

Chiang Kai-shek ' s vision for returning to China in the 1950s

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**Chiang Kai-shek's Vision for Returning
to China in the 1950s**

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Abstract: This paper investigates Chiang Kai-shek (Jiang Jieshi, the First President of the Republic of China)'s vision for returning to mainland China during the period of the two Taiwan Strait Crises in the 1950s through the analysis of Taiwanese archival documents. Some conclusions can be drawn from the analysis presented here. First, Taiwanese archival documents show that the United States was more actively encouraging the Republic of China [ROC] to hold and even take advantage of the offshore islands, the Da-chen Islands in particular. The U.S.'s attitude may have maintained or strengthened Chiang Kai-shek's hope that he would be able to return to the mainland of China. Second, Chiang had paid enormous attention to the People's Republic of China [PRC]-Soviet relations, and when he discussed the subject with allied U.S. officials, he emphasized that the Soviet Union would not intervene even if the ROC conducted a counter-offensive against the Chinese mainland. While it is difficult to judge whether Chiang's analysis of Soviet intentions concerning the defense of the PRC was motivated by his desire to entrap the United States or if it was the outcome of more cool-headed logical thinking, his observances of the signs of the split between Beijing and Moscow after the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis in 1958 was remarkably accurate. It is possible that Chiang may have thought that his chance of returning to mainland China would be greater in the late 1950s and the early 1960s. The critical piece that he needed to realize his dream, however, was support from the United States who ironically became more reluctant as time went on.

Keywords: Chiang Kai-shek, U.S.-Taiwan Relations, Taiwan Strait Crisis, offshore islands

JEL classification: Z00

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Chiang Kai-shek's Vision for Returning to China in the 1950s:

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Introduction:

There have been few studies that utilize Taiwanese sources to highlight how Chiang Kai-shek (Jiang Jieshi, the First President of the Republic of China) understood the issue of the Republic of China's (ROC) government returning to mainland China. Most studies on this issue have focused on Taiwan's diplomatic history in the 1950s in the context of U.S.-China or U.S.-Taiwan relations based on diplomatic and archival documents available in the United States, such as the *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS)*. One of the reasons why this issue has been analyzed only from the context of bilateral relations has been that the availability of diplomatic documents from Taiwan has been very limited for a long time. It had been very difficult, as a result, to know Taiwan's diplomatic history from Taiwanese perspectives. However, thanks to democratization in Taiwan, archives such as Academia Historica, Academia Sinica's Institute of Modern History Archive, and the Kuomintang Archive have begun to open various ROC governmental documents. Because of these developments, it has become possible for researchers to examine Taiwan's diplomatic history during the Cold War not only from U.S. but also Taiwanese perspectives.

This paper investigates Chiang Kai-shek's vision for returning to mainland China in the 1950s through the analysis of Taiwanese archival documents. In particular, it focuses on Chiang Kai-shek's remarks and conversations with high-ranking U.S. officials during the period of the two Taiwan Strait Crises in the 1950s. This project is based on the author's ongoing archival research in Taiwan.

In the following sections, I first explain the issues concerning the defense of the so-called offshore islands, which the ROC considered to be the spring board for returning to the mainland. Special attention is paid to the Da-chen Islands defense. Next, I highlight Chiang Kai-shek's analysis of the relations between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Soviet Union. Both issues were significantly related to the ROC agenda of returning to mainland China. In doing so, I utilize archival materials that I uncovered in Taiwan.

Chiang Kai-shek's Vision for Returning to China and the Offshore Islands Issue:

How did the United States attempt to manage the issue of Chiang Kai-Shek's returning to mainland China? According to one archival record, before the first Taiwan Strait Crisis in 1954 to 1955, the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) had been vigorously conducting activities to assist the ROC's military preparedness on the offshore islands for returning to China in the future. After transferring the ROC's capital to Taiwan in 1949, the offshore islands, such as Jinmen, the Mazu, the Da-chen, the Yijiangshan islands along the coast of mainland China, had been regarded as important strongholds for the ROC for conducting limited counter-offensives against the PRC.

