

BOMBS AND UMBRELLAS:
DEFENDING US MIDDLE EAST ALLIES FROM A NUCLEAR-ARMED IRAN

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DISCLAIMER

The conclusions and opinions expressed in this document are those of the author. They do not reflect the official position of the US Government, Department of Defense, the United States Air Force, or Air University.

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ABSTRACT

This paper informs the US policy response to a nuclear-armed Iran. Specifically, it addresses whether or not the United States should provide security guarantees for its allies in the Middle East. The Introduction sets the stage by describing the current trajectory of the Iranian nuclear weapons program and the likely ramifications of Iranian acquisition. It provides the analytical framework for the case studies that follow. Chapter 1 is a case study of France and its decision to develop a national nuclear weapons capability despite the US security guarantee. This chapter reveals that security considerations are but one of many factors that may contribute to a country initiating a nuclear weapons program. It also displays the fragility of US credibility. Chapter 2 is a case study of Taiwan. It demonstrates the power of a junior ally in driving the security relationship and provides a caution against entangling alliances. It also highlights the importance of economic aid and military sales as critical enablers of any security guarantee. Chapter 3 studies the case of South Korea. This chapter examines the implications of forward deployed troops and underscores the difficulty in forming multilateral security regimes. Chapter 4 applies the lessons learned from the three case studies to the current situation in the Middle East. In total, these cases offer a sharp warning to the United States as it considers extending formal security guarantees to its Middle East allies. This paper offers the broad contours of a new Middle East security framework and recommends that the United States avoid adopting new formal security relationships. Rather the United States should update the Carter Doctrine, work to rebuild its bilateral relationships in the region, and continue to provide the requisite assistance and presence to deter Iranian aggression and forestall the further spread of nuclear weapons.

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Introduction

Please pay attention. They should know that our nation is brave enough to explicitly announce it if it wants to make a nuclear bomb, it will build it and is not afraid of you....I officially announce that the era of the superpowers and bullying has passed in the world.

Iranian President Mahmud Ahmadinejad

Iran is on the cusp of acquiring nuclear weapons. Governments around the world are beginning to grapple with the implications of a nuclear-armed Iran. Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons will force its neighbors to reassess their long-standing policies of nuclear restraint. In an effort to reassure its Middle East allies and forestall the development of multiple nuclear weapons programs, Secretary of State Clinton recently discussed the possibility of opening a security umbrella over the Middle East. The United States has stepped up its theater missile defense deployments and increased the transfer of arms to the region. The United States is also contemplating formal mutual defense pacts with its Arab allies, further strengthening the bilateral relationships it built following the first Gulf War. There are increasing calls for the United States to develop a multilateral security regime to confront Iran much as it did with NATO in facing the Soviet Union.

This paper considers whether or not the United States should provide these security guarantees, and if so, how best to do it. It draws on lessons from the United States' experience providing security guarantees to France, Taiwan, and South Korea. This chapter sets the stage for examining the historical record. It discusses why the United States would consider extending security guarantees to its Middle East allies by exploring the implications of Iranian nuclear acquisition. It provides a general discussion of deterrence theory and nuclear proliferation and then offers a framework to examine the three case studies that follow.

Contemplating a Nuclear-Armed Iran

A 2007 National Intelligence Estimate warned that Iran had resumed its nuclear weapons program in January 2006 and “would probably be technically capable of producing enough highly enriched uranium for a weapon sometime during the 2010-2015 timeframe.”¹ President Obama disclosed in September 2009 the existence of a second Iranian uranium enrichment facility in Qom that was covertly constructed and not disclosed to International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors. The following month, the United Nations assessed that “Iran has sufficient information to be able to design and produce a workable implosion nuclear device.”² The IAEA then reported in February of this year that Iran was continuing its nuclear weapons activities and had completed uranium enrichment to 20 percent.³ In testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee in April, the Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency suggested Iran was less than a year away from being able to produce weapons-grade fuel, though it would take another two to five years to construct an operational bomb.⁴

The *New York Times* reported in April of this year that Defense Secretary Robert Gates sent a secret memo to the White House in January warning President Obama that the United States lacks an effective policy to confront Iran’s nuclear weapons program.⁵ Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Michael Mullen has reportedly ordered the Pentagon to prepare a military response, but he cautioned that any attack would have “limited results.”⁶ The United Nations has levied three rounds of sanctions against Iran, all to little effect. It is currently considering additional sanctions;

¹ National Intelligence Estimate, “Iran: Nuclear Intentions and Capabilities,” November 2007.

² William Broad and David Sanger, “Report Says Iran Has Data to Make Bomb,” *New York Times*, 5 October 2009.

³ “Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement in the Islamic Republic of Iran,” 18 February 2010, Council on Foreign Relations website. http://www.cfr.org/publication/21476/implementation_of_the_npt_safeguards_agreement_in_the_islamic_republic_of_iran_february_2010.html (accessed 5 May 2010).

⁴ David Sanger and Thom Shanker, “Gates Says U.S. Lacks a Policy to Thwart Iran,” *New York Times*, 17 April 2010.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

although, Chinese and Russian support are questionable. It now seems certain that Iran will either develop nuclear weapons or develop the capability to do so in short order, in effect becoming a virtual nuclear state.

What happens after Iran gets nuclear weapons? How will Iran use its new nuclear might? During his presidential run, then-Senator John F. Kennedy warned that Soviet “missile power will be the shield from behind which they will slowly, but surely, advance—through Sputnik diplomacy, limited brush-fire wars, indirect non-overt aggression, intimidation and subversion, internal revolution, increased prestige or influence, and the vicious blackmail of our allies.”⁷ Many fear this description of the Soviet Union also fits the Islamic Republic of Iran—though not everyone is as alarmed. Lindsay and Takeyh suggest Iranian aims will be more modest, “Iran does not seek to invade its neighbors, and its ideological appeal does not rest on promises of economic justice. It seeks to establish itself as the dominant power in the region while preserving political control at home.”⁸ Ken Waltz suggests the region may be more, not less stable. He submits that “the gradual spread of nuclear weapons is more to be welcomed than feared.”⁹ He argues convincingly that nuclear weapons induce caution amongst statesmen, citing the historical record as evidence that nuclear weapons do not make war more likely, quite the opposite.¹⁰ Waltz asks, “How do governments behave in the presence of awesome dangers?” Citing Bernard Brodie, he answers, “Very carefully.”¹¹

For their part, most Arab governments do not fear an Iranian nuclear attack, but they are very concerned about the impact the Persian bomb is going to have on the balance of power and prestige in the region. Undoubtedly, Iran will be emboldened and more assertive in the region. It may become more

⁷ Quoted in Jane Stromseth, *The Origins of Flexible Response: NATO's Debate over Strategy in the 1960s* (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1988), 27.

⁸ James Lindsay and Ray Takeyh, “After Iran Gets the Bomb,” *Foreign Affairs* 89, no. 2 (Mar/Apr 2010).

⁹ Scott D. Sagan and Kenneth N. Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: A Debate Renewed* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2003), 45.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 13, 17.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 24.

flagrant in its support to bad actors, more influential in Iraq and Afghanistan, and could attempt to leverage its nuclear clout to limit Persian Gulf access. Iran's ability to coerce its neighbors will be enhanced, and Iranian nuclear weapons will provide further cover for its ongoing asymmetric challenges to regional stability. A more assertive Iranian foreign policy is only one concern. A second is the potential for the further spread of nuclear weapons throughout the region.

US Defense Secretary Robert Gates said in February 2010, "We have to face the reality that if Iran continues and develops nuclear weapons it almost certainly will provoke proliferation in the Middle East. That's a huge danger."¹² One retired Arab general commented that Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons would force a regional reassessment of the utility of nuclear weapons, "Every country in the region will open their files and decide again what to do. If nuclear weapons appear to be the road to becoming a world power, why shouldn't that be us?"¹³ Former US Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Chas M. Freeman agrees: "Senior Saudi officials have said privately that, if and when Iran acknowledges having, or is discovered to have, actual nuclear warheads, Saudi Arabia would feel compelled to acquire a deterrent stockpile."¹⁴ The hurdles to nuclear acquisition are not as great as one might expect. Though an indigenous program is expensive, relatively poor countries, like Pakistan and North Korea, have been able to develop national nuclear programs despite the cost.¹⁵

Kurt M. Campbell offers five reasons why a country may decide to acquire nuclear weapons: a loss of confidence in the United States as a responsible and reliable partner; the continuing erosion of the nuclear

¹² Fred Baker, "Gates in Paris: Nuclear Iran puts entire Middle East in danger," *American Forces Press Service*, 8 February 2010.

¹³ Joby Warrick, "U.S. steps up arms sales to Persian Gulf allies." *Washington Post*, 31 January 2010.

¹⁴ Kathleen J. McInnis, "Extended Deterrence: The U.S. Credibility Gap in the Middle East," *The Washington Quarterly* 28, no. 3 (Summer 2005), 174.

¹⁵ Richard L. Russell, "Arab Security Responses to a Nuclear-Ready Iran," *Getting Ready for a Nuclear-Ready Iran* ed. by Henry Sokolski and Patrick Clawson. (Carlisle, PA: US Army War College 2005), 36.

nonproliferation regime; the general decline in regional and global security; mounting internal domestic drivers; and, a wider availability of nuclear-related technology.¹⁶ Today, each of these factors is at play in the Middle East.

Without question, Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons will put pressure on its neighbors to reconsider their nuclear policy. If countries in the Middle East see the nonproliferation regime eroding, how long will they stand by as their neighbors develop national nuclear capabilities?

An Iranian nuclear weapon will create legitimate security concerns for her neighbors. These threatened countries will respond by improving their national capabilities, by relying on other states for their security, or a combination of both. A recent Senate Foreign Relations Committee report offers a bleak assessment: "In the eyes of countries such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Turkey in particular, Iran's nuclear program has heightened threat perceptions, while the US intervention in Iraq has damaged Arab and Turkish perceptions regarding the reliability of the US security guarantee. As a result of this dangerous synergy, these three states in particular appear to be moving deliberately in the direction of a nuclear hedging strategy that would position them to obtain a nuclear weapon breakout capability in the next two decades."¹⁷ See Appendix for a further discussion of Saudi Arabia's and Egypt's prospects for a nuclear weapons program.

Opening a Security Umbrella

Thus the United States objectives in the Middle East following Iranian acquisition will be twofold. The first is confronting an emboldened Iran. The United States seeks continued regional stability to ensure the security of its allies and the protection of global oil flows. This will require deterring Iranian acts of aggression, coercion, and intimidation. The United States will seek to limit Iranian malign influence and material support to Hezbollah and other

¹⁶ Kurt M. Campbell, "Reconsidering a Nuclear Future," in *The Nuclear Tipping Point: Why States Reconsider Their Nuclear Choices*, (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution Press, 2004), 20.

¹⁷ US Senate. *Chain Reaction: Avoiding a Nuclear Arms Race in the Middle East. Report to the Committee on Foreign Relations.* 110th Cong., 2d sess., 2008, 7-8.

Shia groups, specifically the transfer of nuclear material to these groups. The second broad objective is limiting the further spread of nuclear weapons in the region. Most would agree that it is in the United States best interests to limit the proliferation of nuclear technology, especially in light of the enduring threat of radical Islamism. To that end, Waltz suggests, “The strongest way for the United States to persuade other countries to forego nuclear weapons is to guarantee their security.”¹⁸

The United States entered into a series of bilateral arrangements with most of the Gulf States after the first Gulf War. In exchange for basing privileges the United States reportedly committed to defending these countries from external attacks. As part of that commitment, the United States has stepped up its theater missile defenses in the region over the past two years. It began a robust security initiative with the Gulf States in 2006 and has increased the transfer of arms to the region in light of Iranian actions. The United States, however, is considering more than simply improving its allies’ local defenses. During a recent trip to the Middle East, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said Iran’s neighbors have three options: “They can just give in to the threat; or they can seek their own capabilities, including nuclear; or they ally themselves with a country like the United States that is willing to help defend them. I think the third option is by far the preferable option.”¹⁹ Clinton then pledged, “We will always defend our friends and allies, and we will certainly defend countries who are in the Gulf who face the greatest immediate nearby threat from Iran.”²⁰ Secretary Clinton’s comments imply a security guarantee—that the United States will come to the aid of an attacked ally. By stating so publically, the United States hopes to forestall Iranian aggression. A short theoretical discussion of deterrence theory is warranted.

¹⁸ *Chain Reaction: Avoiding a Nuclear Arms Race in the Middle East. Report to the Committee on Foreign Relations*, 42.

¹⁹ Mark Landler, “Clinton Raises U.S. Concerns of Military Power in Iran,” *New York Times*, 16 February 2010.

²⁰ Mark Landler, “Clinton Raises U.S. Concerns of Military Power in Iran.”

Thomas Schelling makes a distinction between *brute force* and *coercion*: “There is a difference between taking what you want and making someone give it to you.”²¹ Brute force dictates the outcome of a conflict by sheer strength. In contrast, coercion is about latent violence. Schelling explains, “It is the threat of damage, or of more damage to come, that can make someone yield or comply.”²² Coercion leverages the power to hurt an adversary in order to bring about the desired outcome. Schelling further disaggregates coercion between *deterrence*—keeping an opponent from doing something you don’t want them to do—and *compellence*—forcing an opponent to do something you want them to do. Compellence demands a change in behavior from the adversary, while deterrence defends the status quo. According to Schelling, “Deterrence involves setting the stage—by announcement, by rigging the trip-wire, by incurring the obligation—and *waiting*.”²³ Deterrence is transactional. Patrick Morgan describes deterrence as, “a relationship between two sets of rational decision makers in which one group conveys a threat to retaliate and thereby impose costs so severe that the other group regards the benefits to be gained by attacking as insufficient to make it worthwhile.”²⁴ In other words, the defender manipulates his adversary’s cost-benefit analysis to dissuade the contemplated action.

Morgan suggests there is a qualitative difference between *immediate deterrence*, in which one country is posturing for a near-term attack on another, and *general deterrence*, in which two parties both consider using force as a future option but neither is considering an immediate attack.²⁵ A general deterrence framework lacks a specific context and is, thus, more difficult to employ. *Basic deterrence*, as defined by Bernard Brodie, seeks to deter a “direct, strategic, nuclear attack” upon the US homeland.²⁶ Whether general or

²¹ Thomas Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), 2.

²² Schelling, 3.

²³ Ibid., 71.

²⁴ Patrick Morgan, *Deterrence* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publishing, 1977), 58.

²⁵ Morgan, 28.

²⁶ Bernard Brodie, *Strategy in the Missile Age* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), 273.

immediate, basic deterrence involves two parties. In contrast, *extended deterrence* entails one party deterring an attack by a second party on a third party. Thus as the United States considers opening a security umbrella over the Middle East it contemplates an *extended general deterrent* for its Arab allies. The United States would seek to deter Iran from attacking its Arab allies by threat of punishment.

Deterring Iran

Some question, given the nature of the regime, whether or not Iran can be deterred. They question the rationality of Supreme Leader Khomeini and President Ahmadenejad. However, Robert Jervis assures us that, "Much less than total rationality is needed for the main lines of [deterrence] theory to be valid."²⁷ In fact, "Rationality may be neither necessary nor sufficient for deterrence."²⁸ Patrick Morgan offers an alternative formulation: "Deterrence rests less on the capacities of men for rationality than on their ability to be conscious of their limitations and adjust their behavior accordingly."²⁹ An adversary must be capable of "sensible" decision making, not necessarily rational decision making.

But are Iran's leaders sensible? Many observers are concerned about religious fanaticism. Ahmadenejad routinely interweaves mysticism into his public pronouncements on Iran's nuclear program. Of concern is Shia Islam's belief in the "Hidden Imam," also referred to as *al Mahdi*. In contrast to Sunni Muslims, Shiites believe the legitimate heirs to Mohammed are direct descendants from the Prophet. Most Shiites believe there have been eleven rightful successors, the Twelfth Imam having entered a period of occultation in 874 AD only to return on the Day of Judgment. The *Mahdi* will be called forth to restore justice on Earth only after a period of apocalyptic turmoil leaving five out of every seven people dead. This leads some to suggest that a nuclear armed Iran would attempt to usher in the return of the *Mahdi* by igniting a

²⁷ Robert Jervis, "Deterrence Theory Revisited," *World Politics* 31, no. 2 (January 1979), 299.

²⁸ Ibid..

²⁹ Morgan, 14.

nuclear conflagration.³⁰ While this line of reasoning cannot be fully discredited, there is nothing in Iranian behavior since the 1979 Revolution to suggest Iran is driven by fanatical religious zealots intent on destroying the world. Would Iran be willing to risk Tehran to take out Tel Aviv? In fact, Ken Waltz observes, “Rulers want to have a country that they can continue to rule.”³¹ Waltz suggests Iran may be self-limiting by acquiring nuclear weapons, “In a nuclear world, no one can escalate to a level of force anywhere near the top without risking its own destruction.”³² Similarly, “For fear of escalation, nuclear states do not want to fight long and hard over important interests—indeed, they do not want to fight at all.”³³

James Lindsay and Ray Takeyh agree, “Despite their Islamist compulsions, the mullahs like power too much to be martyrs.”³⁴ They have systematically avoided direct military confrontation with either the United States or Israel. Regularly displaying pragmatism, the Iranian regime has worked to balance the tensions between their revolutionary ideals and their governing responsibilities. Iran has challenged the US presence in both Iraq and Afghanistan but has done so in a way that avoids escalation. At times, Iran has even supported US policy objectives in both countries when their national interests aligned. It is difficult to look past the bellicose rhetoric, especially if you are Israel, but the Iranian government’s actions have fallen well within the “sensible” range. There is nothing then to suggest Tehran is immune to traditional statecraft.

Assessing US Extended Deterrence: A Historical Perspective

The United States has practiced extended general deterrence in various forms since the end of World War II. The Cold War policy of containment rested squarely on the shoulders of a global extended deterrent regime. This paper will explore three of those experiences in an effort to glean lessons that

³⁰ Kurt Crytzer, “Mahdi and the Iranian Nuclear Threat,” USAWC Strategy Research Project, 30 Mar 2007.

³¹ Sagan and Waltz, 14.

³² Ibid., 37.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Lindsay and Takeyh.

can help inform the formulation of a new extended deterrent regime for the Middle East. The three cases were selected for their slight variation in themes. The case of France offers a multilateral framework that ultimately failed to dissuade France from developing a national nuclear capability. The case of Taiwan demonstrates a reluctant US security commitment that has taken various forms over time and has been reinforced by substantial arms sales and foreign assistance. The case of South Korea illustrates a bilateral treaty commitment reinforced with a large troop deployment and integrated military command. All three cases are drawn from the Cold War experience, and there is some danger in extrapolating lessons out of this context. Nonetheless, the selection of three Cold War studies enables an evaluation within a common framework.

The three cases are assessed using six broad factors: 1) structure of the security guarantee, 2) credibility of the commitment, 3) impact of domestic drivers, 4) degree of coupling between the ally and the United States, 5) deployment of US forces, and 6) level of economic and military assistance. Not all will be salient in every case. Nonetheless, they will frame an analysis of how each security guarantee was established and evolved over time. Ultimately this analysis will help answer some of the major questions facing the United States as it contemplates extending security guarantees to its Middle East allies. Should the United States seek a multilateral framework to confront Iran or rely on its longstanding bilateral relationships? Is a US security guarantee credible in light of the changing regional context? Will a US security guarantee be sufficient to keep its Arab allies from acquiring a nuclear weapon? Should the United States defend the non-representative, often corrupt Middle Eastern regimes? Should the United States fall back to an offshore balancing posture or seek to maintain a troop presence on the ground in the Middle East? What is the utility of economic aid, military assistance, and arms sales?

Following the case studies, this paper applies the lessons learned to better inform the formulation of US Middle East policy in light of a nuclear-armed Iran. Ultimately, these cases are cautionary tales for US policy-makers

as they contemplate a new Middle East security architecture. They reveal the pitfalls of formal mutual security alliances. The US experience with France, Taiwan, and South Korea suggest that security guarantees will be an essential component in stabilizing the region and limiting the further spread of nuclear weapons. At the same time, they warn against overly-binding security commitments that reduce US flexibility. The cases highlight the importance of foreign assistance and arms sales as part of any security guarantee. Lastly, they reveal the limits of US influence and suggest that some Middle East allies may seek to develop nuclear weapons regardless of a US security guarantee.

Chapter 1

France Case Study

*Can the United States risk having New York or
Chicago destroyed in order to save Hamburg or
Copenhagen?*

French President Charles de Gaulle

This case study examines how the US established a security guarantee for France and how it evolved over time. The US extended deterrence strategy succeeded in deterring a Soviet attack on Western Europe; however, it failed to keep France from developing an independent nuclear weapons capability. The US security guarantee was formal, explicit, automatic, nuclear, multilateral, and forward deployed. In other words, it was as strong a commitment as could have possibly been made. And yet France felt it was not enough. This case study illuminates the difficulty of guaranteeing another country's security in light of strong domestic impulses for an independent capability. It also highlights the fragility of the guarantor's credibility.

Truman Commits

The United States extended a nuclear deterrent over France as part of its wider strategy to contain the Soviet Union. This commitment was made in response to aggressive Soviet moves in Central and Eastern Europe culminating in the Berlin Blockade. The US security guarantee was formalized by the North Atlantic Treaty, and subsequent US and NATO strategy committed the United States to the nuclear defense of Europe.

George Kennan's *Long Telegram*, sent from Moscow in February 1946 to explain Soviet intransigence over the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, set the initial contours of the ideological struggle that became the Cold War. Kennan characterized the Soviet regime's view of a world divided into diametrically opposed camps. The Soviets, he wrote, believe, "there can be no permanent peaceful coexistence" between the socialists and the capitalists. Kennan called communism a "malignant parasite which feeds only on diseased

tissue” and recommend the United States employ the “logic of force.”¹ Kennan’s subsequent article in *Foreign Affairs*, “The Sources of Soviet Conduct,” called for “a policy of firm containment, designed to confront the Russians with unalterable counter-force at every point where they show signs of encroaching upon the interests of a peaceful and stable world.”²

Embracing this formulation, President Truman moved quickly to resist armed communist movements in Greece and Turkey when Great Britain informed him they could not. In March 1947, he announced what became known as the Truman Doctrine in a speech before a joint session of Congress, “I believe it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures.”³ Congress approved financial aid to both Greece and Turkey in what would prove to be the first steps of an enormous US financial investment in Europe. Addressing the graduating class of Harvard the following June, Secretary of State George Marshall announced the government’s plans to rehabilitate Europe. Marshall said, “It is logical that the United States should do whatever it is able to do to assist in the return of normal economic health in the world, without which there can be no political stability and no assured peace. Our policy is directed not against any country or doctrine but against hunger, poverty, desperation, and chaos. Its purpose should be the revival of a working economy in the world so as to permit the emergence of political and social conditions in which free institutions can exist.”⁴

The containment of the Soviet Union would entail more than economic aid though. Outlining the growing Soviet menace in another speech before

¹ George F. Kennan telegram to George C. Marshall, “The Long Telegram,” 22 February 1946. http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/coldwar/documents/index.php?pagenumber=1&documentdate=1946-02-22&documentid=6-6&studycollectionid=coldwar (accessed 17 May 2010).

² “X,” George F. Kennan, “The Sources of Soviet Conduct,” *Foreign Affairs* 25, no. 4 (July 1947): 581.

³ Harry S. Truman, “Address of the President of the United States before a Joint Session of the Senate and the House of Representatives, recommending Assistance to Greece and Turkey,” 12 March 1947.

⁴ George C. Marshall, “Commencement Address to the 1947 Graduating Class of Harvard University,” 5 June 1947.

Congress in March 1948, Truman said, “Since the close of hostilities, the Soviet Union and its agents have destroyed the independence and democratic character of a whole series of nations in Eastern and Central Europe. It is this ruthless course of action, and the clear design to extend it to the remaining free nations of Europe, that have brought about the critical situation in Europe today.” As a result, Truman called for “the temporary enactment of selective service legislation in order to maintain our armed forces at their authorized strength.”⁵ These additional troops would hold the line in Western Europe.

Implementation of the Marshall Plan and negotiations on the status of Berlin brought US-Soviet tensions to a head. The Soviets began to harass Western road and rail traffic to Berlin in spring 1948. Counseling against abandoning the city, General Lucius Clay, the US military governor in Germany, told the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, “Why are we in Europe? We have lost Czechoslovakia. We have lost Finland. Norway is threatened. We retreat from Berlin ... If we mean that we are to hold Europe against communism, we must not budge.”⁶ When the Soviets instituted a blockade of Berlin in June 1948, Truman agreed: “We are going to stay. Period.”⁷ The United States further strengthened this commitment to Europe by signing the North Atlantic Treaty on 4 April 1949. Article 5 of the treaty states, “The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all.” In the event of an attack each agreed to take “such action as it deems necessary, including the use of force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area.” The forward deployment of troops, demonstrated steadfastness in Berlin, and the new NATO alliance served notice to the Soviet Union that the United States would defend Western Europe.

⁵ Harry S. Truman, “Special Message to the Congress on the Threat to the Freedom of Europe,” 17 March 1948.

⁶ Quoted in Campbell Craig, *Destroying the Village: Eisenhower and Thermonuclear War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 16.

⁷ Andrei Cherny, *The Candy Bombers: The Untold Story of the Berlin Airlift and America’s Finest Hour* (New York: The Berkley Publishing Group, 2009), 259.

That defense would be both conventional and nuclear. Western European countries had initially feared US disengagement after World War II, specifically the redeployment of US troops from the Continent. Would the United States come late to World War III as it had in the previous two world wars? The presence of forward deployed US troops was reassuring to the Western Europeans; it meant that the United States was committed in some material way to defending against a Soviet attack. There was a sharp internal US debate on how best to defend Europe from the Soviets, fueled largely by interservice rivalries. Advocates of forward defense, notably the US Army, proposed defending Europe as far east as possible. Others, including the US Air Force and US Navy, suggested withdrawing from the European landmass and employing a peripheral strategy that relied on naval and air power.⁸ Fortunately for the Western European allies and the US Army, US atomic stockpiles and delivery systems remained limited throughout the 1940s and early 1950s. Truman was forced to rely on a conventional strategy that kept large numbers of US troops in Europe.⁹

In the early years of the East-West confrontation, the United States enjoyed an atomic monopoly. However, the matter of US nuclear policy after Hiroshima and Nagasaki remained opaque, reflecting Truman's own consternation, "I don't think we ought to use this thing unless we absolutely have to. It is a terrible thing to order the use of something that is so terribly destructive beyond anything we have ever had. You have got to understand that this isn't a military weapon. It is used to wipe out women, children and unarmed people, and not for military use. So we have to treat this differently from rifles and cannon and ordinary things like that."¹⁰ Still, NSC-7, published two weeks after Truman's *Threat to the Freedom of Europe* speech in March 1948, called for a "counter-offensive" against the Soviet Union which would require maintaining "overwhelming US superiority in atomic weapons."

⁸ Marc Trachtenberg, *History and Strategy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 153.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 159.

¹⁰ Quoted in Lawrence Freedman, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 49.

Truman remained guarded on if and when he would use atomic weapons, but the confrontation over Berlin forced a definitive statement of US policy. In the week after the Soviet blockade began, Truman ordered nuclear-capable B-29 bombers to Germany and England.¹¹ The following September, Truman issued his first formal expression of US atomic policy. NSC-30 stated, somewhat awkwardly, that the Soviets “should in fact never be given the slightest reason to believe that the US would even consider not to use atomic weapons against them if necessary.”¹²

Coming years earlier than most observers anticipated, the Soviets detonated their first atomic bomb on 29 August 1949, shattering the US nuclear monopoly. At the time, NATO was in the midst of drafting its first military strategy. NATO’s initial strategic concept, finalized in early 1950, called for NATO to defend itself with “all means possible with all types of weapons, without exception.”¹³ In other words, it sanctioned the use of nuclear weapons to defend Europe. That April, Truman signed NSC-68 endorsing a vast expansion of US military capabilities to confront the Soviet Union. The hydrogen bomb was its centerpiece. By the time he left office in 1953, Truman had committed the United States by treaty to the nuclear defense of France.

