

**ISOLATING THE ENEMY: US-PRC RELATIONS, 1953-56**

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By

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### ABSTRACT

Sino-American relations from 1953 to 1956 were marked by two contradictory tendencies. China and the United States adopted very confrontational policies toward each other, but at the same time, they took conciliatory actions even as they were confronting each other. Based on the new sources from China, Russia, Vietnam, as well as government documents from archives in the US, Britain and Taiwan, this dissertation assesses the interaction between China and the US from 1953 to 1956 from a multilateral perspective. It puts the two states' policy-making into the broader context of their relations with friends and allies, and concentrates on their perceptions/misperceptions of and actions/reactions to each other.

Focusing on the Geneva Conference on Indochina, the First Taiwan Strait Crisis, and the Bandung Conference, this dissertation highlights the PRC's often-neglected peace initiatives at the Geneva and Bandung Conferences. It delves into the causes, the PRC leaders' motives, the influence of the Soviet Union and Vietnam, the shift to the Taiwan Strait Crisis, and as importantly, the US leaders' perceptions and reactions.

This dissertation finds that although the Eisenhower administration had kept alive the idea of exploiting the divisions between the PRC and the Soviets, their policy concentrated more on containment of China rather than pressuring it in order to split the Sino-Soviet alliance. The US policy was undermined by its reliance on cooperation with allies and using nuclear weapons to

deter the PRC. While US dependence on allies gave American friends opportunities to influence its policy, US leaders' rhetoric about using atomic bombs strained their relations with friends as well as neutral states in Asia.

China's policy in this period aimed to break US containment. Sensitive to US relations with its allies, Chinese leaders strived to exploit the differences between the US and its friends in order to build a buffer area in Indochina at the Geneva Conference, preclude a US-ROC alliance during the First Taiwan Strait Crisis, and exclude the US from Asia at the Bandung Conference by building an "Area of Peace" on the basis of a united front with Asian states. Meanwhile, the Chinese were aware of the US intention to split their alliance with the Soviet Union, and tried to strengthen the unity with the Soviet Union, which for its own reasons, provided China with substantial material as well as advisory assistance.

On the US side, although leaders also knew of the PRC's intentions to alienate them, they were less successful meeting this challenge, because US allies often held different positions toward China, and moreover, the PRC leaders' consistent efforts to play off the US against its allies and Asian states added to the tensions in US relations with these countries.

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## Introduction

Sino-American relations from 1953 to 1956 were marked by two contradictory tendencies. On the one hand, the People's Republic of China (PRC or China) and the United States adopted very confrontational policies toward each other. PRC leaders viewed the US as their archenemy, which refused to recognize China and militarily encircled the People's Republic. They initiated the so-called First Taiwan Strait Crisis in July 1954, claiming that they intended to liberate Taiwan from the US-supported Chiang Kai-shek. The crisis brought the US and China to the "edge of war."<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, US leaders saw China as "the primary problem" for the US in Asia and tried to contain China. During the crisis, they sent aircraft carriers to the Taiwan Strait several times, publicly threatened to use nuclear weapons against the PRC, and concluded a Mutual Defense Treaty (MDT) with Chiang Kai-shek's Republic of China (ROC or GMD/KMT/the Nationalist Government) in December 1954, providing security protection to the ROC regime, which the PRC considered illegitimate.

On the other hand, both the PRC and the US took conciliatory actions even as they were confronting each other. The PRC advocated "peaceful coexistence" with the US, and its flexibility at the Geneva Conference on Indochina (from April to July 1954) led to the end of the eight-year war between its Communist comrades the Vietminh and US ally France. At the Bandung Conference in April 1955, during the Taiwan Strait Crisis, Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai proposed to negotiate with the US to reduce the tensions between the two countries. In response, the US agreed to hold direct diplomatic talks with the PRC, a regime with which it had tried to

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<sup>1</sup> Dwight Eisenhower, *The White House Years: Mandate for Change, 1953-1956* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1963), 459.

avoid any official contacts. The conciliation on both sides led to the ambassadorial talks between the two states, a means through which the Chinese and American governments communicated with each other at a time there were no formal diplomatic relations between them.

How can the seeming contradictions in the two countries' policies be reconciled? Did they each adopt coherent policies? What were the motives of leaders of the two countries during this period? How did they perceive one another, and how did their perceptions or misperceptions of the other side shape their policies? Moreover, what impact did their actions have on the other? In summary, how did the two states interact with each other during the years from 1953 to 1956? What was the dynamic behind the crisis and conciliation in bilateral relations? These are the questions this dissertation explores.

The current literature on the PRC's foreign policy from 1953 to 1956 gives three basic interpretations. Historians Chen Jian and Thomas Christensen stress the domestic orientation of the PRC leaders' policy-making in the 1950s. Both argue that the PRC's supreme leader Mao Zedong deliberately provoked tensions, for example, the crises in the Taiwan Strait, to mobilize the Chinese people for his domestic programs. Chen Jian concentrates on the ideological roots of China's policy: obsessed with a tremendous sense of "post-revolutionary anxiety," Mao created diplomatic tensions to promote the revolutionary enthusiasm of the Chinese people, who also had a strong victim mentality and tended to support such a policy. Christensen points out the consequences of this policy: Mao's manipulation of foreign policy to serve his domestic needs

often backfired and brought about unexpected and unwanted results.<sup>2</sup> But other scholars, such as He Di, Gong Li, Zhang Baijia, and Jia Qingguo, believe the PRC's policy was basically prompted by US aggression, and the "'sovereignty prerogative' of territorial unification and integration" constituted the "primary objective" of China's foreign policy. According to their interpretation, the outbreak of the Taiwan Strait Crises resulted principally from PRC leaders' anxiety about China's physical security and territorial integrity.<sup>3</sup> Scholar Michael Sheng, however, challenges these previous interpretations by arguing that instead of a reasonable policy based on shrewd calculations, China's actions were actually dictated by a "dictatorial and impulsive" Mao Zedong, who had neither "a long-term strategy nor a short-term plan." Because of his continuous miscalculations, Mao ended up severely damaging, instead of promoting, China's national interests.<sup>4</sup>

Interpretation of the US China policy-making during the Eisenhower administration has undergone three different phases: traditional, revisionist, and post-revisionist. Traditionalists such as Roscoe Drummond, Hans Morgenthau, and Norman Graebner believe the Eisenhower administration's China policy was primarily manipulated by US Secretary of State John Foster

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<sup>2</sup> Chen Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), especially 6-15; Thomas Christensen, *Useful Adversaries: Grand Strategy, Domestic Mobilization, and Sino-American Confrontation, 1949-1958* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996).

<sup>3</sup> He Di, "The Evolution of the People's Republic of China's Policy toward the Offshore Islands," in Warren Cohen and Akira Iriye, eds., *The Great Powers in East Asia, 1953-1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 224-26; Gong Li, "Liangci Taiwan Haixia Weiji de Chenyin yu Zhongmei Zhijian de Jiaoliang," in Jiang Changbin and Robert Ross, eds., *Cong Duishi Zouxiang Huanhe: Lengzhan Shiqi Zhongmei Guanxi zai Tanta* [From Confrontation to Détente: Reflections on Sino-American Relations during the Cold War] (Beijing: Shijie Zhishi Chubanshe, 2000), 62; and Zhang Baijia and Jia Qingguo, "Duikang zhong de Fangxiangpan, Huanchongqi he Tanceyi: Zhongmei Dashiji Huitan," in Jiang and Ross, *Cong Duishi Zouxiang Huanhe*, 171-78.

<sup>4</sup> Michael Sheng, "Mao and China's Relations with Superpowers in the 1950s: A New Look at the Taiwan Strait Crises and the Sino-Soviet Split," *Modern China*, Vol. 34, No. 4 (October 2008): 477-507.

Dulles.<sup>5</sup> Assuming the PRC was nothing but an adjunct of the Soviet Union, Secretary Dulles pushed an indifferent and sometimes incapable President Dwight D. Eisenhower to sticking to an unnecessarily provocative hostility toward the PRC, which almost led to disastrous military conflicts in the Taiwan Strait.<sup>6</sup>

The Eisenhower revisionists, however, see a cautious President Eisenhower, who commanded US foreign policy skillfully. Instead of a highly ideological, rigid China policy controlled by Dulles, revisionist historians like Leonard Gordon, Stephen Ambrose, and Robert Divine argue that Eisenhower actually handled the US relations with the PRC deftly.<sup>7</sup> Scholars Melanie Billings-Yun, John Prados, George Herring and Richard Immerman praise Eisenhower for his “decision against war” during the Dien Bien Phu crisis, which prevented a possible fight with the PRC over Indochina.<sup>8</sup> According to Ambrose, Gordon, and Bennett Rushkoff, by his

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<sup>5</sup> Roscoe Drummond and G. Coblenz, *Duel at the Brink: John Foster Dulles—Commander of American Power* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1960); Hans Morgenthau, “John Foster Dulles,” in Norman Graebner, ed., *An Uncertain Tradition: American Secretaries of State in the Twentieth Century* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961); Norman Graebner, “Eisenhower and Communism: The Public Record of the 1950s,” in Richard Melanson and David Mayers eds., *Reevaluating Eisenhower: American Foreign Policy in the Fifties*, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 67-87. See also David Heller and Dean Heller, *John Foster Dulles: Soldier for Peace* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960), chapter 17.

<sup>6</sup> Townsend Hoopes, *The Devil and John Foster Dulles* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1973), 262-73; Foster Rhea Dulles, *American Policy Toward Communist China, 1949-1969* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1972), 130-60; Peter Lyon, *Eisenhower: Portrait of the Hero* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1974), 632, 637, 853-54; Alexander George and Richard Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), 266-94; Jan H. Kalicki, *The Pattern of Sino-American Crises: Political-Military Interactions in the 1950s* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 120-55; and Thomas E. Stolper, *China, Taiwan, and the Offshore Islands: Together With Some Implications for Outer Mongolia and Sino-Soviet Relations* (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1985).

<sup>7</sup> Leonard Gordon, “United States Opposition to the Use of Force in the Taiwan Strait, 1954-1962,” *Journal of American History*, Vol. 72, No. 3 (December 1985): 637-60; Robert Divine, *Eisenhower and the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981); Stephen Ambrose, *Eisenhower the President* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1984). See also Anna Nelson, “The Top of the Policy Hill: President Eisenhower and the National Security Council,” *Diplomatic History*, 7(Fall 1983): 307-28; Fred Greenstein, *The Hidden-hand Presidency: Eisenhower As Leader* (New York: Basic Books, 1982); and Bennett Rushkoff, “Eisenhower, Dulles and the Quemoy-Matsu Crisis, 1954-1955,” *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 96, No. 3 (Fall 1981): 465-80.

<sup>8</sup> Melanie Billings-Yun, *Decision against War: Eisenhower and Dien Bien Phu, 1954* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988); John Prados, *The Sky Would Fall: Operation Vulture: The U.S. Bombing Mission in Indochina, 1954* (New York: Dial Press, 1983); George C. Herring and Richard H. Immerman, “Eisenhower, Dulles, and Dien Bien Phu: ‘The Day We Didn’t Go to War’ Revisited,” *Journal of American History* 71 (September 1984):

“deliberate ambiguity and deception,” President Eisenhower successfully avoided military conflicts with the PRC in the Taiwan Strait, while at the same time keeping his options open throughout the crises.<sup>9</sup> In the eyes of other revisionists such as John Gaddis, Gordon Chang, and David Allan Mayers, US leaders adopted a complicated “wedge strategy.” By posing belligerence toward the PRC, the US aimed to push China to demanding more assistance than the Soviet Union could satisfy, and consequently, US leaders hoped, to strain and ultimately destroy the Sino-Soviet alliance.<sup>10</sup>

The post-revisionist historians, for example, Tor Egil Forland and Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, see a cooperative relationship between Eisenhower, Dulles, and their assistants, some of whom played critical roles in US foreign policy-making.<sup>11</sup> While the post-revisionists agree that Eisenhower Administration’s China policy was not as rigid as the traditionalists argue, they evaluate it differently. According to Tucker, Eisenhower was pragmatic and believed the US should conduct trade with the PRC and he even thought of allowing it to enter the UN; Dulles pursued a “Two China” policy, which accepted the Communist control of the mainland China

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343-63; Immerman, “Between the Unattainable and the Unacceptable: Eisenhower and Dien Bien Phu,” in Immerman and Mayers, *Reevaluating Eisenhower*, 120-54, and Fred I. Greenstein, *The Hidden-Handed Presidency: Eisenhower as Leader* (New York: Basic Books, 1982).

<sup>9</sup> Ambrose, *Eisenhower*, 245; Divine, *Eisenhower and the Cold War*, 10-66; Gordon, “United States Opposition to Use of Force in the Taiwan Strait, 1954-1962”; and Rushkoff, “Eisenhower, Dulles and the Quemoy-Matsu Crisis, 1954-1955.”

<sup>10</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, “The American ‘Wedge’ Strategy, 1949-1955,” in Harry Harding and Yuan Ming, eds. *Sino-American Relations, 1945-1955: A Joint Reassessment of a Critical Decade* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1989), 157-83, and in a longer version, “Dividing Adversaries: The United States and International Communism, 1945-1958,” in Gaddis, *The Long Peace: Inquiries into the History of the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 147-94; Gordon Chang, *Friends and Enemies: The United States, China, and the Soviet Union, 1948-1972* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990); and David Allan Mayers, *Cracking the Monolith: U.S. Policy Against the Sino-Soviet Alliance* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986).

<sup>11</sup> Tor Egil Forland, “Selling Firearms to the Indians: Eisenhower’s Export Control Policy, 1953-54,” *Diplomatic History* 15 (Spring 1991): 221-44; Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, “Cold War Contacts: America and China, 1952-56,” in Harding and Yuan, *Sino-American Relations*, 238-66, and “John Foster Dulles and the Taiwan Roots of the ‘Two Chinas’ Policy,” in Robert Immerman, *John Foster Dulles and the Diplomacy of the Cold War* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990), 235-62.

and sought to prevent Chiang Kai-shek from provoking the PRC, and thus dragging the US into a war.<sup>12</sup> Other post-revisionists were more critical. Scholars like Waldo Heinrich, Su-Ya Chang, and Robert Accinelli find the US China policy was “indecisive” rather than “flexible.” Instead of a consistent policy, Eisenhower administration’s China policy was crisis-driven, and its commitment to Taiwan “emerged piece-meal in the context of crises,” according to Accinelli.<sup>13</sup> Historian Gordon Chang goes further and criticizes Eisenhower for his unnecessary and unwise provocation in the first Taiwan Strait Crisis, which could have led to miscalculations and a war with the PRC.<sup>14</sup>

The current interpretation of Sino-American relations in this period, however, is insufficient in two aspects. First of all, most works restrict themselves to only one perspective, either that of the US or the PRC, and thus fail to give adequate attention to the *interaction* between them. If there was a “wedge strategy” on the US side, for example, how did PRC leaders perceive and respond to it? How did the Americans further view the PRC’s responses to their actions? What actions did they take against the PRC’s reactions? By concentrating on only one actor of the bilateral relations, most works give one-sided description and fail to create a

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<sup>12</sup> Tucker, “Cold War Contacts” and “John Foster Dulles and the Taiwan Roots of the ‘Two Chinas’ Policy.” See also Su-Ya Chang, “Reluctant Alliance: John Foster Dulles and the Making of the United States-Republic of China Mutual Defense Treaty of 1954,” in *Chinese Yearbook of International Law and Affairs*, Vol. 12 (1992-94): 126-71; and Qing Simei, “The Eisenhower Administration and Changes in Western Embargo Policy against China, 1954-1958,” in Cohen and Ariye, *Great Powers in East Asia*, 121-42.

<sup>13</sup> Robert Accinelli, *Crisis and Commitment: United States’ Policy toward Taiwan, 1950-1953* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996), especially x; Waldo Heinrichs, “Eisenhower and Sino-American Confrontation,” in Cohen and Ariye, *Great Powers in East Asia*, 86-103; and Su-Ya Chang, “Taihai Weiji yu Meiguo dui Fangong Dalu Zhengce de Zhuanbian” [Taiwan Strait Crises and US Policy toward KMT’s “Restoration of the Mainland”], *Bulletin of the Institute of Modern History*, Academia Sinica, Vol. 20 (June 1991): 369-41.

<sup>14</sup> Gordon H. Chang, “To the Nuclear Brink: Eisenhower, Dulles, and the Quemoy-Mazu Crisis,” in *International Security*, Vol. 12, No. 4 (Spring 1986): 119.

complete picture of the Sino-American relations in this period.<sup>15</sup>

Moreover, the current literature has tended to *approach events in this period in isolation*. Most works on this period have concentrated on the First Taiwan Strait Crisis and do not connect it to what happened both before and after the crisis, and consequently, do not demonstrate the consistency in both the PRC's and the US's policies. China's conciliation in Geneva turned abruptly to confrontational actions in the Taiwan Strait, and that was followed by a dramatic flexible stance in Bandung, but the current interpretations do not explore the reasons for the *policy shifts*. As a result, China's proposal to talk with the US in Bandung simply came out of the blue, and the PRC's bombardment of Jinmen had nothing to do with their peace efforts in Geneva. On the US side, scholars have also failed to reconcile the American leaders' rhetoric about a tough policy toward the PRC, especially their public threat of using nuclear weapons against China, and their decision to negotiate with the Communist Chinese, despite all the considerations about driving a "wedge."

The recent declassification of government documents from the PRC, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV), and the Soviet Union, for the first time enables scholars to approach Sino-American relations in the 1950s from a more balanced perspective.<sup>16</sup> This

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<sup>15</sup> There are, however, a few works that take a more balanced approach, but they were written on the basis of Chinese press reports and very limited government sources, and thus, most of their arguments are speculations lacking documentary support. See for example, Stolper, *China, Taiwan, and the Offshore Islands*; Gordon Chang and He Di, "The Absence of War in the U.S.-China Confrontation over Quemoy and Matsu in 1954-55: Contingency, Luck, Deterrence?" *American Historical Review* 98, No.5 (December 1993): 1500-24; Shu Guang Zhang, *Deterrence and Strategic Culture: Chinese-American Confrontations, 1949-1958* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992); Qiang Zhai, *The Dragon, the Lion, and the Eagle: Chinese-British-American Relations, 1949-1958* (Kent, OH: Kent University Press, 1994).

<sup>16</sup> Since 2004, the Foreign Ministry Archives of the PRC (hereafter, CFMA) have opened its diplomatic documents for public use. By 2011, they have declassified most of their materials from 1949 through 1966. At the same time,

dissertation, based on the new sources from the former Communist governments, as well as official documents from the archives in the US, the UK, and the ROC, reassesses the interaction between the PRC and the US from 1953 to 1956 from a multilateral perspective. It puts the two states' policy-making into the broader context of their relations with friends and allies, and concentrates on their perceptions/misperceptions of and actions/reactions to each other.

While focusing on three major events in Sino-American relations in this period: the Geneva Conference on Indochina, the First Taiwan Strait Crisis, and the Bandung Conference, this dissertation highlights the PRC's often-neglected peace initiatives at the Geneva and Bandung Conferences. It delves into the causes, PRC leaders' motives, the influence of the Soviet Union and the DRV, the policy shifts between the conferences and Taiwan Strait Crisis, and just as importantly, US leaders' perceptions and reactions. By exploring the motives behind the PRC's quest for détente and US agreement to talk with the PRC despite their hostility toward each other, this dissertation brings new insight both to the understanding of the PRC's diplomacy in the mid-1950s and US foreign policy under the Eisenhower administration.

Apart from the introduction and conclusion, this dissertation consists of a prologue and five substantial chapters. The prologue analyzes Sino-American relations immediately after the Korean War. While US leaders regarded the PRC as the major challenge to them in Asia, and planned to weaken China and contain the Chinese Communist expansion, PRC leaders wanted to break the US encirclement of China through diplomacy. To realize their goals, both Chinese and

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the DRV government has also published some documents, a lot of which have been translated into English. For a time, the Russian government opened the most important Presidential Archives, and most of the documents related to this dissertation were translated into English and/or Chinese. This dissertation is deeply indebted to Professor Shen Zhihua, who generously shared with the author all the documents he obtained from Russia, and the Cold War International History Program of the Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars, for its translations of the Russian and Vietnamese documents and proceedings of the international workshop on the Geneva Conference of 1954, which it sponsored in February 2006.

American leaders were thinking of separating their enemy from its major allies.

Chapter 1 explores the PRC's policy toward the Geneva Conference on Indochina in relations to the US. China's goal at Geneva was to neutralize Indochina in order to preclude covert US intervention, and thus, posing a direct military threat from Indochina. Chinese leaders adopted a tactics of exploiting differences between the US and other participants, including its allies and Asian states, to pressure the US to accept a peaceful settlement of the war between the Vietminh and France.

Chapter 2 assesses US actions in Geneva. US leaders realized the Communist intention to separate them from their allies, but they initially misperceived China's goal and exaggerated its ambition in Indochina. Their intransigence about negotiations with the Communist states strained their relations with major allies, which were not willing to continue the war in Indochina and whose cooperation was vital to the US policy of taking "United Action" to contain the Communists. Under the pressures from both US allies and Communist states, US leaders had to retreat from their original positions, and accept a basically neutralized Indochina. On the other hand, Communist concessions in the talks convinced the Americans that the PRC had only limited goal in Indochina, which made it easier for the US to make concessions.

Chapter 3 interprets the PRC's policy during the First Taiwan Strait Crisis. PRC leaders' experience at Geneva convinced them that they could push the US from concluding the MDT with ROC by mobilizing US allies and Asian states to pressure the US, and hence they initiated the crisis in the Taiwan Strait. But PRC leaders overestimated the differences within the Western camp, and exaggerated US vulnerability to diplomatic pressures. Therefore, their military actions turned out expediting, rather than preventing, the conclusion of the MDT. After the Chinese

realized the limit of their policy, they adjusted their focus and turned to conciliations to form a united front with Asian states in order to exclude US further infiltration into Asia.

Chapter 4 explains US efforts to defuse the Crisis and at the same time maintain its alliances. US leaders initially mistook China's primarily coercive diplomacy as military action, aiming to capture the offshore islands. To contain the perceived PRC military aggression, the US sought allied assistance and precipitately concluded the MDT. Worried about a Sino-American conflict, Britain, US major ally, pressed the US to make concessions in the Taiwan Strait and seek détente with the PRC to lessen the danger of war in Asia. To deter the Chinese from further aggression, US leaders threatened to use atomic weapons, which put pressure to their relations with Britain and Asian states. Under the pressures from its allies and enemies, the US had to retreat from its positions again.

Chapter 5 depicts US-PRC interaction at the Bandung Conference. PRC leaders aimed to build a Peace Area with the Asian neutral states to exclude US presence in their neighborhood. Thus, they displayed conciliations to lessen Asian states' worries about a military conflict between the US and China, and launched a diplomatic offensive to win over major Asian states, as well as adding pressure on the US. US leaders, on the other hand, worried the PRC would get the conference's support to its policy toward Taiwan, and worked with friendly attendees to frustrate the Chinese ambition. China's flexibility won over sympathizers, who turned to pressing the US for direct talks with the Chinese to reduce tensions. Although the PRC failed to build a Peace Area, their efforts resulted in Sino-American ambassadorial talks at Geneva.

## Prologue

### Hostility and Confrontation: US-China Relations after the Korean War

#### US Perception of and Policy toward the PRC in 1953

The PRC's participation in the Korean War decisively changed American leaders' perceptions of China and its relations with the Soviet Union, and eliminated any chance of an accommodation between the United States and the PRC in the near future.<sup>1</sup> By the end of the war, the PRC had emerged in Americans' mind as a "powerful and hostile" Communist state closely aligned to the Soviet Union, whose threat to US interests in Asia, according to Walter Robertson, Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, was even more "active" than the Soviet menace in Europe.<sup>2</sup> As soon as the Korean Armistice was concluded in July 1953, Secretary of State Dulles warned US diplomats around the world not to be beguiled by the Chinese willingness to stop fighting on the Korean peninsula:

Armistice in Korea would not indicate [that] Communist China had abandoned its basic objectives or its willingness [to] seek these objectives by armed force. Danger of aggression would continue, particularly in Southeast Asia, while Communists

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Jervis, "The Impact of the Korean War on the Cold War," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (Dec., 1980): 574-76, 582-84. For contesting works about the "Lost Chance" thesis, see Warren I. Cohen, "Acheson, His Advisers, and China, 1949-1950," in *Uncertain Years: Chinese-American Relations, 1947-1950*, eds. by Dorothy Brog and Waldo Heinrichs (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 13-52; Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, *Patterns in the Dust: Chinese-American Relations and the Recognition Controversy, 1949-1950* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983); David McLean, "American Nationalism, the China Myth, and the Truman Doctrine: The Question of Accommodation with Peking, 1949-50," in *Diplomatic History* 10 (Fall 1986): 25-42; Chen Jian, "The Myth of America's 'Lost Chance' in China: A Chinese Perspective in Light of New Evidence," in *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (Winter 1997): 77-86; Thomas Christensen, "A 'Lost Chance' for What? Rethinking the Origins of the U.S.-China Confrontation," in *Journal of American-East Asian Relations* 4 (Fall 1995): 249-78; and Michael Sheng, "The Triumph of Internationalism: CCP-Moscow Relations before 1949," in *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (Winter 1997): 95-104.

<sup>2</sup> "Memorandum by the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Robertson) to the Secretary of State," June 2, 1953, *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 202.

would attempt [to] exploit armistice as tactical device to weaken and divide [the] free world.<sup>3</sup>

In November 1953, the National Security Council (NSC) prepared the first basic policy toward the PRC. NSC 166/1 (“US Policy toward Communist China”) pointed out the PRC as “the primary problem of US foreign policy in the Far East.” According to the document, the PRC’s ultimate goal was to dominate the Far East and exclude Western forces from the area. In the short run, the PRC menaced the US interests in several areas.<sup>4</sup> In Indochina, the Chinese were increasing their assistance to the Vietnamese Workers Party (VWP, the Vietnamese Communists) and planned to expand Communism throughout Indochina; consequently by late 1953, the Vietnamese Communists were winning the upper hand over the French, and the NSC predicted that the situation would further deteriorate.<sup>5</sup> In other areas in Southeast Asia, the PRC was making use of the huge community of overseas Chinese and assisting the indigenous Communist movements in order to extend its influence. At the same time, the authors of NSC documents noticed, the PRC wanted to capture Taiwan from the GMD government, thus breaking the US island chain defense in the Western Pacific. In the summer of 1953, the PRC had seized several off-shore islands and was preparing to attack the more important Dachen Islands.<sup>6</sup> Elsewhere in Asia, the PRC was trying to neutralize these states to prevent them from

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<sup>3</sup> “The Secretary of State to Certain Diplomatic and Consular Offices,” July 29, 1953, *FRUS*, 1952-1954, Vol. 14: 238.

<sup>4</sup> “State of Policy by the National Security Council,” or NSC 166/1, November 6, 1953, *FRUS*, 1952-1954, Vol. 14: 279. The following analysis of the US China policy is basically based on this document.

<sup>5</sup> “United States Objectives and Courses of Action with Respect to Southeast Asia,” NSC 5405, January 16, 1954, *FRUS*, 1952-1954, Vol. 13: 972.

<sup>6</sup> “Memorandum of Discussion at the 153<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the National Security Council, Washington, July 9, 1953,” *FRUS*, 1952-1954, Vol. 14: 227-29; telegrams from the Ambassador in ROC to the Department of State, July 21 and 22, 1953, *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 232-33, 233-34; and letter from the Secretary of State to the Secretary of Defense, August 17, 1953, *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 244-45.

being used by the US against the PRC. To realize their objectives, according to the NSC document, the Chinese Communists were taking a series of actions. Politically, they were advocating peace in order to form “the broadest possible alliance with all potentially anti-Western elements.” Economically, the PRC was promoting trade with such important US allies as Japan, Britain, and France, as a way to win them over to the Communist side. Strategically, the Chinese would try to prevent “the establishment of strong Western military forces” in its bordering areas, especially North Korea, northern Burma and Vietnam. And diplomatically, the PRC wanted to enter the UN and set up diplomatic relations with more Asian states.<sup>7</sup> Among all of the above areas, Indochina and Taiwan were critically important for US national interests. According to US “Basic National Security Policy” (NSC 162/2), which was prepared right before the adoption of NSC 166/1, these two places were “of such strategic importance to the United States that an attack on them probably would compel the United States to react with military force either locally at the point of attack or generally against the military power of the aggressor.”<sup>8</sup>

In response to the challenge from the PRC, according to NSC 166/1, the US sought eventually to “secure a reorientation of the Chinese Communist regime or its ultimate replacement by a regime which would not be hostile to the United States.” In the short run, US objective was to “reduce the relative power position of Communist China in Asia:

- a. Primarily by developing the political, economic and military strength of non-Communist countries.

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<sup>7</sup> “Basic U.S. Objective toward Communist China,” study prepared by the Staff of the National Security Council, April 6, 1953, *FRUS*, 1952-1954, Vol. 14: 175-79; and NSC 166/1, “U.S. Policy toward Communist China,” November 5, 1953, in *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 279.

<sup>8</sup> Report to the National Security Council by the Executive Secretary about NSC 162/2, October 30, 1953, in *FRUS*, 1952-1954, Vol. 2: 584.

- b. At the same time by weakening or at least retarding the growth of Chinese Communist power in China.
- c. By impairing Sino-Soviet relations.<sup>9</sup>

At the same time, however, US leaders realized the Sino-Soviet alliance, a major source of the strength of the PRC, was “firmly established” on the basis of “common ideology and mutual interest,” and valuable for both states, so there was not much the US could do to carry out the Wedge Strategy in the short run. According to the NSC document, on the one hand, US leaders believed “there are major potentials for tension and discord in the Sino-Soviet partnership;” on the other hand, “it seems evident that the potential difficulties of the Sino-Soviet connection will stem primarily from the internal workings of the partnership and only secondarily from the nature of external pressures or inducements.”<sup>10</sup>

Nevertheless, continuing to contain and pressure the PRC was the safest policy to realize the goal of weakening the Chinese Communists. In terms of containment, US leaders strived to: “Maintain the security of the off-shore island chain”; “Foster strong and healthy non-Communist governments in the Far East, particularly in Korea, Formosa and Indochina, which border on Communist China”; “Continue to explore the potentialities of collective arrangements in the Pacific area...”; and assist the development of Japan and other non-Communist states against the Communists.<sup>11</sup>

As for “pressures” on the PRC, according to NSC 166/1, the US should “continue to exert political and economic pressures against the PRC, including unconventional and covert

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<sup>9</sup> NSC 166/1, “U.S. Policy towards Communist China,” in *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 281.

<sup>10</sup> The most important works on the US “Wedge Strategy” include Gaddis, “The American ‘Wedge’ Strategy, 1949-1955”; Chang, *Friends and Enemies*; and Mayers, *Cracking the Monolith*.

<sup>11</sup> NSC 166/1, “U.S. Policy towards Communist China,” in *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 281-82.

pressures.” Politically, the US sought to deny the PRC “full status in the international community,” including UN membership, diplomatic recognition and normal relations. Economically, the US should “impose difficulty and some delay” on PRC’s industrialization—the primary means was to maintain the embargo on trade with China, which the US had imposed after the outbreak of the Korean War. Strategically, the US had encouraged and increased assistance for France to defeat the Communists in Indochina, and in particular, funded the Laniel-Navarre Plan to regain the initiative against the Vietminh.<sup>12</sup> On Taiwan, the US included the islands of Taiwan and Penghus (Pescadores) in its defense system, assisted ROC government defending the islands off the coast of the mainland, and encouraged ROC forces to raid the Chinese mainland.<sup>13</sup>

At the same time, US leaders were clear that the success of their policy depended on cooperation with allies. As the NSC 166/1 indicated, both the political and economic pressures on the PRC relied on the West “act[ing] in concert.” Militarily, as the NSC 162/2 showed, the French forces in Indochina and the British troops in Malaya and Hong Kong, as well as the military powers of the Republics of Korea, the State of Vietnam (SOV, or South Vietnam), and the ROC, provided indispensable ground forces for US strength. This was extremely important for the US when its economy was in a recession and US leaders were considering a policy later named the “New Look,” the gist of which was to contain the Communists at a lower price.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> NSC 5405, “United States Objectives and Courses of Action with Respect to Southeast Asia,” January 16, 1954, in *FRUS*, 1952-1954, Vol. 13: 972-73.

<sup>13</sup> NSC 146/2, “United States Objectives and Courses of Action with Respect to Formosa and the Chinese National Government,” in *FRUS*, 1952-1954, Vol. 14: 308.

<sup>14</sup> Report to the National Security Council by the Executive Secretary about NSC 162/2, October 30, 1953, in *FRUS*, 1952-1954, Vol. 2: 586.

On the other hand, US leaders also realized that their relations with their allies were strained by their hostility toward the PRC. They were aware that their major allies were worried about being dragged into either a general war with the PRC, or “indefinitely prolong[ed] cold-war tensions” in the Far East.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, US leaders knew that the British were enticed by the China market and wanted to adopt a conciliatory policy; the French wished the PRC would help them solve the Indochina problem; and Japan wanted more trade with China. In addition to the allies, US officials were aware that most states in Southeast Asia agreed with the Indian policy of wooing the PRC away from the Soviet Union through contacts with it, instead of confronting the PRC. In this circumstance, US leaders expected that “any US policy toward Communist China will encounter strenuous and vocal objections from at least some of the countries of the Free World.”<sup>16</sup>

Moreover, US leaders also knew the Communists were launching a “peace offensive” in order to “divide the West by raising false hopes and seeking to make the United States appear unyielding,” but they had no intention to change their expansionist policy and settle the Cold War with the West.<sup>17</sup> Such tactics did not cost the Communists anything but catered to US allies very well. As a result, the NSC 166/1 concluded that the US should be careful in its relations with allies, and must avoid “excessive pressure” in order to “avoid the most dangerously divisive potentials of the Chinese Communist issue.”<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Report to the National Security Council by the Executive Secretary about NSC 162/2, October 30, 1953, in *FRUS*, 1952-1954, Vol. 2: 586.

<sup>16</sup> NSC 166/1, “U.S. Policy towards Communist China,” in *FRUS*, 1952-1954, Vol. 14: 305-06.

<sup>17</sup> “Review of Basic National Security Policy,” Draft Statement of Policy Proposed by the National Security Council, September 30, 1953, in *FRUS*, 1952-1954, Vol. 2: 491-99; and NSC 146/2, in *FRUS*, 1952-1954, Vol. 2: 579, 581.

<sup>18</sup> NSC 166/1, “U.S. Policy towards Communist China,” in *FRUS*, 1952-1954, Vol. 14: 306.

## The PRC's Policy toward the US in 1953

From the perspective of PRC leaders, the US had been the major security threat to them since the establishment of the People's Republic in October 1949, and particularly after its entrance into the Korean War. In November 1950, when US forces were crossing the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, PRC leaders judged that the US intended to invade China from one of the three directions: Korea, Taiwan, and Vietnam. According to Mao Zedong, China was facing a US invasion and the danger of world war carried out by the belligerent figures in the US government.<sup>19</sup>

After the Korean Armistice, PRC leaders felt US threats from these three directions still existed, though to a lesser degree. To the northeast of China, US troops stationed in South Korea directly threatened the PRC's major industrial base in Manchuria. According to Chinese intelligence, US harassment of China, especially the Shandong peninsula across the Yellow Sea from Korea, "had increased unprecedentedly since the end of the war."<sup>20</sup> In October 1953, by concluding a mutual defense treaty with South Korea, the US legitimized its long-term military deployment in the Korean peninsula, and prevented a final peaceful solution to the Korean problem. And this was followed by a security treaty with Japan in early 1954, which from the Chinese perspective meant that the US had started to "rearm Japan" in order to confront the PRC.

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<sup>19</sup> *Renmin Ribao* [People's Daily], editorial, November 6, 1950; Mao Zedong, *Mao Zedong's Selected Works*, Vol. 5: 104, 136.

<sup>20</sup> *Neibu Cankao* [Internal Reference], August 19, 1953. *Neibu Cankao* was a daily briefing compiled by Xinhua News Agency. It provided the most important background information about international and domestic affairs for a very limited number of PRC leaders. The only collection publicly available is kept in the Universities Service Center for China Research of the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Unless indicated otherwise, English translation of the Chinese sources from *Neibu Cankao* is by the author.

To the east of the PRC, the US Seventh Fleet had been protecting the ROC government since the outbreak of the Korean War; and after the war, US leaders attached greater importance to the position of Taiwan, according to PRC officials. Consequently, from the PRC's point of view, the US increased economic assistance to the ROC government, and strengthened its control of ROC troops. PRC leaders also suspected that the US was attempting to enter a formal alliance with the ROC government.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, in the Taiwan Strait, the US had encouraged and assisted the ROC in its efforts to barricade the mainland ports and seize merchant ships since 1949.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, after the Korean War, ROC navy intensified its actions to disrupt Chinese foreign trade by intercepting ships at the request of the US, according to PRC leaders.<sup>23</sup> In the Philippines, the US controlled the Filipino military through a mutual defense treaty in 1952, and had reinforced its military bases in the Western Pacific to contain China. According to Chinese diplomatic reports, US leaders were also considering a Southeast Asian alliance based on the US-Filipino treaty to carry out their aggression against the PRC.<sup>24</sup>

To the southwest of the PRC, Chinese leaders saw US involvement in Indochina was increasing. As Chinese intelligence indicated, the US sent more military assistance to the French, and was pressuring France to turn over military control to the American military.<sup>25</sup> Outside Indochina, the US was increasing its military and economic assistance to Thailand and pushed

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<sup>21</sup> *Neibu Cankao*, July 23 and October 19, 1953, and January 28, 1954.

<sup>22</sup> *Neibu Cankao*, November 4, 1952; April 22, July 18, and September 17, 1953.

<sup>23</sup> Zhongyang Wenxian Chubanshe, ed., *Jianguo Yilai Mao Zedong Wengao* [Mao Zedong's Manuscripts since the Foundation of the People's Republic of China] (hereafter, *Mao Wengao*), Vol. 3 (Beijing: Zhongyang Wenxian Chubanshe, 1989): 294, 331.

<sup>24</sup> "US Imperialist Conspiracy of Holding a 'US-Filipino Defense Meeting'," Chinese Foreign Ministry Archives, Beijing (hereafter, CFMA), 105-00819-02, 39-41. Before this, The Australia, New Zealand, United States Security Treaty (ANZUS) came into effect in April 1952. Unless indicated otherwise, the English translation of Chinese documents from the CFMA is by the author.

<sup>25</sup> "The [British, American and French] Three Foreign Ministers Meeting and the Vietnam Issue," July 27, 1953, CFMA, 110-00234-04, 42-46.

the Thais to expand their forces to be used, as Beijing saw it, for US aggression against China.<sup>26</sup>

Meanwhile, the US was also planning to organize an anti-Communist alliance with Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, and Burma. For PRC leaders, all these US actions targeted China.<sup>27</sup>

The US encirclement of China put Chinese leaders under great pressure—in Mao Zedong’s words, “we cannot have a sound sleep,”<sup>28</sup> although the PRC’s participation in the Korean War convinced its leaders that a direct invasion in the short run was not likely. In 1952, Mao predicted that the US was not ready for a world war, and its strategic focus was in Europe, rather than Asia, so the PRC should have ten years or so to concentrate on its domestic development. In June 1953, PRC Premier Zhou Enlai told his assistants that the PRC’s experience in Korea demonstrated that the US “did not dare to invade the mainland [of Asia].”<sup>29</sup> At the same time, Mao Zedong told Chinese officials that the PRC’s participation in the Korean War had “put off the imperialistic invasion of China and the outbreak of the Third World War.” After the US concluded the mutual defense treaty with South Korea and rejected the PRC’s proposal for a political conference on Korea in late 1953, PRC leaders believed that the US “dared not restore a war;” rather they were keeping an “unstable ceasefire in Korea deliberately to *pressure us*” [emphasis added].<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> *Neibu Cankao*, November 16, 1953.

<sup>27</sup> “The Contradictions between the French and Americans on War or Peace in Indochina After the Starting of the Dien Bien Phu Campaign,” April 5, 1954, CFMA, 102-00159-02, 6-9.

<sup>28</sup> Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Waijiaobu, Zhongyang Wenxian Yanjiushi, eds., *Mao Zedong Waijiao Wenxuan* [Mao Zedong’s Selected Works on Diplomacy] (Beijing: Zhongyang Wenxian Chubanshe, 1994), 163-76.

<sup>29</sup> “Premier Zhou Enlai’s Report at the National Conference on Foreign Affairs of 1953,” June 5, 1953, CFMA, 102-00110-01, 4-43. This important government document is the only available source about the PRC’s consideration about foreign policy around the end of the Korean War.

<sup>30</sup> See Pang Xianzhi and Jin Chongji, et al., *Mao Zedong Zhuan, 1949-1976* [Biography of Mao Zedong, 1949-1976] (Beijing: Zhongyang Wenxian Chubanshe, 2003), 546; “Analysis of Eisenhower’s Statement on December 26 by Our Embassy to the Soviet Union,” December 30, 1953, CFMA, 102-00158-01, 14.

Nevertheless the US encirclement of the PRC prevented China from concentrating on domestic development, which the Korean War had proved to be vitally urgent. To deal with US threat, PRC leaders followed the peace initiatives the Soviet Union adopted after the death of Joseph Stalin in March 1953, and strived to “relax the tensions” through diplomacy.<sup>31</sup> At Soviet suggestion, the Chinese had made new proposals and the Korean War Armistice was concluded largely due to China’s concessions on the POW (prisoner of war) issue, the principal obstacle for the truce.<sup>32</sup> As soon as the war was over, the Communists suggested building on the momentum to solve other international disputes by peaceful means.<sup>33</sup> Along with the Soviet suggestion in September to hold a Five-Power conference, including the US, Soviet Union, Britain, France, and the PRC, to discuss tensions in Asia, Zhou Enlai proposed holding a political conference to talk about the withdrawal of foreign troops from Korea and settle the Korean problem permanently.<sup>34</sup> Meanwhile, the Soviet and Chinese leaders also started to call for a peaceful solution of the Indochina problem.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> For the latest work on the Soviet Peace Offensive, see Geoffrey Roberts, “A Chance for Peace? The Soviet Campaign to End the Cold War, 1953-1955,” CWIHP, working paper #57; a collection of articles regarding the Soviet Peace Offensive and the US response to it is Klaus Larres and Kenneth Osgood, eds., *The Cold War After Stalin’s Death: A Missed Opportunity for Peace?* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006). The current documents, however, do not indicate if and how the Soviets discussed with the Chinese how to coordinate their actions, but the coordination between the two Communist states was obvious, as the following chapters will show.

<sup>32</sup> For the Soviet role in ending the Korean War, see Shen Zhihua, “Jieshu Chaoxian Zhanzheng: Zhongsu Lidaoren de Zhengzhi Kaolu” [Ending the Korean War: political considerations of the Chinese and Soviet leaders], in Zhang Baijia and Niu Jun, eds., *Lengzhan yu Zhongguo* [The Cold War and China] (Beijing: Shijie Zhishi Chubanshe, 2002), 182-215; an English version of this article is “The Sino-Soviet Decision to End the Korean War,” <http://www.shenzhihua.net/000118.htm>, accessed September 24, 2005; Kathryn Weathersby, “Stalin, Mao and the End of the Korean War,” in Odd Arne Westad, ed., *Brothers in Arms: The Rise and Fall of the Sino-Soviet Alliance, 1945-1963* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 90-116; and Yang Kuisong, *Mao Zedong yu Mosike de Enen Yuanyuan* [Love and Hate between Mao Zedong and Moscow] (Nanchang: Jiangxi Renmin Chubanshe, 2005), 415-18.

<sup>33</sup> For more details about actions the Communists took to advance their Peace Offensive, see King Chen, *Vietnam and China, 1938-1954* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 281.

<sup>34</sup> *Pravda*, September 30, 1953, cited in Ilya Gaiduk, *Confronting Vietnam: Soviet Policy toward the Indochina Conflict, 1954-1963* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 13; Li Ping and Ma Zhisun, et al., *Zhou Enlai*

In addition to their alliance with the Soviet Union, PRC leaders' confidence in diplomacy came also from their observations of the relations between the US and its allies. Viewing the world through the lens of Leninism, PRC leaders, especially Zhou Enlai, had found increasing contradictions among the "Western imperialists." In early 1952, based on his observations of the relations within the Western camp during the Korean War, and the process of concluding the Japan Peace Treaty, Zhou Enlai judged that the world order was much more complex than a single confrontation between the Eastern and Western Camps. The capitalist world was not a monolith, according to Zhou; rather it was made up of progressive, neutral, and conservative states. This gave the PRC enough room for diplomatic maneuver between them. Therefore, Zhou pushed PRC diplomats to conduct flexible diplomacy and distinguish these states from each other.<sup>36</sup> When the Korean War was coming to its end, PRC leaders concluded that US foreign policy was facing increasing opposition from allies and former Western colonial states, and the contradictions between the Western imperialists had become "extremely tense." Politically, Chinese leaders believed the US was struggling with the British and French for diplomatic leadership. As Zhou Enlai saw it, Britain and France wanted to maintain their colonies and the *status quo* in the world power configuration, but the US wanted to expand its influence into their

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*Nianpu, 1949-1976* [A Chronological Record of Zhou Enlai, 1949-1976], Vol. 1: 330-31, 333-36. Unless indicated otherwise, the following citations from *Zhou Enlai Nianpu* are from Volume 1 of this three-volume book.

<sup>35</sup> For the Soviet press reports about and the PRC's proposals for a peaceful settlement of the Indochina war, see Vietnamese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "The Diplomatic Struggle As Part of the People's National Democratic Revolution (1945-1954), Volume Two," 13, 14-15 (hereafter, "The Diplomatic Struggle"). This critical Vietnamese document was acquired by Christopher Goscha and translated by Merle L. Pribbenow for the International Workshop, "Reconsidering the Geneva Conference: New Archival Evidence," held by the Cold War International History Project (CWIHP) of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, February 17-18, 2006, Washington, DC. This document was compiled in 1976, before the deterioration of Sino-Vietnamese relations, and thus its description of the Vietnamese Communists' relations with the PRC was fairly objective. For the Soviet policy toward Indochina before Geneva, see Gaiduk, *Confronting Vietnam*, 1-14; and Mari Olsen, *Soviet-Vietnam Relations and the Role of China, 1949-1964* (New York: Rutledge, 2003), 13-27.

<sup>36</sup> *Zhou Enlai Nianpu*, 235-36.

spheres of influence. According to Chinese diplomats, in India, US infiltration had led to the surfacing of US-British conflicts as well as the Indians' resistance.<sup>37</sup> In Indochina, the French were afraid that the US would take over their interests, but still found US economic and military assistance indispensable. Economically, despite the US trade embargo on the PRC, the British wanted to have more trade and France concluded an agreement with China, selling the PRC all kinds of strategic materials, in order to compete with the British for the profitable China market, according to PRC leaders. Japan, a major US ally of in Asia, was also eager for business with the PRC and sent trade delegations to China, although it was still under US control.<sup>38</sup> The PRC's peace policy since early 1953 had added to the conflicts among the imperialists, as Zhou Enlai told Chinese officials, and the PRC should carry on the momentum further to isolate the US.<sup>39</sup>

While PRC leaders were planning to exploit the differences within the West, they were also aware that the US wanted to separate them from the Soviet Union through a "Wedge Strategy." In March 1953, PRC leaders learned that US officials in the Departments of State and Defense reached an agreement on forcing China to seek extra assistance from the Soviets. Since the latter were busy with domestic issues and incapable of satisfying the PRC's requests,

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<sup>37</sup> For US conflicts with Britain over India, see "US Military Infiltration into India," February 20, 1953, CFMA, 105-00247-02, 14-17; "US Ambassador [Chester] Bowlers and US Activities in India During His Tenure," February 26, 1953, CFMA, 105-00247-03, 19-33; "How Britain Had Reinforced Its Control of India Since 1952 and How the Contradictions between Britain and the US Had Intensified," April 1, 1953, CFMA, 105-00247-05, 40-44; "Report on Dulles's Visit to India," May 1953, CFMA, 105-00247-04, 35-38.

<sup>38</sup> For Western opposition to the US embargo on China, see "Bankruptcy of the US Embargo Policy," CFMA, 110-00171-02, 22-33. For the French interests in trade with China, and their conflicts with the US, see "The French and American Conflicts over 'Foreign Product Order'," September 1 to 21, 1952, CFMA, 110-00186-05, and "Reply Regarding the French Trade Delegation," February 14, 1953, CFMA, 110-00212-01. For the French differences with the US on the rearmament of Germany, see "Covert Struggles between the US and France," CFMA, 110-00186-09, 90-94, and "Recent Internal Contradictions over the 'European Army'," CFMA, 110-00234-09, 66-90. For the Japanese trade delegation to China, see *Zhou Enlai Nianpu*, 226; and "Briefing of Sino-Japanese Meeting Regarding Trade Issues," March 4, 1953, CFMA, 105-00251-25, 83-88.

<sup>39</sup> "Premier Zhou Enlai's Report at the National Conference on Foreign Affairs of 1953," June 5, 1953, CFMA, 102-00110-01, 4-43.

Americans believed this was an effective way to disrupt the Communist alliance. For that purpose, Chinese leaders learned, some US officials suggested taking strong actions in Korea and probably also in Indochina to put more pressure on the PRC, in addition to launching covert psychological warfare.<sup>40</sup> After the Korean War, according to Chinese sources, US leaders still believed pressuring China was the best way to split the PRC from the Soviet Union, as the Communist alliance would stay stable in the near future, because the Soviets were pleasing the PRC and the alliance proved to be built upon mutual interests as well as external menace. In this circumstance, according to the Chinese document, US leaders concluded conciliation toward the PRC would only contribute to the growth of Communist power.<sup>41</sup>

But US allies were not enthusiastic about the US strategy, Chinese leaders learned. According to PRC officials, the British believed that pressure would only strengthen the unity among the Communists, and moreover, US provocative actions would lead to PRC retaliation, and thus involve the British in a Sino-American war. Instead, the British advocated taking flexible actions, such as trade, to draw the PRC away from the Soviets.<sup>42</sup> Chinese leaders also knew that the French government, with its interests in Indochina, wanted to grant the PRC some kind of recognition too, such as meeting with Chinese officials at the Five Power Conference the Soviets suggested, in order to convince the PRC to stop assisting the Vietnamese Communists. Therefore, PRC leaders concluded, both Britain and France were interested in negotiation with

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<sup>40</sup> *Neibu Cankao*, March 8, 9, and especially 16, 1953.

<sup>41</sup> *Neibu Cankao*, August 18, 1953.

<sup>42</sup> *Neibu Cankao*, March 10, 19, and August 18, 1953.

the PRC, and their conciliation toward the PRC added to the tensions in their relations with the US.<sup>43</sup>

In summary, the period immediately after the Korean War was one of deep hostility between the US and the PRC. While the PRC perceived the US as a threat to its security and development, the US viewed China as the primary enemy in Asia. Both hoped to separate the other from its allies in order to lessen the menace. But they took different actions: while US leaders wanted to contain or pressure the PRC to undermine the PRC's strength, the Chinese planned to make use of US allies' interests in conciliation to isolate the US through diplomatic maneuver. At the same time, both states were aware of the other's strategy, and they also realized the importance of unity with allies, but their policies created different consequences, as is indicated in their interactions during the Geneva Conference on Indochina, the Taiwan Strait Crisis, and the Bandung Conference.

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<sup>43</sup> "Press Comments on the Bermuda Conference," December 10, 1953, CFMA, 110-00234-05, 47-50.

## Chapter 1

### Neutralizing Indochina: The Geneva Conference and China's Efforts to Isolate the US

“We must not let the Geneva Conference fail... the Chinese delegation will do its best to bring about an agreement, especially on restoring peace in Indochina...The Western states such as Britain and France should be told that they are facing two different roads: they could either have good relations with Asian people and maintain part of their interests, or refuse this road and choose to walk the same road with the US, thus losing everything.”<sup>1</sup>

——Zhou Enlai, April 19, 1954

“If a military alliance was set up and if the three Indochinese states were included in the treaty, ‘peace would become meaningless.’”<sup>2</sup>

——Zhou Enlai, July 17, 1954

The Geneva Conference from April to July 1954 ended the war between France and the DRV, which to a great extent was a proxy war between the PRC the United States. As active participants of the French Indochina War, China and the US played significant roles in the conference, leading to the Geneva Agreements on Indochina. Yet few works have approached the event from the perspective of Sino-American relations.

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<sup>1</sup> Zhonghua Renmin Waijiaobu, ed., *Zhou Enlai Waijiao Huodong Dashiji* [Major Events in Zhou Enlai's Diplomatic Career], (Beijing: Shijie zhishi Chubanshe, 1993), 58; *1954 Nian Rineiwa Huiyi* [The Geneva Conference of 1954] ed. by Zhongguo Waijiaobu Danganguan (Beijing: Shijie Zhishi Chubanshe, 2006), 15-18; Li Ping and Ma Zhisun, et al., *Zhou Enlai Nianpu, 1949-1976* [A Chronological Record of Zhou Enlai, 1949-1976] (Beijing: Zhongyang Wenxian Chubanshe, 1997), Vol.1: 360-61. Unless indicated otherwise, the following citations from this book are from volume 1. The translation of this citation is by Chen Jian and included in the Wilson Center Reader on the Geneva Conference on Indochina (hereafter Wilson Center Reader), by the Cold War International History Project (CWIHP) of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars for the international workshop on the Geneva Conference, February, 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Zhou's meeting with British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden, July 17, 1954, *1954 Nian Rineiwa Huiyi*, 246-51; *CWIHP Bulletin*, Issue 16, 65-68. Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Fall 2007/Winter 2008 (Hereafter, this issue of bulletin is referred to as *CWIHP Bulletin*).

This chapter assesses China's actions at the Geneva Conference on Indochina in relations to its policy toward the US. It answers the following questions: How did the Geneva Conference serve the PRC's national interests? How did Chinese leaders perceive US attitude toward the conference, and how did that perception in turn influence their policymaking? And what strategies and tactics did PRC leaders adopt during the conference?

Based on newly declassified government documents from the PRC, Russia and Vietnam, as well as sources from the US and Britain, this paper interprets the PRC's policy from a multilateral perspective: it places China's diplomacy in Geneva in the broader context of its understanding of the relations within the Western bloc, and explains the PRC's policy in terms of its relations with its Communist allies, the Soviet Union and the DRV.

This chapter finds that the PRC's objective in Geneva aimed to neutralize Indochina in order to prevent the US from intervening militarily in Indochina, which would pose a direct threat to China's security from its southwestern flank. For that purpose, PRC leaders adopted a strategy of exploiting the differences between their archenemy the US, and its allies Britain and France to pressure the US to agree to end the war, and hence its further involvement in Indochina. Meanwhile, aware of US sensitivity to the differences with the Communist camp, PRC officials tried to build a united front with the Soviet Union and DRV, which shared Chinese leaders' anxiety about US intervention, and guided DRV leaders to make necessary concessions to bring about peace in Indochina.

## PRC's Policy toward Geneva

The decision to hold the Geneva Conference was made in Berlin by the foreign ministers of the US, the Soviet Union, UK and France in early 1954. The Berlin meeting was originally held to discuss the German issue, but the Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov proposed a Five-Power conference, with the addition of the PRC, to discuss the issue of relaxing the tensions in Asia. Although the US opposed this suggestion, Molotov got the British and French support, and finally the Berlin meeting decided to hold the Geneva Conference to discuss the Korean and Indochinese issues. The participants included the PRC and all other related states, but the US government particularly declared that the Conference was not a "Five-Power" one, as the PRC was not a sponsor, and the US agreement to sit together with the PRC did not mean diplomatic recognition of the Communist regime.<sup>3</sup>

The Geneva Conference partly resulted from the well-coordinated "peace offensive," which the Communists had launched in early 1953.<sup>4</sup> At Stalin's funeral, the new Soviet Premier Georgy Malenkov declared "[t]here are no contested issues in US-Soviet relations that cannot be resolved by peaceful means."<sup>5</sup> As the first step, the Soviets urged the PRC to end the Korean War.<sup>6</sup> In September, the Soviets first suggested holding a Five-Power conference to discuss the

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3 *FRUS*, 1952-54, 16: 415.

4 For the latest work on the Soviet Peace Offensive, see Geoffrey Roberts, "A Chance for Peace? The Soviet Campaign to End the Cold War, 1953-1955," CWIHP, working paper #57; a collection of articles regarding the Soviet Peace Offensive and the US response to it is Klaus Larres and Kenneth Osgood, eds., *The Cold War After Stalin's Death: A Missed Opportunity for Peace?* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006).

5 Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War: From Stalin to Khrushchev* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 155.

6 For the Soviet role in ending the Korean War, see Shen Zhihua, "The Sino-Soviet Decision to End the Korean War," <http://www.shenzhijhua.net/cxzz/000118.htm>, accessed September 24, 2005; for the original Chinese version, see Zhang Baijia and Niu Jun, eds., *Lengzhan yu Zhongguo* [The Cold War and China] (Beijing: Shijiezhishi Chubanshe, 2002), 182-215; see also Yang Kuisong, *Mao Zedong yu Mosike de Enen Yuanyuan* [Love and Hate between Mao Zedong and Moscow] (Nanchang: Jianxi Renmin Chubanshe, 2005), 415-18. For the Soviet

tensions in Southeast Asia and the Pacific.<sup>7</sup> The Soviet proposal was readily welcomed by PRC leaders, who declared that “all international disputes can be solved through peaceful negotiation.” And Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai immediately proposed a political conference to solve the Korean problem permanently. Soon the PRC invited North Korean leaders to Beijing, and the two countries made a comprehensive proposal for the political conference.<sup>8</sup>

Meanwhile, the Communists directly started to call for a peaceful settlement in Indochina. Again it was the Soviets who took the initiative, and then PRC leaders immediately declared their support.<sup>9</sup> In private, Chinese leaders tried to convince their Vietnamese comrades to consider a diplomatic solution. According to a new Chinese document, on November 23, 1953, three days before the Ho Chi Minh’s well-known publication of his willingness to negotiate with the French, PRC Chairman Mao Zedong sent a telegram to Ho, urging him to take diplomatic actions:

Currently the pressure from French people’s request for ending the Vietnam War is increasing. Some members in the French ruling class also believe the invasion of Vietnam does not deserve the costs and advocate peace talk. [The French Premier Joseph] Laniel also twice formally expressed willingness for negotiation. But the

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perspective, see Kathryn Weatherby, “Stalin, Mao and the End of the Korean War,” in Odd Arne Westad, eds., *Brothers in Arms: The Rise and Fall of the Sino-Soviet Alliance* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 90-116. <sup>7</sup> *Pravda*, September 30, 1953. Cited in Ilya Gaiduk, *Confronting Vietnam: Soviet Policy toward the Indochina Conflict, 1954-1963* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 13.

<sup>8</sup> *Zhou Enlai Nianpu*, 330-31, 333-36.

<sup>9</sup> For the Soviet press reports about and China’s proposals of a peaceful settlement of the Indochina war, see Vietnamese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “The Diplomatic Struggle As Part of the People’s National Democratic Revolution (1945-1954), Volume Two,” 13, 14-15 (hereafter, “The Diplomatic Struggle”). This critical Vietnamese document was acquired by Christopher Goscha and translated by Merle L. Pribbenow for the International Workshop: Reconsidering the Geneva Conference: New Archival Evidence, held by CWIHP of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, February 17-18, 2006, Washington, DC. This document was compiled in 1976, before the deterioration of Sino-Vietnamese relations, and thus its description of the DRV’s relations with China is fairly reliable. The current documents do not indicate if the Soviet Union was involved in the Chinese proposal to the DRV. For the Soviet policy toward Indochina before Geneva, see Gaiduk, *Confronting Vietnam*, 1-14; and Mari Olsen, *Soviet-Vietnam Relations and the Role of China, 1949-1964* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 13-27.

American imperialists have tried to expand the invasion war in Vietnam since the end of the Korean War, and forced the French imperialists to fight to the end. In this circumstance, it is necessary and timely for the government of the Vietnamese Democratic Republic to formally express its willingness to end the Vietnam War through peaceful negotiations. Only in doing so, can we take the banner of peace into our hands, encourage the struggle of the French people and all peace-loving people all over the world, and expose the lie of the French reactionaries who blame Vietnam for not wanting peace, and thus shift the responsibility for the war onto Vietnam. And only in so doing, can we take advantage of and further the contradiction between France and the US.<sup>10</sup>

Mao's suggestion seemed to be accepted by DRV leaders, who, according to the new Vietnamese documents, had also realized the limit of their strength and were worried about US intervention as the Chinese were. Although their confidence in negotiation may not have been as high as the Chinese, DRV leaders wanted to demonstrate their good will and separate the US from its allies.<sup>11</sup> Three days after Mao's message, in a telegram interview with the Swedish newspaper the *Stockholm Expressen*, Ho Chi Minh declared that "if the French government has drawn a lesson in this war, wanting to reach a truce in Vietnam via negotiations and solve the Vietnam problem through peaceful means, then the Vietnamese people and the DRV government are ready to respond to that wish."<sup>12</sup> A month later, Ho repeated his willingness to negotiate with the French at the seventh anniversary of the beginning of the war.<sup>13</sup> The DRV's position was

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<sup>10</sup> Pang Xianzhi, Jin Chongji, et al., *Mao Zedong Zhuan* [Biography of Mao Zedong] (Beijing: Zhongyang Wenxian Chubanshe, 2003), 552-53; Wen Zhuang, "Wo Suo Jingli de Rineiwa Huiyi" [The Geneva Conference as I experienced] in *Dangshi Bolan* [General Review of the History of the Chinese Communist Party], December 2005, 18-23. Wen Zhuang was one of the Chinese advisors working in Vietnam in 1954. He also worked as the DRV delegation's interpreter during the Geneva Conference. The current literature has failed to explore the following Ho Chi Minh's initiative for diplomacy, and these new Chinese sources for the first time reveal China's possible influence on Ho's declaration. For the French willingness to negotiation with the DRV, see Vietnamese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "The Diplomatic Struggle," 6. For the PRC's relations with the DRV after 1949, see Qiang Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 10-59. The translation is by Chen Jian and included in the Wilson Center Reader.

<sup>11</sup> "The Diplomatic Struggle," 16-17.

<sup>12</sup> Unpaginated primary sources included in the Wilson Center Reader.

<sup>13</sup> Pierre Asselin, "The Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the 1954 Geneva Conference: A Revisionist Critique," *Cold War History*, Vol. 11. No. 2 (May 2011): 161-63.

readily supported by Chinese and Soviet leaders, who urged peace talks on Vietnam and demanded “further detente.”<sup>14</sup>

Molotov’s proposal in Berlin was a continuation of the Communist efforts. According to new Chinese diplomatic documents, when the Soviets proposed the Five-Power conference, they did not hold much expectation it would be held, because they knew the US would resolutely oppose it, but the Soviets wanted to make use of the French and British interests in a diplomatic settlement of the Indochina War, and win a political victory over the US by advocating peace through diplomacy in contrast to the US opposition to diplomacy. Contrary to the Soviets’ expectation, the US finally agreed to hold the Geneva Conference under pressure from Britain and France.<sup>15</sup> As newly uncovered Chinese sources indicate, throughout the meeting, Soviet leaders had kept their Chinese ally informed of their intentions and they sought PRC leaders’ opinions. After the Geneva Conference was finally decided, the Soviets immediately asked the Chinese to push DRV leaders to attend the conference.<sup>16</sup>

PRC leaders welcomed the decision as “a move toward peace” and declared that China would attend the conference despite that the PRC was not put on an equal footing with the “Four Powers,” which the Soviets had worried would displease the PRC. According to Zhou Enlai, China attached great importance to the Geneva Conference and would actively participate to

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<sup>14</sup> King Chen, *Vietnam and China, 1938-1954* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 282.

<sup>15</sup> The Soviet strategy was very successful, and US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles had to admit, “if we had vetoed the resolution regarding Indochina, it would have probably cost us French friendship in EDC [European Defense Community] as well as Indochina itself.” See *FRUS*, 1952-54, 13: 1080-81. For evaluation of the action of the US and allies in Berlin, see Gaiduk, *Confronting Vietnam*, 17.

