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The United States' shifting relationship with Taiwan due to Cold War influences

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The United States' Shifting Relationship with Taiwan due to Cold War Influences

An Honors College Project Presented to
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College of Arts and Letters
James Madison University

by Hunter Wade Pratt

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Abstract

The struggle between the Kuomintang (KMT) and Communist Party of China (CPS) shaped the direction of future American-Chinese relations by seismically uprooting the dynamics between the two states amidst the backdrop of the Cold War. President Harry Truman and later President Dwight Eisenhower were responsible for shepherding the United States through this new period of crisis as the ideological debates of the 21st century were beginning to simplify into the East vs the West, communism vs. capitalism, and democracy vs. authoritarianism. China serves as one of the proto-battlefields of this ideological battle. Truman's personal qualities, temperament, and beliefs influenced the relationship between the United States and the KMT in the formative years prior to the Korean War and establishment of Taiwan, which helped to contribute, but did not cause, the failure of Chiang Kai-shek in preventing the Chinese to fall to communism. Through the fall of the KMT's China in 1949, the affairs of East Asia were irrevocably changed with wider global implications. Truman's transformation and pivot toward East Asia, as events transpired in the Korean War, began to move the locus of global concern from Europe to Asia, which Eisenhower reinforced, and has persisted to the present day.

Introduction

The evolution of the United States' stance on the diplomatic status of the island of Taiwan during the mid-20th century underwent shifts as a result of the Cold War beginning. The importance of personality and the leaders, such as Presidents Harry S. Truman and Dwight D. Eisenhower, Supreme Commander Douglas MacArthur, Chairman Mao Zedong, Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, and Premier Zhou Enlai, provided substantial contributions to the driving of events. Their personal abilities and dispositions influenced the outcomes of events in the mid-20th century. However, the principal leaders dealt with causal forces of preceding centuries initiated by past policy, such as the ethnic policies of Taiwan. Through this interplay of current leadership, centuries long trends, and nascent new ones with the Cold War, the forging of the new Cold War status quo in East Asia transpired.²

The research involved the examination of various primary sources with the goal of answering the question: "what influence did the leaders of the involved states have over the

²For the secondary sources, they can similarly be divided by subject matter. As a general overview of the relevant time period, the best source was Hsiao-ting Lin, *Accidental State: Chiang Kai-Shek, the United States, and the Making of Taiwan*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2016). For the colonization and occupation of Japan, the best sources were Paul D. Barclay, *Outcasts of Empire: Japan's Rule on Taiwan's "Savage Border," 1874-1945*, (University of California Press, 2018); Chen Chao-Ying, "Development of Confucianism in Taiwan," *Contemporary Chinese Thought* 41, no. 1 (Fall 2009): 10-27, doi:10.2753/CSP1097-1467410101. For understanding the Qing's ethnic policies, the best sources included: Edward J. M. Rhoads, *Manchus & Han: Ethnic Relations and Political Power in Late Qing and Early Republican China, 1861-1928* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000); James Louis Hevia, *Cherishing Men from Afar: Qing Guest Ritual and the Macartney Embassy of 1793*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995). For the Truman biographies, the superior one is Robert Ferrell, *Harry S. Truman*, (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1994). For sources detailing the Cold War and the evolution of the policies, the ideal sources were: Melvyn P. Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992); John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982); Norman Friedman, *The Fifty-Year War: Conflict and Strategy in the Cold War* (Annapolis, Md: Naval Institute Press, 2000). For an Eisenhower biography, consult Robert A. Divine, *Eisenhower and the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981). For MacArthur's administration of Japan and interactions with Truman, consider Dayna L. Barnes, *Architects of Occupation: American Experts and the Planning for Postwar Japan*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017); Michael Pearlman, *Truman & MacArthur: Policy, Politics, and the Hunger for Honor and Renown*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008). For a biography on Chiang Kai-shek, Jay Taylor, *The Generalissimo: Chiang Kai-Shek and the Struggle for Modern China* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009).

development of Taiwan in the 20th century?” This was an attempt to show the personal leadership influences on the events typically lent to the greater forces of the Cold War in driving the relations of the United States in this time period. Sources for this included Truman’s personal letters and memoirs, speeches by leaders, and treaties signed between the states. These sources were used to answer furthered questions such as: What was the personality of Truman and how did this influence the pertinent events? How did the 2/28 massacre influence KMT-American relations? How did the Cold War shape American policymakers thoughts and decisions? How did the United States view the KMT through this period? How did the PRC and Soviet Union factor into the relations between the KMT and United States? Through these questions, historical analysis of the political themes were drawn out with one complementary aspect examined being the ethnic component. The ethnic identities of the groups within Taiwan and how this influenced the series of events that created the East Asia status quo were examined in light of the 2/28 massacre. This combination of primary sources, such as treaties, memoirs, and speeches, allowed for political and ethnic analysis showing how these factors interacted with one another which created the foundation of this paper. The scope extended briefly into the 17th century with the Ming dynasty to establish the ethnic line of analysis, and extended to 1955 with the political analysis emphasized from 1945-1955.

The ethnic history of Taiwan traces its origins to the Ming and is subsequently shaped further by the Qing and Japanese rules. The Ming dynasty originally colonized Taiwan with Han Chinese in the 17th century laying the initial causal trends for the ethnic tensions in Taiwan. Upon the Ming’s fall, the successor Qing dynasty oversaw the island following the Ming’s collapse in 1644 until the Sino-Japanese War in 1895. From there the island’s administration saw the Japanese imposing new policies of ethnic segregation which reinforced existing ethnic

dynamics. The internal dynamics established by these occupations primed the island for disaster when the Kuomintang (KMT) helmed by Chiang Kai-shek assumed control.³

Chiang's regime instituted corrupt practices and inflamed tensions preexisting on the island that caused disastrous results both to the people on the island, but the KMT's international standing as well. The 2/28 massacre served as an impetus for negative policy changes of the United States' toward the KMT. The international events of the early Cold War forced the United States to reconsider the position of the KMT on Taiwan as the necessity of containment overrode international idealism.⁴

From 1945-1955, Presidents Truman and Eisenhower shaped the United States' efforts through this tumultuous period of American-East Asia diplomatic relations. Each of them bore their own personal convictions and ideas to both statecraft and how to fight the burgeoning Cold War. Each possessed the instincts of a cold war warrior, but Eisenhower's willingness to support the KMT and Chiang began earlier than Truman's.

Truman doubted Chiang through his handling of the interwar period between 1945 and 1950 which led to the American government briefly cutting ties with the Republic of China (ROC). His personal views of leadership directly influenced how the diplomatic discourse occurred as he clashed with MacArthur in East Asia and discontinued aid to the ROC. During the few months between Washington's lack of support for Taiwan, private American citizens such as Charles Cooke provided the needed support to sustain the ROC government on Taiwan. The

³ Barclay, 1-6 and 20.

⁴ Lin, 54-56

political discourse, which Eisenhower took part. This period of lost faith garnered a stroke of fortune for Chiang with the Sino-Soviet Friendship Treaty in 1950.⁵

The appearance of a solidification of relations between the Soviets and People's Republic of China (PRC) proved itself as a watershed moment for relations between the ROC and the United States as the Cold War now required the United States to seek out the assistance of Chiang and his KMT for containment purposes. This began a revitalization of relations with the ROC as Korean War unfolded. This conflict began to solidify the new status quo of support between the states which Eisenhower affirmed definitively during his presidency.⁶

Eisenhower's administration outlined the beginning of the official relationship between the ROC and United States due to the First Taiwan Straits Crisis prepping the region for the Cold War. The First Taiwan Straits Crisis provided the final push needed for the United States to extend its sphere of influence into Taiwan. The crisis itself required American military assets stepping into the straits to reinforce the KMT's position which helped create a cordon surrounding the PRC. The realization of this containment was the Sino-American Security Agreement. The agreement helped to slow the expanding tide of communism in the region and pivot American interests into East Asia. The establishment of a security agreement between the ROC and United States served as the death knell of the PRC's efforts at reunification during the First Taiwan Straits Crisis. Ultimately, the agreement served as one of the final cornerstones to the balance of power in East Asia that served as boundaries for the Cold War.⁷

⁵ Lin, 141-148; Taylor, 427-429.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Lin, 235-239.

Chapter I: Origins

The United States and China's early relationship in the late 19th and early 20th century helped to prime Truman and US policy makers for a relationship between a rising great power and a falling power that steered early affairs. Given the identities of the two states, they share an intriguing relationship. China's millennia long history with well-established world views and outlooks is juxtaposed with the nascent, intransigent, and upstart United States that is only beginning to enter the global arena after existing as an independent nation for not even two centuries. The two find their paths crossing in the second half of the 19th century, with China in the twilight of its last dynasty in light of its defeat at the hands of Japan. Meanwhile, the United States walks on its path to ascendancy in the subsequent century. The year 1899 marked the beginning of these interactions with the Boxer Rebellion and the Open Door policy that set the tone for the early relationship. The early interactions between the powers set the stage for future events and sentiments as the relationship is carved by the United States with a mixture of violent means, economic self-interest, and a sense of youthful naiveté ignorant to the greater history of China. Truman's history indicates at least the general naiveté he held toward China and perhaps explains some of his later actions.

