COUNTERING COMMUNIST CHINA:
ESCALATING U.S. CONTINGENCY PLANS, 1949-1958

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Introduction:

In the event of attack on Taiwan, the United States must “authorize the use of atomic weapons against airfields and POL storage sites; initially against jet fighter fields within effective range of Quemoy and Matsu, progressively expanding these operations to include fields at extreme jet fighter range.”¹ This policy prescription, written in early 1955 at the height of tension between the United States and the PRC, indicates that the Taiwan Strait Crisis, a critical Cold War event beginning in 1949 and peaking in 1958, easily could have altered the course of world history. Military contingency plans incorporating an authorization of “nuclear bombing of coastal air fields” on mainland China will forever remind the world of the dangers associated with brinkmanship.²

Between 1949 and 1958, American foreign policy underwent a fundamental transition in its dealings with the newly founded People’s Republic of China (PRC). Through the use of declassified government documental archives, personal correspondence, historical newspapers, memoirs, and secondary sources, this thesis assesses the changing characteristics of contingency plans for dealing with the threat posed by Communist expansion in Asia. This thesis argues that under Eisenhower, experiences in East Asia catalyzed a drastic reevaluation of contingency plans for dealing with Communist China, sparking a change over time that easily could have precipitated into total war.

¹ This, along with a vast majority of the primary source documentation found within this thesis, can be found in the Declassified Documents Reference System Digital Archive found at http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/DDRS?locID=tulane. Throughout this thesis, all documents referenced from this archive will be accompanied by the acronym DDRS in order to signify the archive where they can be found. This particular reference comes from: The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. U.S. Military Courses of Action to Meet a Chinese Communist Attack Against the Quemoy or Matsu Island Groups. Top Secret. March 31, 1955. DDRS. (accessed July 27, 2013).

Reacting to a Perceived Threat:

Scholars debate the intricate details that shaped the development of foreign relations between the United States and the PRC. Individuals such as Cold War historian John Lewis Gaddis offer explanations based upon prevailing political currents of the time period. Through the use of policy recommendations from the National Security Council in conjunction with speeches and memoirs from the time, Gaddis provides a thorough analysis of the strategic environment during the Cold War. Of particular concern to Gaddis is the manner by which the foreign policy initiatives of administrations are shaped by “perception of the means available to them.” Gaddis argues that unlike Eisenhower, Truman limited the means available to him by no longer considering the use of nuclear weapons as a form of strategic response. This is affirmed in the evidence cited within this thesis, which suggests that under Eisenhower, contingency plans expanded to include the use of nuclear weapons, indicating a reevaluation of American policy that easily could have precipitated into total war.

Jay Taylor, in *The Generalissimo: Chiang Kai-shek and the Struggle for Modern China*, provides an extensive analysis of the life and legacy of Chiang Kai-shek, the former President of the Republic of China (ROC). Focusing his chapter “Managing the Protector” on the hostile state of diplomatic relations between the PRC, ROC, and United States, Taylor centers his research on the diaries of the Generalissimo in order to provide an analysis of the tension characteristic of this time period. Taylor also draws from Jian Chen’s *Mao’s China and the Cold War*, a work cited throughout this thesis, in order to

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add a Communist perspective to his otherwise Nationalist-centric work. In his chapter, Taylor proposes that while the Eisenhower administration committed itself to the defense of Taiwan, the threat of using nuclear weapons could never come to fruition due primarily to backlash within the American public.\(^5\) Thus, while references exist that allude to the possibility of nuclear war, in actuality the strategic environment would not allow for these weapons to be used. This differs from the findings of this thesis, which suggest that the possibility of nuclear weapon use by Eisenhower would not be overlooked, as suggested in contingency plans for dealing with the aggressiveness of Communist China.\(^6\)

Chinese historian Jian Chen utilizes previously unrecorded Chinese archival documents in an effort to provide a better historical understanding of the events occurring within China during the period following the Chinese Civil War. By focusing on Mao’s China, Chen argues that by understanding the China experience; it is possible to uncover key insight vital to the development of a more complete historical comprehension of the global Cold War. This China-centric approach provides a good juxtaposition with the works by Tucker and Young, who focus primarily on the American side of the foreign policymaking apparatus.\(^7\)

In contrast to the works conducted by Gaddis and Taylor, Nancy Bernkopf Tucker focuses her research on the Chinese Recognition Controversy. This event, occurring in the time period between 1949-1950, represents an important moment in the evolution of


\(^{7}\) If attempting to learn more about Mao Zedong’s role in the evolution of the PRC’s foreign policy, see: Jian Chen, *Mao’s China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill NC; London: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).
diplomatic and political interactions between the United States and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Through the use of primary sources and historiography, Tucker argues that recognition of the Chinese Communists was impossible due to the Truman administration’s concern for the possible outcomes associated with Communist control over China. This, coupled with a general disinterest towards affairs in East Asia, created a situation in which the United States government failed to acknowledge PRC-control over the mainland, leading to the hostility that characterized diplomatic relations between the two entities.³

Local studies help uncover the personal opinions of individuals residing on islands in the Taiwan Strait during the crisis. An example of this is the work created by Michael Szonyi, who analyzes the experiences of individuals residing on the islands in the Taiwan Straits throughout the Cold War. Szonyi delves into the intense militarization and geopoliticization that came to embody life on the islands during this time period. Utilizing over 170 oral accounts and countless archival documents from Jinmen, an island in the Strait, he attempts to intricately recreate the events in the Strait during the Cold War. This allows for a more personal narrative on the lives of individuals forced to deal with the effects of foreign policymaking by two greater powers, indicating that the United States, ROC, and PRC all adopted policies without regard for the effect these policies had on individuals residing in the territory involved. In other words, by isolating his study to specific islands in the Taiwan Strait, Szonyi is able to convey the local

perspective on foreign relations between greater powers, allowing for a more in-depth analysis of the foreign policymaking establishment of the time.\(^9\)

Following the Korean War, a venue for diplomatic relations between the United States and People’s Republic of China (PRC) opened, allowing for the creation of a dialogue between the two nations that would define international relations in the Asian sphere over the next twelve years. The structure and nature of these negotiations, known as the Ambassadorial Talks, followed a pattern of structural rigidity and stalemate; however, they also served as an important source of communication between the two world powers that kept direct engagement at bay. In *Negotiating with the Chinese Communists*, Kenneth T. Young delves into the nature of the United States’ experience during these talks, attempting to draw conclusions from the negotiations that could be applied to the future of diplomatic relations between the two sides. While Young believes the Ambassadorial Talks opened up a necessary communication channel between the United States and PRC, he also argues that future interactions will require continued patience and different negotiation techniques if any real results are to be witnessed.\(^10\)

While many scholars, exemplified by John King Fairbank in *China and the United States*, formulate theories based upon prevailing diplomatic trends between the United States and the PRC, few root their research in the declassified governmental documents from this time period.\(^11\) The most important of these documents, furthermore,

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\(^9\) For a more detailed case study incorporating the lives of islanders during the Taiwan Strait Crisis, look at: Michael Szonyi, *Cold War Island: Quemoy on the Front Line* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

are often overlooked because they are hidden in the pages of strategic planning committee recommendations. By examining the growing number of contingency plans related to the problems posed by Communist control of the mainland, it is possible to witness a change over time in United States foreign policy for China. This change, indicative of growing levels of hostility between the two actors, suggests that the threat of Communist expansion in East Asia played a significant role in the development of American foreign policy towards the region.