There is a record of conversations among Chiang Kai-shek, the U.S. Ambassador to the ROC Karl Rankin, and an U.S. Navy Vice Admiral officer on April 15, 1953¹. According to the record, the U.S. side made clear that the CIA's obligation toward the ROC should cover the whole of China and that her main missions included training for the ROC's guerrilla forces, conducting psychological operations against enemies, and intelligence gathering. Moreover, the document reveals that the U.S. Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG)'s obligation did not cover training for the ROC's guerrilla forces in offshore islands. Chiang Kai-shek references this situation:

If the ROC's guerrilla forces, trained by the MAAG, conducted counterattacks against mainland China, it might negatively affect the U.S. government. That is to say, the U.S. public opinion might become critical of the U.S. government...however, the CIA's activities in the offshore islands were unofficial, and there were no such problems.²

As this document makes clear, the U.S. government tried to assist the ROC's limited

¹ 005-010205-00108-006, President Chiang Kai-shek Materials, Academia Historica, Taipei. Translated by author.

² 005-010205-00108-006, President Chiang Kai-shek Materials, Academia Historica, Taipei. Translated by author.

counter-offensives against the mainland not through the MAAG but through the CIA's unofficial activities.

After initiating the first Taiwan Strait Crisis, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) launched an attack against the Da-chen Islands and the Yijiangshan Island, the latter of which was captured by the PLA in January 1955.³ After the announcement of Yijiangshan's fall, the U.S. government strongly urged Chiang Kai-shek to withdraw from the Da-chen Islands. According to conventional wisdom, the U.S. government faced extreme difficulty in persuading Chiang Kai-shek to do so. Because of this, it is often argued that Chiang was irrationally obsessed with the defense of the offshore islands despite the huge risk of causing a major military clash.

It is true that Chiang did not easily accept the withdrawal of the ROC forces from the Da-chen Islands. But the ROC archival records show that there was a legitimate reason why Chiang was so reluctant to accept the withdrawal. As it turned out, Chiang did not simply persist in defending the Da-chen Islands in order to maintain hope of ultimately returning to the mainland; it was the United States that had encouraged and even instructed the ROC to fortify the defense of the Da-chen before the first Taiwan Strait Crisis had begun. The ROC archival documents reveal that before the beginning of the crisis, the U.S. government strongly encouraged the ROC government to enhance the Da-chen's defenses and even recommended that the ROC blockade the PRC's shipping around the Da-chen and other offshore islands.⁴

It is important to note that the ROC military was not initially enthusiastic about the blockade plan near the Da-chen because it considered the defense conditions of the islands to be fragile, and it would be difficult to blockade near the islands without strengthening the ROC's defense capabilities there.⁵ The ROC even argued that if the U.S. government still wanted them to strengthen the defense of the offshore islands,

³ Yijiangshan Island was located along the defense line of the Da-chen Islands, and it was believed that if the islands fell, the defense of the Da-chen Islands would be next to impossible.

⁴ 409/0236, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archives, Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica, Taipei. Translated by author.

⁵ *Ibid.*

additional military aid and assistance from the United States would be required.⁶ While this counter-proposal may have been partly a tactic to receive more aid from the United States, the fact that the ROC was aware of the difficulty in defending the Da-chen Islands is significant.

On July 18, 1953, Chiang Kai-shek, accompanied by the ROC Foreign Minister George Yeh (Yeh Kung-ch'ao), had a meeting with U.S. Ambassador Rankin in Taipei and stated:

The Da-chen Islands are too far away from Taipei and too close to Wenzhou. The PRC can easily seize the islands anytime. Without strengthening the U.S. military assistance for the islands, it would be difficult to retain them. Therefore, we would like to suggest that the U.S. recognize the offshore islands, including the Da-chen Islands, as falling within the range of U.S. military assistance and that the Seventh Fleet patrol them.⁷