First Impressions

The early stages of the formal relationship between the United States and China were slow to develop into proper relations and required armed conflict to begin fully forming in the 19th century. China's position faced erosion due to the Europeans and lacked the means and willingness to engage with the greater world. The reason for this disinterest in global positioning rests in the Qing dynasty's decline at this point in its history, and the historical trend of foreign relations for China was to generally stay in East Asia. In contrast, the roots of the United States'

ascendency gained traction during these formative years in the later 19th and early 20th century. Lacking the power to fully steer the course of events, the United States leadership sought different ways to insert itself into international politics. This prevented the two from fully coming into contact until the United States found a reason to begin a connection with the Chinese. Trade served as the one mechanism that the United States actively advanced in an effort to grow its trade relations which helped to open the door to relations with China.⁸

Trade and commerce began the discourse between nations as the United States sought further partners and markets for trade. The population of China held massive appeal to American businessmen who saw a golden opportunity in the Chinese masses. This dream never fully came to fruition, but it helped to ignite the early relationship that evolved over time. The advent of this spark's developed from the course charted by the British in the middle of the 19th century in their initial encounters with China that escalated into the Opium Wars.⁹

The initial interactions between the British and Chinese coupled with the Opium War began the fall of the Qing dynasty and the push for American involvement in the relationship. The British desired access to Chinese markets which initiated the Macartney Embassy. This exchange fell through due to competing power dynamics between the imperial British and the Qing dynasty. The Qing lacked the means to possess imperial arrogance and protocol though they exercised it anyway. The Qing reigned over a diverse China and possessed powerful lineages to explain its power, but it reached the zenith of its power already in contrast to the dominant British in the 19th century. This set the stage for the Opium Wars as the British sought

⁸ Adams, cclxix; Hay, 1; "Chronology of U.S.-China Relations, 1784-2000."

⁹ *Ibid.*

to forcibly wrest exclusive access and control of areas from the Qing dynasty that still viewed itself as a powerful force.¹⁰

When the British imposed itself upon the Chinese, the spheres of economic influence were formed in the treaty aftermath that gave Britain exclusive economic control and extraterritoriality over areas of China. This led to further creation of spheres by other European powers partitioning China's economy. This division of China into spheres of economic influence proved to be an obstacle to American interests in China and began to affect the American perspective of China as their businessmen began to turn to the region.¹¹

The United States found this practice of spheres of influence to be objectionable for both practical and moral reasons. Morally, the perception of the Europeans throwing their weight around too judiciously drew a problem while the pragmatic reasoning is that to gain an American foothold in the country, then the territory needed to be shared. Henry Adams, a descendent of the Adams family, discussed how "Russia and Germany dismembered China, and shut up America at home."¹² Pragmatically it appeared that the Americans lost their place at the table for economic activities in China with no recourse. Regardless of the reasoning, this served as the proper start of the formal American-Chinese interactions as John Hay rectified the situation with his letters.¹³

The United States desired access to the markets and this served as the root of the future Open Door Policy put forth by Secretary of State John Hay in response to the European spheres.

¹⁰ *Ibid*; Hevia, 6-7, 14-15, and 57.

¹¹ *Ibid*.

¹² Adams, cclxix. It should be noted that this episode had Henry Adams under the tutelage of John Hay and this is how he derives his comments on the situation.

¹³ *Ibid*; "Chronology of U.S.-China Relations, 1784-2000."

In 1899, Secretary of State Hay sent letters to the various powers and China professing the Open Door Policy dated September 6, 1899.

More recently, however, the British Government recognized by a formal agreement with Germany the exclusive right of the latter country to enjoy in said leased area and the contiguous "sphere of influence or interest" certain privileges, more especially those relating to railroads and mining enterprises; but as the exact nature and extent of the rights thus recognized have not been clearly defined, it is possible that serious conflicts of interest may at any time arise not only between British and German subjects within said area, but that the interests of our citizens may also be jeopardized thereby.¹⁴

This policy took aim at European encroachment over economic resources with a specific interest of American citizens in these communications by Secretary of State Hay in this first note. The Boxer Rebellion served to it test the policy which it survived.

The United States participated in the quelling of the Boxers a few months after Hay's note. The rebellion began in November of 1899 and persisted until 1901. This provides somewhat of a contradiction to the initial tone the United States began with though not an absolute one. Due to American citizens at risk and the besieged embassy in Beijing, the United States dispatched soldiers to resolve the conflict. This possessed a somewhat contradictory nature as they United States took part in suppressing the Chinese despite an effort to in a way support them through the Open Door Policy. Nonetheless, the aftermath of the rebellion saw a shift toward the American model of interacting with China through the Qing dynasty rather than attempting to colonize it. European entanglement helps to explain this as further colonies in the region coupled with difficulties in maintaining it prepared the Europeans for a hypothetically greater World War and costs than previously imagined. Thus, the United States claimed a moral victory, and, from these early experiences, the tone of the relationship gained form.¹⁵

¹⁴ Hay, 1.

¹⁵ *Ibid*; "Chronology of U.S.-China Relations, 1784-2000."

The perceived success of the Open Door Policy coupled with the early interactions with China placed an idea within the United States that China's status as a falling power in relation to their growing great power status. Henry Adams reflects that, "When Hay suddenly ignored European leadership, took the lead himself, rescued the Legations and saved China, Adams looked on, as incredulous as Europe, though not quite so stupid, since, on that branch of education, he knew enough for his purpose. Nothing so meteoric had ever been done in American diplomacy."¹⁶ With this dynamic, the United States possessed an obligation of guidance to bring them into the international arena and a sense of growing power in the world. This dynamic between the United States and the Chinese, despite the Chinese eclipsing the new power in age and experience, served to reflect a sense of naiveté in American understandings of international dynamics and helped to dispose their leadership in subsequent decades to think in this manner. Beyond the mainland of China, a small island off the coast did not even register as a potential flashpoint of future conflict as China did not even possess sovereignty over it.¹⁷

Taiwan before the Storm

During the 19th and early 20th centuries, Taiwan's involvement in the story between the United States and China remained nonexistent, though the Japanese occupation still factored into the later events due to ethnic influences. The Japanese secured the island from the declining Qing dynasty during the Sino-Japanese War in 1895 with their occupation persisting until Japan's defeat in World War II. This defeat did not engender the relationship of equals between the United States and China that formed less than five years later. Taiwan underwent occupation by

¹⁶ Adams, cclxix.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

the Japanese and this laid the groundwork for the post-war world which the KMT stepped into of competing ethnic sentiments.¹⁸

The Japanese occupation of Taiwan saw an aggressive application of racial identity construction between the Han, Taiwanese, and Japanese populations which provided ethnic obstacles the KMT stumbled over in their administration. The Japanese sought to impose a divide in terms of race between the native elements of Taiwan, the Chinese, and the Japanese who came to live on the island. Born of Japanese nationalism, the need to preserve their sense of superiority was deemed necessary to abide by their ideological foundation. However, this idea's role claims an older mantle earlier than the Japanese. The Ming and Qing dynasties conducted their own efforts to maintain a separation between the indigenous population and the Han Chinese that further compounded the problem that the Japanese exacerbated.¹⁹

Before the Japanese and the Qing, the Ming provided the roots of the policies that shaped Taiwan's ethnic dynamics in the 17th century. The Ming utilized fairly devolved power structures that allowed some local independence. The acquisition of the island occurred due to colonization by Han Chinese. Taiwan underwent colonization by Chinese settlers with Europeans having actual administrative control over the island. The dynamic between the Europeans and Chinese settlers started the evolution of Taiwan into a Chinese colony where the implementation of seemingly colonial practices occurred. The collapse of the Ming shortly after acquiring Taiwan led to the Qing dynasty assuming control who in turn imposed their own ethnic practices

¹⁸ Barclay, 1-6 and 20.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

reinforcing the dynamics. The Qing established the foundation of early ethnic divisions and promoted Confucianism to the people.²⁰

The Qing generally ruled its territories as a multiethnic empire that allowed for more divergence than previous dynasties from the idea of Han ethnic unity. The Qing did not stop efforts to spread Confucianism to develop a strong culture of Confucianism among the people, but its rule that did not discourage ethnic divisions helped to foster ethnic cleavages. This helped to create the roots of the divide between the Japanese and the island centuries after colonization by the Chinese. The combination of colonial practices and ideology began the fermentation of an ethnic identity of the Taiwanese people that evolved and further solidified beyond the efforts of the Qing which boiled over two times prior to the KMT's later occupations of the island.²¹

Taiwan endured an ethnic rebellion in 1915 and 1930 which saw echoes in the interwar period when the KMT established its occupation. The Japanese faced insurrections led by the Han Chinese who remained on the islands during the occupation. The indigenous people's treatment and further geographic isolation by the Japanese on the island helped to intensify a perceived difference in race. However, the relations between the three different groups changed in 1930. The 1930 Wushe Rebellion created a new power dynamic on the island that the KMT inherited in 1945. While the Japanese crushed the rebellion, they still began a campaign of inclusion for the island's administration to maintain pacification that made a new system of administration. The Taiwanese people gained more involvement in the system of rule, but retained their status as a separate class of people. This further hardened the differences, but not through force. This helped to solidify the changes in the perceived racial structure of the island

²⁰ Rhoads, 293-294; Chao-Ying, 22-23; Barclay, 20.

