

## Chapter 10

### "There are bigger issues at stake": The Administration of John F. Kennedy and United States-Republic of China Relations, 1961-63

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The administration of President John F. Kennedy (1961-63) focused considerable attention to foreign policy matters, most notably to Cold War disputes over Cuba and Berlin with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). In the meantime, the White House also faced crises with its anti-communist allies, particularly with the Republic of China (ROC) on the island of Taiwan, just off the coast of Mainland China. Relations between the United States and the ROC caught the attention of several of Kennedy's advisors, some of whom suggested that the Eisenhower-Dulles policy of containment and isolation of the People's Republic of China (PRC) should be reconsidered.

Much has been written on American Cold War policy toward China. While Nancy Bernkopf Tucker's research on U.S.-Taiwan relations remains the standard, works by Noam Kochavi and John Garver have provided fresh insights on this unique alliance. Nonetheless, the most recent works on American-Chinese relations have emphasized the adversarial relationship between the United States and the PRC, and little focus has been cast on the collision of allied interests and bureaucratic "turf battles" over policy.<sup>1</sup> These "turf battles," though, are not new to Kennedy scholars. For example, Political Scientist Graham Allison, in his classic work entitled *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (1971), hinted in his bureaucratic politics model that the Kennedy administration's handling of this October 1962 predicament may have reflected a

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<sup>1</sup> Both Tucker and Garver view U.S.-ROC relations as a part of the larger American-Soviet-Communist Chinese Cold War competition and argue that the strong relationship between the United States and the ROC helped to drive a wedge between the Soviets and the PRC. Kochavi, on the other hand, suggests that Cold War hardliners in the Kennedy administration were not interested in rapprochement with the PRC. Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, *Uncertain Friendships: Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the United States, 1945-1992* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1994), 94; John W. Garver, *The Sino-American Alliance: Nationalist China and the American Cold War Strategy in Asia* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1997), 1; Noam Kochavi, *A Conflict Perpetuated: China Policy During the Kennedy Years* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002), 250-51. In her latest work, Tucker moves past the Cold War and analyzes the larger security relationship between the United States and the Republic of China on Taiwan as well as the limitations of the relationship into the 1990s and the early administration of President George W. Bush. Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, *Strait Talk: United States-Taiwan Relations and the Crisis with China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 6-8.

collision of interests between individuals and organizations within the executive branch.<sup>2</sup> Likewise, the American-Taiwanese relationship between 1961 and 1963 shows numerous examples of such collision of interests, which led to an ideological struggle over policy. By the end of Kennedy's presidency, disagreement within the administration led some American policymakers to become increasingly frustrated with Chiang and caused them to more openly reconsider the larger scope of China policy, even to the point of discussing a more flexible and accommodationist approach to East Asia.

But on the surface, Chiang Kai-shek, President of the Republic of China (ROC) on Taiwan, may have had much to look forward to going into the 1960s. During the previous decade, Chiang had been a strong supporter of American policy in East Asia. After the Korean War, the ROC received copious amounts of military aid and became an American client state. Chiang had hoped that this aid and support would continue through the new Kennedy administration. Having won the 1960 presidential election by an extremely slim margin, the new president could not politically advocate major changes in China policy.

Meanwhile, Kennedy had appointed a number of advisors who would suggest that the United States should re-think its China policy. Among the first of these appointments was Robert W. Komer, whom Kennedy appointed to the National Security Council staff early in 1961. A former agent of the Central Intelligence Agency, Komer recommended to National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy that the State Department reconsider its Chinese relationships.<sup>3</sup> Komer suggested that the United States "disengage, as skillfully as we can, from the unproductive aspects of our China policy, e.g., UN membership . . . ." <sup>4</sup> In his report titled "Strategic Framework for Rethinking China Policy," Komer did not accept the idea that the American position in the Far East hinged on Taiwan. Chiang, however, could not be allowed to lose power. Komer, therefore, proposed that policy toward the ROC allow for greater flexibility. The Kennedy administration had to convince Chiang that the U.S. would continue to defend Taiwan and to maintain its international presence in the UN. Such a program would be expensive, but in the end, the "sole determinant of our FE [Far Eastern] policy cannot be keeping Chiang happy or even of preserving Taiwan. There are bigger issues at stake."<sup>5</sup> Kennedy also appointed a group of foreign policy experts and scholars, including Adlai E. Stevenson, III, W. Averell Harriman, and Chester Bowles, each of whom had been vocal critics of

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<sup>2</sup> Graham T. Allison, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1971), 6-7, 144-47, 210.

<sup>3</sup> *Contemporary Authors*, vol. 108 (Detroit: Gale Research Company, 1983), 272-73.

<sup>4</sup> Memorandum from Robert W. Komer to McGeorge Bundy, March 1, 1961, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963: Volume 22, Northeast Asia* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1996), 19, hereafter cited as *FRUS 1961-63*.

<sup>5</sup> Robert W. Komer, "Strategic Framework for Rethinking China Policy," April 7, 1961, Box 22, China, General, "Strategic Framework for Rethinking China Policy," 4/7/61, Papers of John F. Kennedy, Presidential Papers, National Security Files, Countries, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, Boston, MA, hereafter cited as NSF, JFKL.

