United States Opposition to Use of Force in the Taiwan Strait, 1954-1962
Author(s): Leonard H. D. Gordon
Reviewed work(s):
Published by: Organization of American Historians
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/1904307
Accessed: 06/05/2012 23:40

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Organization of American Historians is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to The Journal of American History.
United States Opposition to Use of Force in the Taiwan Strait, 1954–1962

Leonard H. D. Gordon

Relations between the United States and the People’s Republic of China during the 1950s were strained by the United States policy of containment and isolation toward China and by combat in Korea. Despite that diplomatic and military hostility, a clearly defined policy of opposition to the use of force in the Taiwan Strait, which separated the Chinese Communists from the Chinese Nationalists, had slowly evolved. Early fears of a resumption of the Chinese civil war in the Taiwan Strait had first been alleviated when President Harry S. Truman ordered the United States Seventh Fleet to patrol the area in June 1950, setting a precedent for opposition to the use of force. As a result, the prospect of conflict had lain dormant until the offshore islands held by the Nationalists were bombarded by Communist forces from the mainland in the autumn of 1954. A United States commitment to help defend the Republic of China on Taiwan soon emerged, and the resulting defense pact established the policy of nonuse of force in the Taiwan Strait. During the following eight years, events surrounding the second Taiwan Strait crisis of 1958 led to a severe test and the refinement of that policy.

The diplomatic negotiations that took place between 1954 and 1962 revealed serious disagreements between the United States and the Nationalist government on Taiwan. Differences in objectives and in the interpretation of the 1954 defense pact resulted in a divisive “alliance”; rather than form a harmonious relationship, the United States and the Republic of China on Taiwan grew farther apart from and distrustful of one another. The cautious and moderate policy of avoidance of force ran counter both to the Chinese Communist policy to reunify Taiwan with the mainland and to the Chinese Nationalist policy to “recover the mainland” (hui-fu da-lu). The Nationalist government’s extensive military and economic reliance on the United States, however, allowed the United States to remain firm in opposing the use of force in the Taiwan dispute.

Leonard H. D. Gordon is associate professor of Chinese history at Purdue University. A portion of the research for this article was supported by a grant from the American Philosophical Society.
An examination of United States policy in the Taiwan Strait during the 1950s reveals also the ideological and strategic approach to the Communist challenge taken by President Dwight D. Eisenhower and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles. The myth of their uncompromising hostility to growing Communist strength and Dulles’s total dominance of foreign policy during the Eisenhower administration has been properly dismantled by earlier writers. The following account of an important aspect of United States China policy in the 1950s, based on documentation recently declassified by the United States Department of State, further substantiates those analyses and also revises our perception of the Eisenhower-Dulles view of President Chiang Kai-shek and the Nationalist government on Taiwan.

Since the United States had very limited contact with the People’s Republic of China during the 1950s, its concern about the use of force was directed mainly toward the recognized Republic of China on Taiwan, with which the United States had official and constant relations. An increasing concern after the Taiwan Strait crisis of 1954 was that the Nationalist government might resort to the use of force to attack the mainland despite its military weakness relative to Chinese Communist forces. The Mutual Defense Treaty, which the United States signed with the Nationalist government on December 2, 1954, and the Exchange of Notes, signed eight days later, clearly encouraged the Nationalists to take bolder measures against the Communists, despite the defensive character of the pact.

To avert the dangers inherent in the Taiwan Strait crisis of 1954, the United States sought to direct the Nationalist government on Taiwan away from the use of force. Thus Dulles suggested to Chiang in early March 1955 that it would be unwise for the government on Taiwan to emphasize the early recovery of the mainland by force. To convince Chiang of the advantages of


2 This article is based largely on Leonard H. D. Gordon, “United States Policy on the Use of Force by the Republic of China against the Chinese Communists, 1955-1962,” Office of the Historian files [U.S. Department of State, Washington]. I completed it in draft form while a member of the State Department’s Historical Office between 1961 and 1963. The article and supporting documents were declassified under the Freedom of Information Act. Selected passages, especially references to military equipment and operations, intelligence activities, and some quotations by foreign leaders, have been excised for reasons of national security. The excised portions, if included, would not alter the analysis or conclusions of this article. In several instances I have cited my own commentary in the original paper that summarized the ideas encompassed in the excised material.

restraint, Dulles indicated that opportunities might develop from Chinese Communist aggression. Before concluding their discussions, Chiang assured Dulles that Taiwan "would not take any unilateral action without consulting the United States." Nevertheless, the United States was committed to allow retaliatory action against military targets in response to a Chinese Communist attack. In addition, the commander in chief of the United States Pacific Fleet was permitted to authorize the Nationalist government to retaliate without referring the decision to the administration in Washington. Those arrangements tempered Chiang's assurance to Dulles and allowed a degree of flexibility in Taiwan's modus operandi that the United States later would not be prepared to concede.4

The administration's strategy in March 1955 was to avoid provoking a Chinese Communist invasion of the offshore islands. Eisenhower was concerned that such an action would lead to United States involvement, which might damage the nation's image in Western Europe, and he warned that "we could not afford to be isolated from our allies in the world." At a White House meeting in which the delicate issue of preventing provocation of an assault was discussed, consideration was given to the relative merits of atomic and conventional weapons for use in the Taiwan Strait. Eisenhower agreed with Dulles, who cautioned that atomic weapons ought not to be used while the European negotiations were in progress and that "the U.S. also should do its best to avoid intervention of any kind on Quemoy [Jinmen] and Matsu [Macu]." Eisenhower believed that "the U.S. should do every practical thing that could be done to help" the Chinese Nationalists with advice, training, and weapons; but if intervention were necessary, he advised the use of conventional weapons, such as napalm, against invading troops. Should conventional weapons not be decisive, however, and should atomic weapons be required, the president believed that use of the latter "should come only at the end, and we would have to advise our allies first."5

Sensitive to allied fears of an eruption in the Taiwan Strait, Dulles, in a speech before the Foreign Policy Association in February 1955, signaled the

4 Tel., Dulles to Herbert Hoover, Jr., March 6, 1955, International series, "Formosa [China] 1952–57 [4]," box 9, Dwight D. Eisenhower Papers as President of the United States, 1953–1961 [Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kans.]; National Security Council, Report 5503, paragraph 11 [U.S. Department of State]; Douglas MacArthur II to Dulles, March 25, 1955, Office of Chinese Affairs files, ibid. Dulles did not believe that he had altered Chiang Kai-shek's preocupation with plans to recover the mainland, but he thought that he at least had "broken the ice." Memorandum of conversation, Percy C. Spender and Dulles, March 10, 1955, ibid. See also Despatch 444 from Taipei, March 15, 1955, file 110.11-DU [U.S. Department of State]. This dispatch contains the record of conversation between Chiang and Dulles on March 3, 1955. United States Ambassador Karl Lott Rankin noted that this record was prepared by Sampson Shen, secretary to Chiang, and was not a verbatim account. Ibid. Summaries also appear in "Memorandum of Record and Understanding," March 6, 1955, file 711.5893, ibid.; and "Memorandum of Meeting and Conversation," Chiang and Dulles, March 6, 1955, Office of Chinese Affairs files. In his report to the president, Dulles noted that Chiang wanted to assure Eisenhower of his commitment to consultation. Tel., Dulles to Herbert Hoover, Jr., March 6, 1955.

