

The Defense Alliance and the Weak Nation's
Bargaining Power: Comment on Fukito Masami,
"The United States' Taiwan Policy and the
Far East during Early Cold War Period, 1949-1954"

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It is my great honor to have a chance to comment on the paper of Professor Fukito Masami, who is a young and emerging scholar on United States foreign policy toward Asia, especially Taiwan.

Professor Fukito sheds light upon the Eisenhower administration's policymaking toward Taiwan and China, especially upon Secretary of State Dulles's thoughts toward the China-Taiwan conflict as well as the making of the U.S.-Taiwan Mutual Defense Treaty (MDT). He successfully depicts how American policies toward China and Taiwan from the late 1940's through 1954 had been stipulated. In his account, the existing monographs on the China-Taiwan split only pointed to the Korean War and consequent Chinese Communists' entry into the war, as the single most important factor that led the United States to the non-recognition policy toward Communist China and to the commitment to Nationalist China. However, Professor Fukito emphasizes the complicated factors of the Far East during this time period, and insightfully shows the winding road of America's policymaking toward China and Taiwan. He contends that not only the Korean War but also other factors, such as the Indochinese situations and the division among America's allies toward the Chinese recognition question, were also significant in deciding the American policy. His argument that the U.S.-Taiwan Mutual Defense Treaty not only consolidated the China-Taiwan split but also "contained" Chiang Kai-shek on Taiwan is provocative.

The first point that intrigued me in Professor Fukito's paper is the pattern of the transformation of the U.S.-Taiwan relations. He argues that the United States showed very low commitment to Taiwan and its leader Chiang Kai-shek during the late 1940's, but the strategic importance of Taiwan was elevated in the early 1950's in the face of the outbreak of the Korean War and various international crises. In fact, the three Asian countries that were suffering domestic instability and external threat--Nationalist China, South Korea, and the Philippines--had gone through parallel experiences from the late 1940's to the early 1950's. During the late 1940's, the leaders of these countries, Chiang Kai-shek, Syngman Rhee,

and Elpidio Quirino--who were all "corrupt and inefficient" according to a U.S. official's words, but pro-American--were almost abandoned by the United States. By this time, the Truman administration's indifference to these nations was clear: the *China White Paper* hinted victory of Communist China over Nationalists in the near future; the gradual U.S. military withdrawal from South Korea suggested the withdrawal of the U.S. commitment from the peninsula; and the U.S. aid for the Philippines was stagnated those days. In the military strategic considerations, U.S. bases in South Korea and Taiwan were too close to areas of conflict. Those in the Philippines were vulnerable to internal threat, and moreover, dispensable given other U.S. bases in the Pacific. In the meantime, Japan had just emerged as America's ally, which was expected to become Asian economic magnet as well as America's military stronghold.

However, these leaders of non-communist, unstable Asian countries were not content to allow the U.S. commitment to diminish even further. In seeking to regain America's commitment to themselves, they found that they had common interests in their respective relations with the United States. During the first half of 1949, they cooperated with each other and proposed to establish Pacific Treaty Organization (PATO), an Asian version of NATO. Given the mounting East-West tension in Asia, Chiang, Rhee, and Quirino wished to establish a regional security system which would be constituted of Asian non-communist nations, plus the United States as the supplier of both troops and military aid. Their purposes were, however, not only security of non-communist Asia, but rather political. Suffering from domestic political instability and shrinking aid from the United States, they attempted to sustain America's military presence and support by proposing such a pact.¹ Such American commitments were essential for them in maintaining their own domestic political power.²

This proposal, however, was dismissed by the United States and other western powers. British Foreign Minister Sir Mabel Dening even despised, criticizing that an idea of a Pacific pact presented by the "combination of discredited former Chinese president, Philippine politician with not too good reputation, and head of insecure Korean state" (*sic*) would be reduced to an "absurdity." State Department officials in Washington regarded it as an attempt to exploit each other by the three Far Eastern "orphans" who desperately sought United States patronage.³

From the above example, we can see that the United States showed the same kind of indifference toward the each of these three Asian countries. The United States, expecting a strong and democratic Asian leader to emerge, refrained from committing itself too much to those vulnerable nations.