In this meeting, while Chiang Kai-shek expressed his appreciation for the CIA's activities on the Da-chen Islands, he asserted that the offshore islands should be included in the scope of U.S. defense perimeter. In response, U.S. Ambassador Rankin explained that Admiral Arthur Radford was in charge of the U.S. military policy, and that he expected that the offshore islands would be included in the range of U.S. military assistance in the near future. Moreover, Chiang Kai-shek explained that in addition to the ROC's military power, if U.S. navy and air forces were added, the Da-chen Islands could be protected. Ambassador Rankin replied that he expected to give substantial support to the ROC because of moral reasons, but if the PLA invaded the Da-chen Islands then it would be difficult for the United States to declare war against the PRC. Foreign Minister Yeh explained that the ROC did not ask the United

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ 005-010205-00079-011, President Chiang Kai-shek Materials, Academia Historica, Taipei. Translated by author.

States to take over the defense of the islands, but that it would rather desire that the Seventh Fleet cover the Da-chen Islands as a part of its patrol and that submarines be provided to the ROC's navy.

The U.S. government requested on another occasion that the ROC government should increase the latter's defense efforts for the Da-chen Islands. In the meeting with the ROC Foreign Minister Yeh on August 12, 1953, U.S. Ambassador Rankin stated:

Washington hoped that the Chinese government would make every effort to retain the islands, particularly the Da-chen islands, while the matter of integrating those islands into the defense scheme of Taiwan and the Pescadores was being actively studied pending the assumption of office of Admiral Radford as Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff.⁸

As this message indicates, the U.S. government was actively encouraging the ROC to defend the offshore islands, including the Da-chen islands, before the first Taiwan Strait Crisis erupted. The situation around that time did not allow Chiang Kai-shek to refuse such a request from the U.S., as the ROC was in the midst of negotiations with the country to conclude a mutual security treaty.

However, the U.S. government changed its attitude toward the offshore islands after the first Taiwan Strait Crisis began as it recognized operational difficulties and risks involving their defense. When the U.S. government asked the ROC to withdraw its troops from the Da-chen Islands, Chiang Kai-shek strongly criticized such a sudden change in U.S. policy. Chiang's reaction was understandable, given that he had been trying to improve the islands' defense precisely because the United States had requested he do so. Judging from the analysis provided above, it is not an exaggeration that certain U.S. actions toward the ROC and U.S. high officials' communications with Chiang Kai-shek encouraged him to expect that the United States might help him

⁸ 426.2/0001, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archives, Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica, Taipei. Translated by author.

initiate counter-offensives against the PRC and possibly return to the mainland.

Taiwan's archival documents show that U.S. military high ranking officers repeatedly encouraged Chiang Kai-shek to counterattack mainland China even right after the Da-chen Islands were attacked on January 10. There was a meeting between Chiang Kai-shek and General Bolte Deputy Chief Staff Army on January 15, 1955 at the Presidential Residence in Shilin in Taipei. Chiang Kai-shek insisted that serious damages would be done to the defense and morale of the ROC if the Da-chen Islands were invaded by the PLA. He thus argued that an announcement should be made that the Da-chen and other offshore islands were included within the geographic scope of defense cooperation between the ROC and the United States.⁹ Bolte did not directly reply to Chiang Kai-shek's insistence, but he expressed his hope to participate in "the great endeavor of returning to mainland China when the time was ripe."¹⁰

There was another meeting between Chiang Kai-shek and a U.S. high-ranking military officer on January 15, 1955. Chiang Kai-shek asked the major general whether there was any opinion on the offshore islands affair. The military officer replied:

When the PRC attacked the offshore islands in September 1954, the ROC's forces promptly managed the crisis and its operation succeeded. However, when the Da-chen Islands were attacked on January 10, 1955, the ROC's army did not retaliate against the PLA. Personally, I am very disappointed at the ROC's handling of the situation at that time. In my opinion, the ROC's air force should retaliate by conducting low-altitude flight bombings. If not, a suspicion could arise as to whether the ROC would be able to return to mainland China or not.¹¹

Chiang Kai-shek only answered that the ROC was in preparation of retaliatory

⁹ Whether the offshore islands were included in the scope of the ROC-US security treaty had remained ambiguous since the conclusion of the treaty in December 1954.

