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"Otherwise, it's War": US-Taiwan Defense Ties and the Opening of the People's Republic of China (1969-1974)

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“Otherwise, it’s War”: US-Taiwan Defense Ties and the Opening of the People’s Republic of China (1969-1974)

A Thesis By

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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May 2021

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Republic of China (1969-1974)

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This study was written by one person, but it is not the work of one person alone. I owe a great deal to all who have supported me throughout the writing of this thesis.

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ABSTRACT

“Otherwise, it’s War”: US-Taiwan Defense Ties and the Opening of the People’s Republic of

China 1969-1974

by Robert Kent

In 1969, President Richard Nixon inherited a much different Cold War than that which existed in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Writ large, the project of ‘containing’ communism appeared to be falling apart. The Soviet Union was ascendant in Eurasia, the Vietnam War was continuing to grind down American power projection, and the People’s Republic of China (PRC) was emerging as a potential partner on the world stage. Despite the uncertainty of the situation, both President Nixon and National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger saw these circumstances as an opportunity to reshape the global balance of power. Key to this plan was a diplomatic ‘opening’ to the PRC, which would engender a tripolar balance of power to counter the Soviet Union’s grip on Asia. Yet, the major obstacle in the way of this plan was the ongoing American recognition of the Nationalist Republic of China (ROC) on Taiwan and the existing defense treaty Washington and Taipei.

For decades, Peking was adamant that Washington needed to forswear all support for Taipei as a precondition for full diplomatic ties between the United States and PRC. Unfortunately, such a formula appeared to give Communist China a path to reunify Taiwan with the Mainland through military action. To maintain peace in East Asia and to protect American

credibility, the United States could not afford to allow the PRC to use force to settle its dispute with Taiwan. This thesis argues that the Nixon Administration sought to use diplomacy with the PRC and its security ties with the ROC to ensure a peaceful resolution of the Taiwan Strait crisis during the US opening of Communist China. In doing so, the US side aimed to find a balance between a diplomatic partnership with Peking and a defense relationship with Taipei. This challenges conventional views about the Nixon Administration's willingness to unilaterally abandon its commitments to Taiwan in order to open the People's Republic of China. This thesis further contends that the roots of the modern American approach of 'strategic ambiguity' towards the ROC has its roots in the policies which the Administration pursued from 1969-1974.

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ABBREVIATIONS

<u>CCP</u>	Chinese Communist Party
<u>CIA</u>	Central Intelligence Agency
<u>DoD</u>	(US) Department of Defense
<u>Eximbank</u>	Export-Import Bank
<u>FMS</u>	Foreign Military Sales
<u>KMT</u>	Kuomintang
<u>MAAG</u>	Military Assistance Advisory Group
<u>MAP</u>	Military Assistance Plan
<u>MDA</u>	Mutual Defense Agreement
<u>NATO</u>	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
<u>NSC</u>	National Security Council
<u>NSDM</u>	National Security Decision Memorandum
<u>NSSM</u>	National Security Study Memorandum
<u>PRC</u>	People's Republic of China
<u>ROC</u>	Republic of China
<u>SEATO</u>	Southeast Asia Treaty Organization
<u>UN</u>	United Nations
<u>US</u>	United States
<u>USSR</u>	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

Introduction

War in Asia was on President Richard Nixon's mind the morning of February 1, 1973. In a White House meeting that day with National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger, he addressed the interlinked issues of the winding down Vietnam War, the improved relations with the PRC, and the ongoing troop withdrawals from the Republic of China (ROC) on Taiwan. This last issue, in particular, had loomed over the Administration's head since he took office. Since 1954, the United States had maintained both an alliance with the ROC and a strong troop presence there, but now, it was gradually scaling back its deployments on the island. The process of doing so was causing apprehension among policymakers in Washington. As the President noted in this conversation, "[what] we have to have in mind is what the hell we do on Taiwan."¹

The Nixon Administration was walking a fine line between Taipei and Peking, fearing the notion that the PRC might see the American troop withdrawals as an assent to annex the 'rogue province' of Taiwan through military means. That the communists had sought for the past four years to pressure Nixon into annulling the 1954 defense treaty added fuel to this fire. These terms were unacceptable to Washington. Reneging on its defense commitments to Taiwan would soil US credibility, cost Washington an important asset in the Asia-Pacific region and place the ROC on the island at risk of annihilation. Hence, the Nixon Administration remained adamant that for a total American withdrawal from the island, the Communists on the mainland would have to forswear any designs of military action against Taiwan. In the meantime, it was imperative that the United States use its security ties with the ROC as a means to ensure a peaceful settlement of the Taiwan Straits crisis- "otherwise," Nixon noted minatorily, "it's war."²

¹ "Nixon in China Again," February 1, 1973 in Douglas Brinkley and Luke A. Nichter, *The Nixon Tapes: 1973* (Boston ; New York: Mariner Books, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2016), 34.

² "Nixon in China Again," February 1, 1973 in Brinkley and Nichter, *The Nixon Tapes: 1973*, 35.

This short observation by the President was not simply a statement of hyperbole, but instead reflected the potentially dangerous tensions that existed between Peking and Taipei well into the 1970s. Simultaneously, the conversation also reflected the continuing interest which the United States had in settling the Taiwan Straits crisis through peaceful means, even after Nixon's 1972 visit to China. Too often, however, scholarship has misread the US-ROC defense relationship under Nixon. In works which examine Nixon's 'opening' of the PRC, Taiwan is largely sidelined within the context of the developing ties between Washington and Peking. Those who have examined Nixon's approach to Taiwan during this time have in large part characterized it as a 'sellout' of the ROC. In their formulation that the Nixon Administration had shorn itself of the responsibility of defending Taiwan, this study affirms that scholars of this 'sellout' camp are asking the wrong questions. Recently declassified documents from both American and Chinese archives reveal a much different reality about the US-ROC defense relationship. Using these sources, this thesis instead reveals the degree to which the United States modified the principles of this alliance while still retaining it in practice. With this in mind, it instead poses the question of how the Nixon Administration was able to square the circle of its defense ties to Taiwan and its 'opening' to the PRC. To this end, Washington recognized the need to soften the hardline anti-communism which underscored the early Cold War containment of Peking, while simultaneously upholding the security ties which it had initially cultivated to do so. Considering the profound diplomatic and defense relationship between the United States and ROC, Taiwan simply could not be abandoned for the sake of convenience.

The major reason this sellout narrative must be challenged is to gain not just a better understanding of the American grand strategy in Asia, but to examine how the US effort to maintain security ties with Taipei laid the groundwork for the modern relationship of strategic

ambiguity towards Taiwan. The American posture towards Asia embodied in the Nixon Doctrine was *not* part of an American plan to give China a complete sphere of influence in East Asia, but to instead limit direct American military involvement while keeping close ties to its allies in the region- the ROC being one of them. As such, the new American posture in the Far East was far from appeasement, but represented a new understanding of what ‘containing China’ meant. Rather than through military force, moderating Peking’s behavior would come through diplomacy and engagement. This, too, would help ensure Taiwan against invasion by the PRC. Moreover, the sellout narrative cannot account for how the United States transformed but still maintained its security ties to Taiwan, setting the stage for the Carter-era approach of strategic ambiguity towards the ROC.

As Nixon’s aforementioned February 1st conversation with Kissinger reflected, the United States’ East Asian foreign policy had been in a state of flux since the President took office in 1969. This sprang in large part from the disastrous, ongoing American involvement in the Vietnam War and its spillovers into neighboring Laos and Cambodia. The conflicts had cost the United States much in terms of men sacrificed, resources expended, and, on a global scale, perceptions of American credibility.³ Worse yet, the failing war effort in Indochina spoke to the fraying nature of American strategy in the region *writ large*. Through its involvement in the Vietnam War and other operations in East Asia, the United States had sought to contain the influence of the PRC, long believed to be the benefactor of violent Marxist action across the

³ Richard Nixon, “Address to the Nation on the War in Vietnam,” November 3, 1969, <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/november-3-1969-address-nation-war-vietnam>

continent.⁴ Now, it seemed that Peking's efforts to sow communist agitation in the region were succeeding, and it was sapping American power projection around the world.⁵

The Nixon Administration brought in a new perspective on the role of the United States in East Asia through the Nixon Doctrine, and simultaneously, harbored hopes of a Sino-American diplomatic rapprochement. As early as 1967, President Nixon spoke about the need for constructive engagement with the PRC. In his mind, the United States "simply [couldn't] afford to leave China forever outside the family of nations, there to nurture its fantasies, cherish its hates and threaten its neighbors."⁶ Warmer diplomatic relations with the PRC would allow the United States to scale back its containment operations in Indochina, and in turn, draw down its direct troop presence in East Asia. Moreover, Communist China could prove an important asset against the interests of the Soviet Union in the region. Given the existing animosity between these two communist powers, Nixon believed that the United States could leverage one against the other to accomplish goals including arms reductions treaties, trade negotiations, and most immediately, ending the Vietnam War. The prospects for such an initiative only grew in the aftermath of the Sino-Soviet border clashes along the Ussuri River in 1969.⁷ With the PRC under threat on its northern flank and the War in Vietnam growing more desperate by the day, the time

⁴ John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of American National Security Policy During the Cold War*, (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2005), 140.

⁵ Note: For the sake of consistency, I will use the Wade-Giles translation of Chinese names throughout, in keeping with the common naming conventions of the Nixon era. As such, names like Beijing, Mao Zedong and Jiang Jeishi will be rendered as Peking, Mao Tse-tung and Chiang Kai-shek, respectively.

⁶ Richard Nixon, "Asia After Vietnam," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 46, No. 1, October 1967, pp. 113-125. Reprinted by permission of *Foreign Affairs*, 2002. Copyright 1967 by the Council on Foreign Relations, Inc, reprinted in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969, Volume 1, Foundations of Foreign Policy, 1969-1972* as "Article by Richard Nixon."

⁷ Note: The USSR and PRC retained competing claims to several islands located in the Ussuri River, which had remained unresolved since the days of the Russian Tsardom and the Qing Empire. Continued provocations on both sides of the disputed territory finally led to a Sino-Soviet skirmish on March 2, 1969. See: George C. Denney, Jr., "USSR/China: Soviet and Chinese Forces Clash on the Ussuri River," March 4, 1969, US Department of State, Director of Intelligence and Research, National Security Archive.

was right to ‘play the China card.’ The only thing standing in the way of this diplomatic revolution was a longtime American ally, the ROC on Taiwan.

To understand why the US-ROC alliance was such a sensitive issue for Nixon, the depth of the ties between Washington and Taipei must be briefly explained. The American partnership with the entity known as the ROC was forged in World War II, during which the United States fought alongside them to repel Japan’s invasion of China. Following the Allied victory in the conflict, President Harry S. Truman had high hopes for Sino-American cooperation. In his mind, Chiang Kai-shek’s Kuomintang party (KMT) would lead China alongside the United States, United Kingdom, and the Soviet Union as one of the ‘Four Policemen’ of the world. This vision prevailed briefly until China was plunged back into civil war in August 1945, with Chiang’s KMT locked in conflict with Mao Tse-tung’s Chinese Communist Party (CCP). The ensuing war resulted in victory for the communists and wide criticism for Truman, who was publicly scorned by then-US representative Nixon, for having ‘lost’ China to the Reds.⁸ Meanwhile, Chiang’s forces regrouped on the island of Taiwan, where they set up a government in exile, claiming to represent the sole legitimate ‘China’. The communists on the mainland contended much the same, asserting that their People’s Republic was the true heir to this legacy. Most concerning for regional stability, neither side accepted that the civil war was over, and both dreamed of striking a final knockout blow against the other.

While the PRC at present lacked the naval and air capabilities to wrest Taiwan from Chiang’s government, Peking was by no means quiet following its victory over the KMT on the mainland. In 1950, Communist China intervened in the Korean War on behalf of the Kim il-Sung regime, helping to stalemate a US-led counterattack against the North. This reversal greatly

⁸ Stephen E. Ambrose, *Nixon: Volume I: The Education of a Politician 1913-1962*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), 240.

alarmed American policymakers, who now feared the prospect of PRC aggression against Burma, Hong Kong, Indochina, and more immediately, Taiwan.⁹ While containment of the Soviet Union continued apace in Europe, the United States now sought a defense framework to contain the PRC in East Asia. Combined with arms sales to anti-communist regimes like those in Thailand and South Korea, the United States also conducted several mutual defense agreements such as SEATO to accomplish this end.¹⁰ The Eisenhower Administration further ramped up the US strategic encirclement of the PRC when it concluded a Mutual Defense Agreement (MDA) with Taiwan in 1954. This pact solidified a US-ROC commitment to containing the PRC, announced a security guarantee for the island against the communists on the mainland, and served as an American re-affirmation that the ROC was the legitimate embodiment of China. Hence, Taiwan was made a formal pillar of the United States' Far East strategy.

Taiwan traditionally enjoyed a strong base of support within the United States, ensuring that the alliance between Washington and Taipei would endure. This was embodied by the 'China Lobby' - a group of politicians and public intellectuals whose anti-communism fed into support for Chiang's regime. Though more of a colloquial grouping than a formal political monolith, the Lobby touted notable adherents including Walter Judd, William F. Buckley, and Ronald Reagan. This group long acted as a stop-break against a number of initiatives to build ties between Washington and Peking, and "from the 1940s to the 1970s, no US president challenged the so-called China Lobby."¹¹ Though their power would decrease in successive decades, their

⁹ National Intelligence Council, "National Intelligence Estimate: Communist China," Washington, DC, January 17, 1951, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1951, Korea and China, Volume VII, Part 2*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1951v07p2/d6>

¹⁰ Note: SEATO refers to the South-East Asian Treaty Organization.

¹¹ John Newhouse quoted in Ronald J. Hrebenar and Clive S. Thomas, "The Rise and Fall and Rise of the China Lobby in the United States," in *Interest Group Politics*, edited by A.J. Cigler, B.A. Loomis. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2012, pp. 297–316, 302

activism carried considerable weight even into the 1970s. As Kissinger would later remark to PRC Premier Chou En-lai, if Nixon had not been the one to open Peking, any other politician would have been “destroyed” by the China lobby.¹²

Almost 15 years after the signing of the MDA, the assumptions which undergirded American policy in East Asia had been greatly altered. The Sino-Soviet border clashes of 1969 had convinced the Nixon Administration that the balance of power in Asia now favored Moscow, and that the USSR posed the more immediate threat to regional stability.¹³ Stemming from this, the Nixon Administration sought to counterbalance Soviet brinkmanship in the East through a diplomatic partnership with the PRC. While hesitant at first, Mao himself was partial to the idea of a Sino-American rapprochement.¹⁴ Yet, as PRC officials had made obvious to their American counterparts, the prerequisite for this was for Washington to sever its ties with the Chiang government in Taipei.¹⁵ This not only included the annulment of the 1954 MDA, but total derecognition of the ROC as a state. The Nixon Administration faced a dilemma in its China strategy- abandon an old ally to accomplish larger geopolitical goals in Asia or uphold its commitments while forsaking a breakthrough with the PRC. Consideration of the new limits of American power in East Asia thus acted to shape the alteration of the United States’ Taiwan policy during the Nixon Administration, which is the subject of this thesis.

¹² “Memorandum of Conversation” July 10, 1971, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969-1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d141>.

¹³ Chalmers M. Roberts, “U.S. Fears Chance of Sino-Soviet War is Rising, Russia Reported Eyeing Strikes at China A-Sites,” *Washington Post*, August 20, 1969, CIA FOIA Virtual Reading Room.

¹⁴ Xiong Xiangui, “The Prelude to the Opening of Sino-American Relations,” *Zhonggong Dangshi Ziliao (CCP History Materials)*, no. 42 (June 1992): 81.

¹⁵ John H. Holdridge, “Memorandum for Dr. Kissinger: Recent Indications of Peking’s Views on Taiwan Question in Sino-American Relations,” August 20, 1971, National Security Council, CIA Virtual Reading Room, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/loc-hak-16-1-81-3>.

Much has already been written of Nixon's 1972 'opening of China' and the events which led up to it. Inevitably, given the magnitude of such a development, the role of more tertiary actors like Taiwan has been overshadowed in the larger scope of US-PRC relations. However, when the ROC is featured in these discussions, Taipei acts more as an annoyance to be negotiated away through talks between Washington and Peking. This has led such scholarly works to either sideline the role of Taiwan in US-PRC negotiations, or worse yet, to characterize the United States as having surrendered the ROC to the communists.¹⁶ Both perspectives fail to analyze the subtle diplomatic game of delaying, denying, and ducking that American diplomats engaged in while at the negotiating table. As documents from American and PRC archives reveal, Taiwan was not simply one issue standing between Peking and Washington, but *the* primary issue between them. However, as this bilateral relationship deepened, both sides slowly moved to accommodate the needs of the other related to the US-ROC security relationship. This thesis argues that the Nixon Administration sought to use a combination of diplomacy with the PRC and a guarantee of Taipei's security to encourage a peaceful resolution of the Taiwan Strait crisis amid its opening to Peking. During this time, the Administration laid the foundation for the American policy of 'strategic ambiguity' which persists in US-ROC relations to this day. This study also examines the notion of a 'defense relationship' as being more than a formal, legally binding set of principles. Herein, it postulates that a defense relationship is the sum total of a number of factors, including but not limited to a formal treaty of alliance, a guarantee of a state

¹⁶ The 'sellout' metaphor has been almost universally adopted by critics of Nixon's Taiwan policy. See: Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, "Taiwan Expendable? Nixon and Kissinger Go to China," *The Journal of American History* 92, no. 1 (June 2005): pp. 109-135 ; Gang Lin and Wenxing Chou, "Does Taiwan Matter to the United States? Policy Debates on Taiwan Abandonment and Beyond," *China Review* 18, no. 3 (2018): pp. 177-206; Frank N. Trager, "The Nixon Doctrine and Asian Policy," *Southeast Asian Perspectives* 6, no. 6 (1972): pp. 1-34, 12.

entity against outside aggression, the provision of defense materiel, and the use of diplomacy to ensure a peaceful resolution among otherwise hostile actors.

Historiography

This work aims to analyze the evolution of the US-ROC defense relationship during the Nixon era by engaging with three main fields of scholarly discussion on American foreign policy. First, it places Taiwan within historical conversations on the Nixon Doctrine, and examines how this framework informed the nature of the American defense commitment to the ROC. Second, this study explores the ways in which scholars have discussed the US-ROC relationship during the Cold War. In doing so, it focuses on the Nixon Administration as being a time of transition for the United States' Taiwan strategy. Lastly, this thesis intersects with existing scholarly work on the Administration's diplomatic opening to the PRC. This thesis demonstrates that the demands of Peking during this time demonstrably shaped how the United States conceived of both the rationale behind and execution of the terms of the 1954 MDA. As a whole, this study uses an interdisciplinary approach to the analysis of foreign policy, blending together elements of history, political science, and international law.

Placing Taiwan within the scholarly context of the Nixon Doctrine helps to underscore the ways in which relations between Washington and Taipei were part of a larger plan for American strategy in East Asia. Following the disaster of the Vietnam War, scholars have highlighted that the United States was in no position to maintain its considerable military presence in the region.¹⁷ In this situation, the Nixon Administration aimed to scale back its direct troop deployments in East Asia while maintaining its treaty obligations and furnishing its allies

¹⁷ Jeffery Kimball, "The Nixon Doctrine: A Saga of Misunderstanding," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 36, no. 1 (2006): pp. 59-74, 65.

with defense materiel.¹⁸ This approach extended not only to the American role in Vietnam, but also to Thailand, Korea, Japan, the Philippines, and Taiwan. At the time, contemporary scholars questioned the efficacy of Nixon's plan, with academics such as Frank Trager claiming that it both damaged American credibility among allies and actually *invited* PRC aggression in the region.¹⁹ On the specific issue of Taiwan, Trager argues that it was naive for Nixon to "limit, in an as yet unclear way, our defense of an old ally, Taipei, in order to promote 'peace' with a longstanding enemy, Peking."²⁰ Earl Ravenal, a contemporary of Trager, advances similar criticism of the Nixon strategy for Asia. For him, the United States spread itself too thin in Asia to actually fulfill the alliances it sought to maintain, giving the United States the worst of both worlds- creating entangling alliances with no force to back them.²¹ Like many scholars of the time, Ravenal and Trager viewed the PRC as the major threat to be contained in Asia, and were skeptical of Nixon's overtures to Peking. For them, the Doctrine was a capitulation to communist dominance of East Asia. However, in light of the Administration's successful diplomatic containment of Communist China, Trager and Ravenal's fears proved unfounded. Later evaluations of the Nixon Doctrine- and its application to Taiwan- have proven to be more favorable than its detractors initially argued.

This thesis shows that these alarmist predictions for US strategy in Asia never took shape. Though Nixon's contemporaries tended to criticize the Nixon Doctrine for appearing to arrange a sell out for Taiwan, modern historians have come to see it in a new light. In his study

¹⁸ Richard Nixon, "Informal Remarks in Guam With Newsmen," July 25, 1969, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/informal-remarks-guam-with-newsmen>

¹⁹ Frank N. Trager, "The Nixon Doctrine and East Asian Policy," *Southeast Asian Perspectives*, Issue 6, (June 1972), pp. 1-34.

²⁰ Trager, "The Nixon Doctrine," 10.

²¹ Ibid.

of US-ROC-PRC relations, Brian Paul Hilton offers the perspective that the Nixon Doctrine helped to strengthen Taiwan's security against invasion by the mainland. By reducing the direct American presence in East Asia, the Administration assuaged Peking's fears of military encirclement by the United States, making them more open to diplomatic dialogue with Washington.²² In this sense, the Nixon Doctrine acted to restrain the PRC from its designs on Taiwan more through diplomacy than direct US troop deployments. Historian Michael J. Green concurs with Hilton's view. Out of the desire to reduce American military spending and extract the United States from Indochina, he contends that the Administration was also making a step towards Sino-American detente through the Nixon Doctrine.²³ Despite friendlier relations with Beijing, Green highlights how the Administration still managed to retain its commitments to Taiwan, pursuant to the terms of Nixon's grand design for Asia.²⁴ As a result, the ROC fits neatly into the scholarly discourse on Nixon Doctrine, in that the American strategy towards the country involved a reduction of direct US troop presence, the furnishing of military and economic aid, as well as firm commitment to existing defense relationships. This thesis falls more in line with the Green-Hilton school of thought, and shows that Nixon's plan for Taiwan both dovetailed with the strategy of the Nixon Doctrine and contributed to regional stability in the process.

Scholarly discussion of US-ROC relations is essentially in agreement that the Nixon Administration substantially altered the partnership between Washington and Taipei. As Arthur

²² Brian Paul Hilton, "A Tolerable State of Order: The United States, Taiwan, and the Recognition of the People's Republic of China, 1949-1979," Thesis, Texas A&M University, 247

²³ Michael J. Green, *By More Than Providence: Grand Strategy and American Power in the Asia Pacific Since 1783* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), 345.

²⁴ Ibid.

Waldron writes in “Back to Basics: The US Perspective on Taiwan-PRC Relations,” the period of 1969-1972 saw notable changes in the relationship between the two countries. However, he contends that these shifts came more in the form of changes in *principle* rather than in practice. While the United States accepted formulations like the ‘One China Policy’ and dispense with the notion of the ROC ‘liberating’ the mainland, security ties between the two countries persisted.²⁵ Meanwhile, Megan Herwig’s “The Balancing Act: Nixon, Taiwan, and the Tactics of Detente,” contends that in the early phases of this adjustment, the Administration struggled to find a proper balance between its commitment to the ROC and its outreach to the PRC.²⁶ Across the three subjects she analyzes- the ending of the US Navy’s Taiwan Strait patrol, Taiwan’s ejection from the United Nations, and Nixon’s 1972 China trip- the Nixon Administration is presented as having to resolve the inherent contradiction of these two positions in the interests of furthering global detente. This thesis builds off Herwig’s work by placing emphasis on the defense aspect of the US-ROC relationship and examines the nature of it post-1972.

One camp of US-ROC diplomatic scholars, meanwhile, has gone as far as to characterize Nixon’s Taiwan adjustment as being a full-on ‘sellout.’ Nancy Bernkhof Tucker’s “Taiwan Expendable?” is demonstrative of this approach. As she maintains, Nixon’s cavalier pursuit of diplomatic ties with Peking resulted in a sidelining of any scruples for American security ties with Taiwan. She writes that the Administration “fundamentally undermined U.S. credibility and sowed the seeds of continuing distrust in United States-Taiwan and United States-China

²⁵ James R. Lilley and Chuck Downs, “Back to Basics: The US Perspective on Taiwan-PRC Relations,” in *Crisis in the Taiwan Strait* (Ft. McNair, WA, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1997), pp. 327-347, 327.

²⁶ Megan Herwig, “The Balancing Act: Nixon, Taiwan, and the Tactics of Detente,” Thesis, University of North Carolina, February 2019, 7.

relations.”²⁷ Jay Taylor in his book *The Generalissimo* views US diplomacy with Taiwan during the Administration to be nothing short of duplicitous. Amid what he views as a deceitful relationship, Nixon’s administration “from the top down had simply continued to attach ever less importance to the interests and feelings of its longtime nationalist ally.”²⁸ Political scientists Gang Lin and Wenxing Chou are in agreement with this view, citing the years 1969-1972 as the nadir of US-ROC relations. In their view, “by tacitly accepting the prospects of peaceful unification of China, Washington was ready to abandon Taiwan, but more gracefully this time.”²⁹ While the Nixon Administration may be rightly criticized for its less than forthcoming communication with Taipei during the opening to the PRC, the accusation that the United States acted with no regard for Taiwan’s security from 1969-1974 is incorrect. In fact, the United States under Nixon went to great lengths to preserve its defense ties with the ROC, hoping to avoid any indication that Washington was willing to “sell out its friends”³⁰

One recent work by Brian Paul Hilton has sought to push back on this sellout narrative. In “Taiwan Expendable: Reconsidered,” he explicitly disputes Tucker’s argument that the Nixon Administration unilaterally gave up the ROC to Peking. During the period of 1969-1972, he argues, “far from viewing Taiwan as an expendable asset, the Nixon administration actually gave much consideration to the island’s future and was reluctant to abandon the ROC despite the

²⁷ Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, “Taiwan Expendable? Nixon and Kissinger Go to China,” *The Journal of American History* 92, no. 1 (June 2005): pp. 109-135, 110.

²⁸ Jay Taylor, *The Generalissimo's Son: Chiang Ching-Kuo and the Revolutions in China and Taiwan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 2000), 555.

²⁹ Gang Lin and Wenxing Chou, “Does Taiwan Matter to the United States? Policy Debates on Taiwan Abandonment and Beyond,” *China Review* 18, no. 3 (2018): pp. 177-206, 180.

³⁰ Henry Kissinger, “Notes on Taiwan,” July 3, 1971, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/loc-hak-464-6-1-9>, 60.

improving Sino-American relationship”³¹ The United States, he affirms, acted in this sense to protect Taiwan’s security until a peaceful settlement could be reached between Peking and Taipei. While this thesis agrees with many of Hilton’s conclusions, it seeks to expand upon his journal article. Herein, this study focuses specifically on the US defense relationship with the ROC, expanding past Nixon’s 1972 visit to the PRC, assessing the role of triangular diplomacy in ensuring the island’s security, and citing the Administration’s Taiwan policy as the root of strategic ambiguity. In doing so, this thesis aims to take a more long-term look at US-ROC security ties in contrast to Hilton’s work, which is more concerned with developments up until February 1972.

Any discussion of US-ROC relations from 1969 to 1974 will inexorably intersect with scholarship related to US-PRC ties during the Nixon Administration. Due to the mutual military and political legitimacy threats they posed to one another, US relations with one of the ‘two Chinas’ had a reciprocal impact on the other. The dynamic to be explored herein is how drawing closer to the PRC would affect outstanding commitments which the United States had with the ROC. James Mann’s *About Face: A History of America’s Curious Relationship with China from Nixon to Clinton* offers a very broad look at the evolution of US-PRC relations since the 1970s. In his characterization, Nixon and Kissinger moved quickly to normalize relations with Peking, almost to the point of folly.³² The one issue on which the Administration did not budge on, however, was Taiwan. In Mann’s view, the sluggishness of progress on this front was due less to Nixon and Kissinger’s principles than it was to external factors like impeachment and the limits

³¹ Brian Paul Hilton, “Taiwan Expendable? Reconsidered,” *Journal of American-East Asian Relations*, Vol. 25 (2018), 296-322, 298.