Eisenhower’s New Look

President Dwight Eisenhower entered office with a deep desire to bring what he perceived to be excessive government spending, defense spending in particular, under control. As part of his *New Look* restructuring, Eisenhower moved to reduce conventional commitments while relying more heavily on the nuclear deterrent. Eisenhower rejected the massive buildup endorsed in NSC-68, fearing it would bankrupt the country.¹⁴ He was willing to concede to conventional inferiority in Europe while recognizing that any confrontation with the Soviets would be a nuclear encounter. Shortly after the Soviets detonated

¹¹ The eventual deployments did not include atomic bombs. See Cherny, 259.

¹² NSC-30, September 1948.

¹³ Gregory Pedlow, “The Evolution of NATO Strategy, 1949-1969,” (NATO International Central Archives, 1997), XIII.

¹⁴ Craig, 44.

a hydrogen bomb in August 1953, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles announced the Administration's new policy of Massive Retaliation: "The way to deter aggression is for the free community to be willing and able to respond vigorously at places and with means of its own choosing.... the deterrent of massive retaliatory power." In essence, any Soviet threat would be met by a nuclear defense. NATO followed suit approving a *New Approach* on 17 December 1954. MC-48 affirmed "in the event of aggression [the Soviet Union] will be subjected immediately to devastating counter-attack employing atomic weapons." NATO's Supreme Allied Commander for Europe was delegated authority to "initiate immediate defensive and retaliatory operations including the use of atomic weapons."¹⁵

Campbell Craig convincingly argues that Eisenhower wanted to make nuclear war the only option, thereby reducing its likelihood. To do so, he would need to cut conventional capabilities in Europe. The Western Europeans were willing to agree to nuclear war on their soil only if it secured a US forward presence. Discussions about any withdrawal were very disconcerting, because they undermined the US commitment to defending Europe. Without the trip wire of a forward deployment, the Europeans feared the United States would balk at a nuclear exchange with the Soviets. *Conventional* and *nuclear* were inextricably linked. Eisenhower had hoped to be able to withdraw substantial US troops out of Europe after the Berlin Crisis ended, relying on the European allies to provide backfill. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Radford thus proposed significant European troop reductions in 1956. Responding to the US proposals, British Prime Minister Anthony Eden wrote Eisenhower in July 1956. Eden argued against any move toward a "peripheral defense," and cited "the political need to maintain the solidarity" as reason enough alone to maintain US forces in Europe. Eden called for a "shield of defensive forces ... capable of imposing some delay on the progress of a Soviet land invasion until

¹⁵ Craig, 44.

the full impact is felt of the thermo-nuclear retaliation.”¹⁶ Ultimately Eisenhower relented in October 1956, admitting he could not “take divisions out of Europe at this time.”¹⁷

After significant internal debate and a series of alternative formulations, the Eisenhower Administration issued NSC 5707/8, *Basic National Security Policy*, on 3 June 1957. Over the objections of Secretary Dulles who argued for more non-nuclear options, the new strategy explicitly equated general war with thermonuclear war: “It is the policy of the United States to place main, but not sole, reliance on nuclear weapons; to integrate nuclear weapons with other weapons in the arsenal of the United States; to consider them as conventional weapons from a military point of view; and to use them when required to achieve national objectives.”¹⁸ At the same time, Admiral Radford admitted “that for many years to come our stockpile of atomic weapons will not be so great as to permit any promiscuous use.”¹⁹

At the same time, Eisenhower was forced to contemplate the further spread of nuclear weapons beyond the United States and the Soviet Union. The Atomic Energy Act of 1946, known as the McMahon Act, forbade the transfer of US nuclear technology to foreign governments. Despite having participated in the Manhattan Project during World War II, the British were shut out from further collaboration with the United States, though they would eventually independently develop and detonate an atomic device in October 1952. For his part, Eisenhower was inclined to share advanced weapons with the NATO allies in an effort to forestall the further development of national nuclear arsenals. Eisenhower exhorted his staff at a 1955 NSC meeting, “For God’s sake let us not be stingy with an ally. In point of fact, however, instead of being generous, we treat many of our NATO allies like stepchildren, and then expect them to turn around and commit themselves to fight with us. By such actions we cut our own throats. Our allies certainly ought to know more

¹⁶ *FRUS, 1955-1957, Vol IV*, 91.

¹⁷ *FRUS, 1955-1957, Vol IV*, 99-100.

¹⁸ *FRUS, 1955-1957, Vol XIX*, 511.

¹⁹ *FRUS, 1955-1957, Vol XIX*, 501.

about our new weapons. Our policy was in great contrast to the generosity which the British had shown in sharing with us their discoveries about radar at the beginning of the second World War.”²⁰ Eisenhower said there could be “no monopoly” and “always favored the sharing of our weapons.”²¹ However, Eisenhower’s plan was to share its nuclear stockpile within strict limits, not to assist the allies in the development of national capabilities.

De Gaulle Demurs

Nuclear sharing, as opposed to an independent national capability, was unacceptable to France. France first requested access to US nuclear weapons at the May 1957 North Atlantic Council meeting. The United States countered with a proposed common NATO nuclear stockpile during a North Atlantic Council meeting in December 1957. The nuclear warheads would remain in US custody, but the Allies would control the delivery systems.²² Having been turned down by the United States and having watched the British develop their own national nuclear capability, France decided to move forward with developing its own nuclear capability. By spring 1958, France had laid the groundwork to proceed. That April, French Prime Minister Felix Gaillard signed an order scheduling the first French atomic detonation for early 1960.²³

This decision came as the French government was roiled by a political crisis. Having been out of power since 1946, General Charles De Gaulle was named Premier and given emergency powers by the French National Assembly in June 1958 as the Fourth Republic was collapsing. The French nuclear program predated his return but it would prove to be the centerpiece of his Fifth Republic. In fact, De Gaulle first established the Commissariat à l’Energie Atomique in October 1945 to work on civil energy stating, “as for the bomb, we have time.”²⁴ The CEA, however, began to migrate to military research and development, leading the program’s director to resign in protest

²⁰ Quoted in Trachtenberg, 187.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid., 184.

²³ Jean Lacouture, *De Gaulle: The Ruler, 1945-1970* trans. Alan Sheridan. (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1992), 414.

²⁴ Lacouture, 414.

in 1949.²⁵ De Gaulle picked back up where Gaillard left off. One of his first acts was to request US assistance in developing a French nuclear capability. He was turned down.²⁶ De Gaulle established a Commission for Special Weapons and gave them “absolute priority.”²⁷ Overriding his defense minister’s fiscal objections, De Gaulle decided a year later “to initiate the carrying out of a program that would lead to thermonuclear weapons.”²⁸

As of June 1959, Eisenhower was continuing to push a multinational approach: “the President noted that we are willing to give, to all intents and purposes, control of the weapon. We retain titular possession only.”²⁹ Eisenhower remarked during a February 1960 press conference, “We should try to arm [our allies] in such methods and ways as will make [our] defense more strong and more secure.”³⁰ Trachtenberg notes the stockpile plan “would never solve Europe’s basic strategic problem of total nuclear dependence on the United States.”³¹ Eisenhower’s proposed collective use scheme was fatally flawed, “The control issue was bound to exert a corrosive influence on any collective Western European military system, especially if the international political situation was tense, and the different nations felt their lives were quite literally on the line.”³²

France exploded its first atomic bomb on 13 February 1960, five months after de Gaulle notified President Eisenhower that he intended to test a nuclear weapon. Following the detonation, De Gaulle proclaimed, “Hurrah for France! From this morning, she is stronger and prouder.” To crowds later in the day, he bragged, “If France must have allies, she has no need of a protector!”³³ Eisenhower had not taken a hard line on preventing France from acquiring a

²⁵ Locoutre, 414.

²⁶ Heuser, 94-95.

²⁷ Lacouture, 415.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Quoted in Trachtenberg, 188-189.

³⁰ Eisenhower, Dwight D. *Public Papers of the Presidents: Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1960-61* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1961), 148.

³¹ Trachtenberg, 190.

³² Ibid., 191.

³³ Lacouture, 423.

nuclear capability. After France detonated its first atomic weapon, Eisenhower commented at a public presser, "I think it's only natural that first Britain and the France have done this, in the circumstances of life as we now understand them and know them."³⁴ He went on to advocate an international agreement among the atomic powers "that would stop this whole thing in its tracks."³⁵

France elected to develop a national nuclear capability rather than rely on the formal US security guarantee for two primary reasons: self-sufficiency and prestige. France doubted the United States' reliability as an ally. In April 1954, as French forces were under siege by the Viet Minh at Dien Bien Phu in French Indochina, French Prime Minister Laniel pleaded with the US Ambassador that "armed intervention by US aircraft at Dien Bien Phu was now necessary to save the situation."³⁶ After some delay, Secretary of State Dulles informed the French that the United States would not take unilateral action apart from its Western allies nor without Congressional approval.³⁷ At a meeting on 14 April with his French counterpart, Dulles reportedly discussed the possible use of atomic weapons, fueling French expectations of US military action.³⁸ However, by 29 April, Eisenhower had decided against any US action in light of Congressional and British objections.³⁹ The French camp fell only weeks later, and the French felt abandoned by its American ally at a time of great need.

These feelings were compounded during the Suez Crisis two years later. After Egyptian President Abdul Nasser seized the Suez Canal in July 1956, Great Britain and France urged an immediate military response. Fearing the Soviet Union would take advantage of any conflict in the region, Eisenhower counseled restraint. The United States coordinated a series of failed

³⁴ Eisenhower, *Public Papers of the Presidents: Eisenhower, 1960-61*, 193.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Martin Windrow, *The Last Valley: Dien Bien Phu and the French Defeat in Vietnam* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2006), 556.

³⁷ Bernard Fall, *Hell in a Very Small Place: The Siege of Dien Bien Phu* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1967), 306.

³⁸ Ibid., 307.

³⁹ Ibid., 311.

negotiations while France and Britain amassed a nearly 80 thousand-strong force on Cyprus. Despite Eisenhower's best diplomatic efforts, Israel launched a coordinated attack on 29 October followed by an Anglo-French assault on 31 October. Fearing the regional repercussions, Eisenhower bucked his NATO allies and took the matter to the United Nations. Playing hardball, he ordered the US Treasury to prepare to devalue British Sterling and refused to sell oil to Britain and France when Saudi Arabia announced an oil embargo. The United Nations called for an immediate ceasefire and approved a peacekeeping force for Egypt. Succumbing to international pressure, Britain announced a 6 November ceasefire and unilateral withdrawal. Not only had France been opposed from the start by the United States, but its joint force partner buckled as well. Together, Dien Bien Phu and the Suez Crisis reminded France just how unreliable allies could be. For De Gaulle, it reinforced his suspicions of the United States and Great Britain with whom he struggled for recognition, support, and supplies during the 1940-1945 German occupation of France.⁴⁰ The Soviet launch of Sputnik in 1957 raised further doubts about the United States' commitment to Europe. The advent of the Soviet intercontinental ballistic missile for the first time placed the American homeland in the nuclear crosshairs. De Gaulle posed the question: "Can the United States risk having New York or Chicago destroyed in order to save Hamburg or Copenhagen?"⁴¹ US opacity on nuclear matters only confirmed this suspicion, adding insult to injury. In September 1958, NATO's Supreme Allied Commander, US General Lauris Norstad refused to disclose to De Gaulle where on French soil the NATO nuclear weapons were and what their targets were. De Gaulle shouted, "This is the last time, I am telling you, that a French leader will hear such an answer!"⁴²

Less than a year before France tested its first atomic weapon, De Gaulle began to publicly articulate his reasoning for a French nuclear capability—

⁴⁰ Lacouture, 421.

⁴¹ Heuser, 17.

⁴² Lacouture, 421.

independence. Speaking at the Ecole Militaire in November 1959, De Gaulle said: “The view of a war and even of a battle in which France would no longer act on her own behalf, and in accordance with her own wishes, such a view is unacceptable.... The consequence is that we must quite obviously be able to provide ourselves, over the coming years, with a force capable of acting on our behalf, what is commonly called a “strike force” capable of being deployed at any time and any place. It goes without saying that the basis for such a force would be atomic weapons—whether we made them ourselves or bought them—but, in either case, they must belong to us.”⁴³ At a press conference a week later he wondered “what will happen tomorrow” if the current possessors of nuclear weapons “come to an agreement to carve up the world” or agree “to crush the others”? France “by giving herself nuclear weapons, is rendering a service to the balance of the world.”⁴⁴

There was a deep psychological component to the development of French nuclear weapons. They gave France a seat at the table of the Great Powers and afforded them greater political heft vis-a-vis the United States and Soviet Union. The humiliation of World War II and the losses in Algeria left the French people wanting for some sort of victory to reclaim their status. The opening line from De Gaulle’s memoirs, “All my life I have thought of France in a certain way,” reflects this longing for greatness.⁴⁵ De Gaulle often referred to France as the “third military power.”⁴⁶ De Gaulle also hoped to boost the confidence of the French military. The nuclear mission became the centerpiece of his speeches to military audiences from 1959 onwards, offering them “a world of scientific discovery, high technology, strategy on a world level.”⁴⁷ Focusing on the nuclear mission also helped reorient the French military from

⁴³ Lacouture, 416.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Charles DeGaulle, *The Complete War Memoirs of Charles de Gaulle, Volume One: The Call to Honor* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1955), 3.

⁴⁶ Heuser, 104.

⁴⁷ Lacouture, 423.

its fixation on counterinsurgency warfare, having fought and lost in Indochina and Algeria.⁴⁸

For de Gaulle, an independent French nuclear force was an essential component of French foreign and defense policy. Yet the French paid little attention to how they would employ a nuclear weapon as part of a wider concept of national defense or reconcile it with their NATO alliance. The British delegation at NATO reported in 1961 that the French had given “little thought to the actual use which could be made of their kiloton bomb when they have it in a year’s time.”⁴⁹ Though mostly accurate, there had been some French thinking on the strategic employment of an independent nuclear capability. In describing the strategic calculus of a stronger nuclear power attacking a weaker nuclear power, Pierre Gallois observed: “The qualitative and quantitative margin of superiority would have to be large enough for the aggressor to be certain either that there would be no reprisal or else that this reprisal would be ‘absorbable.’ ... Numerical superiority is no longer decisive, at least to a certain degree. Though stronger than the nation it wishes to attack, the aggressor would still be paralyzed.”⁵⁰ This concept of dissuasion, or deterrence of the strong by the weak, suggested a certain level of nuclear capability would be sufficient to deter any would-be attacker out of fear of reprisal. Gallois’ argument would become the backbone of de Gaulle’s reasoning. Beatrice Heuser observed, “The development of official nuclear strategy in France was in fact preceded by the development of French nuclear technology. Official nuclear strategy was therefore constructed around existing weapons systems, instead of weapons systems being acquired to fulfill the needs of strategy.”⁵¹ In other words, the acquisition of nuclear weapons was the primary consideration; strategies for their employment were secondary. Years later, General Andre Beaufre argued French nuclear weapons were a

⁴⁸ Jane Stromseth, *The Origins of Flexible Response: NATO’s Debate over Strategy in the 1960s* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1988), 19.

⁴⁹ Heuser, 98.

⁵⁰ Pierre Gallois, *The Balance of Terror: Strategy for a Nuclear Age* trans. Richard Howard. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961), 20.

⁵¹ Heuser, 100.

guarantee that the United States would in fact launch its nuclear forces in the event of a European war. If France met a Soviet conventional attack with a nuclear launch, the Soviet Union would be compelled to retaliate, thus forcing the United States to reciprocate. Officially endorsed by the French government, this strategy seemed to afford France a role in any nuclear decision-making within the Alliance.⁵²

Kennedy's Flexible Response

President Kennedy entered office at a time when the fragile consensus on Massive Retaliation was crumbling. The Berlin Crisis convinced him that the United States needed more options when confronting the Soviet Union. During his Presidential campaign, Kennedy argued that the Soviets' growing nuclear strength would embolden them to move more aggressively against US interests: "Their missile power will be the shield from behind which they will slowly, but surely, advance—through Sputnik diplomacy, limited brush-fire wars, indirect non-overt aggression, intimidation and subversion, internal revolution, increased prestige or influence, and the vicious blackmail of our allies."⁵³ Once in office, Kennedy sought to move away from the all or nothing approach afforded by Massive Retaliation.

National Security Action Memorandum 40, signed on 20 April 1961, outlined "a pragmatic doctrine" for a new NATO military strategy. It argued, "First priority be given, in NATO programs for the European area, to preparing for more likely contingencies, i.e., those short of nuclear or massive non-nuclear attack." It called for continued preparations to fight a nuclear conflict but "not to the degree that would divert needed resources from non-nuclear theater programs."⁵⁴ NASM 40 called for a significant investment in conventional forces. The United States was making a sharp detour from its previous reliance on a massive retaliatory response to any Soviet aggression. This did not sit well with France.

⁵² Heuser, 106.

⁵³ Quoted in Stromseth, 27.

⁵⁴ *FRUS, 1961-1963, Vol XIII*, 287.

Kennedy met with de Gaulle in Paris in June 1961 en route to his infamous session with Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev. During the meeting, de Gaulle argued the circumstances facing NATO had shifted dramatically since its inception eleven years earlier. The United States no longer had a monopoly on thermonuclear forces and the countries of Europe were back on their feet. This called into question the United States' commitment to defending Europe while at the same time meant Europe was better able to defend itself. De Gaulle argued NATO should evolve to better reflect this changed landscape. This entailed the development of national defenses, specifically, "The defense of France must once again be French defense."⁵⁵ De Gaulle asked Kennedy, "At what moment will the United States consider that the situation calls for the use of atomic weapons? One hears that the United States intends to raise the threshold for the use of atomic weapons. This must mean that the United States has decided that such weapons will not be used in all cases. When are they going to be used? This is the question that preoccupies Europe."⁵⁶ De Gaulle was making the case for an independent French force by questioning US resolve.

Nonetheless, the Berlin Crisis of 1961 confirmed for President Kennedy that this was the appropriate course of action. He felt he desperately needed more than a nuclear option in confronting the Soviet Union. According to Jane Stromseth, the Berlin Crisis "provided clear evidence that in a crisis situation the prospect of initiating nuclear war to defend Western interests would only be considered with extreme reluctance."⁵⁷ This was clear on both sides of the Atlantic. The US response to Berlin Crisis, and later the Cuban Crisis, coupled with its move away from nuclear reliance began to concern the European allies about the American commitment to defending Europe. General Norstad reported in October 1961 the European allies' oft stated "concern about the seriousness of the United States in its intention to defend Europe if necessary

⁵⁵ *FRUS, 1961-1963, Vol XIII*, 310-312.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 315.

⁵⁷ Stromseth, 39.

with nuclear weapons” based on the “continued emphasis which the United States continues to place on the build up of conventional forces.”⁵⁸

Consistent with NSAM 40, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara delivered a speech at the 5 May 1962 NATO ministerial meetings in Athens, reiterating the US commitment to counter a Soviet nuclear attack or overwhelming conventional attack with nuclear weapons; however, he said the United States did not believe that NATO “should depend solely on our nuclear power to deter the Soviet Union from actions not involving a massive commitment of Soviet force.”⁵⁹ While US troop totals in Europe remained largely unchanged during the 1960s, the Kennedy Administration came to believe those totals were sufficient to confront a Soviet attack. In March 1963, Paul Nitze commented, “We are much more powerful, and they much less overwhelming than generally realized ... If NATO can meet its presently prescribed NATO goals ... the Atlantic forces should be able to put up a stout, extended, non-nuclear fight along the frontier.”⁶⁰ NATO’s Military Committee proposed a much more flexible strategy, known as MC 100/1, in September 1963. It called for three progressive stages of defense: an initial attempt to contain a Soviet attack with conventional means, followed by the employment of tactical nuclear weapons, and ending with the gradual use of strategic nuclear weapons.⁶¹ Many of the allies feared the lack of a firm trip-wire for the employment of nuclear weapons, though all but France would eventually accede to the new strategic direction advocated by the United States. Nonetheless, France’s objections to any move away from massive retaliation effectively vetoed further consideration of MC 100/1.

Despite the noted tilt toward conventional means, the United States doubled its stockpile of European-deployed tactical nuclear weapons in the 1960s.⁶² In a redux of the earlier Eisenhower proposals, the United States

⁵⁸ *FRUS, 1961-1963, Vol XIII*, 333.

⁵⁹ Quoted in Stromseth, 45.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁶¹ Pedlow, XXIII.

⁶² Stromseth, 69.

expressed in April 1962 a willingness to field under NATO command a 200-missile strong sea-based MRBM force to be manned by mixed crews. This was intended to be “dramatic evidence of [the United States’] unconditional commitment to the defense of the entire Alliance.”⁶³ It was intended to offset the impact of Flexible Response. The Administration viewed the MNF “as a non-proliferation device which could incorporate the French and British nuclear forces and constrain the development of others.”⁶⁴ De Gaulle refused to cooperate: “This multilateral force necessarily entails a web of liaisons, transmissions and interferences within itself, and on the outside a ring of obligations such that, if an integral part were suddenly snatched from it, there would be strong risk of paralyzing it just at the moment, perhaps, when it should act. In sum, we will adhere to the decision we have made: to construct and, if necessary, to employ our atomic force ourselves.”⁶⁵ For France, a strategy of flexible response voided any benefit provided by a nuclear deterrent. If the French response was not immediate and total, it could not hope to dissuade a Soviet attack.

France deployed its first nuclear weapons in 1963 as free fall bombs delivered by Mirage IV aircraft.⁶⁶ It was not until 1971 that France deployed a nuclear capable intermediate range ballistic missile.⁶⁷ The French army was reduced from just over 1 million troops to 581 thousand between 1962 and 1967, following the Algerian conflict and reflecting de Gaulle’s emphasis on the nuclear mission. De Gaulle refused to be the American’s ground fodder.⁶⁸

At the same time, French actions were becoming markedly obstructionist. France refused to join the United States, Soviet Union, and Great Britain in signing the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in Moscow in August 1963.⁶⁹ This French obstructionism would manifest in de Gaulle’s

⁶³ *FRUS, 1961-1963, Vol XIII*, 387.

⁶⁴ Stromseth, 76.

⁶⁵ Quoted in Stromseth, 79.

⁶⁶ Heuser, 102.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 104.

⁶⁸ Stromseth, 116.

⁶⁹ Lacouture, 425.

withdrawing France from NATO's integrated military command structure and evicting NATO forces from French soil in March 1966. Defense Minister Pierre Messmer said, "Flexible response was not the cause of de Gaulle's decision to leave NATO. It was the occasion or pretext. De Gaulle wanted an independent military policy in which we would have the chief military responsibility for our own nation."⁷⁰ Likewise, Foreign Minister Maurice Couve de Murville claimed, "The McNamara proposals and the Nassau agreement were not that important in shaping French policy. They were more a pretext than a reason for de Gaulle's decisions in 1963 and 1966. In the 1960s, the French realized that the American nuclear guarantee was not a protection against every risk—this was the main reason for French policy vis-a-vis NATO. America did not have to take decisions for us; rather, France had to take her own decisions."⁷¹ De Gaulle recognized the importance of NATO in defending France. What he objected to was the automaticity of commitment. He hoped to retain French freedom of decision.⁷² Beatrice Heuser observes, "France sought for herself a role that no other member of the North Atlantic Alliance must follow, if the Alliance, in which France has a vested interest, was to survive."⁷³

France knew the American guarantee to Western Europe would be forthcoming regardless of her actions. Kennedy understood de Gaulle, "He relies on our power to protect him while he launches his policies solely based on the self-interest of France."⁷⁴ France's European allies were mostly dismayed by her intransigence. German politician Lothar Ruehl remarked, "For France, national security is not a function of independence, but, on the contrary, of dependence on the European system that is the very basis of her existence."⁷⁵ Nonetheless, France remained fully dependent on the United

⁷⁰ Stromseth, 119.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Lacouture, 432.

⁷³ Heuser, 123.

⁷⁴ Trachtenberg, 166.

⁷⁵ Lacouture, 426.

States nuclear umbrella. The French force was vulnerable to disarming Soviet first strike; thus, the French deterrent was not credible without US backing.⁷⁶

Only after France left the NATO command structure did the Alliance finally adopt flexible response as its strategic concept. Known as Flexible Escalation in NATO parlance, MC 14/3 was adopted by the Alliance in 1967. At the same time, de Gaulle issued his “planetary” directive: The French armed forces would be able “to intervene at any point in the world, carry out an action at sea or around our own territory, and put up resistance on the national territory.” He called for “a long-range thermonuclear force capable of striking wherever necessary on the surface of the earth in order to obtain irreparable destruction in any of the great states.”⁷⁷ French Chief of Staff Ailleret subsequently declared France had an “all-round strategy.”⁷⁸

“By the late 1960s, however, it was clear that constructing a theoretical model of an independent French force posture was easier than sustaining it in practice.”⁷⁹ In March 1969, French Chief of Staff General Fourquet articulated a concept of a ‘reinforced test’, maintaining that French forces would normally act in ‘close coordination’ with NATO forces, signaling a French move toward a strategy of graduated response. Fourquet’s strategic concept “satisfied the political need to emphasize nuclear deterrence and autonomy of decision, while conceding the practical military fact that in facing a threat from the East some degree of coordination with NATO forces was necessary.”⁸⁰ France refused to publicly acknowledge the level of coordination with NATO regarding its nuclear employment. Even after de Gaulle had departed the scene in 1969, French independence remained “a sacred myth.”⁸¹ By the end of the 1960s, a majority of the French public supported the independent nuclear force.⁸²

⁷⁶ Panayiotis Ifestos, *Nuclear Strategy and European Security Dilemmas: Towards an Autonomous European Defence System?* (Brookfield, VT: Gower Publishing, 1988), 284-285.

⁷⁷ Lacouture, 428

⁷⁸ Ibid., 429.

⁷⁹ Stromseth, 112.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 113.

⁸¹ Heuser, 122.

⁸² Stromseth, 114.

After the United States formally acknowledged the positive role played by the French independent nuclear force in the 1974 Ottawa Declaration, there was a notable shift in French attitudes towards greater cooperation with NATO and the United States in particular.⁸³ Francois Mitterand admitted the importance of the partnership: “Whoever gambles on the question of decoupling between the European continent and the American one will jeopardize the equilibrium of forces and consequently peace, a development considered by France as a very dangerous one.”⁸⁴ France eventually joined the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty in June 1991.⁸⁵

Lessons Learned

The France case illuminates the challenge of maintaining a credible extended deterrent. It also highlights the limits of US influence and the strength of domestic factors in driving security policy. The elements of prestige and independence echo through to the Middle East of today. The parallels between Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Egypt are many.

Structure. The United States made a robust commitment to defend France. It was part of a larger, comprehensive multilateral framework, codified by treaty, with an automatic defense mechanism. This was part of the much larger Cold War conflict with the Soviet Union. The Soviet threat to Western Europe was tangible, explicit, and had been demonstrated in Berlin. The lines were clear. The United States really had no other option than to extend a nuclear umbrella over Western Europe. This is not the case currently in the Middle East. A similar treaty-based multilateral alliance is unlikely in the Middle East given the Israeli-Palestinian dynamic. Likewise, a formal alliance may be too binding for the United States even if the Middle Eastern allies were to propose one. The France case study offers a further cautionary note. The North Atlantic Treaty requires consensus which means that an obstructionist France was able to block any attempts to change NATO strategy. A consensus-

⁸³ Ifestos, 279.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 280.

⁸⁵ Hueser, 120.

driven multilateral security framework can be unwieldy and unresponsive. In the end, the United States will not be able to match the level of commitment that it did to Western Europe. Will that be enough?

