

CHAPTER 3
THE US FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS TAIWAN UNDER
GEORGE W. BUSH ADMINISTRATION

Under the Bush's presidency, there had been the developments of new international challenges that affected the US grand strategy and also reshaped the US foreign policy towards other countries in the way that served the US's supreme goal—winning the war on terror. The US foreign policy towards Taiwan under this period is one of the good examples reflecting the adjustment of the US foreign policy in response to the changing international environment.

President George W. Bush, the 43rd President of the United States, began his first term on January 20, 2001 and ended January 20, 2005 with the beginning of his second term as president which expired with the swearing-in of President Barack Obama on January 20, 2009. Bush began his first and second administrations with a majority of his party, the Republicans, in both the House and Senate. However, though Bush was an accepted president for much of his first term, according to his immediately preemptive actions to defend American interests after 9/11 and the following war against terror, his popularity declined dramatically in his second term as a result of the same actions made him popular, because such actions became costly.

Although Taiwan was not the main actor in the US new strategy, in 'war of terror,' it was affected by it. Especially when the US had sought for cooperation with

China in which Taiwan appeared to be a bargaining chip for the US in gaining support from China. This chapter would examine the US Taiwan policy and the changing of policy under the Bush's presidency which it had not affected only Taiwan, but also China that regards Taiwan issue as a concern of Chinese territory.

A. The US Taiwan Policy under Bush's First Term: 2001-2004

1. The US Taiwan Policy before 9/11: Strengthening US Commitment to Taiwan

In March 2000, Democratic Progressive Party candidate Chen Shui-bian became the first opposition party candidate to win the presidency. The victory of Chen Shui-bian resulted in the first-ever transition to the presidential office from one political party (Kuomintang: KMT) to another, validating Taiwan's democratic political system.¹ The new government of Taiwan began to advance more openly a pro-independence agenda in which it could distress the Cross-Strait relations. However, Chen's government had been firmly supported by Washington and received continuing security commitment from the United States. Moreover, the US election of a new republican president in 2000 further strengthened the US security commitment to Taiwan.²

¹ James A. Kelly, "Overview of US Policy towards Taiwan," *DISAM Journal* (summer 2004), http://www.disam.dsca.mil/pubs/Indexes/v.26_4/Kelly.pdf (accessed February 8, 2008).

² Mike Shi-chi Lan, "US Foreign Policy and the Changing Dynamics between China and Taiwan, 1995-2005," in *Ensuring Interests: Dynamic of China-Taiwan Relations and Southeast Asia*, eds. Ho Khai Leong and Hou Kok Chung (Malaysia: Institute of China Studies, 2006), pp. 79-80.

1.1 The US –Taiwan Security Relationship: The US Arms Sales

Regarding the US policy towards Taiwan, “arms sales” have been perhaps the most important policy since the enactment of the TRA. The US arms sales to Taiwan become significant as: they relate to the US’ defense commitment to Taiwan—the symbolic of the US support of Taiwan; they are the major obstacle in improving the US-China relations—the US always uses the sales and deliveries of weapons to Taiwan as political leverage to facilitate the broader goals of the US-China relations; and it concerns the US domestic politics.

Moreover, the US arms sales policy is the policy that most gives Washington the dilemma on preserving American interests in both Taiwan and China. The arms sales has always arouse outrage and indignation in China as China insists that the arms sales are obvious violations of its sovereignty and of the 1982 US-China Joint Communiqué. Consequently, the conflicts over the arms sales often occur. The US administration sometimes has to accommodate China through its arms sales policy. At the same time, the Congress always put pressure on the government on the same issue, but in favor of Taiwan. The US arms sales to Taiwan, then, reflect the role of unofficial interactions between US politicians and private businesspersons and the ROC government officials and politicians and politicians in influencing the selection of specific US weapons systems in Taiwan’s annual procurement process.³

Before the Bush administration, the arms sales process started with the annual US-Taiwan arms sales talks in April which Taiwan would present the US with a “wish

³ John P. McClaran, “US Arms Sales to Taiwan: Implications for the Future of the Sino-US Relationship,” *Asian Survey* 40, no.4 (July/August 2000): 622-640.

list” detailing its arms requests. Consequently the Pentagon, State Department, and NSC would formulate their positions on Taiwan’s requests and US officials then worked to resolve any disagreement over which requests should be approved. Finally Taiwan would be informed about the US’s decision. This process allowed Taiwan to mobilize Congress and the media to put pressure on US executive branch policy makers to approve the sale of the items Taiwan had requested.⁴