<sup>16</sup> The Soviets provided the Chinese government with documents (ranging from January 23 to early March) about actually every development of the meeting in Berlin. See CFMA, 109-00396-01, especially 1-34. Before the Geneva Conference, the Soviets dealt with the DRV solely through the Chinese Communist Party, according to the division of labor between the two Communist parties.

bring about some positive results.<sup>17</sup> Within two weeks after the Berlin meeting, the PRC government had prepared a plan for the conference. At the same time, PRC leaders suggested to the Soviets that a partition line along the 16<sup>th</sup> parallel in Indochina would be “a very advantageous proposal for Ho Chi Minh.” Meanwhile, Zhou Enlai made the same proposal to Ho Chi Minh and encouraged him to seek a ceasefire through “diplomatic struggle.”<sup>18</sup> Why were Chinese leaders so enthusiastic about the Geneva Conference? Why did they so eagerly want a ceasefire in Indochina? And why was Zhou Enlai confident that China’s diplomacy would work in Geneva?

Traditional works on the PRC’s foreign policy often stress the significance of the Geneva Conference in boosting the PRC’s international position, but they do not fully explore China’s policy itself. More recent studies do not agree on such important issues as the PRC’s goals and motivations in Geneva. For example, Shu Guang Zhang believes that “[t]hrough actively participating in multilateral diplomacy, Chinese leaders expected to construct an image of a

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<sup>17</sup> Xiong Huayuan, *Zhou Enlai Chudeng Shijie Wutai* [Zhou Enlai’s First Appearance on the World Stage] (Shenyang: Liaoning Renmin Chubanshe, 1999), 5-6.

<sup>18</sup> *Zhou Enlai Nianpu*, 355-58; “Preliminary Opinions on the Assessment of and Preparation for the Geneva Conference,” March 2, 1954, and telegram from Zhou Enlai to Ho Chi Minh, March 11, 1954, Wilson Center Reader; telegram from Chinese ambassador in Moscow to Beijing, March 6, 1954, cited in Ilya Gaiduk, *Confronting Vietnam*, 17. The question of who first proposed the 16<sup>th</sup> parallel is not answered by the current documents. According to Chinese sources, Zhou Enlai first put forward the 16th parallel in his telegram to the DRV on March 2. See Xiong Huayuan and Liao Xinwen, *Zhou Enlai Zongli Shengya* [Zhou Enlai’s Career as Premier] (Beijing, Renmin Chubanshe, 1997), 74-75. But Gaiduk believed as early as late January, the Soviet diplomats had tested the French and British reaction to a partition along the 16th parallel, although Gaiduk believes that that Soviets diplomats would not have done this without approvals from allies. See Gaiduk, *Confronting Vietnam*, 18. And according to British sources, as early as late 1951, the PRC leaders had contemplated partition of Vietnam. See Nông Văn Dân, *Churchill, Eden and Indo-China, 1951-1955* (New York: Anthem Press, 2010), 54. The reason for dividing Vietnam at the 16<sup>th</sup> parallel seemed obvious: it was the geographic partition line of Vietnam in its history, and also the dividing line, according to which the Japanese surrendered to different members of the alliance states after WWII.

‘normal state’ and play a leading role in normalizing international politics in Asia.”<sup>19</sup> Chen Jian stresses the domestic orientation of China’s policy—negotiating with the big powers would raise the PRC’s international prestige and promote Chinese people’s enthusiasm for construction at home.<sup>20</sup> Although both works touch on China’s concerns over American military intervention in Indochina, they do not further explore the impact of the concerns on China’s policy, as their concentration is the PRC’s policy toward the Geneva Conference, instead of US-China relations. However, the PRC’s policy was not made in a vacuum, and the Chinese leaders could not go to Geneva without analyzing the policies of the opposite side, in particular their primary enemy the US. Therefore, from the perspective of Sino-American relations, the current literature has not sufficiently addressed some important questions. For example, how did Chinese leaders perceive US policy toward the conference and China? How did that perception shape the PRC’s policy—were they reacting to the US, or were they acting out of their own initiatives?

My interpretation of new documents from the PRC, the DRV, and the Soviet Union corroborates an argument historian Qiang Zhai makes: PRC leaders’ objective was to bring about peace in Indochina in order to preclude direct US intervention, and their strategy was to separate the US from its allies.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, news sources enable this work to go beyond Qiang Zhai’s analysis by depicting in detail how the PRC’s perceptions of the US threat and its relations with its allies shaped China’s actions in Geneva, and by exploring more accurately the relationships among the Communist states. My study finds that the inter-alliance relations between the PRC,

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<sup>19</sup> Shu Guang Zhang, “Constructing ‘Peaceful Coexistence’: China’s Diplomacy toward the Geneva and Bandung Conferences, 1954-55,” *Cold War History*, Vol. 7, No. 4 (November 2007): 509-28.

<sup>20</sup> Chen Jian, “China and the Indochina Settlement at the Geneva Conference of 1954,” in Mark Atwood Lawrence and Fredrik Logevall, eds., *The First Vietnam War: Colonial Conflict and Cold War Crisis* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 240-62.

<sup>21</sup> Qiang Zhai, “China and the Geneva Conference of 1954,” in *The China Quarterly*, No. 129 (March, 1992): 103-22.

the DRV and the Soviet Union were cooperative and coordinated, rather than beset by differences or conflicts, as Qiang Zhai and much of the existing literature on the Indochina War and Geneva argues.<sup>22</sup>

The PRC's policy was basically a reaction to the US threat Chinese leaders perceived. Since the outbreak of the Korean War, PRC leaders had felt pressure from the US military presence in Korea and Taiwan, but in early 1954, they believed the possibility of direct US intervention in Indochina was increasing. They noticed that the US had publicly supported the French, and in March 1954, US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles called for a "United Action" with allies to intervene in Indochina. This was followed by President Eisenhower's warning of a "falling domino" in Asia if Indochina were allowed to be "lost" to the Communists. Then Dulles went to London and Paris to push for the United Action.<sup>23</sup> According to Chinese diplomatic reports, although the US agreed to hold the Geneva Conference, US leaders were pushing France to continue the war in Indochina and wanted to prevent the conference from discussing the Indochina issue. Meanwhile, Chinese leaders believed, the US sent new military assistance to the French and US military leaders were striving to get the power to command the indigenous Vietnamese troops now under French control.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Besides Qiang Zhai's emphasis on the conflicts between the Communists, Richard Immerman also stresses US leaders' speculations about the differences between the Soviet, Chinese and Vietminh leaders, although this perception did not bring about actions in response. See Richard Immerman, "The U.S. and the Geneva Conference of 1954: A New Look," *Diplomatic History* 14, no. 1 (Winter 1990): 43-66.

<sup>23</sup> "The French and British responses to the US clamor for 'United Action'," April 16, 1954, Chinese Foreign Ministry Archives (hereafter, CFMA), 102-00159-04, 14-17. Unless indicated otherwise, the English translation of the documents from the CFMA is by the author.

<sup>24</sup> *Neibu Cankao* [Internal Reference], November 16, 1953. This news briefing prepared by Xinhua News Agency was available to very limited number of Chinese leaders and provided the most important background for Chinese

In these circumstances, the Geneva Conference provided Chinese leaders with an excellent diplomatic opportunity to prevent US intervention in Indochina, and they believed the PRC could exploit the differences between the US and its allies at Geneva. First of all, PRC leaders noticed that US attempts to increase its intervention in Indochina ran against the French, who were unwilling to give up their interests in Indochina to the US, although France relied on US assistance.<sup>25</sup> At the same time, Chinese leaders believed, US's encouraging France to fight on and its offer of military and advisory assistances had led to French suspicion that the US wanted to sacrifice the French lives for its own interests, because the US refused to send its own troops to Indochina.<sup>26</sup> The French and Americans also had different attitudes toward the Geneva Conference, according to the PRC officials. The US tried to understate the significance of the conference, and opposed any possible solutions, such as division of Vietnam, a coalition government or free election in Vietnam. In contrast, French politicians put very high value on Geneva. On the eve of the Geneva Conference, according to Chinese documents, French officials were talking not just about whether they wanted war or peace, but how to bring about peace. The French government even suggested making concessions to the PRC, such as granting it recognition or allowing it entry into the UN, in return for it ending its support of the DRV. According to Chinese diplomats, French Premier Joseph Laniel declared that he was considering going ahead with the negotiation without consulting the US. Since the US was pressuring France

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leaders' policy making. As US sources indicate, the Chinese perception was fairly accurate. For the US policy toward Indochina, see chapter 2.

<sup>25</sup> "Premier Zhou Enlai's Report on the National Conference on Foreign Affairs of 1953," June 5, 1953, CFMA, 102-00110-01, 4-43. This perception was correct. For details, see Chapter 2.

<sup>26</sup> "French attitude toward the Indochinese ceasefire negotiation as seen from the French parliament debate," March 9-13, 1954, CFMA, 102-00158-01, 71-73.

to approve the European Defense Community (EDC), the French had a good opportunity to ask for US diplomatic support in return, according to Chinese analysis.<sup>27</sup>

US policy was not supported by its allies, especially the British, from the perspective of Chinese leaders. As the Chinese knew, Britain had supported the French invasion of Indochina and provided moderate military assistance to prevent Communist expansion in Southeast Asia from threatening its colonial interests, especially in Malaysia. But when the Indochina war worsened in early 1954, according to Chinese officials, the British became increasingly worried that the US would intervene in Indochina and that would provoke the PRC into participation, which would ultimately lead to a world war.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, according to Chinese diplomats, British leaders were eager for trade with China and wanted to make use of the Geneva Conference to end the embargo on the PRC, which the US had imposed on China in 1951. As PRC leaders learned, British trade policy was supported by other European states such as Italy and West Germany. A German newspaper even believed that trade was the most powerful weapon the PRC could use in Geneva, according to what Chinese diplomats reported to Beijing.<sup>29</sup>

Impressed with the conflicts between the US and its allies, PRC leaders deemed they could frustrate US intention to move into Indochina by playing the Western powers against each

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<sup>27</sup> See “Latest development of the French and American contradictions on the issues of Indochinese ceasefire and ‘European Army’,” March 15-20, 1954, CFMA, 102-00158-01, 75-79; “Our analysis of the French attitude toward the Vietnam problem,” March 13, 1954, CFMA, 110-00258-08, 51-4; and “The American and French preparation for the Indochina issue to be discussed at the Geneva Conference,” March 18, 1954, CFMA, 110-00258-04, 24-26. Again, the Chinese judgment about the relations between the US and its allies was very accurate. See chapter 2.

<sup>28</sup> “Collection of documents on the British responses to the Indochina issue,” March 25, 1954, CFMA, 110-00248-04, 16-21. For British policy toward the Geneva Conference, see Kavin Ruane, “‘Containing America’: aspects of British foreign policy and the Cold War in South-East Asia, 1951-54,” in *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (March 1996): 141-74; Geoffrey Warner, “The Settlement of the Indochina War,” in John W. Young, ed., *The Foreign Policy of Churchill’s Peacetime Administration, 1951-55* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1988), 233-59; and Matthew Johns, “The Geneva Conference of 1954: New Perspectives and Evidence on British Policy and Anglo-American Relations,” presented at the International Workshop at the Wilson Center, February 2006.

<sup>29</sup> “The American and French preparation for the Indochina issue to be discussed at the Geneva Conference,” March 18, 1954, CFMA, 110-00258-04, 24-26.

other. Under pressure from its allies, some Chinese diplomats believed, the US was likely to make major concessions to China, such as cancellation of the embargo, allowing trade or even refraining from vetoing China's entrance into the UN.<sup>30</sup> Although PRC leaders may not be as optimistic as their diplomats, they were certainly confident about what they could achieve in Geneva. In addition to peaceful solution of the Indochina problem, the Chinese also wanted to discuss the Taiwan issue and comprehensive US-China relations, according to new sources from the Chinese Foreign Ministry Archives.<sup>31</sup>

### **Building a United Front**

While planning to separate the US from its allies, PRC leaders closely coordinated policies with their Communist comrades before the Geneva Conference started. Communist preparation for the negotiation has not been explored by previous works, due to the shortage of government documents. New sources from the PRC, the Soviet Union, and particularly the DRV, however, reveal the original positions of the three states for the first time. According to these new government documents, in early 1954 all three governments recognized the threat of US direct intervention in Indochina, and they agreed to strive for a ceasefire in Geneva. The Soviets

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<sup>30</sup> "The American and French preparation for the Indochina issue to be discussed at the Geneva Conference," March 18, 1054, CFMA, 110-00258-04, 24-26.

<sup>31</sup> The PRC's ambitious schedule was reflected by the topics of issues the PRC leaders wanted to raise at Geneva. In addition to the Indochina War, they also prepared to discuss the Taiwan issue and the comprehensive relations between the US and the PRC. See *Mao Zedong Zhuan*, 555; *Jianguo Yilai Mao Zedong Wengao* [Mao Zedong's Manuscripts since the Foundation of the People's Republic of China], ed. Zhongyang Wenxian Chubanshe, Vol.3 (Beijing: Zhongyang Wenxian Chubanshe, 1989): 480. (Hereafter, *Mao Wengao*).

and Vietnamese also agreed to the PRC's strategy of exploiting the conflicting interests between the Western states in order to realize peace in Indochina.<sup>32</sup>

However, there existed subtle differences between the Communists on some major issues, especially the three most important problems they would later face at Geneva: the demarcation line, the status of the Laos and Cambodia, and supervision of the ceasefire. On the issue of the demarcation line, China proposed the 16<sup>th</sup> parallel as a temporary partition line in Vietnam. While the Soviets accepted partition as "the middle position" they would seek in Geneva, the Vietnamese had different ideas, despite Zhou's repeated suggestions. First of all, DRV leaders could not agree among themselves if they wanted an on-the-spot ceasefire or draw a clear line: the former option would give them the most territory and help them win the election if the French agreed to hold one right after the ceasefire. DRV leaders admitted that it was difficult to achieve that result. Also, a demarcation line would mean the DRV would withdraw its forces from the South and give up many bases they had built. Among those DRV leaders who agreed to

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<sup>32</sup> For the PRC's position, see "Preliminary opinions on the peaceful solution of the Indochina problem prepared by Vietnam team of the Chinese delegation to the Geneva Conference," March 23, 1954, CFMA, 206-00057-03, 88-92; "Comprehensive proposal for the peaceful solution of the Indochina problem prepared by Vietnam team of the Chinese delegation to the Geneva Conference," March 24, 1954, CFMA, 206-00057-04, 99-100; "Proposal for restoring peace in Indochina," CFMA, 206-00057-05, 101-03; and "Draft proposal for the peaceful solution of the Indochina problem prepared by Vietnam team of the Chinese delegation to the Geneva Conference," March 1-31, 1954, CFMA, 206-00057-09, 195-202. For the Soviet position, see "Outline of directives on the issue of the restoration of peace in Indochina," March 17, 1954, included in the Wilson Center Reader. For the PRC's analysis of the DRV's positions and differences with the PRC, see "Table of proposals for the peaceful solution of the Indochina problem prepared by Vietnam team of the Chinese delegation to the Geneva Conference," March 1-31, 1954, CFMA, 206-00057-05, 143-58. This extremely important document provides the most important information about the DRV leaders' considerations about the Geneva Conference at a series of politburo conferences held in preparation for the negotiation, and it is the only available document revealing differences between China and the Vietnamese leadership. The message in this document is consistent with new Vietnamese documents, such as "The Diplomatic Struggle." The following analysis of the DRV's positions is primarily based on this document. See also Qian Jiang, *Zhou Enlai yu Rineiwa Huiyi* [Zhou Enlai and the Geneva Conference] (Beijing: Zhonggong Dangshi Chubanshe, 2005), 47-50. For the Chinese contact with the Soviets, see telegram, Zhang Wentian to Beijing, March 5, 1954, in *1954 Nian Rineiwa Huiyi*, 12-13; Zhang's telegram to Beijing, March 6, 1954, and Molotov's Memorandum of conversation with Zhang Wentian, March 6, 1954, both available in *CWIHP Bulletin*, 13-14, 86-88. For China's contact with the Vietnamese, see *Zhou Enlai Nianpu*, 358. For the Soviet-Vietnamese contacts, see March 5 and 31, 1954, Wilson Center Reader; March 26, Gaiduk, *Confronting Vietnam*, 17.

a demarcation line, there was no agreement as to where the line should be drawn. Since a demarcation line would suggest partition of Vietnam, at least temporarily, many DRV leaders regarded this as a *least acceptable position*.<sup>33</sup>

On the issue of Laos and Cambodia, the DRV stressed the “shared destiny” between the states in Indochina, and demanded a “general solution” to the Indochina issue, although they at the same time acknowledged that the situations in these states were different from that in Vietnam. The Chinese agreed to a general solution, and accepted the Vietnamese position that the three states would ultimately form a *Confederation of Indochina*, but they proposed that a political solution should aim at “three unified and independent states,” before they could move toward a Confederation of Indochina “on the basis of common will.”<sup>34</sup> On the other hand, the Vietnamese did not put forward any concrete solution with regards to the differences between the three states.<sup>35</sup>

Communist positions on the issue of supervision of the ceasefire best indicated the three states’ different objectives at Geneva. PRC leaders were most hopeful that a ceasefire in Indochina would preclude future US intervention. Hence the Chinese were the only party that proposed to have the Five Powers guarantee the ceasefire reached in Geneva, and to set up a

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<sup>33</sup> “Table of proposals for the peaceful solution of the Indochina problem prepared by Vietnam team of the Chinese delegation to the Geneva Conference,” March 1-31, 1954, CFMA, 206-00057-05, 143-58. This new Chinese document was the only sources available that indicate the DRV leaders’ positions before the Geneva Conference.

<sup>34</sup> By this time, PRC leaders had little idea about the history and geography of Indochina, as well as the situation in Laos and Cambodia, so they readily accepted the DRV’s idea for an Indochinese Confederation, although they had been involved in the area since 1950, as they admitted. See “Review of the work on the Geneva Conference (draft),” undated document, CFMA, 206-00019-01, 51; See also Shi Zhe, *Zai Lishi Juren Shenbian: Shi Zhe Huiyilu* [On the Side of Historical Giants: Shi Zhe’s Memoirs] (Beijing: Zhongyang Wenxian Chubanshe, 1991), 556.

<sup>35</sup> See “Table of proposals for the peaceful solution of the Indochina problem prepared by Vietnam team of the Chinese delegation to the Geneva Conference,” March 1-31, 1954, CFMA, 206-00057-05, 143-58. For the evolution of the DRV’s idea about a Confederation of Indochina, see Christopher Goscha, “Geneva 1954 and the ‘de-internationalization’ of the Vietnamese idea of Indochina” presented at the international workshop on the Geneva Conference, held by CWHIP of the Woodrow Wilson Center, Washington, DC: February 17-18, 2006.

supervision commission to make sure the Indochinese states would not allow the introduction of foreign troops and weapons. The Soviets' major interests lay in Europe and they did not specify its position on this issue. But for the DRV, this Chinese proposal meant it could no longer get military assistance from the PRC, the only source of Communist help they could rely on by this time.<sup>36</sup>

In addition, the Vietnamese still did not have high expectations for the success of diplomacy,<sup>37</sup> although both the Soviet Union and the PRC stressed the importance of a diplomatic solution. For the Chinese and Soviets, according to new sources, the minimum objective they sought in Geneva was maintaining direct negotiations between the French and the DRV, *even if* no agreement could be reached in Geneva. Some DRV military leaders wanted to force the French to give up Indochina through military pressure. Although the PRC had supported the DRV since the foundation of the People's Republic and helped it launch a series of successful campaigns, Chinese leaders made it clear when the Dien Bien Phu campaign started in March that military actions must serve diplomatic purposes. Zhou Enlai told the Chinese military advisors in Vietnam to win several battles before Geneva, "in order to gain diplomatic initiative;" and Mao Zedong told them to keep the military pressure on the French, but not to expand the fighting.<sup>38</sup> PRC leaders also eliminated the possibility of sending Chinese troops to join the war directly, despite repeated Vietnamese requests for China's direct intervention when

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<sup>36</sup> According to Qiang Zhai, "Until 1954, China bore full responsibility for guiding and support the Vietnamese revolution," in Qiang Zhai, "China and the Geneva Conference of 1954," 106. For the DRV's reliance on the PRC's assistance, see "The Diplomatic Struggle," 14.

<sup>37</sup> According to Asselin, the DRV leaders "expected the Geneva talks to be difficult," and "we [DRV leaders should not harbour illusions that peace will come easily." Therefore, the DRV leaders "ha[d] no high expectation about the Geneva Conference" even before the opening of the talks. See Asselin, "The Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the 1954 Geneva Conference," 166.

<sup>38</sup> *Zhou Enlai Nianpu*, 358; *Mao Wengao*, Vol.3: 480.

their forces suffered heavy losses in the beginning phase of the campaign, although they urged Chinese advisors to do their best to assist their Vietnamese comrades.<sup>39</sup> Determined to neutralize Indochina through diplomacy, PRC leaders were preparing to stop assistance to the DRV under a scenario of armistice, and they ordered Vietnamese troops being trained in China be moved back to Vietnam as soon as possible.<sup>40</sup>

To sum up, the PRC's goal was not completely consistent with the DRV's. While the PRC wanted a neutralized Indochina and would not hesitate to accept a temporarily divided Vietnam, the Vietnamese wanted a ceasefire, and ultimately a Confederation of Indochina, but they did not have a clear idea how they could achieve either the short-term or the long-term goals. Chinese leaders invited Ho Chi Minh to Beijing to coordinate their positions in late March, but they were only able to reach some general agreements: a solution to the Indochina problem included a military ceasefire and political elections; the two sides should regroup their troops after the armistice; the French should finally withdraw their forces from Indochina *on schedule*; and elections should be held to create a unified Vietnamese government. The DRV also agreed to stay within the French Union and maintain its economic and cultural ties with France, to demonstrate to the French that their interests would not be hurt after the ceasefire. However, as the new documents indicate, the two sides did not reach a consensus on the most important

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<sup>39</sup> Mari Olsen, *The Soviet Union, Vietnam and China*, 36. Qian Jiang, *Zhou Enlai yu Rineiwa Huiyi*, 67-69; Mao Wengao, 3: 474. The Chinese leaders also knew about the US press prediction that China would not send troops to Indochina even if the US increased assistance to the French. See *Neibu Cankao*, April 7, 1954.

<sup>40</sup> When meeting the North Korean delegation in Beijing on April 17, Zhou Enlai revealed that the PRC would work against US sabotage of Geneva and try to reach an agreement through diplomacy; on the same day, Mao said he believed "it is possible that an armistice could happen in Vietnam," and in that case the Vietnamese artillery units which were established and being trained in China should be moved into Vietnam as soon as possible. See *Mao Wengao*, Vol. 3: 480.

issues of how to achieve a ceasefire—namely, did they want a clear-cut demarcation line or an on-the-spot ceasefire—and how were they going to handle the issue of Laos and Cambodia.

Communist differences on these key issues remained until they entered negotiation in Geneva. In early April the Chinese and Vietnamese leaders went to Moscow at the Soviets' request.<sup>41</sup> The Communists reached some general agreements: they would secure the DRV's independent participation in the conference, and the participation of the “resistance governments” of Laos and Cambodia in the Vietnamese delegation if they failed to get them in as independent delegations;<sup>42</sup> their goal at Geneva was a ceasefire, guaranteed by the Five Powers, and withdrawal of all foreign forces from Indochina within *six months* after the ceasefire; and the DRV's military action would continue until an acceptable political solution was reached—in Geneva they would follow a policy of “fighting while talking.” But the three states failed to reach an agreement on the most important question of whether they wanted a demarcation line or an on-the-spot ceasefire, although both the Soviet and Chinese leaders once again suggested the 16<sup>th</sup> parallel and they agreed that the French and Vietnamese troops would adjust their occupied territories after ceasefire.<sup>43</sup> The Soviets had decided to let the Chinese and

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<sup>41</sup> Memo of meeting between Yudin and Mao, March 26, 1954, Shen Zhihua Personal Archives (hereafter, SPA). For the Soviet perspective of the Communist meetings in Moscow, see Gaiduk, *Confronting Vietnam*, 22-24.

<sup>42</sup> According to Goscha, DRV leaders did not “over-emphasize the request that the Lao and Khmer resistance governments participate in the conference” in their talks with the Chinese and Soviets. See Goscha, “Geneva 1954,” 11.

<sup>43</sup> “A comprehensive plan for Indochinese peace issue prepared by Vietnam team of the Chinese delegation to the Geneva Conference,” April 5, 1954, CFMA, 206-00055-04, 27-29. This new Chinese document drafted during the Moscow meeting simply indicates that after the ceasefire the two sides would adjust their territories “in a suitable way.” This document is consistent with new Vietnamese sources, which clearly pointed out that the Communists failed to reach a consensus on this issue. See “The Diplomatic Struggle,” 39. See also “Work summary of the Geneva Conference,” undated document, CFMA, 206-00019-01, 13. These new evidences go against Gaiduk's argument that “during the negotiations in early April all principal questions relating to the Communist position at the forthcoming conference in Geneva were settled,” (Gaiduk, *Confronting Vietnam*, 24) and Olsen's argument that the Vietnamese agreed to divide Vietnam into two zones in the Communist meetings in Moscow (Olsen, *Soviet-Vietnam Relations and the Role of China*, 38).

Vietnamese take the initiative on the Indochina issue in Geneva, and Soviet leaders told the Chinese and Vietnamese that they would respect whatever decision they would make in this aspect.<sup>44</sup>

Preoccupied with the threat of US intervention, the Communists made up their mind that “any agreement on Indochina... shall contain a clause on the end of the US interference in Indochinese affairs;” to eliminate any excuse the US might use to move into Indochina, the Communists decided to leave no impression that the PRC “at present is providing assistance to the DRV.”<sup>45</sup> The Vietnamese leaders certainly shared this worry. In a series of instructions to the grassroots organizations of the Vietnam Workers’ Party (VWP), DRV leaders warned that the “ruling circles in the US have openly and directly been intervening in the war of aggression,” and were pushing France to “conscript troops and exploit our people with all method in order to implement the policy of ‘using Vietnamese to fight Vietnamese, feeding war with war’.” In response, they called on the party to support the Geneva Conference to defeat the US plan of intervention.<sup>46</sup>

On the eve of the Geneva Conference, PRC leaders’ determination to reach an agreement in Geneva was strengthened by reports from Chinese diplomats about the differences between the US and its allies. According to Chinese intelligence, France wanted a solution through diplomacy. Although the current French administration was not sure what actions it could take in

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<sup>44</sup> March 17, 1954, Wilson Center Reader; Qiang Jiang, *Zhou Enlai yu Rineiwa Huiyi*, 63-65.

<sup>45</sup> From Olsen, *The Soviet Union, Vietnam and China*, 35.

<sup>46</sup> Instructions by the Secretariat, April 7, 10, 1954, Wilson Center Reader. On his way to Geneva, Zhou Enlai once again met the Vietnamese leaders in Moscow. The Communists approved the Vietnamese “Opinions on the situation and our strategies and policies.” See Zhou’s Telegram to Beijing about his meetings with the Communist leaders, April 23, 1954, CFMA, 206-00048-08, included in *1954 Nian Rineiwa Huiyi*, 18-19, and *CWIHP Bulletin*, 15. However, this most important Vietnamese document is not available in currently declassified sources. From what happened later, the Vietnamese apparently failed to come up with any concrete plans and stated some general principles in it.

Geneva, it was uninterested in “United Action” with the US.<sup>47</sup> PRC leaders noticed that Dulles’s trip to Paris and London in mid-April failed to get either French or British support for the United Action. France simply rejected Dulles’s request to make a joint statement about it. The British only agreed to state that they would study the possibility of establishing a defense group in Southeast Asia, but they refused to make a joint communiqué about that, in order to give diplomacy an opportunity in Geneva. The Indian government, whose policy on Indochina PRC leaders believed reflected the British position, called for a ceasefire in Indochina, in opposition to US strive for United Action.<sup>48</sup>

In order to convey to Britain the PRC’s willingness to reach an agreement in Geneva, Zhou Enlai deliberately told the Indian ambassador to Beijing before he left for Geneva, “We must not let the Geneva Conference fail... the Chinese delegation will do its best to bring about an agreement, especially on restoring peace in Indochina,” despite the US efforts to sabotage the conference. “The Western states such as Britain and France should be told that they are facing two different roads: they could either have good relations with Asian people and maintain part of their interests, or refuse this road and choose to walk the same road with the US, thus losing everything.”<sup>49</sup> From the perspective of British leaders, Zhou was obviously reminding them of Hong Kong.

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<sup>47</sup> “Difficult situation facing France and the US on the eve of the Geneva Conference,” April 9, 1954, CFMA, 102-00159-03, 10-13.

<sup>48</sup> Qian Jiang, *Zhou Enlai yu Rineiwa Huiyi*, 79-80; Li Lianqing, *Da Waijiaojia Zhou Enlai*, Vol. 2: *She Zhan Rineiwa* [Zhou Enlai the Master Diplomat: Verbal Struggle in Geneva] (Hong Kong: Tiandi Tushu, 1994), 15-18. Hereafter citations from from this Volume is referred to as *She Zhan Rineiwa*.

<sup>49</sup> *Zhou Enlai Waijiao Huodong Dashiji*, 58; *1954 Nian Rineiwa Huiyi*, 15-18; *Zhou Enlai Nianpu*, 360-61.

## Preventing the US from Sabotaging the Conference

The Korean sessions, with which the Geneva Conference started, just confirmed PRC leaders' perception of the differences between the US and its allies. PRC leaders primarily looked at this phase of the conference as a chance to observe relations within the Western camp, because they regarded Korea as a less serious issue, since the war there had stopped and the Communists had already known the US was not interested in a solution.<sup>50</sup> During this period, the PRC delegation avoided mentioning Indochina on purpose, but both the British and French leaders demonstrated eagerness about solving the Indochina problem, giving the Soviets a chance to convince the French to invite the DRV delegation to the conference. Meanwhile, Chinese officials noticed that the two US allies were indifferent to the Communist accusations against the US on the Korean issue.<sup>51</sup> Despite US Secretary Dulles's statement at his press conference that he would not meet the PRC premier unless their cars collided, shortly after the conference started, the British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden met Zhou, at the suggestion of the Soviets. At the meeting, Eden expressed strong interest in developing relations with the PRC, especially trade, and moreover, tried to distinguish Britain from the US. He told Zhou Enlai that "we have nothing in common with the US except the same language," and Britain would not oppose if the PRC were a sponsor of the conference, making it a Five-Power one, as the

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<sup>50</sup> As they expected, the discussion reached a deadlock three days after the conference, because the US did not want to solve the problem, and Britain and France were not interested, as Zhou Enlai reported to Beijing. See telegram, from Zhou Enlai to Mao Zedong, Liu Shaoqi, and the CCP Central Committee, April 28, 1954, Wilson Center Reader. Similarly, the Soviet leaders did not expect to solve the Korean problem, as Molotov had told Eden in Berlin. See Gaiduk, *Confronting Vietnam*, 29.

<sup>51</sup> Zhou's telegram to Mao, April 26, 1954, *CWIHP Bulletin*, 15-16. The Soviets did not struggle for the attendance of the two "Resistance Governments" and were satisfied with the participation of the DRV delegation. For Molotov's efforts to invite the DRV, and Western reactions to his proposal, see Gaiduk, *Confronting Vietnam*, 29-31. For the Communist plan about attendance of "Resistance Governments," see *1954 Nian Rineiwa Huiyi*, 120.

Communists had pressed for.<sup>52</sup> Zhou Enlai judged from these observations that the British sincerely wanted peace in Indochina, and thus “it is impossible for the US to prevent the negotiations on the Indochina issue now.”<sup>53</sup>

As soon as the Indochina session started, Zhou Enlai pushed the DRV delegation to agree to let the French withdraw their wounded soldiers to demonstrate sincerity. But it did not take long for the two sides to find the gaps between their positions. First of all, they did not agree on the general goal of the conference. France was just interested in a ceasefire but it refused to talk about the future of Vietnam, so it proposed to start negotiations about the ceasefire first. The DRV, however, wanted to discuss simultaneously a military ceasefire and a political solution, which would lead to a unified Vietnam, and it would not stop military actions until a satisfactory result was achieved through negotiation, following the position it had agreed with its Communist allies.

The second difference was about supervision of the ceasefire. While the two sides agreed about the necessity of supervision, they disagreed on the composition of the supervision commission. The French suggested an ambiguous “international control” of the ceasefire, but the Communists suspected the French proposal was actually a step toward the US-proposed military group, and they counter-proposed a commission made up of neutral states, including India, Pakistan, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Indonesia or Burma. But the Western side opposed this,

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<sup>52</sup> Telegram, Zhou to Mao, May 1, 1954, *1954 Nian Rineiwa Huiyi*, 97; CWIHP Bulletin, 16-17. Zhou’s telegram to Beijing, May 3, 1954, *1954 Nian Rineiwa Huiyi*, 402-07. “Telegram regarding setting up diplomatic relations with Britain,” May 4, 1954, CFMA, 110-00023-04.

<sup>53</sup> “British actions in the beginning period of the Geneva Conference,” May 7, 1954, CFMA, 102-00159-07, 30-31; Telegram, Zhou to Mao, May 1, 1954, *1954 Nian Rineiwa Huiyi*, 97. Chinese officials had learned that the US would put off the negotiation on Indochina until the Korean sessions brought about a result, which meant it wanted to avoid the Indochina negotiation at all, since it had expressed no interest in a solution to the Korean problem. See “IV: Preliminary opinion on a peaceful solution to the Indochina problem,” March 23, 1954, CFMA, 206-00057-03, 2.

because “Communist states were not neutral,” and the Communist members in the commission would make it useless, as they learned from the Korean armistice.

The third difference concerned Laos and Cambodia. The Western side and the Laotian and Cambodian governments wanted to separate these two states from Vietnam, on the ground that these two states were actually invaded by the DRV, as there was no fighting at all between the two states and France, and the so-called two “Resistance Governments” in Laos and Cambodia were simply Vietnamese puppets. Thus they simply demanded an unconditional withdrawal of the DRV forces from Laos and Cambodia before any negotiation about a ceasefire in Vietnam could be conducted. The Communists, however, refused to admit the existence of the DRV forces in Laos and Cambodia, and they proposed an overall ceasefire in all of Indochina, which indicated they represented the whole Indochina, due to their expectation of building a Confederation of Indochina.<sup>54</sup>

Different positions aside, the US was trying to exacerbate the conflicts between the two sides, which the PRC leaders believed was the main obstacle for the deadlock. Despite the British and French requests, Secretary Dulles was uninterested in the negotiations and left Geneva even before the conference entered the Indochina phase. While the conference was discussing a ceasefire, the US government publicized its plan to assist France and the Indochinese states to resist “Vietnam invasion.” Meanwhile, the US repeatedly demonstrated intention to develop a “collective defense group” in Southeast Asia. These reports from Chinese

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<sup>54</sup> As indicated earlier, the Communists had also attempted to let the delegations of the two “Resistance Governments” attend the conference independently, but had to drop the proposal in Geneva. For the Communist plan about attendance of “Resistance Governments,” see *1954 Nian Rineiwa Huiyi*, 120. For Molotov’s efforts to invite the DRV, and the Western reactions to his proposal, see Gaiduk, *Confronting Vietnam*, 29-31.

diplomats only confirmed the PRC leaders' suspicion that the US did not want the war in Indochina to stop and was trying to sabotage the Geneva Conference.<sup>55</sup>

In order to facilitate private discussions, the negotiation turned to restricted sessions at Molotov's request, but this did not lead to any progress, because both the DRV and France were increasing pressure, expecting the other side to retreat first. While the Vietminh forces were preparing for new offensives after Dien Bien Phu, the French started talking with the US about internationalizing the war, and later they deliberately released the news as a way to press the Communists.<sup>56</sup> When that did not seem to work on the Communists and only led to the British protests, French officials directly warned Chinese diplomats that they would seek US assistance if the Communists refused to make concessions; on the other hand, France would consider establishing diplomatic relations with the PRC if it could push the DRV to reach a satisfactory solution.<sup>57</sup> By late May, the French became impatient and made a more serious threat: if the Vietnamese "did not make good use of their time," the French would have to "turn the war to the US." They requested holding direct meetings between the military representatives from France and the DRV to talk about the ceasefire.<sup>58</sup>

In order to break the deadlock, the PRC encouraged the DRV delegation to make some concessions, particularly after Eden also warned Zhou Enlai that military situation in Indochina would "deteriorate" if no agreement could be reached in Geneva.<sup>59</sup> But although the Vietnamese were also worried about US intervention, they were reluctant to follow the Chinese advice,

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<sup>55</sup> *1954 Nian Rineiwa Huiyi*, 122.

<sup>56</sup> For the Franco-American secret talks, see Anthony Eden, *Full Circle* (London: Cassell, 1960), 119-20; for US considerations about the negotiation, see Chapter 2.

<sup>57</sup> *1954 Nian Rineiwa Huiyi*, 259-60.

<sup>58</sup> *1954 Nian Rineiwa Huiyi*, 261-63.

<sup>59</sup> Eden, *Full Circle*, 122.

because the victory of Dien Bien Phu encouraged some DRV leaders, and more importantly, the Vietnamese were still divided on the question of how they could obtain a ceasefire. On May 18, Wang Jiaxiang, Chinese Vice Foreign Minister, suggested starting discussion on the ceasefire issue, while keeping on agenda the proposal for a political solution, which retreated from spontaneous negotiation on the two issues, the original position the Communists reached in Moscow. Wang also suggested the DRV reconsider its position on Laos and Cambodia by reminding Pham Van Dong, the DRV's chief delegate, that DRV newspaper had once published the existence of Vietnamese forces in the two countries. Dong admitted this but he did not want to change the position, rather he told Wang that he would avoid the issue in the conference.<sup>60</sup> Chinese officials also suggested a temporary division of Vietnam "along either the 14<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, or 16<sup>th</sup> parallel," but the Vietnamese refused the idea as "politically disadvantageous," and instead proposed regrouping forces "according to the situation after the fall of Dien Bien Phu," which would give the DRV more than 80% of Vietnam's territory. The Soviets supported the idea of division, but they avoided getting involved in the dispute, and asked the two delegations to work out the differences among themselves.<sup>61</sup>

In this circumstance, the negotiations were not able to break the deadlock. Upon repeated requests from the Chinese, on May 25 Pham Van Dong first agreed to regroup military forces into zones decided by the two sides, which implied his acceptance of demarcation, and he also agreed to hold military-commander meetings with France in both Indochina and Geneva. The

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<sup>60</sup> Minutes of the Meeting of Wang Jiaxiang, Pham Van Dong and Gromyko, May 15, 1954, Wilson Center Reader. Meanwhile, the French were stressing to the Chinese officials the significance of distinguishing Laos and Cambodia from Vietnam: the Vietnamese invasion of Laos and Cambodia would lead to a Southeast Asia bloc, which would put China in a disadvantageous position. For the minutes of the meeting between Chinese and French diplomats on May 18, 1954, see *1954 Nian Rineiwa Huiyi*, 259-60. For Zhou Enlai's report to Beijing about this issue on May 19, 1954, see *1954 Nian Rineiwa Huiyi*, 132.

<sup>61</sup> "The Diplomatic Struggle," 40; and Gaiduk, *Confronting Vietnam*, 37.

military talks started on June 1, but soon French officials complained to the Chinese that the DRV refused to talk about any details about a ceasefire and simply put forward some abstract principles.<sup>62</sup>

PRC leaders were not satisfied with the lack of development, especially when they were also facing increasing pressure in the Taiwan Strait and the US threat of establishing the Southeast Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO). In the Taiwan Strait after the most serious conflicts since 1949 broke out between the PRC and the KMT in May 1954, the US sent its aircraft carriers to the area to show its force. Meanwhile, Chinese leaders believed, US leaders were considering an alliance with Chiang Kai-shek and had sent a series of military leaders to Taiwan to discuss it.<sup>63</sup> According to Chinese officials, US military leaders were also visiting Southeast Asia, and US government was increasing pressure on Britain and France for their cooperation on the issue of SEATO. PRC officials believed the US planned to have the US, Australia, New Zealand, Britain and France as sponsors and include some Asian states.<sup>64</sup> President Eisenhower even declared US willingness to move on without Britain if the latter was hesitant to follow the US.

The US threats required a quick solution in Geneva. For this purpose PRC leaders wanted to drive home their original plan of ending the war by separating the US from its allies. And their observations convinced them this strategy was still feasible, because serious differences still

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<sup>62</sup> Qian Jiang, *Zhou Enlai yu Rineiwa Huiyi*, 263-64; June 5, 1954, Wilson Center Reader.

<sup>63</sup> This perception was basically correct. The US leaders were considering a Mutual Defense Treaty with Chiang Kai-shek, but only as a long term plan. See Chapter 4. But US leaders did want to use Taiwan to distract the PRC leaders from Indochina. See Chapter 2.

<sup>64</sup> Regarding the tensions in the Taiwan Strait and US officials' visit to Taiwan, there are numerous reports in the May 21, 22, 24, 25, 26, and 27 issues of *Neibu Cankao*. For Chinese Foreign Ministry analysis of the US efforts to conclude a Southeast Asia Defense Pact, see "The US actions in the Southeast Asia after the liberation of Dien Bien Phu and the contradictions between the US and Britain and France," May 28, 1954, CFMA, 102-000159-10, 42-44.

existed between the Western states. The French still refused to let the US command the Vietnamese troops. Although the British agreed to the US suggestion to hold a military staff meeting with other allies, they declared in advance that this conference would not talk about the defense treaty in Southeast Asia.<sup>65</sup>

At the same time, the DRV's top leaders were also anxious about US intervention and were pushing their delegation in Geneva for progress. In a telegram to the delegation on May 27, the Central Committee of the VWP suggested that the French "were playing up and inflating the military threat against them to finding justification for sending additional reinforcements and requesting American assistance." Meanwhile, DRV leaders acknowledged that the Vietnamese people's demand for restoration of peace "grew very strong." On the other hand, they admitted that they themselves were unsure how to bring about peace, as they "[did] not have a clear understanding of the situation in France or of the international situation."<sup>66</sup>

In this circumstance, the PRC took the initiative again. In a long telegram to the Central Committees of the CCP and VWP, Zhou Enlai pushed the Vietnamese to "enter discussions of substance" on the key issues of dividing zones, ceasefire supervision, and Laos and Cambodia. According to Zhou, the Vietnamese should "develop a more clearly-defined solution" and "persistently take the initiative to pursue peace," instead of procrastinating in the negotiations, which would lead to a failure. He once again suggested dividing Vietnam at the 16<sup>th</sup> parallel, and prepared the Vietnamese for even more concessions. To increase the pressure, Zhou Enlai deliberately told the Vietnamese that the Soviets approved of this suggestion. Meanwhile, Zhou

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<sup>65</sup> "The US actions in the Southeast Asia after the liberation of Dien Bien Phu and the contradictions between the US and Britain and France," May 28, 1954, CFMA, 102-000159-10, 42-44.

<sup>66</sup> "The Diplomatic Struggle," 24.

suggested the DRV make concessions on Laos and Cambodia, because, according to Zhou, the three countries in Indochina were delimited in “very clear terms” by national borders, which had existed before the French created the colonial state of Indochina; in addition, the Communist forces in Laos and Cambodia were limited, and there were *no independent Communist parties in Laos and Cambodia*, contrary to what the DRV had claimed.<sup>67</sup>

At the same time, Zhou Enlai worked on France and Britain. He sought his first meeting with French Foreign Minister Georges Bidault, and clearly told Bidault that China’s goal was to restore peace in Indochina, and he would do his best to realize that goal. He promised the French that both the regroupment and supervision issues could be solved, and Vietnam would join the French Union after its independence. Zhou was very frank with Bidault that what China worried about was US intervention in Indochina, and he believed it was China’s common interests with France to stop fighting in Indochina.<sup>68</sup> He encouraged the French to be more active and take more initiatives, and Zhou also agreed that the negotiations should work on the demarcation and supervision issues at the same time. Chinese diplomats soon started to talk with their French counterparts about the two issues. After the French complained again that the Vietnamese just talked about principles and refused to make concrete proposals, Wang Bingnan, General Secretary of the Chinese delegation, once again assured the French that “problems could be

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<sup>67</sup> “Zhou Enlai’s telegram to Mao Zedong and others, on the situation of the eight restrict session,” May 30, 1954, *CWIHP Bulletin*, 26; *Zhou Enlai Nianpu*, 371-72; “The Diplomatic Struggle,” 40; and Goscha, “Geneva 1954,” 12-15. Zhou’s telegram answers Gaiduk’s question of what China did to convince the Vietnamese that partition served their interest. See Gaiduk, *Confronting Vietnam*, 38.

<sup>68</sup> *1954 Nian Rineiwa Huiyi*, 268-70; *CWIHP Bulletin*, 28-30.

solved.”<sup>69</sup> As we now know, Zhou Enlai was pressuring DRV leaders for concession behind the scenes.

When Zhou explored British intentions, Eden told him that Britain sought better relations with the PRC. He offered to visit China, and said he hoped the PRC would send its diplomatic representative to London. From the PRC’s perspective, this was a highly significant move, as no head of government, including the Soviet Union’s or any other socialists’, had ever visited Beijing since the foundation of PRC, and the British still supported the ROC in the UN. On the issue of Indochina, Eden did not support Poland and Czechoslovakia as candidates for the supervision commission but he wanted to include more Asian states, implying the British Commonwealth members, through which the UK could exert influence. However, Eden also set up a deadline for the negotiation and said he hoped the conference would be ended “in 10 to 15 days.”<sup>70</sup> In response, Chinese officials agreed to send its Charge d’Affaires and suggested exchanging trade delegations with Britain. At the same time, the Chinese wanted to make a public declaration on this, obviously in order to put more pressure on the US.<sup>71</sup>

The VWP Central Committee finally agreed to Zhou’s suggestion about temporarily dividing Vietnam at the 16<sup>th</sup> parallel on June 4.<sup>72</sup> Consequently, the Vietnamese delegation clearly indicated their acceptance of partition on June 8. This was a significant step forward compared to its former position.<sup>73</sup> But the Western states demanded more concessions on the issues of supervision and Laos and Cambodia. Britain nominated the five Colombo Powers as

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<sup>69</sup> 1954 *Nian Rineiwa Huiyi*, 271-76; *CWIHP Bulletin*, 34-38.

<sup>70</sup> 1954 *Nian Rineiwa Huiyi*, 239.

<sup>71</sup> 1954 *Nian Rineiwa Huiyi*, 420-24.

<sup>72</sup> Goscha, “Geneva 1954,” 18-19; June 4, 1954, Wilson Center Reader. The DRV made this decision under the pressure of US intervention, but ironically, just at this time, US leaders decided against military intervention. See chapter 2.

<sup>73</sup> Gaiduk, *Confronting Vietnam*, 37.

candidates for the supervision commission and the West opposed granting the commission the right of veto, as the Communists proposed, on the grounds that it would give Communist members so much power that they could make supervision impossible. On Laos and Cambodia, the French told the Vietnamese that an unconditional withdrawal of Vietnamese forces was “a prerequisite” for the negotiation to move on.<sup>74</sup>

The Western side became increasingly impatient, when DRV leaders were not willing to retreat more from their positions, and at the same time, pressing on its military actions on the battlefield. US Deputy Secretary of State Walter Bedell Smith warned Molotov of possible US intervention in Indochina, if the Viet Minh had “too great appetites” and “over-reached themselves.”<sup>75</sup> Eden told Zhou Enlai directly that the conference would fail if no progress was made.<sup>76</sup> Meanwhile, the British changed their attitude toward exchange of Charge d'affaires with the PRC, and declined Chinese trade delegation’s visit to Britain, to which they had previously agreed.<sup>77</sup> A French diplomat also warned his Chinese counterpart that the US wanted both the Korean and Indochinese negotiations to fail.<sup>78</sup> At the same time, British government declared that its Premier and Foreign Secretary would soon visit Washington, which the Chinese worried would lead to a US-British agreement on establishing SEATO.

Zhou Enlai was anxious about these signals. He expressed dissatisfaction about the lack of progress in the military talks between France and Vietnam, and warned the VWP that the US

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<sup>74</sup> Goscha, “Geneva 1954,” 19.

<sup>75</sup> *FRUS*, 52-54, 16: 899; Gaiduk, *Confronting Vietnam*, 36.

<sup>76</sup> *1954 Nian Rineiwa Huiyi*, 165-66; June 10, 1954, Wilson Center Reader.

<sup>77</sup> *1954 Nian Rineiwa Huiyi*, 424-25.

<sup>78</sup> *1954 Nian Rineiwa Huiyi*, 101-04. The negotiation on the Korean problem ended on June 16, without achieving any result.

would sabotage the conference if the VWP failed to carry the negotiation forward.<sup>79</sup> He had urged the VWP to move the demarcation line to between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> parallels, and now directly requested concession on Laos and Cambodia in return for French concession on the dividing zones in Vietnam.<sup>80</sup> After he probed British attitude and was told that if an agreement was reached in Geneva, Britain “cannot imagine any participating states would use such an agreement to establish bases” in Laos and Cambodia, Zhou proposed to the VWP to retreat on “the key issue” of Laos and Cambodia, so that the conference would continue.<sup>81</sup>

Under Zhou’s pressure, the VWP finally agreed to withdraw its troops from the two states. Zhou Enlai immediately revealed this major concession to Eden, and clarified that these two states should become “Southeast Asian type” countries, in which the US should not build military bases.<sup>82</sup> When Zhou declared this concession in the plenary conference, he even agreed to allow Laos and Cambodia to import weapons for self-defense purposes, so long as they did not allow foreign military bases on their lands.<sup>83</sup> And Pham Van Dong also declared that the DRV would respect Laos’ and Cambodia’s independence and unity.

Communist concessions prevented the conference from failure. French Foreign Minister told the Soviets that the British-American meeting in Washington did not matter very much, and the negotiation at Geneva should continue “at the highest possible level.”<sup>84</sup> British Foreign Secretary Eden also assured Molotov that the foreign ministers should continue to settle the problems of supervision and guarantees; meanwhile British diplomats declared that they were

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<sup>79</sup> *Zhou Enlai Nianpu*, 380, 382.

<sup>80</sup> “The Diplomatic Struggle,” 41.

<sup>81</sup> *1954 Nian Rineiwa Huiyi*, 166-67, 169, 240-41; June 15, 1954, Wilson Center Reader.

<sup>82</sup> *Zhou Enlai Waijiao Huodong Dashiji*, 66.

<sup>83</sup> *1954 Nian Rineiwa Huiyi*, 170-72.

<sup>84</sup> AVP RF, f. 06, op. 13a, p. 25, d. 8, ll., 29-33. Cited in Gaiduk, *Confronting Vietnam*, 39.

now ready to accept China's Charge d'affaires.<sup>85</sup> Under pressure from Britain and France, US officials had to express that the Geneva Conference "should be kept going while there was hope of reaching reasonable settlement."<sup>86</sup>

Political change in France also gave the Communists hope. On June 16, French premier Laniel was replaced by Pierre Mendes-France. Chinese officials had long believed he was much more pro-peace than Laniel, and the Soviets had learned from his foreign policy advisor in early April that Mendes-France wanted a ceasefire in Indochina and free elections in Vietnam.<sup>87</sup> Mendes-France's promise to the French people that he would resign if he could not bring about peace in Indochina by July 20 just reinforced the Communists' impression that they could cooperate with the new French Prime and Foreign Minister. To build on the momentum, Zhou Enlai worked out a new position with the other two Communist delegations. In order to secure a solution in Vietnam, the Vietnamese should withdraw all their forces from Cambodia and strive only for a political solution; and in Laos they would limit their regrouping areas to only two each in the North and the South. Zhou sent a telegram to the VWP to push them toward agreement:

The current situation is, if we propose a reasonable plan in the military meeting, it would be possible to reach a ceasefire and solve the problem. As a result, we could push the new French government to stand up to US intervention, and at the same time, delay the European Defense Community issue. Therefore it would benefit both the East and the West.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> *1954 Nian Rineiwa Huiyi*, 428-29.

<sup>86</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, 16: 1189.

<sup>87</sup> For Chinese foreign ministry analysis of the French politicians, see "Analysis of the French ruling group," January 29, 1954, CFMA, 110-00258-09, 56-57. For the Soviet contact with Mendes-France's policy advisor, see MID USSR—Plans for discussions with Zhou Enlai and Ho Chi Minh, AVP RF, f. 022, op. 7b, pa. 106, d. 7, 23-26, cited in Olsen, *Soviet-Vietnam Relations and the Role of China*, 34-35. These documents modify Qiang Zhai's argument that the Chinese initially were not sure of Mendes-France's intentions regarding Indochina before Zhou met him. See Qiang Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars*, 58.

<sup>88</sup> *Zhou Enlai Nianpu*, 386; the translation of this citation is by Chen Jian and included in Wilson Center Reader.

To make sure the Vietnamese understood the significance of a peaceful solution, he proposed holding a meeting with “a maximum number of comrades in control in Vietnam Central Committee.” The VWP leaders agreed, as they saw new indications of US determination to get involved in Indochina. On June 19, Ngo Dinh Diem became premier of South Vietnam. In the eyes of the Viet Minh leaders, this was a clear signal that Washington had its “lackey” in place and if the Geneva Conference failed, the “Americans would have free rein” in Vietnam.<sup>89</sup>

When the foreign ministers left the negotiation to their assistants in late June, Chinese leaders believed their efforts to prevent the US from spoiling the negotiation on Indochina had worked well. Mao Zedong optimistically predicted that an armistice could be reached in July.<sup>90</sup> However, the developments in Geneva were achieved at a price. The Vietnamese agreement to separate Laos and Cambodia from Vietnam meant they grudgingly accepted that these two states would have different fates than Vietnam. Thus they had to put aside, at least temporarily, the idea of an Indochina Confederation.<sup>91</sup> The fact that it was China that put forward the suggestion also sowed seeds for disagreements in Sino-Vietnamese relations, although at the time they were satisfied with the progress in Geneva, and wanted to continue the negotiation.<sup>92</sup> Chinese leaders understood this and they were also aware that some Vietnamese military leaders were still reluctant to resort to diplomacy. In a telegram to Chinese military advisors in Vietnam, Mao instructed them to restrain the Vietnamese from expanding the military actions before the end of

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<sup>89</sup> Pierre Asselin, “The Democratic Republic of Vietnamese and the Geneva Conference,” 168.

<sup>90</sup> *Mao Wengao*, Vol. 3: 509.

<sup>91</sup> Goscha, “Geneva 1954,” especially 30-34.

<sup>92</sup> The Vietnamese saw the continuation of the conference against US sabotage as a “victory of great significance,” which exceeded “our original expectation.” See “The Diplomatic Struggle,” 30-31.

the Geneva Conference, when the DRV was concluding a major military victory against the French.<sup>93</sup>

### **Zhou Enlai's Diplomacy outside the Conference**

Before Zhou Enlai left Geneva in late June, he started another round of intense diplomacy. First of all, he clarified with the Laotians and Cambodians on the future of these two states. Zhou assured the two delegations that Vietnam would be sure to withdraw its forces, and guaranteed that their independence and security would be safeguarded. On the other hand, Zhou warned them that China would not allow the US to build military bases on their lands: "Once such bases were built, we [China] would have to get involved, because they were a threat to our security." Therefore, remaining neutral was the only choice Laos and Cambodia could make, Zhou Enlai pointed out to the representatives of the two states.<sup>94</sup> Zhou's meeting with the two delegations was very significant, not only because it was the first meeting between Zhou and officials from Laos and Cambodia, but also because Zhou Enlai paved the way for Pham Van Dong's meetings with representatives of the two governments, which the DRV had branded as French puppets and refused to recognize.<sup>95</sup>

Zhou Enlai then proposed a meeting with the new French Premier, and at Zhou's insistence, the two states made a joint statement about the meeting in advance. Mendes-France was frank about his eagerness for peace in his meeting with Zhou Enlai, as he told Zhou that the difficulty in making progress came from the US. Zhou also the French that what China wanted

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<sup>93</sup> *Mao Wengao*, Vol. 3: 509. For the DRV's military victory, see Chapter 2.

<sup>94</sup> *1954 Nian Rineiwa Huiyi*, 316-19; *Zhou Enlai Waijiao Huodong Dashiji*, 68; *Zhou Enlai Nianpu*, 389; Wilson Center Reader.

<sup>95</sup> Goscha, "Geneva 1954," 21-22.

was prevention of the US's internationalizing the war and building military bases in Indochina—"other than that, China did not have other requirements." Mendes-France responded that the "French government had not the slightest intention of allowing them [military bases] to be established."<sup>96</sup> Zhou then suggested leaving the demarcation line to the French and DRV's military representatives, and they would settle the political issues when the conference resumed in July. The political problem was "not a big issue," according to Zhou, so long as a demarcation line was settled. This suggestion indicated China's formal retreat from Communist agreement that political solution must come before armistice, in opposition to the French attempts to have only a military ceasefire.<sup>97</sup> Zhou Enlai also indicated to Eden that if the DRV's demands in Vietnam were satisfied, they would make concessions on Laos and Cambodia.<sup>98</sup>

Zhou Enlai's concessions were based on international situation in late June. The British were afraid of being dragged into a war in Indochina, and did not want to bend to the US leadership in a Southeast Asian group. Thus, they were trying to form its own version of a Southeast Asian bloc with countries like India, Indonesia, Burma and Ceylon, in the eyes of Chinese leaders, as a way to resist US expansion into their traditional sphere in Southeast Asia. Before leaving for Washington, Eden declared that Britain wanted to build a Locarno-type pact in Asia, and more importantly, he would even include Communist states in the pact; his purpose in the trip to the US was to convince the Americans to give France a chance to reach a peace agreement. Eden was also satisfied that the British relations with China were improved in

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<sup>96</sup> Gaiduk, *Confronting Vietnam*, 42.

<sup>97</sup> *1954 Nian Rineiwa Huiyi*, 289-97; *CWIHP Bulletin*, 51-55.

<sup>98</sup> *1954 Nian Rineiwa Huiyi*, 242; *CWIHP Bulletin*, 51.

Geneva.<sup>99</sup> Excited by these statements, Chinese leaders concluded London was not willing to engage in US United Action during the British leaders' stay in Washington. Meanwhile, Chinese leaders believed the French were resisting the US pressure to continue fighting in Indochina because they were worried that even if they ultimately won the war their sacrifice would only facilitate US entry into Indochina. In conclusion, Chinese leaders believed the US would not be able to prevent them from neutralizing Indochina, so long as they could further keep Britain and France away from the US and push the conference forward.<sup>100</sup>

To win Indian Premier Jawaharlal Nehru's support, Zhou Enlai visited India in late June, picking up an invitation the Indians made earlier, which he had declined. Zhou Enlai's visit to India reinforced Chinese leaders' judgment that they could, and should, work with the British.<sup>101</sup> In New Delhi, Nehru tried to convince Zhou that London was still the center of diplomacy in the world, and "to some extent, London was even more important than Washington." According to Nehru, Britain was not interested in the defense group the US proposed, and its China policy was far different from the US's.<sup>102</sup> Chinese leaders may not believe the British were as important as Nehru said, but his description about the UK-US differences was consistent with Zhou Enlai's

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<sup>99</sup> Eden, *Full Circle*, 131.

<sup>100</sup> "The US attempts to form a 'Southeast Asian defense group'," June 30, 1954, CFMA, 105-00626-01, 1-12.

<sup>101</sup> The goal of Zhou Enlai's visit to India has not been adequately discussed in the current literature. The new sources from Chinese foreign ministry archives show that he visited India in order to win over the Indians to building a Peace Area to exclude the US from Asia. See "About Concluding a Mutual Non-Aggression Treaty with Southeast Asian States," June 13, 1954, CFMA, 203-00005-06, 55-57; "Opinion about Concluding a Mutual Non-Aggression Treaty with Southeast Asian States" June 17, 1954, CFMA, 203-00005-06, 58-60; and "Goal and Plan for Premier Zhou Enlai's Visit to India," June 22, 1954, CFMA, 203-00005-01, 3-4. For more detailed analysis of Zhou's visit to India and China's efforts to build a Peace Area, see Chapter 5. According to Goscha, the Indians were interested in the neutralization of Laos and Cambodia and were relieved when Zhou confirmed to Nehru that the two states were different from Vietnam and should become "Southeast Asia type" neutral states. See Goscha, "Geneva 1954," 24-25.

<sup>102</sup> "Minutes of Zhou Enlai's meetings in his visit to India," June 25, 1954, CFMA, 203-00006-01; Zhou Enlai Nianpu, 390-93. For India's policy toward Indochina, see Gilles Boquérat, "India's commitment to peaceful coexistence and the settlement of the Indochina war," *Cold War History*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (May 2005): 211-34.

observation in Geneva. Based on Zhou's experiences in Geneva and India, Chinese leaders concluded that the British government sincerely wanted better relations with China, against the US opposition, and the PRC should exploit the opportunity to establish diplomatic relations with Britain.<sup>103</sup>

Churchill's and Eden's visit to the US confirmed for Chinese leaders that Britain could be used against the US. In Washington, according to Chinese officials, British leaders refused to talk about any concrete steps toward a defense treaty in Asia, and only agreed to a statement about some very general principles, despite the great pressure the US put on the British leaders. In the eyes of Chinese leaders, the British visit to Washington was nothing but a failure for US diplomacy. Mao Zedong told the Soviet Charge d'Affaires to Beijing that despite US pressure on Britain to end the Geneva Conference fruitlessly, the British continued the negotiation, and more significantly, Churchill declared in Washington that he sought peaceful coexistence with the Communists. In response, the Soviets encouraged the Chinese to make good use of the chance to resolve the Indochinese problem.<sup>104</sup> Chinese officials found several reasons to explain the British intransigency. First, the British were afraid of being dragged into a nuclear war; second, Britain was under pressure from the world peace movement and members in the British Commonwealth;

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<sup>103</sup> "Summary of the issue of establishing Sino-British diplomacy," June 25, 1954, CFMA, 110-00023-18, 52; *Mao Zedong Zhuan*, 562-64; *Zhou Enlai Nianpu*, 395; *1954 Nian Rineiwa Huiyi*, 185.

<sup>104</sup> Record of Conversation Between Soviet charge d'affaires in China V. Vaskov and Mao Zedong, July 5, 1954, AVP RF, f. 0100, op. 47, pa. 379, d. 7, 69-70, from SPA. See also Gaiduk, *Confronting Vietnam*, 43. The Chinese perception, however, was wrong. The British and American leaders reached a confidential seven-point agreement, which later served as the basis for the Western negotiation. The essence of the agreement was integrity and independence for Laos and Cambodia, and division of Vietnam along the 18th parallel. But the agreement was not raised publicly at Eden's request. For the seven-point agreement, see Eden, *Full Circle*, 132-33, and "The Diplomatic Struggle," 34. Moreover, the British agreed to study concrete steps to be taken to establish the defense pact, and a joint study group started working quickly after the British visit. See *FRUS*, 13: 580-82; 16: 1254-55.

and third and more importantly, the British economy was improving and did not rely on the US as much as before.<sup>105</sup>

Therefore, Chinese leaders became confident that their goal could be realized so long as they could convince their Vietnamese comrades. From July 3 to 5, Zhou Enlai held a series of intense meetings with DRV leaders in Liuzhou on the Sino-Vietnamese border. In a two-day long presentation, Zhou stressed the necessity of an immediate ceasefire and the inevitability of US intervention if the negotiation failed. He concluded, “the only task we are facing now is to accomplish peace.” For that, Zhou Enlai made some specific suggestions on the most important issue of the demarcation line. The bottom line was the 16<sup>th</sup> parallel in Vietnam. If this was not possible, it could be moved to the Route 9 to the north (approximately the 17<sup>th</sup> parallel). In Laos, the Communists would demand one area each in upper, middle and lower Laos, but could only expect the two areas in upper and middle Laos. In Cambodia, the Communists could try requesting a regroupment area, but should not have too much expectation.<sup>106</sup>

No less worried about US intervention, Ho Chi Minh agreed that they should strive to reach a compromise on the demarcation issue and end the Indochina war as quickly as possible. He also agreed to Zhou’s idea of neutralizing Laos and Cambodia. To make sure the DRV delegation understood the urgency of the situation, he sent a “July 5 Directive” to the VWP delegation in Geneva, which set the bottom line in Vietnam: a temporary demarcation line on the

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<sup>105</sup> “Report on the so-called British Asian Locarno plan,” July 4, 1954; CFMA, 110-00244-03.