Credibility. France determined to develop nuclear weapons because it wanted a guaranteed, independent capability. The French did not want to depend fully on the United States for their security. In light of its experiences with the United States during the Dien Bien Phu and Suez crises, France was not confident the United States would defend or promote French interests in all cases. Despite the NATO superstructure, France still questioned US credibility. The NATO trigger mechanism was automatic and yet France questioned its reliability. Whether a convenient excuse or not, the French argument against sole reliance on the United States to defend against a Soviet attack was a powerful argument for developing an indigenous nuclear capability. Questioning the US commitment provided rhetorical cover for the French determination to build a nuclear capability. US reliability as an ally, at least initially, fueled French desires to build the bomb.

The development of Soviet capabilities over time further impacted the credibility of the US commitment. As Soviet capabilities to target the US homeland improved, Western European fears that the United States would falter in its nuclear defense of their territory increased. The security guarantee was much more credible when the Soviets could not attack the United States. Improved Soviet capabilities led the United States to reconsider its strategy of Massive Retaliation, and it led the Allies to question the US commitment. Once parity was achieved, any US leader would certainly be compelled to question whether an all out nuclear war that would destroy the United States was worth defending Western Europe. The United States had to convince its allies that fighting to defend Western Europe was worth a nuclear exchange. As long as Iranian weapons cannot threaten the United States, the US guarantee will remain credible. Improving Iranian capabilities to target the US homeland will diminish any US security guarantee. Middle Eastern allies will rightly question

the extent to which the United States will go to defend them and not just US interests.

Domestic Drivers. Prestige, as much as independence, drove the French acquisition. Given the humiliations in World War II, French Indochina, and North Africa, France was desperate to regain its confidence and status as a great power. There was little else the United States could have done to keep France from acquiring nuclear weapons. The security guarantee provided was as robust as it could possibly have been. Certainly, there are limits to US influence. If a state perceives it can go it alone, it will. Domestic politics drives foreign policy, and French domestic politics demanded an independent nuclear capability. The British nuclear acquisition made the French program a certainty. For its part, the United States did not really fight to keep France from acquiring nuclear weapons. US non-proliferation measures were half-hearted. Eisenhower was not completely set against a French nuclear weapon and the proposals for a multinational nuclear force were tepid. At the same time, it did nothing to assist them in their efforts. Besides France and the United Kingdom, however, no other Western European ally chose to develop an independent nuclear capability. To that extent, the US security guarantee was successful in precluding further nuclear proliferation. Undoubtedly France continued to rely on the United States for protection even after going nuclear. Having the weapon was much more important than figuring out how to use it. That France never developed a coherent strategy for employing its nuclear forces meant little. French nuclear strategy never fully met the test of logic. France knew the US commitment to Western Europe would stand, so they were able to act independently with impunity.

Deployments. US troops were deployed throughout Europe at the end of World War II, and there was a broad consensus for them staying. As a trip wire, the troops ensured the US would be immediately involved in any hostilities. The forward deployment of conventional US troops at times both reinforced and undermined the US commitment. Eisenhower's proposed troop cuts shook European confidence. Conversely, Kennedy's attempts to bolster

conventional levels called into question the US commitment to fighting a nuclear war to save Western Europe.

Chapter 2

Taiwan Case Study

In alliances among unequals, the contributions of lesser members are at once wanted and of relatively little importance....the greatest mistake a great power can make is to let a small ally drag it into war against its interests.

Hans Morgenthau¹

This case study explores the reluctant security guarantee provided to Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist Chinese forces exiled on the island of Formosa. The mutual defense relationship with Taiwan demonstrates how the junior partner can exert influence beyond its relative size and importance. The United States has consistently feared that the coupling with Taiwan could draw them into a war they did not want to fight. The US-Taiwan security relationship shows how international commitments, once established, can take on a life of their own. From its inception, the US security guarantee for Taiwan has been intentionally ambiguous. While this has afforded operational and strategic flexibility over the years, it has also been the source of mixed signals and miscalculations on both sides of the Strait. Lastly, the case of Taiwan underscores that a formal alliance is not always necessary. The combination of the Taiwan Relations Act, continued arms sales, and periodic US shows of force have met US policy objectives in the Strait for the past 30 years without a mutual defense treaty.

Truman's Reluctant Commitment

The United States had an uneasy relationship with Chiang Kai-shek dating back to World War II. Chiang's Nationalist Kuomintang Party had largely defeated Mao Tse Dong's Communist Party before Japan invaded Manchuria in 1931. During the war, Chiang was designated Supreme

¹ Quoted in Bernard Cole, *Taiwan's Security: History and Prospectus* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 147.

Commander of Allied forces in China, though the Allies soon grew disillusioned with Chiang for his reluctance to engage Nationalist forces in fighting the Japanese.² Nonetheless, President Roosevelt recognized China's utility in a post-war world and secured for them a seat on the United Nations Security Council.³ For his part, Chiang remained leery of the United States, eventually firing both his army chief of staff and ambassador to the United States because he suspected they were too closely aligned with Washington.⁴ Despite these tensions, Chiang and his wife both enjoyed strong American public support, benefiting from a savvy public relations campaign in Washington.⁵

After the war, the United States continued to support Chiang's Nationalist forces under the banner of the Republic of China, while the Soviet Union supported Mao's Communists, both for obvious reasons. In an attempt to forestall a civil war that would end in a Communist victory, President Truman dispatched General George Marshall to China at the end of 1945 to negotiate a peaceful settlement. Marshall was able to secure a ceasefire, but it crumbled after only four months. Both sides believed they could achieve their aims through further fighting. Marshall soon concluded the mission was hopeless and returned home in early 1947 to become the Secretary of State. For his part, Chiang believed Washington had no alternative than to back him against the Communists, so he refused to entertain a compromise solution.

Frustrations with Chiang began to mount. In summer 1949, Secretary of State Dean Acheson reported to Truman that Chiang's Nationalists had "sunk into corruption" with the ongoing war "rapidly weakening such liberal elements as it did possess." As a result, "The mass of the Chinese people were coming more and more to lose confidence in the Government."⁶ Despite this environment, Acheson wrote, the United States could not have withdrawn

² Denny Roy, *Taiwan: A Political History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 106.

³ Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, *Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the United States, 1945-1992: Uncertain Friendships* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1994), 16.

⁴ Roy, 105.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 106.

⁶ US Department of State, *United States Relations with China: With Special Reference to the Period 1944-1949* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1949), VII.

support for Chiang, as it would have “represented an abandonment of our international responsibilities and our traditional policy of friendship for China.”⁷ Reflecting that friendship, the United States provided \$2 billion in economic aid and sold over \$1 billion in supplies to China in the five years after World War II.⁸ This assistance did little to bolster Nationalist forces on the battlefield. Chiang’s forces peaked in early 1947; the Communists steadily gained ground and influence thereafter. The PLA destroyed the Nationalists as an effective fighting force during their November 1948-January 1949 military campaign. In October 1949, Mao, sensing final victory, declared the establishment of the People’s Republic of China (PRC). Acheson reported that Nationalist leaders had “proved incapable of meeting the crisis confronting them, its troops had lost the will to fight, and its Government had lost popular support.”⁹

In the face of Communist advances, over 2 million Nationalist military and civilian personnel had retreated to the island of Taiwan by 1949.¹⁰ Taiwan, also called Formosa, is a 240 mile long, 85 mile wide island that sits 100 miles from the Chinese coast at its nearest point. The island was first incorporated into the Chinese empire under the Qing Dynasty in 1683. It had been governed by Japan since the conclusion of the 1895 Sino-Japanese War. Facing a complete defeat, Chiang moved his Nationalist forces to Taiwan, intending for it to be the temporary seat of government. Given the deteriorating situation, Acheson advised that “the implementation of our historic policy of friendship for China must be profoundly affected by current developments.”¹¹ The Joint Chiefs of Staff advised that Taiwan was not worth defending and seemed reconciled to the eventual fall of the island to Communist forces.¹² In October, the National Security Council determined to link further assistance to

⁷ *United States Relations with China*, X.

⁸ *Ibid.*, XV.

⁹ *Ibid.*, XIV.

¹⁰ Cole, 16.

¹¹ *United States Relations with China*, XVI.

¹² David Finkelstein, *Washington’s Taiwan Dilemma, 1949-1950: From Abandonment to Salvation* (Fairfax, VA: George Mason University Press, 1993), 182-183.

the Nationalist government on Taiwan to “the correction by the Chinese themselves of those administrative faults which are a major cause of the present precarious position on Formosa.”¹³ A strongly worded demarche demanding good governance reforms was delivered to Chiang in November. Effectively, the United States had abandoned Taiwan and repeated requests for further aid were rejected.¹⁴

The “China Lobby,” an influential group of Chiang supporters in Washington, pushed back against this new policy direction. Republicans in Congress, notably Wisconsin Senator Eugene McCarthy, seized on the Truman Administration’s withholding support for Chiang as weakness in the face of a growing Communist threat. General Douglas MacArthur and Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson both favored continued support to Chiang. Working with Congress, the Defense Department secured an additional \$75 million in aid for Taiwan.¹⁵ Johnson pushed, through the National Security Council, for sustained support to Taiwan’s military as part of a broader initiative to contain communist advances in Asia. Following a contentious debate between the State and Defense departments in late 1949, Truman held firm and suspended any further aid.¹⁶

Truman announced this policy shift at a 5 January 1950 news conference. Referring to the conflict over Formosa, he proclaimed that the United States has no “intention of utilizing its Armed Forces to interfere in the present situation. The United States Government will not pursue a course which will lead to involvement in the civil conflict in China. Similarly, the United States Government will not provide military aid or advice to Chinese forces on Formosa.”¹⁷ Later in the day, Acheson reiterated the new policy: “We

¹³ *FRUS, 1949, Vol IX*, 395.

¹⁴ Finkelstein, 197, 216.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 229.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 250.

¹⁷ Harry S. Truman, *Public Papers of the Presidents: Harry S. Truman, 1950* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1965), 11.

are not going to get involved militarily in any way on the island of Formosa.”¹⁸ He added, “It is not the function of the United States nor will it or can it attempt to furnish a will to resist and a purpose for resistance to those who must provide for themselves.”¹⁹ In other words, Taiwan was on its own to face the Communists.

This policy would prove short-lived. North Korea invaded the south on 25 June 1950. Two days later, Truman, fearing a broader regional conflict, announced that “the occupation of Formosa by Communists forces would be a direct threat to the security of the Pacific area and to the United States forces performing their lawful and necessary function in that area.”²⁰ He ordered the US Navy’s Seventh Fleet “to prevent any attack on Formosa” and announced that “the determination of the future status of Formosa must await the restoration of security in the Pacific.”²¹ A month later, Truman restored military aid shipments to Taiwan and established a US military assistance program on the island.²² As Nancy Bernkopf Tucker explained, “Korea, thus, miraculously saved Chiang Kai-shek’s government from extinction.”²³ Thus, the first explicit US security guarantee for Taiwan was an unwanted by-product of an unrelated conflict. The Administration had already decided to abandon the Nationalists. This reluctance would continue to characterize the US security guarantee for years to come.

Eisenhower Reinforces

US relations with Communist China deteriorated further with the Chinese invasion of North Korea; Chiang reaped the benefits. During his first State of the Union address in February 1953, President Eisenhower reiterated his commitment to Taiwan and sent a sharp message to the PRC. He recalled Truman’s initial orders to the Seventh Fleet “to insure that Formosa should not

¹⁸ US Department of State, *American Foreign Policy, 1950-1955* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1957), 2451.

¹⁹ *American Foreign Policy, 1950-1955*, 2452.

²⁰ *FRUS, 1950, Vol VII*, 202.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 203.

²² *FRUS, 1950, Vol VI*, 393-394.

²³ Tucker, 32.

be used as a base of operations against the Chinese Communist mainland.” This step was taken to keep the fighting in Korea from spiraling into a larger regional conflict, but Eisenhower found the United States had “no obligation to protect a nation fighting us in Korea.” As such, he ordered “that the Seventh Fleet no longer be employed to shield Communist China.”²⁴ In other words, the Seventh Fleet would remain on station, but only to defend Taiwan from the PRC. The United States would no longer prohibit Nationalist attacks on the mainland. In fact, Chiang Kai-shek continued to harbor ambitions of retaking China from the Communists and ordered his forces “to secure the military’s base in Taiwan before making the move to recover the Mainland.”²⁵ In an effort to bolster the regime on Taiwan and sustain morale within Taiwan’s military, Eisenhower provided limited support to small raids against the mainland.²⁶ The Central Intelligence Agency maintained a cadre of advisors and aviation assets to facilitate Nationalist guerrilla attacks against the Communists.²⁷

The new administration feared losing control of the situation. At an April 1953 National Security Council meeting, new Secretary of State John Foster Dulles expressed his concern that aircraft recently sold to Taiwan would be used “to undertake offensive action against the Chinese mainland.” He suggested further sales be halted pending a formal commitment by Chiang to refrain from attacks against the mainland without prior coordination with the United States. Eisenhower agreed and tasked the Commander in Chief, Pacific to secure the commitment.²⁸ Later that month, the Nationalists agreed to consult the United States in advance regarding “any operations which would radically alter the pattern or tempo of present operations of their armed forces including specifically any offensive use of aircraft.”²⁹

²⁴ Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Public Papers of the Presidents, Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1953* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1960), 16-17.

²⁵ Quoted in Cole, 20.

²⁶ Cole, 24.

²⁷ Roy, 125.

²⁸ *FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol XIV*, 181.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 192.

The Eisenhower Administration's national security policy for Taiwan, NSC 146/2, issued on 6 November 1953, affirmed the US commitment to defend Taiwan and the Pescadores but restricted US forces from defending the offshore islands or raiding the mainland.³⁰ It called for the further development of indigenous Taiwanese ground forces: "The maximum feasible development of the National Forces would constitute a sorely needed general military reserve in an area where Western Allied manpower is at a present greatly outnumbered by Communist forces."³¹ It proposed a \$300 million appropriation for 1955 which would help make Taiwan's 21 Divisions combat ready, build an eight wing jet-equipped air force, and plus up naval destroyers.³²

1954-1955 Crisis. After retreating from the mainland in 1949, Nationalists forces occupied many of the thirty small coastal islands in the Taiwan Straits, most of which were within a few miles of the Chinese coast and over 100 miles from Taiwan. The Communists were able to take the second largest island, Hainan in 1949, with a force of 100 thousand but failed to capture many of the smaller, better defended islands. The PRC's official policy remained to "liberate Taiwan and its offshore islands of Penghu, Quemoy, and Matsu."³³

On 3 September 1954, the PLA began shelling the island of Quemoy. This attack marked the beginning of a nine month crisis that would bring the United States and the PRC to the brink of war and would result in a much deeper US commitment to defend Taiwan. Mao had hoped military action in the Straits would deter the United States from agreeing to the mutual defense treaty then under negotiation and so wanted by Chiang. However, his aggressive moves had the opposite effect. At issue was not the defense of Taiwan but the small offshore islands the Nationalists held. None of the

³⁰ *FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol XIV*, 308.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 318.

³² *Ibid.*, 320.

³³ Cole, 21.

players—the Nationalists, the Communists, nor the United States—were certain of the redlines for conflict.

As the crisis unfolded, Eisenhower was reluctant to get involved, recognizing that “once we get tied up in any one of these things our prestige is so completely involved.”³⁴ He quickly decided that US troops “should not go in unless we can defend [Taiwan].”³⁵ Eisenhower also recognized any conflict could take the United States “to the threshold of World War III.”³⁶ Reflecting this desire to avoid war with China, Secretary of State Dulles informed the Nationalists through diplomatic channels “that the United States will not engage in large-scale and perhaps atomic war against Chi Com mainland to hold these islands.”³⁷ Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Arthur Radford disagreed, arguing for a military confrontation: “If we fail to resist this aggression, we commit the United States further to a negative policy which could result in a progressive loss of free world strength to local aggression until or unless all-out conflict is forced upon us.”³⁸ Eisenhower remained reluctant to engage over these militarily insignificant islands and remained intentionally vague as to whether or not the United States would defend Quemoy and Matsu.³⁹ However, the shelling convinced Eisenhower it was time to formalize the mutual defense pact between the two countries.

The United States and Taiwan entered into a formal defense treaty on 2 December 1954. Article II of the *Mutual Defense Treaty Between the United States and the Republic of China* stated, “the Parties separately and jointly by self-help and mutual aid will maintain and develop their individual and collective capacity to resist armed attack.” It further declared that in the event of an attack the Parties “would act to meet the common danger in accordance

³⁴ Bennett Rushkoff, “Dulles and the Quemoy-Matsu Crisis, 1954-1955,” *Political Science Quarterly* 96, no. 3 (Autumn 1981), 467.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Mandate for Change, 1953-1956* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, 1963), 464.

³⁷ *FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol XIV*, 670.

³⁸ Ibid., 598-610.

³⁹ Gordon Chang, “To the Nuclear Brink: Eisenhower, Dulles, and the Quemoy-Matsu Crisis,” *International Security* 12, no. 4 (Spring 1988), 100.

with its constitutional processes.”⁴⁰ This wording suggested to many that the US security guarantee was neither automatic nor guaranteed, though Secretary Dulles assured all that this was not the case. The United States did insist that the territory include only “Taiwan and the Pescadores.” In other words, it explicitly excluded Quemoy and Matsu from the defensive umbrella. In announcing the treaty, Secretary Dulles reiterated its defensive character and said it “provides for continuing consultation regarding any such threat or attack.”⁴¹ Dulles considered the bilateral treaty with Taiwan part of a larger regional effort to contain Communism. He told Eisenhower that “the treaty will serve as an important deterrent to possible Communist efforts to seize positions in the West Pacific area.”⁴² In return for this security guarantee, Chiang promised to clear with the United States in advance any further offensive actions against the mainland.⁴³ Dulles told Congress, “I do not doubt that the Chinese Communists are probing our resolution.”⁴⁴ As such, the treaty not only “would give the Chinese Communists notice, beyond any possibility of misinterpretation,” but it would also “provide firm reassurance to the Republic of China and to the world that Taiwan and the Pescadores are not subject for barter as part of some Far Eastern ‘deal’ with the Chinese Communists.”⁴⁵ In other words, it would be a measure of US resolve.

Not wanting to wait on the Senate’s deliberate consideration of the treaty, Eisenhower simultaneously sought immediate Congressional approval for US military action to defend Taiwan if it became necessary. He wrote Congress, “In the interest of peace, therefore, the United States must remove any doubt regarding our readiness to fight, if necessary, to preserve the vital stake of the free world in a free Formosa, and to engage in whatever operations may be required to carry out that purpose.”⁴⁶ Congress subsequently authorized the

⁴⁰ *American Foreign Policy, 1950-1955*, 945-946.

⁴¹ *American Foreign Policy, 1950-1955*, 949.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 952.

⁴³ Chang, 101.

⁴⁴ *American Foreign Policy, 1950-1955*, 956.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 955.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 2485.

Formosa Resolution authorizing the President “to employ the Armed Forces of the United States as he deems necessary” and any “such other measures he judges to be required” to defend Taiwan from Communist Chinese aggression.⁴⁷

Even after the treaty’s signing and the Formosa Resolution, the matter of defending the offshore islands remained very much undetermined within the Administration. Dulles and Eisenhower continued to court ambiguity in their policy regarding the islands. In proposing the Formosa Resolution, Dulles maintained the Administration need not “nail the flag to the mast” for specific islands.⁴⁸ At a press conference in March, Dulles commented that “neither the treaty nor the law gives [the President] authority” to defend the islands of Quemoy or Matsu.⁴⁹ As the crisis unfolded, however, Eisenhower wavered on his exclusion of the offshore islands from the security guarantee. Communist Chinese forces overran the Nationalist-held island of Ichang and began aerial attacks against the Dachen islands in January 1955, merely six weeks after the treaty was signed. Eisenhower feared events would spiral out of control and determined “the time had come to draw the line.”⁵⁰ Eisenhower’s position on the islands evolved during the crisis, principally due to Taiwanese sensibilities and his perception of Chiang’s fragility. He was concerned that a US policy excluding Quemoy and Matsu from the defensive umbrella “would infuriate the Chinese Nationalists” and significantly reduce their morale.⁵¹ A weakened Taiwan would then fall prey to any Communist attack. The President warned that Chiang “might give up the entire struggle in utter discouragement” if the United States pressured him too hard to abandon the islands. As Bennett Rushkoff writes, “Chiang’s willingness to keep on resisting communism could not be jeopardized.”⁵² Robert Cutler, the National Security Advisor, and Secretary of Defense Charles Wilson argued against defending any

⁴⁷ *American Foreign Policy, 1950-1955*, 2487.

⁴⁸ H. W. Brands, Jr., “Testing Massive Retaliation: Credibility and Crisis Management in the Taiwan Strait,” *International Security* 12, no. 4 (Spring 1988), 138.

⁴⁹ *American Foreign Policy, 1950-1955*, 2492.

⁵⁰ Quoted in Chang, 102.

⁵¹ Rushkoff, 472.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 476.

of the coastal islands, fearing a major war over the relatively insignificant islands.⁵³ In retrospect, it appears Eisenhower never fully committed to a firm policy on the islands. It is clear that Eisenhower hoped to draw the difficult distinction between an attack only on the offshore islands and an attack on those islands as part of a larger operation to capture Taiwan. He determined to defend only against the latter.⁵⁴ As such, the Administration appeared to be warming to the idea of defending Quemoy and Matsu despite previous decisions and public statements to the contrary.

Hoping to deescalate the crisis, Eisenhower instructed Dulles to inform the Taiwanese foreign minister that the United States would publicly pledge to defend Quemoy if Taiwan withdrew her forces from the Dachen. Eisenhower concluded the two islands “were the outposts for the defense of Formosa.”⁵⁵ The President conceded that there was “nothing we could do to prevent” war with the PRC if they wanted it; though he believed a more explicit expression of US policy would decrease the risk of war.⁵⁶ Chiang agreed to Eisenhower’s proposal, believing that he was securing US protection of Quemoy and Matsu.⁵⁷ During the first week of February, US naval vessels evacuated nearly 25 thousand Taiwanese military and civilian personnel from the islands. The White House never made public their commitment to defend Quemoy and Matsu. Eisenhower began to second-guess his decision to withdraw Taiwanese forces from the Dachen Islands. Writing to British Prime Minister Winston Churchill in February, he said the move had “apparently been interpreted by the Chinese Communists merely as a sign of weakness,” believing any further concession would only further embolden the PRC.⁵⁸ Dulles lamented the loss of US credibility when the islands fell to the PLA later that month, “It was in many quarters assumed that we would defend the islands, and our failure to

⁵³ Quoted in Chang, 102.

⁵⁴ Rushkoff, 473.

⁵⁵ Chang, 103.

⁵⁶ Brands, 137.

⁵⁷ Chang, 105.

⁵⁸ Eisenhower, *Mandate for Change*, 472-473.

do so indicated that we were running away when actual danger appeared.”⁵⁹ He feared the further erosion of US credibility should other islands fall: “We would be charged with turning and running and making excuses, and the whole effect on the non-communist countries in Asia would be extremely bad.”⁶⁰

Dulles became convinced that it was only a matter of time before the United States and Communist China would square off over Taiwan. At a March 1955 National Security Council meeting, Dulles argued for “steps to create a better public climate for the use of atomic weapons by the United States if we found it necessary to intervene in the defense of the Formosa area.” Dulles said his discussions with military officials in the region convinced him that atomic weapons would be the only effective means for eliminating PLA airfields, railways, and artillery. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Radford, concurred. Dulles concluded it was of vital importance to “educate our own and world opinion as to the necessity for the tactical use of atomic weapons.”⁶¹ Dulles also suggested a US demonstration of resolve, as he said to “shoot off a gun,” in order to end further Communists encroachment in the Strait.⁶²

At the same time, the Administration made a concerted effort to ready the public for the use of atomic weapons in the Strait. Dulles was instructed to announce to a national television audience on 8 March that atomic weapons were “interchangeable with the conventional weapons.”⁶³ At his 16 March press conference, Eisenhower suggested atomic weapons should “be used just exactly as you would use a bullet or anything else.” In a speech in Chicago the following day, Vice President Richard Nixon stated: “tactical atomic weapons are now conventional and will be used against the targets of any aggressive

⁵⁹ Brands, 135.

⁶⁰ Brands, 136.

⁶¹ *FRUS, 1955-1957, Vol II*, 346-347.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 349.

⁶³ Chang, 106.

force.”⁶⁴ Despite this stated willingness to employ nuclear weapons to defend Taiwan, Eisenhower concluded at a National Security Council meeting in March that atomic weapons “should only come at the end.”⁶⁵ For their part, the US military was prepared to carry out this task. Strategic Air Command’s General Curtis LeMay informed the Chief of Staff of the Air Force in late March: “Plans have been developed and are ready for immediate execution by use of B-36 type aircraft based on Guam to deal with any eventuality involving Communist China.... Target selections have been made, coordinated with other responsible commander and assigned to B-36 crew.”⁶⁶

As the shelling continued, Secretary Dulles argued for further military measures, suggesting a naval blockade of the entire Chinese coast and stationing nuclear weapons on Taiwan to demonstrate US resolve.⁶⁷ Eisenhower did not authorize proposals to bomb PRC radar sites, deploying nuclear forces to the island, nor moving additional bombers to Guam, but he did approve the proposal to blockade China if Chiang would evacuate Quemoy and Matsu. Remarkably, Eisenhower was proposing an act of war against the PRC to gain concessions from an ally that the United States was pledged to defend.⁶⁸ It was rejected outright by Chiang; he refused to consider any further withdrawals. Chiang told the US Ambassador, “Soldiers must choose proper places to die. Chinese soldiers consider Quemoy and Matsu are proper places for them.”⁶⁹ Eisenhower was thus left holding the bag. The United States would be forced to defend Quemoy and Matsu despite all public statements to the contrary. Held hostage by ally sensibilities and fearing a loss of credibility, Washington was stuck. Historian Gordon Chang observes, “If the Communists had actually threatened to overwhelm the offshore islands, Eisenhower was clearly committed to intervene. He would not have stood aside and watched

⁶⁴ Chang, 108.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 111.

⁶⁶ Chang, 112.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 113, 115.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 116.

⁶⁹ Brands, 146.

the loss of the islands.”⁷⁰ The crisis was ultimately resolved when Communist Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai suggested talks with the United States to reduce tensions in the Strait.

Throughout the crisis, the United States lacked clarity in its position, sent mixed signals to its enemies and allies, and, in so doing, increased the potential for miscalculation. The available Chinese documentary record suggests that Chinese leaders viewed the events beginning on 3 September 1954 simply as a continuation of the ongoing tensions in the Strait and not as an escalation as Washington saw it.⁷¹ Washington believed Beijing was ignoring their warnings. Twice in 1954, the United States dispatched warships to the Dachen Islands as a show of force. Secretary Dulles warned at a 24 August press conference that the United States was inclined to oppose by force of arms any PLA attacks on the offshore islands.⁷² For their part, the Chinese had only planned for the attacks on the Dachens. The shelling on Quemoy and Matsu was not a prelude to an attack either on those islands or Taiwan proper.⁷³ The attacks were intended to discourage the United States from signing a treaty with Taiwan. That summer, Mao began a propaganda campaign focused on the “Liberation of Taiwan.” This media blitz, both for domestic and international audiences, was conceived “to break up the collaboration between the United States and Chiang and to keep them from joining military and political forces.”⁷⁴ This campaign definitely colored Washington’s perceptions of the military maneuvers that fall. Unbeknownst to US intelligence, the PLA was in no position to assault Taiwan, much less the well defended Quemoy and Matsu. It would take the largest combined operation in PLA history to take the small island of Ichiang in January 1955.⁷⁵

⁷⁰ Chang, 119.

⁷¹ Gordon 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* 98, no. 5 (December 1993), 1504.

⁷² Ibid., 1505.

⁷³ Ibid., 1507.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 1508.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 1510.