Significantly, these declassified contingency plans allow historians to view many of the options that were on the table leading up to each event rather than just relying solely on the event’s outcome. This approach reveals the broad spectrum of strategic planning conducted within the government, rather than relying solely on how events actually played out. In other words, contingency plans allow for an understanding of the counterfactual, making them a unique resource from which to focus research. Admittedly, these documents are problematic because there is no way to know exactly who authored each contingency plan.

Contingency plans, created by military and diplomatic advisors, contain language originating within the United States government during the Cold War. These documents often utilize out-dated and occasionally demeaning terms such as CHINCOM (Chinese Communist), Peiping (Beijing), Formosa (Taiwan), Kinmen (the Jinmen Islands), and Red (referring to anything controlled by the Communists) when referencing the Chinese theater. Many of these terms, used routinely in declassified governmental documents, can likely be attributed to a political attempt to deny PRC legitimacy within American

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foreign policy at the time. For this reason, these documents reveal the hidden underbelly of the foreign policymaking establishment.

Three archives form the backbone of research in this thesis. The Declassified Documents Reference System Digital Archive (DDRS), containing information from the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Department of Defense, State Department, and White House, provides an important resource where information on the inner-workings of the U.S. government can be found. The second archive utilized extensively throughout this work is sponsored by the United States Department of State. This archive, known as the Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) digital archive, provides information on the development of relations between the United States and China, allowing insight into the manner by which relations changed with the establishment of the PRC. Finally, the Cold War Digital Archive, sponsored by the Wilson Center, provides sources outside of the United States, giving added perspective to the lives of individuals residing in East Asia during this time period.

The argument that President Eisenhower was more willing than Truman to keep the prospect of nuclear weapon deployment on the table is not new. Scholars such as John Lewis Gaddis argue Eisenhower’s “New Look” foreign policy agenda relied upon the prospect of massive retaliation in order to limit expenditures on conventional military forces. Others, such as Jay Taylor, argue while Eisenhower appeared to advocate the use of nuclear weapons, statements such as these evoked negative reactions within the American public, leading to a political environment that would have never supported actual engagement. This thesis goes further, expounding upon arguments such as these in order to demonstrate that the prospect of nuclear weapon deployment was far from
political posturing. Locked in the pages of contingency plans, avocation for tactical nuclear strikes against military targets on the Chinese mainland indicates the Eisenhower administration kept the prospect of coordinated nuclear strikes on the table, creating a scenario in which even a minor shift in the diplomatic environment brought closer the prospect of total war between the United States and the PRC.

**US, GMD, and CCP Relations Pre-1949**

The Guomindang Party’s political success on the Chinese mainland leading up to World War II did not rely on the financial support of the United States, which scholars such as leading PRC historian Zi Zhongyun argue, was not widely invested in the Asian sphere until after the attacks at Pearl Harbor on the morning of December 7, 1941. These attacks provided the foundation upon which American foreign policy for China would be based during World War II, incorporating a need to establish a pro-American China committed to the war effort.\(^\text{12}\) With Japan on the assault and the United States beginning its island-hopping campaign in the Pacific, the Chinese Communists in the countryside did not pose a direct threat to American interests, and therefore did not merit much consideration on the part of foreign policymakers within the United States. Rather, the most important consideration involved regionalized staging areas (military bases) for American forces opposing Japanese territorial expansion. Or as John King Fairbank argues, the focus of American policymakers became solely to keep China involved in the

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war effort against the Japanese regardless of what that aim meant to the elimination of communism on the interior.13

With the end of World War II came a decision for American foreign policymakers within both the State Department and the Department of Defense. They could either choose to side with the Communists and risk the expansion of communism in the Asian sphere, or choose to support the corrupt government of Chiang Kai-shek and the Guomindang. This decision, occurring during the Chinese Civil War between 1946 and 1949, would come to define American and Chinese foreign policy for over two decades. As Zi Zhongyun notes, the main reason for American involvement in the Chinese Civil War can be traced to Cold War paranoia.14 The realization of communism’s growth around the world caused what John King Fairbank termed a heightened state of fear in the United States over the brutal methods of expansion utilized by the Communist movement that ultimately led to a fundamental miscalculation of the level of corruption that had come to define the Guomindang.15 In other words, “Communism seemed increasingly to be the only way out for the one people and the mortal enemy of the other,” a problem that affected American relations with China into the future.16

As the Guomindang evacuated the Chinese mainland, the United States was given a choice between either recognizing the legitimate government of the PRC or supporting the Republic of China’s rule from Taiwan. Nancy Tucker defined this decision as the Chinese Recognition Controversy of 1949-1950. Similar to Fairbank, Tucker believed

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13 John King Fairbank, *The United States and China*, 337.
14 Zi and Center, *No Exit?*, 284.
16 Ibid.
Cold War paranoia created a situation in which the American public could not be expected to accept policy prescriptions that would ease diplomatic tensions between these two powers.\footnote{Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, \textit{Patterns in the Dust: Chinese-American Relations and the Recognition Controversy, 1949-1950} (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 198.} The United States chose the path by which its foreign policy prescriptions for China progressed into the future.

\begin{quote}
\textit{Hostility To Recognition: 1949-1950}
\end{quote}

While China’s “fall” to the Communists dealt a severe blow to morale in the United States, military contingency plans developed for the Joint Chiefs of Staff within the Truman administration by committees such as the Joint Strategic Plans Committee advised caution. One plan, for example, stated that the “strategic importance of Formosa does not justify overt military action in the event that diplomatic and economic steps prove unsuccessful to prevent Communist domination.”\footnote{Joint Strategic Plans Committee, \textit{The Impact of Current Far Eastern Developments On Emergency War Planning}, J.C.S. 1966/17. Top Secret. 14 September 1949. DDRS. (accessed July 2, 2013).} This demonstrates that at least initially, the United States military did not plan to become directly involved with the ROC’s attempt to retake the mainland, a fact of unequivocal importance. In 1949, the United States was not only unwilling to directly support the ROC’s attempted retaking of the mainland, but also did not wish to be involved in the creation of a mutual defense pact between the ROC and the United States, indicating a refusal within the military leadership of the United States to once again get involved in the East Asian region. This is indicative of a common fear within the American policymaking establishment of getting pulled into total war with the Chinese Communists. For this reason, while it
continued to provide military aid to the Nationalists, at this time the United States refused to commit soldiers to fight a war in the Taiwan Strait.

Arguments against the Truman administration’s position in regards to the ROC on Taiwan became more abundant as Communist forces first attacked the ROC-controlled Jinmen Islands in October 1949. Jian Chen argues that leadership within the CCP pushed for the initiation of an amphibious assault to liberate Taiwan, allowing the Communists to assert themselves as the one sovereign regime over all of China.\textsuperscript{19} Newspaper articles, drawn to the occurrences in East Asia, provide a fascinating perspective on the events transpiring in the region. As noted in the pages of \textit{Christian Science Monitor}, Communist movement towards Taiwan in August of 1949 brought “rapidly closer the day when the United States and Britain will have to commit themselves on the question of Taiwan’s sovereignty,” creating a situation that many leaders in the United States deemed fit for response.\textsuperscript{20}

While a cohort within the American government firmly believed it was an obligation of the United States to protect the ROC on Taiwan from Communist incursion, there also existed a considerable number of powerful individuals firmly opposed to any form of intervention in China. President Truman’s Secretary of State Dean Acheson opposed any form of military, economic, or other aid to the Guomindang on Taiwan. According to the 1983 autobiography of Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Omar Bradley, Acheson “believed Chiang was doomed, that the Nationalists would not fight for Formosa any harder than they had fought for the mainland, and that if we continued to

\textsuperscript{19} Chen, \textit{Mao’s China and the Cold War}, 165.

support Chiang, however modestly, when Formosa fell it would do ‘further damage to our prestige and to our whole position in the Far East.’”  