¹⁰ 005-010205-00080-001, President Chiang Kai-shek Materials, Academia Historica, Taipei. Translated by author.

¹¹ 005-010205-00080-002, President Chiang Kai-shek Materials, Academia Historica, Taipei. Translated by author.

measures concerning the PLA's attack against the Da-chen Islands. It is remarkable that right after the Da-chen Islands were attacked by the PLA and right before the decision to withdraw from the islands was made, the high-ranking U.S. military officials directly spoke to Chiang Kai-shek, recommended strengthening the Da-chen's defenses, and hinted at their willingness to assist the ROC's retaliation. It is probable that what the U.S. military officials indicated was not the official policy of the United States. But even if that had been the case, it is easy to imagine that their attitudes encouraged Chiang Kai-shek to develop a stronger hope for realizing a return to the Chinese mainland in the future.

After the First Taiwan Strait Crisis in 1954-55, the ambassadorial talks between the United States and the PRC began. Even during the period, there were some meetings in which the U.S. and the ROC government officials discussed the issue of returning to China, although the U.S. officers' enthusiasm lessened compared to their prior attitude. According to a record of a conversation between Chiang Kai-shek and U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Walter Robertson on March 16, 1956, at the Presidential Residence in Shilin, Robertson asked Chiang Kai-shek about the ROC's planning for returning to China. Chiang Kai-shek answered:

It would be difficult to return to China right now; however, it would be impossible to maintain status quo eternally. Therefore, within several years, I would like to return to China. It will take some time, and the U.S. support will be absolutely important.¹²

Furthermore, Chiang Kai-shek revealed a more concrete timetable for returning to China. In a meeting among Chiang Kai-shek, other ROC leaders, and Admiral Radford at the Presidential Resident at Yangmingshan Mountain. Chiang Kai-shek discussed the issue of returning to China:

¹² 005-010205-00082-001, President Chiang Kai-shek Materials, Academia Historica, Taipei. Translated by author.

I have been to Taiwan. If there was no vision and plan for returning to China, it would be meaningless for me to be there. As far as the timetable is concerned, we would need the U.S. government's consultation and agreement in advance. Without the U.S. agreement, the ROC's morale will be harmed...we should mobilize a revolutionary movement in mainland China in order to successfully return to China. If we lose out on timing, it would be more difficult to return to China. Thus, we definitely need cooperation from the U.S. government.¹³

Radford stated that currently a majority of countries were opposed to the ROC's counter-offensive toward mainland China. He said that the U.S. government was willing to provide aid to the ROC and that, in fact, President Eisenhower intended to do so. However, it was difficult for the Eisenhower administration to express its support for the ROC's counter-offensive to the mainland officially because doing so would negatively influence the presidential election. This hesitation suggests that Radford's and the U.S. government's attitude toward aiding the ROC had diminished. It is noteworthy, nonetheless, that discussions of a counter-offensive to the mainland was not taboo even after the conclusion of the U.S.-ROC security treaty in 1954 and that the allied officials continued to exchange opinions on the possibility of an offensive.

Chiang Kai-shek's Views of Returning to the Chinese Mainland and of Sino-Soviet Relations

This section analyzes, based on Taiwanese archival materials, Chiang Kai-shek's views of the Sino-Soviet relations in the context of his vision for returning to the Chinese mainland. In discussing with U.S. government officials the need for a counter-offensive against the PRC, Chiang often made predictions about how the Soviet Union would respond to such an act by the ROC. For instance, in three

¹³ 005-010205-00075-005, President Chiang Kai-shek Materials, Academia Historica, Taipei. Translated by author.

meetings with U.S. Vice President Nixon in November 9, 1953, Chiang displayed his own view regarding strategic situations in East Asia and laid out his ideas of how to deal with the situation. First, Chiang elaborated on how he viewed the Soviet strategy in East Asia. He argued that “[i]n Soviet strategy, cold war is hot war,” indicating that the Soviet’s strategic interests lay in buying time to develop its own capabilities while keeping the United States engaged in constant Cold War tensions without direct involvement.¹⁴ From this, Chiang predicted the Soviet reaction to a counter-offensive against the PRC as follows:

It is my conviction that Russia will never intervene openly in the hostilities when we launch a counterattack on the Mainland because that would defeat the Soviet policy of not taking an active part in war and of actually achieving its plan of world conquest without getting directly involved militarily. I believe that Russia will never enter a war unless it is absolutely necessary. The question naturally arises as to when it will be absolutely necessary for Russia to enter a war. I believe the time will come when the balance of power between the U.S. and Russia will be drastically upset; that is, when most of the countries of the world are either pro-Communist or have adopted a neutral stand, and the U.S. is placed in an isolated position.¹⁵

This logic was certainly self-serving; since the ROC needed to acquire substantial U.S. support for launching its counter-attacks against the PRC, it wanted to persuade the U.S. government that Soviet involvement in a war against the PRC was unlikely. Even so, the logic that Chiang employed here was not inconsistent but instead close to the line of hawkish realists; although, he still may have underestimated the possibility of Soviet intervention to support the PRC.

¹⁴ 407.1/0185, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archives, Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica, Taipei. Translated by author.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

On May 20, 1954, Chiang met U.S. Secretary of Defense Charles Wilson and U.S. Ambassador Rankin at the Presidential Residence in Shilin. When Wilson stated that the United States must take a cautious stance on the Chinese Nationalists' counterattacks against the mainland and that the Soviet Union's response to the ROC's counterattacks could not be predicted, Chiang responded as follows:

We understand the concerns of the U.S., but even if our military conducts a counter-offensive operation, the Soviet Union would definitely not participate. Our military would take the entire responsibility. This is genuinely China's problem. I believe that we should also take into account the experiences from our past struggles. Although the Korean War was a large-scale war, the Soviet Union did not directly participate in the war, only the PRC did. In the case of the Vietnam war, neither the Soviet Union nor China participated directly. I believe that the Soviet Union would definitely not initiate a world war simply because they belong to a Communist bloc.¹⁶

Furthermore, on May 28, 1954, when Chiang Kai-shek met U.S. Assistant Secretary of Defense W. J. McNeil, General Van Fleet, U.S. Ambassador Rankin, and Foreign Minister Yeh at the Presidential Residence in Yangmingshan, he referred to the necessity for concluding a defense treaty between the U.S. and the ROC governments. In so doing, he stated that the ROC had no intention of involving the United States in joint operations for counterattacking mainland China. He emphasized that the conclusion of a U.S.-ROC security treaty would "bolster the confidence" of people in mainland China that the Nationalists would someday return there, and the only duty for the United States would be to recognize the territories that the ROC desired to recover."¹⁷

¹⁶ 005-010205-00075-002, President Chiang Kai-shek Materials, Academia Historica, Taipei. Translated by author.

¹⁷ 002-080106-00034-010, President Chiang Kai-shek Materials, Academia Historica, Taipei. Translated by author.

Foreign Minister Yeh added to Chiang's comment, saying that the significance of the proposed U.S.-ROC treaty rested not on its military but on its political ramifications. He specifically stated that the reasons why the ROC emphasized the task of returning to the mainland were "70 percent political and 30 percent military." On the other hand, Yeh stated that the ROC's military job would be greatly facilitated if the United States provided "adequate political support." Chiang also noted, "As to military aid, we do not need American ground forces. If we can get air support, so much better; otherwise, we shall only want United States aid in training and equipping our Air Force and continuous logistical support. In addition, we must also have United States naval support in blockading the China coast."¹⁸

It should be noted that Chiang proposed to the United States that the scope of the treaty should include the entire Chinese mainland. This implied that the probability of the United States being entrapped would increase in the event of a military clash between the ROC and PRC governments. Despite this fact, Chiang emphasized that the significance of the counterattack against the mainland lay not so much in military as in political aspects. In addition, Chiang again insisted in this meeting that he was convinced that the Soviet Union would not desire to enter into a war on mainland China in support of the PRC's side even if the ROC initiated a counterattack.

