

## Analysing PRC's Military Strategy in the 1950s -Three Crisis Studies

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### Abstract

This paper is to analyze three Sino-American military confrontations in the 1950s: the Korean War, the First and Second Taiwan Strait Crises from a Taiwanese perspective. The study of this period particularly makes sense because in which China had militarily confronted a nuclear superpower, the United States. The first part of this paper will be devoted to the introduction of China's military doctrines in the 1950s, mostly the People's War. In the second part are the crisis analyses. In the Korean War (1950-53), the Chinese served as the vanguard of the Soviets, but were eventually isolated in a strained international circumstance. After the First Taiwan Strait Crisis (1954-55), some changes between Washington and Beijing, however were happening even though their mutual antagonism still remained. In the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis (1958-59) by contrast, China had effectively deterred the US-Taiwan alliance and obtained political profits from the disagreement of the latter. In the sections of analysis and conclusion, I argues that military operations would not be meaningful without proper understanding of international politics. On one hand, with the declines of US nuclear deterrence to PRC's People's War doctrine in these three crises, Taiwan's status accordingly became lesser and lesser significant to US's national interests. On the other hand, for Washington and Beijing, they could possibly acquire more political objectives, if with more adequate and amiable attitudes for the nature of mutual relations.

**Key Words:** Chinese Military Strategy, People's War, Nuclear Deterrence, the Korean War (1950-53), the First Taiwan Strait Crisis (1954-55), the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis (1958-59)

## **Introduction**

With the gradual maturity of war studies, military strategy is no longer regarded as a thoughtless practice. Without suitable strategic guidance or doctrines, it would be difficult to win a modern war or establish concrete defence. Henry Kissinger may be right in this point. "It is the task of strategic doctrine to translate power into policy." (Kissinger,1957:7) In this paper, I will examine the doctrines and crises of China in the 1950s. They will present a clear difference and change of China's grand strategy.\*

The People's Republic of China (PRC) was founded in 1949, when the international system has already fallen under the spell of a possible thermonuclear war. The West and the Soviet blocs facing each other in a military stalemate were just like two scorpions in a bottle. Each was capable of killing the other, but only at the risk of his own life (Freedman,1989:94). In this atomic age, military exchanges would be extremely dangerous due to the possibility of employment of nuclear weapons. This assumption was challenged by the Chinese in the 1950s. Before the successful detonation of its first nuclear devices in 1964, the PRC had boldly involved in three serious military confrontations with the United States (US), which was the strongest nuclear power then. Every occasion the US had threatened to use nuclear weapons against the PRC in different degrees. To the end, however, neither of these conflicts was escalated into a nuclear war. Moreover, the US instead had made some concessions, directly or indirectly to the PRC, which did not win final victory in these confrontations in a strictly military sense in the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis. However, With the declining of US nuclear deterrence v.s. PRC's People's War confrontations in these three crises, Taiwan's status accordingly became lesser and lesser significant to US's national interests. More evidences would be introduced in the section of three cases study.

## **General Doctrines**

Before the 1960s, ideology and misperception had generally characterised

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\* In this article, "China" means "People's Republic of China" founded by communists. The use of term does not imply any kind of political judgement.

Sino-American relations. In the absence of direct communications, the US and PRC hardly comprehended the military posture of each other. Both dwelled on their respective ideologies and believed the opposite side to be inherently aggressive. Disagreements were also clear on nuclear strategies. The US felt that the nuclear proliferation would be a dangerous scenario and tried to discourage the Communist possession of nuclear weapons. In the view of the PRC, however, these destructive weapons should not be monopolised by the imperialist countries since this would strengthen the domination of international imperialism and hegemony. In terms of grand strategy in this period, Mao Zedong firmly believed that the struggle between the “reactionary camp”, headed by the US, which sought world domination, and the “progressive forces”, guided by the Soviet Union, was the determining factor of the post- WWII era. To balance the global struggle, the PRC, which was self-styled as a leader of the “intermediate zone” (Third World) chose to lean to the Soviet Union, not only to avoid being subjugated but also because Marxism-Leninism historically would prevail. According to *Dagongbao*, the Chinese Communists believed:

“The Soviet army possessed all the weapons and the technique for fighting a modern war. If the imperialists started a war they would be completely destroyed by the Soviet army. If the growing power of the Chinese forces was taken into consideration, then the imperialist aggressors could have no hope at all.”(Gitting, 1967:128)

**General Doctrines of War** Basically, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) leaders were convinced that Just War, which leads to international peace and progress, is inevitable between these two blocs. Mao, an adherent of the principle of *Si vis pacem, par bellum* (to have peace, you must prepare for war), had accordingly established his own theories on war and grand strategy:

- 1. War for Great Way** The nature of war is either just or unjust. Military struggle, initiated by the communists, to counter the oppression and obstacles to social progress can all be called just wars. Conversely, other wars that do not belong to this category are unjust. A communist society, which is the realisation of the Chinese “Great Way” (*Dadao*), is the ultimate goal of social evolution. Before that stage, war is a frequent struggle at all.
- 2. War as the sole channel to socialist peace** Given the imperialism was the source of struggle, a general nuclear war or local military conflicts would be

possibly expected. Only when the imperialism is eliminated can peace prevail. Military power is an instrument to break unjust domination. The task of war is chiefly to fight against the oppressors. All class wars, however, will eventually be eliminated by Just War, namely, the final war, which is “the sole channel to socialist peace.” (Mao,1954:179)

**3. War of legitimacy** To a high degree, the Chinese ideas of war are inherited from the Chinese tradition of “legitimacy”. Just like Americans’ Manifest Destiny and Nazi Master Race doctrines, the traditional Chinese doctrine of war also carried a similar sense of a cultural mission to impose a just peace. In ancient times, China was the suzerain above any other nations, so it had the unavoidable obligation to preserve the world order on behalf of Heaven. Under the communist rule, the PRC became a self-claimed representative of the oppressed and the Third World countries. It by the same token felt the strong responsibility to maintain international peace and break the dominance of imperialist hegemony.

From these assumptions above, most importantly, Mao gradually completed his theories on “People’s War”, which formulated a major countermeasure against US nuclear deterrence in the 1950s. There are more discussions on this topic in the following paragraphs.

## People’s War

If Chinese Emperors sought to get close to Heaven to unfold their legitimacy (*Zhengtong*), Chairman Mao would rather extract his from the masses instead (Frederic, 1973:21). This was where Mao Zedong formulated his “People’s War” (*Renmin Zhanzheng*) theories, which were obviously expressed in the 1950s to confront America’s conventional and nuclear threat, particularly before the PRC possessed its own nuclear weapons. It is known that Mao Zedong was not the sole prominent strategist of the CCP. Zhu De (*On Guerrilla Warfare*), Peng Dehuai (*Strategy and Tactics of the Eighth Route Army*), Guo Huaruo (*Tactical Problems in Guerrilla Warfare*) and Ming Fan (*A Textbook on Guerrilla Warfare*) all made significant contributions of Chinese Communist military strategy (Bok,1984:5). However, the doctrine of People’s War was mostly Mao’s brainchild. Compared with Western notions of “general war” or “total war” covering the whole military, economic,

psychological, industrial, demographic and societal strategies, the concept of People's War had similar but more specific indications in a Chinese context (Garden, 1966:185).

By means of the mobilization of People's War, the Chinese Communists successfully grasped political power from the Kuamintang (KMT) in the Civil War (1945-1949). After the establishment of the regime of the PRC, the CCP was still sceptical if the Americans would use their atomic bombs to help Chiang Kai-shek to retake the mainland. Again Maoist People's War was promulgated as a basis to consolidate his regime. Under US nuclear threat, Mao proclaimed Chinese military preparation be on the principle of "prompt, great and nuclear war" (*zaoda, dada, dahezhanzheng*).