At the US-Taiwan arms sales talks on April 24, 2001, President Bush approved the largest arms sales package to Taiwan since his father’s controversial sale of F-16 fighters in 1992. The list of advanced weapons included four decommissioned Kidd-class destroyers and an integrated undersea surveillance system for strategic cueing of its P-3C MPA and diesel electric submarines, and MH-53 minesweeping Helicopters. Additionally, the US not only approved Taiwan’s request for a classified briefing on the PAC-3 missile defense system, but also offered to sell the system to Taiwan should it decide to move forward with a missile defense capability.⁵

Moreover, after approving this major arms sales package, the Bush administration declared that it would no longer hold annual arms sales talks with Taiwan each April and would instead deal with the future requests for arms purchases from Taiwan on a rolling or “as-needed” basis. Under the new process, “pre-talk” sessions would be no longer held. This change was created in order to reduce delays in the

⁴ McClaran.

⁵ Bruce J. Dickson, “New President Adjust Old Policies: US-Taiwan Relations under Chen and Bush,” *Journal of Contemporary China* 11, no. 33 (November 2002): 645-656.

decision-making process, to diminish media attention, to lessen the irritations in US-China relations, and to reflect a new approach to security cooperation with Taiwan.⁶

The new process of US arms sales could be presumed as a “secret approach” intended to continue sales of advanced weapons to Taiwan with a low-key profile in order to avoid conflict with China. Although another certain way to avoid conflict with China was to stop entirely selling sophisticated weapons to Taiwan, the Bush administration and also other US administrations could not do that because of pressures from Congress, a large number of organizations, and offices that had related responsibilities including: the NSC; State Department; Department of Defense; International Security Affairs; the American Institute in Taiwan; the Defense Security Cooperation Agency; the Joint Staff; the Pacific Command and the services.⁷ Moreover, the US-Taiwan Business Council, comprise of American firms selling weapons to Taiwan, and US arms contractors had a strong impact on US policy making. The US-Taiwan Business Council also sponsored the US-Taiwan defense summit meeting in 2002, discussing about US arms sales, and invited Taiwan Minister of Defense Tang Yiau-ming, who held real power in Taiwan to attend the meeting. Whereas the US’s side, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz attended the meeting as a senior official, trying not to arouse the attention of the outside world including China.

⁶ Dickson.

⁷ Shirley A. Kan, “Taiwan: Major US Arms Sales since 1990,” RL 30957 (Washington D.C.: Congressional Research Service, February 11, 2009), www.fas.org/sgp/crs/weapons/RL30957.pdf (accessed February 16, 2008).

1.2 Bush on the Cross-Strait Status Quo: The US Would Do Whatever it Took to Defend Taiwan

After the approval of a major sale of arms to Taiwan, President Bush also clarified the US commitment to defend Taiwan. On ABC's Good Morning America television show on April 25, 2001, Bush stated that if the People's Republic of China (PRC) attacked Taiwan, the US had an obligation to defend the Taiwanese and declared that the United States would do whatever it took to help Taiwan defend itself. And in later interviews with The Associated Press and CNN, Bush affirmed that the use of U.S. military force against China in defense of Taiwan was certainly an option.⁸

Since Section 3 of the TRA addresses only arms sales and not the use of American military force in Taiwan's defense, President Bush's statement caused considerable controversy over whether the United States had changed its policy towards Taiwan's security or was preparing to change its position on Taiwan independence.⁹ Although Bush said he did not consider his comments a change in policy and also the US official denied any change in policy, subsequent statements and actions taken by Bush administration officials continued to appear more supportive of Taiwan. Whereas earlier US governments were either unwilling or forced by congressional pressure to allow Taiwan officials to come to the US, the Bush administration was more accommodating.¹⁰

⁸ John Diamond, "Bush Stirs Taiwan Tempest," *The Chicago Tribune*, April 25, 2001, <http://www.newsday.com/topic/sns-taiwan-bush,0,7228596,full.story> (accessed February 16, 2008).

⁹ Kerry Dumbaugh, "Taiwan: Recent Developments and U.S. Policy Choices," IB 98034 (Washington D.C.: Congressional Research Service, January 24, 2006), <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/IB98034.pdf> (accessed February 16, 2008).