³² James Mann, *About Face: A History of America's Curious Relationship with China, From Nixon to Clinton* (New York: Random House International, 2000), 50-52.

of executive authority.³³ Still, Nixon's opening to China "effectively banished from American foreign policy the unreality...[that] Chiang Kai-shek's nationalist regime on Taiwan was the legal government for the Chinese mainland."³⁴ Dealing solely with the Nixon Presidency, Chris Tudda's *A Cold War Turning Point: Nixon and China 1969-1972* offers a succinct narrative about the challenges that the Administration faced in its opening to the PRC. As he argues, "the President and his national security team...and the PRC government boldly moved along parallel lines to forge a new relationship that fundamentally altered the Cold War."³⁵ While offering a coherent 'highlight reel' of Nixon's China diplomacy, much of its effects on Taiwan are left unexplored. Like Tudda's work, Robert S. Ross's "US Policy Toward China: The Strategic Context and the Policy-Making Process," offers a grand strategy portrait of US-PRC relations under Nixon. According to him, "the United States' China policy was fundamentally shaped by the challenge posed by the Soviet Union and the corresponding value of strategic cooperation with Beijing."³⁶ Taiwan, meanwhile, features briefly as an existing issue between Washington and Peking, he writes that "to the extent that the Soviet threat appeared more severe, Washington sought closer U.S.-Chinese relations and adopted a more flexible policy regarding bilateral conflicts, including the Taiwan issue."³⁷ These studies, while offering in depth analyses of US-PRC relations under Nixon, ultimately have similar shortcomings. These three works are archetypes in that they reflect a tendency to emphasize the larger strategic goals of the China

³³ Mann, *About Face*, 66.

³⁴ Mann, *About Face*, 15.

³⁵ Chris Tudda, *A Cold War Turning Point Nixon and China, 1969-1972* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2012), ix.

³⁶ Robert S. Ross, et al., *China, the United States, and the Soviet Union: Tripolarity and Policy Making in the Cold War* (Armonk N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1993), 149.

³⁷ Ibid.

opening (detente, triangular diplomacy, arms control) over tactical issues such as Taiwan. This study bridges the gap between the means of constructive ambiguity towards the ROC and the ends of grand strategy. The first step to understanding the full picture of Nixon's opening to China, I affirm, is to start with Taiwan- the 'other China'.

'Constructive ambiguity' was without a doubt the most enduring contribution of the Nixon Administration to American dealings with Peking.³⁸ By this formula, the United States sought to draw close enough to the PRC to satisfy its grand strategy objectives and avoid having to make dramatic concessions at the expense of its allies. To borrow Nixon's terminology, the United States would be "enigmatic" on the nature of its commitments to Taiwan, all while attempting to find common ground with Peking on the objectives of grand strategy. As a whole, the Nixon Administration's interactions with the PRC sought to emphasize common geopolitical concerns over issues like the 1954 defense pact with Taiwan. Future presidential administrations adopted these precepts within the US-ROC-PRC triangle, a construct whose roots can be traced back to the era in which Nixon and Kissinger ruled American foreign policy.

Chapter I of this study deals with the strategic context which the Nixon Administration faced as it sought a new direction in its China policy. While breaking with early Cold War thinking that Peking represented an untenable enemy, US policymakers grappled with preserving American credibility engendered by pre-Nixon alliances like those with Taiwan. Chapter II examines the practical difficulties which the Administration faced in the preparation for and aftermath of the Kissinger-Chou summit of 1971. After years spent theorizing about the implications of the US-ROC alliance *vis a vis* the opening of the PRC, Washington now faced

³⁸ Note: This term is attributed to Henry Kissinger, particularly within the context of the status of American relations with Taiwan, see Representative Sherrod Brown (OH), "One China Policy." *Congressional Record* Vol. 142, No. 77, May 30, 1996.

the burden of making meaningful adjustments to accommodate its old friend and win over a potential partner. Chapter III examines the crafting of the Shanghai Communique and the ways in which it affected the US-ROC relationship for the duration of the Nixon Administration. While moving towards full diplomatic relations with the PRC, Washington searched for a formula which would preserve its defense ties with Taiwan.³⁹

³⁹Timothy W. Crawford, *Pivotal Deterrence: Third-Party Statecraft and the Pursuit of Peace* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 2003), 189.

Chapter 1: Taiwan and Nixon's Asia

In 1969, the United States began withdrawing its direct troop presence in Asia under the auspices of the Nixon Doctrine. To fill this void, Washington sought to bolster its regional allies with material aid and reassurances that it would continue to uphold its treaty commitments to them. In order for this strategy to work, however, Nixon would have to diplomatically neutralize the threat which Communist China posed to the region. In parallel, the diplomatic overtures to Peking and American troop withdrawals from East Asia would directly affect Taiwan's security against the existential threat posed by the PRC. At this stage of outreach to Peking, the Nixon Administration sought a middle ground between breaking Communist China's fears of encirclement while not abandoning the allies which had kept Peking in check for the past two decades. As it was apparent to Washington, Taiwan would likely be the PRC's first target if the United States appeared to be slackening on its commitments to its Asian partners.

The stalemate of the Korean War pushed the administration of President Dwight Eisenhower to sign a mutual defense agreement with Taiwan in 1954. Fearful of further PRC expansion into other parts of 'free Asia,' Washington believed that an alliance with Taiwan would deter Peking's stated intentions to 'liberate' the island. Article V of the 1954 MDA was the binding provision behind this treaty, which stated that should Taiwan be attacked by an outside power, the United States would intervene on its behalf.⁴⁰ The defense agreement extended to a peacetime context as well, as the treaty gave both parties the right to station troops on each other's territory.⁴¹ While Taiwan had little use for stationing its troops in the United

⁴⁰ "Mutual Defense Treaty Between the United States and Republic of China," December 2, 1954. Avalon Project - Mutual Defense Treaty Between the United States and the Republic of China; December 2, 1954 (yale.edu).

⁴¹ Ibid., Note: The military aid relationship was not wholly one sided, as under the ENHANCE PLUS plan, Taiwan agreed to furnish several combat aircraft for the United States for service in the Vietnam War. See: "Memorandum From the Under Secretary of State for Security Assistance (Tarr) to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) and the

States, the United States took full advantage of the important military position which its island ally provided. Though this treaty was not the sole factor in underwriting US-ROC security ties, it nevertheless remained an important one in the face of Peking's aggressive designs against the island.

Twenty years after the treaty was signed, the United States' presence on Taiwan had grown remarkably. The US maintained a number of bases on the island, with the most important ones being Taipei Air Station, Shu Linkou Air Station, Tainan Air Base, Tsoying Naval Base, and Kaohsiung Naval Base.⁴² American-operated airfields on the island were of particular use for U-2 spy plane flights over mainland China, which continued to feed Washington with greater details about the PRC's burgeoning nuclear program.⁴³ Additionally, the fighter group stationed at Tainan Airbase housed a number of nuclear armed F-4 Phantom jets, which acted to prop up the American nuclear deterrence strategy in the Far East.⁴⁴ Taiwan's many air and naval bases likewise provided crucial support for the ongoing American conflict in Indochina, being used both for supply purposes and bombing sorties.⁴⁵ The US troop presence on the island also included the Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) Taiwan. Much like its more well-known counterpart in South Vietnam, the purpose of the MAAG stationed there was to provide logistics and training to the ROC military, ostensibly for the purpose of fighting off a PRC

Director, Office of Management and Budget (Weinberger)," November 24, 1972, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969–1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d268>.

⁴² See <https://www.stripes.com/news/us-military-history-on-taiwan-rooted-in-confrontation-with-china-1.445146>

⁴³ Mark O'Neill, "Nixon Intervention Saved China from Soviet Nuclear Attack," May 12, 2010, *South China Morning Post*, <https://www.scmp.com/article/714064/nixon-intervention-saved-china-soviet-nuclear-attack>

⁴⁴ William Beecher, "Little Strategic Loss Seen in a Pullout from Taiwan," August 17, 1971, *New York Times*, CIA FOIA Electronic Reading Room, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/cia-rdp80-01601r000800180001-7>.

⁴⁵ Richard Bush and Shelley Rigger, "The Taiwan Issue and the Normalization of US-China Relations," January 16, 2019, Brookings Institution, <https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-taiwan-issue-and-the-normalization-of-us-china-relations/>

invasion.⁴⁶ This objective remained largely the same under Nixon in 1969, and the American military presence on Taiwan hardly diminished. With 9,243 men on the island assigned to service in MAAG or Indochina, the US garrison was the largest it had ever been.⁴⁷ Thus, General Douglas MacArthur's 1950 remark that Taiwan represented "an unsinkable aircraft carrier" carried the same weight in the 1970s.⁴⁸

New Agendas

Given the depth of the aforementioned security ties between the US and ROC, Taipei was very sensitive to any sort of alteration to the American presence in East Asia. Such a shift came in 1969, when President Nixon delivered his famous 'Guam Speech.' Stopping on the island of Guam during a diplomatic tour of Asia, Nixon delivered what was intended to be an informal press conference to a group of reporters. The statements he made over the course of this briefing were not yet part of a larger strategic plan for East Asia, but represented the overall ethos of his administration.⁴⁹ Throughout the speech, Nixon emphasized the need for continued defense ties with its Asian allies, both in the sense of honoring treaty commitments and furnishing them with defense materiel. However, he also affirmed that "except for the threat of a major power involving nuclear weapons...the United States is going to encourage and has a right to expect that

⁴⁶ "National Intelligence Estimate Number 43-54: Probable Developments in Taiwan Through Mid-1956," September 14, 1954, CIA FOIA Electronic Reading Room, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP79R01012A004400010001-3.pdf>, 7-9. Note: The United States operated a number of MAAG groups worldwide in countries deemed to be members of the Cold War periphery. These groups provided training and logistics aid to states which otherwise struggled to maintain their own defense burdens. Such countries hosting US MAAG forces included the Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia, and the aforementioned South Vietnam, see: US Government Accounting Office, "Profiles of Military Assistance Advisory Groups in 15 Countries," United States General Accounting Office, September 1, 1978, <https://www.gao.gov/assets/id-78-51.pdf>

⁴⁷ Tim Kane, "Global US Troop Deployment, 1950-2005," May 24, 2006, The Heritage Foundation, <https://www.heritage.org/defense/report/global-us-troop-deployment-1950-2005>.

⁴⁸ John O. Birkenland, "The Unsinkable Aircraft Carrier- An American Response to the Chinese Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2/AD) Challenge," April 2013, Air Command and Staff College Air University, published by Defense Technical Information Center, 26.

⁴⁹ Kimball, "The Nixon Doctrine," pp. 59-74.

this problem [of military defense] will be handled by, and responsibility for it taken by, the Asian nations themselves.”⁵⁰ Simply put, the Nixon Administration was committing itself to the avoidance of ‘another Vietnam’.⁵¹

This speech laid the groundwork for what came to be termed ‘the Nixon Doctrine’. Domestically, Nixon’s sweeping pronouncements in his press conference won him a great degree of clout, both from an American public which largely opposed the ongoing Vietnam War and a foreign policy apparatus whose resources had been exhausted by it.⁵² The generalities of the Guam Speech became formalized as a presidential doctrine later that year, wherein Nixon laid out his formula for the American presence in East Asia. First, he affirmed that the United States would keep all its treaty commitments, specifically those related to mutual defense, which included SEATO and NATO.⁵³ Second, it would “provide a shield” to any nation whose security was threatened by another nuclear-armed state, should that country under threat be deemed vital to US national security.⁵⁴ Third, the United States would provide whatever material aid it could to countries whose immediate security was threatened by an outside (read: communist) aggressor.⁵⁵ Within the context of the larger Cold War, the Nixon Doctrine represented a departure from the direct troop commitments of the Kennedy-Johnson era and the nuclear deterrence focus of the Eisenhower Administration. The United States was now taking a

⁵⁰ Nixon, “Informal Remarks.”

⁵¹ In reference to Nixon’s book *No More Vietnams*

⁵² Richard A. Hunt, *Melvin Laird and the Foundation of the Post-Vietnam Military, 1969-1973* (Washington, D.C: Historical Office, Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2015), 346.

⁵³ Richard Nixon, “Address to the Nation on the War in Vietnam,” November 3, 1969, University of Virginia- Miller Center, <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/november-3-1969-address-nation-war-vietnam>

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

decidedly more low-profile approach to its presence in East Asia while supporting its allies from a greater distance.

Though not mentioned by name in Nixon's pronouncements on Guam or in his November address, Taiwan was subject to each of the Doctrine's three tenets. By virtue of the commitments outlined in the 1954 MDA and the threat posed to it by the nuclear-armed PRC, the ROC fell within the purview of Nixon's new strategy for East Asia. Taiwan should have felt reassured by the American re-affirmation of its treaty obligations, but some of its politicians feared that even a lower US presence in the region bode ill for their national security. Indeed, as American diplomats summarized, Nixon's new approach to Asian security was causing "a certain adverse reaction" among policymakers in Taipei.⁵⁶ President Chiang Kai-shek indicated that while he would support Nixon's plan in principle, he conveyed via an intermediary that he was concerned about its implementation.⁵⁷ Specifically, Chiang feared that the decreased American troop presence in East Asia could invite the PRC to behave more assertively. In one letter to President Nixon, the Generalissimo "declar[ed] that he supports the Nixon Doctrine, but adds that this should mean strengthening the free nations against aggression, and by inference, not giving in to the Chinese Communists."⁵⁸

At the heart of these comments was Nationalist apprehension about American neglect of Taiwan's security, or worse, a potential sellout of it. As the CIA summarized, "the Republic of

⁵⁶ "Memorandum of Conversation," September 10, 1970, *Foreign Relations of The United States, 1969-1976, Volume XIX, Part 2, Japan, 1969-1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v19p2/d53>.

⁵⁷ "Memorandum Of Conversation," April 21, 1970, *Foreign Relations of The United States, 1969-1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969-1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d76>.

⁵⁸ "Memorandum From The President's Assistant For National Security Affairs (Kissinger) To President Nixon, Subject: Personal Letter to You from President Chiang Kai-shek Protesting Warsaw Talks," March 7, 1970, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969-1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969-1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d71>.

China believes the 1970s will be a crucial period in its history. Taipei views its declining support abroad, together with recent shifts in US Asian policy, as a growing threat to Nationalist interests.”⁵⁹ This “declining support abroad” was in reference to the growing trend of Taipei’s de-recognition as the legitimate Chinese government, and the slow international acceptance of Peking as the ‘one true China.’ For Taiwan, this declining political legitimacy abroad went hand-in-hand with the prospect of a sudden ‘reclamation’ of the island by the PRC.⁶⁰ With the United States being the ROC’s last great-power friend, Taipei was watching the Nixon Doctrine’s execution closely for any further disturbances in the status quo.

The international stage was not the only source of anxiety for many Taiwanese politicians at the beginning of the 1970’s. Chief among these fixations was the question over the country’s presidential succession. It was common knowledge that President Chiang Kai-shek was very ill, and he could no longer exert the same authority over the KMT that he once had. His designated heir was his son, Vice Premier Chiang Ching-kuo, who was also head of Taiwan’s secret police. While the younger Chiang had the backing of powerful institutions within the ROC, the actual succession process could theoretically set off a leadership crisis. Historically, the KMT was already prone to infighting, and the departure of the Generalissimo from the scene would only aggravate this.⁶¹ US intelligence identified ROC Vice President Chen Cheng as one of Ching-kuo’s potential challengers, and the fear was that he could potentially usurp the presidency for his own ends.⁶² This degree of political instability on Taiwan played right into the PRC’s hand,

⁵⁹ CIA Directorate of Intelligence, “Intelligence Memorandum: Taipei and the Nixon Doctrine,” April 17, 1970. CIA FOIA Electronic Reading Room, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/cia-rdp85t00875r001100090020-5>, 1

⁶⁰ CIA Directorate of Intelligence, “Taipei and the Nixon Doctrine,” 12.

⁶¹ Mark Mancall, “Succession and Myth in Taiwan,” *Journal of International Affairs*, vol 18, no.1 (1964) pp.12-20, 14.

⁶² Central Intelligence Agency, “Memorandum: The Succession to Chiang Kai-shek,” March 8, 1963, CIA FOIA Electronic Reading Room, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/cia-rdp79t00429a001300020005-9>.

as Peking could capitalize on the confusion created by such a crisis, possibly prompting military action against the island.

The question of a stable transition of power after the Generalissimo fed into fears about the political loyalties of the island's native population. When the KMT fled to Taiwan in 1949, the ruling cadre found themselves as a mainlander (*wàishěngrén*) party ruling over a population of ethnic Taiwanese people. For the most part, the Taiwanese viewed the Nationalists as an occupying government which had been grafted onto their island.⁶³ Consequently, they did not view Chiang's government as legitimate, much less share his aspirations for a future retaking of the Chinese mainland.⁶⁴ This sentiment took the form of the native-dominated Taiwan Independence Movement, whose adherents supported the idea that Taiwan belonged to neither Communist China nor Nationalist China, and was an entirely separate entity from the two. The Taiwanese made up 85 percent of the island's population, and the CIA reported that if given the opportunity, this group would likely vote the KMT out of power.⁶⁵ Such a move would not only oust the US-allied Chiang loyalists, but possibly result in Taiwan formally declaring independence, which would provoke Peking to invade. The concern over the independence movement's volatility grew in degree especially after one of its members, Peter Huang, attempted to kill Ching-kuo outside of the Plaza Hotel in New York on April 25 in 1970.⁶⁶

⁶³ Central Intelligence Agency, "Intelligence Memorandum: Prospects for Stability on Taiwan," February 10, 1972, CIA FOIA Electronic Reading Room, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/cia-rdp85t00875r001100130029-1>.

⁶⁴ Note: This explicitly undermined the ROC's claim to represent the 'true' China.

⁶⁵ CIA Office of National Estimates, "Memorandum: Taiwan and the Taiwanese," Central Intelligence Agency, June 28, 1971. <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP85T00875R002000110021-1.pdf>, 6

⁶⁶ Joseph Lelyveld, "Entrance to the Plaza Hotel Is the Scene of Assassination Attempt," April 25, 1970, *New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com/1970/04/25/archives/entrance-to-the-plaza-hotel-is-the-scene-of-assassination-attempt.html>.

Hostility to this movement was one of the few issues on which Washington, Peking, and Taipei could agree on.

Another source of concern for the ROC was its budget, which was “already overstrained,” as its spending was disproportionately focused on the military.⁶⁷ While the United States supported Taiwan’s purchasing of foreign arms by providing Taipei with lines of credit and unconditional aid, Washington also feared that such spending was “imposing an increasing burden on its economic development” and “could in fact seriously damage [the] GRC base [of support] on Taiwan.”⁶⁸ As defense chewed up more of the national budget, it was detracting from the country’s ability to subsidize sectors of its economy necessary for continued growth. In light of Taiwan’s international circumstances, this spending trap could place the country on a downward financial spiral. With the threat posed by the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) on the mainland, it was imperative that Taiwan maintain its high defense spending, but in the long term, both Washington and Taipei were unsure of how long the ROC could maintain it.

Considering these sources of anxiety going into the 1970s, Taiwan was apprehensive about the signals that its closest ally was sending. Already reeling from a spate of de-recognitions and uncertain about its prospects for domestic stability, the last thing Taipei wanted was for the Nixon Administration to start reconsidering its defense posture in East Asia.

Meanwhile, Peking, having just emerged from the chaos of the Cultural Revolution and in the

⁶⁷ “Telegram From The Embassy In The Republic Of China To The Department Of State,” October 22, 1970, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969–1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d92>.

⁶⁸ “Memorandum From Richard L. Sneider Of The National Security Council Staff To The President’s Assistant For National Security Affairs (Kissinger), Subject- Republic Of China (Grc) Armed Forces Reorganization And Reduction

Recommendation For Clearance Of Telegram,” January 25, 1969, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969–1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d1>; Note: the ‘base’ in question is not a physical place, but refers instead to the KMT’s base of political support.

midst of a border standoff with the Soviet Union, appeared to Taiwan to be just as unpredictable and threatening as ever.

The ‘Other China’

Allies like the ROC were not the only variable affected by the new American strategy for East Asia. In fact, an implicit goal of the Nixon Doctrine was to reduce its apparent military pressure against the PRC. According to the State Department, troop reductions pursuant to the Doctrine were “intended to make clear to the Chinese that we do not seek a permanent military presence on the Asian mainland and that China can best ease her own security worries over U.S. ‘encirclement.’”⁶⁹ The National Security Council (NSC) echoed this same point, stating that direct troop reductions would “allay Peking’s fears of US-Soviet collusion against and encirclement of China.”⁷⁰ In Nixon’s words, American military posture in the region had to change in character from “potential offense” to “active defense.”⁷¹ Troop reductions would signal to Peking that Washington no longer viewed the PRC as an adversary to be contained, opening the possibility for improved diplomatic ties, which would in turn, allow the United States to further reduce its foreign garrisons.

American policymakers had good reason to want an opening to the PRC. With the existing Sino-Soviet rift deepening, the Nixon Administration saw the opportunity to drive a diplomatic wedge between Peking and Moscow. Cultivating better relations with one state was

⁶⁹ “Memorandum From Secretary Of State Rogers To President Nixon, Subject-guidance For Sino-U.S. Ambassadorial Meeting, January 20, 1970,” *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969–1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d61>.

⁷⁰ “Draft Response To National Security Study Memorandum 106- China Policy,” February 16, 1971, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969–1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d105>.

⁷¹ Nixon, “Asia After Vietnam,” *Foreign Affairs*.

bound to give America greater diplomatic leverage over the other, or so the logic went.⁷² As National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger characterized it, the United States needed to engineer “a subtle triangle of relations between Washington, Peking, and Moscow” which would “improve the possibilities of accommodations with each as we increase our options towards both.”⁷³ The PRC’s growth in GDP and military might since 1949 meant that playing the ‘China card’ would give the United States the opportunity to create a tripolar balance of power. The stakes were high, and price appeared to be Taiwan.

Since 1955, the informal negotiations between the United States and PRC had been hamstrung by American recognition of the ROC and its parallel defense commitments to it.⁷⁴ Peking’s hard line throughout these interactions was that high level US-PRC talks could only come after the “abrogation of all treaties [and] agreements with KMT” and the “complete withdrawal [of] all US naval military forces from China and Chinese waters, including Taiwan.”⁷⁵ Derecognizing Taiwan was not just the price for full diplomatic relations between Washington and Peking, but a prerequisite for the Communists to *even consider* the Nixon Administration’s proposition in the first place.⁷⁶ This being the case, the US and PRC confined their talks to a rank below the diplomatic level, using ‘people to people’ contacts to bridge the gap between them.

⁷² “Foundations of Foreign Policy, 1969-1972,” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Volume I*, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/ho/frus/nixon/i/21100.htm>

⁷³ Henry Kissinger, *White House Years* (New York: Simon & Schuster Trade Paperbacks, 2011), 165.

⁷⁴ “Sino-US Ambassadorial Talks,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/ziliao_665539/3602_665543/3604_665547/t18054.shtml.

⁷⁵ “The Consul At Shanghai (Mcconaughey) To The Secretary Of State,” August 25, 1949, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1949, The Far East: China, Volume VIII*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1949v08/d580>.

⁷⁶ Note: This was the essence of the ‘one China policy’ - according to this principle, there could only be one ‘China’ in the world, and its ruling body was Mao’s CCP.

Lacking formal diplomatic relations meant that the Nixon Administration continued to rely on unofficial ‘backchannels’ to Peking that its predecessors had established.⁷⁷ In particular, the US diplomatic mission in Poland- colloquially called the ‘Warsaw Channel’- served as an important avenue to the PRC which the Administration had inherited from the Johnson years.⁷⁸ Since Nixon took office, US and Chinese officials had held 134 meetings through this route, nearly all of which got bogged down over the American treaty commitments to Taiwan.⁷⁹ Hoping to break the deadlock, Nixon indicated to Kissinger that he wanted to “plant the idea” that his administration was open to “exploring possibilities of rapprochement with the Chinese” via the Warsaw Channel.⁸⁰ The PRC’s Polish delegation proved receptive to the idea of negotiations with the Administration, and agreed to a meeting scheduled for February 20th that year.⁸¹ On February 11th, Kissinger relayed the agenda for the meeting to Nixon, writing that “the Warsaw talks offer an opportunity to shift the focus of our policy...seeking a modus vivendi with the Communist Chinese which provides greater stability for East Asia... without abandoning our commitment to Taiwan or undermining its position.”⁸² Moreover, the National Security

⁷⁷ See: Michael Lumbers, *Piercing the Bamboo Curtain: Tentative Bridge-Building to China during the Johnson Years* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014).

⁷⁸ “Memorandum From James C. Thomson, Jr., of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Bundy), Subject: Warsaw Talk with the Chicomcs, July 29,” July 15, 1964, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1964-1968, China, Volume XXX*, https://1997-2001.state.gov/about_state/history/vol_xxx/35_40.html.

⁷⁹ Kissinger, *White House Years*, 684.

⁸⁰ “Memorandum From President Nixon To His Assistant For National Security Affairs (Kissinger),” February 1, 1969, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969–1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d3>.

⁸¹ Kendrick Kuo, “Nixon's Opening to China: The Misleading Apotheosis of Triangular Diplomacy,” June 28, 2013, The George Washington University, <https://www.e-ir.info/pdf/39860>.

⁸² “Memorandum From the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon, Subject- U.S. Policy Toward Peking and Instructions for the February 20 Warsaw Meeting,” February 12, 1969, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969–1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d6>.

Advisor stated that the United States should push the idea of “peaceful coexistence” to Peking as a means of settling its animosity towards the ROC.⁸³

However, Peking scuttled the Nixon Administration’s plans for this important meeting in the wake of a relatively minor diplomatic spat. Earlier that year, the Chinese Charge d’ Affairs in the Netherlands, Liao Ho-shu, defected to the United States.⁸⁴ With the February 20th meeting looming, Peking now demanded him back. As the highest-ranking PRC diplomat to defect to the West, the Administration was reluctant to hand over the diplomat, but by declining to return Liao, the United States drastically misread the situation. On February 18th, the PRC abruptly called off the Warsaw meeting in retaliation.⁸⁵ The American Ambassador to Poland (and Washington’s point man for the Warsaw Channel), Walter J. Stoessel, remarked grimly that the Administration ought to be prepared “for [a] prolonged suspension of Warsaw meetings.”⁸⁶ The Warsaw Channel was frozen, and no further US-PRC breakthroughs on the Taiwan issue were envisioned for the foreseeable future. In response to the seemingly dead backchannel in Poland, the Nixon Administration continued to probe for other diplomatic routes to Peking. To do this, it found willing partners in President Nicolae Ceausescu of Romania and Ambassador Yahya Khan

⁸³ “Memorandum From the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon, Subject- U.S. Policy Toward Peking and Instructions for the February 20 Warsaw Meeting,” February 12, 1969, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969–1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d6>

⁸⁴ Juan de Onis, “Chinese Defector, In US, Asks Refuge,” February 4, 1969, *The New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com/1969/02/05/archives/chinese-defector-in-us-asks-refuge-chinese-in-us-asks-for-asylum.html>.

⁸⁵ Dennis Bloodworth, “China Tantrums and Tactics” in *The Bulletin*, March 8, 1969, Vol. 091 No. 4643 (8 Mar 1969) (nla.gov.au); Yukinori Komine, “U.S. Foreign Policy Toward Sino-U.S. Rapprochement in the Early 1970s: A Study of Secrecy in Bureaucratic Politics,” Thesis, Lancaster University, June 2005, 121.

⁸⁶ “U.S.-Chicom Talks,” DNSA, Secret, Cable 452 (Item Number CH00063), Feb. 20, 1969, quoted in Kuo, “Nixon’s Opening to China: The Misleading Apotheosis of Triangular Diplomacy,” 2.

of Pakistan, both of which were mutually friendly to the United States and PRC.⁸⁷ Through these intermediaries, the Administration hoped to make another attempt at breaching the China wall.

