

Taiwan's Strategic Role and the Future Development of Taiwan-U.S. Relations

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Abstract

Although some of the practices during U.S. President Donald Trump's administration may be continued after President-Elect Joe Biden takes office, including maintaining close U.S.-Taiwan relations, they may be more cautious on issues such as official contacts and arms sales. However, Biden's belief in the value of democracy and freedom far exceeds that of Trump's. He will certainly not betray Taiwan, but the question is how much the Biden administration would be willing to pay to prevent the Communist China from annexing Taiwan. Biden's past remarks about Taiwan show that the U.S.-Taiwan relationship will become more constrained within the framework of U.S.-China relationship and might return to the framework of the *Taiwan Relations Act* with strategic ambiguity and defensive weapons. It might be difficult to see offensive weapons sold to Taiwan in the future. Taiwan will be regarded as a worthy partner, not as a card to play against China. U.S. policy toward Taiwan will continue to focus on helping Taiwan build confidence in its security, independently determine the direction of its economic development, and establish dignity and win respect on the world stage.

Keywords: U.S.-Taiwan Relationship, Biden Administration's Policy to Taiwan, Taiwan-U.S.-China Relationship, U.S. Arms Sales to Taiwan, Strategic Ambiguity

I. Introduction

Although U.S. President Trump has not yet admitted that he lost the election and still hopes to reverse the fact that Joe Biden won the election. However, most voters in the United States and most countries seem to have agreed that Biden will become the next President. During the Trump era, Taiwan-U.S. relations are said to be the

best in history. Will the Biden administration continue the steps of the Trump administration and continue to support Taiwan? After examining the strategic role of Taiwan under the strategic competition between the United States and China, this article will explore the future development of Taiwan-U.S. relations in the Biden period.

II. The Strategic Role of Taiwan in U.S.-Chinese Strategic Competition

At present, strategic competition between the United States and China has taken shape, and an anti-Chinese and friendly-to-Taiwan atmosphere has also formed. The importance of Taiwan's strategic role has been jointly confirmed by the U.S. government and opposition. We will analyze this role from three aspects.

1. The Core Position of the First Island Chain

Taiwan, as a large island in the Western Pacific, is between the two main waterways from Northeast Asia into the South China Sea. One is the Taiwan Strait and the other is the Bashi Strait. The South China Sea is the most important energy and fuel supply line for the Northeast Asian countries and the main route of Europe and Africa. It is the maritime communication line that maintains Japan and Korea's lifeline. Taiwan can be used as a transit point for the Seventh Fleet from the south to the north, which is extremely beneficial for the United States' control of Southeast Asia. If the United States uses Taiwan as its base, it can also play a role in deterring China's East China Sea Fleet and South China Sea Fleet, and it can pose a direct threat to Southeast China.

The United States can take advantage of Taiwan's strategic naval posture to contain China's South China Sea Fleet based on Taiwan's geographic characteristics, and play a moderate role in restraining China's maritime power. The survival and security of Taiwan is the key to the United States to ensure a free and open Indo-Pacific region. As Randy Schriver has said, the United States regards Taiwan as the "Fulda Gap" located at an important strategic stronghold on the border between East and West Germany, just like in the Cold War.¹

1. Chiang Chin-yeh & Chiang Yi-ching, "Taiwan key to freedom of Indo-Pacific: former U.S. defense official," *Focus Taiwan (CNA English News)*, October 20, 2020, <<https://focustaiwan.tw/politics/202010200005>>.



Figure 1. The First and Second Island Chains

Source: Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2012* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2012), p. 40, *U.S. Department of Defense*, <https://archive.defense.gov/pubs/pdfs/2012_CMPR_Final.pdf>.

2. The Key Role of “Global Supply Chain Restructuring”

The United States has led the reorganization of the global supply chains as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. Whether it is military or supply chain reorganization, Taiwan occupies an important position. If China unifies Taiwan, the overall impact on the global technology industry will be extremely huge. China may have influence or partial control over many original design manufacturers (ODMs) in Taiwan, such as Foxconn, and it may also have an impact on TSMC, which manufactures processors for many American companies such as Apple, Supermicro, and Qualcomm. The United States currently attaches great importance to the protection of the supply chain. Taiwan will play an important role in the diversification of the U.S. global supply chain. Because Taiwan has many cutting-edge technology industries, the United States and Taiwan have a very broad space for cooperation.



