



Breaking Taiwan?

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“Would you defend Taiwan against China?” *Bloomberg News* [recently](#) inquired of former President Donald Trump.

After mentioning his great “respect” for the Taiwanese — though complaining that the nation “did take about 100% of our chip business” — the Republican nominee [responded](#): “I think Taiwan should pay us for defense. You know, we’re no different than an insurance company. Taiwan doesn’t give us anything. Taiwan is 9,500 miles away. It’s 68 miles away from China. A slight advantage ...”

Indeed. But the Nazis and Imperial Japan once flaunted the same geographic advantage. And note that the Japanese island of [Yonaguni](#) is closest to the big island of Taiwan.

Taiwan is much freer than China. And, accordingly, richer per

capita ... because the Taiwanese do give us (and the world) something: computer chip manufacturing, especially high-end chips. An important commodity. The Chinese government [encourages](#) and facilitates the [stealing](#) of our intellectual property; Taiwan companies just kicked our butts in the marketplace.

“Cool to the idea of the U.S. protecting Taiwan,” was how Nancy Cook, *Bloomberg’s* senior national political correspondent, not unreasonably [characterized](#) Mr. Trump’s comments. Still, Trump may have been simply negotiating up Taiwan’s military commitment, much as he did to NATO countries in his first term.

Of course, “Taiwan has been paying for its own defense,” [says](#) the State Department.

Taiwan has “consistently been one of the biggest buyers of U.S. weapons,” [argues](#) Michael McCaul (R-Texas), acknowledging that Trump “is right that U.S. allies should” pony up “in their own defense.”

Lastly, is the United States like an “insurance company”?

Well, it’s certainly a breakable world. But the idea is to prevent *more* breakage, not pay out after a disaster.

This is Common Sense. I’m Paul Jacob.