<sup>106</sup> Minutes of these important meetings are not found in the declassified government documents, but contents of the meetings are disclosed in Xiong Huayuan, *Zhou Enlai Chudeng Shijie Wutai*, 139-144, Li Lianqing, *Shezhan Rineiwa*, 335-36; *Zhou Enlai Nianpu*, 394-95, and “The Diplomatic Struggle,” 41, 54-55. For detailed analysis of the meetings, see Chen Jian, “China and the Indochina Settlement at the Geneva Conference of 1954,” 254-57.

16<sup>th</sup> parallel, a general election to take place six months to one year after the end of war, and two regroupment areas in Laos.<sup>107</sup>

But the meetings also indicated that there were still differences between the two states and divisions among DRV leaders. The fact that Zhou had to make repeated requests demonstrated the unwillingness of the DRV to make concessions. Despite Zhou's insistence on the importance of peace, in his presentation, Ho still said the Vietnamese "should also be prepared for [continuously] fighting a war. The complication of our work is that we have to prepare for both aspects [peace and war] in our strategy." Although he agreed that "the main direction should be the pursuit of peace," he pointed out that "there were many difficulties" in "persuading our cadres" to accept the wisdom of seeking peace with the French.<sup>108</sup>

As soon as the meetings were over, Zhou Enlai managed to find some time in his short and busy stay in Beijing for a meeting with British Charge d'affaires. He told the British that he had reached agreement with the Vietnamese leaders, and he said he believed "it should not take long to settle matters at Geneva." He also revealed that "he did not think there was any danger of fighting on a significant scale in Indochina."<sup>109</sup> Soon both the Chinese and DRV governments published editorials in their mouthpieces, introducing the contents of the meetings and declaring the willingness for peace from peoples of the two states—Significantly, this was the DRV's first public declaration that their goal in Geneva was peace.

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<sup>107</sup> "The Diplomatic Struggle," 35, 41-42; Asselin, "The Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the 1954 Geneva Conference," 169-70; and Goscha, "Geneva 1954," 28.

<sup>108</sup> Ho Chi Minh's presentation is in Xiong Huayuan, *Zhou Enlai Chudeng Shijie Wutai*, 143-44; English translation by Chen Jian is in "China and the Indochina Settlement at the Geneva Conference of 1954," 257 and Wilson Center Reader.

<sup>109</sup> Telegram, Trevelyan to British Foreign Office, July 8, 1954, Wilson Center Reader.

After Zhou's meeting with the Vietnamese, Chinese leaders reviewed their policy in Geneva and concluded that an agreement in Indochina was likely, so long as the Communists could further exacerbate the conflicts between the US and its allies.<sup>110</sup> They even believed there were internal conflicts between US leaders—they found Smith was more reasonable and different from Dulles and Eisenhower; and even between Dulles and Eisenhower some differences seemed to exist.<sup>111</sup> Based on this analysis, Mao Zedong instructed the Chinese delegation to resume the consulate talks in Geneva in order to play on the differences between US leaders and isolate the more aggressive leaders within the US government.<sup>112</sup> On his way back to Geneva, Zhou Enlai stopped over in Moscow, and reached consensus with the Soviet leaders: the Communists should put forward a simple, clear-cut proposal, which should be acceptable to the French, to help it resist US pressure and bring about peace in Indochina. Zhou now became certain that the conference could restore peace in Indochina.<sup>113</sup>

### **China's Last Efforts to Neutralize Indochina**

Zhou Enlai's first task back in Geneva, however, was to push the DRV delegation to accelerate the negotiations, since they had failed to take any initiative during Zhou's absence, and the military talks were stuck. When the French proposed a demarcation line at the 18<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> *Zhou Enlai Nianpu*, 395-96.

<sup>111</sup> Wang Bingnan, *Zhongmei Huitan Jiunian Huigu* [Reflections on the Nine-Year Sino-American Talks] (Beijing: Shijie Zhishi Chubanshe, 1985), 19-20; *Mao Zedong Zhuan*, 560.

<sup>112</sup> *1954 Nian Rineiwa Huiyi*, 185-86. The US had asked Britain to request that China set free some US nationals detained in China, including a dozen US air men, whose planes were shot down on what China saw as reconnaissance trips in Manchuria. When the British approached China again in Geneva, Zhou Enlai suggested a direct meeting between Chinese and American officials. The two sides met four times, but the meetings were restricted to consulate affairs and did not bring about any results. For US efforts toward the American nationals detained in the PRC, see Chapters 2 and 5.

<sup>113</sup> *1954 Nian Rineiwa Huiyi*, 231-32. For details about Zhou's meeting with the Soviet leaders, see Chen Jian, "China and the Indochina Settlement at the Geneva Conference of 1954," 258-59.

parallel, the DRV would only be willing to accept the 14<sup>th</sup> parallel, despite Ho Chi Minh's July 5 Directive and the requests from the Soviets and Chinese. According to Zhou, the lack of progress resulted from the DRV delegates' overestimation of their military strength and reluctance to give up the idea of a Confederation of Indochina.<sup>114</sup>

Because French and British leaders were going to meet Dulles in Paris the next afternoon, Zhou wasted no time and held an overnight conversation with Pham Van Dong to convince him "the major task now is to strive to reach agreement on Indochina," after he met Molotov. The Communist side, according to Zhou, must immediately tell British and French leaders its intention for settlement and put forward new proposals acceptable to France, in order to give them, especially Mendes-France, "some capital to counterbalance" US pressure in Paris. For that purpose, Zhou suggested that Pham Van Dong propose the 16<sup>th</sup> parallel as a demarcation line, but be prepared to move the line a little further north in order to get an agreement. As for the election, they could strive for a fixed deadline, but it would be alright to reach an agreement in principle and set the deadline later. On the issue of Laos, Zhou expected to send some members from the "resistance government" to the national government to form a coalition government. In Cambodia, most of the Vietnamese personnel should withdraw, with some left to work underground. The key point, Zhou stressed, was to keep the negotiations going, which was the only means to settle the problem, and give up the unrealistic thought of unifying Vietnam

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<sup>114</sup> Li Kenong's report on the progress of the Geneva Conference to Zhou Enlai and the Chinese delegation, July 12, 1954, in *Zhonggong Dangshi Ziliao* [Materials of the History of the Chinese Communist Party], 69, March 1999; Wilson Center Reader.

through war. Pham finally agreed to Zhou's proposals.<sup>115</sup>

Early the next morning, the three Communist delegations reached agreement on the basis of Zhou's position, and they met the Western leaders immediately to make the concessions known.<sup>116</sup> Zhou Enlai first assured Mendes-France: "[t]he two sides have many common points, and the problem can be solved," and he then pushed Mendes-France to meet with Pham, who according to Zhou was now in a position to make more concessions.<sup>117</sup> After that, Zhou turned to Eden when Pham Van Dong was talking with Mendes-France.<sup>118</sup> Lest the British underestimated the significance of his meeting with DRV leaders in Liuzhou, Zhou briefed Eden in person about the DRV's willingness for peace, and assured Eden that neither the regrouping areas in Vietnam nor neutralization of Laos and Cambodia was problems, so long as Indochina would not allow foreign military bases, or join a military alliance. He pushed Eden to "give a fair judgment" between the PRC and the US: while the former wanted peaceful coexistence with "any state," the latter planned to build a Southeast Asian military alliance to threaten the PRC.<sup>119</sup>

Zhou Enlai shifted to Cambodia and Laos when the Western leaders were meeting in Paris. He reassured the two states that the DRV would observe the principle of peaceful coexistence

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<sup>115</sup> Minutes of the Meeting between Zhou Enlai and Pham Van Dong, July 12, 1954, Wilson Center Reader. For detailed analysis of the meeting, see Chen Jian, "China and the Indochina Settlement at the Geneva Conference of 1954," 259-60.

<sup>116</sup> Li Lianqing, *Leng Nuan Sui Yue: Yibosanzhe de Zhongsu Guanxi* [Warm and Cold Times: Ups and Downs in Sino-Soviet Relations] (Beijing: Shijie Zhishi Chubanshe, 1999), 226-27.

<sup>117</sup> Li Lianqing, *She Zhan Rineiwa*, 359-64; *1954 Nian Rineiwa Huiyi*, 305-09; Wilson Center Reader.

<sup>118</sup> Gaiduk, *Confronting Vietnam*, 44.

<sup>119</sup> *She Zhan Rineiwa*, 364-69; *1954 Nian Rineiwa Huiyi*, 243-45; Wilson Center Reader. Most current works have neglected China's diplomacy during the last phrase of the Geneva Conference. See for example, Qiang Zhai, "China and the Geneva Conference of 1954," and Shu Guang Zhang, "Constructing 'peaceful coexistence'." Although Chen Jian discusses China's diplomacy in this phrase, he concentrates on China's pressure on the DRV and Zhou Enlai's concession to Mendes-France and Eden. See Chen Jian, "China and the Indochina Settlement at the Geneva Conference of 1954," 259-61. The new sources allow for more sophisticated description of Zhou Enlai's diplomacy in the final stage of the Geneva Conference, especially Zhou's meetings with Laos and Cambodia, which demonstrate China's goal in Geneva and the tactics it used to achieve that goal.

and was willing to establish friendly relations with them, but the two states should maintain neutral and must not allow any foreign bases on its territory. To demonstrate his goodwill, Zhou retreated more and allowed the Cambodians to import foreign weapons or even introduce French troops after the period of armistice, so long as the US was kept out of Cambodia.<sup>120</sup> Zhou's efforts toward the two states were definitely necessary and very timely, because in private the US was pushing them to insist on the right to join SEATO, and enticing them with military assistances. Laos and Cambodia, on the other hand, had also asked the US for membership in the defense pact, in order to protect them against the DRV's invasion.<sup>121</sup>

After his meetings with British and French leaders, Zhou Enlai reported to Beijing that the French were willing to reach an agreement ahead of their self-imposed deadline, as they had already sent him a copy of a draft agreement. Zhou believed the French would finally agree to a demarcation line somewhere between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> parallels.<sup>122</sup> To get ready for the ceasefire, Zhou instructed Chinese military advisors in Vietnam to tell the Vietnamese to “quickly work out a plan for the [Vietnamese] People's Army to withdraw from the South, and promptly report the plan to the Vietnamese delegation [in Geneva].”<sup>123</sup>

Communist concessions, however, failed to bring about French concessions. After the Western Paris meeting, Molotov pushed Mendes-France to show flexibility on the demarcation line, and set June 1955 as the deadline for the election in Vietnam. He told the French that the Vietnamese concessions were made under “strong force of persuasion,” and the French should

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<sup>120</sup> For Zhou's telegram to Beijing regarding his meetings with the Cambodians and Laotians, see *1954 Nian Rineiwa Huiyi*, 320, 331; July 15, 1954, Wilson Center Reader.

<sup>121</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, 16: 1226, 1235-36, 1338, 1342.

<sup>122</sup> *1954 Nian Rineiwa Huiyi*, 233-34; July 14, 1954, Wilson Center Reader.

<sup>123</sup> Zhou's telegram to Wei Guoqing, July 15, 1954, *Zhou Enlai Nianpu*, 399; and Wilson Center Reader.

not expect more from Vietnam.<sup>124</sup> But according to the agreement they reached with allies in Paris, the French refused to retreat from the 18<sup>th</sup> parallel demarcation line, and opposed the Soviet proposal for elections.

Communist delegations had to make more concessions. Molotov suggested moving the demarcation line somewhere to the north of the 16<sup>th</sup> parallel, and seeking a flexible election date. For example, the two sides should decide, no later than June 1955, on the date of the real election. Zhou Enlai readily agreed with Molotov and assured Pham Van Dong that a flexible date was also approved by Ho Chi Minh in Liuzhou. He also suggested allowing French forces to stay in southern Vietnam until three months before the election, but as a negotiating tactic, he suggested Pham start with the 16<sup>th</sup> parallel and insist on a fixed election date.<sup>125</sup> After Ho Chi Minh sent another telegram to Pham urging him to speed up negotiation as the July 5 Directive instructed, Pham was finally ready to move on with his comrades.<sup>126</sup>

When Zhou Enlai made these proposals, PRC leaders were still concerned about US attempts to build SEATO. According to Chinese intelligence, the US had already started to prepare for a ceasefire scenario in Indochina. US leaders sent General James Van Fleet to the Far East twice in early July, in order to conclude an alliance with Chiang Kai-shek and to push for bilateral military alliances between Taiwan, and Japan and South Korea.<sup>127</sup> On the basis of these alliances, PRC leaders suspected the US would ultimately build an overall North Pacific military

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<sup>124</sup> For the Soviet role in the last phase of the Geneva Conference, see Gaiduk, *Confronting Vietnam*, 45-53.

<sup>125</sup> *Zhou Enlai Nianpu*, 399; July 16, 1954, Wilson Center Reader.

<sup>126</sup> Goscha, "Geneva 1954," 28.

<sup>127</sup> The Chinese thought, however, was incorrect. According to American documents, the US leaders were not considering a Mutual Defense Treaty (MDT) with the ROC at this time, and Van Fleet's visit did not mean to seek MDT. See Memo of Conversation, between Wellington V. Koo and E. F. Drumright and Walter P. McConaughy, General Records of the Department of State, Records of the Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs Relating to Southeast Asia and the Geneva Conference, 1954, Geneva Conference, April-June 1954, Box 14, RG 59, NAUS.

pact.<sup>128</sup> Zhou suspected the US, Britain and France might have reached some agreement on SEATO during their meeting in Paris. If such a military group were built and “the Americans manage to draw Bao Dai’s Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia into a military bloc, then the agreement we are drafting about a prohibition on creating foreign military bases on the territory of countries mentioned will lose the importance which we are attaching to it,” Zhou told Molotov and Pham.<sup>129</sup>

Nevertheless, Zhou Enlai believed they could still exploit US allies’ worries about US infiltration into their traditional spheres of influence in Southeast Asia, because it seemed Britain did not want to give up its Locarno-type alliance in Asia.<sup>130</sup> And French Premier Mendes-France, according to PRC leaders, was strengthening cooperation with Britain and anxiously wanted to end the war.<sup>131</sup>

To make sure further concessions would not facilitate US intervention in Indochina, Zhou Enlai wanted to get Eden’s and Mendes-France’s guarantee. He told Eden directly that the Communists wanted peace, but if that was followed by a US military treaty, and particularly if the three Indochinese states were included in the treaty, “peace would become meaningless.” Eden assured Zhou that the US did not intend to build military bases in Laos and Cambodia, and Britain wanted the two states to be a “buffer” area between the two blocs. On the Southeast Asian defense treaty, although Eden admitted that Britain and the US were studying the possibility of it, he did not think China should worry too much, because it would be “purely

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<sup>128</sup> Some Chinese officials believed Van Fleet wanted to link the two military blocs in the North and South Pacific through the Philippines; see “Van Fleet’s conspiracy in the Far East,” July 17, 1954, CFMA, 206-00117-05, 101-02.

<sup>129</sup> *Zhou Enlai Nianpu*, 399-40; Record of a conversation with Pham Van Dong and Zhou Enlai, July 16, 1954; Wilson Center Reader.

<sup>130</sup> Record of a conversation with Pham Van Dong and Zhou Enlai, July 16, 1954, Wilson Center Reader.

<sup>131</sup> “Mendes-France cabinet and its domestic and foreign policy,” July 17, 1954, CFMA, 206-00117-06, 103-05.

defensive,” and “the better result we could achieve here in Geneva, the less we need to worry about the defense arrangement.”<sup>132</sup> After double-checking with the US, the British informed Chinese officials that the three Indochinese states would not join SEATO, and the final agreement, if reached, would include stipulations about this and entrance of foreign personnel and arms. With that guarantee, PRC officials promised the UK that China would not ally with the DRV.<sup>133</sup> Zhou then told Mendes-France straightforwardly that the demarcation line and date of elections would not be problems, if China was assured about the defense alliance in Southeast Asia.<sup>134</sup> But if the US built an alliance and included Indochina, Zhou warned, “all of our efforts to push for these compromises will become fruitless.” And he suggested including these positions in the final agreement.<sup>135</sup>

Zhou then reiterated his positions to the Cambodian and Laotian delegations. The Cambodians, however, were still suspicious of the DRV, and warned that they would have to seek US help, and even consider joining an alliance, if Vietnam threatened their security.<sup>136</sup> Zhou of course assured them that this was impossible. To Laos, in addition to the promise that the Vietnamese forces would finally leave, he also agreed that Laos could import weapons for defense purpose and also that the French would be allowed to leave two bases before the Vietnamese troops withdrew. What the PRC opposed, Zhou told the Laotians and Cambodians,

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<sup>132</sup> For Zhou’s meeting with Eden, July 17, 1954, see *1954 Nian Rineiwa Huiyi*, 246-51; *CWIHP Bulletin*, 65-68. Eden’s response about SEATO did not seem to raise enough attention among the PRC officials. As the following chapter indicated, the PRC leaders still believed the UK want a Locarno-type pact, along with SEATO, if they were not able to prevent that.

<sup>133</sup> *1954 Nian Rineiwa Huiyi*, 252-54; Wilson Center Reader. However, according to American sources, the British made this guarantee without their prior knowledge. See Chapter 2.

<sup>134</sup> *1954 Nian Rineiwa Huiyi*, 307-09; *CWIHP Bulletin*, 68-69.

<sup>135</sup> Memo of conversation between Molotov, Zhou Enlai, and Pham Van Dong, July 17, 1954, AVP RF, f. 06, op. 13a, p. 25, d. 8, l. 107, *CWIHP Bulletin*, 97-99.

<sup>136</sup> *1954 Nian Rineiwa Huiyi*, 321-22; *CWIHP Bulletin*, 70-72.

was American bases and their alliance with the US. The Laotians promised Zhou they did not intend to join the defense alliance.<sup>137</sup>

With all these guarantees, the Communists were ready for further concessions. Dong finally agreed to a demarcation line drawn slightly to the north of Route No. 9, but in return he demanded French concessions on the timing of the election. Zhou agreed but Molotov suggested another concession: just setting a time period during which the election should be held. The Communists were also prepared to agree to the French proposal concerning the composition of the international supervision commission, which would include India as chair, along with Canada and Poland.<sup>138</sup> Zhou Enlai, however, pointed out that a new French draft he received did not include the provision about forbidding foreign bases in Indochina, and this position was also not in the draft documents about Laos and Cambodia. Communist leaders decided to have Laos and Cambodia make a formal statement about this commitment.

Molotov immediately informed Mendes-France of the new concessions. But French Premier insisted on their original positions. The French intransigence led to Molotov's suspicion that they did not want a solution at all. On a restricted session on July 18, Molotov tried to demonstrate that the Communists had made enough concessions, and if the conference failed it was not their fault. Seeing no further concessions from the Communists, the British also became pessimistic and Eden reported to London that the conference had "no more than fifty-fifty chance of reaching agreement."<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> *1954 Nian Rineiwa Huiyi*, 332-35; Wilson Center Reader. For US policy toward the two states, see chapter 2.

<sup>138</sup> Gaiduk, *Confronting Vietnam*, 47.

<sup>139</sup> Gaiduk, *Confronting Vietnam*, 47.

The Communists, however, were determined to settle the issue, particularly after the US delegation declared that it would not disturb the agreement if it was acceptable, and the British promised the final agreements would forbid foreign bases and alliances in Indochina. Zhou Enlai finally told Eden he agreed to the composition of the international supervision commission.<sup>140</sup> And in addition to letting the French troops stay in Laos for some time, he also reduced the regroupment area for the resistance forces.<sup>141</sup> The British guaranteed, on behalf of the British Commonwealth, not just the UK, that the Indochinese states would not be invited to any military alliance. In return, Chinese officials made a package concession: the demarcation line could be 10 kilometers north of Route 9; the election should be held two years after the signing of the agreement of armistice, but no later than June 1955, representatives of North and South Vietnam must negotiate for a decision; the regrouping of the armed forces within Vietnam would be completed within 245 days after the agreement. But the PRC requested that the final agreements be guaranteed by all conference participants, including the US. The British side, however, revealed that the US would only make a unilateral declaration.<sup>142</sup> On July 20, the Cambodians agreed not to allow foreign combat forces, but they wanted to keep some foreign technicians and experts and import weapons for their security; they also opposed the DRV- suggested six months withdrawal period. After the PRC realized its goal of neutralizing Cambodia, Zhou Enlai promised to push the DRV to accelerate the withdrawal and agreed to allow Cambodia to import weapons. The key point, Zhou told the Cambodians, was that Cambodia must not be pro-US.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> *1954 Nian Rineiwa Huiyi*, 196-97; Wilson Center Reader.

<sup>141</sup> *1954 Nian Rineiwa Huiyi*, 310-12; 13-15; Wilson Center Reader.

<sup>142</sup> *1954 Nian Rineiwa Huiyi*, 252-58; *CWIHP Bulletin*, 77-78.

<sup>143</sup> *1954 Nian Rineiwa Huiyi*, 322-38; *CWIHP Bulletin*, 80-83.

The Communists primarily reached their goals: the Geneva Agreements concluded on July 21 temporarily divided Vietnam and neutralized Cambodia and Laos neutralized.<sup>144</sup> But the two states were allowed to appeal for foreign military aid if they were under threat from Vietnam. To convince the Laotians that they did not need foreign military assistance, especially from the US, after the agreements were concluded Zhou reassured the Laotian delegation of the good intentions from China and the DRV, and encouraged Laos to develop friendly relations with the DRV. To demonstrate the PRC's sincerity, Zhou expressed understanding of Laos' request to keep French troops in Laos before the Vietnamese "volunteers" finally withdrew.<sup>145</sup> Before the foreign ministers left Geneva, Zhou Enlai once again sought Eden's guarantee that the US would not establish military bases in Cambodia. And he was satisfactorily told that Britain placed a great deal of emphasis on China, and wanted to further develop relations with the PRC.<sup>146</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The PRC played an instrumental role in bringing about the Geneva Agreements.<sup>147</sup> Zhou Enlai's timely concession to withdraw DRV forces in Laos and Cambodia prevented the Geneva Conference from coming to an early and fruitless end. The PRC's agreement with the VWP leaders to seek peace as quickly as possible and its efforts to convince the DRV delegation to carry out this idea led to progress in the negotiation. Finally Zhou Enlai's flexibility on the

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<sup>144</sup> Apart from Zhou's combination of concessions and warnings, another important reason for the two states' agreement to neutralization was the US change of policy. At this point, the US officials were convincing them not to request memberships in the Southeast Asian defense pact; see *FRUS*, 1952-54, 16: 1425-26. See also chapter 2.

<sup>145</sup> *1954 Nian Rineiwa Huiyi*, 474-76. In private, Zhou believed it was a wise way to keep the US out by letting the French stay. *Zhou Enlai Nianpu*, 399.

<sup>146</sup> *1954 Nian Rineiwa Huiyi*, 212; Wilson Center Reader.

<sup>147</sup> According to Olsen, "The Chinese performance during the Geneva Conference was decisive, not only in the eyes of the Western powers but also to the Soviets." See Olsen, *Soviet-Vietnam Relations and the Role of China*, 43-44.

demarcation line in Vietnam and his concessions to Laos' and Cambodia's security concerns directly contributed to the final agreements. In short, the Geneva Conference provided the PRC a precious opportunity, to present itself to the world as a major power, and the Chinese leaders seized it and realized their goal of neutralizing Indochina.

The PRC's actions in Geneva resulted principally from its security concerns. Seeing US military presence in its neighborhood as a serious menace, Chinese leaders strived to build a buffer area around the PRC by removing the US presence through diplomacy, following the Soviet peace offensive. They started first with the Korea issue. By the time that Geneva convened, however, the war in Korea had stopped and North Korea insulating the PRC from US military in Korea. Therefore, Chinese leaders concentrated their efforts in Geneva on Indochina. The Geneva Agreements built another buffer to the South of the PRC, and thus, decreased US pressures on China.

The PRC's strategy of isolating the US by winning over the majority of the participants of the Geneva Conference contributed to the final agreements. Although PRC leaders only had very limited access to information about the relations between the Western powers, their perceptions of differences between them were basically correct. Zhou Enlai's efforts to play off the British and French against the US may not have exacerbated tensions in US relations with allies as much as PRC leaders expected, but his demonstration of good intentions kept Britain and France in the negotiations, and this gave the Chinese an opportunity for diplomatic maneuver. The PRC's assurances and concessions to Laos and Cambodia helped draw them away from the West, and led to their approval of the Geneva Agreements.

The PRC's experience at Geneva had a strong influence on its policy toward the US. When the Geneva Conference ended, Chinese leaders concluded the US was isolated and vulnerable to diplomatic pressures. Therefore their strategy of separating the US from other states would still be effective. They were especially impressed with the British willingness for better relations with the PRC, and they perceived a British policy fundamentally different from the US's. To a great extent, the initiation of the Taiwan Strait Crisis was China's efforts to mobilize US allies and neutral states to push the US not to conclude a mutual defense treaty with the Chinese Nationalist government on Taiwan.<sup>148</sup>

Throughout the Geneva Conference, the PRC, the Soviet Union and Vietnam coordinated their positions closely and maintained a good division of labor, due to a common anxiety about US intervention in Indochina. The Soviet Union's basic concern was in Europe, and after it brought the Geneva Conference into being, its task was to introduce the PRC and DRV into the conference. It was the PRC and the DRV's job to initiate most of the proposals. Although the Soviets played a seemingly moderate role, they were the organizer of the Communist actions.<sup>149</sup> This went against US leaders' perception of the differences between the PRC and the Soviet Union. Molotov's remarks before Western leaders, such as "China is very much her own master in these matters" proved to be nothing but a negotiating tactic.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> For details, see Chapter 3.

<sup>149</sup> For the division of labor among the Communists, see Gaiduk, *Confronting Vietnam*, 34; Olsen, *Soviet-Vietnam Relations and the Role of China*, 28.

<sup>150</sup> My research of Chinese documents corroborates Gaiduk's analysis of the Soviet documents. See Gaiduk, *Confronting Vietnam*, 32. But it goes against Zhai's and Immerman's argument about the conflicts between the Chinese and Soviet leaders. See Qiang Zhai, "China and the Geneva Conference of 1954," and Immerman, "The United States and the Geneva Conference of 1954."

The DRV's role was much more complicated. On the one hand, DRV leaders' worries about US invention in Indochina were real, and their need for peace urgent.<sup>151</sup> On the other hand, some DRV leaders were reluctant to give up their military advantage, especially after Dien Bien Phu. Yet they had neither concrete plans nor material means to realize their goal. Due to their reliance on China for ideological guidance and material assistance, it was natural for China to provide advice. Vietnamese leaders also admitted their needs for the PRC leaders' guidance. Consequently, Chinese leaders initiated most of the important proposals and pushed Vietnam to make concessions.

However, although the Geneva Agreements served China's interests, they did not necessarily damage the DRV's interests. The DRV welcomed the Geneva Agreements when they were reached, and believed they served the DRV's interests well.<sup>152</sup> But when the situation in Indochina did not develop as they expected, both the Chinese and the Vietnamese put forward different interpretations of the Geneva Conference. While Chinese leaders regretted that they pressured the DRV into the Geneva Agreements and Zhou Enlai even admitted his "mistake" in pushing the DRV to retreat from its original positions, the Vietnamese portrayed themselves as innocent victims of Chinese pressure. As Chen Jian points out, "...Beijing's handling of the Indochina issue at Geneva in 1954 ... sowed a seed of potential discord between the Chinese and their Vietnamese comrades."<sup>153</sup> Furthermore, Chinese leaders' admission of "mistakes" added to

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<sup>151</sup> For detailed analysis of the DRV leaders' need for the agreements, see Goscha, "Geneva 1954," 34-36, and Pierre Asselin, "The Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the Geneva Conference," 176-83.

<sup>152</sup> Immediately after the conference, both the Vietnam delegation and Ho Chi Minh believed by securing peace the DRV won a "tremendous victory" through diplomacy; the VWP Central Committee concluded that the peaceful settlement of the Indochina problem "shattered the scheme of the American imperialists to prolong and expand war in Indochina." See "Diplomatic Struggle," 65, 67, and 69. This new document goes against Zhai's argument that "The Viet Minh accepted the solution reluctantly." See Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars*, 62.

<sup>153</sup> Chen Jian, "China and the Indochina Settlement at the Geneva Conference of 1954," 262.

the Vietnamese resentment toward China, which contributed to the conflict between the two Communist states that flared in 1979—ironically, the war between the former Communist allies contributed to the normalization the PRC’s with its former enemy, the US, and led to a period of US-PRC relationship as “tacit allies” in the 1980s.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> James Mann, *About Face: A History of America’s Curious Relationship with China, from Nixon to Clinton* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000), 96-154.

## Chapter 2

### Seeking United Action: Geneva Conference on Indochina and US Policy toward the PRC

“Every effort will be made by the enemy to divide France and the US to contrast a peace-loving, reasonable France anxious to stop the death of her sons with warmongering US eager to continue a slaughter in which American soldiers are not engaged.”<sup>1</sup>

—Bonn Philip W. Bonsal, March 15, 1954

“The British people would not be easily influenced by what happened in the distant jungles of S.E. Asia; but they did know that there was a powerful American base in East Anglia and that war with China, who would invoke the Sino-Russian Pact, might mean an assault by Hydrogen bombs on these islands.”<sup>2</sup>

—Winston Churchill, April 26, 1954

“What is certain, it’s that internationalization of the war is the end of French influence in Indochina—in one definitive stroke it draws down one hundred years of effort and eight years of sacrifice.”<sup>3</sup>

—Henri Navarre, April 11, 1954

The United States policy toward the Geneva Conference on Indochina in relation to the PRC is a topic that has not been sufficiently explored. Previous works on US actions in Geneva often concentrate on either American foreign policy in general, or its relations with allies, instead of its policy toward the PRC.<sup>4</sup> Traditionally, scholars stress US objection to negotiations with the

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<sup>1</sup> Memorandum by the Director of the Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs (Bonsal) to the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Robertson), *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 16: 464.

<sup>2</sup> Memorandum, Brownjohn to Prime Minister, 26 April 1954, FO371/112057, National Archives of the United Kingdom (hereafter NAUK).

<sup>3</sup> James David Anthony Waite, “The End of the First Indochina War: An International History,” Ph.D. dissertation, Ohio University, 2005, 242.

<sup>4</sup> An representative early work before government documents were declassified is Robert Randle, *Geneva 1954: The Settlement of the Indochinese War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969). Other works on US relations with allies include Geoffrey Warner, “The Settlement of the Indochina War,” *The Foreign Policy of Churchill’s Peacetime Administration, 1961-66*, ed. by John Young (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1988), 233-59; Kevin Ruane, “‘Containing America’: Aspects of British Foreign Policy and the Cold War in South-East Asia, 1951-54,” *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (March 1996): 141-74; George Herring, “‘A Good Stout Effort’:

Communists and its preference for a military solution through united actions with its allies.<sup>5</sup> Eisenhower revisionists concentrate on Eisenhower's "decision against war" during the Dien Bien Phu crisis, rather than US policy toward the Geneva Conference.<sup>6</sup> In contrast to traditionalist historiography, post-revisionists, however, argue that US leaders were not unaware of differences within the Communist bloc, nor did they oppose diplomatic talks with the Communists. Rather, post-revisionists say, US leaders did not rule out the possibility of negotiating with the Communists and were planning to exploit the differences within the Communist bloc. Unfortunately, US officials never put into practice these ideas.<sup>7</sup> The existing literature, however, has not addressed adequately the role China played in US policy making. For example, how did US leaders see the Chinese intentions in Indochina and their objectives at the Geneva Conference? How did that perception influence US actions in Geneva? What were the consequences, if any, of the PRC's policy of separating the US from its allies?

Based on government documents from the US and UK, as well as the PRC, DRV, and the Soviet Union, this chapter reassesses US policy toward the Geneva Conference from the perspective of its relations with China. It finds that US policy during the Geneva Conference

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John Foster Dulles and the Indochina Crisis, 1954-1955," in *John Foster Dulles and the Diplomacy of the Cold War*, ed. by Richard Immerman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 213-33; Waite, "The End of the First Indochina War"; Lucia J. Rather, "The Geneva Conference of 1954: Problems in Allied Unity," Ph.D. dissertation, University of North Carolina, 1994; and Victor S. Kaufman, "Argument and Accord: Anglo-American Policies toward China, 1948-1972," Ph.D. dissertation, Ohio University, 1998.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Gary Hess, "Redefining the American Position in Southeast Asia: The United States and the Geneva and Manila Conferences," in *Dien Bien Phu and the Crisis of Franco-American Relations, 1954-1955*, eds. by Lawrence Kaplan, Denise Artaud, and Mark Rubin (Wilmington, DE: SR Books, 1990); and George C. Herring, "'A Good Stout Effort'."

<sup>6</sup> George C. Herring and Richard Immerman, "Eisenhower, Dulles, and Dienbienphu: 'The Day We Didn't Go to War' Revisited," *Journal of American History* 71 (September 1984): 343-63; Richard Immerman, "Between the Unobtainable and the Unacceptable: Eisenhower and Dienbienphu," in *Reevaluating Eisenhower: American Foreign Policy in the Fifties*, eds. by Richard Melanson and David Mayers (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 120-54.

<sup>7</sup> Richard Immerman, "The United States and the Geneva Conference of 1954: A New Look," in *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 14, Issue 1 (Jan. 1990): 44-66.

shifted from initial resistance to negotiation to final acceptance of the settlement as an accomplished fact. This change resulted from the allies' quest for peace, Communist military pressure in Indochina, and Communist diplomatic concessions, especially by China. Throughout the conference, US leaders were well aware of Communist attempts to split them from their allies; but they in turn did not find much opportunity to similarly exploit the differences between the Communists.

### **Reluctant Participation**

For the Dwight D. Eisenhower Administration, Indochina was America's "first concern in the Far East."<sup>8</sup> The importance US leaders attached to Indochina principally resulted from their belief that the Chinese Communists were striving to dominate Indochina, the gateway to Southeast Asia, which with its rich resources and vast market was critical to the survival of Japan and the economy of Western world.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, in the eyes of US leaders, the Communist proposal for a negotiated settlement of the Indochina War was nothing but part of their "peace offensive," which they used to separate the US from its allies and cover up their military actions in Indochina.

US leaders had long recognized the importance of Indochina, but it was only after the establishment of the PRC in 1949 that they started to face the danger of losing Indochina to the Communists. China's recognition of and assistance to Ho Chi Minh's DRV immediately as soon as the Chinese Communists established their government in Beijing led to the Truman

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<sup>8</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 360.

<sup>9</sup> Michael Schaller, "Securing the Great Crescent: Occupied Japan and the Origins of Containment in Southeast Asia," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 69, No. 2 (September 1982): 392-414.

administration's belief that China "had specifically targeted Southeast Asia for revolutionary activity." Communist initiation of the Korean War, and in particular the PRC's participation in the war, reinforced the belief that there was a Communist conspiracy for expansion; and Southeast Asia, with its weak governments and indigenous Communist insurgents, was an ideal next target.<sup>10</sup> With Chinese assistance, the DRV marched into Laos in April 1953, shortly after the Eisenhower Administration came to power. From the US's perspective, the end of the Korean War only freed the Chinese to assist their Vietnamese comrades, even if they did not participate directly in the war.<sup>11</sup> By January 1954, the Vietminh forces were capable of "weakening... the resolve of France and the Associated States of Indochina to continue to oppose the Vietminh rebellion." A French military defeat or forced withdrawal would give Indochina to the Vietminh, and hence lead to the PRC domination in the region, and consequently the West would lose the whole Southeast Asia to the Communists. That in turn could lead to the disaffection of India, Japan, the Middle East, which would seriously endanger "the stability and security of Europe," according to NSC.<sup>12</sup>

To deter the Chinese, President Eisenhower and Secretary Dulles repeatedly warned the

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<sup>10</sup> For the influence of the Korean War on the American and British perception of a "monolithic Communism," see Marc Jay Selverstone, "'All Roads Lead to Moscow': The United States, Great Britain, and the Communist Monolith," PhD dissertation, Ohio University, 2000.

<sup>11</sup> For the US perception of its interests in Indochina, see Richard Immerman, "The Prologue: Perceptions by the United States of Its Interests in Indochina," especially 7-13, in *Dien Bien Phu and the Crisis in Franco-American Relations, 1954-55*. A NSC document in January 1954 noticed that "The situation in Indochina today is almost identical to that existing in Korea in during the Second week of September 1950, the date of overt Chinese Communist participation.... With a simple change of place names, North Korea to Vietminh Army and minor variations to fit the situation, the reports, activities, and themes could be interchanged." See "Sino-Soviet Direction and Nature of the Indo-China Conflict," January 19, 1954, White House Office NSC Staff, OCB Central File Series, Box 37, OCB 091. Indochina (File 1), Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library (DDEL). But basically, US leaders believed the PRC would not intervene in Indochina openly. See "Probable Communist reactions to certain possible US courses of action in Indochina through 1954," December 18, 1953. General Records of the Department of State, Records of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Lot File No. 78 D394, box 3, RG 59, NAUS.

<sup>12</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 13: 971-76, 1145-46; *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 16: 438; *The Pentagon Papers* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971; Senator Gravel edition), 1: doc. 13 and 20, 384-90, 435-37.

PRC that any overt aggression in Indochina “would have grave consequences which might not be limited to the area of the aggression.”<sup>13</sup> When the Communists proposed a Five-Power Conference to discuss relaxing tensions in Asia, Secretary Dulles publicly cautioned the world not to be duped by the proposal:

Communist China has been and now is training, equipping, and supplying the Communist forces in Indo-china. There is the risk that as in Korea, Red China might send its own army into Indochina. The Chinese Communist regime should realize that such a second aggression could not occur without grave consequences which might not be limited on Indochina....<sup>14</sup>

In January 1954, Dulles made his well-known speech about Massive Retaliation against the Communists, implying using nuclear weapons against their expansion in Indochina.<sup>15</sup>

In this circumstance, the Communist proposal for a peaceful settlement in Indochina was simply seen as part of the Peace Offensive, a different yet more dangerous way to seek domination, in addition to boosting the PRC’s and DRV’s international positions. When the Soviets first made the peace initiative in March 1953, US leaders believed it was “a skillful effort to promote dissension within the U.S. Government, between the U.S. Government and the American people and, above all, between the United States and the rest of the non-Communist world.”<sup>16</sup> As Eisenhower told British Premier Winston Churchill in late 1953, “Russia was a

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<sup>13</sup> “United States Policy on Armed Intervention in Indochina,” 2 August 1954, Duller Papers, Subject Series, Box 9, DDEL.

<sup>14</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 13: 747; “United States Policy on Intervention in Indochina,” August 1, 1954, Dulles Papers, Subject Series, Box 9, DDEL.

<sup>15</sup> For the details of the strategy, see John Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Reappraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 127-63.

<sup>16</sup> For the Communist initiatives, see King Chen, *Vietnam and China, 1938-1954* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 282. For the immediate US perception of Communist initiatives, see “Special Estimate for Secretary of State: Current Communist Tactics,” April 24, 1953, General Records of the Department of State, Records of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Lot File No. 78 D394, box 3, RG 59, NAUS. “The Soviet Statement of 25 April in Reply to President Eisenhower’s Speech of 16 April 1953,” 30 April 1953; Bohlen to Secretary of State, 24

woman of the streets and whether her dress was new, or just the old one patched, it was certainly the same whore underneath. America intended to drive her off her present ‘beat’ into the back streets.” And the US officials predicted the Communist diplomatic offensive would turn to Indochina<sup>17</sup> When the Communists proposed to settle the Indochina war, US officials believed they were using this to divide the Western powers and weaken the French will to fight, as they believed the Communists would not agree to any negotiations and settlement to Indochina.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, there was no way for the US to negotiate with them, at least not before it could talk from a position of strength. According to Dulles, “even to initiate discussion, puts us on slippery ground.”<sup>19</sup>

But US allies had different ideas. Under the pressure of French war weariness, Foreign Minister Georges Bidault had tried to include a diplomatic solution in Indochina in the Korean armistice talks in July 1953, and he pointedly asked the Americans “...why negotiation was fit

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and 25 April 1953; in *FRUS* 1952-54, 8: 1157, 1166, 1168-69. The latest work on the Communist “Peace Offensive” after Stalin’s death is Geoffrey Roberts, “A Chance for Peace? The Soviet Campaign to End the Cold War, 1953-1955,” Cold War International History Project (CWIHP), Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, working paper #57; a collection of articles regarding the Soviet Peace Offensive and the US response is *The Cold War After Stalin’s Death: A Missed Opportunity for Peace?* Edited by Klaus Larres and Kenneth Osgood (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006).

<sup>17</sup> Lloyd C. Gardner, *Approaching Vietnam: from World War II through Dienbienphu, 1941-1954* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1988), 160. Special estimate for Secretary of State: Current Communist Tactics, April 24, 1953, General Records of the Department of State, Records of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Lot File No. 78 D394, box 3, RG 59, NAUS. Eisenhower was having a meeting with the British and French leaders in Bermuda, which decided to hold the Berlin meeting. For the Bermuda Conference, see J. W. Young, “Churchill, the Russians and the Western Alliance: The Three-Power Conference at Bermuda, December 1953,” *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 101, No. 401 (October 1986): 889-912.

<sup>18</sup> Report to the NSC by the Executive Secretary, “Importance of Indochina and Perception of Chinese Intervention,” January 16, 1954, *FRUS*, 13: 971-76.

<sup>19</sup> Telegram, Dulles to Eisenhower, February 6, 1954, *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 13: 1020-21. Although the US basic national security policy did not rule out the possibility of negotiating with Communists, US leaders were only willing to talk to them from a position of strength. Immerman, “The United States and the Geneva Conference of 1954,” 45.

and honorable for Korea and not for Indochina,” when the US refused his suggestion.<sup>20</sup>

Meanwhile, the British, who were pushing for detente with the Soviet Union and a *Modus Vivendi* in the Far East, not only supported the Communist proposal for a Korean political conference, but also attempted to include in it a “wide agenda” of solving the “China problem” permanently.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, both France and Britain pressed the US for a positive response to the Communist proposal for negotiation over Indochina.

Under pressure from the allies, which was skillfully manipulated by the Soviets, the US had to agree to meet with the Soviets in Berlin, and subsequently to hold the Geneva Conference, because according to Dulles, “It was apparent that if Bidault had not gone back to Paris with something to show on Indochina, the [Joseph] Laniel Government would have fallen at once and would have been replaced by a government which would not only have a mandate to end the war in Indochina on any terms, but also to oppose French ratification of EDC,” which was “a primary objective of American foreign policy in 1953-1954.”<sup>22</sup> But Dulles made it clear that this did not indicate US recognition of China, and the PRC was not a sponsor, like the Big Four, as the

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<sup>20</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, 13: 656-66; 707-08; 737; Francis Noland Dawson, “The 1954 Geneva Conference: Eisenhower’s Indochina Policy,” 39, Ph.D. dissertation, West Virginia University, 1985.

<sup>21</sup> For the British quest for détente with the Soviet Union, see Nông Văn Dân, *Churchill, Eden and Indo-China, 1951-1955* (New York: Anthem Press, 2010). See also J.W. Young, “Churchill, the Russians and the Western alliance: the three-power conference at Bermuda, December 1953,” *English Historical Review*, Vol. 101, No. 401 (October 1986): 889-912.

<sup>22</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 13: 1021, 1057, 1080-81. For the importance of EDC, and the leverage the French enjoyed in its relations with the US, see *The Pentagon Papers*, Vol. 54, 75-81. See also Ruane, “Containing American,” 159-60, and “Anthony Eden and Geneva 1954,” 169. According to Dulles, Molotov “played the game very smart,” and successfully “induced” the French to “force” the Soviets to suggest a formula to incorporate Indochina into the Far Eastern agenda,” despite the Westerners’ alertness to his tactics. See Immerman, “The United States and the Geneva Conference,” 49-50. For detailed analysis of the US-Franco-British relations and the Berlin meeting, see Kevin Ruane, “Anthony Eden, British Diplomacy and the Origins of the Geneva Conference of 1954,” *The Historical Journal*, 37, 1 (1994): 153-72; for the Bermuda Conference of the three states, see Young, “Churchill, the Russians and the Western Alliance.” “RC’s Summary of Principal Points Made by the President in Talking with Republican Leaders, May 3, 1954.” Dulles Papers, Subject Series, Box 9, DDEL.

Soviets suggested and the British and French connived.<sup>23</sup> For Dulles, “It is...one thing to recognize evil as a fact. It is another thing to take evil to one’s heart and call it good.” And he also set up preconditions for the negotiation: the Geneva Conference would only take place after the PRC stopped its aggression; and the Communists must first prove their goodwill in the negotiations on Korea, the issue with which the conference would start.<sup>24</sup>

Consequently, US officials never welcomed the Geneva Conference. As soon as the Berlin meeting was over, the State Department concluded that none of the possibilities that might come out of the conference was acceptable. Ceasefire and an end to Chinese military aid to the DRV would not necessarily bring about a French victory, given the growing strength of the Vietminh forces. An overall political settlement would result in the Vietminh’s victory in elections, and was the “most dangerous” result. Partition of Indochina along the 16<sup>th</sup> parallel would give the Communists the Tonkin Delta, “the key to the whole of Southeast Asia;” and moreover, if the US was involved in this arrangement, it would be seen as selling out its ally the State of Vietnam (SOV, or South Vietnam, as it was later commonly known), and “completely losing what[ever] credit we have remaining in Asia.” The “least dangerous formula” for the US was neutralization and demilitarization of Indochina, but US officials did not think the Communists would accept this. In addition, the decision to hold the conference itself would prompt the Vietminh to increase military pressure on the French in order to gain diplomatic initiative, as Dulles warned the French in Berlin. On the French side, negotiations could end up lessening, rather than increasing,

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<sup>23</sup> “Far Eastern Aspects of the Berlin Conference,” January 15, 1954, Records of the Bureau of the Far Eastern Affairs Relating to the Southeast Asia and the Geneva Conference, Box 2, RG 59, NAUS.

<sup>24</sup> US Delegation Record of the Second Restricted Meeting, February 1954, *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 7: 890-92, 1046; US Del Berlin to State, Secto 24, January 26, 1954, 396.1-BE/1-2654, NAUS; Dulles to State, February 6, 1954, 396.1 BE/2-654, NAUS.

the chance of French ratifying EDC, because the prospects of peace would further decrease falling French fighting morale and slow the urgency in approving EDC.<sup>25</sup>

Perceptions of the Communists made US leaders even more pessimistic. A National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) predicted that the Communists would not “make any major concessions in the interest of relieving international tension in Asia.” According to the Director of Southeast Asia affairs of the State Department, the Communists, aware of US difficult position among allies and encouraged by their diplomatic victory in Berlin, would spare no effort “to divide France and the US to contrast a peace-loving, reasonable France anxious to stop the death of her sons with warmongering US eager to continue a slaughter in which American soldiers are not engaged.”<sup>26</sup> On the other hand, the seemingly close relations between Communists did not seem to leave much room for exploitation. Although Dulles was suspicious about Soviet sincerity in promoting the PRC’s position, and American officials wondered if the rise of the PRC’s prestige after the Korean War and Stalin’s death had made the Soviets uneasy, they were never sure if the differences they perceived within the Communist alliance really existed.<sup>27</sup> With its attention concentrated on Europe, the Soviet Union seemed to be content to let the PRC play a central role in Asia, although they did not want to get involved in a conflict in Southeast Asia.

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<sup>25</sup> Memo, Gullion to Bowie, February 24, 1954, *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 16: 417-25; “Possible Problems vis-à-vis France in Connection to the Geneva Conference,” March 8, 1954. Records of the Bureau of the Far Eastern Affairs Relating to the Southeast Asia and the Geneva Conference, Box 13, RG 59, NAUS. The US officials learned from the Soviets in early March that the Communists would like a partition on the 16<sup>th</sup> parallel. See *The Pentagon Papers*, 134.

<sup>26</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 16: 440, 464; *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 391, 406-07; “China newspaper article listing reasons for US agreeing to the Geneva Conference at Berlin,” March 13, 1954, Records of the Bureau of the Far Eastern Affairs Relating to the Southeast Asia and the Geneva Conference, Box 13, RG 59, NAUS; “Preparation for the Geneva Conference: recommendation for establishing additional working group on Communist China,” March 15, 1954, General Records of the Department of State, Lot file No. 71 D 368, General Subject File Relating to the People’s Republic of China, 1954-61, Box 24, RG 59, NAUS.

<sup>27</sup> Telegram, Dulles to President, February 1, 1954, Dulles-Herter Series, Box 1, DDEL.

Given the fact China's security interests were at stake, as US leaders acknowledged, "the US and China are now in effect engaged in a limited war (the battlefronts are in Korea, the Straits of Formosa, and Indochina," US officials judged that in Geneva the PRC would be "the principal actor" on the Communist side.<sup>28</sup>

Therefore, in early March both US military and civilian leaders concluded that negotiations would not produce any acceptable result, and the US "must help France win" a military victory, without using US troops.<sup>29</sup> To assist the French, President Eisenhower publicly declared that the US was "supporting the Vietnamese and French in their conduct of war." The US had provided cargo airplanes and training technicians, and now it pushed France to continue fighting until a "satisfactory settlement was achieved." Meanwhile, Dulles suggested helping Taiwan launch some "harassing tactics" along China's coast to distract the PRC from Indochina. Some State Department officials proposed starting negotiations with Chiang Kai-shek on a Mutual Defense Treaty (MDT) to "strengthen our negotiating posture at the Conference by making clear at the outset our completely firm position on the Formosa issue."<sup>30</sup>

If the US had to go to Geneva, according to Secretary Dulles, it should approach the conference as a "holding action," to make time for the French to improve its stance in Indochina and to ratify the EDC. The US delegation would "specify our terms of a settlement with

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<sup>28</sup> Preparation for the Geneva Conference: recommendation for establishing additional working group on Communist China, March 15, 1954, 0513/4, Box 24, NAUS; *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 16: 476; Vol. 13: 1174, 1109-16; *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 397-98.

<sup>29</sup> See memorandum, the Chairman of the Operations Coordinating Board of the State Department, *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 16: 426-28, 450, and 475; at this time, the NSC was not pessimistic about the military situation in Indochina, see Memo of NSC 187<sup>th</sup> meeting, March 4, 1954, *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 13: 1093, 1174. See also, *The Pentagon Papers*, 439-43; and *From Pearl Harbor to Vietnam: The Memoirs of Admiral Arthur W. Radford*, ed. by Stephen Jurika, Jr. (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1980), 388-93.

<sup>30</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 16: 442; *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 396, 400, and 407.

Communist China,” and the best result was to let the conference “end inconclusively.”<sup>31</sup> In order to delay the conference, Dulles instructed US diplomats not to make preparation with the British and French officials for the conference, but rather to leave all the procedural and substantive problems until he arrived at Geneva. Meanwhile, Dulles resisted the Soviet efforts to make China “look like” a sponsor of the conference, and warned Britain and France not to consult with the PRC about anything having to do with the composition of the Geneva Conference.<sup>32</sup>

The deteriorating military situation in Indochina, however, pushed the US leaders to consider intervention. In mid-March, the Vietminh started the Dien Bien Phu campaign with Chinese assistance, which according to Dulles “came ‘awfully closely’ to the type of overt aggression” the US had been expecting from China.<sup>33</sup> By late March, the French forces were facing a collapse, and repeatedly requested US intervention. The American leaders worried about a French surrender, but they recognized that US intervention could not be approved by the Congress unless several conditions were reached: joint action with allies, continued French fighting and granting independence to the three Indochinese states, and an invitation for US intervention from France and the three Associated States of Indochina.<sup>34</sup> In these circumstances, building a collective defense organization to deter the Communists as well as to prepare allies for further actions seemed to be the only feasible strategy, although Dulles in private was even talking about using nuclear weapons to save Dien Bien Phu, and some US officials suggested

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<sup>31</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 16: 417-25, 426-31, 449, 476; *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 398.

<sup>32</sup> The US negative attitude toward the conference was so obvious that the French press accused the US of trying to “postpone or call Geneva Conference on any possible pretext...” *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 16: 466, 470-71, 484; Vol. 13: 1206.

<sup>33</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 13: 1145-46, 1273, 1283-84, 1299; US reaction to Chinese Communist introduction of air power in Indochina, April 9, 1954. General Records of the Department of State, Records of the Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs Relating to Southeast Asia and the Geneva Conference, miscellaneous file, Box 13, RG 59, NAUS.

<sup>34</sup> For the US worries about French surrender, see *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 13: 1206, 1242, 1214-18. For US conditions for intervention, see *FRUS*, 1952-54, 13: 1236,

attacking China directly to prevent a military disaster. Dulles and Eisenhower publicly called for United Action, which they hoped would deter the Chinese Communists, and stiffen the French positions.<sup>35</sup>

But US efforts for United Action found few supporters. France on the one hand requested US intervention to save Dien Bien Phu, but on the other, was worried that the internationalization of the war would help the US take over their control of Indochina. What is certain,” according to General Henri Navarre, the French Commander in Indochina, “it’s that internationalization of the war is the end of French influence in Indochina—in that definitive stroke it draws down one hundred years of effort and eight years of sacrifice.”<sup>36</sup> Therefore, they wanted a one-time unilateral strike from the US to save Dien Bien Phu, rather than United Action. After the military situation was stabilized, they could start negotiations from a position of strength with the Communists for a negotiated peace.<sup>37</sup> Also, the talk about US intervention would put pressure on the Communists. Therefore, to press the US for assistance, the French warned the Americans that once they lost the fortress, they would have to seek peace with the Communists, and also disapprove EDC under French public pressure. But on the other hand, they told the British they would strive for a negotiated settlement in Geneva. In this situation, the US Ambassador to France believed that it was “hardly likely” that US plan for intervention could get France support

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<sup>35</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 13: 1109-16; 1221-23, 1234-35, 1236; *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 397.

<sup>36</sup> Waite, “The End of the First Indochina War,” 242.

<sup>37</sup> In conversations with American officials on April 21, French officials implied that France wanted US intervention but not “United Action.” See telegrams, US Embassy Paris to State, no. 3972, and 4003, April 21, 1954, 751G.5/4-2154, NAUS; *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 13: 1352-54, 1358. For French original position, see *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 16: 436, 446; “Possible Problems vis-à-vis France in Connection to the Geneva Conference,” March 8, 1954, Records of the Bureau of the Far Eastern Affairs Relating to the Southeast Asia and the Geneva Conference, Box 13, RG 59, NAUS.

before Geneva.<sup>38</sup>

The British was even less willing to follow the US. First of all, although the British agreed about the strategic importance of Indochina, they did not think the loss of it would hurt their interests in Southeast Asia, which focused on Malaya and Hong Kong; and they did not even think loss of Dien Bien Phu would lead to the loss of Indochina.<sup>39</sup> British officials also did not believe the PRC was as ambitious as US leaders perceived. According to their Charge d’Affaires in Beijing, the Chinese concentration was on their domestic development, and needed a period of “easier relations with the West.” Therefore the PRC was not likely to intervene in Indochina.<sup>40</sup>

Moreover, both France and Britain were worried that US intervention would provoke the PRC’s intervention and lead to a general war with the Communists.<sup>41</sup> And the Americans’ talks about massive retaliation and tests of hydrogen bombs in particular scared the British, given their deployment of nuclear weapons in Britain and the fact that the Soviets already possessed hydrogen bombs. For Churchill, “the British people would not be easily influenced by what happened in the distant jungles of S.E. Asia; but they did know that there was a wonderful American base in East Anglia and that war with China, who would invoke the Sino-Russian Pact, might mean an assault by Hydrogen bombs on these islands.”<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 13: 1280-83, 1361-62, 1371-74, 1375-77.

<sup>39</sup> Cable, *The Geneva Conference*, 1; *The Pentagon Papers*, 145. According to Warner, the British had concluded in 1952 that they could withhold Malaya at the Kra Isthmus even if the Chinese captured Indochina. See Warner, “The Settlement of Indochina War,” 235-36. For the importance of Hong Kong to Britain, and American and British policy toward it, see Johannes R. Lombardo, “Eisenhower, the British and the Security of Hong Kong, 1953-60,” *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, Vol.9, No. 3 (1998): 134-53.

<sup>40</sup> Telegrams, Trevelyan No. 334, October 19, 1953, and Trevelyan No. 9, January 12, 1954, unpaginated in *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office*, Part V, Series E, Vol. 4 and 6 (Bethesda, MD: LexisNexis, 2005).

<sup>41</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 13: 1337, and Vol. 16: 466.

<sup>42</sup> Churchill letter to Eisenhower, 9 March 1954, *Churchill-Eisenhower Correspondence*, 122-24; Telegram, Radford to Dulles, JCS 960578, April 27, 1954, 790.5/4-2654, NAUS; *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 13: 1416-17; Memo, Brownjohn to Prime Minister, April 26, 1954, FO371/112057, NAUK. For the British anxiety about US nuclear

The French and British also believed the PRC's real concern was its own security, instead of expansion into Indochina; and what it wanted in the negotiation was a buffer area in Northern Vietnam.<sup>43</sup> On the other hand, a ceasefire on the basis of partition of Vietnam was the "only feasible solution" for the French, given their military disadvantage and domestic divisions. They did not want to initiate the proposal, however. For the British, a divided Vietnam with independent Laos and Cambodia was the "least undesirable" solution, as British diplomats told their American colleagues in early April.<sup>44</sup> But according to Dulles, "Communists would infiltrate south of any agreed line;" and thus a partition would ultimately result in the loss of all of Indochina.<sup>45</sup>

Both France and Britain believed the DRV was the PRC's satellite, and the Westerners could induce the Chinese to push their Vietnamese comrades toward concessions. Since there

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policy, see Matthew Jones, "The Geneva Conference of 1954: New Perspectives and Evidence on British Policy and Anglo-American Relations"; Wilson Center Reader.

<sup>43</sup> "Draft Policy towards Indochina," March 16, 1954, FO 371/112048, NAUK; Joint Intelligence Committee, "PTI", March 31/April 1, 1954, FO 371/112050, NAUK; Cable, Minute, 23 February 1954, FO 371/112047, NAUK; Allen, Letter to Scott, 24 February 1954, FO 371/112047, NAUK. Cable, *Geneva Conference*, 44.

<sup>44</sup> The French originally proposed the "leopard skin" zones, which left all the major urban centers in French hands. See "Memorandum of Conversation: French Military Briefing—Indochina," May 11, 1954, Executive Secretariat Conference Files, 1949-1963, Box 49, CF 312, RG 59, NAUS; but in private, they acknowledged that partition was more realistic. See Philippe Devillers and Jean Lacouture, *End of a war: Indochina, 1954* (New York: Praeger, 1969), 206-07. Britain started to think about the partition to end the conflict in Indochina in March 1954. See for example, "Draft Policy towards Indochina," March 16, 1954, FO 371/112048, NAUK. On March 31, the Joint Intelligence Committee endorsed the document and Eden approved it the next day. See Joint Intelligence Committee, "PTI", March 31/April 1, 1954, FO 371/112050, NAUK; Scott, Record of Interview, April 2, 1954, FO 371/112050, NAUK; UK Embassy Washington to Foreign Office, FO 371/112049, NAUK; "Record of Interview at State Department," April 2, 1954, FO 371/112050, NAUK; "Memorandum of Conversation, by the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Drumright)," April 2, 1954, *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol.13: 1214-17.

<sup>45</sup> Dulles to Washington, May 3, 1954, Executive Secretariat Conference Files, 1949-1963, Box 49, CF 309, Five Power Military Talks and United Action, RG 59, NAUS; "Record of Interview at State Department," April 2, 1954, FO 371/112050, NAUK; "Memorandum of Conversation, by the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Drumright)," April 2, 1954, *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol.13: 1214-17. When the British enthusiasm for partition became public in late April, Eisenhower told the press that the US government did not consider "partition or division" as an acceptable compromise. See "Message from the President for immediate transmission to the Secretary of State," May 1, 1954, *FRUS*, 1952-54, 16: 640-41.

was little the French could offer, they expected the US to make some concessions to the PRC.<sup>46</sup>

The British agreed that détente with the PRC would work. As Eden told Churchill, “I have always believed that these negotiations involve concessions to the Communists probably entailing a buffer state on China’s southern border.”<sup>47</sup> But for the Americans, “There is no possibility whatever of extending any concessions to Communist China,...in exchange for promises or agreements they might indicate willingness to enter [Indochina]...”<sup>48</sup>

In sum, both the British and French thought the Geneva Conference provided an opportunity to get a negotiated peace. Their position received support from Australia and New Zealand, two other most important allies of the US.<sup>49</sup>

To win allies’ support for United Action before the Geneva Conference, Dulles visited London and Paris, but his trips were hardly successful.<sup>50</sup> The British did not think he had a well-developed idea about what he wanted to do, so Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden only agreed to start “informal talks” about a defense group, and declined to make a declaration about it.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> For the French attitude, see Anthony Rumbold to John G Tahourdin, Paris, 16 March 1954, FO 371/112048, NAUK; US Embassy Paris to State, no. 2951, 13 February 1954, 751G.5/2-1354, NAUS, *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 13: 1044-46; Probable French Position on Indochina at Geneva. Intelligence Report, NIE No. 6; March 26, 1954, Miscellaneous Lot Files, 1944-59, Intelligence Bureau, Office of the Director, Lot 58D528, Box 65, RG 59, NAUS; US Position at Geneva-- General Records of the DOS, Records of the Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs Relating to Southeast Asia and the Geneva Conference, 1954, Miscellaneous—Geneva Conference, April 1954-2, Box 13, RG 59, NAUS; Memorandum by the Counselor (MacArthur),” March 31, 1954, *FRUS*, 1952-54, 16: 458-60; “The Secretary of State to the Embassy in France,” March 27, 1954, *FRUS*, 1952-54, 16: 485-86.

<sup>47</sup> Eden to Churchill, May 22, 1954, PREM 11/649, NAUK.

<sup>48</sup> Geneva Conference Indochina Phase: US Position with French; General Records of the Department of State, Records of the Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs Relating to Southeast Asia and the Geneva Conference, 1954, Miscellaneous—Geneva Conference, April 1954-2, Box 13, RG 59, NAUS.

<sup>49</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 407; *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 13: 1234-35. For Australia’s role during the Geneva Conference, see Gregory James Pemberton, “Australia, the United States, and the Indochina Crisis of 1954,” *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (Winter 1989): 45-66.

<sup>50</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 13: 1287. Before his trip, Dulles was already warned that the United Action was “hardly likely” to get support. Telegram, April 7, 1954, *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 13: 1280-83; Vol. 16: 504. For Dulles’s travel to Europe, see *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 13, 1311-15; *The Pentagon Papers*, 101-03; “Chronology of Actions on the Subject of Indochina,” January 27, 1956, Subject Series, “Indochina 1954 (3),” Dulles Papers, DDEL.

<sup>51</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 13: 1311-13, 1319-23, 1326. See Warner, “The Settlement of Indochina War,” 242, 245.

Moreover, when Dulles came back to Washington to call for the meeting, Eden changed his mind and asked the British ambassador not to attend it.<sup>52</sup> In Paris, Dulles found that the French did not want to displease the PRC, and could not agree among themselves what they wanted other than a military cease-fire. According to Dulles, they would “favor a negotiated settlement of the fighting in Indochina at almost any price.” On the other hand, the US refused the French request for intervention, on the grounds that the US would not intervene without the UK’s participation.<sup>53</sup> When the three foreign ministers met together at Paris right before conference, the US requested UK participation to save Dien Bien Phu, as it would be soon lost to the Communists, and the French warned of a collapse of French resistance in Indochina.<sup>54</sup> Eden was not even willing to discuss the possibility of intervention, and refused to give even “moral support” to it. However earnestly Dulles requested British help, Eden only agreed to think about building a defense group after Geneva. The British government believed that intervention would “be the first step towards a third world war,” and it declared that Britain would try to help France reach an agreement in Geneva.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 16: 533-34, 537; Vol. 13: 1349. Jones believed Eden changed his mind because of his concerns about reactions from Asian states, especially India. See Jones, “The Geneva Conference of 1954,” 20-22.

<sup>53</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 13: 1292, 1327-40; Vol. 16: 518, 519-20, 524, 556, 557-8, and 570; John Foster Dulles, memorandum of conversation with Georges Bidault, April 14, 1954, Dulles Papers, Dulles-Herter Series, Whitman File, DDEL.

<sup>54</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 16: 576. The most important British documents include “tripartite meeting in Paris on Indochina,” April 16, 1954, FO371/112055, NAUK; telegram, Eden to Churchill, from Paris to Foreign Office, April 24, 1954, FO371/112055, FO371/112056, NAUK; telegram, Foreign Office to British Embassy in Canada, April 28, 1954, FO371/112056, NAUK; telegram, Eden from Geneva Conference to Foreign Office, May 2, 1954, FO371/112058, NAUK. See also Dulles telegrams to State Department, April 22, 23, 24, 25, 1954, “Dulles-April 1954 (1), (2),” Dulles-Herter Series, Whitman File, DDEL. However, the British perception of the organization was different from the US’s. Warner, “The Settlement of Indochina War,” 243-48, 250.