Chinese Communist government that it might renounce the use of force in the Taiwan area without necessarily renouncing its objectives there. Meeting in Bandung, Indonesia, with nonaligned nations in April 1955, Zhou Enlai declared China's desire to avoid war and its willingness to negotiate with the United States "to discuss the question of relaxing tension in the Taiwan area" while not surrendering China's right to liberate Taiwan. Following up on that response, yet remaining characteristically skeptical of Chinese Communist overtures, Dulles, in a statement to the press on April 26, doubted the sincerity of the Chinese Communists but said "we intend to try to find out."  

Before the matter could be explored further, the State Department received from naval sources reports that China had made operational new airfields in Fujian province opposite Taiwan; it was feared that the situation had become "extremely grave [and] pregnant with most disastrous consequences" and that the advantage was "in [the] hands of our enemy." Equal concern was registered by Chiang, and once again the State Department, through Ambassador Karl Lott Rankin in Taipei, had to clarify that the United States would condone a military response only to an actual attack against Nationalist forces or territory rather than to a mere threat of attack. Despite Chiang's renewed assurances of restraint, the State Department remained skeptical. The divergence in interpretation of the circumstances that would justify the use of force against the China mainland reflected essential policy differences. United States policy was one of restraint and avoidance of conflict in the Taiwan Strait, whereas Nationalist policy saw the use of force as an inevitable strategy to "recover the mainland."  

American skepticism about Chiang's intentions in the spring of 1955 had been heightened by the inordinately large number of Nationalist troops on the offshore islands. That issue concerned the highest levels of allied governments. Eisenhower, writing to Winston S. Churchill in late March, said he "would personally be very happy . . . to see Chiang, voluntarily and in accordance with what he believed to be his own best interests, withdraw from Quemoy and the Matsus." Eisenhower cautioned, however, that he was "unwilling to put so much pressure on him that he might give up the entire struggle in utter discouragement." Shortly afterward the president expressed his belief that an inducement would be necessary "to bring Chiang to withdraw voluntarily." Eisenhower was willing to deploy up to one division and an air wing on Taiwan "if Quemoy and Matsu were made outposts rather than

6 Department of State Bulletin, May 9, 1955, p. 754; Robert Murphy to Dulles, April 28, 1955, Office of Chinese Affairs files. Robert Murphy suggested that if the Chinese Communists renounced armed attack upon Taiwan and the Penghu [Pescadores] Islands, the United States ought to renounce armed attack against the mainland and "would use its influence to assure that Taiwan and the Penghus are not used as a base for attack against . . . the mainland." Ibid. For a review of United States negotiations with the Chinese Communists during this period, see "Efforts by the United States to Reach an Agreement with the Chinese Communists on the Renunciation of Force in the Taiwan Area," typescript, Sept. 2, 1958, ibid.

strongholds and symbols of prestige." Unable to persuade Chiang, he expressed his dismay to Dulles that the "Gimo" (Generalissimo) did not see "the wisdom of trimming the garrison on the offshore islands down to the leanest fighting weight possible." Eisenhower was also exasperated with his East Asia advisers, Adm. Arthur W. Radford and Assistant Secretary of State Walter S. Robertson, believing that so long as they "could not grasp the concept, we simply were not going to get anywhere." 8

During the latter half of 1955, the Nationalist government gave renewed impetus to its program for mainland recovery. In late August the Mainland Recovery Planning and Research Committee reaffirmed that recovery of the China mainland was "established national policy" and prepared plans for the counterattack. Planning took into consideration "the requirement of a long war" and the problem of rehabilitation after an anticipated successful counterattack. Those developments and public pronouncements on Taiwan emphasizing the counterattack policy led United States diplomats in Taipei to conclude that the Nationalists were abandoning the policy of restraint. There was no evidence, however, that the heightened government campaign on Taiwan at this time was a prelude to military operations against the mainland. 9

Nevertheless, the Nationalists' renewed emphasis on returning to the mainland was disturbing to the United States because of pending discussions in Geneva with the Chinese Communist government on the use of force. In those negotiations the United States suggested a mutual renunciation of the use of force, and it again made clear that China would not be expected to renounce pursuit of its policies only by peaceful means with respect to Taiwan. In their response, more to the bellicose voices on Taiwan than to United States conciliation, the Chinese omitted specific references to the Taiwan area and to the recognition of the right of self-defense. By mid-January 1956 the Chinese blamed the United States for causing all the tension, and it was apparent that no agreement could be reached. 10

China's position in early 1956 stimulated a more aggressive stance by officials on Taiwan. Chiang contended that his government could overthrow the Communists in a counterattack from Taiwan, and Nationalist officials began to speak of taking the initiative with local small-scale wars. Meanwhile, of-


ficial press commentary offered reassurance that forces from Taiwan could succeed without precipitating a major war and without requiring the support of American troops. Such confidence rested on the belief that China would avoid war with the United States and that the Soviet Union would not interfere. The argument Taiwan officials presented at the time would often be repeated in the future. Some Taiwan officials, however, spoke more realistically in private, and one told a United States official that it would be "silly" to consider a counterattack against the China mainland without American assistance.\(^{11}\)

Chiang, however, was persistent. In April 1956 he wrote to Eisenhower for support of his counterattack policy in the belief that China was then plagued with extreme social and economic difficulties and that it was an "opportune time" to plan for action. Chiang's appeal met little favor in Washington. Dulles suggested to Eisenhower that he "should discourage any belief that we are willing to provide logistic support for his proposed operations." Following Dulles's advice, Eisenhower replied to Chiang and stated firmly that he did "not believe it would be in the best interests of our two countries to espouse the use of force to solve the difficult problem of Communist control of the China mainland. We do not consider," Eisenhower continued, "that to involve military force is an appropriate means of freeing Communist-dominated peoples and we are opposed to initiating action which might expose the world to a conflagration which could spread beyond control." Chiang, however, was not dissuaded from his course and later raised the issue with Radford, who was cautious and noncommittal and who stressed that it was not United States policy to initiate military action. Although Chiang's appeal to Radford was couched in the restricted tone of seeking moral support, compared with his earlier request for logistical support, Madame Chiang was more precise when she stated that "the purpose of aiding Taiwan is not just to defend Taiwan." When information about Chiang's proposal, essentially involving military operations against the China mainland reached the State Department, it received a cool reception.\(^{12}\)