Chiang and He suggest Mao's desire to avoid conflict with the United States would have precluded him from authorizing the assault on the Dachen. They write, "If Washington, instead of avoiding explicit commitments to the defense of the offshore islands, had consistently demonstrated its determination to defend the islands, Mao would not have been likely to approve the assault on the Dachen."⁷⁶ In a similar fashion, the mutual defense treaty gave a green light to taking the offshore islands. Chiang and He argue, "Before the treaty's provisions were known and because of the vagueness of the Eisenhower Administration's position, Mao had wondered whether Washington would directly involve itself in combat over the offshore islands; after the disclosure of the treaty terms, he and his military commanders concluded that the United States would not join in the active defense, since the treaty omitted specific mention of the offshore islands."⁷⁷ "Rather than deterring Communist aggression, Eisenhower's policy of keeping the enemy guessing had sent mixed signals to Beijing, which contributed to the Communist decision to assault Ichiang."⁷⁸ The PRC was willing to take all the rope the Administration was willing to offer. A firmer position may have halted the Ichiang attack, but the United States was in no position to know this at the time. The subsequent evacuation of the Dachen Islands merely confirmed for Mao that Washington was not willing to go to war over the islands.⁷⁹ Similarly, neither party wanted conflict, but the proposed US blockade would have forced an armed confrontation with the PLA. They could not have stood by idly and accepted such an infringement.

In the end, the 1954-55 crisis moved Washington much closer to Taiwan. The formal treaty committed the United States to defending Taiwan and the situation on the ground demanded the United States defend the offshore islands. Furthermore, it appears the Eisenhower team had resolved to employ nuclear weapons in defense of Taiwan. While affording a certain degree of

⁷⁶ Chang and He Di, 1512.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 1513.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 1514.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 1515.

flexibility, the intentionally ambiguous policy with respect to the offshore islands induced a level of misunderstanding that could have easily resulted in an open war between the United States and China.

1958 Crisis. After the 1954-55 crisis, Chiang moved to consolidate the implicit security guarantees for the offshore islands, while the United States continued in its efforts to constrain Nationalist adventurism. Eisenhower wrote Chiang in May 1956 expressing his desire to avoid a military conflict, “I do not believe it would be in the best interests of our two countries to espouse the use of force to solve the difficult problem of Communist control of the China mainland. We do not consider that to invoke military force is an appropriate means of freeing Communist-dominated peoples and we are opposed to initiating action which might expose the world to conflagration which could spread beyond control.”⁸⁰ At the same time, Chiang’s backers inside the United States kept the pressure on the White House to sustain its support of the Nationalist regime on Taiwan using mass media and Congressional allies.⁸¹

Chiang had substantially reinforced the islands following the 1954-55 crisis, positioning one third of his total forces on the offshore islands. Chiang’s clear intent behind these deployments was to further bind the United States to their defense. Eisenhower commented afterwards, “We had the feeling that he wanted to reinforce them so heavily with personnel that it would be difficult, indeed, for us not to go right to their defense quickly, even if it were only a local attack.”⁸² The United States was complicit. By 1958, the Nationalists had amassed the second largest military force in Asia, due in large part to the \$260 million annual US aid package.⁸³ Admiral Felix Stump, Commander in Chief,

⁸⁰ *FRUS, 1955-1957, Vol. II*, 361.

⁸¹ Tucker, 46.

⁸² Quoted in Jonathan Trumbull Howe, *Multicrisis: Sea Power and Global Politics in the Missile Age* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1971), 173.

⁸³ Howe, 167.

Pacific told Congress in 1958 that US policy was “to assist in building them up to where they can defend the offshore islands.”⁸⁴

Tensions began to rise again in 1958 with a sharp increase in PRC “liberation” propaganda punctuated by Chinese Premier Chou En-lai’s comments in February that “Taiwan is an inalienable part of the Chinese territory. The Chinese people are determined to liberate Taiwan.”⁸⁵ This was matched by a noticeable military buildup of PLA forces across the Strait from Taiwan. Admiral Stump reported that the “purpose of build-up is obscure of course. But it could mean an assault on Taiwan.”⁸⁶ China was irritated by the continuing Nationalist raids conducted with the assistance of the US Central Intelligence Agency. Additionally, the United States had deployed 14,000 troops to Lebanon in July 1958 which may have led the Communists to increase their pressure in the Strait believing the United States would be distracted.⁸⁷

Defense of the offshore islands was once again at issue. Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Arleigh Burke characterized the Taiwanese position on the offshore islands, “If I was asked once I was asked a hundred times of what military importance is Quemoy and Matsu. They were tremendous psychological importance ... just as important to [Taiwan] as a man’s wife is important to him. No more, no less.”⁸⁸ Given their psychological importance and the stationing of a third of all Taiwanese forces, Quemoy and Matsu had become central to Taiwan. Given this, Chiang sought a firm US commitment to defend the islands. The United States refused, believing Chiang was attempting to precipitate a conflict to hasten his return to the mainland. On 10 August, in response to Chinese rhetoric and deployments, the Eisenhower Administration released a policy statement on the “Non-Recognition of Communist China,” flatly stating that communism in China “was not

⁸⁴ Howe, 171.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 176.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 187.

⁸⁷ Tucker, 42.

⁸⁸ Quoted in Howe, 189.

permanent ... it one day will pass.”⁸⁹ In his recounting of the incident, Eisenhower wrote, “We assumed that under the circumstances of the moment, we would probably have to come to the aid of our ally.”⁹⁰ He further noted “that to be successful we might face the necessity of using small-yield atomic weapons against hostile airfields,” using “sheer power” to offset China’s “immense geographical advantage.”⁹¹ Eisenhower decided not to bolster US forces in the region, hoping to avoid further inflaming the tensions.⁹²

PLA batteries opened fire on Quemoy on 23 August. Chiang wrote Eisenhower a “frantic letter” pleading for an aggressive response.⁹³ In response, Dulles released a public letter to the House of Representatives in which he stated any Communist attack against the islands “would, I fear, constitute a threat to the peace of the area,” invoking language consistent with the Formosa Resolution. Monitored situation looking for indications of an imminent assault on the island and explored various US options. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Nathan Twining recommended an explicit warning to the Chinese that any assault would be met with atomic strikes on the mainland.⁹⁴ On 4 September, Dulles released a statement reiterating the US treaty obligation and Congressional authority to defend Taiwan to include “securing and protecting related positions such as Quemoy and Matsu.” He also noted that the two islands have “increasingly become related to the defense of Taiwan.”⁹⁵

This time, the Eisenhower Administration made a more forceful public commitment to the islands, driven largely by Chiang’s deployments since the last crisis. Eisenhower approved a plan to escort Nationalist resupply ships, which went into effect on 4 September. According to Chiang, the United States

⁸⁹ Howe, 185.

⁹⁰ Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Waging Peace, 1956-1961* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, 1965), 294.

⁹¹ Eisenhower, *Waging Peace*, 295.

⁹² Howe, 192.

⁹³ Ibid., 215.

⁹⁴ *FRUS, 1958-60, XIX*, 118.

⁹⁵ Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Public Papers of the Presidents, Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1958* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1960), 687-688.

“finally came through” after weeks of foot-dragging.⁹⁶ Seventh Fleet was instructed to “show itself by supersonic fighter sweeps through the Formosa Straits.”⁹⁷ By the end of August, the United States had positioned three aircraft carriers in the area, with three more expected, and ordered an additional Marine and Air Force fighter squadron to Taiwan. Marine amphibious units departed Singapore on 26 August for a combined landing exercise with Taiwanese forces in September.⁹⁸ Pacific Command announced it as “the largest integrated naval force ever assembled in peacetime history.”⁹⁹ The United States shipped nuclear-capable eight-inch howitzers to Taiwan. Though no nuclear shells were ever deployed, the United States did station nuclear-capable Matador missiles on the islands.¹⁰⁰ US officials “neither confirmed nor denied the presence of nuclear ordnance” on Quemoy.¹⁰¹ The United States also supplied Sidewinder air-to-air missiles to the Taiwan Air Force.¹⁰² The military deployments and public statements demonstrated a clear willingness on the part of the United States to defend the offshore islands.

At the same time, the Administration also left itself some wiggle room to de-escalate the crisis. On the same day that Dulles released his statement, the PLA stopped shelling the island and Chinese Premier En-lai announced China’s “desire to settle the Sino-American dispute in the Taiwan area through peaceful negotiation.”¹⁰³ On 11 September, President Eisenhower addressed the Nation regarding the crisis. He noted that Quemoy and Matsu “have always been a part of Free China.”¹⁰⁴ Recalling Munich, Eisenhower said the United States could not show a “weakness of purpose” in the “face of armed aggression.”¹⁰⁵ He boldly claimed “there will be no retreat,” and “there is not going to be any

⁹⁶ Howe, 216.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 217.

⁹⁸ Howe, 217-218.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 247.

¹⁰⁰ Cole, 22.

¹⁰¹ Howe, 239-240.

¹⁰² Ibid., 246.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 210-211.

¹⁰⁴ Eisenhower, *Public Papers of the Presidents, Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1958*, 694.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 698.

appeasement.”¹⁰⁶ Though, he left the door open to a negotiated settlement and even indicated that “there are measures that can be taken to assure that these offshore islands will not be a thorn in the side of peace.”¹⁰⁷

In light of En-lai’s comments and the relative quiet in the Straits, Dulles sought to advance negotiations by distancing the United States from Chiang. At a 30 September press conference he seemed to discredit Nationalist desires to recapture the mainland, calling such a scenario “a highly hypothetical matter” that was unlikely “just by their own steam.” He further stated that he “did not feel that it was sound” for the Nationalist forces to have built up the offshore islands over the preceding years. He went on to say it would “depend” on the situation as to whether those forces could be withdrawn but claimed “it would not be wise or prudent to keep them there.”¹⁰⁸ Chiang was incensed by Dulles’ comments. With all possible avenues for a successful assault on the islands blocked, Mao decided to deescalate, satisfied that he had increased political pressure on Chiang from Washington to eventually abandon the islands. On 6 October 1958, Mao delivered his “Message to Our Taiwan Compatriots,” in which he acknowledged the offshore islands would be returned to Chinese control only once Taiwan was fully reincorporated.¹⁰⁹

The second Strait crisis further demonstrated the ebb and flow of the US security guarantee for Taiwan. The Eisenhower Administration explicitly and aggressively expanded the defensive umbrella over the islands, largely as a result of their increased relevance brought on by Chiang’s deployment of one third of his troops to the islands. The United States reinforced their public pronouncements with a massive naval and air buildup in the vicinity of Taiwan and conducted critical resupply convoy escort. Nevertheless, the Administration left the door open to a negotiated settlement, going so far as to propose the full demilitarization of the islands. While Chiang used the ambiguity to press the commitment to its limits; Eisenhower and Dulles used it

¹⁰⁶ Eisenhower, *Public Papers of the Presidents, Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1958*, 698, 700.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 700.

¹⁰⁸ *FRUS, 1958-60, XIX*, 301.

¹⁰⁹ Tucker, 43.

to keep the Chinese guessing. They seem to have considered the offshore islands critical, while at the same time, effective bargaining chips.

1962 Crisis. Unlike the first two Taiwan Strait crises, the third was precipitated by the Nationalists. President Kennedy reasserted US control of the situation and effectively neutralized Chiang's plans for an offensive. Displaying a consistent position with the prior administrations, Kennedy made it clear that the US commitment to defending Taiwan did not include supporting a Nationalist offensive to retake the mainland. Kennedy inherited a Far East foreign policy characterized by "institutionalized Sino-American tension," reflecting a large degree of bureaucratic inertia in the State Department.¹¹⁰ Despite indications of a more flexible approach to Communist China during the campaign, Kennedy's China policy during the first year was markedly status quo.¹¹¹ Kennedy even privately agreed to veto the admission of Communist China to the United Nations, something the Eisenhower Administration had refused to commit to.¹¹² The President also agreed to airdrop Nationalist commando teams into southern China; although, he refused to support more aggressive military operations.¹¹³

China suffered a massive famine from 1959 to 1962, with upwards of 30 million associated deaths.¹¹⁴ At the same time, Mao faced five major rebellions affecting approximately 20 percent of the country.¹¹⁵ The Taiwan CIA Station Chief proposed a large-scale covert insertion into the mainland to capitalize on the internal turmoil.¹¹⁶ Chiang pressed the United States to assist him in taking advantage of a weakened PRC consumed by famine, rebellion, and deteriorating PRC-USSR relations. He pointed to improved Nationalist military might, and, most importantly, China's lack of nuclear weapons.¹¹⁷ On 2

¹¹⁰ Noam Kochavi, *A Conflict Perpetuated: China Policy During the Kennedy Years* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002), 15

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 74.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 55.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 66.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 96.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 97.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 100.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 113.

January, Chiang publicly announced that the Nationalists “had made adequate preparations” to return to the mainland, a task for which “we can no longer vacillate or hesitate.”¹¹⁸ He also levied an “invasion preparation tax.”¹¹⁹ For their part, the Chinese Communists were increasingly concerned by the bellicose statements coming out of Taiwan. They also noted a spike in raids on the mainland and were alarmed by high profile visits to Taiwan and even the offshore islands. The PRC feared the United States had finally green-lighted at Nationalist assault and redeployed substantial forces to the Strait.

Kennedy had no intention of supporting a Nationalist attack. The Kennedy Administration sent a stern warning to Chiang through multiple channels urging restraint. They cancelled a scheduled delivery of C-130 aircraft and replaced the US Ambassador to Taiwan, who was considered inclined to Taipei, with a retired admiral who was more skeptical of Chiang.¹²⁰ At the Presidential press conference on 27 June, Kennedy reaffirmed the Eisenhower Administration’s earlier policies with respect to the defense of Taiwan as codified in the mutual defense treaty and Congressional resolutions. He remained noncommittal on US policy regarding the offshore islands, fully consistent with earlier US policy statements. Most importantly, he reemphasized the defensive nature of the treaty, sending a signal to Chiang that the United States could not support offensive actions.¹²¹ The President reinforced these public comments with private assurances through diplomatic back-channels to the Communists that the United States would not support “any GRC attack on Mainland under existing circumstances.”¹²² Furthermore, the US Ambassador told Chiang that any action against the mainland was “entirely a domestic matter.”¹²³ In other words, the United States would not support such a move in any way.

¹¹⁸ Kochavi, 114.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 115.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 114-115.

¹²¹ John F. Kennedy, *Public Papers of the Presidents, John F. Kennedy, 1962* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1962), 509, 510.

¹²² Kochavi, 118.

¹²³ Ibid., 119.

The mass of pressure on Chiang forced him to delay, and then cancel, his planned invasion. While Chiang had effectively bound the United States to defending the Nationalists' existing holdings, he failed to garner US support for anything more. There were in fact limits to what the junior member could instigate. Kennedy made it clear that Chiang was on his own if he chose to attack the mainland.

Reversing Course

The Vietnam War changed how the Cold War was fought, especially in Asia. Strengthening relations with Communist China would prove too tantalizing a geostrategic prospect for the Nixon Administration, desperate to end the conflict in Southeast Asia. Having benefitted from the Korean War, Chiang and his Nationalists would prove a casualty of the shifting Cold War strategic context. Chiang's Nationalists had lost their luster long before Nixon took office. The US Military Assistance Advisory Group had grown from a staff of 300 in May 1950 to 2,300 by the mid-50s. The US provided \$2.5 billion in aid to Taiwan between 1951 and 1965 during which time the Taiwanese army grew to 600,000 soldiers.¹²⁴ During that period, Taiwan purchased 1,500 US aircraft.¹²⁵ The US pressured Chiang to reduce the size of his expensive standing army. He refused, continuing to nurse dreams of retaking the mainland. Given Chiang's intransigence, the United States determined to sharply reduce US aid to the Nationalists beginning in 1965. US troop presence on the island would peak at 10 thousand in 1970 due to the Vietnam War, but it fell precipitously thereafter.¹²⁶

When Richard Nixon took office in 1969, he signaled a significant course correction in the US relationship with China. Nixon had argued in a 1967 *Foreign Affairs* article that "we simply cannot afford to leave China forever outside the family of nations, there to nurture its fantasies, cherish its hates

¹²⁴ Tucker, 69.

¹²⁵ Roy, 141.

¹²⁶ Tucker, 111.

and threaten its neighbors.”¹²⁷ The Nixon State Department seized on the September 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia to drive a wedge between Moscow and Beijing. Suspecting the PRC was uneasy with the bellicose Brezhnev Doctrine, the State Department proposed a resumption of ambassadorial talks, to which Beijing quickly agreed.¹²⁸ This was a first step that Nixon hoped to build upon. In July 1969, Nixon lifted trade and travel restrictions on the PRC. That same month, he issued what became known as the Nixon Doctrine: while the United States would honor its commitments to assist its allies in Asia, it would “look to the nation directly threatened to assume the primary responsibility of providing the manpower for its defense.”¹²⁹ In November, he officially concluded Seventh Fleet operations in the Taiwan Strait, ending a nearly twenty-year mission patrolling the waters between the two belligerents.¹³⁰ The US Ambassador at the bilateral talks in Warsaw pledged that “it is my Government’s intention to reduce those military facilities which we now have on Taiwan as tensions in the area diminish.”¹³¹ When Chiang Ching-kuo, Chiang Kai-shek’s oldest son and heir apparent, visited Washington, Nixon reassured him, “I will never sell you down the river.”¹³² In fact, he was maneuvering to do just that. Nixon’s unilateral moves had laid the groundwork for secret talks in July 1971 between National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger and PRC Foreign Minister Zou En-lai. At the talks, Kissinger agreed in principle to China’s demands that the US acknowledge Taiwan as a province of China, withdraw all US forces from Taiwan, and end the mutual defense treaty with Taiwan. Kissinger made a second trip in October 1971, this time in public, to pave the way for normalizing relations between the two countries. Chiang intimated that continued US arms sales and maintenance of the mutual defense treaty would

¹²⁷ Tucker, 102.

¹²⁸ John Holdridge, *Crossing the Divide: An Insider’s Account of the Normalization of US-China Relations* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1997), 23-25.

¹²⁹ Tucker, 112.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 102.

¹³¹ Ibid., 103.

¹³² Roy, 131.

overcome any damage cause by the Shanghai Communiqué.¹³³ That same month, however, the PRC was seated in the United Nations, finally displacing the Nationalists as the internationally recognized government of China. At the same time it lost its seat in the UN, Taiwan lost its membership in a host of affiliated international organizations.¹³⁴ The dam had finally broken, and it was Taiwan's closest ally who was responsible.

Nixon made his historic trip to Beijing in February 1972 after which both countries jointly released what is known as the Shanghai Communiqué. In it, the US government agreed, "there is but one China and that Taiwan is a part of China." The United States also acknowledged the "ultimate objective of the withdrawal of all US forces and military installations from Taiwan," but conditioned doing so on the reduction of tensions in the area. The communiqué did not address the mutual defense treaty between the United States and Taiwan; however, Nixon privately assured the Chinese that the United States would not support Taiwanese independence nor aid the Nationalists in attacking the mainland.¹³⁵ Nixon dispatched the governor of California, Ronald Reagan, to Taiwan to help soothe the wounds.¹³⁶ Still, the Nationalists felt betrayed by the international community and the United States in particular. Taiwan enjoyed official recognition from 64 countries prior to Nixon's opening to China. By 1975, only 26 countries recognized them, while the PRC enjoyed normalized relations with 112 states.¹³⁷ Taiwan seriously considered a move toward Moscow to balance the growing relationship between the United States and the PRC, but decided such a move would risk severing what little relationship it had left with Washington.¹³⁸ It would take nine years before the United States would officially normalize relations with Communist China. The Vietnam War, the Watergate scandal, and the deaths of Chiang Kai-shek, Zou En-lai, and Mao Tse Dong conspired to

¹³³ Holdridge, 99.

¹³⁴ Roy, 135.

¹³⁵ Tucker, 106.

¹³⁶ Holdridge, 65.

¹³⁷ Roy, 132.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 136.

complicate sustained progress. For their part, the Nationalists continued to resist the diplomatic tilt toward Beijing. Nonetheless, Congress formally repealed the Formosa Resolution in 1974.

In December 1978, Jimmy Carter delivered the final blow when he announced that the United States would normalize relations with the PRC on 1 January 1979. Taiwan was given only two hours notice of Carter's announcement. Furthermore, Carter had agreed to withdraw from the 1954 Mutual Defense Treaty with Taiwan.¹³⁹ US officials had repeatedly pledged their continuing support for the mutual defense treaty. Taiwan and much of the US Congress were dismayed. Chiang said the United States had "broken its assurances ... and cannot expect to have the confidence of any free nation in the future."¹⁴⁰ Deputy Secretary of State Warren Christopher traveled to Taipei afterwards to discuss the policy change and was met by some 20,000 violent protestors who blocked his official motorcade and broke windows out of the limousine.¹⁴¹ Tensions had reached a boiling point. With White House acquiescence, Congress passed the Taiwan Relations Act in April 1979 which pledged to enhance Taiwanese self-defense capabilities through continued arms sales. It also noted that any attack would be a "grave concern" to the United States. Yet it was a far cry from the mutual defense treaty. It mandated no specific US response to aggression, nor authorized the President to employ military measures.¹⁴² At the same time, Taiwanese access in Washington became increasingly restricted. Nationalist officials were no longer allowed to schedule formal visits to the United States, and the State Department significantly curtailed official travel to Taiwan.¹⁴³ The United States maintained 600 personnel in Taiwan at the point relations were normalized with China. US military grants were suspended and all nuclear

¹³⁹ Tucker, 132.

¹⁴⁰ Roy, 139.

¹⁴¹ Holdridge, 191.

¹⁴² Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, "Strategic Ambiguity or Strategic Clarity?" *Dangerous Strait: The US-Taiwan-China Crisis* ed. Nancy Bernkopf Tucker. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 193.

¹⁴³ Tucker, *Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the United States*, 137.

weapons were removed from Taiwan in 1974.¹⁴⁴ US advisors were pulled from the offshore islands in 1976.¹⁴⁵ Through the 70s, the US continued to provide annual arms transfers between \$200 and \$300 million, including advanced radar systems and Hawk surface-to-air missiles.¹⁴⁶ In 1978, Carter notified the Nationalist government that her foreign military sales credits would be slashed from \$80 million in 1978, to \$10 million in 1979, and cut completely by 1980.¹⁴⁷ US arms sales to Taiwan fell from \$598 million in 1979 to \$290 million in 1980.

Nixon initiated a decade-long process that largely dismantled the US security guarantee for Taiwan, culminating with Carter's abrogation of the mutual defense treaty. Congress attempted to fill the breach with continued arms sales, but the level of commitment would never be the same. Yet Presidents since have demonstrated a continued commitment to the defense of Taiwan. Amidst Taiwanese hopes that the election of Ronald Reagan would reverse the trend in US-Taiwanese relations, the new administration announced in January 1982 that the United States would not sell the advanced FX fighters to Taiwan.¹⁴⁸ Chiang Ching-kuo was nonplussed, "To talk peace with the Chinese Communists is to invite death. This is an agonizing, blood stained lesson that we and many other Asian countries have learned."¹⁴⁹ In August 1982, Reagan agreed to an additional US-PRC joint communiqué regarding the sale of arms to Taiwan. In it, the United States agreed to restrict arms sales to "the level of those supplied in recent years." At the same, Reagan reassured the Nationalist leadership that it had not set a date for ending the arms sales to Taiwan, nor would it push to amend the Taiwan Relations Act.¹⁵⁰ The Reagan Administration loosely interpreted their agreements with China and promised Taiwan that they would become

¹⁴⁴ Roy, 128.

¹⁴⁵ Tucker, *Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the United States*, 145.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 146.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 147.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 138.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Tucker, *Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the United States*, 139.

invalidated should the PRC threaten the peace. President George H.W. Bush boldly violated the Reagan Communiqué and agreed to sell 150 F-16 fighter jets to Taiwan, totaling over \$6 billion and dwarfing any previous arms sales.¹⁵¹ When China fired missiles over Taiwan during their 1996 presidential election, President Bill Clinton dispatched two aircraft carrier battle groups to the Strait as a show of force. Secretary of State Warren Christopher stated publicly, “We’ve made it quite clear to the Chinese that if they try to resolve this problem through force rather than through peace, that will be a grave matter with us. We’ve made it as clear as we possibly can to them, because we don’t want any miscalculation on their part.”¹⁵² Beijing had not anticipated the US response and quickly deescalated the crisis. Democratic and Republican Administrations alike have continued to supply Taiwan with advanced weaponry, much to the dismay of Communist China.

The US-Taiwan security relationship has been marked by an apparent ebb and flow of US commitment. Nonetheless, the policy of strategic ambiguity in its many manifestations has allowed the United States to successfully deter a Chinese attack on Taiwan. Though ambiguity has its downsides, ultimately there may be no wiser course to take. Tucker explains, “Some 50 years after strategic ambiguity originated as a policy, it remains safer and smarter, as well as more realistic, than attempts at reaching clarity.”¹⁵³

Taiwan’s Nuclear Weapons Program

The PRC detonated its first nuclear bomb in October 1964. Chiang was unnerved and lobbied Washington for immediate action. He requested, at a minimum, that the United States “immediately give the GRC the wherewithal to destroy the ChiCom nuclear installations.”¹⁵⁴ The White House remained circumspect. After the Chinese detonation, President Johnson publicly

¹⁵¹ Holdridge, 252.

¹⁵² Tucker, “Strategic Ambiguity or Strategic Clarity?”, 196.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 205.

¹⁵⁴ *FRUS, 1964-1968, Vol XXX*, 133.

reaffirmed the US defense commitment to its allies in Asia.¹⁵⁵ He wrote Chiang and reiterated US determination to stand by the mutual defense treaty and proposed sending additional US fighter aircraft to Taiwan; however, he counseled that “success against the Communists is to be won principally by political means, not by force.”¹⁵⁶

Acquiring a nuclear weapon would reassert the Nationalist claim to the mainland, returning them to par with the nuclear-armed Communists. A nuclear weapon would ensure de facto independence. Tactical nuclear weapons, at a minimum, would make any amphibious assault impossible. On the flip side, a national nuclear program would further strain relations with the United States, end US assistance to the civil nuclear energy program, and threaten US conventional arms sales. It could also precipitate a Chinese attack.

In 1967, Taiwan’s National Security Council proposed a \$120 million program to develop an indigenous nuclear capability, to include a heavy water reactor, production plant, and plutonium separation plant. Allegedly, the German company Siemens had agreed to build three nuclear facilities in Taiwan if the plan was approved. Ultimately, Chiang did not support the plan and place further nuclear enemy development under civilian control. Taiwan signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1968 and submitted to standard inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). However, routine IAEA inspections were terminated when the PRC was recognized by the UN in 1971. In 1969, Taiwan purchased a heavy water reactor from Canada which became operational in 1973. Taiwan established a nuclear fuel fabrication plant in 1972-1973 with the assistance of French, German, US, and South African firms. It completed a reprocessing facility and a plutonium laboratory in 1976. The CIA reported in 1974 that Taiwan would possess the requisite technical skill and facilities to produce a nuclear weapon within five

¹⁵⁵ Lyndon B. Johnson, *Public Papers of the Presidents, Johnson 1963-1964*, (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1964), 1379.

¹⁵⁶ *FRUS, 1964-1968, Vol XXX*, 142-143.

years. By 1976, Taiwan had 700 US-trained nuclear scientists.¹⁵⁷ Chiang Ching-kuo later claimed that his father had halted the nuclear weapons program in 1974 “on the grounds that we cannot use nuclear weapons to hurt our countrymen.”¹⁵⁸ After President Nixon’s trip to Beijing, a member of the Taiwanese Parliament publicly proposed a national nuclear weapons program.¹⁵⁹

The IAEA was frustrated by the lack of routine access and was sufficiently concerned in 1975-76 that it called for closer scrutiny of the Taiwanese nuclear energy program. The IAEA uncovered numerous irregularities and reportedly could not account for ten spent fuel rods in 1976. Given these findings, the United States leaned on Chiang Ching-kuo to agree that Taiwan would not acquire its own reprocessing facilities else it “fundamentally jeopardize” further US-Taiwan nuclear cooperation.¹⁶⁰ After further irregularities were discovered at the Canadian heavy water reactor, Chiang Ching-kuo announced, “We have the ability and the facilities to manufacture nuclear weapons We will never manufacture them.”¹⁶¹ Subsequently, the United States forced Taiwan to halt operations at the reactor, dismantle its reprocessing facilities, and return all US-supplied plutonium. In 1988, the United States learned from a Taiwanese defector about another unauthorized nuclear laboratory that had been opened the previous year. Taiwan agreed to shut down the facility under US threats to suspend future heavy water shipments.¹⁶² The subject of nuclear weapons reemerged after China test fired missiles over Taiwan in summer 1995, Taiwanese President Lee Teng-hui told his country’s parliament, “We should re-

¹⁵⁷ Tucker, *Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the United States*, 146.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 147.