Rapprochement Redux

It took the Soviet Union to inadvertently rescue US-PRC rapprochement. On March 2, the PLA and the Red Army clashed over the disputed Zhenbao Island in Xinjiang Province. Amid the skirmishes, the Chairman convened several of his most trusted advisors on the possibility of “play[ing] the American card in case of a large-scale Soviet attack on China.”⁸⁸ To this end, Marshal Chen Yi suggested the need for a departure from the dogmatic principles that were stifling better US-PRC relations. Breaking precedent, he advised Mao that the PRC should not raise the annulment of US-ROC ties as a prerequisite to the resumption of talks between Washington and Peking.⁸⁹ While stating that that issue should be resolved at higher levels of diplomatic exchange, Chen still argued that the PRC should not alter its plan to one day ‘liberate’ Taiwan, either through diplomatic or military means.⁹⁰ Mao was receptive to this proposal, seeing it as the impetus for a partnership with the United States. With his country seemingly surrounded by hostile neighbors like the Soviet Union, India, and Japan, the Chairman mused that the PRC must negotiate with countries which were far “while fighting those that are near.”⁹¹ Diplomacy with the United States was thus back on the table.

⁸⁷ Tudda, *A Cold War Turning Point*, 36-37.

⁸⁸ Xiong Xianghui, “The Prelude to the Opening of Sino-American Relations,” *Zhongguo Danshi Ziliao (CCP History Materials)*, no. 42 (June 1992):, 81 quoted in Lorenz M. Lüthi, “Restoring Chaos to History: Sino-Soviet-American Relations, 1969,” *The China Quarterly*, Vol. 210 (June 2012), pp. 378-397, <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/china-quarterly/article/restoring-chaos-to-history-sinosovietamerican-relations-1969/294A56F2CD4909D330FEB6F1E031B150>.

⁸⁹ “Further Thoughts by Marshal Chen Yi on Sino-American Relations,” *Zhonggong dangshi ziliao*, No. 42 (June 1992), pp. 86-87, in “All Under the Heaven is Great Chaos: Beijing, The Sino-Soviet Border Clashes, and the Turn Toward Sino-American Rapprochement, 1968-69,” Wilson Center, pp. 170-171, 171.

⁹⁰ “Further Thoughts by Marshal Chen Yi on Sino-American Relations,” 171.

⁹¹ Mao Tse-tung, quoted in Dr. Li Zhishui, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao* (New York: Random House, 1994), 514.

Renewed PRC interest in talks with the Nixon Administration coincided with US efforts to revive the Warsaw Channel after the Liao incident. What American policymakers believed they needed to do was send a signal to Peking without appearing to lose face internationally. To this end, Washington made a considerable gamble in its relationship with the PRC and ROC. Since 1950, the US Navy's Seventh Fleet had run patrols of the Taiwan Strait, which President Harry Truman deemed necessary to the "neutralization" of the waterway.⁹² Now, in 1969, the financial cost associated with maintaining the patrol was greater than apparent the security it afforded to Taiwan. In connection with Defense Secretary Melvin Laird's plan to reduce US military spending, the Pentagon saw fit to eliminate the costly strait patrol.⁹³ Though done for budgetary reasons, this decision could easily have been misconstrued by the ROC as a softening of the US defense commitment, and the Nixon Administration moved quickly to assuage this fear. For one, Under Secretary of State Elliot Richardson conveyed in a telegram to the US Taiwan Defense Command that this "modification [of the patrol] carries no implication whatever of any change in US defense commitment or in ability of Seventh Fleet to perform [the] mission contemplated for it under Mutual Defense Treaty."⁹⁴ The US ambassador to Taiwan, Walter McCaughy, carried the same point to Chiang directly at a meeting later that year. He assured the Generalissimo that the "alteration in the orders to individual ships of the Seventh Fleet were dictated purely by reasons of economy," and there had been no change to the terms of the

⁹² Abram N. Shulsky, *Deterrence Theory and Chinese Behavior* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 2000), 7.

⁹³ "Telegram From The Department Of State To The Embassy In The Republic Of China And Commander, U.S. Taiwan Defense Command," September 23, 1969, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969–1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d34>.

⁹⁴ "Telegram From The Department Of State To The Embassy In The Republic Of China And Commander, U.S. Taiwan Defense Command," September 23, 1969, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969–1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d34>.

MDA.⁹⁵ The Nixon Administration also believed that given the high quantity of US naval and air assets on Taiwan in 1969, the patrol had essentially been relegated to a symbolic role anyway.⁹⁶

The Administration, however, did not want to lose the symbolic power afforded by this cut. National Security Council staff member John Holdridge sent a memorandum to Kissinger stating that the State Department was “thinking of using the elimination of the Taiwan Strait patrol as a lever to encourage the [Communist] Chinese who wish to reopen the Warsaw talks.”⁹⁷ Kissinger saw value in this move, and became convinced that in connecting the two issues, the PRC could be compelled to come back to negotiations. At Secretary of State William Rogers’ direction, US diplomats began selectively ‘leaking’ this information to PRC officials, while Kissinger used his connection with President Khan of Pakistan to pass the same message to Premier Chou En-lai in Peking.⁹⁸ As a qualifier, the National Security Adviser’s message made it clear to the Communists that such a move did not indicate a softening of the US-ROC defense relationship.⁹⁹ Despite the addendum, PRC officials appeared pleased by the gesture, and Chou advised Chairman Mao that they ought to “pay attention to Nixon's and Kissinger's inclinations”

⁹⁵ “Memorandum Of Conversation, Subjects- Exposition Of Us China Policy, Changes In Seventh Fleet Patrol Of Taiwan Strati, Miscellaneous Matters,” December 17, 1969, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969–1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d52>; Note: Deputy Secretary of Defense David Packard and Admiral John McCain, Sr. also met with Chiang to discuss similar points, see: “Memorandum From The President’s Assistant For National Security Affairs (Kissinger) To President Nixon,” December 9, 1969, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969–1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d50>.

⁹⁶ Bruce A. Elleman, *Taiwan Straits: Crisis in Asia and the Role of the U.S. Navy* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 43.

⁹⁷ “Memorandum From John H. Holdridge of the National Security Council Staff to the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger),” November 21, 1969, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969–1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d48>.

⁹⁸ Kissinger, *White House Years*, 187; “Memorandum From the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon,” December 20, 1969, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969–1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d53>.

⁹⁹ John W. Garver, *The Sino-American Alliance: Nationalist China and American Cold War Strategy in Asia* (Armonk N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1999), 267.

going forward.¹⁰⁰ To Peking, the discontinuation of the patrol seemed to be a signal that the United States wanted to make another attempt at negotiation.

With Taipei mollified and Peking in the loop, the Nixon Administration now looked to a resumption of the talks in Warsaw. They again placed Stoessel at the head of this mission, and instructed him to contact Lei Yang, the PRC Charge 'd Affairs for Poland. Strangely enough, the two men finally ran into one another during a Yugoslav fashion show hosted at the Palace of Culture in Warsaw, rather than at an official meeting.¹⁰¹ Stoessel and Lei then agreed to resume their backchannel discussions, and arranged for the 135th US-PRC meeting to take place on January 20th, 1970 at Peking's Polish embassy. Just before the talks, Secretary Rogers sent the President a memorandum outlining the American positions for the January 20th meeting. In it, he stressed three points which became the standard operating procedure for addressing US-ROC relations during talks with the PRC. First, "the U.S. does not seek to impose its views concerning Taiwan on either side and does not intend to interfere in whatever settlement may be reached."¹⁰² Second, the United States would affirm "a strengthened commitment not to support a GRC offensive action against the mainland."¹⁰³ And finally, proceeding from the tenets of the Nixon Doctrine, the Administration hoped that "we can reduce U.S. military presence on Taiwan as peace and stability in Asia grows."¹⁰⁴ This was, in effect, the three tactical commitments which

¹⁰⁰ Zhonggong zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi bian (CCP, Central Documents Research Office) (ed.), *Chou Enlai nianpu, 1949–1976 (A Chronicle of Chou Enlai's Life: 1949–1976)*, Vol. 3 (ZELNP3) (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1997), p. 334 quoted in Lüthi, "Restoring Chaos to History: Sino-Soviet-American Relations".

¹⁰¹ "China on the Verge of Speaking Terms," December 26, 1969, *Time Magazine*, <http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,941779,00.html>.

¹⁰² "Memorandum From Secretary of State Rogers to President Nixon," January 14, 1970, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969–1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d61>.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

stemmed from Kissinger's prior plan to promote 'peaceful coexistence' between the PRC and ROC.

When the January 20th meeting finally arrived, the Nixon Administration got a second chance at the backchannel opening it had fumbled almost exactly a year prior. The Stoessel-Lei talks began with the usual exchange of diplomatic niceties, with both sides exchanging concurrent views about the need for greater US-PRC negotiations. However, it was inevitable for the two diplomats to address the Nationalist elephant in the room. Stoessel stressed the three ROC guidelines which Rogers had given him, but clarified that in any case, "the United States will continue to maintain its friendly relations with the Government in Taipei and honor its commitment to that Government to assist it in defending Taiwan and the Pescadores from military attack."¹⁰⁵ The Administration was willing to reduce its troop presence on the island, yet such a drawdown would only occur in the event that the PRC took steps to reduce tensions between itself and the ROC.¹⁰⁶ Lei found these terms to be unacceptable. American forces were occupying rightful Chinese land, he argued, as Taiwan was "an inalienable part of [Communist] China's territory."¹⁰⁷ He grew irate with Stoessel's formulation that the United States was bound by treaty to defend the "Chiang clique," and informed him that no meaningful progress was possible until the United States withdrew its troops and annulled the 1954 MDA.¹⁰⁸ Though productive in the area of setting the stage for greater US-PRC governmental contacts, the January 20th meeting produced no meaningful changes in Peking's attitude towards the Taiwan

¹⁰⁵ US Department of State, "Stoessel-Lei Talks: Report of 135th Meeting, January 20, 1970," January 24, 1970 <https://2001-2009.state.gov/documents/organization/72575.pdf>, 3; Note: The Pescadores (also called the Penghus) are a group of small islands off of Taiwan's coast.

¹⁰⁶ US Department of State, "Stoessel-Lei Talks," 3-4.

¹⁰⁷ US Department of State, "Stoessel-Lei Talks," 5.

¹⁰⁸ US Department of State, "Stoessel-Lei Talks," 5-6.

issue. Stoessel reported back to Rogers that this was to be expected, as “any expectation that Peking’s position on this would change was fruitless.”¹⁰⁹ The PRC maintained the position that Taiwan remained an internal issue to be settled, and its liberation would come through whatever means they deemed necessary.

Stoessel’s second meeting with Lei on February 20th carried a more conciliatory tone than that which had occurred on January 20th. According to Stoessel, the PRC Charge d’ Affairs had emphasized two major points: the “primacy of Taiwan issue and [Communist] Chinese interest in [a] higher level meeting.”¹¹⁰ Lei took these two points to be convergent, and stated that ‘progress’ on the Taiwan issue would lead to a “fundamental improvement in Sino-US relations.”¹¹¹ This seemed to be a step in the right direction, but it was implicitly an attempt to wring appeasement from Washington. By placing the onus on the Americans to lower the tension in the area, Lei hoped to get Washington to give concessions before Peking was forced to. Stoessel, meanwhile, reiterated that it was imperative for the PRC to take equal steps in this direction. In the long term, it was the American goal to “reduce those military facilities which we now have on Taiwan as tensions in the area diminish.”¹¹²

The talks between Stoessel and Lei hit upon one of the major philosophical differences in negotiating strategies between Washington and Peking. Heavily influenced by Kissinger’s

¹⁰⁹ “Telegram From The Embassy In Poland To The Department Of State, Subject- Sino-us Talks: 135th Meeting,” January 20, 1970, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969–1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d62>.

¹¹⁰ “Telegram From the Embassy in Poland to the Department of State, Subject- Sino-US Talks: February 20 Meeting,” February 20, 1970, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969–1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d68>.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² “Airgram A-84 From the Embassy in Poland to the Department of State, February 21, 1970, Subject- Stoessel-Lei Talks: Report of 136th Meeting, February 20, 1970,” February 21, 1970, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume E-13, Documents On China, 1969–1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve13/d4>.

strategy of ‘linkage,’ US diplomats often tried to focus on a broad spectrum of issues to be discussed with the PRC, bundling together matters such as trade, the US-PRC-USSR triangle, and the wars in Indochina.¹¹³ Focusing on a plethora of ‘big picture’ issues often made it easier to shirk certain tactical ones like those of Taiwan. For Peking, however, Taiwan was not one issue among many to be discussed with the United States, but *the* main rift between the two countries. To the PRC, talking grand strategy before settling such immediate differences was akin to putting the cart before the horse.

Taking this view into consideration, the Nixon Administration realized it would need to begin considering a new outlook on its rigid Taiwan policy. In response to the Warsaw talks, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Marshall Green laid out the approach for the future US position on Taiwan when dealing with the PRC. First, he affirmed that the end goal of the negotiations would be to encourage a peaceful resolution of the PRC-ROC dispute over the island. Second, the United States would not interfere in such a settlement, so long as it were done without military aggression. Third, America would reiterate its desire for the progressive reduction of forces on Taiwan as tensions diminished.¹¹⁴ Such an approach maintained US-ROC defense ties while not prejudicing a PRC-ROC *modus vivendi*.

Though negotiations hit an impasse on the Taiwan issue when the February 20th meeting concluded, Lei’s suggestion of upgraded contacts between Washington and Peking was great news. In standing resolute on the US-ROC defense commitment, the Nixon Administration

¹¹³ ‘Tab A- Memorandum From the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon, Subject- Warsaw Talks,” February 11, 1969, in “Memorandum From the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon,” February 12, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969–1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d6>; “Telegram from Marshall Green to Secretary of State Rogers: How to Deal with the Question of a Higher-Level Meeting with the Chinese- Action Memorandum,” March 5, 1970, Proquest Digital National Security Archive, 3.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

appeared to have forced Peking's hand on discussing bilateral issues at a higher level. While Stoessel was only in a position to convey American policy, Lei's higher-ups knew that to go any further, they would need to interface with someone closer to the Presidency.

Growing Pains

It did not take long for news of this meeting and its details to leak to the press. When President Chiang was informed that Taiwan had even been the subject of discussion between Stoessel and Lei, he was shocked. In a strongly worded letter to President Nixon, the ROC leader stated that any compromise with the PRC on the Taiwan issue was blatantly "infringing on the sovereign rights of the Republic of China."¹¹⁵ However sharp, Kissinger stated that this reaction was predictable. As the National Security Advisor observed, Chiang's letter "illustrated the deep concern which he and others like him in Taiwan undoubtedly feel with respect to the possible indications of the Warsaw talks."¹¹⁶ To conclude, he advised Nixon to write a letter to Chiang in which "our continued commitment to the Republic of China is re-emphasized."¹¹⁷

The response generated by the mere discussion of Taiwan in US-PRC talks served as a reminder of how closely the ROC watched dealings between Washington and Peking. Combined with what unfolded in Warsaw, Chiang was equally worried about the way in which the Nixon Administration seemed to be cutting back its means to uphold their defense relationship. The promised drawdown of American forces on Taiwan was proceeding apace, with US forces on the

¹¹⁵ "Letter: Chiang Kai Shek to Richard Nixon"; March 1, 1970; 1969-1974 Republic of China Correspondence President Chiang Kai Shek [Nov 1969- Mar 1973]; Box 751; National Security Council (NSC) Files; Presidential Correspondence 1969-1974; RNPLM, National Archives at College Park, Maryland, quoted in Sue Peng Ng, "Reassuring One's Friends: Richard Nixon's China Policy and its Impact on East and Southeast Asia, 1969-1974," (2011), Thesis, University of Nottingham, pg. 26.

¹¹⁶ "Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon," March 7, 1970, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969-1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969-1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d71>.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

island down from 9,243 to 8,813, in part due to the drawdown of troops in Indochina.¹¹⁸ The Generalissimo also found the decreased American military aid provided through the Military Assistance Program (MAP) to be a point of anxiety.¹¹⁹ According to one report, MAP funds for the ROC were down from \$55,336,000 in 1969 to \$37,865,000 in 1970.¹²⁰ Going by numbers alone, it appeared that the US was choking off a vital lifeline for the ROC military.

During one meeting, Chiang Ching-kuo confronted Kissinger about these developments, stating that because of the cuts, “confidence in US consistency and dependability had been seriously diluted in all sectors [of Taiwan’s] government.”¹²¹ The National Security Advisor then moved to clarify the American position. Washington, he said, was in the midst of cutting defense expenditures while also allocating funds for an overhaul of the Cambodian military.¹²² Cuts had not come from a sidelining of Taipei’s interests, but wholly from budgetary constraints. With Taiwan’s massive growth in GDP (bankrolled in large part by American aid and investment), Kissinger stated that the ROC was now in a position to buy weapons rather than receive them *sine condicione*.¹²³ MAP funds were diminishing, but the United States was still more than willing to furnish defense articles on credit to Taiwan through its Foreign Military Sales program

¹¹⁸Kane, “Global US Troop Deployment, 1950-2005,” May 24, 2006, The Heritage Foundation, <https://www.heritage.org/defense/report/global-us-troop-deployment-1950-2005>; Note: The drawdown of troops in Indochina was part of the Nixon Administration’s goal of ‘Vietnamization.’

¹¹⁹ “Telegram 4269 from Taipei,” October 1, 1971, Washington National Records Center, RG 330, ISA Secret Files: FRC 330 73 A 1975, China, Rep. of, 1970, 333 Jan.

¹²⁰ US Department of Defense, “Military Assistance and Foreign Military Sales Facts, April 1972” December 1, 1972, Defense Security Assistance Agency, Washington, DC, University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign, pg.6 Note: Dollar amounts throughout this thesis are not adjusted for inflation.

¹²¹ “Telegram From the Embassy in the Republic of China to the Department of State,” October 22, 1970, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969–1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d92>.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.; Note: Statistics on the ‘Taiwan Miracle’ can be found in Pan-Long Tsai, “Explaining Taiwan’s Economic Miracle: Are the Revisionists Right?” *Agenda: A Journal of Policy Analysis and Reform*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (1999), pp. 69-82, 70.

(FMS). In point of fact, between 1969 and 1970 alone, US arms sales to the ROC had more than doubled from \$13,528,000 to \$36,528,000.¹²⁴ At the conclusion of the meeting, Kissinger again reaffirmed Washington's "intention to uphold the international position of the GRC and to carry out all of our [treaty] commitments" to Ching-kuo.¹²⁵ In a subsequent talk with ROC Vice President Yen Chia-kan, President Nixon also attempted to calm Taiwan's fears of military abandonment, remarking that he would fight in Congress for greater aid to be allocated for Taipei.¹²⁶ For the purposes of maintaining the Nixon Doctrine, the United States would adhere to its plan of modernizing Taiwan's armed forces, particularly its air force and navy, to defend against a PRC incursion.¹²⁷ Still, the shock had been dealt. The US-ROC defense treaty remained unaltered, but even so, the MAP cuts indicated that the patron-client relationship between the two was changing. From the Nixon Administration's perspective, Taiwan had become a "graduate" from many of the programs intended to prop up the defense of its third world allies.¹²⁸ The ROC, meanwhile, was struggling to adapt to this new set of growing pains.

With the next round of the Stoessel-Lei talks slated to take place in March of 1970, Nixon felt it prudent to send a letter to Chiang regarding the nature of deepening US-PRC negotiations. In doing so, the President hoped to avoid a repeat of some of the Administration's

¹²⁴ "Military Assistance and Foreign Military Sales Facts, April 1972" December 1, 1972, Defense Security Assistance Agency, Washington, DC, University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign, pg.6.

¹²⁵ "Telegram From the Embassy in the Republic of China to the Department of State," October 22, 1970, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969-1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969-1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d92>.

¹²⁶ "Memorandum of Conversation," October 25, 1970, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969-1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969-1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d93>.

¹²⁷ "Memorandum of Conversation, Subject- SECDEF Working Luncheon for CIVE Premier of Republic of China," April 22, 1970, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969-1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969-1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d78>.

¹²⁸ "Paper Prepared in the National Security Council Staff: The Nixon Doctrine for Asia: Some Hard Issues," National Archives, RG 59, Policy Planning Staff Files: Lot 77 D 112, Director's Files, Selected Lord Memos. Confidential, Docs 54-67 (state.gov).

past blunders where it had caught Taipei off guard. Nixon stated that while he knew of Chiang's "deep distrust" towards Mao's regime, the American president said he would be "remiss in my duty to the American people if I did not attempt to discover whether a basis may not exist for reducing the risk of a conflict between the United States and Communist China."¹²⁹ Such dialogue, he affirmed, would not come at the expense of Taiwan's security, and as had become tradition at this point, he restated that "there shall be no change in the firmness of our commitment to the defense of Taiwan."¹³⁰ However lofty the President's goals were for the next Warsaw meeting, none would come to pass. The US-PRC talks hit yet another snag.

In mid-1970, the Nixon Administration again committed an act of self-sabotage in its opening to the PRC. Notwithstanding efforts to 'Vietnamize' the war in Indochina, the United States found itself again escalating the war there, this time with an incursion into Cambodia. On April 29, President Nixon ordered US troops into the country, aiming to hit enemy supply sites and, hopefully, to destroy the theorized headquarters of the Viet Cong, COSVN.¹³¹ Peking was outraged at this act of aggression against its fellow Asian communists. Reflecting the Chinese Politburo's general views, the CCP's mouthpiece, *People's Daily*, summarily decried the "naked gangster logic of US imperialism," which it claimed was once more on display in Cambodia.¹³²

¹²⁹ "Letter From President Nixon to the President of the Republic of China Chiang Kai-shek," March 27, 1970, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969–1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d74>.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ "Address to the Nation on the Situation in Southeast Asia," April 30, 1970, Richard Nixon Foundation, <https://www.nixonfoundation.org/2020/04/fifty-years-ago-president-nixon-announces-cambodia-incursion/>; Note: COSVN was 'theorized' in that American intelligence only deduced it existed based on incomplete information.

¹³² "Signal Victory and Militant Unity of the Three Indochinese Peoples," Jen-min jih-pao (People's Daily), April, 30 1970, in *Peking Review: Joint Declaration of Summit Conference of Indo-Chinese Peoples- Statement of the Government of the People's Republic of China*, May 8, 1970, pp. 9-10, 10, <https://www.marxists.org/subject/china/peking-review/1970/PR1970-19X.pdf>.

Just as it had handled the Liao defection in 1969, the PRC cancelled the Warsaw talks as punishment- this time, for good.

Across the strait, Taiwan observed the escalation in Indochina with unease. From the outset of American involvement in the region, Chiang doubted the US ability to wage a successful war in Indochina.¹³³ The incursion into Cambodia only confirmed this outlook. Indeed, a CIA report gauging the reactions of the US's East Asian allies found that politicians in Taipei believed the United States to be "fighting the wrong opponent in the wrong way in the wrong place."¹³⁴ Nevertheless, Chiang was a strong supporter of Cambodia's right-wing leader, Lon Nol, and believed it to be vital for the general's anticommunist regime to survive against the PRC-backed Viet Cong and Khmer Rouge.¹³⁵ It was not surprising, therefore, that official KMT news outlets began to pitch the conflict in markedly similar terms to America's 'domino theory' of communism. The party-run Taiwanese newspaper, *Chung Hua Jih Pao*, stated in alarmist terms that "the defeatists think it realistic to surrender part of Cambodia to the Communists. They let the Communists have northern Korea, northern Vietnam and even mainland China. Such realism led to war in Korea and Vietnam. Now it is leading toward a conflict that would be both global and nuclear."¹³⁶ Feeling its security to be interlocked with Cambodia's, Taipei evidently believed it was imperative to participate in a more active role in the wars in Indochina.

¹³³ Taylor, *Generalissimo*, 526

¹³⁴ Central Intelligence Agency, "Communist Reactions to the Entry into Cambodia of Troops from South Korea, Indonesia, or Nationalist China," May 28, 1970, CIA FOIA Archive, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/cia-rdp79r00967a000200020011-9, 2>.

¹³⁵ Hsiao-ting Lin, "Taiwan's Cold War in Southeast Asia," April 2016, Wilson Center, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/taiwans-cold-war-southeast-asia>

¹³⁶ Chung Hua Jih Pao Editorial Staff, "Cambodia's Importance," July 1, 1970, electronically reprinted by *Taiwan Today*, <https://taiwantoday.tw/print.php?unit=4&post=6165>.

Though ROC forces had already been involved in Indochina through their support role in the Free World Military Forces (FWMF), the United States now probed the possibility of using KMT troops in Vietnam.¹³⁷ However, this plan was ditched not long thereafter, as the presence of Taiwan's forces so close to the PRC could provoke the Communists into "overt troop and aircraft deployments to coastal areas opposite Taiwan; harassment of [ROC] air and sea units in the Taiwan Strait area; and shelling of the Offshore Islands."¹³⁸ Tensions between the US and PRC were already surging, and the Nixon Administration did not want to provoke another standoff in the Taiwan Strait in exchange for Nationalist troops.

By July, the Nixon Administration had retracted its troops from eastern Cambodia with comparatively little to show for it. Though the US military managed to interdict several Viet Cong supply lines, the 'bamboo Pentagon' of COSVN continued to elude discovery.¹³⁹ The cost, unfortunately for Washington, was the negotiations it had worked tirelessly to set up with the PRC. With the Warsaw Channel dead, the Nixon Administration came to rely even more heavily on the aid of Ceausescu and Khan to relay information to Peking.¹⁴⁰

Aside from the aggravation posed by the US attacks into Cambodia, factors inside the PRC also contributed to the deterioration of relations between Washington and Peking. Mao's

¹³⁷ Tony White, "The Vietnam Chapter," in *War, Strategy, and History: Essays in Honour of Professor Robert O'Neill*, edited by Daniel Marston and Tamara Leahy, ANU Press (2016) 31-38, pg. 31. Note: Unofficially, remnants of the KMT's 93rd Nationalist Division were still in Indochina until around 1961, where they waged a covert campaign against Pathet Lao forces, See: Victor S. Kaufman, "Trouble in the Golden Triangle: The United States, Taiwan, and the 93rd Nationalist Division," *The China Quarterly*, 2001, Cambridge University Press Vol. 166 440-456

¹³⁸ Central Intelligence Agency: Office of National Estimates, "Memorandum for the Director: Communist Reactions to the Entry Into Cambodia of Troops from Non-Communist Asian States," May 28, 1970, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/cia-rdp79r00904a001500020012-3>;

¹³⁹ "Report Prepared in the Central Intelligence Agency, Subject- Post Mortem: The Role of Cambodia in Supplying VC/NVA Forces in South Vietnam," November 1970, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969-1976, Volume VII, Vietnam, July 1970-January 1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v07/d62> , Tim Weiner, "An American Pattern: Seeking Elusive Enemies with Unreliable Allies," June 15, 2015, Reuters, <http://blogs.reuters.com/great-debate/2015/06/14/nixon-in-cambodia-seeking-elusive-enemies-with-unreliable-allies/>

¹⁴⁰ Mann, *About Face*, 25.

Cultural Revolution had severely worsened fractures within the 9th CCP Politburo, which led to an open split between so called ‘moderates’ led by Premier Chou En-lai and ‘radicals’ led by Marshal Lin Biao.¹⁴¹ Following the border conflict with the Soviet Union and the American overtures to Peking, this division began to center around the direction of the PRC’s foreign policy. Chou’s group favored improved relations with the United States, whereas Lin’s loyalists emphasized a “go-it-alone” foreign policy independent from Moscow and Washington.¹⁴² Following the American invasion of Cambodia, Lin’s faction gained ascendancy, and took full advantage of the polemical opportunities it afforded. In one speech, the marshal vocally expressed his faction’s views declaring that the PRC must “firmly support the peoples of Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos in their war against U.S. aggression and for national salvation.”¹⁴³ Given the circumstances, Chou’s pragmatism appeared to many in the CCP to be appeasement rather than realism.