Eisenhower's containment and isolation of the PRC. They all shared the idea that the United States should work toward a policy of accommodation with the PRC.<sup>6</sup>

The appointment of Dean Rusk as Secretary of State was also a major factor in the development of U.S.-ROC relations during the Kennedy administration. In May 1961, Rusk met privately with President Kennedy to explore possible changes in China policy and to discuss the ramifications. Rusk stated that the United States could recognize both the PRC and the ROC, work privately to bring reconciliation between the two Chinas, or sit tight and do nothing. Kennedy, though, refused to initiate changes in China policy. Any changes in China policy, Kennedy warned, would divide Congress and the American people, and would hand the Republicans a political weapon to use in 1964. Rusk agreed with Kennedy, and as the Secretary left the Oval Office, Kennedy further warned Rusk, "And what's more, Mr. Secretary, I don't want to read in the *Washington Post* or the *New York Times* that the State Department is thinking about a change in our China policy!"<sup>7</sup> Rusk publicly submerged his views with Kennedy's and did not directly initiate any new studies of China policy. Privately, though, Rusk contended that only by default was the ROC's government "the only Chinese government we [the United States] recognized."<sup>8</sup>

Meanwhile, the Kennedy administration inherited a foreign policy apparatus that did not encourage innovation. The State Department, especially the Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs, had been emptied of experts after investigations by Senator Joseph McCarthy (R-Wisconsin) targeted suspected communists. By 1961, the bureau had been staffed with stern anti-communists who favored containment and isolation of the PRC. Later that year, Kennedy assigned Harriman as Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, who then appointed Edward Rice to the bureau from his position on the Policy Planning Council. Rice, a long-serving State Department analyst who had survived the McCarthy "witch-hunt," had long championed abandoning containment policy toward the PRC in favor of accommodation.<sup>9</sup> While on the Policy Planning Council, Rice authored a paper that included a list of possible U.S. initiatives toward the Beijing regime, such as lifting the passport ban, opening arms control and disarmament talks, possible PRC representation in the United Nations, and ROC evacuation of the Offshore Islands. In short, Rice's paper proposed a policy that was flexible, moderate, and accommodating toward the Communist Chinese. Apparently, he greatly influenced several young staffers at the Far East office, such as James C. Thomson, Jr., and Roger Hilsman, to likewise advocate a more relaxed policy toward the PRC.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> James C. Thomson, Jr., "On the Making of U.S. China Policy, 1961-9: A Study in Bureaucratic Politics," *The China Quarterly* 50 (April-June 1972): 221-22.

<sup>7</sup> Dean Rusk, *As I Saw It* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1990), 282-84.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 284.

<sup>9</sup> Thomson, 222-23.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 223-24.

Like Komer and Rice, Undersecretary of State Chester Bowles also questioned the direction of China policy. In July 1961, he circulated a confidential report entitled "Some Requirements of American Foreign Policy," recommending various changes in American foreign policy toward Europe, Africa, and Asia, but most significantly argued that both the PRC and the ROC threatened regional stability. Attributing its aggression to the famine and the government's failure to meet food requirements, Bowles claimed that the PRC was a regional threat that had to be excluded from the United Nations. But, he argued, Nationalist China represented just as much of a problem in East Asia as the PRC. If the United States disengaged from Taiwan, the situation in Taipei may become chaotic and difficult to control. Instability could cause a war between the ROC and the PRC, or a coup d'état that could result in Chiang's overthrow, or an attempt to turn Taiwan over to the Communist Chinese. Any future China policy, Bowles concluded would have to consider and balance these mutually explosive situations.<sup>11</sup>

While some of Kennedy's State Department and White House appointees privately considered a more accommodationist China policy, Eisenhower administration stalwarts, like Everett F. Drumright and Ray Cline, opposed any such changes. A career diplomat, Drumright had been associated with the Nationalist Chinese government in various capacities between 1931 and 1946, and then returned to the Foreign Service in the Office of Chinese Affairs when Eisenhower became President in 1953. He firmly believed that the security of Nationalist China was vitally important to the United States.<sup>12</sup> His hard-line anti-communist opinions concerning China policy angered many of his colleagues in the Taipei embassy.<sup>13</sup> Ray Cline similarly opposed significant changes in China policy. Since the Eisenhower administration, Cline had been CIA Station Chief in Taipei. Taking advantage of his position, Cline had become close friends with General Chiang Ching-kuo, President Chiang' son and Deputy Secretary General of the ROC's National Defense Council.<sup>14</sup> Cline regularly conveyed Chiang's personal messages to the State Department and the White House. Chiang, Cline believed, feared the Democrats and contended that "the faintest indication of a change in U.S. attitudes can seem like a matter of life and death."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Chester Bowles, "Some Requirements of American Foreign Policy," July 1, 1961, Box 28, Bowles, Chester, 3/24/59-7/5/61, NSF, JFKL.

<sup>12</sup> Jay Taylor, *The Generalissimo's Son: Chiang Ching-kuo and the Revolution in China and Taiwan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 238.

<sup>13</sup> Interview with James Leonard, in *China Confidential: American Diplomats and Sino-American Relations, 1945-1996*, ed. Nancy Bernkopf Tucker (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 170-71. Leonard, Chinese Language Training and Political Officer at the Taipei embassy between 1957 and 1963, claimed that Drumright was "captive of this right-wing ideology on the China question." His difficult personality and his conservative politics angered the embassy staff, many of whom rejoiced at Kennedy's 1960 victory and disagreed with the way Taiwan had been governed.

<sup>14</sup> Taylor, 239.

<sup>15</sup> Memorandum from McGeorge Bundy to President Kennedy, July 7, 1961, *FRUS 1961-63*, 89.

