

Section II: Politics and International Relations

Workshop I

Summary of Discussions at Workshop I

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At Workshop I, Prof. Fukito gave a paper based on sound archival research on the policy making process of the Eisenhower Administration towards Taiwan in the immediate post-Korean War period, which was followed by Prof. Ito's comments that focused on the regional context of the subject, introducing "parallel experiences" of Chiang's Taiwan, Rhee's South Korea, and Qirino's Philippines, for comparison. She also raised some questions on the details of the paper.

In responding to Prof. Ito's comments, Prof. Fukito made two points. The first was about Chiang Kai-shek's intentions in pursuing the U.S.-Taiwan Mutual Defense Treaty, even when Chiang perceived the MDT as an American tool to 'contain' his own aggressive actions against mainland China. According to Prof. Fukito's analysis, the sense of vulnerability in terms of his own regime survival might have played a central role in Chiang's decision. Having concerns over diminishing U. S. commitment to Taiwan, the KMT leader wanted at least to maintain the existing ties with Washington. As for Chiang, there was no other choice but to accept the MDT, even though the terms of the Treaty were not satisfactory. The ambiguity of the Treaty might have been interpreted by Chiang, as a room for 'freedom of action' on his part, Prof. Fukito suggested.

Second, regarding the role of Dulles, Prof. Fukito reiterated his view that Dulles was the key player, while President Eisenhower agreed with Dulles on most occasions, and the military was virtually excluded from the decision making process of the MDT. According to his own archival research, the process was mostly handled by the State Department, and therefore the role of the military was relatively small and limited, he maintained.

On the paper, Prof. McMahon made several comments and suggestions. First, he pointed out that Prof. Fukito should be more precise on how to put his own findings and arguments in the context of previous studies, making clear the similarities and differences with those studies in the analysis of the subject.

Second, Prof. McMahon commented that the depiction of Dulles as "virtually a sole policy maker" in Fukito's paper might be the result of its over-reliance on the published volumes of FRUS, which usually reflect the views of the State Department. The roles played by the U. S. military, for example, would be more explicit in the files of the JCS. And the views from Taipei could be given

appropriate attention by doing research at Taiwanese archives. It goes without saying that historical studies on particular events or decisions are easily affected by the materials we depend on. As Prof. McMahon stressed, whether Dulles was really the most important player in the decision making process leading to the MDT with Taiwan should be analyzed and verified on the basis of multiple archival sources.

The third point Prof. McMahon raised was the “agency of the weaker powers in alliance relations,” which was evident not only in the case of Taiwan, but also in U. S. relations with South Korea and the Philippines. Even for the U. S. as superpower, policies toward smaller allies could not be unilateral decisions, but were the products of politics and compromises. Taipei, Seoul, and Manila were not just puppets, but agents pursuing desperately their own interests. Through various diplomatic maneuvers, even these small “client states” could exert certain degree of influence over U.S. decisions. Prof. Fukito’s analysis could be more balanced and comprehensive by integrating these perspectives, Prof. McMahon suggested.

After Prof. McMahon’s comments, questions and discussions were opened up to the floor, covering wide range of issues. Prof. Yoshikawa of Nanzan University asked what kind of leverages smaller states might have. She wondered how seriously the policy makers in the Eisenhower administration took the “threat of recklessness” Chiang might have tried as diplomatic weapons. In relation to it, Prof. Terachi of Kyoritsu Women’s University raised the issue of U. S. involvement in Taiwan’s aggressive operations onto the mainland China. He challenged the implication of Fukito’s paper that Eisenhower and Dulles tried to reduce U. S. commitment to Asia after the Korean War, causing concerns among the dependent allies in the region. He rather presented the view that the U. S. was strengthening military presence to counter the emerging threats from China in the post-Korean War period. Prof. Matsuda, Kyoto University of Foreign Studies, pointed out the need to take into consideration the economic dimension in analyzing U. S. foreign policies in Cold War period. Raising the example of the “sense of crisis of capitalist system” as a background factor for the well-known NSC 68, he asked how much the economic concerns influenced the decisions in the Eisenhower administration. Prof. Ricardo T. Jose of the University of the Philippines asked about the similarities and differences among the MDTs with Taipei, Seoul, and Manila, in terms of U. S. commitments in cases of aggression. Prof. Ma, Osaka University of Education, wondered whether the experiences in the 1950s, mutual mistrust for example, affected the perceptions and behaviors of both the U. S. and Taiwan in the following years up to today, or whether there were any changes in the patterns of mutual relations. Because of limited time, these questions and comments were only briefly answered by the paper-giver, Prof. Fukito, and much was left for further discussions and researches.

Discussions at Workshop I were very lively and thought-provoking ones, stimulated by a very solid paper based on detailed archival research, and by the

incisive and insightful commentator. Prof. McMahon's comments also made a great contribution to broadening the scope of discussion, emphasizing the methodology and the perspectives of comparative studies in the emerging field of "international history" rather than traditional diplomatic history.