The split between the Chou and Lin groups was informed to an equal degree by their divergent views on how to handle the Taiwan question. Though both men were staunch advocates of the island’s eventual annexation, they differed markedly in their plans on how to do it. Chou was of the opinion that the PRC could leverage the United States into annulling the 1954 MDA, derecognizing the ROC, and then withdrawing its troops, paving the way for the liberation of Taiwan, ideally through “peaceful means.”¹⁴⁴ As an officer of the PLA, Lin took a

¹⁴¹ Stephen Uhalley, Jr. and Jin Qiu, “The Lin Biao Incident: More Than Twenty Years Later” *Pacific Affairs*, Autumn, 1993, Vol. 66, No. 3 (Autumn, 1993), *Pacific Affairs*, University of British Columbia pp. 386-398 388.

¹⁴² Central Intelligence Agency- National Foreign Assessment Center, “Memorandums in Support of Former President Nixon’s Trip to China,” August 1979, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/cia-rdp83r00184r002600620001-5, B3-B4>.

¹⁴³ “Speech at Rally Celebrating the Twenty-First Anniversary of the Founding of the People’s Republic of China,” October 1, 1970, quoted in *The Lin Biao Affair*, edited by Michael Kau (Routledge Revivals, 1975).

¹⁴⁴ “Central Committee Politburo’s Report on the Sino-American Meeting” (drafted by Chou Enlai), 26 May 1971, quoted in Yafeng Xia, “China’s Elite Politics and Sino-American Rapprochement, January 1969–February 1972,” *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 8, No.4, Fall 2006, pp. 3-28, 19.

different stance. While Chou had stressed the need for a conciliatory approach which would first negotiate away the US presence on the island, the marshal's designs were decidedly warlike. In one speech decrying American and Soviet imperialism, he boldly proclaimed that "the Chinese People's Liberation Army are determined to liberate their sacred territory Taiwan and resolutely, thoroughly, wholly, and completely wipe out all aggressors who dare to come!"¹⁴⁵ Obliquely referencing the likely US response to such an attack, Lin believed that the "invincible" PLA could fend off any American efforts to uphold its defense commitment to Taiwan.¹⁴⁶ Naturally, the friction generated in the party by these two competing worldviews considerably slowed Peking's foreign policy in 1970. For a considerable portion of the year, US-PRC dialogue remained frozen.

Once More Unto Peking

Kissinger's Pakistani Channel proved the most valuable diplomatic asset in salvaging US-PRC relations.¹⁴⁷ Aside from allowing the Presidency and the National Security Council more control over the content of US-PRC relations, it also allowed for a degree of secrecy which prevented possible ROC interference in negotiations. In December of 1970, Kissinger passed a message dubbed the 'Communist China Initiative' to Pakistan's president, Yahya Khan, which the National Security Advisor in turn, asked him to deliver to Chou En-lai. The communique aimed to paper over the differences which the Cambodia incident had exacerbated, and indicated

¹⁴⁵ Lin Piao, "Report to the Ninth National Congress of the Communist Party of China," April 1, 1969, quoted in *The Lin Piao Affair: Power Politics and Military Coup*, (1975) Routledge Revivals, NY..

¹⁴⁶ "Speech at Rally Celebrating the Twentieth Anniversary of the Founding of the People's Republic of China," October 1, 1969 *The Lin Piao Affair: Power Politics and Military Coup*, (1975) Routledge Revivals, NY.

¹⁴⁷ Jaw-ling Joanne Chang, "United States-China Normalization: An Evaluation of Foreign Policy Decision Making," *Occasional Papers Reprints in Contemporary Asian Studies*, Issue 4, Vol. 75, 1986, University of Maryland School of Law, 32.

that the United States was still interested in carrying out “a higher-level meeting in Peking.”¹⁴⁸ Regarding the Taiwan question, Kissinger’s message stated that while the US desired to “reduce progressively its military presence” on the island, he re-affirmed that this would not be the only item on the agenda.¹⁴⁹ In so doing, he aimed to pre-emptively neutralize the possibility of having to take more dramatic steps in altering the US-ROC defense relationship. Somewhat disingenuously, Kissinger’s message ignored the stipulation of Lei’s February 20th, 1970 invitation that the high-level talks in Peking deal exclusively with the Taiwan issue.¹⁵⁰

By the time that Peking received Kissinger’s message, the situation within the CCP had changed a fair bit. The ambitions of Lin and his radical group within the Politburo were beginning to alarm Chairman Mao, who now feared that the polemics of his designated successor were giving rise to ‘factionalism’ within the Party. As such, he conspired with the moderate faction to “launch a surprise attack” against Lin’s ‘ultra-leftists’ beginning at the Party’s Second Plenum in August 1970.¹⁵¹ With Chou’s help, Mao managed to politically outmaneuver the marshal and cut off his base of support within the Politburo.¹⁵² Though Lin had yet to be formally purged, by late 1970, he had been removed from many of the state, party, and military

¹⁴⁸ “Memorandum for the President from Henry Kissinger, Subject: Chinese Communist Initiative,” December 10, 1970, printed in *The Beijing-Washington Back-Channel and Henry Kissinger’s Secret Trip*, National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 66, edited by William Burr.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ “Record of A Discussion With Mr. Henry Kissinger on the White House on 16th December 1970,” undated. Printed in *The Beijing-Washington Back-Channel and Henry Kissinger’s Secret Trip*, National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 66, edited by William Burr.

¹⁵¹ Central Intelligence Agency, “Intelligence Report: Policy Issues in the Purge of Lin Piao (Reference Title: Polo L),” <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/cia-rdp85t00875r001000010049-3, V>.

¹⁵² Central Intelligence Agency- National Foreign Assessment Center, “Memorandums in Support of Former President Nixon’s Trip to China,” August 1979, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/cia-rdp83r00184r002600620001-5, B3-B4>; Note: A full discussion of the purge of the CCP’s ‘ultra leftists’ during the period of 1969-1970 would be a task in itself. For a more thorough analysis, see: “Night Flight” in Gao Wenqian, *Chou Enlai: The Last Perfect Revolutionary*, translated by Peter Rand and Lawrence R. Sullivan, (Public Affairs, NY), 2007, 201-227.

posts he once held.¹⁵³ With the radical faction rapidly losing power over the course of the year, Mao and Chou were once again in a position to formulate foreign policy.¹⁵⁴ Lin's anti-American position and hawkish stance on Taiwan was left to fall by the wayside.

On December 9th, Ambassador Hilaly of Pakistan brought Chou's message of reply to Kissinger. To the Nixon Administration's relief, the Premier was willing to conduct a meeting with an envoy from Washington. However, the excitement had to be qualified. The topic of discussion, the Premier said, would be largely confined to the Taiwan issue. "Taiwan and the Straits of Taiwan are an inalienable part of China have now been occupied by foreign troops of the United States for the last fifteen years," he wrote, "in order to discuss this subject of the vacation [sic] of Chinese territories called Taiwan, a special envoy of President Nixon's will be most welcome in Peking."¹⁵⁵ Though this line was hardly new, Chou's letter was an indicator that US-PRC rapprochement was not dead in the water.

In early 1971, the Nixon Administration felt reassured about the possibility to finally meet in Peking, either with Mao or Chou. Yet, Peking's intransigence on the single issue of Taiwan still loomed large in the minds of American policymakers. As a result the White House commissioned National Security Study Memorandum (NSSM) 106 to weigh its options. As the draft response to the directive laid out, while it was wholly possible to reduce American troop presence on the island (pursuant to part of Peking's demands), annulment of US-ROC defense

¹⁵³ CIA Directorate of Intelligence, "Intelligence Report: The Purge of Lin Piao's "Conspiratorial Clique": A Tentative Reconstruction (Reference Title: POLO XLVIII) ," <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/cia-rdp85t00875r001000010047-5, A-25>.

¹⁵⁴ National Security Council, "Memorandum for Brent Scowcroft from Richard Solomon: Peking's Current Political Instability and Its Import for US-PRC Relations," March 3, 1976, CIA FOIA Electronic Reading Room, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/loc-hak-113-1-3-1, 16>.

¹⁵⁵ "Memorandum from Henry Kissinger to the President: Chinese Communist Initiative," undated, *The Beijing-Washington Back-Channel and Henry Kissinger's Secret Trip*, National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 66, edited by William Burr.

ties would jeopardize the entire goal of the Nixon Doctrine and, by extension, American grand strategy in East Asia.¹⁵⁶ NSSM 106 thus tried to find a middle ground between upholding the US's existing alliance and charting a new relationship with Peking. Regarding the ROC, the United States should “insure the security of Taiwan from external attack” and “maintain access to Taiwan to the extent necessary to meet our commitment to the defense of Taiwan and the Pescadores and our strategic requirements in East Asia.”¹⁵⁷ With regard to the PRC, the directive advised that the United States continue to “encourage a peaceful resolution of the Taiwan issue” and “deter PRC aggression against non-communist neighbors.”¹⁵⁸ To encapsulate NSSM 106's conclusions, the United States' role in the PRC-ROC standoff would be one which guaranteed peace long enough for a settlement to be reached between Peking and Taipei.

The draft response to NSSM 106 also outlined a huge shift in the American understanding of Taiwan's status. “We have tried to set aside the Taiwan issue by making clear to Peking that we would accept any peaceful resolution by the parties directly concerned,” the report read, “this position implies that we would not oppose the peaceful incorporation of Taiwan into the mainland. However, we have also made clear to Peking that until a peaceful settlement is reached, we intend to maintain our defense commitment to, and continue our diplomatic relations with the [ROC].”¹⁵⁹ This statement in NSSM 106 challenged two major

¹⁵⁶ “Draft Response to National Security Study Memorandum 106,” February 16, 1971, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969–1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d105>.

¹⁵⁷ “Draft Response to National Security Study Memorandum 106,” February 16, 1971, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969–1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d105>.

¹⁵⁸ “Draft Response to National Security Study Memorandum 106,” February 16, 1971, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969–1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d105>.

¹⁵⁹ “Draft Response to National Security Study Memorandum 106,” February 16, 1971, Proquest Digital National Security Archive, 24.

assumptions which guided US-ROC relations in the early years of the MDA. First, this new formulation implied that the United States would not participate in any efforts by Taipei to ‘reclaim’ the mainland, and second, suggested that Washington would not oppose a Chinese solution to the Taiwan dispute. In this context, the MDA served now more as an ‘insurance policy’ against a forcible PRC reunification of Taiwan with the Mainland than an effort by Washington to sever the ‘two Chinas’.

To wrap up its analysis, the NSC’s draft response to NSSM 106 laid out five possible courses of action regarding the US defense commitment to Taiwan. The Administration could:

- Maintain the present level of troops on Taiwan
- Increase the amount of support troops (logistics, intelligence, engineering, etc.) on Taiwan
- Increase the amount of combat troops on Taiwan
- Decrease the total US presence on the island unilaterally while maintaining base rights there
- Make further troop withdrawals contingent upon a PRC agreement to renounce force against Taiwan while maintaining the terms of the MDA¹⁶⁰

At a Senior Review Group (SRG) meeting, the NSC debated the possible options and their potential effects on American foreign policy. ‘Option 2’ and ‘Option 3’ were rejected almost immediately, citing the fact that they were at odds with the larger goal of building trust with Peking. ‘Option 1,’ meanwhile, was in direct conflict with the withdrawals that were already in progress, stemming from the principles of the Nixon Doctrine and the drawdown of American

¹⁶⁰ NSSM 106 Section IV, “Memorandum for Record of the Senior Review Group Meeting, Subject- Senior Review Group Meeting of 12 March 1971, on NSSM 69, US Nuclear Policy in Asia and NSSM 106, US China Policy,” March 12, 1971, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969–1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d108>.

forces in Vietnam.¹⁶¹ Lastly, ‘Option 4’ left Washington appearing too willing to ‘quit Taiwan,’ damaging not only US credibility, but also the country’s ability to project power in the Asia-Pacific region. Thus, ‘Option 5,’ which made American withdrawals contingent on a PRC renunciation of force, seemed to be the choice which most preserved US defense ties to the ROC and allayed the fears of Peking.¹⁶² The United States was already prepared to make withdrawals from Taiwan, regardless of whether or not the PRC pressured Washington into doing so. The trick, according to Kissinger would be “to extract concessions [from Peking] for changes in military deployments that we were going to make anyway.”¹⁶³ Ultimately, it was the fifth option which found the most consensus among those at the SRG meeting, and the group adjourned shortly thereafter.

Though most in the Nixon Administration remained optimistic about the United States’ ability to maintain its defense ties to Taiwan and open the PRC, the Department of Defense was decidedly more cautious about the means to do it. Though it concurred with the NSC’s idea that the MDA should remain in full force as negotiations with Peking continued, it warned against moving too fast to appease the Chinese Communists. For instance, rather than using the withdrawal of American troops on Taiwan to induce Peking to negotiate, the Pentagon argued that pullout should first be “contingent upon PRC willingness to agree to a mutual renunciation of force in the Strait area.”¹⁶⁴ Aside from serving as a deterrent factor against outside aggression,

¹⁶¹ Note: Recall that many of the troops stationed on Taiwan were directly involved in fighting the wars in Indochina.

¹⁶² “Memorandum for Record of the Senior Review Group Meeting, Subject- Senior Review Group Meeting of 12 March 1971, on NSSM 69, US Nuclear Policy in Asia and NSSM 106, US China Policy,” March 12, 1971, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969–1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d108>.

¹⁶³ Kissinger, *White House Years*, 706.

¹⁶⁴ “Department of Defense Position Paper, Subject- DOD Position Paper on Option A-5 of the NSSM 106 Study,” *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969–1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d110>.

the Department of Defense pointed out that the troops stationed there served practical strategic goals as well, acting to advance American interests in Indochina and Korea. In the long term, the Pentagon advised that the United States should continue to build up the ROC's ability to resist future military pressure by the PRC.¹⁶⁵ In this sense, it was proposing a model similar to that of Secretary Laird's 'Vietnamization' strategy, which he had outlined in 1969 to address the situation in Indochina.¹⁶⁶ The report from the Department of Defense concluded by stating that, for the purposes of upholding the principles of the Nixon Doctrine and the terms of the MDA, any further overtures to Peking should be weighed against the risks of degrading security ties between the ROC and the United States.¹⁶⁷

With these considerations in mind and Chou's invitation pending, the Administration decided that now was not the time to make any hasty moves. After all, as Nixon had handwritten on a memorandum from Kissinger, "I believe we may appear too eager. Let's cool it."¹⁶⁸ Peking had already demonstrated its keen desire for a meeting- keeping the Chairman waiting for a moment could, in theory, improve the negotiating terms that Washington was being offered, especially regarding Taiwan.¹⁶⁹ At present, the Administration resolved to send positive signals

¹⁶⁵ "Department of Defense Position Paper, Subject- DOD Position Paper on Option A-5 of the NSSM 106 Study," *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969-1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969-1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d110>.

¹⁶⁶ Robert K. Brigham, *Reckless: Henry Kissinger and the Tragedy of Vietnam* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2018), 29.

¹⁶⁷ "Department of Defense Position Paper, Subject- DOD Position Paper on Option A-5 of the NSSM 106 Study," *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969-1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969-1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d110>.

¹⁶⁸ "Memorandum for the President from Henry A. Kissinger: Conversation with Ambassador Bogdan, Map Room, January 11, 1971," January 12, 1971, CIA FOIA Electronic Reading Room, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/loc-hak-464-10-1-4>, 4.

¹⁶⁹ Note: The idea that Peking was more willing to negotiate than Washington initially thought was evidenced by the fact that Chou extended yet another invitation- this time directly to President Nixon- on January 11, 1971 through the Romanian Ambassador to the US, Corneliu Bogdan. See: "Memorandum for Dr. Kissinger from Peter Rodman: Who Invited Whom?" October 13, 1971, CIA FOIA Electronic Reading Room, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/loc-hak-464-10-1-4>, 1.

in the PRC's direction which would least affect the defense relationship between the US and ROC. In March of 1971, the Administration ended the travel ban which the United States had placed on Communist China, allowing for both Chinese and American citizens to visit the Mainland for the first time in decades.¹⁷⁰ The following month, it also lifted a number of embargoes on the PRC related to commercial shipping, currency exchange, and the trade of non-strategic goods.¹⁷¹ Though Kissinger reasoned that Taipei would (correctly) read these moves as an effort by Washington to improve relations with Peking, such dealings would not in any way come at the direct expense of Taiwan.¹⁷² In a small signal of goodwill, the PRC extended an invitation to the American ping-pong team to participate in the 31st annual World Table Tennis Championship in Peking on March 28, 1971.¹⁷³ In spite of the relative innocuousness of this invite, the move raised a few eyebrows on Taiwan. "Although the Nationalist Chinese have reacted in relatively low key," a CIA report on the subject read, "Taipei papers are calling Peking's gesture a 'plot' and are suggesting that Washington has been bamboozled by clever Communist tactics."¹⁷⁴ While not as apparently bold as the cancellation of the Taiwan Strait patrol or the re-opening of the Warsaw talks, the exchanges between the US and PRC in the early months of 1971 served their purpose. They managed to keep a relatively low profile on the world

¹⁷⁰ Tad Szulc, "U.S. Lifts Ban on China Travel," March 16, 1971, *New York Times*.

¹⁷¹ Robert B. Semple, "Nixon Eases China Trade Embargo to Allow Nonstrategic Exports," April 15, 1971, *New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com/1971/04/15/archives/nixon-eases-china-trade-embargo-to-allow-nonstrategic-exports-u-s.html>.

¹⁷² "Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon," March 25, 1971, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969-1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969-1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d111>.

¹⁷³ Public Broadcasting Service, "Ping-Pong Diplomacy," PBS American Experience, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/china-ping-pong/>.

¹⁷⁴ Central Intelligence Agency- Directorate of Intelligence, "Intelligence Memorandum: Ping Pong Diplomacy," April 19, 1971, CIA FOIA Electronic Reading Room, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/cia-rdp85t00875r001100100050-0, 1-2>.

stage while also improving the value of the ‘people-to-people’ contacts between their two countries.

Then, on April 29, 1971, the Administration received an important message from Chou En-lai. On the surface, it was simply another invitation for either the President or one of his representatives to pay a visit to Peking. What was crucial about this message was the absence of any mention of annulling the US-ROC defense treaty, either as a prerequisite for discussion or as the primary focus of a hypothetical meeting. “At present, contacts between the peoples of China and the United States are being renewed,” and as such, Chou wanted to extend an invitation to President Nixon to visit Peking.¹⁷⁵ Additionally, the Premier wanted to arrange a preliminary meeting to discuss outstanding issues between the United States and PRC with “a special envoy of the President of the U.S.”¹⁷⁶ The Administration was very pleased with the results of its delay tactic. Per Chou’s suggestion in the telegram, Nixon decided that Kissinger ought to be the envoy which Washington sent at this initial round of negotiations.¹⁷⁷ On May 10th, the American side accepted the PRC’s invitation, conveyed through a message which the President gave to Ambassador Hilaly.¹⁷⁸ Kissinger’s secret trip to Peking was thus secured.

The first stages of the American opening to Peking were fraught with troubles stemming not only from ideological friction, but more immediately, from the stumbling block posed by Taiwan. Despite several misfires, both sides were able to preference the objectives of grand

¹⁷⁵ “Message from Premier Chou En Lai dated April 21, 1971 (Delivered to Mr. Kissinger),” April 27, 1971, pg. 1, in *The Beijing-Washington Back-Channel and Henry Kissinger’s Secret Trip*, National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 66, edited by William Burr, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB66/ch-17.pdf>.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Richard M. Nixon, *RN: the Memoirs of Richard Nixon* (Norwalk, CT: Easton Press, 2012), 653.

¹⁷⁸ “Message from Nixon to Zhou via Hilaly,” May 10, 1971, in *The Beijing-Washington Back-Channel and Henry Kissinger’s Secret Trip*, National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 66, edited by William Burr, 1.

strategy over their tactical points of contention. While the Nixon Administration can be credited for its ability to counter Peking's demands related to the ROC, it was also due to the PRC's alteration of its dogmatic Taiwan stance that negotiations were able to progress the way they did.

Chapter 2: Managing Turbulence

The dynamics of American containment in East Asia were at a crossroads in 1971. While troop deployments of the 1950s and 1960s were scaled back in accordance with the Nixon Doctrine, the United States now had a real chance to transform hostile Peking into a partner for peace in the region. With this new course more tangible than ever, the Administration had to face reality on Taiwan. An invitation to visit the PRC provided the basis for negotiations, but it also gave the Communists a chance to extract concessions.

Indeed, despite the relative absence of Taiwan in Chou's April 1971 invitation and in Nixon's reply, the Administration was under no illusion that they could avoid addressing the topic at the upcoming meeting. While the Premier had seemingly ducked the issue in his April 29th message, he made clear at a subsequent press conference that "the American military presence on Taiwan and in the Taiwan strait area" remained the "key problem between China and the US."¹⁷⁹ Accordingly, the Nixon Administration sought to establish some fundamental terms on their Taiwan stance before Kissinger's meeting in Peking. This first meeting would essentially be a fact-finding mission for the National Security Advisor, wherein he would attempt to gauge the foreign policy attitudes of the PRC.

The response to NSSM 124 from the NSC's Interdepartmental Group for East Asia set several of these axioms. In terms of basic positions on Taiwan, this study differed little from that which NSSM 106 had put forward, operating on the assumption that "there will be no change in our policy of recognition of or support for the Government of the Republic of China."¹⁸⁰ The

¹⁷⁹ CIA Directorate of Intelligence, "Central Intelligence Bulletin," June 24, 1971, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/cia-rdp79t00975a019400010001-5, 2>.

¹⁸⁰ "Response to National Security Study Memorandum 124, Subject- Next Steps Toward the People's Republic of China- NSSM 124," May 27, 1971, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969-1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969-1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d129>.

report stated that though the United States should move to emphasize common grand strategy objectives with the PRC, but also “intend to continue our policy of recognition of, and support for, the [ROC].”¹⁸¹ The formula which the Interdepartmental Group provided for the upcoming meeting in Peking was not unlike that which was already in practice during the days of the Warsaw talks. It advised that the US negotiating position should be to “put the Taiwan issue aside,” but not renege on “insuring [ROC] security from external attack and maintaining necessary military access for ourselves.”¹⁸² These were the parameters which Kissinger’s meeting in the PRC would have to operate within.

Prior to the National Security Advisor’s trip to Peking, Nixon briefed Kissinger one last time. As the President indicated, no part of the negotiations should indicate an American willingness to “sell out” Taiwan.¹⁸³ Moreover, Kissinger’s statements on the ROC should seek to skirt the issue, aiming to be “enigmatic” more than concrete.¹⁸⁴ On the issue of troop deployments, Nixon pointed out that in accordance with the Nixon Doctrine, a progressive withdrawal of American forces on the island satisfied both US and PRC needs. Troop reductions could be expedited, he noted, if the PRC backed off its support for the communists in Indochina and took a more conciliatory stance on settling the Taiwan Strait crisis.¹⁸⁵ As standard operating

¹⁸¹ “Response to National Security Study Memorandum 124, Subject- Next Steps Toward the People’s Republic of China- NSSM 124,” May 27, 1971, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969–1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d129>.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ “Memorandum for the President’s File, Subject- Meeting Between President, Dr. Kissinger and General Haig, Thursday, July 1, Oval Office,” July 1, 1971, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969–1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d137>.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

procedures dictated, these talks as a whole should seek to deal with regional issues that both Washington and Peking could agree on, including the settlement of the Vietnam War, restraining a possible resurgence of Japanese militarism, and above all, constraining Soviet designs on East Asia.¹⁸⁶ Returning to the issue of Taiwan, Nixon told Kissinger that the United States could “not appear to be dumping on our friends” and that the American position be “be somewhat more mysterious about our overall willingness to make concessions in this area.”¹⁸⁷

On July 1st, 1971 Kissinger and a small entourage embarked on their secret trip, which was codenamed POLO I.¹⁸⁸ Though it began under the auspices of a diplomatic tour of South Asia, the National Security Advisor and his group covertly boarded an airplane to Peking while on a stopover in Pakistan. The reason for this diversion, Kissinger recalls, was because a public trip “would have set off a complicated internal clearance project within the US government and insistent demands for consultations from around the world, including Taiwan.”¹⁸⁹ While trying to shrug off the restrictions which ROC protestations would have placed on American freedom of maneuver, Taipei was still on Kissinger’s mind throughout the trip. In a July 3 scope paper, he affirmed that in his talks with PRC negotiators, he would make it clear that as it pertained to Taiwan “the US as a great nation simply will not sell out its friends.”¹⁹⁰ Though he would convey to them the progress that the United States was making in its troop reductions on the

¹⁸⁶ “Memorandum for the President’s File, Subject- Meeting Between President, Dr. Kissinger and General Haig, Thursday, July 1, Oval Office,” July 1, 1971, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969–1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d137>; Note: World War II left deep scars on the Chinese sense of security concerning Japan. In many negotiations, Peking had sought assurances that the United States would not allow Tokyo to acquire nuclear weapons, rebuild its military, or station troops on Taiwan after an American withdrawal from the island.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ “Eureka,” July 9, 2014, Richard Nixon Foundation, <https://www.nixonfoundation.org/2014/07/polo/>.

¹⁸⁹ Henry Kissinger, *On China* (New York: Penguin Books, 2012), 236.

¹⁹⁰ “Scope Paper by Kissinger,” July 3, 1971, [https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/loc-hak-464-6-1-9, 1](https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/loc-hak-464-6-1-9,1). (Page 60 in File)

island, he would also affirm that the existing defense treaty between Washinton and Taipei was a “reality with which both we and the PRC must deal.”¹⁹¹

Along this line of thinking, he noted that while the United States could be willing to withdraw all of its troops from the island some point in the future, this could only be done if Peking agreed to moderate its posture in the region. As Kissinger’s logic went, the PRC’s aggressive foreign policy was the main reason for the US forces on Taiwan, and as this threat abated, there would be no real need for the American military to be directly involved. But, “as long as hostilities go on and a threat continues to exist (including a threat in the Taiwan strait),” he outlined, “the requirement for US forces to be stationed on Taiwan will remain.”¹⁹² For Kissinger, US troops on the island could be used as a bargaining chip against Peking, but the defense treaty itself would be treated as a given. What he therefore sought to further at this first meeting was a “Sino-US modus vivendi on the Taiwan situation which will permit our relations with Peking to develop while we at the same time retain our diplomatic ties and mutual defense treaty with the ROC.”¹⁹³

The Kissinger mission arrived in Peking on July 9th, and the group was posted at the Diaoyutai Guesthouse, which served as the temporary residence of all high ranking foreign envoys visiting the PRC.¹⁹⁴ At 4:30 in the afternoon, Chou En-lai and his entourage arrived to begin the scheduled meeting, and as was tradition among Chinese diplomats, the Premier

¹⁹¹ “Scope Paper by Kissinger,” July 3, 1971, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/loc-hak-464-6-1-9, 1.> (Page 60 in File)

¹⁹² “Scope Paper by Kissinger,” July 3, 1971, CIA FOIA Electronic Reading Room, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/loc-hak-464-6-1-9, 3.> (Page 63 in file)

¹⁹³ “Scope Paper by Kissinger: Chinese Objectives,” Undated, CIA FOIA Electronic Reading Room, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/loc-hak-464-6-1-9, 6.> (Page 10 in File)

¹⁹⁴ Kissinger, *On China*, 238.

allowed the National Security Advisor to speak first.¹⁹⁵ After addressing broad points about the unprecedented nature of the US-PRC talks, Kissinger got down to business on the issues he wanted to discuss with Chou. First on that list was Taiwan. “From the exchange of notes between us, we know [that] to be your principal concern in relations between us,” Kissinger commented, and regarding the withdrawal of US troops from the island, the National Security Adviser was prepared to hear Chou’s views and “discuss the matter practically.”¹⁹⁶ The Premier replied that he did not fully blame Nixon for the current impasse on the Taiwan issue. Instead, he noted that the United States was simply carrying out the terms of Truman and Eisenhower’s past notions of containment. Chou then pressed his demands for the current Administration- first, Nixon must derecognize Taiwan, then “withdraw all its armed forces and dismantle all its military installations on Taiwan,” and abrogate its “illegal” defense treaty with the ROC.¹⁹⁷

Kissinger then attempted a diversionary tactic, wherein he stated that he wished to separate the Taiwan issue into two parts for negotiation- being military concerns over the Taiwan Strait crisis and secondly, political concerns over which state Washington recognized as the ‘legitimate China.’¹⁹⁸ Chou did not buy the National Security Advisor’s feint. Instead, he pointed out that it was not possible from Peking’s perspective to separate these considerations. The Premier proposed a singular solution, affirming that “if relations are to be established...the United States must recognize that the PRC is the sole legitimate government in China and that

¹⁹⁵ Richard Solomon, *Chinese Political Negotiating Behavior, 1967-1984*, RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, CA, 1995, 61.