Figure 2. TSMC, Fab 5 Building, Hsinchu Science Park, Taiwan

Source: Peeldien, “(TSMC), Fab 5 building,” *Wikimedia*, <<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=15947207>>.

3. A Democratic Model and A Shining Example in the Chinese Society

Taiwan is now a vibrant democracy. This fact should be the guiding principle for the development of relations between Western countries and Taiwan. Taiwan’s outstanding performance in public health and economic growth in 2020 shows that compared to China, Taiwan is more likely to become a benchmark in the Asia-Pacific region. Taiwan is a dynamic democratic country. Regarding the response to the epidemic, Taiwan is far superior to China in terms of overall mortality, economic shocks, and respect for human rights. This success stems from the Taiwanese people’s determination of democratic ideals. Xi Jinping claims that China’s technological authoritarian model is superior, but Taiwan’s success in democracy proves that Xi Jinping’s statement is not in line with reality. As China increases its attack on the global order, it is now all democratic countries, including the United States, to strengthen their relations with Taiwan.

Taiwan is a democratic model and a shining example in the Chinese community. Therefore, protecting Taiwan's already acquired freedom and democracy is in fact completely consistent with the United States' philosophy of nation-building and established foreign policy. For a long time, the Taiwan policy of the United States and other Western countries has been part of U.S.-China relations. Realize that Taiwan, as the "Beacon of Asian Democracy," must be able to shine through. No matter who will be in power in the United States in the future, it will focus on protecting Taiwan's democracy.



Figure 3. Joe Biden Speaking with Supporters at Sun City in Nevada

Source: Gage Skidmore, "Joe Biden speaking with supporters at a community event at Sun City MacDonald Ranch in Henderson, Nevada," *Wikipedia*, <[https://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E4%B9%94%C2%B7%E6%8B%9C%E7%99%BB#/media/File:Joe_Biden_\(49536511763\).jpg](https://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E4%B9%94%C2%B7%E6%8B%9C%E7%99%BB#/media/File:Joe_Biden_(49536511763).jpg)>.

III. Some Biden's Past Remarks about Taiwan

While there is no prospect of the U.S.-China relationship returning to what it used to be, it is worth revisiting some of U.S. president-elect Joe Biden's stated views on the subject. As a senator in 1973, and a long time in the Foreign Affairs Committee,

he has personally experienced the review of the *Taiwan Relations Act* and the policy reassessment after the 1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis. Biden should be the president who knows the United States' one-China policy best.

1. “No Amount of Weaponry Alone Can Guarantee Taiwan’s Security”

Biden was a key figure in opposing the *Taiwan Security Enhancement Act* in 1999. From the current point of view, the content of that Act is actually quite ordinary and has been mostly realized. The point Biden opposed at the time was that:

the bill’s mistaken conclusion that Taiwan’s security is primarily a function of its military capabilities..... Taiwan’s security, in my view, flows from its democratic form of government, its growing economic, cultural, and political contacts with the mainland, and, ultimately, the United States’ abiding commitment to a peaceful resolution of the Taiwan question.

Regarding the *Taiwan Security Enhancement Act*, which seeks to enhance Taiwan’s military capabilities, he believed that “passage of this legislation would be the equivalent of waving a red cape in front of Beijing and inviting China to charge.”²

2. The Statement That “The U.S. Has An Obligation That Taiwan’s Peaceful Way of Life Is Not Upset by Force” Is “Not Exactly” Correct

In 2001, responding to a reporter’s question whether the United States had an obligation to defend Taiwan if it was attacked by China, then-U.S. President George W. Bush said: “Yes, we do, and the Chinese must understand that. Yes, I would.” The reporter asked a follow-up question: “With the full force of the American military?” Bush said: “Whatever it took” to help Taiwan defend itself. In a May 2, 2001, opinion article in the *Washington Post*, Biden criticized Bush, saying that the United States should continue to maintain “strategic ambiguity” over whether it would come to Taiwan’s assistance. Biden said: “There is a huge difference between reserving the right to use force and obligating ourselves, a priori, to come to the defense of Taiwan.”