21 Acheson served as an important voice of dissent to ROC supporters such as General MacArthur after the Nationalists’ migration to Taiwan. As a close advisor to President Truman, Acheson argued that support for the Nationalist government on Taiwan was not an effective way of dealing with the perceived Communist threat on the Chinese mainland.

While unwilling to recognize the PRC as the legitimate ruling authority over the Chinese mainland, the opinions of Acheson highly influenced President Truman. According to Mei-Ling T. Wang, the Truman administration wanted nothing to do with the chaotic occurrences in China, and chose to remove itself from the recognition debate.  

22 Through his unwillingness to get involved in the region following the events of 1949, Truman established his foreign policymaking agenda in East Asia as one in which the United States would do all in its power to not get involved. This presented a problem to other leaders within the American government, who wanted to ensure the Guomindang’s preservation on Taiwan.

Military leaders, for example, did not unanimously support the position taken by the Truman administration in regard to the threat posed by the PRC to Taiwan. Notable American generals (including the next president, General Dwight D. Eisenhower) disagreed with policy prescriptions for the region, with General Douglas MacArthur openly “favoring American military occupation to prevent the island from being seized


by the Communists."\textsuperscript{23} MacArthur’s public support for the preservation of Nationalist control over Taiwan indicated his belief that the Truman administration’s handling of the region did not bode well for the Guomindang’s survival at the hands of Communist China. Those who favored sending soldiers to the island emphasized the threat posed by Communist expansion in the East Asian sphere, believing that the United States must support the Guomindang’s attempt to retake the Chinese mainland at all cost.

Speeches made in Congress also indicate support for the Nationalist cause during this time period. In a statement to Congress, Senator Howard Alexander Smith from New Jersey professed the importance of American support for the Nationalist government on Taiwan, arguing that the “support of anti-Communist resistance in the Far East” was far more important to national security than the “short range financial pressures” that went along with such support.\textsuperscript{24} This, according to Smith, was of vital strategic importance because “Formosa might be the last bastion opposing the Communist wave in China, but also because Formosa, if in hostile hands, would threaten the island bases on the eastern Pacific,” creating massive problems for the projection of American power in the region.\textsuperscript{25} Statements such as this are indicative of a growing perception in the United States of the need to defend Nationalist sovereignty on Taiwan.

Communists in China took the concerns expressed in the American public at face value, urging additional attacks on the Jinmen islands before the United States could get involved. In December of 1949, for example, Zhou Enlai described the Communists’


\textsuperscript{25} Ibid.
plans for continued involvement in the Chinese Civil War to Soviet Ambassador to the PRC Nikolai V. Roshchin as follows: “Our leadership’s . . . plans are the preparation in the spring of 1950 for landing operations against Formosa and a landing in the summer of 1950. We think this operation should be carried out only after careful preparation for a combined air and sea strike” that would cripple Nationalist resistance on the island.26 The failure of the People’s Liberation Army’s (PLA’s) first attempt at taking the islands within the Taiwan Strait surprised many in the CCP, who wrongly assumed the islands would be poorly defended. By quickly responding in an aggressive countermove, the Communists hoped to catch the Guomindang off-guard and eliminate resistance before American policy could be swayed towards intervention in the region.

Chinese suspicion over the role of the United States in East Asia is further affirmed in declassified reports from American spies in Hong Kong. These reports suggest that after General Marshall’s appointment to the position of Secretary of Defense, “the Chinese Communists have reached the initial decision that the appointment be treated as a sign ‘the warmongers are rising to power,’” indicating a fear that the United States would once again attempt to directly involve itself in the East Asian sphere.27 The CCP did not believe that the United States would ignore an opportunity to take control of Taiwan, especially in light of recent occurrences on the Korean Peninsula. From their point of view, individuals in the United States sought to expand the West’s influence in the region, regardless of whether or not such an expansion would render relations between the PRC and the United States more hostile.


**Chilling Tension: War on the Korean Peninsula**

The Korean War placed additional tension on relations between the United States and the PRC. By coming to the aid of South Korea in 1950, American forces fought soldiers of the PLA battling for control of the Korean Peninsula. It was this event, notes Nancy Tucker, which eliminated all hope for a normalization of diplomatic relations between the two powers.\(^{28}\) The Korean War, lasting from 1950 until 1953, provided reasoning for American involvement in East Asia, dashing Truman’s initial policy to refrain from any intervention in the region.

Prior to Chinese involvement in the Korean War, Zhou Enlai announced to the United Nations, “Despite any military steps of obstruction taken by the United States Government, the Chinese people are irrevocably determined to liberate Taiwan [Formosa] without fail.”\(^{29}\) This statement demonstrated Mao’s urge to recover the island of Taiwan from the Nationalists. By drawing together American involvement on the Korean Peninsula with its support for the ROC on Taiwan, Zhou Enlai explained the situation as one in which “the American imperialists’ invading North Korea and invading Taiwan are one and the same thing.”\(^{30}\) This link allowed Mao to connect the CCP’s efforts in Taiwan to events on the Korean Peninsula. The Communists in China made it clear through their rhetoric that they intended to connect conflict in the Korean theater to aggression in the Taiwan Strait. This association directly influenced the policy


prescriptions put forth by military leaders in the United States, who took the idea of mass-engagement in East Asia as a serious threat to be mitigated. Such concerns can be easily identified within contingency plans of the time period, which express a direct link between conflict in Korea and the coming conflict over the island of Taiwan.

The two theaters became so indelibly linked, both for the United States and the CCP, that during private correspondence to Gao Gang and Kim Il Sung over the possibility of armistice, Mao Zedong only reluctantly agreed that while “it is worth raising the question of Taiwan as a condition” for armistice, “if America firmly insists that the question of Taiwan be resolved separately, then we will make a corresponding concession.” In other words, while Mao hoped to combine talks about Taiwan into the Korean peace settlement, he also recognized that the United States was very unwilling to address the question of Taiwanese sovereignty at this time. This suggests at least a preliminary unwillingness on the part of leadership in the PRC to separate the issue of Taiwan from the resolution of the Korean War. Thus, by tying together these two separate events occurring in the East Asian sphere, the CCP was successful in rhetorically linking Korea and Taiwan. This perceived connection forced the United States to increase its military presence in the region, escalating tensions between the two powers.

The United States quickly mobilized to assist the Nationalists in their attempt to ward off Communist presence in the Taiwan Strait. Following the invasion of South Korea in 1950, General MacArthur personally declared “that it was ‘my responsibility


32 Though the concept of linkages became overwhelmingly apparent with policies initiated by President Nixon in his dealings with Communist China and the Soviet Union, the association drawn here suggests that these linkages existed long before Nixon’s presidency. Also interesting is the nature of this linkage, and the CCP’s role in the creation of such a close connection.
and firm purpose’ to defend Formosa from the Communist invasion forces gathering on the mainland,” creating a situation in which a top general from the United States publicly sided with Chiang Kai-shek and representatives of the ROC in order to lay “the basis for United States-Chinese ‘military cooperation’ and ‘the joint defense of Taiwan’ (Formosa).” By providing direct support for the ROC on Taiwan, the United States entered into direct confrontation with the PRC’s established intent to secure the island for itself. This represented a reversal from Truman’s initial foreign policy prescriptions, and can be seen in the transforming contingency plans related to the defense of Taiwan from Communist aggression.