¹⁰ Ibid.

In August 2000, the Clinton administration granted a visa to the newly elected President Chen Shui-bian to transit in Los Angeles on his way to South America and Africa, but Washington and Taipei had an understanding that President Chen would not hold public events. US Representative Sam Gejdenson tried to handle a meeting between Chen and some members of Congress but it was denied by Chen.

But in 2001, in granting President Chen “private and unofficial” transits through New York (May 21-23) and Houston (June 2-3) en route to and from Latin America, the Bush administration took a different position on meeting. As the State Department spokesperson said, “we do believe that private meetings between Members of Congress and foreign leaders advance our national interests, so Chen may have meetings with Members of Congress.”¹¹ These actions and statements of the Bush administration were considered to adopt “more supportive and sympathetic policy” towards Taiwan and to abandon the strategic ambiguity about what the US response would be if conflict broke out in the Taiwan Strait.

2. The US Taiwan Policy post 9/11: Reversal of Policy

Although when it first assumed office, the Bush administration expressed policies that were more favorable of Taiwan and less engagement with the PRC, the terrorist attack in New York and Washington D.C. on September 11, 2001 created a dramatic

¹¹ Shirley A. Kan, “China/Taiwan: Evolution of the “One China” Policy – Key Statements from Washington, Beijing, and Taipei,” RL 30341 (Washington D.C.: Congressional Research Service, December 16, 2002), www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL30341.pdf (accessed February 16, 2008).

transformation in policy regarding the Cross-Strait relations and also US global strategic thinking.

After the terrorist's attack, the US global strategy mainly aimed to counter terrorism and the anti-terrorism support from the PRC was also required. During President Bush and President Jiang Zemin's meeting at APEC summit in Shanghai, a month after terrorist attack, both "seek a constructive relationship."¹² Nonetheless, the US stated that its policy regarding Cross-Strait relations was based on "One China" and "Taiwan Relations Act" which embodied US national interests and American values in favor of preservation of cross-strait status quo. Moreover, the US still offered to sell 40 anti-tank missile systems, four 9,900-tonne, Kidd-class guided missile destroyers in which the total value of US military sales to Taiwan in 2001 was US\$4 billion. This could be implied that the US would not sacrifice the rights and interests of Taiwan while consulting with the PRC on the war against terrorism.¹³

2.1 Bush on the Cross-Strait Status Quo: The US "Opposes" Taiwan Independence

Though the 9/11 incident caused the remarkable changes in US policy and also global strategy, the important change in US Taiwan policy did not happen immediately. One reason that directly accelerated that change came from the political style of President Chen Shui-bian. In the early month of Chen administration, the US concern over the new

¹² Ralph A. Cossa, "Sino-US Relations: In Search of a New Slogan," *CSIS Pacnet Newsletter*, July 20, 2001, <http://csis.org/files/media/csispubs/pac0129a.pdf> (accessed 20 February, 2008).

¹³ Philip Mao, "US Global Strategy with the PRC and the Issue of Taiwan," in *Security and Conflict Prevention Across Taiwan Strait in the Early 21st Century*, ed. Jangruey Tzeng (Taipei: National Strategic Studies Institute, 2002), pp. 333-347.

government's independence aspirations was relieved by President Chen's moderate tone, including his apparent openness to engagement with China, and his embrace of "Five Noes"¹⁴ to encompass Taiwan's policy towards China.

However, after the Bush administration has pursued a policy in favor of Taiwan more than any US administration since 1979, the actions of the Chen administration were changed. As the U.S. and Taiwan officials routinely and publicly stated that their primary interest was to maintain the status quo between Taiwan and the PRC, however, the Taiwan and U.S. governments had fundamentally different interpretations of the definition of status quo. To the US government, maintaining the "status quo" meant Taiwan's political status remained unresolved pending a solution mutually reached by Taiwan and the PRC, but to the Chen administration in Taiwan, the "status quo" meant Taiwan was already an independent, sovereign state. Moreover, in August 2002 President Chen gave a video conference in which stated that there was one country on either side of the Taiwan Strait — or "yi bian, yi guo" ("one side, one country"). After that, the Bush administration began to see the Taiwan leadership as more inclined to put personal political interests ahead of more strategic objectives and U.S. concerns.¹⁵ Chen's statement of "one side, one country" was only the first of a series of Taiwan statements and decisions, considered by the US, issued unpredictably and without

¹⁴ Chen's "five noes" policy is a series of pledges made in his inaugural speech in 2000 that included promises of - no independence, no change in Taiwan's official name, no constitutional change, no referendum on independence and no abolition of Taiwan's guidelines for unification.