One of the first China policy crises the Kennedy administration faced concerned irregular ROC forces which had been operating in the Burma-Thailand-Laos border region since the 1950s. In 1949, 11,000 to 15,000 Chinese Nationalist troops had fled China into this border region as the Nationalist government and most of the military retreated to the island of Taiwan. By 1961, despite two previous attempts to evacuate these irregular soldiers, some 10,000, including women and children, remained.<sup>16</sup> While the Burmese government demanded that these irregulars be evacuated, Chiang continued to supply these troops.

In February, 1961, the Burmese shot down two ROC aircraft: a B-24 supply plane bound for northern Burma and a PB-4Y, supplied to the Nationalists through the U.S. Military Assistance Program (MAP). The Burmese government justified their actions on the grounds that irregular troops, armed with American equipment supplied through such airdrops, had instigated trouble within their borders. Understanding Burma's problem, President Kennedy wanted these irregular troops to be withdrawn from Burma to Taiwan or broken into small groups for resettlement in Thailand and Laos.<sup>17</sup>

Chiang, during a February 25, 1961, meeting with Drumright, denied harming American interests. When asked to evacuate the irregulars, Chiang stated that while doing so would meet with great resistance because of their deep hatred for the Chinese Communists, he also recognized the inconvenience and embarrassment the situation caused to the United States. Chiang promised to end the airdrops and to evacuate those irregulars who wanted to be evacuated. In the case of those irregulars who were not longer responsive to his orders, the ROC President promised to disassociate himself from them and terminate their resupply.<sup>18</sup>

Meanwhile, Secretary Rusk requested that Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs write a report on these ROC irregulars for President Kennedy. The report concluded that since the 1950s President Chiang had disregarded American requests to evacuate his irregular troops from Burma. The irregulars, moreover, threatened the internal stability of Thailand, Burma, and Laos, and their positions along the border with Mainland China jeopardized peace in the region. Some were also suspected of trafficking in narcotics. The report thus concluded that the irregulars had to be evacuated or dispersed. Fearing

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<sup>16</sup> "Chinese Nationalist Irregulars in Southeast Asia," May 4, 1967, Box 245, China Visit of C. K. Yen – Briefing Book 5/9-10/67, Papers of Lyndon B. Johnson, President, 1963-1969, National Security File, Country File, China, Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library, Austin, TX, hereafter cited as NSF, LBJL.

<sup>17</sup> Memorandum from John F. Kennedy to Dean Rusk, February 17, 1961, Box 87, Department of State, 2/16/61-2/28/61, Papers of John F. Kennedy, Presidential Papers, President's Office Files, Departments and Agencies, John F. Kennedy, Presidential Papers, President's Office Files, Departments and Agencies, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, Boston, MA, hereafter cited as POF, DA, JFKL; Special Report No. 7, February 21, 1961, Box 87, Department of State, 2/16/61-2/28/61, POF, DA, JFKL.

<sup>18</sup> Telegram from Embassy in the Republic of China to Department of State, February 25, 1961, *FRUS 1961-63*, 16-17.

that President Chiang would not cooperate voluntarily, the report suggested that Chiang could be manipulated by selectively limiting or ceasing military aid, refusing to train Taiwanese Special Forces, and not participate in planning operations against the Mainland.<sup>19</sup>

Some evidence suggests that Chiang feared such repercussions and ordered ROC irregular troops to disarm and return to Taiwan or settle as civilians. Nationalist Chinese General Lai Ming-tang, after meeting with Ambassador Drumright in April 1961, reported that some of the six hundred to seven-hundred irregulars living in the Burma-Laos-Thailand border and nearly one thousand living in Thailand "appear to have gone into civilian life." Drumright, therefore, believed that the ROC had honestly and diligently carried out the American request. By the end of the month, he regarded the evacuation as complete.<sup>20</sup>

As the crisis over the ROC irregulars dissipated, the Kennedy administration faced a growing problem in the United Nations concerning ROC membership. Through the 1950s, there had been little challenge to Taiwan's status in the United Nations, but opposition increased in the 1960s.<sup>21</sup> President Kennedy publicly pledged his support to maintain ROC membership in the UN and to keep the PRC out.<sup>22</sup> Meanwhile, support for Taiwan slowly eroded as newly independent nations from Africa, some of whom were sympathetic to the PRC, joined the United Nations.<sup>23</sup> Given this development, several of Kennedy's foreign policy staff believed it was necessary to derive new ideas and tactics to ensure the ROC's continued presence in the United Nations.

In July 1961, Roger Hilsman of the State Department's Office of Intelligence and Research addressed the Chinese Representation issue. It was important, according to Hilsman, for the United States to firmly establish the ROC's claim on the China. Hilsman concluded that the most prudent course President Kennedy could take was to set up a commission to investigate the situation and provide further advice to the President. If the United States lost control of the issue, Hilsman wrote, "then doubts and tensions over

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<sup>19</sup> Memorandum from Dean Rusk to John F. Kennedy, February 20, 1961, Box 21, China, General, 2/20/61-2/28/61, NSF, JFKL; "United States Efforts to Effect Cessation of the Government of the Republic of China's Support of Chinese Irregulars in Burma-Laos Border Area," n.d., Box 21a, China, General, 2/20/61-2/28/61, NSF, JFKL.

<sup>20</sup> "Department of State Staff Summary," April 17, 1961, Box 88, Department of State, 4/61-5/61, POF, DA, JFKL.

<sup>21</sup> Ralph N. Clough, *Island China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), 150.

<sup>22</sup> Thomas J. Schoenbaum, *Waging Peace and War: Dean Rusk in the Truman, Kennedy, and Johnson Years* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988), 387.

<sup>23</sup> George T. Yu, "Africa in Chinese Foreign Policy," *Asian Survey* 28 (August 1988): 851.

