

**The United States and the
Republic of China, 1949–1978:
Suspicious Allies**

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The United States and the Republic of China, 1949–1978: Suspicious Allies

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This paper discusses the relationship between the United States and the Republic of China (ROC) from 1949 to 1979. This was an association that began and ended with an American determination to distance itself from the government on Taiwan, in the interests of improved relations with the government of the People's Republic of China (PRC) on the mainland. In the intervening years, the United States and the ROC were aligned in a relationship—formalized by a mutual defense treaty from 1955 to 1979—which weathered two (almost three) military confrontations with the PRC.¹

Considerable cooperation, as well as often bitter bargaining, characterized this complex and evolving alliance. The primary purpose of the discussion that follows is to trace the evolution of this alliance and to describe the manner in which it was managed. Its secondary purpose is to relate that analysis to the present state of America's Asian alliances.

I. Allies of a Kind: 1950–1963²

Overview

Taiwan's greatest strategic asset was and is its location. Situated about one hundred miles off the coast of China, the island was seen by American military planners in the late 1940s as part of a natural defense line stretching from the Aleutians to the Philippines and sitting astride the major sea lanes running from North Asia to the South and to Europe beyond.³ Prior to the outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950, there was no American consensus regarding policy toward the island. The armed services stressed its military significance, but with limited resources and extensive global commitments, they generally argued for simply denying the island to any potential enemy, not controlling it. However, Secretary of State Dean Acheson had little desire to retain ties with what he considered a losing, incompetent, and deceitful Kuomintang (KMT) government. For Acheson, the problem was political. Securing the island would damage the prospects of arriving at a *modus vivendi* with China's new government, and alienate many allies.

By the spring of 1950, worsening relations with both the Soviet Union and the PRC rejuvenated proposals to retain an American position on Taiwan. This became more compelling after North Korea's invasion of South Korea.⁴ The immediate reaction of the administration was to seek further ways of denying the island to the Sino-Soviet bloc without aligning with the KMT government. President Truman's June 27, 1950 decision to use the Seventh Fleet to "neutralize" the Taiwan Strait was consistent with this strategy, as were efforts to achieve its neutralization through the UN.⁵

This American posture continued until the PRC entered the Korean War in October 1950. Beijing was then an enemy and alignment with Taiwan's KMT government was no longer avoided.⁶ In May 1951, Under Secretary of State Dean Rusk belittled the PRC as a "Slavic Manchukuo." He declared that assistance would go to the "National Government of the Republic of China," while a National Security Council (NSC) document (48/5) referred to formal military cooperation with the ROC government.⁷ Approval was soon given for the sale of aircraft to Taiwan; the Military Advisory Assistance Group (MAAG) was sent to the island; and consultation between the two militaries began. Plans were afoot for what one official called a "massive economic-military aid program."⁸ Administration discussions suggested that this shift represented not simply a denial of Taiwan to the enemy, but rather, preparation for *active use* of KMT forces in Asia, should that be required.⁹

Even as events drove both sides toward alignment, the legacy of the civil war remained. In a conversation with Douglas MacArthur in the summer of 1950, Averell Harriman, then special assistant to the President, stressed the importance of understanding that there was a "basic conflict of interest between the United States and the Generalissimo's position." Washington wanted to prevent the island from "falling into hostile hands," while Chiang saw realignment as a "stepping stone for. . . re-entry to the mainland."¹⁰

Very simply, while one ally sought to use the alliance primarily as an offensive tool, the other saw it primarily as a defensive mechanism. Chiang had not gone to Taiwan to create a government-in-exile or to be an American strategic asset. The island was a place to regroup his forces and to prepare to take the battle back to the mainland. At the staff level, ROC military leaders sought to refocus joint planning sessions with their American counterparts, away from defense and toward preparations for a new offensive against the mainland.¹¹ The

American reaction was clear. Washington was willing to entertain guerrilla raids against the mainland (if the need arose), as well as even more ambitious landings (for example, an impending defeat in Korea or a widening of the war by Beijing). The emphasis, however, was on defense.¹²

There was continuity between the policies of the late Truman administration and the early years of the Eisenhower administration. This existed even though Eisenhower used the occasion of his February 1953 State of the Union speech to announce that the Seventh Fleet would no longer “shield Communist China.” This statement, depicted as the “unleashing of Chiang Kai-shek,” did not signify American acceptance of his mission to return to the mainland. Instead, it was intended as a signal to the PRC of the need for closure in the Korean War, and as a sop to conservative Republicans at home.¹³

After the Korean War ended, Chiang became concerned that Taiwan’s interests would be neglected, so he pressed for a formal treaty commitment. Throughout 1953 the American response was negative.¹⁴ Despite sentiment within the administration in 1954 to move forward with a treaty, in light of French difficulties in Vietnam and the forthcoming Geneva Conference, Dulles resisted.¹⁵ After the Geneva Conference, Beijing began a campaign to “liberate Taiwan.” By September, the offshore island group of Quemoy was under artillery attack.

Quemoy is one of several small island clusters—some within sight of the mainland—that were not a part of the main Taiwan/Pescadores formation. Unlike this formation, they had remained part of China during the twentieth century. These clusters were occupied by the KMT at the end of the civil war and thus were vulnerable to both mainland attack and occupation. The most important of these, the Quemoy and Matsu groups, were off the coast of Fujian. In Taipei’s view, these clusters served three purposes: as jumping-off points for mainland invasion; as bases from which to launch guerrilla raids and to harass shipping; and as essential defensive outposts. Even more notably, their proximity to the mainland lent them psychological significance as symbols of KMT status and its determination return to the mainland.¹⁶ As the 1954–55 crisis developed, the ROC was unwilling to retreat from these outposts. Rather, it wanted to use the PRC attack as a pretense to expand the crisis.

In Washington, the administration was divided. The majority of the Joint Chiefs asserted the military importance of these islands. Dulles and Eisenhower were less convinced of their strategic importance, but remained deeply concerned over the psychological impact their loss would have on the KMT. Yet they too sought to avoid involvement in their defense. From September 1954 to April 1955, the administration struggled to find a policy to end the crisis without indicating abandonment of its ROC ally or entrapping the United States in a conflict with the mainland.¹⁷ This was a poor environment for negotiating a mutual defense treaty. Instead of negotiating hypothetical scenarios, Washington and Taipei were drawing up a treaty to cover an evolving crisis about which both sides had diverging views and expectations. The treaty that was negotiated in November 1954 and ratified in February 1955 was being tested even as it was created. To make matters worse, amid mutual recrimination and limited commitments to Taiwan, the United States began talks with the PRC in Geneva, intended in part to achieve a *de facto* truce.¹⁸

During the subsequent three years, alliance roles remained ambiguous, distrust grew, and institutions remained inchoate.¹⁹ Washington modulated its military aid to limit ROC aggressiveness and counseled moderation—particularly with regard to the ROC’s heavy military and psychological investment in the offshore islands. At the same time, in its talks with the PRC, the United States sought to stabilize the Taiwan Strait by securing Beijing’s agreement to renounce force in resolving its dispute with the ROC.

In August 1958, the PRC initiated a second Taiwan Strait crisis with a bombardment of Quemoy that amounted to a virtual artillery blockade.²⁰ By the end of August, the United States dispatched a large task force to the Taiwan Strait area and, for the first time, on September 4, John Foster Dulles publicly committed to the defense of the offshore islands. The Seventh Fleet escorted ROC supply ships to international waters off the islands, and the provision of military supplies was expedited.

In response to an offer from Zhou Enlai in early September, Sino-American talks were reconvened in Warsaw, but little was accomplished. The crisis did not pass until the blockade broke. In early October, Beijing declared a cease-fire that was followed by a symbolic alternate-day shelling of the islands. In the same month, during a Dulles visit to Taipei, Chiang Kai-shek was pressured into agreeing to a joint communiqué that declared the treaty to be “defensive in character” and that the ROC considered the “principal means” to achieve its “sacred mission” of a “restoration of freedom” on the mainland to be “the implementation of Dr. Sun Yat-sen’s Three People’s Principles. . . and not the use of force.”²¹

This second Taiwan crisis did little to repair the damage done to the alliance by the 1954–55 clash. The American side, concerned that it might be entrapped in a conflict with the mainland, supervised Taiwan’s activities closely. Chiang perceived this as a threat to his goal of regaining the mainland, as well as a domestic political humiliation. The last years of the Eisenhower administration witnessed an even more frustrated ROC, and thus left a difficult agenda to the Kennedy administration.

Candidate John F. Kennedy had been a critic of the Eisenhower administration’s Taiwan policy and, as a result, the ROC was wary when he became president. ROC concern was magnified in early encounters, when the new administration showed less circumspection in dealing with Taipei than its predecessor.²² Moreover, within the Kennedy administration, staff argued for greater American distance from the civil war and increased pressure on the ROC to withdraw from the offshore islands—a policy known as “Operation Candor with the GRC.” By October 1961, a draft proposal circulating within the administration referred to restricting operations against the mainland; minimizing U.S. “over-identification” with the KMT government; and “damping-down” the civil war.²³

Despite continued American support at the UN, Chiang suspected that the United States was “actually embarked on a calculated change of its China policy.”²⁴ Aggressive rhetoric from Taiwan increased as Chiang saw Communist legitimacy threatened by the famine that followed the Great Leap Forward. Rumors of ROC mainland operations and of PRC military preparations threatened to ignite yet a third crisis. To head this off, the Kennedy administration acted decisively. In June of 1962, at the Warsaw meetings, Beijing was notified that while Washington would defend Taiwan, it would not support any ROC actions against the mainland. If Taipei were to take such actions, the PRC was told, the United States hoped that ambassadorial contacts would be maintained.²⁵

Over the next year, a sobered Kennedy administration struggled to end all ambiguity in its attitude toward the ROC’s mainland ambitions. A disappointed Chiang was told that the United States would not “acquiesce in military action against the China mainland.” The president himself carefully specified a United States commitment limited to three points: diplomatic support for the ROC; provision of economic aid to create a “model of dynamic economic development” to contrast with that on the mainland; and “defensive commitments.”²⁶ Amid Chiang’s complaints regarding the restrictive nature of the treaty, his assertions that mainland recovery was a domestic issue not covered by the treaty, and his warnings that he “would find it difficult to keep the people and the army under control,” the United States sought to impose its will.²⁷

As the Kennedy administration ended, there were inklings of a further reassessment of policy. The U.S. ambassador to Taiwan proposed a review of “whether or not Taiwan is ‘vital’ to our interests,” and hinted that a general reconsideration of the mutual defense treaty was needed.²⁸ Secretary of State Rusk suggested that the time had passed when the ROC military could be seen as a strategic reserve for use in Asia. Most future warfare in Asia would be unconventional, he argued, and even limited use of the ROC military might provoke the PRC.²⁹

Finally, there were signs of a very cautious reconsideration of policy toward the mainland. By late 1962, a Policy Planning Council paper argued that it might be necessary to achieve “minimal restraints on our freedom of action in consequence of our alliance with the Nationalist regime on Taiwan” if relations with the mainland were to be improved.”³⁰

Alliance Objectives

There is no agreement on a definition of alliances. The most useful approach is to consider them a type of alignment in which mutual obligations are formalized in “an explicit agreement, usually in the form of a treaty” for “two or more nations to collaborate on national security issues.”³¹ Moreover, as article two of the U.S.–ROC treaty, which speaks of joint determination “to resist armed attack and communist subversive activities,” makes clear, alliances are usually directed “against, and only derivatively for, someone or something.”³²

The establishment of a formal agreement does not assure total consensus on the objectives of the alliance. In any alliance, there are “levels” of agreement and disagreement as nations seek to secure their own interests as well as the “common interest.” It is thus important from the outset to understand not only what brings allies together, but also what separates them.³³ Such “common interests” and “competitive interests” become the parameters for alliance management—“the joint and unilateral processes by which alliance members try to keep the alliance alive and advance their interests within it.”³⁴

The sections that follow analyze a period that was unquestionably the most trying in the pre-1978 U.S.–ROC relationship. During these years, distrustful allies came together in a new alignment that blossomed into an alliance confirmed by the Mutual Defense Treaty of 1954. From the beginning, however, it was apparent that the allies’ objectives were sharply asymmetrical. The result was a complex and delicate process of alliance management.

The United States

In the fall of 1953, as the two sides edged toward a *de jure* alliance, NSC 146/2 and its accompanying staff study provided a comprehensive summary of American objectives in the alignment.

- The “maintenance of the security of Formosa, independent of communism [is]. . .an essential element within the U.S. Far East defense position.”
- The United States should promote “increased effectiveness of the Chinese National armed forces for action in the defense of Formosa, for raids against the Communist mainland and seaborne commerce with Communist China, and for such offensive operations as may be in the U.S. interest” [later specified to include a “possible invasion of the mainland” should there be

PRC intervention in Vietnam or “renewed aggression in Korea”]. At the very least a substantial ROC military force (about 500,000 men) would force the diversion of PRC military assets to the coast.

- The “use of Chinese National military potential, including the availability of Formosa for use of U.S. forces, in accordance with U.S. national security policies” should be achieved.³⁵

The report encapsulated the shift in the nature and level of American commitment to the ROC since 1949. The limits of this shift were apparent. On the broadest level, the statement made clear that the goal of military coordination was to achieve the “maximum cooperation from the Nationalists *in the furtherance of over-all U.S. military strategy in the Far East*, subject to the commitment taken by the Chinese Nationalist Government that its forces will not engage in offensive operations considered by the United States to be inimical to the best interest of the United States.” [italics added] Specifically, political support would be provided “while avoiding any implication of U.S. obligation to underwrite the Government or to guarantee its return to power on the mainland.”³⁶

These last qualifications suggest that the expansive language of the objectives became more modest when placed within the context of the “best interests of the United States.” While holding out the possibility that ROC military power might be utilized outside the island, the general tone of the statement appears closer to the two very limited goals that characterized American policy before the PRC’s entry into the Korean War: denial of the island to a potential enemy, and avoidance of American involvement in the Chinese civil war. The difference was that, by 1953, denial was linked not to neutrality, but to a defense commitment; and it was acknowledged that this would be in cooperation with the previously shunned ROC government.

This orientation became obvious while negotiating the Mutual Defense Treaty. In May 1954, Dulles argued against such a treaty, suggesting to the ROC ambassador that it might frustrate Taipei’s dream of retaking the mainland. Noting that there was now a “state of running warfare” across the Strait which neither government “wanted to stop,” Dulles is reported to have added:

We are in the position of wanting neither to check Chinese operations against the mainland Communists nor to get directly involved ourselves in these operations. It was feared that a mutual security pact would have one of these undesirable effects. The Secretary thought that there might be a prospect that the current situation would develop to our mutual advantage and that possibly the present arrangement should not be modified. . . it was difficult to justify a purely defensive pact when one of the parties by tacit agreement in effect was carrying on offensive operations. Both parties needed freedom from rigid treaty obligations in such a situation.³⁷

Dulles’ position was an admixture of disingenuousness and candor. Seeking to distance the United States from the ROC’s mainland ambitions, he cleverly played on those ambitions by suggesting that a treaty would have the effect of serving to “check Chinese [ROC] operations against the mainland Communists.” In fact, in November 1954, when Dulles finally agreed to negotiate a defense treaty, the agreement was one part of a more elaborate scheme intended to achieve precisely that end.

At this time, the Strait confrontation was in full swing and the administration was seeking ways to bring it to a peaceful conclusion.³⁸ Dulles decided to take the offshore island conflict to the UN to secure a cease-fire and, eventually, a more permanent solution. The ROC opposed any intervention on this issue of national sovereignty by a body that it saw as hostile. To secure Taipei's assent to this proposal, Dulles offered the treaty.

The treaty was thus part of a larger American policy intended to frustrate the ROC's mainland ambitions.³⁹ Moreover, to secure as restrictive a treaty as possible, Washington brushed aside objections from the ROC foreign minister and demanded a narrowly defined, defense-oriented document squarely in line with American preferences. This was accompanied by public assurances from the ROC that it would not launch any major military operations against the mainland without American consent, and that it would accept restrictions on the disposition of U.S.-trained troops to the offshore islands.⁴⁰

The position taken during the treaty talks adumbrated the American objectives in the alliance. In the years that followed, these would be further elaborated through statements and, more importantly, through the practice of alliance management. Washington sought to use the treaty to limit the ROC military to defensive actions, and to spin a web of restrictions that would prevent Taiwan from using the alliance to pursue its mainland ambitions and entrapping the United States in an unwanted conflict. Yet alongside this negative objective of limiting Taiwan's options, a more positive one emerged in the Eisenhower administration, and was further developed during the Kennedy administration.

One of Dulles's purposes in the secret talks with the PRC, initiated in 1955, was to negotiate a renunciation of force agreement with Beijing. This agreement would then be joined with the restrictions on the ROC achieved through the treaty, to create a *de facto* truce in the Taiwan Strait. The truce would be the basis for what Dulles called a "divided country" situation in China, similar to that in Korea and Germany. Beijing, of course, rejected any renunciation of force and condemned the initiative as a thinly veiled "two-Chinas" policy. Beijing was right. Dulles was clearly seeking to stabilize the China area by crafting a civil war truce through parallel American agreements with both sides.⁴¹ Discussions during the Kennedy administration aimed at achieving American distance from the Chinese civil war were consistent with this policy.

These two alliance objectives of restraining the ROC and stabilizing the Taiwan Strait coexisted uneasily with two other American perceptions that, ironically, pushed them in opposite directions. These were the symbolic importance of the U.S.-ROC alliance in Asia, and the perceived fragility of the KMT regime on Taiwan.

In the wake of the French defeat in Vietnam and China's strong international showing at the 1954 Geneva Conference, there was a sense in the Eisenhower administration that Beijing's confidence and international standing were growing.⁴² Within the Kennedy administration, concern over Beijing's role in Vietnam and Laos prompted a similar impression. For both administrations it became important to counter this image by showing a determination to frustrate the PRC's ambitions—and the best way to do so was to support America's Asian allies.