¹⁵ Kerry Dumbaugh, "Taiwan-U.S. Political Relations: New Strains and Changes," RL 33684 (Washington D.C.: Congressional Research Service, October 10, 2006), <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/74903.pdf> (accessed March 3, 2008).

apparent regard for U.S. interests. The surprises included President Chen's announcement in 2003, during his campaign for reelection, that he planned to hold a referendum which declared by Deputy Secretary-General Lee Ying-yuan that the government the government intended to hold nationwide votes on three key issues before the next presidential election: the future of Taiwan's fourth nuclear power plant, Taiwan's membership in the World Health Organization, and constitutional amendments.¹⁶ Specifically, the referendum on a new constitution for Taiwan could be interpreted as the effort in seeking to change the political status of the island which had seriously deteriorated the Bush-Chen administrations relations. The PRC also urged the US to pressure Chen Shui-bian into discarding his referendum plans.

As a result, during a visit by Premier Wen Jiabao of the PRC, President Bush stated that the United States opposed "any unilateral decision by either China or Taiwan to change the status quo." Making it clear that his warning was directed primarily to Taipei rather than Beijing, Bush added that "the comments and actions made by the leader of Taiwan indicate that he may be willing to make decisions unilaterally, to change the status quo which we oppose."¹⁷

However, a message from Bush to President Chen Shui-bian in early December 2003, delivered by the senior director of Asian Affairs at the National Security Council, warning Taiwan "in no certain term" against holding a referendum that could provoke the

¹⁶ Global Security, "Weapons of Mass Destruction," <http://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/news/taiwan/2003/taiwan-030627.htm> (accessed February 20, 2008).

¹⁷ Ted Galen Carpenter, "President Bush's Muddled Policy on Taiwan," *Foreign Policy Briefing* no. 82 (March 15, 2004), <http://www.cato.org/pubs/fpbriefs/fpb82.pdf> (accessed March 3, 2008).

PRC and expressing the US opposition to any unilateral effort to change the status quo, might cause trouble. President Chen interpreted the message to mean that only a referendum that touched on Taiwan's sovereignty or other provocative issues would be of grave concern to the US; referenda on other, "non-provocative" subjects, according to Chen's interpretation, would be acceptable. Consequently on March 20, 2004, the Taiwan government held a referendum on—what it said was a non-provocative topic—whether Taiwan should acquire more advanced weapons to defend against PRC missiles and whether the Taiwan government should engage in negotiations with the PRC concerning a "peace and stability" framework for cross-strait interactions." A number of observers tended to agree the US-Taiwan relationship was not very well in 2002-2003 by the series of ambiguous US messages, which it was possible the US's objective.

Although Taiwan's supporters within the US Congress put pressure for more favorable US treatment of Taiwan, the Bush administration sought to pursue a great-power partnership with China in accordance with a "strategy of partnership" that became the primary goal of the Bush administration. In January 2004, Washington's "non-confrontational" position towards China and the changes in US global strategy was spelled out more clearly by the US Secretary of State Collin Powell. As Powell pointed out, the US was willing to develop "cooperative relations among the world's major powers" in which the US could achieve its major goals in world politics: to win the war

on terrorism and to resolve regional conflicts.¹⁸ Powell indicated that while the US was focusing on the war on terrorism, Washington hoped its partners, the major power, could undertake the task of resolving regional conflicts and further argued that the US welcomed a “global role for China” and expected China to take responsibilities “commensurate with the role.”¹⁹ The roles in resolving regional conflict that the US expected from China were to resolve the Cross-Strait conflict and, especially, to cooperate on the North Korean nuclear issue.

After September 11 incident, the US’s priority was to be against terrorism and to defense homeland.²⁰ Consequently, regarding to Taiwan policy, the US proactively promoted direct negotiation between China and Taiwan as a way of resolving Cross-Strait dispute. Some believed that the emphasis of US policy on “negotiation” instead of “peaceful resolution” represented that the US pursued a more distant role in Cross-Strait issue and take gradual steps in cutting back its involvement. Bush’s undercutting of Taiwan drew sharp rebukes from his political allies, neo-conservative Representatives and Taiwan’s supporters within the Congress also put pressure for more favorable US treatment of Taiwan.

