



RESEARCH ARTICLE

The US Policy towards Some Asian Countries (Vietnam, China and Taiwan) in the First Two Decades of the 21st Century

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| ARTICLE INFO | ABSTRACT |
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| Received: Oct 12, 2024 Accepted: Dec 3, 2024 | In the early years of the twenty-first century, The Us policy has been updated in some Asian countries such as: Vietnam, China, Taiwan, etc. In case of Vietnam, the two countries open more on trade policy and normalize international trade. In case of China and Taiwan, The US policy has some updates since post covid 19. Also, The US government maintains the policy of "status quo" of Taiwan, while promoting informal diplomatic activities with the island in the first two decades of the 21st century. Overall, the US government's policy has achieved two fundamental goals; first, to contain China, prevent the Chinese government from using armed means to take back Taiwan as well as control the security of the Taiwan Strait; second, to support Taiwan's participation in international organizations as a non-independent country, while at the same time using the guise of "protection" to trade arms with Taiwan, profit greatly from defense contracts and maintain the status quo in Taiwan, restrain Taiwan from moving towards "Taiwan independence". The duplicity and short-term adjustment in US policy towards Taiwan has been demonstrated throughout the US presidents. |
| Keywords International Relations People-to-People Ties Policy Security Taiwan strait | |
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1. INTRODUCTION

In case of Vietnam:

Twenty-five years after establishing bilateral relations in 1995, the United States and Vietnam have become trusted partners with a friendship grounded in mutual respect. The United States and Vietnam enjoy an increasingly active and comprehensive cooperative relationship that has developed into a strong partnership across political, economic, security, and people-to-people ties (Nguyen and Tran,, 2024). The United States supports a strong, prosperous, and independent Vietnam that contributes to international security; engages in mutually beneficial trade relations; and respects human rights and the rule of law. The bilateral relationship is guided by the 2013 United States-Vietnam Comprehensive Partnership, an overarching framework to advance the bilateral relationship; and Joint Statements issued by the leaders of the two countries in 2015, 2016, and May and November 2017. In 2020, Vietnam and the United States celebrated 25 years of diplomatic relations between the two countries, continuing their commitment to strengthening cooperation (Van Quyet, & Nguyet, 2023).

Secondly, After World War II, the world's political situation underwent many important changes, and US foreign policy also underwent certain changes due to the impact of the global context. The US was the only country that was not heavily affected by World War II. The US quickly became the world's financial and economic center, becoming the economic locomotive of the world's industry (Randall, 1993). With its economic and financial strength and potential, the US government quickly established its influence in strategic areas on a global scale. The "carrot and stick" policies are one of the main tricks the US government uses to intervene in strategic areas around the world - including Taiwan.

The tension in US-China relations arose from the Taiwan issue during the Cold War and after the Cold War (Ross, 2002). The US's involvement in the Taiwan issue has affected China's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The US government has adopted the three no's policy of "no unification, no independence, no war", with the intention of using Taiwan as a card to contain China and promote US influence in Northeast Asia. The previous US President G. Bush's administration implemented a "dual track" policy towards China and Taiwan. On the one hand, it developed a stable and cooperative relationship with China, on the other hand, in the name of continuing to assume its "Taiwanese obligations", relying on the Taiwan Relations Act to strengthen military relations with Taiwan (Sutter, 2019).

This has caused China and the US to always maintain a policy of fighting each other on the Taiwan issue. To reaffirm China's stance on the Taiwan issue, the Political Report of the 16th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in November 2002 emphasized that China adheres to the basic principles of "peaceful reunification, one country, two systems" and "resolutely opposes separatist and independent forces" (USA, 2011).

METHODOLOGY

This Paper uses Historical method, theoretical analysis - synthesis method, comparative method are used throughout the research process to solve the problem. By studying documents and collecting scientific information through historical methods, the author presents arguments based on historical events, documents, reports, and changes over time through consecutive events from the past to the present to recreate the theoretical and practical basis for the formation of US policy towards Taiwan and security on both sides of the Taiwan Strait in the first two decades of the 21st century.