Mao's argument was very interesting since he said the very one to launch nuclear war would be doomed. Some criticized the reason for Mao's proposal of People's War in this nuclear age was just to cover China's lack of nuclear capacity (Joffe, 1965:50). It is somehow true that without credible nuclear deterrence, the Chinese leadership might have no other alternatives but emphasized the significance of conventional forces (Huck, 1970:61). Mao's dictum "man over weapons", stimulated from Sunzi's accounts became the rudiment of military strategy especially in the 1950s (Lewis and Litai, 1994:209). Through propaganda, the Maoists believed that the spiritual components of war should prevail over the material ones, and a well-trained army of reasonable size, with popular support, would be almost invincible even if the opposition forces used costly modern warfare techniques and equipment against it. In this case, the quality of weapons becomes secondary. More assumptions of People's War on nuclear struggles are as follows:

Firstly, the main resources of People's War are the people. Millions of people were viewed as "a vast sea of humanity in which the enemy will be swallowed up, obtain relief for our shortage in arms and other things and secure the prerequisites to overcome every difficulty in the war." (Schram, 1989:287) In this time, the size of the PRC's standing army was estimated as high as 4 to 4.5 million, with the availability of millions of draftees every year (O'Balance, 1962:199). At least 700 million populations would be the backups to engaging in a perspective People's War and could provide resources from political, economic, social, cultural and military areas. Taking advantage of these technological, financial, and demographic resources released from social power, the CCP expected to build disciplined, systematically organized, armed forces. More than that, with the stakes so high for a nuclear war,

Mao encouraged the rapid reproduction of Chinese population. Because if there were 100 million Chinese died in a nuclear attack, China would still survive and be the most populous nation in the world to resume fighting after the first strike. In short, the essence of People's War is to sustain the entire national defence permanently. It will be justified to mobilise all national power just to undertake People's War in the name of the national interest.

Secondly, on the one hand, although twenty of China's biggest cities were located in the eastern coast, these cities were still by comparison dispersed and industries were less concentrated and more primitive than other counterparts of Western countries. The PRC, as a whole, would be less vulnerable if the cities were attacked by nuclear weapons (Segal,1985:14-9). On the other hand, without sufficient nuclear capacity, what the Chinese Communists could do was not possibly to attack the US homeland. Some analysts by contrast suggested that with neighbouring Japan as "hostage". If China would become a battlefield of American nuclear war, so would Japan. In case of that, the PRC might possibly deter America's first use of nuclear weapons (Fraser,1973:30).

Thirdly, unlike the Russians, who believed that a nuclear war would be a short blitzkrieg and emphasised crucially on the first strike and pre-emptive attack, the Chinese still held the conviction of protracted war, (Douglass and Hoeber,1979:12) and did not believe that the initial period was decisive or pre-emptive attack advantageous. Ellis Joffe argued that the Maoists nearly made little differentiation between nuclear and conventional weapons in this stage (Joffe,1987:36). Indeed, there was no reason for the CCP to differentiate these two weapons because in their assumptions of war, the first strike of nuclear attack must be at once followed by the invasion of conventional forces. Only if more troops would come to occupy the Chinese territories after nuclear attacks, no successful invasion was possible. However, if the enemies did so, they will find themselves entrapped in a war of attrition, which the Chinese Communists were good at. This assumption considerably differed from the notion of massive retaliation of the Eisenhower administration. The key concepts of massive retaliation consisted in reducing American ground forces and deterring the enemies with nuclear strength. As for regional warfare, especially in the places with unessential interest, the US would seek the indigenous armies to deter communist invasion instead of its own forces (Snow,1981:53). Namely, the American military presence at abroad should be decreased. By contrast, the Chinese strategy was to

attract the Americans deep into their inner land and then to entrap them by numerical superiority.

Finally, the application of Maoist People's War is not limited to a domestic scope. In Mao's assumption, "the East wind prevails over the West wind". The decline of imperialism was inevitable and the Soviet nuclear power could accelerate this process of decline. According to this point, People's War is not merely the event of a single country, but should be the aspiration of the oppressed. This is the reason why Chiang Kai-shek always criticized that communist war is by nature an international struggle. Every armed conflict between two antagonist social systems would end in a communist victory over the capitalist imperialism. It is regarded by the CCP in *Hongqi* magazine as being

"...of vital practical importance for the Chinese people and for the people of the whole world in their struggle against U.S. imperialism and its lackeys and, in particular, for the oppressed nations in Asia, Africa, and Latin America in their struggle for liberation."(Gitting,1967:236)

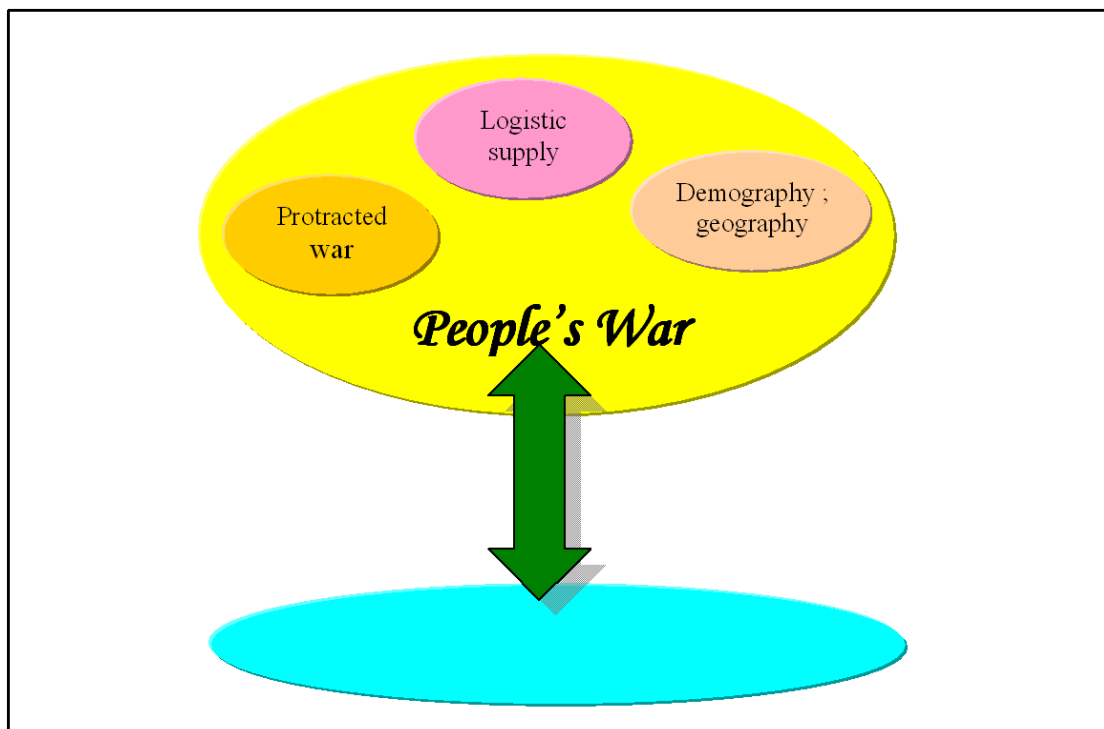


Fig.1 the Nature of Maoist People's War

To sum up, Mao questioned the manpower of the US for its plans to subjugate China or the world and thus the Americans had to rely on nuclear weapons as a threat for their goals. Since the atomic bomb was only another paper tiger, the PRC, with the biggest population, would prevail over imperialism and be the best to survive in a nuclear war (Mao,1977a:152-153). Optimistically as it could be, Mao's nuclear assumption of People's War was however proven to be improper in several aspects:

First of all, the imaginary enemy of People's War was obviously the US then, but Mao seemingly misjudged the international politics and overestimated the Soviet friendship. If Mao could really stick to the Third Line between the US and USSR, not adopt "leaning to the Soviets" (*Yibiandao*) policy, he would find the Americans were not as hostile as he previously thought. To grasp more political profits, there was no need to specify the enemy of People's War.

Secondly, Mao's idea of sacrificing millions of human lives to win Just War was ridiculous, not to mention his policy of encouraging massive population reproduction, which caused serious demographic problems in the following decades. As a matter of fact, the price of a real nuclear war might be too high to be accepted by anyone including Mao. In the 1950s, the US already had had sufficient nuclear capacity to completely destroy most populous cities in China if it would like so. Geographic dispersion did not make big sense even in a primitive country like China. Millions of losses were not an exaggeration.

Thirdly, there should be no direct connections between conventional and nuclear wars. The nuclear weapons could possibly be used for a tactical need. If the US attacked China in a nuclear way without dispatching its ground forces to "invade" China, there would be no means for Chinese counterattack by attrition of People's War.

Fourthly, Mao's treatment to nuclear threat by stressing China's psychological strength was not the best approach to formulate nuclear strategy. The folks might be emotionally roused by the CCP against "American imperialism" in the beginning of Mao's People's War. However, when the Chinese people encountered catastrophic losses of lives and properties by nuclear attacks, their morale could by no means be sustained for good. It is very naïve to lay the foundation of nuclear strategy mainly on psychological strength.

With the change of international politics, these incorrect assumptions were gradually cleared up. While the Sino-American relations were improving, the PRC's



military attitude was then becoming more cautious.

