

American Institute in Taiwan Director William Stanton said yesterday US policy toward China was shaped by idealism and that the US will not walk away from Taiwan.

“From a Machiavellian point of view, the easy thing would be to just not sell arms to Taiwan any more, simple, but we go on doing that,” Stanton said at a Taipei Salon lecture hosted by the Lung Yingtai Cultural Foundation.

In a speech titled “The Paradox of America,” Stanton said it was a myth that US foreign policy is driven only by self-interest.

Stanton said that adherence to idealist principles was one of the things that made US foreign policy so difficult to understand.

“It would be much easier if we did everything from the point of view of self-interest,” he said.

PRIORITIES

Recalling his experiences at the US Embassy in Beijing, Stanton said he was told by a Chinese think tank that the US is “wasting [its] breath” talking about freedom and religion in China and Tibet, defending Taiwan and selling arms to Taiwan.

Stanton said the Chinese think tank told him that none of those issues were a major priority or in US interests, adding that the US should instead talk about trade between the two countries.

“But the point is actually that America does care passionately about those things,” Stanton said.

TRANSFORMATION

In his speech, Stanton praised the achievements of Taiwan, saying that Taiwan’s own efforts and policies had transformed it from a poor country with a military dictatorship to a developed democracy with technological leadership in the world.

“The United States can’t walk away from [Taiwan] and still remain the United States,” he said.

NEGOTIATIONS

After the forum, Stanton was asked whether the US would resume the Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) negotiations with Taiwan.

In response, Stanton said only that he hoped the US would renew focus on the talks and move forward, particularly after the recently signed cross-strait Economic Cooperation

Idealism shapes US foreign policy, AIT director says

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Framework Agreement.

Stanton said the dispute over US beef imports to Taiwan was still an issue in trade relations with Taiwan, but added that the US had not set any precondition for the resumption of the TIFA talks.

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