As these Taiwanese archival sources indicate, Chiang consistently predicted that the Soviet Union would not participate in a war to support the Chinese Communist Party [CCP] even if the ROC conducted a counterattack against mainland China. It is difficult to judge from these materials whether this was the result of Chiang's logical analysis or nothing but rhetoric to encourage the United States' involvement in his attempt to return to the mainland.

However, it is noteworthy that there was a discussion between the U.S. and the ROC governments on the readiness to use nuclear weapons against the Chinese Communists based on the assumption that the Soviet Union would not intervene. On

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

March 16, 1958, Chiang Kai-shek met Admiral Felix B. Stump, the U.S. Commander in Chief in the Pacific, at the Presidential Residence in Shilin. In the meeting, Stump discussed with Chiang “the concept of operations using nuclear weapons.” He explained that the United States had emphasized three times in the past meetings of the Southeast Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO) that it would aid its allies by promptly using its atomic weapons in the event of a large-scale invasion. He also stated that if South Vietnam was invaded, the United States should immediately protect its major cities and military bases, and that “the United States should at the same time warn Red China by attacking with small tactical nuclear weapons North Vietnamese railroads and other lines of transportation that connected Chinese railroads.” He asserted that if Mao Zedong, Chairman of the PRC, neglected this warning, the United States would expand its offensive to Guangdong and advance to the north and demonstrate the power of atomic weapons.¹⁹

Chiang Kai-shek agreed with the U.S. explanations, and he expressed a desire that the U.S. military would secretly proceed in preparing the plan. Stump responded by stating that the United States was already moving forward (hinting at the use of nuclear weapons), and that he wanted to put it into effect when appropriate; both then agreed.²⁰ This seems to suggest that there were some exchanges of opinions between the U.S. and Taiwanese sides on the use of nuclear weapons against China around March 1958.

Chiang revealed his more interesting views on Sino-Soviet relations after the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis had begun. On November 10, 1958, he met a military high-ranking officer at the Presidential Residence in Shilin. Chiang maintained that while his air force maintained superiority over the Taiwan Strait, the Soviet Union would likely provide active support for Red China’s air force, and thus, he argued that the ROC needed U.S. support. In responding to the inquiry from the U.S. as to whether

¹⁹ 005-010205-00084-004, President Chiang Kai-shek Materials, Academia Historica, Taipei. Translated by author.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

or not a split was emerging between Moscow and Beijing (whether or not the Soviet Union's leader, Nikita Khrushchev had confidence in Mao Zhedong), Chiang said that "although he could not say definitively, it was true that the Soviet Union was disappointed with the poor capability of the Communist China's air force during the Second Taiwan Crisis." He pointed out that the Chinese Communist military leader Su Yu was dismissed one day before the ceasefire was announced, and that this fact proved there was a serious rift within the PRC. Su Yu had studied in the Soviet Union, and he had been arguing, even during peacetime, that China should occupy Taiwan, Pescadores, and Jinmen. He was dismissed because he expressed to Mao and Peng De-huai his opposition to the ceasefire. This was, in Chiang's view, a military victory for the United States and the ROC.²¹ It is noteworthy that Chiang referred to the possibility of a Sino-Soviet rift soon after the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis faded.

Furthermore, Chiang commented on Sino-Soviet relations after Khrushchev's visit to Beijing in October 1959. On October 21, he met with U.S. Assistant Secretary of State at the Presidential Office and shared his analysis of the Soviet leader's visit to Beijing. He stated that there was no progress during Khrushchev's three-day visit to Beijing, and Mao opposed Khrushchev's policy of peaceful coexistence. He noted that the disagreement between Mao and Khrushchev had emerged two years before, and that their disagreement became more evident. Chiang pointed out that Khrushchev opposed the PRC's creation of people's communes, and Khrushchev did not desire that Mao would take a leadership position over communist parties in Asia, specifically in the Korean Peninsula and Vietnam. However, he continued, Khrushchev could not control Mao any longer. He said that for the past two years, Mao had been opposed to Khrushchev's "peace offensive" and his opposition recently had surfaced as more radicalized.²²

In another meeting on the same day, Chiang Kai-shek again pointed out the

²¹ 005-010205-00083-004, President Chiang Kai-shek Materials, Academia Historica, Taipei. Translated by author.

