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Revisiting the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis: Strategic Lessons for Today

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Revisiting the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis: Strategic Lessons for Today

Abstract

As the inhabitants of the Quemoy Islands sat down for dinner on August 23, 1958, three years of relative peace in the Taiwan Strait came to an abrupt end. In the weeks that followed, the Eisenhower administration deployed ships to the strait, worked to understand the Communists' intent, and considered nuclear first use. Though Washington ultimately prevailed in the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis, a critical review of the decision-making process enabled by newly leaked materials suggests catastrophe was closer than previously assumed. This article investigates the successes, the failures, and the nearly avoided contingencies that permitted a non-nuclear resolution to the crisis, then mobilizes the lessons of history to inform Washington's approach to a Taiwan contingency today.

Introduction

As the inhabitants of the Quemoy Islands sat down for dinner on August 23, 1958, three years of relative peace in the Taiwan Strait came to an abrupt end.[1] Some 40,000 shells of Chinese Communist artillery rained down on the Nationalist military outposts, re-engaging the violent contest for control over the islands between Formosa and the Chinese mainland.[2] Quickly following, the Communists paired the overwhelming artillery with PT boat action to blockade the island, cutting off military reinforcements and critical supplies, and used targeted propaganda to undermine Nationalist morale on the island.[3]

The unfolding crisis forced Washington into a frenzy of decision-making as officials scrambled to prepare briefs, speeches, and operational plans for President Eisenhower's consideration. The bulk of prior military planning and diplomatic commitments had intentionally avoided stating a firm position on the offshore islands, but the administration now had to seriously consider, reasonably articulate, and put into action the defense of the islands.[4] Rejecting the military's calls for strikes on the mainland, both conventional and nuclear, Eisenhower ultimately elected to escort and protect the Republic of China (ROC) resupply ships, hoping that public saber-rattling would deter the People's Republic of China (PRC) from making moves against American ships while resupplies helped fortify Quemoy's garrisons.[5] Less than a month after the first convoy completed its operation, the Communists unilaterally ceased fire.[6] Though the Nationalists and Communists would continue exchanging shots for some two decades, the immediate crisis was resolved.[7]

For all intents and purposes, the Nationalists—aided by their American supporters—had won. The Nationalists retained control of the islands, and Washington avoided serious military confrontation with Beijing. However, analysts must be careful in accepting this outcome as evidence that the American strategy was the right one. Indeed, two seemingly contrasting realities can be true at once: the Americans secured victory in the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis, and the Eisenhower administration's approach to the crisis undermined American interests and stoked instability. A review of the decision-making process reveals—in between instances of admittedly salient wisdom—missed opportunities, invalid assumptions, and process-driven errors in Washington's response. And today, as relations across the

Taiwan Strait once again appear dire, a critical review of an accepted success story in American foreign policy offers instructive wisdom.

The Decision-Making Process

Hindsight decisively illuminates the path to crisis, but contemporaries similarly understood that an attack was imminent. Diplomatic indicators, namely the Communist's demanding resumption of Sino-American ambassadorial talks, had been present since at least June 30, and the military situation deteriorated significantly in late July when PRC fighters shot down two ROC photo-reconnaissance planes.[8] For at least a month prior, the White House, State Department, and Pentagon frequently conversed and debated about the extent of the U.S. commitment to Taiwan's offshore islands—and the extent to which this should be publicly articulated. By August 22, the day before crisis ensued, Washington had reached an agreement in principle: America would defend the islands if they came under attack.

Taking this tacit pre-crisis understanding to mean the path of American decision-making was paved before the first shells landed in Quemoy, however, would be a mistake. While no one disputed Washington's obligation to assist the ROC, the range between abandonment and nuclear strikes on the Chinese mainland is considerable.[9] The political and tactical contours of America's defense remained undetermined, relying on Eisenhower's ultimate assessment of several key questions, two of which rose above the others: What were the Communists' intentions? And what were America's goals for the Taiwan Strait?