¹⁵⁹ George Quester, “Taiwan and Nuclear Proliferation,” *Orbis* XVIII, no. 1 (Spring 1974), 146.

¹⁶⁰ David Albright and Corey Gay, “Taiwan: Nuclear nightmare averted,” *Bulletin of the Atomic Sciences* (January/February 1998), 6.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 7.

study the question [of nuclear weapons] from a long-term point of view.... Everyone knows we had the plan before.”¹⁶³

It appears the US threats to withhold vital support to Taiwan’s civil nuclear energy program proved sufficient to force Taiwan to abandon a national nuclear weapons program on at least two occasions. Chiang and his heirs were sufficiently dependent on US assistance that the prospect of losing it preempted their acquisition of nuclear weapons. At the same time, it did not preclude them from attempting to covertly develop them. Absent US pressure, Taiwan is likely to have acquired a nuclear bomb. Doing so would certainly have guaranteed Taiwanese independence.

Lessons Learned

The Taiwan case study reveals the dangers of entangling alliances. It demonstrates how security guarantees can expand over time. It also shows that a formal treaty is not necessary to deter an attack on an ally; foreign aid and arms sales provide an alternative.

Structure. The United States attempted to distance itself from Chiang Kai-shek once his failings became obvious after WWII. History intervened in the form of the Korean War and bound the United States to defending Taiwan, albeit reluctantly. Still many in Congress and much of the public favored strong relations with Taiwan who they viewed as bulwarks against a rising tide of Communism. Communist attacks on the offshore islands drove Eisenhower to formalize the security guarantee, though it lacked a degree of automaticity. To keep both sides guessing, Eisenhower and successive US administrations employed a policy of strategic ambiguity. This ambiguity was largely, though not exclusively, by design. Yet it routinely created the potential for misunderstanding, as demonstrated by successive crises in the Taiwan Straits. Miscalculation is the twin of ambiguity. Eisenhower and Dulles struggled with whether or not more explicit commitments would deter or invite an attack. In fact, the PRC documentary evidence suggests that a clear statement of US

¹⁶³ Albright and Gay, 1.

intent would have been heeded by the Communists. While the US security guarantee as articulated in the mutual defense treaty was intended to deter an attack, it actually encouraged the attack on the Dachen islands because it specifically excluded the offshore islands. H. W. Brands observes, “Had Eisenhower or Dulles stated plainly, before the issue became a center of world attention, that Taiwan itself was what they were interested in, events would not have taken them to the edge of war over territory they deemed fundamentally insignificant.”¹⁶⁴ Any ambiguity in a Middle East security guarantee will be probed for weakness and pushed to the limits.

Nonetheless, the US policy of strategic ambiguity has served the United States well. The combination of the Taiwan Relations Act, continued robust arms sales, and periodic US shows of force have continued to deter the Chinese since the United States abrogated its mutual defense treaty with Taiwan. It demonstrates that formal alliances are not necessary for an effective security guarantee.

Coupling. Security commitments, once established, often expand beyond what the defender wants. Once Chiang secured the US commitment to defend Taiwan, he was able to push the offshore islands under the security umbrella. Successive US governments were trapped to some degree by Truman’s original security guarantee. Although it had explicitly excluded those islands by treaty, Chiang and Eisenhower both concluded the United States would be compelled to engage to defend them, else lose credibility. Chiang proved the power of a small ally to dictate the terms of the relationship and manage events to his favor, at least until the strategic context shifted and Nixon realized he had bigger agenda items. Tight coupling can pull you into a conflict you don’t want to fight. The Korean War forced the United States and Taiwan into an uneasy partnership. From the beginning of the mutual defense pact, the United States was concerned that Chiang would pull them into a broader war with China. Eisenhower recognized the United States was now

¹⁶⁴ Brands, 148.

tied to “a fellow who hasn’t anything to lose.”¹⁶⁵ The case of Taiwan embodies Hans Morgenthau’s warning that “in alliances among unequals, the contributions of lesser members are at once wanted and of relatively little importance....the greatest mistake a great power can make is to let a small ally drag into war against its interests.”¹⁶⁶ It also highlights Mancur Olsen’s notion of the “exploitation of the great by the small.”¹⁶⁷ Chiang certainly demonstrated how an ally has an independent agenda that may not always comport with your own. Kennedy remarked, “Adenauer, De Gaulle and Chiang Kai-shek seemed to want to operate as makers of US policy and not allies.”¹⁶⁸ Coupling with the unsavory Chiang regime resembles many of the US relationships in the Middle East. Washington eventually decided siding with Chiang was more important than reforming his corrupt government. It will be forced to answer the same questions in the Middle East.

Assistance. The United States reinforced their extended deterrent by improving the indigenous Taiwanese capabilities through arms sales and generous military aid. The United States had to make Taiwan a credible defensive force but could not strengthen Chiang’s forces to the point that they became a self-sufficient offensive force. In a sense, the United States was deterring both China and Taiwan. The stronger partner is faced with simultaneously empowering and restraining the weaker ally. The United States made a concerted effort to bolster Taiwan’s military so that they would not have to do their fighting for them. US policy makers simultaneously pressed Chiang for assurances that these weapons would not be used offensively. With US assistance, Chiang built a 600,000-man army. The PLA had insufficient amphibious resources to overtake this robust Taiwanese force. In all likelihood, Chiang’s army was a big a deterrent as the US security guarantee. At the same time, this dependence on the United States also gave sufficient

¹⁶⁵ Chang, 105.

¹⁶⁶ Quoted in Cole, 197.

¹⁶⁷ Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), 35.

¹⁶⁸ Kochavi, 66.

leverage to persuade Taiwan to abandon a nuclear weapons program on at least two occasions. In the end, Taiwan had no other option but to attach its train to the United States.

If Taiwan serves as a guidepost, the United States will want to reinforce any security guarantee with arms sales and military aid. Importantly, the United States should seek to create maximum leverage through economic aid and possibly a civilian nuclear energy program. Taiwan abandoned its nuclear program largely because the US threatened to withdraw critical support for its civil energy programs. Lastly, US assistance was critical in reinforcing the US commitment to defend Taiwan after the mutual defense pact was broken. In the absence of the treaty, the United States was still able to demonstrate its commitment to Taiwan. Normalizing relations with the PRC took precedence over the alliance; yet, the United States took the requisite steps to ensure Taiwanese security. Though it often appeared to abandon Taipei, Washington never truly forgot them.

Deployments. A permanent stationing of large numbers of troops is not necessary in all cases. The United States only deployed a small advisory contingent to Taiwan and instead relied on Chiang's larger ground force and on a robust naval presence in the region. While the United States stationed military advisors and, at times, military forces, they were never part of an integrated command structure. The United States routinely reinforced the treaty with public pronouncements and military deployments. Shows of force or temporary deployments can effectively reinforce the security guarantee. Eisenhower's team determined to employ nuclear weapons in defense of Taiwan should it come to that, though this was before the PRC developed their own nuclear weapon. The United States reportedly backed this commitment up by deploying nuclear weapons on Taiwan; however, they always remained in US custody. The Taiwan case suggests that these maneuvers can serve as adequate signaling to both the adversary and the ally.

Chapter 3

South Korea Case Study

Your assurance that “if, in violation of armistice, ROK is subjected to unprovoked attack, you may of course count upon our immediate and automatic military reaction” meets question I have raised about this aspect of mutual defense treaty. I trust that this same principle may be extended to include contingency of an attack upon Korea by Japan.

South Korean President Syngman Rhee

This case study examines the security guarantee provided to South Korea following the Korean War. It explores the impact of significant forward troop deployments and an integrated command structure. It highlights the recurring problem of dealing with an intransigent ally. It further examines the historical relationship between Japan and Korea and describes why a Pacific Pact never emerged. Lastly, the South Korea case reveals another successful attempt by the United States to derail a clandestine national nuclear weapons program.

Post-World War II Division

The US role in Korea began with the Japanese surrender ending World War II. Finding little strategic interest in Korea, Truman had disengaged the United States by 1949, but the Communist invasion brought the United States back to the peninsula in force. The US security guarantee for South Korea, thus, is an outgrowth of World War II and a consequence of the emerging Cold War. Japan officially annexed Korea in 1910, consolidating gains won during the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95 and Russo-Japanese War of 1904. Korea was governed under Japanese colonial rule until the 1945 Japanese surrender ending World War II. At Cairo in 1943, the Allies had agreed in principle to an international trusteeship for Korea after the war. This was reaffirmed at the Potsdam Conference in July-August 1945, but Japan’s rapid defeat left Moscow and Washington scrambling for a workable solution for Korean administration

to fill the vacuum left by the defeated Japanese.¹ At the time, the United States had no forces on the Korean peninsula, but Stalin agreed to halt his Red Army at the 38th Parallel. The Soviets could have occupied the entirety of Korea, but Stalin was hoping to curry favorable consideration during Allied discussions on post-war Japan and her holdings. Both countries agreed to jointly administer Korea. President Truman saw the occupation of southern Korea as an important step in dominating post-war Japan. It would take US forces more than a month to deploy to Korea. The United States was forced to rely on Japanese civil servants to run many of the essential services until US personnel could get into place.² The US-USSR Joint Commission assumed authority in December 1945.

Truman pressed for a negotiated settlement, in line with the agreed Allied position. The Soviets on the other hand moved to install a Communist regime in the north that they hoped could dominate the Korean government after the withdrawal of all foreign forces. Truman's refusal to give Stalin a zone of occupation in Japan complicated attempts to negotiate a settlement in Korea.³ Allied negotiations drag on for years, with the political division of Korea looking increasingly permanent. US efforts to negotiate a settlement were frustrated by local political actors, namely Syngman Rhee, a right-wing nationalist who campaigned against any concessions to the Soviet Union or Communist forces in the north.⁴ Rhee systematically eliminated his more moderate rivals and forged a united opposition to an international trusteeship, blaming Washington for the divided peninsula. The United States continued to make little headway in negotiations with the Soviets or right-wing parties in the south. As unrest and violence mounted in the south, Truman decided to submit the issue for resolution by the fledgling United Nations in September 1947.⁵ Most within the US government had grown to view Korea as peripheral to US interests in the

¹ James Irving Matray, *The Reluctant Crusade: American Foreign Policy in Korea, 1941-1950* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1985), 20.

² Ibid., 53.

³ Ibid., 47.

⁴ Ibid., 62.

⁵ Matray, 123.

Pacific. A divided Korea with separate governments soon became the default position. In January 1948, the Communist party announced its intention to create a national government for the whole of Korea and encouraged its compatriots in the south to join them in resisting further US occupation.⁶

In April 1948, Truman's National Security Council determined "to establish within practicable and feasible limits conditions of support of a government established in South Korea as a means of facilitating the liquidation of the US commitment of men and money in Korea with the minimum of bad effects."⁷ The United States was looking for a way out and explicitly rejected the option of guaranteeing the "political independence and territorial integrity of South Korea by force of arms."⁸ In order to facilitate a withdrawal by the end of 1948, the United States would focus on training and equipping South Korean forces while providing economic aid to bolster the fragile new South Korean government. The National Security Council warned that the United States should not become "so irrevocably involved in the Korean situation" that it would pull US forces into another shooting war.⁹

Elections for a South Korean national assembly were held the following month, officially bringing Rhee to power in the south. The United States ended the Military Government in August 1948, and the Republic of Korea assumed governance in December 1948. However the United States postponed further troop withdrawals in November 1948 when the ROK requested the United States remain "for the time being" to guarantee internal and external defenses.¹⁰ US troop totals held fast at 7,500. A year after deciding to pull out of Korea, the National Security Council determined in March 1949 that a complete US disengagement would abandon the ROK to a Soviet-backed takeover, would be "interpreted as a betrayal," and would be a severe blow to the United Nations. Nonetheless, the Joint Chiefs of Staff found no strategic

⁶ Matray, 142.

⁷ *FRUS, 1948, Vol VI*, 1168.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 1168.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 1169.

¹⁰ *FRUS, 1949, Vol VII*, 971.

interest in Korea.¹¹ The JCS reported: “Korea is a liberated area which did not contribute to the victory and it is in the opinion of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of little strategic value. To apply the Truman Doctrine to Korea would require prodigious effort and vast expenditure far out of proportion to the benefits to be expected.”¹² The Commander-in-Chief, Far East, reported that the training and equipping of South Korean forces was “substantially complete,” and recommended proceeding with the planned withdrawal. The National Security Council recommended the United States “continue to give political and economic, technical, military, and other assistance” to the ROK.¹³ Noting the continued risk posed by Communist forces in the north, the Council advised Truman that US forces should nonetheless be withdrawn from Korea by 10 May 1949, and no later than the end of June 1949.¹⁴ Truman approved the plan and sought Congressional approval for \$150 million in aid to South Korea to ease the transition.¹⁵ Assistant Secretary of State Dean Rusk recalled, “Because of cuts in our defense budget and the paucity of American forces in general, President Truman finally sided with the Pentagon and ordered our last regimental combat team out of Korea.”¹⁶

Rhee repeatedly attempted to delay the US departure. Rhee sponsored official mass demonstrations when plans for the US withdrawal were announced, and he pressed the US Ambassador to establish a “Pacific Pact” in line with that in Europe. Rhee wanted an explicit statement of US intent to defend his regime and publicly called for Washington to define its commitment to the ROK. This infuriated Secretary of State Acheson who dug his heels in on the withdrawal and refused Rhee’s requests for additional aid.¹⁷ Truman and his advisors had concluded the ROK could be sustained without the

¹¹ *FRUS, 1949, Vol VII*, 975.

¹² Matray, 196.

¹³ *FRUS, 1949, Vol VII*, 976.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 977.

¹⁵ Matray, 197.

¹⁶ Terence Roehrig, *From Deterrence to Engagement: The U.S. Defense Commitment to South Korea* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2006), 118.

¹⁷ Matray, 191-192.

deployment of US forces on the peninsula, nor an overt security guarantee to resist by force of arms any Communist ground action against the south. Thus all US combat forces were withdrawn by 29 June 1949.

After the US withdrawal, Rhee continued to press for a multilateral alliance to confront Communist China, the Soviet Union, and their puppets in the north. He requested “a specific assurance that the United States would come to the defense of the Republic of Korea in the event of an armed attack against it.” Acheson said such a statement was “out of the question.”¹⁸ Rhee hosted Taiwan’s Chiang Kai-shek in August 1949 to consult on the formation of a “Far East Security Pact,” but Truman was unmoved by Rhee’s repeated requests for a formal security guarantee. His administration was determined to limit its assistance to the ROK to the bare minimum.¹⁹ Consequently, the United States offered no explicit security guarantee to South Korea.

Korean War

The invasion of South Korea by Communist forces on 25 June 1950 confirmed US fears of a Soviet grand design to conquer the free world. Up to that point, the United States had worked to extract itself from Korea and had mostly done so by the time of the North Korean invasion. Truman’s initial reluctance to defend the ROK was replaced by a growing recognition of the emerging Cold War with the Soviet Union. For many, Truman’s failure to formally and explicitly commit to the ROK, punctuated by a complete troop withdrawal, was viewed as a lack of commitment and opened the door to the eventual invasion. Truman had failed to establish clear redlines for US action.

The Truman Administration immediately viewed the invasion as part of the larger Cold War context. The State Department’s intelligence estimate on the day of the invasion found: “The North Korean Government is completely under Kremlin control and there is no possibility that the North Koreans acted without prior instruction from Moscow. The move against South Korea must

¹⁸ Matray, 206; *FRUS*, 1949, VII, 1058-1059.

¹⁹ Matray, 210.

therefore be considered a Soviet move.”²⁰ The report also highlighted the potential impact Soviet domination of Korea would have on Japan. The report suggested the US response in Korea would in large measure determine the future course of US-Japanese bilateral relations. It recommended “rapid and unhesitating US support for the ROK” to bolster US support within Japan and reassure the Japanese that the US was committed to defending Japan against any future Communist moves.²¹ The State Department also concluded that any “hope that the UN might become an effective international organization will have been virtually destroyed,” if the United States failed to confront the Communist aggression.²² Dean Acheson later observed, “This was an occasion upon which a perfectly clear alternative was presented to the United States, an alternative between withdrawing, retreating in front of Russian pressure brought through a satellite, or standing up and fighting and taking the consequences.”²³

President Truman echoed these sentiments in his national address the following week: “The attack on the Republic of Korea, therefore, was a clear challenge to the basic principles of the United Nations Charter and the specific actions taken by the United Nations in Korea. If this challenge had not been met squarely, the effectiveness of the United Nations would have been all but ended, and the hope of mankind that the United Nations would develop into an institution of world order would have been shattered.”²⁴ The President further stated: “The attack upon the Republic of Korea makes it plain beyond all doubt that the international communist movement is prepared to use armed invasion to conquer independent nations.”²⁵ For Truman, the war in Korea was against a global Communist threat and victory was essential for the survival of the United Nations. Long gone were the days that the ROK possessed “little strategic value.”

²⁰ *FRUS, 1950, Vol VII*, 149.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 151.

²² *Ibid.*, 154.

²³ Roehrig, 127.

²⁴ Truman, *Public Papers of the Presidents, Harry S. Truman, 1950*, 528.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 531.

UN forces regained the initiative, recaptured all lost ROK territory, and, in October 1950, pushed the Communist forces north of the 38th Parallel. The rapid advance of UN forces northward propelled the Peoples Republic of China to send more than 100,000 troops across the border to defend North Korea. The combined Communist force repelled the UN forces back into South Korea and fought to a stalemate by July 1951. Negotiations between the UN and Communist forces continued through the change of administration between Truman and Dwight Eisenhower.

Eisenhower and the Mutual Defense Treaty

Eisenhower entered office committed to ending the Korean War on favorable terms and set on cutting US defense spending. Eisenhower agreed to a mutual defense treaty with the ROK following any ceasefire. This formal, explicit security guarantee was part of the larger Cold War effort to contain Communist advances in the Pacific. As the armistice held, Eisenhower looked to reduce troop levels in Korea while simultaneously introducing tactical nuclear weapons. Negotiations with North Korea had drug on for nearly two years by the time Eisenhower took office; however, by summer 1953 the two sides had hammered out a proposed armistice. Eisenhower wrote Rhee in June stating, "The moment has now come when we must decide whether to carry on by warfare a struggle for the unification of Korea or whether to pursue this goal by political or other methods." Eisenhower concluded, "It is my profound conviction that under these circumstances acceptance of the armistice is required of the United Nations and the Republic of Korea." In an effort to entice Rhee's acceptance, Eisenhower committed to signing a mutual defense treaty "after the conclusion and acceptance of an armistice."²⁶ Ultimately, Rhee refused to agree to the negotiated terms, but Eisenhower nonetheless directed UN forces to sign the armistice on 27 July 1953. At the same time, the sixteen UN countries deployed in Korea declared "that if there is a renewal of the armed attack ... we should again be united and prompt to

²⁶ *American Foreign Policy, 1950-1955*, 2729-2730.

resist. The consequences of such a breach of the armistice would be so great that, in all probability, it would not be possible to confine hostilities within the frontiers of Korea.”²⁷ Eisenhower had determined that any renewed attack south would lead to general war, to include the employment of nuclear weapons beyond the borders of Korea.²⁸

Eisenhower would encounter the same problems with the intransigent Rhee that Truman had. Rhee continued to agitate for a renewed ROK offensive to reunify the Korean Peninsula. The Eisenhower administration was very concerned about Rhee unilaterally renewing the fighting. Eisenhower wrote Rhee on 25 July to secure a firm commitment that the ROK would adhere to the ceasefire. In his reply, Rhee acknowledged the US pledge to defend the ROK from renewed attack, but he wrote, “The question of whether your armed forces will join with ours, or of whether moral and material support will be extended to us for our own undertaking to re-unify our nation, in the event of failure of political conference, is, I understand, left for consideration in my talks with you.”²⁹ He also warned: “No matter how excellent may be motivation, when one power or a group of powers simply tell another nation what is to be done to it, or what it must do, the results can lead only to impairment of confidence.”³⁰ Clearly, Rhee had not abandoned hope of unifying Korea through renewed fighting, with or without the aid of the United States.

The US Commander in Korea requested clear guidance from Washington in the event that US-ROK relations deteriorated precipitously or should Rhee initiate unilateral action. The National Security Council met with Eisenhower in October 1953 to determine the appropriate course of action. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff reported the military was applying as much leverage on Rhee as possible. Eisenhower insisted that US and UN forces be deployed to ensure they would not automatically become involved in any ROK attack.

²⁷ *American Foreign Policy, 1950-1955*, 908.

²⁸ *FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol XV*, 1571-1572.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 1440.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

Dulles expressed his grave concerns about ROK-initiated hostilities and pushed for a written pledge from Rhee not to violate the ceasefire. He suggested pulling US troops back from the front and threats to withdraw US forces completely to encourage Rhee's commitment. If he failed to cooperate, Dulles argued that "we should have measures ready to replace him as head of the ROK."³¹

Secretary of State Dulles met with Rhee in August 1953 to discuss the mutual defense treaty. Rhee explained that he "wanted to make the treaty as strong as possible."³² He also repeatedly raised concerns about the long-term objectives of Japan: "Korean fears are that Japan is aiming at its old colonial ideas." He further commented that the Japanese would be able to "persuade the Americans that Japan needs Korea back."³³ Weeks earlier, Rhee had written Eisenhower to press the United States for a commitment that any US security guarantee "may be extended to include contingency of an attack upon Korea by Japan or another external power."³⁴ In response, Dulles assured Rhee that the proposed treaty would be consistent with similar mutual defense treaties already signed with Australia, New Zealand, and the Philippines—no more, no less.³⁵ Dulles affirmed that the treaty would defend the ROK from all aggressors and reassured him that the United States was not equipping Japan in such a way that would enable it to undertake offensive actions.³⁶ Dulles viewed the mutual defense pact with the ROK as part of a larger network of Pacific treaties. It was also a clear articulation of Administration policy to deter future aggression. Dulles stated that the treaty "will constitute a clear warning. It will make it unlikely that the Republic of Korea will be subjected to another act of unprovoked military aggression which would again involve the United States."³⁷ Noting the larger context, Dulles said, "We do not make the

³¹ *FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol XV*, 1573-1574.

³² *Ibid.*, 1472.

³³ *Ibid.*, 1472-1473.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 1440.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 1472.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 1473.

³⁷ US Department of State, *Bulletin XXIX*, no. 742, (14 Sep 1953), 339.

mistake of treating Korea as an isolated affair. The Korean War forms one part of a worldwide effort of communism to conquer freedom.”³⁸

Following the treaty signing but prior to Senate ratification, Eisenhower announced that the United States would be progressively reducing troop levels in Korea beginning with the withdrawal of two Army divisions. He cautioned that these redeployments should not be considered a loosening of the US commitment to defend South Korea from further attack and reiterated the warning that “a breach of the armistice would be so grave that, in all probability, it would not be possible to confine hostilities within the frontiers of Korea.”³⁹

Dulles and Rhee released a joint statement on 8 August 1953, detailing the mutual defense treaty for the first time in public. The United States recognized the common objective of “the reunification of Korea.” At the same time, the ROK “agreed to take no unilateral action to unite Korea by military means” for at least 90 days during which the US and ROK had proposed a political conference with the North Koreans.⁴⁰ The United States signed the treaty at a White House ceremony on 1 October 1953. Dulles assured Eisenhower that “an armed attack by either party does not obligate the other to come to its assistance.”⁴¹ Article III of the treaty stated: “Each Party recognizes that an armed attack in the Pacific area on either of the Parties in territories now under their respective administrative control, or hereafter recognized by one of the Parties as lawfully brought under the administrative control of the other, would be dangerous to its own peace and safety and declares that it would act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes.” This specific language was selected for two important reasons. First, it bounded the treaty to currently held territories and not those that might be retaken by the ROK. Second, the “constitutional processes” phrase was included to forestall any resistance in the Senate where many members

³⁸ Roehrig, 130.

³⁹ *American Foreign Policy, 1950-1955*, 2733.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 898, 900.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 901.

felt the North Atlantic Treaty overstepped Congressional authority by binding the United States to defend foreign lands without the requisite Constitutional authorizations.

Eisenhower transmitted the US-ROK treaty to the Senate in January 1954 calling it “another link in the collective security of the free nations of the Pacific.”⁴² The Senate had already approved the three mutual defense treaties with the Philippines, Australia, and New Zealand on 20 March 1952. In considering the treaty, the Senate noted that the United States was not obligated to provide internal security for the South Korean government, nor required to station US troops in the country.⁴³ The Senate also pressed for the formation of a “Pacific Pact” akin to NATO, but Dulles countered that the cultural and political differences and physical separation made the Pacific a very different case than Europe.⁴⁴ Ultimately, the Senate would ratify the treaty but not without one caveat. Concerned that Rhee may initiate hostilities, the Senate added a rider that stated, “It is the understanding of the United States that neither party is obligated, under Article III of the above Treaty, to come to the aid of the other except in case of an external armed attack against such party.”⁴⁵ In an 81-6 vote, the Senate consented to the treaty on 26 January 1954.⁴⁶

Eisenhower officially terminated all US combatant activities in Korea on 31 January 1955.⁴⁷ By the following May, only two US Army divisions remained in Korea, down from eight combat divisions at the time of the ceasefire.⁴⁸ The United States sent roughly \$700 million annually to the ROK over the next several years. Eisenhower, as he was want to do, grew concerned about the size of the US contingent and the level of US assistance being

⁴² Eisenhower, *Public Papers of the President, Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1954*, 45.

⁴³ *American Foreign Policy, 1950-1955*, 906.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 911.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 898.

⁴⁶ Roehrig, 165.

⁴⁷ *American Foreign Policy, 1950-1955*, 2736.

⁴⁸ Roehrig, 176.

provided. US troops reached a high of 63,000 in the 1950s.⁴⁹ The President thought that Rhee was attempting to maintain too large a force structure, and he was “personally convinced that we did not need as many men as were now under arms in South Korea.”⁵⁰ The central problem in reducing troop levels was Paragraph 13-d of the armistice which precluded any party from introducing weapons into Korea beyond those as of July 1953. Qualitative arms improvements would have allowed further troop reductions, but these were banned under the terms of the ceasefire. Nonetheless, the Pentagon pressed for modernizing US forces in Korea, which would have entailed the deployment of dual-purpose weapons capable of delivering tactical nuclear weapons. Deputy Defense Secretary Donald Quarles argued that modernizing US and ROK forces would allow further US troop reductions and would provide the necessary leverage to press the South Koreans to reduce their force structure.⁵¹ Additionally, the Joint Chiefs of Staff argued that tactical nuclear weapons were essential to brunt a Communist offensive and to prevent US forces from being overrun. Admiral Radford said the Joint Chiefs “simply could not see their way to assure the security of US forces in Korea unless we were in a position to equip our forces there with the complete list of modern weapons.”⁵² Dulles agreed that modern weapons should be sent to Korea in light of Soviet actions doing the same, but he feared introducing the large nuclear artillery would inflame tensions.⁵³ Eisenhower approved the modernizing of US forces, to include nuclear capable jet aircraft, but he hedged on the larger nuclear artillery. The President directed the Pentagon to make public the US intention to introduce modern weapons and leave it at that.⁵⁴ On 21 June 1957, the Defense Department announced that it no longer considered Paragraph 13-d binding in light of the “flagrant and long-continued

⁴⁹ Roehrig, 163.

⁵⁰ *FRUS, 1955-1957, Vol XXIII*, 310, 312.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 446.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 448.