As a symbolic alternative to Chinese communism, it was essential that the KMT regime not simply survive, but thrive, while maintaining its international status. This was true partly because Taiwan still held considerable political support in Congress, but largely because signs of weakened American support had a significant impact on its image in Asia. Taiwan's existence under American protection was seen as essential to U.S. security goals in Asia, by sustaining confidence that the mainland juggernaut could be stopped and that the United States would stand by its anti-Communist friends.

There was, of course, no reason why this objective should be incompatible with restricting the ROC's offensive ambitions, or emphasizing the defensive nature of the treaty underlying the alliance—with one exception. There was, particularly during the Eisenhower years, an awareness of the ROC government's fragility. Earlier efforts to defend American interests on Taiwan without a commitment to the KMT had failed. The indivisibility of the two goals led to the belief in Washington that sustaining the regime required not only economic or military aid, but also maintenance of morale and legitimacy of an exile government amid a nonsupportive population. In this light, an NSC statement in the late 1950s established that the goal of American assistance was not simply to develop "the military potential" of ROC forces, but also "to sustain [their] morale."⁴³

The implications of this chain of logic are obvious. *If* the existence of Taiwan was essential to U.S. objectives in Asia; and *if* this required maintaining morale on the island which, in turn, depended upon the continued hope of regaining the mainland (as Dulles put it, "If all hope of a Nationalist return to the mainland were to be destroyed the United States would lose the whole show in the Far East"),⁴⁴ *then* American policy would have to give some semblance of support to such offensive aspirations even if it might lead to American involvement.⁴⁵

Here, then, lay the incompatibility in American alliance objectives. On the one hand, there was concern over becoming entrapped in a ROC-provoked conflict, as well as an emerging commitment to the longer-term goal of separating the combatants in China's continuing civil war. This orientation suggested that U.S. alliance objectives center around a narrowly defined commitment to the island. The belief, however, that such a narrowly defined mission might erode ROC morale and begin a chain of events undermining broader American goals in Asia encouraged the contradictory alliance objective of supporting a more aggressive posture. This, in turn, subverted the first set of goals.⁴⁶

The ROC

The KMT and its leader, Chiang Kai-shek, continued to act as if Chinese history had stopped in the late 1940s. The ROC government denied that it was an "exile government." Rather, it was a legitimate national government ruling a nation, large parts of which were occupied by "rebels." The KMT would never settle into the island nor would it develop Taiwan for any purpose other than as a base for invasion. To do otherwise would be to admit defeat in the civil war.⁴⁷ The political slogans were thus "*fangong dalu*" ("counterattack the mainland") and "*guangfu dalu*" ("recover the mainland").⁴⁸

The mainland's continued association with the ROC government was also an essential prop for KMT rule on Taiwan. In the first place, for Chiang's mainland colleagues—especially in the military—the expectation that they would someday return to their homes was an important element in securing their continued loyalty. Second, the fiction of being a national government that would relocate after the defeat of the Communist "rebels" provided both the rationale for the authoritarian government's refusal to be accountable to the people of the province of Taiwan, and the justification for a puppet legislature elected on the mainland.⁴⁹

This connection between mainland recovery and political legitimacy explains Chiang Kai-shek and the ROC officials' insistence that support for mainland operations figure prominently in alliance objectives. Yet as much as political legitimacy required themes of recovery, it also required circumspection in their promotion. Chiang was aware that American support was central to the maintenance of KMT rule. He would not have been so foolish as to sacrifice its benefits for the intangibles of legitimacy and the dreams of a triumphant return to the mainland.

Besides the umbrella of the defense relationship, the alliance with the United States brought essential economic benefits and international recognition. From 1951 to 1963, American aid played an essential role in the reconstruction of Taiwan. While military assistance helped to relieve the burden of a large military budget, various forms of civilian assistance further offset the impact of that budget, by providing funds to develop the island's economy, especially for costly infrastructural investments. According to one estimate, during the years from 1949 to 1963, U.S. economic and military grants totaled approximately U.S. \$3.7 billion, with another U.S. \$1.3 billion in the form of loans. In a 1963 report to the Congress, the Kennedy administration estimated that non-military aid "equalled [sic] 43 percent of gross investment during the decade and accounted for nearly 90 percent of the flow of external capital and donations."⁵⁰

Washington's support was also crucial to the maintenance of the ROC's international position. After the PRC joined the Korean War, and despite the objections from many of its allies (particularly Great Britain), Washington's steadfast opposition to Beijing's entry into the United Nations preserved both the ROC's status in this keystone international organization and its claim to represent all of China.⁵¹ Thanks to American threats of withdrawal and, eventually, in 1961, the tactic of designating the issue of Chinese representation an "important question" requiring a two-thirds vote of the General Assembly, the ROC remained a member of the Security Council.⁵²

Thus, in some senses the ROC's alliance objectives mirrored those of the United States. At the core of ROC objectives was the desire to shape the alliance's public image to be consistent with a pledge to return to the mainland and not simply to serve as a shield behind which the government would take root on Taiwan. This built legitimacy, and also, by locking the United States into support of the fiction it reflected, made Washington's dealings with Beijing more difficult. Still, this objective was tempered by an awareness of the ROC's heavy dependence on American goodwill. When pressured to act with restraint, Chiang also had to consider the most fundamental of his alliance objectives—survival.⁵³

Alliance Management

In 1954, a common species of alliance, known as a "restraining alliance," was negotiated. Such an alliance reflects the desire of one ally—almost always the stronger—to restrain the actions of a more adventurous junior partner.⁵⁴ Despite the disparity in power, the dominant power managing such a restraining alliance must still resolve what Glenn Snyder calls an "alliance security dilemma"—"tension" between "the fear of abandonment [the defection of an ally which lessens the other's security] and the fear of entrapment [whereby an aggressive ally becomes too confident of support and drags the other into war]."⁵⁵

As John Garver notes, in the U.S.-ROC alliance, Washington had to walk a fine line between restricting Taipei's actions so narrowly that it would "defect" (in this case collapse politically) and being so supportive of its determination to recover the mainland that the United States would become entrapped in an unwanted conflict.⁵⁶ As Snyder notes, this line is fine because these dangers "vary inversely." The more a partner seeks to prevent entrapment by withholding support, the greater the danger of the other's defection. Conversely, the more support is increased to prevent abandonment, the greater the danger of entrapment.

For a small nation in such an alliance, the challenge is to create room to maneuver. In the specific case of the ROC, entrapment meant becoming enmeshed in Washington's schemes to restrict mainland operations and to neutralize the Strait. Abandonment meant endangering economic and political benefits of the alliance to Taiwan.

There is yet another dimension to intra-alliance bargaining that has a decisive impact on the forms that relationship takes: the relationship between the allies and the adversary. On the one hand, a deterrent posture vis-à-vis the adversary enhances the danger of entrapment by encouraging an ally's aggressiveness. Conciliation with the adversary, on the other hand, increases the danger of abandonment by a frustrated ally. Allies often find themselves pursuing inconsistent policies—for example, maintaining a deterrent posture toward the enemy, while seeking to restrain an ally—that severely test management skills. This situation, which Snyder dubs the “composite security dilemma,” was the challenge facing the United States as it sought to “contain” *both* the PRC and the ROC in the 1950s and 1960s.⁵⁷

The United States

The diplomatic record contains abundant evidence of the tension between entrapment and abandonment in American policy. The dilemma arose at every important juncture in the alliance. It was present in early 1953 after the withdrawal of the Seventh Fleet; during both Taiwan Strait crises (especially in 1958); on the eve of the resumption of talks with the mainland in 1958; and in 1962, during the near-crisis over escalating military preparations on both sides. In all these cases, U.S. military and civilian officials warned that Taiwan might use these occasions to provoke or expand armed conflict with the mainland. Naturally, these concerns, sometimes stated quite bluntly, were passed on to ROC officials.⁵⁸ Neither the Eisenhower nor the Kennedy administration was satisfied with mere warnings, no matter how sharply put. Over time, the United States developed a broad arsenal of management techniques intended to guard against entrapment by a risk-taking ROC.

The first technique was to extract formal pledges from Taipei that limited the scope of its military activity vis-à-vis the mainland. In 1953, after Eisenhower's inaugural speech, the ROC agreed to consult with the United States on “any offensive military operations against mainland China which would radically alter pattern or tempo of operations hitherto undertaken.”⁵⁹ By 1954, in the notes accompanying the treaty, the language was more restrictive (and public): there would be “joint agreement” on “offensive military operations by either party from the territories held by the Republic of China.” Finally, in the fall of 1958, after the crisis had eased, Dulles received a commitment to use political means for reunification. No new agreements were reached during the Kennedy administration, which simply cited restrictions already in place.⁶⁰

Of course, these general pledges had to be specified in rules of engagement which, in turn, had to be monitored. In the crises of 1954 and 1958, the American military not only gave general instructions regarding the type of operations that might be permitted, but also signed off on specific actions.⁶¹ Guidelines were backed up by surveillance. American radar tracked the activities of ROC forces, and military officers monitored Taipei's contingency planning. Such monitoring was especially intense during crisis periods and there are several instances of U.S. military commanders objecting to particular actions or deployments.⁶² Finally, supervision was exercised indirectly through Washington's control over the types of training and weapons systems provided to the armed forces of Taiwan.⁶³ Washington made sure that there would be total dependence on U.S. naval and air forces for any large-scale assaults on the mainland. The provision of items that the ROC might use in independent offensive operations, such as landing craft, parachutes, transport aircraft, etc., was also limited, as was training in their use.⁶⁴

Arms could also be used as incentives and sanctions—or simply for the purposes of morale building. When, after Eisenhower's State of the Union message in 1953, the ROC

delayed in providing a pledge to bar offensive operations, the administration withheld a crucial shipment of jet aircraft until the assurances were received. In the late 1950s, the United States supplied artillery in exchange for a pledge to reduce troop deployments on the offshore islands. After refusing to train large airborne units, the Kennedy administration provided some support for much smaller intelligence-gathering operations. Finally, in 1958, nuclear-capable Matador missiles were stationed in Taiwan in an attempt to bolster morale on the island.⁶⁵

The ROC

These American techniques were not well received in Taiwan. Chiang Kai-shek complained bitterly in 1962 that the mutual defense treaty was binding the ROC “hand and foot” and preventing it from accomplishing its goals.⁶⁶ He was, of course, expressing the natural frustration of any small power in alliance with a larger one. The ROC, however, was not without its own alliance management strategy for coping with these restrictions.

One strategy was simply to attempt to evade general pledges. For example, in 1959 after pledging to stress peaceful means, Chiang and his foreign minister suggested that raids on the mainland were exempt from the requirement to consult with the United States, since they were “paramilitary” operations intended to foment “political” unrest. In 1962, Chiang went even further. Apparently reneging on all previous agreements, he angrily noted that mainland operations were a domestic affair of the ROC. In all of these cases, the United States rejected such arguments and Taipei did not press the issue.⁶⁷

In the Strait area, the ROC sought to evade limitations, through exaggeration of conditions or simple concealment. U.S. military reports during and after the 1958 crisis suggest that ROC forces were carrying out unauthorized operations and that ROC officials were exaggerating the nature of the conflict to gain greater latitude for approved operations.⁶⁸ Similarly, in 1962, during the dangerous arms build-up in the Strait, American officials, concerned that a conflict might be provoked, admitted that they were being kept in the dark over ROC plans.⁶⁹

Outside the Taiwan Strait, the most flagrant example of evasion was ROC policy in Burma.⁷⁰ During the Korean War, the United States and Taiwan apparently supported cross-border raids by remnant KMT troops that had been driven out of Yunnan province and into bases in Burma. However, as the war ended, strong protests from the Burmese government and signs of improved Burmese relations with Beijing led Washington to drop its support of the raids and to request that the ROC do the same. From 1953 to 1961, despite intense American and international pressure and frequent pledges of compliance, Taipei took only partial steps to end its support of the raids. Finally, in 1961, more than 4,000 KMT troops were airlifted out. Even then, some remnants remained.⁷¹

Supervision and evasion are, of course, not sustainable strategies for managing an alliance. Rather than solving differences, they create a cycle of suspicion, further tightening of surveillance, and growing distrust. More commonly, both sides used the more mundane tools of alliance management—diplomatic negotiation. As one might expect, there were several channels through which such bargaining could take place. Embassies were maintained in both countries; the respective military services regularly consulted with each other; and the CIA station chief in Taiwan maintained close ties with ROC security services headed by Chiang Kai-shek’s son, Chiang Ching-kuo. The principal factor that shaped the manner in which these channels were used was the elder Chiang’s intensely personal diplomatic style. The Generalissimo maintained an active correspondence with Presidents Eisenhower and

Kennedy, met frequently with American personnel stationed on the island, and held audiences with a wide variety of visitors, from high-ranking administration figures to congressional delegations.

The varied contacts reflected more than Chiang's diplomatic style. They were part of the ROC's more ambitious effort to use the fragmented nature of both the American presence in Taiwan and the United States government to serve its own ends. There is evidence that for more than a decade after 1950 (when Chiang dealt directly with Douglas MacArthur in Tokyo without Washington's knowledge), the Chinese leader sought out sympathetic interlocutors in the American government.⁷² This technique was especially blatant during the Kennedy administration when (with the apparent complicity of the White House) the CIA station chief, Ray Cline, became a back channel to the president via the Generalissimo's son Chiang Ching-kuo.⁷³

Chiang's choice of the CIA was a good one. The CIA had an important stake in maintaining good relations with Taiwan. Operating through two cover agencies, the CIA was responsible for a staff larger than that of the military, which was deeply involved in ROC cross-Strait raids, as well as in covert operations against the mainland. The CIA seemingly benefited from these activities as Cline, throughout the Kennedy administration, consistently argued the ROC cause. His role seemed to end in early 1963, when Kennedy wrote directly to Chiang, and encouraged him to stay within channels and to deal only with the ambassador in Taipei.⁷⁴ Cline would remain an advocate for permitting riskier—and perhaps, from his bureaucratic perspective more valuable—ROC actions.

Finally, of course, Taipei sought to cultivate influential élites, particularly in Congress. There is ample evidence for the existence of a pro-Taiwan lobby in the United States and for that lobby's close connections with important members of the Senate and the House of Representatives, until at least the end of the 1950s.⁷⁵ There is also considerable evidence of intensive efforts by the ROC's government and nongovernment organizations to influence views of American opinion leaders. A steady stream of national and state officials were fêted and briefed during official visits to Taiwan, while an information office in the United States provided a steady diet of "news" about the island and global politics.⁷⁶ In addition, organizations such as the Chinese Association for the United Nations (which had been excluded from the World Federation of United Nations) busily sent messages, hosted meetings, and maintained ties with sympathetic individuals and institutions.⁷⁷

Despite this considerable activity, the nature of the ties between the ROC and its American backers remains largely unexposed. Those who have studied this question have found scattered evidence of consultation and of Taipei's provision of some programmatic and travel support. In addition, it appears that the ROC government circulated false documents suggesting that some in the U.S. government had pro-Communist leanings. These actions, based for the most part on materials from the American side, probably underestimate the volume and scope of Taiwan's efforts to influence opinion leaders and lobby Congress. The impact of these efforts is even more difficult to assess because ROC support also undoubtedly resulted from general anti-Communist tone of American foreign policy.⁷⁸

Whatever its source, the substantial support within the United States for the ROC appears to have been an important factor in strengthening Taipei's position in its negotiations. During the Eisenhower years, John Foster Dulles was particularly sensitive to Congress' mood and exercised caution in his dealings with the ROC.⁷⁹ John F. Kennedy's concerns about the domestic political consequences of any change in China policy inspired even greater caution. In an oft-quoted conversation with Secretary of State Dean Rusk, Kennedy warned that his narrow margin of electoral victory severely limited the

administration's options in addressing this issue.⁸⁰

In sum, the ROC cultivated a number of channels for dealing with Washington and, either due to its own efforts or the nature of the times, benefited from a sympathetic audience. Through these many channels, Taipei conveyed a message intended to shape alliance policy to suit its objectives. This message, as one might expect, centered around the danger the PRC posed to the peace of Asia and to American interests in the region. The argument was simple: stability would come only when the “root” of the problem, the government in Beijing, was overthrown by a KMT counterattack supported by the rebellion of a disaffected population. The return of the ROC to the mainland would be the best guarantee of American security—and the sooner this was accomplished, the better. Such a stance naturally encountered considerable resistance in Washington.

In countering this opposition, Chiang and his negotiators played the part of the aggrieved but also fragile ally. They vented their anger—but also sought to put the American side on the defensive—by referring to controversial events in the World War II alliance experience, such as the Yalta conference, the Marshall mission, or the White Paper.⁸¹ The message was hardly subtle: the United States in the past had consistently misunderstood the nature of communism and, as a result, had sacrificed its own, as well as the ROC's interests. In addition, as John Garver has noted, time and again in his negotiations with the United States, Chiang warned that American restrictions on mainland operations might result in the collapse of KMT rule, due to their impact on the morale of the military, the legitimacy of government, and his personal prestige. He argued that maintaining the anti-Communist fighting morale of the armed forces, as well as the continued loyalty of former mainland political figures, required a credible, public determination to return to the mainland. Any signs of backing away from this would lead to political instability, even subversion, and the consequent loss of a major anti-Communist force in Asia.⁸²

This argument was used during the treaty negotiations to forestall any public release of the pledge not to take offensive actions against the mainland without American permission and to argue for publication of a pledge to defend the offshore islands, made briefly in early 1955 by the Eisenhower administration.⁸³ During times of acute crisis between Taiwan and the PRC, such as 1955 and 1958, when the United States tightened its restrictions on ROC military activities, Chiang warned that such restrictions were damaging the island's morale and his own prestige.⁸⁴ At times of crisis in the PRC itself, such as the post-Great Leap Forward famine, Chiang argued that ROC failure to act would also undermine his credibility.⁸⁵

In almost all of these instances, the ROC did not succeed in changing American policy. Yet Taipei's threat to collapse, and the warnings regarding potential domestic as well as international repercussions, did have an impact on certain aspects of American alliance policy. This was especially true with regard to policy toward the offshore islands. During both the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations, these were seen as the venue most likely to lead to American entrapment.