¹⁹⁶ “Memcon, Kissinger and Zhou,” July 10, 1971, pg. 5 in *The Beijing-Washington Back-Channel and Henry Kissinger’s Secret Trip*, National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 66, edited by William Burr, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB66/ch-35.pdf>.

¹⁹⁷ “Memcon, Kissinger and Zhou,” July 10, 1971, pg. 10, in *The Beijing-Washington Back-Channel and Henry Kissinger’s Secret Trip*, National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 66, edited by William Burr, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB66/ch-35.pdf>.

¹⁹⁸ “Memcon, Kissinger and Zhou,” July 10, 1971, 11.

Taiwan Province is an inalienable part of Chinese territory.”¹⁹⁹ From this arrangement, he noted that “the US-Chiang Kai-shek Treaty would not exist.”²⁰⁰ The two issues, in Chou’s mind, were really a singular one.

Sensing that he could not move any further on the issue for the moment, Kissinger then turned to discussing what moves Peking needed to take in step with efforts by Washington to reduce tensions in East Asia.²⁰¹ He underscored that the United States was already whittling down its presence on the island, and that the United States was “prepared to remove that part [of our forces] related to activities other than to the defense of Taiwan.”²⁰² As he pointed out, two thirds of the American troops on the island were serving roles in the Indochina conflict, and as the peace process of that war progressed, the need for those garrisons would diminish. Kissinger would recall years later, that “we linked Taiwan to the settlement of Vietnam when we linked the withdrawal of our troops from Taiwan to the settlement of Vietnam.”²⁰³ In a classic demonstration of the Nixon-era concept of linkage, the National Security Advisor sought to arrange a partial *quid pro quo* between Washington and Peking. In this connection, the American troop presence on Taiwan would serve as leverage to compel the PRC towards moderating its aggressive posture in East Asia.

This move allowed Kissinger and Chou to segue into a discussion on the issue of American involvement in the Vietnam War, and then following a brief interlude for dinner, to

¹⁹⁹ “Memcon, Kissinger and Zhou,” 12

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Note: Stoessel proceeded with a similar tactic in his talks with Lei

²⁰² “Memcon, Kissinger and Zhou,” July 10, 1971,” 13.

²⁰³ Winston Lord, *Kissinger on Kissinger: Reflections on Diplomacy, Grand Strategy, and Leadership* (New York, NY: All Points Books, 2019), 46.

engage in talks over the presence of US troops in Korea- both of which were of direct concern to Peking's security interests. But, outside of passing references to the current presence of US troops in East Asia, Taiwan was not discussed at all for the duration of the meeting. While true that Kissinger was in no position to begin formal negotiations concerning the US-ROC alliance, he had nevertheless reiterated to Chou the terms that the United States was willing to operate on. Both Washington and Peking acknowledged that Taiwan was the primary diplomatic difference between the two, and the fact that both sides wished to finesse it did not indicate that it was unimportant. Paradoxically, by attempting to 'put the issue aside,' they were actually demonstrating how sensitive it was, and by extension, how crucial it remained to be ambiguous on the subject.

The following day, the Kissinger and Chou groups met in the Great Hall of the People to continue their discussions. The Premier wasted no time in placing Taiwan back on the agenda. Regarding the establishment of full diplomatic relations between the United States and PRC, Chou made several points to Kissinger. Peking desired that the Nixon Administration recognize Peking as the sole legitimate government of 'China,' accede to the fact that Taiwan was part of that entity, forswear any support of an independent Taiwan, and confirm that the island's political status was no longer undetermined.²⁰⁴ These four points were the substance by which all countries that sought relations with Peking had to abide by, often referred to simply as the 'One China Policy'.²⁰⁵ In the case of the United States, however, there was a unique implication behind accepting these demands. Essentially, the points which Chou was advancing would annul

²⁰⁴ "Memorandum for Henry Kissinger from Winston Lord, Subject- Conversations with Chou En-lai: July 10, Afternoon Sessions," August 6, 1971, pg. 5 in *The Beijing-Washington Back-Channel and Henry Kissinger's Secret Trip*, National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 66, edited by William Burr, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB66/ch-35.pdf>.

²⁰⁵ Stanton Jue, "The 'One China' Policy: Terms of Art," *American Journal of Chinese Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (OCTOBER 2005), pp. 159-168, pg. 160.

the US-ROC MDA, as Washington could not possibly retain a legally-binding alliance with a country which it did not recognize to exist. Though Chou conveyed that these terms would not be a precondition for Nixon's visit to Peking, these were the goals which he sought to fulfill in his future discussions with the President.

Additionally, the Premier sought to outflank Kissinger on his linkage of US forces in Vietnam and Taiwan. As Chou conceded, the two issues were indeed linked, but according to Peking, the United States would need the PRC's help in negotiating a settlement in Indochina, and that could only come from full diplomatic relations with Communist China.²⁰⁶ Therefore, Nixon would have to accept the One China Policy and renounce the US-ROC alliance if it wanted out of Vietnam. "Taiwan is not an isolated issue," Chou stated, and asked "if your President were to come to the PRC without a clear cut attitude on this issue, then what impression would this give to the world?"²⁰⁷

Kissinger was now back on the defensive. Seemingly pressured by Chou to make a commitment he did not believe he could keep, the National Security Adviser repeated that both the United States and PRC could satisfy their mutual interests by making a progressive withdrawal of US forces from the island.²⁰⁸ Chou grew demonstrably frustrated by the repetition of this line. The Premier pressed Kissinger harder, saying that he was well aware of this, but that troop reductions would yield little in the way of settling the political issue of Taiwan's

²⁰⁶ "Memorandum for Henry Kissinger from Winston Lord, Subject- Conversations with Chou En-lai: July 10, Afternoon Sessions," August 6, 1971, pg. 9 in *The Beijing-Washington Back-Channel and Henry Kissinger's Secret Trip*, National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 66, edited by William Burr.

²⁰⁷ "Memorandum for Henry Kissinger from Winston Lord, Subject- Conversations with Chou En-lai: July 10, Afternoon Sessions," 10.

²⁰⁸ "Memorandum for Henry Kissinger from Winston Lord, Subject- Conversations with Chou En-lai: July 10, Afternoon Sessions," August 6, 1971, pg. 14 in *The Beijing-Washington Back-Channel and Henry Kissinger's Secret Trip*, National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 66, edited by William Burr, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB66/ch-35.pdf>.

recognition by the United States.²⁰⁹ To this, the National Security Advisor replied that the United States was not plotting to indefinitely separate the two sides on the basis of a “one China, one Taiwan” solution, nor did they intend support the idea of there being ‘two Chinas’ based in Peking and Taipei.²¹⁰ What Kissinger sought to convey to Chou in this statement was not an American abandonment of Taiwan’s security interests, but to indicate that Washington would not stand in the way of a peaceful resolution to the crisis in the Strait. According to his formulation, the Nixon Administration would “accept any political evolution agreed to by the parties,” provided that such an understanding could be arrived at peacefully.²¹¹ In short, if a political solution was possible, then the United States’ military commitments would not prevent it. His statement also affirmed that the United States would not support the KMT’s claim to be the *de jure* rulers of China, which both sides acknowledged was all but a delusion at this point. In the context of prior assurances made to Peking, neither point was anything beyond what the United States had already made clear in prior meetings- that the United States would oppose the use of force by *both* sides and that it wouldn’t stand in the way of an arrangement between them. However, in relation to the understanding of US-ROC ties prior to the Nixon Administration, such positions were precedent-breaking.

Kissinger’s last formal meeting with Chou concluded late on the night of July 10th. For all intents and purposes, the two diplomats had succeeded in fixing their countries’ respective

²⁰⁹ “Memorandum for Henry Kissinger from Winston Lord, Subject- Conversations with Chou En-lai: July 10, Afternoon Sessions,” August 6, 1971, 15.

²¹⁰ “Memorandum for Henry Kissinger from Winston Lord, Subject- Conversations with Chou En-lai: July 10, Afternoon Sessions,” 15-16.

²¹¹ “Memorandum for Henry Kissinger from Winston Lord, Subject- Conversations with Chou En-lai: July 10, Afternoon Sessions,” 13.

foreign policy stances in advance of the proposed Peking visit by President Nixon.²¹² Chou's more conciliatory approach to Taiwan notwithstanding, the meetings had served to reinforce the notion of the island's centrality in US-PRC relations. Before retiring for the night, the Premier instructed Vice Chairman of the Military Affairs Commission Yeh Chien-ying and diplomat Huang Hua to begin drafting the meeting's joint communique with Kissinger.²¹³ The two sides ran into trouble when it came to determining if the President's visit would fully normalize diplomatic relations with the PRC.²¹⁴ According to Huang's formulation, the President's visit would visit Peking for the purpose of formally derecognizing Taiwan and beginning the process of recognizing Communist China.²¹⁵ The National Security Advisor flatly rejected this, as it went well beyond both what PRC diplomats said would be discussed at the meeting, and it directly conflicted with Nixon's instruction to Kissinger that his meeting should not arrange a sell out of Taiwan.²¹⁶ The two sides eventually settled on a straightforward communique which affirmed that the President accepted Chou's invitation and tacked on a hope for future normalization between Peking and Washington.²¹⁷ It would not be the last contentious joint message which Kissinger drafted.

²¹² "Memorandum for Henry Kissinger from Winston Lord, Subject- Memcons of the Final Sessions with the Chinese, July 10, 1971," August 12, 1971, pg. 1 in *The Beijing-Washington Back-Channel and Henry Kissinger's Secret Trip*, National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 66, edited by William Burr, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB66/ch-36.pdf>.

²¹³ "Memorandum for Henry Kissinger from Winston Lord, Subject- Memcons of the Final Sessions with the Chinese, July 10, 1971," August 12, 1971, 7.

²¹⁴ "Memorandum of Conversation," July 11, 1971, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969-1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969-1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d142>.

²¹⁵ Kissinger, *White House Years*, 752.

²¹⁶ Ibid.; "Memorandum for the President's File, Subject- Meeting Between President, Dr. Kissinger and General Haig, Thursday, July 1, Oval Office," July 1, 1971, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969-1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969-1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d137>.

²¹⁷ "Memorandum of Conversation," July 11, 1971, 12:00 Midnight - 1:40 AM, 9:50 AM - 10:35 AM, pg. 4 in *The Beijing-Washington Back-Channel and Henry Kissinger's Secret Trip*, National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 66, edited by William Burr, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB66/ch-37.pdf>.

Kissinger engaged in one last informal conversation with Chou before departing from Peking. Determined to plant Taiwan in the back of the National Security Advisor's mind, the Premier indicated that he believed Nixon's upcoming visit would speed up the process of the ROC's eventual derecognition. Chou remarked that he hoped "by the time we have established diplomatic relations, the treaty between the US and Chiang Kai-shek should not have any effect."²¹⁸ Kissinger gave him the tried and tested reply that the United States would work to ensure that the Taiwan issue will be solved peacefully.²¹⁹ Following a brief exchange of other geopolitical topics, the two men decided that the exact date of President Nixon's trip should be fixed for some point in late 1971 or early 1972. Anticipating both the optimism and the uproar from Kissinger's visit, Chou parted ways with the National Security Advisor noting that news of their secret talks "will shake the world."²²⁰ What the National Security Advisor had learned from his talks with Chou was how far the PRC demands related to Taiwan went. Though the Premier was receptive to Kissinger's idea that Washington and Peking could put their issues aside momentarily, it was clear that the ultimate goal of the Communists was to wholly sever US-ROC relations- both in the diplomatic and military sense of the word.

On July 14th, Kissinger prepared a memorandum for Nixon on his talks with the Premier. As he reported, the meeting helped to secure Nixon's future visit to Peking while also exploring the topics to be discussed at the meeting.²²¹ Regarding Taiwan, Kissinger conveyed that in

²¹⁸ "Memorandum of Conversation," July 11, 1971, 10:35 AM- 11:55 PM, pg. 10 in *The Beijing-Washington Back-Channel and Henry Kissinger's Secret Trip*, National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 66, edited by William Burr, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB66/ch-38.pdf>.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Chou En-lai quoted in Kissinger, *On China*, 255.

²²¹ "Memorandum for the President from Henry Kissinger, Subject- My Talks with Chou En-lai," July 14, 1971, pg. 1 in *The Beijing-Washington Back-Channel and Henry Kissinger's Secret Trip*, National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 66, edited by William Burr, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB66/ch-40.pdf>, 1.

addition to the political derecognition of Chiang's government, Chou was also demanding a total withdrawal of all US forces on the island and an annulment of the 1954 MDA.²²² The latter term was out of the question, but the National Security Adviser noted that the former could be placed on the negotiating table. The two-thirds of the forces on Taiwan related to Indochina could be withdrawn as Vietnamization proceeded, but withdrawal of the latter "would depend on the general state of our relations with the PRC."²²³ After the meeting, Chou also carried the American position on Taiwan to his boss. Upon being informed that the United States was willing to continue its withdrawals from the island, Mao appeared pleased with the results. Surprisingly enough, the Chairman even informed his Premier that settling the war in Indochina was more important than forcing the Americans to concede on Taiwan. "We are not in a hurry on the Taiwan issue because there is no fighting there," Mao observed, "but there is a war in Vietnam and people are being killed there."²²⁴ Evidently, the Chairman was more concerned about the conflict taking place on China's southern flank than even US support for Peking's nemesis.

Damage Control

Chou was right to say that news of Kissinger's trip would shake perceptions about the global balance of power. On July 15th, Nixon appeared before a press conference "to announce a major development in our efforts to build a lasting peace in the world."²²⁵ In his pronouncement, he informed his audience that following Kissinger and Chou's secret meeting, he had accepted

²²² "Memorandum for the President from Henry Kissinger, Subject- My Talks with Chou En-lai," July 14, 1971, pg. 12.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Chen Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 267.

²²⁵ Richard Nixon, "Nixon Announces Trip to China," USC China Institute, July 21, 2011, 3:23, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NwcVv1cxflk>.

the PRC's invitation to a summit. The President asserted that in light of this development, there was bound to be "inevitable speculation" by both American allies and adversaries alike.²²⁶ To allay this concern, he gave an oblique reassurance to Taiwan that "our action in seeking a new relationship with the People's Republic of China will not be at the expense of our old friends."²²⁷ The fallout would come swiftly.

The ROC's fear of a sellout by the Americans was palpable following the July 15th announcement. As Kissinger reported, KMT criticism of the United States' China initiative "continues at a high pitch," with officials "alleging a US abandonment of principle and betrayal of an ally."²²⁸ ROC Premier Yen's execration of the Nixon Administration was especially acerbic. According to him, the President's China initiative "could lead to a tragedy far more serious than that involved in the fall of the Chinese mainland" to the CCP back in 1949.²²⁹ Additionally, by attempting to moderate PRC behavior through diplomacy, he argued that Washington was "harboring unrealistic illusions" about Peking's desire for peace in East Asia.²³⁰ Taiwan's new ambassador to the United States, James Shen, carried many of these criticisms directly to Assistant Secretary Green in a formal diplomatic protest.²³¹ He stated that the Kissinger trip and the arrangement of a summit in Peking could "hardly be described as a

²²⁶ Richard Nixon, "Nixon Announces Trip to China," USC China Institute, July 21, 2011, 3:23, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NwcVv1cxflk>.

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ "Memorandum for the President from Henry Kissinger, Subject- Continuing World-Wide Reaction to Your China Initiative," July 24, 1971, CIA FOIA Electronic Reading Room, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/loc-hak-294-4-29-0>.

²²⁹ New York Times Staff, "Dismay on Taiwan," July 17, 1971, *New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com/1971/07/17/archives/dismay-on-taiwan-tokyo-welcomes-plan-stunned-surprise-reported-in.html>

²³⁰ CIA Foreign Broadcast Information Service, "ROC Premier's Statement on Nixon PRC Trip," July 17, 1971, CIA FOIA Electronic Reading Room, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/loc-hak-115-1-15-6,1>.

²³¹ New York Times Staff, "Taiwan Lodges a Protest," July 16, 1971, *New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com/1971/07/16/archives/taiwan-lodges-a-protest-emergency-conference-taiwan-protests-nixons.html>

friendly act,” adding that the entire free world would suffer as a result.²³² Strangely enough, Chiang Kai-shek did not seem outwardly concerned by the news of July 15th. According to one source close to Chiang, Taiwan’s leader was “very calm” after being passed the news of Nixon’s announcement.²³³ Perhaps this was due to the fact that Chiang had weathered other storms before, or because he felt assured by Nixon’s personal guarantees about the US defense commitment to his regime- either way, the Generalissimo’s qualms were more restrained than those of his subordinates.

Domestically, the China Lobby in the United States was in an uproar. William F. Buckley personally phoned Kissinger to inform him that in light of possible alterations to the “defense situation” of Taiwan, members of his group “have resolved to suspend [their] support of the Administration.”²³⁴ Buckley was not alone in this regard. As the *New York Times* reported, “Mr. Nixon’s former friends in the conservative wing of the Republican party were puzzled and dismayed” by the President’s pursuit of improved relations with the PRC.²³⁵ These defections concerned Nixon greatly, as his rise to prominence as a red-baiter during the McCarthy era had been fueled, in part, by support from the China Lobby. In a private conversation with Secretary of State Rogers on the matter, the President confided that he had to find a way to handle “the

²³² “Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in the Republic of China,” July 16, 1971, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969–1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d145>.

²³³ Interview with Frederick Chien, Taipei, May 16, 1996 quoted in Taylor, *The Generalissimo*, 567.

²³⁴ “Transcript of a Telephone Conversation Between the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) and William F. Buckley, Jr.,” July 28, 1971, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume XIII, Soviet Union, October 1970–October 1971*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v13/d300>, quoted in Xinlan Hu “Danger and Opportunity: The Sino-US Rapprochement as a Domestic Political Crisis in Both Countries, 1971-1972,” Thesis, Georgetown University, May 7, 2018, 39.

²³⁵ New York Times Staff, “Nixon to China: For Most Americans It Was An Event To Cheer,” July 18, 1971, *New York Times*, https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1971/07/18/79677171.pdf?pdf_redirect=true&ip=0

hardliners in the House and Senate...people, frankly, who are still part of the China Lobby, which is still a considerable group.”²³⁶ Nixon’s apprehensions about losing the support of the Lobby dissipated in the proceeding months, as the congressional and public support for his summit with Mao vastly outweighed the subduing factor posed by the hardline supporters of Nationalist China.²³⁷ Moreover, Nixon’s own pedigree as a staunch conservative helped insulate him from accusations that he had gone soft on communism.²³⁸ Members of the ‘old guard’ like Buckley and Walter Judd simply could not resist the rising tide of support for detente with Peking. As one observer noted in hindsight, the President’s July 15th announcement represented the “doomsday” of the China Lobby.²³⁹

Nixon was now in the unenviable position of having to calm the storm that his press conference helped to create. On July 17th, Nixon instructed Ambassador McConaughy to deliver a message to Chiang to guarantee him that there would be no drastic changes to the US-ROC relationship in the foreseeable future. “I wish to assure you that the United States will maintain its ties of friendship with your country,” his message stated, and added that Washington “will continue to honor its defense treaty commitment to the Republic of China.”²⁴⁰ What this indicated was that though Nixon was interested in deepening ties between the US and PRC, he believed that there could be some formula by which Washington could keep its legal treaty

²³⁶ “When You go to Two-China, That’s Going to Appear Awfully Reasonable,” May 27, 1971, in Brinkley, *The Nixon Tapes: 1971-1972*, pp. 139-146, 141.

²³⁷ Nixon, *RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon*, 659.

²³⁸ See: Eric J. Ladley, *Balancing Act: How Nixon Went to China and Remained a Conservative* (New York: iUniverse, 2007).

²³⁹ Washington Post Staff, “The Death Rattle of the China Lobby,” February 2, 1972,, *Washington Post*, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1979/02/02/the-death-rattle-of-the-china-lobby/d5828448-a9e9-4b0d-a765-687ab73f9108/>

²⁴⁰ “Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in the Republic of China, Subject- Letter to President Chiang from Richard Nixon,” July 17, 1971, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969–1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d146>.

commitments to Taipei and have diplomatic ties with Peking. During this time, Kissinger also acted to conciliate the temper of ROC officials. In a meeting with Ambassador Shen, the National Security Adviser offered a similar assurance that the United States “would not betray old friends, or turn anyone over to communism to ease our problems.”²⁴¹ During this conversation, Kissinger also provided Shen with the plan by which the United States sought to use its MDA with Taiwan to leverage peace between Taipei and Peking. As he stated, the United States would “not oppose any peaceful solution which the ROC and the PRC worked out” and that the alliance between the US and ROC would help in compelling both sides towards this end.²⁴² The time frame immediately following Nixon’s July 15 announcement was a time of extreme contention in US-ROC relations. While the United States had damaged its credibility with Chiang’s government in holding meetings with Chou, The Administration sought to use personal assurances about the strength of the US-ROC defense pact to shore up trust with Taiwan. Nixon himself would acknowledge this in his memoirs. “Our friends in Taiwan were terribly distressed,” he recalled, “however, they were reassured that we did not withdraw our recognition of their government and did not renounce our mutual defense commitment.”²⁴³ Moreover, the Nixon Administration backed these assertions with concrete efforts to support Taiwan.

Despite the diplomatic shocks between the United States and the ROC that occurred over the course of 1971, the former continued to reinforce the latter through substantial aid programs.

²⁴¹ “Memorandum of Conversation, Subject- Dr. Kissinger’s Discussions with Ambassador Shen on the President’s Visit to Peking,” July 27, 1971, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969–1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d152>.

²⁴² “Memorandum of Conversation, Subject- Dr. Kissinger’s Discussions with Ambassador Shen on the President’s Visit to Peking,” July 27, 1971, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969–1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d152>.

²⁴³ Nixon, *RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon*, 659.

Economically speaking, the United States sought to provide financing for the country's "import substituting industrialization" to ensure the island country's continued self-sufficiency.²⁴⁴ In 1971 alone, the United States had provided over \$52 million in subsidies to support the ROC's expanding GDP, with most of the funds that year going towards the support of Taiwan's nuclear power program.²⁴⁵ In light of Taiwan's improving economy, the United States began a process of weaning the country off MAP programs, transitioning to the use of FMS as a means to bolster the country's defense capabilities.²⁴⁶ By the end of 1971, aid through MAP programs had dropped to \$18,664,000, but military sales to Taiwan through the FMS program had gone up to \$56,672,000- a substantial increase from 1970.²⁴⁷ Arms sales were not the only means through which the United States continued to bolster ROC military capabilities. In connection with the drawdown of forces in Indochina, the US military was now flush with arms it did not plan to use in connection with the Vietnam War. These 'excess defense articles' were often transferred to the arsenals of American allies, and Taiwan benefited greatly from this. According to one insider, the ROC continued to receive "a steady stream of cut rate weapons out of the mammoth Vietnam stockpile," adding that some of these transfers were often "unauthorized, uncontrolled,

²⁴⁴ Congress of the United States, Joint Economic Committee, "Shrinking the Surplus: External Adjustment Strategies for the Taiwanese Economy," July, 13, 1987, CIA FOIA Electronic Reading Room, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/cia-rdp90m00004r000200030025-6, 2>.

²⁴⁵ Export-Import Bank of the United States, "1971 Annual Report" (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1971), 58-59, <https://www.digitalarchives.exim.gov/digital/collection/ExImD01/id/7783>

²⁴⁶ CIA Directorate of Intelligence, "Intelligence Memorandum: Taiwan's Trade Prospects- A A Quantitative Assessment," November, 1970, CIA FOIA Electronic Archives, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/cia-rdp85t00875r001600030161-0, 13>.

²⁴⁷ US Department of Defense, "Military Assistance and Foreign Military Sales Facts, April 1972" December 1, 1972, (Washington, DC: Defense Security Agency, 1972), reprinted by University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uiug.30112105107392&view=1up&seq=1>, pgs. 6, 16.

and often unknown to the Congress.”²⁴⁸ In fiscal year 1971 alone, the United States was estimated to have delivered \$45,454,000 worth of surplus arms through this program.²⁴⁹ Hence, if Taiwan was feeling that its public friendship with the United States was waning following Nixon’s July 15th announcement, both economic and military data seemed to belie this sentiment.

Showdown at the UN

Aside from the Nixon Administration’s announcement of a trip to Peking, the year 1971 dealt Taiwan another major challenge to its political legitimacy, namely, over its membership in the United Nations (UN). The ROC had been one of the early members of the organization, and by virtue of its post-World War II status as a member of the ‘Big Four,’ it occupied a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. Taiwan’s representation on this committee was an oddity in the 1970s, as its seat therein gave an island of some 14 million people the same political and military influence afforded to superpowers like the United States and Soviet Union. The announcement of the Kissinger-Chou talks had reignited debate on Taiwan’s status within the UN, not just as a member of the Security Council, but as a member of the UN *writ large*. As Kissinger remarked, “our opening to Peking effectively determined the outcome of the UN debate, although we did not realize this immediately.”²⁵⁰

Since the end of the Chinese Civil War in 1949, both the PRC and ROC jockeyed with one another in the UN over their claim to be the sole representative of the entity called ‘China’ in

²⁴⁸ Allen S. Whiting quoted in “Peril to Nixon Trip Seen: Secrecy is Charged in US Aid to Taiwan,” Philadelphia Bulletin, August 11, 1971, in “Mr. Nixon and Taiwan,” CIA FOIA Electronic Reading Room, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/cia-rdp80-01601r000800180001-7>.

²⁴⁹ US Department of Defense, “Military Assistance and Foreign Military Sales Facts, April 1972” December 1, 1972, (Washington, DC: Defense Security Agency, 1972), reprinted by University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uiug.30112105107392&view=1up&seq=1>, 8.

²⁵⁰ Kissinger, *White House Years*, 770

the General Assembly.²⁵¹ While Taipei sought to maintain its position as a member, Peking fought hard on the diplomatic scene to be admitted and for Taiwan to be expelled. This had been the case for well over two decades now. Thus, the ROC's tedious membership in the organization was not a new consideration for the Nixon Administration, nor was it new to US politics during the Cold War. Starting in 1950, the United States was able to construct a reliable bloc of voters in the UN to block further deliberations about Taiwan's membership in the body.²⁵² Through sly political maneuvering, this group had used its simple majority in the General Assembly to make a vote on Taiwan's membership in the organization an 'Important Question,' meaning that any motion to eject the ROC would require a two-thirds majority to actually pass. Year after year, the PRC's allies managed to place the issue on the General Assembly's voting agenda, and the ROC's allies handily voted down any further attempts to seat Peking in the organization.²⁵³

A number of new considerations changed the United States' rigid approach to opposing PRC admission while maintaining that the ROC represented the sole 'China' in the UN. First, from the start of his outreach to the PRC, Nixon had made it clear of the need to include Peking in 'the family of nations' in order to moderate the country's aggressive behavior.²⁵⁴ To continue to oppose Communist China's admission into the body was wholly against the rationale behind 'opening' the PRC. The second challenge to the United States' unqualified support of the ROC

²⁵¹ Sigrid Winkler, "Taiwan's UN Dilemma: To Be or Not To Be," June 20, 2012, Brookings Institute, <https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/taiwans-un-dilemma-to-be-or-not-to-be/>

²⁵² Eric Ting-Lun Huang, "Taiwan's Status in a Changing World: United Nations Representation and Membership," *Annual Survey of International and Comparative Law*, vol. 9, issue 1, 2003.

²⁵³ Evan Luard, "China and the United Nations," *International Affairs* (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-), Oct., 1971, Vol. 47, No. 4 (Oct., 1971), pp. 729-744, 731.