⁵³ *FRUS, 1955-1957, Vol XXIII*, 445.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 450-451.

disregard by the Communist side of its obligations.”⁵⁵ The Department of the Army continued to press the White House for authorization to deploy the nuclear “Honest John rocket and 280mm gun.”⁵⁶ In August, the National Security Council agreed to deploy a minimum of two US infantry divisions and one fighter-bomber wing through the end of 1958. The Council held out the possibility of introducing nuclear weapons as part of a larger plan to cut ROK forces.⁵⁷ In December 1957, Eisenhower finally approved the deployment “as soon as feasible under Army deployment schedules.”⁵⁸ Ultimately, Eisenhower replaced US ground troops with tactical nuclear weapons, part of his larger New Look effort to cut force structure and rely on the nuclear deterrent.

Vietnam and Its Aftermath

The conflict in Vietnam presented both opportunities and challenges for the US-ROK defense pact. It severely tested US resolve in Asia and ultimately compelled the United States to pull back in the Pacific. Internal political instability also threatened to derail the partnership. In 1961, Major General Park Chung Hee led a military coup that overthrew Singman Rhee. Washington condemned the coup to little effect, but the Kennedy Administration was able to convince Park to stand for election. He did and won in 1963, 1967, and 1971. He then abolished popular elections and remained in power until he was assassinated in 1979.⁵⁹ During his tenure, Park begrudged the ROK’s dependency on the United States, but he nonetheless recognized the importance of maintaining the relationship and the US security guarantee. The ROK, unlike Japan with its Constitutional limitations, was able to support US operations in Vietnam. In 1964, Park sent more than two thousand military support personnel to Vietnam. The following year he deployed another 18 thousand troops, including an infantry division and Marine brigade. In 1966, the ROK increased total troop strength in Vietnam

⁵⁵ Department of State, *Bulletin* XXXVII, no. 941, (8 July 1957), 58.

⁵⁶ *FRUS, 1955-1957, Vol XXIII*, 464-465.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 493

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 533.

⁵⁹ Don Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History* (Indianapolis, IN: Basic Books, 1997), 33.

over 47 thousand, by adding a second infantry division. The deployment strengthened the bilateral relationship and demonstrated ROK military capabilities. President Johnson “expressed the admiration of the American people for Korea’s major contribution to the struggle in Vietnam.” At the same time, he reaffirmed “the readiness and determination of the United States to render prompt and effective assistance to defeat an armed attack against the Republic of Korea.”⁶⁰

Tensions spiked in 1967-68 due to repeated North Korean provocations along the demilitarized zone.⁶¹ In January 1968, the North Koreans seized the *USS Pueblo*, an intelligence collection vessel in international waters. One crew member was killed and the remaining 82 were held captive for nearly a year before being released. In April 1969, a North Korean fighter airplane shot down a US Navy reconnaissance airplane, killing all 31 Americans onboard. The United States elected not to respond to any of the hostile acts, hoping to avoid any escalation with the North Koreans while attempting to bring the war in Vietnam to a conclusion. The restrained US response to these numerous provocations and the looming failure in Vietnam caused alarm amongst Park and his advisors. Would the United States be willing and able to defense the ROK against another Communist attack? President Nixon exacerbated these fears during a visit to the region in July 1969.

While visiting Guam, Richard Nixon announced what became known as the Nixon Doctrine: the United States would henceforth expect Asian nations to increasingly shoulder the burden of self-defense. Nixon said the United States would continue to be engaged in Asia and would fulfill its treaty obligations but that it would progressively reduce military aid, assistance, and deployments to the region.⁶² Subsequently, Nixon ordered the withdrawal of one of the two remaining infantry divisions from Korea and the redeployment of the other away from the demilitarized zone. Park called Nixon’s comments on Guam “a

⁶⁰ Roehrig, 132.

⁶¹ Ibid., 134.

⁶² Richard M. Nixon, *Public Papers of the Presidents, Richard Nixon, 1969* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1971), 549, 551, 552.

message to the Korean people that we won't rescue you if North Korea invades again." The United States initiated a military modernization program for the ROK to offset the troop cuts and attempt to allay Park's concerns.⁶³ The \$1.25 billion program included the sale of F-4 aircraft, M-48 main battle tanks, armored personnel carriers, artillery, and surface-to-surface missiles.⁶⁴ Fearing US withdrawals from Vietnam and Korea may embolden the North Koreans, the United States adjusted its war plans to include a counteroffensive that would capture Pyongyang rather than settle for a return to the pre-conflict status quo.⁶⁵ Nonetheless, Nixon's troop withdrawals and stated policy shook the ROK's confidence in their US ally.

Prospects for improved confidence made a turn for the worse with the election of Jimmy Carter. Carter pledged during the 1976 Presidential campaign to withdraw all US forces from South Korea, fueled largely by Carter's distaste for Park's human rights record in South Korea. Upon taking office, he moved to do just that. By 1977, US forces in Korea totaled 39,000 including one infantry division and multiple air wings.⁶⁶ The interagency Korea planning team was advised to determine how to implement the Presidentially-directed withdrawal and not to comment on whether or not it should be undertaken in the first place.⁶⁷ There was no room for discussion. In April 1977, over the objections of his Secretaries of State and Defense, Carter ordered the withdrawal of six thousand troops by the end of 1978, an additional nine thousand in mid-1980, and the remainder by 1981-82. None of these moves were predicated upon North Korean or South Korean actions; they were to be unilateral and unconditional.⁶⁸ For his part, Park pressed for the United States to turn over its equipment when departing and to delay the planned withdrawal schedule. In October 1977, Carter informed Congress of

⁶³ Roehrig, 133.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 173.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 183.

⁶⁶ William G. Gleysteen, Jr., *Massive Entanglement, Marginal Influence: Carter and Korea in Crisis* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1999), 21.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 23.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 24.

his plan. Citing the ROK's impressive record of economic growth, Carter stated: "I have concluded that the withdrawal of US ground combat forces from Korea over a four-to-five year period can be accomplished in a manner which will not endanger the security of the Republic of Korea." He pledged to retain US air and support units and sought Congressional approval to transfer \$800 million of equipment to ROK forces upon withdrawal.⁶⁹ Carter also pledged \$1.9 billion in aid would be provided "in advance of or parallel to the withdrawals."⁷⁰

However events transpired to derail Carter's troop withdrawal. He faced stiff resistance from Capitol Hill, angry about not being consulted prior to the decision. The *Washington Post* had reported in 1976 that 90 members of Congress had taken some \$1 million in bribes from a South Korean agent. "Koreagate" soon hamstrung Congress from considering any changes to Korea policy.⁷¹ Simultaneously, the US intelligence community uncovered evidence suggesting North Korean force totals were much higher than had been previously assessed.⁷² Consequently, Carter was forced to abandon his planned troop redeployment, making the public announcement in July 1979. Carter's ambassador to the ROK later observed, "Fortunately, the policy was abandoned before it caused fundamental damage."⁷³ In the end, Carter reduced US troop totals in Korea by only 3,000. He did pull out 450 nuclear weapons and consolidated the remaining 250 at Kunsan Air Base.⁷⁴ Surprisingly, US weapons sales to the ROK during the Carter years exceeded those of any other administration to that point. Transfers included F-4, F-5, and F-16 fighters, C-130 airlifters, Sidewinder and Sparrow air-to-air missiles, and advanced radar systems.⁷⁵ Carter also transferred greater command

⁶⁹ Jimmy Carter, *Public Papers of the Presidents, Jimmy Carter, 1977* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1977), 1822-1823.

⁷⁰ Oberdorfer, 91.

⁷¹ Roehrig, 137.

⁷² Gleysteen, 26.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁷⁴ Oberdorfer, 108.

⁷⁵ Roehrig, 174.

authority to the South Koreans. Since the June 1950 invasion, ROK forces had been commanded by UN and then US commanders when at war. In peacetime, the ROK retained command authority. Carter moved ROK generals into more senior positions within the command structure, though the United States continued to dominate the key positions.⁷⁶

Amidst growing internal unrest and displeasure with the repressive governing regime, the director of the ROK Central Intelligence Agency shot and killed President Park at his residence on 26 October 1979. He was quickly arrested and hung with several of his co-conspirators. In the aftermath of Park's assassination, a military contingent led by Major General Chun Doo Hwan seized power in December 1979.⁷⁷ Chun's military government cracked down on political opposition and declared martial law throughout the ROK in an attempt to squelch growing mass protests throughout the country. Events reached a crescendo in May 1980 when government forces killed nearly a thousand protesters in the city of Kwangju.⁷⁸

Renewing the Commitment

In the aftermath of Carter's failed bid to withdraw all US ground troops from Korea and the general political instability inside the ROK following Park's assassination, Ronald Reagan moved quickly to stabilize the situation upon taking office in 1980. He welcomed ROK President Chun as the first foreign head of state to visit the Reagan White House in February 1981. After the visit, Chun reported that "President Reagan gave me firm assurances that the United States has no intention of withdrawing the American forces from Korea."⁷⁹ The two presidents also "pledged to uphold the mutual obligations embodied in the United States-Korea Mutual Defense Treaty of 1954."⁸⁰ Reagan's decision to host Chun after the Kwangju Massacre was widely resented amongst South Korean reformers; however, Reagan was ultimately able to press Chun to hold

⁷⁶ Roehrig, 184-185.

⁷⁷ Gleysteen, 77.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 131.

⁷⁹ Ronald Reagan, *Public Papers of the President, Ronald Reagan, 1981* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1982), 68.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 69.

elections in 1987, marking the first peaceful transition of governments in South Korean history.⁸¹ In an effort to further bolster ROK defenses, Reagan upgraded US forces on the peninsula with new A-10 and F-16 aircraft, artillery pieces, and antitank missiles. The Pentagon also deployed nuclear capable Lance surface-to-surface missiles in 1987.⁸² Reagan also sold the ROK \$4.31 billion in military hardware, nearly matching the total US sales since the Korean War.⁸³ Reagan also increased US troop totals from 37,000 to 43,000.⁸⁴

North Korea's attempts to acquire nuclear weapons gave an added sense of urgency to the US-ROK alliance. North Korea signed the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty in 1985 at the same time US intelligence was uncovering significant North Korean efforts to acquire a nuclear weapon. In the late-1980s, North Korea reportedly produced enough weapons-grade plutonium for two nuclear devices.⁸⁵ President George H.W. Bush pressed North Korea to "implement in full all IAEA safeguards for its nuclear facilities without exception."⁸⁶ Washington's pressure produced few dividends. At the same time, Bush announced in September 1991 the United States' intention to unilaterally recall its worldwide inventory of ground launched theater nuclear weapons. In July 1992, Bush reported that the United States had completed these redeployments.⁸⁷ In 1991, Bush also cut troop strength from 44,000 to 37,500.

The Clinton Administration inherited the problem of an emerging nuclear-armed North Korea. Clinton eventually secured a North Korean commitment to denuclearize, known as the 1994 Agreed Framework. Nevertheless, North Korea continued to develop nuclear-capable long-range

⁸¹ Roehrig, 138.

⁸² Ibid., 172.

⁸³ Ibid., 174.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 176.

⁸⁵ Jonathan Pollack and Mitchell Reiss, "South Korea: The Tyranny of Geography and the Vexations of History," *The Nuclear Tipping Point: Why States Reconsider Their Nuclear Choices* ed. Kurt Cambell, Robert Einhorn, and Mitchell Reiss. (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2004), 255.

⁸⁶ Roehrig, 141.

⁸⁷ George Bush, *Public Papers of the Presidents, George Bush, 1992-93* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1993), 1062.

missiles, eventually test-firing one over Japan in 1998. The United States contemplated military strikes against North Korean nuclear facilities. The Korea war plan was updated in 1998 to include preemptive strikes should a North Korean invasion appear imminent. It also included provisions for limited strikes against North Korea's nuclear weapons infrastructure and leadership facilities.⁸⁸ ROK President Kim Dae Jung was adamantly opposed, telling Clinton, "You are trying to fulfill your objectives by fighting war in our country ... [You] would never be allowed to start bombing on our soil."⁸⁹ In a strange role reversal, the ROK was now concerned about US unilateral attacks against North Korea. Kim was pursuing an alternate policy. In an effort to seek reconciliation with North Korea in the late 1990s, Kim initiated his "sunshine policy" which promised peace between the two countries and pledged substantial economic aid to North Korea. Despite Kim's official visit to Pyongyang in 2000, the ROK olive branch produced few concrete results.⁹⁰

After numerous starts and stops, North Korea eventually abandoned the agreement, left the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, kicked-out all international atomic inspectors, and restarted its nuclear weapons program in 2002.⁹¹ The second Bush Administration proposed cutting one third of US troops in Korea, reducing levels further to 25,000.⁹² The Pentagon also ordered the remaining US forces to redeploy further south and away from the DMZ.⁹³ The proposal included \$11 billion in weapons sales to offset the troop reductions. The Pentagon also deployed stealth fighters to the ROK in 2004 as a show of force and visible commitment to maintaining peace in Korea.⁹⁴ Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld also restated "the provision of a nuclear umbrella for the ROK."⁹⁵ Nonetheless, the plans for withdrawal and redeployment away from

⁸⁸ Roehrig, 183.

⁸⁹ Pollack and Reiss, 280.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 256.

⁹¹ Roehrig, 146.

⁹² Ibid., 163.

⁹³ Pollack and Reiss, 267.

⁹⁴ Roehrig, 178.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 192.

the DMZ caused consternation within the ROK. On the one hand, US withdrawals stoked fears of abandonment, while on the other, redeployments south threatened to remove US troops out of the path of any initial North Korean onslaught, opening the way for preemptive strikes against North Korean nuclear facilities.⁹⁶

South Korea's Nuclear Weapons Program

South Korea joined the International Atomic Energy Agency in 1957. The ROK acquired a research reactor in 1962 and began work on a commercial reactor in 1970. All of these activities were covered by the relevant IAEA safeguards. South Korea has remained dependent on US nuclear fuel production, a source of some consternation given Japan's relative nuclear autonomy. By the mid-2000s, South Korea had 28 nuclear power reactors in operation or under construction, producing nearly 40 percent of all South Korean energy requirements.⁹⁷ According to one of Park's senior advisors, Park determined to acquire the capability to indigenously produce nuclear weapons following Nixon's announcement that the United States would withdraw one of the two remaining US Army divisions from South Korea.⁹⁸ Equally disconcerting was Nixon's rapid abandonment of Taiwan, a country in a very similar position as South Korea.⁹⁹ Park harbored a deep distrust of the United States and scoffed at the US surveillance to which he was subjected.¹⁰⁰ Park had not decided to produce a nuclear bomb but wanted the ability to do so in short order. He was not only concerned about North Korea, but Japan as well. One of his advisors said that "Park wished to have the [nuclear] card to deal with other governments."¹⁰¹

In 1970, the ROK established the Weapons Exploitation Committee, a "covert, ad hoc governmental committee responsible ... for [nuclear] weapons

⁹⁶ Pollack and Reiss, 269.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 259.

⁹⁸ Oberdorfer, 68.

⁹⁹ Pollack and Reiss, 262.

¹⁰⁰ Oberdorfer, 33.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 69.

procurement and production.”¹⁰² President Park was briefed by a team of 20 nuclear scientists at least once a month. The group completed long-term planning in 1973 and recommended that the ROK proceed with a 6-10 year nuclear weapons program at a cost of \$2 billion.¹⁰³ The biggest challenge for South Korea was acquiring fissile material. They were forced to attempt to clandestinely import the requisite technology from outside of the ROK.¹⁰⁴ In 1972, Park began collaborating with France to design a plant capable of producing enough plutonium annually to equip two nuclear weapons. Canada and Belgium were also approached. In 1973, South Korea began recruiting nuclear experts and acquiring nuclear-related equipment. Following India’s nuclear test in 1974, the US Embassy in Seoul assessed that the ROK “is proceeding with initial phases of a nuclear weapons development program” capable of producing an indigenous device within ten years.¹⁰⁵ Secretary of State Kissinger reported to President Gerald Ford, “ROK possession of nuclear weapons would have major destabilizing effect in an area which not only Japan but USSR, PRC and ourselves are directly involved. It could lead to Soviet or Chinese assurance of nuclear weapons support to North Korea in event of conflict.” Kissinger further assessed that the ROK nuclear weapons program “has been in part a reflection of lessened ROK government confidence in US security commitment, and consequent desire on Park’s part to reduce his military dependence on US.”¹⁰⁶

Consequently, the United States determined “to discourage ROK effort in this area and to inhibit to the fullest possible extent any ROK development of a nuclear explosive capability or delivery system.”¹⁰⁷ The US government pressured France to halt their collaboration with the ROK, but the French refused. In a June 1975 press interview, Park claimed, “We have the capability. If the US nuclear umbrella were to be removed, we have to start

¹⁰² Pollack and Reiss, 262.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 262.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 260.

¹⁰⁵ Oberdorfer, 69.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 70.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

developing our nuclear capability to save ourselves.”¹⁰⁸ That August, Defense Secretary James Schlesinger advised Park that a national ROK nuclear weapons program would affect relations between the two countries. Once the ROK officially contracted with France to produce the nuclear plant, the United States employed both carrots and sticks to convince the ROK to abandon its nuclear weapons program. If Seoul would cancel the contract, Washington would guarantee access to US reprocessing for civilian purposes and also pledged other scientific and technical incentives. At the same time, the United States moved to block international financing for the ROK civilian nuclear program. The United States also placed the entire bilateral relationship on the line. The US Ambassador informed Park that at issue was “whether Korea is prepared to jeopardize the availability of the best technology and largest financing capacity which only the United States could offer, as well as a vital partnership with the United States, not only in nuclear and scientific areas but in broad political and security areas.”¹⁰⁹ Confronted with this massive US opposition, Park conceded and cancelled the French contract.

However following Carter’s election and promised full withdrawal, Seoul again looked to restart its nuclear weapons program. In 1978, the ROK again entered into negotiations with France to develop a nuclear facility; however, President Carter pressed the French prime minister to halt the discussions. However, the Commander of the South Korean Defense Security Command claimed Park told him in September 1978 that the nuclear weapons program was 95 percent complete. Park reportedly boasted in January 1979 that the ROK “can complete development of a nuclear bomb by the first half of 1981.”¹¹⁰ To date, there is no evidence that South Korea has acquired nuclear weapons, though it remains distinctly capable of doing so given its technological capacity and national wealth. Jonathan Pollack and Mitchell Reiss argue that the “fear of abandonment by an inconsistent United States was the primary

¹⁰⁸ Oberdorfer, 71.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 72.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 73.

motivation for Seoul's attempts during the 1970s to acquire nuclear weapons."¹¹¹ The threat of losing the US nuclear umbrella pushed Park into a clandestine national program and only the threat of a full rupture in relations kept South Korea from acquiring a device.

Lessons Learned

The South Korean case explores the impact of forward troop deployments and demonstrates why a multilateral framework is sometimes not feasible.

Structure. For nearly forty years, the US security guarantee has deterred Communist aggression. It has also provided the requisite leverage to forestall a national South Korean nuclear weapons program. Truman's initial dismissal of South Korea's strategic importance was discarded once the Korean War emerged as the first true test of both the United States' containment strategy and the fledgling United Nations. In essence, the United States was forced into a commitment because of the Cold War context. After the war, the United States codified its commitment with a formal mutual defense treaty. The Eisenhower Administration resisted calls for a "Pacific Pact" similar to NATO, noting the cultural differences and geographic separation amongst US allies in the Pacific. The historical animosity between Korea and Japan drove adoption of a bilateral framework. At the time of the treaty's signing, the ROK viewed Japan as an enemy, not as an ally. Rhee wanted the United States to commit to defending South Korea not only from North Korea, the PRC, or USSR but also from Japan. There are significant parallels between Japan and Israel. Any US security guarantee to a Middle Eastern ally that explicitly includes defense against an attack by Israel would meet stiff resistance from Israel and, more importantly, the US Congress. Similarly, crafting a multilateral regional framework that formally includes Israel will be impossible. Just as the Pacific Pact was untenable, so would any comprehensive Middle East Pact. The integrated command structure afforded a great deal of control over ROK forces. An integrated US-Arab force to confront Iran would send a powerful signal,

¹¹¹ Pollack and Reiss, 264.

deepen US regional leverage, and ensure US arms sales and military assistance were used as intended. That said, the likelihood of that happening is remote. Besides, the United States should avoid such an explicit commitment.

Credibility. Despite the formal treaty-based security guarantee, which was reinforced by significant forward-deployed US troops and tactical nuclear weapons, Park still felt compelled to initiate a clandestine national nuclear weapons program. The Nixon Doctrine and subsequent troop cuts coupled with the perceived abandonment of Taiwan, pushed Park to explore greater self-sufficiency. The perceived reduction in US reliability precipitated the initiation of South Korea's nuclear weapons program. As an aside, it is interesting to consider that North Korea's acquisition of nuclear weapons has not propelled South Korea to restart its own nuclear weapons program.

Coupling. The United States was very concerned that ROK President Rhee would unilaterally restart the fighting and pull the United States into another shooting war that it did not want to fight. While the integrated command structure allowed for some degree of control, the White House drew up plans to remove Rhee by force if he moved against the north. Additionally, at various times throughout the US-ROK relationship, the United States has had to overlook Rhee, Park, and Chun's political repression. Confronting the Iranian threat and capping the spread of nuclear weapons will require similar decisions by the United States.

Assistance. Throughout the bilateral relationship, the United States has provided significant economic and military aid to reinforce its troop deployments and declaratory policy. This aid created a dependency that allowed, in large part, the United States to force Park to abandon his nuclear weapons program. The ROK was sufficiently dependent, militarily and economically, on the United States that it could not afford to go it alone. Only the threat of a complete rupture in US-ROK relations persuaded Park to abandon the effort. The United States should seek to leverage a similar dependency in the Middle East; however, the national wealth of the Arab allies will make this more difficult to do. The United States must offer technical and

scientific access that cannot be produced indigenously or by a different ally. The threat of a full breach of relations only carries weight if the relationship is vital to begin with.

Deployment. The US presence in the region is an essential backstop to any security guarantee. US troop deployments in South Korea have been a visible sign of the US commitment to defend the ROK for nearly 50 years. The Korean War drove the introduction of those troops and the immediate security situation dictated they remain. The United States continued to station US ground troops in the ROK after the armistice; however, withdrawals by Eisenhower, Nixon, and Carter shook the ROK's confidence in the US commitment. Any re-deployments out of the country or away from the DMZ only stoked fears of abandonment. Troop reductions are viewed, as intended or not, as a reduction in the US commitment to defend South Korea. The United States is in the midst of a post-war drawdown in Iraq. It must determine the value of maintaining some footprint as a trip wire to deter Iranian aggression and bolster Iraqi confidence. Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons is likely to force a reassessment of the current force structure plans. The United States likely will look to maintain some force level in the country, at least for the time being. At the same time, the case of South Korea demonstrates the enduring political pressure US leaders face to cut costs and redeploy US troops home.

Chapter 4

A New Middle East Security Framework

'Tis our true policy to steer clear of permanent alliances with any portion of the foreign world; so far, I mean, as we are now at liberty to do it; for let me not be understood as capable of patronizing infidelity to existing engagements. I hold the maxim no less applicable to public than to private affairs, that honesty is always the best policy. I repeat it, therefore, let those engagements be observed in their genuine sense. But, in my opinion, it is unnecessary and would be unwise to extend them.

George Washington

How do the lessons learned from these cases inform the formulation of US policy for the Middle East? In total, they suggest the United States should proceed cautiously but deliberately in confronting a nuclear-Iran. The United States should steer clear of any binding security commitments in the Middle East. It must address the legitimate security concerns of its regional allies, but it should do so in a way that minimizes the US commitment. There should be no formal mutual defense treaties or multilateral alliances. Instead, the United States should offer a broad unilateral commitment to defend regional security and its allies. This should be coupled with private bilateral security assurances. These minimal security guarantees must be reinforced with small-scale US troop deployments, defensive weapons sales, and ample foreign assistance. Ultimately these steps may fall short in convincing its allies to refrain from nuclear weapons; therefore, the United States should be prepared to communicate the consequences of its allies abandoning their nonproliferation commitments. Lastly, the US extended deterrent regime must be nested within a larger US government effort to confront a nuclear-armed Iran.

Beware Entangling Alliances

The United States should avoid binding security commitments in the Middle East. Following the first Gulf War, the United States developed a series of bilateral relationships with its Arab allies. In exchange for informal security guarantees, these countries allowed US forces and equipment to be stationed in their country. Though not fully disclosed to the public, these relationships were critical to the US war effort in both Afghanistan and Iraq. However, Iran's pending acquisition of nuclear weapons joins a growing list of threats to this bilateral framework that the United States uses to manage its relations in the Middle East. A perceived decline in US influence and power in the region matched by a growing anti-Americanism, strengthened Islamist movements throughout the region, and encroachment by other major powers into a traditional US sphere of influence all threaten to derail the current structure.¹

As the United States looks to a new Middle East security framework, it should not seek formal mutual defense treaties with any of its Middle East allies nor should it be a member of any regional alliance to confront Iran. The United States should seek to maximize its flexibility and freedom of action in the region while minimizing close coupling with any of the Middle East regimes. When the United States enters into a formal treaty with another country it places its credibility on the line. It also forfeits a large measure of control. As the preceding case studies illustrated, dealing with allies can be difficult. They have their own distinct national interests and agendas and often pursue courses contrary to US wishes. Frustrated with the intransigence of his allies, Kennedy once remarked, "Adenauer, De Gaulle and Chiang Kai-shek seemed to want to operate as makers of US policy and not allies."²

Security guarantees tend to expand beyond their initial limits. They often pull the defender into fights it does not want to fight. The case of Taiwan and the offshore islands illustrates this point clearly. Eisenhower was initially

¹ James A. Russell, "A Tipping Point Realized? Nuclear Proliferation in the Persian Gulf and Middle East," *Contemporary Security Policy* 29, no. 3, (December 2008), 527-528.

² Noam Kochavi, *A Conflict Perpetuated: China Policy During the Kennedy Years* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002), 66.

reluctant to defend any of the offshore islands, intentionally limiting the territory covered in the mutual defense treaty to “Taiwan and the Pescadores.” Although Eisenhower convinced Chiang to abandon the Dachen Islands, the Nationalist leader refused to withdraw from Quemoy and Matsu, despite intense US pressure to do so. In time, Eisenhower acquiesced to the idea of defending the islands to show support for Chiang and sustain the morale of his Nationalist forces. Thus the United States was forced into defending islands explicitly excluded from the security umbrella because their ally refused to cooperate. When Chiang deliberately reinforced the islands after the first crisis to garner further US protection, Eisenhower again was forced to commit to the nuclear defense of these relatively insignificant outposts. As Chiang demonstrated, an ally can easily put the United States in a position where it has to act—or lose credibility. The French nuclear weapon acted in a similar fashion. France’s nuclear arsenal was designed, in part, to ensure the United States would employ its nuclear weapons in the event of a full-scale Soviet invasion of Western Europe. By launching its small fleet of nuclear weapons, France could guarantee the Soviets and United States, in turn, would do likewise. France could in essence unilaterally commit US nuclear forces.

