

The 5G Network: Southeast Asia Ignores US War on Huawei

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Region: [Asia](#)

Theme: [Science and Medicine](#)

The Western media has begun complaining about Southeast Asia's collective decision to move forward with 5G network technology from Chinese telecom giant Huawei despite US demands that nations ban all Huawei products.

These demands are predicated on clearly fabricated security threats surrounding Huawei technology. The US itself is a global leader of producing hardware with hidden backdoors and other security flaws for the purpose of spying worldwide.

Instead, the US is clearly targeting the telecom giant as part of a wider campaign to cripple China economically and contain its ability to contest US global hegemony.

Media Disinformation Serves the War on Huawei

Articles like Reuters' "[Thailand launches Huawei 5G test bed, even as U.S. urges allies to bar Chinese gear](#)," in title alone confounds informed readers.

The article's author, Patpicha Tanakasempipat, fails to explain in which ways the US is "allies" with any of the nations of Southeast Asia, including Thailand. The history of US activity in Southeast Asia has been one of coercion, interference, intervention, colonisation and protracted war.

As US power has faded, it has resorted to "soft power," with its most recent "pivot to Asia" being accompanied by several failed attempts to overthrow regional governments and replace them with suitable proxies.

Considering this, and a complete lack of suitable US alternatives to Huawei's products, there is little mystery as to why the region as a whole has ignored US demands regarding Huawei.

The article claims:

Thailand launched a Huawei Technologies 5G test bed on Friday, even as the United States urges its allies to bar the Chinese telecoms giant from building next-generation mobile networks.

Huawei, the world's top producer of telecoms equipment and second-biggest maker of smartphones, has been facing mounting international scrutiny amid fears China could use its equipment for espionage, a concern the company says is unfounded.

Patpicha fails categorically to cite any evidence substantiating US claims. She also fails categorically to point out that there is in fact a glaring lack of evidence behind US claims, just as many other articles across the Western media have predictably and purposefully done.

Vietnam, the Outlier

The one exception in Southeast Asia is Vietnam. It has sidestepped considering Huawei in favour of US-based Qualcomm and Scandinavian companies Nokia and Ericsson. While the Vietnamese government said its decision was based on technical concerns rather than geopolitics, [a Bloomberg article](#) quoted the CEO of state-owned telecom concern, Viettel Group, who claimed:

We are not going to work with Huawei right now. It's a bit sensitive with Huawei now. There were reports that it's not safe to use Huawei. So Viettel's stance is that, given all this information, we should just go with the safer ones. So we choose Nokia and Ericsson from Europe.

The same article would also cite supposed experts who claim Vietnam seeks closer ties with the US in countering China's growing stature upon the global stage, and ultimately folded to US demands because of this.

This however is unlikely. Vietnam – among all of Southeast Asia's nations – is not an “ally” of Washington.

The US waged a bloody war against Vietnam at the cost of 4 million lives. The nation still bears the burden of chemical warfare through persistent birth defects as well as swaths of land covered in unexploded ordnance. To this day the US maintains [a stable of opposition groups it funds](#) to pressure and coerce the Vietnamese government. The US also [invests in groups fanning anti-Chinese sentiment](#) inside Vietnam.

Considering this, Vietnam, by spurning Huawei at the moment, is more likely cynically playing the US and China off one another with this particular move aimed at currying leverage over Beijing and favour with Washington, while at other junctures, Vietnam has made moves to gain leverage over Washington while cultivating closer ties with Beijing.

Not Just Thailand

The same Bloomberg article would note:

Vietnam's decision to shun Huawei appears to make it an outlier in Southeast Asia, where other countries such as the Philippines, Thailand and Malaysia are open to deploying Huawei's technology.

The irony of this is that the Philippines in particular has been touted by Washington as one of its key partners in provoking China over its claims in the South China Sea. Not only has Manila [repeatedly sabotaged or undermined Washington's efforts](#) in the South China Sea deciding to bilaterally deal with Beijing instead and without US help, it is now openly ignoring US demands to dump Huawei technology.

Malaysia has been another target of [US political interference](#). There were hopes in Washington that after the last Malaysian elections, victorious parties backed by Washington would cut growing ties with Beijing. This did not happen. While some Malaysian-Chinese deals were renegotiated, they continued to move forward nonetheless.

By ignoring US demands that Huawei products be banned and by moving forward with Huawei technology for national 5G infrastructure, Malaysia affirms again that Asia's future will be determined in Asia by the nations residing there, not by Washington thousands of miles away.

While the US remains a potent geopolitical hegemon with a powerful military and economy, and the means to inflict punishment on nations opposing its agenda across the globe, it is still a hegemon in decline.

The US is not losing to China because it hasn't been ruthless enough or because its "allies" are not cooperating. It is not losing to China because of anything in particular China is doing to the US. The US is losing because of fundamental flaws in what is an entirely unsustainable and indefensible foreign policy.

Until it fixes those fundamental flaws and adopts a more appropriate foreign policy, it will continue to lose out to competitors like China. Its tech giants like Apple and Qualcomm will continue to lose out to competitors like Huawei. No amount of coercion, threats or acts of malice can change the fact that at a fundamental level, the US has no competitive edge and its power stems more from momentum than from any remaining driving strength.

While nations bide their time for this momentum to diminish, Beijing, Moscow and the capitals of other developing and emerging global powers continue building an alternative global order based on a multipolar balance of power and the primacy of national sovereignty... a global order where, for example, one nation does not get to decide who the rest of the world works with to build their respective telecom infrastructure.

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