<sup>55</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 16: 576. The most important British documents include “tripartite meeting in Paris on Indochina,” April 16, 1954, FO371/112055, NAUK; telegram, Eden to Churchill, from Paris to Foreign Office, April 24, 1954, FO371/112055, FO371/112056, NAUK; telegram, Foreign Office to British Embassy in Canada, April 28, 1954, FO371/112056, NAUK; telegram, Eden from Geneva Conference to Foreign Office, May 2, 1954, FO371/112058, NAUK. See also Dulles telegrams to State Department, April 22, 23, 24, 25, 1954, “Dulles-April

US leaders had kept open the option of intervention alone, but without the British support, the US Congress would not support the action.<sup>56</sup> And perhaps more importantly, they had to agree with the British that US unilateral actions in Indochina would very likely lead to Chinese intervention.<sup>57</sup> Finally the NSC decided to “hold up for the time being any military action on Indochina,” but the US should continue to push for the establishment of a defense group in Southeast Asia.<sup>58</sup>

On the eve of the Indochina negotiation, great gaps existed between the US and its allies. The American diplomats believed there were only two results to be achieved in Geneva: disguised capitulation by either the French or the Communists. In this circumstance, the US delegation would simply specify terms for the Communists to reach. Although the Americans did not eliminate a ceasefire, they set some rigid conditions, such as demobilizing Vietminh forces to “a controllable limit,” control of the Sino-Vietnamese border under international supervision, withdrawal of the DRV’s forces from Laos and Cambodia, and ultimate incorporation of the DRV into the SOV.<sup>59</sup> The French government, paralyzed by internal divisions, could only agree on a peaceful settlement, which according to US ambassador to Paris, was such a “paramount goal” that they could not afford to do anything that might endanger their chances of making

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1954 (1), (2),” Dulles-Herter Series, Whiteman File, DDEL. However, the British perception of the organization was different from the US’s.

<sup>56</sup> Arthur Radford supported air strike to save Dien Bien Phu, and Dulles thought of using US air and sea forces to restrain China from supporting the DRV. See *FRUS*, 1952-54, 13: 1206. For US military estimate of using atomic bomb to eliminate the DRV from Dien Bien Phu, see *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 13: 1271-72. For detailed discussion, see Herring and Immerman, “Eisenhower, Dulles, and Dienbienphu.”

<sup>57</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 13: 1251-66, 1430.

<sup>58</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 13: 1430, 1431-45; *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 16: 605, 640.

<sup>59</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 16: 508, 530, 631-35.

peace in Geneva.<sup>60</sup> The British were increasingly worried US leaders were seriously considering replacing France in Indochina; and Eden indicated to Dulles his willingness to accept the 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> parallel as a demarcation line in Vietnam.<sup>61</sup>

Although the Western leaders realized the vital importance of unity amongst themselves, especially when the Communists were obviously exploiting the differences between them, US relations with its allies were frayed.<sup>62</sup> French officials resented that the US was putting them in the most difficult position: it refused to help them either on the battleground, or at the negotiation table. Many French believed the US was sacrificing the French lives for its own interests.<sup>63</sup> US leaders were worried that France would “sacrifice friendship for peace,” and at the same time, were so infuriated by British intransigence that Dulles considered establishing a coalition without British participation.<sup>64</sup> US diplomats expected that “we may find ourselves in uncomfortable isolation” in Geneva.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> UK Del to FO, no. 145, 5 May 1954, FO371/112059, NAUK; *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 6: 689-90; *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol 13: 1290-92; US Del to State, Secto 89, 4 May 1954, 396.1 GE/5-454, NAUS; Bobbright, Memo, April 8, 1954, 751G.00/4-854, NAUS.

<sup>61</sup> Eden (Geneva) to Foreign Office, April 26, 1954, FO 371/112056, NAUK; *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 16: 553-57; Vol. 13: 1375-77.

<sup>62</sup> Chinese newspaper article listing reasons for US agreeing to the Geneva Conference at Berlin, March 13, 1954, General Records of the Department of State, Records of the Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs Relating to Southeast Asia and the Geneva Conference, miscellaneous file, Box 13, RG 59, NAUS; and General Records of the Department of State, Lot File No. 71 D 368, General Subject Files Relating to the People’s Republic of China, 1954-61, Box 24, RG 59, NAUS. For the American responses to the British and French positions on the Dien Bien Phu crisis in late April, see Eisenhower Diary, April 27, 1954, and Eisenhower to Everett “Swede” Hazlett, April 27, 1954, in Diary Series, “April 1954,” Whiteman File, DDEL.

<sup>63</sup> UK Embassy Paris to Foreign Office, April 7, 1954, FO371/112050, NAUK; Telegram, Jebb to Foreign Office, May 3, 1954, FO371/112058, NAUK.

<sup>64</sup> US leaders were aware that the French were not only pressing them for concessions to the PRC, but also holding secret talks with the Soviets, and attempting to trade EDC for settlement in Indochina. See Meeting between Sir Percy Spender and Mr. Arthur H Dean, memo for Secretary from Arthur Dean, Chinese Communist Commentary on Indochina, General Records of the Department of State, Records of the Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs Relating to Southeast Asia and the Geneva Conference, 1954, Miscellaneous—Geneva Conference, April 1954-2, Box 13, RG59, NAUS.

<sup>65</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 13: 1431-45.

In contrast to their own disunity, US leaders did not find many gaps between the Communist countries.<sup>66</sup> Dulles toyed with the idea of pressuring the PRC through the Soviet Union, and tried to feel out the Soviets on this possibility when he reached Geneva. At his meeting with Molotov, Dulles suggested the US and Soviet Union should both restrain their junior partners, meaning France and the PRC, but to his disappointment, Molotov did not “bite” at “any of the flies I [Dulles] had cast.”<sup>67</sup> The NSC had believed before Dulles went to Geneva that there was no open friction between the PRC and the Soviets, and driving a wedge between the two remained a long-range objective. After his meeting with Molotov, Dulles concluded, “To date there has been no development...which would tend to indicate anything but complete Communist bloc unity.”<sup>68</sup>

### **Negotiations as Holding Action**

Communist actions after the Indochina negotiation started simply confirmed the US officials’ prediction about their aggression against the region. Communist proposals at the conference were absolutely unacceptable to the US. A ceasefire leaving the Vietminh forces intact would lead to Communist control of Vietnam; without effective supervision, the Vietminh would use the ceasefire to build up military and political strength. Moreover, the DRV’s request for a “general solution” obviously indicated its ambition to dominate the whole of Indochina, not

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<sup>66</sup> Immerman, “The United States and the Geneva.”

<sup>67</sup> Dulles-Molotov meeting, April 27, 1954, and luncheon meeting of Dulles, Eden, and Bidault, April 28, 1954, *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 16: 579-80, 152-53; telegram, Dulles to State Department, April 30, 1954, Chronological Series, “May 1954 (5),” Dulles Papers, DDEL; and U. Alexis Johnson, *The Right Hand of Power* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1984), 220.

<sup>68</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 406-07, 409-11; Telegram, Dulles to State Department, April 30, 1954, Chronological Series, “May 1954 (5),” Dulles Papers, DDEL.

just Vietnam.<sup>69</sup> Meanwhile, Communist actions on the battleground removed any doubt about their ambitions. After capturing Dien Bien Phu, the Vietminh forces were quickly moving toward the Tonkin Delta, and would be able to start new offensive in two or three weeks, according to the CIA director.<sup>70</sup> Shortly after the negotiations began, a joint estimate by the State Department and CIA concluded that Communist objective was “Victory in Vietnam,” and their peace proposal simply served the purpose of exploiting the French and British interests in peace.<sup>71</sup> Therefore, talking with the Communists simply played into their hands.

US allies, however, were interested in diplomacy with the Communists. The French were eager for a respite from the war, and reluctantly added the issue of supervision to their proposal under the threat that the US would end its assistance and also its participation in the negotiations. But according to US ambassador to Paris, with the loss of Dien Bien Phu, France had lost its hand, and “may eventually be forced to accept pretty much any settlement put forward by the Vietminh and the Chinese Communists.”<sup>72</sup> The British agreed with the US on the importance of supervision, but in contrast to US position of a guarantee by United Action of the US and its allies, they suggested a general guarantee by both the Communist and the Western powers,

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<sup>69</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 13: 1519. Eden also judged that the DRV wanted to “grab the whole of Indochina including Laos and Cambodia.” See Eden’s telegram regarding his meeting with Zhou Enlai, May 20, 1954, FO371/112067, NAUK. For the DRV’s proposal, and the US perception, see *The Pentagon Papers*, 118-21.

<sup>70</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 13: 1505, 1509. For US military estimates of the DRV’s movements, see Memo of conversation: Situation in Indochina and possible defense arrangements in SEA, General Records of the Department of State, Records of the Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs Relating to Southeast Asia and the Geneva Conference, 1954, Geneva Conference, April-June 1954, Box 14, RG 59, NAUS.

<sup>71</sup> Joint State-CIA Estimate on Communist Intentions regarding Indochinese phase of Conference—Memo to Ambassador Heath from Chester Cooper and Joseph Yager, General Records of the Department of State, Records of the Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs Relating to Southeast Asia and the Geneva Conference, 1954, Geneva Conference, April-June 1954, Box 14, RG 59, NAUS. US officials noticed the uncompromising tone of the PRC’s propaganda and believe it indicated the PRC would not take any moves in the direction of moderation. See Memo for Robertson from Edwin W. Martin: Comments on Molotov’s May 14 Speech, General Records of the Department of State, Lot File No. 71 D 368: General Subject Files relating to the PRC, 1954-61, Box 24, RG 59, NAUS.

<sup>72</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 16: 700, 747.

which US officials believed would give the Communists opportunities to make the supervision useless.<sup>73</sup> Eden told the Cabinet that the British aim in Geneva “should be to draw a line and create a Modus Vivendi in Asia of the kind already created in Europe.”<sup>74</sup> He decided to coordinate with the French against the US pressure, in order to reach a settlement.<sup>75</sup>

US leaders hesitated but finally decided to stay in the negotiations, because they feared that the French government would collapse and surrender everything to the Communists if the US did not stand by them. US participation would also enable it to restrain its allies from retreating too much. And moreover, it would demonstrate the US’s willingness to seek peace, and thus help it win over allied support for the defense group to be built in Southeast Asia. According to the special assistant to US delegation, US objective in Geneva was to make use of its participation to “play off the Associate States against the French, to stimulate the Communists to overreach themselves, and in general attempt to whittle down the degree of unacceptability of the Indochina settlement.”<sup>76</sup>

To put pressure on US allies as well as the Communists, US officials took a series of actions. They warned the French that the US would disassociate itself from any unacceptable settlement. They also made sure the SOV delegation would refuse to recognize any

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<sup>73</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 16: 584. Originally, Dulles proposed the United Nations as supervisor, *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 16: 790. But he had to give it up later, because the French were afraid that the question of their colonies in Africa would be raised, and Dulles also came to realize that getting UN involved would inevitably lead to discussion about the PRC’s membership in the UN.

<sup>74</sup> Eden to Foreign Office, May 22, 1954, PREM 11/649, NAUK.

<sup>75</sup> Eden told the British Foreign Office on May 12, “it is important to coordinate our line with French; two things are essential: that French should make up their minds as to what they will take and say so soon. We will back them. Americans should not press French to stand out for more than they can hope to get. We should speak out firmly against any such US tendency.” Telegram, Eden to Foreign Office, May 13, 1954, FO371/112065, NAUK. The French were on the one hand seeking US intervention and holding secret talks with the US, but on the other, reassuring the British that they were still committed to negotiation in Geneva, and were using the threat of US intervention to “play on fears of Chinese and Russians.” See Eden to Foreign Office (for Prime Minister), May 17, 1954, FO 371/112067, NAUK.

<sup>76</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 16: 645-46, 747.

“unsatisfactory solution,” and would withdraw from the conference should an unexpected settlement come out. Dulles limited US role to a mere “interested nation,” which would not give “express or implied approval” to any settlement which would not protect the current Indochinese governments and their territorial integrity.<sup>77</sup>

Behind the scenes, Dulles talked with Eisenhower again about the possibility of US intervention, and concluded that it was too risky, as unilateral intervention would be vetoed by the British and encourage Chinese aggression “to a point where the whole position in the Pacific would be endangered and the risk of general war increase,” and even a united intervention would have “at least 50 percent chance” of Chinese intervention. From his short stay in Geneva, Dulles became increasingly worried about possible PRC intervention under the scenario of US covert entrance into Indochina. Meanwhile, US leaders were also clear that US intervention would also be opposed by “Asiatic opinion.”<sup>78</sup>

On the other hand, US efforts for United Action made little progress. Eden agreed with Dulles’s suggestion of starting preliminary talks through the Five Power Military Staff Agency (including US, UK, France, Australia, and New Zealand), but opposed even publishing his willingness to establish a defense organization, on the grounds that it would decrease the chance of agreement at the negotiations, and alienate Asian states, especially those British Commonwealth members which he wanted to bring along into the organization.<sup>79</sup> In this circumstance, Dulles started negotiations with France behind British backs about internationalizing the war, hoping the French would “come to [the] conclusion that this [internationalization] is preferable

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<sup>77</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 16: 779, 780.

<sup>78</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 13: 1532-33; *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 16: 728.

<sup>79</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 16: 746, 775, 792, 799.

to the harsh terms which no doubt the Communists will seek to exact.”<sup>80</sup> The French refused to meet the conditions the US set. When they reluctantly agreed to let the US train and advise SOV troops under US pressure as well as encouragement, they were not willing to meet other conditions the US had insisted on for intervention.<sup>81</sup> Finally Dulles figured out that what France sought was US intervention independent of United Action, and instructed US officials not to accept the training program. French officials frankly told the Americans that they would only be willing to reach some agreement regarding internationalization if an “honorable armistice” could not be obtained at Geneva.<sup>82</sup>

US leaders concluded that the French were not serious about internationalization and were simply using the negotiations to pressure the Communists for a settlement. Dulles believed that “Laniel is creating an alibi and he, or his successor, will in the end tell the French people that they had to capitulate because US terms were so rigorous that they were obviously unacceptable and that therefore [the] US is to blame.” US officials concluded that “the French were practicing a form of blackmail, holding a sword of Damocles over our heads...”<sup>83</sup> What’s worse, France released the Franco-US secret talks to newspapers as a way to pressure the Communists, and this led to strong British reactions. Premier Churchill publicly denied British participation in the negotiations and declared “our immediate task is to do everything we can to reach an agreed settlement at Geneva for the restoration of peace in Indochina.” At the same time, Eden proposed

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<sup>80</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 16: 729; Vol. 13: 1516; 1526-28.

<sup>81</sup> The conditions for US intervention as Dulles published included: an invitation from the Indochinese governments, independence to Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam, UN approval, a joint effort of some other nations in the area, and the French guarantee that it would continue to fight. *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 13: 1582, 1594, 1614, 1676.

<sup>82</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 13: 1601-02, 1689.

<sup>83</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 13: 1571, 1576, 1604, 1671, 1676; *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 16: 1100-01, 1604.

a cease-fire, the acceptance of which, according to Dulles, “would bring about a de facto partition of all three of the Associated States.”<sup>84</sup>

Infuriated by the British, Eisenhower told Dulles that he “would not necessarily exclude sending some Marines” to Indochina, so long as the US got support from its other allies, and the two agreed that the defense organization “did not make British active participation a necessary condition.” Meanwhile, Eisenhower requested US officials to prepare “with the highest urgency and secrecy” studies on China’s reactions under the scenario of US intervention. Dulles once again suggested letting Chinese Nationalist forces to start some “diversionary activities” to stop the PRC’s aggression in Indochina, which got Eisenhower’s support. At the same time, Dulles declared at a press conference that the US would soon start the Military Staff meeting to discuss United Action in Washington.<sup>85</sup>

Meanwhile, negotiations in Geneva were deadlocked. The Communists retreated a little from their original positions, such as agreeing to start the military talks first, reaching a ceasefire on the basis of demarcation, and setting up armistice negotiations with the French.<sup>86</sup> But they refused to admit the existence of DRV forces in Laos and Cambodia, and they did not accept US requirements for ceasefire supervision. US officials ignored Communist concessions as a game of “playing for time.” Dulles agreed that the Communists would “protract the negotiations until they were sure that they had won the war in Indochina,” because they knew the UK and France were unwilling to carry out United Action.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 16: 834-35, 857, 943, 1023-24.

<sup>85</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 13: 1581, 1584, Vol. 16: 1068-69.

<sup>86</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 16: 864, 865, 911.

<sup>87</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 16: 865; *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 13: 1590.

Communist actions reinforced this perception. The Vietminh refused to discuss substantial issues in their meetings with the French; Zhou Enlai refused to separate Laos and Cambodia from Vietnam; and Molotov, whom the Westerners thought was moderate, started to take a “tougher line,” leading to the speculation that the Communists may have been instructed by the Moscow not to retreat.<sup>88</sup> Meanwhile, reports from various channels indicated that the Vietminh would attack the Tonkin Delta soon. The presence of Soviet advisors in DRV forces and the fact that the Vietminh depended completely on China for logistical support led to the US leaders’ suspicion that the Communists had a well-coordinated plan, and were just using negotiations to prevent the British and French from supporting US intervention.<sup>89</sup> Meanwhile, the situation in the Taiwan Strait added to US estimate of Communist aggressiveness: Chinese air and naval forces were gathering along the Chinese coast for an attack on the Dachen Islands in the Taiwan Strait, according to US Ambassador in Taiwan.<sup>90</sup> According to a NIE prepared by the CIA, Chinese forces were already prepared to help the DRV’s offensive on the Tonkin Delta, and the potential threat could be disastrous:

At the very minimum, China possessed the ability to commit seven armies and two artillery divisions involving between 500,000 and 600,000 men to the Tonkin Delta within 7 days ....the Chinese possessed the capability to intervene in Indochina in sufficient strength to overcome any conventional US assistance....If the Chinese chose to attack the Tachen Islands, the naval forces needed to support the marines in Indochina would be drawn away....the alternative to conventional US intervention was the use of atomic weapons directly against China.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 16: 1051, 1066. Immerman, “The United States and the Geneva Conference,” 57-60.

<sup>89</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 13: 1; Vol. 16: 944.

<sup>90</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 426, 429, 434.

<sup>91</sup> NIE 35-3-54, submitted by CIA on May 25, and declassified on December 20, 1982. Francis Noland Dawson, “The 1954 Geneva Conference: Eisenhower’s Indochina Policy,” 129, Ph.D. dissertation, West Virginia University, 1985; Excerpts from National Intelligence Estimate on Communist Capabilities in Indochina, from Joseph Yager and Chester Cooper to Ambassador Heath, General Records of the DOS, Records of the Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs Relating to Southeast Asia and the Geneva Conference, 1954, Geneva Conference, April-June 1954, Box 14, RG 59, NAUS.

In Geneva, the Chinese were also launching a new offensive. Making use of Americans' concerns about their nationals detained in the PRC, the Chinese delegation suggested direct negotiations with the US. US leaders saw this as a ploy to promote China's international status and to exploit differences between the US and the UK, which had always been interested in mediating between China and the US. Under pressure from the American public, they had to seek the return of the Americans, and finally agreed to start consular talks with the Chinese. Dulles, however, instructed Smith to interrupt the negotiations as soon as they got back the detained American citizens.<sup>92</sup>

With negotiations deadlocked, the US saw an increasingly serious Chinese aggression in early June. Smith even believed China would probably "welcome" US intervention, because that would give them a chance to enter the war and drive out the US; and a US intervention would also alienate Asian states, thus working for the Communist policy of isolating the US.<sup>93</sup> US officials had warned the PRC leaders not to take actions in late May, and now the NSC started to discuss US response to a Chinese Communist overt unprovoked military aggression in the Western Pacific area or Southeast Asia. Dulles met with Australian and New Zealand's ambassadors, requesting their support to get ready for a possible Chinese aggression in the Western Pacific, under the scenario that the Chinese Communists would "run amuck" after successes in Indochina "go to their heads."<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 438-43. The Americans were correct: as Chinese sources indicate, PRC leaders were actually using the detained Americans as tools in their relations with the US first in Geneva (see Chapter 1) and then during the Bandung Conference (Chapter 5).

<sup>93</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 16: 1055.

<sup>94</sup> "Overt Chinese aggression in Southeast Asia," June 4, 1954. General Records of the Department of State, Records of the Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs Relating to Southeast Asia and the Geneva Conference, 1954. Box 14, RG 59, NAUS. *The Pentagon Papers*, Chapter 2.

US leaders were worried their allies could not withstand Communist pressure. Given the British “obvious determination to see some form, almost any, of settlement” and the French “unmistakable trend on the political side to get a settlement,” Smith pessimistically predicted that a settlement could be reached in ten days.<sup>95</sup> Dulles instructed US Ambassador to France to “warn Laniel that no statement implying anything like final agreement should be made to his cabinet or in parliament or otherwise now or at any time without careful prior agreement between our governments as to precise form of words.” US leaders also asked the US delegation to “avoid formal identification with open partition or the creation of two states where one now exists.” Dulles instructed Smith to tell Thailand to appeal to the UN Security Council against Vietnamese invasion of its neighbors. At the same time, Smith warned Molotov that if the Vietminh “appetites were too great and if they over-reached themselves a crisis could ensue, which...might well lead to US armed intervention.” In case the French and British would be lured into an agreement when the Soviets “put up a proposal which would salvage a little something for the French” at the last minute, Dulles again instructed the US delegation to warn the French that the US would disassociate itself from such a result.<sup>96</sup>

To the Americans’ relief, a breakthrough did not take place and consequently their allies lost their patience with Communist intransigence. The French sensed a “growing tendency on the part of the Communists to spin out the talks and play for time;” and the British believed the Geneva negotiations were going to fail “within the next week or ten days.” Eden finally concluded that “it might be that it was a Communist rather than a western advantage to continue

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<sup>95</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 16: 992; telegrams, Eden to Foreign Office regarding his meeting with Smith and with Molotov, June 12, 1954, FO371/112071, and FO371/112071, NAUK.

<sup>96</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 13: 1659; *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 16: 1056, 1058, 1059-60, 1104-05.

the conference.”<sup>97</sup> To make use of the British impatience with the Communists, President Eisenhower and Secretary Dulles instructed Smith to “do everything in his power to bring this conference to an end as rapidly as possible,” “...so that we can get ahead on serious talks on collective action as only real means of improving situation.” As another ally, Australia, also came to agree to carry out the plan of the defense group, Dulles told the US delegation that “...the final adjournment of conference is in our best interest.”<sup>98</sup> Meanwhile, some officials in the State Department suggested sending US troops to defend South Vietnam, and American officials were also assessing Chinese reactions to various levels of US intervention in Indochina.<sup>99</sup>

Just at this moment, the Communists made major concessions. Molotov compromised on the composition and authority of the international supervision commission; Zhou Enlai agreed to withdraw all “foreign forces” from Laos and Cambodia; and Pham Van Dong told the two states directly that DRV “volunteers” would leave their territory.<sup>100</sup>

### **Coming to Terms with Reality**

US leaders attributed Communist concessions to the pressure the US had exerted, such as British leaders’ upcoming visit to Washington, and allied threats of intervention.<sup>101</sup> But the US neither increased its pressure on the Communists, nor did it withdraw from negotiations to let the

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<sup>97</sup> Telegram, Reading to Foreign Office, June 7, 1954, FO371/112069, NAUK; *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 16: 1066, 1084. For British perceptions of the negotiation, see Discussion of Far East Problems, memo of Drumright meeting with Scott, British Minister, General Records of the DOS, Records of the Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs Relating to Southeast Asia and the Geneva Conference, 1954, Geneva Conference, April-June 1954, Box 14, RG 59, NAUS.

<sup>98</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 16: 1125, 1130, 1134, 1147.

<sup>99</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 13: 1705-09.

<sup>100</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 16: 1128, 1214; Eden telegrams to Foreign Office, June 16 and 17, 1954, FO371/112073, and FO371/112073, NAUK;

<sup>101</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 16: 1169; 1223-24, 1228. For the reasons for the Communist concession, see Chapter 1.

conference fail, which was the “best result” they had expected. Instead, US leaders privately accepted partition of Vietnam, and on this basis reached an agreement with the British as the foundation for a diplomatic settlement to the Indochina war, a position which they had originally opposed. What were the reasons for this change of policy? This question has not been sufficiently addressed by existing works.

Careful analysis of available documents reveals that the shift of US policy was due to several factors. First of all, after the Communists made certain concessions, US leaders modified their previous estimate of the Communists’ objectives. In his meetings with Western as well as leaders of Laos and Cambodia, Zhou Enlai’s repeatedly expressed his concerns about the US setting up bases in Laos and Cambodia, and indicated that China’s sole objective was to neutralize Indochina, for which Zhou demonstrated a willingness to push the DRV to withdraw from the two states.<sup>102</sup> American leaders saw this as a “considerable advance” over his previous positions.<sup>103</sup> Now American officials came to realize that Chinese anxiety about their security overwhelmed their ambition for expansion, and they believed the Chinese really wanted a ceasefire in Indochina. The State Department admitted that the PRC’s actions in Geneva did demonstrate some “less doctrinaire” and “significant trends”, including China’s trying to be “reasonable” in international affairs, and attempting to reduce international tensions, although it had not given up its ultimate goal of dominating Asia. US officials also acknowledged that restricted by its limited forces, the PRC would “probably be reluctant” to take actions that would

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<sup>102</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 16: 1170-73, 1190.

<sup>103</sup> Telegram from Paris to Secretary of State regarding Zhou’s meeting with Mendes-France, Dulles-Herter Series, Box 1, DDEL.

provoke a war with the US.<sup>104</sup> This was the first time American officials articulated a clear idea about China's actual objectives in Geneva. According to a NIE, the Communists wanted the partition of Vietnam; control of about one-half to one-third of Laos, withdrawal from Cambodia, on condition that Cambodia did not join the US sponsored defense group, and an ineffective international supervisory commission.<sup>105</sup>

If US leaders still had any doubt about the Communists' sincerity about a diplomatic settlement, America's allies were certainly impressed by Chinese eagerness for peace, and British and French leaders pressed the US for peace.<sup>106</sup> From meetings with Zhou Enlai, Eden and the new French Premier Pierre Mendes-France "received a strong impression that Zhou wanted peace urgently and was willing to make concessions for a settlement."<sup>107</sup> According to French diplomats, the Chinese were "pressing" the DRV for a settlement based on partition at the 16<sup>th</sup> parallel; and the Vietminh also seemed "anxious to reach agreement with the least possible delay." Therefore, French officials optimistically told their US colleagues that they were going to reach "tentative agreements" with the DRV very soon. British diplomats believed that France

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<sup>104</sup> "Recent Developments in Communist China," June 17, 1954. General Records of the Department of State, Records of the Office of Chinese Affairs, Numerical Files, 1949-55, Box 48, RG 59, NAUS.

<sup>105</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 16: 1223-24, 1228. NIE on Soviet Capabilities and Main Lines of Policy through Mid-1959, June 9, 1954, from memorandum, from Joseph Yager and Chester Cooper to Ambassador Heath, General Records of the Department of State, Records of the Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs Relating to Southeast Asia and the Geneva Conference, 1954, Geneva Conference, April-June 1954, Box 14, RG 59 NAUS.

<sup>106</sup> Eden to Foreign Office, June 16, 1954, FO 371/112074, NAUK; Dult 185, June 16, 1954, *FRUS*, 16: 389-90; Record of conversation between R. G. Casey and Chou Enlai, Geneva, June 18, 1954, FO 371/112073, NAUK; Zhou admitted these concerns to Eden when he met with the later on June 16. For the British perception of the meetings, see UK Del to Foreign Office, no. 747 and 751, 16 June 1954, FO371/112073, NAUK; Anthony Eden (Geneva) to Foreign Office, June 18 and July 13, 1954, FO 371/112073, and FO 371/112077, NAUK.

<sup>107</sup> Telegrams, Eden to Foreign Office regarding his meetings with Zhou June 16 and 19, 1954, FO371/112073, NAUK; Telegram, Eden to Foreign Office regarding his meeting with Bidault, June 17, 1954, FO371/112073, NAUK; telegrams, Reading to Foreign Office, June 22, 1954, and account of the French note re Mendes-France meeting with Zhou Enlai, June 23, 1954, FO371/112074, NAUK; telegram regarding meeting between Mendes-France and Zhou Enlai, Paris to Foreign Office, June 24, 1954, FO371/112075, NAUK.

“had decided partition of Vietnam leaving Tonkin to Vietminh.”<sup>108</sup> US officials were anxious that the French was “moving rapidly toward Franco-Vietminh agreement” on a ceasefire, “with almost complete lack of agreement on supervision.”<sup>109</sup> Before leaving for Washington, Eden declared in the British parliament that collective defense must wait for the result of the Geneva Conference, and the British wanted a Locarno-type pact to guarantee the ceasefire in Indochina, which included both Communist and non-Communist states.<sup>110</sup> Zhou Enlai’s message about his meetings with DRV leaders only confirmed the British perception that a settlement was imminent.<sup>111</sup> Consequently, Eden made up his mind to “do my best to make the Americans understand” the importance of reaching a settlement in Geneva.<sup>112</sup>

At the same time, Communist military advance forced US leaders to accept a diplomatic solution. By the end of June, the Vietminh eliminated the most elite troops in the French expedition forces.<sup>113</sup> The US and its allies recognized that without US intervention, the French were going to lose the Tonkin Delta.<sup>114</sup> But US negotiations with the French had stopped in mid-

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<sup>108</sup> Telegram, Delegation to Foreign Office, July 1, 1954, FO371/112076, NAUK; *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 16: 1248, 1253, and 1228-29.

<sup>109</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 13: 1751-52. The French actually deliberately kept the US in the dark. See telegram, from Geneva to Foreign Office, June 25, 1954, FO371/112075, NAUK.

<sup>110</sup> For Eden’s thoughts about Locarno Pact in Asia, see Nông Văn Dân, *Churchill, Eden and Indo-China*, 152, 157-58.

<sup>111</sup> Telegrams, Trevelyan to Foreign Office re his meeting with Zhou, July 8, 1954, and telegram, Eden to Foreign Office re his meeting with Zhou, July 13, 1954, FO371/112076, and FO371/112077, NAUK.

<sup>112</sup> Telegram, Jebb to Foreign Office regarding US representation at Geneva, July 14, 1954, FO371/112077, NAUK. For the US isolation in mid-June, see *The Pentagon Papers*, 131.

<sup>113</sup> For the DRV’s military actions after Dien Bien Phu, see *Pentagon Papers*, 121-22; NIE on Probable Developments in Indochina (up to July 15, 1954), Memo from Chest Cooper and Joseph Yager to Ambassador Heath; General Records of the DOS, Records of the Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs Relating to Southeast Asia and the Geneva Conference, 1954, Geneva Conference, April-June 1954, Box 14, RG 59, NAUS.

<sup>114</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 16: 1226-27. According to the Five-Power Military Conference, the DRV would start offensive in September, and the French “could not withstand without outside reinforcements of at least three divisions and three hundred planes;” if the Chinese intervened, it would probably be impossible to stop them North of the Kra Isthmus leading to Malaya, and such a defense would require an attack on military targets in China using nuclear weapons, which would lead to a global war. Report of the Five-Power Military Conference, 11 June 1954, *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol.12: 554-63; telegram, Eden to Foreign Office, June 9, 1954, FO 371/112070, NAUK.

June; Dulles had acknowledged that the best time to intervene in Indochina had passed; and the NSC had also decided against intervention, even on the basis of United Action. Actually both Eisenhower and Dulles had publicly declared that the US would not send troops to Indochina.<sup>115</sup> Intervention at this time, according to US officials, would make the US “appear in the unenviable position of being against both peace and democracy,” as it would not only “split our basic coalition,” but also “appear to world and US opinion as a desperate US move to frustrate a cease-fire and free elections.”<sup>116</sup> Moreover, according to the latest analysis by the special advisor to the US delegation, even if the US intervened, it “would not produce durable or desirable results.”<sup>117</sup> Once the Geneva Conference failed, the French would not be able to resist a new Vietminh offensive. The French government had declared it would send reinforcements, but they would not be able to reach Indochina until the end of September—by then, the French would have lost the critical Hanoi-Haiphong line. France’s only hope was US air and sea support, but as Dulles told Smith in private, “[the] US is not prepared at the present time to give any commitment that it will intervene in the war [even] if the Geneva Conference fails.”<sup>118</sup>

On the other hand, US leaders came to realize that a partition of Vietnam might not be as disastrous as they had originally imagined. The Five Power Military Staff meeting held in early June accepted the British view that division of Vietnam was inevitable. After calculating the military situation in Indochina, the meeting attendees made a pessimistic prediction about the future of the war, if it continued. At the same time, the military leaders reached one conclusion

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<sup>115</sup> On June 10, Eisenhower told the press that he had no plans to ask Congress before it adjourned for the summer for authority to intervene in Indochina, *Public Papers of the Presidents*, no. 138, June 10, 1954. Dulles also told the US Embassy in Paris that intervention was unlikely. See Dulles papers, Subject Series, Box 9, DDEL.

<sup>116</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 13: 1689-90, 1712, 1742-43.

<sup>117</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 16: 1374.

<sup>118</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 13: 1385-40; *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 16: 1389-91.

that provided them some relief: if a cease-fire was obtained, they believed the Western alliance should be able to stop the Communist advance at the Thakhek-Donghoi line, even if the Tonkin Delta was lost.<sup>119</sup> For US leaders, as Dulles told Smith this meant division of Vietnam was no longer unacceptable because they could still “draw a line” to stop the Communist expansion.<sup>120</sup>

On the other hand, a settlement of the war would pave the way for the United Action, since US allies did not want to move on with that maneuver before the conclusion of the conference. Moreover, withdrawal from Geneva was also risky, because the US would lose whatever restraining power they had on the British and French. This became particularly important when the new French premier set up a deadline for the negotiations in order to show his determination for peace. Therefore, US leaders concluded that they should stay in Geneva to “salvage as much as possible from a most unhappy situation.”<sup>121</sup>

The US policy shift of policy led to an Anglo-American consensus, for the first time since the Geneva Conference, which greatly relieved the British, who were anxious about the rift with Americans, and who wanted to improve bilateral relations. According to Churchill, “we [the British] must never let there be any doubt which side we [are] on,” although he wanted détente with the Communists.<sup>122</sup> In these circumstances, US and UK leaders reached a Seven-Point Agreement during Churchill’s and Eden’s stay in Washington in late June, including the integrity and independence of Laos and Cambodia; a divided Vietnam, with the possibility of the ultimate

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<sup>119</sup> Report of the Five-Power Military Conference, 11 June 1954, *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 12: 554-63.

<sup>120</sup> Dulles: “Five-Power staff report suggesting Thakhek-Donghoi line, coupled with rapid Delta deterioration, is leading us to reexamine *de facto* partition Vietnam.” See State to US Del, Tedul 222, June 18, 1954, 396.1 GE/6-1854, NAUS.

<sup>121</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 16: 1250.

<sup>122</sup> Letter, Kirkpatrick to Brownjohn, May 18, 1954, FO371/112067, NAUK. For British diplomatic reports about the tensions between the US and UK, see UK Embassy Washington to FO, no. 949, May 17, 1954, FO371/112066; UK Embassy Washington to FO, no. 961, May 19, 1954, FO371/112067; Makins, Letter to Eden, May 21, 1954, FO371/111869, NAUK.

unification by peaceful means, and effective international supervision of a ceasefire.<sup>123</sup> Eden also gave up his Locarno Pact, after Eisenhower rejected “any sort of guarantee as was involved in the Locarno Pact.”<sup>124</sup> On this basis, the US and UK leaders declared “we will press forward with plans for collective defense...”<sup>125</sup> The French were not happy about being excluded from the meeting, but they were satisfied that the joint declaration met their need for pressure on the Communists, as they required, and were willing to follow the US positions.<sup>126</sup>

Despite the agreement with the British, however, Dulles suspected that the UK “look[ed] upon this merely as an optimum solution and... would not encourage the French to hold out for a solution as good as this...” US leaders were also disturbed that the French did not keep them informed of the development of their negotiations with the Vietminh and that they refused to talk about their military plans. Dulles was worried that France “would recognize China as a part of any political settlement which they may reach;” at the same time, British leaders implied they were willing to let China enter the UN after an agreement was reached at Geneva. In a memorandum Dulles prepared for Eisenhower, he warned “we have to expect that the French will not succeed in getting our terms from the Communists.”<sup>127</sup>

Therefore, Dulles instructed the US delegation to “urge French delegation to stand firm” on the positions US and UK had reached. Lest the French reach an agreement unacceptable to

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<sup>123</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 13: 1757-58. For the US positions before the British visit, see “The Choice of US Policy in Indochina,” General Records of the DOS, Records of the Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs Relating to Southeast Asia and the Geneva Conference, 1954, Geneva Conference, April-June 1954, Box 14, RG 59, NAUS.

<sup>124</sup> See Nông Văn Dân, *Churchill, Eden and Indo-China, 1951-1955*, *ibid*; for US Congressional opposition to Locarno, see Congress House Committee on Foreign Affairs to President, June 24, 1954, Dulles papers, Subject Series, Box 9, DDEL.

<sup>125</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 16: 1254-55.

<sup>126</sup> See telegrams, Paris to Foreign Office, June 28, 1954, FO371/112076, NAUK; and June 30, 1954, FO371/112075, NAUK.

<sup>127</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 13: 1775; 1780-81; *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 486-87.

the US, Dulles did not give up other options such as withdrawal of the US delegation from Geneva or public disapproval of the French position. Meanwhile, Dulles told the US diplomats in Paris to remind the French that in addition to meeting the Seven-Point Positions, a settlement should also get the approval of the Associated States.<sup>128</sup> Moreover, when newspapers speculated that the French might trade the EDC for a favorable Indochina settlement, Dulles decided neither he nor Smith would attend the last phase of the negotiations on Indochina.

Dulles's decision met strong opposition. When he met Eden and Mendes-France in Paris to prepare for the final session of the negotiations, the French and British leaders strongly pleaded with Dulles to return to Geneva as an indication of his support of the negotiations. Mendes-France "begged" for Dulles's attendance, and promised that France "will do all she can to obtain a settlement within the seven point framework...if there is no agreement by July 20, the war will continue, with intensification." Meanwhile, President Eisenhower was also afraid that the absence of the US in the negotiations would be exploited by Communist propaganda, and used by French to blame the US for "everything that goes wrong."<sup>129</sup> The US Ambassador in Paris also warned Dulles that "Your absence would be interpreted as demonstrating your disapproval of the conference and of everything that might be accomplished" as well as the divisions with the Western states.<sup>130</sup> Finally Dulles agreed to let Smith go back to Geneva; but he "made it crystal clear to Eden and Mendes-France that the US could never join in any guarantee to the Communists of the fruits of their aggression."<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 13: 1781, 1788, 1791-92; Vol. 16: 1271, 1294, 1302, 1309.

<sup>129</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 13: 1800-02; *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 16: 1333-34.

<sup>130</sup> Telegram from Paris to Department of State, July 14, 1954, Dulles-Herter Series, Box 1, DDEL.

<sup>131</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 16: 1354, 1361-62. For the British depiction of the meeting in Paris, see Eden telegram to Foreign Office through Sir G. Jebb, from Paris, July 14, 1954, FO371/112077, NAUK.

## Salvaging as Much as Possible

Richard Immerman argues that the concluding phase of the Geneva Conference was “anticlimactic,” and that Smith “exercised scant influence on the settlement.”<sup>132</sup> But the available documents indicate that the US’s role was not simply a passive audience. Rather, it contributed to the Geneva Agreements in an indirect way: instead of supporting the positions of the Associate States, which Dulles had encouraged, US officials pushed them to retreat from their original agreement.

Once US leaders became convinced the PRC wanted a ceasefire, they no longer interpreted Communist intransigence as “delaying tactics,” and they started to distinguish the DRV from the Chinese. When the French military talks with the Vietminh deadlocked, because the Vietminh delegate “made unacceptable proposal of demarcation line along the 13<sup>th</sup> parallel” and requested a political election in 1955, US officials believed DRV leaders were emboldened by their military gains. They also speculated that the DRV suffered from internal differences.<sup>133</sup> On the other hand, US officials now believed the Chinese wanted a ceasefire “as badly as the French and would be disposed to force the Vietminh” to make concessions.<sup>134</sup> US perception was confirmed by Communist concessions before the Western leaders’ meeting in Paris: the Vietminh agreed to move the demarcation line up to the 16<sup>th</sup> parallel, and give up the request for a fixed date for elections. Zhou Enlai further promised Mendes-France that the demarcation line would not be a problem and the Vietminh would make this major concession.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> See Immerman, “The United States and the Geneva Conference of 1954: A New Look,” 63.

<sup>133</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 12: 1255-56; Vol. 13: 1769-70; Vol. 16: 1267, 1279.

<sup>134</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 16: 1280-82.

<sup>135</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 16: 1346-47, 1350-52, 1369.

Dulles believed the Communist retreat, despite their apparent military advantage, reflected their anxiety about the threat to their security brought about by a potential US intervention in Indochina.<sup>136</sup> Zhou Enlai's obsession with the US building bases in Indochina and including these states in military alliances was evident in his meetings with officials of both US allies and Associate States. He also repeatedly expressed willingness to make concessions to prevent the threat.<sup>137</sup> When the Communists made strong requests on the issues of a regroupment area in Laos, and exclusion of Cambodia from the military group, US officials believed they were dissatisfied with an unexpectedly firm Mendes-France, and worried about the Associate States' participation in the Southeast Asia defense pact, but their need for a settlement remained.<sup>138</sup>

Nevertheless, US leaders wanted to make sure their allies kept their promise of sticking to the Seven-Point positions, particularly when Britain and France were pressing the US to compromise the original positions. Dulles instructed Smith to restrict his role to "a representative of a nation friendly to the non-Communist states primarily interested, which desires to assist, where desired, in arriving at a just settlement." When the British pushed the US to endorse the final Geneva declaration, despite the US position that it would only be willing to make a unilateral statement, Dulles told the US delegation to let the British know that "[the] Executive has no Constitutional power to give [a] 'guarantee'" and he told Smith to prevent Eden from "push[ing] Mendes-France into agreement far short of seven points which will confront us with

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<sup>136</sup> Dulles's meeting with Congress members, July 16, 1954, cited in Francis Noland Dawson, "The 1954 Geneva Conference: Eisenhower's Indochina Policy," PhD dissertation, West Virginia University, 1985, 219-20.

<sup>137</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 16: 1421, 1437, 1466; telegrams regarding Eden's meetings with Zhou on July 13, 17 and 18, FO371/112077, FO371/112078, FO371/112079, and FO371/112080, NAUK; July 18, Eden to Foreign Office regarding meeting with Mendes-France about the latter's meeting with Zhou, FO371/112079, NAUK.

<sup>138</sup> At the beginning of the last phase of the negotiation, the DRV requested almost half the Laos' territory for regroupment, and demanded a coalition government; Zhou Enlai demanded that Cambodia not join the Southeast Asia pact, allow US military bases, or accept US military instructors; and Molotov was firm on the date for election in Vietnam. See *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 16: 1405, 1420.

dilemma of either agreeing to ‘respect’ it or repudiation which might involve our responsibility for breakup.” In response to the French request that the US expand its proposed unilateral declaration to include more parts of the eventual conference declaration, Dulles instructed Smith to tell the French that it was impossible to retreat and that Eisenhower was preparing for the failure of the Geneva Conference.<sup>139</sup>

In private, however, the US delegation was pushing Cambodia and Laos to compromise their original positions that the US had supported. US officials had stayed in close contact with the two delegations, expecting to influence the result of the negotiation through them, and therefore were well informed of their meetings with the Communists. In June, Dulles welcomed the two states to join SEATO, and warned them and US allies as well not to make any commitment which would exclude the possibility of their memberships in the organization.<sup>140</sup> He also offered military training and weapons to Cambodia to consolidate their position. But now Smith wanted the two states to compromise their positions. Although he was well aware of their resistance to neutralization and eagerness for direct US assistance, Smith told the Cambodian delegation that it needed neither membership in the defense group, nor US weapons, because their membership in the French Union would enable Cambodia to get “adequate desirable means of securing through France necessary arms some of which would be American as well as necessary instructors and technicians some of which might well be American trained.”<sup>141</sup> When

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<sup>139</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 13: 1844, 1849-50, 1851-52; *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 16: 1430, 1436, 1454. For the British dissatisfaction about the US, and Eden’s meeting with Mendes-France about this, see Eden telegram to Foreign Office, July 19, 1954, FO371/112080, NAUK.

<sup>140</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 16: 1226, 1236, 1338, 1342.

<sup>141</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 16: 1425-26. Smith blamed the British for their first retreat regarding SEATO membership. See telegram, delegation to State Department, July 18, 1954, *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 16: 1429. But he himself also assured the Soviets that “it was not now contemplated that the Associate States be invited or pressed to join SEATO,” when he visited Molotov after the agreements were reached. See Memo, Smith July 21, 1954, 396.1

US officials became aware that Zhou Enlai was using both sticks and carrots to press for the two states' neutralization, Smith knew his attitude was critical in their decision. Finally Laos and Cambodia had to promise Zhou that they would not join any alliances "not in conformity with the principles of the charter of the UN."<sup>142</sup>

US willingness to accept a diplomatic settlement was also indicated by its attitude toward the SOV. At the beginning of the conference, Dulles had worked together with the SOV delegates and got their agreement to withdraw from the negotiation if it went against their positions. When the Communists were making ambitious requests in June, Dulles pressed US allies to agree that a final settlement must get the approval of the Allied States, in case France made any unacceptable concessions to the Communists. The Secretary of State had repeatedly reminded the French of this position, and US officials were also aware that the French never bothered to consult the SOV governments about their negotiations with the Communists, and wanted the US to press the SOV to accept whatever results they could bring about. But US officials now simply ignored their original position, and seemingly did not care if the SOV liked the agreements when they were finally reached.<sup>143</sup>

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GE/7-2154, NAUS. According to Chinese sources, Eden made the promise after he got Smith's agreement, see Chapter 1. According to Rather, Smith did not report this to Dulles and therefore the later thought the Indochinese states were free to join the defense group. See Jucia J. Rather, "The Geneva Conference of 1954: Problems in Allied Unity," 442. Ph.D. dissertation, University of North Carolina, 1994.

<sup>142</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 16: 1468-69. The French might also have contributed to the Laotian retreat. According to Eden, the French Premier Mendes-France opposed Dulles's suggestion of American providing Laos with weapons and economic aid, when the three foreign ministers met in Paris. There is no further document showing if the French pressured the Laotians to give up the idea of requesting US weapons, but given their influence in Laos and their eagerness for a settlement, it is reasonable to suggest they influenced the Laotians' decision. See Eden telegram from Paris to Foreign Office through Sir. G. Jebb, July 14, 1954, FO371/112077, NAUK.

<sup>143</sup> *The Pentagon Papers*, declassified by NAUS in 2011, section 3.3, from B-9 to B-16. Available at: <http://www.archives.gov/research/pentagon-papers/>.

US actions facilitated the conclusion of the final agreements, although Dulles refused to guarantee the result. Under pressures from both the US and the Communists, Laos and Cambodia had to make a unilateral statement, declaring their actual neutrality, and the SOV had to accept that fact that Vietnam was divided without their agreement.<sup>144</sup> By withdrawing their support from the Associate States, US leaders accepted the agreements as an accomplished fact, so that they could start United Action with their allies—building SEATO.<sup>145</sup>

## **Conclusion**

US leaders originally misperceived the PRC's intentions in Geneva, and as a result, they exaggerated Communist aggression. Instead of a peaceful settlement in Indochina, US leaders believed the Geneva Conference was just part of the Communist expansion scheme. Therefore, they ignored Communist demonstration of conciliation, and set up unrealistic objectives in the beginning phase of the negotiations. Under allied pressure for peace, and also in the face of a worsening military situation in Indochina, US leaders had to compromise their original positions and finally they developed a more accurate judgment of Communist objectives. On the other hand, however, US assertive position enhanced the Communists' worries about US intervention in Indochina, and led to their, particularly the Vietminh's, conciliatory position, which were critical to the end of the war in Indochina.

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<sup>144</sup> And according to George Herring, US leaders meant this partition to be permanent. See, Herring, "A Good Stout Effort," 224.

<sup>145</sup> For US decision to launch SEATO as soon as the Geneva Conference was over, see Editorial Notes, *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 16: 1550-1551; and Dulles statement, in Dulles Papers, Subject Series, Box 9: Geneva Negotiations, State for the Press, No. 400, DDEL.

Although US leaders were clear about the Communist tactics of exploiting the differences within the Western alliance, they were not able to meet the challenge effectively. The US strong response to the misperceived Communist aggression strained its relations with Britain and France, both of which had a better understanding of the Communist intention and were interested in a peaceful solution in Indochina. These differences further undermined the effectiveness of the US basic policy of relying on alliances with European powers to contain Communist expansion.

US intransigence also alienated it from states in Southeast Asia. The British Commissioner General for Southeast Asia best summarized US isolation shortly after the Geneva Conference:

The conduct of American foreign policy towards Asia during recent months has left the United States with few friends, many enemies and almost universal critics amongst Asian Governments and peoples. It has done America's reputation shattering harm, appears sometimes to Asians to support the Communist contention that the United States are the real "war-mongers" in the world, and has left the United States virtually isolated here except for the support of the least influential Asian nations, like Siam and Chinese Nationalist Formosa. It is appalling that American statements and actions have caused such gigantic misunderstanding, and that the vast influence which America could exert for good has been turned to grave disadvantage to us all.<sup>146</sup>

Although American leaders attempted to exploit the differences within the Communist bloc, they did not get much chance. Lacking information about the relations between the Communists, their observations of emerging tensions remained speculative and uncertain. They often over-read differences between the PRC and the Soviet Union, as is indicated by currently available government documents from these two states. Compared to Sino-Soviet relations, US leaders were relatively ignorant of differences between the PRC and the DRV, and they often

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<sup>146</sup> Malcolm MacDonald note, August 8, 1954, FO371/111852, NAUK; Jones, "The Geneva Conference of 1954," 34-35.

mistook the Vietminh's military actions on the battle ground as the PRC's intentions to dominate Indochina. Although they were aware that the PRC would play a principal role in Geneva, there was no way they could exert influence over the Chinese, due to their hostility toward and isolation from the People's Republic.

US actions during the Geneva Conference added to the tensions in Sino-American relations. On the one hand, US intransigence about negotiation and hostility against the PRC, especially its attempts to use the ROC to contain the PRC, deepened PRC leaders' suspicions about the US and drew their attention to the yet to be restored territory of Taiwan. On the other hand, US leaders' willingness to make compromises under pressure from its allies and Communist military action enhanced Chinese tendency to further mobilize US allies by taking coercive actions in a bid to make the US compromise its policy. This led to the PRC's initiation of the crisis in the Taiwan Strait.

## Chapter 3

### “We Must Liberate Taiwan”?

#### —The First Taiwan Strait Crisis and PRC’s Attempts to Prevent US-ROC Alliance

“The US is worried that the Taiwan issue...will be put on the agenda [of international diplomacy], so it is attempting to consolidate the current situation in US-Taiwan relations with a military agreement, in order to prevent a final solution to the Taiwan problem.”<sup>1</sup>

——PRC Foreign Ministry telegram to its diplomats, July 17, 1954

“Right now, an important issue in our relations with the US is the Taiwan issue. This will be a long-lasting problem. We must prevent the possible US-Taiwan [military] pact.”<sup>2</sup>

——Mao Zedong, July 7, 1954

“Making use of the contradictions between the US and Britain, [China] should expose US aggression policy in Asia, to substantially separate the US from Britain. [China should] propagandize Sino-British friendship and trade, in order to win over Britain and isolate the US.”<sup>3</sup>

——Zhou Enlai, August 12, 1954

Only two days after the Geneva Agreements were concluded, the PRC abruptly started a massive propaganda campaign claiming it was determined to liberate Taiwan. On September 3, the Chinese People’s Liberation Army (PLA) severely bombarded the Nationalist-held Jinmen Islands off the coast of China’s Fujian Province, despite the fact that the United States Seventh Fleet had been deployed in the Taiwan Strait to protect the Nationalists since the outbreak of the Korean War. After the US sent warships to the Jinmen area to show its resolution against the PLA’s action, tensions quickly escalated in the Taiwan Strait. The US and China went into an eight-month military confrontation, commonly known as the First Taiwan Strait Crisis. The crisis

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<sup>1</sup> “Van Fleet’s Conspiratorial Acts in the Far East,” Beijing: Chinese Foreign Ministry Archives (CFMA), 206-00117-05, 101.

<sup>2</sup> *Mao Zedong Wenji* [Collection of Mao Zedong’s Works] (Beijing: Renmin Chubanshe, 1999), Vol. 6: 333.

<sup>3</sup> “Zhou Enlai’s Report on Foreign Affairs,” Fujian Provincial Archives, 101-5-542.

reached its peak in March 1955, when the US threatened to use nuclear weapons against China. Then it came to an abrupt end when the PRC Premier Zhou Enlai declared at the Bandung Conference in April 1955 that the PRC was willing to negotiate with the US to resolve the tensions between them.

Why did PRC leaders initiate the confrontation with the US at a time when they were trying to reduce tensions in Asia? How can China's assertive policy in the Taiwan Strait be reconciled with its conciliatory actions at Geneva and later at Bandung? What were the factors leading to China's subsequent conciliation? These are the questions this chapter explores.

Although the current available literature generally agrees that China's initiation of the confrontation aimed to prevent the US from concluding a Mutual Defense Treaty with the Republic of China government on Taiwan, it has failed to give a convincing interpretation to the question of how the bombing of the Jinmen Islands could serve that purpose. According to Shu Guang Zhang, China took belligerent actions to "deter" the US from making a commitment to the Nationalists, but he did not explain how the PRC leaders could expect to deter the US, given their limited strength, and why they did not continue their deterrence in October and November before the MDT was concluded.<sup>4</sup> Chen Jian, however, sees China's actions in the Taiwan Strait as part of Mao Zedong's consistent policy to create new diplomatic momentum to promote his revolutionary construction at home.<sup>5</sup> Gordon Chang and He Di believe the shelling of Jinmen was a "political-military demonstration," which was "part of Mao's attempt to focus world attention on the Taiwan issue and what he believed was US interference in Chinese internal

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<sup>4</sup> Shu Guang Zhang, *Deterrence and Strategic Culture: Chinese and American Confrontations, 1949-1958* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), 189-224.

<sup>5</sup> Chen Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 167-70.

affairs,” but they do not clarify what concrete objectives PRC leaders wanted to achieve.<sup>6</sup> Qiang Zhai, however, interprets the attack on Jinmen as a “calculated political maneuver designed to test American intentions in the area, to aggravate Washington’s differences with Taipei over the offshore islands, and to intensify US disputes with [its] allies and neutral Asian governments that were against Washington’s commitment to Chiang Kai-shek,” but he does not further explore this argument.<sup>7</sup> Thomas Stolper believes that the PRC’s bombardment of Jinmen was “communication by action,” which aimed to “remind everyone of the danger of conflict” with China, isolate the US, and prevent a link between Taiwan and the Southeast Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO).<sup>8</sup> Writing before Chinese government documents were available, Stolper’s argument is basically speculation based completely on Chinese newspaper reports, and needs to be tested with newly available official sources.<sup>9</sup> Unlike the above authors, Michael Sheng sees a “dictatorial and impulsive” Mao Zedong carrying out an “erratic policy,” with neither long-term strategy nor short-term plan.<sup>10</sup> As to the conclusion of the event, most scholars believe Zhou Enlai’s conciliation at the Bandung Conference led to the end of the confrontation, but none of them have explored the PRC’s conciliatory actions in early February, 1955, long before the Bandung Conference took place.

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<sup>6</sup> Gordon H. Chang and He Di, “The Absence of War in the U.S.-China Confrontation over Quemoy and Matsu in 1954-1955: Contingency, Luck, Deterrence?” in *American Historical Review* 95, no.5 (December 1993): 1500-24.

<sup>7</sup> Qiang Zhai, *The Dragon, the Lion & the Eagle: Chinese-British-American Relations, 1949-1958* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1994), 153-77.

<sup>8</sup> Thomas E. Stolper, *China, Taiwan and the Offshore Islands: Together with an Implication for Outer Mongolia and Sino-Soviet Relations, 1949-1958* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 1985), 4, 39-40.

<sup>9</sup> However, it is interesting to note that Stolper’s reasoning so closely parallels that of the others even though they have had access to much better sources.

<sup>10</sup> Michael M. Sheng, “Mao and China’s Relations with the Superpowers in the 1950s: A New Look at the Taiwan Strait Crises and the Sino-Soviet Split,” in *Modern China*, Vol. 34, No. 4 (October 2008): 477-87.

Because of the shortage of Chinese official documents about the crisis, most of the existing works isolate the PRC's actions in the Taiwan Strait from its behavior at the Geneva and Bandung Conferences. They thus fail to interpret the seeming contradiction between the PRC's assertiveness in the Taiwan Strait and its conciliation at the Geneva and Bandung Conferences.<sup>11</sup> The current literature also concentrates exclusively on the PRC's policy toward the US, without addressing the broader context of its foreign policy making, and therefore, does not offer a complete picture of the PRC's policy.

My study of the newly released documents from the PRC Foreign Ministry Archives finds that China's policy was more consistent and sophisticated than the current literature depicts. The PRC's actions in the Taiwan Strait were a continuation of its efforts to reduce tensions in its neighborhood—in this case, US attempts to build the MDT with Chiang Kai-shek's ROC government, which PRC leaders suspected was the first step toward a broader Pacific Pact to encircle China.<sup>12</sup> And Chinese leaders continued to use their strategy of separating the US from other states, especially its major ally Britain, and neutral Asian states. The military actions in the Taiwan Strait, therefore, served the PRC's goal of mobilizing the UK and Asian states to pressure the US to give up the military treaty with the ROC, and warning the US of the risk of allying with the Nationalists, in addition to removing the ROC forces from the offshore islands, which had been sources of the Nationalist raids to the mainland, and galvanizing the Chinese

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<sup>11</sup> For example, Chang and He believe the Taiwan Strait campaign "contradicted Mao's wish to reduce tensions in the Southeast Asia region and damaged China's prestige with some of its Asian neighbors," Chang and He, "The Absence of War," 1522. According to Michael Sheng, Mao simply adopted an unreasonable policy, Sheng, "Mao and China's Relations with the Superpowers in the 1950s," 483.

<sup>12</sup> According to Chang and He, Mao "questioned the sincerity of Washington's professed desire to reduce tensions with the Communist world after the 1954 Geneva Conference," see Chang and He "The Absence of War," 1508. But as new documents indicate, Chinese leaders saw US alliance building as efforts to create tensions—instead of questioning US sincerity, Chinese leaders never believed the US would stop creating tensions, as my study of the Geneva Conference demonstrates.

people for the domestic programs, as Chen Jian argues. When the PRC's military actions caused anxiety among the Asian countries, with which PRC leaders wanted to form a united front against the US, the PRC turned to conciliation, which on the one hand eased the worries of these states, and on the other hand, turned the pressure to the US side.

### **PRC's Initiation of the Crisis**

PRC leaders increased tensions in the Taiwan Strait as soon as the Geneva Conference was over.<sup>13</sup> On July 23, the day after *Renmin Ribao* (The People's Daily) hailed as a big victory by negotiation the peaceful settlement of the Indochina War, the PRC government suddenly stated in the same newspaper that the Chinese people "are determined to liberate" Taiwan, and "[t]hey will not stop until their aim is achieved."<sup>14</sup> To add to the tensions, on the same day, PLA air force shot down a British Cathay Pacific airliner and killed ten passengers, including two American citizens, when the plane was flying from India to Hong Kong over Hainan Island. The event led to US retaliation and two Chinese fighters were shot down by US air force three days later. While protesting the US action, PRC press published numerous articles warning against US attempts to sign the MDT with the ROC government, as well as its efforts to whip together a Southeast Asian military group.<sup>15</sup> On August 1, the PLA Commander-in-Chief declared at the anniversary of the PLA's establishment that Chinese determination to liberate Taiwan would not

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<sup>13</sup> For details of the PRC's propaganda campaign, see Stolper, *China, Taiwan and the Offshore Islands*, 34-38. US leaders concentrated on the PRC's military actions and regarded the bombardment of Jinmen Island as the beginning of the crisis. And most current works on US policy toward the crisis start with the bombardment. But as new Chinese government documents indicate, PRC leaders had planned to take a series of actions as early as July, starting with the propaganda campaign.

<sup>14</sup> *Renmin Ribao*, July 23, 1954.

<sup>15</sup> See for example, *Renmin Ribao*, July 24, 28, 31; August 1, 3, 8, 13, 15, 20, etc.

waver even if the US intervened. On August 11, PRC Premier Zhou Enlai published a report on foreign affairs, warning:

If any foreign aggressors dare to try to hinder the Chinese people from liberating Taiwan, if they dare to infringe upon our sovereignty or violate our territorial integrity, if they dare to interfere in our internal affairs, they must take all the grave consequences of such acts of aggression upon themselves.<sup>16</sup>

Soon, a joint declaration of “all democratic parties and people’s organizations” in the PRC (hereafter Joint Declaration) was published, claiming Taiwan as Chinese territory and warning the US not to conclude the MDT with Taiwan.<sup>17</sup> China’s actions culminated on the PLA shelling Jinmen on September 3. In response, the US promptly sent warships to the Jinmen area to deter the Chinese from taking further actions. Consequently a military confrontation began between the US and the PRC.

Why did the PRC initiate the confrontation with the US when it was demonstrating conciliation in other ways? How did Chinese leaders perceive the US? What were their purposes in bombarding the Jinmen Islands at this point? Did they really believe their military actions would deter the US, as Shu Guang Zhang argues? Or is this an aberration due to Mao Zedong’s whimsical impetus, as Michael Sheng argues? The current works generally agree that the PRC took these actions to preclude the US-ROC MDT, but they fail to explain the questions of why the Chinese took assertive actions so soon after they had strived to restore peace in Indochina. Moreover, they do not account for how Chinese leaders expected to prevent the MDT through confrontation.

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<sup>16</sup> *Important Documents Concerning the Question of Taiwan* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1955), 109-26.

<sup>17</sup> *Important Documents Concerning the Question of Taiwan*, 127-32.

The recently released documents from the PRC Foreign Ministry, however, shed new light on these questions. The Chinese leaders initiated the crisis because they felt the US was going to conclude the MDT soon. According to Chinese intelligence, after the Geneva Agreements ended the war in Indochina, US leaders were worried that the Taiwan issue would be raised in the international arena, which would put the US under considerable diplomatic pressure. Therefore they wanted to consolidate relations with Taiwan with the MDT, so that they could continue to use Taiwan to confront China.<sup>18</sup> PRC leaders saw this as evidence that the US was enlarging its military advisory group in Taiwan and strengthening its control of the Nationalist army, and at the same time, the US was expanding the activity of the Seventh Fleet to the area of offshore islands like Jinmen and Dachen. The PRC leaders were also anxious that the MDT would become part of a Pacific military alliance, which included a Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) and a Northeast Asia Treaty Organization (NEATO). When US efforts to set up SEATO did not meet with enthusiasm from Britain and Asian states, according to Chinese speculation, US officials wanted to begin with the MDT, and build NEATO on the basis of bilateral treaties between Taiwan, Korea and Japan. Chinese leaders were particularly alerted by General James Van Fleet's repeated visits to Taiwan in April and July, and believed Van Fleet's purpose was to conclude the MDT.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> The current documents do not indicate why the PRC leaders believed the Taiwan issue would be raised. They had prepared but were not able to discuss the topic at the Geneva Conference. See *Jianguo Yilai Mao Zedong Wengao* [Mao Zedong's Manuscript since the Founding of the PRC] (Beijing: Zhongyang Wenxian Chubanshe, 1993), Vol. 3: 480; Pang Xianzhi, Jin Chongji, et al., *Mao Zedong Zhuan, 1949-1976* [Biography of Mao Zedong, 1949-1976] (Beijing: Zhongyang Wenxian Chubanshe, 2003), 555; and "Speech script on Sino-American relations," undated document prepared for the Geneva Conference, Chinese Foreign Ministry Archives (hereafter CFMA), 206-00053-03, 28-32. Unless otherwise indicated, this dissertation uses English versions of the documents from the CFMA translated by the author from Chinese.