It was clear in 1956 that United States and Chinese Nationalist views diverged sharply. The United States objective was limited to defense of Taiwan and the Penghu (Pescadores) Islands and to restraint from the use of force, whereas the Nationalist government sought a military potential that would enable it to recover the mainland. Nevertheless, near the end of the year, Eisenhower attempted to reassure Chiang that United States policy interests


and objectives were generally aligned. While he did not yet perceive the same degree of unrest in Communist areas of Asia as were then apparent in Eastern Europe, Eisenhower wrote that eventually "we can confidently expect to see in the Far Eastern area also a growing rebelliousness among the captive peoples which their Communist rulers will, in the end, be unable to contain." In further accord with Nationalist policy, Eisenhower agreed that "we must be prepared to take advantage of any such developments in an appropriate manner when the time arrives." Those remarks were the first by a high United States official to allude to the uprising in Hungary during the autumn of 1956 and to equate it with the situation in China.13

Although it cannot be directly established that Eisenhower's letter encouraged Chiang to reinvigorate his mainland-recovery policy, the year 1957 brought heightened preparations for a counterattack against the China mainland. During the first two months of the year, Chiang and other high-ranking officials on Taiwan issued a flurry of statements supporting the return policy, all emphasizing the combat readiness of the Nationalist armed forces to launch a counterattack. The public rhetoric was supported by increased military preparations, including heavier emphasis on amphibious and airborne assault techniques and on mountain and jungle fighting. Nevertheless, the United States army attaché in Taiwan, who gave a sober assessment of Nationalist preparations, did not anticipate an immediate assault on the China mainland. The United States air attaché, however, believed that the Nationalist air force was capable of attacking targets on the mainland with group-size task forces and could airdrop one regiment on the mainland, sustaining operations for approximately thirty days. Moreover, such actions could be taken unilaterally, unknown to American observers.14

After three months of heightened emphasis on the mainland-recovery policy came a brief lull, followed by renewed attention to expanding plans for guerrilla warfare designed to stimulate uprisings on the mainland. That Nationalist focus continued into 1958 and in March became the subject of detailed discussion among Chiang, Dulles, and Robertson. Chiang's eagerness was buttressed by his belief that the Chinese populace on the mainland was ripe for revolt, and he wished to exploit the situation. Chiang received sympathetic support from the new United States ambassador, Everett F. Drumright, but the National Security Council rejected all Nationalist proposals.15

By midsummer 1958 a series of events had led to renewed Nationalist determination to use force against the mainland, causing apprehension in Washington. The events included Chinese Communist pronouncements to "liberate Taiwan," the shooting down of two Nationalist F-84s on routine patrol, and

the stationing of Chinese Communist jets on airfields in the vicinity of the offshore islands. An ominous pall was cast over these events when Premier Nikita S. Khrushchev of the Soviet Union and his defense minister met with Chairman Mao Zedong in Beijing from July 31 to August 3. After the meetings the incidents increased, and on August 7 Nationalist and Communist jets clashed for the first time over Jinmen Island. The United States, pursuing its policy to impede the use of force in the Taiwan Strait, urged the Nationalists "to consult" and to obtain "advance agreement" prior to retaliation, which could be justified only as a genuine measure of self-defense. As late as August 21, the United States embassy staff did not believe that retaliatory action was warranted. The Nationalist minister of defense, Yu Dawei, and chief of the general staff, Gen. "Tiger" Wang Shuming, however, did not consider it necessary to obtain prior United States concurrence with respect to bombarding mainland airfields. Those positions soon became a moot issue, because on August 23, 1958, the Chinese Communists opened a massive artillery bombardment of the Jinmen Islands, shooting over twenty thousand rounds of high explosives.16

The second Taiwan Strait crisis provided a new dimension and challenge for United States policy of adamantly resisting the use of force. Anticipating a possible assault against the offshore islands, the State Department promptly instructed the United States embassy to increase military power in the area. Two days later, army units were ordered to prepare to assist the Nationalists, including attack against mainland coastal air bases in the event that the offshore islands were seriously endangered. Further assistance was given to the Nationalists by the navy, which was authorized "to escort and protect China resupply ships" sailing to the offshore islands. A follow-up message cautioned that "offensive action against the mainland . . . should not be taken except as a last resort." United States policy was clearly to avoid "taking offensive moves and to be branded as aggressors." The admonition, however, did not eliminate the right of "hot pursuit" in defense against hostile acts by Chinese Communist aircraft. Moreover, Drumright suggested that "localized retaliatory action" be designed to break the interdiction of Jinmen, hoping that a warning might have a deterrent effect.17

The jostling between assistance and cautious restraint during the first week of heavy shelling did not represent wavering of United States resolve but only uncertainty about Chinese Communist objectives. Rather than testing United


States resolve, deterring Nationalist threats, or manipulating foreign affairs for domestic political gain, however, China's objective was directed solely toward the Nationalist surrender of Jinmen.18 As time passed, it became increasingly evident that avoidance of conflict was still paramount in United States policy. The president himself reflected that concern. Two days after the bombardment began, Eisenhower agreed "to Chiang striking back at the Chicoms" as long as it did not "drag us into attacking Peiping and the whole of China." He was unwilling to grant full United States commitment because, he contemptuously concluded, "the Orientals can be very devious; they would then call the tune."19

At the same time, the president and his advisers began to shift their attitude on the significance of Jinmen and Macu, noting that the administration was "coming to consider Quemoy and Matsu worth defending, but not for their inherent military importance." They were no longer regarded as outposts, as in 1954; and the large number of Nationalist troops on the islands made their defense a matter of morale and credibility among other Asian nations. While Eisenhower's top military leaders recommended allowing United States naval and air forces to assist in defending ten selected offshore islands, the "majority opinion" in the administration regarded the islands "important but not essential to the defense of Formosa [Taiwan] from a military standpoint."20 Later writers, unaware of the administration's thinking at that time, wrote critically about United States policy, noting the offshore islands' unsuitability for launching a counterattack.21

The bombardment of the offshore islands reopened the question of the Nationalists' commitment to refrain from the use of force in the Taiwan Strait. Despite the limitations on force recorded in the Exchange of Notes (1954), the State Department did not regard that understanding as an attempt to prevent all use of force by the Nationalists. J. Graham Parsons, deputy assistant secretary for far eastern affairs, referred to "a series of informal understandings with the GRC [Government of the Republic of China] military authorities that only actions below a certain point in scale, intensity and character will be

undertaken by the GRC without our specific consent in advance." Nevertheless, to enhance its image in the world, the United States had to take a public stand firmly renouncing the use of force in settling the Taiwan question. In a report to the American people on September 11, 1958, Eisenhower declared that the United States "shall never resort to force in settlement of differences except when compelled to do so to defend against aggression."22

