

**Reluctant Alliance:
John Foster Dulles and the Making of
the U.S.-R.O.C. Mutual Defense Treaty of 1954**

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Abstract

This study places the conclusion of the Sino-U.S. Mutual Security Treaty in the context of the Republic of China's quest for a long-term U.S. commitment as well as its endeavor to retain its sliding international position. It first describes the ROC's futile drive to join a regional security pact in 1953-1954. It then delineates the process that eventually leads to the conclusion of the treaty.

This article argues that, preoccupied with events in Europe, Washington could only handle problems in Asia on a crisis basis. Hence, despite Taipei's persistent probing efforts since President Eisenhower took office, the State Department, particularly Secretary John Foster Dulles, did not pay much attention to its wish to join a pact with Washington until after the outbreak of the first Taiwan Strait crisis in September 1954. As a trade off for an acquiescence in a cease-fire maneuver through the U.N. Security Council, Washington decided to offer Taipei the treaty it long sought after. Through the negotiation process, however, Dulles developed what he considered an ideal design to maintain the *status quo* in the Taiwan Strait area: to obtain a U.N. cease-fire resolution to prevent a Communist takeover of the offshore islands while concluding an MDT to safeguard Taiwan and Penghu.

This study concludes that, while Dulles' design did not work out as ideally as he had planned, it provided the thrust needed to bring about the realization of a formal alliance between Taipei and Washington. Restricting Taipei's operations against the mainland, the treaty nevertheless recognized implicitly the Nationalist claim of sovereignty over the mainland. It also gives the appearance of reciprocity and put the ROC on a par with other non-Communist Asian nations as far as treaty relations with the United States were concerned. With the meager bargaining power they possessed, the Nationalists could really congratulate themselves for such an accomplishment.