However, as international situations grew hostile since the fall of 1949 and the Korean War broke out in 1950, the United States had to change its policies toward these countries. After all, these leaders, Chiang, Rhee, and Quirino, might be corrupt and inefficient, but at least pro-American. The United States had to support them as "lesser evil(s)"⁴--or as better alternatives than communists--

although Washington recognized that they were not ideal partners in pursuing its policy toward Asia. The United States decided to save South Korea and sent troops under the name of the United Nations Forces, sent the Seventh Fleet to Taiwan, and began massive intervention into internal politics in the Philippines.

To my great interest, Professor Murata Koji contends in his book that the United States went into the Korean War, "*not because* it was South Korea," but "*in spite of the fact* that it was South Korea that was invaded".⁵ Similarly, the hovering Giant began to support Taiwan and the Philippines, although unwillingly, in spite of the fact that the United States had once sought to dismiss their leaders.

But it was such critical situations that these Asian leaders could exploit, thus successfully procuring America's commitment to themselves. In other words, a weak ally, who had been forgotten or dismissed, could obtain strong bargaining power vis-à-vis the United States, when the latter was faced by some serious international issues with which it needed overall allied support.⁶

The second point that intrigued me in the paper was Professor Fukito's account of the formation of the U.S.-Taiwan Mutual Defense Treaty of 1954. He contends that the United States concluded the MDT not only because of Taiwan's strategic importance, which was never regarded as "vital"; but rather because of the necessity to deter Chiang from reckless aggression onto the mainland. In other words, political considerations that sought international stability and avoidance of military collision with Communist China were the major factors in the treaty making, rather than military strategic requirements. Although Chiang's perception toward the U.S. policy is not the focus of Professor Fukito, it seems to me that, even though Chiang was "contained" on Taiwan by the MDT, he must have welcomed the treaty that preserved U.S. military presence over there.

Here again, we can see similar patterns in the U.S.-Philippine MDT of 1951 as well as the U.S.-South Korean MDT of 1953. With regard to the U.S.-Philippine pact, both the State Department and the Joint Chiefs of Staff considered it as "unnecessary", and even "against U.S. national security interest." They feared that the military command line would be divided by making a number of bilateral and trilateral pacts (such as the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty and the ANZUS Treaty), thus military operations would become inefficient and weakened.⁷ However, the Philippines fortified the conclusion of the MDT, if Japan would be given Peace and Security treaties. John Foster Dulles, then the Special Ambassador on the Japanese Peace issue, came to make concessions to the Philippines in order to save the latter's support for the Japanese Peace Treaty.⁸ In other words, the U.S.-Philippine MDT was far from a military necessity, but the product of political considerations in which the utmost importance was put on the creation of the San Francisco System, the postwar capitalist framework in Asia. However, such an overall Asian system to fight the Cold War did not mean so much to the Philippines. What it imperatively wanted was the assurance that the United States would not dismiss itself, a small but loyal ally who had fought

against Japan with its ex-suzerain state.

With regard to the stipulation of the U.S.-South Korean MDT of 1953, the logic seems similar to that of the U.S.-Taiwan MDT. By this time the United States was weary of the war and longed for the armistice, but Syngman Rhee of South Korea resisted. In the effort to make the Korean armistice, the Eisenhower administration gave President Rhee a military assurance by the U.S.-Korean MDT, and promised military and economic aid. But the MDT was, from the U.S. point of view, expected to function as a containment for Rhee himself, to keep him from northern invasion.⁹ Looking at these processes of mutual defense treaty making, it can be said that different from the Super Power whose utmost interest was how to fight the Cold War, the weak allies had their own logic in determining their own diplomacy.

