cost for every bill they participate in proposing as they cannot spend the time writing other bills that might help to build a reputation. Furthermore, lawmakers are selective in cosponsoring, with each legislator only cosponsoring an average of 396 out of 11,488 bills and resolutions

introduced in the 116th House. Finally, legislators face repercussions if they break their cosponsoring agreements (Bernhard and Sulkin 2013). In sum, studying introduced measures provides valuable insights into lawmakers' preferences and priorities.

Sponsoring and cosponsoring data have been used to gauge legislators' preferences on many issues. For example, Rosenson, Oldmixon, and Wald (2009) use the number of sponsorship and cosponsorships of Israel-related bills to examine senators' support for Israel. Kleinberg and Fordham (2013) investigate whether House Representatives' trade interests in their electoral districts influence the number of hostile measures to China that they sponsor and cosponsor. Meanwhile, Heaney and Rojas (2015) delved into how lawmakers' partisanship and ideology affected the count of antiwar legislation that they sponsor and cosponsor.

Figure 1 provides insight into the level of support for Taiwan among members of Congress from 2007 to 2020 (110th–116th Congress). The density distribution plots illustrate the number of measures sponsored and cosponsored, revealing a long tail that indicates a high level of activity among certain members. While many remained relatively inactive, others proposed as many as six, seven, or more bills to support Taiwan. Table 1 identifies these "active Taiwan supporters" and lists their names alongside the number of bills they sponsored and cosponsored.

Independent variables

To test H1, I measured lawmakers' perception of China based on the number of China-related bills and resolutions they sponsored and cosponsored. The data selection is based on the following procedure. First, on the website Congress.gov, I applied two filters: "Congress" ("110th–116th") and "legislation type" ("All House"). Second, I limited search results to measures that have at least one of the following words in their titles or summaries: China, Chinese, People's Republic of China (PRC), Communist, Tibet, Hong Kong, Macau, Dalai, Uyghur, Huawei, and Zhongxing (ZTE). All these words are highly relevant to China. I excluded bills and resolutions that deal with budgets, including authorization and appropriations measures. These omnibus measures are typically lengthier than traditional legislation and address a wide range of issues, and the proportion of China-related content within them is minimal, making it difficult to judge the views of legislators regarding China-related matters in these measures. I then read the text of each one of the bills and further excluded ones that do not portray China as a challenger to the US. First, I excluded proposals that have nothing to do with the Chinese government, such as those congratulating US athletes on their performance during the 2008 Olympics in Beijing. Second, I excluded bills that express kindness or promote cooperation with China, such as expressing condolences to the victims of the 2010 earthquake in China. Finally, I also excluded the bills that contain Taiwan in the abstract or the main text because it is unclear whether these bills aim to support Taiwan, oppose China, or have a combination of both. In other words, they can be coded as independent variables or dependent variables. Therefore, I removed them from consideration. Table A3 in the Appendix provides a complete list of all the China-related legislation I selected.

To categorize China-related bills in a way that accurately reflects their content, I followed Wichowsky and Weiss (2021) and grouped China-related measures into

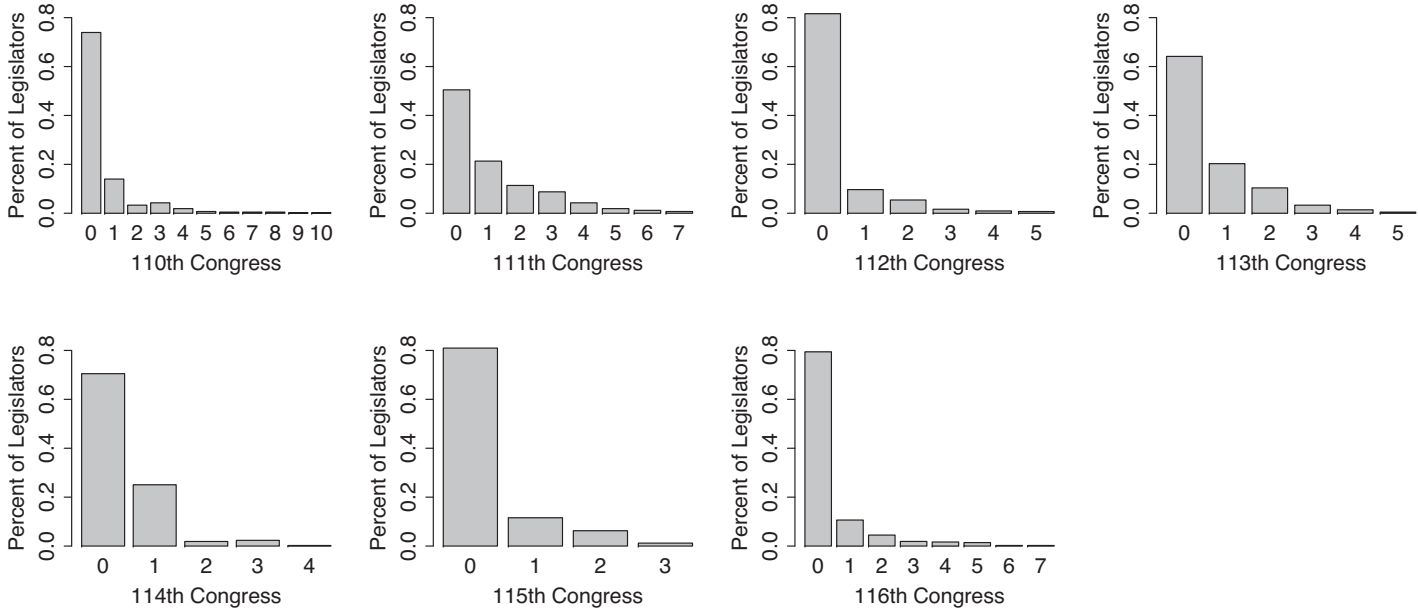


Figure 1. The number of measures legislators sponsored and cosponsored to support Taiwan (2007–2020).