With a meeting at the White House inked for August 25, Washington's intelligence apparatus began prompt work on answering the first question. The Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) position was articulated best in Navy OP-61: the attack is the "beginning of an encroachment on the entire … Nationalist position."[10] If it was not stopped initially, the document argues, it would lead to the destruction of the ROC. A special National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) covering the crisis came to a different conclusion, namely that the Communists were using military power primarily as a political weapon.[11] The aim was not the immediate capture of the islands, the NIE claimed, but to probe and determine Washington's commitment to the ROC.[12] While a clear consensus concerning Communist contentions never

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officially emerged, the latter wisdom was widely adopted. By the end of the meeting, “no one seriously expected” the Communists had their eyes on Formosa.[13]

Accordingly, Eisenhower, above all, wanted to convince the Communists that continued military action risked dangerous confrontation with the US.[14] That is, to issue a credible signal of resolve to deter further communist aggression.[15] Critical contingencies of the Joint Chiefs endorsed the approach, believing America had critical non-military goals in the defense of the islands—namely, in support of the islands as powerful psychological and political symbols for the nationalists and to uphold American prestige in the Far East.[16] For Washington, then, defending the islands was a necessary testament to its anti-communist commitment. Failure was to show weakness. Success was to demonstrate unwavering strength.

The administration and its officials then turned to the obvious question of how. The JCS demanded a firm military response and, while understanding that strikes may need to be initially conventional for political reasons, believed rebuffing Communist aggression would ultimately require nuclear attacks on the mainland.[17] In the meantime, Eisenhower was to publicly commit the United States to the stern defense of the islands.[18]

Central to the administration’s crisis response, though understood as a more enduring response to general Communist aggression against Taiwan, was American direct military aid and support. In the days before the shelling began, the JCS requested Secretary McElroy for authorization to enhance the Nationalist’s air capabilities through aircraft provision and pilot training.[19] The crisis itself was characterized by “sharply increased U.S. assistance” to guarantee the resupply of forces on Quemoy and, in the weeks that followed, generated support for more robust U.S. force provisions to the island, including surface-to-air and air-to-air missiles, 240 mm Howitzers, and fighter and transport aircraft.[20]

The military leadership urged Eisenhower to go further. Living up to their commitments to the islands, the JCS reasoned, was worth risking confrontation with the Communists.[21] The President wasn’t so keen. Much to the consternation of his military leadership, the president continued to

refuse to give advanced authorization for strikes on the Chinese mainland, both conventional and atomic.[22] In a closed-door meeting on September 6, including the President, Secretary of State Dulles, Secretary of Defense McElroy, and Chairman of the JCS Twinning, Eisenhower approved a JCS paper officially authorizing escort-and-protect operations in the strait.[23] He made any further military action, however, contingent on his expressed approval.

Understanding Eisenhower's approach requires recognizing the president's need to balance multiple audiences. Throughout the crisis, Eisenhower remained worried that, if given too certain a commitment, Chiang might attack the Chinese mainland and bring America into a confrontation with the Communists.[24] In a statement of the day the shelling began, Eisenhower—in language weaker than Chiang would have liked—noted the increased interdependence between the islands and Formosa and characterized the Communists' attacks as a "threat to the peace of the area."[25] Maintaining relative ambiguity, Eisenhower thought, would limit the ROC's entanglement-risking leverage on the United States, and he remained determined that the ROC would be kept somewhat in the dark.[26] Privately with the Communists, however, the administration was unambiguously aggressive in its commitment to the islands.[27] Though the conditions for American offensive operations against the Communists remained undefined, the administration had, two weeks after the crisis began, outlined the basics of American policy that would guide the crisis toward its resolution.

Shortcomings and Successes

Perhaps most notable about the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis is that it was the second. Indeed, the same administration's allowance of a tacit resolution to the crisis in 1955 kept the door open for confrontation three years later.[28] Similarly, Washington's refusal to publicly articulate a policy on the offshore islands, though theoretically preserving American flexibility, created an environment of ambiguity that all but formally invited the Communists to test the extent of American resolve. Weak oversight over the Nationalists in the interim compounded these apparent diplomatic miscalculations. While the Eisenhower administration sought to push the issue down the road, Chiang took the opportunity to move a third of his military to the islands, increasing the stakes of a renewed crisis

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and further compulsing the United States to come to the islands' defense.[29] By neglecting to take the issue seriously after 1955, the Eisenhower administration allowed Washington's credibility to become tied to the fate of these islands, ultimately bringing the Americans to the brink of war over territory they fundamentally thought of as insignificant.[30]