American military support for the Nationalists on Taiwan during the Korean War was not limited to supporting the sovereignty of the island. In a Senate hearing on China, published on December 19, 1950, General Claire Lee Chennault of the Flying Tigers professed his belief that while the Communists were embroiled in war on the Korean Peninsula, a force originating from Taiwan had a distinct advantage in an attempted invasion of the mainland. As noted in his testimony:

I think that the easiest and quickest way to start a countermovement against the Reds up here in the north who are fighting us in Korea today, would be to utilize the Nationalists on Formosa, and through their contacts with guerillas on the mainland. There is one thing that Red China is desperately afraid of far more than they are afraid of MacArthur and the United Nations in Korea, and that is if Chiang Kai-shek will get back on the mainland, then the people of China will rise up and throw the Reds out.  

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34 The Flying Tigers were an elite American squadron who fought with the Chinese Nationalists during World War II. For more information on the Flying Tigers, see: Daniel Ford, *Flying Tigers: Claire Chennault and His American Volunteers, 1941-1942*, Updated and rev. ed., (New York: Smithsonian Books/Collins, 2007).

Statements such as this suggest that even while embroiled in war with the Communists, leadership within the American military still believed that there existed the possibility of retaking the mainland from Communist control. This becomes important as one considers the development of contingency plans for the region. If there existed the possible procurement of an invasion force on Taiwan, it made sense for the policy of the United States to be in complete defense of the island. By supporting the ROC, the United States could provide additional time during which the Nationalists could amass an invasion force while remaining relatively uninvolved in the actual military engagement on the mainland. Thus, denying Taiwan to the Communists became the essential policy prescription of the Truman administration during this time period.

Contingency plans for dealing with the PRC during the Korean War focused primarily on the use of naval superiority in order to dominate the PLA in all theaters. On June 27, 1950, the Truman administration made a sweeping declaration by ordering “the Seventh Fleet to prevent any attack on Formosa,” indicating a shift in American military policy for the region.36 By 1951, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, a panel of the highest ranking military officers representing each branch of the armed forces, decided that one of the American military’s key policies in the region included the denial of “Formosa to the Communists.”37 This policy included both a full naval blockade of Communist China and a removal of “the restrictions on operations of the Chinese Nationalist forces and give such logistic support to those forces as will contribute to effective operations against the


The United States thus altered both the manner by which it supported Chiang Kai-shek’s regime on the island of Taiwan and its initial opposition to the possibility of becoming further engaged with forces of the PRC outside the Korean Theater. This transition, occurring over the course of less than two years, repositioned the needle by completely altering the Truman administration’s resistance to the possibility of armed confrontation with the PLA. That said, the possibility of tactical nuclear engagement remained off the table, something that would come to change as Truman’s successor entered the White House.

Also incorporated into the American military’s policy prescription for Communist China in 1951 was an explicit reference to the use of covert operations in an effort to overthrow Mao’s regime. According to a Memorandum to the Secretary of Defense, by furnishing “now all practicable covert aid to effective Nationalist guerilla forces in China,” the United States hoped to facilitate resurgence on the mainland, fostering the Guomindang’s attempts to regain control of the remainder of China. This suggests that the United States was no longer willing to sit idly as the Communists retained control over the vast expanse of mainland China, and makes sense considering the testimony made by General Chennault in front of the United States Senate. Clearly, policymakers in the United States hoped that by denying Taiwan to the Communists, Chiang Kai-shek would have time to amass an invasion force capable of retaking the mainland. Thus, it can be asserted that the United States’ implicit goal for maintaining Taiwanese sovereignty involved an amount of cautious optimism that by securing the island, the

38 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
Nationalists could retake the mainland and rollback the expansion of communism in East Asia.

The latter half of the Korean War only reinforced American commitments to the continued survival of the ROC on Taiwan. According to a National Intelligence Estimate commissioned in 1952, “If US policy with respect to Taiwan should change and the US did not participate in the defense of Taiwan, the Chinese Nationalist forces could not successfully defend Taiwan against a large-scale Communist operation.”⁴⁰ This led to a belief that the PRC may attempt to secure the islands “by military action when a favorable opportunity presents itself,” indicating the necessity for continued American intervention in the region.⁴¹ Thus, the United States engaged the Chinese both physically on the Korean Peninsula and diplomatically in the Taiwan Strait.

The entrance of Chinese forces into the Korean War brought American soldiers in direct confrontation with their Communist counterparts. The nature of warfare during this period laid the groundwork from which military policymakers based the majority of their contingency plans into the future. As Martin Russ makes clear, US soldiers encountered Chinese Communists in a hostile environment characterized by “weather so cold that weapons jammed and men were put out of action through frostbite.”⁴² This fact had a profound effect on the development of contingency plans in the future. For this reason, military contingency plans for dealing with PRC efforts to engage the ROC in the Taiwan Straits can be directly linked to American experiences on the ground in Korea. While

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⁴¹ Ibid.

there is no way to find out precisely who wrote each contingency plan, writers of military contingency plans in the years following the Korean War served in and around the conflict, inevitably bringing their own personal experiences to the table. As they ascended the ranks, these former soldiers became regional experts in Asia, fostering the development of contingency plans that then served as the backbone of the United States military’s policy for dealing with the devolving situation in Taiwan.

Events that transpired during the Korean War permeated relations between the United States and PRC. The armistice talks held in Panmunjom, on the border of North and South Korea between representatives from the United States and PRC, set the stage for two decades of diplomatic relations between the two nations. These interactions, also known as the Ambassadorial Talks, provided an organized structure where delegates from both the PRC and the United States voiced their distaste for the other nation’s actions. While these talks were not productive in the normalization of relations between the two actors, according to Kenneth T. Young “they have eased critical tensions over Taiwan three times and lowered the danger of international nuclear conflict in that area” by creating a back channel by which leaders from each side can come together and voice their dissent for policies of the opposing nation.43 These talks later helped establish a peace initiative that defined the time period between the First and Second Taiwan Strait Crises.

Tense Ties: Eisenhower and NSC 166

Hostility defined American interactions with the PRC following the Korean War. In response to the 1953 armistice, the United States armed forces created contingency plans that dealt directly with the problems posed by Communist China. The election of General Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1953 contributed heavily to the restructuring of military contingency plans for dealing with Communist China. Similar to MacArthur, Eisenhower was not a firm proponent of the Truman administration’s policies for dealing with Communist China. This is noted by John Lewis Gaddis, who states Eisenhower’s only major problem with foreign policy under the Truman administration centered on American involvement in the Chinese theater. Eisenhower, never one to sacrifice an advantage, did not believe nuclear weapon deployment should be eliminated from contingency plans for dealing with Communist China. This makes sense, considering his extensive military experience and his belief that all available means must be used in order to achieve success. For this reason, upon Eisenhower’s entrance into the Oval Office, the language of contingency plans changed to the point at which they directly referred to the threat posed by the PRC, providing possible responses to actions taken by the ROC, the PRC, and the United States. This suggests a drastic reevaluation of American military policy at the hands of a new President who was no stranger to war.

As the 1953 Korean Armistice Talks at Panmunjom drew near, the Joint Chiefs of Staff ordered the development of contingency plans in an attempt to present the new administration with possible options depending upon how the talks proceeded. One particularly important contingency plan was National Security Council Recommendation 44.