¹⁸ Mike Shi-chi Lan, “US Foreign Policy and the Changing Dynamics between China and Taiwan, 1995-2005,” in *Ensuring Interests: Dynamic of China-Taiwan Relations and Southeast Asia*, eds. Ho Khai Leong and Hou Kok Chung (Malaysia: Institute of China Studies, 2006), pp. 82-83.

¹⁹ Colin L. Powell, “A Strategy of Partnerships,” *Foreign Affairs* 83, issue 1 (January/February 2004): 22-34.

²⁰ David S. Chou, “ROC-US Political Relations As Seen from the Implementation of the Taiwan Relations Act,” in *ROC-US Relations under the Taiwan Relations Act: Practice and Prospects*, ed. King-Yuh Chang (Taipei: Institute of International Relations, 1988), pp. 30-33.

2.2 Reiteration of US Taiwan Policy: One China Policy

After President Chen's reelection in March 2004, the PRC pressed US officials to avoid sending the "wrong signals" to Taiwan which was the White House's and State Department's cautious congratulatory messages to Chen's victory. The messages from the US might be interpreted as the US encouraged Taiwan independence aspirations since Chen referred to the Taiwan identity that had enabled him to win the election and also insisted that the election proved that the status quo in the Taiwan Strait was Taiwan independence.²¹

When the main focus of the Bush administration after 9/11 attack was not on Taiwan issue and the US still sought the support from China to cooperate in the war on terror and the North Korean nuclear problem, Bush then realized that an unnecessary military conflict with China over Taiwan would not serve US interests. Consequently, Bush called on President Chen to exercise restraint and call off his controversial referendum scheme.

At a hearing on Taiwan in the House International Relations Committee of the Congress, James A. Kelly, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, reaffirmed the principles of US policy towards Taiwan. He said that 'it is useful to reiterate the core principles of our policy:'

- The United States remains committed to our one-China policy based on the three Joint Communiqués, and the Taiwan Relations Act;

²¹ Robert L. Suettinger, "Leadership Policy toward Taiwan and the United States in the Wake of Chen Shui-bian's Reelection," *China Leadership Monitor* no. 11 (summer 2004), <http://www.hoover.org/publications/clm/issues/2904106.html> (accessed March 10, 2008).

- The United States does not support independence for Taiwan or unilateral moves that would change the status quo as we define it;

- For Beijing, this means no use of force or threat to use force against Taiwan. For Taipei, it means exercising prudence in managing all aspects of cross-strait relations. For both sides, it means no statements or actions that would unilaterally alter Taiwan's status;

- The United States will continue the sale of appropriate defensive military equipment to Taiwan in accordance with the Taiwan Relations Act; and

- Viewing the use of force against Taiwan with grave concern, we will maintain the capacity of the United States to resist any resort to force or other forms of coercion against Taiwan.

Our foremost concern is maintaining peace and stability in order to advance US interests, spare the region the dangers of war, safeguard Taiwan's democracy, and promote China's constructive integration into the global community as well as the spread of personal freedom in China.²²

Kelly's balanced and carefully nuanced outline of US policy contained clear warnings to Taiwan, as well as to China:

"As Taiwan proceeds with efforts to deepen democracy, we will speak clearly and bluntly if we feel as though those efforts carry the potential to adversely impact U.S. security interests or have the potential to undermine Taiwan's own security. There are limitations with respect to what the United States will support as Taiwan considers

²² Yang.

possible changes to its constitution.” However, China took no official notice of Kelly’s presentation.

In order to balance China and Taiwan, not only reiterated the core principles of US policy, but the Six Assurances was later also reiterated by the US State Department to guarantee Taiwan security. Since Powell once stated in a press interview during an official visit to China that the US and China both looked forwards to the “peaceful unification of China and Taiwan and that Taiwan was not a sovereign country, the word “peaceful unification” of Powell seriously gave concern to Taiwan. Until the US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State stated to the ROC Representative to the US that the US hoped that the Cross-Strait dispute could reach a “peaceful resolution,” that the Six Assurances had not changed i.e., the US position on Taiwanese sovereignty also remained the same. And the term “peaceful unification” was not used again.²³

B. The US Taiwan Policy under Bush’s Second Term: 2005-2009

1. The US Tilt towards China

In 2005, after President Bush won his reelection, the Bush administration gave more importance to China. Not only seeing China as an important partner in the Six-Party

²³ Chen-Yuan Tung, “Taiwan-US-China Relations After the 2004 Presidential Election in the United States,” *Taiwan Perspective* no. 53 (December 30, 2004), <http://revistas.ucm.es/cps/16962206/articulos/UNIS0505130005A.PDF> (accessed March 3, 2008).