Beside the belief of People's War, under America's nuclear intimidation, the Chinese still militarily relied on Soviet nuclear deterrence, which was apparently the backup of Chinese military provocation especially in the Korean War (Gill and Kim, 1995:19). With the alienating of Sino-Soviet relations, the Soviet nuclear commitment disappeared. Nevertheless, while the People's War v.s. nuclear deterrence declined, the Soviet commitment became less mattered. On the contrary, the Soviet nuclear capacity reversed to be a principal threat against China in the 1960s while the relations of these two largest communist countries went sour.

In view of this, I would like to examine three Sino-American military confrontations in the 1950s: the Korean War, the First and Second Taiwan Strait Crises. A careful overview is presented in detail as follows.

## **Crisis Studies**

**Korean War** The Korean War, called by the CCP as "Resisting the US, Aiding the North Korea War" (*Kangmei Yuanchao Zhanzheng*) is the first large regional war after WW II. Although many aspects of the Korean War remained murky, it seemed that the initiation of war in June, 1950 was mainly out of Kim Il Sung's political ambition, which was encouraged by US Secretary State Dean Acheson's speech on "defence perimeter". At first, Kim sought Josef Stalin's backing for his southward move but did not get things more substantial than a verbal approval in spite of Kim's assurance that the US would not participate in the war. He by contrast was promised support from the PRC, whose 100,000 experienced troops were the backbone of Kim's unification plan.

Beginning on June 25, 1950, 80,000 out of 150,000 troops of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) fought their way south across the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel, which neither Seoul nor Pyongyang recognised as a permanent legitimate boundary after 1945. The outbreak of war had caught the US flat-footed, which had few forces available for immediate fighting in Korea. Surprised at Kim's operation, Washington called on the United Nations (UN) within hours after learning of Pyongyang's attack. Washington directed a more specific appeal to Stalin through its Moscow embassy, asking that it should prevail upon Pyongyang to halt the fighting. In response, however, the Soviets blamed the Republic of Korea (ROK) the aggressor and refused

to mediate. Faced with Soviet reaction and a rapidly worsened situation, the US began to press for a more unyielding action by the UN. The Security Council Resolution of June 25 had called upon members to refrain from helping the DPRK. On July 3, the Secretary General of the UN, Trygve Lie, circulated a proposed resolution to the delegations from the US, Britain and France, which suggested that the US would direct the armed forces of member states in Korea, but with the assistance of a "Committee on Co-ordination of Assistance for Korea." As such, under the recommendation of his Joint Chiefs of Staff, the US President Harry Truman appointed Army General Douglas MacArthur to command the UN forces on July 10, 1950. Four days later, President Rhee Syngman of the ROK assigned his control of South Korean forces to General MacArthur. On July 24, MacArthur issued orders establishing the United Nations Command (UNC) with general headquarters in Tokyo, Japan.

Resistance of South Korea, which had 100,000 troops in hand, unexpectedly collapsed in a very fast fashion. General MacArthur sent ground troops into the fight as speedy as he could. He ordered the 24<sup>th</sup> Division from Japan to Korea on June 30, and set up the Pusan Base Command under Brigade General Crump Garvin. The 34<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Infantry and the remainder of the 21<sup>st</sup> Infantry regiments, plus supporting units-moved to Korea rapidly. The 24<sup>th</sup> Division however only made futile efforts at Suwon, which is some thirty miles south of Seoul. On July 12, MacArthur named General Walton H. Walker commander of the ground forces in Korea. For the sake of convenience, forces in Korea were referred to as Eighth US Army in Korea (EUSAK) and those remaining in Japan were still referred to as Eighth Army or as Eighth Army Rear, of which General Walker retained command. The Department of the Army of the US had suspended peacetime strengths and authorised full combat Table of Organisation and Equipment (TO & E) strength for all divisions operating in the Far East Command on July 19. General MacArthur established the X Corps on August 26, which was officially designated commanding general in addition to his duties as chief of staff and deputy commander, Far East Command, United Nations Command. The aggression was not immediately stopped. Within a month, Kim's forces had seized all but a small corner of Southeastern Korea. The Republic of China (ROC) Government on Taiwan, through its Washington ambassador expressed its wish to support the UN forces with 33,000 soldiers. At beginning, President Truman was inclined to accept this offer, but was dissuaded by his advisers. Secretary of State Dean Acheson warned

of the potential danger of bringing Chinese Communists into the war if KMT troops entered Korea.

At one time the US Government were considering the possible withdrawal from Korea. If retreat of this kind came into being, however, it would be likely criticized as a political and military calamity. In addition to boosting up communist political influence, withdrawal might discredit US foreign policy and undermine confidence of American allies in Washington's military capabilities. Moreover, the collective actions were mainly from US initiative, and withdrawal from intervention on behalf of the UN could also greatly weaken American leadership within the UN. For the US, there were not many choices but keeping on fighting. The stubborn resistance of the UN forces eventually denied repeated DPRK's further moves on the Pusan (Naktong) perimeter. The fortunes of war were further reversed when General MacArthur boldly carried out Operation CHROMITE, landing his forces at Inchon port of west central Korean peninsula in September 1950. Due to this successful operation, MacArthur severed the lines of communication and logistics between the DRPR armies and its base. Kim's armies quickly crumbled down and were driven northward by the UN forces.

On August 4, Jacob Malik, USSR representative to the UN, proposed that the "civil war" in Korea should be discussed with the Chinese Communists in a UN agenda and that all foreign troops be immediately withdrawn from Korea. On August 22, he warned again that continuation of the ongoing Korean War would inevitably lead to a widening conflict. The UN Security Council voted down Malik's proposal and rejected his move to have Beijing come to the UN on September 6 and 11 respectively. After that, verbal protests were all the Soviets would give to the DPRK. When Kim's campaign was nearly extinguished in September 1950, the Soviet Union did almost nothing substantial to reverse it.

On the China's side, the PRC formally accused the US with strafing its territory across the Yalu River on August 25. Chinese Foreign Office declared that China would always stand on the side of the "Korean people" on September 22. Eight days later, the Chinese Foreign Minister Zhou Enlai again publicly warned that the Chinese people absolutely will not tolerate foreign aggression, nor will they supinely tolerate seeing their neighbours being savagely invaded by the "imperialists". Zhou called in the Indian Ambassador to Beijing, Dr. K. M. Pannikar on October 3 to convey messages to Washington that if UN troops entered North Korea territory, the PRC

would send its armies from Manchuria. In other words, China would not interfere if UN forces stopped at the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel (Pannikar,1955:109-11). Despite this warning, MacArthur concluded that there was no possibility of China's intervention. During the well known October 15, 1950 conference at Hawaii, when President Truman asked MacArthur what chance there was of Chinese interference, MacArthur still confidently replied, "Very little". Nevertheless, other officials were not so optimistic. President Truman's defence and state advisers had already alerted that any crossing of the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel by General MacArthur would evoke certain reactions from the USSR, and might encourage the Chinese Communists to occupy North Korea. General MacArthur, obsessed with the marvellous triumph over the whole Korea peninsula, eventually crossed this vital line. Pyongyang fell on October 19, whereupon MacArthur started the all-out drive toward the new objective line. More UN troops were moving northward. By late October, troops of other UN members, totalling about 9,000 men and officers, were serving with US and ROK soldiers. Two British units, the 2-battalion infantry brigade from Hong Kong, and a Turkish marine commando unit, plus a 5,000-man infantry brigade was already in Korea. More supplement from Britain, Canada Greece, Belgium, the Netherlands, France, Australia, Thailand, and New Zealand were also on their ways.

In spite of this success, the worries remained. Some UN members, including those sending troops had taken American border violations with mounting alarm. The leaders in France, the United Kingdom and other Commonwealth of Nations were seriously disturbed by rumours that MacArthur wanted tough measures against China. On November 16, President Truman reassured the PRC that the UN had no designs on the Sino-Korean borders and the US desired no expansion of the war. Yet to the Chinese Communists, Truman's promise was not so persuasive and reliable only if his "aggressive" commander General MacArthur was still in charge.

Unbeknown to General MacArthur or to the UN, the PRC decided to jump into this quagmire by organizing its Northeastern Boundary Army (*Dongbei Bianfangjun*) into "Chinese People's Volunteers"(CPVs, *Zhongguo Renmin Zhiyuanjun*) in October 1950 despite its unpreparedness. The CPVs were led by Marshal Peng Dehuai in the name of "prevent the destruction of hydroelectric facilities along the Yalu River". American pilots in this area began to encounter Russian-built MIG-15 jet aircraft piloted by the Chinese since November 1. According to one estimate, in the end of October 1950, which was the coldest winter in 177 years, six CPV armies totalling

180,000 men had crossed the Yalu River. Four more armies joined in November. Unexpectedly, CPV armies pushed the combined forces out of North Korea rapidly. The 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel was crossed by the Communists and Seoul captured again in January 1951. In the coming summer, there were about 700,000 Chinese troops at the peak in Korea (Gitting, 1967:75).