²⁵⁴ Nixon, "Asia After Vietnam," *Foreign Affairs*.

in the UN was that several of Washington's close allies, including Britain, France, Italy, and Canada, had fully recognized the PRC and supported Peking's seating in the organization. The third and most pressing consideration was the effect which decolonization was having on the composition of the General Assembly. Through its Maoist interpretation of Marxism, the PRC had long presented itself as the leader of the Third World, and many of the new post-colonial states in Africa and Southeast Asia assented to this.²⁵⁵ The admission of new left-leaning, PRC-friendly regimes like those of Algeria, Congo-Brazzaville, and Senegal acted to shift support in the General Assembly in favor of Peking's admission.²⁵⁶ The 1970 vote to expel Taiwan and seat the PRC reflected this. When the voting had concluded, the majority had voted in favor of ejecting the Nationalist Chinese and seating the Communist Chinese in the organization. The ROC's allies were able to save the country's seat only by scrounging together 66 votes to make the representation issue an Important Question, defeating the PRC allies by a margin of 14 votes.²⁵⁷ It was the closest vote yet on the issue.

Though it would have been expedient for Nixon to support the PRC and vote to expel the ROC, American policymakers believed that Taiwan's membership in the UN was vital to preserving the country's legitimacy on the world stage, and by extension, its security against a PRC attack. Going back to the Kennedy Administration, the United States had maintained in no uncertain terms that "the best long term political and military defense of Taiwan will require that

²⁵⁵ Jeremy Scott Friedman, *Shadow Cold War: the Sino-Soviet Split and the Third World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 183.

²⁵⁶ Yawsoon Sim, "Taiwan and Africa," *Africa Today*, Vol. 18, No.3, China and Africa (July 1971), pp. 20-24, 22.

²⁵⁷ Evan Luard, "China and the United Nations," *International Affairs* (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-), Oct., 1971, Vol. 47, No. 4 (Oct., 1971), pp. 729-744, 732.

the [ROC] continue to be represented in the UN.”²⁵⁸ Even with the new outreach to Peking, this stance had changed little by the 1970s. According to a CIA report, policymakers in the Nixon Administration “speculated that the loss of UN membership...could break the will of the Nationalists to resist absorption by the Communists, precipitate domestic instability, or inspire aggressive communist actions against the island.”²⁵⁹ The propaganda victory afforded by an expulsion would indeed bolster the PRC’s claim that Taiwan was not a legitimate state, and therefore, would not be protected by the mores of international law. As Nixon feared, the island nation would be regarded as an international “pariah” if expelled from the organization.²⁶⁰ For him, if the US-ROC MDA and its concomitant security relationship were seen as a stop-break on PRC actions against Taiwan, then the country’s membership in the UN provided a second one.

The Nixon Administration was facing an uphill struggle, and as such, its policymakers doubted that the United States could afford to stymie Peking’s admission and retain Taipei’s seat on the Security Council. At the same time, the failure of the United States to support the ROC at this time would be a flagrant abandonment of its ally, and call into question the American willingness to uphold its commitments. To solve this dilemma, the NSC had directed in NSSM 107 that an interdepartmental study be conducted on the question of Chinese Representation (Chirep) in the UN. One of the options which the study recommended, and the one which the Administration would widely accept, was that the United States advocate a “dual representation” approach wherein the American delegation would maintain its commitment to ROC

²⁵⁸ “Draft Memorandum from the Counselor of the Department of State (McGhee) to Secretary of State Rusk, Subject- A New Basic Approach to the GRC,” March 10, 1961, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1961–1963, Volume XXII, Northeast Asia*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v22/d12>.

²⁵⁹ CIA Directorate of Intelligence, “Intelligence Memorandum: Prospects for Stability on Taiwan,” February, 10, 1972, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/cia-rdp85t00875r001100130029-1, 10>.

²⁶⁰ “Fourteen Million Against 750 Million,” June 30, 1971, in Brinkley, *Nixon Tapes 1971-1972*, 189.

representation but not oppose PRC membership in the body.²⁶¹ This maneuver was bound to meet stiff opposition from both Peking and Taipei. Despite lip service paid to PRC diplomats that the United States would not support a ‘two China’ solution to the Taiwan Strait crisis, the American position on the Chirep issue demonstrated that these promises were nothing more than sweet diplomatic nothings. The ROC, likewise, had made it clear that it would not accept dual representation, as this would undercut Chiang’s claims to be the *de jure* leader of ‘China’. The Generalissimo had indicated that this formula was anathema to him, stating that “there is no room for patriots and traitors to live together.”²⁶²

The deadline for such a decision was approaching fast. During the UN’s 26th Session, the PRC’s sole ally, the People’s Republic of Albania, announced its intention to introduce a resolution which would eject the ROC and seat the PRC at both the General Assembly and on the Security Council.²⁶³ As Secretary of State Rogers informed Nixon, the debate on this so-called ‘Albanian Resolution’ was slated to begin on October 18, 1971.²⁶⁴ At a press conference on September 16th that year, Nixon publicly laid out the United States’ position on the matter. While seating Peking in the General Assembly and the Security Council “reflects the realities of the situation,” he conceded, the American delegation would “vote against the expulsion of the Republic of China” from the organization.²⁶⁵ The Administration planned to mount a rearguard

²⁶¹ “Response to National Security Study Memorandum 107,” Undated, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume V, United Nations, 1969–1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v05/d326>.

²⁶² “Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in the Republic of China,” April 5, 1961, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1961–1963, Volume XXII, Northeast Asia*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v22/d19>.

²⁶³ Note: The 26th Session lasted from 1971-1972

²⁶⁴ “Memorandum From Secretary of State Rogers to President Nixon, Subject- Status Report on the Chinese Representation Issue,” October 12, 1971, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume V, United Nations, 1969–1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v05/d417>.

²⁶⁵ Tad Szulc, “Nixon Says Seating Peking in UN ‘Reflects Realities’,” September 17, 1971, *The New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com/1971/09/17/archives/nixon-says-seating-pekings-in-un-reflects-realities-nixon-says-stand.html>.

action at the UN, wherein they would attempt to save Taiwan's seat by voting to make the Albanian Resolution an Important Question while supporting a motion admitting the PRC and seating them on the Security Council.²⁶⁶ The dual representation formula was the only way this could happen. On October 1, the State Department issued a high priority telegram to all its foreign posts in which it directed American diplomats to gauge where its allies stood on Taiwan's representation. The telegram noted forebodingly that "if the ROC should be deprived of representation, this would be a dangerous precedent."²⁶⁷

At this point in time, the Nixon Administration moved to consult Taiwan on its plans for how to approach the UN issue. In a meeting with ROC Foreign Minister Chou Shu-kai, Nixon assured the diplomat that the American delegation was "prepared to fight" on Taiwan's behalf, and that the country's presence in the UN "is a fact of life for us and we will do nothing to give it up."²⁶⁸ Additionally, he noted that the decision of the General Assembly, whether in Taiwan's favor or against it, would not dilute the existing MDA.²⁶⁹ Kissinger discussed analogous points with Ambassador Shen later on October 10th. The National Security Advisor informed him that the task before them in the UN would be "painful," but nevertheless, the United States "would certainly do nothing to sacrifice our central interests," in reference to the alliance with Taiwan.²⁷⁰

²⁶⁶ Ministry of Foreign Affairs Japan, "Section 16: United Nations Stands at a New Turning Point" in *Diplomatic Bluebook: Review of Foreign Relations April 1971-March 1972*, Japan Reference Series, Public Information Bureau, July 1972, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/other/bluebook/1971/1971-contents.htm>

²⁶⁷ "Telegram From the Department of State to All Posts, Subject- Chirep Status Report and Action Program," October 1, 1971, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969-1976, Volume V, United Nations, 1969-1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v05/d413>.

²⁶⁸ "There is no Clever Way of Being Defeated," in Brinkley and Nichter, *The Nixon Tapes: 1971-1972*, pp. 58-59).

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ "Memorandum of Conversation, Subject- Questions from the Chinese Ambassador Concerning Mr. Kissinger's Visit to Peking and the Situation in the UN," October, 15, 1971, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969-1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969-1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d159>.

Shen reacted positively to the points which Kissinger had raised, and added that for Taiwan in the long term, “being in or out of the UN was not important, what our enemies wanted was for us to give up our defense relationship.”²⁷¹ On top of the UN issue, Kissinger also used this meeting with Shen to notify the Ambassador that he would be making one final visit to Peking ahead of Nixon’s own trip. Evidently, the National Security Advisor did not want to take the same flak he had back in July after his secret meeting with Chou. Meetings such as these spoke to the greater degree of transparency in US-ROC relations in the latter half of 1971, spurred in large part by the looming debate on Taiwan at the UN.²⁷² As Nixon acknowledged, Taipei’s seat at the General Assembly and on the Security Council was of great psychological importance to them, and taking a firm stand on their behalf was a means of mending the rifts in the alliance that had formed over the last several months. At stake was not just Taiwan’s membership on an international body, but to a large degree, its status as a legitimate state entity.

The American Ambassador to the UN, George Bush, was to be the Nixon Administration’s point man in defending Taiwan in the General Assembly. Per Washington’s plan, the US delegation would submit a resolution for dual representation of both the ROC and PRC in the organization while gathering a coalition to oppose the Albanian Resolution.²⁷³ Should those two motions fail, the American side would revert back to its ‘Important Question’ strategy. As the President instructed Bush on the matter, the Ambassador was to “go all out—especially

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² Note: Jaw-Ling Joanne Chang demonstrates the depth of consultation between Taipei and Washington on the UN issue in greater detail in the section titled ‘The Dual Representation Issue’ in the chapter “Taiwan’s Policy Toward the United States, 1969-1978,” in William Kirby, et al., *Normalization of US-China Relations: An International History*, Harvard University Asia Center, 2005, pp. 209-251.

²⁷³ Monique Chu, “Taiwan and the United Nations - Withdrawal in 1971 was an historic turning point,” September 12, 200, *Taipei Times*, <https://www.taipeitimes.com/News/local/archives/2001/09/12/0000102595>.

on procedural matters.”²⁷⁴ Despite the efforts of Bush and the Delegation to scrounge together a coalition in favor of Taiwan, the situation at the UN’s 26th Session looked grim. Deputy Secretary for National Security Affairs Alexander Haig reported that the United States’ crucial resolutions did not have the votes to win in the General Assembly, and the Important Question and Dual Representation strategies were likely to be beaten by the Albanian Resolution.²⁷⁵

The UN vote proceeded along the lines which Haig had predicted. On October 25th, the General Assembly voted on the Albanian Resolution, which won handily with 76 in favor and 35 opposing.²⁷⁶ Thereafter, the US resolution to make this motion an Important Question was defeated by a vote of 55 in favor and 59 against.²⁷⁷ Much to the chagrin of the American delegation, the General Assembly also struck down the dual representation strategy.²⁷⁸ As Bush concluded, last minute lobbying by the Arab countries, Yugoslavia, Zambia, Pakistan, Somalia, and even US allies Britain and France acted to tip the scales in favor of Peking’s admission.²⁷⁹ Rather than being officially ejected from the organization, the ROC made one last defiant move. Taiwan’s Foreign Minister Chou Shu-kai took the podium at the General Assembly, declaring

²⁷⁴ Handwritten notes, “China vote and later private meeting,” Sept-Oct 1971, folder 3, OA/ID 25863, United Nations Files, George Bush Collection, George Bush Presidential Library, quoted in James W. Weber Jr., “The First Cut is the Deepest: George H.W. Bush and CHIREP at the U.N. 1970-1971,” Thesis, University of New Orleans, 2020, 35.

²⁷⁵ “Memorandum From the President’s Deputy Assistant for National Security Affairs (Haig) to President Nixon, Subject- UN Chirep Situation,” Undated, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume V, United Nations, 1969–1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v05/d422>.

²⁷⁶ “Memorandum From the President’s Deputy Assistant for National Security Affairs (Haig) to President Nixon, Subject- UN Chirep Situation,” Undated, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume V, United Nations, 1969–1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v05/d422>.

²⁷⁷ Albanian Affairs Study Group, “Albanian Resolution Wins Historic Victory in UN, People’s China Takes its Rightful Place in World Body,” *Albania Report*, Vol.2, No. 2, October-November 1971. <https://www.bannedthought.net/Albania/ForeignSupport/USA/AlbaniaReport/AlbaniaReport-NY-V02N02-1971.pdf>

²⁷⁸ Frank Chiang, “Political Status of Taiwan,” in *The One-China Policy: State, Sovereignty, and Taiwan’s International Legal Status*, (Amsterdam, NED: Elsevier Ltd, 2018), pp. 131-178.

²⁷⁹ “Telegram From the Mission to the United Nations to the Department of State,” October 26, 1971, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume V, United Nations, 1969–1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v05/d429>.

his country had decided to “withdraw from the organization which it helped to establish.”²⁸⁰ Thus, after 22 years of membership, the ROC left the United Nations. Though defeated, the Nixon Administration did not despair at their efforts. As Secretary Rogers later surmised, “we lost, but our position was right.”²⁸¹ Chiang, obstinate to the end, also made it a point for the ROC to go down swinging. In a press release statement, the Generalissimo decried the conduct of the General Assembly, and proclaimed that his country’s withdrawal from the UN “presaged the demise of the United Nations itself.”²⁸² Isolated seemingly on all fronts, his regime now depended almost exclusively on the United States for international support.

The majority of 1971 was an exceptionally difficult time for US-ROC relations, and to borrow Kissinger’s frequent description of the situation, it was a “painful” one.²⁸³ While it was one thing to formulate rosy portraits about a future balance of power engendered by a US-PRC relationship, it was another thing to deal with the harm that a potential opening was bound to inflict on American allies. By every measure, Taiwan bore the brunt of it. During this time, the Nixon Administration found itself shuttling back and forth between reaching out to Peking and reassuring Taipei. Though Washington generated no shortage of formulas about how to minimize the damage done to the US-ROC alliance and ‘open’ the PRC, none of these strategies

²⁸⁰ Taiwan Review Staff, “We Have Only Begun to Fight,” November 1, 1971, *Taiwan Review* reprinted by *Taiwan Today*, <https://taiwantoday.tw/news.php?unit=4&post=6104>.

²⁸¹ “Telegram From the Embassy in Japan to the Department of State, Subject- Connally Visit, East Asia, Suharto,” November 12, 1971, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume XX, Southeast Asia, 1969–1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v20/d323>.

²⁸² Chiang Kai-shek quoted by ROC diplomat in “Chiang Kai Shek Statement Following Taiwan's Expulsion From United Nations, October 26, 1971,” Associated Press Archive, YouTube, July 21, 2015, 1:10, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cYznz1qvSrw>.

²⁸³ “Memorandum From the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon, Subject- My October China Visit: Drafting the Communique,” Undated, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969–1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d165>.

provided a solution which satisfied both. At least for now, Nixon and Kissinger's sought after "modus vivendi" continued to elude them.²⁸⁴

²⁸⁴ "Scope Paper by Kissinger," Undated, CIA FOIA Electronic Reading Room, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/loc-hak-464-6-1-9>, 6. (Page 10 in File)

Chapter 3: Sleight of Hand

Though Nixon's 1972 trip to China should have been a development which his Administration viewed with great optimism, it was obvious that the US-ROC defense relationship hung in the balance. As normalization between Washington and Peking appeared to draw closer, the major question which American policymakers wrestled with was how to recalibrate their alliance with Taiwan without jeopardizing their security. No doubt, the President would face great pressure in Peking from politicians like Chou to renege on this commitment. From 1972 onward, the United States aimed to achieve a degree of ambiguity on the subject-committing itself to a peaceful solution while its partnership with the ROC assumed a decidedly deterrent nature. Such a balance would allow the Administration to play the role of distant moderator in the possible detente between Taipei and Peking.

Amid the flare-up of Taiwan's departure from the UN, Kissinger made one final trip to Peking in October before Nixon's summit there. Though the PRC had responded to the American position on Taiwan at the UN with its usual acerbic rhetoric, the attacks from its state-run media appeared to have little effect on substantive relations with Washington.²⁸⁵ Indeed, Premier Chou's relatively friendly greeting to Kissinger on the first day of the meeting seemed to belie any serious falling-out between the two countries.²⁸⁶ On the second day of their talks, they turned to their respective countries' most sensitive issues, chiefly, that of Taiwan. Kissinger reiterated the American position that the United States planned to withdraw two-thirds of its forces from the island once the war in Vietnam terminated, but that further reductions were

²⁸⁵ Angela Torelli, "The Costs of Realism: The Nixon Administration, the People's Republic of China, and the United Nations," *The Journal of American-East Asian Relations*, 2012, Vol. 19, No. 2 (2012), pp. 157-182, 179.

²⁸⁶ "Memorandum of Conversation," October 20, 1971 in *Negotiating US-Chinese Rapprochement*, National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 70, edited by William Burr, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB70/doc10.pdf>.

conditional on Peking's efforts to improve relations with Washington.²⁸⁷ For the first time, he then presented to Chou the idea of Peking renouncing the use of force to resolve the Straits crisis.²⁸⁸ Though Kissinger expressed that it was vital for a solution to be achieved through peaceful means, he assured Chou that the actual terms of such an agreement was "for the [Nationalist and Communist] Chinese themselves to settle."²⁸⁹

Chou seemed pleased with this arrangement, but required clarification. He then asked what would happen to the US-ROC MDA if Taiwan were peacefully unified with the Mainland.²⁹⁰ As Kissinger stated, the purpose of the treaty was primarily to defend the island from a military takeover by the PRC, and if Peking settled the Straits crisis peacefully while improving its relationship with Washington, then the MDA could be abrogated.²⁹¹ He also added that under no circumstances would the United States allow Japan to begin stationing troops on Taiwan, which had been a frequent sticking point in talks with PRC diplomats.²⁹² After the two briefly discussed Taiwan's status in the UN, their conversation then turned to the issue of the Vietnam War, which Chou identified as "an even more urgent issue" to be settled between the

²⁸⁷ "Memorandum of Conversation," October 21, 1971, in *Negotiating US-Chinese Rapprochement*, National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 70, edited by William Burr, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB70/doc11.pdf>.

²⁸⁸ "Memorandum of Conversation," October 21, 1971, 21.

²⁸⁹ "Memorandum of Conversation," October 21, 1971, 27.

²⁹⁰ "Memorandum of Conversation," October 21, 1971, 28.

²⁹¹ "Memorandum of Conversation," October 21, 1971, in *Negotiating US-Chinese Rapprochement*, National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 70, edited by William Burr, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB70/doc11.pdf>, 28.

²⁹² Note: Japan also had a tenuous claim to ownership over Taiwan, owing to the fact that the Japanese Empire had ruled the island as an overseas province under the name 'Formosa'. Following the end of World War II, the island was legally transferred back to the Republic of China. Despite their defeat of the KMT in 1949, the CCP had never established formal control over Taiwan, and as such, Peking feared that Tokyo might one day re-assert its claims there. In a strange sort of way, Japan could be considered to have a stronger claim to ownership over the island than even the PRC.

two sides.²⁹³ This was in large part due to the fact that, militarily speaking, the PRC was deeply involved in aiding the communist war effort in Indochina. Having an existing conflict so close to its southern flank was, apparently, more concerning than simply the *presence* of American troops on one of the islands which Peking claimed. It was thus an issue that both sides could agree to neutralize, as neither wanted to prolong the conflict any further. Focusing on this issue of mutual concern provided for more productive conversation than about Taiwan. The Premier had clearly taken to heart Mao's earlier comment that the wars in Indochina were more proximally pressing than settling the Taiwan Strait dispute.²⁹⁴

Despite the relative ease with which the two diplomats moved through their talks over the past several days, they hit their greatest point of contention when it came to drafting a joint communique ahead of Nixon's visit. Per diplomatic protocol, this would be the formative document which set the terms for the President's summit in February.²⁹⁵ In the early drafting process of the American position, the National Security Advisor and his staff intentionally limited references to Taiwan, hoping to maintain a degree of constructive ambiguity.²⁹⁶ Upon receiving the US draft statement for review. However, Chou and his team were repulsed. Specifically, they took issue with the draft's affirmation that the Taiwan Strait crisis should be resolved through peaceful means, which the Premier resisted on the grounds that it

²⁹³ "Memorandum of Conversation," October 21, 1971, 4:42:-7:17PM, *Negotiating US-Chinese Rapprochement*, National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 70, edited by William Burr, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB70/doc12.pdf>, 9.

²⁹⁴ Note: Other factors which made this so will be discussed further in a later section.

²⁹⁵ Kissinger, *White House Years*, 781.

²⁹⁶ James K. Sebenius, L. Alexander Green, Eugene B. Kogan, "Henry A. Kissinger as Negotiator: Background and Key Accomplishments," (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School, 2014), https://www.hbs.edu/ris/Publication%20Files/15-040_4d9f0e6b-bb9f-451c-8aa4-7d5f66aa3429.pdf, 27.

acknowledged the ‘Chiang clique’ on Taiwan as a sovereign entity.²⁹⁷ This rejection was particularly telling in light of a prior statement which Chou made to Kissinger, in which the former stated that Peking reserved the right to settle the Strait crisis by “other means” if a peaceful resolution were not reached within roughly six years.²⁹⁸ After meeting with Mao to discuss the American draft, Chou then arranged a follow-up with Kissinger on October 24, launching into a fairly confrontational diatribe on the issue of Taiwan.²⁹⁹ In his polemic, he reasserted the demand that the United States must commit to renouncing its alliance with the ROC, and that the communique would be the vehicle to announce this change.³⁰⁰ Kissinger had proven adept in his ability to rhetorically maneuver around the Premier’s insistences, but he now provided Chou with an “unusually hard” reply.³⁰¹ The National Security Advisor informed the Premier that Peking “would not respect us if we started our new relationship by betraying our old friends,” giving him one final assurance that “we would not renounce our Taiwan ties.”³⁰² Though Chou had cut through Kissinger’s ambiguity, he did not get the reply he wanted.

As a consequence, the two parties began a lengthy exchange of drafts and counter drafts of the communique. By evening on October 24th, Chou’s staff had submitted an innovative formula for the communique. Rather than seeking to establish a Sino-US consensus on all issues

²⁹⁷ “Kissinger’s Second Visit to China in October 1971,” Xin zhongguo waijiao fengyun, Vol. 3, pp. 59-70 in *Negotiating US-Chinese Rapprochement*, National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 70, edited by William Burr, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB70/doc21.pdf>, 7.

²⁹⁸ “Memorandum From the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon, Subject- My October Visit: Discussions of the Issues,” November 1971, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969–1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d164>.

²⁹⁹ “Memorandum for the President: My October China Visit: Drafting the Communique,” undated, CIA FOIA Electronic Reading Room, [https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/loc-hak-467-5-1-7, 2](https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/loc-hak-467-5-1-7,2). (Page 91 in File)

³⁰⁰ Kissinger, *White House Years*, 782.

³⁰¹ Ibid.

³⁰² Ibid.

that Nixon was due to discuss in Peking, the PRC delegation instead proposed that the statement would cover policy positions on which the two sides *disagreed* while also stating their convergent views.³⁰³ It was a novel approach to how diplomatic communiques were normally crafted. Evidently, the PRC had come to see the value of the American approach to negotiations, namely, in demonstrating their ability to acknowledge existing differences but also show a willingness to cooperate in the interests of grand strategy.³⁰⁴ As it would develop, this approach underscored the fact that in the long term, the nascent US-PRC partnership would be one of convenience, not of principle.

Under this rubric, Kissinger submitted his own addition to the communique, which would deal specifically with the Taiwan issue. For him, the dilemma would be “how to recognize [the policy of] One China” without abandoning American support for its ROC ally.³⁰⁵ To do this, the National Security Advisor drew up a formula by which the United States would simply acknowledge the PRC’s claim over Taiwan, without formally declaring Washington’s support or opposition to this assertion. Kissinger’s new section opened by stating that the US side “acknowledges that all Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Straits maintain there is but one China and that Taiwan is a province of China.”³⁰⁶ On this point, neither the most staunch member of the CCP or the KMT could disagree. Kissinger’s addition went on to affirm the American interest in resolving the Straits crisis through peaceful means, the Administration’s

³⁰³ “Kissinger’s Second Visit to China in October 1971,” Xin zhongguo waijiao fengyun, Vol. 3, pp. 59-70 in *Negotiating US-Chinese Rapprochement*, National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 70, edited by William Burr, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB70/doc21.pdf>, 9-10.

³⁰⁴ Green, *By More Than Providence*, 352.

³⁰⁵ Lord, *Kissinger on Kissinger*, 45.

³⁰⁶ “Memorandum of Conversation,” October 26, 1971, *Negotiating US-Chinese Rapprochement*, National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 70, edited by William Burr, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB70/doc19.pdf>, 2.

desire to remove its forces “as tensions diminish,” and a promise that the United States would not use its military presence to stop such a peaceful settlement.³⁰⁷ Along the lines of constructive ambiguity, the wording of this statement was very elastic. Without affirming or denying Peking’s claim to Taiwan, the United States resolved to state a fact that both ‘Chinas’ had acknowledged for decades now- that there was one ‘China’ and that Taiwan was a part of it. In this way, the United States mollified the PRC while deliberately keeping the issue of the US-ROC MDA totally off of the negotiating table.

Kissinger pitched this addition to Chou early in the morning on October 26th. Though the Premier did not reject the wording out of pocket, he criticized the wording of the Taiwan section for its vagueness.³⁰⁸ Kissinger informed him that this was a fundamental difference between what the United States could propose versus what the PRC was seeking. To uphold its credibility with the ROC (and indeed the world), the American side had to maintain a degree of elasticity on the issue. “The [Premier] seeks clarity,” Kissinger observed to Chou, “and I am trying to achieve ambiguity.”³⁰⁹ For the moment, the PRC side could not be swayed. As Chou generalized, his people would be “dissatisfied with something that is ambiguous.”³¹⁰ In any case, the two sides recognized that they were unlikely to finish drafting the communique before Nixon was able to speak with Mao in February the following year.³¹¹ Though Kissinger and Chou had managed to

³⁰⁷ “Memorandum of Conversation,” October 26, 1971, *Negotiating US-Chinese Rapprochement*, National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 70, edited by William Burr, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB70/doc19.pdf>, 2.

³⁰⁸ “Memorandum of Conversation, Beijing, October 26, 1971, 5:30-8:10 p.m.,” October 26, 1971, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume E–13, Documents On China, 1969–1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve13/d55>.

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ “Memorandum of Conversation,” October 26, 1971, *Negotiating US-Chinese Rapprochement*, National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 70, edited by William Burr, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB70/doc19.pdf>, 11.

agree on a general formula for the joint communique, its specifics were still undecided when the National Security Advisor left Peking later that day.³¹²

Preparations and Assurances

The October meeting failed to complete the drafting process for a joint statement, but it did lay the foundation for the so-called ‘Shanghai Communique’ which Nixon and Mao would assent to in February 1972. Much of what had been drafted between Kissinger and Chou would make its way into the final document, but the entire section on Taiwan remained blank at the end of the trip. As Kissinger observed, if the United States could finesse this issue, the Administration would have “have a communique that is realistic, clear, dignified, reassuring to our friends and positive for the further development of US-[PRC] relations.”³¹³ In his report to Nixon, the National Security advisor reiterated the points he had discussed with Chou regarding Taiwan- that the United States would continue to reduce its presence on the island, accept a peaceful resolution of the PRC-ROC dispute, and would not compel either side towards a ‘two-China’ or a ‘one China, one Taiwan’ solution.³¹⁴ What undergirded these assumptions, however, was the idea that Peking was willing to accept a peaceful resolution in the first place. In the absence of a negotiated settlement to the Straits crisis, Kissinger stated to Nixon that any softening of the US-ROC security arrangement would remain “unlikely.”³¹⁵

While Kissinger had been away in Peking, the Chinese Communists had scored a great geopolitical victory through the ROC’s UN ouster. According to American estimates, “a major

³¹² “Detailed Itinerary of Visit to Peking (October 20-October 26, 1971),” Undated, CIA FOIA Electronic Reading Room, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/loc-hak-467-5-1-7>, 4. (Page 86 in File)

³¹³ “Memorandum for the President from Henry Kissinger: My October China Visit: Drafting the Communique,” Undated, CIA FOIA Electronic Reading Room, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/LOC-HAK-467-5-1-7.pdf>, 8. (Page 97 in file)

³¹⁴ “Memorandum for the President: My October China Visit: Discussions of the Issues,” 15. (Page 53 in file)

³¹⁵ “Memorandum for the President: My October China Visit: Discussions of the Issues,” 19, (Page 57 in file)

challenge to the PRC's claim to Taiwan ha[d] been defeated" following the passage of the Albanian Resolution.³¹⁶ Despite the psychological victory which Peking had been afforded, it meant next to nothing in terms of its effect on the US-ROC alliance or security ties. Immediately following the news of Taiwan's withdrawal from the UN, Ambassador McConaughy had met with Chiang to affirm that "nothing has happened in the United Nations which will in any way affect the defense commitment... of the United States to the Republic of China."³¹⁷ Fresh from his meeting in Peking, Kissinger carried this same commitment to ROC Foreign Minister Chou Shu-kai, to which the latter replied that ties with the US would be of "preeminent importance" going forward.³¹⁸ Contrary to the alarmist reports that UN expulsion could incite wide domestic instability on the island, Chou additionally conveyed to the National Security Advisor that prospects for Taiwan's political and economic prosperity appeared positive for the foreseeable future.³¹⁹ Later studies of Taiwan's development would confirm this perspective, backing up the idea that the island's developmental success owed little to its membership in the UN.³²⁰ Its status on the world stage, meanwhile, continued to be secured by virtue of its alliance with Washington.³²¹ Reports of the ROC's 'death' in the aftermath the UN decision thus appeared to have been greatly exaggerated.