<sup>19</sup> "Van Fleet's Conspiratorial Acts in the Far East," July 17, 1954. CFMA, 206-00117-05, 101-02.

On July 27, Mao Zedong sent a telegram to Zhou Enlai, who was on his way back from Geneva via Moscow:

The Central Committee recently discussed the situation related to the Geneva Conference, and it believes that after the armistice in Korea and Indochina, the US is unwilling to accept its failure at the Geneva Conference, and will inevitably continue to carry out the policies of creating intentional tension for the purpose to further taking over more spheres of influence from Britain and France, expanding military bases for preparing for war, and remaining hostile to our country. In Southeast Asia, in addition to active efforts to set up an organization of defense and rearming Japan, the US surely will continue to use Taiwan to carry out pirate-style robberies of the ships from various countries to come to our country, and is likely to expand the sphere of blockade of our country to the areas off the Guangdong coast and to the Gulf of Tonkin area. Recently the US and Chiang Kai-shek have been discussing signing a US-Chiang treaty of defense, and the US has repeatedly invested military aid to the Chiang bandits in Taiwan. All of this is worthy of our main attention. According to public information, it seems as if the US still has some worries about signing a US-Chiang treaty of defense, and it seems as if they had not made the final decision. But if the US and Chiang sign such a treaty, the relationship between us and the US will be in tension for a long period, and it becomes more difficult for the relationship to turn around. Therefore, the central task of our struggle against the US at present is to break up the US-Chiang treaty of defense and the SEA treaty of defense.<sup>20</sup>

From the PRC's perspective, the US was creating new tensions and meddling in China's domestic affairs. Therefore, China must take actions to *relax the tensions* by breaking up the US-Nationalist alliance.<sup>21</sup> PRC leaders decided to adopt a comprehensive program to prevent the US from concluding the MDT. Politically, they launched a major propaganda campaign to highlight to the world the domestic nature of the Taiwan issue and China's determination to liberate

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<sup>20</sup> "The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Central Committee Telegram to Zhou Enlai Concerning Policies and Measures in the Struggle against the United States and Chiang (Kai-shek) after the Geneva Conference," July 27, 1954. CFMA, 206-00048-11, 1-3. The English translation is by Chen Jian and included in Wilson Center Reader on the Geneva Conference on Indochina, compiled by the Cold War International History Project (CWIHP) of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, February 2006 (hereafter, Wilson Center Reader).

<sup>21</sup> Previous works arguing that China wanted to prevent the MDT are basically based on China's propaganda. See for example, Stolper, *China, Taiwan, and the Offshore Islands*. The new government document from the Chinese Foreign Ministry Archives for the first time discloses Chinese leaders' considerations behind the propaganda. For Chinese press articles about the MDT, see *Renmin Ribao*, May 24, June 13 and 17, August 8, 20, 29; *Xin Hua She* [New China News Agency], May 18, July 30, 31, August 20, 30.

Taiwan. Militarily, the PLA was prepared to take actions against the Nationalist forces in the Taiwan Strait to demonstrate to the US the risk of getting involved in the Chinese civil war. But the PRC's military actions served diplomatic purposes, as PRC leaders strictly limited the military targets to the Nationalist forces, and cautioned PLA generals not to attack US planes and warships in order to avoid conflicts with the US.<sup>22</sup> And diplomatically, the PRC would take advantage of the tensions to mobilize US allies, especially Britain, and Asian states to pressure the US not to ally with the ROC. Such a program would also serve China's domestic purpose, as Chen Jian argues: it could "raise the political consciousness and political alertness of the people of the whole country" and "stir up" their "revolutionary enthusiasm" in order to promote the socialist construction.<sup>23</sup> This was particularly important in the summer of 1954, when a great flood in the Yangtze River was causing serious losses.

PRC leaders' confidence in their plan first came from the support from their Soviet comrades. While the current literature has failed to explore the role the Soviet Union played in the First Taiwan Strait Crisis, the new sources from the Chinese and Russian archives first reveal Soviet involvement in the initiation of the confrontation. When Zhou Enlai stayed in Moscow on his way back to Geneva on July 11, he told the Soviet leaders about the PRC's concerns about

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<sup>22</sup> A CCP Central Committee instruction on the Liberate Taiwan campaign on July 24 says: "At present, the direct target of our military struggle is Chiang Kai-shek and his cohorts in Taiwan. The United States should not be treated as our direct target; we should confine the conflicts with the United States to the diplomatic arena only." See CCP Propaganda Department and the Political Department of the Central Military Commission, "Guanyu Taiwan Wenti de Junshi Baodao de Zhishi," July 24, 1954; cited in Chang and He, "The Absence of War," 1510. This document indicates that the nature of the Communist attacks on the ROC forces in the Taiwan Strait was different from previous actions, which were basically military moves to capture islands.

<sup>23</sup> "The CCP Central Committee Telegram to Zhou Enlai Concerning Policies and Measures in the Struggle against the United States and Chiang (Kai-shek) after the Geneva Conference," July 27, 1954. CFMA, 206-00048-11, 1-3; Chen Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War*, 167-70. This new document indicates that China's initiation of the confrontation resulted from a coherent policy, instead of an inconsistent one as Michael Sheng argues. See Sheng, "Mao and China's Relations with the Superpowers in the 1950s."

the Taiwan issue. According to the Soviets, US leaders were still hesitant about the MDT, and their policy was uncertain when they were facing the mid-term election in November; so the US may not take “resolute actions” to commit themselves to Taiwan. Therefore, the Soviet leaders encouraged the Chinese to give “stern warnings” to US leaders to enhance their indecision, in addition to criticizing US “conspiracy” in the press, and not to show weakness before the US.<sup>24</sup> On his way back from Geneva in late July, Zhou consulted the Soviets about the PRC’s plan to raise the issue of liberating Taiwan in order to disrupt the US-ROC treaty through worsening differences between the US and its allies. The Soviet Premier Gregory Malenkov regarded the PRC’s goal of preventing the MDT as “correct” and its strategy of isolating the US “important.” And the Soviets also agreed to strengthen the PRC’s navy and air forces for this purpose and promised to study the issue of providing more advanced bombers, when Zhou Enlai increased orders for military equipment from the Soviet Union.<sup>25</sup>

PRC leaders’ perception of US isolation on its China policy also convinced them that a combination of propaganda, military actions, and diplomacy would effectively preclude the MDT. The Chinese had noticed that US hostility toward China was criticized by Asian neutral states. India, Burma, and Indonesia adopted a policy of peaceful coexistence with China, and supported the PRC’s entry into the UN. Zhou Enlai’s visits to India and Burma during the Geneva Conference, according to PRC diplomats, further increased China’s affinity to these

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<sup>24</sup> “Zhou Enlai’s Telegram to the CCP Central Committee Concerning Van Fleet’s Trip to Taiwan,” July 11. CFMA, 206-00048-10, 1.

<sup>25</sup> “Memorandum of Conversation, between Soviet Premier Georgy M. Malenkov,” July 29, 1054, AVPRF f. 06, o. 13a, d. 25, ll. 8; from *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, Issue 16 (Spring 2008), 102-03; and Li Ping and Ma Zhisun, et al., *Zhou Enlai Nianpu, 1949-1976* [Chronological Record of Zhou Enlai, 1949-1976] (Beijing: Zhongyang Wenxian Chubanshe, 1997), Vol. 1, 405. Unless otherwise indicated, the following citations from this book are from Volume One of the three-volume book.

countries. These states were also opposed to US efforts to build SEATO, and advocated building a “Peace Area” in Asia.<sup>26</sup>

More importantly, PRC leaders believed there were great differences between the US and Britain. Instead of uniting to fight Communism, according to PRC leaders, the British were struggling with the US for a sphere of influence in Asia. This was best demonstrated by their different considerations about SEATO: the British proposed a Locarno-type pact in Asia, which would include both the Communist and the Western states, meaning peaceful coexistence between the two camps; but the US wanted to build a Western military group, which would on the one hand contain Communism and on the other enable the US to expand its influence into the traditional British sphere.<sup>27</sup> On China policy, the British were also different from the US in several respects, PRC leaders believed. First of all, the British suffered heavy losses in the American-supported Nationalist harassment of merchant ships in the Taiwan Strait, and were opposed to US idea about a military treaty with the ROC, which would encourage the Nationalist raids on the mainland and consequently drag the US and possibly Britain into a war with the

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<sup>26</sup> *Neibu Cankao*, July 15, 1954; *Zhou Enlai Nianpu*, 392; “Development of the US efforts to whipping together a ‘Southeast Asia Defense Group’,” June 30, 1954. CFMA, 105-00626-01, 1-12; “Zhou Enlai’s Report on Foreign Affairs (excerpts),” August 12, 1954. Fujian Provincial Archives, 101-5-542. In July, President Eisenhower publicly declared his opposition to China’s entry into the UN, and then US Congress passed a resolution supporting this position. Most Southeast Asian states, however, were dissatisfied with the US position. See “Responses of Southeast Asian states to US opposition to our entry into the UN,” July 24, 1954. CFMA, 102-000159-13, 55-58. The Chinese perception was correct. According to British diplomats, the American relations with Asian states “worsened by her recent conduct of foreign policy” after the Geneva Conference, while the British influence in Southeast Asia was enhanced. See Mr. MacDonald, Notes on relations with US, China and Colombo Powers, August 13, 1954, and Mr. Dodds-Parker, D1631/23, visit to Southeast Asia by Mr Dodds-Parker, M.P., October 6, 1954; both in *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office*, Part V, Series E, Vol. 7 (Bethesda, MD: LexisNexis, 2005).

<sup>27</sup> Although the British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden told Zhou Enlai in Geneva in July that the British no longer insisted on a Locarno Pact, Chinese leaders still believed the British did not give up the idea. See “Zhou Enlai’s report on foreign affairs (excerpts),” August 12, 1954. Fujian Provincial Archives, 101-5-542. The Pact of Locarno are a series of agreements between the two sides of WWI, which was initiated in Locarno, Switzerland in October 1925 but signed in London in December. According to the pact, the two former antagonistic sides mutually guaranteed each other’s peace, and hence, “Locarno” or “the Spirit of Locarno” were synonymous to “compromise,” or “a sense of goodwill.”

RPC.<sup>28</sup> Secondly, the British wanted to coexist with China, and were willing further to develop the relationship, but the US was hostile to China. Thirdly, the British wanted to improve trade with the PRC, and had invited a Chinese trade delegation to visit Britain, despite the US imposed embargo on China. And according to Chinese officials, the British independent policy was bolstered by its economic condition. While the US was experiencing an economic crisis, Britain was not suffering much from it and its economy had developed very well. According to some Chinese diplomats, the British government was attempting to get rid of US “economic control” of Britain.<sup>29</sup>

In these circumstances, Chinese leaders believed the US was becoming increasingly isolated on its China policy. As Zhou Enlai observed, in the Korean War, the US was able to mobilize a dozen or so states to support it; in Indochina, it had become difficult for the US to find followers; and on the Taiwan issue, the US was alone.<sup>30</sup> The Chinese perception was confirmed by their Soviet comrades. During Zhou Enlai’s stay in Moscow after Geneva, Malenkov also told Zhou that “the international situation is undergoing some new changes after the Geneva Conference. In particular some new factors were coming up in the British and French policy—the gap between policies adopted by the US and Britain and France were widening.”<sup>31</sup>

Therefore, PRC leaders concluded that they could further mobilize Britain to pressure the US to give up the MDT, because in diplomatic isolation, the US would make concessions under

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<sup>28</sup> Britain lost over forty ships and was the biggest sufferer of the Nationalist harassments in the Taiwan Strait. Therefore, Chinese leaders believed the British were sympathetic to China’s actions. See “Minutes of provincial Committee meeting on ‘The Issue of Liberating Taiwan,’” Fujian Provincial Archives, 101-1-384. For British records of ROC plundering vessels, see telegram, from Tamsui to Foreign Office, December 11, 1954, FC 1094/56, FO 371/112059, National Archives of the United Kingdom (hereafter UAUK).

<sup>29</sup> “Report about British economy achieving seeming recovery,” July 16, 1954. CFMA, 206-00117-04.

<sup>30</sup> “Zhou Enlai’s Report on Foreign Affairs (excerpts),” August 12, 1954. Fujian Provincial Archives, 101-5-542.

<sup>31</sup> Li Lianqing, *Lengnuan Suiyue: Yibosanzhe de Zhongsu Guanxi* [Cold and Warm Years: the Ups and Downs in Sino-Soviet Relations] (Beijing: Shijie Zhishi Chubanshe, 1999), 230.

pressures from allies, as proved by Zhou Enlai's experience at the Geneva Conference.<sup>32</sup> But while Chinese leaders were planning to separate the UK from the US, PLA pilots' attack on the British plane damaged China's relations with the UK. Probably mistaking the British passenger plane for a Chinese Nationalist plane, two PLA fighters escorting a Soviet merchant ship opened fire and destroyed it, without seeking approval from their commanders. To make up for the accident, as soon as the attack took place, the PRC government acknowledged mistake, granted a full apology and promised compensation. This was unprecedented and led to British Chargé d'Affaires Humphrey Trevelyan's "utter astonishment." Soon the PRC government paid in full amount the compensation the British demanded, and Trevelyan even speculated that "the offending pilots had probably been shot" for their mistake.<sup>33</sup> To prevent further reckless actions from damaging his diplomatic strategy, Mao immediately ordered the PLA not to attack any foreign ships or planes when they were patrolling the high seas or convoying merchant ships, and to use this accident to carry out a serious education movement to make sure no further accident would take place.<sup>34</sup>

In order to separate the British from the US, PRC leaders attached the greatest importance to a visit by a British Labor Party delegation led by former Premier Clement Attlee. In early May, when Chinese leaders learned that the Labor Party, which recognized the PRC in 1950 but was now in opposition, was interested in a trip to China, they immediately welcomed and even

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<sup>32</sup> As early as July 7, Mao Zedong had come to this conclusion, based on Zhou Enlai's report about his experience in Geneva. See *Zhou Enlai Nianpu*, 395-96; *Mao Zedong Wenji*, 332-33; *Mao Zedong Zhuan*, 562-64. These documents further undermine Michael Sheng's argument about the inconsistency in China's policy.

<sup>33</sup> Humphrey Trevelyan, *Living with the Communists: China, 1953-5, Soviet Union, 1962-5* (Boston: Gambit, 1971), 111.

<sup>34</sup> *Mao Wengao*, Vol. 3: 516; "The CCP Central Committee Telegram to Zhou Enlai Concerning Policies and Measures in the Struggle against the United States and Chiang (Kai-shek) after the Geneva Conference," July 27, 1954. CFMA, 206-00048-11, 3.

offered to pay for the visit.<sup>35</sup> When the Labor Party's trip was decided, Zhou criticized the *Renmin Ribao* for not highlighting the event enough, and instructed the editors to coordinate with the Foreign Ministry and the CCP's Central Propaganda Department on how to improve the propaganda. According to Zhou's judgment, the Labor Party could not visit the PRC without the agreement from the British government; and the fact that the British government supported this visit despite US hostility toward the PRC indicated the anticipated US-UK contradictions had surfaced. Therefore Chinese officials should not miss the opportunity to play on the differences between them.<sup>36</sup> Before the delegation's arrival in mid-August, Zhou Enlai held a central government conference, in which he stressed again the importance of exploiting the visit to worsen US-UK differences. According to Zhou Enlai, although the British visitors wanted to feel out Sino-Soviet differences, their principal purpose was to expand Sino-British exchange and normalize relations with China. Therefore, China would be able to form a united front with Britain against the US.<sup>37</sup> The day before the delegation's arrival, all Chinese newspapers published Zhou's report on foreign affairs, which declared China's determination to liberate Taiwan and protested US aggression toward China. Trevelyan suspected that the PRC intentionally chose this time in order to exacerbate differences between the US and UK.<sup>38</sup>

During the Labor delegation's stay in China, both Zhou Enlai and Mao Zedong tried to convince the British visitors that they should push the US to change its policy toward the PRC.

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<sup>35</sup> "Regarding approval of the British Labor Party's Visit to China," May 9, 1954. CFMA, 110-00026-03; "Regarding the British Labor Party's Visit to China," May 11, 1954. CFMA, 110-00026-03, 7-8.

<sup>36</sup> "Regarding Press Publication of Important News such as the British Labor Party's Visit to China and the Geneva Conference," June 9, 1954. CFMA, 110-00026-08; *Zhou Enlai Nianpu*, 373.

<sup>37</sup> "Concerning the propaganda guideline and plan for the British Labor Party's visit," undated document. CFMA, 110-00127-04, 5-6; Zhou Enlai's Report on Foreign Affairs (excerpt), August 12, 1954. Fujian Provincial Archives, 101-5-542; Zhou Enlai, *Zhou Enlai Waijiao Wenxuan* [Selected Diplomatic Works of Zhou Enlai] (Beijing: Zhongyang Wenxian Chubanshe, 1990), 79-86.

<sup>38</sup> Telegram, September 2, 1954. *British Documents on Foreign Affairs*:Part V, Series E, Vol. 6.

Zhou Enlai had met some Labor leaders in Geneva and was told about the differences between the UK and US on China's entry into the UN, and he had encouraged the British to demonstrate to the world their different opinion, so as to influence the US.<sup>39</sup> In Beijing, Zhou stressed that it was "universally recognized" that Taiwan was part of Chinese territory; the Taiwan problem resulted from US support of the Nationalists; and it was "unreasonable" for the US to "occupy" Taiwan.<sup>40</sup> Mao Zedong assured the British visitors that China wanted a peaceful environment and was willing to exist peacefully with different countries. He "wished the US would adopt a policy of peaceful coexistence. If such a Big Power as the US does not want peace, China as well as the world would not have tranquility." He pushed the British to convince the US:

1. To remove its 7<sup>th</sup> Fleet [from the Taiwan Strait], and no longer meddle with the Taiwan issue, because Taiwan belonged to China;
2. Not to set up SEATO, as it is against the history, and to establish a collective peace pact instead;
3. Not to rearm Japan, which aimed at China and the Soviet Union, and would ultimately hurt [the US] itself and the states in Southwestern Pacific...;
4. Not to rearm Germany, for that would not end well and may 'shoot itself in the foot'...<sup>41</sup>

The Chinese intention was so obvious that the British immediately realized what Communist leaders wanted. According to Trevelyan, what Mao Zedong said "probably represent[ed] accurately the policy which they would like Her Majesty's Government to follow. They look to us to exercise a moderating influence on American policy and in particular to get the United States government to withdraw from Formosa the protection of the 7<sup>th</sup> Fleet."<sup>42</sup> But Trevelyan believed "[f]or all their subtlety and intelligence, the Chinese did not understand the

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<sup>39</sup> *Zhou Enlai Nianpu*, 372-73.

<sup>40</sup> Excerpts of Zhou Enlai's talk with the British Labor Party, *Zhou Enlai Nianpu*, 408-09.

<sup>41</sup> *Mao Zedong Zhuan*, 567.

<sup>42</sup> *British Documents on Foreign Affairs*, Part V, Series E, Vol. 6, September 2, 1954.

British political scene at this time,” as the Labor delegation did not represent the British government, “although the visit is being treated as a major event.”<sup>43</sup> And the Chinese “seemed to underestimate the strength of the Anglo-American alliance, which was of much greater importance to us than our relatively small interests in China, and to expect from us much more than they had any hope of getting.” According to Trevelyan, the British “were not going to abandon the American alliance in favor of a neutralist position, nor had we as much influence on American policy as the Chinese seemed to think. We did not even press, against American opinion, for the recognition of the Peking [Beijing] government as the Chinese representative in the United Nations, nor for a modification of the special trade embargo.” In conclusion, “The Chinese failed to understand our position correctly.”<sup>44</sup>

But Chinese leaders did not realize this and believed their diplomacy was successful.<sup>45</sup> Even after the visit, Chinese diplomats still reported to Beijing that the Labor Party spoke for the British government.<sup>46</sup> The trip had raised US anger, and worsened US-British relations, according to the Chinese observation.<sup>47</sup> This conclusion was confirmed by the leaders of the British Communist Party, who told their Chinese comrades that the visit changed the Labor Party’s attitude toward China, strengthened the position of the left wing of the party, and

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<sup>43</sup> *British Documents on Foreign Affairs*, Part V, Series E, Vol. 6., August 16, 25, and September 2.

<sup>44</sup> Trevelyan, *Living with the Communists*, 119, 131-32. The Chinese perception of UK-US relations was obviously misled by their limited diplomatic experience. When the Burmese Premier U Nu visited China in December after the MDT had been concluded, he frankly told the Chinese “it was absurd to suppose that the United Kingdom would suddenly desert its close relationship with the United States.” And in private U Nu told the British that “the Chinese were much too prone to jump to conclusions about United Kingdom policies and states on the basis of newspaper reports.” See Telegram regarding Visit to China by U Nu, Mr. Gore-Booth, No. 301, December 22, 1954, in *British Documents on Foreign Affairs*:Part V, Series E, Vol. 6.

<sup>45</sup> Trevelyan believed the Chinese “may well consider the visit to have been a successful experiment.” See *British Documents on Foreign Affairs*:Part V, Series E, Vol. 6, September 2, 1954.

<sup>46</sup> “British press responses to the Labor Party’s visit to China,” August 18, 1954. CFMA, 110-00241-18, 57-59.

<sup>47</sup> “British press responses to the labor Party’s visit to China from August 19 to 23,” August 25, 1954. CFMA, 110-00241-13, 54-56.

deepened the contradiction between the UK and US.<sup>48</sup> Satisfied with the result, PRC leaders instructed their diplomats in Switzerland to pay close attention to the possible British change of attitude toward the MDT and SEATO, and especially differences between the US and its allies.<sup>49</sup> First and foremost, they should report back the possibility of the conclusion of the MDT and its contents. Chinese leaders were also interested in the questions of whether the US treated Taiwan differently from the offshore islands, whether there were differences within the US government on the Taiwan issue, whether the US was ready to intervene under the scenario of China attacking Taiwan, and whether they would invade the Chinese mainland should they decide to fight.<sup>50</sup>

While they were taking diplomatic actions, PRC officials paid close attention to US reaction to their propaganda and believed it worked well. According to a Foreign Ministry document in late August, the US government had avoided mentioning the MDT and US press generally disagreed with the idea, following the publication of Zhou Enlai's report on foreign affairs. The reason, according to the document, was the US was worried about being dragged into a war with the PRC by Chiang Kai-shek, and it was also unwilling to get into a long-time deadlock in its relations with China. Moreover, according to the Foreign Ministry document, President Eisenhower indicated that the US might change its policy regarding China's entry into the UN, although it was not ready to let China join any international body now. On the defense of Taiwan, although the US declared its willingness to protect the island, it did not promise

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<sup>48</sup> "Responses to the Labor Party's visit," August 29, 1954. CFMA, 110-00241-13, 60-61.

<sup>49</sup> PRC Charge d'Affaires to Britain did not get to London until late October, and it did not have diplomats in other major Western states.

<sup>50</sup> "About the key points on intelligence collecting after the Labor Party's visit to China," September 2, 1954. CFMA, 110-00234-02, 51-53.

unconditional intervention. On the offshore islands of Jinmen and Dachen, according to the PRC diplomatic document, US leaders, including the most hostile Dulles, took Zhou Enlai's warnings seriously and distinguished these islands from Taiwan; US Navy also indicated that these islands were out of the protection of the 7<sup>th</sup> Fleet.<sup>51</sup>

The British position on Taiwan also changed because of the PRC actions, according to Chinese officials. On July 14, British Premier Winston Churchill had proposed putting Taiwan under UN trusteeship, which meant he denied the ROC regime statehood, as the US supported, and expressed his disagreement with the US plan to conclude the MDT. After Zhou published China's position on the Taiwan issue, according to PRC diplomats, the British Foreign Ministry declared that the UK did not assume responsibility for protecting Taiwan, and would not help the US do that. Following the Joint Declaration by different Chinese parties, according to the Chinese officials, the British Foreign Ministry further retreated and declared Taiwan had already been returned to China, and denied that Britain had proposed UN trusteeship.<sup>52</sup>

Based on these observations, PRC officials concluded that the US had no ally on the Taiwan issue and was afraid of the PRC's follow-up actions. Although it was preparing to stop China's attack on Taiwan, US talk about intervention was very reserved, and it carefully distinguished the offshore islands from Taiwan. Therefore, Chinese officials concluded, the US was leaving room for flexibility and was looking for an exit. Moreover, they also believed the US quest for SEATO relaxed, as President Eisenhower publicly stated that he did not like calling it a defense group, and rather wanted it to be a loose ANZUS style organization (Australia, New

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<sup>51</sup> "About the key points regarding intelligence collection after the Labor Party's visit to China," September 2, 1954. CFMA, 110-00234-02, 51-53.

<sup>52</sup> "Responses from different parties on the Taiwan issue after the publication of Zhou Enlai's report on foreign affairs and multi-party joint statement," August 28, 1954. CFMA, 102-00171-03, 8-13.

Zealand, United States Security Treaty), instead of an organization similar to the militarized NATO.<sup>53</sup>

To further demonstrate the risk of concluding the MDT with Taiwan, PRC leaders bombarded the Nationalists on the Jinmen Islands on September 3. The heavy shelling lasted five hours and two US military advisors were killed along with many Nationalist soldiers. From the military perspective, the shelling was not a surprising action as PRC leaders had prepared to attack the offshore islands since early 1952, and military conflicts had already taken place in May, as Gordon Chang and He Di argue. But the action was not “an unintentional initiation of a confrontation” as Chang and He believe. Rather it was “coercive diplomacy” to break up the MDT, as new documents have indicated.<sup>54</sup> PRC leaders originally planned to attack the Dachen and Jinmen Islands simultaneously in mid-August, around the time the British Labor Party was visiting China, but they had to put off the bombing because transportation was blocked by the flood in the Yangtze River. After Mao Zedong instructed PLA generals not to attack Dachen if there were US planes or warships in the area, that action was finally cancelled.<sup>55</sup>

For PRC leaders, the bombardment at least revealed US position on the offshore islands. According to their intelligence, the White House avoided the question of whether the Seventh Fleet would protect Jinmen, although its spokesman declared Taiwan was under US protection;

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<sup>53</sup> “Responses from different parties on the Taiwan issue after the publication of Zhou Enlai’s report on foreign affairs and multi-party joint statement,” August 28, 1954. CFMA, 102-00171-03, 8-13.

<sup>54</sup> The exact date of September 3 may have been chosen by Ye Fei, the local PLA commander, as Chang and He argue, but the order to shell Jinmen was made by top CCP leaders, as Chang and He admit. See Chang and He, “The Absence of War,” 1507. For Chinese leaders’ consideration about the shelling, see *Mao Zedong Zhuan*, 585. “Coercive diplomacy” is first used by Shu Guang Zhang in *Deterrence and Strategic Culture*, 222.

<sup>55</sup> There were no US forces in Jinmen area when the bombardment took place. That was another proof that the action was a diplomatic move. See *Mao Wengao*, Vol. 3: 533; Xu Yan, *Jinmen zhi Zhan* [The Wars over Jinmen] (Beijing: Zhongguo Guangbo Dianshi Chubanshe, 1992), 175; Liu Tong, *Kua Hai zhi Zhan—Jinmeng, Hainan, Yijiangshan* [The Cross-Sea Wars: Jinmen, Hainan, Yijiangshan] (Beijing: Sanlian Shudian, 2010), 448.

the Defense Department declared it did not know the Seventh Fleet had the responsibility of protecting the Jinmen Islands. Chinese intelligence also reported to Beijing that the State Department declared the US would not protest against the killing of the US officers, and that the NSC was divided on the issue of whether the US should prevent China from attacking Jinmen. Some US officials wanted to help the Nationalists, according to Chinese sources, but many others were worried about a Sino-American conflict, which would split the alliance between the US and UK. And US press concentrated on difficulties in stopping China from liberating the offshore islands.<sup>56</sup>

PRC leaders believed the US and ROC had been negotiating over the MDT, and the bombardment exacerbated the differences between the US and the Nationalists. Instead of being unaware of differences between the US and ROC and assuming that “Chiang [Kai-shek] was little more than a puppet of the United States,” as Chang and He argue,<sup>57</sup> PRC officials were quite clear about the conflicts between them, as the new sources indicate. US leaders did not agree to cover the offshore islands in the MDT, and the bombardment added to US hesitation about concluding the treaty with the Chinese Nationalists, according to PRC document. And US ambassador to Taiwan Karl Rankin was reported as saying that the offshore islands were the biggest problem in US considerations about the MDT—if they were included in the treaty, the US would face the risk of fighting China, but if they were not covered by the treaty, China would attack them. Therefore, Rankin suggested not concluding the treaty at this point. Secretary Dulles was meeting with allies to establish SEATO in the Philippines when the bombardment took

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<sup>56</sup> “Southeast Asian and Northern European states’ responses to our putting forward the slogan of liberating Taiwan,” undated. CFMA, 102-00159-15, 1-3.

<sup>57</sup> For Chang and He’s argument, see Chang and He, “The Absence of War,” 1508. “Responses to our shelling of the Jinmen Islands,” September 7, 1954. CFMA, 102-00171-01, 1-4.

place, and had previously declared he would visit Taiwan after the meeting. Chinese officials believed that this would be in order to discuss the MDT. But after the bombing began, US Embassy in Taipei refused to indicate the purpose of the Secretary's trip in its news release, and only said his stay in Taipei would be very short.<sup>58</sup> The British government also reiterated its position that the UK was not committed to protecting Taiwan, and Taiwan was not covered in SEATO.<sup>59</sup>

Probably to increase pressure on the US, and also to retaliate for ROC air raids of the coastal area after the bombardment of Jinmen, the PLA shelled the islands again on September 22.<sup>60</sup> After that PRC leaders took no more military actions until November. There were several reasons for the end of bombardment. Firstly, PRC leaders may have felt that the military actions backfired. According to a Chinese analysis after the second bombardment, the Nationalists had withdrawn their proposal to include the offshore islands in the MDT, and the final treaty would not specify its accurate coverage. As a result, although some US officials were still suspicious about the necessity of the treaty, US government sped up its pace of negotiating with the Nationalists in order to conclude the MDT to deter China from invading Taiwan.<sup>61</sup> Secondly, the bombardments met Chinese leaders' original intentions. Through the two bombings, they figured out US position on the offshore islands, highlighted the Taiwan issue to the world, and pushed the US to stop the Nationalists raiding the coastal areas—after the second bombing, the

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<sup>58</sup> "Responses to our shelling of the Jinmen Islands," September 7, 1954. CFMA, 102-00171-01, 1-4.

<sup>59</sup> "British Labor Party and the Conservative Party government's attitude toward remarks about the status of Taiwan," September 13, 1954. CFMA, 110-00244-01, 19.

<sup>60</sup> The Nationalist air raids of the coastal area, which lasted till late September, caused great anxiety among the Chinese people, and influenced the production as well as normal life. This worked against the PRC leaders' intention to mobilize people for construction. For this reason, they needed to take more actions to ease people's anxiety. For the air raids and consequences, see *Neibu Cankao*, September 14, 21, and 22.

<sup>61</sup> "SEATO and different states' responses to and attitudes toward it," October 1, 1954. CFMA, 102-000626-02, 85.

Nationalist air attacks on the mainland almost stopped completely.<sup>62</sup> Thirdly, the PLA was incapable of carrying on lasting attacks. According to the new sources, PLA artillery forces had just enough resources to take limited actions; and short of air force coverage, after the bombardment, the artillery troops had to move elsewhere to avoid being destroyed by the Nationalist air attacks.<sup>63</sup> Fourthly, PRC leaders' concentration turned to other issues, such as the First Chinese People's Congress, which was top on PRC leaders' agenda for the year and lasted from September 15 to 28, and more importantly receiving two important visits to China: a Soviet government delegation led by the Soviet Communist Party Secretary Nikita Khrushchev in late September and Indian Premier Jawaharlal Nehru in October.

### **From Diplomatic Pressure to Military Actions**

In the PRC's foreign policy, support from the Soviet Union was indispensable. During Soviet visit to China for the fifth anniversary of the establishment of the PRC, the two countries demonstrated strength of the Sino-Soviet alliance, which was particularly important when PRC leaders were aware of US attempts to split the Communist alliance and had also recently noticed US sensitivity to Sino-Soviet differences.<sup>64</sup> In Beijing, Khrushchev declared that the Soviet people supported the Chinese exercise of their sovereignty in liberating Taiwan. And the two states made a joint communiqué accusing US of a "direct invasion" of China through its occupation of the Chinese territory Taiwan, and economic and military support to Chiang Kai-

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<sup>62</sup> Stolper, *China, Taiwan, and the Offshore Islands*, 42.

<sup>63</sup> Liu Tong, *Kua Hai zhi Zhan*, 448; Dai Chaowu, *Didui yu Weiji de Niandai: 1954-1958 Nian de Zhongmei Guanxi* [Years of Hostility and Crises: US-China Relations, 1954-1958] (Beijing: Shehui Kexue Chubanshe, 2003), 130. This fact further proves that the shelling of Jinmen was essentially a diplomatic move, as Chang and He argue, not the beginning of assault on Jinmen, let alone Taiwan. See Chang and He, "The Absence of War," 1504.

<sup>64</sup> For the PRC leaders' knowledge about the US "wedge strategy," see Prologue. For the Chinese knowledge about the recent American talks about the Sino-Soviet differences, see *Neibu Cankao*, August 11 and October 5, 1954.

shek, who was “the common enemy of the Chinese people.” Although there are no government documents indicating how leaders of the two states discussed the Taiwan issue during the Soviets’ stay in China, coordination of actions was obvious. In the UN, the Soviet Union twice accused the US of invading China and infringing on free shipping in the Taiwan Strait on September 30 and October 15. On October 8, when the Soviets were still in Beijing, Zhou Enlai sent a telegram to UN General Assembly, accusing the US that its occupation of Taiwan was not only infringing upon China’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, but also increasing war threat in the Far East.<sup>65</sup> When the Soviet delegation left Beijing, *Renmin Ribao* declared that “China and the Soviet Union were completely in agreement on the cooperation between the two states and issues of international situation”: the two states wanted to build relations with other countries on the basis of Peaceful Coexistence; and they protested US denial of China’s UN membership and support of Taiwan as against the requirements of relaxing tensions.<sup>66</sup>

The Soviets, especially Khrushchev, who had just become the First Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party and was number two leader after Malenkov, also wanted PRC leaders’ support, when a struggle for leadership was still going on after Stalin’s death. For this reason, Khrushchev offered to visit Beijing in order to strengthen his relations with the CCP leaders,

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<sup>65</sup> *Zhou Enlai Nianpu*, 418.

<sup>66</sup> *Renmin Ribao*, October 12, 1954. Dai Chaowu stresses the contradictions between China and the Soviet Union, and argues that the Soviets were not satisfied with and worried about China’s actions, because they did not clarify what substantial assistance they would provide China, and did not indicate they would provide military assistance according to Sino-Soviet alliance treaty, once a war broke out in the Taiwan Strait. See Dai Chaowu, *Didui yu Weiji de Niandai*, 159-60. This argument is actually groundless, as China made it very clear at the very beginning that they would avoid conflicts with the US, and liberating Taiwan was a long term goal. Besides, when the Soviets visited China in October, there was no military action in the Taiwan Strait. For what Zhou Enlai told the Soviets about China’s considerations about initiating the confrontation, see “The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Central Committee Telegram to Zhou Enlai Concerning Policies and Measures in the Struggle against the United States and Chiang (Kai-shek) after the Geneva Conference,” July 27, 1954. CFMA, 206-00048-11, 1-3.

although the original Soviet plan did not include him.<sup>67</sup> During his stay in Beijing, Khrushchev promised to provide the PRC an experimental nuclear reactor, when Mao Zedong expressed interest in nuclear weapons and asked for Soviet help, although Khrushchev was hesitant to agree to China's plan of building its own nuclear weapons.<sup>68</sup> In addition to their support of China's foreign policy, the Soviets signed a series of agreements for assistance programs, ranging from scientific and technological cooperation to government loans, to aid China's massive industrial modernization. The Soviets had been using Port Arthur since 1945. Now the Soviet leaders decided to return the port to the Chinese, in order to demonstrate their respect for Chinese sovereignty, despite the strong opposition from the Soviet Foreign Ministry, which believed the port was still important for Soviet interests. For the same reason they also sold to the PRC Soviet shares in four Sino-Soviet joint ventures in Xinjiang and Manchuria, which were set up in 1950 and had been a subject of criticism by Chinese intellectuals. The Soviet visit started the honeymoon in the Sino-Soviet alliance.<sup>69</sup>

In PRC leaders' efforts to isolate the US, Asian neutral states, especially India, were the most important countries with which to unite. These neutral states were preparing to hold an Asian-African Conference, and the Indian premier Nehru was advocating a Peace Area in Asia

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<sup>67</sup> "Resolution concerning related measures to be taken for celebrating the fifth anniversary of the PRC," August 1954, from Shen Zhihua Personal Archives (hereafter SPA), SD08096.

<sup>68</sup> Shi Zhe, *Zai Lishi Juren Shenbian: Shi Zhe Huiyilu* [On the Side of the Historical Giants: Shi Zhe's Memoir] (Beijing: Zhongyang Wenxian Chubanshe, 1991), 572-73; Shen Zhihua, "Yuanzhu yu Xianzhi: Sulian yu Zhongguo de Hewuqi Yanzhi, 1949-1960" [Assistance and Restriction—The Soviet Union and China's research on the nuclear weapons, 1949-1960], [www.shenzhihua.net/zhongsu31.htm](http://www.shenzhihua.net/zhongsu31.htm), accessed June 10, 2005.

<sup>69</sup> ABПPΦ, ф.0100, оп.47, п.383, д.40, л.4-5; ABПPΦ, ф.0100, оп.47, п.383, д.40, л.10-19; ABПPΦ, ф.0100, оп.47, п.383, д.40, л.10-19. From SPA, SD 08096, 08097, 08101, and 08098. Shu Guang Zhang also mentions the Soviet assistance programs. See Zhang, *Deterrence and Strategic Culture*, 195. Stolper believes "According to both sides, the period between Stalin's death in 1953 and the Soviet Twentieth Party Congress in 1956 was the period of greatest harmony between the two powers." While my research corroborates Stolper's estimate of Sino-Soviet relations, it goes against Stolper's argument that the PRC's policy in the Taiwan Strait was not supported by the Soviet leaders. See Stolper, *China, Taiwan, and the Offshore Islands*, 18-19.

built upon the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence India had reached with China, in contrast to the US military alliance system. According to Chinese documents, India not only refused to join SEATO, but also dissuaded other Asian states from entering, because Nehru believed SEATO increased the threat of war.<sup>70</sup> After the PRC launched the propaganda campaign, these states expressed sympathy for China's position, although they were afraid of war and wanted to see a peaceful solution.<sup>71</sup> Based on these observations as well as their experience in Geneva, PRC leaders divided the capitalist camp into three groups: the aggressive group led by the US, the *status quo* group headed by Britain and France, and the neutral group with India as its leadership. The PRC's policy was to isolate the aggressive group, win over the status quo group, and unite with the neutral powers. Chinese leaders were particularly interested in the Asia-African Conference and believed they could work together with India to carry out the idea of a Peace Area at the conference. In addition to that, they also wanted to get the Indian support on Taiwan.<sup>72</sup>

To further China's relations with India, PRC leaders invited Nehru to Beijing shortly after the Soviets left. During Nehru's stay in China, Chinese leaders did their best to impress him with China's good will. Zhou Enlai explained that China's action in the Taiwan Strait resulted from the Nationalist harassments and US interference in China's domestic affairs. If the US withdrew its forces from Taiwan, the problem would be solved internally. Zhou assured Nehru that China could not afford not to take action, for that would mean China acknowledged the legitimacy of

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<sup>70</sup> "Excerpts of Nehru's remarks on foreign affairs," October 31, 1954. CFMA, 204-00142-03, 40-43.

<sup>71</sup> "Responses on the Taiwan issue after the publication of Premier Zhou's report on foreign affairs and our multi-party joint declaration," August 28, 1954. CFMA, 102-00171-02, 8-13.

<sup>72</sup> "Zhou Enlai's Report on Foreign Affairs before the Visit of Nehru," October 18, 1954, Fujian Provincial Archives, 101-5-542, 11-21; *Zhou Enlai Nianpu*, 419-20.

US occupation of Taiwan. Zhou also assured Nehru that China wanted peace and cooperation with other countries including the US, and it did not want to provoke a war—China’s basic goal was to isolate US war policy, and it was very careful in its actions, although China claimed to liberate Taiwan.<sup>73</sup> Mao Zedong also reassured Nehru that China wanted a peaceful environment, but the US put its front lines in Korea, Taiwan and Indochina, “making it hard for us to fall asleep;” therefore, China needed friends, and supported the establishment of the Peace Area.<sup>74</sup>

Apparently PRC leaders believed they won Nehru’s sympathy. According to Chinese diplomats, on his way back to India, Nehru reiterated his position that India only recognized one China. He told the press that he personally trusted China’s peaceful intentions; however, there was little India could do to help on the Taiwan issue. In contrast to China, according to Nehru, the US was creating obstacles to peace.<sup>75</sup> Needless to say, Chinese leaders were satisfied with these remarks, because they indicated that the PRC won Nehru’s moral support, if not substantial help on Taiwan, and alienated India from the US. Soon the Soviet Charge d’Affaires in the US learned from the *Christian Science Monitor*’s Washington bureau chief that the US Congress was very worried about the deteriorating relations with India.<sup>76</sup> But what the PRC leaders did not know was Nehru knew the US and UK were considering taking the crisis to UN Security Council, and he supported this idea, because it was consistent with his idea of solving international tensions peacefully, and more importantly it might give the PRC a chance to go to the UN, thus helping to solve the “China problem.”

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<sup>73</sup> *Zhou Enlai Nianpu*, 420-21.

<sup>74</sup> *Mao Zedong Waijiao Wenxuan*, 163-76.

<sup>75</sup> “Nehru’s remarks about the Taiwan issue,” October 29, 1954, *Neibu Cankao*; “Nehru’s remarks on foreign policy,” October 31, 1954. CFMA, 204-00142-03, 41-59.

<sup>76</sup> SPA, October 21, 1954; see Chapter 4 for Nehru’s involvement in the UN initiative.

Although the UK joined the US in setting up SEATO, PRC leaders by this time still distinguished British policy from the US's. According to Zhou Enlai, British participation in SEATO and its support of the ROC in the UN were "creating barriers for the improvement of the Sino-British relations," but PRC leader told Chinese officials that Britain remained a power to win over. And Zhou encouraged Britain to enhance cooperation with China, as the PRC was doing.<sup>77</sup> Lacking access to international diplomacy, PRC leaders' attitude toward the UK was primarily based on their analysis of SEATO. According to the Chinese Foreign Ministry, the establishment of SEATO enabled the UK to get into the AZNUS sphere of influence, which the UK had wanted but the US had refused, and the pact was actually consistent with the British concept of the Locarno pact, because it "helped to keep a balance [between the UK and US] on the basis of strength." The British also successfully aborted US plan to include Communist invasion as the target and cover Taiwan in the SEATO Pact. Chinese officials believed the British were still pushing for the Locarno Pact in Asia and pressuring the US to start peaceful negotiation with China.<sup>78</sup>

To enhance their relations with the UK, PRC leaders made diplomatic as well as commercial efforts. They sent Huan Xiang, the first Chinese Charge d'Affaire to Britain in late October. And Huan wasted no time in telling British officials that the only solution to the Taiwan

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<sup>77</sup> "Zhou Enlai's Report on Foreign Affairs before the Visit of Nehru," October 18, 1954. Fujian Provincial Archives, 101-5-542, 11-21; *Zhou Enlai Nianpu*, 419-20; "Zhou's Political Report at the First People's Congress," [http://news.xinhuanet.com/ziliao/2004-10/11/content\\_2075930.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/ziliao/2004-10/11/content_2075930.htm). Accessed December 10, 2011.

<sup>78</sup> Even after the British participated in SEATO, the Chinese Communist officials still believed Britain wanted to carry out the Locarno Pact in Asia. According to Chinese officials, although Britain gave up the idea "temporarily" in late July, it picked it up when Asian countries such as India refused to join SEATO. See "Preliminary analysis of the Southeast Asian Collective Defense Pact," September 9, 1954. CFMA, 105-00626-03, 13-17, and especially, 27-28. However, British documents did not indicate the British took the Locarno pact seriously, and moreover, PRC leaders were also unaware that at this point the US and UK were preparing to take the issue to the UN Security Council, and the British agreed to the US plan to conclude the MDT with the ROC to make sure the UN resolution would be successful. See Chapter 4.

problem was US withdrawal of its support to Chiang Kai-shek, and he reminded the British of the “obligations borne by the British Government as a result of its signing the Cairo Declaration and the Potsdam Proclamation.” At the same time, Huan also assured the British that China “would never wish to start a war with the United States.”<sup>79</sup> Meanwhile, PRC leaders wanted to attract the UK with trade, following their trade initiatives during the Geneva Conference. At the request of the Chinese, a Sino-British Trade Committee was set up in London in July, and it sent a business delegation to China in November. In Beijing the British found a very hospitable host, which “adopted a more realistic stance” and no longer demanded items on the US embargo list. According to *The Financial Times*, “this Chinese position marked ‘a notable change from the experience of earlier British business visitors to China who came back with masses of conditional contracts which were never fulfilled’.” Trevelyan believed “the Chinese will no doubt make incidental political capital” out of the trade relations with Britain, in addition to establishing sound trade channels between the PRC and UK.<sup>80</sup>

But the PRC’s efforts failed to prevent the MDT. In November, Chinese leaders felt the US-Nationalist military alliance was inevitable—on November 16, Dulles declared at his press conference that the US would not give up protecting Taiwan. In his meeting with British diplomats in mid-November, Huang Xiang disclosed that PRC leaders predicted the MDT would soon come into being.<sup>81</sup> *Renmin Ribao* published a series of articles protesting the coming of the

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<sup>79</sup> “Quemoy and Formosa,” Records of the Office of Chinese Affairs Numerical Files, 1949-55, Box 42, RG 59, NAUS; Foreign Office minute, November 18, 1954, FO371/110238, NAUK.

<sup>80</sup> Cited in Trevelyan, *Living with the Communists*, 166-67. For the Sino-British Trade Committee, see Foreign Office No. 31, Guidance Tel., July 14, 1954, and Trevelyan No. 404, Visit of Sino-British Trade Committee Delegation to China in November-December 1954, December 21, 1954, in *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Part V, Series E, Vol. 6*.

<sup>81</sup> “Quemoy and Formosa,” Records of the Office of Chinese Affairs Numerical Files, 1949-55, Box 42, RG 59, NAUS.

MDT.<sup>82</sup> In this situation, China's goal turned to preventing the MDT from including the offshore islands. For that purpose, Chinese leaders took two actions to deter the US. On November 23, a Chinese court sentenced eleven US pilots to imprisonment as spies, despite US protest that these Americans were POWs from the Korean War.<sup>83</sup> On November 30, PRC military leaders instructed the PLA troops to get ready to attack Yijiangshan Island off the Zhejiang coast around December 20, an important defense point in the Dachen Islands. The purpose, according to the order, was to warn the US and the Nationalists not to include the offshore islands in the MDT.<sup>84</sup>

Just as the PLA made up its mind to attack Yijiangshan, the conclusion of the MDT was declared on December 3. In response, *Renmin Ribao* declared that China would not tolerate the US invasion of Taiwan and would carry its liberation cause to the end, and Zhou Enlai stated that the US-Nationalist treaty was "illegal and invalid." The Soviet Union also immediately declared its support of China.<sup>85</sup> But in private, PRC leaders had to take the MDT seriously, although it did not specify if the offshore islands were covered. Mao Zedong once again put off the planned

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<sup>82</sup> See *Renmin Ribao*, November 11, 20 and 29, 1954.

<sup>83</sup> For the issue of US pilots, see Trevelyan, *Living with the Communists*, 151-56. For Chinese sources, see "Documents Concerning American Espionages," CFMA, 111-00053-01, 02, and 03. As early as July, Mao decided to use US nationals in China as a diplomatic tool and that led to Sino-American consulate meetings in Geneva. See *Mao Zedong Wenji*, Vol. 6, 332-33.

<sup>84</sup> Jiang Ying, "50 Niandai Mao Zedong Waijiao Sixiang Shulun," in Jiang Changbing, Robert Ross, eds. *Cong Duishi Zouxiang Huanhe: Lengzhan Shiqi de Zhongmei Guanxi* [From Confrontation to Détente: Sino-American Relations during the Cold War] (Beijing: Shijie Zhishi Chubanshe, 2000), 587-88; Xu Yan, *Jinmen zhi Zhan*, 180. The PLA had long prepared to attack Dachen and Yijiangshan. As early as January 1954, the PLA leaders had decided to take the offshore islands following an order from north to south, and from small to bigger ones. In May, the PLA occupied several small islands. In July, the PLA wanted to bomb Dachen and Yijiangshan, but Mao Zedong stopped the action in order to avoid a military conflict with the US forces in the area. In late August the PLA decided to take Yijiangshan before Dachen, and from November 1 to 4, preparatory bombing on Dachen and Yijiangshan started and on November 14, the PLA sank a Nationalist major destroyer. Liu Tong, *Kua Hai zhi Zhan*, 433, 446-47, 460-61.

<sup>85</sup> *Renmin Ribao*, December 5, 9, 13 and 17. Stolper also believes that the PLA actions in November aimed at the MDT, and he noticed "the opening of the campaign was related to the presence of the Nationalist Foreign Minister in Washington to conclude negotiations for the MDT." But no Chinese documents indicate this connection. See Stolper, *China, Taiwan, and the Offshore Islands*, 50.

attack on Yijiangshan, when the US Seventh Fleet sent warships to patrol the Dachen area in response to the PRC's attacks on the Nationalists.<sup>86</sup>

In the eyes of the Communist leaders, British pressure on the US contributed to the exclusion of the offshore islands in the MDT. According to Chinese sources, British Foreign Ministry officials visited Washington three times to pressure the US to neutralize Taiwan, instead of concluding the MDT, and trade the offshore islands for China's promise of not attacking Taiwan. But Eisenhower wanted to use the treaty to bolster Chiang Kai-shek, according to the document, and refused British request, although he agreed with the British on the status of the offshore islands. The sentence of the US pilots, however, according to Chinese officials, helped the Americans, because it gave US leaders an excuse to inhibit British pressure and conclude the MDT promptly.<sup>87</sup> This was a cautious implication that it was wrong to take this action.

However, after the treaty was concluded, British policy changed, according to PRC officials. The British press defended the US by stressing that the treaty was defensive, its coverage did not include the offshore islands, and Nationalist attack of the mainland must get US approval according to the treaty. Moreover, the British government turned to supporting the US publicly: it attacked China for sentencing US pilots, and warned China not to attack the islands. Premier Eden even warned that attack on Taiwan was invading a UN member, and would lead to UN collective action, which required British participation. According to Chinese diplomats, the Conservative Party needed to demonstrate strength to win the coming general election, but it

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<sup>86</sup> Liu Tong, *Kua Hai zhi Zhan*, 465.

<sup>87</sup> "British response to US-Chiang Treaty," December 6, 1954. CFMA, 110-00276-01, 1-5.

may also have mistaken China's previous display of good will as its weakness.<sup>88</sup> In this situation, PRC leaders' attitude toward Britain changed. Zhou Enlai attacked the British as followers of US aggression. Such a policy, according to Zhou, regrettably went against British commitments in the international treaties regarding Taiwan, and hurt Sino-British relations.<sup>89</sup>

In order to push for a Peace Area and China's participation in the Bandung Conference, PRC leaders had invited the Burmese Premier U Nu to Beijing, and they also made use of this chance to win the Burmese support on the Taiwan issue. Zhou Enlai told U Nu that the MDT legitimized US occupation of Taiwan and Penghu Islands, and encouraged the Nationalists to attack mainland China. The US purpose, according to Zhou, was to encircle China with a Pacific Pact, which would be built on the basis of SEATO and the MDT. To prove US aggression, Zhou handed U Nu a detailed record of US incursions into Chinese air space.<sup>90</sup> In contrast to US aggression, China wanted peace and supported the efforts by India, Burma and Indonesia to build a Peace Area in Asia, Zhou assured U Nu. Mao Zedong asked U Nu to help China improve relations with Thailand, in addition to reiterating China's peace intentions.<sup>91</sup>

PRC officials believed China's diplomacy toward Burma paid off. According to Chinese diplomats, U Nu trusted China's good will, agreed with the Chinese position on Taiwan, and regarded US forces on Chinese territory Taiwan as "unbearable." U Nu even declared his willingness to mediate between China and the US, but he insisted that Sino-American detente

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<sup>88</sup> "British response to US-Chiang Treaty," December 6, 1954. CFMA, 110-00276-01, 1-5; "Comprehensive analysis of British responses to Premier's [Zhou] statement on December 8," December 13, 1954, CFMA, 110-00276-01, 6-9; "British deputy secretary of state talked about Taiwan issue on US TV programs," December 14, 1954. CFMA, 110-00276-02.

<sup>89</sup> "Zhou Enlai's political report on the first plenary conference of the second Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference," December 21, 1954; *Zhou Enlai Nianpu*, 433-34.

<sup>90</sup> "Statistics of US fighters' invasion of our air space from 1950 to September 1954," undated document. CFMA, 204-00148-04, 23-29.

<sup>91</sup> *Zhou Enlai Nianpu*, 428-29; *Zhou Enlai Waijiao Huodong Dashiji*, 93-94; *Mao Zedong Zhuan*, 576-80.

must build on US withdrawal of its forces from Taiwan. He believed the Taiwan issue must be solved in the UN, on condition of China's participation in the organization.<sup>92</sup>

The conclusion of the MDT delayed China's attack on Yijiangshan, but it also made the action inevitable. Gordon Chang and He Di believe the action was a pure military move to capture the island, but new sources indicate this action served both military and political purposes.<sup>93</sup> Facing the US "naked aggression," Chinese leaders could not afford to retreat, given their original intention to mobilize the Chinese people by showing strength. According to *Neibu Cankao*, the conclusion of the MDT caused great anxiety among the Chinese; many people lacked confidence in the government's capability of liberating Taiwan, and some even questioned the validity of its policy.<sup>94</sup> In this situation, PRC leaders had to protest the MDT with actions to bolster the Chinese confidence. Militarily, the PLA had long prepared and was ready for the attack by middle January, and the PRC leaders were under pressure from the local PLA generals. Internationally, the attack would test the US position on the offshore islands, and might also expose differences between the US and UK, given the previous British positions on these islands.

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<sup>92</sup> "Burmese press response to U Nu's visit to China," December 12, 1954. CFMA, 102-000159-19, 89-91. China's diplomacy on Burma was so successful that it caused the British diplomats to worry that U Nu "have leaned over excessively in the direction of the Communist point of view." See telegrams, Mr. Gore-Booth, No. 301, regarding visit to China by U Nu, December 22, 1954, and Trevelyan No. 407, regarding visit to China of U Nu, December 22, 1954; both in *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Part V, Series E, Vol. 6*.

<sup>93</sup> But Chang and He are correct that the PRC leaders were under pressure from local PLA leaders. See Chang and He, "The Absence of War," 1510, 1512, and Liu Tong, *Kua Hai zhi Zhan*, 478-80. As new documents indicate, Chinese leaders originally planned to prevent the MDT from covering the offshore islands. For the PRC's plan to attack Yijiangshan, see Jiang Ying, "50 Niandai Mao Zedong Waijiao Sixiang Shulun," in Jiang and Ross, eds. *Cong Duishi Zouxiang Huanhe*, 587-88; Xu Yan, *Jinmen zhi Zhan*, 180.

<sup>94</sup> *Neibu Cankao* (Internal Reference) was a daily briefing about domestic and international affairs for top PRC leaders prepared by Xinhua News Agency. See *Neibu Cankao*, December 29, 30 and 31, 1954.

Nevertheless, PRC leaders carefully avoided possible US intervention. Beijing warned the local PLA generals a couple of times not to start the action unless they had “absolute confidence.” With prior knowledge that there were no US forces in the Yijiangshan area, the PLA started the attack on January 18 and took the small island within two hours. After the action, Mao Zedong again restrained PLA commanders from carrying out their original plan to attack Dachen. When the US had to force the Nationalists to withdraw from the Dachen Islands under US military protection after losing the shelter of Yijiangshan, Mao once again instructed the PLA not to chase or attack the Nationalists to avoid US intervention. The capture of Yijiangshan, according to Mao, was a military success, but its political consequences were still uncertain.<sup>95</sup>

The PRC attack led to a strong American response. Although the US had to push the ROC to evacuate the Dachen Islands, Secretary Dulles sent a signal to the Soviets warning China not to attack the evacuating Nationalist forces, in case PRC leaders misjudged.<sup>96</sup> US Congress responded with the Formosa Resolution on January 28, which authorized President Eisenhower to use US forces to defend Taiwan and Penghu and “related positions and territories....”<sup>97</sup> Meanwhile, at the request of the US, New Zealand requested that the UN discuss the hostile situation in the Security Council, which in turn led to strong opposition in the Chinese media and a Soviet counter-proposal to talk about US invasion of the PRC. The Security Council invited the

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<sup>95</sup> Liu Tong, *Kuanghai zhi Zhan*, 481. The “political consequences” most probably meant responses from the Asian states, not the fear about US nuclear threat, as the next section analyses.

<sup>96</sup> “Telegram from the Secretary of State to the Embassy in the Soviet Union,” *FRUS*, 1955-1957, 2: 111-12. There was no evidence if the Soviets forwarded this message to the Chinese, but Mao’s decision to stop attacking Dachen most probably did not result from this signal, because throughout the crisis, the PLA never took military actions against the ROC forces if there were US forces around. In this sense, the confrontation in the Taiwan Strait was never out of the control of PRC leaders, as Shu Guang Zhang argues. See Zhang, *Deterrence and Strategic Culture*, 189-90.

<sup>97</sup> “Joint Resolution by the Congress,” *FRUS*, 1955-57, 2: 162-63.

PRC to the UN for the discussion, but China rejected the invitation on the grounds that the UN was intervening in China's domestic affairs. In late February, PLA artillery forces bombed the Nationalists on Nanji Island, which led to ROC withdrawal of its forces from the vulnerable island, and the Communists captured all the islands off the Zhejiang coast.

### **PRC's Conciliation**

Just as the tension seemed to be escalating out of control, PRC leaders turned to conciliation. On February 5, Zhou Enlai indicated to Sweden's ambassador to Beijing, who was forwarding a UN Secretary General's invitation for the PRC to attend UN discussion, that China was willing to negotiate with the US to resolve the tensions.<sup>98</sup> The following day Zhou expressed the same idea to the Indian ambassador.<sup>99</sup> What caused the change in China's policy? Previous works have neglected China's shift to conciliation in early February, and concentrated only on Zhou Enlai's peace initiative later in Bandung.<sup>100</sup> China's proposal in February was not responded to by the US, and in early March US leaders declared they were considering using nuclear weapons against China. China's media reacted vehemently. But surprisingly, at the Bandung Conference, Zhou Enlai declared China was willing to negotiate with the US.

According to my research in the newly available Chinese and Russian documents, Zhou's initiative in Bandung was not surprising at all, because he simply reiterated the proposal he made in February. Scholars Qiang Zhai and Jia Qingguo made an excellent summarization of the

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<sup>98</sup> Zhonghua Remin Gongheguo Waijiaobu and Zhongyang Wenxian Yanjiushi, eds., *Zhou Enlai Waijiao Wenxuan* [Selected Diplomatic Papers of Zhou Enlai] (Beijing: Zhongyang Wenxian Chubanshe, 1990), 107.

<sup>99</sup> *Zhou Enlai Waijiao Huodong Dashiji*, 100.

<sup>100</sup> Qiang Zhai, *The Dragon, the Lion, and the Eagle*, 169; Gordon H. Chang and He Di, "The Absence of War," 1520-21; Shu Guang Zhang, *Deterrence and Strategic Culture*, 220-21; and Dai Chaowu, *Didui yu Weiji de Niandai*, 227-40.

elements influencing Zhou's initiative in Bandung, including realization of China's goal of drawing international attention to the crisis, anxieties among Asian states, the influence of the Soviet Union, and the US nuclear threat.<sup>101</sup> Their argument provides the framework for the analysis of the PRC's policy making, but my research of the current documents refines their arguments, if we use this frame to interpret the PRC's initiative in February.

Firstly, the new documents give much more significance to the shift towards conciliation in February than they do to Bandung itself. In addition to Zhou's proposal, on February 4, the day after China rejected the UN invitation, the Soviet Union proposed a "Ten Power Conference" (including the US, China, the Soviet Union, Britain, France, and the five Colombo Powers: India, Burma, Indonesia, Pakistan and Ceylon) to discuss the Taiwan Strait Crisis.<sup>102</sup> While the current literature fails to pay attention to the Soviet proposal, a new Russian document indicates that the Soviet Union and China were in close consultation, and the Soviet proposal was made at China's request. On February 2, according to the document, Zhou Enlai told J. Lomakin, Soviet Charge d'Affaires ad interim in Beijing, about China's decision to ask the Soviets to propose through Britain and India a "Ten Power Conference."<sup>103</sup> After that, Zhou Enlai moved on to tell the Swedish and Indian diplomats that China was willing to talk to the US. Thereafter, Chinese leaders maintained this position and Zhou's initiative in Bandung was in compliance with this position. Therefore, Zhou's Bandung initiative was not as dramatic a shift as the current

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<sup>101</sup> Zhai, *The Dragon, the Lion, and the Eagle*, 173-74; Jia Qingguo, "Unmaterialized Rapprochement: Sino-American Relations in the mid-1950s," 247-50. Ph.D. Dissertation, Cornell University, 1988.

<sup>102</sup> On the fact that participants of the proposed conference included the Colombo Powers, G. H. Jansen commented, "it indicates how quickly Russian diplomacy played up to and sought to use this new Asian grouping, for which Mr. Dulles had only ill-concealed contempt." See G. H. Jansen, *Afro-Asia and Non-Alignment* (London: Faber and Faber, 1966), 183. As the following section indicates, it was the PRC, instead of Russia, which made this proposal.

<sup>103</sup> Memorandum of Zhou Enlai's meeting with Soviet diplomat, February 2, 1955, ABПPФ, ф.0100, оп.48, п.394, д.10, л.203-206; from SPA, SD09935. Unfortunately, this document does not indicate what factors made Chinese leaders come to this decision.

literature indicates. This finding also revises Gordon Chang's and He Di's argument that Zhou's initiative "was an impromptu response to discussions he had had with Asian delegates at Bandung," and was not "specifically planned by the Beijing leadership before Bandung."<sup>104</sup>

Secondly, declassified documents confirm the importance to PRC leaders of the Southeast Asian leaders' anxieties about tensions in the Taiwan Strait, but they do so in a different way. While current works stress the actions these states took in Bandung, new documents disclose the pressure they put on China earlier in January and February.<sup>105</sup> According to these documents, the PRC's plan to use the coming Bandung Conference to push for a Peace Area against the US was probably the most important reason for its shift to conciliation, particularly after China had accepted the invitation to attend the conference on January 22.<sup>106</sup> The importance PRC leaders attached to Bandung in relation to their policy toward the US is indicated by one new document. After the PRC sentenced the US pilots, UN Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld asked to go to China to talk about this issue since these pilots were viewed by the US as POWs from the Korean War. PRC leaders believed Hammarskjöld's purpose was to exaggerate the significance of the issue to "divert people's criticism and opposition" away from the "aggression treaty" the US had just signed with Taiwan. But they still agreed to receive Hammarskjöld, because, as Zhou Enlai told the Soviet Ambassador to Beijing:

If we refuse, we would be put into a passive situation. They would still push this issue through the neutral states; and Ceylon would raise this issue among the Colombo Powers, thus putting us in a disadvantageous position. This would *even*

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<sup>104</sup> Chang and He, "The Absence of War," 1520-21. Chang and He mentioned Zhou's proposal in February, but they do not focus on that. According to them, Zhou Enlai believed his statement in Bandung "was not a departure from China's previous position," but lacking documents, they do not explain what China's previous position was.

<sup>105</sup> For example, Stolper believes "the Asia-African conference in Bandung may have had a greater effect in producing the more dramatic shift that Chou made there on April 23." See Stolper, *China, Taiwan, and the Offshore Islands*, 105.

<sup>106</sup> *Zhou Enlai Nianpu*, 442-43.