Table 1. Active Taiwan supporters in House of Representatives (110th–116th Congress)

110th Congress (2007–2008)	# bills	114th Congress (2015–2016)	# bills
TANCREDO, Thomas G. (R-CO)	10	SHERMAN, Brad (D-CA)	4
BURTON, Danny Lee (R-IN)	9	SALMON, Matthew James (R-AZ)	3
McCOTTER, Thaddeus George (R-MI)	8	ENGEL, Eliot Lance (D-NY)	3
CHABOT, Steve (R-OH)	8	WEBER, Randy (R-TX)	3
ROHRBACHER, Dana (R-CA)	7	ROYCE, Edward Randall (R-CA)	3
GARRETT, Scott (R-NJ)	7	GARRETT, Scott (R-NJ)	3
SOUDER, Mark Edward (R-IN)	6	CHABOT, Steve (R-OH)	3
BERKLEY, Shelley (D-NV)	6	BURGESS, Michael C. (R-TX)	3
111th Congress (2009–2010)		McCAUL, Michael T. (R-TX)	3
BURTON, Danny Lee (R-IN)	7	SESSIONS, Pete (R-TX)	3
McCOTTER, Thaddeus George (R-MI)	7	CONNOLLY, Gerald E. (Gerry) (D-VA)	3
WU, David (D-OR)	7	115th Congress (2017–2018)	
CULBERSON, John (R-TX)	7	YOHO, Ted (R-FL)	3
ROS-LEHTINEN, Ileana (R-FL)	6	ROYCE, Edward Randall (R-CA)	3
GINGREY, Phil (R-GA)	6	ROS-LEHTINEN, Ileana (R-FL)	3
GARRETT, Scott (R-NJ)	6	BACON, Donald J. (R-NE)	3
FOXX, Virginia Ann (R-NC)	6	CONNOLLY, Gerald E. (Gerry) (D-VA)	3
MARCHANT, Kenny (R-TX)	6	MOONEY, Alex X. (R-WV)	3
112th Congress (2011–2012)		116th Congress (2019–2020)	
BURTON, Danny Lee (R-IN)	5	CHABOT, Steve (R-OH)	7
McCAUL, Michael T. (R-TX)	5	YOHO, Ted (R-FL)	6
MARCHANT, Kenny (R-TX)	5	DIAZ-BALART, Mario (R-FL)	5
HULTGREN, Randy (R-IL)	4	SHERMAN, Brad (D-CA)	5
HARRIS, Andy (R-MD)	4	BACON, Donald J. (R-NE)	5
ANDREWS, Robert Ernest (D-NJ)	4	PERRY, Scott (R-PA)	5
POE, Ted (R-TX)	4	FITZPATRICK, Brian K. (R-PA)	5
113th Congress (2013–2014)		GALLAGHER, Michael (R-WI)	5
McCAUL, Michael T. (R-TX)	5	McCAUL, Michael T. (R-TX)	4
ROYCE, Edward Randall (R-CA)	5	WRIGHT, Ron (R-TX)	4
FORBES, J. Randy (R-VA)	4	BERA, Ami (D-CA)	4
BENTIVOLIO, Kerry (R-MI)	4	SIRES, Albio (D-NJ)	4
ENGEL, Eliot Lance (D-NY)	4	RESCHENTHALER, Guy (R-PA)	4
STIVERS, Steve (R-OH)	4	WILSON, Addison Graves (Joe) (R-SC)	4
STOCKMAN, Steve (R-TX)	4	CONNOLLY, Gerald E. (Gerry) (D-VA)	4
JOHNSON, Eddie Bernice (D-TX)	4		

Note: The table shows the names of the House Representatives and the number of Taiwan-specific bills and resolutions they sponsored and cosponsored.

four categories: economy, human rights and democracy, security, and others. These categories are not mutually exclusive, as a bill may cover multiple issue areas. For each legislator, I then coded the number of relevant bills they sponsored and cosponsored across the three variables of *China economic bills*, *China human rights bills*, and *China security bills*.

The sub-categories for each major issue are as follows:

- Economy: financial markets, trade, intellectual property rights, supply chain, aid, investment, debt, tariffs, China's market economy status, consumer products safety, WTO Government Procurement Agreement, economic espionage, currency manipulation, acquisition, bonds
- Human rights and democracy: Hong Kong, Chinese human rights activists, Tibet, Uyghurs in Xinjiang, China's role in human rights abuses in foreign countries (e.g., Sudan and North Korea)
- Security: South/East China Sea, Syria, People's Liberation Army, cybersecurity, Indo-Pacific region, Chinese political influence in the US and overseas, arms sales, telecommunications industry (5G), natural resources security, security of US allies, fentanyl
- Others: climate change, Covid-19 pandemic, and others

To test H2, I assigned a value of 1 to Democrats and 0 to all other legislators (*Democrat*).¹¹

Control variables

I accounted for several potential drivers that may shape lawmakers' support for Taiwan.