Taking into account these political situations and fortifications of the Asian allies, these small nations, whose relationships with the United States were never those of equal partners, *did* have bargaining power vis-à-vis the United States. Although the United States and these Asian allies had common interests respectively, there were discrepancies in the world views and political purposes between the Superpower and the weak allies. While the maintenance of their own political power, the acquisition of military and economic aid as well as security measures for their own nation, were of utmost importance to the leaders of the Asian allies, the Superpower placed the security of the free world and international stability as the first priority.

The United States presence in Taiwan, South Korea, and the Philippines can be regarded as an “empire by invitation,” as Geir Lundestad once phrased United States presence in Western Europe.¹⁰ Dulles has often been called “pact mania,” making many alliance treaties with non-communist nations. However, if we look into each nation’s individual situation and treaty making process, it can be said that Dulles did not necessarily wanted such numerous pacts or did he consider they were strategically necessary; but that it was rather these Asian “weak” allies who wanted the pact, in order to retain America’s commitment to themselves.

Now, I would like to ask a couple of questions to Professor Fukito. First, I would like to know Chiang Kai-shek’s intentions and behavior in the formulation of U.S.-Taiwan relations. How did Nationalist China respond to the U.S. policy toward themselves and mainland China? Did they try to influence the United States in the latter’s policy toward China or the MDT? If the U.S.-Taiwan MDT functioned as a tool to contain Chiang Kai-shek as Professor Fukito argues, how did Chiang perceive such U.S. policy? It seems to me that even if the MDT was a containment tool upon Chiang, the treaty had a great merit for him in preserving U.S. commitment toward him and Taiwan. Multi-archival research is one of the recent major trends in the scholarship of international history, and the study of U.S.-Taiwan-Chinese relations is also in the midst of this trend.¹¹ Exploring the policymaking process and the perceptions from both sides may lead us to more

comprehensive understandings of history and U.S. policymaking itself.

Second, Professor Fukito develops an account of U.S. policy toward Taiwan mainly focusing on Dulles's thoughts. What roles did President Eisenhower or the U.S. military play in the policymaking process? In the school of the Eisenhower revisionism, the President's role was reevaluated as considerable. In addition, U.S. military policies could not have been founded without consulting the military authorities.

Third, since Professor McMahan developed discussions on the history issue in his Keynote speech, I would like to bring it up in the topic of U.S.-Chinese-Taiwan relations. How do the memories of the U.S.-Taiwan alliance, the China-Taiwan split, or the U.S. non-recognition of Communist China and reconciliation thereafter, function in the contemporary relations among these countries? As the U.S.-Chinese relations deepen in the 21st century, has historical interpretation changed? Professor McMahan rightly argues that the sharp divergence between the United States and Japan on the memory of World War II, especially of Pearl Harbor, has not become a major political obstacle for their bilateral relations because those memories are rather "internal" to American people; while the history issues between Japan and China or between Japan and South Korea, such as the Nanking Massacre and comfort women, still become major political problems that bring tensions to bilateral relationship. Then, how are the public memories different between the United States and Taiwan, or the United States and China? From the vantage point of 21th century when we know economic emergence of both Taiwan as one of the Newly Industrialized Economies and mainland China as one of the centers of World economy, how are the history of the U.S.-Taiwan alliance since World War II until the 1970's, and the history of U.S. recognition of Communist China thereafter, perceived in each of these three nations? And how do the perception gaps play roles in politics?

It seems to me that if a nation considers that politicizing the conflict of memories might jeopardize its national interest in bilateral relations with another, the former often dares not mention the difference of historical understanding to the latter. In such a case, a memory of history that is inconvenient to the present political situation might be intentionally or unintentionally obliterated from public consciousness. The U.S.-Taiwan relations and U.S.-Chinese relations seem to fit the case of the oblivion of the memories.

In concluding my comment on Professor Fukito's paper, I would like to once again praise his fine and detailed research. It is a very important work which clarifies the policymaking process of the United States toward Asia in the early Cold War period. Although the scholars of American foreign relations tend to move their scope of interest toward more recent time period along with the declassification of the newer documents, it is always necessary to go back to the earlier era to reevaluate the existing interpretations.