²¹ *Ibid.* Barclay, 190-196.

and create the power structure the KMT inherited in 1945. During this time, Truman's childhood and formative experiences occurred shaping how he grew into his role as president.²²

Truman's Ideological Beginnings

Truman's story started in Missouri on May 8, 1884, not even two decades before the United States and China began their story and only a little less than a decade before China lost Taiwan. A child of farmers, Truman's journey to claiming a political career that decisively influenced the course of world affairs seemed unimaginable at birth. His rough and tumble origins as a "common man" helped to influence his attitudes and opinions that possessed far reaching impacts on the course of history in the mid-20th century to the 21st.²³

In his youth, Truman never gained an interest in foreign affairs beyond that of an amateur which contributed to later difficulties assuming the presidency. International affairs and current events were never topics of importance to Truman through his formative years. Instead, he gained generalizations and stereotypes of distant lands as far as his personal correspondence shows. From 1911 to 1913, letters to his future wife Bess Wallace reveal some of these earlier thoughts of the future president in regards to China.²⁴

"I very much wish that they were in China or some other faraway place."²⁵ This content was from a letter addressed October 22, 1913 and reflects a perceived geographic disparity and

²² Barclay, 1-4.

²³ Robert Ferrell, *Choosing Truman: The Democratic Convention of 1944* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1944), 5-14; Ferrell, *Harry S. Truman*, 1-176; David McCullough, *Truman* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), 162-166; Truman, *Memoirs* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1955), 112-140; Leffler, 26.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Harry S. Truman to Bess Wallace, October 22, 1913, in *Family, Business, and Personal Affairs Papers - Family Correspondence File*,

https://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/trumanpapers/fbpa/index.php?documentid=HST-FBP_3-7_01&documentYear=1913&documentVersion=both.

gulf between the countries. *Truman* was never college educated and this perhaps help to explain the mystery of China that persisted in the earlier years and even in the first months of his administration. Despite China appearing far away, Truman at least maintained an understanding of the Chinese characters being different from the alphabet he was familiar with.

“I read some Chinese poetry this morning and I guess that is the reason I can't do any better. It was rendered into English but even then it sounded as bad as the hen tracks they made for writing look.”²⁶ This content was from a letter addressed May 17, 1911. An inherent foreigner bias, one shared by nearly all of his contemporaries, emerges in this letter. This is an interesting train of thought for understanding the president’s earlier opinions of foreign people, places, and governments. He outright states his dislike of the Asian people in another letter. On June 22, 1911, he noted:

“He does hate Chinese and Japs. So do I. It is race prejudice I guess.”²⁷ This letter shortly followed the previous letter and is reflective of a sharp bias at least prior to his political career. The amount of influence these ideas have in his later decision making as president is impossible to fully ascertain though it is possible it helped to influence his thoughts on his Asian allies to some extent.

Truman’s ideas evolved with time. His letters to Bess do not reflect any mentions of his attitudes toward the Chinese from 1913-1939, other than remarking about his occasional meal at

²⁶ Harry S. Truman to Bess Wallace, May 17, 1911, in *Family, Business, and Personal Affairs Papers - Family Correspondence File*, https://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/trumanpapers/fbpa/index.php?documentid=HST-FBP_1-16_01&documentYear=1911&documentVersion=both.

²⁷ Harry S. Truman to Bess Wallace, June 22, 1911, in *Family, Business, and Personal Affairs Papers - Family Correspondence File*, https://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/trumanpapers/fbpa/index.php?documentid=HST-FBP_1-21_01&documentYear=1911&documentVersion=both.

a Chinese restaurant that he found satisfying. Rather, it is not until 1942 where Truman reflects an opinion on China's geopolitical utility to Bess. "If Britain were to run out on us, or if China should suddenly collapse, we'd have all that old isolation fever again and another war in twenty years. We must take this one to its conclusion and dictate peace terms from Berlin and Tokyo. Then we'll have Russia and China to settle with afterwards."²⁸ In light of the geopolitical settings, Senator Truman did possess some opinions as to the best conduct of war. Here, he appears fairly supportive of the war effort in China and this reflects at least a general tacit acceptance of Chiang Kai-shek and his efforts. This attitude shifted dramatically prior to the Korean War during his presidency. Despite this instance, Truman's knowledge of China and other foreign matters is questioned by some.

Truman's experience with foreign policy is circumspect prior to his succession to president. According to Arthur N. Young, a financial advisor to the Chinese and the United States, "I remember that in the fall of 1945...And President Truman, of course, had not been in office very long, and had had practically no contact with China, and he naturally relied on the specialists at that time."²⁹ This was in regards to the Chinese Civil War and the foreign policy establishment's, in Washington, push for reforms for Chiang to conduct in terms of his conduct. It indicates that Truman needed to catch up on the events between the two countries upon assuming the presidency. This was a result of FDR's unwillingness to include Truman on various aspects of the presidency. Tony Vaccaro, an acquaintance of Truman, reportedly said that, in regards to Truman's Vice Presidency, "Truman doesn't know what's going on. Roosevelt won't

²⁸ Harry S. Truman to Bess W. Truman, April 30, 1942, in *Family, Business, and Personal Affairs Papers*, https://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/trumanpapers/fbpa/index.php?documentid=HST-FBP_12-81_01&documentYear=1942&documentVersion=both.

²⁹ Arthur N. Young, "Oral History Interview with Arthur N. Young," Transcript of an oral history conducted February 21, 1974, by James R. Fuchs, Independence, Missouri, Harry S. Truman Library, <https://www.trumanlibrary.org/oralhist/young.htm>.

tell him anything.” Eventually, Truman solidified his position and knowledge, though the time is in doubt and the influence it had up for debate as to how it affected his policy and the proceeding Taiwan affairs.³⁰

³⁰ *Ibid*; Robert Ferrell, “Did FDR Think he Was Immortal?” *American Heritage* 41, no 8. (December 1990); Leffler 26.

Chapter II: Interwar Changes

The interwar period between World War II and the Korean War brought a shift in the relations between the United States and China. The United States was suddenly burdened with a new world, as a result of the World War II peace, to manage as the inklings of a greater conflict began to form between the Soviets and Americans for the post war world in Europe, Asia, and Africa. There were intentions to support the ROC's government, but this fell apart as events evolved in China, Japan, and elsewhere in the world. Japan evolved into the locus of the United States' interest in East Asia with China progressively becoming less of a concern or valued ally. Battlefield defeats and atrocities by Chiang diluted his political capital earned in the trenches in World War II. Truman's attention shifted back to Europe out of concern for the Soviet Union and came to be a far less receptive friend of the Chinese, though this could be attributed to his personal opinions on the conduct of the KMT. With the retreat to Taiwan in 1949, as Chiang lost the mainland, the KMT entered perilous straits as the United States withdrew support and the communists sensed complete victory. For a considerable duration of the interwar period, Chiang was in the wilderness and the situation in Taiwan unclear.

Inherent Chinese Weakness

The KMT's weakness contributed to the fading of Washington's aspirations for the state in sustaining the American presence in mainland China which helped push the United States away diplomatically. In 1947, the KMT conducted a massacre of the Taiwanese in the 2/28 Massacre. American reporters, notably George Kerr, sent communications of these events and this certainly had an effect on Washington policymakers' views of Chiang and his ability to sustain control. The necessity of World War II and the Pacific Theatre evaporating in 1945 further reduced the efficacy of the KMT in the eyes of Washington as seen in the CIA reporting

on the survivability of the regime. The Cold War was only beginning to emerge at this point as well which prevented policy decisions on the potential of Taiwan for a containment strategy. These opinions helped to shape the new president's views and the future developments of their relationship.³¹

The KMT's administration of Taiwan's following World War II possessed considerable corruption. Under Governor Chen Yi, the KMT failed to rule impartially and effectively. Instances of property seizures and forced grain sales at fixed prices angered the population greatly from 1946 to 1947 just before the 2/28 Incident. This corruption helped to precipitate the short term crisis that manifested through the uprising. The corruption in conjunction with the ethnic divisions born of centuries of policy³² designed to separate and delineate a distinct Taiwanese identity provided the factors necessary for an explosive revolt as the Japanese previously dealt with. This helped to contribute to the longer term concerns held by the United States over the efficacy of the KMT's rule on the island pushing them to distance themselves from the KMT.³³

The occupation of Taiwan met disaster on February 28, 1947. Rebellion struck the island with Cigarettes serving as the spark. On February 27, 1947, a woman attempting to sell cigarettes was beaten, robbed, and arrested by corrupt agents of the KMT government's Monopoly Bureau. According to reports, she died not long after the confrontation. The next day, people mobbed the agents and subsequently, a person was shot and killed. The next day, mass protests erupted with a demonstration aimed at demanding justice for the deaths, but as they marched on the Monopoly

³¹ Lin, 54-56; George Kerr, "Formosa: The March Massacres," *Far Eastern Survey* 16, no. 19 (1947): 224-226, doi:10.2307/3022622.