Personal interests

First, since Taiwan is primarily a foreign policy issue, it is reasonable to expect that members of Congress who sit on the Foreign Affairs Committee would be particularly invested in this issue. According to Adler and Lapinski (1997), such lawmakers may be more interested in foreign policy due to their personal backgrounds or the preferences of their constituents. I assigned a value of 1 to members who served on the Foreign Affairs Committee and 0 to those who did not (*Foreign Affairs Committee*).

Second, the Congressional Taiwan Caucus (CTC) has been actively promoting US–Taiwan relations since its founding. It is reasonable to expect that CTC members are more likely to propose Taiwan-specific legislation to improve ties between the US and Taiwan. Therefore, I coded CTC members as 1 and others as 0 (*CTC*). Data are from the Formosan Association for Public Affairs website.

Third, I included the total number of bills and resolutions (divided by 100) sponsored and cosponsored by each lawmaker (*Active lawmaker*). The rationale behind this is that the more active a lawmaker is, the more likely they are to support Taiwan by proposing relevant measures.

Finally, the ideologies of lawmakers may also influence their support for Taiwan. Those who hold strong liberal or conservative beliefs may have unique positions on foreign policy issues. Compared to other lawmakers, they are more likely to propose legislation aimed at modifying current US policy towards Taiwan. To code each

lawmaker's ideology, I used the first dimension of the DW nominate score (Poole and Rosenthal 2001) and converted the original score to its absolute value (*Ideology*).¹²

Constituents' interests

In his seminal book *Congress: The Electoral Connection*, Mayhew offers a simple assumption: members of Congress are "single-minded seekers of reelection" (Mayhew 2004, 5).¹³ Given the importance of taking constituents' interests into account for reelection, I consider several factors that may shape lawmakers' support for Taiwan.

First, lawmakers who represent districts with strong economic ties to China may be less supportive of Taiwan-specific bills, as, for instance, Chinese investment may provide job opportunities to their constituents.¹⁴ To account for this, I included a control variable for the proportion of Chinese investment in total local household income (*Chinese investment*), using data from the American Enterprise Institute¹⁵ and the American Community Survey five-year estimate.¹⁶

As US–China economic ties deepen, politicians in Washington have expressed concerns on the potential negative consequences. Autor, Dorn, and Hanson (2013) find that rising imports from China lead to higher unemployment, lower labor force participation, and reduced wages in US local labor markets that house import-competing manufacturing industries. Similarly, Kuk, Seligsohn, and Zhang (2018) find that members of Congress who voted against China after 2003 were more likely to come from districts that were adversely impacted by import competition. Legislators from districts with a high concentration of manufacturing industries may be more likely to be tough on China-related issues due to concerns about the impact of imports from China on local labor market. To account for this, I included a control variable for lawmakers who come from districts where manufacturing is a major industry (*Manufacturing industry*), using data from *Politics in America* edited by Congressional Quarterly Staff.¹⁷

Finally, lawmakers' electoral landscape can affect their decision on sponsoring or cosponsoring bills to support Taiwan. Polls indicating voters rank the importance of foreign policy issues behind domestic issues are abundant (Drezner 2019).¹⁸ Previous research also finds that during economic recessions, even dramatic international crises may not divert the public's attention away from the economy (Heffington, Park, and Williams 2019). Therefore, lawmakers who come from competitive districts may focus more on introducing legislation that deals with domestic instead of foreign policy issues. I controlled for lawmakers' vote share in the last congressional election (*Vote share*) and expect it to be positively associated with support for Taiwan. Data come from MIT Election Data And Science Lab (2017).

Lobbying influence

Lawmakers' support for Taiwan may also be influenced by lobbying organizations and interest groups. To account for this, I first examined the impact of the Formosan Association of Public Affairs (FAPA), the first Taiwanese American interest group to exert systematic efforts in congressional lobbying (Chen 2007). As of 2021, FAPA has 44 local chapters with more than 2,500 active members around the US. Each chapter holds its own events with the local communities. In 2019, members who attended the

conference visited 86 congressional offices.¹⁹ It is reasonable to expect that legislators from states with local FAPA chapters might be more supportive of Taiwan. I thus included the number of FAPA chapters in the state where the member of Congress comes from as a control variable. Data are from FAPA's website.

Furthermore, Taiwan ranks among the top recipients of US arms sales despite the lack of a formal bilateral defense treaty. The US defense industry might lobby lawmakers to support Taiwan, especially in arms sales. I thus controlled for *Defense industry contribution*, measured by the proportion of campaign contributions from the defense industry in the total amount of money raised by each legislator's campaign. I anticipate that legislators' support for Taiwan will be positively associated with the proportion of campaign contributions they receive from the defense industry.

My analysis covers 2,957 observations from the 110th to the 116th House of Representatives (2007–2020), with the individual legislator by congressional term as the unit of analysis. I selected these seven congresses because they span a period when executive and legislative power shifted between the two major parties in both the US and Taiwan, and they provide a good mix of US and Taiwanese leadership.²⁰ In addition, throughout much of the George W. Bush Administration, US foreign policy primarily focused on counterterrorism, while relations with China remained relatively smooth (Dumbaugh 2006). After the financial crisis, there has been a noticeable increase in Congress's hostility towards China (Kuk, Seligsohn, and Zhang 2018). Moreover, some control variables, such as *Chinese investment*, *CTC*, and *Manufacturing industry*, are not available before 2007. I excluded legislators who left office before the end of their two-year term, shifted parties in the middle of a congressional term, were elected in special elections, or those from outside the 50 US states. Table 2 summarizes the independent and control variables, their hypothesized direction, and the descriptive statistics.