#154 (NSC 154). This document noted that “an armistice in Korea would not indicate
that Communist China had abandoned its basic objective or its willingness to seek . . .
objectives by armed force,” indicating that the United States must be willing and able to
counter the threat posed by Communist China even after the armistice talks concluded.45
In light of recent developments, NSC 154 suggested that the United States “continue to
recognize the Government of the Republic of China on Formosa as the Government of all
China,” indicating that the United States was firmly committed to the continued support
of its Nationalist allies on the island.46 This commitment was further reinforced with the
development of National Security Council Recommendation #166 (NSC 166) in
November of the same year, which finalized American contingency plans for dealing
with Communist China in case of an attempted invasion.

Eisenhower firmly opposed Communist control over the mainland, ordering the
adoption of NSC 166 within the first year of his administration’s arrival in Washington.
This contingency plan laid out the options for dealing with the Chinese Communists’
perceived tendency towards aggressive expansion. At this time, proposals to utilize the
full strength of the United States military, complete with support for attempts by the ROC
to forcibly overthrow the Communists, were viewed as too risky without significant
changes in the levels of hostility between the United States and Communist China.47 NSC
166 provides a look into the Eisenhower administration’s plans for countering the threat

46 Ibid., 2.
November 06, 1953. DDRS. (accessed July 2, 2013).
posed by the PRC with special attention placed on the manner by which each contingency plan affected relations between the United States and the PRC into the future.

According to NSC 166, “the primary problem of U.S. foreign policy in the Far East is to cope with the altered structure of power which arises from the existence of a strong and hostile Communist China, and from the alliance of Communist China with the USSR.” This statement set the stage for the proposals prescribed by the document.

While NSC 166 suggests that “the overthrow or replacement of the Chinese Communist regime by the use of U.S armed force” and “support with U.S. forces of an attempt by the Chinese Government on Formosa forcibly to overthrow the Chinese regime” were policies of last resort to be used only in case of additional hostility between forces of the United States and the PRC, many other contingencies existed in regards to possible actions taken by Communist China. For example, while the United States did not wish to once again become embroiled in full-scale engagement against the PRC, NSC 166 does state that the armed services should “be prepared to prevent, with the use of U.S. armed forces if necessary and feasible, further territorial expansion elsewhere by the Chinese Communists.” This proclamation suggests that the American military establishment, though fully aware of the Korean War’s costs, was willing to utilize military force if necessary in order to counter the threat posed by China and had done so before.

Arguments such as this paralleled a movement on Taiwan aimed at retaking the mainland from Communist control. Political rhetoric throughout East Asia reached a

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48 Ibid., 1.


50 Ibid., 7.
heightened level of intensity, with groups such as the Asian Peoples Anti-Communist Conference arguing, “All the troubles in Asia originated from the Chinese Communists who have not only sold the Chinese nation to the Soviet imperialists, but have also offered the Chinese mainland as Russia’s base for her eastward and southward advances.”

Statements such as this explained the current situation as a problem in which the PRC served solely as a puppet-state to Moscow rather than as an autonomous entity in the international sphere. This group, composed of individuals representing each sovereign nation of non-Communist Asia, pushed for the rollback of communism from the region. It was for this reason that the ROC adopted a policy in which “the recovery of the Chinese mainland is the responsibility of the Chinese people and the common wish of the Asian people,” indicating a movement towards the justification of a counteroffensive aimed at rolling back the movement towards socialism on the mainland.

The language within NSC 166 fails to acknowledge the political organization and leadership within Communist China. According to the document, “it is obvious that Chinese Communist achievements can in large degree be attributed to factors other than the political competence of the Chinese Communist leaders.” This inability to acknowledge the prowess, power, and sovereignty of Communist China demonstrates that the military establishment of the United States retained intense and underestimated bias towards its Communist counterparts, a direct reversal of the praise offered to the CCP during the Dixie Mission to Yan’an only a decade earlier. This is exemplified in a

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52 Ibid.

letter from Secretary of State John Foster Dulles to Eisenhower, which stated that had Taiwan fallen to the Communists, “The consequences in the Far East would be even more far-reaching and catastrophic than those which followed when the United States allowed the Chinese mainland to be taken over by the Chinese Communists.” While the evidence for such a strong statement is limited at best, such a letter indicates the extreme levels of Cold War paranoia that existed during this time period. For this reason, as policymakers in the United States experienced heightened levels of fear, it became increasingly apparent that communism could not be allowed to take root on Taiwan, a fact that can be seen in the language of contingency plans from the time period.

In conjunction with National Security Council’s release of NSC 166, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) created Special Estimate #50 (SE 50), which dealt with probable Communist reactions to an attempted invasion of Hainan Island by the Nationalists, supported by air forces from the United States. Military leaders of the time considered Hainan Island, less than twenty miles from the mainland and under Communist control since the Chinese Civil War, to be the best stepping point from which to base Nationalist forces prior to the proposed invasion of the mainland. This can be primarily attributed to its large size and close proximity to the mainland, making it an ideal staging point for the accumulation of large numbers of troops and equipment prior to the initiation of their invasion northward.

It is clear that Hainan Island served as an important point of Communist control in East Asia during the Cold War. Within the pages of SE 50, policymakers in the CIA wrote, “The rulers of the USSR and Communist China would view the loss of Hainan as

a severe psychological defeat and a blow to the military prestige of Communist China.\footnote{The Central Intelligence Agency. \textit{Special Estimate #50 (SE 50). Top Secret Security Information: Designated for Specific Eyes Only. September 09, 1953. DDRS.} (accessed July 10, 2013).} Most policymakers in the United States, whether from a political or military background, believed the intense international backlash associated with direct and unprovoked American military involvement would create a situation that would only prove detrimental to the progression of America’s foreign policy agenda around the world. This can be attributed to the fact that most neutral countries during the Cold War era were “inclined to believe that a real settlement of East-West differences, at least in the Far East, is possible at the present time,” making any direct military intervention on the part of a superpower such as the United States unnecessary.\footnote{Ibid., 20.} Rather than supporting armed engagement, the CIA recognized the fact that containing the spread of communism required the development of diplomatic ties between America and neutral powers around the world.

The first year of the Eisenhower administration proved to be a turning point in the progression of American military policy for dealing with the perceived threat posed by the CCP. In 1953 alone, military contingency plans evolved in both scope and response, presenting many more available options than previously considered during the Truman administration. As time progressed and Communist influence in the region grew, policymakers in the United States developed contingency plans for dealing with the problem of Taiwanese sovereignty, leading to the creation of an explicit policy for dealing with the threat posed by Communist China. While these plans indicate support for the Nationalists on Taiwan (something far less important under Truman), attacking
the PRC remained a last resort during the early years of the Eisenhower administration. This would come to change with the eruption of the First Taiwan Strait Crisis of 1955.

**Tensions on the Rise: The First Taiwan Strait Crisis**

“Suddenly I heard the sounds of shelling – ‘bong bong.’ At first, the shells landed mostly in the sea between Shuitou and Little Jinmen . . . We could see the shells firing from the Communist guns on the coast at Xiamen. As each shell landed in the water, it sent up a spray of water – what a sight!”

This exclamation, uttered by Jinmen Island native Zheng Qingli, serves as an important oral account in remembrance of the shelling of the Jinmen Islands by Communist China that began the First Taiwan Strait Crisis. This crisis, lasting from September 3, 1954 until May 1, 1955, ushered in a new level of hostility in East Asia, raising tensions in the region to a level that very easily could have led to the use of military force, either conventional or nuclear, by the United States to counter Communist aggression in the region.