In addition to its military operations, The US imposed a comprehensive economic embargo on China's waters since December 3, 1950 except those authorised shipping with valid export licenses. The Department of Commerce also issued orders prohibiting US ships and aircraft from visiting Chinese ports on December 16. But these economic sanctions were never effectively enforced because other nations, including some UN members with forces in Korea, did not strictly obey them.

The issue of KMT support came again while the PRC itself had a finger in war then. General MacArthur had reminded Washington of Chiang Kai-shek's July offer to send 33,000 troops to serve under him. But this offer had been turned down again on the advice of Truman's Joint Chiefs of Staff. Washington felt that the introduction of KMT forces in Korea would precipitate a full-scale war with the PLA and might even trigger a global war with the USSR. There was also a strong possibility that US policy change toward Chiang involved in the use of his troops would be interpreted by its European allies as reducing the America's defence in Europe to a lower priority. Furthermore, the employment of KMT armies would likely incur, if not all, unwillingness of other UN members with troops in Korea. The Commonwealth nations, for instance, would probably refuse to have their forces alongside Chiang Kai-shek's troops.

The process of war was shifted while Lieutenant General Matthew Ridgeway replaced General MacArthur and took the command of the UN armies in April 1951. Ridgeway's original post as the commander of the Eighth Armies was taken by General Van Fleet later on. Compared with MacArthur's, Ridgeway's authority was very limited and subject to direction from Washington. For example, he was forbidden to take military action against Chinese territory at will; to use non-Korean forces in areas bordering Manchuria or USSR; or to attack the hydroelectric installations in North Korea in the vicinity of the Yalu River. Nor could he consider the North Korean area as a general objective, but he could, under the restrictions on troops and targets, operate north of the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel. Most importantly, Ridgeway had been instructed to create conditions favorable to a settlement of the Korean War under appropriate

armistice arrangements and to give considerable thought to the best location of a cease-fire line. Despite these restrictions, the new UN commander successfully stopped the CPVs in the 37<sup>th</sup> Parallel by adopting a new policy of attrition and then dispelled the Communists back to the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel. To the end, the Chinese changed their attitude and would like to talk with the Americans at the negotiation table.

The Korean War was coming to an end by Panmunjom armistice on July 27, 1953. By the end of the Korean War, it was believed that there were 3 million CPVs mobilised. According to a UN estimate of October 23, 1953, China's casualties had reached 900,000, as against 520,000 of the DPRK troops. The UN forces lost more than 110,000 killed and 260,000 wounded. The ROK's losses were about 1,300,00 with 3 million civilian casualties (Boyne,1977:62). 36,000 Americans were killed in this war (US Department of Defense,2001). As for the prisoners of war, more than 14,000 CPVs chose to be sent to Taiwan. The rest were returned back to Mainland China.

**The First Taiwan Strait Crisis** The struggle between the CCP and KMT has been a long story. In 1949, while the CCP consolidating its grip over Mainland China, the KMT, which had been exiled from power was still holding Taiwan (Formosa) and, Penghu (Pescadores Islands), Jinmen (Quemoy) and Mazu (Matsu) islands. After the end of the Korean War, Taiwan had been promoted to the predominant issue in the US and PRC strained relationship, which was tested by two serious CCP-KMT military confrontations. In both occasions the US responded with military actions, including nuclear threats, to support Chiang's position.

In terms of the case of conflicts, a traditional account assumed that the PRC wanted at least to occupy Jinmen and Mazu, if not Taiwan. This assumption in fact was not so accurate since these two island groups were only of slight tactical, not to mention of strategic value to initiate large-scale military campaigns. A more plausible story was that if the PRC lacked the military capability to seize Taiwan, it at least should bring the issue of China's division to international attention and try to prevent the US from making more commitments to Taiwan.

American attitude towards the ROC was not always consistent. After failing to mediate between the CCP and KMT, President Truman was determined to avoid further involvement in the Chinese Civil War and prepared to abandon Chiang Kai-shek's regime. In the 1948 election year, Truman was harshly under attack by the Republicans, who charged that Roosevelt had sold out East Europe and Truman had

similarly sold out China. Being afraid that Congress would vote against his European Security plan, Truman was grudgingly obliged to keep on providing the KMT with economic and military aids. Two weeks after his being elected, however, he abruptly turned down Chiang's request for more aids. On January 5, 1950, President Truman announced that Taiwan was a part of China and the US will not involve in the dispute in the Taiwan Strait. This announce in fact implied that the US would not intervene or provide military assistance to the KMT troops if the China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) were to attack Taiwan. His Secretary of State, Dean Acheson also excluded Taiwan from the US defence zone in the pacific region in a statement of January 12. Acheson remarked that it would be a mistake to undertake "ill-conceived adventures with the object of stopping communism and thus to deflect to ourselves the righteous wrath of the Chinese people." (Gitting, 1967:40-1) Simply speaking, before the outbreak of the Korean War, Taiwan was allocated as one of US places of unessential interest even though the US still kept diplomatic relations with the ROC.

Knowing this, the PRC started to mobilise its Huadong and Xibei Field Armies in Zhejiang and Jiangsu provinces for military reunification. When the Korean War broke out in June 1950, nevertheless, President Truman drastically changed his tones and reacted immediately by declaring the neutralisation of the Taiwan Strait on June 27, which legally denied the PRC's authority over Taiwan. The Seventh Fleet was sent into the Strait under orders to prevent any invasion to Taiwan, but it was also ordered to KMT armies from attacking on Mainland China. In January 1951, the US government resumed its military aids to the ROC. The "Sino-American Mutual Defence and Assistance Agreement" was signed on February 10. A Military Assistant Advisory Group (MAAG) was dispatched to Taiwan and began operation in May. From then on, Taiwan was under *de facto* military protection of the US and became a part of the Western camp in the Cold War bipolar system regardless Chiang's claim of the equality between the US and ROC. The Korean War was indeed a significant turning point, which altered the fates of the KMT regime and Taiwanese people.

Despite the huge losses during the Korean War, the PRC's ambition to Taiwan did not subside anyhow. The first Taiwan Strait crisis, in which the PLA launched a series of heavy shelling on Jinmen islands, occurred from August 11, 1954 to May 1, 1955. The lift of US blockade of Taiwan by President Eisenhower on February 2, 1953 had made KMT's counterstrikes on Mainland China possible. In August 1954, Chiang moved some 58,000 troops to Jinmen and 15,000 to Mazu respectively. On

August 17, the US publicly warned China's action against Taiwan, but this did not stop PLA's artillery attacks on Jinmen on September 3, and the Dachen Islands in November. An average of 10,000 rounds was fired daily by the PLA at the peak of this operation. In January 1955, heavier air and amphibious raids were launched against the Dachen Islands. Some ROC convoys and the Seventh Fleet, which were reinforced by a carrier and four destroyers from the Sixth Fleet, evacuated 42,000 KMT soldiers and civilians from the Dachen islands and further resupplied the islands. Regardless of political pressures from hard-liners, President Eisenhower refused to bomb Mainland China or direct use of American troops to resolve the crisis, but signed the Mutual Defence Treaty (MDT) with the ROC on December 2, 1954. The MDT has lasted for more than two decades and has been replaced with the "Taiwan Relation Act", which is by nature a U.S domestic law in 1979, when the US officially severed diplomatic tie with the ROC.

The shelling of the Yijiangshan islands, which were 210 miles north of Taiwan, began on January 6, 1955. The KMT had not fortified these islands as heavily as Jinmen or Mazu, and thus the PLA could easily take them on January 18 by expelling Chiang's forces stationed there. The PRC and ROC forces continued fighting on Jinmen, Mazu, and along the Mainland Chinese coast. In light of sustained PLA campaigns, President Eisenhower sought the approval from the Congress to grant him extended executive rights to defend Taiwan. Recalling the ambiguous article VI of the MDT, the Congressmen passed the Formosa Resolution, which gave Eisenhower the power to take necessary measures as he judges to be required or appropriate in assuring the defence of Taiwan. The Formosa Resolution passed by both Houses on January 29 before ratifying the MDT with Chiang by the Senate on February 9. The inclusion of these islets in the Resolution was very controversial however. President Eisenhower thought these islands would not be important in an attack on Taiwan and could cause more unwanted trouble. By contrast, Secretary of State Dulles argued that their losses, though not significant from a security consideration would be devastating to KMT morale.