While the United States held firmly to its policy of avoidance of the use of force in the Taiwan Strait during the early tumultuous days of Communist bombardment, Chiang became distraught over what he considered United States inaction and made direct, emotional appeals to United States officials for support of his policy. Those to whom he personally appealed included Secretary of the Army Wilbur M. Brucker and Drumright. The ambassador thought that Chiang's "'extreme fear'" of what might happen was unjustified and that once the interdiction of the offshore islands was successfully broken, his anxiety would cease. Drumright was also convinced that Chiang would honor his commitments and refrain from taking retaliatory measures against the mainland without United States concurrence.23

The administration's preoccupation with the need to calm Chiang's irritation and to reassure him of the importance of letting the Communists appear as the aggressor grew as the issue lingered. Moreover, prospects of obtaining China's cooperation were discouraging because the ambassadorial talks in Geneva had been suspended since the beginning of 1958. To break the impasse Dulles met with Eisenhower on September 4, 1958, at the naval base in Newport, Rhode Island, where the president was vacationing during the Labor Day weekend, and reviewed the problem of obtaining a commitment from the Chinese Communists on the renunciation of force. After their conference Dulles made a public statement enunciating an effort by the United States to secure ""a declaration of mutual and reciprocal renunciation of force, except in self-defense,"" that would not prejudice a pursuit of national policies by peaceful means. The United States position was first to arrange a ceasefire and then to conclude an agreement renouncing the use of force. In an effort to place pressure on China, Eisenhower wrote to Khrushchev on September 12, 1958, lamenting that the Chinese ""insistently refused"" to reach an agreement on the renunciation of force and expressing his hope that ""an understanding can be achieved through the renewed talks." On Taiwan, Dulles's Newport statement brought further consternation, especially for coming after Chiang's appeal for retaliation.24

22 Department of State Bulletin, Sept. 29, 1958, p. 481; "President Eisenhower's Report to the American People," Sept. 11, 1958, Department of State Publication 6708; "Summary of Meeting at the White House on the Taiwan Straits Situation," Aug. 29, 1958, Office of Chinese Affairs files; Howard L. Parsons to Christian A. Herter, Aug. 29, 1958, ibid. The "'informal understandings'" with Nationalist military authorities do not appear to have been recorded in the diplomatic archival material.

23 Tel. 273 from Taipei, Sept. 1, 1958, Office of Chinese Affairs files; Tel. 290 from Taipei, Sept. 3, 1958, ibid.; Tel. 352 from Taipei, Sept. 10, 1958, ibid. The Department of State quickly grew concerned that Chiang might invoke the Nationalists' inherent right of self-defense regardless of the United States position. Tel. 169 to Taipei, Aug. 31, 1958, ibid.

24 "Statement by Secretary Dulles," Department of State Publication 6708, Far Eastern Series
Throughout September 1958, after the Newport statement, the primary issues between the governments in Washington and Taibei were retaliation, potential negotiations between the United States and the Chinese Communists, and military efforts to break the interdiction of the offshore islands. Since an attack on the China mainland was regarded as potentially the most provocative retaliatory action, considerable attention was devoted to the scope of authority to be granted to military commanders with respect to retaliation. It was generally agreed that the United States would grant authority "to attack mainland bases in the general area." Naval instructions were promptly dispatched stating that Chinese invasion tactics and aerial bombing of the offshore islands would justify the Nationalists in exercising their "inherent right of self-defense," which would include pursuing and attacking Communist aircraft at their bases. Prior consultation, however, would be expected except in an emergency. Caution in United States decisions was ever present as United States naval units began escorting Nationalist supply ships with the warning to "avoid any action which is provocative or might be made to appear provocative before world opinion."25

As the shelling of the offshore islands continued into mid-September, the divergent views on retaliation further strained relations between the United States and the Nationalist Chinese. Distrust and suspicion grew as United States military leaders on Taiwan reported "growing signs" that the Nationalists might be planning to take independent action and were withholding plans from the United States. Those fears were momentarily tempered by a perceptive evaluation of a report from the Operations Coordinating Board that considered the military potential and goals of the Nationalist leadership. The dispatch from the embassy in Taibei stated that although the Nationalists were convinced "that the eventual recovery of the mainland will involve the infliction of a military defeat upon the Chinese Communist armed forces . . . sometimes termed the 'counterattack policy' [it did] not imply the existence of any actual intention on the part of the GRC to launch an invasion of the mainland which it knows it could not accomplish without full U.S. participation."26

76 Department of State Bulletin, Sept. 22, 1958, pp. 445-46; Tel. 204 to Taibei, Sept. 8, 1958, Office of Chinese Affairs files; Eisenhower to Nikita S. Khrushchev, Sept. 12, 1958, ibid. Chinese Nationalist officials were particularly concerned that the United States was preparing to reopen negotiations with the Chinese Communists. Tel. 312 from Taibei, Sept. 5, 1958, ibid. During his address on Sept. 11, 1958, Eisenhower reinforced Dulles's views concerning renunciation of force when he discussed the United States effort to negotiate in Geneva with the Chinese. Department of State Bulletin, Sept. 29, 1958, pp. 481-84.


The reassurance offered by the dispatch was short-lived. Nationalist statements and activities on Taiwan still caused some apprehension among United States authorities that there might be a premature resort to retaliation. Reports of resentment and restiveness among Nationalist leaders brought a warning that they might be "planning something big." Drumright was more tranquil, reporting that although the patience of the Nationalist leadership was "running out," it was "not yet exhausted." If, however, no appreciable change occurred within several weeks, Drumright believed, the Nationalists would "be obliged to take retaliatory action" and would proceed without United States concurrence "whenever [the] situation is regarded as justifiably desperate." Emphasizing the time limit on the patience of the Nationalist government, he noted that it had "already given us notice that it will repudiate commitments made by us which adversely affect its vital rights and interests."27

Reports about Nationalist plans for retaliatory action against the China mainland were consistently discouraged by United States officials in Taipei. The consequences of a wider war, United States involvement, and the possible adverse effect on public opinion now caused great apprehension in the State Department. Dulles was blunt in his analysis and questioned whether the Nationalists would be satisfied with only logistical support in a retaliatory move, since the Nationalists "may view this as a golden opportunity for recovering the mainland as the outcome of a war between the U.S. and Red China." Eisenhower had become concerned that the State Department was "doing nothing to convert Chiang to flexibility," but Dulles assured him that the department was "working on it every minute," explaining that the Nationalists were "desperate because we won't let them attack the mainland." Meanwhile, reports claiming that the Nationalists were preparing for a military assault against the mainland continued to arrive from Taipei. By the second half of September, Nationalist reassurances were no longer regarded as trustworthy. Adm. Harry Felt, commander in chief of the Pacific Fleet, reported that Yu had given the impression that the Nationalists would continue to refrain from taking offensive action against the mainland, but Felt regarded that reassurance only as an effort to placate him while the Nationalists made actual preparations to attack the mainland. He estimated that the attack would occur in not more than two weeks.28