The threat of Communist invasion coincided with a massive Communist-fueled propaganda campaign aimed at gaining support for an eventual attack on Taiwan. The CCP Central Committee, in a telegram to Zhou Enlai, believed that after the Korean War, the Communists had “failed to take necessary measures and make effective efforts in military affairs, on the diplomatic front, and also in our propaganda” to initiate a successful offensive against the Nationalists on the island of Taiwan. This belief led to the PRC’s initiation of a propaganda campaign indicting American imperialism and the

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57 Zheng Qingli, JMMFFT, I: 409-410. Taken from: Michael Szonyi, Cold War Island, 42.

illegitimacy of Guomindang rule in East Asia. Zhou Enlai, speaking in Geneva, argued, “The U.S.A. first and foremost – still refuses to recognize the People’s Republic of China and endeavors to ignore the right of the Chinese people to choose their own state system,” adding an international aspect to the propaganda campaign already occurring in East Asia. This propaganda campaign exacerbated tensions in the region, further reinforcing the Nationalists’ urge to attack the mainland while encouraging the United States to restate its intent to defend the ROC-controlled islands at all cost.

In response to the propaganda campaign initiated by the Chinese Communists, ROC leaders encouraged the mobilization of soldiers against the Chinese mainland. According to the New York Times, Premier Chen Cheng stood before the Taiwanese legislature in order to reinforce the notion that “a mainland campaign was necessary not only to recover lost territory but also to protect Formosa itself” from the threat of Communist invasion. Under threat of attack, leaders from the ROC became greater proponents of a counteroffensive against the mainland, arguing “Not a single area in Free Asia today is free from the threat of the aggressive forces of the Soviet imperialists and their tool of aggression --- the Chinese Communists. Freedom and slavery, democracy and totalitarianism cannot exist side by side.” Rhetoric such as this set the stage for the showdown looming on the horizon between forces of the PRC and the Nationalists on the Strait of Taiwan.


The American intelligence community also recognized the significance of such a large-scale propaganda campaign. Understanding that heightened amounts of politically charged rhetoric may signify an impending move against the ROC-controlled islands in the Taiwan Strait, American foreign policymakers began taking note, hoping to prepare for the possibility of Communist aggression towards the United States’ Nationalist allies. According to Special National Intelligence Estimate 100-4-54 (SNIE-100-4-54), a document created by the CIA, “there has been a Communist propaganda campaign involving pledges by high-level leaders in Peiping to ‘liberate’ Taiwan and the off-shore islands and warnings that if anyone ‘dares to interfere in our internal affairs, they must take upon themselves all the grave consequences of such acts of aggression.’”62 This served as a threat to American involvement in the region, creating a situation in which the Chinese Communists aggressively attempted to rebuke any possible interference by the United States in regards to the ROC-controlled islands in the Strait of Taiwan.

In addition to the Nationalist push towards their ultimate goal of a counteroffensive directed against Communist forces on the mainland, the ROC also sought the creation of a mutual defense pact between itself and the United States. This pact would require the United States to aid the Nationalists in any instance of armed aggression between the ROC and the PRC, and weighed heavily on the minds of leaders in the PRC. Notably, Zhou Enlai expressed his concern to the Soviet Premier Georgy M. Malekov:

Preparations are being made to conclude a defense pact between Jiang Jieshi [Chiang Kai-shek] and the US government. The Americans still have not decided to sign the pact. They cannot fail to understand that

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this act will provoke still stronger anti-American feelings in China and might hinder the settling of differences with China in the future. Correspondence such as this indicates a concern within the PRC whose leaders understood that further American involvement in the region as a form of aggression that would only hinder their attempts at acquiring the ROC-controlled territories in the Strait.

Shelling of the Jinmen Islands by forces of the PLA on September 3, 1954 brought American foreign policy in direct contention with the PRC’s established goals for dealing with the Strait of Taiwan. The United States opposed the shelling, with Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Radford going so far as to state, “If we fail to resist this aggression, we commit the United States further to a negative policy which could result in a progressive loss of free world strength to local aggression until or unless all-out conflict is forced upon us.” The staunch anti-communist sentiment within the Eisenhower administration would not accept Communist control over the Strait of Taiwan. For this reason, the coming months would witness an expansion in the creation of contingency plans for dealing with forces of the PRC, some of which went as far as to suggest the United States should consider the inclusion of the release of atomic weapons against military targets on the Chinese mainland.

In response to heightened tension in the Strait of Taiwan, the United States foreign policy establishment reacted swiftly in an effort to prove its unwavering security commitment to the Nationalist government on Taiwan. This included the creation of

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65 Contemplation over whether or not to use tactical nuclear weapons in order to defend the Strait of Taiwan can be found in policy recommendations originating from the Joint Chiefs of Staff at this time period. Most notable of these is used in the introduction of the thesis, and can be found online in the Declassified Documents Reference System. For more information, see: The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. U.S. Military Courses of Action to Meet a Chinese Communist Attack Against the Quemoy or Matsu Island Groups. Top Secret. March 31, 1955. DDRS. (accessed July 27, 2013).
National Security Council Action 1206-F (NSC Action 1206-F), which established United States policy on armed aggression against the Jinmen Islands held by the ROC. On September 11, 1954, the Joint Chiefs of Staff expressed their personal recommendations to the Secretary of Defense, Charles Erwin Wilson, for the enforcement of this policy prescription. Every member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, with the exception of the Chief of Staff of the United States Army, agreed to the policy recommendations expressed within this document indicating a high level of support for defense of the Jinmen Islands.

To the American military, the Jinmen Islands represented a vital strategic location in the effort to defend Taiwan from its Communist aggressors. While not vital to the counteroffensive against the Chinese mainland, NSC Action 1206-F demonstrates these islands represented a location that, in the possession of the Chinese Communists, would afford “them unrestricted and unimpeded use of their best harbor south of Shanghai from which could be launched an amphibious attack against Formosa and the Pescadores.”

For this reason, NSC Action 1206-F recommended defense of the islands as an essential part of American military policy in the region. As stated by the Joint Chiefs of Staff in their policy prescription, “successful defense of the islands in the face of a determined attack would probably involve U.S. naval and air forces in some direct action against the Chinese mainland,” requiring the creation of additional policy prescriptions in the event that this form of action occurred.

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67 Ibid.
In the days following initial artillery strikes conducted against Nationalist fortifications on the Jinmen Islands, the United States received a series of telegrams from American Ambassador to the ROC Karl L. Rankin, who recommended that “US Commanders should have full authority immediately to give any necessary support in defense of [the] Kinmen (Quemoy), Matsu, Nan-je and Tachen Islands.” This only reaffirms the stance taken by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who viewed the Jinmen Islands as a point of strategic necessity in the defense of ROC-controlled Taiwan.

While Admiral Radford and a majority of the Joint Chiefs of Staff firmly believed that the United States was capable of holding the Jinmen Islands, other policy briefs place far more speculation into whether or not this was actually the case. According to the memorandum from a telephone conversation between President Eisenhower and Secretary of State Dulles on September 6, 1954, “Radford thinks Quemoy could be held, Ridgway [the Chief of Staff of the Army] differs. Smith and Eisenhower agree that if we go in, our prestige is at stake.” This led to the President’s personal belief that “We should not go in unless we can defend it,” indicating that even the staunch anti-communist Eisenhower, while willing to use United States’ forces in defense of Taiwan, was more skeptical about the American ability to defend the ROC-controlled islands in such close proximity to mainland China.

The fall of 1954 saw retaliation in the form of coordinated air strikes by Nationalist forces originating from the island of Taiwan against PLA detachments

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stationed on the mainland. These attacks only increased tension in the region, necessitating a decision on the part of American policymakers, who now had to determine in what manner to support their allies on Taiwan. By winter, policymakers in the United States were in the process of developing a mutual defense treaty that would solidify America’s vested interest in the survival of the ROC on Taiwan. While in the CIA it was accepted that “Communist China and the USSR would vigorously denounce the treaty,” in so doing, the intelligence community assumed that “the Chinese Communists would probably estimate that the treaty (with or without a [UN] Resolution) did not significantly alter the balance of power in the Formosa area.”