The military conflicts became more complicated while the nuclear weapons were considered. As early as on September 12, 1954, the US Joint Chiefs of Staff had recommended the possible use of nuclear weapons against the PRC. The PRC's sentencing of 13 American pilots shot down over China in the Korean War to long jail terms on November 23, prompted further discussion of nuclear strikes. Secretary



Dulles at a National Security Council (NSC) meeting on March 10, 1955 stated that the Americans have to prepare for possible nuclear strikes against China. Five days later Dulles again publicly declared that the US was seriously considering using atomic weapons in the Jinmen-Mazu area. And the following day President Eisenhower warned that A-bombs can be used as a bullet. These provocative statements sparked an international chaos. NATO foreign ministers opposed atomic attack on China. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill also advised against US atomic defence in Taiwan Strait crisis in a very early time. Nonetheless, on March 25, US Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Robert B. Carney still claimed that the President is planning “to destroy Red China's military potential”, predicting a possible nuclear war in mid-April. Subsequently, Eisenhower provided the ROC with air-to-air missiles that enabled Chiang to dispel PRC's MIGs from the skies over the Taiwan Strait and 8-inch howitzers capable of firing nuclear shells. The Air Force deployed the 511th Tactical Fighter and 63rd Fighter Interceptor Squadrons to enhance Chiang's airpower. Meanwhile, the 354th Tactical Fighter, 27th Tactical Fighter, 363rd Tactical Reconnaissance Wings and 354th Bomb Group were sent to Okinawa. The Army dispatched 703 men of the 2nd Missile Battalion, 71st Artillery, with its Nike-Hercules missiles on Taiwan, which remained there until August 1959.

On April 23, 1955, Premier Zhou Enlai spoke at the Afro-Asian Bandung Conference that the PRC was ready to negotiate with the US to discuss the questions of relaxing tensions. Through negotiations, the first Taiwan Strait crisis was finally ended on May 1, 1955. Beijing also released the 11 captured US airmen on August 1. With these however, mutual animosity between two sides of the Strait did not disappear. The ROC reinforced more troops at Jinmen and Mazu as bases to mount raids on Mainland China. The PRC also began to build up its military capabilities across the strait. At the same time, the US stepped up rhetorical attacks against the PRC on many international occasions, accusing Beijing of adherence to Stalinism. No one was expecting that the conflict would have been eased.

**The Second Taiwan Strait Crisis** The 1958 crisis in the Taiwan Strait, which is commonly known as “823 Shelling”(Baersan Paozhan) is a sequel to the first one. In the early months of 1958, ROC President Chiang Kai-shek was again restive at US restrictions blocking his declared intention to return back the mainland. When Secretary Dulles visited Taiwan in March 1958, Chiang urged efforts to exploit the instability he perceived on the mainland. In particular, Chiang demanded that Taiwan

should be free to use special guerrilla units for commando raids. Ambassador Everett Drumright was generally supportive of Chiang's proposals, but other officials in Washington by contrast took a dim view of the prospects for such KMT activities.

In addition to the military support for Taiwan, the US's unfriendliness toward the PRC was highlighted in its discontinuing ambassadorial talks in 1957. For the PRC, the talks were an important channel to Washington through which it attempted to solve the Taiwan problem. However, the Americans from the very beginning rejected Beijing's requests to elevate the talks onto a higher level, and eventually failed to send a new delegate to Bangkok at the end of 1957.

The PRC's international challenges were more than that. Mao Zedong's growing irreconcilability with Nikita Khrushchev meant that he could hardly take advantage of Soviet deterrence as his diplomatic bargain chips against the US. Mao knew this well and began to resume his independent mass-line People's War strategy. At the Moscow Conference of Communist Parties in November 1957, Mao contradicted Khrushchev's claim that no one could win a nuclear war. He by contrast said that such a war would not be the end of the world, because half of his population would still survive. This was not simply a personal prejudice against Khrushchev's "retreatism". From other statements by Mao, it is clear Mao was indeed convinced that a large part of the Chinese population would survive an atomic war.

In 1958, the CCP launched the Great Leap Forward (*Dayuejin*, 1958-1960), aimed at accomplishing the economic and technical development of the country at a quantum leap. Externally, the soft foreign policy based on the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence to which China had subscribed in the mid-1950s gave way to a hard line. Tension mounted rapidly in the Taiwan Strait in late July 1958, with the announcement in Beijing of a series of campaigns to "liberate" Taiwan. When it was rumoured that the PLA was moving its MIG-17 fighters to airfields in South-eastern China unprecedentedly, the US Department of Defence promptly responded by providing some Sidewinder air-to-air missiles, sending 20 F-86 fighters, a carrier group to the area, and deploying some F-100 fighters on Taiwan on a rotational basis under Chiang's request. On August 14, the Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman General Nathan F. Twining declared that US forces should be used, if necessary, to help the ROC resist a Communist blockade or assault of Jinmen and Mazu islands. The Joint Chiefs of Staff moreover considered that the defence of the offshore islands would require the use of nuclear weapons even though the President did not want to get the

US involved like this. Such developments may well have led the Chinese to believe that the situation in the strait was menacing. The PRC once again was reminded that Taiwan, which should be one part of its territory, was still under nuclear protection of the US.

The PLA began a massive artillery bombardment on Jinmen from August 23, 1958. President Eisenhower agreed to send the Seventh Fleet to aid the ROC and US escort of logistic ships to the offshore islands on 25 August. He insisted, however, that any decision on use of nuclear weapons would require formal referral to him. Eisenhower further approved US escort of ROC re-supply ships outside the 3-mile limit on August 29. But he did not agree to Chiang's requests for a public statement promising US defence and was annoyed at the pressure from Chiang to involve the US in this unwanted conflict. Nevertheless, President Eisenhower and Secretary Dulles eventually affirmed the US commitment to defend Taiwan and to counter naval threats in the Taiwan Strait. Dulles discussed the situation with the President on September 4 at Newport, Rhode Island. In the Newport statement, President Eisenhower hinted that he would authorise US forces to protect Taiwan's offshore islands under the Formosa Resolution. But it also mentioned that the "naked use of force" against the islands would "forecast a widespread use of force in the Far East which would endanger vital free world positions and the security of the United States." In the end, this statement concluded by expressing US interest in a peaceful end to the crisis and noting that Washington would resume the ambassadorial talks at Geneva to obtain mutual agreements on renunciation of force.

In response, PRC Premier Zhou Enlai issued a statement on September 6 declaring PRC's willingness to continue the ambassadorial talks, but he also attacked American imperialism. President Eisenhower responded promptly. In a television address on September 11, Eisenhower took a strong stance, equalling the crisis to Hitler's aggression, but he also declared that measures could be taken to assure that the offshore islands would not be "a thorn in the side of peace." Meanwhile, following Dulles's instructions, ambassadorial talks were resumed on September 15. US Ambassador Jacob Beam urged an end of provocative activities and tensions. His PRC counterpart Wang Bingnan presented a proposal for an announcement: Beijing declared that Taiwan and the offshore islands were China's territories and their liberation was China's internal affair. The PRC would not pursue KMT forces if they withdrew from the offshore islands. After retrieving these islands, the PRC would

then strive to liberate Taiwan by peaceful means. The US government must withdraw its armed forces from Taiwan and the Taiwan Strait. However, Washington considered the China's proposal thoroughly unacceptable and countered with a draft agreed announcement on September 18, which urged PRC government renouncing the use of force against Jinmen and Mazu except individual and collective self defence. Wang immediately rejected this proposal in return. The US and PRC positions still remained far apart.

At this critical juncture, Moscow entered the stage and roused more turmoil to the already complicated situation. Khrushchev sent a public letter to President Eisenhower on September 7 supporting the Chinese claim over Taiwan, charging US aggression, and warning that an attack on the PRC would be viewed as an attack on the Soviet Union. Eisenhower replied with a statement that if Khrushchev was interested in a peaceful solution, he should appeal to persuade Chinese leaders instead. On September 19, Khrushchev fired off a more bombastic letter, charging that the US was trying to detach Taiwan from China. Again, he reiterated that his support to the PRC, and declared that an atomic attack on the PRC would be repulsed by the same means.

On October 5, Khrushchev repeated this position in an interview with a Tass reporter. Eisenhower and Dulles rejected Khrushchev's accusation with a public statement that it was unacceptable because it contained false charge and inadmissible threats. By careful consideration, however, the US recognised that, similar to the first Taiwan Strait crisis, the Soviets did not want to prepare for war and predicted that they would not directly intervene as long as the conflict was confined to the Taiwan Strait. It is clear that Khrushchev's nuclear threat was to serve as a demonstration of his support for China but not mean to fight against the US face-to-face.