While the Nationalists pressured for retaliatory action against the mainland, the Communists appeared willing to attempt a negotiated settlement. As a

27 Marshall Green, "Taiwan Straits Crisis: Where do we go from here?" Sept. 18, 1958, Office of Chinese Affairs files; Tel. 443 from Taipei, Sept. 19, 1958, ibid.
later writer suggested, "the Chinese use of force [was] primarily for defensive deterrence" against a perceived threat in pursuit of political ends. Following a nonmilitary course, Zhou responded to the Newport statement that China was prepared to resume ambassadorial talks with the United States "in order to contribute further to the safeguarding of peace." The discussions resumed in Warsaw, but the divergent views between the parties revealed that a solution was not yet in the offering.29 Had a compromise been reached, it probably would not have been brought to fruition, because the Nationalists stood adamantly for retaliation.

The thrust of the United States position was clearly for a ceasefire and the attainment of a peaceful solution at the Warsaw talks. In addition, the United States now considered demilitarization in the Taiwan Strait. Responding to British inquiries, Dulles indicated that demilitarization of the offshore islands was "one of several possibilities" that he was "turning over in my mind." He did not believe, however, that the contingency had particular promise "unless there were to be corresponding demilitarization of the Communist coastal areas threatening the islands and unless the Communists were to give de facto recognition of GRC jurisdiction over the islands." Dulles was realistic and pragmatic and did not believe that the Chinese Communists would accept demilitarization on those terms. Moreover, he thought that the Nationalists would bitterly oppose the "mere suggestion of such a solution." Eisenhower reinforced Dulles by sending his own message to the British prime minister, Harold Macmillan, explaining that Chiang's intransigence was due to his fear that "abandoning a single foot of his defense perimeter . . . would end his capacity to retain Formosa in friendly hands." Despite the pitfalls, Dulles suggested that the State Department consider the question of demilitarization and expressed the hope that some arrangement could be made to place the Nationalist forces on defensible terrain. Included among the persuasive arguments opposing demilitarization was that such a concession to the Chinese Communists "would represent a partial surrender to their threats and use of force" and consequently affect the future peace of Asia.30

Demilitarization became a moot question near the end of September when heavy bombardment of Da Dan and Er Dan, two small islands near Jinmen, threatened the Nationalists with their loss. Chiang regarded those islands as essential to the defense of Jinmen. United States naval commanders, sensing a critical issue, feared that the Nationalists might use the occasion to take retaliatory action against Chinese gun positions on the mainland. They had good reason for concern. Chiang was now comparing the interdiction of the offshore islands to the Berlin crisis of 1948, and he believed that United States

---


aircraft ought to drop supplies to the islands. Local United States naval representatives warned the Nationalists of the futility of attacking the mainland to defend the islands and reiterated United States opposition to rendering military support. Nevertheless, the Nationalists continued to plan to bomb the mainland if the islands were lost but hesitated in making any unilateral provocative moves in light of American opposition. Meanwhile, at the White House, cutting off aid to the Nationalists as pressure to conform to United States policy was rejected, because “it might provoke [an] attack against [the] mainland” that would fail, lead to anti-American sentiment, and force the United States out of Taiwan.\(^3\)

By the end of September, the United States position had become clear to the Nationalists: oppose retaliation, favor negotiations with the Beijing government, consider demilitarization of the offshore islands, and evacuate the Dan Islands. Recognizing United States restraint and determined opposition to the use of force, Chiang held a press conference on September 29 in which he presented a temperate view of the Nationalists' counterattack policy. He explained that his forces were defending Jinmen and Macu because they constituted “a shield” for Taiwan, not because the Nationalists intended to use them as “springboards” for a counterattack. Bombing of the mainland would occur only if Jinmen's supply lines were cut or if the Communists launched a full-scale attack. Further clarifying the Nationalists' moderate position, Chiang declared that his government never had any intention to precipitate a world war by fighting over Jinmen and Macu; and with regard to United States involvement, he said that “we shall not ask our ally to participate with ground forces. This is a guarantee I can responsibly and openly offer to the world at large.”\(^3\)

It now appeared that the gap between the United States and the Chinese Nationalist positions was closing, but on the following day Dulles held his own press conference in Washington and made several speculative comments on the Nationalists' prospects for returning to the mainland that added ambiguity to the United States position and that unwittingly encouraged Chiang in his counterattack policy. Believing that events on the mainland would largely determine the Nationalists' prospects, Dulles said that “if you had on the mainland a sort of unrest and revolt, like, for example, what broke out in Hungary, then the presence of a free China with considerable power a few miles away could be a very important element in the situation.” His remark would later lead to conflicting interpretations between United States and Nationalist leaders over “Hungarian-type uprisings” on the mainland.\(^3\)


\(^3\) Department of State Bulletin, Oct. 20, 1958, p. 599. Dulles also alluded to the Mutual
The crisis in the Taiwan Strait had subsided between Dulles's press conference on September 30 and his arrival on Taiwan on October 21, an attention then largely centered on reduction of forces on the offshore islands. Meanwhile, on October 25, the Chinese Defense Ministry announced that its troops were ordered not to fire at Jinmen on even-numbered days. The reduction of forces on the offshore islands, however, was a military question that had political overtones. The States Department was particularly disturbed about the effect that the crisis was having on public and congressional opinion in the United States, about the declining support for the Nationalist government in the United Nations, and about the impact on the attitudes of non-Communist nations that might eventually demand the Nationalists' withdrawal from the offshore islands. Since the political implications did not appear to impress the Nationalists, on October 7 Eisenhower suggested to Dulles that the tactical approach to Chiang be changed and that stress be placed on the military aspect of the problem. Eisenhower believed that Chiang might be persuaded to accept the proposal to reduce his forces because he would be in a better military position to carry out the Nationalists' return policy in the event of internal disorder on the mainland. To help the Nationalists accomplish their objective, the United States would assist in providing an adequate amphibious lift capability while reducing the garrisons from the offshore islands.\(^{34}\)

That approach was seriously explored in two meetings, one held the next day among State Department officials and another on October 10 at the Pentagon among representatives from the State and the Defense departments and the Central Intelligence Agency. The State Department group did not reach a solution because of opposition to the concept of reducing forces. The Pentagon representatives, however, considered it good military strategy to disperse troops, rather than to concentrate them on small islands, and favored reduction. In a discussion of the political aspects, Gen. Nathan F. Twining, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, suggested that Chiang renounce the use of force as a means of returning to the mainland while retaining the right to return if a revolution occurred there. The idea was similar to Dulles's concept of justifying a Nationalist return in the event of a "Hungarian-type uprising" on the mainland. Consequently, for both political and military reasons, it was decided that further approaches be made to induce the Nationalists to withdraw part of their forces from the offshore islands and to renounce the use of force in effecting a return to the mainland. In compensation for the modified