Notes

1. For the detailed discussions on the Pacific pact proposal by the Philippines, see Yuko ITO, "Taiheiyou-Jouyaku Koso no Hen'you: Ajia Taiheiyou Chiiki Anpo Togo heno Ugoki to Firipin Initiative 1949-1951" ("The Transformation of the Idea of the 'Pacific Pact': A Move toward an Asia-Pacific Regional Security Union and the Philippine Initiative, 1949-1951") *Kokusai Kankei Kiyou* (The Journal of International Relations), Asia University, Vol. 10, No. 3 (March 2001), 41-66.
2. *Foreign Relations of the United States* (hereafter cited as *FRUS*) 1949, vol. 7, pt. 2, 1192-55; Joint Weeka 32, 15 Jul 1949, *Confidential Department of State Files, the Republic of the Philippines*, 1945-49, Reel 4.
3. Joint Weeka 34, 29 Jul 1949, *ibid.*; *FRUS* 1949, vol. 7, pt. 2, 1168-71, 1176; Fisher to Butterworth, 15 Jul 1949, 890.20/7-1549, Record Group (hereafter cited as RG) 59, United States National Archives (hereafter cited as USNA).
4. American Embassy in Manila to the Secretary of State, July 6, 1949, 896.00/7-649, box7410, RG59, USNA.
5. Koji Murata, *Daitoryo no Zassetsu: Carter Seiken no Zai-Kan Beigun Tettai Seisaku* (The President's Failure: President Carter's U.S. Troop Withdrawal Policy from South Korea) (Tokyo: Yuhikaku, 1998), 6.
6. With regard to a weak nation's bargaining power in negotiations, see for example, Yoshikawa Yoko, "Firipin no Taibei Kosho Kodo: 79 nen Kichi Kosho" (Negotiation Behavior of the Philippines toward the United States: the Bases Talks in 1979), Chap. 16, Kimura Hiroshi, ed., *Kokusai Kosho-Gaku: Kosho Kodo Yoshiki no Kokusai Hikaku* (The Study of International Negotiations: International Comparison of Negotiation Behaviors) (Tokyo: Keiso-Shobo, 1998), 313-337.
7. JCS2180/10-12, April 9-11, *Records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, pt. 2: 1946-53, Far East*, Reel 6.
8. With regard to the connection between the Japanese Peace issue and the US-Philippine MDT, see Ito, *op. cit.*, 54-61; and Yuko Ito, "Postwar U.S. Military Policy Towards the Philippines and the 'Japanese Factor,' 1945-1951," Ikehata Setsuho & Lydia N. Yu Jose, eds., *Philippine- Japan Relations* (Manila: Ateneo de Manila UP, 2003), 299-336.
9. William W. Stueck (trans. Toyoshima Tetsu), *Chosen Senso: Minzoku no Junan to Kokusai Seiji* (Tokyo: Akashi Shoten, 1999), 384-396 (William W. Stueck. *The Korean War: An International History*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1995); Peter Lowe, *The Korean War* (London: MacMillan, 2000), 94-95.
10. For Lundestat's argument, see Geir Lundestat, *The United States and Western Europe since 1945: From "Empire" by Invitation to Transatlantic Drift* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).
11. Ishikawa Masato, "Multi-Archive to Higashi-Ajia no Reisen: 'Tairiku-Hanko' kara Taiwan wo Mitsumeru" (Multi-Archival research and the Cold War in Asia: Looking at Taiwan through the Attack on the Mainland), *Asu no Toyo-gaku* (Asian Studies of Tomorrow), Research and Information Center for Asian Studies, Institute for Advanced Studies on Asia, University of Tokyo, No. 23 (March 2010), 2-5; Fukuda Madoka, "Mo Taku-to Jidai ni Okeru tai Taiwan Seisaku no Keisei: Rittaiteki na Shikaku to Multi-Archive no Omoshirosa" (Chinese Taiwan Policy Formulation in the Mao Ze-dong Era: Three-dimensional Perspectives and the Interest in Multi-Archival Research), *ibid.*, 6-9.