Model specification

I tested the effect of the independent and control variables on two dependent variables: a dummy variable of whether a legislator sponsored and cosponsored any Taiwan-specific bills in a given Congress and a count variable representing the number of Taiwan-specific measures legislators sponsored and cosponsored in a given Congress. For the dummy dependent variable, I ran multilevel logistic regressions with random intercepts varying by legislators. For the count dependent variable, because Figure 1 suggests there are excessive zeroes in my data, I thus ran a multilevel zero-inflated negative binomial regression with random intercepts varying by legislators. All models include Congress fixed effects. I used a fully Bayesian approach due to its benefit of accounting for the uncertainty in the parameter estimates.²¹ When *CTC* and *Manufacturing industry* are included as additional control variables, the sample size reduces to 2,112 (111th–115th Congress) due to limited data coverage.

Findings

Table 3 presents models that predict the likelihood of a member of Congress sponsoring or cosponsoring Taiwan-specific bills during a given two-year Congress.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics

Statistic	Description	Direction	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
<i>Key independent variables</i>							
China economic bills	Count		2,957	0.324	0.818	0	10
China human rights bills	Count	+	2,957	0.900	1.672	0	20
China security bills	Count	+	2,957	0.414	0.974	0	17
Democrat	Yes/No	–	2,957	0.495	0.500	0	1
<i>Personal interests</i>							
Foreign Affairs Committee	Yes/No	+	2,957	0.107	0.309	0	1
CTC	Yes/No	+	2,112	0.310	0.463	0	1
Active lawmaker	Range	+	2,957	3.447	1.778	0	13.020
Ideology	Range	+	2,957	0.427	0.144	0.011	0.931
<i>Constituents' interests</i>							
Chinese investment	Range	–	2,957	0.242	1.680	0	36.373
Manufacturing industry	Yes/No	+	2,112	0.422	0.494	0	1
Vote share	Range	+	2,957	0.655	0.119	0.275	1.000
<i>Lobbying influence</i>							
FAPA	Count	+	2,957	1.993	1.797	0	5
Defense industry contribution	Range	+	2,957	2.878	4.290	0	38.806

The results support H1, showing that perceiving China as a human rights violator and a non-democracy or as a security threat is positively correlated with support for Taiwan. In contrast, since the credible interval of *China economic bills* contains both positive and negative values, it cannot be concluded with certainty that it has a significant effect on the dependent variable. Furthermore, as expected by H2, Democrats are less likely to support Taiwan compared to Republicans.

Among control variables, lawmakers' support for Taiwan is affected by their personal interests. Members who serve on the House Foreign Affairs Committee and the Congressional Taiwan Caucus (CTC) and who are active are more likely to propose bills to support Taiwan. In addition, the findings from model (1) suggest that ideologically extreme legislators are more likely to propose Taiwan-specific bills. In model (2), the effect of *Ideology* becomes less significant.

When it comes to constituents' interests, the direction of the effect of *Chinese investment* and *Manufacturing industry* is uncertain, as the credible intervals contain zero. A lawmaker's vote share in the previous congressional election is an unstable predictor. Furthermore, the number of FAPA chapters in the lawmaker's state is positively associated with support for Taiwan in model (1), although in model (2) there is no strong evidence to suggest that FAPA has a non-zero effect. Interestingly, both Model (1) and (2) present evidence indicating a negative association between support for Taiwan and the proportion of campaign contributions from the defense industry, which is inconsistent with the prediction.

Figure 2 reports the substantive significance of the key independent variables based on model (1) in Table 3. Here, I used the observed-value approach (Hanmer and Kalkan 2013). Specifically, I held *China economic bills* at zero and all the other

Table 3. Multilevel logit models of Taiwan-specific bills and resolutions sponsorship and cosponsorship

	(1)			(2)		
	Estimate	Sd. Error	90% CI	Estimate	Sd. Error	90% CI
<i>Key independent variables</i>						
China Economic Bills	0.061	0.095	(-0.097, 0.219)	-0.111	0.179	(-0.406, 0.184)
China Human Rights Bills	0.252	0.052	(0.167, 0.338)	0.172	0.078	(0.045, 0.301)
China Security Bills	0.276	0.094	(0.126, 0.432)	0.375	0.140	(0.149, 0.604)
Democrat	-1.797	0.224	(-2.173, -1.444)	-1.644	0.235	(-2.038, -1.273)
<i>Personal Interests</i>						
Foreign Affairs Committee	1.734	0.242	(1.336, 2.140)	1.311	0.258	(0.890, 1.735)
CTC				1.856	0.178	(1.578, 2.154)
Active Lawmaker	0.361	0.056	(0.269, 0.454)	0.459	0.071	(0.344, 0.581)
Ideology	1.418	0.636	(0.371, 2.482)	0.817	0.628	(-0.221, 1.851)
<i>Constituents' Interests</i>						
Chinese Investment	0.028	0.037	(-0.033, 0.087)	0.004	0.037	(-0.058, 0.066)
Manufacturing Industry				0.100	0.162	(-0.163, 0.367)
Vote Share	-0.705	0.624	(-1.716, 0.306)	-1.561	0.683	(-2.681, -0.485)
<i>Lobbying Influence</i>						
FAPA	0.108	0.048	(0.030, 0.186)	0.046	0.047	(-0.030, 0.124)
Defense Industry Contribution	-0.040	0.020	(-0.073, -0.007)	-0.069	0.021	(-0.105, -0.035)
Observations	2,957			2,112		

Note: Multilevel logistic models with random intercepts estimated for legislators and fixed-effects for congresses. 90% credible intervals are reported.