Defense Treaty and the Exchange of Notes, commenting that neither the United States nor the Nationalists could employ force "from the treaty areas [Taiwan and Penghu] except in agreement between us." The only exception, he thought, would be "in the case of emergency requirements of self-defense." \(\text{Ibid.}\)

policy, the United States planned to strengthen the Nationalist military forces and to develop an amphibious lift capability.\textsuperscript{35}

The reduction of forces was a United States policy change seeking to de-emphasize the strategic importance of the offshore islands. Eisenhower realized that it was important to Chiang's image to use persuasion rather than pressure to effect a partial withdrawal. By mid-October Eisenhower was willing to guarantee the evacuation, to modernize the Nationalist army, partially to modernize the air force, and to grant more economic aid, in addition to giving shipping and amphibious lift capabilities. When Dulles met with the Nationalists in Taipei, October 21–23, he was able to get Chiang to renounce the use of force publicly in a joint communiqué. On the following day Dulles again emphasized the Nationalists' renunciation of force in a public statement, declaring that although "its mission is to bring about the restoration of freedom to the people on the mainland," the Nationalist government would do so "not by the use of force." Dulles's feat was not easily accomplished. He reported to Eisenhower that he had "some considerable difficulty in getting the 'non-force' declaration." He saw no possibility of Chiang's abandoning the offshore islands, but he anticipated a substantial reduction in forces during a break in the fighting.\textsuperscript{36}

The United States interpreted the Nationalists' acceptance of the principles expounded in the joint communiqué as indicative of an important evolution in that government's position. The Nationalists were seen as having drawn away from the expectation of an early return to the mainland through violent means and as relying on reunification after a general collapse of the Communist government. The State Department now held a fundamental trust in the Nationalists' adherence to restraint in their return policy, reinforced by their restraint exhibited during the height of the crisis when they might have been justified in resorting to retaliatory measures.\textsuperscript{37}

The Nationalist interpretation of the joint communiqué, however, was contrary to that of the United States. Leading Nationalist government officials, such as the president, the premier, and the foreign minister, and the press all emphasized that the right to use force was not abandoned but merely renounced\textit{ as a principal means} of recovering the mainland. To emphasize the military option, Premier Chen Cheng declared publicly on November 12 that

\textsuperscript{35} Memorandum of conversation, Dulles, Herter, Robertson, and Parsons, Oct. 8, 1958, Office of Chinese Affairs files; memorandum of conversation, Dulles, Herter, Murphy, Robertson, Quarles, Nathan F. Twining, Maxwell D. Taylor, and Allen W. Dulles, Oct. 10, 1958, ibid.


military force ought to be not only maintained but also "reinvigorated and strengthened" to carry out the eventual task of recovering the mainland. Moreover, he stated that there had been no change in Nationalist military policy and deemphasized abandoning the right to use force under any circumstances. Foreign Minister Huang Shaogu was even more severely critical of the joint communiqué. On December 2 he met Dulles in Mexico City and took issue with him over the expression "not the use of force" in the joint communiqué.  

The official position of the Nationalists following the joint communiqué was most candidly expressed by Chiang on December 23 in his address at the annual plenary session of the Mainland Recovery Planning Board. He reaffirmed his belief that the people in China were awaiting the Nationalists' counterattack, and he declared that an uprising would be inadequate and that a forceful attack was indispensable to annihilate the Communists. Thus he envisioned an uprising on the mainland followed by a military attack. That response caused apprehension among United States representatives in Taibei, who now had established a system for reporting any signs of impending military action against the mainland.

Adverse reaction to the joint communiqué continued during the early months of 1959, and the Nationalists reiterated their position that the use of force was not entirely excluded as a contingency of the counterattack policy. Their rationale was the need to raise morale among the rank-and-file mainlanders on Taiwan. Thus they stressed the need to take advantage of a Hungarian-type uprising on the mainland. The Nationalist leadership, however, equated such an uprising with any "large-scale revolt." In February 1959 United States embassy officials in Taibei explained to the Nationalist leadership that a Hungarian-type uprising, as applied to China, would mean that an anti-Communist group would be able to control the government machinery and the armed forces of a major area, readily accessible from non-Communist areas, and would be seeking assistance from Taiwan.

Although the United States agreed with the Nationalists that the joint communiqué was not a "renunciation of force" under every circumstance, recognizing the Nationalists' inherent right of self-defense, it did not condone the Nationalists' initiation of the use of force. The United States contended that an attempt to provoke a mainland uprising by use of force or to resume a military initiative in the Taiwan Strait would be wholly inconsistent with the meaning of the joint communiqué and would in world opinion be similar to the policies of the Communists. In a review of United States policy toward the Nationalist government, two considerations were paramount: (1) whether Nationalist intervention might involve the United States in a war with the Soviet Union; and (2) whether Nationalist intervention would favorably influence the

---

38 Tel. 666 from Taibei, Oct. 24, 1958, Office of Chinese Affairs files; Tel. 682 from Taibei, Oct. 28, 1958, ibid. [italics mine]; Desp. 238 from Taibei, Nov. 20, 1958, ibid.
40 Desp. 409 from Taibei, Feb. 12, 1959, ibid.
course of events on the mainland. The State Department was concerned that a second defeat on the mainland would lead to the collapse of the Nationalist government.  

Despite the easing of tension in the Taiwan Strait throughout the spring of 1959, the Nationalist leadership, including Chiang, made a forthright appeal for United States support in resorting to guerrilla warfare against China. Chiang saw the decline of Mao's power, a result of the failure of his Great Leap Forward campaign and the Tibetan uprising, as an excellent opportunity to take appropriate measures to effect a return to the mainland. Moreover, the United States reluctance to concur in that opinion received veiled criticism from Chen in his report to the Gwomindang Central Committee on May 16. Chen charged that an "international undercurrent" was attempting to "prevent Tibetan anti-Communist forces from linking up with us."  

After Chiang's failure to elicit vital support from the United States for guerrilla warfare on the China mainland, his efforts temporarily subsided. Consequently, in late 1959 and early 1960, returning to the mainland through the use of force was not emphasized, and Chen now gave increasing attention to economic development in Taiwan. In February 1960 he announced a four-point principle for government planning in which the economic program took precedence over the "program in the field of national defense and military affairs." Nevertheless, the United States embassy staff in Taipei reasoned that Chen, being an outspoken advocate of the counterattack thesis as discussed by Chiang in his 1959 New Year's address, still placed considerable reliance on military means. Chen saw economic development and the counterattack policies as interrelated in that the former strengthened the latter.  