Eisenhower administration officials were only slightly concerned about the military implications of losing the islands.⁸⁶ The Joint Chiefs often argued for their military significance. The general view in Washington, however, was that their loss would actually benefit American interests by reducing the chances of a conflict with China, and by creating a more geographically logical situation for a two-Chinas policy. Dulles, in particular, wanted no part of their defense.

In Chiang Kai-shek's mind, as noted, the islands were an important symbol. His warnings that their loss or evacuation would undermine the KMT's morale, the island's

stability, and the credibility of American commitments in Asia, eventually secured Washington's pledge to support their defense during both Strait confrontations, although in neither case was their defense considered strategically necessary. The reasoning in the Eisenhower administration councils proceeded almost exclusively from arguments regarding the psychological impact of their loss on Taiwan, and a subsequent domino effect in Asia. More serious was the fact that, in both scenarios, the American military planners' chain of logic assumed that any United States defense would involve attacks on the mainland. To be effective, such attacks would have to involve tactical nuclear weapons. On two occasions, Chiang's strategy of threatened defection did succeed in creating a situation of possible American entrapment in the Eisenhower administration.⁸⁷

American concern over the link between KMT occupation of the islands and the political integrity of the regime also stymied attempts to defuse this potential crisis during the periods between the confrontations. The Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations explored many alternatives in their efforts to coax the Nationalists off Quemoy and Matsu, but neither administration was willing to exert the pressure necessary to gain ROC concessions. Instead, incentives were offered which, in at least one case (1955), would have increased the danger of a U.S.-mainland armed conflict.⁸⁸

The perception of a decline in ROC morale severely limited American options toward another issue in the alliance where the entrapment danger was high—policy toward raids on the mainland. To be sure, these were operations which, because of their intelligence-gathering potential, held great value to both allies. For Taiwan, however, it was clear that raids were even more important, both as a validation of its continued commitment to retake the mainland, and as a basis for expanded mainland operations that could circumvent American limitations.

Until 1963, Washington maintained a somewhat equivocal stance toward such operations, characterized by mixed signals and simple prevarication. For example, during these years, the armed forces of the ROC and the United States conducted a number of joint exercises that were offensive in nature, even as the MAAG trained a unit of special forces.⁸⁹ More revealing, though, were the late Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations' responses to Taiwan's requests for equipment that would permit large-scale operations against the mainland under the guise of political warfare. The response was to call for more study or to supply only some of the materials requested. Only in 1963 did Washington's answers become more negative. Despite their provocative nature and negative impact on the credibility of overall American limits, this equivocation over mainland operations undoubtedly reflected an appreciation of their intelligence value, as well as the belief that these activities were essential to KMT morale.⁹⁰

When viewed within the context of Snyder's "composite security dilemma," the U.S.-ROC alliance illustrates the problem of seeking to deter the adversary while coping with the entrapment/abandonment dilemma. Washington availed itself of a broad range of diplomatic and organizational tools to avoid the danger that the ROC might use the alliance's rhetoric to provoke an unwanted conflict. Yet, to maintain the alliance, successive American administrations also had to engage in activities that came perilously close to entrapment. Washington's dominance was not so great that it could avoid the twin dangers of the alliance dilemma. Even so, while the deterrent posture created a difficult alliance management situation, it actually strengthened the alliance as it faced another serious challenge to its cohesion—the Sino-American ambassadorial negotiations that began in 1955.

Taipei's immediate reaction to the talks typified that of an ally fearing abandonment.⁹¹ The ROC, anxious that Washington might seek an agreement with the mainland at its

expense, warned that its relations with the mainland were a domestic matter, that it would never agree to a renunciation of force in the Taiwan Strait, and that it would not be bound by any agreement reached in these negotiations. There were certainly reasons for Taipei to be concerned. During both the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations, questions inimical to the alliance were being discussed with the PRC. For example, after assuring Taipei that its interests would not be harmed, Washington unilaterally pursued talks intended to secure a renunciation of the use of force in the Taiwan Strait except in self-defense (1955), and to achieve a negotiated end to the 1958 crisis. Most dramatically, at the June 1962 meeting, the Kennedy administration weakened the value of the 1954 treaty when it told the PRC ambassador that the United States would not support an ROC attack on the mainland, and offered to continue talks with Beijing regardless of Taipei's actions.

Washington also expended considerable effort to alleviate Taipei's fears. It kept the ROC informed about the course of the talks (although Dulles was not above concealing important elements) and took some account of its concerns in the negotiations. Moreover, while the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations were willing to *talk* with the PRC (generally to keep Beijing talking rather than fighting), they were not ready to *negotiate* on key points that might endanger the alliance. The bond of shared hostility remained and held the alliance together. This situation would soon change.

Conclusion

The alliance relationship between the United States and the ROC until 1963 has many of the characteristics of a classic restraining alliance. In its most extreme form, as Snyder has noted, a restraining alliance with one dominating partner has the quality of a unilateral commitment, where the senior ally determines when and under what conditions assistance will be provided.⁹² In such a situation, one might reasonably expect that the alliance dilemma—entrapment v. abandonment—is not a major consideration. The evidence presented above makes it clear that this was not the case here. The United States was very concerned over the possible consequences of mismanaging the alliance dilemma. Defection in the form of political collapse could be a consequence of too restrictive a policy toward Taipei, and this moderated Washington's tactics of restraint.

The manner in which the alliance was managed during these years left a strong residue of dissatisfaction. The areas of overlap that existed in both sides' objectives in the alliance made unity possible. There is little reason to believe, however, that this partial unity of purpose increased the alliance's underlying cohesion or decreased its legacy of mutual distrust. To maintain unity, each side had to make unwanted—and in their minds, dangerous—compromises. This eventually led not to greater cohesion but to a rethinking of the alliance's value. By the 1960s, Chiang had come to see the treaty as limiting his strategic options and Washington, too, was ready to distance itself from the ROC.

This condition of unity without cohesion was not without its benefits. The simple existence of the alliance provided a "political halo." Such a halo results from the natural tendency of alliances to project an image of support that goes beyond strictly military issues, strengthening political ties and providing political benefits for each side. Unquestionably, the ROC benefited enormously from this halo effect. During these years, despite clear tensions in the military relationship, Washington provided enormous diplomatic support to Taipei. This support sustained the obvious fiction that the ROC was the legitimate government of the mainland, deserving of global recognition. On the American side, the alliance provided credibility for its anti-Communist posture in Asia and advanced its reputation of loyalty.⁹³

Over time, this halo effect leads to the crystallization of a political dimension which complements the military dimension. Ideally, of course, these can be consistent and mutually reinforcing, with support in one realm enhancing the other. By and large, this was the situation between the United States and the ROC. But these two dimensions can also move in different directions. Situations can develop wherein one ally seeks to increase its diplomatic maneuverability by limiting the halo's reach, while still preserving the credibility of the military commitment. This would characterize the situation in the 1960s and 1970s.

II. Distant Allies: 1964–1978

When changes occur in the shared perceptions of the security environment in general and in the nature of the adversary in particular the foundations of an alliance are naturally weakened. If alliances are primarily against “something,” then it is illogical for them to persist if one of the parties seeks rapprochement with the adversary. This is precisely what happened during these final years of the formal U.S.–ROC alliance.

Until the December 1978 announcement that the United States would terminate the mutual defense treaty in 1979, the nature of its alliance with the ROC changed radically. This process began in a meaningful, but limited, fashion during the administration of Lyndon B. Johnson. During the Nixon, Ford, and Carter administrations, it intensified and changed in nature. These administrations began to treat the PRC as a strategic ally even as they endeavored to maintain the credibility of their ROC alliance directed at that putative ally. For more than six years after 1972, Washington managed two contradictory alliances.

Overview

As Washington's involvement in Vietnam increased between 1964 to 1968, it seemed that a stronger foundation for ties between Washington and Taipei was emerging. In public, the Johnson administration identified the PRC as the major force encouraging North Vietnamese “aggression” in the South, and justified its own involvement as a necessary step to thwart Beijing's ambitions in Asia. Moreover, with the military build-up in Vietnam, Taiwan became an important component of the American forward-base structure in Asia.⁹⁴

In Taiwan, the identification of China as the major threat to stability in Asia lent credence to its efforts to expand cooperation with anti-Communist countries in the area, and to its admonitions that the conflict's real objective should be to extirpate the “root” of the Communist threat in Asia—the PRC. By 1967, with the mainland in the grip of the Cultural Revolution, Chiang Kai-shek came to believe that conditions were optimum for a renewed ROC offensive that would finally end this threat to the peace of Asia.

Despite the Johnson administration's rhetorical identification of China as the enemy in Asia, Washington was in no mood to confront Beijing. Chinese reactions to American policy were carefully monitored to avoid repeating the Sino-American confrontation of the Korean War. It was assumed that the introduction of ROC forces in the area was *the* act most likely to result in intervention by Beijing.⁹⁵ As the war in Vietnam escalated, the Johnson administration was not satisfied to anticipate PRC actions; it also sought to ease Beijing's concerns about American military intentions by offering to explore ways to improve the relationship.

High ROC expectations for the opportunities that might have resulted from the Vietnam War were rudely dashed by Washington's uncompromising determination to restrain its ally to avoid PRC intervention. Nevertheless, domestically, these were good years for Taiwan.

The Vietnam War boosted the economy. Benefiting from an intact political halo as well as American encouragement and aid, Taiwan successfully made the transition from import substitution and became a major exporter of inexpensive consumer goods. As living standards increased, the island grew into an economic force in Asia.

With the Nixon presidency, the interweaving of the Vietnam War, policy toward the PRC, and the Taiwan alliance developed on a new plane.⁹⁶ Determined to extricate the United States from the war in Vietnam, the administration at first sought improved relations with Beijing, not simply to put pressure on North Vietnam at the negotiating table, but also to ensure a more stable Asia in the postwar period. Over time, Washington's impetus for an improved relationship—and the basis for mutual reconciliation—came from Beijing's concerns over Soviet intentions and the belief that rapprochement with the PRC would provide the United States with additional leverage in relations with Moscow. An improved relationship with China was more than the central element in the protection of American interests in Asia: it became an essential part of an entirely new strategy in the global Cold War with the Soviet Union. With this, the ROC simply lost its strategic significance.

The U.S.–PRC rapprochement moved with startling speed. After Henry Kissinger's July 1971 secret trip, President Nixon visited China and signed the February 1972 Shanghai Communiqué. In this document, the PRC restated its view that Taiwan was a province of the People's Republic of China; that Taiwan's "liberation" was an "internal affair in which no other country has the right to interfere"; and that "all U.S. forces and military installations must be withdrawn from Taiwan." For its part, the United States stated that it "acknowledges that all Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Strait maintain there is but one China and that Taiwan is a part of China." It also committed to an ultimate objective of the withdrawal of all U.S. forces and military installations, and pledged to reduce forces and installations "as the tension in the area diminishes."⁹⁷ Finally, in the spring of 1973, the two countries agreed to open liaison offices in each other's capitals. Behind this rapprochement, there were signs of a growing strategic relationship between the PRC and the United States.

These were obviously difficult years for Taipei. Declining morale at home and growing global isolation brought subtle shifts in domestic and foreign policy. Increasingly, the government restructured the bases of its legitimacy to economic performance and political responsiveness, even as it pursued a foreign policy less dependent on American goodwill or even diplomatic recognition. Still, this did little to slow the erosion in its relations with the United States. The ROC found itself a spectator as relations between its most bitter enemy and its only ally in the world progressively improved.

As the U.S.–PRC alignment grew, so did its incompatibility with America's formal ties to Taiwan. Although it seemed to some observers that the United States and China had agreed to differ over Taiwan in the interests of promoting an anti-Soviet *entente*, this was not the case. They simply differed—and sharply at times.⁹⁸ After 1973, Beijing became increasingly insistent that three conditions (what became known as the "Japanese Formula") would have to be met for the relationship to develop further: American forces were to be withdrawn from Taiwan; diplomatic relations with the ROC severed; and the mutual defense treaty ended. In light of the defeat in Vietnam and the domestic political fallout that would ensue in complying with the last two of these conditions, the Nixon and Ford administrations shied away from meeting them. Both administrations were thus faced with a conundrum. To maintain American credibility and to satisfy domestic political constituencies, normalization of relations with the PRC required stability in the relationship with Taiwan. Such stability, however, was an obstacle to normalization of relations with the PRC.

By 1978, a sharp downturn in U.S.–Soviet relations moved the Carter administration to resolve this conundrum and move to full normalization.⁹⁹ The three PRC conditions were met. However, the United States accompanied the normalization announcement with a pledge to “maintain commercial, cultural and other relations” with Taiwan in the absence of “official governmental representation or diplomatic relations,” as well as an exhortation (not challenged by Beijing) that the cross-Strait conflict be settled “peacefully by the Chinese themselves.” Washington also indicated that after a one-year moratorium, it would resume the sale of defensive weapons to Taiwan. This statement *was* challenged by the PRC.

The termination of the defense treaty and Beijing’s unwillingness to make any public pledges to resolve the conflict peacefully were the most controversial aspects of normalization. In the judgment of the Carter administration, Beijing’s need for a peaceful international environment to support its ambitious economic plans; its inability to mount a successful invasion of Taiwan; and the U.S. commitment to continued sales of defensive arms guaranteed the island’s security.

Congress, angered by the White House’s failure to consult with it despite repeated demands, disagreed. When presented with legislation intended to implement the new unofficial relationship with Taiwan, Congress not only added language that suggested a continued American commitment to the island’s security, but mandated an unprecedentedly large congressional role to assure that this commitment remained. The resulting Taiwan Relations Act of April 1979 declared that:

- “any effort to determine the future of Taiwan by other than peaceful means, including by boycotts or embargoes [would be considered] a threat to the peace and security of the Western Pacific area and of grave concern to the United States”;
- the United States would “maintain the capacity. . . to resist any resort to force or other forms of coercion that would jeopardize the security, or the social or economic system, of the people on Taiwan”;
- Taiwan would be provided arms “to maintain a sufficient self-defense capability” and that “the President and Congress shall determine the nature and quantity of such defense articles and services based solely upon their judgment of the needs of Taiwan, in accordance with procedures established by law”;
- Finally, the President was to “inform the Congress promptly of any threat to the security or the social or economic system of the people on Taiwan and any danger to the interests of the United States arising therefrom,” while “the President and the Congress shall determine, in accordance with constitutional processes, appropriate action by the United States in response to any such danger.”

This was a remarkable act of Congress in two respects.¹⁰⁰ First, in a piece of *domestic* legislation, the United States made what verged upon a unilateral declaration of its determination to defend Taiwan, not only from armed invasion but from any action that threatened

its “social or economic system.” Second, it legislated that Congress would be the partner of the executive in formulating security policy toward Taiwan.

Alliance Objectives

Frances Beer’s contention that alliances are often “more an ongoing process than a stable condition” is borne out by the evolution of the U.S.–ROC mutual defense treaty from 1964 to 1978.¹⁰¹ In response to the Vietnam War and the PRC–American rapprochement, the alliance passed through two different periods. In the first, intensified concern over the entrapment/abandonment dilemma combined with the emergence of a new orientation in one ally’s policy toward the adversary. The United States’ objective in this restraining alliance became not simply to avoid conflict (as was the case earlier), but to initiate a policy of *détente* with the PRC. Taiwan sought not simply to retain the adversarial relationship and press for a more aggressive posture toward China, but also to escape from, or compensate for, American restrictions on its own freedom of action.

In the second stage of the alliance, which began with the Kissinger visit to Beijing in July 1971, objectives changed again. The PRC was transformed in American eyes from an adversary to a much-desired strategic partner, and the Taiwan alliance came to be seen as the major impediment to consummating that new relationship. The logical solution for the United States was not to manage the alliance with the ROC, but simply to abrogate it. However, international and domestic constraints placed Washington in the bizarre position of managing this relationship to maximize American alignment with the island’s enemy, the PRC. For its part, Taiwan reoriented its alliance objectives to cope with these changes in American policy. It sought to slow the process of U.S.–PRC strategic alignment while exploiting those areas where its interests continued to coincide with those of Washington.

The United States, 1964–1971

The Vietnam War was a watershed, both in United States foreign policy and in the development of Asian international relations. It was also the occasion for two fundamental reorientations of American alliance objectives, each of which roughly corresponded to the periods of active American involvement in the postwar era.

The first orientation, from 1964 to 1971, was reflected in the policies pursued by the Johnson administration as it became more deeply involved in Vietnam, and those of the Nixon administration as it sought to extricate itself from Vietnam. As noted above, throughout the period of escalation, one of the Johnson administration’s major preoccupations was the possibility of Chinese intervention in the war. Restraining Taipei to avoid entrapment remained at the core of American alliance objectives—and there was little willingness to err on the side of leniency to accommodate ROC sensibilities. The tone of discussions within the administration suggests a judgment that the margin of error (and hence the room for tolerance of ROC actions) was much less than it had been earlier. American activities in Vietnam were considered, in and of themselves, perilously close to provoking armed conflict with the mainland. The view in Washington was that very little more in the way of actions by Taiwan would spark a Sino-American conflict.

During the Nixon administration, this objective of restraint shifted slightly. At a time of de-escalation of the war in the late 1960s, the alliance objective sought to ensure that Taipei’s statements or actions did not complicate either the withdrawal from Vietnam or the active efforts underway to negotiate a settlement to the war. Both administrations, however, shared the objective of ensuring that the alliance’s scope would thereafter be more limited.