[emphasis added] influence negatively our participation in the coming Asia-African Conference.<sup>107</sup>

At the same time, Mao Zedong also stressed to the Soviet ambassador that China “attached great significance” to Bandung for the opportunity it provided to unite other Asian states against the US.<sup>108</sup>

Before the crisis escalated in late January, China’s Asian neighbors did not seem to be particularly anxious about the situation. Rather, India, Burma, and Indonesia expressed sympathy toward China’s attempts to solve its domestic problems.<sup>109</sup> Nehru and U Nu showed their understanding when Chinese leaders blamed US “invasion” of Taiwan as the reason for the tensions.<sup>110</sup> But when the hostilities between the US and China intensified after the Yijiangshan takeover and the consequent pass of the Formosa Resolution, they became increasingly anxious. On January 30, Burma called for a peaceful solution, and U Nu offered to visit the US to help China find a way to end the crisis. The Indonesian cabinet proposed that the Colombo powers hold a conference over this issue.<sup>111</sup> Although China had the right to liberate its territory, the Indonesians argued, its attack on Taiwan “directly endangers world peace.” Moreover, such an

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<sup>107</sup> Zhou Enlai *Waijiao Huodong Dashiji*, 95.

<sup>108</sup> Memorandum of Yudin and Mao Zedong’s meeting, January 8, 1955, ABПРФ, ф.0100, оп.48, п.393, д.9, л.24-30; from Paul Wingrove, “Mao’s Conversation with the Soviet Ambassador, 1953-1955,” Cold War International History Project, working paper #36 (Washington, DC, 2002).

<sup>109</sup> Nehru told the press that the KMT’s harassment of the mainland had produced “uncomfortable and unpleasant situation.” See “Nehru’s Remarks Concerning Foreign Policy,” October 31, 1954, CFMA, 204-00142-03, 45. For Chinese analysis of the Southeast Asian responses to the bombing of Jinmen, see “Southeast Asian and North European States’ Responses to Our Declaration to Liberate Taiwan,” September 21, 1954, CFMA, 102-000159-15, 65-67.

<sup>110</sup> When they visited Beijing, neither of them demonstrated anxieties about the situation in the Taiwan Strait; and Nehru even told Mao Zedong explicitly that “a man like Dulles is a great menace.” See *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, 27: 32-40, 105. As late as late December, Nehru was still convinced China “is anxious to avoid war, anxious even to avoid friction and possibilities of conflict,” *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, 27: 116.

<sup>111</sup> Telegram from Chinese Embassy to Indonesia, February 2, 1955, CFMA, 105-00173-12, 1.

action would put China in a disadvantageous position in the coming Bandung Conference, Indonesia warned Chinese leaders.<sup>112</sup>

It was Nehru who drew PRC leaders' closest attention. Nehru kept expressing to PRC diplomats that "Taiwan's legal position is indisputable, and the Chinese position was completely correct." But he also worried about a war between the US and China.<sup>113</sup> Nehru was then attending a meeting of the British Commonwealth premiers, the main purpose of which was to coordinate positions on the Taiwan issue.<sup>114</sup> PRC leaders feared Nehru would not keep his original position, because they knew Britain was pushing Nehru to put more pressure on China.<sup>115</sup> Nehru's assistant was also implying to Chinese diplomats that India would have to accept a "military deadlock" in the Taiwan Strait.<sup>116</sup> To make sure the Indians understood China's conciliatory attitude, Zhou Enlai immediately told the Indian ambassador that China was willing to negotiate with the US at an international conference, so long as Taiwan was excluded; and China rejected the invitation to UN Security Council simply because that was a trap to create two Chinas.<sup>117</sup> Catering to Nehru's desire to play a leading role, Zhou Enlai encouraged India to make the international conference proposal, which "would be helpful to the whole Asia."<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Shijie Zhishi Chubanshe, ed., *Zhongmei Guanxishi Ziliao Huibian* [World Knowledge Press, ed., *Collection of Documents on Sino-American Relations*] (Beijing, 1957), Vol. 2: 2168, 2177.

<sup>113</sup> "Excerpts of Charge d'Affaires Huan Xiang's Talk with Nehru," February 1, 1955, CFMA, 105-00058-04, 6-8. For Nehru's concerns about the Taiwan Strait in early February 1955, see *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, Vol. 28 (New Delhi, 2001): 158-67.

<sup>114</sup> *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, Vol. 28: 167-72.

<sup>115</sup> Telegram from Soviet Embassy to Molotov, February 8, 1955, ABIPФ, ф.0100, оп.48, п.394, д.10, л.222-223; from SPA, SD09937.

<sup>116</sup> "The Ceylonese and Indian High Commissioners' Visit Regarding the Commonwealth Conference and Taiwan Issue," February 5, 1955, CFMA, 110-00276-06, 37.

<sup>117</sup> *Zhou Enlai Waijiao Huodong Dashiji*, 100.

<sup>118</sup> Memorandum of conversation between the Chinese and Soviet diplomats, February 6, 1955, ABIPФ, ф.0100, оп.48, п.394, д.10, л.215-219; from SPA, SD09936.

Thirdly, the current literature is right that Chinese leaders were concerned about US nuclear threats, but it is wrong to argue that the specific threat of using nuclear weapons in the Taiwan Strait caused China's shift to conciliation. US atomic menace during the Korean War, and the strategy of "massive retaliation" had created an atmosphere in which nuclear weapons were being touted as the equivalent of conventional weapons.<sup>119</sup> But US nuclear threat against China was made in March, after PRC leaders had already indicated their willingness to negotiate with the US in February.<sup>120</sup> Similarly, US nuclear menace in the Taiwan Strait was not the reason for China's decision to start its nuclear program in January and its efforts to enlist signatures in *Renmin Ribao* for a petition against nuclear weapons in February, which most works use to stress the impact of US nuclear threat in the Taiwan Strait on Zhou Enlai's "dramatic change of position" in Bandung.<sup>121</sup> According to sources now available, China launched its nuclear program in January 1955 primarily because the Soviet Union decided to support China's nuclear research around that time;<sup>122</sup> and China's public petition resulted from a worldwide propaganda movement the Soviets launched, which requested 400 million Chinese signatures to protest a

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<sup>119</sup> Memorandum of Yudin and Mao Zedong's meeting, January 8, 1955, ABIPФ, ф.0100, оп.48, п.393, д.9, л.24-30; from Wingrove, "Mao's Conversation with the Soviet Ambassador, 1953-1955."

<sup>120</sup> Ever since the confrontation started, the US leaders had thought of nuclear weapons, but they did not seriously consider and prepare Americans for the use of nuclear weapons until March, although their purpose was still to deter the PRC from attacking Jinmen or Mazu. See Shu Guang Zhang, *Deterrence and Strategic Culture*, 213-15.

<sup>121</sup> Qiang Zhai, *ibid.*; Shu Guang Zhang, *Deterrence and Strategic Culture*, 220-222; He Di, "The Evolution of the People's Republic of China's Policy toward the Offshore Islands," in *Great Powers in East Asia, 1953-1960*, eds. Warren Cohen and Akira Iriye (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 228; and Chang and He, "The Absence of War," 1523.

<sup>122</sup> *Zhou Enlai Nianpu*, 445. For Soviet assistance to China's nuclear program, see Shen Zhihua, "Yuanzhu yu Xianzhi." See also John Wilson Lewis and Xue Litai, *China Builds the Bomb* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 11-46.

new NATO policy in December 1954, which legitimized the first use of tactical nuclear weapons against possible Soviet conventional attack.<sup>123</sup>

Actually, at this time, PRC leaders were not scared by US military threat and still maintaining military pressure on the US, although they had tried to avoid a conflict. When two US fighters entered the airspace of Zhejiang Province on February 9, PLA anti-aircraft artillery opened fire and shot down one of them.<sup>124</sup> On February 21, Mao Zedong instructed the PLA not to retreat before US threat, “if we show any fear, the enemy will consider us weak and easy to bully. In other words, if we give them an inch, they will take a mile and intensify their military expansion. Only by adopting an unyielding, resolute, and calm stance can we force the enemy to retreat.”<sup>125</sup> Subsequently, PLA air force bombed and captured Nanji Island. As late as February 28, Mao still believed that China could keep pressure on the US to “enlarge the contradictions between England and the United States.”<sup>126</sup>

US nuclear threats, nevertheless, did work and deterred the PRC from further actions on the offshore islands in March. According to new sources, in early March, PLA leaders wanted to carry on the momentum and attack the Mazu Islands, expecting the US would push the

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<sup>123</sup> “Directive Concerning Carrying out a Nationwide Campaign to Enlist Signatures for the Petition against the Use of Atomic Weapons,” February 19, 1955, CFMA, 102-00214-02, 35-36. For description of the PRC’s anti-nuclear propaganda since mid-January, see Stolper, *China, Taiwan, and the Offshore Islands*, 98-99. At the request of the US, NATO adopted a new policy of deterrence in the fall of 1954, declaring it would not hesitate to use nuclear weapons against Communist aggression. See Matthew Jones, “Targeting China: U.S. Nuclear Planning and ‘Massive Retaliation’ in East Asia, 1953-1955,” *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 4 (Fall 2008): 40.

<sup>124</sup> And the US government did not protest or retaliate; instead the fighters “drifted off course,” according to US government declaration. See Liu Tong, *Kua Hai zhi Zhan*, 508.

<sup>125</sup> The CCP Central Committee, “US interference in the question of our liberation of Taiwan,” February 21, 1954, Zhongyang Dang’anjuan compiled, *Zhonggong Zhongyang Wenjian Huibian: 1954*, 2722-24. Translation from Chang and He, “The Absence of War,” 1516.

<sup>126</sup> “Guangyu Zhou Enlai Tongzhi he Yingguo Zhuwoguo Daiban Trevelyan Tanhua Neirong,” February 28, 1954, *Zhonggong Zhongyang Wenjian Huibian*, 573-79. Cited in Chang and He, “The Absence of War,” 1516. According to Chang and He, the Chinese actions in February resulted from the US contradictory behaviors: on the one hand, it was suing China in the UN and sought a ceasefire, on the other, the US was forcing the Nationalists withdrawing from the Dachen Islands. See Chang and He, “The Absence of War,” 1516.

Nationalists to withdraw from the Jinmen Islands, as they did on Dachen.<sup>127</sup> But Mao Zedong vetoed the plan on March 14 and ordered the local PLA commanders to let the Nationalist forces go—even if they withdrew from Mazu or any other islands, the PLA should not attack or obstruct the withdrawal.<sup>128</sup> This happened days after Dulles declared on television that the US “would use atomic weapons as interchangeable with the conventional weapons.” On March 16, President Eisenhower also declared at a news conference that he believed nuclear weapons could be used “as you use a bullet or anything else” if a war broke out in the Taiwan Strait.<sup>129</sup> Subsequently, in late March, PRC leaders twice held conferences discussing the possibility of a US surprise attack. At the conferences, Mao Zedong warned CCP leaders to “think in terms of and prepare for the worst...to study intensively how to deal with the nuclear age.” “If we are prepared beforehand,...the atomic and hydrogen bombs the imperialist use to scare us will not be that terrifying.”<sup>130</sup> In mid-April, PLA troops stationed across the Taiwan Strait were ordered to be prepared for US air raids on Shanghai, and the coastal areas along Fujian and Zhejiang.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> According to Chang and He, Mao Zedong believed in February 1955 that the US would not intervene in the event of China’s attack on the offshore islands, and China could continue to “agitate against the United States and the Nationalists without provoking war,” see Chang and He, “The Absence of War,” 1515. This further demonstrates that the US threat was not a major concern in China’s negotiation initiative in early February, and thus accentuates the importance of Asian states in Chinese considerations. See Chang and He, “The Absence of War,” 1515-16.

<sup>128</sup> Zhonggong Jiangsushen Dangshi Yanjiushi, ed., *Su Yu Nianpu* [Chronological Record of Su Yu] (Beijing: Dangdai Zhongguo Chubanshe, 2006), 567; *Jianguo Yilai Mao Zedong Wengao*, Vol. 5, 51; Liu Tong, *Kua Hai zhi Zhan*, 510.

<sup>129</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, 2: 345-60; Chang and He, “The absence of war,” 1519; Zhai, *The Dragon, the Lion & the Eagle*, 171; and Stolper, *China, Taiwan, and the Offshore Islands*, 84.

<sup>130</sup> Mao Zedong, “Concluding remarks at the National Conference of the CCP,” March 31, 1954, in Kau and Leung, *The Writings of Mao Zedong*, 540; and “Outlines of the concluding speech at the National Congress of the CCP,” March 31, 1954, *Mao Wengao*, Vol. 5: 72; cited in Zhang, *Deterrence and Strategic Culture*, 221.

<sup>131</sup> Zheng Wenhan, *Mishu Riji Lide Mao Zedong* (Beijing: Junshi Kexue Chubanshe, 1998), 10; Nanjing Junqu Dangdai Zhongguo Junshi Guofang Juan Bianjishi, ed., *Zhongguo Renmin Jiefangjun Nanjing Junqu Junshi Gongzuo Dashiji* (Nanjing: Nanjing Junqu Neibuban, 1988), 177; cited in Liu Tong, *Kua Hai zhi Zhan*, 512. These documents prove incorrect Chang’s and He’s argument that “some top officials in Beijing” “ignored” the US threat. See Chang and He, “The Absence of War,” 1522.

Fourthly, new documents modify the current argument about the Soviet influence on the PRC's decision to talk with the US. According to the current literature, Soviet leaders may have passed along a US warning to China, and moreover, they suggested to China directly that it solve the crisis through negotiation because the Soviets were kept in the dark and were worried about a Sino-American conflict. On January 22, as most current works cite, Dulles informed the Soviets that the US would defend Taiwan, Mazu and nearby islands, and protect withdrawal of KMT forces from Dachen, and asked the Soviet Union to exercise its "moderating influence on the Chinese Communists," lest China misjudge and attack.<sup>132</sup> Although new evidence does not reveal if and when the Soviets forwarded Dulles's warning to the Chinese, they do demonstrate that the PRC and the Soviets had maintained close contacts, and China's decision to negotiate with the US was made after PRC leaders consulted with the Soviets in early February. In addition, according to a new Soviet document, the Soviets also pushed China to take follow-up actions to relax the tensions in late February. And Zhou Enlai addressed the Soviet concern by promising Soviet diplomats his "sincere interest" in breaking the deadlock in the Taiwan Strait and avoiding conflict.<sup>133</sup> Liu Shaoqi, Mao's successor apparent, also assured the Soviets that China would not attack such islands as Jinmen and Mazu, given the limited capabilities of the PLA.<sup>134</sup>

Thus, these new documents revise Dai Chaowu's argument that the Soviets did not understand China's policy toward Taiwan—on the contrary, PRC leaders had kept the Soviets

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<sup>132</sup> "Telegram from the Secretary of State to the Embassy in the Soviet Union," *FRUS, 1955-57*, 2: 111-12.

<sup>133</sup> Memorandum of conversation between Soviet and Chinese diplomats, February 23, 1955, ABПPΦ, ф.0100, оп.48, п.394, д.10, л.271-176; from SPA, SD09941.

<sup>134</sup> Li Danhui, ed., *Beijing yu Mosike: Cong Lianmeng Zouxiang Duikang* [Beijing and Moscow: from Alliance to Confrontation] (Guilin: Guangxi Shifan Daxue Chubanshe, 2002), 248.

informed of their plans. Moreover, according to new sources, the PRC's decision to move toward conciliation was done to its own initiative, instead of resulting from the Soviet pressure, as the current works suggest. No new sources prove that the Soviet leaders took the initiative to negotiate before China's shift to conciliation in early February; instead one new document indicates the PRC's decision came *before* the Soviet suggestion. For example, Dai Chaowu cites as evidence Khrushchev's pressure on PRC leaders: when Chinese Defense Minister visited Moscow in January 1955, Khrushchev talked to him about the Taiwan issue, and stressed the importance of peaceful negotiation in solving international conflicts, given the superior power of the US.<sup>135</sup> But according to new sources, instead of January, as Dai believes, Khrushchev's talk with the Chinese official took place in *May 1955*, long *after* Chinese leaders made their decision.<sup>136</sup>

The Ten Power Conference proposal was rejected by the US on the grounds that it would not talk about the issue without Taiwan's presence. Meanwhile in London, the Commonwealth premiers followed the US and shelved the proposal for a Ten Power Conference. And India no longer insisted on holding the conference.<sup>137</sup> Moreover, PRC leaders were told, Nehru seemed to be leaning towards US position, as he started to suggest that Taiwan could attend the proposed conference, if it happened. Worried about this news, Chinese leaders immediately instructed

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<sup>135</sup> Dai, *Didui yu Weiji de Niandai*, 237.

<sup>136</sup> Wang Yan, et al., *Peng Dehuai Nianpu* [A Chronological Record of Peng Dehuai] (Beijing: Renmin Chubanshe, 1998), 595-96.

<sup>137</sup> Telegram from Soviet diplomat to Molotov, February 8, 1955, ABIPФ, ф.0100, оп.48, п.394, д.10, л.222-223; from SPA, SD09937.

their diplomats to confirm this message.<sup>138</sup> To their relief, Nehru soon switched back to his original position.<sup>139</sup> To consolidate Nehru's position, Zhou Enlai promptly told the Indian ambassador that the simplest way to solve the Taiwan problem was a direct US-China negotiation.<sup>140</sup> Meanwhile, Chinese officials kept the Indonesians and Burmese informed of their conciliatory stance.<sup>141</sup>

The support of these states was indispensable for the PRC to realize its goal of isolating the US in Bandung, particularly when PRC leaders were told the US was trying to sabotage the Bandung Conference by sending all its "lackeys" to disrupt the conference, and the British were helping the US with this.<sup>142</sup> According to PRC officials, US officials believed unity of the Colombo powers would be critical to the result of the conference, and decided to do their best to split it.<sup>143</sup> The US offered India economic assistance and even atomic materials to lure it away from China; meanwhile, it also increased economic assistance to Indonesia and promised to enlarge its investments.<sup>144</sup>

The PRC's demonstration of conciliation was not just a gesture to Southeast Asia; it was also a clever diplomatic offensive towards the US. The proposed conference was to discuss

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<sup>138</sup> "Telegrams between Chinese Foreign Ministry and Charge'd'affires," February 23, 1955, CFMA, 110-00276-04, and 110-00276-06.

<sup>139</sup> Memorandum of conversation between the Soviet and Chinese diplomats, February 23, 1955, ABIPФ, ф.0100, оп.48, п.394, д.10, л.271-276; from SPA, SD09941.

<sup>140</sup> *Zhou Enlai Waijiao Huodong Dashiji*, 102.

<sup>141</sup> "Excerpts of Vice Minister Zhang Hanfu's Meeting with Indonesian Ambassador," February 16, 1955, CFMA, 207-00003-05, 56-59. U Nu sent the Chinese message to Dulles when the later visited Burma in late February. See Evelyn Colbert, *Southeast Asia in International Politics, 1941-1956* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1977), 320-21.

<sup>142</sup> "India Press Coverage of Asia-African Conference," February 5, 1955, CFMA, 207-00002-02, 54-55.

<sup>143</sup> "Summary of British Press Coverage and Our Analysis of the Bangkok Conference," February 28, 1955, CFMA, 105-00173-13, 65-67.

<sup>144</sup> "Increase of US Activities in Indonesia to Sabotage the Asia-African Conference," March 7, 1955, CFMA, 207-00002-02, 57-58; "US Actions in Indonesia before the Asia-African Conference," March 25, 1955, CFMA, 207-00002-04, 136-39.

tensions in the Taiwan Strait, a deliberately ambiguous phrase, not a cease-fire or solution to the Taiwan problem, which were China's domestic issues and not to be discussed internationally. As Chinese leaders had made known, the tensions in the Taiwan area resulted from US intervention and "occupation" of Taiwan. So if the US agreed to hold the conference, China would propose discussing withdrawal of US forces from Taiwan, according to what Zhou Enlai told the Soviets.<sup>145</sup> By displaying their willingness to accept a diplomatic solution, Chinese leaders put the ball back in the US's court. The US would then face a dilemma between sitting together with China in an international conference, thus giving it *de facto* recognition, and rejecting the proposal, which would then be interpreted as US unwillingness to solve the problem diplomatically—this would further alienate the Asian states. Moreover, the proposal to hold a conference without Taiwan's attendance would also strain US relations with Taiwan, which had been worried whether the US would protect its interests as pledged. This proposal would also exacerbate the differences between the US and Britain, according to what Chinese diplomats told their Soviet colleagues.<sup>146</sup> Chinese leaders were aware that the British had pushed the US to force Taiwan to give up the offshore islands, which the US was still reluctant to do.<sup>147</sup> If an

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<sup>145</sup> Memorandum of Zhou Enlai's conversation with Soviet diplomat, February 2, 1955, ABПPФ, ф.0100, оп.48, п.394, д.10, л.203-206; from SPA, SD09935. This was exactly what Chinese leaders did when India mediated between the US and China in May. See memorandum of Zhou Enlai's conversation with Soviet diplomat, May 21, 1955, ABПPФ, ф.0100, оп.48, п.394, д.11, л.125-134; from SPA, SD09943.

<sup>146</sup> Memorandum of conversation between Soviet and Chinese diplomats, February 23, 1955, ABПPФ, ф.0100, оп.48, п.394, д.10, л.271-276; from SPA, SD 09941.

<sup>147</sup> A Chinese Foreign Ministry telegram on February 9, 1955 indicates that Britain was pushing the US to ask Taiwan to withdraw its forces from Jinmen and Mazu, in return for China's promise not to attack Taiwan. See "Summary of the Commonwealth Premiers' Meeting," February 9, 1955, CFMA, 110-00276-06, 43-44.

international conference were ever held, Chinese leaders hoped, the US-UK difference would surface, providing China opportunities to maneuver between the two allies.<sup>148</sup>

After China initiated negotiations with the US in February, Chinese leaders stopped military actions in the Taiwan Strait, and the amount of belligerent propaganda also “fell to its lowest point since the summer of 1954.”<sup>149</sup> Then China’s attention turned to using the Bandung Conference to build a Peace Area with Asian states against the US. Making use of the meetings with Asian and African leaders at Bandung, Zhou Enlai declared to the world China’s willingness to negotiate with the US, which actually ended the confrontation in the Taiwan Strait.

## **Conclusion**

The PRC’s initiation of the Taiwan Strait Crisis in order to prevent the MDT was based on incorrect judgment that the US was negotiating with the ROC about the MDT—in fact, although both US and ROC officials were talking about a possible MDT, US leaders had not made up their minds if and when they wanted it.<sup>150</sup> Ironically, instead of preventing the MDT, PRC actions in the Taiwan Strait expedited the MDT: in their efforts to defuse the crisis, US leaders decided to conclude the MDT.

Moreover, PRC leaders overestimated the conflicts between the US and its allies, especially the UK, and British interest in improving relations with the PRC, and their willingness and capabilities to influence the US, although their perception of US isolation on its China policy

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<sup>148</sup> As Chang and He argue, “enlarg[ing] the contradictions between England and the United States” remained to be Chinese leaders’ consideration in late February. See Chang and He, “The Absence of War,” 1516.

<sup>149</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-1957, Vol. 2: 319-20, 339-41; Chang and He, “The Absence of War,” 1517.

<sup>150</sup> See Chapter 4.

was basically correct. This was hardly surprising for a new government whose attendance of the Geneva Conference was its diplomatic debut in the world. As a result, although the PRC's efforts to increase the diplomatic pressure added to tensions between the US and UK, they were not able to prevent the MDT. Therefore, China's diplomacy toward the Western powers achieved limited success.

But Chinese leaders were able to shift their focus and modify their policy in time. After their military actions to protest the MDT and rejection of the invitation to go to the UN led to world-wide worries about a coming military conflict between the US and China, they changed to conciliation, which on the one hand worked out the pressure from Asian states, and on the other, enabled them to mobilize these states' support. In this sense, the Bandung Conference provided PRC leaders an opportunity to continue their strategy of isolating the US by working with China's Asian neighbors.

## Chapter 4

### “A Horrible Dilemma”—United States Efforts to Defuse the Taiwan Strait Crisis

“The Communists are clearly out to maintain tensions with the U.S. and to cause difficulties between us [Britain and the U.S.] over the Formosa question.”<sup>1</sup>

——British Commonwealth Relations Office, August 31, 1954

“The Communists might estimate that this [bombing the offshore islands] would exacerbate relations between the US and such states as the UK and India over China policy, and possibly deter the US from extending a long-range commitment to Chiang Kai-shek.”<sup>2</sup>

——SNIE, September 4, 1954

“...they (the Chinese Communists) are certainly doing everything they can to try our patiences. It’s awfully difficult to remain calm under these situations. Sometimes I think that it would be best all around to go after them right now without letting them pick their time and the place of their own choosing.”<sup>3</sup>

——President Eisenhower, February 2, 1955

United States policy during the Taiwan Strait Crisis of 1954-55 has been given numerous interpretations. Traditionally, scholars believed President Dwight D. Eisenhower’s China policy was manipulated by some ardent anti-Communist assistants and almost led to a war with China.<sup>4</sup> Eisenhower revisionists appreciate the president’s restraint and flexibility, which prevented a major conflict with China in the Taiwan Strait.<sup>5</sup> The post-revisionists criticize Eisenhower’s

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<sup>1</sup> Telegram, Commonwealth Relations Office to High Commissioners in Commonwealth countries, FC 1094/17, FO371/110257, London: National Archives of the United Kingdom (hereafter, UNUK).

<sup>2</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 567.

<sup>3</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, Vol. 2: 202-03.

<sup>4</sup> Townsend Hoopes, *The Devil and John Foster Dulles* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1973), 262-73; Foster Rhea Dulles, *American Policy Toward Communist China, 1949-1969* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1972), 130-60; Peter Lyon, *Eisenhower: Portrait of the Hero* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1974), 632, 637, 853-54; Alexander George and Richard Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), 266-94; Jan H. Kalicki, *The Pattern of Sino-American Crises: Political-Military Interactions in the 1950s* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 120-55; Thomas E. Stolper, *China, Taiwan, and the Offshore Islands: Together with Some Implications for Outer Mongolia and Sino-Soviet Relations* (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1985).

<sup>5</sup> Leonard H. D. Gordon, “United States Opposition to Use of Force in the Taiwan Strait, 1954-1962,” *Journal of American History*, Vol. 72, No. 3 (December 1985): 637-60; Robert Divine, *Eisenhower and the Cold War* (New

policy as inconsistent, or crisis-driven, and say the avoidance of war with China was due more to luck or Chinese leaders' cautious actions, rather than Eisenhower's skillful handling of diplomacy.<sup>6</sup>

A fair evaluation of the US policy toward China, however, cannot be made without sufficient knowledge about the other side of the relations—the People's Republic of China.<sup>7</sup> In the light of the new sources from the Chinese Foreign Ministry, this chapter reassesses US actions during the Taiwan Strait Crisis from the perspective of US-China interactions. It concentrates on American leaders' perceptions/misperceptions of the motives of the leaders of the PRC and their reactions to the PRC's moves during the crisis. By juxtaposing this chapter with the previous chapter on the PRC's policy toward the crisis, these two chapters answer the questions of how reasonably the leaders of the two states perceived each other's motivations, and how effectively their policies met the challenges from the other side.

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York: Oxford University Press, 1981); Stephen E. Ambrose, *Eisenhower*, Vol. II: *The President* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985); Bennett C. Rushkoff, "Eisenhower, Dulles and the Quemoy-Matsu Crisis, 1954-1955," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 96, No. 3 (Fall, 1981): 465-80.

<sup>6</sup> Robert Accinelli, *Crisis and Commitment: United States Policy Toward Taiwan, 1950-1955* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); H. W. Brands, "Testing Massive Retaliation: Credibility and Crisis Management in the Taiwan Strait," *International Security*, Vol. 12, No. 4 (Spring 1988): 124-51; Gordon H. Chang, "To the Nuclear Brink: Eisenhower, Dulles, and the Quemoy-Matsu Crisis," *International Security*, Vol. 12, No. 4 (Spring 1986): 96-123; Gordon H. Chang and He Di, "The Absence of War in the U.S.-China Confrontation over Quemoy and Matsu in 1954-1955: Contingency, Luck, Deterrence?" *American Historical Review* (December 1993): 1500-24; Chang Su-Ya, "Taihai Weiji Qian Meiguo dui Waidao de Zhengce," *Zhongyang Yanjiuyuan Jingdaishi Yanjiusuo Jikan*, Vol. 23 (June 1994): 295-330; "Taihai Weiji yu Meiguo Dui 'Fangong Dalu' Zhengce the Zhuanbian," *Zhongyang Yanjiuyuan Jingdaishi Yanjiusuo Jikan*, Vol. 36 (December 2001): 231-97; "Anlihui Tinghuo An: Meiguo Yingfu Diyici Taihai Weiji Celur zhi Yi," *Zhongyang Yanjiuyuan Jingdaishi Yanjiusuo Jikan*, Vol. 22, II (June 1993): 61-106; "Jinma Chejun: Meiguo Yingfu Dierci Taihai Weiji Celue zhi Er," *Zhongyang Yanjiuyuan Jingdaishi Yanjiusuo Jikan*, Vol. 24, I (June 1995): 413-72.

<sup>7</sup> The current works approaching the event from the perspective of US-China interaction include: Chang and He, "The Absence of War;" Stolper, *China, Taiwan, and the Offshore Islands*; Qiang Zhai, *The Dragon, the Lion, and the Eagle: Chinese-British-American Relations, 1949-1958* (Kent, O.H.: Kent University Press, 1994), 153-77; and Shu Guang Zhang, *Deterrence and Strategic Culture: Chinese-American Confrontations, 1949-1958* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1992), 189-224. These scholars' analysis of the PRC's policy making is based exclusively on Chinese news reports or very limited government-selected documents.

## US Policy after the Geneva Conference

When the Geneva Conference ended, US leaders concluded that the conference had promoted the PRC's prestige and increased its capacity to expand Communism in Asia, despite Chinese concessions in Indochina. According to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, China "was the heart of the problem for US policy in Asia."<sup>8</sup> The CIA Director Allen Dulles predicted in early August that the Chinese Communists would not give up Indochina and change its tactics to subversion and infiltration, although they were not likely to break the armistice openly; meanwhile, PRC leaders "would make Formosa [Taiwan] a major diplomatic issue," and launch "diversionary attacks on the offshore islands near Formosa."<sup>9</sup> The PRC would also continue its "peace offensive" to separate the US from its allies and attract other Asian states to the Chinese side.

Although the situation in the Taiwan Strait seemed to be a more pressing challenge, the top US priority in Asia after the Geneva Conference was "drawing a line" in Southeast Asia to deter Chinese aggression.<sup>10</sup> As the British Ambassador to the US Roger Makins observed, US leaders' attention after the Geneva Conference "focused on the creation of a system of defense for South-East Asia."<sup>11</sup> Compared to Southeast Asia, Taiwan had secondary importance to US interests. Also, US leaders were eager to restore US prestige and leadership in containing the

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<sup>8</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 529. The current works on US policy toward the crisis usually start from the PRC's bombardment of Jinmen, but as new Chinese sources indicate, the PRC's actions started as soon as the Geneva Conference was over. Without analysis of US perception of and reaction to China's actions before the bombardment, it would be hard to understand US reaction to the bombardment. However, this chapter does not agree with Gordon Chang and He Di, who argue that the bombardment was a continuation of the PRC's activities in the Taiwan Strait, and PRC leaders "understood the events as an integral part of the continuing tensions of the Chinese civil war in the offshore area." See Chang and He, "The Absence of War," 1504.

<sup>9</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 518-19.

<sup>10</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 12: 666-81; George C. Herring, "'A Good Stout Effort': John Foster Dulles and the Indochina Crisis, 1954-1955," in *John Foster Dulles and the Diplomacy of the Cold War*, ed. by Richard Immerman (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990), 213-33.

<sup>11</sup> See telegram, from Sir Roger Makins to Foreign Office, No. 388, August 3, 1954, unpaginated, in *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office*, Part V, Series E, Vol. 7 (Bethesda, MD: LexisNexis, 2005).

Communists, which was hurt by their supporting France in Indochina. Furthermore, while Taiwan was a divisive issue in US's relations with allies, American leaders had reached consensus with major allies on building a Southeast Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO). Therefore, the day after the Geneva Conference, President Eisenhower declared that the US would push for a "rapid organization of a collective defense in Southeast Asia in order to prevent further direct or indirect Communist aggression in that general area."<sup>12</sup> Secretary Dulles soon publicly laid out his plans for this organization at a press conference. US leaders had since been preoccupied with SEATO until it was set up in early September.<sup>13</sup>

Chiang Kai-shek's Republic of China, and to a lesser extent, PRC's propaganda, however, forced the Taiwan issue onto American leaders' agenda. Worried about the elevation of the status of the PRC, and the exclusion of the ROC from SEATO, Chiang Kai-shek, who had been pleading for a Mutual Defense Treaty with the US, started a new round of intense diplomacy in July 1954. He promised that he would not take any military actions against the mainland without prior US agreement in order to lessen US worries that with a MDT, he would drag the US into a war with the PRC.<sup>14</sup> ROC diplomats also worked hard in Washington and got sympathy from such important leaders as Vice President Richard Nixon, Congressman Walter Judd and Senator William Knowland. Meanwhile, the ROC government started a campaign of "negotiation through journalism," and made the MDT a "hot topic" in the press in both Taiwan and the US. ROC Foreign Minister declared that the US and the ROC was negotiating the MDT, and some

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<sup>12</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 16: 1503.

<sup>13</sup> US preoccupation with Indochina is demonstrated by the fact that post-Geneva Indochina remained to be the most important topic of the National Security Council meetings throughout August 1954. See *The Pentagon Papers* (Gravel Edition), chapter 4, vol. 1, 11. For secondary works on the US preoccupation of SEATO, see Roger Dingman, "John Foster Dulles and the Creation of the South-East Asia Treaty Organization in 1954," *The International History Review*, XI, 3 (August 1989): 457-77; and Herring, "'A Good Stout Effort'."

<sup>14</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, 14: 490-91.

GMD-related news agencies clamored that the treaty would be signed before the end of the year.<sup>15</sup>

The ROC's efforts for the MDT were partly encouraged by US attempts to include Taiwan in SEATO. Ever since 1951, US officials had pondered over a long term goal of building a comprehensive Pacific security group.<sup>16</sup> In March 1954, Dulles thought of including Taiwan in a temporary Western Pacific organization made up of SEATO and NEATO (Northeastern Asian Organization) as a "united action" to deal with the Indochina crisis. After American and British leaders reached agreement on SEATO in June, US officials again attempted to include Taiwan in SEATO. Although they had to give this up because of the British opposition, US leaders sought British agreement that SEATO would be open to additional participants. Soon US officials told ROC officials that they might be allowed to join the organization later.<sup>17</sup> Meanwhile, US leaders did not give up the plan of a broader security pact in the Western Pacific. Dulles talked about this possibility and Taiwan's participation at his press conference on August 3, and NSC 5429, published in November 1954, also indicated such an organization as a long-term goal.<sup>18</sup>

Busy with SEATO, US leaders were not ready to consider the MDT.<sup>19</sup> At the request of US diplomats for clarification of US position, both President Eisenhower and Secretary Dulles told the press in late July that the possibility of the MDT was being studied, but no final decision

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<sup>15</sup> Su-Ya Chang, "Reluctant Alliance: John Foster Dulles and the Making of the United States-Republic of China Mutual Defense Treaty of 1954," *Chinese Yearbook*, Vol. 12 (1992-1994): 148; Stolper, *China, Taiwan and the Offshore Islands*, 25-26.

<sup>16</sup> Stolper, *China, Taiwan and the Offshore Islands*, 19.

<sup>17</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 493; Chang, "Reluctant Alliance," 137.

<sup>18</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 913.

<sup>19</sup> Outside Asia, top on US leaders' agenda was the European Defense Community (EDC) and the French ratification of it. Ironically, the French Parliament vetoed the plan on August 30, 1954, and thus the EDC aborted, despite all the US enticements and pressures, although it was the French President who first proposed the plan.

had been made.<sup>20</sup> In late August, Assistant Secretary of State Walter Robertson interpreted the PRC's actions as efforts to "generate increasing international pressures for a negotiated change in the status of the Formosa as a means of removing a serious cause of tension." He suggested concluding the MDT to declare to the world US protection of Taiwan, and thus "remov[ing] the basis for the pressures and undermin[ing] the effectiveness of the Communist propaganda campaign." Secretary Dulles wanted to delay a decision, although he indicated the US might ultimately need a MDT.<sup>21</sup> Dulles had planned to visit Taiwan after SEATO's opening conference in Manila. Expecting Chiang would demand the MDT, he thought of canceling the trip but finally decided to restrict it to a "purely social call," and limit his stay to two hours, which he hoped would deprive Chiang Kai-shek of the opportunity to discuss MDT.<sup>22</sup>

Dulles's attitude toward MDT was a continuation of previous US policy. Since President Eisenhower had come to power, Chiang had striven for a long-term commitment to the ROC's security, and as importantly, its legitimacy. The US mutual defense treaty with South Korea and especially the PRC's participation in the Geneva Conference had prompted Chiang Kai-shek to make repeated requests. While Nationalist diplomats were pressing for such a treaty in Washington, Chiang had pushed US visitors, including Vice President Nixon (November 1953) and Defense Secretary Charles Wilson and General James A. Van Fleet (May and July 1954). Dulles's assistants also suggested concluding an MDT to prevent the PRC to make use of the Taiwan issue to separate the US from allies, and to pressure China in the Geneva negotiations.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Chang, "Reluctant Alliance," 148.

<sup>21</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 555.

<sup>22</sup> Telegram, Robert Scott to Foreign Office, September 7, 1954, FO 371/110231, NAUK.

<sup>23</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 399-401.

Dulles had put off a decision. In private President Eisenhower thought an MDT was a big commitment that required careful consideration.<sup>24</sup>

At the same time, the PRC also drew US attention to the Taiwan Strait. After the Geneva Conference, the Communist press repeatedly warned the US of “protracted grave consequences,” if it concluded MDT with the ROC. Soon it started to claim that the Chinese people “were determined to liberate Taiwan” and “cannot tolerate any encroachment on the territorial integrity and sovereignty of their country.” To add to the tensions, the Chinese People’s Liberation Army (PLA) fighters shot down a British airliner around Hainan Island on July 23, and two American passengers on board were killed.<sup>25</sup>

US leaders initially did not think the PLA would invade Taiwan, which was confirmed by their British ally.<sup>26</sup> Their worries about the security of the offshore islands increased after the event. The Seventh Fleet was again sent to the Dachen area, under the order that they now would return fire if attacked by the Communists.<sup>27</sup> At the same time, US positions on the offshore islands became stronger. President Eisenhower now regarded these islands as “vital outposts for the defense of Formosa,” and believed “we should go as far as possible to defend them without inflaming world opinion against us.”<sup>28</sup> Secretary Dulles told the press that the security of these islands “might from a military standpoint be so intimately connected with the defense of

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<sup>24</sup> Conference with the President, May 23, 1954, Dulles Papers, White House Memorandum Series, Box 1, Eisenhower Presidential Library (hereafter, DDEL).

<sup>25</sup> US leaders saw this event as an isolated event, caused by some “trigger-happy” PLA pilots. See *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 505, 507-12.

<sup>26</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 550; Telegram, Sir R. Scott to Foreign Office, August 25, 1954, FO 371/110257, NAUK; Foreign Office Minute, August 25, 1954, FO 371/110257, NAUK.

<sup>27</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 544.

<sup>28</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 537.

Formosa that the military would be justified in concluding that the defense of Formosa comprehended a defense of those islands.”<sup>29</sup>

These statements were in keeping with a tendency toward increasing US commitment to the islands. The ROC had been pushing the US to help protect these islands, but both the Departments of State and Defense believed they were not essential to the defense of Taiwan, and basic US policy, as indicated by NSC 146/2, was to protect just Taiwan and the Penghu Islands (Pescadores). Nevertheless, President Eisenhower was willing to provide some warships, and in late 1953 agreed to include these islands in the US military assistance programs. When conflicts in the Taiwan Strait increased and the Communist forces captured a few small islands in May 1954, Eisenhower on the one hand thought the protection of the islands was “too big a commitment,” but on the other hand, believed some islands were “really an integral part of the Formosa defense” and must not be lost to the Communists. In compromise, he sent the Seventh Fleet to the Dachen area to deter the PRC.<sup>30</sup>

US position on the offshore islands was still temporary and limited, and basically meant as a deterrent. When Dulles reviewed NSC record of action, he carefully replaced the words the offshore islands “are an integral part of the defense of Formosa” with “are closely related to the defense of Formosa.”<sup>31</sup> After the US ambassador to Japan questioned the credibility of sending warships, Dulles assured him the PRC was not “prepared to challenge us in any major or sustained way and provoke further our sea and air power along their coast.”<sup>32</sup> He had good reasons to believe the deterrence would work: when the Seventh Fleet visited Dachen in May,

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<sup>29</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 562.

<sup>30</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 427-9.

<sup>31</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 443-4.

<sup>32</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 546.

the PRC stopped taking further actions. Without careful exploration of the situation, US leaders failed to take the offshore islands seriously. As late as August 25, Assistant Secretary for the Far Eastern Affairs Walter Robertson still told the British Minister Robert Scott that the “possibility [of Communists attacking the coastal islands] had not occurred to him.”<sup>33</sup> When Scott expressed concern over the offshore islands, although Dulles implied the US would defend them, he stressed that the position was “flexible,” and depended on the actual situations.<sup>34</sup> When the possibility of an attack on the islands was raised at the NSC meeting on August 18, Dulles doubted if the President had Congressional authority to defend them.<sup>35</sup> A Policy Planning Staff memorandum prepared on August 20 also indicated that “[t]here are no US commitments of any kind, public or private, to defend the islands.”<sup>36</sup> On September 9, the NSC requested US military to submit recommendations or US policy under the scenario of Communist attacking the coastal islands.<sup>37</sup>

PRC leaders, however, believed the US was pressing for MDT, rather than SEATO, and increased their pressure on the US. Chinese leaders repeatedly warned of “grave consequences,” if any aggressors “dare[d] to infringe upon our sovereignty and violate our territorial integrity.”<sup>38</sup> In addition, the PRC leaders pushed the British to convince the US to withdraw its forces from Taiwan and not to conclude any security treaty.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Telegram, Sir R. Scott to Foreign Office, August 25, 1954, FO 371/110257, NAUK.

<sup>34</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 554.

<sup>35</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 537-38.

<sup>36</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 543.

<sup>37</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 539. The British officials also interpreted the US policy as deterrence, rather than commitment to the defense of the islands. Telegram, Commonwealth Relations Office, August 31, 1954, FO 371/110257, NAUK.

<sup>38</sup> *Important Documents Concerning the Question of Taiwan* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1955), 109-26.

<sup>39</sup> Telegram, Trevelyan to Foreign Office, August 25, 1954, PREM 11/697, NAUK.

The Chinese efforts did not work as PRC leaders expected, however.<sup>40</sup> Although PRC's diplomacy did add to the tensions between the US and UK, it only made the British government reluctant to pressure US leaders. Fully aware that PRC leaders would "take every opportunity for wedge-driving between the United States and the United Kingdom,"<sup>41</sup> and "the Chinese problem remains today one of the major threats to closer Anglo-American understanding and to a concerted United States-United Kingdom approach to other quite unrelated issues," the British were very careful in their relations with the US in respect to China,<sup>42</sup> although they actually came up with very accurate analysis of Chinese intentions.<sup>43</sup> The next day after China started the propaganda campaign, British Charge d'Affaires in Beijing Humphrey Trevelyan told British Foreign Office that "The main reason for the campaign was to prevent the 'bilateral agreement of mutual security' between the US and KMT."<sup>44</sup> According to Trevelyan, Zhou Enlai's diplomatic report indicated the motives of the Communist propaganda as:

- (1) To try and deter the Americans from making a defense treaty with Chiang Kai-shek;
- (2) To provide a new pretext for attacks on American Far Eastern Policy in substitution for intervention in Indo-China, as suggested by Robertson;
- (3) To provide a substitute for "Oppose America, Aid Korea" as an incentive to further efforts on the home front;
- (4) To raise the temperature in the hope of mobilizing international pressure on the Americans to modify their attitude;

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<sup>40</sup> For the British policy toward the crisis, see Michael Dockrill, "Britain and the First Chinese Off-Shore Islands Crisis, 1954-55," in *British Foreign Policy, 1949-1956*, eds. by Michael Dockrill and John Young (London: Macmillan, 1989), 173-96, and Qiang Zhai, *The Dragon, the Lion and the Eagle*, 153-77. The current works, however, have neglected the British perception of the PRC's propaganda and the Labor Party's visit, and have concentrated on the British influence after the bombardment of Jinmen. The British sources this chapter uses for the first time demonstrate that the British policy during the crisis was far more consistent and well-founded than mere reacting to requests from its ally the US.

<sup>41</sup> Foreign Office minute, August 16, 1954, FO 371/110216, NAUK.

<sup>42</sup> Foreign Office minute, June 22, 1954, FO 371/110222, NAUK.

<sup>43</sup> A comprehensive and accurate analysis of the PRC's foreign policy after the Geneva Conference in late August is Trevelyan's telegram to the Foreign Office, August 31, 1954, FO 371/110216, NAUK.

<sup>44</sup> Telegram, Trevelyan to Foreign Office, July 24, 1954, FO 371/110257, NAUK.

- (5) As a diplomatic counter order to recover the islands off the coast, not only for protection of shipping but also for obvious security reasons.<sup>45</sup>

Meanwhile, officials in the Foreign Office reached similar conclusions.<sup>46</sup> After the Labor Party delegation left Beijing, Trevelyan concluded that what Mao Zedong said “probably represent[ed] accurately the policy” which China wanted British government to follow. “They look to us to exercise a moderating influence on American policy and in particular to get the United States government to withdraw from Formosa the protection of the 7<sup>th</sup> Fleet.”<sup>47</sup> In late August, the British officials predicted that the Communists would not attack Taiwan, but they might very likely attack the offshore islands such as Jinmen, Mazu or Dachen. The US, however, seemed to be insensitive to this.<sup>48</sup> The British were extremely concerned that the US would rush to the defense of the islands, or chose to “deter the Communists from attacking by leaving them guessing as to real American intentions” but leave the situation to the local military leaders, because either way “would increase the chances of a clash between the American and Chinese very considerably,” and thus hurt British interests in Hong Kong and peace in the Far East. To prevent a conflict in the Taiwan Strait, British officials wanted to ask the US to keep the Nationalists under control and stop their provocative actions.<sup>49</sup>

On the other hand, the British knew that China’s diplomatic maneuvers had caused an “unfavorable impression” in the US, and led to US suspicious about Britain.<sup>50</sup> Therefore British leaders decided *not* to talk with the Americans about their analysis of China. Although British

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<sup>45</sup> Telegram, Trevelyan to Foreign Office, August 27, 1954, FO 371/110257, NAUK; telegram, Trevelyan to Foreign Office, August 17, and 18, 1954, FO 371/110216, NAUK.

<sup>46</sup> Minute attached to “Future of Formosa, brief for Lord Reading,” August 20, 1954, FO 371/110257, NAUK.

<sup>47</sup> *British Documents on Foreign Affairs*, Part V, Series E, Vol. 6, September 2, 1954.

<sup>48</sup> Foreign Office minute, August 25, 1954, FO 371/110257, NAUK.

<sup>49</sup> “Future of Formosa, brief for Lord Reading,” August 20, 1954, FO 371/110257, NAUK.

<sup>50</sup> See for example, telegram, Foreign Office to Washington, August 30, 1954, FO 371/110257, NAUK.

officials conveyed to the US what Mao told the Labor delegation, they felt “slightly embarrassed by the whole thing.”<sup>51</sup> They also believed that suggestions to restrain the ROC may be interpreted by US leaders as “conciliating” the PRC, therefore, they preferred “say[ing] nothing to the Americans at the present,” and finding “suitable opportunity” to tell Dulles their concerns when the Taiwan issue came up at the Manila Conference, which took place after the PRC bombed Jinmen Island.<sup>52</sup>

During this time, US leaders’ attention continued to be occupied by EDC and SEATO. Despite pressures from both the ROC and PRC, an MDT remained a long-term goal; a clarified US policy toward China waited to be decided after Dulles got time to “give the problem of Communist China a great deal more thought.”<sup>53</sup> The NSC agreed to keep the current China policy until a review was finished. Moreover, military recommendations about the offshore islands were not ready. Nevertheless, US leaders did reach consensus on some basic factors they must take into consideration in making a coherent policy, including: 1) Sino-Soviet alliance was going to last, and it was difficult to split it from outside in a certain period of time, which according to Dulles was about twenty years; 2) US policy toward China was facing increasing pressure from allies, such as Britain and France, as well as neutralist states like India; and 3) the

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<sup>51</sup> “British Labor Party Delegation’s Visit to China,” August 27, 1954, attached memorandum, September 7, 1954. Box and Collection number missing, College Park, National Archives of the US (NAUS); telegram, Trevelyan to Foreign Office, August 25, 1954, PREM 11/697, NAUK.

<sup>52</sup> Foreign Office minute: Position regarding Formosa, FO 371/110257, NAUK.

<sup>53</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 531.

US could not afford to get involved in a war with the PRC.<sup>54</sup> These factors would have strong influences on US reaction to the Taiwan Strait Crisis as it later developed.

### **From Oracle to MDT**

Although the MDT was not yet on US leaders' agenda, all the talks about it and US actions in the Taiwan Strait caused great anxiety among PRC leaders, and they decided to take military action to warn the US of the risk of concluding the MDT with Taiwan or extending its military protection to the offshore islands. On September 3, the PLA shelled Jinmen Island, which killed two American military advisors and led to ROC's retaliative bombing of the mainland cities and shipping.

US officials sensed the diplomatic signal from the PRC. According to a Special National Intelligence Estimate (SNIE) prepared the day after the bombing, the PRC wanted to "exacerbate relations between the US and such states as the UK and India over China policy, and possibly deter the US from extending a long-range commitment to Chiang Kai-shek," or making a guarantee to the offshore islands.<sup>55</sup> Secretary Dulles also believed that the PRC wanted to influence the upcoming Manila Conference.<sup>56</sup>

US leaders, however, tended to focus on the military aspect of the bombardment, and their reactions had since concentrated on the defense of the offshore islands.<sup>57</sup> Acting Secretary of

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<sup>54</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 526-40.

<sup>55</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 568.

<sup>56</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 572.

<sup>57</sup> And most of the current works have also concentrated on the military actions in the Taiwan Strait, and neglected PRC's diplomatic moves and US reactions to them.

State Robert Anderson predicted that the action may lead to an all-out attack on the islands.<sup>58</sup> A SNIE on September 10 concluded that China's objective was to capture some offshore islands "as an essential part of the consolidation of their control of all China."<sup>59</sup> The bombardment only lasted five hours and even the ROC did not regard it as the beginning of large scale invasion and seek US assistance.<sup>60</sup> The British Joint Intelligence Committee was not sure "whether the bombardment was a propaganda gesture designed to embarrass the Manila negotiations for SEATO, or actually portended a Chinese Communist attempt to seize these islands."<sup>61</sup> Yet US leaders were still worried the PRC would take the offshore islands. Why did the bombing have such a big impact on US leaders?

There were several reasons. First, US officials overestimated PLA capabilities. The two SNIEs prepared after the bombing estimated that the PRC had superior air power in the area of the coastal islands, and the PRC already had "the military potential" to capture the Nationalist-held islands, if US military did not come to the help.<sup>62</sup> According to new Chinese documents, however, this was incorrect. This mistaken analysis guided US policy in the crisis. Second, US officials also exaggerated Chinese determination to take military actions, and regarded this as a failure of deterrence—according to Gordon Chang and He Di, the bombardment came as a "rude shock" to US leaders.<sup>63</sup> The Americans were excited by the fact that the bombardment took place despite the fact that the Seventh Fleet was sent to the Dachen area and Dulles publicly warned

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<sup>58</sup> Robert Anderson to Eisenhower, September 3, 1954, Eisenhower Papers (Ann Whitman File), Dulles-Herter Series, Box 3, Dulles, Sept. 1954 (2), DDEL.

<sup>59</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 596.

<sup>60</sup> For Dulles's meeting with Chiang Kai-shek, see Memorandum "Discussion at the 214th Meeting of the National Security Council, Sunday, September 12, 1954," Eisenhower Papers (Ann Whitman File), NSC Series, Box 6, DDEL.

<sup>61</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 584-5.

<sup>62</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 566, 596.

<sup>63</sup> Chang and He, "The Absence of War," 1505.

that an attack on the islands might provoke US military intervention. The “Communist propaganda acknowledged the US would defend the off-shore islands and a formal guarantee was coming.” Still the PRC bombed Jinmen, and according to Karl Rankin, US ambassador to Taiwan, the PLA would continue its aggression.<sup>64</sup> US officials should have noticed that the bombardment took place in Jinmen, where there were no US forces, not in Dachen, which had the Seventh Fleet in the vicinity. They also did not know that Mao Zedong cautiously stopped a planned bombing of Dachen to avoid a conflict with the US. Third, the British Labor Party delegation, which the PRC invited to Beijing to increase pressure on the US, may have contributed to US estimate of Chinese aggressiveness. According to a Labor delegation member, who sent a message to the State Department via the US embassy in Japan shortly after the bombing, the PLA would soon attack Taiwan “in order to provoke US countermeasures and thereby split the Western powers.”<sup>65</sup> Also, the timing of the bombing had a strong psychological impact on the Americans: it took place after the conflicts in the Taiwan Strait in May, amongst the PRC’s propaganda campaign, and right when the US was setting up SEATO to contain China.

The spontaneous US response was sending war ships to the Jinmen area to deter the Communists, but the question of whether the US should commit to protect the island became a “horrible dilemma.” If the island was lost to the PRC, the US would lose prestige and the ROC’s morale would suffer. On the other hand, US leaders agreed that effective protection of the islands would require substantial forces and an attack on the mainland, which could lead to a general war with the PRC. This would alienate allies, especially Britain, and not be supported by the

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<sup>64</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 562, 563-71.

<sup>65</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 573, note 3.

American people. Secretary Dulles initially intended to help the KMT protect the offshore islands, and he got the support from the majority of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), except General Matthew Ridgway, Chief of Staff for the US Army, who believed the offshore islands were not essential to Taiwan and did not deserve protection. Facing the prospect of war with China, President Eisenhower retreated from his previous position and argued that Jinmen had only “psychological importance” to the ROC.<sup>66</sup>

The NSC finally decided to deter the PRC by withholding positions on the islands to “keep the enemy guessing,” meanwhile adopting a proposal Dulles had made: taking the issue to the UN Security Council and accusing the PRC of menacing international peace. According to Dulles, such a policy would also serve the purpose of straining Sino-Soviet relations, and at the same time rallying ally support:

This move could put a serious strain on Soviet-ChiCom [Chinese Communists] relations. If the S.U. vetoed the move, that would gravely impair its “peace offensive” and then the US would win a measure of support from allies and world opinion now lacking. If the Soviets did not veto, the ChiCom could react adversely, and might, indeed, defy the UN. In that case the ChiCom would again become an international outcast.<sup>67</sup>

The success of this policy, however, required support from allies—first and foremost, Britain. But British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden thought the offshore islands were more part of the mainland than Taiwan, and were “indefensible and inessential to the defense of” Taiwan. So it would be a “terrible wicket if US [got] involved in [a] major war over” Jinmen, and Britain would not support the US. He pushed the US to stop the ROC from attacking the mainland, and

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<sup>66</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 572, 580-81, 583-95, 611-13, 613-24.

<sup>67</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 612.

request it ultimately to withdraw its forces from the offshore islands.<sup>68</sup> Eden finally agreed to cooperate with the US on the UN move, because he was scared by a “frightening prospect” Dulles described: the PRC might attack Jinmen or Dachen “at any time,” and the majority of US military leaders wanted to assist the ROC, probably with atomic weapons.<sup>69</sup> The Communist renewal of bombardment of Jinmen in late September definitely reminded Eden of this danger.

What attracted Eden most were Dulles’s suggestions that “his object was to start a process of negotiation that might overcome some of the present difficulties in the Far Eastern situation and that above all would resolve the differences that still divided our two countries on Far Eastern policy.”<sup>70</sup> He thought this implied the US would ultimately be willing to explore a general solution to the China problem, if the Chinese attended the UN discussion of the proposed resolution and accepted a ceasefire. Since early 1954, the British officials had expected the US would adopt a more flexible China policy; in June Dulles also suggested that the US might consider recognition of the PRC after the Congressional elections in November.<sup>71</sup> In July, Dulles indicated to Eden and Indian Premier Jawaharlal Nehru that India might take China’s place in the UN Security Council and the two Chinese regimes could join the General Assembly simultaneously.<sup>72</sup> Dulles’s new suggestion seemed to Eden the opportunity for the US to reconsider its policy. Also, the US had taken actions to address the British concern that ROC

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<sup>68</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 650-1; For record of the Dull-Eden meeting on September 17, 1954, and British considerations about the MDT, see Foreign Office minutes, September 16, FC 1042/8 and September 23, 1954, FO 371/110231, NAUK.

<sup>69</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 667-9.

<sup>70</sup> See also, for example, Telegram, P. Dixon to Foreign Office, September 23, 1954, FO 371/110231, NAUK.

<sup>71</sup> Telegram, Robert Scott to Foreign Office, January 9, 1954, FO 371/110222, NAUK; telegram, Eden to Foreign Office, June 14, 1954, FO 371/110222, NAUK.

<sup>72</sup> Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, “John Foster Dulles and the Taiwan Roots of the ‘Two Chinas’ Policy,” in John *Foster Dulles and the Diplomacy of the Cold War*, ed. by Richard H. Immerman (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), 255.

attacks on the mainland were the source of the conflict.<sup>73</sup> After the PRC resumed bombing Jinmen, President Eisenhower decided to “suspend ‘encouraging and assisting the Chinese Nationalist Government to raid Chinese Communist territory and commerce’,” as a means to help Dulles reach an agreement with the British.<sup>74</sup> Finally the British suggested letting New Zealand introduce the UN Security Council resolution (code named Oracle), but Eden insisted on inviting the PRC to the UN when Oracle was discussed. To improve the chance of the Communist cooperation, the British would inform the PRC and the Soviet Union in advance.<sup>75</sup>

After the British started discussion with the US, however, it turned out Dulles just wanted to restrict the scope of the ceasefire to the offshore islands. Eden found this “unduly restrictive” and pushed for a “wider settlement” on the grounds that a mere neutralization of the offshore islands would not prevent the Nationalists from provoking the mainland elsewhere. He got the New Zealanders’ support, but Dulles argued that a broad discussion of a general ceasefire would expose the differences between the US and UK over China, and warned Eden that the situation would be “fraught with perilous possibilities,” if they failed to take action. Eden had to agree to introduce the resolution after the US informed the KMT.<sup>76</sup>

To convince the ROC to support Oracle, however, the US had to take some “offsetting steps.” Ambassador Rankin and Assistant Secretary Robertson suggested concluding the MDT to

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<sup>73</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 663.

<sup>74</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 661-2.

<sup>75</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 724-8; Telegram, Dixon to Foreign Office, September 30, 1954, FO 371/110231, NAUK; Minute by C. T. Crowe on Quemoy, October 8, 1954, FO371/110234, UNUK; Telegram, Eden to Makins, October 8, 1954, FO371/11-232, UNUK; and Telegram, Dixon to Eden, October 8, 1954, FO371/110233, UNUK; and Telegram, Guard to Eden, October 8, 1954, FO371/110233, UNUK.

<sup>76</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 701-5, 710-3. For the British documents regarding Oracle, see telegram from New York to Foreign Office, September 30, FC 371/110231; Telegram, Foreign Office to New York, and telegrams from the Foreign Office to Washington, October 7 and 8, 1954, FO 371/110232, NAUK. For discussions about Oracle, see telegrams, from Washington to Foreign Office, October 18 and 19, 1954, FO 371/110235, NAUK.

reassure Chiang Kai-shek of the US commitment. President Eisenhower readily agreed on condition that the ROC “was prepared to assume a defensive posture on Formosa and Pescadores.”<sup>77</sup> However, Chiang Kai-shek regarded a ceasefire as the first step leading ultimately to the PRC taking over Taiwan, and asked the US to give up the UN action, even after Robertson had indicated US willingness to conclude the MDT. American officials tried to convince Chiang that Oracle would help him protect these islands, since the US would not commit to defend the offshore islands in the MDT. Chiang finally agreed with the MDT, but on condition that the US must declare its intention to conclude the MDT *before* the New Zealand move; and the US should also commit to help defend those islands in an exchange of notes.<sup>78</sup> As soon as the meeting was over, however, Chiang instructed his diplomats in the US to derail Oracle and strive for an early conclusion of the MDT.<sup>79</sup>

PRC leaders had expected the British government would convince the US not to conclude an MDT with the ROC, but what they did not know was when the US informed the British of the MDT, Eden just suggested moving ahead with the MDT *first*, so that Britain had better knowledge about it when they informed the Communists of Oracle and invited the PRC to the UN. British agreement with MDT was based on several reasons. Firstly, they were clear that the US had thought about such a treaty for some time, and would probably conclude it anyway,<sup>80</sup> so British opposition would only lead to tensions with the US. They also knew the Americans would not give up Taiwan and Penghu, and Britain had supported this position. If the treaty did

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<sup>77</sup> For Rankin’s report about the ROC’s reaction, see *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 682-83. For Rankin’s and Robertson’s suggestions, see *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 693, 706-07, 708, and “Memo, Robertson to Dulles re Mutual Security Treaty with the Government of the Republic of China,” October 2, 1954, 794a.5MSP/10-254, RG 59, NAUS.

<sup>78</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 728-53.

<sup>79</sup> For the ROC’s efforts to prevent Oracle, see Su-Ya Chang, “Anlihui Tinghuo An,” 76-78.

<sup>80</sup> Telegram from Washington to Foreign Office, October 19, 1954, FO 371/110235, NAUK.

not cover the offshore islands, as the US officials promised, it simply formalized current US policy.<sup>81</sup>

Secondly and more importantly, the British believed a combination of the MDT and Oracle would give them new hope for settling the China problem once for all. While Oracle would neutralize the offshore islands, British officials expected the MDT might lead to the US limiting Chiang Kai-shek to Taiwan and accepting Communist rule on the mainland, thus creating *de facto* Two Chinas, which was consistent with the policy Britain had adopted.<sup>82</sup>

Thirdly, the British thought the PRC would also find the MDT acceptable, because neutralization of the offshore islands would give it some hope that the PRC would ultimately get the islands peacefully. US might also adopt a more pragmatic policy after the ceasefire, such as relaxing the trade embargo and being more flexible about UN recognition of the PRC. Therefore, they expected the PRC could still be “lured” to attend the UN, which was the first step toward an ultimate settlement of the China problem.<sup>83</sup> Therefore, the British just requested the US not to infuriate the PRC by indicating its diplomatic recognition of the ROC in MDT.<sup>84</sup>

When US officials were negotiating with allies behind the scene, PRC leaders were increasing pressure on the US by demonstrating unity with their Soviet ally, but their efforts

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<sup>81</sup> Outward telegram from Commonwealth Relations Office, October 16, 1954, FO 371/110235, NAUK.

<sup>82</sup> Telegrams, between Washington and Foreign Office, October 15, 1954, FO 371/110234; telegram from UN delegation to Foreign Office, October 15, 1954, FO 371/110234; telegram, W. D. Allen to Foreign Office, October 19, 1954, FO 371/110235, NAUK; telegrams from Eden to Foreign Office, October 19, and 21, 1954, FO 371/110235; telegram from Colonial Office to High Commissioners, October 26, 1954, FO 371/112035, NAUK.

<sup>83</sup> Telegrams, between Foreign Office and Washington embassy, October 15, 1954, FO 371/110234, NAUK; telegram from Washington to Foreign Office, October 18, 1954, FO 371/110235, NAUK.