In June 1960 Eisenhower made a goodwill tour of East Asia, including Taiwan, where he held discussions with Chiang on June 17–19. Although the discussions remain classified, there is no indication that they altered either the United States or the Nationalist position. Chiang openly reiterated Nationalist intentions to take advantage of large-scale uprisings on the mainland by joining the movement with its armed forces. Chiang was serious. Information reached the State Department in early September 1960 of intensified efforts to increase forces on the offshore islands. In the public arena, in his Double Tenth message (October 10, 1960), Chiang claimed that the mission to recover the mainland would be accomplished "within three or five years at most."  

A change in leadership from Eisenhower to John F. Kennedy brought no alteration in United States policy. On Taiwan the campaign for expanding efforts regarding the counterattack policy continued during the first six months

---

42 Tel. 1156 from Taipei, May 3, 1959, ibid. Chen Cheng's comments were publicly reported in the [Taipei] China Post. Tel. 1211 from Taipei, May 21, 1959, ibid.  
43 Desp. 528 from Taipei, April 1, 1960, ibid.; Desp. 429 from Taipei, Feb. 12, 1960, ibid.; Desp. 528 from Taipei, April 1, 1960, ibid. For Chiang's speech, see tel. 957 from Taipei, Feb. 21, 1959, ibid.  
of 1961. In Chiang's customary New Year's message and Youth Day message [March 29], he reaffirmed the Nationalist commitment to crush the Chinese Communists and called for unity in the counteroffensive. The tenor of his Youth Day speech appeared to favor "going it alone" if necessary rather than relinquishing the policy of mainland recovery. Developments outside Taiwan brought a degree of urgency to the policy. Word of famine spreading on the mainland, talk in other countries about "two Chinas," and a growing pessimistic outlook for the Nationalist government on the United Nations representation issue all coalesced. In several speeches Chen strongly emphasized the return-to-the-mainland theme. Throughout this period the United States sought to deter the Nationalists from undertaking paramilitary operations; but in light of the political and economic dislocations developing in China, the State Department grew increasingly concerned that the Nationalists might exploit the situation and bring the United States into a conflict.45

In a mounting campaign the Nationalists continued their appeal for more aggressive action against the mainland at the highest levels. On May 14, 1961, Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson held discussions with Chiang in Taipei. Their conversation remains classified, but the United States response suggests grave concern that the Nationalists might take aggressive and provocative action against the mainland. Consequently, the State Department made contingency plans for a possible renewed Chinese Communist attack. If an attack were made on the offshore islands, the United States planned to pursue a military, diplomatic, and political course similar to that taken in the 1958 crisis. Meanwhile, an attempt would be made to have the Nationalists reiterate their adherence to the Dulles-Chiang joint communiqué of October 23, 1958, which emphasized political means rather than the use of force to effect a return to the mainland.46

In late July 1961 the Nationalists concluded that appropriate action must soon be taken to return to the mainland. International developments, such as possible United States recognition of the People's Republic of Mongolia and the potential admission of China to the United Nations, caused further anxiety within Nationalist ranks. In an effort to improve the Nationalists' military posture, Chiang ordered all armed-forces units to prepare for combat readiness and to await further orders. To emphasize the urgency of the situation, Chiang wrote to Kennedy on July 28, 1961, and in Washington Chen raised with Kennedy the question of increased efforts against the China mainland. Kennedy and Secretary of State Dean Rusk, however, gave no encouragement, believing that the real situation on the mainland would have to be determined before any counterattack measures could be taken.47


47 Chiang to John F. Kennedy, July 28, 1961, ibid.
China specialists at the State Department were convinced by late August that most Nationalist leaders believed that a return to the mainland would come as a result of war between the United States and China and that a "showdown" was inevitable. Moreover, some American observers suspected that the Nationalists were quietly pursuing efforts to involve the United States more deeply by resisting acceptance of certain weapons, thus forcing United States involvement should a clash occur. The Nationalist defense minister's reluctance to accept all-weather fighter aircraft was cited as an example. State Department officials, however, regarded the return-to-the-mainland activists among the Nationalists as a small minority and believed that it was unlikely such a course would be undertaken. Nevertheless, as early as May 1961, staff members in the State Department's Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs recognized that the Nationalists were making secret preparations directed at the mainland; and they believed that if an appropriate situation developed, the Nationalists in desperation might launch operations against the mainland without the assent of the United States.48

In the autumn and early winter of 1961, momentum for the Nationalists' return policy increased. In his annual Double Tenth message, on October 10, Chiang alluded to the decadent situation on the mainland developing in the aftermath of the abortive Great Leap Forward campaign and claimed that there was no alternative to increasing preparations for the counteroffensive. "Peace in Asia," he believed, "would come only with the overthrow of the Peiping regime." He believed also that the Nationalists would soon "effect a junction between our forces in the Taiwan area and the anti-Communist uprisings on the mainland."49

At the beginning of 1962, Chiang transformed the military planning and the public suggestion that a counterattack would eventually occur into a vigorous public campaign of implementation. In his New Year's message on January 2, Chiang addressed the people on the mainland, calling for them to rebel and declaring that the Nationalist "armed forces have made adequate preparations for the counter-offensive and therefore are capable of moving into action at any time." Once the mainland population took action, Chiang promised, he would provide material assistance, indicating that "in our counter-offensive political measures must precede military action." In a twist of logic, he declared that the "counter-offensive for national recovery is aimed at removing the danger of a thermonuclear war by means of a conventional war." He continued, "We seek to prevent the outbreak of a world war by a domestic localized war." With his patience frayed, he announced that "we can no longer vacillate or hesitate to perform our duty to deliver our people . . . from catastrophe." More ebullient statements followed, including one on January 8 by the foreign minister, who stated that the only way to remove the source of chaos in Asia was to overthrow the "Peiping regime."50

50 FBIS, Daily Report, Far East, Jan. 2, 1962, enclosure, Desp. 274 from Taipei, Jan. 9, 1962,
Reports of military preparations and public statements led to American concern that the Nationalists assumed the United States would concur in offensive military operations on the mainland. To avoid any misunderstanding, Ambassador Drumright in Taipei was instructed to tell the Nationalist leaders of the disadvantages of their public statements and to remind them again that agreement by the United States was required for military operations on the mainland. The situation was not viewed with the same alarm in Taipei, however, as the ambassador gave his reassurance that the Nationalists would employ restraint. Moreover, Drumright did not think that Chiang's New Year's message was inconsistent with the joint communiqué of 1958 and expressed his reluctance to admonish Chiang, believing that to do so would be impolitic and might be taken as "a slur on his honor and a reflection on his integrity and good faith." Finally, Drumright believed that Chiang would "certainly consult us in advance and ask our moral and material support" and added that "we are convinced he would not move contrary to our wishes without advance notification."