³¹⁶ Foreign Broadcast Information Service, "Trends in Communist Propaganda," November 3, 1971, CIA FOIA Electronic Reading Room, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/cia-rdp85t00875r000300040045-2>, 3.

³¹⁷ Taiwan Review Staff, "We Have Only Begun to Fight," November 1, 1971, *Taiwan Review* reprinted in *Taiwan Today*, <https://taiwantoday.tw/news.php?unit=4&post=6104>.

³¹⁸ "Memorandum of Conversation, Subject- Mr. Kissinger's Visit to Peking, the UN Vote on Chirep, and U.S.-ROC Relations," October 29, 1971, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969-1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969-1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d169>.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

³²⁰ CIA Directorate of Intelligence, "Weekly Summary, Special Report: Nationalist China Revisited," June 28, 1974, CIA FOIA Electronic Reading Room, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/cia-rdp85t00875r001500060012-3>, 4

³²¹ CIA Directorate of Intelligence, "Nationalist China Revisited," 5.

Ahead of Nixon's trip to Peking, the Administration emphasized through both public and private assurances to the ROC that the summit in February would not dissolve the alliance between the two countries. First, Kissinger met with Ambassador James Shen to discuss his October meeting in Peking as well the President's forthcoming visit in February. As the National Security Advisor informed the diplomat, the United States had every reason to want Taiwan to "stay alive, and to maintain their integrity and their identity," with neither the meeting the previous month nor the UN vote having any impact on this.³²² Regarding Peking's perspective, he also added that, so long as the PRC believed it needed a partnership with Washington, policymakers like Chou were simply going to have to "overcome or ignore inconsistencies" like the US alliance with the ROC.³²³ On December 30th, Kissinger convened another meeting with Ambassador Shen, this time with Foreign Minister Chou accompanying him. In the most blunt terms possible, the National Security Adviser stated that though a PRC attack against Taiwan was unlikely in the near future, "if you are attacked, we will come to your defense."³²⁴ Relating specifically to military aid, Kissinger assured the two diplomats that the United States would continue to furnish arms for Taiwan's defense apparatus.³²⁵ Pursuant to the interests of both states, this equipment would largely be of a defensive rather than offensive nature.³²⁶ To round things off, Nixon gave his most public assurance to Taiwan during his annual report to Congress

³²² "Memorandum of Conversation, Subject- Mr. Kissinger's Trip to Peking and US-ROC Relations," November 15, 1971, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969-1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969-1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d172>.

³²³ Ibid.

³²⁴ "Memorandum of Conversation," December 30, 1971, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969-1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969-1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d180>.

³²⁵ Ibid.

³²⁶ Ibid.

on US foreign policy in early February 1972. In familiar terms, the President stated that “our new dialogue with the PRC would not be at the expense of friends,” and added that “we shall maintain our friendship, our diplomatic ties, and our defense commitment [to Taiwan].”³²⁷ From this, Taipei had finally received the public re-affirmation of the US-ROC alliance it had been pressing the Administration to give for upwards of two years.

Mr. Nixon Goes to Peking

On February 17, 1972, Nixon, Kissinger, and their entourage left Washington for their summit in Peking. Four days later, their plane touched down at Hung Chiao Airport in Shanghai, where they were greeted by Chou En-lai.³²⁸ In a highly symbolic gesture, the President shook the Premier’s hand upon disembarking the plane- a sharp reversal from the moment when Secretary of State John Foster Dulles had refused Chou’s handshake at the Geneva talks in 1954.³²⁹ It was a testament to just how much relations between Peking and Washington had developed since the Eisenhower Administration. As Chou would remark to the President, “your handshake came over the vastest ocean in the world- twenty-five years of no communication.”³³⁰

These friendly gestures papered over the fact that Nixon came prepared to play hardball. Both he and Kissinger knew all too well the possibility that the American commitments to Taiwan were likely to confound the talks over the next week. Prior to leaving for the trip, Nixon expressed doubt that the PRC would accept a ‘peaceful resolution’ clause in the still-incomplete

³²⁷ Richard Nixon, “Third Annual Report to the Congress on United States Foreign Policy,” February 9, 1972, transcribed by The American Presidency Project, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/third-annual-report-the-congress-united-states-foreign-policy>.

³²⁸ Max Frankel, “Historic Handshake: President Nixon Being Welcomed By Premier Chou En-lai. At The Left Is Mrs. Nixon,” February 21, 1972, New York Times, <https://www.nytimes.com/1972/02/21/archives/a-quiet-greeting-no-airport-speeches-plane-stops-in-shanghai-an.html>.

³²⁹ Ibid.

³³⁰ Chou En-lai, quoted in Nixon, *RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon*, 665.

Taiwan section of the joint communique. Kissinger was of the opinion that while the American side could place this proposition into their section, the idea that Peking would agree to such terms was “almost inconceivable.”³³¹ With this in mind, Nixon affirmed to his National Security Advisor that the US delegation should operate under the assumption that the United States would not be “giving up on our treaty” either during the talks or afterwards.³³²

Nixon had not expected to meet with Mao during the Summit, such a possibility was a remote one at best. However, on the day of the President’s arrival, the aging leader of the PRC suddenly felt energized enough to take part in the meetings.³³³ Shortly after reaching Peking, Mao requested a meeting with the President at this Zhongnanhai residence.³³⁴ Once there, the Chairman greeted Nixon with a characteristically sardonic remark, noting that “our common old friend, Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, doesn’t approve of this.”³³⁵ Having opened on a reference to the US-ROC relationship, it was therefore interesting that when Nixon broached the idea of discussing Taiwan, Mao brushed this suggestion off. Rather than beginning with a discussion of the “troublesome problems” between them, the Chairman instead wanted to talk more broadly about the international scene, especially issues relating to Japan, Pakistan, and the Koreans.³³⁶ The first day’s discussions with Mao were a surprisingly banal affair, and outside of

³³¹“The American Role in Asia,” February 14, 1972, in Brinkley and Nichter, *The Nixon Tapes 1971-1972*, 403.

³³² Ibid.

³³³ William P. Bundy, *A Tangled Web: The Making of Foreign Policy in the Nixon Presidency* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1999), 304.

³³⁴ Joe Renouard, “The Nixon-Mao Summit: A Week that Changed the World,” Vol. 17, Issue 3, *Association for Asian Studies*, (Winter 2012), 38.

³³⁵ Mao Tse-tung in Kissinger, *White House Years*, 1060.

³³⁶ “Memorandum of Conversation,” February 21, 1972, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969–1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d194>.

free associating about the geopolitical scene, the two sides talked little about the very real rifts between them.

The second day's talks between Nixon and Chou were decidedly more substantive than the previous ones. As the 'philosopher,' Mao often spoke in elliptical generalities, which was why he needed his tactician, Chou, to get down to specifics with men like Nixon.³³⁷

Consequently, in the discussions on February 22, the President and the Premier were committed to addressing the immediate issues posed by Taiwan. Nixon began by restating the main points which Kissinger had hammered out in the draft communique back in October. The President assured Chou that Taiwan was a part of the entity called 'China,' that the United States did not support the Taiwan Independence Movement, that Japan would not be allowed to station troops on the island, and that Washington wanted the Straits crisis settled peacefully.³³⁸ The United States desired normalization of relations with the PRC, Nixon added, but the outstanding American alliance with Taiwan was a major barrier to this. With this consideration, the United States, he indicated, was willing to draw down its forces on Taiwan in concert with the end of the war in Vietnam and "as progress is made on the peaceful resolution [of the Taiwan strait crisis]."³³⁹ In providing this assurance, Nixon was demonstrating two ideas. First, that he was committed to breaking Peking's fears of military encirclement, deviating from the precedent established by Truman and Eisenhower's efforts to contain China following the Korean War. Second, Nixon viewed the American troop presence on Taiwan to be a secondary factor in

³³⁷ "Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon, Subject- Mao, Chou, and the Chinese Litmus Test," February 19, 1972, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969-1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969-1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d193>.

³³⁸ "Memorandum of Conversation," February 22, 1972, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969-1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969-1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d196>.

³³⁹ "Memorandum of Conversation," February 22, 1972, 2:10-6 PM, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969-1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969-1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d196>.

ensuring the ties of security between Washington and Taipei. If the PRC were to formally agree to some sort of a status quo in East Asia, the need to ‘contain’ the Communist using American forces on the island would abate.

Nixon then told Chou candidly that for domestic and international reasons, he could not afford to be “the American president [who] went to Peking and sold Taiwan down the river.”³⁴⁰ With this in consideration, the President stated the need for a communique which satisfied the American imperative to maintain its credibility and gave Peking an affirmation that Washington was acting in good faith.³⁴¹ Constructive ambiguity on the Taiwan issue would be the only way to accomplish this. In reply, Zhou accepted the points on Taiwan which Nixon had provided him. Though it was the Premier’s goal that the island would “come back to the motherland,” Peking was willing to wait for this settlement to occur over a period of time.³⁴² While his statement should not be construed as a commitment to a peaceful resolution, the Premier’s statement was indicative of Peking’s growing pragmatism on the Straits crisis. It also reflected, according to Kissinger, the PRC’s idea “that continuing differences over Taiwan were secondary to our primary mutual concern over the international equilibrium.”³⁴³

As these talks proceeded, Kissinger was at work with Deputy Foreign Minister Ch’iao Kuan-hua in completing the joint communique, which had remained unfinished since October 1971.³⁴⁴ By their third meeting on February 24, the two diplomats turned to drafting the most

³⁴⁰ Ibid.

³⁴¹ Ibid.

³⁴² Ibid.

³⁴³ Kissinger, *White House Years*, 1074.

³⁴⁴ Kissinger, 1071.

delicate part of the statement- the section on Taiwan.³⁴⁵ Kissinger went into the discussions operating from the artfully vague point that the island was a part of ‘China,’ which Ch’iao did not challenge.³⁴⁶ Most of the contentions the two sides raised regarded the connotations of certain words in Kissinger’s draft of the Taiwan section. Specifically, Ch’iao took issue with the defense-related statements that the United States “[was] prepared” to make troop withdrawals from the island, and that Washington would “progressively reduce” its presence there.³⁴⁷ Such terminology, the Deputy Foreign Minister would remark, was “too loose” and “might even imply no action at all.”³⁴⁸ Admittedly, this hedging language was an attempt to give the Administration some leeway when it came to the actual time table of the troop reductions. Kissinger was able to get around this line of criticism with an equally vague assurance that it was the Administration’s “ultimate objective” for a complete pull-out once tensions in the area had dissipated.³⁴⁹

After haggling over the semantics of the Taiwan section in the communique, the two sides reached a workable solution to the question of the American defense commitment to the ROC. Notably, the formulation which the two sides would agree upon was markedly similar to

³⁴⁵ “Memorandum of Conversation, Beijing, February 24, 1972, 9:59 a.m.-12:42 p.m.,” February 24, 1972, 9:59 AM-12:42 PM, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume E–13, Documents On China, 1969–1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve13/d93>.

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

³⁴⁸ “Memorandum of Conversation, Beijing, February 25, 1972, 9:34-10:58 a.m.,” February 25, 1972, 9:34-10:58 AM, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume E–13, Documents On China, 1969–1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve13/d97>.

³⁴⁹ Ibid.; Note: Variations of the ‘as tensions diminish’ statement were a favorite tactic of the Administration. A diminishing of tensions in East Asia could mean a number of things- be it a renunciation of force agreement from Peking, a Soviet withdrawal from the disputed border region with mainland China, or the end of the Vietnam War. Using such elastic terms applied over a broad region meant that the United States could uphold its troop withdrawals pledge whenever it pleased.

that which Ch'iao had presented to Kissinger in their meeting on February 25.³⁵⁰ The final written communique stated:

“[The US] reaffirms its interest in a peaceful settlement of the Taiwan question by the Chinese themselves. With this prospect in mind, it affirms the ultimate objective of the withdrawal of all U.S. forces and military installations from Taiwan. In the meantime, it will progressively reduce its forces and military installations on Taiwan as the tension in the area diminishes.”³⁵¹

The main importance of this section in the communique was that it made no explicit mention of the US-ROC MDA- either in support of it or against it. This omission was deliberate, as both sides tacitly acknowledged that the other was unwilling to make further concessions in this area. As Kissinger highlighted, the Administration was likely to receive flak for not specifically stating its treaty commitments in the communique, and even conveyed to Ch'iao that Washington planned to publicly acknowledge that the defense commitment “remains in force” following the statement’s publication.³⁵² On the question of the troop withdrawals mentioned in this section, the Nixon Administration evidently did not believe that reducing US forces on the island would impinge upon its ability to uphold its bargains to Taipei. This was especially the case as the two reasons for the troop presence in the first place- the Vietnam War and a possible

³⁵⁰ “Memorandum of Conversation, Beijing, February 25, 1972, 9:34-10:58 a.m,” February 25, 1972, 9:34-10:58 AM, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume E–13, Documents On China, 1969–1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve13/d97>, Note: Ch'iao's statement was as follows: “[the US] reaffirms its interest in a peaceful settlement of the Taiwan question, by the Chinese themselves, and accepts the ultimate objective of the withdrawal of all U.S. forces from Taiwan. With this in mind it will progressively reduce its forces as the tension in the area diminishes.

³⁵¹ “Joint Statement Following Discussions With Leaders of the People’s Republic of China,” February 27, 1972, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969–1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d203>.

³⁵² “Memorandum of Conversation, Shanghai, February 27, 1972, 11:30 a.m.-1:55 p.m,” February, 27, 1972, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume E–13, Documents On China, 1969–1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve13/d106>.

PRC invasion of Taiwan- were dissipating. Hence, the communique's statement that withdrawals would continue "as tensions diminish"³⁵³

Both the American and Communist Chinese sides signed off on the joint statement on February 27, 1972, and in light of where it was signed, the proclamation came to be known as the 'Shanghai Communique.' As its section on Taiwan metonymically demonstrated, the document set forth a number of principles on which Peking and Washington disagreed, while also affirming their need to cooperate on issues of mutual geopolitical concern. Regarding the US defense commitment to the ROC, the statements put forth in the Communique were at once "artful, subtle, misleading, and somewhat confused."³⁵⁴ In a way, however, this degree of obscurity was exactly what the Administration hoped to achieve. The President would recall in his memoirs that he and his team "felt that we should not and could not abandon the Taiwanese," making a "strongly worded" Communique not conducive to American interests.³⁵⁵ Thus, what Kissinger had leveraged in his negotiations with Ch'iao had summarily "finessed the Taiwan problem through mutual and ambiguous compromise."³⁵⁶ This was 'constructive ambiguity' in its most pronounced form, and helped to set up the "modus vivendi" the Administration had hoped to achieve since 1971.³⁵⁷ One major issue remained unresolved by the Communique,

³⁵³ "Joint Statement Following Discussions With Leaders of the People's Republic of China," February 27, 1972, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969-1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969-1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d203>.

³⁵⁴ Richard C. Bush, *At Cross Purposes: U.S.-Taiwan Relations since 1942* (Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2015), 129.

³⁵⁵ Nixon, *RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon*, 684-658.

³⁵⁶ "Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon," March 2, 1973, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969-1976, Volume XXXVIII, Part 1, Foundations Of Foreign Policy, 1973-1976*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v38p1/d3>.

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

however- Peking had neither renounced the use of force against Taiwan nor committed itself to a peaceful resolution of its dispute with the ROC.

Fallout

Among the United States' Pacific allies, Taiwan was naturally the most affected by Nixon's China trip. Accordingly, Taipei had few positive reactions to both the Communique and the President's visit. One analysis by the CIA succinctly summed up that politicians on Taiwan "remain deeply suspicious that the US commitment to them has been seriously weakened" after the February summit.³⁵⁸ While relatively muted in his response, Chiang Ching-kuo meanwhile asserted that Taipei was experiencing "uncertainty and anxiety" concerning the implications of 'opening' Peking.³⁵⁹ Taiwan's Foreign Ministry shared this perspective, and issued a lengthy denunciation of Washington's initiative on February 28th. It reserved its major criticisms for the Shanghai Communique, whose positions were considered "null and void" by KMT authorities.³⁶⁰

To head off the tide of criticism, the Nixon Administration issued a number of public statements aimed at allaying Taipei's fears of a sellout. At a press conference in Shanghai, Kissinger answered a number of questions about the Communique, including one regarding the statement's effect on the US-ROC MDA. "We stated our basic position with respect to this issue in the President's world report [on February 2]," the National Security Advisor replied, "we say that this treaty will be maintained. Nothing has changed in that position."³⁶¹ Nixon provided

³⁵⁸ Directorate of Intelligence, "Intelligence Memorandum- The President's CHina Trip: Governmental Reactions," March 10, 1972, CIA FOIA Electronic Reading Room, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/cia-rdp85t00875r001100140006-5, 1>.

³⁵⁹ Ibid.

³⁶⁰ Tillmand Durdin, "Taipei Says Nixon's Trip Will Not Result in Peace," Feb. 29, 1972, *New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com/1972/02/29/archives/taipei-says-nixons-trip-will-not-result-in-peace-taipei-asserts.html>.

³⁶¹ "News Conference of Dr. Kissinger and Mr. Green, Shanghai, February 27," in *The Department of State Bulletin, Vol. 66, Part 1*, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1972), 428.

another similar assurance in a speech he delivered at Andrews Air Force Base upon returning to Washington. In his pronouncement, he stated that US forces on Taiwan would be “gradually reduced as tensions ease,” with total withdrawal being contingent on a “peaceful settlement” between the PRC and ROC.³⁶² His Administration, he assured, had no plans to “negotiate the fate of other nations behind their backs,” and had acted “without giving up any United States commitment to any other country.”³⁶³

Beyond simply making public statements affirming the validity of the MDA, Kissinger conducted another meeting with Ambassador James Shen on March 1 to discuss the nature of the post-Communique alliance with the ROC. According to the National Security Advisor, it would have been “impossible” to affirm the MDA in the joint statement, but counseled that Taipei should feel secure in the current state of the defense relationship.³⁶⁴ Essentially, the omission of the US-ROC alliance in the Shanghai Communique did not imply its abrogation. Shen accepted this point, but drew attention to the American plan to reduce its forces on the island. Kissinger stated that at present, the withdrawals scheduled by the Administration included a reduction of about 3,000 troops and possibly two of the United States’ C-130 squadrons.³⁶⁵ Further pullouts before the resolution of the Vietnam War or the Taiwan Strait crisis remained unlikely. At the meeting’s conclusion, Kissinger declared that the US aim was “not to liquidate Taiwan, and not

³⁶² Richard Nixon, “Remarks at Andrews Air Force Base on Returning From the People’s Republic of China,” February 28, 1972, in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Richard Nixon (1972)*, (Washington , DC; Government Printing Office, 1974), 382.

³⁶³ Nixon, “Remarks at Andrews Air Force Base on Returning From the People’s Republic of China,” 382.

³⁶⁴ “Memorandum of Conversation, Subject- ROC Doubts on US Defense Commitment,” March 1, 1972, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume Xvii, China, 1969–1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d205>.

³⁶⁵ Ibid.

to scuttle our Mutual Defense Treaty with the Republic of China,” but “to move in a new direction with Peking.”³⁶⁶

On March 8th, Kissinger forwarded a memo to Nixon from Secretary Rogers which laid out what state believed to be the best course of action on Taiwan going forward. The memorandum from the State Department affirmed that the United States should continue to press both sides of the Straits towards a peaceful resolution, seeking more contacts with Peking all the while “maintain[ing] our existing relationship [with Taipei] including the mutual defense treaty.”³⁶⁷ As Rogers predicted, the growing nature of ties between the United States and PRC could motivate the Communist Chinese to “become less dogmatic” about the need to gain control over Taiwan, either through peaceful or military means.³⁶⁸ Interestingly, the Secretary of State did not rule out the possibility of Taiwan developing into its own separate country outside the reach of Peking. Nixon shared this view, and envisioned Taiwan developing its own “orbit” outside the Mainland, or at the very least, reaching a peaceful accommodation with the PRC that granted it a considerable degree of autonomy.³⁶⁹ Though Kissinger noted that he agreed with most of the formulations in Rogers’ memorandum, he was skeptical of whether Peking would

³⁶⁶ “Memorandum of Conversation, Subject- ROC Doubts on US Defense Commitment,” March 1, 1972, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume Xvii, China, 1969–1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d205>.

³⁶⁷ “Memorandum From the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon, Subject- Mao, Chou, and the Chinese Litmus Test,” February 19, 1972, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969–1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d193>.

³⁶⁸ Ibid.

³⁶⁹ “Fourteen million against 750 million.” June 30, 1971, Brinkley and Brinkley, *The Nixon Tapes, 1971-1972*, 190; “Conversation Between President Nixon and his Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger),” February 1, 1973, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume XVIII, China, 1973–1976*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v18/d5>.

accept the existence of Taiwan outside the control of the Mainland.³⁷⁰ In this regard, the National Security Advisor took a rather strange, almost contradictory approach to Taiwan- the United States could achieve full diplomatic recognition of the PRC while keeping its defense treaty with Taiwan.³⁷¹ “Our movements will include guaranteed enforceable provisions for ensuring continued separate status for Taiwan if that is what Taiwan wants,” he told Ambassador McConaughy, saying he hoped to find an arrangement with the ROC so that “the US-Taiwan defense treaty does not lapse.”³⁷² Indeed, in the face of greater ties between Peking and Washington, Taipei was by no means militarily abandoned.

More Than A ‘Decent Interval’

Pursuant to the plan outlined in the Nixon Doctrine and the Shanghai Communique, Washington continued its plans to progressively withdraw American troops from Taiwan. Such a formula was not an isolated one in East Asia. Much the same could be observed in South Vietnam throughout the period of 1969-1973. In the decades since the pullout of US forces from Indochina, revelations about the Administration’s plans to provide a ‘decent interval’ between the American withdrawal from there and the actual demise of Saigon have drawn scrutiny towards Nixon, with scholars accusing him of duplicity towards America’s Asian allies. Taiwan, however, was a different case entirely. In the aftermath of the Shanghai Communique, the Nixon Administration stuck by its plans to strengthen the ROC while reducing the United States’ extensive presence there. This defense arrangement was further underwritten by the mutual

³⁷⁰ “Memorandum From the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon, Subject- Memorandum from Secretary Rogers on Policy Toward Taiwan,” March 8, 1972, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969–1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d208>.

³⁷¹ “Notes on a Conversation Between Secretary of State Kissinger and the Ambassador to the Republic of China (McConaughy),” October 3, 1973, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume XVIII, China, 1973–1976*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v18/d53>.

³⁷² Ibid.

security guarantee of the MDA. Far from a ‘sellout’ on par with that of South Vietnam, the level of backing which Washington continued to provide Taipei indicated that the Nixon Administration intended to uphold its defense commitments.

Both the specializations and pace of the troops withdrawn from Taiwan in the aftermath of the Communique spoke volumes about the way the Nixon Administration viewed its presence on the island. In fact, the primary forces being pulled out in the post-1972 period of the Nixon Administration were not those attached to MAAG Taiwan or serving in theater-level roles, but those linked to the de-escalating wars in Indochina.³⁷³ As the State Department maintained, the ongoing withdrawals “stem[ed] more from the American disengagement in Vietnam than from the new policy of better relations with Peking.”³⁷⁴ The Department of Defense, meanwhile, strongly advocated for a large stay-behind contingent to remain active on the island. In a 1972 report, Defense Secretary Laird outlined that the United States should plan to maintain a presence of around 4,500 men on the island, even in the event that a peace settlement was reached in Indochina.³⁷⁵ At the start of the Nixon presidency in 1969, US troops on Taiwan had numbered 9,243 but, pursuant to Laird’s design, this number had been reduced to 4,619 by 1974.³⁷⁶ Those remaining largely occupied intelligence, training, logistical, and advisory roles. Equally important, the troops on the island symbolically reaffirmed the strength of the US-ROC

³⁷³ “Memorandum From Phil Odeen of the National Security Council Staff to the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger), Subject- US Forces on Taiwan” March 29, 1972, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969–1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d216>.

³⁷⁴ William Beecher, “Air Force Plans Cutback Of Its Planes on Taiwan: U.S. Is Planning Cutback of Its Planes on Taiwan,” March 18, 1972, *New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com/1972/03/18/archives/air-force-plans-cutback-of-its-planes-on-taiwan-us-is-planning.html>.

³⁷⁵ “Memorandum From Phil Odeen of the National Security Council Staff to the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger), Subject- US Forces on Taiwan” March 29, 1972, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969–1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d216>.

³⁷⁶ Ibid.

MDA. According to one Department of Defense report, “[ROC] officials foresee the continued psychological and political requirement for a visible U.S. military presence throughout the area to be the best deterrence against aggression in the years ahead.”³⁷⁷ It is worth noting that in spite of the drawdown of conventional forces, the US continued to maintain its nuclear-armed F-4s at Tainan Air Force Base, indicating that the Nixon Administration still felt the need to provide a strong deterrent against an attack on Taiwan.³⁷⁸ As one policy paper advised in 1973, the United States had to maintain such armaments in the region “as a hedge against the failure of a conventional defense...in the event of a major PRC attack.”³⁷⁹ ‘Tensions in the area’ were diminishing in Southeast Asia, but without a renunciation of force from the PRC, a cross-strait conflict necessitating the use of nuclear weapons was still a real- if remote- possibility.

To fill the void left by the incremental withdrawals of US forces, the Nixon Administration continued to supply the ROC with military equipment. These assistance programs, as Laird noted in 1972, were necessary to balance the demands of the Nixon Doctrine with the strength of American defense commitments to Taiwan.³⁸⁰ Richard T. Kennedy of the NSC staff would carry this point to Kissinger in an April 7, 1973 stating that current military

³⁷⁷ “Memorandum From Deputy Secretary of Defense Clements to Secretary of Defense Schlesinger, Washington, September 27, 1973, Subject- Korea/Far East Trip Report, 7-19 September 1973,” September 27, 1973, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume E–12, Documents On East And Southeast Asia, 1973–1976*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve12/d6>.

³⁷⁸ William Beecher, “Air Force Plans Cutback Of Its Planes on Taiwan: U.S. Is Planning Cutback of Its Planes on Taiwan,” March 18, 1972, *New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com/1972/03/18/archives/air-force-plans-cutback-of-its-planes-on-taiwan-us-is-planning.html>.

³⁷⁹ “National Security Memorandum 230, Subject- US Strategy and Forces for Asia,” August 9, 1973, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume E–12, Documents On East And Southeast Asia, 1973–1976*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve12/d4>.