The United States must be aware that any US security guarantee may encourage their Gulf allies to take a more aggressive posture with Iran than they otherwise would. This “Titanic Effect” may embolden them to take bigger chances, secure in the knowledge that the United States will be there to defend them. Much as it did with Taiwan and South Korea, the United States must avoid having the junior partner drive the situation on the ground. In Chiang, Eisenhower recognized the United States was now tied to “a fellow who hasn’t anything to lose.”³ The case studies reinforce Hans Morgenthau’s caution against letting small allies pull it into a war it should not fight. Chiang

³ Gordon Chang, “To the Nuclear Brink: Eisenhower, Dulles, and the Quemoy-Matsu Crisis,” *International Security* 12, no. 4 (Spring 1988), 105.

certainly demonstrated Mancur Olsen's notion of the "exploitation of the great by the small."⁴

There are numerous flashpoints for conflict between Iran and its neighbors that could embroil the United States. There is an ongoing dispute between Iran and the United Arab Emirates over several Gulf islands. Iran has occupied the Greater and Lesser Tunbs and Abu Musa islands to which the UAE also lays claim.⁵ Iran is believed to be backing Shia minorities in the Gulf States, exacerbating internal tensions between the ruling Sunni majorities and minority Shiites. Iran and Qatar are competing to develop their shared gas field in the Persian Gulf and both are negotiating to provide natural gas to India and Pakistan. A nuclear-armed Iran could bully foreign investors into limiting their investments in any Qatari projects.⁶ Despite both countries having majority Shia populations, Iran and Iraq nonetheless are not historical allies. There is good reason to believe the Arab-Persian divide holds more sway than the religious affinity between the two countries. Both harbor resentment from the Iran-Iraq war, and Iraqi voters have demonstrated a willingness to reject Iran's preferred political parties during multiple rounds of elections. A nuclear armed Iran will serve as a major threat to any Iraqi government hoping to retain its autonomy and sovereignty.

Richard L. Russell warns "that extending American security guarantees to Saudi Arabia and the small GCC states to come to their defense in any and all circumstances—most, if not all of which, will be unforeseen—is too rigid a security commitment for the United States."⁷ He argues that any security commitments should retain the requisite flexibility to allow future US

⁴ Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), 35.

⁵ Richard L. Russell, "Arab Security Responses to a Nuclear-Ready Iran," *Getting Ready for a Nuclear-Ready Iran* ed. by Henry Sokolski and Patrick Clawson. (Carlisle, PA: US Army War College 2005), 35.

⁶ Kenneth R. Timmerman, "The Day After Iran Gets the Bomb," *Getting Ready for a Nuclear-Ready Iran* ed. by Henry Sokolski and Patrick Clawson. (Carlisle, PA: US Army War College 2005), 122.

⁷ Richard L. Russell, "The Persian Gulf's Collective-Security Mirage," *Middle East Policy* XII, no. 4 (Winter 2005), 86.

Presidents to decide each case on its merits. Some degree of binding will be necessary to reassure US allies in the Middle East; however, the United States should seek to limit the extent of this coupling.

Fortunately, formal treaty relationships are not a prerequisite for an effective extended deterrent regime. The case of Taiwan demonstrates this point. Truman's unilateral security guarantee following the start of the Korean War and the Taiwan Relations Act passed after the US-Taiwan treaty was abrogated were both sufficient to deter Chinese aggression short of a formal mutual defense pact. In fact, Huth and Russett's study of US extended deterrence suggests formal alliances are largely irrelevant in determining the success or failure of the security guarantee. After examining 20th century US extended deterrent cases, they found that the "existence of a formal military alliance played no positive role, and, if not backed up by more tangible ties, actually worked against the success of the deterrent."⁸ In other words, the formal alliance actually proved detrimental if not supported by other reinforcing measures.

George and Smoke also remind us that "a nation's existing treaty commitments are no sure guide to its actions should deterrence be challenged."⁹ History is littered with broken treaties. Conversely, the initial contours of a security guarantee matter little: "Commitments that are perfunctory, weak, or limited may become stronger as new developments increase the value attached to the independence of a weak ally by the protecting power."¹⁰ Taiwan and South Korea are examples of just that. Truman had determined to withdraw US support for both countries but Communist advances eventually forced the United States to become their security guarantor nonetheless. Thus a treaty is neither necessary nor sufficient for a successful extended deterrent.

⁸ Paul Huth and Bruce Russett, "What Makes Deterrence Work? Cases from 1900 to 1980," *World Politics* 36, no. 4 (July 1984), 524.

⁹ Alexander George and Richard Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974), 555.

¹⁰ George and Smoke, 555-556.

In any event, formal defense pacts are largely unwanted in the Middle East despite a growing chorus calling for them. In contrast to the current bilateral approach, Kenneth Pollack and others have argued for a regional security structure which would formalize a multilateral dialogue and institute confidence-building measures, in hopes of creating a robust Middle East arms-control framework.¹¹ Michael Ryan Kraig suggests a Gulf Regional Security Forum that would “wrap the Gulf parties in a web of interlinked security arrangements that could be adapted or expanded as necessary.”¹² The only current organization poised to perform such a collective security role is the Gulf Cooperation Council which includes Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. The GCC reportedly, though it has never been publicly confirmed, signed a mutual defense pact in 2000 that designated an attack on one member as an attack on all of the members. The members have also reportedly agreed to grow their Peninsula Shield Force from 5,000 to 25,000 personnel.¹³ It is this effort that the United States helped bolster with its 2006 Gulf Security Initiative.

Such a multilateral approach has its detractors. Multilateral treaties are more difficult to construct, and they are more difficult to manage. Many in Congress supported a NATO-like pact for the Pacific, but Truman and Eisenhower both resisted such a move, citing differences in distance and cultures between the two regions. Rhee and Chiang both pushed for a broader, multilateral defense framework; though historical animosity between Japan and South Korea made this unlikely. In fact, South Korean President Rhee insisted the mutual defense pact include provisions defending South Korea from a Japanese attack. Likewise, when the South East Asian Treaty organization was formed in 1954, the constituent members decided to exclude

¹¹ Kenneth M. Pollack, “Securing the Gulf,” *Foreign Affairs* 82, no. 4 (Jul/Aug 2003).

¹² Michael Ryan Kraig, “Forging a New Security Order for the Persian Gulf,” *Middle East Policy* XIII, no. 1 (Spring 2006), 97.

¹³ James A. Russell, “Searching for a Post-Saddam Regional Security Architecture,” *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 7, no. 1 (March 2003), 33.

Chiang's Taiwan from the group. As a result, the Pacific arena was marked by a series of interlocking bilateral agreements rather than a multilateral alliance.

Michael Yaffe argues that a NATO-like Pact is unlikely in the region, "The Middle East is an area marked more by its diversities than its commonalities. It has numerous interstate rivalries limited to distinct locales, lacks many cultural commonalities and comprises states with greatly varying threat perceptions and interests."¹⁴ While the Saudi Foreign Minister expressed hope in 2004 that the Gulf Cooperation Council could provide the backbone of a regional security framework, Saudi Arabia has done little if anything to make this a reality.¹⁵ Saudi Arabia is the largest member of the GCC, and its security considerations differ markedly from those of the other smaller Gulf States. Saudi will remain a significant obstacle to transforming the GCC into an effective multilateral regime capable of confronting an emboldened Iran.

Nonetheless, Pollack argues: "The GCC states do not actually want a formal alliance relationship with the United States, at least not at the moment. GCC leaders fear that far from legitimizing an American presence, such an alliance would be seen as the ultimate act of colonialism and cronyism and would thus help to delegitimize their own regimes. Even a very pro-American Iraqi government might be uneasy with a formal treaty relationship, for similar reasons."¹⁶ By collaborating in private, however, the United States and its Middle East allies avoid much of the blowback that would result from public characterization. Lippman argues that "Saudi leaders for domestic reasons often find it necessary to take contrary public positions lest they appear to be US puppets."¹⁷ Any deals struck with the House of Saud will be necessarily hidden from public view. The powerful Saudi clerics and fundamentalist

¹⁴ Michael D. Yaffe, "The Gulf and a New Middle East Security System," *Middle East Policy* XI, no. 3 (Fall 2004), 121.

¹⁵ James A. Russell, "Saudi Arabia in the Twenty-First Century: A New Security Calculus?" In *Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Middle East* ed. by James A. Russell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 116.

¹⁶ Pollack, "Securing the Gulf."

¹⁷ Thomas W. Lippman, "Saudi Arabia: The Calculations of Uncertainty," *The Nuclear Tipping Point: Why States Reconsider Their Nuclear Choices* ed. Kurt Campbell, Robert Einhorn, and Mitchell Reiss. (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2004), 140.

Wahhabi population will resist stronger ties with the West, and the Saudi monarchy cannot afford to estrange itself from the population at a time when succession to the third generation of rulers is looming.

The United States must resist the urge to develop formal alliances with its Middle East allies. As the case of Taiwan has demonstrated, a formal treaty is not always necessary to affect an extended deterrent. Formal treaties in the Middle East are unlikely and problematic for both the United States and its allies. The allies do not want to appear puppets of Washington and the United States should avoid overly-binding commitments. Alliances are not necessary for a successful deterrent nor are they desired in the region. They reduce flexibility and have a tendency to pull the defender into unwanted situations. Likewise, the hard realities of the region make a multilateral framework unlikely. The many hazards of formal alliances should give the United States pause as it moves forward in crafting security guarantees for the Middle East.

A Neo-Carter Doctrine

Despite the dangers of entangling alliances, the United States must find a way to address its Middle East allies' legitimate security concerns; else, they will develop national capabilities or outsource their defense to another country—neither of which the United States wants to have happen. While external security is but one of the many drivers that may lead a Middle East country to reconsider its nuclear policies, the United States must remove security concerns from the equation. It must balance between doing enough to reassure its allies while avoiding a large commitment. The United States should issue a broad unilateral security guarantee for its Middle East allies complemented by private bilateral security assurances.

The United States has a long history of unilateral foreign policy proclamations dating to President James Monroe's articulation of US policy for the Americas. President Carter offered a similar declaration for the Middle East after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. President Obama could rearticulate this pledge once Iran acquires nuclear weapons. What would a Neo-Carter Doctrine look like? There are three key components. First, it must affirm

US interests in maintaining regional security. Second, it should state that the United States will not allow Iran to bully, threaten, intimidate, or coerce its friends and allies using nuclear blackmail. Lastly, it should warn Iran not to transfer nuclear material to any other parties—state or non-state—and declare that Tehran will be held accountable for any attack using nuclear material originating in Iran. The policy should be broad and non-specific. It need not offer an explicit nuclear guarantee.

This intentional ambiguity, however, carries a price as evidenced by the case of Taiwan. Hoping to avoid tying his hands, Eisenhower intentionally obscured the extent of the security guarantee for Taiwan. While the United States committed to defending Taiwan and the Pescadores, it did not want to go to war with China over the small offshore islands. Ambiguity, however, has its costs. While it created a degree of flexibility for the United States, it also invited probing by the Chinese. When the islands were left out of the mutual defense pact, China considered this a clear signal that the United States was intentionally excluding them from the security umbrella precipitating a series of crises in the Straits. At the same time, ambiguity can imply a weak commitment. George and Smoke explain how deterrence is generally ineffective against lesser challenges to the status quo. If an attacker believes the defender's commitment is ill-defined, he will test the commitment with limited probes, forcing the defender to clarify his redlines. Similarly, if an attacker believes the defender has a weak commitment, he will apply controlled pressure to erode the defender's resolve and shake the ally's confidence in his defender.¹⁸ Ambiguity only compounds the weakness of an extended deterrent. Consequently, the United States must be prepared in advance for Iranian probing, instituting sufficient firebreaks to minimize escalation. This will require concerted efforts to avoid investing credibility at an early point in any emerging conflict. Nonetheless, an intentionally ambiguous unilateral commitment limits the degree of binding and affords the requisite level of

¹⁸ George and Smoke, 540-547.

flexibility. An important corollary to the unilateral regional security guarantee will be bilateral assurances delivered to US allies in private.

Will these assurances be credible in light of the changing regional dynamic? Credibility is the critical component of any deterrent; though making a commitment credible is especially difficult with *extended deterrence* for two reasons. First, the level of interest in defending an ally is significantly less than in defending yourself. Second, the commitment must be credible to both the allies *and* the enemy. Often convincing an ally of your reliability is more difficult than convincing your adversary. When Kennedy moved toward Flexible Response, the Allies were concerned that the United States was backing away from its commitment to fight a nuclear war to defend Western Europe. If the United States was no longer committed to an immediate nuclear response to a Soviet attack, then Europe was at greater risk to being overrun by a Soviet conventional attack. French confidence in the United States as an ally was already shaken by the United States refusal to come to French aid at Dien Bien Phu and opposition to French operations to seize the Suez Canal. France would find it difficult to rely entirely on a US promise to deliver nuclear weapons in defense French soil.

The credibility of the US deterrent is also impacted by enemy capabilities. The US commitment to defend Western Europe was made at a time when the US enjoyed a nuclear monopoly. Even after the Soviet Union developed a nuclear arsenal, their sole means of delivery was long-range aircraft. It was only after the Soviet ICBM was fielded that the United States was truly threatened. Would the United States risk a nuclear attack on US soil to protect Western Europe? How could the allies be certain they would? Likewise when Nixon briefed reporters in Guam that the United States' Asian allies would be responsible for a larger share of their own defense, it called into question the United States' willingness to stand by its security commitments. Declining US credibility apparently led both Taiwan and South Korea to initiate clandestine national nuclear weapons programs.

There are great doubts in the region about the US reliability as an ally. Kathleen McNinn argues, "A US extended deterrent policy in the Middle East would lack credibility, not due to a lack of physical capability or presence in the region, but rather as a result of the fragility of US relations with its allies in the region, creating a uniquely dangerous situation."¹⁹ Thus the United States must begin by restoring its relationships in the Middle East. The US commitment to Saudi Arabia dates to the 1945 agreement between President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Saudi King Ibn Abdul Aziz al-Saud: the United States would protect Saudi Arabia from external threats, while Saudi Arabia would supply crude oil to meet US energy demands. This enduring relationship has been rattled in recent years. US-Saudi relations took a sharp turn for the worse following the 9/11 terrorist attacks after it was determined that 15 of the 19 hijackers were Saudis. Intense media coverage further revealed the depths of Saudi support to Pakistani *madrassas* which taught a markedly fundamentalist version of Islam and were linked to Afghanistan's Taliban regime. Statements of support for al Qaeda by Saudi clerics further contributed to a growing US public and Congressional uneasiness over the coziness between the two governments.²⁰ Tensions were further strained by the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. The Saudis were displeased with the lack of counsel prior to operations and were deeply troubled by the emergence of a Shiite-dominated government in Baghdad following the war. President George W. Bush's democracy and good governance initiatives further destabilized relations with the House of Saud.

Further straining Saudi confidence in the United States is the growing capability of Iran to counter US foreign policy in the Persian Gulf. An Iranian bomb and associated delivery capability make it less likely that the United States will confront an aggressive Iran. Borrowing de Gaulle's formulation, will the United States risk New York for Riyadh? Or more importantly, will the

¹⁹ McNinn, "Extended Deterrence: The U.S. Credibility Gap in the Middle East," *The Washington Quarterly* 28, no. 3 (Summer 2005), 170.

²⁰ James A. Russell, "Saudi Arabia in the Twenty-First Century: A New Security Calculus?", 117.

United States risk Tel Aviv for Riyadh? For now, the United States is immune from a direct Iranian nuclear strike. As Iranian delivery capabilities improve and the United States is brought into range of Iranian weapons, US allies in the Middle East will reconsider the US commitment to their defense.

There are emerging cracks in the US-Egypt relationship as well. As it did with Saudi Arabia, Operation Iraqi Freedom created tensions with Egypt. President Mubarak believes the United States acted rashly in Iraq, further destabilizing the Middle East and emboldening Iran and Hezbollah. Furthermore, Egypt rankles at US conditions on foreign aid that require democratic reforms and human rights improvements.²¹ The US and wider international response to Iranian nuclear weapons development has alarmed Egypt and its Arab allies. In June 2006, the EU, Germany, Russia, China, and the United States offered Iran a series of incentives to halt its enrichment activities setting off fears in the Arab world of rapprochement with the Iranian clerical regime. There is a deep concern within Arab governments that the West will craft a grand bargain with Iran which leaves them out of the picture. Compounding these fears is the lack of meaningful Arab involvement in the ongoing negotiations.²²

The United States faces the prospect of failing relationships at a time when it needs them most. The United States must move to rebuild trust and shore up confidence in its partnerships throughout the region. In the end, the most credible commitment will come not from formal guarantees but rather from a reiteration of the United States' deep and enduring interest in maintaining regional stability and ensuring continued resource flows. The United States must be seen as protecting its interests if it is to remain credible.

²¹ US Senate. *Chain Reaction: Avoiding a Nuclear Arms Race in the Middle East. Report to the Committee on Foreign Relations.* 110th Cong., 2d sess., 2008, 28-29.

²² Sammy Salama and Heidi Weber, "The Emerging Arab Response to Iran's Unabated Nuclear Program," 22 December 2006. http://www.nti.org/e_research/e3_83.html (accessed 1 April 2010).

Rebuilding these relationships may require some compromises. Washington found itself in partnership with a host of corrupt, repressive regimes in confronting the Soviet Union. Chiang's Nationalist Party was known to be corrupt. The South Korean government repressed political dissent and systematically eliminated their political rivals. The Cold War context and overarching containment strategy demanded the United States ally with those partners willing to stand up to communist advances. The partnerships with Chiang and Rhee were thus marriages of convenience. Most Presidents considered this a necessary evil—a minor compromise for the greater good. Ronald Reagan was forced to decide how the United States was going to respond to South Korean President Chun in light of the Kwangju massacre. Reagan decided to host Chun as his first official visitor to the White House amidst objections from South Korean reformers and humanitarian-minded Americans. Nonetheless, Reagan successfully managed the relationship in such a way that convinced Chun to stand for election and resulted in the first peaceful transition of power in South Korean history.

The Middle East has equally corrupt and repressive regimes. The House of Saud was established along with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1932 by Abd al-Aziz ibn Saud who served as the country's absolute monarch. By his decree, the future kings would be chosen from among his sons, five of which have done so since Abd al-Aziz died in 1953. The royal family, now numbering in the thousands, controls all levers of national government and monopolizes the exploitation of Saudi's oil reserves. The regime is non-representative, corrupt, and deeply entrenched. In order to consolidate its power, the House of Saud brokered a deal with the country's fundamentalist Wahhabi clerics to gain a religious mandate for its government. From the Kingdom's inception, Saudi rulers have balanced their absolute power with the demands of their religious partners. There is a body of evidence that suggests substantial material support flows to al Qaeda from inside the Kingdom. Saudi Arabia continues to export its fundamentalist brand of Islam, providing significant financial support to radical madrassas in Pakistan. Saudi Arabia has refused

to establish diplomatic ties with the new Iraqi regime, and Saudi clerics have incited Sunni violence inside Iraq. Saudi Arabia remains one of the Palestinian's staunchest supporters. Kathleen McNinn asks, "Would the United States risk nuclear war with Iran to defend a corrupt regime that was potentially complicit in terrorist attacks against the United States?"²³

Like Saudi Arabia and Egypt, the Gulf States are ruled by non-representative regimes; however, the Gulf States have shown a willingness to reform their political structures to allow for greater political freedoms and wider participation. While promising, these steps still fall well short of the good governance and liberal Constitutionalism that the United States advocates. The United States must determine the extent to which it will go to defend these Arab regimes. Former Secretary of State James Baker highlights the dilemma the United States faces, "In foreign and security policy, when you deal with a country, you deal with the government of that country....If it's got warts on it, it has warts on it....So we deal with a government that's not perfect."²⁴

Critical Enablers: Money, Arms, and Troops

A broad unilateral commitment coupled with private assurances should adequately address the US allies' security concerns. However this must be reinforced with the deployment of US forces to the region and ample foreign assistance and arms sales.

US Assistance. Foreign aid and arms sales are critical enablers of any security guarantee. US foreign assistance enhances self-defense and reduces the demand on US forces. It creates leverage to manage the partnership and, most importantly, it creates an interdependence that is critical to an extended deterrent. At the same time, arms sales must be geared to the defensive to avoid precipitating any hostilities. Foreign aid and arms sales were the cornerstones of US post-World War II relationships. They were the backstop for global US security guarantees. The Nationalists amassed the second largest

²³ McNinn, 181.

²⁴ James Baker as quoted in "PBS Frontline: Saudi Time Bomb?" <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/saudi/analyses/ussaudi.html> (accessed 1 May 2010).

military force in Asia following the first Taiwan Strait crisis thanks to \$260 million in annual US assistance. After the United States abrogated its mutual defense treaty with Taiwan, President Reagan and Bush used arms sales to reaffirm the US commitment to defending Taiwan from Chinese aggression. In South Korea, President Nixon moved to offset his proposed troop cuts by offering \$1.25 billion in assistance and arms transfers. Likewise, Carter proposed \$1.9 billion in aid to ease the impact of his troop cuts while simultaneously selling South Korea more hardware than any previous administration. As the allies' economies flourished, they were better able to pay for the necessary hardware. Aid shifted from grants to loans, and then from loans to sales.

The bulk of US foreign aid goes to the Middle East. The United States provides Egypt with \$50 billion annually in military, economic, and other foreign assistance.²⁵ Egypt relies on the United States to equip its armed forces to the level of parity with Israel, receiving more than 50 percent of its weapons from the United States.²⁶ US assistance to Saudi Arabia is minimal; however, Saudi Arabia depends on the United States for the bulk of its conventional armaments. Additionally, the House of Saud has hundreds of billions of dollars in US investments. A Saudi nuclear weapons program would risk having these sizeable assets frozen.²⁷ Saudi Arabia's CSS-2 missile fleet is nearing obsolescence. The Kingdom will have to decide within the near future whether or not it wants to refit their long-range missile fleet or abandon the delivery capability all together. The United States should leverage this decision to discourage continued cooperation with China, while meeting the legitimate security considerations of the Kingdom.²⁸

In early 2010, the United States deployed eight Patriot missile batteries to the Gulf region, with two each in Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain,

²⁵ McInnis, 177.

²⁶ Robert Einhorn, "Egypt: Frustrated but Still on a Non-Nuclear Course." In *The Nuclear Tipping Point: Why States Reconsider Their Nuclear Choices* ed. Kurt Cambell, Robert Einhorn, and Mitchell Reiss. (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2004), 67.

²⁷ Lippman, 134.

²⁸ Richard L. Russell, "Arab Security Responses to a Nuclear-Ready Iran," 43.

and Kuwait.²⁹ Over the past two years, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have purchased over \$25 billion in US weaponry. The United States is assisting Saudi Arabia in tripling its forces to defend critical infrastructure. A US official said, “We’re developing a truly regional defensive capability, with missile systems, air defense and a hardening up of critical infrastructure. All of these have progressed significantly over the past year.”³⁰ The UAE recently purchased 80 F-16 fighter aircraft and participated for the first time in US Red Flag exercises. US Central Command’s General David Petraeus recently stated publicly that the UAE air force “could take out the entire Iranian air force.”³¹

The United States has made a substantial investment in the future of Iraq. Significant aid and other contributions to the democratic government in Baghdad will continue for the foreseeable future. Richard L. Russell believes, “A viable Iraqi military would need to have an air force and long-range strike capabilities if it is to feel secure against the threat posed by Iran’s growing ballistic-missile programs.” Such a force, he argues, would “dampen Iraq’s strategic interest in rekindling a nuclear-weapons program.”³² It is likely that Iraq will demand a modern air force to defend itself against a nuclear-armed Iran.³³ While this would serve to keep the Iranians in check, it would also inflame Israeli insecurity. Any force capable of retaliating against an Iranian attack could also be used to attack Israel.

Arming an ally could equip them to initiate hostilities. Upon entering office, Secretary Dulles feared US aircraft recently sold to Taiwan could be used for offensive purposes. He convinced the President to suspend further sales until Pacific Command received Taiwanese assurances that US arms would be used only for defensive purposes. With Chiang and Rhee obsessed with

²⁹ David Sanger and Eric Schmitt, “U.S. Speeding Up Missile Defenses in Persian Gulf,” *New York Times*, 31 Jan 2010.

³⁰ Joby Warrick, “U.S. steps up arms sales to Persian Gulf allies.” *Washington Post*, 31 January 2010.

³¹ Warrick, “U.S. steps up arms sales to Persian Gulf allies.”

³² Richard L. Russell, “The Persian Gulf’s Collective-Security Mirage,” *Middle East Policy* XII, no. 4 (Winter 2005), 85.

³³ Richard L. Russell, “Arab Security Responses to a Nuclear-Ready Iran,” 42.

regaining lost territory, Washington was very concerned that US arms sales could precipitate renewed hostilities. Thus any arms sales to US allies in the Middle East must be geared to the defensive for two reasons. First, providing offensive weaponry to the Arab allies will threaten Israel and upset the delicate balance between Arab and Israeli forces. Second, an offensive capability could drive the Arab countries to ill-considered attacks against the regime in Tehran, pulling the United States into a conflict it does not want to fight. Lindsay and Takeyh agree, “Throwing the doors of the armory wide open would do little to secure the buyers and might even increase instability in the region. A smart US arms sales policy would focus on offering weapons systems that are designated to deter or help counter an Iranian attack, such as missile defense systems and command-and-control systems, which would provide advance notice of Iranian actions.”³⁴

At the same time, US assistance also creates leverage to pressure its allies to conform to US policy. In 1976 and again in 1988, the United States threatened to cancel further nuclear cooperation with Taiwan, forcing the Taiwanese to dismantle their covert program. The threat of a full rupture in bilateral relations persuaded South Korea to do likewise. Recent events in the Middle East in this regard are promising. The GCC commissioned a study in 2006 to explore a joint civil nuclear energy program.³⁵ The United States and the UAE signed a civil nuclear cooperation agreement in 2008. Saudi Arabia signed a memorandum on nuclear energy cooperation with the United States in 2008 and is negotiating with France for a similar agreement.³⁶ This increased civil nuclear energy cooperation will create future leverage opportunities for the United States.

Assistance enables allies to better help themselves, but it also creates an economic and military interdependence that bolsters the extended deterrent.

³⁴ James Lindsay and Ray Takeyh, “After Iran Gets the Bomb,” *Foreign Affairs* 89, no. 2 (Mar/Apr 2010).

³⁵ Salama and Weber.

³⁶ Kate Amlin, “Will Saudi Arabia Acquire Nuclear Weapons?” August 2008. http://www.nti.org/e_research/e3_40a.html (accessed 1 April 2010).

Bruce Russett asked, “How can a major power make credible an intent to defend a smaller ally from attack by another major power?”³⁷ Surprisingly, he discovered that a stated commitment to defend the ally was not as important as strong shared bonds between the defender and ally. Of his 18 case studies, only one successful deterrent strategy had a “clear and unambiguous commitment prior to the actual crisis.”³⁸ Neither the state of the military balance between the three powers nor the relative importance of the ally seemed to correlate with successful deterrence. Russett observes, “It is now apparent why deterrence does not depend in any simple way merely upon the public declaration of a ‘solemn oath,’ nor merely on the physical means to fight a war, either limited or general....[rather] the effectiveness of the defender’s threat is heavily dependent on the tangible and intangible bonds between him and the pawn.”³⁹

While US assistance and arms sales improve an ally’s self-defense, US troop deployments are a tangible measure of the US commitment to defend a country. They act as a trip wire to ensure the US is fully invested in defending local territory. They force an additional calculation upon and increase the potential cost to would-be attackers. In Europe, the continuing presence of troops after World War II reassured Western Europe that the United States was committed to defending them from a Soviet attack. Eisenhower’s plan to cut US troops in Europe, while relying on a nuclear deterrent, caused alarm in Western European capitals afraid that they were losing their American trip-wire and thus an assured ally. Conversely, President Kennedy’s plan to increase troops in Europe had the opposite effect of alarming the Allies that the United State was not committed to fighting a nuclear war to defend them. The one-two punch of the Nixon Doctrine and the planned withdrawal of one of only two infantry divisions from South Korea convinced Park that the United States was no longer committed to defending his country despite its formal security

³⁷ Bruce Russett, “The calculus of deterrence,” *Conflict Resolution* VII, no. 2 (1963), 97.

³⁸ Ibid., 100.

³⁹ Russett, “The calculus of deterrence,” 106-107.

commitment. Carter confirmed these fears by announcing his intent to withdraw all US ground forces from the Peninsula. In contrast to South Korea and Europe, the United States did not deploy large numbers of troops to Taiwan and instead relied on a naval presence. It reinforced this standing presence with periodic shows of force as circumstances dictated. Eisenhower made a significant show of force as the second Taiwan Strait crisis unfolded in 1958, deploying six aircraft carriers and two fighter squadrons to Taiwan. As tensions peaked again in 1996, Clinton sent two aircraft carrier battle groups to the Straits. The forceful deployments demonstrated US resolve and convinced the PRC in both cases to deescalate tensions.