³² Rhoads, 275. Perhaps in their defense, Chiang did not view China, at least politically, as having multiple ethnicities with their only being the one true Han people with everyone else gradually assimilating into it. While this is in regards to the mainland, it could be assumed to apply to Taiwan as well.

³³ Lin, 41-42.

Bureau, they fell upon more malfeasance being conducted by two agents who were promptly given the crowd's justice. These events reinforced the idea that the corrupt KMT officials were against the Taiwanese's interests. The protest then set its sights upon the Governor's office to levy demands against the practice of monopolies that seemingly got the woman killed the previous day. Upon giving their demands and the arrival of the police, the crackdown began.³⁴

Martial law was declared the night of 2/28 and the massacres followed. The soldiers in the city fired upon people in the streets. Kerr erroneously absolves Chiang of culpability in the incident and places the blame solely upon the governor Chen Yi. However, Chiang originally gave Chen Yi the order to crackdown to prevent future incidents, but rescinded this order too late.³⁵

The uprising spread to other areas on the island as the Taiwanese rose up in an effort to vent their frustrations against the foreign mainlanders' corrupt administration. This could be indicative of the split identities of the Taiwanese as the Japanese fostered a unique independent identity. The ethnic tensions boiled over and this helped to increase the levels of violence, but where the local communities had closer relations, then it was avoided. Kerr himself speculates as to this as he notes some villages did not have violence as "in some instances military police and troops handed over their arms, agreeing with the Formosans that it was foolish for Chinese to fight Chinese. In other instances there was bloodshed. "Many people from the mainland were beaten as community after community vented accumulated hatred of the carpetbaggers."

³⁴ Kerr, 224-226.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

Taiwan's vacillating and lack of set identity allowed for the divergence in reaction to the events of 2/28.³⁶

The ethnic differences began to emerge to a greater extent in light of these uprisings. Some citizens of Taiwan identified with China and others saw themselves as a unique Taiwanese people. The Japanese and Qing influences on the ethnic composition of the island began to emerge as the Confucianism fostered by the Qing helped to mold some into loyal citizens who did not resist the Chinese and viewed themselves as Chinese. Others though saw this as either an attempt to take advantage of their impoverished nature or it could be attributed to deeper set ethnic differences inspired by the Japanese. Regardless of the reason behind the various reactions to the crisis, Washington saw the weakness in the Chiang regime with even larger failures on the mainland waiting to augment this realization. This event further gained notoriety in Washington due to the need for political capital in opposing the Soviets in Europe as the Cold War began to come into greater form. Morally standing with the KMT provided too much risk when attempting to provide a counter narrative to the Soviet situation. As the final throes of the Chinese Civil War began, the CIA began to take note and report in 1948 on the weakening status of the KMT that showed severe weakness in the KMT.³⁷

CIA assessments of the situation in China begin to come to the conclusion that the KMT was facing defeat though the extent of it was not clear. On July 22, 1948, in "The Current Situation in China," the CIA reported that "The position of the present National Government is so precarious that its fall may occur at any time." There was a significant lack of faith as "even with the current US aid program, the present National Government has little prospect of

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Rhoads, 293-294; Chao-Ying, 22-23; Barclay, 20.

reversing or even checking these trends of disintegration.” Concerns of the failure of the KMT and rise of the communists are seen plainly in this document; however, it is too aggressive in its forecast as it predicts the failure of the KMT to survive. The pessimism in the analytical judgement may have provided a sense of futility in aiding the KMT. This line of thought is continued in the next relevant report as conclusions were revised in light of new information.³⁸

On November 19, 1948, the CIA reported in “Possible Developments in China,” that the situation had worsened. The opening judgement was that “the disappearance of the Chinese National Government, as presently constituted, will probably occur within the next few months.” This is interesting to note as several months later, the KMT fled the mainland. The report fails to fully get the scale of this as it instead predicts a return to a warlord period of various nationalist governments controlling parts of China, and the communists controlling “north and central China east of Kansu Province.” This lacks the gravity of reality as the communists completely repelled nationalist elements and secured the mainland. Regardless of the accuracy of the forecasting, which could be indicative of weak American intelligence capabilities on East Asia, the reports were reaching Truman and influencing his thoughts and expectations for the KMT as he utilized his specialists. This helped to further precipitate Washington’s loss of faith in Chiang. This helped to inspire more decisive actions to secure a more favorable and effective agent for China.³⁹

Truman’s Evolving Attitude following World War II

³⁸ Central Intelligence Agency, *The Current Situation in China*. Washington DC: GPO, July 22, 1948, Accessed March 25, 2019, <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/collection/china-collection>.

³⁹ Central Intelligence Agency, *Possible Developments in China*. Washington DC: GPO, November 19, 1948, Accessed March 25, 2019, <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/collection/china-collection>.

The United States focus at the end of the war began to transform as Truman assumed the presidency and shifted his attention away from East Asia. Truman started to siphon the cracks in the Soviet alliance to the surface which began a pivot away from the wartime alliance. No longer concerned as much with the Pacific Theater, the reins were granted to General MacArthur for administrative purposes as Supreme Commander. This put Truman in a far less influential position in the area and allowed new elements to emerge in the relations with the KMT despite his personal misgivings that emerged over Chiang's competency.⁴⁰ Regardless of his opinions on Chiang, Truman still avoided taking direct control and instead granted directives and general policy prescriptions for MacArthur, but left the tactical application of those ideas to MacArthur. Through this, Chiang managed to maintain his position to a greater degree than if Truman actively sought to depose him. However, the pivot to the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe only lasted a brief period of time and lacked regional permanency as the Containment Policy came into fruition and further events occurred.⁴¹

Truman, even in his time in the Senate, had a distaste for the Soviet Union which helped to push the two states apart. Prior to his geopolitical shift and the United States' entry into World War II, in 1941, he gave a noteworthy quote, "If we see that Germany is winning we ought to help Russia, and if Russia is winning we ought to help Germany, and that way let them kill as many as possible although I don't want to see Hitler victorious under any circumstances."⁴²

⁴⁰ Truman, *Memoir*, 90. Truman laments in his memoir that "Chiang Kai-shek would not heed the advice of one of the greatest military strategists in history and lost to the Communists."

⁴¹ Barnes, 167-175; William Joseph Sebald, *With MacArthur in Japan; a Personal History of the Occupation* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1965), 54-55; Leffler, 90-91.

⁴² Turner Catledge, Special to THE NEWYORK TIMES. "OUR POLICY STATED." *New York Times* (1923-*Current File*), Jun 24, 1941, s <https://search.proquest.com/docview/105537016?accountid=11667>.

Truman harbored no feelings for the Soviets and this certainly did not help the future postwar relations. This would be seen with events helping to reinforce this break.

Particular events, such as the Marshall Plan's implementation and the Berlin Airlift served as instruments to dissolving the Soviet-American partnership as the United States began to take a greater role in the world. The Marshall Plan was seen by the Soviets as a direct effort to undermine their plans for Europe, though by design it serviced Western Europe. Funding of recovery for the war torn region served to draw the European states closer to the United States in their eyes. The plan did not lack this intent, though it was not the only reason for the relief. This helped to cause the Berlin Airlift which served to raise tensions further. This was a Soviet attempt to hinder Western efforts in Germany and hinder the reconstruction plans. As these events unfolded, the Soviets and United States diplomatically drifted into opposing camps. The status of Eastern Europe and the Marshall Plan marked the beginning of the end of the wartime alliance and prepared the groundwork for the United States' next step in the coming Cold War.⁴³

The Containment Policy, eventually called the Truman Doctrine, was Foreign Service Officer George Kennan's lasting contribution to American foreign policy that shaped the political thought of numerous leaders. Kennan's Long Telegram in 1946 laid out the case for concern toward the Soviet Union and mobilized hints of what already existed within the American foreign policy establishment. The Cold War warrior spirit can be seen in Truman's description of the policy,

Our vigilance had to go beyond our frontiers as we co-operated with our allies and other nations menaced by Communist imperialism. Our foreign policy was aimed to preserve the peace, and we fought the Communist threat everywhere and in many ways...Our foreign policy was mistakenly called by some a policy of containment. This is not true.

⁴³ Gaddis, 59; Friedman, 70-72 and 76-78.