³⁸⁰ “Department of Defense Appropriations for 1973, Hearings Before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, House of Representatives, Ninety-second Congress, Second Session,” (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1972); 406.

sales to Taiwan were “consistent with Taiwan’s continually improving economy, our commitment to the [ROC], and the self-sufficiency aspects of the Nixon Doctrine.”³⁸¹ With this in mind, the trends apparent in US military aid to the ROC from 1969 to 1971 had stayed constant following the ‘opening’ of Peking.³⁸² Being “flush with cash reserves and in a position to buy,” FMS agreements continued to supplant grant aid given under MAP.³⁸³ In 1972- the year that the Shanghai Communique was issued- the US delivered an estimated \$56,200,000 in arms sales to Taiwan, coupled with around \$19,712,000 provided under MAP aid.³⁸⁴ The following year, the value of FMS deliveries to the ROC had grown larger still to reach \$74,069,000.³⁸⁵ In 1974, the United States had delivered around \$96,141,000 in materiel to Taiwan- the most expensive FMS delivery to Taipei under the Nixon presidency.³⁸⁶ The rising tide of military sales spoke both to Taipei’s increasing ability to purchase arms, and the large role which American military equipment played in modernizing the ROC armed forces. In this way, military aid helped to make up for the apparent decline in the American presence on the island. Vis-a-vis

³⁸¹ “Memorandum From Richard T. Kennedy of the National Security Council Staff to the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger), Subject- Security Assistance, Taiwan,” April 7, 1973, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969–1972*, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/documents/organization/100320.pdf>, 240.

³⁸² Ibid.

³⁸³ “Action Memorandum From Richard T. Kennedy of the National Security Council Staff to the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger), Subject- MAP and FMS, 1972,” January 7, 1972, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume IV, Foreign Assistance, International Development, Trade Policies, 1969–1972*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v04/d48>.

³⁸⁴ “Military Assistance and Foreign Military Sales Facts, May 1973,” May 30, 1973, Defense Security Assistance Agency, Washington, DC, University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uiug.30112105107400&view=1up&seq=14>, pgs. 10, 20

³⁸⁵ “Military Assistance and Foreign Military Sales Facts, April 1974,” May 20, 1974, Defense Security Assistance Agency, Washington, DC, University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uiug.30112105107418&view=1up&seq=16>, 16.

³⁸⁶ “Military Assistance and Foreign Military Sales Facts, April 1974,” May 20, 1974, Defense Security Assistance Agency, Washington, DC, University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uiug.30112105107426&view=1up&seq=22>, 22.

Peking, this would allow the Administration to “appear to be decreasing its military support while increasing Taiwan’s defensive capabilities.”³⁸⁷

American economic aid, too, continued to bolster Taiwan’s economy well beyond the issuing of the Shanghai Communique. Indeed, after 1972, the Nixon Administration continued to look upon the island’s economic growth as both a guarantor of national security and political legitimacy.³⁸⁸ The United States’ Export-Import Bank (Eximbank) was instrumental towards this end. In 1972, the Bank furnished \$187,806,00 in economic aid to the ROC, \$149,850,000 of which was put towards the construction of a nuclear reactor by the Taiwan Power Company.³⁸⁹ The following year, the amount which Eximbank issued dipped to around \$159,049,068, and helped mostly to subsidize the country’s energy sector.³⁹⁰ At the conclusion of FY 1974, the credit amount granted by the Bank had increased to an impressive \$239,499,300, with the Taiwan Power Company again receiving the bulk of the funds for its nuclear program that year.³⁹¹ This influx of American foreign aid, combined with the international capital which its fruits attracted, helped to ensure Taiwan’s healthy GDP growth rate of 9.4% over the period of 1971-1980.³⁹²

³⁸⁷ Keren Yarhi-Milo, et. al., “To Arm or To Ally? The Patron’s Dilemma and the Strategic Logic of Arms Transfers and Alliances,” *International Security*, Vol. 41, No. 2 (Fall 2016), pp. 90–139, 111.

³⁸⁸ CIA Directorate of Intelligence, “Weekly Summary- Special Report: Nationalist China Revisited,” June 28, 1974, CIA FOIA Electronic Reading Room, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/cia-rdp85t00875r001500060012-3,4>

³⁸⁹ Export-Import Bank of the United States, “Summary of Operations, Fiscal Year 1972,” (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1972), <https://www.digitalarchives.exim.gov/digital/collection/ExImD01/id/10061/rec/1,38>

³⁹⁰ Export-Import Bank, “Statement of Condition Fiscal Year ‘73,” (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1973), <https://www.digitalarchives.exim.gov/digital/collection/ExImD01/id/10135,58-61>.

³⁹¹ Export-Import Bank, “Annual Report 1974,” (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1974), <https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=z9fvd5w3JZEC&hl=en&pg=GBS.PA9,30>.

³⁹² Pan-Long Tsai, “Explaining Taiwan’s Economic Miracle: Are the Revisionists Right?,” *Agenda: A Journal of Policy Analysis and Reform*, 1999, Vol. 6, No. 1 (1999), pp. 69-82.

Evaluating the American commitment to Taiwan by these metrics, the US security ties with the ROC can hardly be taken to be in decline post Nixon's trip to China. While true that the nature of the MDA had been altered (in that Washington would no longer support a KMT 'reclamation' of the Mainland), the alliance now assumed a largely defensive posture. Moreover, the steps which Washington took at this time aimed to make Taiwan more self-sufficient, both militarily and economically. Through a combination of its own initiatives and American support, the ROC was weathering the diplomatic setbacks it experienced in the early 1970s, setting in motion its transformation from a peripheral government in-exile to a viable political actor.

The Soviet Counterweight

It was not only the American defense commitment which helped to ensure the ROC's enduring security. As the level of US-PRC contacts increased over the period of 1969-1974, Peking had noticeably altered its dogmatic stance on Taiwan's 'liberation.' To be sure, the PRC's own internal divisions had contributed to its growing pragmatism on the Taiwan issue, but external factors in Asia were equally important. Notable among these considerations was the aggressive posture of the Soviet Union along China's northern border.

Just as Moscow's posturing had pushed the United States and PRC towards accommodation starting in 1969, the continued deterioration in Sino-Soviet relations inadvertently helped to ensure Taiwan's security. Years after the Ussuri River clash, Central Asia remained a major flashpoint between the two communist states. As such, Peking continued to strengthen its military in the region to counter a possible attack by the Red Army. Additionally, it had begun constructing missile sites in its northern regions for the purpose of

delivering nuclear strikes “to targets deep within the Soviet Union.”³⁹³ The CIA noted this pattern, observing in one 1972 report that the main focus of PRC military preparations were largely directed against the Soviet Union, relegating the issue of Taiwan to the “sidelines” in terms of Peking’s security concerns.³⁹⁴ The allocation of troops for a possible conflict in Central Asia thus helped to tie down the PLA far away from Taiwan, limiting the chances of a PRC buildup to ‘liberate’ the island. “Clearly the Soviet threat-in both the short and the long term-ha[s] become the dominant factor in [Communist] Chinese strategic planning,” one American intelligence estimate concluded.³⁹⁵

The second factor was the role which Washington itself played in this dynamic. Peking conceived of the United States as a potential ally against a Soviet invasion, which Nixon had established by assuring Mao that America would “oppose any effort of others to interfere with the PRC.”³⁹⁶ The Soviets, too, sensed that the United States had a vested interest in ensuring Peking’s security, which helped to restrain Moscow’s designs on Central Asia.³⁹⁷ Not wanting to damage this advantageous relationship, the PRC decided to refrain from any actions which would anger the United States, among them being aggression against Taiwan. In the face of this consideration, an assault against the island was unlikely, if wholly self-defeating. “An actual

³⁹³ Directorate of Intelligence, “Intelligence Memorandum: Developments in Sino-Soviet Relations,” April 23, 1973, CIA FOIA Electronic Reading Room, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/cia-rdp85t00875r001100180004-3>, 13.

³⁹⁴ CIA Directorate of Intelligence, “Military Developments in China: Implications for Defense Policy,” March 1, 1975, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/cia-rdp86t00608r000700080005-3>, 10.

³⁹⁵ National Security Council, “The National Defense Posture of the PRC,” October 1975, CIA FOIA Electronic Reading Room, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/loc-hak-469-16-1-3>, 7.

³⁹⁶ “Memorandum of Conversation,” February 23, 1972, 2:00 p.m.-6:00 p.m., Location of original: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials Project, White House Special Files, President’s Office Files, Box 87, Memoranda for the President Beginning February 20, 1972, page 21, quoted in Michael Pillsbury, *The Hundred-Year Marathon: China’s Secret Strategy to Replace America as the Global Superpower* (New York: St. Martin’s Griffin, 2016), 61.

³⁹⁷ CIA Directorate of Intelligence, “Intelligence Memorandum: Sino-Soviet Relations: From Worse to Worst,” January 31, 1972, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/cia-rdp85t00875r001100140003-8>, 5.

attack on Taiwan would divert considerable military resources from China's defense against a possible Soviet thrust," one NSC report stated, and consequently, "destroy the nascent relationship with Washington."³⁹⁸ This point was echoed by the State Department, which went as far as to describe better US-PRC relations as having a greater deterrent effect against an invasion than even the military guarantee of the MDA.³⁹⁹

Taiwan's security was one of the collateral effects of Kissinger's 'triangular diplomacy' framework. Herein, Peking feared that an attack on the ROC would sever US-PRC ties, and worse still, invite another Soviet incursion along its Central Asian border. If ensuring itself against an existential war with the USSR meant foregoing an attempt to 'retake' Taiwan, Peking proved it was willing to accept the status quo for the sake of its survival. The PRC had thus traded a tactical concern (Taiwan) for a strategic one (defense against a Soviet invasion). This was the point which the Nixon Administration had hoped to prevail upon Peking's diplomats since it first began its attempts to 'open' China. In this way, the Nixon Administration's rapprochement with the PRC helped to ensure Taiwan's security, *not* abandon it.

A Long Stalemate

But just how feasible was the Administration's hope for a peaceful resolution to the Taiwan Strait crisis? In light of its improved relations with Washington, Peking did back off its more aggressive rhetoric of retaking Taiwan by force, preferring instead to bombard the island with pro-unification propaganda rather than bombs.⁴⁰⁰ Taipei, meanwhile, was less than enthused

³⁹⁸ National Security Council, "China's View of Relations with the United States," November 21, 1975, CIA FOIA Electronic Reading Room, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/loc-hak-541-15-1-3>, 3.

³⁹⁹ US Department of State, "Security Assistance, ROC- Assessment," July 12, 1973, National Archives and Records Administration, Access to Archival Databases, <https://aad.archives.gov/aad/createpdf?rid=54883&dt=2472&dl=1345>, 1.

⁴⁰⁰ Foreign Broadcast Information Service, "Trends in Communist Propaganda," January 10, 1973, CIA FOIA Electronic Reading Room, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/cia-rdp85t00875r000300060002-7>, S5.

with the PRC's public efforts to build support for unification. So long as the KMT remained in power and felt sufficiently assured by the US-ROC MDA, they felt little pressure to come to an accommodation with Peking.⁴⁰¹ This was especially true as more native Taiwanese entered the ROC bureaucracy, stiffening the country's conception of itself as being a distinct entity from 'China.' In light of this, Taipei's policy of "no contact and no negotiation" with Peking was likely to continue, even past the rule of the KMT.⁴⁰² In short, Nixon and Kissinger's hope for a peaceful resolution was a fantasy. Instead of creating the conditions for peace between the two Chinas, the Administration continued to accept a cross-strait stalemate. The President was at least partially aware of this, remarking to Kissinger that the ROC was "never going to say, 'all right, we're now going to become part of the PRC.' Never."⁴⁰³ Nixon was correct in his assumption that in the long term, Taipei's hostility to unification would remain constant. "Since Taiwan was unwilling to accept unification with the mainland," Gang Lin and Wenxing Zhou have argued, "the peaceful settlement that the U.S. Taiwan policy...emphasized actually meant no [support for] unification, suggesting that Taiwan abandonment was not on the policy agenda."⁴⁰⁴

In Peking, the issue of the American defense commitment to Taiwan progressively abated towards the end of the Nixon Administration. Chou had indicated as much in a 1973 meeting with Kissinger when he stated that the PRC had "no such plan at the moment" to liberate Taiwan

⁴⁰¹ CIA Directorate of Intelligence, "Intelligence Report: Peking-Taipei Contacts: The Question of a Possible 'Chinese Solution' (Reference Title: Polo XLVI)," December 1, 1971, CIA FOIA Electronic Reading Room, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/cia-rdp85t00875r001000010045-7>, 45-46.

⁴⁰² CIA Directorate of Intelligence, "The Political Succession on Taiwan: An Intelligence Assessment," January 1985, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/cia-rdp86t00590r000100010001-3>, 4.

⁴⁰³ "Nixon in China Again," February 1, 1973, in Douglas Brinkley and Luke Nichter, *The Nixon Tapes: 1973* (New York, NY: Mariner Books, 2016), 35.

⁴⁰⁴ Lin and Zhou, "Does Taiwan Matter to the United States?," 183.

through military means.⁴⁰⁵ Kissinger took such assurances from Zhou to be a positive development, stating that he hoped that a normalization of Sino-American relations could take place within Nixon's second term.⁴⁰⁶ Some, like John Holdridge of the National Security Council even observed that some PRC politicians (Mao among them) had begun to suggest that the US-ROC relationship no longer remained "an obstacle to the normalization of Sino-American relations."⁴⁰⁷ At this juncture, the US-PRC relationship was developing in a way which Washington saw favorable to its interests, and this cross-strait arrangement was at least tolerable to both sides. In an albeit facetious way, Mao carried that message to Kissinger in one of their final meetings. "When I go to heaven to see God," the Chairman noted, "I'll tell him it's better to have Taiwan under the care of the United States now."⁴⁰⁸

The appointment of Leonard Unger to succeed Walter McCaughy as US ambassador to the ROC did much to ensure Taiwan's sense of the American commitment to the island.⁴⁰⁹ On May 23, 1974, Unger met with Chiang Ching-kuo to deliver four assurances to Taipei on Washington's behalf.⁴¹⁰ First, the message conveyed that Washington stood by its commitments embodied in the 1954 MDA.⁴¹¹ Second, the United States would continue its efforts to normalize

⁴⁰⁵ "Memorandum of Conversation," February 16, 1973, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume XVIII, China, 1973–1976*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v18/d9>.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁷ "Memorandum From John H. Holdridge of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger), Subject- Current State of Sino-American Relations, and Possibilities for the Immediate Future," January 18, 1973, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume XVIII, China, 1973–1976*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v18/d4>.

⁴⁰⁸ Mao Tse-tung quoted in Kissinger, *On China*, 307.

⁴⁰⁹ Taiwan Review Staff, "The Month in Free China," April 1, 1974, *Taiwan Review* reprinted in *Taiwan Today*, <https://taiwantoday.tw/news.php?unit=4&post=5449>.

⁴¹⁰ Note: From September 22, 1973 onward, Kissinger served in dual roles as National Security Advisor and Secretary of State

⁴¹¹ James Soong and Fang Pengcheng, *Secretary Jiang Jingguo Reports*, (Taipei Shi: Shang Zhou chu ban, 2018), 79.

relations with Peking, noting that “the existing form of the relationship meets our current needs.”⁴¹² Third, the Administration would continue to cooperate with the ROC to aid its economic growth.⁴¹³ Lastly, the message stated that “we will not turn our back on our friends and will consult with the Government of the Republic of China before taking any actions which could have a significant effect on the interests of [Taipei].”⁴¹⁴ Though US-PRC relations were moving in the direction of full diplomatic recognition, the Administration believed that this would not compromise the security relationship with Taiwan.

Unfortunately for Nixon, the ultimate arrangement which his Administration sought to reach in regards to normalizing relations with the PRC and retaining its security relationship with the ROC did not materialize. Following the scandal caused by the Watergate break-ins, the President resigned on August 9th, 1974.⁴¹⁵ Though Kissinger remained at the forefront of foreign policymaking in the successive administration of Gerald Ford, whatever design Nixon had for a triangular balance of security ties between Washington, Peking, and Taipei went down with him. In place of a ‘peaceful solution,’ the United States instead acted to create a *modus vivendi* between the ‘two Chinas.’ While this stalemate was conducive to the interests of the Nixon Administration, it was less so for Peking and Taipei. In the absence of a negotiated settlement or a renunciation of force by the PRC, the Taiwan Strait remained a geopolitical flashpoint. Indeed, Washington had simply acted to put cross-strait tensions on hold.

⁴¹² James Soong and Fang Pengcheng, *Secretary Jiang Jinguo Reports*, (Taipei Shi: Shang Zhou chu ban, 2018), 79.

⁴¹³ Ibid.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid.

⁴¹⁵ New York Times Staff, “The Nixon Resignation,” August 9, 1974, *New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com/1974/08/09/archives/the-nixon-resignation.html>.

Conclusion: Strategic Ambiguity

To outline American options on the security relationship with Taiwan, President Ford directed the creation of a study on US-ROC defense provisions through NSSM 212.⁴¹⁶ On November 12, 1974, the Ad Hoc Interdepartmental Regional Group for East Asia and the Pacific delivered its response to this memorandum. Their report operated under the assumption that US-PRC normalization would persist and that the United States would keep its security commitments to Taiwan.⁴¹⁷ As the study affirmed, the future of the ROC's defense depended on "the deterrent effect of the [current] US-PRC relationship," "the U.S. security treaty and the remaining U.S. force presence on Taiwan," and "ROC access to U.S. military equipment."⁴¹⁸ Regarding the options facing the Ford Administration, the response to NSSM 212 suggested a number of levels at which the United States should provide military aid to Taiwan. The conclusion which the National Security Council arrived at was that Washington should continue to furnish new weaponry to the ROC, albeit with some restraint.⁴¹⁹ This would allow the Administration "to maintain a balance between accommodating PRC sensitivities and fulfilling ROC needs for psychological confidence in its security."⁴²⁰

⁴¹⁶ National Security Council, "National Security Study Memorandum 212: US Security Assistance to the Republic of China," October 8, 1974, Ford Presidential Library and Museum, <https://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/document/0310/nssm212.pdf>

⁴¹⁷ "Study Prepared by the Ad Hoc Interdepartmental Regional Group for East Asia and the Pacific, Subject- U.S. Security Assistance to the Republic of China," November 12, 1974, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume XVIII, China, 1973–1976*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v18/d90>.

⁴¹⁸ Ibid.

⁴¹⁹ "Memorandum from Solomon, Granger, and Froebe to Kissinger," May 23, 1975; Ford Library, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H-32, NSSM 212, U.S. Security Assistance to the Republic of China.

⁴²⁰ "Study Prepared by the Ad Hoc Interdepartmental Regional Group for East Asia and the Pacific, Subject- U.S. Security Assistance to the Republic of China," November 12, 1974, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume XVIII, China, 1973–1976*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v18/d90>.

The process of normalization under the Ford Administration accelerated rapidly, particularly due to Kissinger's maneuvering on the issue of Taiwan. At a November 26, 1974 meeting with Teng Hsiao-p'ing, the National Security Advisor conceded that the annulment of the US-ROC MDA would have to follow necessarily from full diplomatic recognition of Peking, as if the United States were to accept full PRC sovereignty over Taiwan in the future, it would be impossible to have a defense treaty with Taipei.⁴²¹ Therefore, to Kissinger, the United States' relationship with Taiwan would need to progressively assume an informal role, wherein the general American guarantee of the island against invasion and Peking's improving ties with Washington would act to ensure a peaceful solution of the crisis by the Chinese themselves. In this regard, he did not see the 1954 MDA as the primary deterrent against an invasion by the Communist Chinese. Instead, Kissinger believed that Taiwan's deterrence against forceful 'liberation' was the sum of the infeasibility of a PRC invasion and the fact that this action would destroy the burgeoning ties between Washington and Peking.⁴²² This was a radical departure from the position he had taken while working as National Security Advisor for the Nixon Administration, wherein he had emphasized early on to ROC, PRC, and American diplomats the need to maintain the MDA in a legally binding way. Now, Kissinger advised President Ford that Washington should seek "to sustain Taiwan's security by political rather than legalistic means," while still adhering to the policy that "we will not permit Taiwan to be overwhelmed by military force."⁴²³ Such a guarantee would be required to ensure a peaceful resolution, pursuant to the

⁴²¹ "Memorandum of Conversation," November 26, 1974, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume XVIII, China, 1973–1976*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v18/d94>.

⁴²² Note: This infeasibility grew out of both American arms provisions and the fact that the PLA was not deemed advanced enough to mount such an invasion.

⁴²³ "Memorandum for the President from Henry Kissinger, Subject- Proposed Reply from You to Republic of China Premier Chiang Ching-kuo," January 6, 1975, <https://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/document/0351/1555798.pdf>, 1. (Page 5 in file)

response to NSSM 212 which stipulated that “some form of U.S. involvement in Taiwan’s security will continue to be important to inhibit the possibility of force being used to resolve the issue.”⁴²⁴ In Washington’s view, the United States could maintain its security ties to Taipei even in the absence of the formal terms outlined in the MDA. Ford had indicated this in a letter to Chiang Ching-kuo, stating that upon taking office, his administration had “reaffirmed our worldwide commitments, including our commitment to the security of the Republic of China,” and added that, “I can assure you that we do not forget our friends.”⁴²⁵

Following the Ford Administration, President Jimmy Carter moved far more quickly than any of his predecessors on the issue of establishing full diplomatic relations with Peking. On December 15, 1978, he announced that not only would the United States be recognizing the PRC, but that it would formally annul the 1954 MDA which the Nixon Administration had attempted to maintain.⁴²⁶ This occurred in the absence of any formal renunciation of force by Peking. Though this was the end of the legally binding relationship between Washington and Taipei, it was not the end of their defense partnership. Seeking to maintain American defense and informal diplomatic ties with the ROC, Congress passed the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) by an overwhelming majority.⁴²⁷ Per the provisions of the document, the United States would

⁴²⁴ “Study Prepared by the Ad Hoc Interdepartmental Regional Group for East Asia and the Pacific, Subject- U.S. Security Assistance to the Republic of China,” November 12, 1974, *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume XVIII, China, 1973–1976*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v18/d90>.

⁴²⁵ “Letter from President Ford to Premier Chiang Ching-kuo,” January 8, 1975, <https://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/document/0351/1555798.pdf>, 2. (Page 4 in file)

⁴²⁶ Jimmy Carter, “Establishing Diplomatic Relations with China,” Dec. 15, 1978, US-China Institute; <https://china.usc.edu/jimmy-carter-%E2%80%9Cestablishing-diplomatic-relations-china%E2%80%9Ddec-15-1978>; Note: Carter, for that matter, did not believe that the PRC had the capability to ‘liberate’ Taiwan following normalization, as the island remained “heavily fortified and also heavily armed” by virtue of American defense aid, see: “Editorial Note,” *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1977–1980, Volume I, Foundations Of Foreign Policy*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1977-80v01/d105>.

⁴²⁷ Jacob Javits, “Congress and Foreign Relations: The Taiwan Relations Act,” *Foreign Affairs*, Fall 1981, Vol. 60, No. 1, pp. 54-62, 62.

continue to provide defense materiel to Taiwan and, most importantly would consider a PRC attack on the island to be “a threat to the peace and security of the Western Pacific area and of grave concern to the United States.”⁴²⁸ Short of an outright declaration that the United States was bound by treaty to intervene in a cross-strait conflict, the TRA marked the beginning of a new era in US-ROC security ties- the age of ‘strategic ambiguity.’ As Carter understood it, this arrangement gave the United States “the *option* of going to war and protecting Taiwan” in the case of a PRC attack.⁴²⁹ This dynamic was indicative of the fact that the United States did not need to formally recognize Taiwan or have a mutual defense treaty with them in order to have a security relationship with the ROC.

The Carter Administration’s decision to annul the MDA with Taiwan represented Washington’s effort to cut the gordian knot embodied in the Nixon-era concept of ‘constructive ambiguity.’ Admittedly, this concept attempted to rationalize what was the increasingly untenable position that the US could somehow normalize relations with Peking while maintaining its formal defense alliance with Taipei. The TRA represented a remedy to this, trading Nixon’s tacit alliance with Peking for a tacit alliance with Taipei.⁴³⁰

Over the period of 1969-1974, the Nixon Administration made every effort to preserve its security ties with the ROC within the limits of opening the PRC. The reconfiguration of Washington’s Taiwan defense policy during this time was a dialectical process, wherein both American and Communist Chinese diplomats pressed one another to be pragmatic about their

⁴²⁸ “Taiwan Relations Act, (Public Law 96-8, 22 U.S.C. 3301 et seq.),” January 1, 1979, American Institute in Taiwan, <https://www.ait.org.tw/our-relationship/policy-history/key-u-s-foreign-policy-documents-region/taiwan-relations-act/>.

⁴²⁹ Dennis V. Hickey, “US Policy Toward Taiwan: Time for Change?” *Asian Affairs: An American Review*, Vol. 40, No. 4, (October-December 2013), pp. 175-198, 180.

⁴³⁰ Dennis V. Hickey, “The Taiwan Relations Act: A Mid Life Crisis at 35?,” March 2014, Wilson Center- Asia Program, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/publication/TRAPolicyBrief.Hickey.pdf>, 3

foreign policy goals. Decidedly not an outright sellout, the United States sought avenues by which Taipei would be insured against a forcible re-unification with the Mainland, through the legal route of the MDA, the military route of arms sales, and the psychological route afforded by triangular diplomacy. As ‘constructive ambiguity’ gave way to ‘strategic ambiguity,’ Washington maintained an underlying interest in the solution of the Straits crisis by peaceful means, discouraging both sides from aggression against the other. Increasingly, however, this situation froze into a protracted stalemate, owing both to Peking’s reluctance to upset its ‘tacit alliance’ with the United States and Taipei’s unwillingness to negotiate with its enemies on the Mainland. Though the Nixon Administration had managed to keep its formal treaty commitments to the ROC, it failed to settle the cross-strait tensions that had existed since 1949. Tensions in the area may have been reduced from the American perspective, but the animosity between the CCP and KMT had dissipated little by the time the President left office in mid 1974.

In the modern age, the US-ROC relationship remains a complicated one. Held together by a mixture of informal diplomatic ties, ambiguous assurances, and substantial arms sales on credit, the partnership between Washington and Peking is nonetheless a vital one in the Pacific. Events over the past decade, however, portend that this arrangement may be tested sooner rather than later.⁴³¹ As of late, Peking’s rhetoric concerning its designs against Taiwan has indicated that the country may aim to ‘liberate’ the island in the near, if not immediate future. Concomitantly, the PRC’s rapidly accelerating naval buildup is continuing to outpace the rate at which the United States is able to provide sustenance for Taiwan’s well-funded yet small

⁴³¹ Chas Freeman, “The Growing Peril of War with China over Taiwan,” December 22, 2020, Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft, <https://responsiblestatecraft.org/2020/12/22/the-growing-peril-of-war-with-china-over-taiwan/>

military.⁴³² In the absence of the formal defense ties which the Nixon Administration attempted to maintain, the United States at present has to rely on planting the idea in Peking's mind that Washington *will* intervene to protect Taiwan, even if only bound by an act of Congress to *consider* intervention. This is the substance of strategic ambiguity. What bankrolls this notion is the maintenance of American military strength, the trust of Washington's allies, and the reluctance which those considerations generate in the minds of its competitors. In this arrangement, the United States' credibility continues to translate directly into deterrence. American security ties to Taiwan are no exception, whether embodied in treaties or implicitly maintained through strategic ambiguity. Should this deterrent capacity fail, and should Peking make good on its promises to 'liberate' Taiwan in the future, the resulting conflict would not just be war, as Nixon had noted in 1973, but a "bloodbath" as Ambassador McConaughy told the President.⁴³³

⁴³² Denny Roy, "Rumors of War in the Taiwan Strait" (The Diplomat, March 20, 2021), <https://thediplomat.com/2021/03/rumors-of-war-in-the-taiwan-strait/>.

⁴³³ "Fourteen million against 750 million," June 30, 1971, 12:18 PM, Brinkley and Nichter, *The Nixon Tapes: 1971-1972*, 190.

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