2. U.S. Government Publishing Office, “Hearing before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, Senate Hearing 106-230,” August 4, 1999, *govinfo*, <<https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-106shrg60900/html/CHRG-106shrg60900.htm>>.

The U.S.' *Taiwan Relations Act* states that if China seeks to "determine the future of Taiwan by other than peaceful means," it would be a matter of "grave concern to the United States." The central thrust of Biden's article is that "the U.S. has no obligation to defend Taiwan."³

3. "We've Agreed That You (Taiwan) Are Going to Be Part of China"

In a 2001 speech about U.S. foreign policy at the National Press Club, Biden said:

*We support a one China policy but it rests upon a cross-strait dialogue..... Mutually arrive at how unification will take place peacefully. That. If the mainland attempts to do this by force and not dialogue. Then the United States. Will provide them military means in terms of materiel to prevent that from happening..... We also said to Taiwan. You are no longer independent country..... We've agreed that you are going to be part of China..... So don't go declaring independence. Because we are not willing to go to war over your unilateral declaration of independence.*⁴

4. The Way to Resolve the Taiwan Issue "Centers on Deepening the Level of Cross-Strait Interdependence"

During John Kerry's 2004 presidential election bid, Biden said that Kerry hoped that the 800,000 Taiwanese investing and doing business in China would exert Taiwan's influence, resulting in increased mutual dependence across the Taiwan Strait. As time progressed, this would naturally develop into mutual acceptance, Biden said.⁵

3. Joseph R. Biden Jr., "Not So Deft On Taiwan," *The Washington Post*, May 2, 2001, <<https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/2001/05/02/not-so-deft-on-taiwan/2adf3075-ee98-4e70-9be0-5459ce1edd5d/>>.

4. "Senate Foreign Relations Committee chairman Joseph Biden talked about U.S. foreign policy at the National Press Club," *C-SPAN*, September 10, 2001, <<https://www.c-span.org/video/?165936-1/us-foreign-policy&fbclid=IwAR0l6c-3iQ5YDI0-FCT8z6WsD-yOSKhRALp11mogSlte0e5AS-CRSuHFjrr0>>.

5. "Obama elects Biden as his deputy, Biden advocates cross-strait peace negotiations," *Taiwan News*, August 23, 2008, <<https://www.taiwannews.com.tw/ch/news/723399>>.

Of course, these remarks are more than ten years old, many changes have occurred between China and the United States and the two sides of the Strait, and Biden's attitude towards China has recently become more hardline. When Biden takes power, the era of strategic competition between China and the United States will not end. This is a mainstream view in both parties of the United States. But for a U.S. president who has a major influence on Taiwan, Biden's past remarks are still worth pondering.



Figure 4. MOU on Establishing A U.S.-Taiwan Economic Prosperity Partnership (EPP) Dialogue

Source: Bi-khim Hsiao, "MOU on Establishing A U.S.-Taiwan Economic Prosperity Partnership (EPP) Dialogue," November 20, 2020, *Facebook*, <<https://zh-tw.facebook.com/Bikhim/photos/a.10151393368060687/10157853390160687/?type=3&theater>>.

IV. Prospects for the Future of Taiwan-U.S. Relations

In recent years, the United States and China have entered an era of strategic competition, and the United States has also conducted a comprehensive reflection on China's policies. China's suppression of Taiwan and human rights violations in Xinjiang, Hong Kong, and other places have an increased anti-China sentiment in the U.S. Congress. Confronting China is no longer the only Republican Party, and

Democratic lawmakers have also begun to join the ranks of criticizing China and actively enacting legislation to counteract Beijing's actions. Faced with the overall change in the United States' attitude towards China, Biden changed his past style and began to show his favor to Taiwan. U.S. policy toward Taiwan is unlikely to return to the Democratic government era before Trump.

