



Can Taiwan and Israel trust US that doesn't defend borders?

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January 2024

Abstract

The Biden administration's open border policy is causing domestic instability, with the state of Texas taking back control of border defense in a standoff against the federal government. It is also creating insecurity among US allies, questioning whether they can trust the US that no longer defends territorial integrity or national borders.

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Analysis

After years of Biden administration's open invasion and borderless policy, rising crimes and defunding domestic law enforcement, hollowing out of commerce as businesses shut down due to rampant theft and robbery in lawless no-go zones such as in San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago and New York,¹ finally Texas is taking back state control of its own borders and defying the federal government's borderless policy².

In mid-January Texas National Guards took control of 2.5-mile stretch of the Rio Grande in Eagle Pass, and blocked federal agents from processing illegal aliens in that part of the border.³ With surging crimes and increasing social instability across the state, the governor finally took action to take back control of Texas' own borders and protect the residents.⁴

This however has incurred the ire of the Biden administration.⁵ Why? Why would a president want to foment increasing social instability in the US and prioritize illegal aliens over American citizens? Worse yet, why would a commander-in-chief not defend his own country's borders and basic national security?

This is an important question for US allies, especially ones that lack defense treaties such as Israel and Taiwan.

Israel

Given the Biden administration's cavalier attitude toward the concept of border defense, it is not surprising there has been calls for Israeli ceasefire or "humanitarian pause."⁶ However, Asian countries such as India disagree and have a different perspective. As Michel Kugelman, director of the South Asia Institute at the Wilson Center observed, "India views the current conflict through the lens of counterterrorism, and it views the Israeli assault on Gaza as a counterterrorism operation. And counterterrorism operations don't pause for humanitarian truces."⁷

Moreover, in view of spreading anti-Israel sentiment within the US government, reminiscent of the 2008-2016 Obama administration, Israel knows it cannot depend on an increasingly fickle US to come to its defense.⁸

¹ Alex Bitter and Jordan Hart, "Nordstrom closes flagship location as office vacancies and fears of crime rise in San Francisco. Here's the full list of stores pulling out of the city's downtown neighborhood.", *Business Insider*, August 29, 2023, <https://www.businessinsider.com/san-franciscos-union-square-store-closures-since-2020-2023-5>; Ronnie Reyes, "RIP Beverly Hills: video shows high-end retail stores now shuttered amid LA crime wave", *New York Post*, September 5, 2023, <https://nypost.com/2023/09/05/beverly-hills-boutiques-and-high-end-stores-shuttered/>; "Data shows violent crime has been on the rise for last 3 years in Chicago", *CBS News*, January 13, 2022, <https://www.cbsnews.com/chicago/news/chicago-violent-crime-data-2021/>; "Retail theft rises, and N.Y.C. small business owners are paying the price", *New York Times*, February 28, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/28/nyregion/new-york-stores-robberies-theft.html>

² Julia Ainsley and Zoe Richards, "Texas refuses to comply with Biden administration's cease-and-desist letter about border access", *NBC News*, January 18, 2024, <https://news.yahoo.com/texas-refuses-comply-biden-administrations-055502113.html>

³ Camilo Galvez, "Texas blocks federal border agents from processing migrants in Eagle Pass public park", *CBS News*, January 12, 2024, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/texas-blocks-federal-border-agents-processing-migrants-eagle-pass-shelby-park/>

⁴ Pooja Salhotra, "A growing number of Texas rural counties are declaring local immigration 'disasters'", *The Texas Tribune*, December 1, 2022, <https://www.texastribune.org/2022/12/01/texas-local-disasters-immigration/>

⁵ Camilo Galvez, "Texas administration warns it will take action if Texas does not stop blocking federal agents from U.S. border area", *CBS News*, January 15, 2024, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/eagle-pass-shelby-park-biden-cease-and-desist-texas/>

⁶ Fritz Farrow, "Biden administration calls for multiple 'pauses' in Israel-Hamas conflict", *ABC News*, November 2, 2023, <https://abcnews.go.com/International/biden-administration-calls-multiple-pauses-israel-hamas-conflict/story?id=104575387>

⁷ Jannatul Nyam Pieal, "India Once Was a Strong Ally of Palestine. What Changed?", *The Diplomat*, November 6, 2023, <https://thediplomat.com/2023/11/india-once-was-a-strong-ally-of-palestine-what-changed/#:~:text=India%20was%20the%20first%20non-State%20of%20Palestine%20in%201988.>

⁸ Allie Raffa and Summer Concepcion, "Biden administration staff sign open letter demanding cease-fire in Israel-Hamas war", *NBC News*, November 14, 2023, <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/joe-biden/biden-administration-staff-sign-open-letter->

Another Asian country, Taiwan, is also watching this closely. Taipei knows that even with a defense treaty, at times US can be a fickle ally, such as in 1978 when the Carter administration dissolved US mutual defense treaty with Taiwan, de-recognized and abandoned Taipei, and established diplomatic relations with Beijing.⁹

Taiwan

Currently, Taiwan is watching the Hamas-Israel war, dynamic with the US, and taking note on treatment of allies.¹⁰ In the past Taiwan has been compared as the "Israel of the East" and its former President Tsai Ing-wen is a great admirer of Israel, with the incumbent Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) intent on upgrading relations with Jerusalem.¹¹