Ultimately, the administration's navigation of the interim period between the First and Second Taiwan Strait Crisis is a failure in international signaling. The literature on international signaling is vast and non-conclusory, but a centrally agreed upon tenant is that the signals states issue must be seen as costly by their targeted audience for them to be credible.[31] Scholars have identified a range of tools states have for making these costly signals, but they may best be understood as advancing one of two strategies: "tying hands" and "sinking costs."[32] In tying hands, states "[increase] the cost of backing down" by making public threats, warnings, and commitments, while in sinking costs, states incur financial costs by, for example, deploying troops, offering military aid, and providing transport support. The central distinguishment is when costs are imposed: tying hands being ex post, as states and leaders face consequences for reneging on their commitments in the case of crisis, and sinking costs being ex ante, as states and leaders preemptively invest resources in case of crisis.

Following the earlier crisis, the Eisenhower administration sought to dissuade Communist aggression against the Nationalists by committing the United States to the defense of Taiwan through the Mutual Defense Treaty—in other words, tying Washington's hands. Ratified in 1955, Washington committed aid the ROC in "[resisting] armed attack and communist subversive activities [...] against their territorial integrity and political stability." As noted later in the treaty, however, this agreement applied only to "Taiwan [the island of Formosa] and the Pescadores" and left the rest of the ROC's claimed territories up to "[determination] by mutual agreement" to come later. [33]

The exclusion of Formosa's offshore islands in the MDT generated two results. First, for the Communists, it offered a gray-zone in American commitments where prevailing ambiguity permitted adventurism. Second, for the Nationalists, it made clear that Washington was not prepared to, on its own accord, come to the defense of the off-shore islands, demonstrating

to Chiang that he needed to take further steps—such as drastically increasing troop numbers in Quemoy—to shore up support in the case of confrontation. Washington's signaling shortcoming, then, was not because it failed to make its commitment to Formosa credible—indeed, as a review of the crisis reveals, the Communists never sought to capture the main islands, and any intermediate escalation was likely dissuaded by Eisenhower's 'sunk cost' signaling through escort-and-protect operations and American military aid— but because it advertently expressed, through exclusion, a non-commitment to the offshore islands. Certainly, states can issue negative signals by retracting public support and reducing aid, but the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis makes clear that there is a relative competent: while absolute support for the offshore islands did not shift, the clear commitment to the rest of the Taiwan through the MDT created—intentional or not—an obvious imbalance. In the fall of 1958, Beijing exploited that imbalance.[34]

To Washington's credit, however, its assessment of Communist motivations, or lack thereof, was initially poignant. The pressure to perceive a comprehensive bombardment of essential military outposts as a precursor attack was undoubtedly immense. Yet, despite the JCS warnings of an imminent PRC move on Formosa, key leaders and the president held to the more pragmatic NIE assessment that the Communist's aims were limited—and they were right. As revealed in a compilation of Mao's confidential talks and speeches released a decade after the crisis, Mao never desired to capture Quemoy, much less Formosa, and instead undertook the shelling as a political operation in defiance of the Americans, sending a political signal in support of communist resistance against the imperialists.[35] Though seemingly similar, this is fundamentally different from Washington's interpretation of the PRC's motives as gauging American support for the islands. The latter suggests the American response was a determining factor of the bombardment's success, that proceeding despite a weak response from Washington would mean success while retreating from an overwhelming show of American force meant failure. Rather, because the attacks on Quemoy were not intended to induce capitulation, the PRC's aims were achieved by the shellings themself. America's protect-and-escort operations and increased aid, then, though they may have played a role in demonstrating Washington's commitment to anti-communism to the broader

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international audience, was hardly instrumental in deterring the PRC's already limited aims.

Expecting a perfectly prescient assessment of Chinese motivations is not fair, certainly, and the warning against hindsight bias is well taken. But the criticism is on the process level. Washington's national security and foreign policy apparatus proceeded almost mechanically to assume the Communists were attempting to gauge the US's will to defend Taiwan, giving little consideration to the range of probable alternatives. Whether or not Washington accurately judged the Communists' motivations is separate from the question of whether the United States interrogated its own operating assumptions.