1. What Is the Difference between Trump and Biden's "Anti-China" Attitudes?

The global landscape has changed drastically, and it is difficult for Biden to return to the old path of "weakness against China" after he takes office. In an exclusive interview with American media, Biden emphasized that Russia is the biggest threat and China is "the biggest competitor of the United States."⁶ This also illustrates Biden's diplomatic strategy. This is a subtle difference from Trump's China policy. Trump once said that the Communist China is an enemy and a threat. The U.S.' view of China has changed from a "threat" to a "competitor." This may be a minor diplomatic shift for the United States, but it may be a matter of life or death for Taiwan.

The Trump administration distinguishes between the Communist China and the Chinese and seeks to form an "anti-CCP alliance." For Beijing, this is the same as intending to overthrow the Chinese Communist regime and peacefully evolve China. However, Biden does not oppose the Chinese Communist regime as he only wants to form an "anti-China alliance." Biden's policy towards China will be more traditional. In other words, it will be more predictable. Trump exerts extreme pressure on China, and he does not hesitate to go in the direction of decoupling the United States and China. But Biden is a typical establishment and has many years of experience in dealing with China. He does not approve of decoupling. He will resume cooperation with Beijing on climate change, coronavirus pandemic and nuclear proliferation (North Korea, Iran). Will Taiwan become a bargaining chip?

6. David Aaro, "Biden says Russia is the biggest threat to America's security. Biden said he believes our biggest competitor is China," *FOXBusiness*, October 25, 2020, <<https://www.foxbusiness.com/politics/biden-says-russia-county-biggest-threat-americas-security>>.



Figure 5. President Donald J. Trump Joins Xi Jinping at Their Bilateral Meeting

Source: Shealah Craighead, "President Trump at the G20," June 29, 2019, *flickr*, <<https://www.flickr.com/photos/whitehouse/48162295476/in/photostream/>>.

2. What Is Meant by Blinken’s “Balance” That Should Be Restored on the Taiwan Issue?

Antony J. Blinken has been chosen by President-elect Joe Biden for the position of Secretary of State. Blinken once said that, before the Trump administration, the U. S. and China’s response to the Taiwan issue was a “source of stability” and was a “success story” in U.S.-China relations. The future U.S. government should “restore this balance.”⁷

This “balance” is obviously to “maintain the *status quo*” through “double deterrence.” This is also the purpose of “strategic ambiguity.” On the one hand, it

7. “China is a challenge but should not be completely decoupled’ If Blinken is Secretary of State, how would he deal with Beijing?” *Voice of America (VOA)*, November 24, 2020, <<https://www.voachinese.com/a/blinken-profile/5674221.html>>.

deters Taiwan from declaring independence; on the other hand, the possibility of using the United States to defend Taiwan deters Beijing from invading Taiwan by force. “Strategic ambiguity” means that China and Taiwan dare not immediately change the *status quo*. However, the reverse is also true. Commitment to assist in the defense of Taiwan may lead to further Taiwan's declaration of independence, while refusal to assist in the defense of Taiwan may lead to China's direct use of force.

3. Biden Supports Seeking A Peaceful Improvement of Cross-Strait Relations and Will Not Deliberately Make Taiwan A Point of Conflict

Since Trump took office, both the White House and the U.S. Congress have changed the previous government's strategy of “avoiding angering Beijing because of Taiwan” to a new policy of “challenging China, and paying more attention to Taiwan's defense.” Compared with Trump, it is generally believed that Biden may not be too radical on the Taiwan issue, because China and the United States may be reluctant to bear the cost of a war. But the question is whether Biden sees China as a relationship that is both competitive and cooperative. Will he break with China or even risk military conflict because of the Taiwan issue? With this possibility, Trump has a greater probability than Biden. On the Taiwan issue, Biden is more cautious and rational. When Biden comes to power, just as U.S.-China relations cannot go back to the past, cross-Strait relations may not go back to the past. But the situation in the Taiwan Strait will not be as tense as it is today.

The United States will reserve the right to use its military force based on both parties' actions and the prevailing circumstances. If China tries to use force rather than dialogue to achieve its goals, the United States will prevent this from happening through military means in terms of materials; however, Taiwan should not unilaterally declare independence because the United States would not be willing to go to the battlefield for this. In 2001, Biden commented that “And as Taiwan's Defense Minister told a visiting staff member of the committee two months ago, poor U.S.-China relations are bad news for cross-Strait relations, for Taiwan-Chinese relations.”⁸ Biden's goal is not to threaten China's own interests, but to maintain the *status quo*

8. U.S. Government Publishing Office, “Hearing before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, Senate Hearing 106-230.”

in the Taiwan Strait. He once said that if Taiwan declares independence and provokes war, the United States should not help.