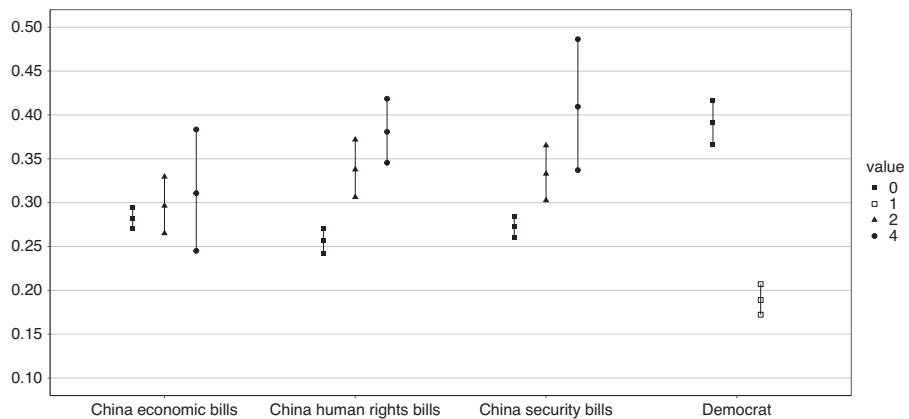


Figure 2. Statistical simulation results for predicted probabilities of sponsoring and cosponsoring Taiwan bills with 90 per cent credible intervals.

independent variables at their observed values in each case (i.e., each legislator). I drew 4,000 sets of simulated coefficients. For each set of the coefficients, I calculated the predicted probability of each legislator, taking into account their random intercepts, and then took the average. This process generated 4,000 predicted probabilities when the *China economic bills* takes zero, and I presented the mean with a 90 per cent credible interval in Figure 2. I then repeated the process by setting *China economic bills* at two and four, respectively, and plotted the credible intervals in Figure 2. I employed the same methodology for *China human rights bills* and *China security bills*. For lawmakers' partisan identity, I held *Democrat* at 0 and 1, respectively.

Figure 2 shows three variables that are proxies for how members of Congress view China. A higher value for each variable indicates a stronger perception of China in a negative light. Based on model (1) in Table 3, the predicted probability of supporting Taiwan by sponsoring and cosponsoring at least one bill is 26 per cent when lawmakers sponsor and cosponsor zero China human rights bills, 34 per cent when sponsoring and cosponsoring two China human rights bills, and 38 per cent when sponsoring and cosponsoring four China human rights bills. The predicted probability of supporting Taiwan is 27 per cent, 33 per cent, and 41 per cent when lawmakers sponsor and cosponsor zero, two, and four China security bills, respectively. Perceiving China as an economic challenger does not have a significant effect. In addition, Democrats have a lower predicted probability of proposing Taiwan-specific bills at 19 per cent, while Republicans have a higher probability at 39 per cent.

Table 4 displays the findings of two zero-inflated negative binomial models. Zero-inflated models involve a mixture of two processes: always zeros and count-model zeros. I hypothesize that among legislators who did not sponsor or cosponsor any Taiwan-specific bills, some would never do so (*always zeros*) while others did not have the opportunity to participate in proposing relevant bills (*count-model zeros*). The zero models in Table 4 estimate the probability of generating *always zeros*, while the count model predicts the counts of Taiwan-specific bills that legislators sponsored and cosponsored. In addition to the key independent variables derived from the theory, I also included control variables that measure lawmakers' personal interests in Taiwan when estimating the zero models.

Table 4 presents the results. Perceiving China as a human rights violator or a non-democracy increases the number of bills that legislators sponsor or cosponsor, and perceiving China as a security threat is a strong predictor of a legislator being an always-zero. Conversely, given that the credible intervals of *China economic bills* in both the count model and zero model contain zero, the direction of its effect is uncertain. Democratic legislators not only sponsor and cosponsor fewer Taiwan-specific bills (the count model), but also have a higher probability of not sponsoring or cosponsoring any such bills (the zero model). Among the control variables, only legislators' personal interests consistently predict support for Taiwan.

Figure 3 displays the predicted count of Taiwan bills that members of Congress are expected to sponsor and cosponsor, using an approach similar to that used for Figure 2.²² Legislators who introduced zero, two, and four China human rights bills are predicted to introduce 0.44, 0.55, and 0.69 Taiwan bills, respectively, in one Congress. Meanwhile, legislators who introduced zero, two, and four China security bills are predicted to introduce 0.50, 0.61, and 0.70 Taiwan bills, respectively. As expected, Republicans are predicted to propose more Taiwan bills than Democrats are.