Our purpose was much broader. We were working for a united, free, and prosperous world.⁴⁴

These ideas, contrary to what Truman claims, were safeguarded by containing communism. The communist actions in Iran and later Eastern Europe provided the spark that shifted the national interest away from Asia in the aftermath of World War II.⁴⁵

Iran provided the initial push, but Greece is where the Truman Doctrine was first exercised. The Soviet refusal to withdraw troops from Iran in 1946 in conjunction with the Long Telegram alerted American policymakers of the necessity to shift. Furthermore, Greece was undergoing a Civil War between the communist partisan forces and western friendly forces. The Greek Civil War helped to solidify the shift to open opposition to the spread of communism as the Yugoslavs appeared to want to intervene. This raised the long specter of communism which appeared to be rising. Truman's concerns over the Soviets led to a break as the Soviets lost the veneer of neutrality in the postwar period which Kennan helped to galvanize and orchestrate.⁴⁶

The Containment Policy served as a bulwark against the spread of communism. Born of Kennan's labor and bolstered by the domino theory or bandwagon effect, it asserted that once a country fell to communism others in the region would as well, Truman saw the need to combat communism. Europe provided an opportunity to actually execute this program of containment as the Greeks potentially stood to collapse as they faced the onslaught of the Greek communist forces. Through the conferral of arms and money by the West, the western friendly Greeks were sustained and the conflict stabilized. Despite China's existence as a similar conflict of an internal

⁴⁴ Truman, *Memoirs*, 290.

⁴⁵ Leffler, 60-61 and 108-109; Gaddis 24-25.

⁴⁶ Truman, *Memoirs*, 93 and 100; Leffler, 74-75, 121-125, 130, and 142; Richard M. Freeland, *The Truman Doctrine and the Origins of McCarthyism; Foreign Policy, Domestic Politics, and Internal Security, 1946-1948* (New York, Knopf, 1972), 53.

civil war with active communists, the shadow of the Soviet Union in Europe kept Truman's interest away from Asia, or at least China. This allowed MacArthur to control East Asia.⁴⁷

MacArthur's administration in Japan saw the early disconnect between Truman and MacArthur. The United States' foreign policy interests served as the leading factor for MacArthur's actions while his personal interests determined the nuances of the implementation of policy. To describe Truman's influence over MacArthur as anything truly significant denies the reality of the time. This infuriated Truman and helped to set the course of events that culminated with MacArthur's resignation.⁴⁸

MacArthur's awareness and agreement toward the grander strategy of the United States provided direction to his orders, but his own ambitions led him to reign in the manner in which he did. His rule punctuated by his re-ordering of Japan and eventual public support of Chiang despite Chiang's loss of favor from Truman. These actions provided a window of opportunity that allowed Chiang to survive despite Truman's indifference if not minor hostility toward his regime.⁴⁹

Lost Faith

The ordeals of the nascent Taiwanese state put incredible stress on Chiang's regime. The Cold War at this point was starting to fully initiate and this began the calculations in Washington as to how best to advance the interests of the United States in the grand conflict between superpowers. As a result, a faction within Washington won the debate as to Chiang's fate and began to prepare a replacement to oversee the KMT. Chiang gained an American opponent in

⁴⁷ Leffler, 143; Truman, *Memoirs*, 100 and 104-109.

⁴⁸ Pearlman, 1-26.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*; Leffler, 375.

General Sun Liren. This effort went as far as to have a US backed coup in the planning stages. This presented Chiang with a new challenge to holding onto power as Truman began to fully embrace the battle against communism with Chiang not factoring into the struggle.⁵⁰

In 1949, with the KMT's flight to Taiwan, Chiang finished his fall from favor with the Truman administration. The KMT's further failure to survive on the mainland and their subsequent withdrawal to Taiwan further reduced their political capital. The question of Taiwan and whether it could survive let alone provide a stoppage to communism. The United States began to aggressively pursue ideas of how to proceed and during this, avoided including Chiang directly in the discussions. Eventually, the United States took to the idea of leaving Taiwan to unofficial sources of support rather than directly involving Washington which provided opportunities to those who had favorable opinions of Chiang.⁵¹

In 1950, Truman announced "the United States Government will not provide military aid or advice to Chinese forces on Formosa." Furthermore, it encouraged the idea of the private elements of the United States to engage with the Taiwanese government for continued aid. Examples of this include selling arms or providing military advice as a private citizen. This declaration signaled a dangerous period in Chiang's political career as the United States cut ties with the nascent state. This severing of official ties served as a crucible as the KMT now faced a PRC that possessed considerable momentum while only having poor morale to oppose them.⁵²

Washington declared that they no longer viewed the KMT as assets with this declaration and more as a liability to their international relations and national interest. Chiang had not done

⁵⁰ Lin, 79-81 and 120-121.

⁵¹ Lin, 134 and 141.

⁵² Harry S. Truman, "Harry S Truman, 'Statement On Formosa,' January 5, 1950;" USC US-China Institute. February 25, 2014. Accessed March 25, 2019. <https://china.usc.edu/harry-s-truman-“statement-formosa”-january-5-1950>. Friedman, 99.

the United States any favors as his actions had failed to secure any resolute support from Truman who had other areas to give his attention. Furthermore, his atrocities did not help his reputation with the United States policymakers. Without even the appearance of stability in their position, American policymakers lacked the confidence to continue outright backing the state. At the brink of defeat, the KMT gained a fortuitous stroke of fortune that enabled relations to be restored. The Soviets and Chinese provided a new means of restoring relations when they signed a new treaty of friendship.⁵³

In 1950, at the brink of Chiang's political death, the Soviets and PRC granted Chiang a gift through the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance. It set forth in its opening,

The Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China and the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Union of Soviet socialist Republics, fully determined to prevent jointly, by strengthening friendship and cooperation between the People's Republic of China and the Union of Socialist Republics, the rebirth of Japanese imperialism and the resumption of aggression on the part of Japan or any other state that may collaborate in any way with Japan in acts of aggression...⁵⁴

The opening of the treaty clearly shows the desire of the two states to counter the United States influence over Japan with its attention of "any other state that may collaborate." This targeting helped to shift Washington's political calculus to being more open to less idealistic allies in the region in an effort to counter this coagulating threat. The treaty continues expressing a unity between the states with aligned national interests that provides further areas of concern for American policymakers.⁵⁵

⁵³ Lin, 170-171.

⁵⁴ Central Intelligence Agency, *The Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance Between the People's Republic of China and the Soviet Union, February 1950*, Washington DC: GPO, August 8, 2000, Accessed March 25, 2019, <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP80R01443R000300050007-8.pdf>.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

with the desire to consolidate lasting peace and universal security in the Far East and throughout the world in conformity with the aims and principles of the United Nations; profoundly convinced that the consolidation of good neighborly relations and friendship between the People's Republic of China and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics meets the vital interest of the peoples of China and the soviet Union...⁵⁶

The Sino-Soviet Treaty aligned the two largest communist states in the world and presented Truman with an intriguing challenge of a new opponent in the Cold War. The two largest communist states entered into a closer friendship with potentially disastrous ramifications for the international balance of power. The Soviet Union expanded the areas of high interest for the nascent Cold War into East Asia with the treaty and this escalated the Cold War. This pivot and expansion of the contest between communism and capitalism was not lost on Americans on either side of the political aisle.⁵⁷

Asia's growing importance increased Chiang's political capital overnight. Asia now had a more significant communist presence that activated the tenets of the bandwagon effect or domino theory and pushed for the invocation of the Containment Policy. The trigger of the Korean War pushes the KMT into a favorable position as it requires the American presence in the region. The product of this shift realized a new balance of power in East Asia through a treaty that forth a new chapter in American policy. This realized MacArthur's visions of Asia being instrumental geopolitically, and the start of Truman acquiescing to Chiang remaining in power which saw full realization under his successor Eisenhower.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Leffler, 143; Lin, 216.

Chapter III: The Korean War and the First Strait Crisis

The deteriorating relationship between the United States and the KMT was revitalized with the advent of the Korean War in 1950 through the mid-1950s as the United States was forced to reevaluate crucial geostrategic relationships as the Cold War began to fully develop. This forced the United States to come to terms with Chiang Kai-shek as the leader of Taiwan as East Asia grew in significance. Chiang's actions through the later parts of the Chinese Civil War, such as the 2/28 massacre, coupled with his totalitarian streak had soured his stock in Washington amongst the Truman administration. The conservative parts of the United States' government, military, and society preserved his hypothetical usefulness in the policy debates and prepare a door for his return to favor through private actors. The Korean War served as a benefit to Chiang as Truman was forced to come to terms with him and grant him his place as ruler of Taiwan with Eisenhower continuing this.