United States relations to the United Nations would probably increase in the public attitude and in the legislative attitude."<sup>24</sup>

On the other hand, Drumright and Cline argued that President Kennedy should take a more active stance. Ambassador Drumright expressed his concern that ROC officials feared that the Kennedy administration was looking for a convenient way out of the Chinese Representation issue at the ROC's expense.<sup>25</sup> Cline, though, worried that Taiwanese officials might not accept changes in American policy toward the ROC. Being that the Nationalists might lose the debate on their UN seat, Cline warned that Chiang would not in the future trust this new Democratic administration in Washington and would move forward on an independent policy of invading the Mainland.<sup>26</sup>

Hilsman, Drumright, and Cline each contended that Taiwanese government officials had to be convinced that the Kennedy administration would continue to protect Taiwan's interests. On the other hand, the Kennedy administration could not allow the ROC to take action to guarantee their interests independently of the United States. President Kennedy echoed these sentiments during a July 1961 White House meeting concerning Chinese representation. The United States and the ROC, Kennedy stated, should have one common objective – to keep the PRC out of the United Nations.<sup>27</sup> Meanwhile, the Chinese representation issue became more complicated when the Soviet-dominated government of Outer Mongolia became independent and applied for admission into the UN. The ROC insisted that Outer Mongolia was a part of China and could not be admitted. Kennedy feared that a ROC veto of Outer Mongolia's membership could warrant a communist bloc push for Taiwan's ouster from the UN. Taiwan, contended Kennedy, should not veto Outer Mongolia's application into the UN.<sup>28</sup>

At the end of July 1961, Rusk proposed a parliamentary ploy that would ensure the ROC its continued membership and would exclude the PRC from the United Nations. Rusk suggested that a representative group of UN members develop a majority proposing that the Chinese representation issue was an "important question" which required a two-thirds vote. This would hopefully delay any credentials vote regarding ROC membership.<sup>29</sup> Kennedy and Rusk had to convince the ROC not to veto Outer

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<sup>24</sup> Memorandum from Roger Hilsman to Secretary of State, n.d., Box 22, China, General, 7/25/61-7/27/61, NSF, JFKL.

<sup>25</sup> Telegram from Everett F. Drumright to Department of State, March 20, 1961, *FRUS 1961-63*, 37.

<sup>26</sup> Memorandum from McGeorge Bundy to John F. Kennedy, July 7, 1961, Box 22, China, General, 6/28/61-7/7/61, NSF, JFKL.

<sup>27</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, July 28, 1961, Conference at White House on China Representation at United Nations and Outer Mongolia-United Nations Membership Application, *FRUS 1961-63*, 99-101.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> Memorandum from Dean Rusk to John F. Kennedy, July 31, 1961, Box 113a, China, Security, 1961, NSF, JFKL.

Mongolia's application and go along with the "important question" proposal. But the Taiwanese had already begun to take steps to ensure their seat in the UN through an African aid program called Operation Vanguard. This aid program had the ulterior motive of securing future support from newly independent African nations for Taiwan's China seat in the UN. Meanwhile, the African nation of Mauritania petitioned to enter the UN. A Soviet veto of Mauritania's UN membership would threaten both Taiwan's aid program and its ability to secure future support among newly independent African countries to maintain its China seat.<sup>30</sup>

Kennedy tried to convince Chiang not to become too involved in the UN representation issue. On August 15, 1961, Kennedy warned Chiang that he might not be able to rally majority support for continued ROC representation in the UN if the ROC vetoed Outer Mongolia's application. If the ROC lost its seat, Kennedy warned that the United States would not be able to generate support for military action to defend Taiwan if the Mainland regime chose to attack.<sup>31</sup> Chiang responded that Outer Mongolia's application for UN membership was nothing more than Soviet blackmail, and that the United States and their allies should reject it and earn the good will of African states supporting the ROC's and Mauritania's membership. Chiang essentially refused to change his plans to veto Outer Mongolia's application.<sup>32</sup>

Having made little headway to compromise with the ROC, Secretary of State Rusk instructed Ambassador Stevenson to move on the "important question" tactic.<sup>33</sup> Rusk also sent instructions to the American embassy in Taipei that, if Chiang planned to "go down with the ship rather than compromise on Outer Mongolia, the United States would share no responsibility for Chiang's decision. Rusk then urged Drumright to assure ROC officials that, because of their common interests, the United States would provide them the strongest support possible, but also reminded Drumright of the gravity of the situation, commenting that, "If we cannot persuade GRC . . . to meet us on any of several significant matters whom can we persuade?"<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Rosemary Foot, "Redefinitions: The Domestic Context of America's China Policy in the 1960s," in *Re-examining the Cold War: U.S.-China Diplomacy, 1954-1973*, eds. Robert S. Ross and Jiang Changbin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 269; Chiao Chiao Hsieh, *Strategy for Survival: The Foreign Policy and External Relations of the Republic of China on Taiwan, 1949-1979* (London: The Sherwood Press, 1985), 181-82.

<sup>31</sup> Letter from President Kennedy to Chiang Kai-shek, August 15, 1961, Box 26, China, Subjects, Chiang Kai-shek, Correspondence 4/61-9/63, NSF, JFKL.

<sup>32</sup> Letter from Chiang Kai-shek to President Kennedy, August 26, 1961, Box 26, China, Subjects, Chiang Kai-shek, Correspondence 4/61-9/63, NSF, JFKL.

<sup>33</sup> Memorandum from Dean Rusk to Adlai Stevenson, September 13, 1961, Box 22, China, General, 9/61, NSF, JFKL.