Taiwan was being used as an offensive base in the Vietnam War. Although there was some concern that such activities might provoke the mainland, the United States was less inhibited in using Taiwan as a repair facility and rest and recreation center, as well as a base for transport and tanker planes supporting its efforts in Southeast Asia.¹⁰² During the course of the war American personnel grew in Taiwan to between 10,000 and 12,000. As one 1970 report noted, the overwhelming number (5,000 to 6,000) operated out of one transport air base, and the bulk of the rest were involved in similar missions in support of the Vietnam War. As far as combat personnel or a command organization geared toward mainland operations were concerned, the American presence was a “paper tiger”—and Washington made sure that Beijing knew it.¹⁰³

The contrast between the United States’ active use of Taiwan facilities for the Vietnam War and its concern over ROC mainland operations suggests another, complicating factor in American alliance objectives. From 1964 until 1971, the Johnson and the Nixon administrations frustrated Taipei’s attempts to use American policy in Vietnam and Asia to promote its own national goals vis-à-vis the mainland. This meant limiting the extent to which the ROC could exploit aggressive, anti-Communist rhetoric. During the Nixon administration’s attempts to disengage, the problem was to Taiwan’s attempts to use the Nixon Doctrine, which preached the importance of self-help on the part of the Asian countries to gain support in the region for Taipei’s anti-mainland ambitions. In short, the increased American presence in Taiwan due to the Vietnam War had to be carefully managed to avoid any impression that it was linked to support of the KMT’s still quite public civil war goals.

In the end, policy goals related to the war in Vietnam introduced a contradiction into American alliance objectives that redounded to Taipei’s benefit. Despite evidence of continued—even intensified—U.S. preoccupation with entrapment and greatly diminished, but still present, concerns regarding the fragility of the government, the Eisenhower/Dulles objective of using the alliance to sustain the ROC regime’s legitimacy remained. As a September 1964 national policy paper argued, U.S. attempts to undermine the KMT government’s claim to govern the mainland would not only have an “unsettling effect on political stability in Taiwan,” but would also increase “pressures for accommodation with the Chinese Communists” in South and Southeast Asia.¹⁰⁴

Previously, these concerns had been alleviated by giving limited backing to ROC cross-Strait ambitions and providing support during the two offshore island crises. In the Vietnam War environment, other kinds of assistance were provided. During the Johnson administration and the early years of the Nixon presidency, the alliance’s political halo was enhanced through continued support for the ROC’s international political status, and through increased support for its integration into the international economic system.

The presentation thus far of American alliance objectives during the Vietnam War suggests that post-Eisenhower/Kennedy adjustments in alliance objectives (i.e., an intensified emphasis on defense and an extension of the political halo) represented a difference in degree more than in kind. To be sure, the alliance dilemma of avoiding the consequences of entrapment (conflict with the mainland) and abandonment (collapse of the ROC and diminished U.S. credibility in Asia) persisted. Moreover, the accompanying alliance composite security dilemma also appeared relatively constant: even as the United States identified the object of the alliance (the PRC) as a threat to Asia’s security, it sought to restrain its eager ally. However, these appearances of continuity were somewhat misleading.

Earlier, the two allies had viewed the adversary—the PRC—differently, and had pursued policies congruent with their respective perceptions. After a brief flirtation with “rollback” (i.e., overthrow) of the government on the mainland, Washington’s objective had shifted to

one of “containment.” This was to guard against military or political expansion and also to increase Beijing’s demands on Moscow which, it was hoped, would drive a “wedge” between the two allies.¹⁰⁵ For Taipei, the objective was different. Throughout these years, it supported “rollback” and remained unwilling to settle for a contained China—particularly in the Taiwan Strait. Despite these differences, both allies saw the PRC as a threat to their respective security and to that of Asia. More importantly, neither ally was willing to explore any genuine grounds for mutual accommodation.

There were, as we have seen, some hints of change during the Kennedy administration. During 1966–71, however, American policy began to shift toward an entirely new (and far more complex) version of the composite security dilemma—one in which one ally seeks to conciliate the adversary while maintaining the alliance directed against it.

This process began in the Johnson years. The content of policy discussions within the administration suggests that three elements contributed to the first serious *demarches* toward Beijing since 1949–1950.¹⁰⁶ The first, and primary, element was the effort to avoid PRC intervention in the war in Vietnam. However, there were also secondary motivations. By 1966, there was evidence both of a growing willingness in Congress and the public at large to tolerate the exploration of new initiatives in China, and an increasing restlessness over the growing commitment to the Vietnam War. The time seemed ripe to take advantage of this shift in opinion, and to demonstrate to the American people (as well as to its allies) that Washington was not on a rigidly anti-Communist crusade. In other words, improved relations with the PRC were seen as a way to calm anti-war feelings at home, and to quiet criticism abroad. Third and finally, while the Vietnam War and the Sino-Soviet dispute made any positive mainland response unlikely, Washington believed that this was the time to table an agenda for better relations with the PRC, which might be grasped in the future.

In private, the administration considered bold initiatives (such as a letter to Zhou Enlai proposing a meeting at the foreign minister level in the spring of 1966), even as its officials spoke in more conciliatory terms in public. In Warsaw, the American ambassador not only offered repeated assurances of nonaggressive intent but also presented an unprecedentedly rich agenda of possible areas for U.S.–PRC. cooperation. Beijing was unresponsive. Nevertheless, by 1968, the Johnson administration had left two important legacies: the linkage between improved relations with the PRC and the Vietnam War, and a long agenda of moves that could be taken should the opportunity arise to improve relations with Beijing.

When Richard Nixon took office in 1969, the nature of this linkage shifted. His administration sought better relations with the mainland primarily to facilitate withdrawal from Vietnam and to stabilize Asia in preparation for a much-reduced American presence. Between 1968 and 1971, American initiatives gradually became even *more* public and *more* positive about the PRC’s place in the world community. In September 1969, the new secretary of state, William Rogers, acknowledged a more open policy toward the mainland, but argued that the purpose of such a policy was to expose the PRC’s intransigence to the world. By January 1970, American trade regulations had been liberalized and during a visit to Taipei, Vice President Agnew struck a much more positive note by maintaining that talks with Beijing might “lessen the terrible tensions” in Asia. Finally, in March 1971, President Nixon made the most positive statement to date when he spoke “of drawing the People’s Republic of China into a constructive relationship with the world community, and particularly with the rest of Asia.”¹⁰⁷

The impact of this policy drift on U.S. objectives in the ROC alliance was important. By signaling a change in its stance toward the mainland from one of opposition to *détente*, Washington changed the dynamic of the alliance security dilemma. The challenge from 1964

to 1971 was not to restrain an overeager ally (without signaling abandonment) while confronting the object of the alliance. Rather, it was to reassure a nervous ally (without risking its greater militancy) and to satisfy domestic critics, while publicly pursuing attempts to improve relations with the longstanding adversary.

The United States, 1971–1978

The nature of American objectives within the U.S.–ROC alliance changed fundamentally after July 1971, and established a basic pattern that would continue into the presidencies of Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter. As noted above, behind this sudden shift was a more fundamental change in the assessment of the United States' global interests. Relations with Beijing were seen as necessary not only with respect to regional problems (to facilitate the withdrawal from Vietnam and to stabilize postwar Asia), but also to the global issue of managing relations with the Soviet Union.

The result of this reorientation was that the mutual defense treaty lost its *raison d'être*. Beijing was no longer the adversary. Close relations with the mainland had suddenly become a keystone of American foreign policy. Indeed, Henry Kissinger's talks with PRC leaders between 1972 and 1976 suggest that he was vigorously and aggressively pursuing a virtual alliance with them: sharing intelligence assessments; coordinating policy on the Indo-Pakistani conflict; offering to obtain advice from the Pentagon on how best to protect the PRC from Soviet missile attacks; revealing the contents of negotiations with Moscow; and committing the United States to oppose a Soviet attack on the PRC.¹⁰⁸ Similarly, when the Carter administration decided to proceed in earnest with normalization, its motivation was one of strategic alignment with the PRC as a check on Soviet activities.

Such negotiations with an adversary go well beyond the bounds of the composite security dilemma of 1964–71. By this time, the issue was not simply one of easing relations with the enemy. During these later years, the United States was negotiating the terms of a strategic alignment with the object of the mutual defense treaty, even as that (former) adversary not only demanded the treaty's abrogation as a precondition for diplomatic ties, but vehemently refused to abjure the use of force to secure Taiwan's unification with the mainland. Washington was moving on a course that could logically lead only toward abandonment of the ROC.

For the Nixon and Ford administrations, at least, abandonment was not seen as an option. Although domestic public opinion favored relations with China, it strongly opposed ending the commitment to the defense of Taiwan.¹⁰⁹ Moreover, within Congress and the Republican Party, opposition to the abandonment of the ROC was considerable. In his memoirs, Nixon wrote of his concerns regarding the "murderous crossfire from any or all the various pro-Taiwan, anti-Nixon, and anti-PRC lobbies" that would have resulted from any misstep on the Taiwan issue. Gerald Ford, facing re-election in 1976 and a challenge from the pro-Taiwan Ronald Reagan, clearly had the same concerns. Finally, there were pressures from the international environment. In the wake of the American withdrawal from Vietnam—and especially after the collapse of South Vietnam in 1975—both Nixon and Ford were determined to avoid any actions that would cast further doubt on the United States' reliability as an ally.¹¹⁰

This dilemma provided the dynamic for the development of the very different set of United States objectives that emerged during the last years of the alliance with the ROC: to avoid the impression of abandoning Taiwan while, at the same time, building a strategic alignment with the target of the alliance that was increasingly unwilling to accept anything less than that abandonment.

The ROC, 1964–1971

As noted, the Johnson administration pursued the Vietnam War amid rhetoric that was both stridently anti-Communist and anti-PRC. For Taipei, this was a unique opportunity to expand its influence within both the alliance and Asia by exploiting its self-proclaimed status as “Free China,” the vanguard of Asian anti-communism. With the beginning of the Cultural Revolution in 1966, it seemed that circumstances were only getting better. The confusion and violence on the mainland not only increased the contrast with the political and economic successes of Taiwan, but also enhanced the possibility that the conditions for the long-anticipated Communist collapse were becoming a reality.

In his many conversations with American interlocutors between 1964 and 1967, Chiang stressed that his government needed to act to maintain its credibility.¹¹¹ The optimal course, he argued, was to coordinate a return to the mainland with the war in Vietnam. Less optimal—but also essential if the KMT were to enhance its legitimacy among the people and, more importantly, the military—were public reaffirmations of the goal of retaking the mainland; concrete discussions of invasion, and continued, slowly escalating, cross-Strait raids. In short, Taipei’s objective was, as before, to use the alliance to enhance its domestic legitimacy.

Of course, domestic legitimacy would also be built by enhancing the government’s regional and global influence. During these years, Taipei utilized the anti-Communist mood in Asia and the symbolism of American support, both to sustain its international position and to expand its influence in the region by resurrecting the idea of the ROC’s central position in a multilateral alliance system in Asia. Increasingly, it seemed, Taipei sought to use the political halo derived from its military alliance with the United States to circumvent Washington’s restrictions.

When viewed against American objectives discussed in the last section, this continuity in Taiwan’s alliance goals from 1964 to 1971 sustained the earlier asymmetry. As noted earlier, however, there were also seeds of radical change. Washington was seeking to end its adversarial relationship with the PRC and thus, to conciliate, rather than to confront, the object of the U.S.–ROC mutual defense alliance. For Taipei, the implications of this drift in American policy were profound. It had to be concerned with possible abandonment by its only ally or, as Chiang Kai-shek told Dean Rusk, with entrapment in a deal with the mainland that was at the ROC’s expense.¹¹²

The ROC had noted the initial groping toward a new China policy during the last days of the Kennedy administration. Yet with the more dramatic gestures of the Johnson and the Nixon administrations, Taiwan developed a growing sense that a shift was occurring in U.S. policy.¹¹³ This movement, along with greatly increased American intolerance for the ROC’s ambitions of mainland recovery and lessened concern that such restrictions might bring about regime collapse—appears to have prompted new thinking about alliance objectives in Taipei.

As noted, during the Kennedy administration, Taiwan began the process of economic transformation that would eventually make it one of the “miracles” of Asian development. Promoting economic ties under the umbrella of the security alliance thus became an even more prominent objective of the ROC. This transformation also had domestic political implications. The KMT government’s earlier reluctance to devote resources to the island’s development sprang from its refusal to acknowledge Taiwan as anything more than a temporary way station for the Party’s return to the mainland. A commitment to develop the island suggested a more permanent residence. As American embassy observers remarked as early as 1964, some officials “below the top level” did not share Chiang’s eagerness to engage the mainland but “were quite pleased with their undoubted success of making a going concern of Taiwan.”¹¹⁴

Despite Chiang Kai-shek's consistent prodding for the United States to support his goals of mainland recovery, there were also indications that toward the end of his life he was rethinking this life-long ambition. As early as 1958, the ROC ambassador to the United States admitted that making pledges to return had become "quite an ordeal" for Chiang Kai-shek.¹¹⁵ During the initial period of the American escalation of the Vietnam War and the early stages of the Cultural Revolution, Chiang demonstrated his usual determination to shape the rhetoric and actions of the alliance to the needs of mainland recovery. When these efforts were bluntly rejected, signs of reconsideration appeared.

By early 1967, the United States embassy was reporting that the mood in Taiwan was turning away from mainland recovery, while Chiang Ching-kuo was conceding that domestic and international conditions were no longer favorable for action against the mainland. By late 1967 and early 1968, Chiang Kai-shek was calling for greater use of political means to effect change on the mainland. The U.S. embassy was reporting a reduction in discussions of, or planning for, mainland recovery. In addition, Chiang Ching-kuo informed Washington that raids on the mainland were ending.¹¹⁶ This late 1960s focus on developing Taiwan, and de-emphasis on mainland recovery, thus sowed the seeds of the even more fundamental reorientation of alliance objectives that came about after 1971, when American policy radically turned again.

The ROC, 1971–1978

As the full implications of America's policy shift unfolded in these years, the KMT (led by Chiang Kai-shek until his death in 1975 and, thereafter, by his son, Chiang Ching-kuo) radically reassessed its policies toward Taiwan and its objectives in the alliance with the United States. Washington's strategic shift toward the PRC meant that the primary alliance objective of maintaining a more offensive posture toward the mainland was now a chimera. This realization provided the fundamental impetus for the ROC's desire for change.

Although the U.S.–ROC military alliance remained intact during the last stages of the treaty, its political halo was rapidly vanishing. Washington pledged repeatedly to "stand by" its ally on Taiwan. However, its increasingly intimate dealings with Beijing released other countries from any obligation to support the fiction. The 1971 admission of China into the UN, soon after the first Kissinger trip, was the most immediate sign that the ROC's international position had seriously eroded as a result of the new U.S.–PRC relationship. Taiwan's bilateral relations also bore this out. In 1970, 53 nations had recognized the PRC and 68 the ROC. By 1977, the figures were 111 and 23, respectively.¹¹⁷

The KMT's policy response to these changes was a further reconsideration of its mainland policy. The rhetoric of return to the mainland and the formal claim to being the only legitimate "China" continued, but the emphasis shifted decisively to the use of peaceful means to achieve these goals.¹¹⁸ Moreover, while the island was still referred to as a "bastion" for national recovery, KMT policy statements throughout the 1970s suggested that the shift to political means determined that Taiwan would become a "model province," attracting the mainland population by promising a better life under KMT governance.¹¹⁹

This new approach to the mainland had important implications for the legitimization of the KMT government. It would achieve historical vindication and political victory not by a military return to the mainland, but by demonstrating its superior capability to develop China. This policy shift had a profound impact on ROC governance on Taiwan. Economic policy and political institutions were no longer oriented toward sustaining a temporary military jumping-off point, which, in turn, meant greater attention to the economic welfare and political rights of the local population.

Until 1978, even as the KMT pledged that the present mainland-based constitution would remain unchanged, it placed more emphasis on political reforms (i.e., local elections and bi-elections for additional representatives to national bodies) and popular welfare.¹²⁰ To be sure, between 1972 and 1978, the ROC officially rejected any accommodation of a “two Chinas” policy or even the “divided China” argument of the 1950s. Nonetheless, the shift toward peaceful reunification and the concept of a “model province” carried with it a new focus on political legitimation via Taiwan’s political and economic development rather than through an unlikely return to the mainland.

The shift in alliance goals that accompanied this reorientation was dramatic. Until 1978, the ROC stressed the mutual defense treaty as the essential mainstay of a *defensive* shield behind which it could *develop* Taiwan, as well as the basis for expanded economic development. Most revealing in this respect was Chiang Ching-kuo’s comment after he was briefed by American diplomats on the Shanghai Communiqué of 1972: Taiwan would be restrained and all would be well as long as military assistance continued.¹²¹

A similar reorientation with respect to the radically shrinking political halo was, of course, more difficult. In this respect, Taiwan’s alliance objectives were to slow the political rapprochement between the United States and the PRC, while seeking ways to compensate for the erosion of the ROC’s international position.

Alliance Management

Any discussion of alliance management must again recognize the fundamental difference between 1964 to 1971 and subsequent years. In the former case, as noted, Snyder’s paradigms of an alliance security dilemma and a composite security dilemma remain valid for understanding the management dynamic of the U.S.–ROC alliance. Viewing the post-1971 relationship through a conceptual framework that focuses on alliance preservation in a situation of potential armed conflict with an adversary is simply no longer useful. The adversary had ceased to be an adversary and the thrust of American policy was to minimize the alliance. Nevertheless, it is useful to employ some elements of this paradigm in an allegorical sense to describe the relationship’s management in its final days.