After Biden takes office, U.S.-Taiwan exchanges should be conducted in a less public manner. The Biden administration will avoid provoking China in ways that may harm Taiwan as deliberately provoking Xi Jinping or forcing China to respond. However, even if Biden will not use Taiwan as a means to anger or retaliate against China, Biden will continue to support Taiwan in support of democracy, human rights and maintaining peace in the Asia-Pacific region. Biden will continue his hardline stance on Beijing through human rights, trade and geopolitics. The Biden administration could be more worried about the risk of military conflict with China. However, it cannot be ruled out that Biden will not continue to support Taiwan's democracy and praise Taiwan's effective anti-epidemic on the Taiwan issue; continue to link Taiwan with the U.S.' overall strategy in the Western Pacific; continue to resolutely oppose China's military threats, actions and words against Taiwan; or continue to implement more practical actions to strengthen Taiwan's combat power.

Table 1. U.S. Cabinet-level Visits to Taiwan 1978-2020

NAME	TITLE	ADMINISTRATION	DATE
Carla Hills	U.S. Trade Representative	George H.W. Bush	December 1992
Federico Pena	Secretary of Transportation	Bill Clinton	December 1994
Phil Lader	Administrator, Small Business Administration	Bill Clinton	December 1996
Bill Richardson	Secretary of Energy	Bill Clinton	November 1998
Rodney E. Slater	Secretary of Transportation	Bill Clinton	June 2000
Gina McCarthy	Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency	Barack Obama	April 2014
Alex Azar	Secretary of Health and Human Services	Donald Trump	August 2020

Sources: Susan V. Lawrence & Wayne M. Morrison, *Taiwan: Issues for Congress, CRS Report No. R44996* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2017), p. 21, *Federation of American Scientists*, <<https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R44996.pdf>>; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, "HHS Secretary Meets with President Tsai," August 10, 2020, *U.S. Department of Health and Human Services*, <<https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2020/08/10/hhs-secretary-azar-meets-with-president-tsai-of-taiwan-and-praises-taiwans-transparent-covid-19-response.html>>.

4. Return to the Framework of the *Taiwan Relations Act*: “Strategic Ambiguity” and Taiwan’s Legal Status

Biden has always been a supporter of “strategic ambiguity,” and his team is indeed echoing the “double deterrence” policy. They obviously disagree with suggestion that there should be “strategic clarity.” It would not be surprising if Biden supports the traditional One-China policy of the United States and the ambiguity of its cross-Strait relations strategy. Such a policy is consistent with Biden’s past political career. Jake Sullivan, who has been nominated to as National Security Advisor to the White House, wrote in a 2019 *Foreign Affairs* article that:

On Taiwan, a tacit commitment not to unilaterally alter the status quo is perhaps the best that can be hoped for given the historical complexities involved.....it is also the greatest unclaimed success in the history of U.S.-Chinese relations. The island has grown, prospered, and democratized in the ambiguous space between the United States and China as a result of the flexible and nuanced approach generally adopted by both sides.⁹

Compared with the Trump administration’s Taiwan policy that frequently stepped on Beijing’s red line, the Biden administration should return to the “One China” policy prior to the Obama era and the strategy of not promising that “the United States will intervene if China violates Taiwan by force.” On November 12, 2020, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said: “Taiwan has not been a part of China.”¹⁰ Pompeo’s remarks triggered a strong response from both sides of the Taiwan Strait, adding to the already tense situation in Taiwan. The Biden administration will not explicitly deny this sentence, but this remark will not appear again. It is bound to strengthen the stance that “the United States must decide its own one-China policy.” However, the Biden administration will likely strengthen the defense of Taiwan’s democracy by exposing China’s interference in Taiwan’s affairs in the future.

9. Kurt M. Campbell & Jake Sullivan, “Competition Without Catastrophe: How America Can Both Challenge and Coexist With China,” *Foreign Affairs*, 2019 September/October, <<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/competition-with-china-without-catastrophe>>.