Table 4. Multilevel count models of Taiwan-specific bills and resolutions sponsorship and cosponsorship

	Estimate	Sd. Error	90% CI	Estimate	Sd. Error	90% CI
Count Model						
<i>Key Independent Variables</i>						
China economic bills	0.062	0.039	(-0.002, 0.128)	0.023	0.084	(-0.114, 0.161)
China human rights bills	0.112	0.018	(0.083, 0.141)	0.058	0.029	(0.010, 0.105)
China security bills	0.053	0.036	(-0.006, 0.113)	0.060	0.061	(-0.039, 0.159)
Democrat	-0.786	0.134	(-1.009, -0.566)	-0.651	0.144	(-0.891, -0.422)
<i>Personal Interests</i>						
Foreign Affairs Committee	0.626	0.113	(0.437, 0.814)	0.501	0.121	(0.302, 0.699)
CTC				0.851	0.096	(0.693, 1.012)
Active lawmaker	0.094	0.031	(0.043, 0.146)	0.134	0.041	(0.067, 0.200)
Ideology	1.243	0.373	(0.629, 1.868)	0.859	0.364	(0.254, 1.452)
<i>Constituents' Interests</i>						
Chinese investment	0.026	0.016	(-0.001, 0.051)	0.010	0.016	(-0.016, 0.035)
Manufacturing industry				0.062	0.085	(-0.075, 0.201)
Vote share	-0.285	0.328	(-0.827, 0.247)	-0.603	0.356	(-1.182, -0.016)
<i>Lobbying Influence</i>						
FAPA	0.041	0.027	(-0.003, 0.086)	0.000	0.026	(-0.042, 0.043)
Defense industry contribution	-0.011	0.011	(-0.030, 0.007)	-0.025	0.011	(-0.044, -0.007)
Zero Model						
China economic bills	0.784	0.561	(-0.089, 1.576)	0.970	1.360	(-0.639, 2.524)
China human rights bills	-0.136	0.484	(-0.980, 0.579)	-0.373	0.535	(-1.323, 0.368)
China security bills	-2.018	1.814	(-5.291, -0.417)	-4.292	4.258	(-11.979, -0.491)
Democrat	2.946	0.889	(1.566, 4.477)	3.200	1.199	(1.400, 5.225)
Foreign Affairs Committee	-7.811	8.768	(-26.181, -0.609)	-6.047	8.063	(-22.764, 0.213)
CTC				-2.379	1.794	(-5.505, -0.794)
Active lawmaker	-2.534	0.598	(-3.602, -1.676)	-2.235	0.709	(-3.571, -1.280)
Ideology	2.883	2.222	(-0.538, 6.806)	3.197	2.795	(-0.801, 8.062)
Observations	2,957			2,112		

Note: Multilevel zero-inflated negative binomial models with random intercepts estimated for legislators and fixed-effects for congresses. 90% credible intervals are reported.

In summary, lawmakers' support for Taiwan is influenced by various factors. Those who perceive China as a human rights violator and non-democracy or a security threat are more likely to back Taiwan. However, views of China as an economic challenger do not significantly impact support for Taiwan. Democrats

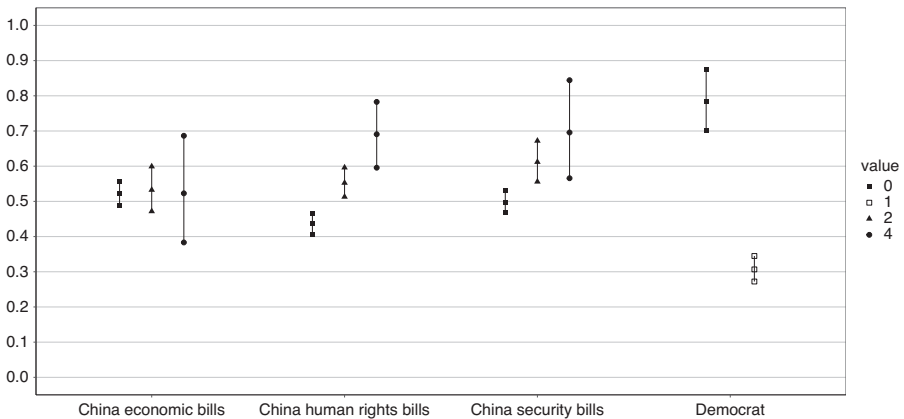


Figure 3. Statistical simulation results for predicted count of sponsoring and cosponsoring Taiwan bills with 90 per cent credible intervals.

are less likely to support Taiwan than Republicans. Moreover, personal interests play an important role in shaping lawmakers' positions. However, the interests of lawmakers' constituents and lobbying efforts are not consistently reliable predictors of support for Taiwan.

Discussion and conclusion

Despite the lack of formal diplomatic relations, the US government has maintained a strong relationship with Taiwan for several decades. However, individual members of Congress exhibit varying levels of support for Taiwan. This article has investigated the US–China–Taiwan relationship on a micro-level by analyzing the sponsoring and cosponsoring activities of US legislators regarding Taiwan during the 110th–116th Congresses. I theorize that lawmakers' perception of China, as well as their partisan identity, can significantly impact their level of support for Taiwan.

When discussing the reasons for US support for Taiwan, experts and officials often emphasize Taiwan's role as a democratic country that shares American values of freedom and democracy, or as a critical producer of semiconductors for the US economy. In fact, even the State Department's top diplomat for East Asia, David Stilwell, has argued that the US–Taiwan relationship is not a subset of US–China relations (Brunnstrom and Pamuk 2020). Although Taiwan is a critical subject matter in its own right, it is essential to consider the role of China in order to fully understand the dynamics of US support for Taiwan.

It is unsurprising that lawmakers with a negative perception of China would be more likely to support Taiwan. FAPA recognizes potential lobbying targets among legislators who lack a pro-Taiwan record but have an anti-China stance. However, this study finds that different perceptions of China have varying impacts on the level of support for Taiwan. Specifically, perceptions of China as an economic challenger, a human rights violator and a non-democracy, or a security threat have distinct effects on support for Taiwan.