<sup>84</sup> Telegram, UN delegation to Foreign Office, October 15, 1954, FO 371/110234, NAUK; telegram, Washington embassy to Foreign Office, October 15, 1954, FO 371/110234, NAUK. British Charge d’Affaires Humphrey Trevelyan, however, did not think the Chinese would agree with Oracle. See Telegram, Trevelyan to Foreign Office, September 25, 1954, FO371/110231, UNUK; and he warned the proposal would hurt Sino-British relations, see Telegram, Trevelyan to Foreign Office, October 29, 1954, FO371/110236, UNUK.

failed to make much substantial influence on US policy over either MDT or Oracle.<sup>85</sup> Although the US ambassador to Moscow believed Khrushchev's speech in China "put [the] Soviet Union solidly behind Chinese position," and should not "be lightly dismissed,"<sup>86</sup> the CIA thought Khrushchev was a "rather brash fellow," whose remarks did not carry much weight due to his secondary position within the Soviet regime.<sup>87</sup> The CIA's judgment seemed to be confirmed, as the Soviet government "appeared to be trying to avoid further public commitment to the Chinese Communist position regarding Formosa."<sup>88</sup> Instead of being deterred by the Communists, Assistant Secretary Robertson believed Khrushchev's support of China accentuated the need for MDT to clarify the US position on Taiwan, lest the Communists miscalculate.<sup>89</sup> When President Eisenhower decided to start negotiation for the MDT, the Soviet position was not a factor in US leaders' consideration. The Soviet move in the UN came after the US had decided to pursue MDT. It caused doubt among some American officials whether the PRC would attack the islands, but only led to a suggestion by the Assistant Secretary for International Organization Affairs that Oracle should be carried out more quickly to prevent further Communist military actions.<sup>90</sup> US leaders also found the Sino-Soviet communiqué "only mildly endorse[d] the

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<sup>85</sup> In early October, a Soviet government delegation headed by Nikita Khrushchev, the First Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party, visited China. During the visit, Khrushchev declared support for the PRC's position regarding Taiwan, and meanwhile the Soviet Union introduced a resolution to the UN Security Council condemning US invasion of China and its occupation of Taiwan as the reason for the tensions. And the PRC and the Soviet Union made a joint communiqué declaring their "complete unity on international affairs." The two states also signed several agreements, in which the Soviets promised to provide enormous economic assistance. For the Soviet visit to the PRC, see Chapter 3.

<sup>86</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 674-6.

<sup>87</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 690.

<sup>88</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 715-6, 720-1; "Discussion at the 217th Meeting of the National Security Council, Thursday, October 14, 1954," Eisenhower Papers (Ann Whitmann File), NSC Series, Box 6, DDEL.

<sup>89</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 707.

<sup>90</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 765-7.

present Chinese Communist campaign regarding Taiwan.”<sup>91</sup> Therefore US officials concluded that the Soviet government seemed to keep a distance from the PRC’s positions on Taiwan, and there was no indication they would provide substantial help to their Chinese ally.

On the other hand, however, China’s diplomacy did demonstrate the strength of the Sino-Soviet alliance, which made US leaders think twice when they were considering using force in the Taiwan Strait. They believed the Sino-Soviet agreements “reflect[ed] the elevation of Communist China’s status in the Communist orbit;” and the joint communiqué put the PRC on equal footing with the Soviets. Therefore, the PRC was “firmly integrated in the Communist bloc under the leadership of the Soviet Union.”<sup>92</sup> This judgment reinforced Eisenhower’s assessment of the unity of the alliance, and he decided that the US could not afford to fight a war with the PRC over the coastal islands, because it would result in a general war with the Soviet Union. According to Eisenhower, the Soviets would join the war, even if just for the credibility of the alliance, because “[i]f the Soviets did not abide by their treaty with Communist China and go to war in support of their Chinese ally, the Soviet empire would quickly fall to pieces.”<sup>93</sup>

Apart from the Soviet Union, PRC leaders also tried to win Indian support and invited Premier Nehru to China.<sup>94</sup> Chinese leaders tried to impress him with China’s peaceful intentions. They stressed that the PRC was not provoking a war in the Taiwan Strait, and the tensions resulted from US aggression. Nehru showed sympathy towards this position and pushed PRC leaders to be moderate and patient on Taiwan, stressing the issue “must be settled by peaceful

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<sup>91</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 776-7.

<sup>92</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 802.

<sup>93</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 831.

<sup>94</sup> India’s role in the crisis has been neglected in the current works. But as new sources from China and Britain show, both states used India to realize their aims: while the PRC wanted to pressure the US through India, and the British planned to push the PRC through India. For more discussion about Nehru’s visit to the PRC, see Chapter 5.

means.” Chinese leaders believed they had convinced Nehru, and even US officials expected that Nehru would criticize the MDT as an “unnecessary provocation to Communist China” and “further evidence of US imperialistic interference in Asian affairs.”<sup>95</sup>

What the Communist leaders did not know, however, was that Nehru had been informed by the British of US plans to introduce Oracle in the UN, and had decided to support the British position behind the scenes.<sup>96</sup> Instead of pushing the US not to conclude the MDT, as the Chinese and Americans had expected, he endorsed the MDT, with a condition that the Nationalists should declare they would stop attacking the mainland before the treaty was concluded, as a way to lessen Communist worries. Although China’s protests were inevitable, Nehru assured US officials, it would finally accept the reality. Nehru also supported Oracle and believed the Chinese might “send spokesman to New York,” by which he implied he would convince the Chinese to go to the UN—at least the British had expected “his [Nehru’s] persuasion might have a powerful effect” on PRC leaders.<sup>97</sup>

Just as US leaders decided to move on with both Oracle and the MDT, the PRC first shelled the Dachen Islands and also renewed bombardment of Jinmen on November 1. This was the last chance that the PRC had to prevent the negotiation about MDT, but the action simply prompted US leaders to carry out the MDT and Oracle. As in September, Communist actions

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<sup>95</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 551, 842. For Nehru’s message to Eden about his visit to China, see “Note on Visit to China and Indo-China,” FO 371/115018, NAUK; “Discussion at the 217th Meeting of the National Security Council, Thursday, October 14, 1954,” Eisenhower Papers (Ann Whitmann File), NSC Series, Box 6, DDEL.

<sup>96</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 823-26, 866; telegrams, from New York to Foreign Office, October 14, 1954, and from UK High Commissioner in India to Commonwealth Relations Office, October 15, 1954, FO 371/110232, NAUK; telegram from Peking to Foreign Office, October 21, 1954, FO 371/112035, NAUK. For communication between the US and Britain on Nehru’s visit, see Telegram, Eden to Makins, October 29, 1954, and Telegram, Makins to Foreign Office, November 1, 1954, FO371/112036, UNUK.

<sup>97</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 893-5; telegram, from Peking to Foreign Office, October 21, 1954, FO 371/110235, NAUK.

made Eisenhower and Dulles believe US protection of the islands would lead to a war with China, which would alienate the whole Free World and Americans at home, and most importantly, trigger a military conflict with the Soviets.<sup>98</sup> Therefore, they concluded pushing for Oracle and MDT was the only practicable option. This judgment was supported by a CIA estimate, which said the MDT would not lead to Communist military action against Taiwan, and if Oracle was pending in the UN Security Council, the PRC would be deterred from attacking the offshore islands.<sup>99</sup>

US and ROC officials started the negotiation about the MDT on November 2 and finished on November 23. According to the treaty, the US agreed to protect “Taiwan, the Pescadores and such other territories as may be determined by mutual agreement.” The two sides agreed on this ambiguous statement because the Nationalists wanted to indicate the ROC’s territory was not restricted to the two areas, and the US wanted to avoid clarifying that the treaty did not cover the offshore islands. In an exchange of notes, the Nationalists also agreed to subject their military dispositions and use of forces to US agreement. These stipulations reflected Dulles’s concerns that the Nationalists would transfer their force to the offshore islands and leave the defense of Taiwan completely to the US, or that Chiang Kai-shek would try to restore its rule in the mainland and get the US involved in an unwanted war. The Nationalists protested but had to include this in the notes, instead of a formal protocol, as the US originally wanted, but they wanted the US not to publish the notes.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 827-39.

<sup>99</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 840-42.

<sup>100</sup> For the process of the negotiations for the MDT, see Su-Ya Chang, “Reluctant alliance: John Foster Dulles and the making of the United States-Republic of China Mutual Defense Treaty of 1954,” *Chinese Yearbook*, Vol. 12 (1992-1994): 150-69. *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 842-51; 855-65, 870-80, 887-92, 895-903, 904-11.

The British, however, were now unwilling to carry on with Oracle. Before the MDT was concluded, Eden requested the US first to declare that Taiwan would not be “established as a protected base for attacks against the mainland.” Dulles disagreed but suggested Eden let China and the Soviet Union know “in private communication” that Taiwan would not be a “privileged sanctuary.” Eden was still hesitant, because the British Charge d’Affaires in Beijing Trevelyan warned him that PRC leaders saw the offshore islands and Taiwan as an integral part of China, and would regard MDT as “notice that Formosa was to be permanently separated from the mainland,” and “acceptance of Oracle as tantamount to acquiescence in such a separation.” British support of US actions would “make the Chinese associate the UK with US Formosa policy and give up all hope that the British might secure any modification in US Far Eastern policy.”<sup>101</sup> Chinese diplomats also warned British officials that the MDT “would only lead to further tension and deterioration of the situation in the Far East,” and pushed Britain to request the US to withdraw its forces from Taiwan.<sup>102</sup>

After the MDT was concluded, Eden insisted that the US declare in public that the offshore islands were not covered by the treaty, and also publicize the exchange of notes with the ROC. These would assure the PRC of the defensive nature of the treaty, and give them the “minimum willingness” to “play along” with Oracle, according to the British. Otherwise, the UN move would only stimulate the PRC to take “further acts of aggression.” Apparently, the British still did not give up the idea of an ultimate settlement of the China problem and wanted to strive

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<sup>101</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 823, note 2, 830. Telegram, Foreign Office to British Embassy, Washintgon, DC, November 29, 1954, FO371/110238, NAUK.

<sup>102</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 880-81, 919-20; Minute by Crowe, re Quemoy and Formosa, November 13, 1954, FO371/110238, UNUK; Telegram, from Eden to Dixon, November 13, 1954, FO371/110238, UNUK; Telegram, from Foreign Office to Makins, about meeting with Chinese Charge in London, November 18, 1954, 793.00/11-2054, RG 59, NAUSand ; Telegrams, from Foreign Office to Makins, November 19, 1954, FO371/110238, UNUK.

for China's attendance at the UN discussion. Dulles could not meet Eden's requirements and had to put off Oracle.<sup>103</sup>

On November 23, the PRC made its last effort to influence MDT by sentencing captured US pilots to imprisonment as spies.<sup>104</sup> PRC leaders did not know that MDT had been concluded by this time. Moreover, instead of being deterred, US Defense Department recommended strong actions in response, including blockading Chinese ports, capturing their vessels, threatening with air attack on China and encouraging the Nationalist to attack the mainland.<sup>105</sup> Senator Knowland publicly supported a blockade. President Eisenhower, however, rejected blockade as an act of war, which would only alienate the US from Asian neutral states and allies, thus serving the Communist policy of isolating the US.<sup>106</sup> Finally, US leaders decided to let the UN Secretary General Dag Hammarskjold go to Beijing to seek the release of the pilots, on the grounds that these pilots were under the UN command.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 989-93, 1001-03; Telegrams, Makins to Foreign Office, and Notes for Cabinet by the Far Eastern Department of Foreign Office, November 23, 1954, FO371/112038, UNUK. Telegram, from Eden to Makins, November 24, 1954, FO371/112038, UNUK.

<sup>104</sup> For the spy issue, see Chapter 3. In fact, the US leaders knew a few of them were really spies. See *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol.14: 950-51, 977-78. For American perception of change of the PRC's attitude toward Britain, see "Discussion at the 228th National Security Council meeting, December 9, 1954," Eisenhower Papers (Ann Whitmann File), NSC Series, Box 6, DDEL.

<sup>105</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 748-49.

<sup>106</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 951-56, 956-57.

<sup>107</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 1003, 1016-17, 1049-50. For President Eisenhower's speech about the US pilots at his press conference, see transcript of Eisenhower's news conference, December 2, 1954, f: 168c, Confidential File, Office Files, Box 856, Dwight D. Eisenhower Records, DDEL.

## **From Formosa Resolution to Evacuation of Islands**

The declaration of the conclusion of MDT on December 2 led to a strong Chinese reaction. Premier Zhou Enlai stated that MDT was a “grave warlike provocation,” and warned the US that it would have to accept “all the grave consequences,” if it did not withdraw its forces from “Taiwan, the Pescadores, and the Taiwan Strait.” Meanwhile, Hammarskjold’s trip to China failed to bring about any result. Zhou only offered visas for the families of the pilots to see them.<sup>108</sup> Moreover, PLA air force bombed the Dachen Islands on January 10 and a week later captured Yijiangshan Island in the north of the Dachen Islands.

The PRC’s military actions meant to protest against the MDT and also test US intentions.<sup>109</sup> Again, however, US leaders misperceived Chinese intentions. While the Director of the CIA speculated the PRC might either make a “suicide” attack on Taiwan or invade the offshore islands,<sup>110</sup> Dulles was worried a PRC attack on Dachen was imminent, and predicted that it also planned to capture the rest of islands in the Taiwan Strait.<sup>111</sup> Based on this judgment, Dulles concluded that the US policy of keeping the PRC guessing had failed, and suggested asking the ROC to withdraw its forces from the indefensible Dachen Islands while publicizing US willingness to help the ROC hold Jinmen, and possibly also the Mazu Islands, to restore the credibility of the US commitment. Under his suggestion, the NSC decided to seek Congressional

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<sup>108</sup> For British analysis of US reactions, see Telegram, Makins to Foreign Office, January 26, 1955, FO371/115026, UNUK.

<sup>109</sup> For analysis of the Communist decision to take actions, see Chapter 3.

<sup>110</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. 14: 1004-6.

<sup>111</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, Vol. 2: 50-52. See “Discussion at the 232nd Meeting of the National Security Council, Thursday, January 21, 1954,” Eisenhower Papers (Ann Whitmann File), NSC Series, Box 6, DDEL.

authority to use forces. To prevent the PRC from miscalculating, Dulles suggested that the US “must now make its positions crystal clear.” Meanwhile, he wanted to press for Oracle.<sup>112</sup>

Facing the new crisis, the US most needed British support—as President Eisenhower stated, “in a crisis they were good sturdy old allies.”<sup>113</sup> The British, however, opposed the US policy. The British Cabinet worried that US guarantee of Jinmen would extend the MDT’s coverage and lead to ROC’s permanent occupation of the offshore islands. This was against the British basic objective of neutralizing the Taiwan Strait. Moreover, US protection of Jinmen would eliminate any possibility that the Communists would go to the UN, but according to Eden, “it was the United Kingdom view that we should do everything possible to secure [the PRC’s] attendance.”<sup>114</sup> Therefore, Eden would only be willing to pursue Oracle unless the US withheld its guarantee on Jinmen.<sup>115</sup>

To get British support, Dulles agreed not to declare the US intention to defend Jinmen and Mazu; and the Formosa Resolution, which granted President the power to use US forces, only mentioned Taiwan, the Pescadores, and “related positions and territories of that area now in friendly hands.”<sup>116</sup> Instead of a “crystal clear” position, the US defense of the offshore islands

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<sup>112</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, Vol. 2: 41-44, 56-68, 69-82; telegram from New York to Foreign Office, February 4, 1954, FO 371/115032, NAUK.

<sup>113</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, Vol. 2: 82; Dulles memo to Eisenhower, January 20, 1955, Eisenhower Papers (Ann Whitman File), Dulles-Herter Series, Box 1, DDEL. See also “Discussion at the 232nd Meeting of the National Security Council, Thursday, January 21, 1954,” Eisenhower Papers (Ann Whitman File), NSC Series, Box 6, DDEL.

<sup>114</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, Vol. 2: 131; Telegram, from Foreign Office to the United Nations, January 21, 1955, FO371/115024, UNUK.

<sup>115</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, Vol. 2: 86-89, 91-92; Telegram, between Washington and Foreign Office, January 19, 20 and 21, 1955, FO371/115023, and FO371/115024, UNUK; letter from Makins to Dulles, January 21, 1955, 793.00/1-2155, RG 59, NAUS; Telegrams between Eden and Makins, January 29 and February 1, 1955, FO371/115029, UNUK; and Letter from Churchill to Eisenhower, January 29, 1955, FO371/115029, UNUK.

<sup>116</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, Vol. 2: 96-99. In private, President Eisenhower believed the US should not fight for the offshore islands. See “Discussion at the 229th Meeting of the National Security Council, Tuesday, December 21, 1954,” Eisenhower Papers (Ann Whitman File), NSC Series, Box 6, DDEL.

remained ambiguous.<sup>117</sup> Finally, New Zealand submitted Oracle, and the UN Security Council decided to invite the PRC to the UN to discuss a ceasefire in the Taiwan Strait.

The PRC reacted vehemently. Zhou Enlai declared that the Congressional resolution “was a war message,” and the UN action infringed upon China’s sovereignty and was a cover for the US aggression. Instead of a ceasefire as Oracle required, China would “liberate” the offshore islands. “The Chinese people were not afraid of war and would resist if war was thrust on them,” he claimed. The PRC also got Soviet support. When New Zealand proposed Oracle, the Soviets introduced a resolution protesting the US “occupation of Taiwan” as interference in China’s internal affairs.<sup>118</sup> Three days later, Zhou Enlai rejected the UN invitation, and declared that the PRC would send representatives to the UN, “only for the purpose of discussing the draft resolution of the Soviet Union, and only when the representative of the Chiang Kai-shek clique has been driven out from the Security Council.”<sup>119</sup>

But meanwhile, PRC leaders asked the Soviet Union to propose a Ten-Power Conference, including the Big Five and five Colombo Powers, and sponsored by Britain, India and the Soviet Union, to discuss the tensions in the Taiwan area.<sup>120</sup> Three days later, Zhou Enlai told the Swedish Ambassador, who was asked by Hammarskjold to forward his personal invitation for China’s attendance to the UN discussion, that China was willing to hold direct negotiations with the US. This was the same initiative Zhou later made at the Bandung Conference, and if the US had taken the proposal, the crisis might have ended in February, rather than in April. But US

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<sup>117</sup> Telegrams, from Washington to Foreign Office, January 21, 1955, FO371/115024, NAUK.

<sup>118</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, Vol. 2: 157-58, 158-59.

<sup>119</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, Vol. 2: 202. For British informing the Chinese, see Telegrams, Trevelyan to Foreign Office, January 28, 1955, FO371/115028, UNUK.

<sup>120</sup> Telegram, from Moscow to Foreign Office, February 4, 1954, FO 371/115032, NAUK. The British diplomat believed that the Soviets “intend it seriously and not as a propaganda move,” but it was “clear enough” the US would oppose it.

leaders refused the initiatives on the grounds that they would not talk about this issue without the ROC's participation. Why did the Communist initiatives fail to get a positive response from US leaders? The current literature has ignored this proposal and failed to explore the US responses.<sup>121</sup>

The available American sources do not show if US leaders discussed Communist initiatives in detail, but they indicate several reasons. First of all, US leaders were so frustrated by the Chinese rejection that they did not take the proposals seriously. The US Ambassador to Moscow had told Washington that the Soviet Union implied that the PRC would accept the invitation.<sup>122</sup> Premier Nehru also suggested the PRC might have interest in attending the UN discussion. This prediction seemed to be confirmed by CIA intelligence, which argued that the Soviets were restraining the PRC and the situation in the Taiwan Strait "had been more or less quiet for the last week."<sup>123</sup> The unexpected rejection, in addition to British and ROC's pressures on the US for clarification on its positions on the coastal islands, although toward opposite directions, pushed US leaders to the limit of their patience. President Eisenhower believed "they [the Chinese Communists] are certainly doing everything they can to try our patience. It's awfully difficult to remain calm under these situations. Sometimes I think that it would be best all around to go after them right now without letting them pick their time and the place of their own choosing."<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> See for example, Chang and He, "The Absence of War;" Zhai, *The Dragon, The Lion, and the Eagle*, 170; Zhang, *Deterrence and Strategic Culture*, 219-22.

<sup>122</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, Vol. 2: 177-78; for US official meeting with Molotov, see telegrams from Berlin to Secretary of State, January 30 and February 1, 1955. Eisenhower Papers (Ann Whitman File), Dulles-Herter Series, Box 1, DDEL.

<sup>123</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, Vol. 2: 199.

<sup>124</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, Vol. 2: 202-03.

Also, the US ambassador to Moscow suggested that the Soviet proposal did “not seem to be a serious move towards settlement of Formosan question” and was “primarily of propaganda nature in support of the CPR [Chinese People’s Republic].” The ambassador initially suspected the Soviets’ sincerity, and after the Chinese rejection, he concluded that the proposal was a Communist maneuver to please neutralist Asian states, especially India, and exploit differences between the US and UK, because it “made quite a point of Great Britain’s position.”<sup>125</sup> In the face of PRC threat to the offshore islands, the Soviet proposal “would be the worst possible context for a solution,” because “[t]he very fact that the ChiCom [Chinese Communists] took part would brand any outcome as appeasement. Moreover, it would be hard to prevent such a conference from taking up other questions such as ChiCom membership in the UN, especially if the ChiCom made this the price of settlement.”<sup>126</sup>

The Chinese signal through the Swedish was not given much importance either. US officials regarded Hammarskjold’s personal invitation to China as “exceeding his authority under the [UN] Charter and contrary to the understanding among the US, UK and NZ that all proceedings on this item were to be confined to the cessation of hostilities.” Dulles thought Hammarskjold’s correspondence with Zhou Enlai was “extremely dangerous,” and “might be misunderstood by Peiping (Beijing).” The British also believed “Hammarskjold’s efforts inevitably would ‘cross some wires’.” In fact, the US representative to the UN was requested to

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<sup>125</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, Vol. 2: 210-12, 217-18.

<sup>126</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, Vol. 2: 238-40. For the British response to the Soviets, after they consulted the US, see telegram, Foreign Office to Moscow, February 8, 1955, FO 371/115035, NAUK; “Formosa-Soviet Proposals,” February 12, 1955, FO 371/115032, NAUK. For the Indians’ response, see telegram, from Foreign Office to Washington, February 10, 1955, FO 371/115035, and telegram, from Moscow to Foreign Office, March 7 and 9, 1955, FO370/115041, and FO371/115042, NAUK.

protest Hammarskjold's actions.<sup>127</sup> As a result, Hammarskjold himself later suggested that the US should not hold talks with the PRC, and any negotiations on the offshore islands "should be under the aegis of the UN."<sup>128</sup> However, this suggestion only reminded US officials that Hammarskjold told the press after his return from China that PRC's membership in the UN would be "useful."<sup>129</sup>

Without exploring the Communist initiatives, US leaders believed that the PRC rejection of the UN invitation indicated its willingness to attack Dachen, and thus requested the ROC to evacuate immediately.<sup>130</sup> The Nationalists had insisted on a US declaration of its protection of Jinmen and Mazu before the evacuation, to which they only grudgingly agreed under the US pressure. The US rejected the request and warned the ROC not to do that in its own statement; otherwise, the US would have to "deny this commitment."<sup>131</sup> Finally with President Eisenhower's warning that the US would withdraw its assistance to the evacuation if he further delayed the action, Chiang Kai-shek evacuated the Dachen Islands, and later gave up another small island, leading to the Communists' capture of all the islands off the Zhejiang coast.<sup>132</sup>

Meanwhile, Dulles pressed Britain for more actions in the UN, but Eden refused again, on the grounds that further moves in the Security Council would only provoke PRC attack. He also

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<sup>127</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, Vol. 2: 225-29, 244-47. For Hammarskjold's idea about the role he wanted to play, see telegram from UK delegation to the UN, January 24, 1955, FO 371/115032, NAUK.

<sup>128</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, Vol. 2: 231-33.

<sup>129</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, Vol. 2: 35, 237.

<sup>130</sup> According to the British Ambassador to Washington, "The CIA are at present inclined to the view that the Communist Chinese intend to press on regardless of the consequences." Telegram, February 4, 1955, FO 371/115032, NAUK. Dulles believed the PRC would maintain tensions for several weeks. See "Discussion at the 235th Meeting of the National Security Council, Thursday, February 3, 1954," Eisenhower Papers (Ann Whitmann File), NSC Series, Box 6, DDEL.

<sup>131</sup> Chiang Kai-shek had also resisted Oracle, but finally abstained from voting in the Security Council, after the US officials threatened if they vetoed the resolution, they would "make a great mistake." *FRUS*, 1955-57, Vol. 2: 38-44, 44-46, 106-10, 124, 152-57.

<sup>132</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, Vol. 2: 220-22.

suggested that a complete evacuation from all the coastal islands was the only way to end the crisis. In Parliament, Eden publicly declared that the offshore islands were in a “different category from Formosa and Pescadores since they undoubtedly form part of territory of the PRC.” The British were holding a Commonwealth Conference on the Taiwan issue, and Eden told US officials that his proposals were supported by all the Commonwealth leaders. Soon Australian and Canadian leaders joined Britain in pressuring the US for an evacuation.<sup>133</sup> British Prime Minister Winston Churchill wrote to President Eisenhower, saying an evacuation was the only way to frustrate the Communist desire to “cause division between the Allies.”<sup>134</sup> Moreover, Eden protested that a statement Dulles made indicating his willingness to protect the offshore islands “amount[ed] to a public commitment,” from which Britain had to “dissociate” itself. As a result, Dulles had to revise his statement before it was published.<sup>135</sup>

Instead of the UN move, Eden suggested making diplomatic contacts: the US should either consider the Soviet proposal, or negotiate with the PRC through Hammarskjold, or hold direct talks with the Communists. The British ambassador had also pushed the US to accept the Soviet proposal, which he thought was a “serious one and not designed for propaganda purposes.” None of the options were accepted by Dulles.<sup>136</sup> When Eden and Dulles met at SEATO conference in Bangkok in late February, Eden told Dulles “[h]e did not see any necessity [of] hold[ing] these islands and pointed[ly] asked why the US wants to defend them.”

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<sup>133</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, Vol. 2: 213-24, 218-9, 244-47, 265; Telegrams, between Washington and Foreign Office, March 9, 12, 1955, FO370/115042, and March 14, 16, 1955, FO370/115042, UNUK; Letter from British Ambassador Roger Makins to President Eisenhower, February 4, 1955. Eisenhower Papers (Ann Whitman File), Dulles-Herter Series, Box 1, DDEL.

<sup>134</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, Vol. 2: 270-73.

<sup>135</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, Vol. 2: 281; telegram, from Washington to Foreign Office, February 14-17, 1955, FO371/115036, FO371/115037, and FO371/115039, NAUK.

<sup>136</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, Vol. 2: 223-24; 234-38. For the British consideration about a UN move, see telegram, from New York to Foreign Office, February 17, 1955, FO 371/115037, NAUK.

If the US gave up the offshore islands, according to the British, its position on Taiwan would get “increased support” from the British Commonwealth and western European states.<sup>137</sup> Finally, Dulles had to agree to let Eden seek a meeting with Zhou Enlai, to feel out if the PRC would promise not to attack Taiwan in return for US pressure for the ROC to abandon the offshore islands.<sup>138</sup>

Zhou Enlai rejected the British proposal by suggesting Eden come to Peking to discuss the “cessation of United States aggression against China and the withdrawal of United States forces from Formosa and the straits.” Early on, he had told the British that the PRC “would not submit to threats nor agree to a ‘dirty deal’.”<sup>139</sup> By now, Chinese leaders had concluded that the British and the US were collaborating on the Taiwan issue, and their concentration turned to the Bandung Conference.<sup>140</sup> In order to reduce the worries among Southeast Asian states about the tensions in the Taiwan Strait, PRC leaders decreased the tensions in the Taiwan Strait. The US State Department officials noticed that the PRC’s propaganda had declined “to the lowest point

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<sup>137</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, Vol. 2: 311-12. Eden may have been encouraged by a message he received from the Canadian Foreign Secretary about his meeting with Dulles on February 16—Dulles promised the US would push the ROC for an eventual withdrawal from the coastal islands, although at the present, it would help it if the PRC attacked. See “Outward telegram from Commonwealth Relations Office, February 28, 1955, FO 371/115040, NAUK; Telegram from Bangkok to Secretary of State, February 25, 1955, Eisenhower Papers (Ann Whitman File), Dulles-Herter Series, Box 1, DDEL.

<sup>138</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, Vol. 2: 307-10, 311-12. For the British records of the meeting, see telegram from Bangkok to Foreign Office, February 25, 1955, FO 371/115040, NAUK; From Foreign Office to Kuala Lumpur, March 1, 1955, FO371/115041, NAUK. Telegram, from Bangkok to Secretary of State, February 25, 1955, Eisenhower Papers (Ann Whitman File), Dulles-Herter Series, Box 1, DDEL.

<sup>139</sup> For the text of Zhou Enlai’s reply, see telegram, from Peking to Foreign Office, March 1, 1955, FO 371/115040, NAUK; for Eden’s reply to Zhou’s reply, see telegram, from Foreign Office to Peking, March 7, 1955, FO371/115040, NAUK. For Trevelyan’s meetings with Zhou Enlai, see telegram, from Peking to Foreign Office, March 1, 1955, FO 371/115040, and telegrams from Peking to Foreign Office, February 28, 1955, FO 371/115040. For other contacts between Trevelyan and Zhou Enlai, see telegrams from Peking to Foreign Office, February 25 and 26, 1955, FC 1041/483, 495, 496, FO 371/115040, NAUK, and Telegram, from Peking to Foreign Office, March 4 and 7, 1955, FC1041/527, FC1041/539, FO371/115041, NAUK.

<sup>140</sup> For Trevelyan’s report about Zhou Enlai criticizing Britain for following the US, see telegram, from Peking to Foreign Office, February 25, 1955, FO 371/115040, NAUK. For the British reports about the PRC’s press attacks on Britain, see telegram, from Trevelyan to Foreign Office, February 5, 1954, 1955, FO 371/115032, NAUK; telegram, from Trevelyan to Foreign Office, February 25, 1955, FO 371/115040, NAUK.

since last summer,” and they speculated that the Communists were probably “adopting a tacit ceasefire.”<sup>141</sup>

US leaders, however, misperceived the Chinese intentions again. Secretary Dulles believed “the present lull is being used by them [PRC leaders] for a large-scale build up,” and their attack on Taiwan was imminent, “So in fact we are in a battle for Taiwan,” although he at the same time admitted that he did not have adequate intelligence.<sup>142</sup> How did Dulles reach this conclusion?

Dulles’s judgment was based basically on his trip to Asia. Before he got to Manila, Admiral Felix Stump, Commander of the Pacific Fleet, reported to him that the PRC was conducting a massive military build-up and preparing for action. The Burmese Premier U Nu, who visited Beijing in December 1954, confirmed Dulles’s pessimistic estimate, probably because Chinese leaders over-stressed their anxiety about US aggression during his visit. U Nu now told Dulles that the PRC was “determined to attack Formosa,” because its leaders “really fear Taiwan is going to be used as base for launching invasion against [the] mainland.”<sup>143</sup> Also, Zhou Enlai’s rejection of Eden’s proposal for a meeting reinforced Dulles’ belief that “there was a likelihood that severe fighting might break out and there was a danger that the US might be drawn in.”<sup>144</sup>

Dulles’s judgment was accepted by other US leaders. Eisenhower now started to consider using nuclear weapons to protect Jinmen and Mazu. While this idea was readily welcomed by

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<sup>141</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, Vol. 2: 319-20.

<sup>142</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, Vol. 2: 340-43, 345-50.

<sup>143</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, Vol. 2: 341, note 4; Telegram, from Vientiane to Secretary of State, February 27, 1955, Eisenhower Papers (Ann Whitman File), Dulles-Herter Series, Box 1, DDEL.

<sup>144</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, Vol. 2: 340, 352-53.

Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff Arthur Radford, Dulles also got the support from Senator Walter George, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs, as well as his assistants in the State Department.<sup>145</sup> The NSC then decided to take “urgent steps to create a better public climate for the use of atomic weapons,” and the US military started to prepare an extensive plan for nuclear attacks on China.<sup>146</sup> According to Gordon H. Chang, the US leaders “actually brought the country to the ‘nuclear brink’.”<sup>147</sup>

In the face of possible nuclear war with China, President Eisenhower realized again “we could not afford to be isolated from our allies in the world,” particularly when the US needed their help on the Western European Treaties. The US goal, according to Eisenhower, was to “avoid direct US intervention in the Formosa area,” and “to limit the US intervention as much as possible if it became necessary to intervene.” He reversed his decision and asked US officials to strive to delay the PRC’s attack on Jinmen and Mazu, in a way that would not provoke it.<sup>148</sup> What he did not know, however, was Mao Zedong was also alerted by the nuclear threat and was restraining PLA generals from taking further actions.<sup>149</sup>

In these circumstances, Dulles resumed his push on the British to carry on further action in the UN, but the British were “fairly unhappy over this proposal,” because they believed that would only “arouse” the PRC to attack the islands, expose the differences between the US and Britain, and alienate the Asian states, which were particularly important because of the upcoming Bandung Conference. Instead of a UN move, the British again suggested that the US should

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<sup>145</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, Vol. 2: 338-40.

<sup>146</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, Vol. 2: 336-7.

<sup>147</sup> Gordon H. Chang, “To the Nuclear Brink,” 97; *FRUS*, 1955-57, Vol. 2: 345-50.

<sup>148</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, Vol. 2: 360.

<sup>149</sup> See Chapter 3.

“find some means of getting Chiang Kai-shek out of the coastal islands before an attack can develop.”<sup>150</sup> Eden also suggested letting Britain, India, and the Soviet Union explore diplomatic means, with which Dulles disagreed on the grounds that all of the three states recognized the PRC and were thus biased, and he strongly pushed Dulles to urge Asian states to restrain the PRC from taking actions.<sup>151</sup>

At this time, Britain’s perception of PRC threat was once again different from the US’s. According to the British Chargé d’Affaires in Beijing, the PRC kept an “absolutely rigid attitude” in order to push other states to increase diplomatic pressure on the US, and the British Foreign Office believed, instead of looking for a “showdown,” as Dulles predicted, “Their [the PRC leaders] objective seems more likely to be to isolate the USA and to consolidate opinion on their side;” therefore, the US needed to “win over Asian opinion and lull Asian suspicion by appearing moderate and peace-loving while at the same time pursuing their objectives under cover.” What the US was facing in the Far East, according to British officials, was a “long drawn out struggle for the support of Asia.” If there were conflicts, they resulted from Communist miscalculation, rather than their “deliberate policy.” To win the support of Asian states, Eden suggested the US “exercise moderation in our statements and attitudes lest we frighten the Asians in China’s arms.” For that purpose, he again pushed the US to evacuate the offshore islands.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, Vol. 2: 397-8, 416-17; Telegram, from New York to Foreign Office, March 24, 1955, FO371/115043, NAUK.

<sup>151</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, Vol. 2: 364-66, 372-74, 416-17. In July 1954, the British had suspected that the PRC was promoting a pan-Asian non-aggression pact. See telegrams between Washington and Foreign Office, July 1 and 9, 1954, FO371/111869, NAUK, and telegrams from Eden to Makins, March 12, 1955, FO371/115042, UNUK.

<sup>152</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, Vol. 2: 374-75. The British had noticed the PRC’s attempts to promote pan-Asian non-aggression pact since July 1954. See telegrams between Robert Scott and Foreign Office, July 1 and 14, 1954, FO371/111869. For Humphrey Trevelyan’s telegram, see telegram, from Peking to Foreign Office, February 4, 1955,

British Commonwealth members joined Eden in exerting pressure on the US. The Canadian Premier pushed Dulles to get out of Jinmen and Mazu when the secretary visited Canada; and the Australian premier agreed to publish a joint declaration to support the US position on Taiwan, but on the condition that the ROC withdrew from the islands.<sup>153</sup> The Indians pressed the US leaders to negotiate with the Chinese through “informal contact,” and implied India was willing to help set up the contact. In opposition to Dulles’s remarks that the PRC was a bigger threat to peace than the Soviet Union, the Indian ambassador argued “his government felt absolutely confident that the Peking regime had no expansionist ambitions.”<sup>154</sup>

US leaders had worked with their Asian friends on the Bandung Conference, and now with the UN move failing to make progress, their efforts turned to using Bandung to restrain the PRC in the Taiwan Strait. Dulles told the British ambassador that he “felt that the Bandung Conference could exercise a real influence for peace with respect to the Formosa situation if something constructive came out of it.” He planned to urge US friends to propose a ceasefire at Bandung, and sought British help with their influence in Asia.<sup>155</sup>

At the same time, US leaders gradually accept the British position on the offshore islands. State Department officials had thought of pushing the ROC to withdraw from these islands. President Eisenhower himself had also suspected these islands were a “liability.”<sup>156</sup> After he

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FO 371/115032, NAUK; Telegram, From Singapore to Foreign Office, March 2, 1955, FO371/115041; Telegrams, from Foreign Office to Washington, March 24, FO371/115043, NAUK.

<sup>153</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, Vol. 2: 384, 477-78; Telegram, from UK High Commission in Canada to Commonwealth Relations Office, March 23, 1955, FO371/115043; Telegram, from Foreign Office to Washington, March 28, 1955, FO371/115043, NAUK.

<sup>154</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, Vol. 2: 392-93.

<sup>155</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, Vol. 2: 444-45, 453-55. For details about the US actions toward the Bandung Conference, see Chapter 5.

<sup>156</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, Vol. 2: 300-02, 305, 315, 354; Memorandum from Eisenhower to Dulles, April 5, 1955, Dulles Papers, Subject Series, Box 9, DDEL; Telegram, Makins to Foreign Office, April 7, 1955, FO371/115045, UNUK.

realized that responding to the PRC's attack on the islands would lead to a world war, and would consequently "cause our allies to back away, not only in the Far East but probably in Europe, in Africa and all over the globe," Eisenhower redefined the significance of the islands, and concluded they were "outposts, not citadels." Dulles then declared at a press conference that the US commitment was "based exclusively on Formosa and Pescadores."<sup>157</sup> A State Department analysis suggested pushing the Nationalists to evacuate Jinmen and Mazu "voluntarily," because:

All-out fight with the Chincoms, involving the US, in an effort to retain Quemoy and Matsu would be undesirable: a) the military position of the islands is not favorable and the ultimate objectives of such an operation are obscure. B) little or no support from our allies is forthcoming to support our position; c) public opinion within the US would be divided; d) impact on the domestic economy could be serious.<sup>158</sup>

On the other hand, President Eisenhower was afraid that "further retreat in front of the Communists" would "dismay the ChiNats," and lead to "the disintegration of all Asian opposition to the spread of Communism in that continent."<sup>159</sup> He was relieved by a State Department policy statement, which argued that MDT did not require the US to defend areas other than Taiwan and Penghu; therefore, US president was not obliged to "make an unconditional decision to defend the coastal position." Moreover, even if the US temporarily saved these islands with nuclear weapons, "it would in no way stabilize the situation or remove the existence of the permanent threat." A NIE suggested that losing Jinmen and Mazu might not damage US prestige, so long as the US gave "convincing evidence of a US determination to resist further Communist aggression."<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, Vol. 2: 409-15, 450-51.

<sup>158</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, Vol. 2: 440-1.

<sup>159</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, Vol. 2: 445-50.

<sup>160</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, Vol. 2: 479-89.

Meanwhile, American generals in the field kept reminding Washington of the urgency of the situation. The PRC was said to be “rushing air buildup across the strait,” and moving tankers and ships.<sup>161</sup> By mid-April, PLA forces were reported to be “fully prepared and are capable of another act of aggression, aimed at Taiwan and or the offshore islands.” On the other hand, the ROC requested permission to attack the Communist airfields, and they got the support of the US generals on the spot, who demanded “immediate action.”<sup>162</sup>

Finally, President Eisenhower made up his mind that the US would not commit to the coastal islands, and the ROC should be informed of this. Although the US “should not be in the position of exerting coercion upon them,” US leaders expected ROC officials to evacuate these islands. Eisenhower also recognized that in the long run, “it might be necessary to accept “Two Chinas.”<sup>163</sup> To offset the withdrawal, he agreed to blockade the Chinese coast along the Taiwan Strait until the PRC renounced the use of force to capture Taiwan and Penghu.<sup>164</sup> When he made this decision, President Eisenhower seemed to forget that he ever said a blockade was an act of war, and that it would definitely create repercussions among allies and from the PRC.

The US plan, however, did not work. Although US officials allured Chiang Kai-shek by promising the US would maintain forces on Taiwan, and would offer help in “preparing and sustaining the bulk of his forces as a weapon of opportunity, ready to take advantage of any political, military, or economic circumstances on the mainland that would give to an invasion a reasonable chance of success,” Chiang simply rejected evacuating the islands. “Soldiers must

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<sup>161</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, Vol. 2: 465-6.

<sup>162</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, Vol. 2: 475-76.

<sup>163</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, Vol. 2: 491-93. Memo, conversation between Eisenhower and Under Secretary Hoover, April 21, Dulles Papers, Subject Series, Box 9, DDEL.

<sup>164</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, Vol. 2: 503, 504, 505.

choose proper places to die. Chinese soldiers consider Quemoy [and] Matsu are proper places for them,” the generalissimo told US officials; he would defend Jinmen and Matsu “with or without US help.”<sup>165</sup>

Chiang Kai-shek’s rejection pushed US leaders back to the dilemma again. Just as they were once again struggling for a solution to the crisis, Zhou Enlai declared at the Bandung conference that China was willing to negotiate with the US to ease the tensions. The PRC’s conciliation “offered an escape from the dilemma,” and the crisis ended to the surprise of the US leaders.<sup>166</sup>

## **Conclusion**

US leaders paid insufficient attention to the actions the PRC took after the Geneva Conference. As a result, they failed to explore the motives of Chinese leaders in the Taiwan Strait, and were not ready to face their military actions. When the bombardment of Jinmen took place, the Americans mistook a largely diplomatic action as the beginning of military attacks. Ironically, US efforts to defuse the crisis led to the hasty conclusion of the MDT, which PRC leaders had intended to preclude through diplomatic pressures.

Throughout the crisis, US leaders concentrated on the military threat the PRC posed, and tended to overestimate the capacity and exaggerate the ambitions of the PRC. Although they were aware the PRC was testing US positions, they believed US protection of the offshore

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<sup>165</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, 2: 510-17; Dwight D. Eisenhower, *The White House Years: Mandate for Change, 1953-1956* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1963), 611; Robertson to Secretary, April 25, 1955, section II, Eisenhower Papers (Ann Whitman File), International Series, Box 9, “Formosa (China) 1952-1957 (4), DDEL.

<sup>166</sup> Robert Accinelli, “Eisenhower, Congress, and the 1954-55 Offshore Island Crisis,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, Vol. XX, No. 1 (Winter 1990): 329-48.

islands would lead to a general war with China, and probably a subsequent global war involving the Soviet Union. Should they take a stronger position when the Communists first bombed Jinmen, further Communist military actions could be avoided, and hence no crisis would have ensued.

Although US leaders were aware of the Communist strategy of alienating the US from allies and neutral states, their basic policy called for cooperation from US allies. This gave Britain great leverage influencing US policy making. In the self-inflicted crisis, US overreaction strained relation with allies, and scared neutral states, who turned back to pressure the US for peaceful negotiation with the PRC. As Eisenhower later admitted, the crisis almost caused a “split between the United States and nearly all its allies.”<sup>167</sup> Under allied pressure, the Americans had to constantly modify their positions and often retreat from their original positions, as was best indicated by their position on the offshore islands. Had the Communists not made the peace initiatives in Bandung, US leaders would have been in a deeper dilemma of forcing the Nationalists to withdraw from the offshore islands and facing the British pressure to neutralize the Taiwan Strait.

Dulles and Eisenhower claimed their management of the crisis had prevented a war with the PRC, and many Eisenhower revisionists praised them for their skillful avoidance of war. The new Chinese sources indicate, however, that throughout the crisis Chinese leaders had avoided taking military actions wherever there were US forces around. As US leaders had also decided even before the bombing of Jinmen that the US would not fight the PRC, there would have been no war to avoid at all.

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<sup>167</sup> Eisenhower, *Mandate for Change*, 459.

## Chapter 5

### Isolating the Enemy: The Bandung Conference and Sino-American Relations

“He [Indian Premier Nheru] proposed formulating a Peace Area, which is good and with which I agree. [I] believe countries such as Burma, Indonesia, and the Indochinese states will also agree [with this idea]. Therefore, [once such an area is constructed,] the Southeast Asian military alliance is unnecessary.”<sup>1</sup>

—Zhou Enlai, October 4, 1954

“They[the Chinese Communists] would emphasize Asia for the Asiatics and seek to increase neutralism to prevent the establishment of additional US bases.”<sup>2</sup>

—Allen Dulles, August 5, 1954

“[The Bandung Conference would] give a green light to the Chinese communists to take Formosa...the question of peace or war in the Far East may be determined [in Bandung].”<sup>3</sup>

—Secretary Dulles, April, 1955

From April 18 to 24, 1955, twenty-nine Asian and African states gathered in the small Indonesian city of Bandung to make their united voice heard in a world whose destiny had long been controlled by others.<sup>4</sup> The Bandung Conference is the most important milestone in the history of the Non-alignment Movement. But it was also a critical moment in Sino-American relations, because it came in the midst of the First Taiwan Strait Crisis and the subsequent United States threats of using nuclear weapons against the PRC. China had made a strong response to

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<sup>1</sup> *Zhou Enlai Nianpu, 1949-1976* [Chronological Record of Zhou Enlai, 1949-1976], Li Ping and Ma Zhisun, et al. (Beijing: Zhongyang Wenxian Chubanshe, 1997), Vol. 1: 416. (Hereafter, *Zhou Enlai Nianpu*; unless indicated otherwise, the following citations is from Volume 1 of this book.)

<sup>2</sup> Editorial Note, Allen Dulles’s Comments to NSC meeting of August 5, 1954, *FRUS, 1952-54*, 14, pt. I: 518.

<sup>3</sup> Memo, Conversation between the British Ambassador and the Secretary of State, April 7, 1955, *FRUS, 1955-57*, 21: 80; “Memorandum of a Conversation: Bandung Conference; U.S. Policy in the Event of Hostilities between Egypt and Israel,” April 9, 1955, *FRUS, 1955-57*, 21: 82-84; and “Afro-Asian Conference,” meeting between Dulles and British Ambassador, April 7, 1955, 670.901/4-755, RG 59, NA.

<sup>4</sup> The twenty-nine states were Afghanistan, Cambodia, China, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gold Coast, Iran, Iraq, Japan, Jordan, Laos, Lebanon, Liberia, Nepal, Philippines, Saudia Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Thailand, Turkey, North Vietnam (the Democratic People’s Republic of Vietnam), South Vietnam (the Republic of Vietnam), Yemen, and the five sponsors of the Colombo Powers: Indonesia, India, Burma, Ceylon, and Pakistan.

the US, but surprisingly, its premier Zhou Enlai declared in Bandung that the PRC was willing to negotiate with the US to solve the problems between them. This proposal ended the crisis in the Taiwan Strait and led to the ambassadorial talks between the two countries, which lasted on and off until US President Richard Nixon's visit to China in 1972.

How can Zhou Enlai's abrupt move toward conciliation in Bandung be interpreted? Although scholars agree on the significance of Zhou's initiative in ending the Taiwan Strait Crisis, few of them elaborate on it. Most works on the crisis do not relate it to the Bandung Conference, and thus fail to address the contradiction between Zhou's flexibility in Bandung and China's assertiveness in the Taiwan Strait. Based on new documents from the PRC's Foreign Ministry Archives and sources from Russia and the US, this chapter assesses the significance of the Bandung Conference from the perspective of Sino-American relations. It interprets China's policy toward the US in the broader context of China's perception of the world and its relations with other Asian states, and just as importantly, American perceptions and reactions to China's actions in Bandung.

### **China's Enthusiasm for the Bandung Conference**

The Bandung Conference was first proposed by the Indonesian Premier Ali Sastroamidjojo, when the premiers of the Colombo Powers met in Ceylon's capital Colombo in April 1954 to exchange their ideas on world affairs, especially the situation in Indochina, colonialism, and international Communism. The Bandung proposal did not generate enthusiasm from the other premiers, but the Indonesians, largely because of their need for diplomatic accomplishments to bolster their regime, struggled to keep the idea alive. In late September

Sastroamidjojo got the support from Indian Premier Jawaharlal Nehru and Burmese Premier U Nu, both of whom were worried about tensions in Asia and advocated unity of Asian and African states. When the Colombo Powers met again in late December, they finally made up their minds to hold the conference and invite the PRC to it.

From the very beginning, PRC leaders demonstrated greater interest toward the conference than most of the sponsors. Shortly after Indonesia put forward the proposal, Zhou Enlai visited India and expressed interest before a reluctant Nehru. During Nehru's visit to China in October, PRC leaders explicitly underscored their eagerness to take part in the proposed conference. When U Nu visited Beijing in December 1954, Chinese leaders once again expressed their enthusiasm for it. All this happened before the final decision to hold the conference was made, and among the five sponsors, there were disagreements over whether the PRC should be invited. PRC leaders were well aware of this controversy.

Why were PRC leaders so enthusiastic about the conference? Traditional works stress the opportunity Bandung provided for the PRC to engage in the international arena, and Zhou Enlai's contribution to the so-called "Bandung Spirit," but they do not interpret China's policy *per se*.<sup>5</sup> Recent works talk about the link between the PRC's policy of peaceful coexistence toward Asian nations and its confrontational actions toward the US, but they do not focus on it and often emphasize a quite ambitious China. According to this interpretation, China's diplomacy in Bandung aimed either to "construct an image of a 'normal state' and play a leading

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<sup>5</sup> Xue Mouhong, et al., *Dangdai Zhongguo Waijiao* [Contemporary Chinese Diplomacy] (Beijing: Zhongguo Shehui Kexue Chubanshe, 1990), 81-94; and Pei Jianzhang, et al., *Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Waijiaoshi, 1949-56* [History of the Diplomacy of the People's Republic of China] (Beijing: Shijie Zhishi Chubanshe, 1994), 231-55.

role in normalizing international politics in Asia,” or to “present a fundamental challenge” to a US-controlled world order by forming a united front in order to advance its revolutionary cause.<sup>6</sup>

My study of the new documents from the PRC’s Foreign Ministry Archives, however, finds that China’s policy was much more substantial than the traditional interpretation allows for but more moderate than the recent literature acknowledges. Instead of challenging the US to promote world revolution or molding international relations in Asia, PRC leaders were responding to US threats and their policy in Asia aimed at removing the security pressure from the US presence around the PRC. For that purpose, Chinese leaders tried to build a “Peace Area” with their Asian neighbors, so that they would not join the US alliance or accept US bases on their territory. And the Bandung Conference provided them an opportunity to push for this Peace Area.<sup>7</sup>

Following the Soviet Peace Offensive, the PRC had strived to remove through diplomacy the US presence in South Korea and Indochina and prevent it from further infiltration into the PRC’s neighborhood, which PRC leaders felt posed potential threats to their security. The Communist leaders first proposed a Korean political conference, and when their efforts failed to bring any result, they decided to neutralize Indochina at the Geneva Conference by adopting a

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<sup>6</sup> Shu Guang Zhang, “Constructing ‘Peaceful Coexistence’: China’s Diplomacy toward the Geneva and Bandung Conferences, 1954-55,” *The Cold War History*, Vol.7, No.4 (2007): 509-28; and Chen Jian, “Bridging Revolution and Decolonization: The ‘Bandung Discourse’ in China’s Early Cold War Experience,” *The Chinese Historical Review*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (2008): 207-41.

<sup>7</sup> Building a Peace Area against the US was also talked about by David A. Wilson and Kuo-kang Shao in their early articles on China’s relations with Thailand and Burma. But their works isolate China’s policy for peaceful coexistence from the Taiwan Strait Crisis and do not concentrate on the Bandung Conference; thus they fail to elaborate on the question of how Bandung fits into China’s efforts to create the Peace Area. Based exclusively on Chinese news reports of the time, their works fail to depict Chinese leaders’ considerations and their plan to carry out this policy as the new sources allow me to do. See David A. Wilson, “China, Thailand and the Spirit of Bandung” (Part I and II), *The China Quarterly*, No. 30 (1967): 149-69, and No. 31 (1967): 96-127; Kuo-kang Shao, “Chou En-lai’s Diplomatic Approach to Non-Aligned States in Asia: 1953-60,” *The China Quarterly*, No. 78 (1979): 324-38, and “Zhou Enlai’s Diplomacy and the Neutralization of Indo-China, 1954-55,” *The China Quarterly*, No. 107 (1986): 483-504.

strategy of separating the US from its allies. However, just as the Geneva Conference was taking place, PRC leaders were alerted to the fact that the US had started its efforts to set up a new military alliance in Southeast Asia. On May 19, US President Dwight E. Eisenhower publicly declared that the US would formulate a collective security arrangement in Southeast Asia without British participation, despite the British insistence that such an organization should not be considered before the end of the Geneva Conference.

The moves of some Asian nations coming as they did at this time attracted the attention of Chinese leaders. Premier Nehru of India made a statement on April 24, calling for a peaceful solution without foreign interference, and the independence of Indochina. In opposition to the military alliance the US sought, Nehru proposed to establish a neutral “Area of Peace” in Asia.<sup>8</sup> Meanwhile, India refused to allow US airplanes carrying French troops to Indochina to cross through its airspace.<sup>9</sup> Then the Colombo meeting of the five premiers took place and the Indonesian premier proposed the Bandung Conference.<sup>10</sup> At the same time, India signed an agreement with China over Tibet, in which the two countries declared they would build their relations on the basis of Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence.<sup>11</sup> Shortly after that, Indonesia suggested a non-aggression treaty with Burma, India, and China; and then Indian and Indonesian

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<sup>8</sup> S. Gopal, et al., *The Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, Vol. 25 (New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund; Distributed by Oxford University Press, 1999): 438, 442-43.

<sup>9</sup> For India’s policy toward Indochina, see Gilles Boquérat, “India’s Commitment to Peaceful Coexistence and the Settlement of the Indochina War,” *The Cold War History*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (2005): 211-34.

<sup>10</sup> “About the Five Asian Premiers’ Meeting,” April 30, 1954, Chinese Foreign Ministry Archives (hereafter, CFMA), 102-00159-06, 25-28. Unless otherwise indicated, this dissertation uses English versions of the documents from the CFMA translated by the author from Chinese. According to Boquérat, the premiers also discussed the possibility of signing an agreement of non-intervention with China. See Boquérat, “India’s Commitment to Peaceful Coexistence,” 218-20.

<sup>11</sup> Also known as “Pancha Shilla” or “Panchsheel,” these principles include: mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, mutual non-interference in each other’s internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence.

diplomats approached Chinese officials to probe China's intention toward such a treaty.<sup>12</sup> In May, Nehru twice repeated publicly his call for a Peace Area in Asia, to be built on the Five Principles.<sup>13</sup>

Eager to find a way to meet the US challenge of encircling China, PRC leaders wanted to explore the possibility of uniting with these states. *Renmin Ribao* first showed China's willingness to join the Asian leaders in an editorial on May 12: "If the Asian countries, with more than half of the world's population, can undertake joint responsibility to safeguard peace and security in Asia, all imperialist schemes to start war in Asia will be defeated."<sup>14</sup> Then on June 13, Chinese leaders in Beijing sent a telegram to Zhou Enlai in Geneva, urging him:

To take active actions to win over these Southeast Asian states, in order to consolidate peace in the Far East and the world, and isolate the US and defeat American imperialist aggression policy and frustrate its conspiracy to put together an aggression group in Southeast Asia. In the current circumstance, it was advantageous for China to conclude bilateral or multilateral treaties with India, Indonesia, or Burma, or a collective security pact with them. That will be conducive to the peace in Asia and to the policy of isolating the US. The fact that it was India and Indonesia who initiated to negotiate such a treaty also put China in an advantageous position.<sup>15</sup>

Therefore, despite the risk that India and Burma would raise issues such as boundary disputes and the PRC's support to foreign Communists, which the PRC leaders were not ready to talk about, they wanted to pursue the proposals actively and directed Zhou to visit India. Zhou

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<sup>12</sup> "Responses of India, Indonesia, Burma and Britain to US Active Quest for Southeast Asian Collective Defense Organization," June 5, 1954, CFMA, 102-00159-11, 1-3; and "Southeast Asian Collective Defense Treaty and Attitudes and Responses to It from Different States," October 1, 1954, CFMA, 105-00626-02, 44.

<sup>13</sup> "Nehru's Remarks Concerning Foreign Policy," October 31, 1954, CFMA, 204-00142-03, 43.

<sup>14</sup> The English translation is from *Summary of the China Mainland Press* (SCMP), No. 807, May 13, 1954, 2.

<sup>15</sup> "About Concluding a Mutual Non-Aggression Treaty with Southeast Asian States," June 13, 1954, CFMA, 203-00005-06, 55-57. The motives of Zhou's visits to India and Burma during the Geneva Conference have not been explored in the current literature. These newly declassified telegrams between Zhou Enlai and Beijing for the first time reveal China's considerations.

consulted the Soviet leader Vyacheslav Molotov and got his support. He further proposed some concrete actions to take:

Concerning a non-aggression treaty, or a collective security treaty, with Southeast Asian states, after studying this issue, we all agree that it is advantageous for China to conclude such a treaty to safeguard peace in current circumstance, as that will enable us to defeat US conspiracy, safeguard our national security and relax international tensions....As for the steps to be taken, it is preferable to begin with bilateral treaties, and then follow up with a multilateral pact. But if possible, we are not against concluding a multilateral treaty directly. The strategic goal is to maintain a neutral group in Southeast Asia, and to unite Britain and France through these Asian states, so as to block the US infiltration and defeat its conspiracy to set up an aggression group in Southeast Asia....<sup>16</sup>

Therefore, Zhou accepted an invitation to visit India, which he had originally declined, when the Geneva Conference was suspended in late June.<sup>17</sup> He also prepared to visit Burma, and instructed PRC officials to approach the Indonesians to test their intentions. Beijing sent Zhou a Draft Treaty for Safeguarding Peace in Asia to prepare him for the visits. The gist of it included withdrawing foreign troops from and dismantling foreign bases in Asia, abolishing aggression treaties, and non-participation in military alliances.<sup>18</sup>

In India, Zhou Enlai and Nehru agreed on their positions toward the US. Nehru told Zhou he was “totally opposed to” US attempts to build a treaty organization in Southeast Asia. Zhou gave his ready support to Nehru’s proposal to create an Area of Peace, composed of states that “have no foreign bases in them.” And the two agreed to apply the Five Principles to Asian states to prevent US military blocs. As the first step, Nehru suggested China make a bilateral

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<sup>16</sup> “Opinion about Concluding a Mutual Non-Aggression Treaty with Southeast Asian States,” June 17, 1954, CFMA, 203-00005-06, 58-60; “Goal and Plan for Premier Zhou Enlai’s Visit to India,” June 22, 1954, CFMA, 203-00005-01, 3-4.

<sup>17</sup> *Zhou Enlai Waijiao Huodong Dashiji* [Chronicle of Major Events in Zhou Enlai’s Diplomatic Career], ed. by the PRC Foreign Ministry (Beijing: Shijie Zhishi Chubanshe, 1993), 62.

<sup>18</sup> “Draft Treaty of Safeguarding Peace in Asia,” June 23, 1954, CFMA, 203-00005-07, 63-65.

declaration with Burma based on the Five Principles; then India, Indonesia, Burma and China would make similar bilateral statements with each other respectively.<sup>19</sup> Pleased by Nehru's proposal, Zhou further suggested their goal was not restricted to the end of war in Indochina, and they should aim to include "as many states as possible" in the Peace Area—preliminarily, he planned to enroll India, Indonesia, Burma, Laos, Cambodia, and even Ceylon, after efforts were made to keep it away from US influence. To demonstrate China's commitment to the cause, Zhou made a communiqué with Nehru, declaring the importance of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence for international relations.<sup>20</sup>

Zhou then moved on to Burma and made a similar communiqué with U Nu. He was very frank with U Nu on his purpose, "China does not want to see our neighbors allow foreign interveners to build military bases on their lands. The Burmese, along with India and Indonesia, did not approve of the Southeast Asia defense group the US planned to build, and did not allow the US to set up military base on its land. This was the foundation for our friendship and cooperation."<sup>21</sup> To work out the Burmese suspicion that China was supporting the Communist insurgents in Burma, Zhou assured U Nu that China would solve the bilateral problems with Burma through negotiations, and more importantly, it would not export revolution into Burma,

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<sup>19</sup> Nehru was clear about China's concern and Zhou's aim for a Peace Area in Asia. See *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, Vol. 26: 354-55.

<sup>20</sup> For their remarks about Bandung, see *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, Vol. 26: 383-90. According to Jamie Mackie, Zhou's visit to India was a major influence on Nehru's decision to hold the Bandung Conference. See Jamie Mackie, *Bandung 1955: Non-Alignment and Afro-Asian Solidarity* (Singapore: Editions Didier Millet, 2005), 62.

<sup>21</sup> *Zhou Enlai Nianpu, 1949-1976* [Chronicle Records of Zhou Enlai, 1949-1976], eds. by Li Ping, Ma Zhisun, et al (Beijing: Zhongyang Wenxian Chubanshe, 1997), Vol. 1: 393-94 (unless otherwise indicated, following citations are from volume one of this three-volume book); "Minutes of Premier Zhou's First Meeting with Premier U Nu," June 28, 1954, CFMA, 203-00007-02, 37-45; and "Minutes of Premier Zhou's Second Meeting with Premier U Nu," June 29, 1954, CFMA, 203-00007-03, 46-57.

which was the promise Nehru had pushed China to make, and Chinese officials had refused before.<sup>22</sup>

Zhou Enlai's visits to India and Burma, and especially his talk with Nehru, encouraged PRC leaders that they could further pursue the policy of building a Peace Area in Southeast Asia. At the same time, Zhou's experience in Geneva convinced them that the war in Indochina could be ended through diplomatic efforts. This gave Chinese leaders a lot of confidence in their judgment and diplomacy. In early July, after hearing Zhou's report, Mao Zedong picked up the "intermediate zone" theory he first put forward in 1946, and concluded that China's policy of uniting with Britain, France, and Southeast Asian states to frustrate the US plan to expand into Indochina was effective.<sup>23</sup> The PRC's policy after Geneva was to build on the momentum and strive for a Peace Area in Southeast Asia further to prevent US involvement in Asia. For that objective, PRC leaders decided to launch a diplomatic offensive.<sup>24</sup>

### **China's Diplomatic Offensive**

PRC leaders knew they had to overcome some obstacles in China's relations with Southeast Asia. Although the major states in the area were opposed to US attempts to set up

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<sup>22</sup> "Nehru's Request for Our Support to U Nu Sent to Vice Foreign Minister Zhang Hanfu via the Indian Ambassador," May 16, 1954, CFMA, 105-00044-01, 11-14.

<sup>23</sup> Mao first put forward the "intermediate zone" theory in 1946, which deemed that the "intermediate zone" between the US and the Soviet Union in Asia, Africa, and Europe would determine the future of the world, and China should support these peoples' efforts for national independence and form a united front against the US. When the Soviets put forward the "two camps theory" in 1947, which denied existence of neutral forces between the two camps, Mao gave up his theory. In 1948, Mao publicly denied the existence of a "third road." In 1949, Mao declared "leaning to the Soviet side" as one of the three diplomatic principles of the new People's Republic of China. For detailed analysis of the evolution of the theory, see Chen Jian, "Bridging Evolution and Decolonization," 211-33.

<sup>24</sup> *Zhou Enlai Nianpu*, 395; *Mao Zedong Wenji* [A Collection of Mao Zedong's Works], ed. by Zhonggong Zhongyang Wenxian Yanjiushi (Beijing: Zhongyang Wenxian Chubanshe, 1999), Vol. 6: 332-33; and *Mao Zedong Zhuan*, 1949-1976 [Biography of Mao Zedong, 1949-1976], eds. by Pang Xianzhi, Jin Chongji, et al (Beijing: Zhongyang Wenxian Chubanshe, 2003), 562-64.

military alliances, they were also suspicious of China. Three issues contributed to this suspicion: anxiety about Communism, overseas ethnic Chinese, and territorial disputes with China.

After the end of the Korean War, the Western press and the ROC government in Taiwan increased reports about a Communist conspiracy to conquer Southeast Asia. These claims culminated in Eisenhower's "falling domino" theory. Meanwhile, news spread about China's support for some Southeast Asian Communist parties. The Burmese Communists were said to receive military training and assistance in China. When in Burma, Zhou Enlai had to admit the presence of some Burmese Communists in China. But he assured Burma that these people had only been granted political asylum, and not allowed to take part in political activities. China also had connections with some Thai leftists. A Thai Communist leader lived in China and was engaged in activities against the Thai government, which Zhou later admitted.