The United States, 1964–1971

Avoiding entrapment was the principal concern of the Johnson administration during the escalation of the Vietnam War. Washington’s concerns that the ROC might provoke a clash with the mainland were intensified at two junctures: the escalation of the Vietnam War in 1964–65, and the initial period of the Cultural Revolution (late 1966 to mid-1967).¹²²

Many of the American alliance management techniques used to respond to these perceived threats of entrapment were consistent with those of the past. There were reminders of previous pledges; supervision of activities; warnings that the United States would not defend the off-shore islands if Taiwan provoked the PRC; monitoring of statements made by ROC leaders; supervision of military planning for mainland operations; and management of military training and material.¹²³ One U.S. government study noted that a justification for the provision of “economic and military aid” was to “ensure. . . [the] preservation of the necessary degree of U.S. influence in key elements of government and society.”¹²⁴

The most compelling evidence, however, of how intensified concern during the Vietnam War translated into closer alliance supervision can be found by examining the “Blue Lion Committee.” Formed toward the end of the Kennedy administration to be the principal

venue for U.S.–ROC discussions of mainland operations, the committee had three purposes from the perspective of the United States: to improve supervision of ROC operations; to maintain KMT morale by providing the illusion of action; and, through the input of the American military, to introduce greater reality into Taiwan's mainland planning.¹²⁵

In 1965–66, Washington became alarmed when Chiang Kai-shek promoted operation Great Torch-5, which proposed a cross-strait invasion of five southwest provinces to be coordinated with the war in Vietnam. Encouragement of planning for morale building or for supervision was now less important than the danger (articulated by both the embassy and Dean Rusk) that the discussions might be passed along to the PRC by agents in Taiwan and thus provoke the much-dreaded mainland intervention. To avoid such a danger, the secretary of state approved a proposal that topics for discussion be limited to those concerned with much broader issues, such as “concepts and strategies (but not plans) for dealing with the Communist threat in Southeast Asia.” Deep concerns over a possible mainland response thus precluded *even* discussions of cross-strait activities.¹²⁶

Similar care was exercised with respect to ROC activities associated with the Vietnam War. By 1960–61, after Ngo Dinh Diem's visit to the island, relations between the ROC and South Vietnam had become quite close. In his talks with Americans, Diem floated the idea of inviting ROC troops to Vietnam and of creating a broader Asian anti-Communist alliance that would include Taiwan. As the war progressed during the late 1960s, similar proposals occasionally surfaced and were enthusiastically supported by the ROC.¹²⁷

Washington was once again determined to manage the alliance in ways that served the overarching objective of blunting PRC intervention. This meant maintaining a sharp line of demarcation between treaty-related activities and the war in Vietnam. Actual ROC participation in the war was consequently limited to technical aid, the provision of a political warfare group, training in Taiwan, the dispatch of small numbers of combat troops disguised as locals, and assistance with transportation.¹²⁸ On Taiwan, American units in support of the Vietnam mission were kept under U.S. command and pursued objectives related solely to that mission.

Preserving Taiwan as a base for intelligence-gathering on the mainland was as important as using the alliance to serve only United States goals in the Vietnam War. Information gleaned from ROC spies operating in the mainland, radio monitoring stations on Taiwan, and from activities by the few remaining KMT troops in North Burma were all valuable to the war effort. Perhaps most important, as John Garver has noted, was the information gathered from U2 aircraft flown by ROC crews, as well as from drone planes operated by U.S. forces bearing the ROC insignia. Such intelligence provided data to those in Washington attempting to track PRC activities vis-à-vis Vietnam, or seeking targets should conflict break out.¹²⁹

To restrict further the ROC's ability to provoke a conflict with the mainland, America intensified its efforts to shift the mission of its armed forces to defense. In the late 1960s, military aid was severely curtailed (in 1969 it was less than 25 percent of what it had been in 1968), and eventually it was ended. In 1969, plans were announced to restructure the ROC military and reduce its size. Significantly, during a private discussion with the American ambassador in 1967, Chiang Ching-kuo had rejected such a reduction, precisely because it would be seen as a lessening of the commitment to retake the mainland.¹³⁰

While the United States persisted in narrowing the scope of the alliance's military aspect, other management strategies promoted the alliance's political halo. The first of these was to encourage the island's economic development. In 1964, a policy planning document approved by Secretary of State Rusk expressed the hope that over the next ten years the ROC

government might orient itself more toward development of the island than toward recapturing the mainland.¹³¹ In the years that followed, American support for Taiwan's development rapidly accelerated and became a central factor in the island's economic success. Although actual aid was extremely limited, other kinds of support flourished. With the United States providing extensive advice, low interest loans, and investment, Taiwan's exports grew by 33 percent between 1965 and 1973, and two-way trade with the United States had grown to U.S. \$1.8 billion by 1972.¹³²

The United States also maintained Taiwan's political halo in the international sphere. Recently released documents reveal that Washington actively worked in tandem with Taipei to frustrate French recognition of the PRC. While this probably reflected the Johnson administration's general impatience with Charles DeGaulle's diplomacy, it was also motivated by concern about the impact that French recognition might have on other countries' willingness to continue to accept of the ROC as China's legitimate government.¹³³

Although French recognition did not prompt many others to follow suit, the act was symptomatic of growing international impatience over the ROC's artificial status in the UN.¹³⁴ Throughout the Johnson years, the United States publicly provided strong support for the waning vestiges of ROC global legitimacy. It was a losing battle, as in the past, but maintenance of American credibility in Asia guaranteed support. Both Secretary of State Rusk and President Johnson felt that any change with regard to the UN representation question would "make us appear to 'falter' in the Pacific at just the wrong time."¹³⁵

This alliance management strategy had a problematic impact on America's contradictory alliance objective of redefining its relationship with the PRC. Policy toward the military aspect of the ROC alliance was certainly consistent with an improvement in relations with the PRC. The American representative in secret talks with the PRC even used it to underline the United States' sincerity in putting forth proposals for improved relations. But strengthening Taiwan's political halo was not consistent with these efforts. Given that both sides claimed to govern China and that neither side would consider a "two-Chinas" solution, strengthening Taipei by supporting its international status could only damage attempts to improve relations with the mainland.

This dilemma was most apparent in U.S. policy toward mainland admission to the UN. On the two occasions (1964 and 1966) when serious attention was devoted to this question, the Johnson administration was deeply divided.¹³⁶ For a brief period during the summer of 1966, it seemed that bilateral initiatives toward better relations with the PRC might also be accompanied by consideration of seating two Chinas. UN representative Arthur Goldberg was in favor. Secretary of State Rusk, who had been consistently opposed, was wavering, and Secretary of Defense McNamara entered the issue expressing support. Foreign and public opinion, it was argued, would support a less confrontational policy toward the PRC. However, concern over the impact on Taiwan eventually derailed the process and even rendered a less significant shift—support for a committee to study the representation issue—more difficult. Washington was not yet ready to withdraw its political halo from Taiwan.¹³⁷

Declassified data comparable to those of the Johnson years are not yet available for the Nixon presidency. Yet from the public record, it is obvious that this administration intensified its predecessor's efforts to change the nature of U.S.-PRC relations. There was little doubt that by 1971 American policy was actively seeking *détente* with its ally's mortal enemy. There is also evidence that a strategy was created to manage the U.S.-ROC alliance so as to facilitate that process. This strategy was reflected in Spiro Agnew's comments to reporters during his 1970 visit to Taiwan, when he asserted that he saw no contradiction

between rapprochement with the PRC and maintaining an alliance with Taiwan. It was, he said, “just a matter of different mechanics.” President Nixon was more direct in February 1971, when he said he did not believe that the alliance with the ROC “need constitute an obstacle to normal relations” with the PRC.¹³⁸

The Nixon administration, in other words, would simply separate the two relationships and seek to satisfy all parties. On the one hand, the mainland would be reassured by the increasingly positive tone of public statements, conciliatory gestures, and repeated pledges regarding the purely defensive nature of the military alliance with the ROC. On the other hand, the Taiwan alliance would be managed through continued provision of defensive military equipment, enhanced support for economic development, pledges to maintain its place in the UN, and assurances that the United States would stand by the defense treaty.¹³⁹

This was not a viable management strategy. Assertions of “different mechanics” were not consistent with the dynamics or even the logic, of this triangular relationship. The political stance taken by the PRC in talks which began in 1955, as well as the thrust of the U.S.–ROC dialogue since 1951, provided no historical support for successfully sustaining both the alliance with the ROC and relations with the PRC. This would become absolutely clear when talks with Beijing began in the 1970s and the U.S.–PRC relationship shifted from *détente* to strategic alignment.

The ROC, 1964–1971

During these years, Taiwan directed its alliance management strategy toward continuing to soften American opposition to its persistent pressure for expanded mainland operations. To secure this objective, the ROC regularly attempted to evade U.S. restrictions on mainland operations that went beyond intelligence gathering. Cables from the U.S. embassy made mention of operations of which they had no knowledge. In some cases, doubt was expressed over whether even the appropriate ROC authorities had been informed. Indeed, during the first year of the Nixon administration, a raid on PRC shipping near the Min River estuary became an issue among members of Congress who feared that such provocative actions by Taiwan might slow a Vietnam settlement.¹⁴⁰

Despite these difficulties, diplomatic bargaining to bring about a change in American policy was, as before, the more common strategy. In their meetings with American officials, Chiang Kai-shek (and, increasingly, his son) pursued a consistent and direct line of argument. Asia, they argued, was the site of a major threat to world peace and the armed conflict in Vietnam was simply one manifestation of the PRC’s aggressive ambitions. It was imperative that anti-Communist forces unite to defeat—not to negotiate with—this fundamental threat to peace.¹⁴¹

Chiang and his advisers offered two contributions from the ROC to secure this goal. The first, as noted earlier, was to provide troops for the conflict in Vietnam. The second action, more congruent with ROC goals in the alliance, was to increase operations against the mainland. The most dramatic example of this was the proposal, made in late 1965, for the ROC to seize five southern provinces along the Vietnamese border. In his meetings with Secretary of Defense McNamara, Chiang Ching-kuo suggested that this action would create a “barrier” to PRC expansion and would not require U.S. ground forces—only “air and navy cover.” As might be expected, this assurance provided little comfort to an edgy Washington.¹⁴²

In attempting to persuade America to accept a more active role for the ROC, Chiang and his colleagues employed the usual arguments. First among these was the hoary bargaining tactic of mixing warnings of weakened domestic legitimacy with bitter references to the

consequences of past weak resistance to aggression.¹⁴³ There are indications, however, that the ROC also sought to gain leverage with the United States by offering incentives. In 1970, for example, when it seemed that B-52 bombers might be withdrawn from Okinawa, the ROC proposed to extend a runway at Hsinchu airbase at its own expense.¹⁴⁴ Finally, on at least one occasion, a government agency (the CIA) speculated that Taipei was retaliating against American policy by severely restricting its activities.¹⁴⁵

Although it is difficult to assess the impact that such retaliation might have had on U.S. policy—due to the heavily censored nature of the available documentation—this bargaining ploy might have had an impact. Cooperation in other areas during the late 1960s was reduced, but the two sides seemed nonetheless to have maintained a robust relationship in the intelligence field. One might speculate that the value the Agency placed on this relationship led director John McCone and deputy director and former Taiwan station chief, Ray Cline (practically the only major voices in the Johnson administration) to argue for a consideration of the ROC's plan to seize the five southern provinces.¹⁴⁶

The CIA was also important as one of the many conduits that Chiang used to get his message through to Washington. As before, the ROC was not satisfied with formal, diplomatic channels to make its case. Early in the Johnson administration, Chiang Kai-shek expressed his preference for communicating through the CIA rather than the embassy. He was rebuffed, but he continued, and a very intimate connection between Cline and Chiang Ching-kuo undoubtedly served the Chiangs well.¹⁴⁷

This was not all. Although the 1960s had considerably weakened the “China Lobby,” the ROC did not lessen its efforts to influence Congress and American opinion leaders. During these years, a steady stream of newspaper and magazine editors, business delegations, and, most important of all, congressional delegations, were received in Taipei and given the ROC message. Moreover, with American-educated Madame Chiang in the lead, prominent figures from Taiwan kept up a busy schedule of American visits while the ROC information machine pressed its case.¹⁴⁸

Besides seeking to persuade the United States to accept an expanded role for the ROC in Asia, Taiwan undertook its most vigorous efforts to date to increase its presence in Asia, either by expanding the structure of the U.S.–ROC alliance, or by developing a separate Asian security organization. The latter idea, with its roots in the 1950s, was clearly intended to evade the increasingly restrictive posture of the United States.

Beginning in the early part of 1964, in meetings with American diplomats and in public statements, ROC officials emphasized the need for Asian countries—particularly South Vietnam, South Korea, and Taiwan—to “join hands in maintaining stability.”¹⁴⁹ As the conflict in Vietnam expanded, these efforts increased, but with a greater emphasis on strictly Asian participation. For example, during visits to Taiwan by Vice President Ky of South Vietnam in 1965, and by President Park of South Korea the following year, there were discussions of an Asian anti-Communist alliance.¹⁵⁰ Throughout the 1960s, the subject came up in discussions with the United States as well as with other Asian countries, with the thinly veiled suggestion that the U.S.’ lessening of anti-Communist determination was the root cause. By 1969–70, Taiwan was promoting the Pacific and Asian Treaty Organization (PATO), with apparent support from South Korea, just as the Nixon Doctrine of Asian self-reliance was becoming United States policy.¹⁵¹

Despite these various efforts, the ROC was less successful than it had been in the previous period in effecting any change in American policy. As we have noted, there was a pattern of consistent tightening of restrictions on action, rhetoric, and even discussions that

might provoke the mainland. During both the Johnson and early Nixon administrations, opposition to any idea of an Asian anti-Communist alliance was steadfast. The Nixon Doctrine, which preached self-help in Asia, apparently did not apply to Taiwan's efforts to create PATO.

The major reason for the ROC's failure to manipulate the alliance is obvious from the argument outlined above. The Vietnam War had heightened concerns over entrapment which, in turn, diminished tolerance for ROC activities toward the mainland. Discussions within the Johnson administration suggest that while there was an awareness of the linkage between such activities and KMT legitimacy, there also existed an unwillingness to accommodate anything more than symbolic gestures. Threats of KMT collapse were less credible at a time of economic growth, and less persuasive when weighed against the prospect of PRC involvement in Vietnam.

The United States, 1971–1978

During these years, three administrations sought to manage the alliance with Taipei. Each sought to establish a strategic alignment with the PRC, while observing both the policy constraints toward the ROC set by domestic politics, and the need to maintain American credibility in Asia. The efforts were largely a failure.

The record of the secret Sino-American talks that began in 1955 should have given the Nixon administration sufficient warning of the difficulties involved in such a project. From the very beginning, PRC negotiators made it clear that Beijing viewed the American military presence in the Taiwan Strait as an act of interference in its domestic affairs. From 1955 to 1957, intense discussions over the renunciation of force in the area became deadlocked as the PRC consistently opposed such a presence. The American side countered by asserting that its presence in the area was pursuant to a valid, international treaty. The two views could not have been further apart.

Little changed when Henry Kissinger met with the Chinese during July and October 1971 to make preparations for the presidential visit of February 1972.¹⁵² Under instructions from the Politburo, Zhou Enlai insisted on three conditions for normalization: withdrawal of American troops, abrogation of the mutual defense treaty, and recognition of Taiwan as a province of the PRC. These conditions would remain the unshakable basis of Beijing's position. Moreover, by 1973–74, it became apparent that the PRC was unwilling to improve relations significantly unless such normalization occurred. Thereafter, the PRC presented the United States with very little room for maneuver. If the strategic alliance were to go forward, it would have to be at the expense of the alliance with Taiwan. Until early 1978, those in Washington who were managing the relationships with Beijing and Taiwan strove to avoid this either/or choice.

Turning first to the mainland, the most obvious—and prominent—reflection of attempts to build a relationship to circumvent the Taiwan issue were the efforts to cultivate the shared antipathy toward the Soviet Union. In the Shanghai Communiqué, both sides had agreed on joint opposition to “efforts” by any “country” or “group of countries” to “establish. . . hegemony.” As noted, the recently published substance of Kissinger's meetings with Mao Zedong and other PRC officials show a pattern of seeking to deepen the anti-Soviet bond at every opportunity.¹⁵³

Second, even as both the Nixon and Ford administrations (and to some extent, the early Carter administration) built on the anti-Soviet theme to strengthen ties, they also tried to maintain the illusion of progress toward normalization by reducing the American military presence in Taiwan. Patrols of the Taiwan Strait by the Seventh Fleet ceased (1969), and the

Formosa Resolution of 1955 was repealed (1974).¹⁵⁴ From 1972 to 1977, the number of American military was reduced from 10,000 to 1,400 support and intelligence personnel (as early as 1972, the ROC claimed there were no combat troops on the island).¹⁵⁵ This reduction, as well as progress in other areas of cooperation, were depicted by Kissinger in December 1975 as demonstrating that “the process of normalization can be said to continue.”¹⁵⁶ More generally, Washington also sought to expand the relationship with the PRC in areas where it could, such as cultural, economic, and even military cooperation. Third and finally, all three administrations made clear their unwavering commitment to ultimate normalization. Given Beijing’s terms, this meant a severing of ties with Taiwan. During his February 1972 trip, President Nixon spoke of normalization by mid-1976. One year later, citing domestic political difficulties, Kissinger pledged to “to move after the 1976 elections.” Watergate put this pledge on hold. However, during his December 1975 trip to China, President Ford told the Chinese that while the Taiwan question was a difficult issue domestically, he would “be in a better position to establish diplomatic relations after the elections.”¹⁵⁷

It is clear, then, that the United States’ rapidly evolving relationship with the PRC set very narrow boundaries within which the alliance with the ROC could be managed. However, it was also apparent that the relationship with the ROC placed limits on the options available for management of relations with the PRC. The domestic and international pressures identified earlier not only curtailed the concessions that could be made to the PRC, but also required a continuing relationship with the ROC that, by itself, only complicated normalization.

One immediate casualty of the pre-normalization U.S.–PRC rapprochement was the political halo that had sustained the ROC’s international position since 1949. Although the United States never went beyond the language of the Shanghai Communiqué in defining the relationship between Taiwan and the mainland, it was clear from the first Kissinger visit that America had already granted *de facto* recognition to the mainland. The end of the political halo was dramatically illustrated by the PRC’s almost immediate admission to the UN, and the number of nations that shifted recognition from Taipei to Beijing. There was little Washington could (or even wished) to do to rebuild that halo.