Legislators who view China's economic policies, especially its unfair trade practices, as harmful to US interests may also find Taiwan not an ideal partner. According

to Glaser, Bush, and Green (2020), the US–Taiwan relations have seen limited advancement in the economic arena compared to the collaborations in the security and diplomatic realms. Nonetheless, it remains to be seen how legislators' support for Taiwan will be affected by their perception of China as an economic challenger in the future, given Taiwan's recent removal of trade restrictions on US beef and pork, as well as ongoing bilateral discussions on other economic issues.

The stark contrast between China's lack of democracy and Taiwan's adherence to democratic values prompts legislators to express more explicit support for Taiwan. Taiwan serves as a democratic model for not only Chinese society, but also the region and the world, and it is crucial that it is protected from authoritarian aggression. If China's human rights record continues to be a concern for US legislators, it is likely that there will be an increase in pro-Taiwan bills proposed in Congress.

Finally, perceiving China as a security threat is also a strong motivator for Congress to support Taiwan. When introducing the Taiwan Policy Act in 2013 in response to China's increasing provocations in the East and South China Seas, Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen argued that China's actions were evidence of its regional hegemonic ambitions and that supporting Taiwan was necessary to preserve the Taiwanese people's ability to determine their own future.²³ Moreover, lawmakers may propose arms sales to Taiwan as a means of supporting the island against China's military capabilities. For example, the Taiwan Airpower Modernization Act of 2011 reiterated the US obligation to help Taiwan maintain self-defense capabilities in light of a Department of Defense report warning that China's air force was focused on building the capabilities required to pose a credible military threat to Taiwan and US forces in East Asia. As China's military capabilities continues to expand, it is possible that proposals for arms sales will persist or even escalate.

Lawmakers' partisanship also plays an important role in shaping their stance towards Taiwan. According to William Stanton, former director of the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT), Democrats tend to prioritize human rights while Republicans tend to focus on anti-communism. Both parties have valid reasons to support Taiwan and oppose China (Chang 2020). However, Table 1 reveals that most active Taiwan supporters are from the Republican party, and my findings indicate that Republican lawmakers show significantly greater interest in the Taiwan issue than their Democratic counterparts. If more Republicans are elected to Congress in the future, we can expect to see a rise in Taiwan-specific proposals.

The effect of certain control variables is noteworthy, particularly the personal interests of lawmakers. Those who serve on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, are members of the Congressional Taiwan Caucus, are active legislators, or hold relatively strong liberal/conservative ideological preferences, tend to show greater support for Taiwan.

The impact of constituents' interests on lawmakers' support for Taiwan is less clear-cut. For instance, the influence of Chinese investment in the districts of lawmakers was not statistically significant across all models. One plausible explanation is that Chinese firms may not consider a legislator's political track record when deciding on investments. Political considerations might not factor into their business decisions. Alternatively, it is possible that Beijing understands that most proposed legislation is unlikely to become law, and therefore, it may not withdraw investments as a means of punishing the legislator. To explore how economic ties with China influence lawmakers' foreign policy perspectives, future studies should examine other mechanisms such as trade links between congressional districts and China.

It is somewhat surprising to note that the lobbying efforts made by the Formosan Association for Public Affairs (FAPA) have not been found to be a consistent predictor of lawmakers' support for Taiwan. One possible explanation is that some of the methods employed by FAPA, such as writing petition letters, may not be highly effective in capturing the attention of legislators, who are burdened with a plethora of responsibilities. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that the majority of the leading Taiwan supporters in Table 1 come from states that have local FAPA chapters. Future research could delve deeper into whether FAPA's lobbying tactics are effective in influencing certain categories of legislators. Finally, while the actual impact of the defense industry's campaign contributions on legislators was found to be contrary to expectations, further research should investigate whether the industry has a positive influence on certain pro-Taiwan bills, such as those related to arms sales. In addition, future research should broaden the time frame and examine whether US lawmakers' support for Taiwan is influenced by different factors in different periods. A potential direction is to consider alternative measures of support for Taiwan, such as visits by legislators in Taiwan.²⁴

Despite the low passage rate of Taiwan-related bills in Congress, the critical role of Taiwan in the semiconductor industry and anxiety over China's rise are likely to result in increased pro-Taiwan legislation proposed by lawmakers in the coming years. This presents a crucial challenge for Beijing, and how it reacts will have significant implications for regional stability.

Supplementary material. To view supplementary material for this article, please visit <http://doi.org/10.1017/jea.2024.12>.

Competing interest. The author declares none.

Notes

1. For a full list of Taiwan-specific bills, see Table A1 in the Appendix. For the detailed methodology employed in selecting those bills, see the Research Design section.
2. Section 3 of TRA states that "The President and the Congress shall determine the nature and quantity of such defense articles and services based solely upon their judgment of the needs of Taiwan, in accordance with procedures established by law." Richard Bush (2014) points out that the terminal phrase of the sentence ("in accordance with procedures established by law") is interpreted to refer to the Arms Export Control Act, which "severely limits the role of Congress in arms sales decisions."
3. U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis. Accessed November 14, 2024. <https://www.bea.gov/data/intl-trade-investment/international-trade-goods-and-services>.
4. Many Taiwanese firms have moved their manufacturing lines from Taiwan to China or Southeast Asia, with finished goods being sent to Europe and North America from these offshore sites. As a result, direct exports from Taiwan to Europe and North America have been replaced by a "triangular trade" model in which raw materials are shipped from Taiwan to China or Southeast Asia for processing, and finished products are then shipped from China or Southeast Asia to Europe and North America. See Liu (2016).
5. US Congress, House Committee on Foreign Affairs, *Why Taiwan Matters: Hearing before the Committee on Foreign Affairs*, 112th Cong., 1st sess., 2011. Accessed April 6, 2023. www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-112hhrg70584/html/CHRG-112hhrg70584.htm.
6. US Congress, House Committee on International Affairs, *The Taiwan Relations Act: The next twenty five years: Hearing before the Committee on International Relations*, 108th Cong., 2nd sess., 2004. Accessed April 6, 2023. http://commdocs.house.gov/committees/intrel/hfa93229.000/hfa93229_of.htm.
7. The US maintains that whatever outcome of the cross-strait relations would be, it should be achieved peacefully. However, the US never makes it clear what it would do to enforce this requirement. See Nathan (2000).