For this reason, there was a general assumption that a mutual defense treaty would only reinforce the current state of international affairs in East Asia, reaffirming America’s earlier support for the ROC on Taiwan.

While Eisenhower did not believe the outlying islands controlled by the ROC to be worthy of defense by forces from the United States, by January of 1955 “it was agreed that if called upon by the Chinese Nationals, the American forces would assist in the evacuation” of islands threatened by Communist invasion. This did not preclude the prospect of armed engagement in the event that it was “essential to the success of the operation” or the Chinese Communists threatened Americans involved in the evacuation effort. Through the creation of this distinction, it is possible to witness the difference between the stances taken by Eisenhower and Truman over Taiwanese sovereignty.


72 Ibid.
While Truman was very unwilling to commit military forces to the region for fear of total war, the position taken by Eisenhower demonstrates complete American support for the Nationalists. Eisenhower, not one to appear weak in the face of a fight, secured the United States’ position by the side of the Nationalists. Time would only tell whether or not the United States would once again enter into armed engagement with forces of the PRC.

Rhetoric also played into the hands of the Eisenhower administration during the early days of 1955. In a show of strength against Communist opposition, “President Eisenhower decided to defend Formosa’s right to the outposts [on Jinmen] and let it be known he was contemplating the use of nuclear weapons” against military strong points along the Chinese coast.73 This, argues John Lewis Gaddis, reveals “how little it would take to push the U.S. into a war with China involving the probable use of nuclear weapons.”74 The threat of nuclear weapons brought the First Taiwan Strait Crisis to a head.

The threat of nuclear weapon deployment changed the foreign policy landscape of East Asia. Unlike Truman, Eisenhower did not have mental reservations associated with the use of nuclear weapons in defense of Taiwan. Keeping all options on the table meant Eisenhower could respond in the manner he saw fit, even though the use of such powerful weapons was widely opposed within the general public back home.75 Luckily, by March of 1955, a belief existed that the United States had a firm grasp upon the events unfolding

in and around the region. Reports from Admiral Stump, Commander of the United States Pacific Fleet from 1953 until 1958, indicated “CHINAT [Chinese Nationalist] action supported by U.S. conventional operations would give a high degree of assurance against loss of the islands.”\textsuperscript{76} This, when coupled with the fact that “the CHICOM artillery threat to Matsu and Quemoy” was considered “harassing but not critical,” suggested to the Eisenhower administration that only an aggressive full-scale Communist invasion force could successfully take the islands, allowing time for the further development of contingency plans in response to the Communist threat.\textsuperscript{77}

While a massive invasion force may have successfully taken control of the Jinmen Islands, the Eisenhower administration wagered that the PRC was unwilling to initiate such an act of aggression while the threat of nuclear weapons remained on the table. Reports from the PRC Foreign Ministry Archive affirm this, documenting Eisenhower’s willingness “to hold direct discussions with Communist China on all issues which would adequately lead to the relaxation of international tension,” an offer that was quickly accepted by leaders within the PRC.\textsuperscript{78} By May 1, 1955, the First Taiwan Strait Crisis had come to a close, its primary result being the adoption of a mutual defense treaty between the United States and the ROC on Taiwan.


\textsuperscript{77} Ibid.

Caution in the Wind: Interactions During a Peaceful Time

The latter half of 1955 brought about an easing of tensions between the United States and the PRC. This period represented the height of the Ambassadorial Talks between representatives of the PRC and the United States, leading to a relationship defined by tense, yet peaceful, ties. Occurring in Geneva, Switzerland, the 1955 Ambassadorial Talks presented the United States and the Chinese Communists with a venue by which each side could voice its concern over each nation’s foreign policy agenda. As Yafeng Xia argues, the Ambassadorial Talks played an important role in reducing confrontations by fostering communication between the two powers. While these talks were not the most productive, their value can be seen in the reduction in tension between both sides during this time period. This did not mean contingency plans stopped accounting for Communist China, but rather that the development of new contingency plans stalled as events on the ground fostered a more stable diplomatic environment.

Leaders in China appeared far more hopeful about the possibility of normalizing relations between the two nations than their counterparts in the United States. Foreign newspapers such as the Times of India cited Zhou Enlai’s belief that “China placed ‘great hopes’ on the Geneva talks,” indicating more willingness on the part of the Communist Chinese to approach the talks in a constructive manner. Compared to articles found in The Sun in Baltimore that argued the talks did “not in any way constitute diplomatic

recognition of Red China,” this apparent open-mindedness gave legitimacy to the belief that the Chinese were willing to negotiate with the United States.\textsuperscript{82} Scholars such as Kenneth T. Young note even if the Talks did not produce tangible results, they did allow for the creation of a venue by which both sides could interact in a peaceful, albeit tense, manner.\textsuperscript{83}

The peaceful time period encompassing the Ambassadorial Talks coincided with an effort by the PRC to achieve victory in the diplomatic sphere. By appealing to neutral countries, leading members of the CCP spoke about the post-1954 identification of Communist China as the aggressor nation intent upon expansion in East Asia. Individuals such as Zhou Enlai engaged the “Two China Policy” in a diplomatic manner, arguing that while the PRC had “suggested the peaceful resolution of the Taiwan problem and have refrained from the use of force,” the notion of two separate China’s was an unacceptable way of forestalling the real issue at hand: the question of what to do about the Nationalist government on the island of Taiwan.\textsuperscript{84}

Such an attempt to appeal to neutral countries was put on display at the Bandung Conference held in Bandung, Indonesia in 1955. Zhou Enlai attended the conference, offering a speech attempting to put the international community at peace. His profession that “the ‘small nations of Asia had nothing to fear from their great neighbour, China, resonated with the spirit that held the conference together.”\textsuperscript{85} Thus, by engaging the


\textsuperscript{83} Kenneth Young, \textit{Negotiating with the Chinese Communists; the United States Experience, 1953-1967}, 20.


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world on a diplomatic level, Chinese officials expressed their desire to join the international community while retaining their identity as the legitimate government over the entirety of China.

The period from mid-1955 until 1958 represented a period of peace following the dramatic events of the First Taiwan Strait Crisis. Growth in trade between the PRC and non-communist countries, as cited by the Central Intelligence Agency in 1956, demonstrated that the PRC was in the process of becoming further involved in the diplomatic sphere, indicating a positive turn in the progression of relations between the PRC and the remainder of the international community. This expansion of trade was particularly significant to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who understood there to be “four methods whereby China can take advantage of the new trade situation,” including: a shift away from trade with the Soviet bloc, increased availability of foreign exchange, extension of credit, and an expansion of exported goods. These changes, if made, could allow the Communists to facilitate an improvement of relations between the PRC and the remainder of the international community. While these considerations should be taken into account, scholars such as Jian Chen portray the peace initiative of this time period as an attempt by the government in Beijing to garner time before its return to an increasingly aggressive policy for dealing with the Taiwan Strait, indicating

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87 Ibid.
that even during this time period, the PRC remained intent upon the achievement of its ultimate goal: the elimination of Nationalist control over the island of Taiwan.\textsuperscript{88}

\textit{Breathing Fire: The Second Taiwan Strait Crisis}

In 1958, the PRC once again began an extended propaganda campaign oriented around the liberation of the island of Taiwan from its Nationalist occupiers. This campaign, strikingly similar to the one that occurred prior to the First Taiwan Strait Crisis of 1954-1955, lasted through June and July of 1958.\textsuperscript{89} By August, the campaign peaked with letters from Wu Lengxi, a member of the CCP Central Committee, stating, “American occupation of Taiwan became even more unjust . . . Our demand was that American armed forces should withdraw from Taiwan, and Jiang’s army should withdraw from Jinmen and Mazu. If they did not, we would attack. Taiwan was too far away to be bombed, so we shelled Jinmen and Mazu.”\textsuperscript{90} By all accounts, this indicated that leadership on the mainland intended to utilize American intervention in the region in order to justify their attempted acquisition of lands controlled by the ROC.