<sup>34</sup> Telegram from Department of State to U.S. Embassy Taipei, September 17, 1961, Box 25, China, Cables, 9/2/61-10/15/61, NSF, JFKL.



But by October, Presidents Kennedy and Chiang reached an understanding. The United States would vote for Outer Mongolia's admission, oppose Communist China's entry into the United Nations, and President Kennedy would reassure Chiang that his government had the right to represent China in the UN. Meanwhile, Kennedy would privately assure Chiang that a U.S. veto would be used to prevent PRC entry, if necessary. Finally, the ROC would not veto Outer Mongolia's application to join the United Nations.<sup>35</sup> On December 15, 1961, the "important question" resolution passed the General Assembly 61-34 with seven abstentions.<sup>36</sup>

With the UN representation issue temporarily resolved, American policymakers became increasingly preoccupied with Chiang's oft-repeated statements and schemes to "retake the mainland." Chiang insisted on a Mainland return policy because his Nationalist government could not abandon its *raison d'être*.<sup>37</sup> Chiang's moment of opportunity to attack and retake the Mainland seemed to arise in the early 1960s as the Mainland suffered through one of the worst famines in recorded history. While the famine caused the deaths of between forty to eighty million people, Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev recalled 1,400 scientists and engineers in April 1960, which led to reductions in industrial production, disruptions in the national transportation system, and transfer of workers to famine-affected areas.<sup>38</sup> Chiang's intentions toward the Mainland generated much concern and discussion in Washington, and many in the White House and State Department believed that he had to be reined in.

Meanwhile, the growing conflict in Vietnam threatened to complicate U.S.-ROC military relations. Chiang hoped to use the deteriorating situation in Vietnam as a means to become more involved in Southeast Asia and, in the long run, as another front in his civil war against Mao and the Mainland Communist regime. Differing views within the Kennedy administration added to the complications. While Defense Department officials sought to use the ROC in the ever widening crisis in South Vietnam, high-ranking State Department policymakers hoped to thwart Chiang's desires. William P. Bundy, Assistant Secretary of Defense, wrote that South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem wished to use Chinese Nationalist troops, naturalize them as Vietnamese citizens, and utilize them in the Mekong River delta, where there was already a large number of ethnic Chinese.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Message from Ray Cline to McGeorge Bundy, October 14, 1961, *FRUS 1961-63*, 156-57.

<sup>36</sup> "Question of Representation of China in the United Nations; Restoration of Lawful Rights of People's Republic of China in the United Nations," in *Yearbook of the United Nations, 1961* (New York: Office of Public Information, 1963), 127.

<sup>37</sup> Chiao Chiao Hsieh, 140.

<sup>38</sup> Clough, 21; Jasper Becker, *Hungry Ghosts: Mao's Secret Famine* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1996), 85, 99, 274; Maurice Meisner, *Mao's China and After: A History of the People's Republic*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition (New York: The Free Press, 1999), 234-35, 237.

<sup>39</sup> Memorandum for the Record from William P. Bundy, October 25, 1961, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963: Volume I, Vietnam 1961* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1988), 434-36, hereafter cited as *FRUS Vietnam 1961*.

U. Alexis Johnson, Deputy Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs, warned that the presence of Nationalist Chinese troops on the Asian mainland would open a “pandora’s box,” drawing Chinese Communist intervention and exacerbating anti-Chinese prejudice in the region.<sup>40</sup>

In February 1962, Chiang pressed Cline and Bundy that the United States and Taiwan, in a joint effort, should take immediate action to rescue the Mainland from the communists.<sup>41</sup> Later, Ambassador Drumright met with Chiang and urged him to take into consideration world opinion and American responsibilities, because the Americans would be cautious about opening a new front in the Cold War. Drumright then warned the State Department that Chiang was determined to order a Mainland invasion that year. To prevent a war, the United States had to channel Chiang’s actions “in directions we deem appropriate.”<sup>42</sup> Roger Hilsman also became quite nervous about a Mainland invasion after his March 1962 meeting with Defense Minister Chiang Ching-kuo, who proposed that the United States provide to Taiwan airplanes to drop several two hundred-man teams of paratroopers. Hilsman compared the Defense Minister’s proposal with earlier problems in Cuba, noting that the Mainland Chinese were discontented, but would not risk their lives unless they were very sure of success.<sup>43</sup>

Despite such hesitations, Kennedy proposed to send American aircraft to Taiwan in March 1962, but refused to participate directly in Chiang’s plans. He suggested that the United States send to Taiwan two C-123 aircraft to be flown by Chinese crews trained in the United States. The C-123s could be used to haul cargo and as many as sixty-one fully-equipped troops.<sup>44</sup> Kennedy then asked Ray Cline to persuade ROC government officials to drop public discussion of plans invading the Mainland and make clear to Chiang “that no commitment was being made other than to prepare the planes and be willing to consider their use.”<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Letter from U. Alexis Johnson to William P. Bundy, December 13, 1961, *FRUS Vietnam 1961*, 733-34.

<sup>41</sup> Telegram from William P. Bundy to Robert S. McNamara and McGeorge Bundy, February 24, 1962, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963: Northeast Asia, Laos, Microfiche Supplement* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1997), Document 35, Fiche 4 of 18, hereafter cited as *FRUS 1961-63 Microfiche*.

<sup>42</sup> Telegram from Everett F. Drumright to Department of State, March 6, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, 189-90.

<sup>43</sup> Memorandum for the Record, March 19, 1962, Box 1, Folder 3, Papers of John F. Kennedy, Presidential Papers, White House Staff Files, Roger Hilsman Papers, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, Boston, MA, hereafter cited as Hilsman Papers, JFKL.