In other realms, however, U.S.–ROC relations continued. As noted above, economic relations grew dramatically during these years and none of the three administrations attempted to check that growth. Loans to Taiwan were increased and the chairman of the Export–Import Bank noted that his institution would continue to offer long-term credits “without limit.”¹⁵⁸ Focus also returned to the military core of the alliance. The challenge here was to manage the military so that Beijing was not alienated, U.S. credibility in Asia was maintained, and domestic critics were calmed. In this respect, until the treaty terminated in 1979, the United States pursued a two-part strategy. First, it continued to emphasize the defensive nature of the treaty, and to make regular assurances that the United States would stand by its defense commitment to Taiwan. The ROC ambassador in Washington, James Shen, cited repeated U.S. pledges in the early years of the U.S.–PRC. rapprochement, while the *New York Times* reported that before Nixon left office in mid-1974, Taiwan had been given assurances no fewer than fifty-two times. Gerald Ford provided similar assurances in the wake of South Vietnam’s fall.¹⁵⁹

To ease the impact of the withdrawal of U.S. personnel from Taiwan and to add credibility to repeated pledges of fidelity to the defense commitment, the United States dramatically enhanced Taiwan’s defensive capabilities—the second prong of this two-part strategy. Although military grants-in-aid were terminated in 1974, this had little effect on the sale of arms which, between 1974 and 1978, totaled more than one billion dollars.¹⁶⁰ Efforts

were also increased to promote the military self-sufficiency of the island. For example, in 1973 the Nixon administration permitted co-production of the F-5E fighter. In August 1976, the Ford administration reported to Congress that in determining arms sales to Taiwan, “highest priority [had been] assigned to air-defense and continued development of self-sufficiency.” This pattern of increased arms sales was intensified in the last year of diplomatic relations under the Carter administration.¹⁶¹

The motivation for these sales clearly changed over time. During the Nixon and Ford administrations, they were an attempt to keep the relationship stable by placating Taiwan; to quiet domestic opposition over abandonment of the ROC; and to maintain credibility in post-Vietnam Asia. Preparation for an attenuated relationship that might follow normalization appears to have been a secondary consideration. During the Carter administration, however, the latter was a primary consideration as preparations were made to terminate the treaty and normalization.

In the end, the strategies intended to affect the basis for an enlarged relationship with Beijing, while avoiding a costly break with Taiwan, utterly failed. A focus on the Soviet threat and a less visible relationship with Taiwan simply were not acceptable to the PRC leadership. Like Chiang Kai-shek in the 1950s, the PRC would accept nothing less than recognition of their legitimate right to rule all of China. The issue was non-negotiable. As Deng Xiaoping told Kissinger in 1974: “It is for the one who has tied the knot to unfasten it.” In the following year, the Chinese made it clear that the lack of progress on the Taiwan issue and the belief that the United States was “leaping to Moscow by way of our [China’s] shoulders” were undermining the relationship.¹⁶² The only solution was normalization on Beijing’s terms.

The ROC, 1972–1978

As the lesser, and potentially expendable, ally in this situation of parallel alignments, Taipei did not, of course, have the luxury of rejecting Washington’s management strategy. In the waning days of the alliance, its response was intended ideally to slow the process of termination and, failing that, to salvage what could be salvaged from the remnants of the alliance.

In considering management options during these last years of the alliance, Taipei was in a paradoxical position. On the one hand, its bargaining power and political leverage were considerably reduced. Diminishing American concerns about the fragility of the regime weakened the credibility of the threat to self-destruct, while growing belief in the importance of alignment with China diminished Taiwan’s strategic value.

The ROC was also a beneficiary of circumstances beyond its control. The very same political currents that restrained normalization with Beijing benefited Taiwan’s position in the alliance with the United States. Support from public opinion, the conservative wing of the ruling Republican Party, and influential members of Congress persisted. In addition, Washington needed to avoid the impression that defeat in the Vietnam War and stress on the military self-reliance of Asian states signaled an American retreat from Asia. Beneath the very obvious growing divergence of interests between the United States and Taiwan, the basis for some kernel of shared interest remained. This explains why, during a time when a potentially devastating American policy shift hung over it, Taipei’s behavior seemed relatively passive. The necessity of maintaining morale at home required some protest, but the overall thrust of Taiwan’s alliance management was directed toward not making a tolerable situation worse.

The first strategy, naturally, was to rally support in the United States for slowing normalization with the PRC and supporting the continuation of the mutual defense treaty.

Before the announcement of normalization in December 1978, the ROC put considerable effort into getting its message out to a wide spectrum of Americans. Most important, of course, were members of Congress. A steady stream of lawmakers visited Taiwan, whether as members of fact-finding delegations, invited guests, or conference speakers. In addition, meetings of sympathetic groups (such as the Veterans of Foreign Wars), special seminars (for example, a seminar of China for American Youth), and interviews with journalists were all utilized to reach the broader American public.¹⁶³ Not surprisingly, the message that was conveyed was predictable. Negotiating with the Communists could come to no good end, and the ROC was an essential ally for maintaining stability in Asia. Should the United States end the alliance, it would call into question its interests elsewhere in Asia and around the world.

Finally, consistent with its recent tentative moves toward democracy, Taipei emphasized the congruence in values between the island's "free and open society" and the United States.¹⁶⁴ This argument had been used in the past when reality made a mockery of Taipei's claims to represent a "free China." In the mid-to-late 1970s, though, the claim had greater credibility and was clearly seen in Taipei as an effective substitute for the island's rapidly eroding value as a strategic asset for the United States.

The message to Washington was not totally positive. Although there are no de-classified materials available for this period, it seems reasonable to assume that some of the more negative public reactions were conveyed in private through the embassy. Perhaps the most important of these were Taiwan's repeated assertions that it would not be entrapped by the United States. On the occasion of the Shanghai Communiqué, the ROC insisted that any agreement "which has been and which may not be published, involving the rights and interests of the government and people of the Republic of China" made by the United States and the PRC would be "null and void." This remained the policy throughout the pre-normalization period.¹⁶⁵ More ominously during this period, the official press agency and the Legislative Yuan warned that termination of the treaty risked conflict in the Strait.¹⁶⁶

Too hostile a stance toward the United States, however, could very easily be counterproductive. Defiant rhetoric was undoubtedly intended, in part to boost morale at home, but it could also diminish the ROC's ability to benefit from those areas of the alliance relatively unaffected by Washington's mainland policy: arms purchases and economic relations. With respect to the former, Taiwan made a clear effort to expand its military capacities rapidly and to become self-reliant in the production of armaments that had previously been purchased.¹⁶⁷ Moreover, as the figures for U.S. arms sales suggest, throughout this period (but especially in the final years of the alliance) Taiwan's arms purchases from the United States increased dramatically. Taipei was stocking up quickly to hedge against any future reductions or an end to the defense relationship.

Progress also seemed possible in the economic dimension of the relationship. The ROC cultivated visiting businessmen as assiduously as it did members of Congress. Trade offices were established in the United States to promote Taiwanese exports. In these years, Taiwan became a leading customer (second in 1975) of the Export-Import Bank; the number of U.S. companies permitted to establish branches in Taiwan grew from 60 in 1972 to 200 in 1975; and joint ventures were approved with American oil companies. By 1978, Taiwan was the United States' eighth largest trading partner, with two-way trade reaching U.S. \$7.2 billion.¹⁶⁸ Taiwan's growing economic boom was, of course, essential to restructuring the bases of legitimacy discussed above. However, the global economic importance that accompanied its economic transformation provided the basis for an innovative foreign policy intended to compensate for the almost totally eroded American political halo.

In the period before the mid-1970s, the ROC had sought to expand its relations with other Asian countries, either to enhance its own anti-Communist credentials or to circumvent American attempts to limit its strategic role in Asia. After 1971, though, the purpose of expanded relations had little to do with opposition to the mainland or with the need to be recognized as the sole government of China (although these remained official ROC positions). Rather, the primary goal was to sustain international contacts for the purpose of developing Taiwan.

While the ROC would not sit in any organization with the PRC or maintain official relations with any country that recognized Beijing, it fought to hold its positions and explored other kinds of relations with states from which it had withdrawn its embassies. It was in these years that the roots of “pragmatic diplomacy,” whereby contacts with foreign states were maintained in the absence of formal, diplomatic relations, were developed. Dubbed “total diplomacy” by Chiang Ching-kuo, such ties mainly involved establishing semi-governmental institutions abroad for the purpose of maintaining cultural or economic contacts, and forming organizations to promote people-to-people diplomacy. Pursuant with this diplomatic line, in 1974 Taipei claimed to be maintaining relations with 114 countries and to have attended 258 international conferences.¹⁶⁹

During the last years of the alliance, fewer data pertaining to U.S.–ROC relations exist than for U.S.–PRC relations. However, what material is available is striking in that it suggests that Washington and Taipei retained a somewhat constructive, positive relationship during a period when acrimony and bitter feelings would have seemed more logical. To be sure, the erosion of the American political halo and Washington’s diplomatic snubs angered Taipei. On the other hand, many policymakers in the United States government were equally impatient with the ROC’s domestic lobbying and its attempts to secure confidential information from the Washington bureaucracy.¹⁷⁰ Yet on the whole, both sides acted with a restraint that belied the bitter exchanges, and even bullying, of earlier years.

This anomalous situation was attributable in part to the political context in the United States. The situation at that time served to check any hope that two administrations (and one diplomat—Henry Kissinger) might have entertained to achieve a more expansive relationship with the PRC, at the expense of ties with the ROC. However, some credit should also be given to Taipei, which behaved in a surprisingly restrained—even passive—manner. Whether this was because the ROC leadership believed that they could not stop the inevitable or because, on the contrary, they never accepted that normalization was possible, they managed the relationship in a way that allowed Taiwan to gain from the opportunities inherent in the American predicament.

III. Conclusion

There are few issues in American foreign policy as controversial as the U.S. relationship with the Republic of China. The failure of the bankrupt KMT government on the mainland in 1949 resonated through the United States’ political system well into the 1960s, as the “who lost China” debate destroyed political careers and limited diplomatic initiatives. This has led some to stress the extent to which the relocated government on Taiwan and administrations in Washington became locked in an intimate alliance bond, tempered by global anti-communism.

The availability of fresh documentation suggests that the reality of the alliance was quite different. The core arguments of this paper have benefited from—but have also sought to enhance and provide nuance to—recent depictions of the U.S.–ROC alliance that have

emphasized the relationship's more complex nature.¹⁷¹ Based on the assumption that the alliance underwent considerable change over the twenty-four years of its existence, the conceptual device of alliance management has been used to pinpoint the principal contradictions in the relationship and the manner in which they were resolved—or not—in these years. These arguments will not be revisited in this conclusion. Rather, the focus here will be on the manner in which the experience of a formal alliance helps to illuminate the nature of America's contemporary defense commitments in Asia.

The project on America's alliances in a changing Northeast Asia, of which this paper is a part, has focused on the formal treaties with the Republic of Korea and Japan. This seems entirely appropriate. Given the volatile nature of the Korean peninsula and the continuing concerns about the future trajectory of China's policy, there can be little doubt that these two alliances constitute the fundamental keystones of the U.S. security posture in the area and, possibly, the trigger for future American military involvement. However, the 1996 Sino-American confrontation in the Taiwan Strait suggests that the United States has also assumed an undefined, informal defense obligation toward the Republic of China on Taiwan, which carries the same importance, and the same risk, as the formalized defense treaties.

Viewed in historical perspective, contemporary U.S. relations with Taiwan are rooted in those of the past. The fundamental dynamics driving the present relationship strongly resemble those of the pre-1979 years. The alliance security dilemma within a restraining alliance is still evident, albeit in a significantly different form. Washington's central concern over the past decade takes after the 1950s—to manage the relationship so that the United States will not be entrapped by Taiwan in a conflict with the mainland. In its contemporary form, however, the dilemma revolves around the impact of independence rhetoric and Taipei's aggressive international diplomacy on cross-Strait stability. These developments have accompanied the democratization process on the island, clearly alarming the PRC. In response, Beijing has sought to blunt such diplomacy while making it clear that it is ready to use force in response to any perceived movement toward independence.

American policy has evolved to the point where it is today invoking an implicit security guarantee, both to deter the mainland from the use of force and to restrain Taipei by suggesting that defense assistance will not be forthcoming *if* it provokes a mainland attack by acts toward independence. The predicament in this position is, on the one hand, that too firm an American guarantee of Taiwan's security might, in and of itself, provide a sense of security to encourage precisely such independence sentiments. On the other hand, a weakened American guarantee might encourage either a more aggressive posture by the leaders in Beijing, or moves toward independence by a Taiwan government motivated by desperation, thus provoking mainland action. Once again, American policymakers find themselves walking a fine line as they seek to deter PRC military action across the Strait.

The contemporary situation is complicated further by the nature of United States relations with the People's Republic of China. The challenge today seems very similar to that of 1971–78. Then, the priority in managing the alliance dilemma with Taiwan was to prevent it from interfering with the cultivation of the more important relationship with the mainland. However, at that time, once the initial steps toward dialogue with Beijing were completed, the military/diplomatic relationship between the United States and Taiwan became the principal bar to further progress. This proved to be too formidable an obstacle to surmount, but there was at least a clear, definable action to be taken in relations with Taiwan (adopting the “Japanese formula”), which would bring with it the possibility of improved relations with the mainland.

Today, it is considerably more difficult for American policymakers to determine the boundaries within which relations with Taiwan might be compatible with a constructive relationship with the mainland. As noted, normalization did not end the American relationship with Taiwan. The intervening years have seen growing concern in Beijing over the combined effects of democratization on the island and continued U.S. support. Even more serious, although PRC suspicions of Washington's intentions were abundantly present in the early 1970s, the events of subsequent years have only heightened these suspicions and further undermined the credibility of any American pledges intended to assuage them.

In short, over the past two decades, the United States has found itself confronting an alliance security dilemma in its relations with Taiwan, within the context of a Sino-American relationship similar to that of the mid-1970s. Moreover, in attempting to navigate within this policy conundrum, Washington has increasingly slipped back to its former—and ultimately futile—policy of seeking to manage parallel relationships on the basis of “different mechanics.” The paradox is apparent. Despite the terms of normalization, Washington now finds itself in much the same situation as that which existed previously.

There is no single reason for the persistence of this conundrum. It results from a complex interaction of a number of factors, many of which do not relate to the issues raised in this paper.¹⁷² However, there is one causative factor which touches directly on the arguments of this paper—the basis upon which relations were normalized in 1979. Specifically, the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA), the vehicle that made the solution politically possible in the United States, contains within it the potential to resuscitate a military relationship with Taiwan in a new and different form, with Congress as the island's declared custodian. Because of the close linkage between policy toward Taiwan and that toward the PRC, the TRA has further complicated matters by creating, indirectly, a legal basis for the diffusion of responsibility for formulating American policy toward the mainland. From the perspective of 1999, it appears that the terms for achieving normalization have, ironically, become the foundation upon which the problems which it was intended to solve have re-emerged.

The TRA was obviously the result of an executive-legislative compromise and, as such, contains important ambiguities in the security realm.¹⁷³ The language of the act is strong and comprehensive in its suggestion of a commitment to the island. Congress was able to insert a statement of American security interests in the area; to enlarge the scope of hostile action by the mainland (beyond that of an armed attack) to include “other forms of coercion” (note the inclusion of boycotts and embargoes); and to declare that the United States would maintain the ability to “resist” threats not only to the island's security, but to its social and economic system as well.

Beyond the call for consultation between the two branches of government and the mandate that the two “shall determine the appropriate response” according to “constitutional processes,” this language is qualified by the absence of any legislated commitment for United States action. It is unclear whether this simply restates the language of the Constitution regarding declaration of war or actually suggests that Congress take a more assertive, initiating role should a “threat” emerge. The section on arms sales, especially the proviso about conformity with existing law, is similarly ambiguous. It is not at all apparent how the consulting and reporting process will go beyond that which governs arms sales to other countries.

The operative sections of the TRA, in short, are concerned with *intra-governmental* processes in response to an external threat to Taiwan. As others have noted, what is missing is any statement of obligation to the government of Taiwan, or commitment that the United States would take any particular action in the event of a crisis in the Strait. This is a domestic

law that expresses unilateral American preferences in forthright, unequivocal terms, but then mandates vague guidelines on how the branches of the United States government are to deal with one another.

In his important study of the TRA, Yufan Hao argues that the TRA actually represents an achievement of a divided government. The two branches, he states, proceeding from different priorities, were able to arrive at a piece of legislation that addressed the concerns of each branch and yet did not overturn the normalization process itself.¹⁷⁴ There is certainly something to this, and both Congress and the President had reason to be satisfied with the result. In President Carter's view, the legislation did little to restrict the executive in its constitutional conduct of foreign policy. In the view of many legislators, they had, through legislation, not only corrected a slight to that body's institutional prerogatives, but also asserted the importance of an American security commitment to Taiwan and of Congress's continued interest—even partnership—in its future shape. Although it was not unknown for Congress to take special interest in policy toward specific countries (Israel is an obvious example), such a formalized arrangement was unprecedented.

While divided government provided the vehicle for a compromise that assured the launching of normalization, it also created an important obstacle to its future success. This is not the place to trace the evolution of legislative-executive conflict over the management of the trilateral relationship since 1979. From today's perspective, however, it seems clear that Congress has steadily asserted its role in the management of policy toward Taiwan. This assertiveness can be found in legislation and resolutions supporting Taiwan; in congressional assertions (accepted by the executive) of the TRA's priority over agreements with the PRC; in calls for a closer relationship with Taiwan; and in demands for greater American support for a voice for the island in international affairs. Most significantly, it is evinced in the steady growth of the role Congress has assumed under the TRA to manage the relationship—particularly with regard to arms sales. By the summer of 1999, amid talk of “enhancing” the act, Congress was working closely with the Pentagon to assess the island's defense needs; advocating specific weapons systems; and pressing for the inclusion of Taiwan in the most important strategic initiative of the past few decades in Asia—the Theater Missile Defense (TMD) system.¹⁷⁵

The legislated role of Congress in the management of relations with Taiwan has added a new and complicating twist to the 1990s version of the earlier conundrum. When the formal defense treaty was in effect, considerations of congressional sensibilities clearly limited the options of the Nixon and Ford administrations. However, as the process of normalization during the Carter administration demonstrated, the balance of influence was still with the executive. This has now changed. The TRA has legislated a *formal* role for Congress regarding Taiwan, and subsequently that body has affirmed and enlarged its role because of the interaction of partisan differences, institutional prerogative, and ideological proclivities.

