THE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION AND TAIWAN: POLICIES OF CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

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Executive Summary

1. During most of Donald Trump’s presidency US relations with Taiwan were arguably better than they ever had been. President Trump favoured Taiwan and played the “Taiwan card” against China.

2. During the 2020 presidential election campaign, candidate Biden hardly mentioned Taiwan. He said nothing that hinted what his Taiwan policy might be.

3. Given the importance of China to the United States it appeared that President Biden’s Taiwan policy would hinge on his China policy.

4. While many of President Biden’s statements were to trash former President Trump’s policies, this did not seem to apply to foreign policymaking, especially Taiwan policy. Anti-China sentiments among the US public and in the Democratic Party were strong as were statements made by the Biden foreign policy team; that suggested a continued favourable stance towards Taiwan.

5. President Biden’s appointments in the foreign policy/security policy realms indicated to many observers he was returning to the Obama era of US China policy. None was particularly anti-Taiwan.

6. President Biden’s supporters portrayed President Trump’s Asia policy as poorly managed, turning the Taiwan Strait into a flashpoint. President Biden, they said, would fix this. However, this did not happen and US-China relations deteriorated.