<sup>44</sup> Telegram from Ralph Clough to W. Averell Harriman, March 30, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, 202-03; Tony Holmes, *Jane’s Historic Military Aircraft* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1998), 304; M. J. Armitage and R. A. Mason, *Air Power in the Nuclear Age*, Second Edition (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 90; Ray L. Bowers, “USAF Airlift and the Airmobility Idea in Vietnam,” *Air University Review* 26 (1974): 8.

<sup>45</sup> Memorandum for the Record, March 31, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, 204-05.

Throughout early April 1962, Cline met regularly with President Chiang and Defense Minister Chiang Ching-kuo. In those meetings, Cline convinced the Chiangs to postpone the target date for an initial air drop from June until October 1, 1962, but President Chiang wanted Kennedy's reassurances that he would fully support the ROC's plans, especially regarding the drop date and mutual study of plans for military operations.<sup>46</sup> On hearing of Chiang's position, McGeorge Bundy warned Cline that the American position "must be that it stands on what is outlined . . . We cannot safely get ourselves in the position of negotiating on this."<sup>47</sup> Cline, delivering Chiang's response to President Kennedy's position, stated that Chiang was willing to take sole responsibility for any attack and that Taiwan was "obliged to take certain prudent military preparedness measures to be ready to intervene in case the situation deteriorates to the point where the U.S. agrees that action is in the Free World interest."<sup>48</sup>

In May 1962, as tensions mounted between the United States and Taiwan over Chiang's preparations to attack the Mainland, President Kennedy appointed long-time family friend Admiral Alan G. Kirk (U.S. Navy, retired) as the new ambassador to the ROC.<sup>49</sup> After meeting with President Chiang in July 1962, Ambassador Kirk questioned whether the United States should provide bombers and landing craft to the ROC, or whether granting them to Chiang's government would display American trust in the ROC and indicate U.S. desire to help Chiang recover the Mainland. Kirk stated that the American response to the ROC request for such weapons was being taken by ROC officials as an indication of unwillingness to help. Nonetheless, Kirk advised the State Department to delay such deliveries because the types of material requested were obviously of an offensive nature and "its release to the [ROC] cannot be concealed."<sup>50</sup> He, therefore, proposed that the United States provide Chiang material on the condition that U.S. policymakers oversee Taiwanese military planning. This minimal aid would allow the Kennedy administration to back away from the previously approved 200-man drops because of the limited capacity of the C-123s. Harriman agreed with Kirk's proposal, which essentially assured that Chiang Kai-shek would not be able to launch an assault against Communist China without a large number of paratroopers.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Telegram from Ralph Clough to John McCone, April 14, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63 Microfiche*, Document 40.

<sup>47</sup> Message from McGeorge Bundy to Ray Cline, April 17, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, 218-19.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Robert Dallek, *An Unfinished Life: John F. Kennedy, 1917-1963* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 2003), 82; Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, ed., *China Confidential: American Diplomats and Sino-American Relations, 1945-1996* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 175-76; Memorandum for the Record, May 31, 1962, Box 23, China, General, 4/62-5/62, NSF, JFKL.

<sup>50</sup> Telegram from Alan G. Kirk to Department of State, July 27, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, 294-95.

<sup>51</sup> Memorandum from W. Averell Harriman to John F. Kennedy, August 8, 1962, Box 88, Department of State, 8/62-12/62, Papers of John F. Kennedy, Presidential Papers, President's Office Files, Departments and Agencies, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, Boston, MA, hereafter cited as POF, JFKL;

In September, Kirk informed Chiang that the United States would send two C-123s to Taiwan when they were ready and the crews trained, but that President Kennedy refused to provide Chiang with the bombers and landing craft.<sup>52</sup> Chiang then warned Kirk that if the Kennedy administration prevented the ROC from going ahead with these air drop plans, he would have great difficulty maintaining his and the ROC's military confidence.<sup>53</sup> The efforts of Kirk, Harriman, and others seemed to pay dividends. By the beginning of October, American officials in Taiwan noted a decrease in invasion rhetoric coming from the Taiwanese government and press. There were also no new reports of "forced-draft" activities, which indicated that military training was returning to normal.<sup>54</sup> Nonetheless, the ROC continued to launch small-scale intelligence gathering operations, using fishing boats as "motherships" to land infiltration teams on the Mainland.<sup>55</sup> Thomas L. Hughes of the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research grew concerned that these missions would result in drawing the United States further into ROC plans for a full-scale invasion. Hughes concluded that the ROC would seek greater amount of American equipment and aircraft for larger operations, perhaps with a view to landing one or more 200-man teams on the Mainland.<sup>56</sup> Later, in February, Ambassador Kirk observed that Chiang and other ROC officials were exhibiting symptoms of "spring fever," building landing craft, training soldiers in a new airborne division, and publicly stating that the time to retake the mainland "was ripe, now or never."<sup>57</sup> In March, Kirk questioned whether or not "the retention of the island of Taiwan in friendly hands is vital to the interests of the United States."<sup>58</sup>

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Memorandum from W. Averell Harriman to Alan G. Kirk, August 8, 1962, Box 23, China, General, 7/62-8/62, NSF, JFKL.