These congressional initiatives have not escaped the attention of Beijing which from the beginning suspected that the TRA represented an attempt to evade the terms of normalization. Many statements and actions coming out of Congress have served to confirm these suspicions, causing the Chinese leadership to demand more distance in the U.S. relationship with the island. Such distance, in turn, often provokes greater protectiveness from Congress and greater constraints on the administration, which then confirm PRC suspicions—and thus the vicious circle continues.

It appears that the embedding of the cross-Strait conflict into the American system of divided government has complicated the management of two relationships by “different mechanics” in a manner reminiscent of earlier years. Due to a formal and custodial congressional

role, improved relations with the mainland once again require continuity in relations with Taiwan, yet such continuity increasingly threatens improved relations with the PRC.

The impact of the TRA's wording and practice on the American security position in Asia becomes more apparent when its status as a defense commitment is compared with the formal mutual defense treaty. Although it has never been formally invoked, there were unofficial reports that during the 1996 crisis United States officials used language similar to that found in the TRA, to justify the presence of two aircraft carrier groups in the area to PRC representatives. These forces never actually moved to defend the island, but the suggestion of a defense commitment—even though it was *only* a suggestion—was unmistakable.

History certainly demonstrates that nations renege on defense pledges when it serves their interests. Short of conflict, however, most nations seek to retain the credibility of such pledges because of their deterrent value. Today in the Taiwan Strait, the United States seeks to deter by ambiguity.¹⁷⁶ While such a stance is undoubtedly motivated by strategic calculations (e.g., to avoid encouraging provocative actions by political groups in Taiwan), it is also a necessary reflection of the TRA.

As noted earlier, this domestic legislation is a unilateral statement of concern that contains merely an implicit *causis belli*. On the surface, its language is similar to that guiding other alliances, but the particular nature of the TRA-based commitment suggests a more complex outcome. At the very least, any response to a future crisis in the Taiwan Strait will contain an element of unpredictability, both because of the language of the act, and the political balance between the legislative and the executive branches.¹⁷⁷ All of this contributes to the possibility of miscalculation on both sides of the Strait. If one assumes that certainty of outcome is an important element in conveying intent, then the unilateral statement of *possible* intent based on the TRA which stands behind the American posture, would seem to be a stance less beneficial to United States interests than the formal treaty which it replaced.

A final area where comparison with the earlier formal treaty seems appropriate is in the United States' ability to affect Taipei's behavior within the context of an alliance security dilemma. To be sure, Taiwan's changed domestic conditions have dramatically altered the situation. Most important, though, the transition from a single-party authoritarian system to multiparty democracy has weakened American leverage. This weakening springs from the unilateral nature of the relationship and its intensified trilateral quality, described above. The uncertain commitment resulting from these factors does little to increase trust of the United States or to lessen the island's sense of insecurity. Moreover, the relationship's formal mechanics have changed the framework for managing the alliance. There has been a reduction in the number and quality of military/political links that earlier served to enhance American influence and to increase Taiwan's understanding of Washington's stance on security issues. Amid uncertainty regarding American policy, the island's policymakers are forced to make their own strategic policy. Recent events suggest that this can have different impacts, ranging from an overestimation of support resulting from a message conveyed by only one branch of government, to an underestimation of support deriving from the blurred quality of the overall message being conveyed. What is most significant for the purposes of this paper is that neither reaction contributes to the management of the contemporary alliance security dilemma.

Viewing the current American commitment to Taiwan in historical perspective thus yields a somewhat unsettling picture. On the one hand, policymakers in Washington face dilemmas strikingly similar to those of the earlier formal alliance. On the other hand, they

have significantly less leverage than previously. After six decades, the United States remains entangled in the still volatile and dangerous Chinese civil war, frustrated, as before, by its inability to influence the combatants or to establish clear terms for its own involvement.

Notes

¹ These dates correspond to the date of formal ratification by the Senate of the Mutual Defense Treaty signed in 1954, and the terminal year in which that alliance was technically in effect, following the announcement of normalization in December 1978.

² This is the title of Christopher Thorne's book on the Anglo-American alliance in the war against Japan. See *Allies of a Kind* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978). It seems an equally appropriate description of the U.S. relationship with the ROC during these years.

³ This paragraph and the next two are based on Robert Accinelli, *Crisis and Commitment: United States Policy toward Taiwan, 1950-1955* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), chap. 1; John L. Gaddis, "The Strategic Perspective: The Rise and Fall of the Defensive Perimeter Concept," in Dorothy Borg and Waldo Heinrichs, eds., *Uncertain Years: Chinese-American Relations, 1947-1950* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), pp. 61-118; and John W. Garver, *The Sino-American Alliance: Nationalist China and American Cold War Strategy in Asia* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1997), chap. 2. Special note should be made of the Accinelli and Garver books, which, the reader will note, have shaped much of my thinking on this period.

⁴ Garver, *The Sino-American Alliance*, pp. 24-31. For examples of this evolution, see U.S. State Department, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1950*, Volume VI (hereafter *FRUS, 1950*, VI) (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1976), pp. 258-64, 346-47, and 366-67.

⁵ In a July statement sent to all diplomatic and consular offices, the Secretary of State stressed that the action was to "prevent attack of Formosa and to prevent Natl Govt air and sea operations against mainland as immediate security measure to preserve peace in the Pacific and without prejudice to pol questions affecting Chi Govt. No change anticipated in relations between US Govt and Chi Govt." *FRUS, 1950*, VI, pp. 367-68. On UN initiatives, see p. 435.

⁶ As John Gaddis has written, "By the end of 1950 the Truman administration found itself precisely in the position it sought to avoid: yoked as it were, for better or for worse, to Chiang Kai-shek." Gaddis, "The Strategic Perspective," p. 93.

⁷ U.S. State Department, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1951*, Volume VII (hereafter *FRUS, 1951*, VII) (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1983), pp. 1474-76 and 1671-72; Dean Rusk as told to Richard Rusk, *As I Saw It*, (New York: W.W. Norton, 1990), p. 174. In *Crisis and Commitment*, pp. 70-75, Accinelli carefully delineates the boundaries of this commitment to the ROC. However, the central point is that the Truman administration had finally aligned itself with the Kuomintang government as the instrument for the defense of the strategically valuable Taiwan.

⁸ *FRUS, 1951*, VII, pp. 1585 and 1615, and *FRUS, 1950*, VI, pp. 601-4.

⁹ These issues are discussed in a Joint Chiefs study paper of March 14, 1951. See *FRUS, 1951*, VII, pp. 1598-1606.

¹⁰ *FRUS, 1950*, VI, p. 428 and Accinelli, *Crisis and Commitment*, pp. 70-71. Garver also discusses this “fundamental divergence of objectives.” See Garver, *The Sino-American Alliance*, pp. 53-54.

¹¹ *FRUS, 1951*, VII, pp. 1586 and 1623.

¹² The policy remained the same as that passed on to a ROC diplomat by John Foster Dulles in 1950: invasion was “out of the question.” *FRUS, 1950*, VI, pp. 542-43.

¹³ Accinelli, *Crisis and Commitment*, chap. 6.

¹⁴ U.S. State Department, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954*, Volume XIV (*FRUS, 1952-54*, XIV), *China and Japan* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1985), pp. 158, 203-4, 217, and 343-45.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 367-70, 407-8, and 422-25.

¹⁶ Gordon H. Chang, *Friends and Enemies: The United States, China, and the Soviet Union, 1948-1972* (Stanford, CA.: Stanford University Press, 1990), pp. 117-21. See also Foster Rhea Dulles, *American Policy toward Communist China, 1949-1969* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1972), pp. 150-151.

¹⁷ Accinelli, *Crisis and Commitment*, conclusion.

¹⁸ The evidence for this is presented in Steven M. Goldstein, “Dialogue of the Deaf?: The Sino-American Ambassadorial Talks, 1954-1970,” in manuscript.

¹⁹ For example, after the first crisis, Karl Rankin reported from Taipei that the relationship was losing its “fresh bloom.” U.S. State Department, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955-1957*, Volume III (hereafter *FRUS 1955-1957*, III) (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1986), pp. 139-40.

²⁰ The 1958 Quemoy crisis has been the subject of innumerable studies and this is not the place to rehash them. For a masterful summary of the various explanations for the crisis, see Thomas J. Christensen, *Useful Adversaries: Grand Strategy, Domestic Mobilization and Sino-American Conflict, 1947-1958* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), chap. 6. Much of the discussion in this paragraph draws from this source.²¹ U.S. State Department, *Foreign Relations of the United States, China*, Volume XIX (hereafter *FRUS, 1958-1960*, XIX), (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1996), pp. 442-44.

²² U.S. State Department, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963, Northeast Asia*, Volume XXII (hereafter *FRUS, 1961-63*, XXII) (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1996), pp. 13-14, 27-28, 47, 56-57, and 137-38.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 53-54, 72-76.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 78, 90, and 92.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 273-75. For a Chinese account, see Wang Bingnan, *Nine Years of Sino-U.S. Talks in Retrospect*, translated in *China Report* (JPRS-CPS-85-079, August 7, 1985).

²⁶ *FRUS*, 1961-63, XXII, pp. 359-60.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 309.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 341 and 354-58.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 375-77.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 326. See also James C. Thomson, "On the Making of U.S. China Policy, 1961-1969: A Study in Bureaucratic Politics," *China Quarterly*, No. 50, April-June, 1972, pp. 220-43 in regard to these tentative moves.

³¹ I have combined the definitions of Glenn H. Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), p. 8 and Oli R. Holsti, P. Terrence Hopmann, and John D. Sullivan, *Unity and Disintegration in International Alliances: Comparative Studies* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1973), p. 4. There is by no means consensus on this definition. For example, Stephen Walt argues for the existence of an alliance even in the absence of a formal agreement. Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), p. 12.

³² George Liska, *Nations in Alliance: The Limits of Interdependence* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1962), p. 12.

³³ Leslie H. Gelb, *Anglo-American Relations, 1945-1949: Towards a Theory of Alliances* (New York: Garland Publications, 1988), p. 33.

³⁴ Snyder, *Alliance Politics*, pp. 165 and 3.

³⁵ *FRUS*, 1952-54, XIV, pp. 307-11. For another view of this statement, see, Garver, *The Sino-American Alliance*, pp. 52-54 and 77.

³⁶ *FRUS*, 1952-54, XIV, p. 309.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 423.

³⁸ This paragraph is based on Accinelli, *Crisis and Commitment*, chap. 8 and Garver, *The Sino-American Alliance*, pp. 54-59.

³⁹ It should be noted that the United States military was not pleased with the decision to pursue a treaty that would limit ROC offensive operations. See, for example, *FRUS*, 1952-54, XIV, pp. 819-20 and 832-33. See also Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, *Taiwan, Hong Kong and the United States, 1945-1992: Uncertain Friendships* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1994), p. 40.

⁴⁰ Accinelli, *Crisis and Commitment*, p. 174.

⁴¹ This is a central theme of Goldstein, "Dialogue of the Deaf?" On Dulles's "two Chinas" policy, see Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, "John Foster Dulles and the Taiwan Roots of the 'Two Chinas' Policy," in Richard Immerman, ed., *John Foster Dulles and the Diplomacy of the Cold War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), pp. 235-63. As Accinelli notes, Dulles had been mulling over this solution since his service in the Truman administration. See *Crisis and Commitment*, pp. 169-70.

⁴² As Rosemary Foot has written "officials in Washington. . . believed that by the mid-1950s Beijing had managed to create the impression in Asia that it was a 'dynamic, permanent and not unfriendly world power.'" *The Practice of Power: U.S. Relations with China since 1949* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 200.

⁴³ "Statement of Policy by the National Security Council on U.S. Policy toward Taiwan and the Government of the Republic of China," August 24, 1960, U.S. State Department, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1958-1960*, XIX (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1996), Microfiche Supplement.

⁴⁴ *FRUS 1955-1957*, III, p. 614.

⁴⁵ An excellent presentation of this logic can be found in William M. Buehler, *U.S. Policy and the Problem of Taiwan* (Boulder: Colorado Associated University Press, 1971), pp. 21-42.

⁴⁶ Accinelli encapsulates the dilemma nicely when he depicts a 1954 NSC presentation by Dulles as follows: "The politico-psychological consequences of weakness in the face of the Communist threat, the secretary lamented, were no more acceptable than war with China...." *Crisis and Commitment*, p. 162.

⁴⁷ Tucker, *Taiwan, Hong Kong and the United States, 1945-1992*, p. 54. Also see Gary Klintworth, *New Taiwan, New China: Taiwan's Changing Role in the Asia-Pacific Region* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), pp. 81-90.

⁴⁸ Zhang Zhanhe, *Liang'an guanxi bianqian shi (A Changing History of the Relations Between the Two Shores)* (Taipei: Shangzhou wenhua faxing, 1995), p. 193.

⁴⁹ On this question, see Hung-mao Tien's *The Great Transition: Political and Social Change in the Republic of China* (Taipei: SMC Publishing Inc, 1989), chaps. 1, 4, and 5, and Yun-han Chu, *Crafting Democracy in Taiwan* (Taipei: Institute for National Policy Research, 1992), chap. 2.

⁵⁰ David W. Chang, "U.S. Aid and Economic Progress in Taiwan," *Asian Survey*, Volume 5, No. 3, March, 1965, pp. 153 and 152. See also Tucker, *Taiwan, Hong Kong and the United States, 1945-1992*, pp. 57-60.

⁵¹ This paragraph is based on the superb summary of U.S. policy at the UN found in Foot, *The Practice of Power*, chap. 2.

⁵² Indeed, in 1961 the ROC threatened to use its veto to prevent the admission of Outer Mongolia to the United Nations. This action, which would also have barred Mauritania, was only averted when President Kennedy promised Chiang Kai-shek that the United States would exercise *its* veto to prevent PRC admission. *FRUS, 1961-63*, XXII, pp. 152-53.

⁵³ For another discussion of ROC and U.S. asymmetrical goals, see Garver, *The Sino-American Alliance*, pp. 143-44.

⁵⁴ For discussions of restraining alliances, see Robert E. Osgood, *Alliances and American Foreign Policy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1968), pp. 21-25 and Paul Schroeder, "Alliances, 1815-1945: Weapons of Power and Tools of Management," in Klaus Knorr, ed., *Historical Dimensions of National Security Problems* (Lawrence, KA: Published for the National Security Education Program by the University Press of Kansas, 1976).

⁵⁵ Snyder, *Alliance Politics*, p. 185.

⁵⁶ See Garver, *The Sino-American Alliance*, pp. 84-88 and 293-95.

⁵⁷ Snyder, *Alliance Politics*, pp. 192-99.

⁵⁸ *FRUS, 1952-54*, XIV, pp. 190-94 and 646-57; *FRUS, 1958-1960*, XIX, pp. 33-34, 38, and 189-90; *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1958-1960*, XIX, Microfiche Supplement, September 8, 1958; and *FRUS, 1961-63*, XXII, pp. 248-51. In a particularly sharp exchange, Assistant Secretary of State Walter Robertson told the ROC ambassador "that the American people cannot and will not let President Chiang or President Rhee declare war for them." *FRUS, 1955-1957*, III, p. 301.

⁵⁹ The precise meaning of this commitment was elaborated in letters exchanged between military commanders from both sides. See below for an elaboration of this point. *FRUS, 1952-54*, XIV, pp. 193-94.

⁶⁰ Garver, *The Sino-American Alliance*, p. 81, and *FRUS, 1961-63*, XXII, p. 191.

⁶¹ *FRUS, 1952-54*, XIV, pp. 655-58; *FRUS, 1958-1960*, XIX, pp. 128-29; *FRUS, 1958-1960*, Microfiche Supplement, August 8 and August 27, 1958; and *FRUS, 1961-63*, XXII, pp. 206-7 and 383-92.

⁶² *FRUS, 1958-1960*, XIX, p. 374 and *FRUS, 1958-1960*, Microfiche Supplement, October 11, 1958 and March 18, 1959. For MAAG report on the general question of ROC compliance that suggests close supervision, see *ibid.*, December 15 and December 31, 1958.

⁶³ Garver, *The Sino-American Alliance*, pp. 66-68. Garver writes, "Nationalist capabilities were kept commensurate with the mission U.S. planners wished them to perform."

⁶⁴ *FRUS, 1958-1960*, XIX, p. 182 and Microfiche Supplement, April 2, 1959.

⁶⁵ *FRUS, 1952-54*, XIV, pp. 180-82; *FRUS, 1958-1960*, XIX, Microfiche Supplement,

November 17 and November 25, 1958; and *FRUS, 1961-63*, XXII, pp. 383-92. Tucker, *Taiwan, Hong Kong and the United States, 1945-1992*, p. 67.

⁶⁶ *FRUS, 1961-63*, XXII, p. 311.

⁶⁷ Accinelli, *Crisis and Commitment*, pp. 198-99; *FRUS, 1958-60*, XIX, pp. 462, 464, 505-6, 560, and 642; and *FRUS, 1961-63*, XXII, pp. 307-12.

⁶⁸ *FRUS, 1958-1960*, Microfiche Supplement, December 15 and 31, 1958 and *FRUS, 1958-60*, XIX, pp. 154, 189-90, and 270. A State Department draft report was less critical than the military and characterized the ROC as an “ally who is more amenable to realism and reason than we have given him [sic] credit for. . . .” *Ibid.* pp. 438-42.

⁶⁹ *FRUS, 1961-63*, XXII, p. 237, for example.

⁷⁰ Except where noted, the discussion in this paragraph is based on Garver, *The Sino-American Alliance*, chap. 8.