The deployment of US troops to the Middle East is extremely problematic and inflames Muslim sensibilities. A continuing US troop presence in Iraq fuels fears of a long-term occupation. McInnis argues, “The rise of anti-US sentiment in the region has made it very difficult to field the kind of highly visible troops that might confirm the US commitment, both because these troops are terrorist targets and because their presence helps foment instability within these countries.”⁴⁰ Consequently, the United States reduced its troop levels in Saudi Arabia from 5,000 to only 400 in 2003 following major combat operations in Iraq.⁴¹

Richard L. Russell suggests, “Washington would be wise to avoid a large-scale permanent military presence on the ground in the Middle East. This would limit the vulnerability of American forces to terrorist and insurgent attacks as well as the claims by Islamic militants that the United States is ‘colonizing’ the region.”⁴² Rather Russell recommends an over-the-horizon approach relying on a minimal lily-pad presence in the Persian Gulf.⁴³ Pollack offers a caution against taking an offshore balancing posture: “The GCC countries have shown a willingness to accommodate powerful, aggressive neighbors, and a reduced American presence could increase their willingness

⁴⁰ McInnis, 180.

⁴¹ Amlin.

⁴² Richard L. Russell, “The Persian Gulf’s Collective-Security Mirage,” 82.

⁴³ Ibid., 83.

to do so again—giving Iran, say, an unhealthy degree of control over oil flows. Finally, a limited American presence might tempt other outside powers—such as China—to fish in the Gulf’s troubled waters at some point down the road.”⁴⁴

Long-term troop deployments are expensive. In South Korea, Eisenhower swapped ground troops for tactical nuclear weapons in an effort to reduce the overseas footprint on the Peninsula and save money. Successive Presidents have sought ways to trim troops and save money. Current discussions about the US footprint in the Middle East echo the post-World War II debate. The “peripheral strategy” advocated by the US Navy and US Air Force following World War II is akin to calls for an over-the-horizon force on-call to respond to any crises in the Middle East.

The US wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have been costly. The military cannot sustain a large, permanent footprint in the Middle East. Large numbers of troops are not required, as the case of Taiwan demonstrates. The United States has military forces in Iraq, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, UAE, and Oman, with permanent component headquarters in several countries. Instead, the United States can rely on a modest ground presence, supported by routine exercises and shows of force as required. After Iran acquires nuclear weapons, Iraq is likely to reassess its current plans and ask for or agree to a more permanent US presence of around 20 thousand troops and an air base. These forces would serve as a trip wire for Iranian aggression but would also help restrain Iraqi forces from any cross-border adventurism. With a small regional defense force permanently in place, the United States could routinize interaction with the integrated GCC forces. However this must be done in a way that minimizes any sense of coupling; an integrated command structure like that in South Korea is not recommended. Ultimately, the most important US deployment in any of the Arab countries will be a robust integrated theater missile defense system. To that end, the United States has also begun to keep

⁴⁴ Pollack, “Securing the Gulf.”

an Aegis cruiser on patrol in the Persian Gulf at all times as part of the bolstered theater missile defenses in the region.⁴⁵

Falling Short

Together the security guarantees, deployments, and assistance may still fall short in persuading the Arab allies to forgo national nuclear weapons programs. The decision to go nuclear isn't only about security. Scholars disagree on the causes of nuclear proliferation and nuclear restraint; what is almost certain, national insecurity is not the only factor in a country's decision to develop nuclear weapons. Scott D. Sagan suggests three models to explain what drives states' nuclear decisions: "the security model, according to which states build nuclear weapons to increase national security against foreign threats, especially nuclear threats; the domestic politics model, which envisions nuclear weapons as political tools used to advance parochial domestic and bureaucratic interests; and the norms model, under which nuclear weapons acquisition, or restraint in weapons development, is determined by the role of such weapons as a symbol of a state's modernity and identity."⁴⁶

The case of France is illustrative. By the time De Gaulle reentered office, France had experienced a string of national humiliations: World War II, French Indochina, Suez and Algeria. Developing an independent nuclear capability was as much about regaining French pride as it was about defending against a Soviet attack. France also highlights the limits to what the United States can do to keep a friendly country from going nuclear. Eisenhower did little materially to stop de Gaulle from developing a national nuclear capability because he was resigned to their getting it. Kenneth Waltz highlights the problem: "If countries feel insecure and believe that nuclear weapons would

⁴⁵ Sanger and Schmitt, "U.S. Speeding Up Missile Defenses in Persian Gulf."

⁴⁶ Scott D. Sagan, "Rethinking the Causes of Nuclear Proliferation: Three Models in Search of a Bomb," in *The Coming Crisis: Nuclear Proliferation, US Interests, and World Order* ed. by Victor A. Utgoff. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), 18.

make them more secure, America's policy of opposing the spread of nuclear weapons will not prevail."⁴⁷

If the Arab states did not feel compelled to develop nuclear weapons after Israel acquired them, why will they feel so compelled when Iran acquires them? It may have more to do with internal politics than external security. A realistic appraisal of the Middle East reveals that security concerns are not the biggest drivers with respect to nuclear proliferation. Most of Iran's neighbors do not fear an Iranian nuclear attack. The Saudis are concerned about the impact a Persian bomb will have on the Arab world. A recent US Senate Foreign Relations Committee study found that "Saudi officials believe Iran wants a nuclear weapon in order to become a regional superpower, to alleviate a sense of marginalization, to serve as a deterrent, and to be a more dominant force in the Gulf."⁴⁸ For their part, Egypt remains focused on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Egyptian public is far more concerned about Israeli nuclear weapons than the possibility of Iranian nuclear weapons.⁴⁹

The view is a little different for Iran's closer neighbors. Central Command's Petraeus believes that "Iran is clearly seen as a very serious threat by those on the other side of the gulf front."⁵⁰ The GCC Secretary General Abdul-Rahman al-Atiya said, "Iran's nuclear program has become worrisome for the region and a fundamental concern for all countries of the world." He further stated that "Iran attaining nuclear weapons will lead to instability in the region and an arms race that will spread an unjustified climate of mistrust. Iran is forcing the GCC states to 'side' with the superpowers due to Iran's insistent pursuit of nuclear weapons."⁵¹

Saudi Arabia fears an erosion of its status within the Muslim world due to an emboldened Iran. Saudi prides itself as the keeper of the most holy sites in Islam and has translated this responsibility into political leverage. Saudi

⁴⁷ Scott D. Sagan and Kenneth N. Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: A Debate Renewed* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2003), 42.

⁴⁸ *Chain Reaction: Avoiding a Nuclear Arms Race in the Middle East*, 11.

⁴⁹ Einhorn, 64.

⁵⁰ Sanger and Schmitt, "U.S. Speeding Up Missile Defenses in Persian Gulf."

⁵¹ Salama and Weber.

rulers have long enjoyed their prominent position in managing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. They are concerned that a more powerful Iran will displace them in these negotiations. More importantly, they are keenly aware of the shifting balance of power toward Tehran.⁵² Of critical importance to Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Turkey is the Israeli response to the Iranian disclosure. McInnis argues, "The emergence of a nuclear Iran would conceivably tempt Israel to declare its nuclear capabilities openly Israel may consider an overt Iranian deterrent too dire a threat to continue its opacity policy, despite the possibility of sending dangerous shockwaves throughout the region and creating 'immeasurable pressure' for states in the Arab world to reverse their nuclear policies."⁵³

There are at least two other reasons why Saudi Arabia may wish to acquire a nuclear weapon: first, to retain power within the Saudi state; and, third, to guarantee succession. Thomas W. Lippman suggests that the acquisition of nuclear weapons would have little to do with external threats: "Any discussion of the acquisition of nuclear weapons under the current Saudi leadership must recognize that the purpose would not be to preserve the existence of Saudi Arabia but to perpetuate the rule of the House of Saud."⁵⁴ Saudi Arabia is beset with internal divisions and tensions. Kraig argues that Iran is not Saudi Arabia's biggest challenge: "Instead, in the twenty-first century, the primary threat to Saudi stability—including the reliability of its oil infrastructure—comes from domestic Sunni terrorist groups that subscribe to a more purist version of Wahhabi Islam than the Saudi government itself does. These groups, which are populist in nature and which challenge the authority of government-sponsored clerics, question the legitimacy and ruling practices of the entire Al Saud family, including its positive relations with the West and its overall economic-political openings to the outside world."⁵⁵ Thus, acquiring

⁵² McInnis, 175.

⁵³ McInnis, 173.

⁵⁴ Lippman, 123.

⁵⁵ Michael Ryan Kraig, "Forging a New Security Order for the Persian Gulf," *Middle East Policy* XIII, no. 1 (Spring 2006), 94.

nuclear weapons would be a sign of strength to any internal challengers and the Saudi population writ large.

Compounding this internal instability is the possible crisis of succession within the House of Saud. Crown Prince Abdullah is in his late 80s as is Defense Minister Prince Sultan, the two men first and second in line of succession respectively. The transfer of power to the third generation of al Saud leaders could easily be marked by an internal power struggle between a number of likely successors. Should that occur, there is a real possibility that a senior prince could attempt to solidify his position by acquiring a nuclear weapon. A nuclear armed prince would surely become the next king. Glen Segell observes, “The purpose of any nuclear weapon or delivery system procured by the House of Saud would be to retain power in the Saudi State—or by a prince who wished to become king.”⁵⁶

Like Saudi Arabia, there are internal and external pressures driving Egypt to pursue a more independent course. Egypt sees itself as the leader of the Arab world. It is home to Islam’s centers of higher learning and is the Arab population center. Egypt’s peace deal with Israel cost her status among the other Arab League states. Iran’s acquisition of nuclear weapons would further erode Egypt’s status and exacerbate Egyptian fears of losing her leadership role in Middle Eastern affairs. Arab League President Amre Moussa, an Egyptian, has said, “Egypt will never accept playing second fiddle. It will do whatever it takes to maintain its position in the Middle East and in the Arab world.”⁵⁷

Could that include the acquisition of nuclear weapons? Polling suggests a significant majority of Arabs support the Iranian nuclear program. Egypt’s opposition party, the Muslim Brotherhood, supports Iranian acquisition and has pressed Mubarak to match it with a similar Egyptian program. The Iranian model is gaining currency inside Egypt. Iran’s victory through Hezbollah during the 2006 Lebanon War led many Arabs to call for emulating

⁵⁶ Marc Segell, “The Nuclear Conundrum,” in *Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Middle East* ed. by James A. Russell. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 139.

⁵⁷ Einhorn, 65.

Iran. An editorial in Egypt's leading newspaper suggested, "We should compare our conditions and actions with those of Tehran."⁵⁸ Mubarak is not immune to public pressure. There is a growing nuclear lobby with increasing support from the street to abandon its previous policy of nuclear restraint. Like Saudi Arabia, Egypt too is poised for internal stability. Building a nuclear weapon could demonstrate strength and rally the population behind Mubarak.⁵⁹ Echoing de Gaulle, Egypt's energy minister said, "The people are searching for a dream, a national project that proves to us that we are strong and capable of doing something fitting of the grandeur of a country that some have begun to doubt."⁶⁰

Like Saudi Arabia, succession too will play a role in the course of Egypt's nuclear endeavors. Mubarak has held the dam against a national nuclear weapons program, but he is 80 years old and his son Gamal, seen as a likely successor, may face pressure to consolidate his rule with a nuclear capability.⁶¹ Regardless, the path chosen by Mubarak or his successor will depend in large measure on the course Israel chooses, "The thin veneer of official ambiguity about whether Israel actually has the bomb has tended to shield Egyptian leaders from the public outcry—and domestic pressures to acquire a matching Egyptian capability—that would arise if Israel were to admit what virtually all well-informed Egyptians believe to be true. The explicit confirmation of Israel's nuclear capability would produce a very powerful reaction in Egypt."⁶²

Security considerations are certainly one, if not the most pertinent, factors in a country's decision to develop or abstain from developing nuclear weapons. There are clear internal domestic factors that may also conspire to force some of the Arab allies to acquire the capability, despite the many negative repercussions of doing so. Nuclear weapons convey prestige and

⁵⁸ Salama and Weber.

⁵⁹ Richard L. Russell, "Arab Security Responses to a Nuclear-Ready Iran," 41.

⁶⁰ Salama and Weber.

⁶¹ Einhorn, 69-70.

⁶² Ibid., 60.

solidify internal power and thus are a potentially valuable commodity in Arab states facing uncertain transitions.

The United States' efforts keep its allies from acquiring nuclear weapons will certainly be bolstered by an extended deterrent. Since this may not work, however, the United States must begin to consider the repercussions of an ally breaking with the United States. The United States must be prepared to communicate the consequences of an ally breaking their agreements. The threat of a full breach in relations was enough to keep South Korea from going nuclear, but it may not suffice for the Arab allies. It is possible to keep the lid on after Iran gets nuclear weapons; however, it will not be possible if another Middle Eastern country does so—the dominos will fall. The United States must lead an effort to punish Iran for breaking its nonproliferation obligations; otherwise, the hurdles to further proliferators will have been lowered significantly.

The United States does not want to further inflame the situation by building a massive coalition to confront Iran. The international community must find a way to integrate Iran as a responsible member of the community of nations. Erecting deterrent superstructures will only reinforce Iran's rogue status and enhance the clout of its current leaders. The United States does not need another mini Cold War on its hands. An extended deterrent regime is but one part of the US strategy to confront a nuclear Iran. George and Smoke make the point that, "American policy-makers erred...by relying on deterrence strategy too heavily and making insufficient use of other means of influencing and controlling the conflict potential in their relations with other states."⁶³ Thus, they conclude that "deterrence should be viewed not as a self-contained strategy, but as an integral part of a broader, multifaceted influence process."⁶⁴ This is sound advice for today's policy makers as well. Micahel Kraig and Riad Kahwaji suggest a broader approach: "Regional security concerns—overall stability, prosperity, political development of existing states, reassurance

⁶³ George and Smoke, 590.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 591.

measures, and multilateral cooperation toward a common regional security goal—must become the overriding goal of US policy, rather than WMD counterproliferation alone.”⁶⁵ Patrick Morgan suggests the limits of general deterrence demand a big tent: “A dominant state seeking stable general deterrence is well advised to broaden participation by others in a system security management, back-stopping others’ efforts when this is possible rather than pushing ahead as leader/organizer.”⁶⁶ Nothing above suggests a unilateral US approach.

Taken together, these steps should deter Iranian nuclear aggression and help minimize other malign influence. In the end, it still may not be sufficient to keep one or more of the states from developing their own national nuclear weapons capability. That said, the combination of a US security guarantee, significant assistance to bolster defenses, and the consequences of breaking with the international community are likely to keep the lid closed to further regional proliferation.

⁶⁵ Micahel Ryan Kraig and Riad Kahwaji, “A Demand-Side Strategy for Regional Security and Nonproliferation in the Persian Gulf,” in *Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Middle East* ed. by James A. Russell. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 218.

⁶⁶ Patrick Morgan, *Deterrence Now* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 115.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

Let our position be absolutely clear: An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force.

President Jimmy Carter

Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons will be a significant test of the United States and the Obama Administration. The US government's moves to date have been measured and reasonable. Iran's pending declaration or demonstration of a nuclear weapon will be met with calls to build a NATO-like superstructure to contain Iran. The three cases studied here suggest this would be a poor policy.

Lessons Learned

A composite review of the three case studies reveals some commonalities. The US security guarantee contributed in all three cases to deterring further communist attacks, but only worked in two instances in forestalling further proliferation. All of the allies doubted the US commitment despite the formal US treaty obligation. All three disliked their dependence on the United States, but only France could chart an independent course. Deployments and shows of force were essential signs of the US commitment. All three countries began a covert nuclear weapons program. The United States contributed large amounts of assistance and in doing so created leverage to press the allies, specifically to end their covert nuclear programs.

The cases demonstrate how security guarantees can take many forms. No two are structured alike. At times, the United States sought ambiguity in its commitments, especially in Taiwan, to give it some added flexibility. However, ambiguity is a double-edged sword. The enemy will probe the limits to better define the security commitment and test the resolve of the defender.

This is compounded by the fact that an extended deterrent is generally not very credible. The interest in defending an ally is not nearly as strong as defending the homeland. Additionally, the defender must convince not only the enemy but the ally as well that the commitment is credible. Furthermore, the enemy's capabilities will impact the credibility of the defender. The more an adversary can threaten the defender the less credible his commitment to defend the ally will be.

The case of France in particular demonstrates how the decision to go nuclear is not only about security. Security is only one of a number of contributing factors. This means a security umbrella may not suffice in capping further proliferation. There are limits to what the United States can do to keep a friendly country from acquiring nuclear weapons.

The cases also offer a warning that security guarantees often expand beyond the original design which can pull the United States into conflicts it does not want to fight. Similarly, US allies do not always cooperate; they have independent agendas and distinct national interests. The national leaders in each of the three cases routinely bucked the wishes of the United States. Nonetheless, the cases reveal that the United States may at times be required to ally with less than ideal regimes in order to accomplish its national security objectives.

US assistance to France, Taiwan, and South Korea was a critical enabler to their post-war reconstitution and a crucial backstop to the US security guarantee. The case studies show, however, that arming an ally could tempt him to initiate renewed fighting. Therefore, all sales must be geared to the defensive. Troop deployments were a visible commitment, especially in Europe and South Korea. The cases showed how any changes in troop totals set off alarms in the ally's capital. Lastly, these deployments proved to be costly, and the various US Presidents were under constant pressure to redeploy the troops to cut costs.

Recommendations

In light of the lessons offered by the three case studies, the United States should proceed cautiously, though deliberately, in crafting a new security framework for the Middle East. The United States has a vital national interest in maintaining regional stability in the Middle East, but the United States should be cautious about extending a security umbrella over its Middle East allies as Secretary of State Clinton has suggested. Iranian nuclear acquisition will send shockwaves throughout the region. It will create a proliferation impulse in many Middle East capitals. While external security will not be the only, or even predominant driver, the United States must take away this security factor. Otherwise, they will develop national capabilities or outsource their security to another country, like China or Pakistan. The United States must reassure its allies of its enduring commitment to Middle East stability and prosperity. At the same time, the United States should avoid a tight-coupling with these non-representative and often corrupt regimes. Washington should make the minimum sufficient commitment to assuage their fears thereby avoiding costly, binding obligations. Security guarantees tend to take on a life of their own, expanding beyond the original design, and potentially pulling the United States into a conflict it does not want to fight.

The United States must adhere to its historical reluctance to enter entangling alliances—the dangers are many. Public treaties or formal agreements are not warranted or necessary. The United States should issue a broad, unilateral security guarantee for its Middle East allies, similar to the Carter Doctrine. This unilateral guarantee should be reinforced by private bilateral assurances. The United States must deal with the leaders of the Middle East countries “warts and all.” The US security guarantee for its Middle East allies will be ambiguous, and this will invite probing by Iran to test the limits of the US commitment. The United States should encourage the development of a regional multilateral framework to improve the security dialogue, but this effort is long-term and is unlikely to produce tangible results. The much-hoped-for multilateral regional security framework is unlikely;

though an integrated regional missile defense and situational awareness network is possible.

Economic aid and US deployments will be essential backstops to the security guarantees. The United States must remain engaged in the area with some minimal level of US troop presence on the ground, probably in Iraq. A large, long-term overseas presence is expensive and problematic and inflames Muslim sensibilities. The standing US deployment should be reinforced with periodic exercises and shows of force as required. Efforts to bolster defenses through arms sales and military assistance should continue. US arms sales to its Arab allies must tilt toward the defense in order to minimize adventurism and to assuage Israeli fears. One exception may be the Iraqi air force.

Taken together, these steps should deter Iranian nuclear aggression and help minimize other malign influence. In the end, it still may not be sufficient to keep one or more of the states from developing their own national nuclear weapons capability. Pressing domestic priorities may force some of the regimes to reconsider their nuclear policy. Consequently, the United States must prepare to communicate to its allies the repercussions of violating the nonproliferation treaty. To remain credible, the United States must lead an effort to punish Iran for breaking its nonproliferation obligations; otherwise, the hurdles to further proliferators will have been lowered significantly. That said, the combination of a US security guarantee, significant assistance to bolster defenses, and the consequences of breaking with the international community are likely to keep the lid closed to further regional proliferation.

Appendix

Saudi Arabia: Prospects for Nuclear Weapons

There are longstanding concerns about nuclear collusion between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. In 1999, Saudi Defense Minister Prince Sultan visited the Kahuta nuclear facility in Pakistan where he was reportedly briefed by the father of the Pakistani nuclear weapons program, A. Q. Khan.¹ Khan is believed to have visited Saudi Arabia several times during the 1990s.² A British newspaper reported in 2003 that Saudi Arabia was actively considering acquiring a nuclear weapon off-the-shelf. The paper cited a trip to Pakistan by Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah in October 2003 where he reportedly agreed to provide Pakistan with cheap oil in exchange for nuclear weapons technology.³ In 2006, a German newspaper reported that the two countries had been actively collaborating on nuclear weapons since the 1990s, using the Hajj to mask the travel of Pakistani scientists to Saudi Arabia.⁴ None of this reporting has been verified and much of it relies on the testimony of a discredited Saudi defector.⁵ Nonetheless, the opacity of the Saudi regime and their historical ties with Pakistan make such covert cooperation possible.

¹ Thomas W. Lippman, "Saudi Arabia: The Calculations of Uncertainty," *The Nuclear Tipping Point: Why States Reconsider Their Nuclear Choices* ed. Kurt Cambell, Robert Einhorn, and Mitchell Reiss. (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2004), 136; Wyn Q. Bowen and Joanna Kidd, "The Nuclear Capabilities and Ambitions of Iran's Neighbors," in *Getting Ready for a Nuclear-Ready Iran* ed. by Henry Sokolski and Patrick Clawson (Carlise, PA: Army War College, 2002005), 54.

² McInnis, "Extended Deterrence: The U.S. Credibility Gap in the Middle East," *The Washington Quarterly* 28, no. 3 (Summer 2005), 177.

³ Richard L. Russell, "Arab Security Responses to a Nuclear-Ready Iran," *Getting Ready for a Nuclear-Ready Iran* ed. by Henry Sokolski and Patrick Clawson. (Carlisle, PA: US Army War College 2005), 33.

⁴ Sammy Salama and Heidi Weber, "The Emerging Arab Response to Iran's Unabated Nuclear Program," 22 December 2006. http://www.nti.org/e_research/e3_83.html (accessed 1 April 2010).

⁵ Lippman, 121; Kate Amlin, "Will Saudi Arabia Acquire Nuclear Weapons?" August 2008. http://www.nti.org/e_research/e3_40a.html (accessed 1 April 2010).

Saudi Arabia calls the claims “baseless and totally false.”⁶ The Saudi Foreign Minister stated, “We do not believe it gives any country security to build nuclear weapons.”⁷ Still, Saudi Arabia signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1988; however, the Kingdom has yet to finalize the required comprehensive safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency.⁸ Saudi Arabia began discussions with the IAEA in 2005 about their “Small Quantities Protocol” which would allow Saudi Arabia to possess limited amounts of plutonium and uranium not routinely inspected by the IAEA.⁹

Saudi Arabia is considered ill-equipped to launch a national nuclear weapons program. It does not have the geological resources, scientific expertise, or nuclear power infrastructure necessary to launch a weapons program; though it does have a delivery capability.¹⁰

Egypt: Prospects for Nuclear Weapons

Egypt initiated a national nuclear weapons program after Israel publicly admitted to building a nuclear reactor in the Negev Desert in December 1960. Nasser pledged to “secure atomic weapons at any cost” should Israel acquire a nuclear weapon.¹¹ Russia installed a small nuclear research reactor in 1961.¹² Egypt made repeated attempts to purchase nuclear weapons from both the USSR and China from 1963-1967, but both countries declined.¹³ The June 1967 Six Day war, however, put an end to the Egyptian nuclear weapons

⁶ James A. Russell, “Saudi Arabia in the Twenty-First Century: A New Security Calculus?” In *Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Middle East* ed. by James A. Russell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 120.

⁷ Ibid., 121.

⁸ Bowen and Kidd, 53.

⁹ James A. Russell, “Saudi Arabia in the Twenty-First Century: A New Security Calculus?”, 115.

¹⁰ Bowen and Kidd, 56-58.

¹¹ Egypt Country Profile. Nuclear Threat Initiative. http://www.nti.org/e_research/profiles/Egypt/Nuclear/index.html (accessed 1 April 2010)

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Robert Einhorn, “Egypt: Frustrated but Still on a Non-Nuclear Course.” In *The Nuclear Tipping Point: Why States Reconsider Their Nuclear Choices* ed. Kurt Cambell, Robert Einhorn, and Mitchell Reiss. (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2004), 45-46.

program. Robert Einhorn observes, “The loss of oil from the Sinai, the closure of the Suez Canal, and the decrease in foreign assistance in the aftermath of the war had a devastating impact on the Egyptian economy, and funding for the nuclear program was frozen.”¹⁴ Priority was given to developing conventional forces to recapture territory lost to Israel. Egypt’s signing the NPT in 1968 effectively closed the door on further nuclear weapons development. The 1979 peace treaty with Israel and bilateral relationship with the United States made nuclear weapons unnecessary. In October 1998, Egypt’s Mubarak said, “If the time comes when we need nuclear weapons, we will not hesitate....Every country is preparing for itself a deterrent weapon that will preserve its integrity and its existence.”¹⁵

Nonetheless, Egypt continued to explore nuclear research for civil energy programs. Egyptian President Anwar Sadat signed an eight reactor deal with Nixon in 1974 but the deal eventually fell through.¹⁶ Argentina sold Egypt a research reactor in 1992, but Mubarak eventually pulled the plug on all civilian nuclear energy programs following the Chernobyl reactor accident.¹⁷ As a result of its civilian nuclear energy programs, Egypt possesses extensive nuclear experience and expertise, with 850 scientists and 650 engineers at its Atomic Energy Authority.¹⁸ The current Egyptian reactors are capable of producing enough plutonium for about one bomb per year, though current IAEA safeguards keep them from doing so.¹⁹

Egypt has rekindled its interest in nuclear energy. Egypt signed nuclear cooperation agreements with Russia and South Korea in 2001 and China in 2002.²⁰ In 2006, Jamal Mubarak called for Egypt to revive its nuclear energy program with a “responsibility to offer a new vision for the Middle East based

¹⁴ Einhorn, 47.

¹⁵ McInnis, 178.

¹⁶ NTI Egypt Country Profile.

¹⁷ Einhorn, 51.

¹⁸ Salama and Weber; Bowen and Kidd, 60.

¹⁹ Richard L. Russell, “Arab Security Responses to a Nuclear-Ready Iran,” 39.

²⁰ Salama and Weber.

on our Arab identity.”²¹ Egypt subsequently announced plans to build a \$1.5 billion nuclear power plant within the next 10 years with contributions by Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Oman.²² The following year, Egypt announced plans to build “10 nuclear-powered electricity-generating stations across the country.” In late 2008, Bechtel Power Corporation won a bid to develop Egypt’s first nuclear reactor.²³

Egypt has a spotty track record of compliance with its nonproliferation commitments. The IAEA has determined that Egypt conducted 16 undeclared activities from 1990-2003.²⁴ In March 2004, international inspectors found evidence of “an exchange of nuclear and missile technology between Libya and Egypt.”²⁵ In January 2005, the IAEA reported “evidence of secret nuclear experiments in Egypt that could be used in a weapons program.”²⁶ The IAEA concluded that “the repeated failures by Egypt to report nuclear material and facilities to the Agency in a timely manner are a matter of concern,” though the United States ultimately concluded there was no evidence of intentional wrongdoing.²⁷

²¹ Salama and Weber.

²² Ibid.

²³ NTI Egypt Country Profile.

²⁴ Bowen and Kidd, 63.

²⁵ Ibid., 65.

²⁶ Ibid., 53.

²⁷ NTI Egypt Country Profile.

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