Talks with North Korea, a strategic partner in the global war against terror, but also seeing China's cooperation on Iran's nuclear programs.

Although American strategic pronouncement continued to cautiously view China's growing military power and international influence, these concerns were overshadowed by Bush administration efforts to urge China to become a "responsible stakeholder" in international affairs.²⁴ Under these circumstances, the PRC's National People's Congress (NPC) officially adopted a ten-article "anti-secession law" in March 14, 2005, regarded as Beijing's effort to demonstrate its determination to deter Taiwan independence through legal and physiological measures. It was believed that this law was designed specifically in response to Chen's movement towards de jure Taiwan Independence (TI) since 2000 and as a preventive action to contain and deter any further attempt to achieve de jure "Taiwan Independence."

The essence of the Anti-Secession Law is captured by Article 8 of the law which specifically authorizes the use of "non-peaceful means" to reunify Taiwan with China. According to Article 8:

In the event that the "Taiwan independence" secessionist forces should act under any name or by any means to cause the fact of Taiwan's secession from China, or that major incidents entailing Taiwan's secession from China should occur, or that possibilities for a peaceful re-unification should be completely exhausted, the state shall employ non-peaceful means and other necessary measures to protect China's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

²⁴ Lan, pp. 88-89.

*The State Council and the Central Military Commission shall decide on and execute the non-peaceful means and other necessary measures as provided for in the preceding paragraph and shall promptly report to the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress.*²⁵

After the enactment of the Anti-Secession Law, the responses from the world were somewhat attractive. Countries including Russia, Cambodia and Indonesia expressed support to the enactment. Major powers like the European Union and Japan only reinforced their interests in a peaceful resolution of the Cross-Strait conflict. The US's response which was no less significant than the law itself became disappointment to Taiwan.

Before 2005, the United States had repeatedly asserted that it strongly opposed any unilateral action by either side of the Taiwan Strait that might change the status quo. Bush commented on Chen's plan to hold Taiwan's first-ever referendum that the US opposed any unilateral decision to change the status quo. While the US regarded a referendum as a "unilateral action," the PRC Anti-Secession Law—a legal mandate for China's use of force against Taiwan—was not seen by the US as Beijing's "unilateral action" to change status quo in the Taiwan Strait.²⁶ The PRC Anti-Secession Law received modest criticism from Washington. In meeting with President Hu Jintao during a visit to Beijing, the new US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice named the law as an "unwelcome" piece of legislation and stated that any unilateral measure taken by Beijing

²⁵ BBC News, "Text of China's Anti-Secession Law," <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/4347555.stm> (accessed May 10, 2008).

²⁶ Lan, pp. 88-89.

was “not helpful.” Rice fell short of denouncing China’s adoption of the Anti-Secession Law as a unilateral action as clearly stayed away from re-confirming US commitment to the defense of Taiwan.

2. The US –Taiwan Security Relationship: The US Arms Sales

Since the US-Taiwan relations had been eroded by President Chen’s movement towards Taiwan Independence that might hurt US interests, the Bush administration appeared to ease its support of Taiwan government. As a result of the progressive relationship between US and China in line with the establishment of great-power partnership since 2004, and becoming “the best US-PRC relationship ever” in 2005, Taiwan faced the tough situation. Although President Chen had adjusted his policy agenda, moving away from promoting de jure “Taiwan Independence” to focus on “arms procurement” from the US in order to strengthen ties with the US, the Bush administration had blocked nearly US\$16 billion in US arms transfers to Taiwan in 2008 under new Taiwanese President Ma Ying-jeou, a few months before leaving office, in which it was the legacy of the Bush and Chen administrations irritated relationship. The list of military hardware being frozen included eight diesel submarines, 66 F-16 Block 50/52 fighter aircraft, four Patriot PAC3 fire units (384 missiles), 30 Boeing-made AH-64D Apache attack helicopters and 60 UH-60 Blackhawk utility helicopters.²⁷

²⁷ Gary J. Schmitt and John Tkacik, “Bush Administration Decision Weakens Taiwan's Position,” American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, <http://www.aei.org/article/28350> (accessed May 15, 2008).