Chiang's Renewed Hope

While the United States was not a monolithic entity in regards to its Chinese policy, it can be simplified into two general camps that each had its own interests which developed and solidified over time. Both sides viewed the growing Cold War and the threat of communism as an enemy to defeat, but the difference between the two lay in terms of approach. Following the defeat of Chiang and his retreat to the mainland, the Truman administration came to disapprove of his efforts and began distancing themselves from his administration if not outright seeking to install a more favorable puppet such as the case of Sun Liren. The other side could be generally classified as the Republicans and those disposed toward more hawkish policies who favored a more supportive role in regards to Chiang. This camp viewed Chiang and the KMT as assets to

be used in the region against the communists. Charles Cooke would be the agent of this group prior to the official return to Chiang in policy⁵⁹

During the short period between the signing of the Sino-Soviet Friendship treaty and the Korean War, Charles Cooke provided a friendly face and a small respite to Chiang and the KMT. A former admiral, Cooke seized the initiative and went to Taiwan to strengthen ties between the groups despite the Truman administration expressing trepidation over the relationship in his 1950 declaration. This can be explained due to the separation between official policy of the administration, and private interactions, which were not discouraged and had been indicated as the course moving forward following the 1950 declaration. Cooke's decisively changed the defense policy of the KMT and helped preserve Chiang's regime during this time.⁶⁰

The KMT heeded Cooke's advice on several defense policies as well as gained arms trade with the Americans which proved crucial to their survival. The KMT came to be reliant upon the private sales of arms which contributed to the ability of the KMT to maintain what little power they still possessed. Furthermore, Chiang was receptive of Cooke's general assistance in acquiring resources for the island. Cooke helped procure excess Department of Defense goods through his contacts which he then sold to the KMT. Arguably the most crucial aspects of support Cooke provided were his military insights. One critical point that he contributed to their efforts was encouraging for them to withdraw their troops from Hainan that provided a considerable strategic liability to the KMT.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Lin, 141-148; Taylor, 427-429.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

The KMT retained some holdings outside of Taiwan during its retreat in 1949. The troops on Hainan, the other major island off the coast of mainland China, were a liability to the KMT administration and a political landmine for Chiang. The KMT's reluctance to withdraw provided a challenge for Cooke to overcome to ensure the security of Taiwan. By successfully arguing for it, Chiang's understanding of a potential withdrawal is that it indicated his complete failure to both the United States and his people which led American policymakers to ascertain his disastrous ability to maintain control or at least the image of it. The corner Chiang found himself in forced him to seek an exit strategy that allowed him to save face.⁶²

Cooke provided Chiang a way out with by personally going to Hainan and reporting on the direness of the situation. Cooke's advice to retreat proved to be true as other islands of some interest but not strategic importance fell to the communists. This helped to push the KMT to acquiesce the island to the communists which preserved their ability to preserve Taiwan. These changes to official policy helped to preserve the KMT administration. It required greater official figures to begin a proper shift back to Chiang's position which came with the Korean War.⁶³

The Korean War drew the United States back into East Asia due to the burgeoning Containment Policy initiated by the Truman administration. Truman's Containment Policy required opposition to communism wherever it might appear through material support. The Greek Civil War helped precipitated the policy, but Korea is where the policy fully manifested itself for the United States as a mechanism to intervene in conflicts. The first major contest between the Soviet Union and the United States took place as the Containment Policy had yet to fully establish in terms of how far the United States' commitment to limiting the growth of

⁶² Lin, 150-153.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

communism extended. The Korean War led to new decision making on Truman's part as the situation in Asia required policy shifts of greater involvement by the United States.⁶⁴

The End of Peace

On June 25, 1950, the Korean War began and this marked the point where more official support emerges as the American presence in Asia increases as the Cold War evolved. Not even a month later after the hostilities begin, on July 19, 1950, Truman announced in his speech "Communist Attack on Korea a Violation of U.N. Charter," that "under the flag of the United Nations, a unified command has been established for all forces of the members of the United Nations fighting in Korea." This set forth the drive of the operation, but the target of his speech is the more interesting aspect of the speech. "The Soviet Government has said many times that it wants peace in the world, but its attitude toward this act of aggression against the Republic of Korea is in direct contradiction of its statements."⁶⁵ Here he focuses on the Soviets rather than the Chinese as the Chinese had yet to involve themselves in the war. The lack of mention of China in the speech is interesting due to the later involvement of the Chinese and perhaps it reflects a last effort at driving a wedge between the two or at least preserving the good will wrought from leaving Taiwan isolated. Within the speech, there was a section dedicated to MacArthur's status as well.

Truman's reading and interpretation of the MacArthur report indicates no divide between the two at this point on Korea, but an indirect mention of the KMT. MacArthur's report mostly speaks of the military situation being stabilized and requesting arms, but there is a warning that "Communist forces have invaded Korea is a warning that there may be similar acts of aggression

⁶⁴ Leffler, 366-367.

⁶⁵ Truman, *Vital Speeches of the Day* 16, no. 20 (August 1950): 610-612.

in other parts of the world. Free nations must be on their guard more than ever before against this kind of sneak attack. It is obvious that we must increase our military strength and preparedness immediately.”⁶⁶ This shows a concern for general American policy of containment, but hints of concern for the KMT. As Supreme Commander of Japan and the war effort in Korea, the only state in the region, that is of probably concern to MacArthur especially given his focus on East Asia, not directly tied to the United States or the communists at this point was Taiwan. Thus, a push for a common defense, which most likely indicated this given his concerns reflects a small though not explicit break with Truman. This idea is reinforced a couple lines lower by Truman in the speech when he stated that “we need to speed up our work with other countries in strengthening our common defenses.”⁶⁷ While not an explicit change to support the KMT, given the circumstances it can be assumed to a limited degree it indicated a softening of stance to their predicament. Within two days, support for the security of the island was announced.

Truman froze the discussion on Taiwan’s status, but affirmed their security in a congressional statement. In a Statement by the President on the Situation in Korea on June 27, 1950, Truman stated;

Accordingly I have ordered the 7th Fleet to prevent any attack on Formosa. As a corollary of this action I am calling upon the Chinese Government on Formosa to cease all air and sea operations against the mainland. The 7th Fleet will see that this is done. The determination of the future status of Formosa must await the restoration of security in the Pacific, a peace settlement with Japan, or consideration by the United Nations.⁶⁸

The declaration by Truman not even half a year after cutting ties to the KMT government reflects the severity of the situation in Taiwan and perhaps greater indication of what he meant in his

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 611-612.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*.

⁶⁸ Harry Truman. “Statement by the President on the Situation in Korea,” *Statement by the President on the Situation in Korea*, August 2017, 1. *Library - Primary Source Documents*, January 2001.

announcement two days earlier. However, it should be noted that there were those who claimed that this was actually a plot to stymie the operations of the KMT in combatting China rather than a proper security arrangement. As the war continued to deteriorate, cracks began to emerge between MacArthur and the president which eliminated one ally of the KMT, though this was not severely detrimental given the shifts in Washington toward a more favorable outlook.⁶⁹

Truman and MacArthur's differences dominated what little relationship existed between the two of them. Truman did not like MacArthur even before he took office as president. The brash, risk taking, and impetuous MacArthur clashed with the temperament of Truman. Truman did not even meet him as president until after the Korean War started, though extenuating circumstances of the wars, administration, and peace process could explain this. Regardless, it required the start of a war to push the two off them to meet. MacArthur's blaze of glory through his Inchon invasion turning the tide of war to the UN's favor and reports of Chinese intervention into Korea pushed Truman to finally meet MacArthur. This first meeting between the two men took place at Wake Island.⁷⁰

On October 15, 1950, MacArthur met with Truman on Wake Island following the beginning of the Korean War on June 25, 1950, the deterioration of South Korean forces, and the Inchon invasion resurgence. Truman wanted to meet with MacArthur for the first time as president to discuss strategy given that UN forces had pushed the North Koreans back to the 38th parallel, the division of North and South Korea, and wanted to see where the maverick MacArthur saw the war going. The lack of concern over Chinese intervention by MacArthur helped to prime Truman for distrusting his judgement when the Chinese overturned expectations.

⁶⁹ Divine, 56.

⁷⁰ Truman, *Memoirs*, 341,359-360, and 362-363; Ferrell, *Harry S. Truman*, 325-330.

There was a need to stress MacArthur's limits in fighting the war as well to ensure he did not overstep his bounds. The meeting itself went well, though it acted as a harbinger for the falling out between the two.⁷¹

Wake Island established the beginning of the end for what little relationship existed between the two men. According to Vernice Anderson, a Secretary to Edwin Locke, "I thought this was a very unusual development. I knew there were problems with respect to the administration of the Korean conflict and there had been some basic military differences with the Supreme Commander on widening the war." This conference had developed due to MacArthur's too successful push in his brilliant landing at Inchon that had propelled the UN forces beyond the 38th parallel. At this point, Chiang's relevance to the events increases as MacArthur brings him in as a potential regional ally.⁷²

MacArthur believed in Chiang to be an ally in the fight against Communism despite his failings as a leader and a general as according to him. Korea required an expansion in the fighting as he evaluated the Chinese as the real source of North Korean strength. MacArthur sought victory at any cost, and the KMT provided yet another resource to support these efforts in his eyes, especially with the criticality of China. However, MacArthur did not take their help in every instance, one such occasion outlined by Truman of KMT support in South Korea is rejected as "these troops would be of little effect in Korea; they were infantry, without artillery or other support element, and of unknown quality."⁷³ Thus, Chiang provided him with an ally of convenience as each sought to gain in their own respective ways as Chiang saw this as a means

⁷¹ Truman, *Memoirs*, 363-366.

⁷² Vernice Anderson, "Oral History Interview with Vernice Anderson," transcript of an oral history conducted February 2, 1971, by Jerry H. Hess, Independence, Missouri, Harry S. Truman Library, Washington DC. <https://www.trumanlibrary.org/oralhist/andersonv.htm>.