⁷¹ *FRUS, 1961-63*, XXII, pp. 12-13 and 16-17, and Tucker, *Taiwan, Hong Kong and the United States*, pp. 66-67

⁷² The evidence for this is only suggestive for the period before the 1960s. See, *FRUS, 1950*, VI, p. 486 and *FRUS, 1952-54*, XIV, p. 471.

⁷³ For example, *FRUS, 1961-63*, XXII, pp. 218-19.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 347.

⁷⁵ Indeed, one author has argued that this lobby was more a congressional caucus than a societal-based interest group. Stanley D. Bachrack, *The Committee of One Million: “China Lobby” Politics, 1953-1971* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976).

⁷⁶ The *Chinese News Service* was a major source of such news. In 1964, the name of this publication was changed to *Free China Weekly*.

⁷⁷ The pages of the association’s newsletter are replete with examples of such activities. Chinese Association for the United Nations, *Newsletter*, Volumes I-XXIV, 1951-1964.

⁷⁸ See Ross Y. Koen, *The China Lobby in American Politics* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1960); Bachrack, *The Committee of One Million*; and Tucker, *Taiwan, Hong Kong and the United States*, pp. 46 and 75.

⁷⁹ See, for example, Hans J. Morgenthau, “John Foster Dulles,” in Norman A. Graebner, ed., *An Uncertain Tradition: American Secretaries of State in the Twentieth Century* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1961), pp. 289-308; Anna Kasten Nelson, “John Foster Dulles and the Bipartisan Congress,” *Political Science Quarterly*, Volume 102, No. 1, Spring 1987, pp. 43-64; and Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, “A House Divided: The United States, the Department of

State, and China,” in Warren Cohen and Akira Iriye, eds., *The Great Powers in East Asia: 1953-1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), pp. 35-62.

⁸⁰ The *locus classicus* for this assertion is Rusk’s report of a meeting with Kennedy early in the administration. See Dean Rusk as told to Richard Rusk and edited by Daniel S. Papp, *As I Saw It* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1990), pp. 282-84. For a general discussion of Kennedy’s China policy, see, James Fetzer, “Clinging to Containment: China Policy,” in Thomas Paterson, ed., *Kennedy’s Quest for Victory: American Foreign Policy, 1961-1963* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

⁸¹ *FRUS*, 1952-54, XIV, pp. 729-53; *FRUS*, 1955-1957, II, pp. 523-25, 545-49; and *FRUS*, 1958-1960, XIX, pp. 319-331.

⁸² Garver, *The Sino-American Alliance*, pp. 84-88.

⁸³ Accinelli, *Crisis and Commitment*, pp. 176 and 196-99.

⁸⁴ For example, U.S. State Department, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955-1957*, Volume II (*FRUS*, 1955-57, II), *China and Japan* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1985), p. 515 and *FRUS*, 1958-1960, XIX, pp. 319-31.

⁸⁵ *FRUS*, 1961-63, XXII, p. 243.

⁸⁶ This discussion of the offshore islands in the next four paragraphs is based on Accinelli, *Crisis and Commitment*, chaps. 8-10 and Garver, *The Sino-American Alliance*, chap. 7.

⁸⁷ In the discussion in *Ibid.*, Garver suggests that Chiang intended such entrapment. For this reason, even as the commitments were made to the offshore islands, Washington sought to dilute them. In 1954, after pledging defense of Quemoy and Matsu to entice the KMT to evacuate other islands, Dulles simply reneged. In 1958, despite a public pledge of defense, the United States restricted its role to convoy operations and then pressed the ROC for a lessened commitment to the islands. However, the fact remained that during two brief periods, concern over the possible collapse of KMT authority unquestionably put the United States in danger of entrapment.

⁸⁸ In 1955, Eisenhower and Dulles’s plan was to assist the ROC with more aggressive policies toward the mainland in exchange for a de-emphasis of the offshore islands’ importance. See Chang, *Friends and Enemies: The United States, China, and the Soviet Union, 1948-1972*, pp. 134-42 and Accinelli, *Crisis and Commitment*, pp. 223-28, both for discussions of this initiative and of the manner in which it increased the danger of conflict with the mainland. For other efforts and the concern over morale see, “Taiwan Straits and the Offshore Islands Problem,” June 20, 1960 in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1958-1960*, Microfiche Supplement.

⁸⁹ For an excellent compilation of both covert operations against the mainland and joint military exercises, see Garver, *The Sino-American Alliance*, chap. 6.

⁹⁰ *FRUS*, 1958-1960, XIX, pp. 355-58 and 386-92.

⁹¹ The discussion of the U.S.-PRC talks draws from my “Dialogue of the Deaf?”

⁹² Snyder, *Alliance Politics*, p. 12.

⁹³ On the “political halo” and the importance of reputation, see *ibid.*, pp. 8, 313-14, and 355-57.

⁹⁴ For a convenient overview of the role of the ROC in Vietnam, see Garver, *The Sino-American Alliance*, chap. 11.

⁹⁵ This paragraph and the next are based on my “Dialogue of the Deaf?”

⁹⁶ The literature on China policy during the Nixon administration is vast. Although incomplete, Henry Kissinger’s memoirs, *The White House Years* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1979), *Years of Upheaval* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1982), and *Years of Renewal* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999) provide important insights. Much that is omitted or slighted in these books can be found in William Burr, ed., *The Kissinger Transcripts: The Top Secret Talks with Beijing and Moscow* (New York: The New Press, 1998). Good overviews and syntheses can be found in Harry Harding, *A Fragile Relationship* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1992); Michel Oksenberg, “A Decade of Sino-American Relations,” *Foreign Affairs*, Volume 61, No. 1, Fall 1982, pp. 175-95 and Robert Ross, *Negotiating Cooperation: The United States and China, 1969-1989* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995). The themes in the discussion that follows are drawn from these works.

⁹⁷ Cited in Ross, *Negotiating Cooperation*, pp. 268-69.

⁹⁸ This is clear in the discussions reported in Burr, ed., *The Kissinger Transcripts*.

⁹⁹ This paragraph and the next two draw from Yufan Hao’s excellent study of the normalization process. *Dilemma and Decision: An Organizational Perspective on American China Policy Making* (Berkeley, CA: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 1997).

¹⁰⁰ On this point, see *ibid.*, pp. 189-91 and 260-61.

¹⁰¹ Francis A. Beer, comp., *Alliances: Latent War Communities in the Contemporary World* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970), p. 5.

¹⁰² This paragraph draws from Ralph Clough, *Island China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978) pp. 23-24; Garver, *The Sino-American Alliance*, chap. 11; *New York Times*, February 14, 1968, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, (hereafter *FEER*), March 14, 1968, and U.S. Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, *United States Security Commitments Abroad, Republic of China*, part 4 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1970), pp. 1123-26.

¹⁰³ *FEER*, April 23, 1970 and September 19, 1971.

¹⁰⁴ *FRUS, 1964-1968*, XXX, p. 93. For one assessment of the eroding support in the UN for the sole seating of the ROC and of the key role of the United States in blunting it, see pp. 121-24.

¹⁰⁵ See Chang, *Friends and Enemies*, chaps. 3 and 7. As Chang notes, by the time of the Kennedy administration, policy had shifted to one of nurturing the relationship with the Soviets and isolating the PRC.

¹⁰⁶ The discussion that follows draws from my “Dialogue of the Deaf?”

¹⁰⁷ See *Department of State Bulletin*, September 1, 1969, p. 183; *New York Times*, January 3, 1970; and *Department of State Bulletin*, March 22, 1981, p. 382.

¹⁰⁸ Burr, ed., *The Kissinger Transcripts*, pp. 49-51, 54-55, 57, 131, 144, 167-69, and 171. In his February 1973 meeting with Mao, Kissinger said if the Soviets “attack China, we would certainly oppose them for our own reasons.” *Ibid.*, p. 99.

¹⁰⁹ For a useful summary of public opinion on this issue, see Jaw-ling Joanne Chang, *United State—China Normalization: An Evaluation of Foreign Policy Decision Making* (Denver, CO: Graduate School of International Studies, University of Denver, 1986), pp. 121-30.

¹¹⁰ On these domestic and international constraints, see Hao, *Dilemma and Decision*, pp. 38-40 and 69; *New York Times*, April 14 and 15, 1976; James Shen, *The U.S. and Free China: How the U.S. Sold Out its Ally* (Washington, D.C.: Acropolis Books, 1983), p. 110; and Chang, *United State—China Normalization*, pp. 149-51.

¹¹¹ *FRUS*, 1964-1968, XXX, pp.190-91, 235-37 and 612-13.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 52-53

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 133 and 357.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

¹¹⁵ *FRUS*, 1958-1960, XIX, p. 467.

¹¹⁶ *FRUS*, 1964-1968, XXX, pp. 507, 552, 572, 579, 599, 605-6, 612-15, 661, and 674-76.

¹¹⁷ Clough, *Island China*, pp. 153-54.

¹¹⁸ *Free China Weekly*, April 13, 1969 and January 28, 1973.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, October 14, 1973.

¹²⁰ For a convenient summary of these developments, see Linda Chao and Ramon H. Myers, *The First Chinese Democracy: Political Life in the Republic of China on Taiwan* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

¹²¹ John H. Holdridge, *Crossing the Divide: An Insider's Account of Normalization of U.S.–China Relations* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1997), p. 99.

¹²² *FRUS*, 1964-1968, XXX, p. 59 and pp. 402-3.

¹²³ See for example, *ibid.*, pp. 502, 615, 674-75, and 719.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 58, 141, 239-40, 266-69, and 405.

¹²⁵ This committee was not, however, permitted to discuss plans for an invasion of the mainland that presupposed American participation. *Ibid.*, pp. 32, 82-83, and 224-28.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 242-47. See also pp. 402-403 and 539-40.

¹²⁷ This paragraph and the next are based on Tucker, *Taiwan, Hong Kong and the United States, 1945-1992*, pp. 97-98; Garver, *The Sino-American Alliance*, chap. 11; and Clough, *Island China*, pp. 22-24.

¹²⁸ For some public discussions of the ROC role, see *Free China Weekly*, August 2, 1964, October 11, 1964, and January 28, 1968; *FEER*, April 7, 1966.

¹²⁹ This entire paragraph draws from chapter 10 in Garver, *The Sino-American Alliance*, which contains the most comprehensive discussion of intelligence activities this author has found.

¹³⁰ *New York Times*, July 27, 1969 and *FRUS, 1964-1968*, XXX, p. 617. For a general discussion of the role this issue played in U.S.-ROC relations, see Tucker, *Taiwan, Hong Kong and the United States, 1945-1992*, pp. 69-70.

¹³¹ *FRUS, 1964-1968*, XXX, pp. 86-96. See also a proposal by James Thomson, Jr., of the National Security Council, pp. 163-64.

¹³² This discussion draws on Tucker, *Taiwan, Hong Kong and the United States, 1945-1992*, and Clough, *Island China*, pp. 27-28. See also Robert Wade, *Governing the Market: Economic Theory and the Role of Government in East Asian Industrialization* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), pp. 82-84 for a discussion of the importance of the American role.

¹³³ *FRUS, 1964-1968*, XXX, pp. 1-15, 19-23.

¹³⁴ See *ibid.*, p. 121 for example.

¹³⁵ *FRUS, 1964-1968*, XXX, pp. 131 and 137.

¹³⁶ In 1965 there was no UN vote on PRC admission. In 1967 and 1968, the dislocations of the Cultural Revolution made admission a moot point at the UN.

¹³⁷ *FRUS, 1964-1968*, XXX, p. 302. See also Tucker, *Taiwan, Hong Kong and the United States, 1945-1992: Uncertain Friendships*, p. 50.

¹³⁸ *New York Times*, January 3, 1970, and *Department of State Bulletin*, March 22, 1971.

¹³⁹ As President Nixon put it in a February 1971 report to Congress: "The purpose of the treaty is exclusively *defensive* and it *controls the entire range* of our military relationship

with the Republic of China, ” [Italics added] *Department of State Bulletin*, March 29, 1971, p. 436. See also *ibid.*, April 28, 1971.

¹⁴⁰ *FRUS*, 1964-1968, XXX, pp. 141, 405-6, and 591-92. See also *FEER*, August 6, 1970 and U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations *United States Security Commitments Abroad, Republic of China*, pp. 963-64, 982, and 1125.

¹⁴¹ *FRUS*, 1964-1968, XXX, pp. 19-21, 27-29, 133, 207-14, and 392-94. For an excellent presentation of the case publicly made by Chiang Kai-shek, see *Free China Review*, May 9, 1965.

¹⁴² *FRUS*, 1964-1968, XXX, pp. 209-214.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 20, 191, and 685.

¹⁴⁴ *New York Times*, July 21, 1970.

¹⁴⁵ *FRUS*, 1964-1968, XXX, p. 477.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 190-91.

¹⁴⁸ Specifics on these visits and the ROC message can be found in the pages of the *Free China Weekly* from 1964 to 1971. See also Tucker, *Taiwan, Hong Kong and the United States*, pp. 121-22.

¹⁴⁹ Such a coalition could either include the United States or not, Chiang told Secretary of State Rusk (although he did note the importance of American sea and air cover). *FRUS*, 1964-1968, XXX, p. 20 and *Foreign Broadcast Information Service* (hereafter *FBIS*) March 5, 1964, August 22, 1964, and October 9, 1964.

¹⁵⁰ *FBIS*, August 19, 1965 and February 18, 1966; *FEER*, April 24, 1966.

¹⁵¹ *FEER*, January 22, 1970. In his 1970 visit to the White House, Chiang Ching-kuo tried unsuccessfully to link the Nixon Doctrine to Taiwan's efforts to create an alliance in Asia. James Shen, *The U.S. and Free China*, pp. 50-51.

¹⁵² This entire paragraph draws from Ross, *Negotiating Cooperation*, pp. 36-54.

¹⁵³ On the Shanghai Communiqué, see Kissinger, *The White House Years*, pp. 1074-76. For subsequent talks, Burr, ed., *The Kissinger Transcripts, passim.*, demonstrates the manner in which the Chinese were approached on this issue.

¹⁵⁴ Tucker, *Taiwan, Hong Kong and the United States, 1945-1992*, pp. 112 and 128.

¹⁵⁵ *FEER*, June 17, 1977, and *Free China Review*, March 19, 1972.

¹⁵⁶ *Department of State Bulletin*, December 29, 1975, p. 929, and Burr, ed., *The Kissinger Transcripts*, p. 114.

¹⁵⁷ Burr, ed., *The Kissinger Transcripts*, pp. 114 and 403.

¹⁵⁸ *Free China Weekly*, April 30, 1972.

¹⁵⁹ Shen, *The U.S. and Free China*, pp. 57, 69, 74-76, 91, 95, 108, 133, 169, and 171; and Hao, *Dilemma and Decision*, pp. 52-53.

¹⁶⁰ Chang, *United State--China Normalization*, p. 87.

¹⁶¹ *New York Times*, February 11, 1973, August 4, 1976, and April 6, 1977.

¹⁶² Burr, ed., *The Kissinger Transcripts*, pp. 312 and 391.

¹⁶³ See *Free China Review*, July 30, 1972, December 9, 1973, November 10, 1974, June 6, 1975, June 20, 1975, December 28, 1975, November 14, 1976, April 24, 1977, and October 1, 1978, for examples of these kinds of activity.

¹⁶⁴ For example, see *ibid.*, January 16, 1972.

¹⁶⁵ *New York Times*, February 29, 1972 and *FBIS*, November 17, 1975. James Shen, the ROC's ambassador at the time, reports that he was assured there would be no secret deals. *The U.S. and Free China*, p. 94.

¹⁶⁶ Of course, the initiator of that conflict was not identified. *FBIS*, January 19, 1976 and July 5, 1977.

¹⁶⁷ For example, see *ibid.*, July 4, 1974, April 7, 1976, and August 22, 1977 for discussions of self-reliance. For specifications of some of the arms being made in the ROC, see *Free China Weekly*, March 7, 1977.

¹⁶⁸ Hao, *Dilemma and Decision*, p. 51.

¹⁶⁹ For discussions of these issues, see, for example, *Free China Weekly*, December 24, 1972, February 25, 1973, March 10, 1974, and January 5, 1975.

¹⁷⁰ David E. Kaplan in *Fires of the Dragon: Politics, Murder and the Kuomintang* (New York: Atheneum, 1992), pp. 146-48 and 182-239 *passim*. paints a dark picture of ROC machinations in these years. See also Tucker, *Taiwan, Hong Kong and the United States, 1945-1992*, pp. 130-31. President Carter was angered by the activities of the "China lobby," including attempts to influence citizens of his hometown of Plains, Georgia. Jimmy Carter, *Keeping the Faith: Memoirs of a President* (New York: Bantam Books, 1982), pp. 187-88.

¹⁷¹ Once again, special acknowledgment should be given to three studies frequently cited in this paper: Accinelli, *Crisis and Commitment: United States Policy toward Taiwan, 1950-1955*, Garver, *The Sino-American Alliance: Nationalist China and American Cold War Strategy in Asia*, and Tucker, *Taiwan, Hong Kong and the United States, 1945-1992: Uncertain Friendships*.

¹⁷² For example, the trajectory of political developments in all three capitals and the complex evolution of relations among them.

¹⁷³ Yufan Hao does an excellent job exploring these ambiguities. See his *Dilemma and Decision*, pp. 188-91 for an overview.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, chap. 10.

¹⁷⁵ U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on International Relations Memorandum, May 4, 1999; *China News Agency*, March 11, 1999 and May 5, 1999; and *Agence France Press*, “U.S. Senators Push for Increased U.S. Military Cooperation with Taiwan,” March 24, 1999.

¹⁷⁶ During the 1950s, ambiguity existed, but only with regard to defense of the offshore islands.

¹⁷⁷ However, the evolution of the congressional commitment amid the changed image of a democratized Taiwan and the increasing economic ties with the United States are factors which suggest that there would be strong pressure for intervention.

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