

## **ABSTRACT**

The Taiwan Strait has been perhaps the most dangerous military flashpoint in Asia as it profoundly relates to the national interest of two major powers, the US and China. There is the possibility for the US and China to involve in a large-scale armed conflict over Taiwan to protect their interests. Under the Bush administration, there was a major adjustment in US policy towards Taiwan. This shift was in response to the changing international environment and new global challenges, especially the threat of international terrorism by which any shift in US policy could affect peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region.

The purpose of this thesis is to study the adjustment of US Taiwan policy under the Bush's presidency, the objective of new policy, and also the dominant factors influencing the formulation and implementation of foreign policy. The main focus of study is on the analysis of the influence of external factors on US Taiwan policy.

To accomplish this work, the "National Interest" concept and the theory of "Linkage Politics" are used as the main analytical frameworks for answering four research questions that are raised in accordance with the purpose of this thesis. The analysis produced several important findings as following: the US foreign policy towards Taiwan under the Bush administration had changed from a position of strategic clarity on Taiwan's defense to a stance of strategic ambiguity after the attacks of September 11, 2001; the main objective of US Taiwan policy was to preserve American strategic interest in the Asia-Pacific region as well as in Taiwan through maintaining the cross-

Strait “status quo.” The formulation of US policy towards Taiwan was influenced by external factors rather than internal factors, especially the US-Chinese relations and the global war against terrorism. Significantly the importance of China in the US strategic calculation on the war against terror followed by the development of the US-China cordial relationship under the Bush administration made the Bush administration restrained Taiwan from challenging the status quo.

Finally, the result of analysis for this thesis highlighted the rise of China as the most important external factor influencing US foreign policy towards Taiwan as Taiwan issue relates to Chinese sovereignty and territorial integrity. The “China factor” would remain important to the formulation of US foreign policy towards Taiwan until a final resolution on Taiwan issue would be reached.