<sup>52</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, September 6, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, 306-11.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.* Delivery of the C-123s remained in dispute until February 1963. United States and ROC officials argued over control and ownership of the aircraft and how the aircraft were to be used. Kennedy proposed to send the aircraft to Taiwan but keep them under U.S. control and ownership with ROC crews. The aircraft were to be used in South Vietnam and in Mainland operations only with agreement of both the ROC and U.S. officials. According to Ralph Clough, Kennedy's proposal appeared to have been well received by President Chiang and his son. See note, Letter from John F. Kennedy to Chiang Kai-shek, February 15, 1963, *FRUS 1961-63*, 347; Memorandum from Ralph Clough to W. Averell Harriman, March 2, 1963, *FRUS 1961-63*, 352.

<sup>54</sup> Airgram from Ralph Clough to Department of State, October 12, 1962, Box 25a, China, Cables, 9/5/62-10/15/62, NSF, JFKL.

<sup>55</sup> Tucker, *Uncertain Friendships*, 64; Interview with Arthur Hummel, in Tucker, *China Confidential*, 210-11; Telegram Information Report, Central Intelligence Agency, December 28, 1962, Box 26, China, Cables, 12/62-2/63, NSF, JFKL.

<sup>56</sup> Memorandum from Thomas L. Hughes to W. Averell Harriman, January 11, 1963; Box 24, China, General, 1/63-3/63, NSF, JFKL.

<sup>57</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, February 4, 1963, *FRUS 1961-63*, 342-44.

<sup>58</sup> Memorandum from Alan G. Kirk to John F. Kennedy, March 29, 1963, Box 113a, China, Security, 1962-63, POF, JFKL.

Although President Kennedy continued to make public statements of support for Chiang through the spring of 1963, he and his advisors began privately to reconsider the necessity of providing military assistance to the ROC. In the wake of the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Sino-Soviet rift, the establishment of a Washington-Moscow "hot-line," and the signing of the Test Ban Treaty of July 1963, the worldwide diplomatic climate had shifted from potential warfare between the superpowers to their mutual impetus to negotiate.<sup>59</sup> Perhaps neither Kennedy nor his advisors were willing to chance the diplomatic gains of peace made with the Soviets by the summer of 1963, and were thus no longer willing to publicly support Chiang's plans to invade Mainland China.

On September 11, 1963, President Kennedy met with ROC Defense Minister Chiang Ching-kuo in the White House. Chiang, on behalf of his father, insisted that the United States and the ROC take advantage of the situation on the Mainland and requested five C-130 aircraft in addition to the C-123s requested earlier, and landing craft to conduct raids along the Mainland coast, with the goals of creating disruption and seizing one or more provinces "south of the Yangtze [River] when the time is ripe." Kennedy responded that American policy "should be determined by reality and not by hopes or optimism," and that the United States "did not wish to become involved in military operations where our role would inevitably become known and which would end in failure."<sup>60</sup>

While the Kennedy administration attempted to prevent the crisis in the Taiwan Strait from becoming an all-out war between the PRC and the ROC, State Department staffers in the Policy Planning Council initiated a plan to moderate the American policy toward the communist world, including the PRC. Walt W. Rostow, the newly appointed Director of the State Department's Policy Planning Council, authored this report entitled "Basic National Security Policy," which suggested that the United States and the Soviet Union could negotiate agreements over areas of mutual interest. The Soviet Union would not "deliberately take actions which would bring about a general nuclear war," a war that no one could win.<sup>61</sup> Rostow also hoped that this threat of mutual destruction from a nuclear war would modify U.S. relations with Communist China, suggesting that the United States "leave ajar possibilities for expanding commercial, cultural and other

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<sup>59</sup> Dallek, 607-08; Vladislav M. Zubok, "Unwrapping the Enigma: What was behind the Soviet Challenge in the 1960s?" in *The Diplomacy of the Crucial Decade: American Foreign Relations During the 1960s*, ed. Diane B. Kunz (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 161; Frank Costigliola, "The Pursuit of Atlantic Community: Nuclear Arms, Dollars, and Berlin," in *Kennedy's Quest for Victory: American Foreign Policy, 1961-1963*, ed. Thomas G. Paterson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 53; Gordon H. Chang, *Friends and Enemies: The United States, China, and the Soviet Union, 1948-1972* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 235.

<sup>60</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, September 11, 1963, *FRUS 1961-63*, 386-92.

<sup>61</sup> "Basic National Security Policy," June 22, 1962, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963: Volume 8, National Security Policy* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1996), 312.

contacts with Communist China"<sup>62</sup> But while the United States worked toward normalization of relations with the PRC, Rostow stated that the U.S. should continue to work with the ROC. The United States should "make plain our enduring commitment to sustain and defend a free government on Taiwan"<sup>63</sup> Therefore, the United States should use its leverage to encourage Taiwan either to "withdraw its forces from the [Offshore] islands or to regard the islands as outposts to be garrisoned . . . if and when this can be done without damage to our position in the Far East."<sup>64</sup> Although Rostow did not specifically call for a "two Chinas" policy, the report very clearly stated that the United States should maintain relations with both the PRC and the ROC.

Understandably, Rostow's initiative provoked grave concern in the ROC. When Ting-fu Tsiang, ROC Ambassador to the United States, met with Dean Rusk in early July 1962 to discuss the Chinese Communist military buildup, he noted that opinion in Taiwan had become alarmed by Rostow's report.<sup>65</sup> This would inevitably mean, according to Tsiang, U.S. recognition of the PRC, the PRC's admittance to the UN, and American neutralization of Taiwan. All of this was deemed unacceptable. Rusk replied that he hoped the report would not be misleading or confusing and he would consider Tsiang's concerns, but he reassured him that "he did not want to give [the] impression, however, that there would be any major change in our publicly stated position."<sup>66</sup>

Rostow's initiative never received a groundswell of support, nor did it immediately result in a change in China policy. Nonetheless, the report remains significant for several reasons. Although the Kennedy administration never formally approved the report, "Basic National Security Policy" acknowledged a shift in thinking at some levels in the State Department. Possible changes in China policy, including a more accommodating relationship with the PRC, were at least being discussed within the State Department bureaucracy. This report did not bode well for the ROC, which claimed to be the government of all China and continually labeled the Beijing regime illegitimate. Nonetheless, this report would influence future public statements of foreign policy with the communist world and might have influenced other State Department staffers to further challenge the established policies of containment and isolation of the PRC.