Bush's reluctance to approve military sales for Taiwan came from his hesitation to infuriate China during negotiations over North Korea's nuclear programs and before his meeting with President Hu Jintao at the G-8 summit in Japan.

3. The US's Block on Taiwan's Bid for the UN

Since Taiwan lost its UN seat to China in 1971 when the UN General Assembly voted to expel the "representatives of Chiang Kai-shek," it has continually attempted to rejoin the United Nations. In 2007, Taipei mounted a strident drive to enter the United Nations as "Taiwan," however, the movement provided Taiwan a conflict with both the United States, its closest friend and supporter, and China, its opponent. For China, with its seat in the Security Council, there was no doubt that it must definitely block Taiwan's entry to the United Nations. But also the Bush administration robustly opposed Taiwan's effort to join the United Nations.

US State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said at a news briefing, "The United States opposes any initiative that appears designed to change Taiwan's status unilaterally. This would include a referendum on whether to apply to the United Nations under the name Taiwan."²⁸ The US officials claimed that the United States cannot endorse the campaign because supporting Taiwan's membership in the United Nations will violate Washington's long-standing "One-China policy" and further stressed that the

²⁸ Embassy of the People Republic of China in the United States, "US Opposes Taiwan Referendum Bid for UN Membership," June 20, 2007, <http://www.china-embassy.org/eng/zt/99999999/t331978.htm> (accessed May 15, 2008).

United States “does not support Taiwan’s membership in international organizations that require statehood, including the United Nation.”

Moreover, at the meeting between the US and China Presidents in Australia ahead of the annual Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum summit, President Hu Jintao said the plans for a referendum on UN membership of Taipei could destabilize the region and urged Bush to issue a firm warning to Taiwan. Afterwards, Bush’s deputy national security adviser James Jeffrey stated that the US was concerned very much about Taiwan’s movement.

“We don’t want to see anyone provoked by the actions of the Taiwanese, so for the moment we’re going to stay with our position and continue to exert our good influence on the Taiwanese to see if we can change their position,” said Jeffrey.²⁹

According to the 1994 interagency review of US policy toward Taiwan, the United States declared it would “support opportunities for Taiwan’s voice to be heard in organizations where it is denied membership.” But until now Taipei still has no voice in the United Nations according to the US’s reluctance to confront with China.

C. Conclusion

President George W. Bush initially took office with the clarity of supportive policy toward Taiwan. Besides the approval of a major sale of weapons, Bush

²⁹ Asia Pacific News, “US, China Join Forces to Warn Taiwan over UN Bid,” September 6, 2007, http://www.channelnewsasia.com/stories/afp_asiapacific/view/298306/1/.html (accessed May 15, 2008).

strengthened the US commitment to defend Taiwan by asserting that the US would do whatever it took to defend Taiwan and also welcomed the visit of Taiwan high-ranking officials to the United States. It was cleared that the Bush administration appeared to abandon the strategic ambiguity towards Taiwan and China. The US expressed that it would be willing to use military intervention if China attacked Taiwan.

Nonetheless, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 had changed the situation, the Bush administration began seeking for a constructive relationship with China to counter terrorism. The US Taiwan policy, overshadowed by the strategic partnership with China, had changed from the position of strategic clarity to a stance of ambiguity on Taiwan's defense, especially in the case of Chinese attack in response to Taiwan's provocative pro-independence. In addition to the strategic ambiguity, the Bush administration had applied "dual deterrence" approach in which the US warned Taiwan of the consequences of moving towards independence, at the same time as continuing to issue warnings deterring China from making use of military force. Emphasizing more on Taiwan, it was cleared that the Bush administration attempted to minimize Taiwan leader's impact on cross-Strait relations. Therefore, when Taiwan's President Chen Shui-bian had begun to provoke China through his campaign initiatives, such as a plan to hold referendum concerning constitutional amendments, the Bush administration then warned Taiwan that the US opposed any unilateral actions to change the status quo. The US foreign policy in the wake of September 11 shifted in favor of China especially under Bush's second term. The US did not even officially object the Chinese "anti-Secession law," which specifically authorizes the use of "non-peaceful means" to reunify Taiwan,

while it blocked Taiwan's bid for UN under the name "Taiwan" and also froze the sale of advanced weapons to Taiwan in 2008.