Despite these failures, Washington came out on top—and much credit must be given specifically to Eisenhower, particularly as recent releases by the now-late Daniel Ellsberg show just how dangerous the crisis truly was. The documents are chock full of military leaders calling for aggressive action, from General Kuter pushing for first-strike authorization to Chairman of the Joint Chiefs General Twinning advocating for nuclear strikes as deep as Shanghai.[36] Far from a radical dissent, nuclear use over the islands was treated by both military and political officials with a degree of inevitability. In the wake of the contracted conventional trauma of Korea and in an administration that had hedged its deterrent bets on massive nuclear retaliation, the institutional pull of offensive military action—at least conventional, but eventually nuclear—was strong.[37] But Eisenhower resisted, preferring a pragmatic strategy of gradualism to a problematically historically-minded inclination towards action.

Perhaps more impressive, however, was Eisenhower's conscious maneuvering between multiple audiences—the Communists, the Nationalists, and his domestic political constituencies. In public, though careful not to give the Nationalists the sense of a blank check, the president espoused the tenets of anti-Communism and containment to mobilize support for the defense of the islands while sinking costs into Quemoy's defense through protect-and-escort operations.[38] In private, however, Eisenhower pressured Chiang to seriously reconsider evacuating the islands.[39] Though diplomatically tactful in the cross-strait environment, Eisenhower's approach isolated both America in the world and himself in domestic public opinion, as American allies and voters alike

overwhelmingly opposed a strong American response and thought the PRC's actions were an understandable reaction to ROC provocations.[40] Pursuing his two-level diplomatic effort to stabilize the strait then required Eisenhower to risk the political consequences of refusing international and domestic demands for disengagement.[41]

But Eisenhower's wisdom, while necessary for navigating towards a ceasefire, was an insufficient condition for peace. Rather, the Americans primarily owe their thanks to the enduring political stubbornness of both Chinese governments. While Washington approached China as two sovereigns for all practical purposes, the PRC and ROC remained tuned in to civil war competition, both still holding tightly on to desires for reunification. Though ostensibly the impetus of crisis, the waging of a protracted civil war provided the most powerful mechanism for peace in 1958. The Nationalists' incentives were relatively clear; forward deployment on the inter-strait islands was tactically essential to reconquering the mainland and instituting Chiang's government, the enduring goal of the Generalissimo.[42] The Communists' shift in strategy, however, requires detangling. Mao, fearing a de facto or formalized two-China situation, sought desperately to maintain a mainland connection with Nationalist-led Taiwan.[43] Nationalist presence in Quemoy provided that connection. Ultimately and above all, however, the sacred task of the Communists was the recovery and reunification with Taiwan, Penghu, Quemoy, and Matsu.[44] Given Mao never imagined the present attacks as an immediate prelude to a move on Formosa, seizing the islands from the Nationalists would be a two-front failure—a partial, failed reunification at the expense of severing their mainland connection to Taiwan.

The PRC sought to resolve this self-made dilemma by making its conciliatory case to the ROC directly, in defiance of Eisenhower's ongoing efforts to broker peace by pressuring Chiang to reduce Nationalist presence in Quemoy. In a message broadcast to the Nationalists by the Chinese Communist Defense Minister, the PRC undercut the Americans and emphasized their common, though oppositional, interest in a one-China situation.[45] "On this we agree," the PRC wrote, the "Chinese people [. . .] will not allow the American plot forcibly to create two Chinas to come true."[46]

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Peace was then not brought upon by American deterrence through strength or crafty diplomatic deal-making but despite it. The Communists, for reasons the Americans struggled to understand, moved from bombarding the islands with artillery to unequivocally favoring continued Nationalist military presence.[47] In his personal diary in late September, Chiang articulated the point best: "Only the Chinese [ourselves] truly understand the way we do business."[48]

This argument is most sobering, suggesting both that Washington was oblivious to the most effective mechanisms of peace and that its Nationalist partners engaged in back-door negotiations outside the American purview. Most damning, however, is that it means American policy was at best mute and at worst directly counterproductive to a peace process definitively in the Nationalist's favor. It renders both the international isolation of America and Eisenhower's personal domestic political sacrifice in vain. And, perhaps most terrifying, it means that—from the American perspective—the most powerful force holding the world back from nuclear catastrophe was luck.

Lessons from a Challenging Past

An unpredictable amalgamation of Washington's strategic failures, pragmatic wisdom, and fortunate circumstances combined to make the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis a convincing success for the Americans. Washington was given the opportunity to signal its anti-Communist commitment while powerful peace mechanisms, working against the well-intentioned instability stoked by the US's involvement, resolved the crisis in the Nationalist's territorial favor. Most importantly, the true extent of American commitment remained untested. Had the Communists not given way to a ceasefire so early on, Eisenhower would have faced increasingly fierce pressure from American military leadership to act. Operating in the shadow of Korea, it's unclear what would have unfolded.