Bureaucratic changes in the Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs further contributed to the elevation of Mainland Chinese affairs on its agenda. Until 1962, a single China desk

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<sup>62</sup> "Basic National Security Policy," June 22, 1962, Document 271, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963: Arms Control; National Security Policy; Economic Policy, Microfiche Supplement* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1997), 163-64.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.; Editorial Note, *FRUS 1961-63*, 271. Rostow provided neither a time line nor a procedure for establishing and maintaining a "two Chinas" policy.

<sup>65</sup> Telegram from Dean Rusk to the Embassy in the Republic of China, July 7, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, 291-92.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

had handled affairs concerning both the Taipei and Beijing regimes. To bring Mainland Chinese affairs to the forefront, the Bureau in mid-1962 established two separate desks, which included a Mainland China affairs desk and a Republic of China affairs desk. This arrangement opened the door for the consideration of new policy ideas toward the PRC and allowed them to filter higher up the State Department bureaucracy. By late November 1963, the new Mainland China desk had been renamed the Office of Asian Communist Affairs and separated from the Office of East Asian Affairs, which handled matters concerning Japan, Korea, and Taiwan. The Office of Asian Communist Affairs could now freely access and influence policymaking.<sup>67</sup> Within the new Office of Asian Communist Affairs, staffers now had a degree of freedom to explore new opportunities toward the PRC without running afoul of the more staunchly anti-communist China hands in the Office of East Asian Affairs.

These organizational changes soon began to bear fruit. The Kennedy administration had initially considered Communist China an expansionist state that threatened regional security in East Asia and had to be contained.<sup>68</sup> A small group of State Department staffers, including Roger Hilsman, Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, James C. Thomson, Jr., Special Assistant in the Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs, Lindsey Grant of Mainland China Affairs, and Allen S. Whiting, Director of the Office of Research for Far Eastern Affairs, contended that it was time to propose a more realistic China policy. Believing that the remnants of the "China Bloc" and the "China Lobby" would not mount much of a counterattack, they wrote a speech that outlined a policy of "firmness, flexibility, and dispassion" toward Communist China. The U.S. would firmly support its allies, in particular the Republic of China, and in their determination to halt aggression, but the U.S. would also be willing to negotiate with the Communist Chinese and dispassionately discuss and analyze mutual problems and seek solutions in their common interests. Once completed, the speech was sent to the White House and to senior officials at State and Defense for approval. Notably, the speech cleared the White House and the State Department without having been read by new President Lyndon B. Johnson, Assistant Secretary of State Harriman, or Secretary Rusk, who refused to go over the speech despite Hilsman's request.<sup>69</sup>

Roger Hilsman delivered the televised speech at the Commonwealth Club in San Francisco, California, on December 13, 1963. Hilsman stated that, in the past, "emotionalism" and "misapprehension of reality" had guided American policy toward China. Instead, Hilsman echoed Rostow's suggestions in "Basic National Security Policy" and called for a China policy that sought to "keep the door open to the possibility

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<sup>67</sup> Thomson, 226; "FE – Office of Asian Communist Affairs," undated, *FRUS 1961-63*, 397-99.

<sup>68</sup> James Fetzer, "Clinging to Containment: China Policy," in *Kennedy's quest for Victory: American Foreign Policy, 1961-63*, ed. Thomas G. Paterson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 179, 197.

<sup>69</sup> Roger Hilsman, *To Move A Nation: The Politics of Foreign Policy in the Administration of John F. Kennedy* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1967), 351, 355; Interview with Lindsey Grant, in *China Confidential: American Diplomats and Sino-American Relations, 1945-1996*, ed. Nancy Bernkopf Tucker (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 193-94.

of change and not to slam it shut against any developments which might advance out national good, serve the free world, and benefit the people of China." He believed that the Chinese Communist, like the Soviets, might be amenable toward reaching "limited agreements which can bring some reduction" of danger between the United States and the PRC. Hilsman's speech was the first public statement by a high-ranking State Department official suggesting that the United States wished to reach an accommodation with the PRC if the PRC modified its hostility toward the United States. This did not mean, however, that the U.S. would abandon the ROC. Hilsman stated that the U.S. would continue to block Communist Chinese attempts to "commit aggression on its free world neighbors."<sup>70</sup>

By the end of 1963, American officials had grown increasingly frustrated with Chiang Kai-shek and the status of China policy. Although President Kennedy did not publicly advocate change, his appointees and their reorganization of the State Department bureaucracy brought forth new approaches toward the PRC and the ROC. But as it seemed more certain that Chiang intended to be more aggressive toward the Mainland than the United States wished, some policymakers became more vocal in favoring a more flexible China policy. Their writings would influence East Asian policy through the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, as the United States increasingly became involved in Vietnam and steadily reconsidered policy toward the PRC. In the wake of improving relations with the Soviet Union and deteriorating conditions in East Asia, there certainly were bigger issues at stake.

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid.; Hilsman, 351; Roger Hilsman, "United States Policy Toward Communist China," *Department of State Bulletin* 50 (January 6, 1964): 11-17.