10. Lin Chia-nan, “Taiwan not part of China, Pompeo says,” *Taipei Times*, November 14, 2020. <<https://taipeitimes.com/News/front/archives/2020/11/14/2003746883>>.

5. Return to The Framework of The *Taiwan Relations Act*: No More Sale of Offensive Weapons?

According to the *Taiwan Relations Act*, the U.S. government should provide Taiwan with “defensive weapons.” However, after Tsai Ing-wen defeated the pro-China Han Kuo-yu and was re-elected as president, China’s military activities near Taiwan have escalated, and the Trump administration decided to sell weapons that allow Taiwan to directly attack Chinese ground targets. Since U.S. President Trump took office, from June 2017 to November 2020, arms sales to Taiwan have been announced 10 times, and the total amount has exceeded the NT\$500 billion mark. Not only did the amount hit a record high, the arms sales method was also different from the previous parcel processing. Going through the *National Defense Authorization Act* and other bills, Taiwan’s arms sales status was made equal to that of non-NATO allies, and it was on track to quickly respond to Taiwan’s military balance needs. The Trump administration’s arms sales to Taiwan are no longer limited to defensive weapons, and include the High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) and Standoff Land Attack Missile Expanded Response (SLAM-ER), which are capable of accurately striking land targets. This weapon can effectively suppress the China’s military ambitions toward Taiwan.

Table 2. U.S. Arms Sales to Taiwan (Able to Attack China’s Land Targets)

Date	Arms	Value (million)
2020-10-22	135 AGM-84H standoff land attack missile expanded response (SLAM-ER) missiles, 4 ATM-84H SLAM-ER telemetry missiles, and 12 CATM-84H captive air training missiles (CATM), including 151 containers, spare parts, support and test equipment, operator manuals, technical documentation, training.	\$1,008
2020-10-22	11 M142 high mobility artillery rocket systems (HIMARS) launchers, 64 MGM-168 Army Tactical Missile Systems (ATACMS) M57 Unitary Missiles, including spare parts, support and test equipment, operator manuals, technical documentation, training.	\$436.1

Source: “List of US arms sales to Taiwan,” December 1, 2020, Accessed, *Wikipedia*, <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_US_arms_sales_to_Taiwan#Donald_Trump_\(01.20.2017.1.20.2021\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_US_arms_sales_to_Taiwan#Donald_Trump_(01.20.2017.1.20.2021))>.

Taiwan's ability to break through the restrictions of the *Taiwan Relations Act* and obtain powerful weapons that can directly attack China's ground targets is mainly due to several pro-Taiwanese and anti-Chinese ministers in the White House who supported Taiwan to strengthen its military power. These include National Security Advisor Robert C. O'Brien, Deputy National Security Advisor Matthew Pottinger.

Will the Biden administration continue all the practices of the Trump administration in all aspects? Probably not. The frequency of arms sales to Taiwan may slow down, not because of the inaction of the Biden administration, but because of the recent large arms sales, which will take some time to integrate into Taiwan's military power structure. Despite this, the United States will continue to sell defensive weapons to Taiwan. Biden will continue to sell arms to Taiwan, because the United States has always sold arms to Taiwan based on the level of Beijing's invasion, but it may not announce the sale of arms to Taiwan in a big way.

Preventing China from controlling Taiwan and the South China Sea has been regarded by the United States as an important strategic interest. The Biden administration will not change this view. If China uses force to attack Taiwan, the United States is still likely to intervene by force on a large scale. Biden may try to relax the tension between the U.S. and China. How to keep the peace across the Taiwan Strait, resolve military conflicts, and prevent the Taiwan issue from becoming a U.S.-China military confrontation is the focus.

6. What Can Taiwan Do? Make Good Use of Biden's Multilateralism

Biden claimed that after taking office, he would "fully implement" the *Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act* and meet with the Dalai Lama of Tibet. Biden also said that he would hold a "Summit of democracy" to study how to curb authoritarianism, and asked technology companies to promise to ensure that data is not abused by the state. Biden's priority of promoting democracy will also create opportunities for U.S.-Taiwan cooperation. Biden has promised to hold a "Summit of democracy" in the first year after taking office to promote progress in combating corruption, resisting authoritarianism, and promoting human rights. Taiwan can provide a lot of valuable experience in these discussions.