The reassurances from Taipei had little effect in Washington. As the days wore on in January 1962, apprehension continued. The State Department regarded it clearly in the interest of the United States to prevent the Nationalists' use of force "against the mainland that might embroil us in hostilities." Political and economic disintegration in China made Chiang more restive and convinced of the urgency to exploit the situation there. United States concurrence in any Nationalist action against the mainland was considered essential. Embassy personnel in Taipei, however, continued to appear less disturbed about Nationalist intentions than did those at the State Department. Diplomats on Taiwan thought that it was Chiang's intention "to bring his forces to a high peak of readiness in order to take advantage of any sudden outbreak on the mainland, at which time he would seek our support." Augmenting the preparations and public statements was the clamor in the Taiwan press strongly supporting the official theme that 1962 was the year for a successful counterattack against the China mainland. A sense of urgency had been added to generate public support and to test American resolve. Statements by Chiang on January 29 and by Chen on February 23 reiterated the claim that the Nationalists' return to the mainland was rapidly approaching. In forthright terms Chen declared that "we must not wait idly for the Peiping regime to collapse. We must improve ourselves and destroy them with our own strength . . . to fight our way back to the mainland as soon as possible." In an effort to dissuade the Nationalists from their course, Averell Harriman, ibid.; Congressional Quarterly, China: U.S. Policy since 1945 (Washington, 1980), 129; Current Foreign Relations, 14 (April 4, 1962), 13.

51 Deptl. 410 to Taipei, Jan. 8, 1962, Office of Chinese Affairs files; Tel. 525 from Taipei, Jan. 11, 1962, ibid.
assistant secretary of state for far eastern affairs, stopped in Taipei on March 14 and discussed the return policy with Chiang. Harriman reminded Chiang twice in the course of their conversation that there was a need not only for consultation but also for agreement in any type of military action against the China mainland. Chiang showed no interest in what he considered mere legalities. Exacerbating the issue were newspaper editorials in Taipei proposing that the United States aid the Nationalists in the counterattack. Moreover, press demands added a new dimension—a proposal to revise the Mutual Defense Treaty of 1954 in order to eliminate any restraint on Taiwan's freedom of action. No press comment, however, pretended that the Nationalists would be able to carry out the counterattack without substantial support from the United States.54

By March 1962 it had become clear that the Nationalists on Taiwan would continue their military preparations for a counterattack and would not yield to pressure from the United States. An estimate of Nationalist military potential reported that troop concentration, training, and supplies were sufficient to launch a fairly large operation. In addition, the Nationalists had made significant changes in their organization and equipment of units contrary to United States military advice. The report concluded that the Nationalists were "seriously preparing for military operations against the mainland" and that Chiang was "concurrently having plans and preparations made for unilateral operations." At that time it was estimated that small-scale operations against the mainland could be gotten underway within a week or so from the time the order was given, but that medium- or large-scale operations would require several months of intensive preparations. Nevertheless, the enormity of the program required to launch a successful counterattack, coupled with the unwillingness of the United States to contribute the necessary equipment, made the project infeasible.55

The Nationalists, however, persisted in their preparations until late June, when tensions mounted and war threatened. The buildup on the offshore islands led to reports that China was massing troops and military equipment, including aircraft, on the mainland. The government in Beijing confirmed that activity on June 23 and alerted the country for an invasion from Taiwan. To reassure the Chinese, their ambassador in Warsaw was informed on June 26 that the United States would not support "any Nationalist attempt to invade the mainland." The Nationalists by this time realized that American resistance to the use of force was irreversible, and at the end of June the public clamor for an imminent return to the mainland subsided, and no effort was made to implement the plan.56

The pattern of events that emerged from the second Taiwan Strait crisis

reveals the consistent United States policy of avoiding the use of force to resolve the Taiwan question. Military commitments between the United States and the government it then recognized as the "Republic of China" were embodied in the Mutual Defense Treaty and the Exchange of Notes signed in December 1954, which strictly limited the United States commitment to the defense of Taiwan and the Penghu Islands. In the latter document, the use of force is specifically limited to circumstances requiring "joint agreement" between the signatory powers. The spirit of the documents was reiterated in the joint communique of October 23, 1958, issued by Chiang and Dulles, in which the Nationalist government denounced the use of force as a principal means for accomplishing a return to the mainland. Emphasis was then placed on ideological rather than on military means.

A major problem with respect to the 1954 agreements concerned the interpretation of whether the Nationalists were required to consult or come to agreement on operational activities against the China mainland. Although the Nationalists never denied their commitment to observe both requirements, they acted and often spoke in such a way to suggest that they did not feel obligated to come to "agreement" after consultation. In his discussions on March 14, 1962, when Harriman attempted to clarify the distinction between the two terms, Chiang only registered his lack of interest in the matter.

The primary cause of tension and distrust between the United States and the Nationalists rested in their diverse objectives. The United States had been concerned primarily with the defense of Taiwan and Penghu, while the Nationalists had been concerned primarily with effecting a return to the mainland and defeating the Communist government. Although the Nationalists did not expect the United States to participate in their counterattack against the mainland, they believed that the United States would acquiesce in and possibly encourage the Nationalists' return to the mainland if a "Hungarian-type uprising" should occur there and should the collapse of the Communist government appear imminent. The size and scope of such an uprising had never been clearly defined, and the Nationalists regarded comparatively small uprisings as similar to the one that occurred in Hungary in 1956.

Throughout this episode of crisis in the Taiwan Strait, the policy of the United States remained sympathetic to the cause and ultimate objectives of the Nationalist policy of returning to the mainland. Thus the United States continued to give military aid to the Nationalists, including limited assistance for the training of special forces and paramilitary personnel. The Nationalists, however, received considerably less assistance than they requested as United States policy was designed only to give the Nationalists sufficient military aid for self-defense but not the quantity or quality necessary for a successful counterattack. Since relations between the United States and the People's Republic of China were generally hostile ones, in which only limited contact occurred through emissaries in Warsaw, the United States could not exercise similar control or influence in Beijing.
The Taiwan Strait controversy of the late 1950s also reveals an American administration that was astute about the dangers inherent in the lingering civil war along the south China coast. Committed to the nonuse of force, Eisenhower deftly handled Chiang and the Nationalist government by combining a defensive strategy of military deterrence with political adroitness in his exertion of influence for restraint. Creating that balance was a highly successful achievement of the Eisenhower administration. The policy to avoid the use of force had been defined, tested, and firmly established in the events surrounding the second Taiwan Strait crisis of 1958. Despite the president's leadership, credit for this policy development can be rightfully shared by his secretary of state. Both Eisenhower and Dulles had exhibited moderation, vision, and unwavering commitment to settling the Taiwan question without the use of force.