The Chinese had been migrating into Southeast Asia for hundreds of years, and by the mid-1950s, about 12 million of them lived in the area, including about 2.5 million in Indonesia, over 2 million in Malaysia, between 2 to 3 million in Thailand, and 250,000 in Burma.<sup>25</sup> Southeast Asian states generally observed *jus soli* (birthright citizenship), but China had followed *jus sanguinis* (citizenship by the right of blood). Therefore, a large portion of these ethnic Chinese had dual citizenships. While some governments worried that these ethnic Chinese could be used to serve the Communist expansion, this became a particularly urgent problem for Indonesia, because the votes from over 1.5 million overseas Chinese holding dual citizenships would be critical for determining the outcome of its first general election in 1955.

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<sup>25</sup> Pei Jianzhang, *Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Waijiaoshi*, 117, 124, and 178; and Wilson, "China, Thailand and the Spirit of Bandung (Part I)," 150.

China had never drawn clear boundary lines in its history, and thus had territorial disputes with most of its neighbors, including India and Burma. The position of Tibet had previously been the biggest problem in the PRC's relations with India, which had regarded Tibet as a buffer area between the two states. When PRC troops moved into Tibet in 1950, India condemned this action as an invasion. Eventually Indian leaders decided to accept this as fact. In late 1953, China and India started negotiations over Tibet, and Zhou Enlai first put forward the Five Principles to indicate China's intentions to coexist peacefully with India. In April 1954, the two countries finally reached an agreement. India and China had other territorial disputes, but they both chose not to talk about them at this moment. Burma also had border issues with China, and Zhou Enlai assured it that China would solve the problem through negotiations.<sup>26</sup>

In Southeast Asia, China had diplomatic relations with five states: India, Indonesia, Burma, Pakistan, and North Vietnam. India was the most important state to China, because of Nehru's influence, his initiation of the idea of the Peace Area, and India's position in Asia. Nehru believed the future of Asia depended on good relations between China and India, two of the leading members in the emerging Third World. He also understood that it was in China's interest to maintain a peaceful foreign policy so it could concentrate on domestic affairs. He played on China's wariness of the United States by adopting a policy of "containment through friendship" toward China. By pushing for the Five Principles with China, Nehru hoped to allay Chinese fears that the US would use India to attack China. More importantly, China's adherence to these principles would create an "environment" that compelled it to keep its international

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<sup>26</sup> For the Sino-Burmese border treaty concluded in 1956, see Kuo-kang Shao, "Chou En-lai's Diplomatic Approach to Non-aligned States in Asia," 332-38; and Shen-Yu Dai, "Peking and Rangoon," *The China Quarterly*, No.5 (1961): 137-44.

commitments and maintain peace. Beyond Asia, India adopted a policy of neutralism because Nehru believed India was “potentially a great nation” and should not be a mere “camp follower.” In a more practical sense, however, non-alignment served India’s national interests by forcing the US and Soviet Union to compete for India’s favor, while sustaining a fragile domestic political consensus.<sup>27</sup> PRC leaders knew Nehru’s intentions, but they were also aware that the US connection with Pakistan alienated the Indians. Dulles had pushed for a defense organization in the Middle East, leading to a military pact between Turkey and Pakistan in February 1954. Three months later, the US itself concluded a military assistance agreement with Pakistan. Nehru declared that Pakistan’s alliance with the US upset the balance of power in the area and would lead to a future world war. And in response, he repeatedly called for a Peace Area.<sup>28</sup>

Burma was the only state that suffered all of the three problems (Communism, ethnic Chinese, and territorial disputes) with China, so it was extremely suspicious about China. On the other hand, it suffered from the ROC military remnants that fled to Burma after losing China’s civil war. The Burmese held the Americans responsible for the problem, as they believed the US was using these forces to harass China. As a result, Burma turned down US offers of a mutual security arrangement and economic assistance in 1952.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, Burmese leaders believed the US also contributed to a financial crisis in Burma. Burma had suffered from surpluses of rice, its major crop, which made up about 70% of its export earnings, but the US was making the

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<sup>27</sup> G. H. Jansen, *Afro-Asia and Non-Alignment* (London: Farber and Farber, 1966), 118, 131, and 170; and Sarvepalli Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography* (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, 1979), Vol. 2: 195. For Nehru’s idea about the “Peace Area,” see Sisir Gupta, *India and Regional Integration in Asia* (New York: Asia Publishing House, 1964), 48-51. For the other Asian states’ policy toward non-alignment, see Jansen, *Afro-Asia and Non-Alignment*, 132-39.

<sup>28</sup> “Nehru’s Remarks Concerning Foreign Policy,” October 31, 1954, CFMA, 204-00142-03, 1-18.

<sup>29</sup> Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, “John Foster Dulles and the Taiwan Roots of the ‘Two Chinas’ Policy,” in *John Foster Dulles and the Diplomacy of the Cold War*, ed. Richard H. Immerman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 244-51.

situation worse by competitively out-pricing Burma on the international market after a world surplus developed in 1953.<sup>30</sup> China was sensitive to this and offered a trade agreement to buy Burma's rice in April 1954. Later that year, it twice increased the amount of rice it purchased from Burma and also started to sell industrial products to Burma, which the Burmese urgently wanted but China itself was short of.<sup>31</sup>

The Indonesian government was allied with the Indonesian Communists, and had adopted a neutral foreign policy since coming to power in 1953. It resented US support of its two major rightist opposition parties, and according to PRC diplomats, the Americans were also suspected to be involved in a KMT attempt to overthrow the Indonesian government, due to its pro-China stance.<sup>32</sup> Meanwhile, PRC leaders also knew that the Indonesians needed economic assistance and support for their struggle to get back West New Guinea, which was still occupied by the Dutch. In June 1954, the PRC sent a delegation to Indonesia and concluded a trade agreement, resulting in Indonesia starting to sell rubber to China.<sup>33</sup>

Ceylon had recognized the PRC in 1950, but the two countries did not exchange ambassadors. Ceylonese premier was very anti-Communist, but he had to find a market for rubber, Ceylon's principal product, which was in the list of trade embargo the US imposed on China.<sup>34</sup> The premier also needed rice to feed the Ceylonese. The Chinese moved in and signed a trade agreement with Ceylon in 1952, according to which the PRC traded rice to Ceylon in

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<sup>30</sup> Evelyn Colbert, *Southeast Asia in International Politics, 1941-1956* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 316-17.

<sup>31</sup> Pei Jianzhang, *Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Waijiaoshi*, 128.

<sup>32</sup> *Neibu Cankao*, November 24, 1954. The Indonesian ambassador also told Zhou Enlai that the KMT's intervention in the Indonesian internal affairs was approved by the US. See "Excerpts of the Minutes of the Premier's Meeting with the Indonesian Ambassador A. Mononutu," February 28, 1955, CFMA, 207-00003-02, 28.

<sup>33</sup> Pei Jianzhang, *Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Waijiaoshi*, 111.

<sup>34</sup> John Lionel Kotelawala, *An Asian Prime Minister's Story* (London: G. G. Harrap, 1956), 140 and 184.

exchange for rubber, thereby solving Ceylon's two major problems simultaneously. The PRC used this political deal to break the US embargo, even though it suffered economic losses by trading with Ceylon.<sup>35</sup> In late 1954, China increased its imports, benefiting Ceylon even more. Needless to say, the Ceylonese were reported to be very satisfied with these arrangements.<sup>36</sup>

Pakistan was an American ally, but according to Chinese diplomats, it joined the alliance simply out of expectation of US economic assistance and support for its conflicts with India over Kashmir, not out of hatred against Communism or China.<sup>37</sup> Apart from the military pact with Turkey, the Pakistanis also offered to join SEATO, when it came into being in September 1954. But the Pakistanis also wanted to sell cotton to China, and the PRC government had become its largest buyer in 1952. In 1953, China signed its first trade agreement with Pakistan exchanging China's coal for Pakistan's cotton.<sup>38</sup>

While the PRC was attracting the states in Southeast Asia with trade and assurance of peaceful coexistence, the establishment of SEATO alienated these same states from the US. Despite US efforts to enroll Asian members, most of them refused the organization, and only Pakistan, Thailand and the Philippines joined SEATO. According to Chinese intelligence, Nehru was the first to reject it, as he believed the military group added to tensions in Asia. He also negated Ceylonese premier's proposal for a meeting to discuss if the Colombo Powers should join SEATO. Burma and Indonesia followed India, and under their pressure, Ceylon also

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<sup>35</sup> *Zhou Enlai Nianpu*, 261-62, and 415-16. For the Ceylonese perspective on trade with China, see Kotelawala, *An Asian Prime Minister's Story*, 127-29, 138-39, and 144.

<sup>36</sup> *Neibu Cankao*, November 25, 1954.

<sup>37</sup> "Southeast Asian Collective Defense Treaty and Attitudes and Responses to It from Different States," October 1954, CFMA, 105-00626-02, 56.

<sup>38</sup> Pei Jianzhang, *Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Waijiaoshi*, 134.

declined the invitation.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, in opposition to SEATO, Indonesia again proposed to hold the Bandung Conference to conclude treaties of non-aggression in order to keep security.<sup>40</sup>

PRC leaders were satisfied SEATO was not popular in Southeast Asia, but at the same time, they were upset SEATO was finally established and Cambodia, Laos, and South Vietnam were put under its protection, which, according to their understanding, violated the Geneva Agreements. What worried them even more was the fact that the US did not give up its efforts to recruit the Colombo Powers into SEATO. PRC leaders noticed that the US was offering carrots and sticks to Indonesia, and the Australian and Filipino foreign ministers went to Burma and Ceylon to push them to join SEATO. They believed Afghanistan and Japan were also US targets for recruitment.<sup>41</sup> They also knew that the major neutral states were interested in US assistance, although these countries did not like the conditions the Americans attached to their assistance.<sup>42</sup> PRC leaders were afraid that these Southeast Asian states would bend to the US lure of economic assistance, as they knew some of them were not resolutely against SEATO.<sup>43</sup>

To consolidate their relations with states in Southeast Asia, Chinese leaders directed their diplomats to take effective actions to convince these states that they could coexist peacefully with China.<sup>44</sup> Meanwhile, the PRC government adopted three major moves to further this policy. First, it started with the dual citizenship problem of overseas Chinese. In late September, Zhou

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<sup>39</sup> "Southeast Asian Collective Defense Treaty and Attitudes and Responses to It from Different States," October 1954, CFMA, 105-00626-02, 23, 46.

<sup>40</sup> "About the Asia-African Conference," September 4, 1954, CFMA, 207-00085-19, 150.

<sup>41</sup> "Southeast Asian Collective Defense Treaty and Attitudes and Responses to It from Different States," October 1954, CFMA, 105-00626-02, 82.

<sup>42</sup> "Nehru's Remarks Concerning Foreign Policy," October 31, 1954, CFMA, 204-00142-03, 13-14.

<sup>43</sup> "Southeast Asian Collective Defense Treaty and Attitudes and Responses to It from Different States," October 1954, CFMA, 105-00626-02, 23, 47, and 49.

<sup>44</sup> "The Foreign Ministry's Directive Concerning the National Day Celebration," September 5, 1954, CFMA, 102-00114-02, 2-5.

Enlai declared that the PRC sought to solve the issue through negotiations, and it would not acknowledge dual citizenship. He also encouraged the overseas Chinese to make a choice of citizenship.<sup>45</sup> This position was a radical departure from the previous policy statements China had made, and Chinese leaders knew it was unpopular among the overseas Chinese, as most of those holding dual citizenships wanted to maintain their Chinese nationality.<sup>46</sup> But protecting the interests of the overseas compatriots was no longer a priority for the PRC government. In November, China started negotiations with the Indonesians on this issue, and the two countries quickly reached a preliminary agreement, due to the PRC's willingness to make concessions. To improve relations with Indonesia, Chinese officials were instructed to sacrifice the "partial interests of the overseas Chinese," and "avoid raising issues that the Indonesians would disapprove of" to speed up the negotiation.<sup>47</sup>

The second initiative the PRC took was to invite Indian Premier Nehru to Beijing in October. At a conference preparing for Nehru's visit, Zhou Enlai explained to Chinese officials why the PRC invited Nehru as the first non-Communist head of government to visit China. The capitalist world, according to Zhou, was divided into three groups: the aggression group led by the US, the status quo powers headed by the British, and the neutral group represented by India. Accordingly, China's policy was to isolate the US, win over the status quo powers, and unite with the neutral powers. Zhou revealed to Chinese officials that the central issue about which he wanted to talk to Nehru was how to make use of the Bandung Conference to formulate the Peace

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<sup>45</sup> Pei Jianzhang, *Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Waijiaoshi*, 125.

<sup>46</sup> China's original position is reflected in "Plan for Our Negotiation with the Indonesian Government on the Issue of Dual Citizenship (draft)," July 6, 1954, CFMA, 118-00778-04, 106-111. For China's policy toward the overseas Chinese, see also Wilson, "China, Thailand and the Sprit of Bandung (Part I)," 155.

<sup>47</sup> "Summary of Our Negotiation with Indonesia on Dual Nationality Issue," February 4, 1955, CFMA, 118-00779-04, 37-40. Meanwhile, Zhou Enlai also pushed Indonesian visitors to work with China to realize the idea of Peace Area. See *Zhou Enlai Nianpu*, 416-17.

Area in Asia. According to Zhou, once established, such an area would finally cover Southeast Asia (except Pakistan), pass over Afghanistan and reach through North Africa.<sup>48</sup>

PRC leaders did all they could to impress Nehru with China's hospitality. About 200,000 people were ordered to welcome Nehru along Beijing's streets; the common historical experience as victims of colonialism was stressed when Chinese leaders met with Nehru; and the shared needs for domestic economic development were pointed out. Chinese leaders once again assured Nehru that China wanted peace, and its policy aimed to pursue international cooperation; the US, however, put its frontlines in Korea, Taiwan, and Indochina, "making it difficult for us to have a sound sleep." Zhou Enlai raised the topic of the Bandung Conference and told Nehru the PRC supported it and was willing to participate, because "it will work towards an Area of Peace."<sup>49</sup> However, Nehru was not as enthusiastic and told Chinese leaders that the Conference would not be a "united" one and would only discuss "broad questions like peace, colonialism, etc." Rather, he was more interested in actions China would take to lessen the fear among some Asian states about China. In reply, Mao Zedong assured Nehru that China would prove its faith by adhering to the Five Principles. He also disclosed to Nehru that China would find a reasonable solution to the overseas Chinese problem.

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<sup>48</sup> "Zhou Enlai's Report on China's Diplomacy before Nehru's Visit to China," October 18, 1954, Fujian Provincial Archives, 101-5-542, 11-21. *Zhou Enlai Nianpu* includes an excerpt of Zhou Enlai's talk, but the new source from Fujian first reveals China's considerations in detail. See *Zhou Enlai Nianpu*, 419-20.

<sup>49</sup> *The Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, Vol. 27 (New Delhi, 2000): 6-38. *Zhou Enlai Nianpu*, 420-21; Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Waijiaobu and Zhongyang Wenxian Yanjiushi eds., *Mao Zedong Waijiao Wenxuan* [Selected Diplomatic Papers of Mao Zedong] (Beijing, 1994), 163-76; *Mao Zedong Wenji*, Vol. 6: 361-73; and "Excerpts of Nehru's Meetings with Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai," November 7, 1954, CFMA, 204-00148-02, 4-14.

PRC leaders were pleased to be told that their efforts toward Nehru received very positive responses in Southeast Asia. Nehru himself was satisfied with the visit.<sup>50</sup> The respect the Chinese people showed to Nehru was seen by other Colombo Powers as indicative of China's goodwill towards neighbors, Chinese diplomats reported.<sup>51</sup> More importantly, Nehru's visit worsened India's relations with the US.<sup>52</sup> PRC leaders learned that Nehru told reporters that he believed China should be admitted into the UN; the Five Principles should be used to establish a Peace Area; and SEATO was an obstacle to peace.<sup>53</sup>

As the next move, PRC leaders welcomed Premier U Nu to Beijing in early December. After stressing China's new position on the overseas Chinese problem, they made other assurances to U Nu: China sought to solve boundary problems through negotiation; it would not interfere with Burma's internal affairs and support the Burmese Communists; and more importantly it would not cross the border to attack the Nationalist remnants in Burma. Further to demonstrate China's trust in Burma and its needs for friendship with neighbors, Chinese leaders asked U Nu to help China improve its relations with Thailand.<sup>54</sup> In addition, Chinese leaders stressed their enthusiasm for the Bandung Conference, despite U Nu's suggestion that Pakistan wanted to invite Taiwan instead of China. "If we are able to attend the Conference, we will feel glorious," Mao told U Nu.<sup>55</sup> Mao and Zhou did not forget to stress their support of the idea of a

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<sup>50</sup> According to scholar Mary Keynes, Chinese leaders convinced Nehru of China's "good intentions" and the value of the Bandung Conference. See Mary Keynes, "The Bandung Conference," in *International Relations*, Vol. 1 (October 1957): 362.

<sup>51</sup> "Indian and Burmese Press Comments on Nehru's Visit to China," November 19, 1954, CFMA, 102-00258-05, 27-29.

<sup>52</sup> See Shen Zhihua personal archives (hereafter SPA), SD10219; see also "Press Response of India, Burma, Indonesia, Pakistan, and Nepal to Nehru's Visit of China," November 3, 1954, CFMA, 102-00159-17, 74-78.

<sup>53</sup> *Neibu Cankao*, October 29, 1954.

<sup>54</sup> *Mao Zedong Zhuan*, 575-80.

<sup>55</sup> *Mao Zedong Wenji*, Vol. 6: 374-83, and *Zhou Enlai Waijiao Huodong Dashiji*, 93-94.

Peace Area, because “once such a Peace Area is expanded ... future war will be delayed or prevented.” Finally Zhou Enlai and U Nu once again reiterated the significance of the Five Principles for world peace.<sup>56</sup>

The PRC’s efforts on all these fronts were rewarded. When the five Colombo Powers met to finalize their planning for the Bandung Conference, India and Burma strongly suggested inviting the PRC despite the Ceylonese and Pakistani opposition and pressure from the US and UK against PRC’s participation.<sup>57</sup> When Pakistan proposed inviting the ROC to represent China, U Nu threatened to withdraw Burma’s sponsorship of the conference, getting Nehru’s immediate support. Finally the prime ministers agreed to invite the PRC to the conference.<sup>58</sup> The Chinese leaders were pleased to see the communiqué of the meeting “was consistent with the spirit” of the Five Principles.<sup>59</sup> Moreover, they were pleased to be told US leaders started to worry that the PRC would make use of the Bandung Conference to frustrate the American plan to expand SEATO, and the PRC would also develop closer relations with American ally Japan, which was eager for trade with China.<sup>60</sup> Encouraged by these messages, PRC officials started to prepare for China’s participation in the Bandung Conference.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> *People’s China*, January 1, 1955, Supplement, 3. For US perception of U Nu’s visit and the threat China posed to Bandung, see “Discussion at the 230th Meeting of the National Security Council, Wednesday, January 5, 1955,” Eisenhower Papers (Ann Whitmann File), NSC Series, Box 6, DDEL.

<sup>57</sup> Jansen, *Afro-Asia and Non-Alignment*, 169-81, and Roseland Bulganin, *The Bandung Connection—The Asia-Africa Conference in Bandung in 1955* (Singapore: Gunning Aging, 1981), 17-39. For the British pressure, see *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, Vol. 27: 106.

<sup>58</sup> Jansen, *Afro-Asian and Non-Alignment*, 174-76.

<sup>59</sup> “About Bogor Meeting,” December 31, 1954, CFMA, 207-00002-04, 94-95.

<sup>60</sup> “British, French and American Responses to Colombo Powers’ Invitation of China to Bandung Conference,” January 10, 1955, CFMA, 207-00002-06, 159-61.

<sup>61</sup> “Preliminary Work Plan Draft for Asia-African Conference,” January 16, 1955, CFMA, 207-00004-03, 22-25.

## US Perception of Chinese Threat

US leaders were clear about the challenge China was posing for US relations with Asian states, and they were worried about the opportunity the Bandung Conference would provide to China.<sup>62</sup> Shortly after Zhou Enlai visited India and Burma, Allen Dulles, Director of the CIA, said at a NSC meeting that China “would emphasize Asia for the Asiatics and seek to increase neutralism to prevent the establishment of additional US bases.”<sup>63</sup> Within a week after the Colombo Powers decided to hold the Bandung Conference, US State Department prepared a fairly accurate analysis of China’s policy. As a part of the Soviet peace offensive, according to the document, Chinese leaders sought to formulate an “area of collective peace” in Bandung to exclude US influence from Asia. Moreover, China’s participation in the conference would set “the dangerous precedent of the Mao regime’s representing China” in the world, and would give

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<sup>62</sup> The latest English work on the US policy toward the Bandung Conference is Kawaka Apia, *The Political and Moral Imperatives of the Bandung Conference of 1955: The Reactions of the US, UK and Japan* (Folkston, Kent, UK: Global Oriental Ltd., 2007), chapter 2. The current literature has approached the Bandung Conference from the perspective of either racial identity or US policy toward the Third World in general, instead of Sino-American relations. See Matthew Jones, “A ‘Segregated’ Asia: Race, the Bandung Conference, and Pan-Asians Fears in American Thought and Policy, 1954-1955,” *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 29, No. 5 (November 2005): 841-67; Cary Fraser, “An American Dilemma: Race and Realpolitik in the American Response to the Bandung Conference, 1955,” in *Window on Freedom: Race, Civil Rights, and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1988*, ed. Brenda Gayle Plummer (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 115-40; Jason Parker, “Cold War II: The Eisenhower Administration, the Bandung Conference, and the Reperiodization of the Postwar Era,” *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 30, No. 5 (November 2006): 867-92; and “Small Victory, Missed Chance: The Eisenhower Administration, the Bandung Conference, and the Turning of the Cold War,” in *The Eisenhower Administration, the Third World, and the Globalization of the Cold War*, eds. Kathryn C. Statler and Andrew L. Johns (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006), 153-74. For contemporary work on the Bandung Conference, see George McTurnan Kahin, *The Asian-African Conference: Bandung, Indonesia, April 1955* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1955). For works by witnesses of the conference, see A. Doak Barnett, *Chou En-Lai at Bandung: Chinese Communist Diplomacy at the Asia-African Conference: A Report from A. Doak Barnett* (New York: American Universities Filed Staff, 1955), and Richard Wright, *The Color Curtain: A Report on the Bandung Conference* (New York: World, 1956). The General Secretary of the Conference Roeslan Abdulgani also published his memory of the conference, and the English translation is: *The Bandung Connection: The Asia-Africa Conference in Bandung in 1955*.

<sup>63</sup> Editorial Note, Allen Dulles’s Comments to NSC meeting of August 5, 1954, *FRUS, 1952-54*, 14, pt. I: 518.

Zhou Enlai “an excellent forum to broadcast Communist ideology to a naive audience in the guise of anti-colonialism.”<sup>64</sup>

However, US leaders faced a dilemma over how to meet China’s challenge: although they definitely did not want China to get its way, they were hesitant to dissuade the invitees from attending the conference, as that would not only arouse Communist propaganda but also lead to resentment from Asian and African states over the US infringing upon their sovereignty. Most US diplomats in the area and the British recommended that the US send allies to the conference, in order to influence it from the inside.<sup>65</sup> But Secretary Dulles requested US ambassadors to ask local governments to withhold their decision, expecting the Conference would be delayed, or at the best, cancelled, despite reports from US embassies that most invited states would attend, and warnings from Britain that it would be a mistake to oppose holding the conference, or to attempt to keep invitees from attending.<sup>66</sup>

Dulles did not change his policy until late January, 1955, when it was certain that the Bandung Conference would take place and China would attend it. On January 25, he agreed that US friends in Asia should go to Bandung and requested them to send their “ablest possible

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<sup>64</sup> Memo, McConaughy to Robertson: Communist China and the Bandung Conference, January 4, 1955, 670.901/1-455, RG 59, National Archives of the United States, College Park, M.D. (Hereafter NAUS); Minutes of a meeting at the Secretary Dulles’s Office, January 7, 1955, *FRUS, 1955-57*, 21: 3.

<sup>65</sup> Telegrams from RG 59, NA: Cumming to Secretary of State, January 2, 1955, 670.901/1-255; Rangoon to Secretary of State, January 3, 1955, 670.901/1-355; Colombo to Secretary of State, January 4, 1955, 670.901/1-455; and Salisbury to Secretary of State, January 5, 1955, 670.901/1-555, NAUS.

<sup>66</sup> Telegram, Dulles to Chiefs of Mission, January 7, 1955, 670.901/1-755, RG 59, NAUS; *FRUS, 1955-57*, 21: 1-5. According to Jamie Mackie, Thailand and the Philippines were “sluggish” about replying to the invitation because of the US. See Mackie, *Bandung 1955*, 65. Japan, Cambodia, and the Arab countries were also facing “strong American pressure” against the conference. See Jansen, *Afro-Asia and Non-Alignment*, 184-85. According to Indian diplomats, the US was pressuring the Egyptians not to attend the Bandung Conference, “in case PRC was one of the invitees.” See *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, 27: 106. For British views, see telegram from London to State, 670.901/1-1155, RG 59, NAUS; secondary works from the British perspective include Ampiah, *The Political and Moral Imperatives of the Bandung Conference of 1955*, chapter 3, and Nicolas Tarling, “‘Ah-Ah’: Britain and the Bandung Conference of 1955,” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 23, No. 1 (March 1992): 74-112.

representation” to defeat China’s efforts to “divide free Asian countries from their Western friends.”<sup>67</sup> Meanwhile, US officials suggested to Dulles that US diplomats should keep their actions secret, to avoid raising the suspicion that the US was working “behind the scenes.” The Chinese Communists, according to US diplomats, would adopt a tactic of “sweet reasonableness...possibly to the extent of making glowing promises to Indonesia, Thailand, Burma, re[garding] position on overseas Chinese, dissolution of ‘provisional governments,’ et cetera.”<sup>68</sup>

In early February, the State Department put forward US objectives and tactics. Because only two of the thirty invitees were Communists and ten of them were pro-Western, the conference would “probably avoid issues on which general agreement cannot be reached.” Therefore, US objectives were: “(1) successful rebuttal of Communist charges, and (2) encouragement of an affirmative attitude by the Conference toward Free World and US achievements and goals.”<sup>69</sup>

To achieve these goals, the US had to work closely with its friends. The coming SEATO meeting was regarded as an excellent opportunity to prepare US allies for Bandung.<sup>70</sup> When SEATO members gathered in Bangkok to implement the collective defense clause in the Manila Pact in late February 1955, Dulles stressed the danger of the Communist expansion, and included in the final communiqué a welcome to the Bandung Conference to demonstrate US goodwill,

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<sup>67</sup> Circular Telegram, State Department to Certain Diplomatic Missions, January 25, 1955, *FRUS*, 1955-57, 21: 23.

<sup>68</sup> Telegram, New Delhi to Secretary of State, January 28, 1955, 670.901/1-2855, RG 59, NAUS.

<sup>69</sup> Memorandum, Main Points of Attached Status Reports on Afro-Asian Working Group, February 8, 1955, *FRUS*, 1955-57, 21: 29-30; see also 670.901/2-855, RG 59, NAUS.

<sup>70</sup> Memorandum, Main Points of Attached Status Reports on Afro-Asian Working Group, February 8, 1955, *FRUS*, 1955-57, 21: 29-30; see also 670.901/2-855, RG 59, NAUS.

which Dulles specifically designed to “have an excellent propaganda value” at Bandung.<sup>71</sup> Meanwhile, US officials were instructed to hold “full and frank discussions” with friends and allies who would work as US proxies in Bandung, including Japan, the Philippines, Thailand, Pakistan, Turkey, and Iran.<sup>72</sup> US diplomats were also requested to push these states to exchange views among themselves, not just act out of US initiative.<sup>73</sup> To their relief, the Philippines, Pakistan and Ceylon turned out to be ardent supporters of the US. Ambassador Carlos Romulo of the Philippines was “eager” to represent the US, and offered to cooperate with delegations from Thailand, Pakistan, Turkey, and Arab delegations.<sup>74</sup> The Pakistani premier promised to “oppose any Bandung resolution adopting the ‘Five Principles,’” and would fight for the principles of collective security, should debates on regional defense pacts such as SEATO come up.<sup>75</sup> The Ceylonese premier prepared his speeches he planned to make in Bandung with the help of US diplomats.<sup>76</sup>

Meanwhile, messages from India and Burma were optimistic: these two critical states would take moderate positions and would not necessarily support China. According to the US embassy in Burma, China would not dominate the conference and the final communiqué would be very general. The Burmese would avoid taking sides, if the Taiwan issue was discussed;

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<sup>71</sup> Telegrams from the delegation at the SEATO Council Meeting to the State Department, February 23, 1955, *FRUS, 1955-57*, 21: 38-41 and 41-45; Telegram, Dulles to the State Department, February 26, 1955, *FRUS, 1955-57*, 21: 62.

<sup>72</sup> Circular Telegram, the Department of State to Certain Diplomatic Missions, February 25, 1955, *FRUS, 1955-57*, 21: 50-54; Circular Telegrams from RG 59, NAUS: 491 (670.901/2-2555), 509 (670.901/3-755), 563 (670.901/3-2455), and circular telegram from Dulles, 670.901/4-255

<sup>73</sup> Telegram, the State Department to US embassies, March 3, 1955, 670.901/3-355, RG 59, NAUS.

<sup>74</sup> Memo for the record by William Lacy, February 9, 1955, 670.901/2-955, RG 59, NA; Memo for the record by MacArthur, counselor of the State Department, February 10, 1955, *FRUS, 1955-57*, 21: 31-32.

<sup>75</sup> “Pakistani Proposals for Conduct of AA Conference,” March 22, 1955, 670.901/3-2255, RG 59, NA; telegram, Karachi to Secretary of State, April 12, 1955, 670.901/4-1255, RG 59, NAUS.

<sup>76</sup> Telegrams from US Embassy in Colombo to Secretary of State, 670.901/4-2055, 670.901/3-2555, 670.701/4-755, and 671.901/4-955, RG 59, NAUS.

moreover, Burma was still alert to China's interference in its internal affairs, according to US diplomats.<sup>77</sup> The US embassy in New Delhi believed India had only "rather half-hearted interest" toward the conference, and would not discuss the issues of Taiwan.<sup>78</sup>

However, Secretary Dulles was worried China would seek the conference's support of its policy toward Taiwan, in addition to the conference's promotion of a united Asia. Despite estimates by US diplomats and allies, Dulles told the British ambassador to the US that he was worried the Bandung Conference would "give a green light to the Chinese communists to take Formosa [Taiwan]." Dulles had decided to push friendly countries to propose a cease-fire if the subject of Taiwan came up at the conference, and he urged Britain to use its influence in Asia "so that both the Formosa situation and the over-all problem of pan-Asianism might not become more aggravated."<sup>79</sup> For Dulles, "the question of peace or war in the Far East may be determined" in Bandung, because China would probably ask the conference to endorse their policy toward Taiwan;<sup>80</sup> and whether China would invade Taiwan "might depend on" the support they got in Bandung. Therefore, a resolution deploring the use of force and demanding cease-fire "might deter" China's use of force, and Dulles gave Romulo a draft resolution for use in Bandung.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Telegram from Rangoon to Secretary of State, February 28, 1955, 670.901/2-2855, RG 59, NAUS.

<sup>78</sup> Telegram from New Delhi to Secretary of State, March 31, 1955, 670.901/3-3155, RG 59, NAUS.

<sup>79</sup> Memo, Conversation between the British Ambassador and the Secretary of State, April 7, 1955, *FRUS, 1955-57*, 21: 80; "Afro-Asian Conference," meeting between Dulles and British Ambassador, April 7, 1955, 670.901/4-755, RG 59, NA. For general prediction about China's position, see Barnett, *Chou En-lai at Bandung*, 4.

<sup>80</sup> "Memorandum of a Conversation: Bandung Conference; U.S. Policy in the Event of Hostilities between Egypt and Israel," April 9, 1955, *FRUS, 1955-57*, 21: 82-84.

<sup>81</sup> Afro-Asian Conference: Dulles meeting with Romulo, April 14, 1955, 670.901/4-1455, RG 59, NAUS. The Draft Resolution reads:

Considering that the occurrence of armed hostilities in the area of the Formosa Strait has created a situation the continuance of which is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security;  
Call upon the parties concerned to renounce forthwith the use of force or the threat of force as a means of securing their stated rights and interests.

Dulles' estimate influenced other US officials. Three days before the Bandung Conference, the State Department concluded that Zhou Enlai would raise the Taiwan issue in Bandung. Although Americans were not sure how hard Zhou "will play upon fears of war by threatening action against Taiwan," they were certain that he would "attempt to convince the conferees that responsibility for any war over Taiwan rests with the US," and probably "press for a Ten Power Conference on Taiwan... and will maintain that 'peaceful liberation' is possible only if the US withdraws its forces from the area." But China would not make any concession, or new "startling proposals concerning negotiations," according to the State Department.<sup>82</sup> To address the threat, US diplomats were requesting US friends to adopt an "offensive approach," and take actions "not only to prevent the Communists from exploiting the Conference to [our] detriment, but also to turn the Conference to the positive benefits of the free world."<sup>83</sup> Dulles had also called the CIA, to make sure they "have done enough imaginative thinking" on Bandung, and was pleased to be told that they "have put their most able and imaginative people on the job."<sup>84</sup> The day before the opening of the Bandung Conference, US leaders made a last try to exert influence. In a press conference, Dulles "lauded Bandung as a venue for the affirmation of peaceful rather than military solutions to Asian crises, naming the ongoing Chinese offshore islands controversy as one such."<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> "Memo to the Secretary from W. Park Armstrong, Jr., Intelligence Note: Probable Communist Position at the Bandung Conference," April 15, 1955, 670.901/4-1555, RG 59, NAUS.

<sup>83</sup> Memo from Staats to Villard, March 28, 1955, and attached extract of OCB 337 Minutes, April 1, 1955; OCB Central File Series, WHO-NSC, Box 85, f: "OCB 092.3 (10)," DDEL; Parker, "Small Victory, Missed Chance," 161.

<sup>84</sup> Memo, telephone conversation between the Secretary of State and the Deputy Director for Plans of Central Intelligence Agency, April 1, 1955, *FRUS, 1955-57*, 21: 77.

<sup>85</sup> Dulles's press conference approved by Eisenhower, Eisenhower-Dulles meeting, in Press Release, Dulles (via Hagerty), April 17, 1955, Dulles-Herter Series, Whitman File, Box 5, f: "J.F. Dulles April 1955 (I)," DDEL; Parker, "Cold War II," 880.

## US and China in Bandung

After demonstrating its willingness to talk with the US in February, the PRC decreased its media attacks on the US, and lessened military actions in the Taiwan Strait. While Chinese leaders were preparing for the Bandung Conference, their attention was attracted to the SEATO meeting in Bangkok. According to Chinese intelligence, the US wanted to set up a permanent military force in Southeast Asia, but it was not willing to send its ground troops, and only promised to provide air and sea capabilities in time of war. Instead the US requested other members to contribute ground troops. This request met with broad opposition; moreover, the three Asian members were only interested in economic assistance, which the US had promised but was hesitant to provide. Because of these differences, the meeting failed to reach any agreement, Chinese leaders observed with satisfaction.<sup>86</sup>

What gave them even more relief was that this SEATO meeting seemed further to alienate the neutral states from the US, despite the latter's gesture of sympathy toward Bandung.<sup>87</sup> Perceiving the conference as a new move to create tensions, Burma not only rejected a US invitation to Bangkok, but also pushed other Asian countries not to attend.<sup>88</sup> According to the Indian press, the Bangkok meeting was a dangerous step toward interference in Southeast Asia, and the US claim to protect this area was an "insult" to Asian states; and Indian government believed that US insistence on establishing a military bloc infringed upon the Geneva Agreements and would harm the coming Bandung Conference.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> "Pakistani Press Comments on the Bangkok Conference," March 3, 1955, CFMA, 105-00173-13, 54-55.

<sup>87</sup> "About the Bangkok Conference," March 5, 1955, CFMA, 105-00173-10, 33-36.

<sup>88</sup> "Report on the Bangkok Conference," February 23, 1955, CFMA, 105-00173-09, 28-32.

<sup>89</sup> "Indian Press Response to the Bangkok Conference Statement," March 2, 1955, CFMA, 105-00173-13, 46-47.

In early April, PRC leaders finalized their executive plan for the Bandung Conference. According to this plan, China's task was to "expand the united front for world peace; promote nationalist independence movements, and create conditions for diplomatic relations with some Asian and African states." The two concrete things Chinese leaders wanted were a permanent organization for these states to meet every two years, and the acceptance of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence as the foundation of international relations.<sup>90</sup> Compared with the preliminary plan made in January, the new plan was more realistic. As Nehru and U Nu indicated, the suspicions about the PRC among Asian states were still a problem that it needed to address. And India had also informed PRC leaders that a regional pact was premature.<sup>91</sup> In this circumstance, universal acceptance of the Five Principles and a permanent organization would provide the PRC with a forum to advance the idea of a Peace Area.

PRC leaders carefully analyzed the attendees of the conference and deemed it practical to form a united front against the US. According to Chinese officials, the participants of the conference were divided into four groups: a) pro-peace neutral states, including India, Burma, Indonesia, and Afghanistan; b) states holding positions close to the neutralists: Egypt, Sudan, Nepal, Syria, Lebanon, Yemen, Saudi Arab, Gold Coast, Cambodia, Laos, and Ceylon; c) states holding positions close to anti-neutralism: Japan, South Vietnam, Jordan, Libya, Liberia, Iran, Iraq, Ethiopia, and Pakistan; and d) anti-neutralist states: Thailand, the Philippines, and Turkey. The PRC would adopt different tactics toward each group: it would cooperate closely with the

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<sup>90</sup> "Plan for Attending Asia-African Conference," April 5, 1955, CFMA, 207-00004-01, 1-15.

<sup>91</sup> "India's Preparation for the Bandung Conference," March 8, 1955, CFMA, 207-00064-09, 13-15. For what Nehru told Chinese leaders about Bandung when he visited China, see *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, Vol. 27: 20. For the Indonesians' attempts to "neutralize" US worries about the Bandung Conference, see Abdulgani, *The Bandung Connection*, 40-48.

neutralist states, and isolate and split those in category d); countries in categories b) and c) did not hold fixed positions, therefore Chinese diplomats should try to win them over. Particular attention should be paid to Egypt and Japan. Even for such anti-neutralists as Thailand and the Philippines, the PRC would not give up and should try to influence them through frequent contact.

Chinese leaders also wanted to use commerce to advance their goal, particularly when they learned the US was influencing Asian states with assistance and US Congress planned to pass a new assistance program right before Bandung. Although there was not much the PRC could do at this point, given its own economic difficulties, Chinese leaders still directed the PRC delegation to try to set up trade relations with more countries, and concentrate specifically on Indonesia and Egypt. They also planned to take some concrete actions toward India, Burma, Ceylon, Pakistan, Syria, Afghanistan, Japan, and Thailand.<sup>92</sup>

In order better to realize the united front, PRC leaders decided not to raise China's particular issues and seek the conference's support; rather they would focus on issues the attendees commonly shared, namely colonialism, and offer support to them. Particularly, the PRC delegation should prevent Communism from becoming a conference topic, but China should reassure its neighbors in private that there should be no interference in their domestic affairs. About the issue of overseas Chinese, the PRC delegation should publicize China's willingness to solve the problem through negotiations, and hold a grand signature ceremony for

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<sup>92</sup> "Trade Plan for Attending the Asia-African Conference (draft)," March 12, 1955, Chinese Foreign Trade Department document, from CFMA, 207-00070-03, 86-94. The Chinese Foreign Ministry also prepared detailed plan for carrying out cultural activities and social events to be held in Bandung to impress the participants. See "Preliminary Plan for Cultural and Friendly Activities to Be Held When Attending the Bandung Conference," March 30, 1955, CFMA, 207-00004-04, 26-31; and "Work Plan for the Social and Communicative Team (draft)," March 30, 1955, CFMA, 207-00004-04, 36-38.

the agreement the PRC reached with Indonesia, in order to impress the conference with China's goodwill.

On the Taiwan issue, the PRC delegation would insist that the problem resulted from US intervention in China's domestic affairs; so China opposed any attempts to legalize US occupation or to create two Chinas, insisted on its right to liberate Taiwan, and demanded that the US withdraw its forces from Taiwan. On the other hand, China supported the Soviet proposal to hold an international conference to discuss the situation and India's proposal for diplomatic contact between the PRC and the US, the position they had held since early February.<sup>93</sup>

Further to demonstrate China's conciliatory approach, PRC leaders planned to inform India, Burma and Indonesia of the plan to release four US pilots, after they got the message from India that the US was going to approve the application of Chinese students in the US who were requesting to go back to China.<sup>94</sup> Chinese leaders were very careful not to displease Nehru, and the PRC delegation was told not to leave the impression that China was stealing the thunder from Nehru, because that "would give imperialists opportunities to alienate India from China."<sup>95</sup>

In order to coordinate positions with leaders of the neutral states, Zhou Enlai met U Nu and Nehru in Burma on his way to Bandung. He clarified China's position on Taiwan and got

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<sup>93</sup> This was exactly what Zhou Enlai told the Soviets in February. See ABIPФ, ф.0100, оп.48, п.394, д.10, л.203-206; from SPA, SD09935. "Plan for Attending Asia-African Conference," April 5, 1955, CFMA, 207-00004-01, 5.

<sup>94</sup> "Zhang Hanfu's Report on his meetings with [Burmese ambassador] U Hlao Maung, [Indonesian ambassador] Arnold Mononutu, and [Indian ambassador] N. Raghavan," March 29, 1955, CFMA 207-Y0004, in Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Waijiaobu Dang'anguan, ed., *Zhongguo Daibiaotuan Chuxi 1955 Nian Yafei Huiyi* [Chinese Delegation Attending the Bandung Conference of 1955; hereafter *1955 Nian Yafei Huiyi*] (Beijing: Shijie Zhishi Chubanshe, 2007), 32-33. "Plan for Attending Asia-African Conference," April 5, 1955, CFMA, 207-00004-01, 6. However, Chinese leaders finally decided to put off the release as a consequence of the "Kashmir Princess Incident" the GMD produced, which killed eleven Chinese delegates. Zhou Enlai's talk with Nehru regarding releasing US pilots on April 23, 1955 is seen in *The Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, 28: 179. For "Kashmir Princess Incident," see Steve Tsang, "Target Zhou Enlai: The 'Kashmir Princess' Incident of 1955," *The China Quarterly* 139 (1994): 766-82. Declassified Chinese government documents about this incident are included in *1955 Nian Yafei Huiyi*, 144-260.

<sup>95</sup> "Experts' Opinions on the Asia-African Conference," April 6, 1955, CFMA, 207-00004-10, 84-87.

their agreement that Communism would not be discussed at the conference. However, the PRC's suggestion for a permanent organization did not arouse U Nu's and Nehru's interest, because the Conference, according to U Nu, would just discuss "general principles," not concrete issues.<sup>96</sup>

In Bandung, Zhou met three major challenges from the US proxies, but he maintained a conciliatory approach throughout the conference.<sup>97</sup> During the opening speeches, Iran and Iraq suddenly started to condemn Communism as a "subversive religion," and they were soon supported by other US allies—the Philippines, Turkey, and Pakistan. Then Cambodia questioned the sincerity of its neighbors in applying the Five Principles toward Cambodia, and Thailand accused China of supporting Thai dissidents for subversion. Zhou Enlai had to defend China and push the Conference toward China's goal.<sup>98</sup> He gave a firm denial to the Thailand accusation, and emphasized the importance of the Five Principles for collective peace. The Chinese delegation came "to seek unity and not to quarrel; to seek common ground and not to create divergence;" Zhou tried to concentrate the participants on their common enemy. Therefore, China had not raised such issues as the tensions over Taiwan caused by the US, or China's membership in the UN, because that would only lead to controversy.

The second challenge came from Ceylonese premier. At a committee meeting, he surprisingly declared Communism "a new form of colonialism," and drew an analogy between the Soviet satellites in East Europe and the imperialist colonies in Asia and Africa. Then US

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<sup>96</sup> *Zhou Enlai Nianpu*, 463-64; "Excerpts of the Talk between Zhou Enlai, Nehru and U Nu," April 16, 1955, CFMA, 207-00015-01, 1-3.

<sup>97</sup> For the process of the conference, see Jansen, *Afro-Asia and Non-Alignment*, 96-163, and Abdulgani, *The Bandung Connection*, 182-226.

<sup>98</sup> For Zhou Enlai's speech, see Roeslan Abdulgani, *The Bandung Connection*, 104-07; for Chinese records, see *1955 Nian Yafei Huiyi*, 52-77.

allies introduced a resolution condemning “all types of colonialism.”<sup>99</sup> The conference attendees debated this issue for a long time. Although he got strong support from India, Burma, and Indonesia, Zhou finally had to accept a compromise formulation, “colonialism in all its manifestations is an evil which should be brought to an end,” which different people could interpret differently. According to Zhou, this meant colonialism had manifestations in the political, economic, social, and cultural fields; but other people could interpret it as “different types of colonialism,” including the “new colonialism” of the Soviet Union.<sup>100</sup>

Then US allies Iraq, Turkey, Pakistan, the Philippines and Thailand launched a third challenge to the final resolution on the principles of world peace, based on the Five Principles, the most important goal of the Chinese delegation. Nehru tried to convince the participants that military blocs threatened peace and a neutral area was the only way to safeguard peace. But those allied with the US justified their membership in the alliance. Pakistan introduced the principle of self-defense, both singly and collectively, which the UN Charter permitted, and the principle of the obligation to settle all international controversies in a peaceful way (which Pakistan used to pressure India to accept a plebiscite in Kashmir). Other US allies stressed the need for small states to seek protection from big powers.

The confrontation between the neutral states and US allies gave Zhou Enlai a chance to demonstrate conciliation and he finally made a seven-point peace declaration, which was basically the Five Principles but with different wording. Making use of the chance to explain his

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<sup>99</sup> Kahin, *The Asian-African Conference*, 19-20; Abdulgani, *The Bandung Connection*, 117-18.

<sup>100</sup> Zhou Enlai was well clear about the risk of this ambiguity. See Zhou's telegram to the CCP Central Committee, April 26, 1955, CFMA, 207-00063-10; “Excerpts of the Foreign Ministry Party Committee's Expanded Conference,” CFMA, 207-00004-05, 46-52. Zhou had to restate his explanation in China's People's Congress on May 13, 1955; see *1955 Nian Yafei Huiyi*, 109-119.

statement, Zhou reassured China's neighbors with his conciliatory position in public. China respected Burma's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and would negotiate with its neighbors to define the border lines; China recognized that Thailand and the Philippines feared a Chinese invasion, and Zhou invited leaders from the two states to visit China to inspect the situation themselves; and he stressed China's adherence to the Geneva Agreements and its promise of non-intervention in the internal affairs of Cambodia and Laos—the day before Zhou had already asked North Vietnam to make the same promise to the two states. Zhou admitted that as a big country, China tended to ignore smaller states, but he promised that China would be alert against such attitudes.

When elaborating on the principle of mutual respect, Zhou expressed China's respect for “the way of life and political and economic systems chosen by the American people.” Moreover, he added that China was willing to settle its disputes with the US by peaceful means, and welcomed those who would like to facilitate the settlement of disputes between the US and China.<sup>101</sup> Most delegations were greatly interested in this, particularly due to the war scare created by US nuclear threat. Zhou had repeated China's positions on eleven different occasions in private, but he was given another opportunity to make his most important statement publicly, lest his willingness to settle China's conflict with the US by peaceful means was expressed only in closed sessions and thus would not be known by the public. Indonesian premier pushed Zhou to hold a press conference and make this influential statement:

Chinese people are friendly to the American people. Chinese people do not want to have war with [the] USA. The Chinese government is willing to sit down and enter

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<sup>101</sup> The translation is based on the citation in Roeslan Abdulgani, *The Bandung Connection*, 147.

into negotiations with [the] US government to discuss question of relaxing tension in [the] Far East and especially question of relaxing tension in [the] Taiwan area.<sup>102</sup>

From China's perspective, Zhou was just making use of the conference to publicize the proposal China had made in early February.<sup>103</sup> And as scholar A. Doak Barnett observed, Zhou's statement was "really a skillful trial-balloon," because he "made no specific offer. He did not say where he would sit down, or with whom, or exactly what he would be willing to discuss. Exactly what he meant was undefined."<sup>104</sup> Moreover, when Zhou repeated his offer of talks with the US in his closing speech the next day, he modified the previous statement, "However, this should not in the slightest degree affect the just demand of the Chinese people to exercise their sovereignty rights in liberating Taiwan." In combination, he just restated the position China had already insisted on.

But for most of the delegations in Bandung, Zhou's statement was dramatic and "a major peace move." The Ceylonese and Pakistani premiers regarded this as a "significant departure" from China's previous policy, and immediately informed their US ally of this "new" policy.<sup>105</sup> Even the foreign minister of Indonesia, of whom China informed its willingness to talk with the US in February, had believed that China had not been willing to negotiate with the US and Zhou had just made a brand-new proposal.<sup>106</sup> Therefore, it was China's isolation from the world, rather than its proposal, that added to the significance of the statement. As is observed by the

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<sup>102</sup> 1955 *Nian Yafei Huiyi*, 75; Telegram from US Embassy in Djakarta to Secretary of State, 670.901/4-2355, RG 59, NAUS.

<sup>103</sup> Those states which had known China's initiative in February understood Zhou did not do anything new. See Nehru's telegram to Eden, April 29, 1955. *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, Vol. 28: 138. For the shift of China's policy in February, see Chapter 3.

<sup>104</sup> Barnett, *Chou En-Lai at Bandung*, 14.

<sup>105</sup> Kotelawala, *An Asian Prime Minister's Story*, 185.

<sup>106</sup> Abdulgani, *The Bandung Connection*, 147-48.

Indonesian foreign minister, “this was the first time that such a statement had been published from the mouth of Prime Minister Chou En Lai. The Western World in general and the American public in particular, did not hear many direct statements from the leaders of the People’s Republic of China.”<sup>107</sup> Therefore, the statement raised enthusiasm among countries both at the conference and outside for the possibility of mediation between the US and China. Soon after the Conference was over, Britain, India, Indonesia, Burma and even Pakistan offered to facilitate US-China dialogue.

US leaders, however, knew that Zhou offered nothing new, and China simply sought to throw “the onus for Far Eastern tensions on the United States, thus enabling the Communist propagandists to utilize the fear of war as a means of isolating the United States.”<sup>108</sup> Nevertheless the US had to respond to this public overture and the next day after Zhou’s statement, the State Department made its first reply insisting on Taiwan’s participation in the talks, and requiring China to prove its “good intentions” by observing a cease-fire, releasing US pilots, and agreeing to discuss the Taiwan issue in the UN Security Council. But the US reply was criticized by most of US allies as intransigent. Those friends the US had depended on to contain China in Bandung now turned around and began pressuring the US. The Pakistani and Thai premiers were convinced of Zhou Enlai’s “sincere desire for Sino-American negotiations leading to a peaceful settlement” and pushed the US to consider Zhou’s proposal seriously.<sup>109</sup> Ceylonese premier thought Zhou’s proposal “reasonable and sincere,” yet the US had brushed it aside “without

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<sup>107</sup> Abdulgani, *The Bandung Connection*, 148.

<sup>108</sup> “Memorandum from the Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Sebald) to the Secretary of State,” April 25, 1955, *FRUS, 1955-57*, 2: 508.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, note 5; and “Telegram from the Ambassador in Indonesia (Cumming) to the Department of State,” April 27, 1955, *FRUS, 1955-57*, 2: 525.

thinking.”<sup>110</sup> Under this pressure, US leaders had to display conciliation, and Secretary Dulles declared that the US would be willing to enter into talks with China, without Taiwan’s presence, to see if China’s proposal was sincere.<sup>111</sup>

Partly due to Zhou Enlai’s flexibility, the Bandung Conference finally reached a compromise on its final communiqué and incorporated both the right of self-defense and the principle of peaceful settlement of disputes, and the Five Principles (with some modifications).<sup>112</sup> Building on the momentum, Zhou Enlai visited Indonesia after the conference to further China’s policy of establishing a Peace Area. He made a joint communiqué with the Indonesian government, repeating the importance of the Five Principles. A month later, Indonesian premier visited China and offered to help start the negotiation between China and the US.

## **Conclusion**

Since the Geneva Conference, the PRC had strived for a Peace Area in Southeast Asia, which the Chinese leaders expected to stop the US infiltration in this region. To achieve that goal, China launched a series of diplomatic offensives toward India, Indonesia and Burma to win their support, including pledging itself to the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence and solving the dual citizenship problem. For the purpose of removing the anxieties among these states about conflict with the US, the PRC proposed to negotiate with the US about the tensions in the Taiwan Strait. While demonstrating China’s policy of conciliation, this proposal was also a useful diplomatic offensive aimed at the US.

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<sup>110</sup> Jansen, *Afro-Asia and Non-Alignment*, 218.

<sup>111</sup> Editorial Note, *FRUS, 1955-57*, 2: 222-23.

<sup>112</sup> For the text of the Declaration, see Abdulgani, *The Bandung Connection*, 187-90; the full text of the final communiqué is on pages 181-90.

PRC leaders believed the Bandung Conference was a good opportunity to push for a permanent organization and the general acceptance of the Five Principles as the foundation for their Peace Area. However, although Zhou Enlai managed to include these principles in the Bandung communiqué, they did not have much binding power, even for those states that claimed to support these principles. Within a month after Bandung, Cambodia signed a military assistance agreement with the US, despite its pledge to observe the Five Principles, and Zhou's and North Vietnam's promise not to disturb its sovereignty.

A permanent organization growing out of the Conference did not get support from India and Burma even before the conference started. Although China raised the issue again at the conference, few participants were interested, and the final communiqué only mentioned the necessity of a liaison office. And even that did not materialize. The PRC proposed to convene another such conference, and Indonesia even suggested it should take place "within the next year," but a second Asia-African Conference never actually took place. Moreover, the expression "Colombo Powers" became a historical term after Bandung, and the five states under the name never held another meeting, leaving no chance for Nehru to pursue neutralism through it.

However, whereas the PRC failed to make much progress in building a Peace Area against the US, the Bandung Conference gave Zhou Enlai the opportunity to declare to the world China's willingness to negotiate with the US to relax the tensions in the Taiwan Strait. While most Asian states were impressed by China's demonstration of conciliation, some turned to pushing the US to negotiate with China, leading to the ambassadorial talks. The direct talk between American and Chinese diplomats greatly enhanced the PRC's international prestige.

Zhou also succeeded in breaking the US isolation of the PRC, although his plan to isolate the US was far too ambitious. Zhou was put on the defensive in the conference most of the time, but he made good use of the time outside the formal sessions. The Chinese delegation invited over 20 delegations to its numerous banquets, at which Zhou made assurances, demonstrated friendliness, and invited guests to visit China. Zhou's activities outside the meeting hall, according to a US witness A. Doak Barnett, were a "social success."<sup>113</sup> His demonstration of goodwill enabled him to win the sympathy of many participants, including some US friends. The Pakistani premier told Zhou that Pakistan did not oppose China and was not afraid of the PRC's aggression. He even promised Zhou that Pakistan would not join the US if a war broke out between the US and China, despite Pakistan's alliance with the US.<sup>114</sup>

Zhou Enlai was able to break new ground too. In Bandung, representatives of the Chinese and Japanese governments realized their first official meeting, following two years of unofficial trade contact. The PRC's relations with the Arab states also started. Egypt had expressed interest in China after its independence in 1953, and following Zhou's meetings with Egyptian premier in Bandung, the two countries continued negotiations, leading to formal diplomatic relations in 1956. The Lebanese delegate, a friend of the US, told Zhou that Lebanon was willing to establish an "intimate relationship" with China.<sup>115</sup> Syria and Saudi Arabia also became friendlier to China after the conference.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Barnett, *Chou En-Lai at Bandung*, 11.

<sup>114</sup> Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru*, Vol. 2: 243.

<sup>115</sup> "Minutes of Zhou Enlai's Meeting with Lebanon Ambassador to the US during the Bandung Conference," CFMA, 207-00015-02, 16; *Zhou Enlai Waijiao Huodong Dashiji*, 106-08.

<sup>116</sup> "Foreign Diplomatic Missions' Comments on the Bandung Conference," April 28, 1955, CFMA, 207-00002-02.

Moreover, Bandung reinforced the PRC leaders' confidence in their policy toward the Asian and African states. Zhou concluded from his experience in Bandung that China's original categorization of the attendees was right, and the policy of establishing a united front with Asian and African countries was "completely correct."<sup>117</sup> According to this judgment, the PRC's Foreign Ministry formulated a comprehensive plan to promote China's relations with Asian and African countries.<sup>118</sup> The next states China should win over, following India, Burma and Indonesia, were Egypt, Pakistan, and Ceylon.<sup>119</sup> Three days after the Bandung Conference, Mao Zedong told the Pakistani Ambassador to Beijing that he understood Pakistan's entry into SEATO was based on its fear about a Chinese invasion; however this fear was unnecessary and the two countries should work out the misunderstanding and improve relations.<sup>120</sup> Later in 1955, PRC leaders invited the premiers of Pakistan and Ceylon to China, because they believed Nehru's and U Nu's visits to Beijing were successful and wanted to repeat the story. As a result of its active diplomacy, the PRC reached the so-called "second peak of establishing diplomatic relations" and the number of states having diplomacy with China doubled in the following decade. Except France, all these states lay in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> *Zhou Enlai Nianpu*, 476-77, and "Excerpts of the Foreign Ministry Party Committee's Expanded Conference," May 9, 1955, CFMA, 207-00004-05, 46-52.

<sup>118</sup> "Draft Plan for Promoting China's Relations with Asian and African Countries," July 16, 1955, CFMA, 207-00086-01, 1-7.

<sup>119</sup> "Excerpts of the Foreign Ministry Party Committee's Expanded Conference," May 9, 1955, CFMA, 207-00004-05, 46-52. According to the document, China's efforts for better relations with Egypt was based on two factors: first, its influence in Africa, the Middle East, and the Muslim world; second, wherever the Soviet Union had problems getting good relations, such as Yugoslavia and the Middle East, China should take initiative, taking advantage of its relative favorable position, and make efforts to improve relations with these countries. See "Contacts between China and Egypt before the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations," CFMA, 107-00008-03, 05.

<sup>120</sup> *Mao Zedong Zhuan*, 593-94.

<sup>121</sup> Xue Mouhong, *Dangdai Zhongguo Waijiao*, 134-42.

On the US side, US officials had made an accurate judgment about the PRC's strategic goal in Asia and the tactics it would adopt in Bandung. But because of his preoccupation with the Taiwan Strait Crisis, Secretary Dulles overestimated the assertiveness of the actions the PRC would take in Bandung. As a consequence of this misjudgment, the result of the Bandung Conference became a "pleasant surprise" to US leaders: the merger of neutralism and Communism did not come true; rather, the final communiqué of the conference "was a document which we [Americans] ourselves could subscribe to;"<sup>122</sup> and most importantly, Zhou Enlai turned out not to be asking the conference to support the PRC's plan to invade Taiwan.

Dulles attributed this to the effectiveness of US policy, or in Dulles's words, the "great amount of pressure which was put on Chou [Zhou] to refrain from acts of violence." He thanked those US friends in Asia, who "put on an amazing performance at Bandung with a teamwork and coordination of strategy which was highly gratifying." To sum up, "[t]his is a good development but we don't boast about it."<sup>123</sup> But as Chinese documents indicate, Dulles claimed credit that the US policy-makers did not quite deserve, because PRC leaders had not planned to take such aggressive actions in Bandung as Dulles imagined.

Moreover, Dulles's overestimate of the seriousness of the problem later backfired—the countries he had pushed to restrain the PRC from taking aggressive actions in the Taiwan Strait turned back to push the US to give a positive response to Zhou Enlai's initiative. US leaders, who were unprepared for the unexpected conciliation from China, and probably also out of a false sense of relief after all the other moves failed to solve the Taiwan Strait Crisis, agreed to talk with China, relinquishing easily their original position about Taiwan's participation.

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<sup>122</sup> "Minutes of a Cabinet Meeting: Report on the Bandung Conference," April 29, 1955. *FRUS, 1955-57*, 21: 91.

<sup>123</sup> "Minutes of a Cabinet Meeting: Report on the Bandung Conference," April 29, 1955. *FRUS, 1955-57*, 21: 91-92.

## Conclusion

The relationship between the US and the PRC from 1953 to 1956 is one of US efforts to contain the People's Republic and the Chinese struggles to break the US containment. Seeing the PRC as their biggest enemy in Asia, which was trying to expand Communism in China's neighborhood, US leaders wanted to contain and weaken the PRC, and to remove the Communist regime in the long run. Meanwhile, PRC leaders were worried about US pressures, and strived to eliminate the US menace, or at least reduce it—in the Chinese terminology, to “lessen the tensions” in Asia—so that they could focus on increasing their strength to get ready for a final fight between the two camps. Therefore, the conciliatory actions on both sides were simply tactics, a different means to fight the enemy. In this circumstance, it was not surprising that the ambassadorial talks that the two states started in August 1955 soon were soon deadlocked, after both sides realized limited goals.

To meet the challenge from the other side, leaders of both the US and the PRC pursued a strategy of isolating their enemy from its allies and potential supporters. Throughout the Eisenhower administration, US officials had kept alive the idea of exploiting the divisions between the PRC and the Soviets. However, realizing the limit of their power, US leaders relied on cooperation with allies and using nuclear weapons to deter the PRC, instead of meeting the perceived Chinese Communist threat head on, even in the face of the latter's militarily provocative moves, as the “wedge strategy” required. While US dependence on allies gave American friends opportunities to influence its policy, US leaders' rhetoric about use of atomic

bombs further strained their relations with US allies as well as neutral states in Asia, which were worried about being dragged into a nuclear war between the US and the PRC.

On the other side, PRC leaders did a much better job isolating the US. Sensitive to US relations with its allies, Chinese leaders strived to exploit the differences between the US and its friends in order to build a buffer area in Indochina at the Geneva Conference, preclude a US-ROC alliance during the First Taiwan Strait Crisis, and exclude the US from Asia by building an “Area of Peace” on the basis of a united front with Asian neutral states at the Bandung Conference. Meanwhile, aware of US intention to split their alliance with the Soviet Union, the Chinese tried to build on their alliances with the DRV, and especially the Soviet Union, which for its own reasons, provided substantial economic, technical assistance and advisory guidance to the PRC government.

Back to the US side, although US leaders also knew of the PRC’s intentions to alienate them, they were less successful meeting this challenge. Major US allies often held different positions toward the PRC, and were worried that the US would expand its own interests at their costs. China’s Asian neighbors were suspicious about US intentions and often perceived the US as an ally of the European colonizers. Moreover, PRC leaders’ consistent efforts to play off the US against its allies and Asian states added to the tensions in US relations with these countries, which forced the US to retreat from its original positions.

Throughout the period, US leaders overestimated the Chinese ambitions, and often mistook the PRC’s long-term goal as its immediate purpose. Therefore, although they were clear of the Chinese strategy of separating the US from its allies, their initial reactions to PRC’s moves were very intransigent. This hurt their relations with allies and played into the hands of the

PRC's strategy of isolating the US. Under pressures from both allies and enemies, US leaders often had to retreat from their initial positions, and made important decisions without thorough considerations. The precipitant decision to conclude the MDT with the ROC and agreement to start ambassadorial talks with the PRC were good examples.

The PRC leaders' strategy of isolating the US was practical, and basically met their security needs. But they sometimes exaggerated the differences between the US and its allies, and overestimated the allied influence on the US. Therefore, the PRC's coercive diplomacy failed to prevent the MDT, and their efforts at Bandung did not achieve their goal of building a Peace Area to exclude the US in Asia, as they had planned. Nevertheless, Chinese leaders were able to adjust their their actions to better pursue their strategy.

Throughout the period, the PRC's foreign policy was flexible and initiative, but from 1957, such a policy was replaced by a more assertive one, culminating into the so-called "Revolutionary Diplomacy" in the 1960s. Throughout the Eisenhower administration, the US had consistently pursued its basic national security policy, and its China policy was in keeping with this policy. As a result, in 1958, when the PRC leaders initiated a second crisis in the Taiwan Strait, the Americans found themselves once again facing a "horrible dilemma." Realizing the weakness of this policy, and subsequent US leaders adopted a policy characterized by "flexible response" to better meet the Communist challenge.

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