It is worth noting that Biden's statement is a "Summit of Democracy" instead of a "Summit of Democracies," which reserves space for the organizers to invite Taiwan. If formal diplomatic recognition is not required to qualify for participation, Taiwan may be able to participate in the same way as APEC. This should be something Taiwan could strive for in the future. All democracies must bypass the geopolitical isolation imposed on Taiwan by China and directly cooperate with Taiwanese people, businesses, and government leaders. This is part of the global mission to strengthen democracy and resist the influence of authoritarianism. The incoming Biden administration should invite Taiwan to participate in the Summit of Democracy. Biden will rely more on cooperation with allies to put pressure on China in areas such as human rights, and Taiwan is a potential partner for cooperation.

In addition, when Biden takes office, although U.S.-Taiwan exchanges will be low-key, the probability of Taiwan and the United States signing a bilateral free trade agreement (BTA) is higher. The Trump administration has actively strengthened its security and diplomatic ties with Taiwan, but has neglected economic and trade relations. U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer has also focused most of his attention on China-U.S. trade agreement negotiations and is unwilling to do anything to destroy his "political heritage." When Biden comes to power, the United States and Taiwan can have a new start, because his government can recognize the common points that the United States and Taiwan have in emphasizing democracy and human rights issues. In this context, the two sides have an opportunity to initiate BTA negotiations. In August 2020, President Tsai Ing-wen lifted the long-term ban on U.S. pork and beef imports. This decision was seen as an attempt to open the door to formal trade negotiations.

Taiwan seeks to participate in activities of international institutions during the coronavirus pandemic, such as the World Health Organization's decision-making body, the World Health Assembly. Biden may be willing to strengthen respect for Taiwan on the international stage, including supporting the restoration of Taiwan's observer status in the World Health Assembly.



Figure 6. Tsai Ing-wen Congratulated Biden on Being Elected President

Source: Tsai Ing-wen, “Now it is my turn to extend congratulations to Joe Biden & Kamala Harris on being elected President & VP-elect,” November 8, 2020, *Twitter*, <<https://twitter.com/iingwen/status/1325228344720289792>>.

V. Conclusion

After Biden takes office, his policy priorities will be domestic. The U.S.-Taiwan relationship in the Biden era will not be the focus of Biden's diplomacy. Biden will be more cautious than Trump in handling relations with Taiwan. Although some of the practices in the Trump administration may be continued, including maintaining close U.S.-Taiwan relations, they may be more cautious on issues, such as official contacts and arms sales. Taiwan should also follow its own footsteps and do its best to cooperate with the United States, but compared with the Trump administration, its sense of security may decrease.

However, Biden's belief in the value of democracy and freedom far exceeds Trump. He will certainly not betray Taiwan when he comes to power, but the question

is how much the Biden administration would be willing to pay to prevent the Communist China from annexing Taiwan. Biden's remarks above show that the U.S.-Taiwan relationship will become more constrained within the framework of U.S.-China relationship and might return to the framework of the *Taiwan Relations Act*: strategic ambiguity and defensive weapons. It might be difficult to see the offensive weapons sold to Taiwan.

Under Biden, U.S.-Taiwan relations may not be full of diplomatic breakthroughs like the Trump era. However, exchanges between the United States and Taiwan have had a solid foundation of more than 40 years, and the pandemic has deepened the hostility and mistrust of countries around the world towards China, which has further highlighted Taiwan's value and contribution. In this context, Taiwanese may be cautious and optimistic about U.S.-Taiwan relations in the next four years. Even if Biden does not use Taiwan as a means to anger or retaliate against China, Biden will continue to support Taiwan in supporting democracy, human rights and maintaining peace in the Asia-Pacific region. Taiwan will be regarded as a worthy partner, not a card to play against China. U.S. policy toward Taiwan will focus on helping Taiwan build confidence in its security, independently determine the direction of its economic development, and establish dignity and win respect on the world stage. Specific decisions will emerge from these goals.