3. RESULTS and DISCUSSION

3.1 The US Policy toward Vietnam

Over the past 30 years since Vietnam and the United States officially established diplomatic relations on July 12, 1995 and established a comprehensive partnership on July 25, 2013, the Vietnam-US relationship has achieved comprehensive and substantive development steps, increasingly deepening, positively contributing to security, peace, cooperation and development in the region and the world. On September 10, 2023, the two countries officially upgraded their relationship to a comprehensive strategic partnership for peace, cooperation and sustainable development. Economic and trade cooperation is the most successful area of cooperation, becoming the focus, foundation and driving force for the development of the general relationship between the two countries. Bilateral trade turnover has increased more than 5 times in the past 10 years, from 25 billion USD (in 2012) to nearly 139 billion USD (in 2022) and increased more than 300 times compared to 1995 (450 million USD) when the two countries normalized relations. Vietnam has risen to become the seventh largest trading partner of the United States worldwide since 2019. Notably, from a member country of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) with one of the lowest export turnovers to the US, in 2014, Vietnam rose to lead ASEAN countries in exporting to the US. Currently, the United States has become Vietnam's largest export market, and is also the only and first market to exceed the 100 billion USD threshold in Vietnam's exports.

3.2 US Policy toward Taiwan

US policy towards Taiwan in the first two decades of the 21st century

3.2.1 President George W. Bush (2001 - 2009)

During his first term, President George W. Bush continued to maintain unofficial relations with Taiwan on the basis of the Taiwan Relations Act of 1979. In April 2001, when answering an ABC reporter on the program "Good Morning America", President G.W. Bush mentioned "if a on the day Taiwan is attacked by China, the United States has an obligation to fight back together with Taiwan." On the same day, President George W. Bush appeared on CNN Inside Politics and stated that "his administration will persistently pursue relations with Taiwan in the spirit of the Taiwan Relations Act." Researchers of US policy toward Taiwan have commented that "it seems that the Bush administration is changing President Bill Clinton's ambiguous policy toward Taiwan, or is preparing to change its stance on Taiwan independence" (Shirk, 2023). The Bush administration allowed

Taiwan's defense minister to make an official visit to the United States in 2001, despite China's objections.

3.2.2 In December 2003, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao made an official visit to the United States. During the official reception at the White House, President G.W. Bush mentioned the Taiwan issue: "The US government opposes China and Taiwan unilaterally changing the status quo ["Status quo" is a Latin term meaning the status quo or maintaining the status quo.] ...but the opinions and actions of the Taiwanese leader have clearly shown that he can unilaterally propose to change the status quo."

3.2.3 To promote unofficial relations with Taiwan, the Bush administration has increased the supply of weapons with increasing quantity and value. During the period 2001-2008, the US government provided Taiwan with military weapons worth 1.5 billion dollars. In 2007 alone, the US provided 66 F-16 C/D fighter jets. The provision of F-16 C/D fighter jets to Taiwan, according to the US government, was carried out within the framework of the Taiwan Relations Act and helped Taiwan increase its defense capabilities in the face of the escalating risk of war between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait. In 2008, the US Congress approved plans to provide Taiwan with weapons in large quantities: PAC-3 missile defense systems, Apache helicopters, fighter jets equipped with E2-T warning systems... In the early years of the 21st century, China's strong development in the economic, political and military fields has had a strong impact on the Asia-Pacific region. The Chinese government under the leadership of President Hu Jintao has increasingly improved its capabilities and position in the international arena. Meanwhile, the government of President G.W. Bush faced with international threats, the only way to maintain strategic balance in the Taiwan Strait was to strengthen Taiwan, to be able to contain and face challenges from China. (Roy, 2011).

3.2.4 President Barack Obama (2009 – 2017)

During his 8 years as US President, Barack Obama made certain changes in his policy towards Taiwan. The US government's "pivot" to Asia policy has made the Taiwan issue one of the main strategies of the US in the Asia-Pacific region. In 2013, President Obama proposed encouraging Taiwan to become a member of the "International Civil Aviation Organization" (ICAO). In April 2015, US Secretary of State John Kerry publicly stated that "Taiwan has become the most important factor in the US strategy in the Asia-Pacific region", and at the same time expressed his stance to continue implementing the "Taiwan Relations Act" (志, 2018). The Obama administration's efforts to help Taiwan become a member of the "International Civil Aviation Organization" aim to help Taiwan carry out multilateral diplomatic activities in international organizations. In November 2009, during an official visit to China, during an official meeting with Chinese President Hu Jintao, President Obama, when referring to the Taiwan issue in US-China relations, stated the following:

"In all cases, the US government respects the "One China" policy, complies with the three joint communiqués between the two countries, and respects China's sovereignty and territorial integrity" [Join Press Statement by President Obama and President Hu of China, according to <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/joint-press-statement-president-obama-and-president-hu-china>, accessed January 3, 2021.].