⁷³ Truman, *Memoirs*, 348.

to remain relevant. The KMT saw this as a path to influence in Washington and MacArthur another means of supporting their war effort.⁷⁴

MacArthur ensured supplies ran to Taiwan and the idea of a KMT invasion of China is floated in 1950.⁷⁵ The supplies enabled the preservation of strength for the KMT in the face of the resolute PRC. The talk of invasion provided some cover for Chiang's place in the United States' planning, but nothing materializes over this effort. Relations did improve generally as the United States looked to Korea for a victory against communism and the placement of the KMT allowed for an expansion of the Containment Policy further into Asia surrounding the PRC. The invasion provides Chiang with a leverage point in his negotiations with the United States for resources and aid. MacArthur ended up providing a favorable voice to Chiang's cause prior to his dismissal as the Korean War went on and his insubordination toward Truman reached a peak leading to Truman finally acting to depose the general.⁷⁶

New American Faces

Truman's initial failure to check MacArthur's disregard for Washington and its specific directions led to a later crisis in US leadership over the area. Truman had clashed with him multiple times, but it required a more significant event to push Truman to the point of breaking MacArthur's imperious nature of defiance. A public debate between the two figures served as this break. Truman's attitudes toward the soldier type that potentially emerged with Chiang can help to explain this.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ *Ibid*; Taylor, 438-440.

⁷⁵ Lin, 176.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 209

⁷⁷ Pearlman, 12.

MacArthur's character helps to explain the falling out between him and Truman that led to East Asia's policy changing. MacArthur's history reveals a man jaded by politicians from childhood with a national stature in adulthood large enough to oppose the politicians with little repercussion. His personal vendetta against leadership, as seen with his discontent with Truman and willingness to violate orders at the end of his time as Supreme Commander, was aided by their own distraction of Europe and domestic issues which largely left Asia as his domain. Together, they allowed MacArthur to act with near autonomy in Asia in regards to specific policy implementation, but it never severely deviated away from the end goals of the administration when they gave vague orders. When MacArthur started to voice his concerns publically, then Truman's own character came into conflict and his superior office prevailed.⁷⁸

Truman's replacement for MacArthur was Matthew Ridgeway who did not have the loyalty or compliance problems of MacArthur nor as long of a tenor. According to Truman, "General Ridgeway did not always agree with policy or with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, but he was meticulous in carrying out directives."⁷⁹ Furthermore, his "calm and efficient manner" are commented upon by Truman further signifying his favor over the more tempestuous MacArthur.⁸⁰ Ridgeway oversaw the conclusion of the Korean War with Truman's successor, Eisenhower, ending it fairly quickly following his inauguration. The lack of insubordination and Eisenhower's devotion to ending the war if necessary saw it wind down.⁸¹

Truman's time overseeing the war quietly lapsed into Eisenhower's administration which took a more resolute stance on Taiwan, though it was not due entirely to the Korean War.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 1-13; Sebald, 54-55; Truman, *Memoirs*, 440-442.

⁷⁹ Truman, *Memoirs*, 454.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*.

⁸¹ *Ibid*.

Eisenhower assumed control at the close of the Korean War helping to facilitate the end of the war, but it indicated a new stage in the Cold War. The Korean War preserved Chiang's administration, but it was the shift southward into Southeast Asia that would begin the proper push to solidify the security arrangement with the KMT. Eisenhower later provided the leadership for the United States in the First Taiwan Straits Crisis which finalized the events surrounding the security arrangement. Furthermore, Eisenhower helped supervise the final deal for the fate of the KMT and Taiwan status quo. This status quo generally persisted through the remainder of the 20th century into the 21st century.

The First Crisis

Eisenhower took office in 1953 and his presidency oversaw the final birthing of the new Taiwanese state. Eisenhower did not have the hostility that Truman had for the KMT during his presidency. It can be debated whether this can be explained due to international events pushing the two closer or a lack of the same personal sentiments Truman had that led to this relationship. Regardless, Eisenhower's receptivity toward Chiang or at least a recognition of his worth helped to the United States began a gentle shift before the official security arrangement. This shift would cause a PRC response later called the First Taiwan Straits Crisis.⁸²

In 1953, Eisenhower's attempted to diplomatically bring Taiwan closer to the United States with an announcement that the KMT were no longer restrained by the 7th fleet. The 7th fleet had previously been dispatched by Truman to safeguard the island. However, there was discussion as to whether Truman's purpose for placing the fleet there was to ensure the safety of the KMT or if it was to prevent incursions or the long rumored invasion of the mainland from

⁸² Divine, 60; Lin, 209-211.

occurring. Regardless of its original purpose, Eisenhower's official stance on the fleet reversed this idea of restraint and expressed that the KMT had the freedom to act as needed rather than curtailing the activities of the KMT. This served as the advent of the new KMT policy of acceptance as an American ally that helped to push the Chinese further away diplomatically and escalate tensions as rumors of a security treaty began to emerge.⁸³

In 1954, tensions rose between the United States and China over the status of Taiwan and their activities. In a note, dated July 27, 1954, between Ambassador Zhang and Premier Zhou Enlai, the Chinese concerns over KMT activities and American interests is revealed.

The Central Committee recently discussed the situation related to the Geneva Conference, and it believes that after the agreements in Korea and Indochina, the United States is unwilling to accept its failure at the Geneva Conference, and will inevitably continue to carry out the policy of creating international tension for the purpose of further taking over more spheres of influence from Britain and France, of expanding military bases for preparing for war, and remaining hostile to our Organization of Defense, and of rearming Japan.⁸⁴

The aftermath of the Korean War indicates to the Chinese that the Taiwan question may be revisited. Eisenhower's posturing over the 7th Fleet most likely did not help this situation either as the Chinese see a wounded opponent who is looking opening to press the attack. The note to Zhou Enlai further amplifies his concerns between alliance between the two and the potential actions this could spiral into.

The United States will surely continue to use Taiwan to carry out pirate-style robberies of ships from various countries coming to our country, and it is likely to expand the sphere of blockade of our country to the areas off the Guangdong coast and to the Gulf of Tonkin area. Recently the United States and Jiang Jieshi [Chiang Kai-shek] have been

⁸³ Divine, 56.

⁸⁴ "Telegram, CCP Central Committee to Zhou Enlai, Concerning Policies and Measures in the Struggle against the United States and Jiang Jieshi after the Geneva Conference," July 27, 1954, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, PRC FMA. Translated by Chen Zhihong <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/111050>.

discussing signing a US-Jiang treaty of defense, and the United States has repeatedly increased military aid to the Jiang bandits in Taiwan.⁸⁵

Only months prior to the crisis itself, the remedy proposed by Ambassador Zhang is “to break up the US Jiang treaty of defense and the Southeast Asian treaty of defense.”⁸⁶ The reason the Zhang assigns to increased discussion between the United States and Taiwan is due to the Geneva Conference that aimed to prevent escalation in Indochina. Beyond this, the military targets are assigned for an expected long duration conflict between the United States and PRC over Taiwan. There is also discussion of greater American activity in Asia that is raising concerns for the PRC. This indicates the Cold War mentality emerging already with arms races and entrenched positions between the various competitors.

Zhou Enlai later discusses this with the Soviet Premier Malenkov which reveals both the relationship between the Soviets and the PRC, but also the affirmation of the PRC’s ideas put forth by Ambassador Zhang Wentian in the earlier note. On July 29, 1954, after briefly reiterating the notes already mentioned in the communication with Ambassador Zhang, Georgy Malenkov gave his answer to Zhou. Malenkov stated:

that questions about measures connected with the international situation are examined and decided in the CPSU CC. Cde. Zhou Enlai's statements deserve great attention. The goal of disrupting the conclusion of a pact between the US and Jiang Jieshi is correct. The question of Taiwan is undoubtedly a critically important problem for China. He agrees with Zhou Enlai's comment that the goal of achieving an exacerbation of the differences between the US and other bourgeois countries is important.⁸⁷

The discussion on the supremacy of the CPSU CC for international affairs is particularly interesting for the Cold War context. It shows the early start of areas of disagreement between

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ "Memorandum of Conversation, between Soviet Premier Georgy M. Malenkov and Zhou Enlai," July 29, 1954, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, AVPRF f. 06, o. 13a, d. 25, II. 8. Obtained by Paul Wingrove and translated by Gary Goldberg, <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/111272>.

the Chinese and Soviets as the Soviets strove for dominance in leading the global communist revolution with the Chinese not necessarily agreeing with this as the Cold War advanced. If anything, the Soviets provided only token notes to the Chinese of recognition rather than genuine cooperation between the two. This shows that the two states were not equals in the friendship treaty as one viewed themselves as the senior partner. Besides this, the affirmation of the plans set forth to stop the alliance shows an effort by the Soviets to remain in control of the situation.