As tensions across the strait again appear dire, reviewing Washington's past confrontations with Beijing—now nuclear-armed and considerably more conventionally capable—provides useful instruction. There are a number of lessons to be learned:

First, a stronger China requires preemptive action. Previous American responses to crises in the strait relied on being able to deeply penetrate the South China Sea (SCS) in order to access Taiwanese territory: in 1955, when American ships evacuated Nationalists from the Tachen islands; in 1958, when protect-and-escort missions traveled to within three miles of Formosa; and in 1995 and 1996, when Washington sent American naval ships, including aircraft carrier USS Nimitz and its supporting battleships, to the edge of the strait.[49] Military support systems were similarly deployed in the middle of the crisis. Today, Washington should not assume such ease of access. In the case of a Taiwan contingency, the ability of American forces to operate in the SCS would be considerably constrained by PRC ship and base presence, robust anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) systems, and advanced missile capabilities.[50] Innovative operational tactics will be needed to permit some support and counter-operations in the case of crisis, but Washington must lighten its crisis-time burden by preemptively bolstering Taiwan's 'defensive' capabilities. It cannot rely—as it has in the past, from 1958 to Putin's invasion of Ukraine—on creating defensive solutions after a crisis erupts.

Second, advanced consensus-building is required. More than half a century later, indecision and ambiguity regarding Taiwan endures. President Biden's recent repeated gaffes concerning the U.S. commitment to Taiwan have again placed an international spotlight on Washington's policy of strategic ambiguity.[51] While America's enduring adherence to strategic ambiguity warrants public vagueness, the Biden administration—internally, and perhaps only at the highest levels of relevant advisors—should strive for private consensus on American interests and response in any number of Taiwan contingencies. Renewed confrontation over Taiwan would force American officials to ask themselves the same questions that created costly divisions in the Eisenhower administration. While advance planning may not guarantee that thoughtful, considered decision-making would prevail, it does mean the administration would have more than three days to chart its course of action—and that certainly seems desirable.

Third, ensuring stability in the strait requires careful and intentional navigation of a multi-audience diplomatic dilemma. Strategic ambiguity is the correct approach, but between President Biden's slips in language and former President Trump's occasional apparent disregard for the island, America's past two presidents have set less-than-ideal examples.[52]

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Washington is no longer bound to Taiwan's defense through the MDT and certainly should not incur undue risks by re-instituting a similar commitment, so it must demonstrate resolve through other means: high-level diplomatic exchanges, military aid and training, and claim-testing in the SCS are all critical components. At the same time, it must be made privately clear to Taipei that American support is not unconditional, and that stability is Washington's foremost priority. As 1958 shows, crisis will be instigated by Beijing, but Taipei's incentives to ensure robust American support may, if left unmanaged, place Washington in unnecessarily precarious situations.

Finally, cross-strait tensions are a political question first and a military question second. The Eisenhower administration's hyper-focus on deterring the Communists' military objectives in 1958 obscured political off-ramps that were to both Washington and the Nationalists' benefit. Today, the areas for politically feasible de-escalation are undoubtedly narrower. Yet there still exist a number of scenarios in which America and Taiwan could extract 'victory' through non-military means—namely, domestic and international opposition could create a credibility crisis for Xi could generate non-military incentives for the PRC to unliterally cease offensive operations. Washington should not hold its breath for such fortune, but it also cannot allow the necessary planning and implementing of a military response to render it blind to favorable political resolutions.

Conclusion

This article proceeded in three phases. First, by narrating the motivations, assumptions, and debates that led to Eisenhower's decision to adopt a middle-ground policy of protecting and escorting Nationalist ships, it illuminated the logic and biases that helped justify the administration's approach.

Then, it offers an appraisal of the successes and shortcomings in Washington's approach, criticizing failures in international signaling after the First Taiwan Strait Crisis and the administration's misperception of PRC intentions while praising Eisenhower for resisting calls for military engagement and for his careful diplomatic navigation between the Communists, the Nationalist, and his domestic constituencies. Ultimately, however, it suggests that Washington's 'success' was primarily driven by

powerful shared political incentives between the Nationalists and the Communists, not the imposition of American military support.