In 2009, the US government issued a visa exemption order for Taiwanese citizens when traveling to Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands. Also in this year, the World Health Assembly (WHA) took place, Taiwan applied to become an observer under the name "Chinese Taipei". This event took place to pave the way for Taiwan to become an official member of the World Health Organization (WHO) and become a member of the United Nations.

In the projects to supply weapons to Taiwan, fighter aircraft of all generations are the most requested by the Taiwanese government because the air force is a fast and strategic combat force in the Taiwan Strait. Taiwan Air Force's (Taiwan Air Force's [Taiwan Air Force (TAF) is located at 10 civil and military airports in Taiwan. The TAF headquarters is located at Songshan Airport (Taipei) and other airports such as Taoyuan (Taipei), Qingquangang (Taichung), Pingtung (Pingtung), Tainan (Tainan), Chiayi (Chiayi), Hsinchu (Hinchu), Taitung (Taidong), Hualien (Hualien), and Kaohsiung (Kaohsiung).] – TAF) is invested by the Taiwanese government with the most modern equipment to undertake reconnaissance work and maintain security in the airspace and sea of this territory. The Taiwanese government assesses the role and strength of the air force in ensuring security as follows: "Taiwan's

national defense is ultimately its air force, and investing in equipment and enhancing training is a regular practice. All planning requirements are fully mobilized by support services and commanded by the Taiwan Air Force (TAF). In which, investing in support equipment, aircraft and pilot training is considered the most important work" (Cole, 2006).

3.2.5 President Donald Trump (2017 – 2021) period

Among the US presidents, it can be said that Donald Trump is the president who strongly supports Taiwan and shows a stance against the policies of the People's Republic of China. The US government still shows an unofficial stance with the Taiwanese government despite strong resistance from China. When he was elected US president, Donald Trump had a phone call with Taiwanese leader Tsai Ing-wen - this event was seen as a response to China letting the Liaoning aircraft carrier pass through the Taiwan Strait after completing exercises in the East Sea:

"At the end of December 2016, China's Liaoning aircraft carrier conducted an exercise in the East Sea, and when returning to its base, it passed through the Taiwan Strait. China's aircraft carrier is a training warship that is not used for combat. However, in a region that is already bitterly contested, the symbolic impact of this train trip needs to be considered while US President Donald Trump is rethinking the foundations of US-China relations since the late 1970s by accepting a phone call with Taiwan's leader, Tsai Ing-wen, and then announcing on Twitter that the US does not maintain a "one China policy" [<http://nghiencuubiendong.vn/quan-h-quc-t/6419-quan-he-my-trung-se-nhu-the-nao-duo-thoi-donald-trump>; accessed 3/1/2021].

Political analysts say Donald Trump's actions demonstrate his personal lack of political experience. The phone call to Taiwan's president, Tsai Ing-wen, has seriously damaged China-US relations in the first two decades of the 21st century. The US stance based on the Taiwan Relations Act signed in 1979 shows the two-faced nature of the US government in resolving the Taiwan issue. The two countries' inconsistent views have led to consequences in bilateral relations and international relations:

"Thus, in the first 10 years of the 21st century, although the Sino-US relationship has had ups and downs, it has generally remained stable. China and the US have somewhat reduced many conflicts, increased understanding and coordination on sensitive issues. Bilateral trade relations have overcome a difficult path and entered a new stage of development. However, at present and in the future, some conflicts between these two major countries are still inevitable, because their national interests cannot completely coincide. But it can be said that in the trend of forming a new international order, public opinion considers that there is a high possibility of forming a bipolar world led by the US and China" (US, 2011).