The First Taiwan Straits Crisis occurred as the PRC strove to reunite with its lost island. On February 15, 1955, Eisenhower gave a message to Congress detailing the situation. “In September 1954, the Chinese Communists opened up heavy artillery fire upon Quemoy Island, one of the natural approaches to Formosa, which had for several years been under the uncontested control of the Republic of China.” From this, the communists advanced to conquer the island of Ichiang and Eisenhower argues that this is escalating to a proper attempt by the PRC to reclaim the island. Given the ambassador’s note, it is more likely that the attacks are an effort to drive a wedge between the United States and the KMT by making the relationship too costly to maintain. Nonetheless, Eisenhower sets forth in this message that he should be given the authority to defend Taiwan from Congress through a resolution. Congress grants it to him.⁸⁸

The grant of a Congressional Resolution provides Eisenhower with more leverage in the situation. Coupled with a diplomatic assertion of support for the KMT, the situation began to transform. The United States began to negotiate with Chiang Kai-shek to withdraw from the island of Dachen, but in return, the United States promised to defend the islands of Jinmen and Mazu. The situation stagnated somewhat as the United States began to evaluate the KMT and

⁸⁸ Eisenhower, *Vital Speeches of the Day* 21, no. 9 (February 15, 1955): 1026-1027.

thee situation for the best path forward and prepared measures accordingly. New negotiations began which determined the place of the KMT and Chiang for the remainder of the 20th century.⁸⁹

Mutually Beneficial Arrangement

Chiang managed to secure Taiwan at the cost of the island's autonomy as the United States assumed security responsibilities in the 1955 Sino-American Mutual Defense Treaty. Through the last few years of the Korean War, Chiang played a minor role in the events. Offering troops and raiding, the KMT lacked a decisive factor in the Korean War, but they managed to remain relevant through the times despite their historical losses. This was accomplished through the maintained idea of an invasion to overthrow the PRC and reestablish the ROC as the rightful rulers of China. However, the efficacy of the KMT and further regional developments in France's colonial holdings reduced this bargaining chip and forced Chiang to reevaluate his place in the East Asia international order.⁹⁰

Chiang's balancing act of maintaining relevancy while not overstepping his bounds to alienate the Americans came to an end with the First Taiwan Straits Crisis. No longer able to balance the KMT government between supporter of the United States and holding onto his own power, the crisis forced Chiang to decide the independence of Taiwan. To either acquiesce to American management of the foreign affairs of Taiwan meant to effectively sacrifice autonomy, but Chiang likely remains in power of the island state, or retain full autonomy but face the

⁸⁹ "The Taiwan Straits Crises: 1954-55 and 1958," US State Department, Accessed April 19, 2019, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1953-1960/taiwan-strait-crises>.

⁹⁰ Lin, 227.

Chinese threat alone. The reason for the United States requiring this was the escalating nature of East Asia.⁹¹

The United States shift to East Asia signaled a need to realign itself and solidify its control over what it did possess. The Cold War was developing with the French failure in Indochina in the 50s opening the door for further American involvement in the region. This provided Chiang a place in the new order as the United States needed another ally in the region plus the geographic proximity could provide a staging ground for operations in Southeast Asia. As a result, the Sino-American Security Agreement is made.⁹²

The security treaty fulfills multiple aspects of the American Cold War strategy. Its Article II establishes that “In order more effectively to achieve the objective of this Treaty, the Parties separately and jointly by self-help and mutual aid will maintain and develop their individual and collective capacity to resist armed attack and communist subversive activities directed from without against their territorial integrity and political stability.” This places the onus on the KMT to provide military assets in the region and prepares them as part of the containment of the PRC. The insistence on the communist threat is of interest, and the idea of subversive activities could be interpreted in controversial ways given the recent history of Taiwan. The 2/28 Massacre is sometime considered a communist inspired uprising and if this is the case, then the resolution against this is a further attack against the PRC in the treaty and would have contributed to a rise in tensions. The utility of the military force is expounded upon in Article V.⁹³

⁹¹ *Ibid*,

⁹² *Ibid*.

⁹³ “Mutual Defense Treaty Between the United States and the Republic of China; December 2, 1954.” Yale, Accessed April 19, 2019, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/chin001.asp.

The defense of Western interests was further strengthened in Article V. The treaty outlines this idea with “Each Party recognizes that an armed attack in the West Pacific Area directed against the territories of either of the Parties would be dangerous to its own peace and safety and declares that it would act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes.” This establishes the shared interest of opposition to the PRC, though they are not named in this clause. Through specifying this threat, the PRC were established as a clear opponent of the United States in its future in East Asia and concerns over their actions maintained a sense of influence for policy makers. Further elaboration of how the defense of Taiwan functioned further reinforced Cold War sentiments of using the United Nations as a bludgeon of policy.

The defense standard provided, “Any such armed attack and all measures taken as a result thereof shall be immediately reported to the Security Council of the United Nations. Such measures shall be terminated when the Security Council has taken the measures necessary to restore and maintain international peace and security.” This effectively gave the United States the ability to intercede at will permitted the Soviet Union did not veto the resolution on the United Nations Security Council. The placement of the ROC on the UNSC permits this to effectively be a rubber stamp for police action. Besides the security side, the actual allotment of American military assets provides the actual interest of the Cold War policy maker as it facilitated the spread of the American sphere of influence.⁹⁴

Article VII offered the United States a greater sphere of influence for its Cold War containment policy. “The Government of the Republic of China grants, and the Government of

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

the United States of America accepts, the right to dispose such United States land, air and sea forces in and about Taiwan and the Pescadores as may be required for their defense, as determined by mutual agreement.” Through the placement of American troops, Chiang pushed Taiwan fully into the American sphere of influence as it allowed the United States to place a fair number of military assets right off the coast of the PRC. This certainly did not increase favorability for the KMT elements, but it served as a tool of intimidation that helped to shift the PRC into accepting the new status quo as the United States asserted itself.⁹⁵

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

Conclusion

I surveyed and showed how the development of Taiwan relied heavily upon external forces from the expulsion of the KMT from the mainland in 1949 until the signing of the security agreement in 1955. This was not a new phenomenon for Taiwan as its history is typified by being beset at all sides by other stronger states and international events driving the development of the island. The island nation has been at the mercy of stronger powers for centuries from the colonization of the Ming dynasty through the Cold War era. With a unique ethnic composition and identities, the island has served to provide an interesting place to administrate with challenges born of various policies that have helped to shape the greater direction of events to a limited degree. The Cold War served to have a distinct formative influence on the state as the United States solidified its role as the stalwart protector of the island.

The United States' mentality toward the island changed with time as presidents' evolved and new ones assumed office. Earlier relations were between that of a nascent superpower and an ailing power. By the time Truman assumes office, China had fallen further in international standing with a loss to Japan and civil wars marring the state for decades. Further events shaped by the battlefield losses and atrocities of the KMT pushed the United States further away requiring the efforts of the Containment Policy and the Korean War to draw them back.

Truman's earlier biases appear not to have influenced his decision making heavily if at all. Other factors account for his neglect of the KMT. Europe provided a more competitive and pressing arena for the competition against communism rather than East Asia where the KMT were evaluated to be at the end of their lines by 1948. Furthermore, the activities of the KMT did not endear themselves to Washington. This combination proved disastrous for the later 1940s for

the relations between the KMT and United States. The ironic fact is that deliverance for the Chiang regime rested in the policy that initially appeared to abandon them: containment.

The temporary shift to Europe did not last though as the policies of stopping communism led the United States back to Asia. The Korean War was initiated and fought by Truman and peace wrought by his successor. With peace in the Korean War and the American presence increasing, the inevitability of needing to secure another regional ally emerged. Eisenhower's ability to fight the Cold War required a new ally in the slowly forming ROC off the coast of mainland China to provide a cordon to communism. Securing the island and the ROC government provided the United States a useful tool for the coming decades both diplomatically and strategically.

The sustained ROC allowed for the UNSC vote to be retained for the United States side and served as an important issue further into the Cold War. Through defending the government and preserving the status quo, the diplomatic power of the PRC was severely curtailed on the international stage officially, though it was not absolute. By aligning with the non-aligned powers, which perhaps was a strategic move by the PRC recognizing this status quo, the PRC was able to install itself as the champion of Asia and Africa against western imperialism and colonialism. This helped to develop the PRC's diplomatic clout with parts of the world that are now being drawn further into the sphere of influence in the 21st century.

Militarily the presence of the ROC allowed the United States to have yet another beachhead for the wars in Southeast Asia. French Indochina was in its last throes of the French efforts and both the PRC and United States saw the coming shift south after Korea. This is reflected in their statements and negotiating over the final status of Taiwan in 1955. With this,

the status quo allowed the United States to provide another stalemate to the Cold War as communisms spread was halted not only in Korea but in China as well, though the Chinese stalemate skewed more toward a defeat than a victory.

At the beginning of Truman's interactions with Taiwan, the president did not have the same Cold War climate as his successor or even his later presidency had. East Asia was not the pressing threat that emerged in the 1950s and 1960s and the Soviet Union appeared to be pushing in Europe. Ultimately, the United States was forced to further develop this relationship that was originally in decline with Chiang's inability to hold control over his state. Due to this, the Cold War brought a new status quo into being that has continued to trouble the region into the 21st century as the political climate has yet to reach a point of being able to resolve this relatively anomalous problem.

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