Finally, the lessons of 1958 are used to provide recommendations for Washington's approach to the Taiwan Strait today. The suggestions are four-fold: 1) ensuring Taiwan's security against a stronger China requires preemptively building up Taipei's defensive capabilities; 2) the administration should engage in advance in internal consensus-building around American priorities and strategies for a range of potential contingencies in the strait; 3) cross-strait stability demands navigating multiple audiences, occasionally signaling resolve to Beijing while expressing constraint to Taipei; and 4) contests in cross-strait issues are political disputes first and military contests second.

Endnotes

[1] M. H. Halperin, "The 1958 Taiwan Straits Crisis: A Documented History (U)," RAND Corporation, December 1966, VI. https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_memoranda/2006/RM4900.pdf; This is an abridged version of the original document, with selection portions removed by the DoD to make it unclassified.; The island of Quemoy is now commonly referred to as Kinmen in English and 金门 in Chinese, which directly translates to "Golden Gate."

[2] Halperin, "The 1958 Taiwan Straits Crisis," VIII.

[3] Halperin, "The 1958 Taiwan Straits Crisis," VIII.

[4] George C. Eliades, "Once More Unto the Breach: Eisenhower, Dulles, and Public Opinion during the Offshore Islands Crisis of 1958," *The Journal of American-East Asian Relations* 2, no. 4 (Winter 1993): 345. http://www.jstor.org/stable/23613015.

[5] "Milestones in the History of U.S. Foreign Relations," U.S. Department of State Office of the Historian (archived May 2017), https://history.state.gov/milestones/1953-1960/taiwan-strait-crises.

[6] Halperin, "The 1958 Taiwan Straits Crisis," 294, 492.

[7] "Milestones in the History of U.S. Foreign Relations," U.S. Department of State.

[8] Halperin, "The 1958 Taiwan Straits Crisis," 17, 24.

[9] Halperin, "The 1958 Taiwan Straits Crisis," 117.; No one disputed, but some initial dissent was voiced. In a memo authored by Dulles to two subordinates on August 23, the secretary briefly considers the apparent hypocrisy of the American-Nationalist position. Noting that their assumed position required the Communists "be quiescent while this area is used by the [Nationalists] as an active base," Dulles suggests the approach—demanding the Communists accept the islands as a 'privileged sanctuary'—may not be "altogether defensible." See Department of State Memorandum for Mr. Herter, Mr. Robertson, signed J. F. Dulles, August 23, 1958 (Secret).

[10] Halperin, "The 1958 Taiwan Straits Crisis," 109.

[11] "Probable Developments in the Taiwan Strait Crisis," Special National Intelligence Estimate Number 100-12-58 (October 1958): 1. https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/DOC_0001084989.pdf.

[12] "Probable Developments in the Taiwan Strait Crisis," 2.

[13] Halperin, "The 1958 Taiwan Straits Crisis," 12, 121.

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[14] M. H. Halperin, "The 1958 Taiwan Straits Crisis: A Documented History," RAND Corporation, December 1966, pages leaked by Ellsberg, 53. https://int.nyt.com/data/documenttools/quemoy-study-significant-redactions/764a87f870d1eba9/full.pdf.; Halperin, "The 1958 Taiwan Straits Crisis," 124-125.

[15] In "Shortcomings and Success," I address the issue of Eisenhower and international signaling before and during the 1958 crisis in more empirical and theoretical detail.

[16] Halperin, "The 1958 Taiwan Straits Crisis," 118-119

[17] Halperin, "The 1958 Taiwan Straits Crisis," Ellserg's release, 109.

[18] Halperin, "The 1958 Taiwan Straits Crisis," 121.

[19] Memorandum from Chairman Nathan F. Twining to Secretary Neil H. McElroy, "Improvement of Chinese Nationalist Air Force Capability (U)," August 22, 1958, Box 106, Nathan F. Twining Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

[20] "Strategic Guidance for the 1962-1966 Military Assistance Planning Period (U)," 59, Box 110, Nathan F. Twining Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; Memorandum from Chairman Nathan F. Twining to Secretary Neil H. McElroy, "Provision of 240mm Howitzers to Taiwan," December 4, 1958, Box 106, Nathan F. Twining Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

[21] Halperin, "The 1958 Taiwan Straits Crisis," Ellserg's release, 124.