²² 005-010100-00055-010, President Chiang Kai-shek Materials, Academia Historica, Taipei. Translated by author.

problems between Mao and Khrushchev, and he even asserted that the PRC and the Soviet Union were on the verge of a split. He then turned to the issue of U.S. support for the ROC and argued that the U.S.'s desire for the ROC to conduct non-military counter-offensive operations was not practical. Chiang expressed his wish that the United States would approve the ROC proposal to aid anti-CCP resistance movement through nonmilitary and paramilitary measures and referred to the creation of special paratrooper units as one method of doing so. He justified his demand by again pointing to the possibility of a Sino-Soviet clash and instability on the mainland.²³ He stated that there was a divergence between Peng De-huai and Lin Biao. Even though Mao and Khrushchev might not yet be at a critical stage, the emergence of a large-scale resistance movement on the mainland could spur their clash, Chiang argued. He then predicted that the following year would present a great chance to take advantage of the prevailing situation, and he would guarantee that the action he proposed would not lead to a world war.²⁴

As this document shows, Chiang correctly observed that the Soviet Union and the PRC were close to splitting up and argued that it was imperative to promote the emergence of resistance movement to the PRC government within mainland China to accelerate the worsening of Sino-Soviet relations. In fact, Chiang had made a similar comment prior to the October 21st meetings. On April 16, 1959, he met the U.S. Army Vice Chief of Staff at the Presidential Residence in Shilin. Chiang noted that an anti-CCP demonstration was continuing and, in fact, expanding in Tibet, and from there the movement was spreading to Qinghai, Sichuan, and other areas. Pointing to the consensus between the ROC and the United States that the ROC government should use various means to assist an anti-CCP movement on the mainland in toppling the PRC, Chiang said that the ROC would seek an opportunity for joint U.S.-ROC

²³ By "instability," Chiang was probably referring to the negative impact of the Great Leap Forward in mainland China.

²⁴ 005-010100-00055-010, President Chiang Kai-shek Materials, Academia Historica, Taipei. Translated by author.

cooperation short of the use of military force to support the demonstrators.²⁵ As these documents indicate, it is possible that the focus of Chiang Kai-shek's counter-offensive against the mainland shifted to overthrowing the PRC government internally by aiding anti-communist movements on mainland China.

Conclusion:

This paper analyzed Chiang Kai-shek's stance on the issue of returning to the Chinese mainland. In so doing, it highlights the issue of the offshore islands and Chiang Kai-shek's view about the relations between the PRC and the Soviet Union; all information here is based on Taiwanese archival materials. This paper is one part of an ongoing project, and it is difficult to make a definitive statement on these two issues.

Nonetheless, some tentative conclusions can be drawn. First, Taiwanese archival documents show that the United States was more actively encouraging the ROC to hold and even take advantage of the offshore islands, the Da-chen Islands in particular. It is possible that partly because of such an attitude from the U.S., Chiang Kai-shek's hopes for returning to mainland China were strengthened or at least maintained. Second, Chiang paid close attention to PRC-Soviet relations, and when he discussed the subject with the United States, he emphasized that the Soviet Union would not intervene even if the ROC were to conduct a counter-offensive against the Chinese mainland. While it is difficult to judge whether Chiang's analysis about the Soviet's intentions concerning the defense of the PRC was motivated by his desire to entrap the United States or the outcome of more cool-headed logical thinking, his analysis of the signs of the split between Beijing and Moscow after the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis was remarkably accurate. It is possible that Chiang may have thought that his chance of returning to mainland China would be greater in the late 1950s and the early 1960s. The critical piece that he needed to realize his dream was support from the United States, who ironically became more reluctant to offer such support as time went by.

²⁵ 005-010205-00097-012, President Chiang Kai-shek Materials, Academia Historica, Taipei. Translated by author.