In addition to Soviet threat, President Eisenhower found himself face with oppositions at home and abroad. The continuing anxiety in the Taiwan Strait crisis and the fear of American nuclear posture filled other US allies. Britain, concerned that direct US involvement in the Taiwan Strait would place an impossible strain on the alliance, counselled restraint and offered a channel of communication between Washington and Beijing. Norway sought UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld to make a match, but the PRC government bluntly rejected any UN involvement and any other attempt at mediation since it asserted that Taiwan question was an internal affair. Facing overwhelming disagreements, Washington began to trim its sails. At a press

conference on September 30, Dulles brought up the agenda of reduction of ROC forces on the islands, blaming that if there was a cease-fire, regardless its form; it would be foolish to keep such large forces on the islands. This proclamation caused immense panics in Taiwan despite Dulles' assurance that it represented no conscious change in his position. In addition, although the President gave clear signs that he would help the ROC to defend Jinmen and Mazu, he was vague about threatening the PRC with nuclear weapons since he remembered the public and international reaction in the spring of 1955 to similar threats. Both Eisenhower and Dulles also feared that the use of nuclear weapons could involve the risk of war with the Soviet Union despite their judgement of Soviet bluffing.

On September 5, PRC Defence Minister Marshal Peng Dehuai broadcast a message to Taiwan that he had suspended the bombardment for 7 days during which the ROC would be free to ship without US escort. Regardless Chiang's objection, Eisenhower immediately stated that if Peng's offer was carried out, it seemed to be no further need for convoys. A week later, the PRC announced that it would continue the cease-fire for 2 more weeks. From this point on, both the Chinese and Americans gradually diffused the crisis. On September 13, Mao ordered a reduction of the shelling of the islands, followed by its suspension on October 6.

During his 21-23 October visit to Taipei, Dulles straightforwardly told Chiang that the greatest danger to his government was not military but political, and it had menaced international security. He urged Chiang to make a policy clear that his government would not attempt to use force to recover the mainland and would reduce the troops on Jinmen and Mazu. Chiang had no way out but agreed the Joint Communiqué issued at the end of Dulles's visit, which declared that the KMT would rely primarily on Sun Yat-sen's Three People's Principles (*Sanmin Zhuyi*) rather than the resort of naked force to restore authority over the mainland. As concerns the offshore islands, the Communiqué noted the defence of islands was closely related to the defence of Taiwan. On October 24, PRC Marshal Peng announced that PLA would refrain from shelling the offshore islands on even-numbered days, but fired upon the islands only on odd-numbered days (*Danda Shuangbuda*). This operation remained until January 1, 1979.

Compared with the First Taiwan Strait Crisis, the Sino-American mutual deterrence in the second crisis was less ambiguous. On one hand, the US had nuclear weapons and Washington said it was "perilously close to having to use nuclear

weapons.” As tension mounted, the US Joint Chiefs of Staff even developed plans for nuclear strikes at the Chinese cities of Shanghai, Guangzhou and Nanjing. But everyone knew that the US would impossibly use its nuclear weapons in this crisis. Without the clear and present danger to Asian-Pacific stability, Washington had no intention to get involve in the CCP-KMT struggle any deeper. On the other hand, the PRC had Soviet nuclear backup ostensibly. It was also known that this commitment was only a bad check. In fact, the Soviets had decided not to deliver an atomic bomb to the Chinese in the preceding winter, although they did not notify Beijing until mid-1959. According to an afterward comment of the PRC,

“Although at that time the situation in the Taiwan Strait was tense, there was no possibility that a nuclear war would break out and no need for the Soviet Union to support China with its nuclear weapons. It was only when they were clear that this was the situation that the Soviet leaders expressed their support for China.” (Gitting,1967:230)

## Analysis

**Korean War** Apparently, both the PRC and US valued the Korea Peninsula as a place of vital interest. The US was already a nuclear power, but the PRC was not. During the course of war, the Americans did threaten to use nuclear weapons against the Chinese troops although finally they did not escalate the level. But President Eisenhower, in his memoirs, *Mandate for Change* believed that it was US nuclear deterrence drew the Chinese to the negotiation table (Craig and Jungerman,1986:76-77). According to the assumption of some Americans, the Korean War was simply an event, in which nuclear US forces fought against backward conventional CPVs.

However, the 1950 treaty between the USSR and PRC has had a major deterrent effect, which prevented the PRC from nuclear attack. The PRC by contrast were convinced that Sino-American confrontations in the Korean peninsula should include the protection of the Soviet nuclear umbrella. Indeed, with Soviet nuclear deterrence, there was still a huge military gap between the US and PRC, mostly due to the

discrepancy of conventional arms capacities. The worst scenario the US would like to see was the Soviet involvement in the Korean War. It might be reasonable for the US to believe that repelling the PRC-DPRK forces out of the Korea peninsula was not the best strategy because the USSR, which had no second CPVs to use, could possibly be forced to intervene in the case of that. This was the reason the negotiation of armistice with the PRC was a must even though the CPVs were retreating.

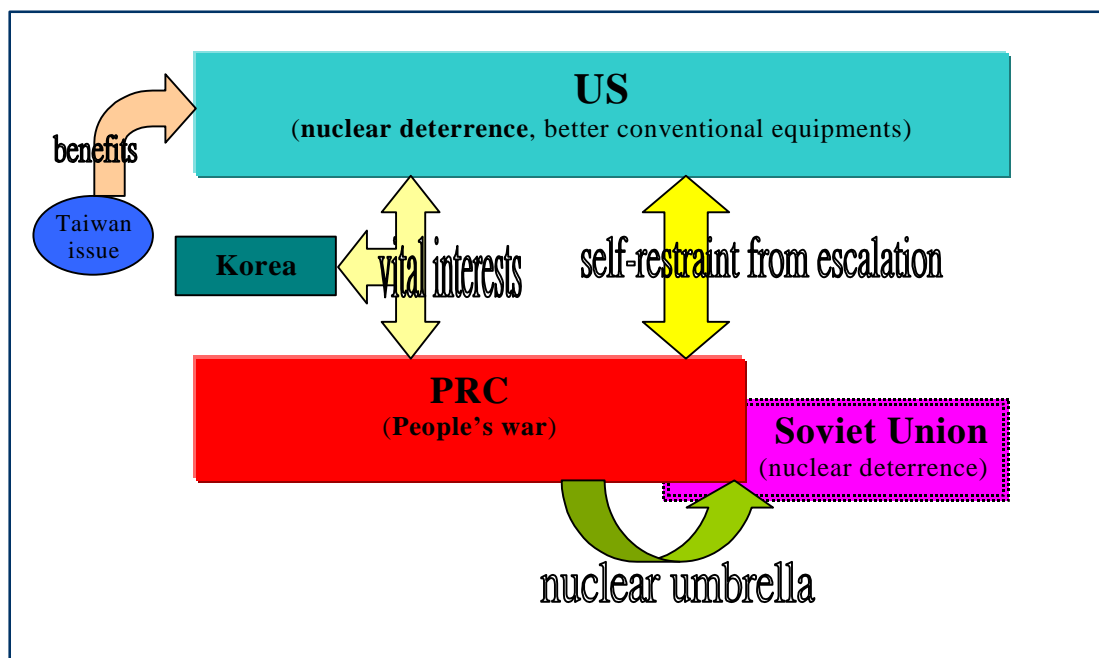


Fig.2 the Strategic Confrontation in the Korean War

It should be noted that in the Korean War, both sides maintained certain sort of self-restraint from escalation. American attitude towards the PRC was in general very cautious, particularly after the relief of MacArthur. President Truman had made it clear that he did not want to expand the scope of war so that he rejected Chiang's proposal of using KMT armies in Korea. The CCP leaders knew this as well and similarly avoided escalating the level of conflicts. For example, the PRC disguised its troops in the name of "Volunteers". If the PRC would like to heat up the confrontation, regular armies would be more legitimate for a just war to resist "imperialist invasion". It is a likely event that if the PRC entered the war without the Soviet naval and air supports, it would be bound to suffer more. In the Korean War, the Chinese leased and

purchased much from the Soviets. But it was reported that all Soviet military aid, which was estimated as high as 5 to 10 billion dollars needed to be settled by the Chinese themselves. The PRC did not clear these debts until 1965. The price of the Soviets aid was more than financial burdens. Acceptance of Soviet aids also made the PRC more dependent on the USSR and it would increase Soviet control in Manchuria. The CPVs were thus complaining that "China shouldered heavy sacrifices and stood in the first line of defence of Korea so that the Soviet Union might stay in the second line." (Gitting, 1967:126) However, the Chinese might not have too many choices, particularly when the UN troops had crossed the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel. The CPVs might not get involved in the Korean War if General MacArthur halted his campaign at 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel, as Zhou Enlai had even warned (Foot, 1985:67-74). Apparently, an American-occupied Korea was more threatening to the Chinese than to the Soviets due to the geographic contiguity.