Incorporated into Communist rhetoric at this time was a belief expressed by Zhou Enlai in a conversation with Kim Il Sung that “To the socialist camp, [the U.S.] is on the defensive. Of course, if there is any conflict among us, they will definitely exploit it. As long as we are united, they can never defeat us.”\textsuperscript{91} To leaders within the PRC, the United

\textsuperscript{88} Jian Chen, \textit{Mao’s China and the Cold War}, 171.


\textsuperscript{91} “Minutes of Conversation between Chinese Prime Minister Zhou Enlai and North Korean Prime Minister Kim Il Sung” November 27, 1958, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, PRC FMA Document 204-00064-02 (1). Obtained for NKIDP by Gregg
States represented a reactionary force that could not repress the Communists’ moves to retake the ROC-controlled islands in the Strait of Taiwan. By uniting the Communist-bloc, leaders within the CCP hoped to challenge the United States’ presence in East Asia. This would be accomplished through an intensive shelling of the Jinmen Islands, the same islands attacked during the First Taiwan Strait Crisis.

With the continued shelling of the Jinmen Islands, individuals in both the United States and ROC believed the most important point of consideration demanding immediate attention to be the re-creation of supply lines of communication to the islands. Without supplies, the islands would not be capable of withstanding the continuous shelling conducted by the Chinese Communists. According to the United States Navy’s Commander in Chief of the Pacific Fleet Headquarters (CINCPAC), in a report to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, there existed a substantial fear that “the morale of the GRC defense forces on Jinmen will crack if the present rate of bombardment continues,” indicating the gravity of the situation at hand.\(^92\) Guomindang forces needed “visible evidence that the US is supporting them” in their attempt to retain control of the islands, a fact that required additional American involvement in the region.\(^93\) This was an important consideration for policymakers attempting to ensure the continued sovereignty of Taiwan during this time period.

Also on the minds of foreign policymakers within the United States was the mutual defense treaty signed during the First Taiwan Strait Crisis. The Eisenhower administration, in an effort to demonstrate its commitment to securing Nationalist control

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\(^93\) Ibid.
over Taiwan, opened the door to armed engagement between the PRC and the United States. Had the Nationalists entered into full-scale engagement against the Chinese Communists, the United States would have been required to support their Nationalist allies in the fight, creating a situation that could have led to total war. Though the use of nuclear weapons remained on the table, policymakers in the United States hoped to forestall direct confrontation at all cost. For this reason, “within days, the United States had assembled off the Chinese coast the most powerful armada the world had ever seen.”\textsuperscript{94} This armada, composed of six aircraft carrier strike groups each containing a full compliment of aircraft, represented the ultimate level of conventional deterrence against any form of Communist aggression against the ROC on Taiwan, allowing for a quick resolution to an otherwise volatile situation.\textsuperscript{95} Through such a projection of power, the United States hoped to repel Communist invasion attempts, securing the island of Taiwan into the future.

Concluding Remarks:

The evolution of diplomatic relations between the United States and the PRC can be boiled down to the efforts of foreign policymakers. The policies created by these individuals, found most explicitly in the pages of contingency plans, offered a manner by which relations between the two sides could develop into the future. By analyzing plans related to the problems posed by Communist expansion on the mainland, it is possible to witness a change over time in the United States’ policy towards the Chinese Communists. Increasing levels of hostility are most dramatic when considering the perpetual problem

\textsuperscript{94} Jian Chen, \textit{Mao’s China and the Cold War}, 182.

caused by American recognition of the Nationalist Government on the island of Taiwan. Under Eisenhower, experiences in East Asia catalyzed a drastic reevaluation of contingency plans for dealing with Communist China, sparking a change over time that easily could have precipitated into total war. For this reason, an analysis of foreign policy between these two entities is incomplete without consideration of the contingency plans created in response to the threats posed by Communist expansion in East Asia.

By engaging the work of notable scholars such as John Lewis Gaddis, this thesis opens the door to further historical examination and analysis. One of the more interesting possibilities that would add to this study would be the inclusion of contingency plans originating from the island of Taiwan during this time period. As many of the contingency plans referenced in this work are based upon possible actions taken by Nationalist forces under the command of Chiang Kai-shek, an exhaustive comparative analysis could be conducted that would only further reveal the extent to which the Eisenhower administration’s foreign policy agenda drew the United States closer to total war with Communist China. A study such as this could also reveal the extent to which Chiang Kai-shek believed he possessed the unwavering support of the United States in his rule over the entirety of China.

The prospect of nuclear weapon deployment was far from political posturing. The pages of contingency plans suggest that the Eisenhower administration kept the prospect of tactical nuclear strikes against military targets on the Chinese mainland on the table throughout the crises that occurred in the Strait of Taiwan. This created a scenario in which the prospect of total war between the United States and the PRC was far from
obsolete. For this reason, contingency plans provide an excellent source base from which
to conduct historical research on relations between the United States and the PRC.
Archives Utilized:

- Declassified Documents Reference System Digital Archive
  - Found online at: http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/DDRS?locID=tulane
- Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) Digital Archive
  - Found online at: http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments
- ProQuest Congressional Archive
  - Found online at: http://congressional.proquest.com/congressional/search/basic/basicsearch
- ProQuest Historical Newspaper Database
  - Newspapers Including
    - Christian Science Monitor
    - The Los Angeles Times
    - The Manchester Guardian
    - The New York Times
    - The Sun
    - The Times of India
    - The Washington Post
  - Found online at: http://search.proquest.com/advanced?accountid=14437&selectids=1005880,1006091,1007871,1007272,1006744,1005676,1007624,1005879,1006442,1005877,1006058,1005671,1005670,1005678,1007874,1007154,1006359
- Wilson Center Cold War Digital Archive
  - Found online at: http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/

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BIOGRAPHY:

Growing up in the small town of Park City, Utah, my early life was very relaxed. I was privileged to attend a high school that did not experience the social segregation characteristic of most schools in the United States. A majority of this portion of my life was spent outside skiing, fishing, or playing football with friends from around town.

I came to Tulane University with the goal of following in my father’s footsteps as a future aviator. Beginning in the summer prior to my sophomore year, I earned a Naval ROTC scholarship, allowing me to come steps away from the realization of this goal. My time in the Naval ROTC Battalion has presented me with unique opportunities to lead and assist my fellow midshipmen in the attainment of their personal goals. I am currently a selected Student Naval Aviator, and will begin flight school in November of 2014 in Pensacola, Florida.

For me, understanding how states interact with one another was the primary focus of my undergraduate education. Coming from a military family and being a future military officer myself, I believe that understanding the relationships between international actors will be one of the most important components of my career into the future. I am also of the belief that it is impossible to understand the field of international relations without understanding the effect cultural differences have on these relations. Therefore, historical tradition is imperative to understanding the manner by which diplomatic relations evolve.