However, Taipei has some concerns in the face of an increasingly distracted and erratic US administration: escalating domestic tensions within the US, support for open borders that creates national security threats, diverting Taiwan's weapons to Ukraine and dismissing Taipei's security concerns, especially the November red-carpet roll out and standing ovation that the US government and business bestowed upon China's President Xi-Jinping in San Francisco.¹² The optic is one of a tributary state paying tribute to the visiting Chinese emperor, as Obama while being a US president bowed down and paid tribute to the Saudi king in 2009.¹³

[demanding-ceasefire-israel-rcna125057](https://www.demanding-ceasefire-israel-rcna125057); Kristen Altus, "Alan Dershowitz calls out Obama's 'deep hatred of Israel': 'He should be ashamed'", *Fox Business*, November 10, 2023, <https://www.foxbusiness.com/politics/alan-dershowitz-calls-obamas-deep-hatred-israel-ashamed>; Thomas Friedman, "Netanyahu is turning against Biden", *New York Times*, January 19, 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/01/19/opinion/israel-war-netanyahu.html>

⁹ Edward Walsh, "U.S. to Normalize Ties With Peking, End Its Defense Treaty With Taiwan", *Washington Post*, December 16, 1978, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1978/12/16/us-to-normalize-ties-with-peking-end-its-defense-treaty-with-taiwan/7d53f81a-865d-4a87-8c32-a0f6f343502c/>

¹⁰ Yimou Lee and Ben Blanchard, "Taiwan sets up task force to study Israel-Hamas war", *Reuters*, October 12, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/taiwan-sets-up-task-force-study-israel-hamas-war-2023-10-12/>

¹¹ <https://www.amazon.com/Taiwan-Israel-East-Influenced-Forming/dp/1947766260>; Sue Surkes, "Taiwan's new president 'amazed' by Israel", *Times of Israel*, January 25, 2016, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/taiwans-new-president-amazed-by-israel/>; <https://www.axios.com/2023/06/20/taiwan-and-israel-have-a-lot-to-learn-from-each-other-former-israeli-security-official>

¹² Gordon Lubold, Doug Cameron, Nancy Youssef, "U.S. Effort to Arm Taiwan Faces New Challenge With Ukraine Conflict", *Wall Street Journal*, November 27, 2022, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-effort-to-arm-taiwan-faces-new-challenge-with-ukraine-conflict-11669559116>; "US business elites welcome Xi with standing ovation", *Financial Times*, <https://www.ft.com/content/a8633d7f-f785-4195-b0b2-0ea9506968c9>

¹³ Alex Spillius, "Barack Obama criticised for 'bowing' to King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia", *The Telegraph*, April 8, 2009, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/barackobama/5128171/Barack-Obama-criticised-for-bowing-to-King-Abdullah-of-Saudi-Arabia.html>



As these optics increasingly cast doubt on American leadership, the concept of a Chinese commonwealth system with tributary states may be gaining traction in East Asia.

A Chinese commonwealth system?

In 2017, Taiwan's former deputy defense minister Chong-Pin Lin outlined the concept of Taiwan joining a Chinese commonwealth similar to the British commonwealth system, and the concept seems to be gaining traction.¹⁴ In a Taipei forum in September 2023, former Singaporean Foreign Minister George Yong-Boon also proposed a "Chinese Commonwealth" for future political integration between Taiwan and China, asserting that "to be Chinese, however, is not to be a PRC citizen."¹⁵

Yeo proposed the process would be like ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) whereby as ASEAN countries "are getting closer together; they become ASEAN citizens." Fellow panelist David Lin, Taiwan's former foreign minister, said it would be more attractive to Taiwanese people if modeled after the U.K. and Singapore being in the same Commonwealth, "rather than like Hong Kong in the 'one country, two systems.'"

Although the Chinese commonwealth concept may seem far-fetched, National Taiwan University's professor Philip Hsu pointed out that similar ideas had already been proposed in academic discussions or through second-track diplomacy. As such there appears to be an increasing nod to China eventually replacing the US as the legitimate hegemonic power in Asia.

Scanning the horizon, would this be the long-term trajectory of Taiwan and other Asian states? If US continues to be distracted internally with more foreign policy blunders, perhaps. In the recent Taiwan election, the incumbent pro-status quo DPP party maintains control of the presidency. However, with the pro-unification Kuomintang (KMT) majority in the legislature, Beijing will likely have more influence over Taiwan's policy for the next four years.

As for Israel and other allies in the Middle East, the question of who will be the next hegemonic power is less clear.

Remarks: Opinions expressed in this contribution are those of the author. This article first published in *The Times of Israel*, January 19, 2024.

¹⁴ Joe Hung, "Will there be a Chinese Commonwealth system? The China Post columnist", *Strait Times*, January 23, 2017, <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/east-asia/will-there-be-a-chinese-commonwealth-system-the-china-post-columnist>

¹⁵ "Ex-Singapore foreign minister moots cross-strait 'commonwealth'", *Focus Taiwan*, September 13, 2023, <https://focustaiwan.tw/cross-strait/202309130023>