With some benefits, however, the PRC still suffered tremendously for the Korean War. Its political rival, the KMT by contrast benefited more politically and militarily even though this had not been realised as a chance to recover Mainland China. The Korean War somehow destroyed America's illusion of "Titoisation" on the CCP, which was inspired by the split between Yugoslavia and the USSR in 1948. This political fiasco of Beijing had made Washington maintain diplomatic and military relations with the Taipei for decades.

**First Taiwan Strait Crisis** In this crisis, the US deployment of its conventional and nuclear forces demonstrated that the Americans did recognise Taiwan as their place of vital interest, even though in a restricted way. However, American nuclear threat against the PRC was rooted in the impossibility of Soviet nuclear intervention. The US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) had reported signs of discord between Moscow and Beijing after Stalin's death in March 1953. This convinced Dulles that the US could strain the Sino-Soviet alliance by ostracising the PRC internationally until increasing Chinese demands for Soviet support would disrupt it completely. When the Taiwan Strait crisis broke out, Washington was not sure about Moscow's potential support for the PRC at first. Eisenhower warned not to take it too lightly, since the Soviets might honour their pledges under the defence treaty of 1950 or "the Soviet Empire would quickly fall to pieces." But no later than May and June 1954, the Eisenhower administration had realised that the Soviets were not behind the Chinese operation in this case. The controversy on US protection of Taiwan's offshore islands



was also used by the US to test the Sino-Soviet relations in the United Nations. The Kremlin would face the dilemma of either vetoing the American proposal in the Security Council or compromising its PRC ally in case of that. The policy, Dulles hoped, would not only shore up allied support but also put a serious strain between these two Communist countries. On September 29, 1954, Nikita S. Khrushchev affirmed that the Soviet Union would support the Chinese in their quest to “liberate” Taiwan. However, he did not make any unqualified pledge to Mao in face-to-face talks. By learning Soviet silence after American nuclear threats in March 1955, Washington concluded Soviet nuclear threats as bluffs and not ready to extend their nuclear umbrella over the PRC with actions.

As such, the US judged that Soviet commitment to China was merely a bluff but could be ignored. The USSR was not going to be drawn into a war with the US without proper preparation and necessary need. On the Chinese side, according to Mao’s assumption, the US would not use nuclear weapons for Jinmen and Mazu due to the possible international objection and its internal disagreement. This assumption might be problematic since Washington did indicate that it would use tactical nuclear weapons in defence of these islands.

Both assumptions were not proven erroneous in terms of the result of the conflict. Indeed, the USSR did not get involved in this crisis as Washington assumed. The US as well did not exercise its nuclear capacity against the PRC as Beijing supposed. The PRC talked less about Maoist People War against the Americans. However, even if reality was as Chinese assumption, in Chinese perspectives, there was no strategic need to continue military campaigns in the Taiwan Strait owing to the impossibility of dispelling American influence over Taiwan then. The China question as the PRC wished, had been raised to international spotlight no matter Taiwan had been liberated or not. After reaching its second best goal, not to mention trophies of Dachen and Yijiangshan Islands grasped from the KMT, it was time for the PRC to cease fire.

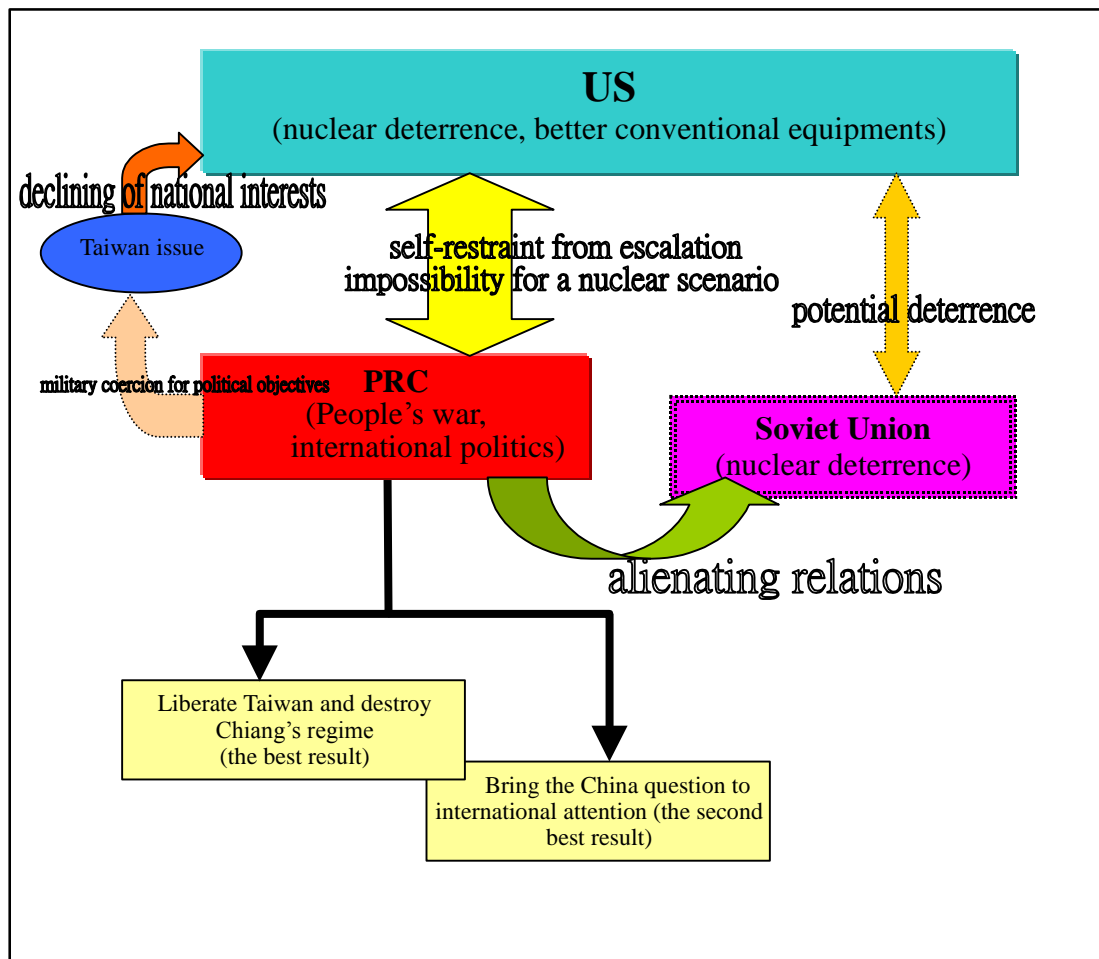


Fig.3 the Strategic Confrontation in the first Taiwan Strait Crisis

**Second Taiwan Strait Crisis** As a more simplified event in terms of military and political meanings, the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis was totally not like the first one or even the Korean War. Mutual confrontation in the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis was only of a conventional kind. No nuclear war had been seriously envisaged. With limited military goals, both sides did not want to drag this crisis into a protracted war, which would only please the Soviets and Chiang Kai-shek.

Politically, however, the outcome of the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis bore multiple implications. Both the US and PRC had good reasons to perceive themselves as winners. Washington did not hide its displeasure to get embroiled in this island conflict but was satisfied with Chiang's subsequent pledge not to attack the mainland,

although the US had made some substantial concessions to the PRC, too. Moreover, the US again deemed Soviet nuclear coercion primarily as a “paper tiger”. Washington could by and by believe that its strategy of nuclear intimidation had been successful both to the Soviets and Chinese. In Chinese perspectives, like the first crisis, the PRC as well obtained certain fruits from this military confrontation. On September 5, 1958, Mao and Zhou plainly told the Soviet foreign minister Gromyko that the PRC had no intention to attack Taiwan or seize Jinmen and Mazu, but it wanted to punish the KMT and undermine the two-China policy of the US. In addition to the resumption of Sino-American ambassador talks, the PRC had made the US less enthusiastic at intervening in the Taiwan question (not anymore China question) and benefited from US pressure to Chiang of giving up re-conquering Mainland by force.