[22] Halperin, "The 1958 Taiwan Straits Crisis," 127.

[23] Halperin, "The 1958 Taiwan Straits Crisis," 285.

[24] Eliades, "Once More Unto," 350.

[25] Eliades, "Once More Unto," 349.

[26] Halperin, "The 1958 Taiwan Straits Crisis," Ellserg's release, 124.

[27] Halperin, "The 1958 Taiwan Straits Crisis," 290.

[28] H. W. Brands, "Testing Massive Retaliation: Credibility and Crisis Management in the Taiwan Strait," *International Security* 12, no. 4 (Spring 1988): 146.

[29] Eliades, "Once More Unto," 345.

[30] Brands, "Testing Massive Retaliation," 148.

[31] A number of scholars have problematized various core assumptions of "costly" signaling, namely by identifying how prior beliefs and dispositions or disparate incentives risk creating gaps between what the signal-sender intends and what the signal-receiver understands. Though this study does not rigorously examine sender-receiver gaps in signaling during the 1958 crisis, future efforts to do so should reference, among others, Keren Yarhi-Milo, "In the Eye of the Beholder: How Leaders and Intelligence Communities Assess the Intentions of Adversaries," *International Security* 38, no. 1 (Summer 2013): 7-51.; Kai Quek, "Are Costly Signals More Credible? Evidence of Sender-Receiver Gaps," *The Journal of Politics* 78, no. 3 (July 2016): 925-940.; Joshua D. Kertzer, Brian C. Rathbun, and Nina Srinivasan Rathbun, "The Price of Peace: Motivated Reasoning and Costly Signaling in International Relations," *International Organization* 74, no. 1 (January 2020): 95-118.

[32] Above all, see James D. Fearon, "Signaling Foreign Policy Interests: Tying Hands Versus Sinking Costs," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 41, no. 1 (February 1997): 68-90.; This paradigm set the standard for almost all subsequent work, as identified in Gartzke, Erik, Shannon Carcelli, J. Andres Gannon, and Jiakun Jack Zhang, "Signaling in Foreign Policy," Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics (2017).; More recent scholarship, however, has introduced complicating frameworks, namely by incorporating whether a signal's cost is contingent or noncontingent, as first advanced by Kai Quek, "Four Costly Signaling Mechanisms," *American Political Science Review* 115, no. 2 (2021): 537-549.

[33] "Mutual Defense Treaty Between the United States and the Republic of China; December 2, 1954," The Avalon Project, Yale Law School.

[34] This is certainly an important moment in the development of inadvertent signaling through exclusion, though it does not stand alone. Perhaps most seminal, though controversial, is Dean Acheson's famous exclusion of the Koreas in his 'defensive perimter'—and it is certainly worth noting Taiwan was also excluded. See James I.

Matray, "Dean Acheson's Press Club Speech Reexamined," *Journal of Conflict Studies* 22, no. 1 (Spring 2002): 28-55.

[35] Thomas E. Stolper, "China, Taiwan, and the Offshore Islands Together with an Implication for Outer Mongolia and Sino-Soviet Relations," *International Journal of Politics* 15, no.1/2 (Spring/Summer 1985): 125.

[36] Charlie Savage, "Risk of Nuclear War Over Taiwan in 1958 Said to Be Greater Than Publicly Known," *The New York Times*, May 22, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/22/us/politics/nuclear-war-risk-1958-us-china.html.

[37] Savage, "Risk of Nuclear War."; Brands, "Testing Massive Retaliation," 124.

[38] Halperin, "The 1958 Taiwan Straits Crisis," 274.

[39] Ruping and Lin, "Inside the Asian Cold War Intrigues," 2128.

[40] Eliades, "Once More Unto," 357.; Stolper, "China, Taiwan, and the Offshore Islands," 130.

[41] Stolper, "China, Taiwan, and the Offshore Islands," 120.

[42] Greg MacGregor, "FIRST ROUND WON, CHIANG DECLARES; Anniversary Message Calls on Troops to Win Second and Conquer Mainland," *The New York Times*, October 10, 1958, https://www.nytimes.com/1958/10/10/archives/first-round-won-chiang-declares-anniversary-message-calls-on-troops.html.

[43] Ruping and Lin, "Inside the Asian Cold War Intrigues," 2128-2189.

[44] Halperin, "The 1958 Taiwan Straits Crisis," 470.

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