8. Egan (2013) points out that Republicans' advantage consists of issues "having to do with a smaller government focused on public order and protecting Americans at home and abroad" (70–71). Following the logic, it can be inferred that Republicans' heightened interest in foreign policy may stem from their concerns regarding national security.
9. Based on this criterion, I did not find a bill or resolution that is against Taiwan from 2007 to 2020.
10. Rep. Ron Paul (R-TX) voted against the suspension of the rules and H.Con.Res.278 (110th): Supporting Taiwan's fourth direct and democratic presidential elections in March 2008.
11. When examining the relationship between partisan identity and support for Taiwan, it is important to differentiate between the total effect and the direct effect of partisan identity. The total effect of partisan identity encompasses all the possible pathways through which it may influence support for Taiwan, including its impact on lawmakers' perception of China. In contrast, the direct effect of partisan identity isolates the specific effect of partisan identity on support for Taiwan, regardless of its influence on lawmakers' perception of China. Therefore, taking lawmakers' perception of China into account in the analysis means that the result for partisan identity does not reflect its total effect on support for Taiwan. Instead, it indicates the direct effect of partisan identity on lawmakers' support for Taiwan, which is independent of their perception of China.
12. For alternative foreign policy ideology measurements, see Jeong (2018). Although Jeong (2018) points out some drawbacks of using DW-NOMINATE scores to estimate legislators' foreign policy position and proposes a new measure based on a Bayesian item response theory model, I chose to use the first dimension of DW-NOMINATE score for two reasons. First, Jeong's coverage of data stops at 2016 as of writing the paper, limiting its usefulness for more recent analyses. Second, as Jeong shows, his new measurement's performance is "only marginally better" than DW-NOMINATE after 1980s.
13. Others point out the additional goals of legislators, such as crafting good public policy and gaining political power and prestige. See Fenno and Hibbing (2002).
14. Although trade with China is another mechanism by which lawmakers' behavior can be influenced, unfortunately, data on trade with China is not available at the congressional district level.
15. American Enterprise Institute. "China's investments in the United States," www.aei.org/china-tracker-home/.
16. American Community Survey, <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>.
17. Ideally, we should also consider the economic ties between congressional districts and Taiwan. Unfortunately, such data is not available.
18. For example, the results of Gallup's Most Important Problem Survey show that the proportion of respondents who think international affairs is the most important problem facing the United States has been low since the 1960s and almost never exceeds 10 percent (mostly below 5 percent). By contrast, macroeconomics is usually identified as a much more important issue by many respondents (mostly above 20 percent). For details, see Jones et al. 2023.
19. FAPA National Advocacy Conference. 2020. Accessed June 21, 2023. <https://fapa.org/nac2020/>.
20. The party of the Taiwanese presidency, US presidency, and US House majority party are listed in Table A4.
21. The Bayesian approach used in this article and the traditional frequentist approach correspond to different data generating processes and differ in interpretations. The frequentist approach offers a single "best guess" for parameters and a 90 percent confidence interval tells us that if we were to conduct the experiment repeatedly, 90 percent of the computed confidence intervals would contain the true parameter value. This is not feasible in my study because my sample represents the entire population. I have no means of knowing whether the current confidence interval is one of the fortunate 90 percent and no possibility for further replications. Bayesian analysis considers all possible values that a parameter might take and represent them as a posterior distribution. A 90 percent credible interval in Bayesian analysis, generated from the posterior distribution of the parameter, is the range that has a 90 percent probability of including the true parameter value. It reflects the researchers' degree of belief in the parameters, considering both the data available and the prior information, and does not rely on the concept of "repeated sampling" as in frequentist statistics (Western and Jackman 1994; Kaplan 2023). The logistic models are estimated using the `rstanarm` package in R and the zero-inflated models are estimated using the `brms` package in R. See Lee et al. (2018) and Bürkner (2018), respectively.
22. As multilevel zero-inflated negative binomial models are more complex than multilevel logit models, to make sure the estimation of coefficients converges, the number of simulations increased to 8,000.

23. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen. April 1, 2014. "35th Anniversary of the Taiwan Relations Act." Congressional Record. Vol 160, No. 52. E484.
24. Table A5 in the Appendix lists all legislators in the US House of Representatives who visited Taiwan between 2007 and 2020, along with the count of China-related legislation they sponsored and cosponsored.

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Cite this article: Wang, Guan. 2024. "Support for Taiwan in the US House of Representatives: A New Look at US–China–Taiwan Relations." *Journal of East Asian Studies* 24, 221–245. doi:10.1017/jea.2024.12