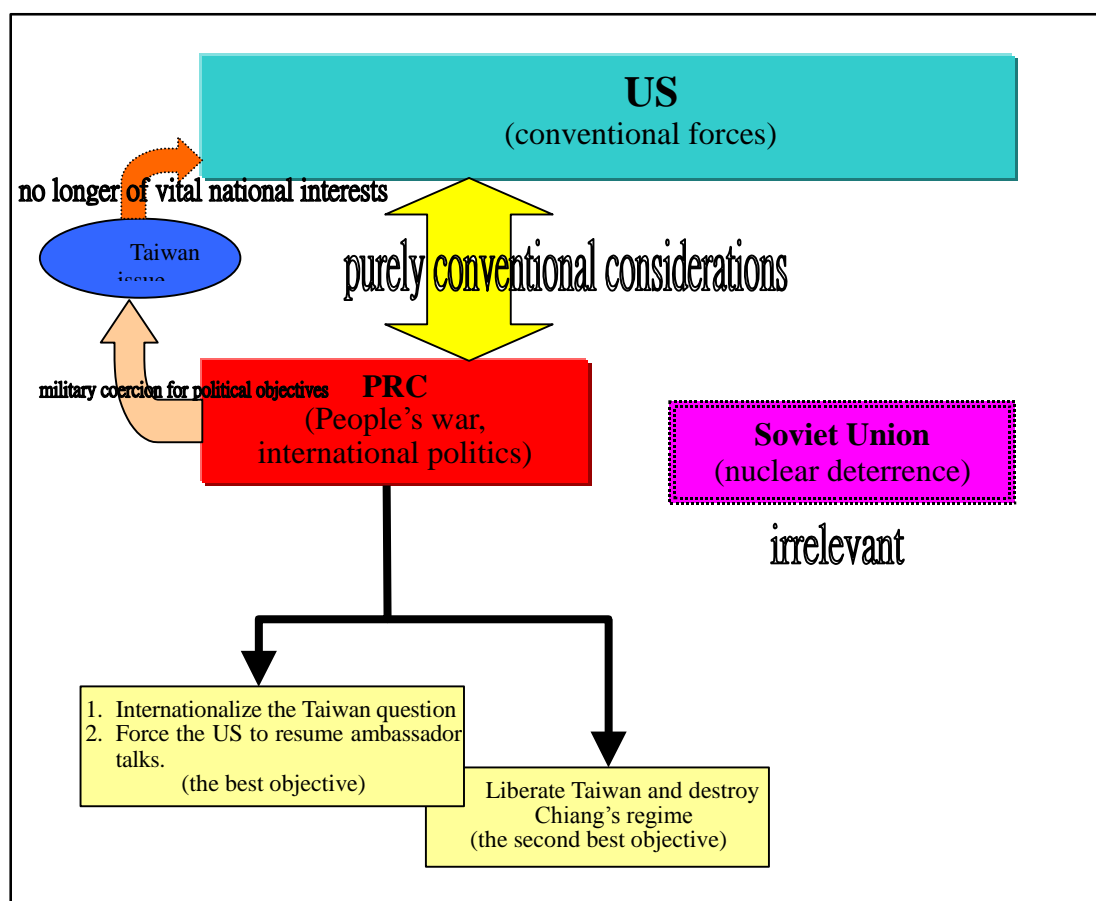


Fig.4 the Strategic Confrontation in the second Taiwan Strait Crisis

In the reverse of fortune, the biggest loser in the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis might be Chiang. Taiwan, which was no longer a place of American vital interest, had lost strategic support of the US since then. Moreover, the KMT was forced to give up recovering Mainland China by its own force. Military co-operation with the US conversely became a political burden of Taiwan. In the next decades, with more unfavourable changes of international politics, the ROC's position was becoming less and less advantageous.

## **Conclusion**

Immediately after World War II, the US enjoyed an actual nuclear monopoly and military superiority. This situation did not last long when the USSR succeeded in creating a few atomic bombs in 1949, and in forming an embryonic striking force. Nuclear deterrence was becoming extremely significant in creating the credibility of military intimidation on a potential adversary of the danger of mass destruction. Responding America's nuclear deterrence, the PRC apparently used Maoist "People's War" theory as a counter measure of its own, especially when the Soviet nuclear commitment was no longer reliable. The two policies were closely intertwined in these three crises in the 1950s between Washington and Beijing. As one subsided, the other one as well was not mentioned. With the declines of US nuclear deterrence v.s. PRC's People's War confrontations, Taiwan's status accordingly became lesser and lesser significant to US's national interests.

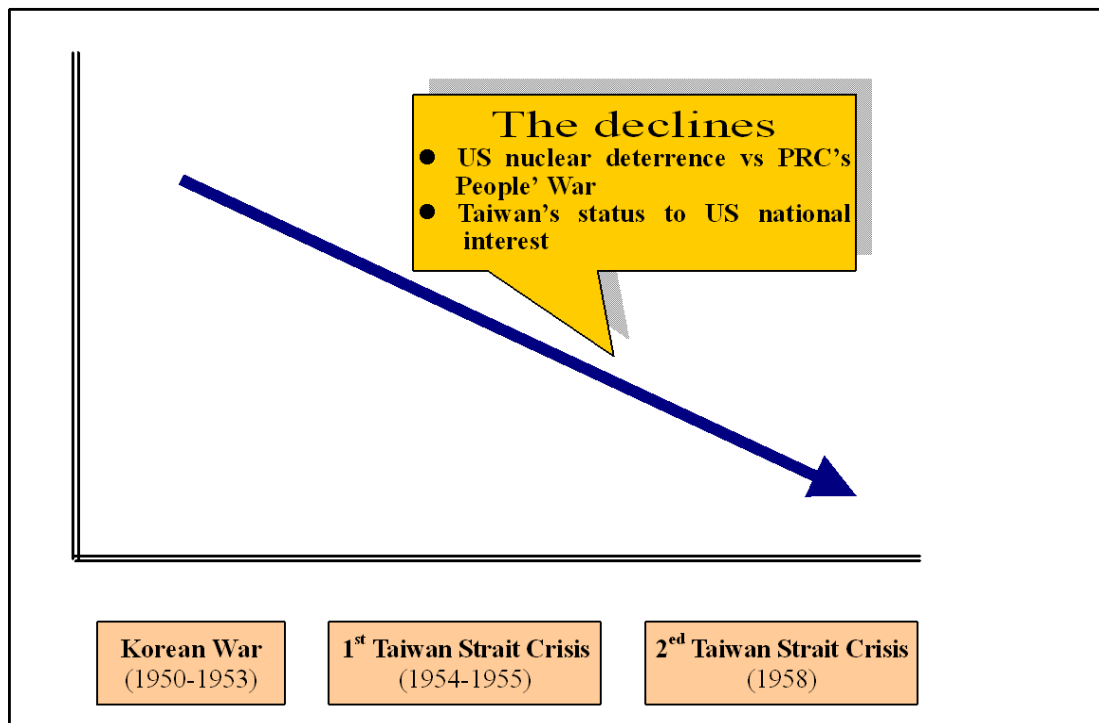


Fig.5 the Strategic Confrontations in the 1950s

Nevertheless, due to the ideological contradictions, both Washington and Beijing had made mistakes in their mutual relations. The fundamental misunderstanding might be caused by the Korean War. It should be noted that, there are two reasons that, however, the US did not take the PRC as a serious challenger in this period. Firstly, the US foreign focus was placed on Europe, not on Mainland China. The only moments when the US considered using nuclear weapons against the PRC were always while the latter seriously got involved into wars with US's places of vital interests: absolutely Korea in the Korean War and likely Taiwan in the First Taiwan Strait Crisis. Secondly, although Washington diplomatically supported Chiang's regime on Taiwan, the disgraceful shadow of Chinese Civil War (1945-1949) still haunted in the mind of the American leadership. The US would not easily get involved in the CCP-KMT struggles again. In fact, the status of Taiwan was descending after the Korean War regardless of the MDT between the US and ROC.

Obsessed with the so-call "People's War" doctrine, which was prevalent in the early 1950s, the PRC did not recognize these points in the Korean War. But when

Beijing was learning the unreliability of Soviet protection and adopting a restrained military posture, it found that it could cash in on bloc struggles between the USSR and US without resorting to “People’s War”. The Chinese had obtained more political and military profits, especially in the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis. It is well that Carl von Clausewitz said that war is the continuation of political activities. From the Sino-American confrontation in the 1950s, it could be found that military operations would not be meaningful without clear understanding of international politics.

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