On the security issue of two sides of Taiwan strait:

The concept of maintaining the status quo has been mentioned by the Taiwanese government in many statements or legal documents. Maintaining the status quo is understood from many different perspectives such as: "maintaining the status quo and then unifying"; "maintaining the status quo now and becoming independent later"; "maintaining the status quo and then deciding whether to be independent or unifying"; "maintain the status quo forever". Some Taiwanese politicians even believe that "maintaining the status quo" means maintaining the political form of the Republic of China, which was established in 1912. Some politicians who advocate Taiwan independence also say:

"Maintaining the status quo means that Taiwan is a sovereign and independent country because it meets the provisions of national rights and obligations under the Montevideo Convention" (Roy, 2011)

This view of the Taiwanese authorities was initiated by the US congressmen in both houses. Maintaining the status quo, according to the US congressmen, is "not unified" and "not independent". For a long time, the US government and the Taiwanese government have not given a precise definition or content of "maintaining the status quo". Taiwanese lawmakers have argued that Taiwan was "the free areas" before the 1990s, and that it became a truly sovereign nation after directly electing its president in 1996 and cutting ties with the mainland.

The idea that Taiwan was an independent nation with the right to exist emerged in Taiwan's leadership when President Lee Teng-hui gave an interview to Deutsche Welle on July 9, 1999, defining cross-strait relations as "state-to-state relations or at least special state-to-state relations" (Lampton, 2001).

President Chen Shui-bian, when representing the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) in the presidential election, defined Taiwan's "status quo" and Taiwan's position in China-US relations with the "Four Nos" view:

3.3 The US policy toward China

The prospect of "maintaining the status quo" in Taiwan is perceived differently by the two major political parties in Taiwan, the Kuomintang and the DPP. President Ma Ying-jeou, during his visit to the United States in 2006, made the following statement on the issue of "maintaining the status quo" in Taiwan:

"One China means the Republic of China. This is the status quo that the majority of Taiwanese support, maintaining the status quo...not unified and not independent is the future that the majority of Taiwanese feel, and that is the reason why the status quo is maintained." [Mo Yan Chih: "Ma Pushes 'Status Quo' in Article", Taipei Times, February 8, 2006, p.8. <https://www.taipetimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2006/02/08/2003292048>, accessed January 30, 2021].

In case of Vietnam: The Comprehensive Partnership underscores the United States' enduring commitment to the Indo-Pacific region and provides a mechanism to facilitate cooperation in the areas of political and diplomatic relations, economic and trade relations, defense and security, science and technology, education and training, environment and health, humanitarian assistance/disaster relief, war legacies, protecting and promoting human rights, people-to-people exchanges, and culture, sports, and tourism. The United States supports Vietnam in building law enforcement capacity, regional cross-border cooperation, and implementation of international conventions and standards. Vietnam is a partner in nonproliferation mechanisms, including the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism, and utilizes available expertise, equipment, and training in the Export Control and Border Security program. In 2016, the United States and Vietnam signed a letter of agreement to enhance cooperation in law enforcement and justice, and the two countries are working to implement the agreement. The United States and Vietnam regularly hold dialogues on labor, security, energy, science and technology, and human rights.

The US government's policy toward Taiwan changes from time to time and from time to time under the US presidency, but it still pursues the goal of maintaining US strategic interests in the Taiwan Strait in particular and the Western Pacific region in general. On the one hand, the US government pledges to respect the "One China" principle and recognizes the government of the People's Republic of China as the sole and legitimate representative. However, the US still tries to create a precedent of establishing unofficial relations with the Taiwanese government through the guise of "protection" and maintaining trade, economic and cultural relations with the Taiwanese people. The Taiwan Relations Act is a tool for the US government to intervene in the internal affairs of China and Taiwan. The provisions of the Taiwan Relations Act also pave the way for the US government to provide arms to increase the self-defense capabilities of the territory against threats from the mainland. The "Congressional Taiwan Caucus" in the US Congress acts as a support to promote the US government's policies towards Taiwan to quickly become a reality.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the US government's policy has achieved two fundamental goals; first, to contain China, prevent the Chinese government from using armed means to take back Taiwan as well as control the security of the Taiwan Strait; second, to support Taiwan's participation in international organizations as a non-independent country, while at the same time using the guise of "protection" to trade arms with Taiwan, profit greatly from defense contracts and maintain the status quo in Taiwan, restrain Taiwan from moving towards "Taiwan independence". The duplicity and short-term adjustment in US policy towards Taiwan has been demonstrated throughout the US presidents. The US has become the main factor influencing and influencing the process of resolving the Taiwan issue and security across the Taiwan Strait.

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