Review of International Studies (2012), 38, 119–140 © *2011 British International Studies Association*
doi:10.1017/S0260210511000477 *First published online 1 Sep 2011*

Structural realism and Dulles's China policy

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Abstract. The Eisenhower administration's tough containment policy toward China has been conventionally viewed as an unsensible policy resulting from domestic political pressures or ideology. Refuting the conventional explanations, this article argues that during the early Cold War, the US superiority in bipolarity drove China to balance the United States in Asia. Dulles, the architect of the China policy, made accurate assessments of the power structure in Asia and the inevitable enmity with China. Driven by structural imperative, he decided to pursue containment to maintain the favourable balance of power in Asia by retarding the relative power growth of China allied with the Soviet Union and secondarily by accelerating their conflict through harder pressure on a weaker China. This case long considered as a prime anomaly to balance of power theory actually demonstrates how powerfully distributions of power shape alliance behaviours of states in the anarchic international system.

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Introduction

The Eisenhower administration pursued a hard-line containment policy toward China. Although the containment of the Soviet Union has usually been viewed as driven by balance of power calculations, it has been conventionally argued that the hard-line policy toward China resulted from domestic pressures from congressional conservatives or ideological belief of American leaders.[1] Even the prominent

* I thank John Mearsheimer, Robert Pape, Clifford Peterson, Stephen Walt, Dali Yang, and anonymous reviewers of the Review of International Studies for their helpful comments.

[1] For important domestic political arguments, see Hans Morgenthau, 'John Foster Dulles (1953–1957)', in Norman A. Graebner (ed.), *An Uncertain Tradition: American Secretaries of State in the Twenties Century* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961); *Politics in the Twenties Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), pp. 416–9; 'The *US and China*', in Tang Tsou (ed.), *China in Crisis, Vol. 2: China's Policies in Asia and America's Alternatives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968); Jack Snyder, *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), pp. 257–61. Also see, Norman Graebner, *The New Isolationism: A Study in Politics and Foreign Policy since 1950* (New York: Ronald Press, 1956). For ideological arguments, see Doak Barnett, *China and the Major Powers in East Asia* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1977); *A New US Policy Toward China* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1971); Foster Rhea Dulles, *American Policy toward Communist China, 1949–1969* (New York: Harlan Davidson Inc., 1972); Townsend Hoopes, *The Devil and John Foster Dulles* (Boston:

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210511000477 Published online by Cambridge University Press

balance of power theorists such as Morgenthau considered the Eisenhower administration's China policy as a rare but very important anomaly that revealed the irresponsibility of some state leaders who betrayed national interests in the face of powerful political pressures.[2] Snyder goes further to argue that this China policy is a prime case that shows that domestic factors frequently override structural factors because structure usually has weak and ambiguous effects on state behaviours in the benign defence dominant world.[3] On the other hand, many scholars such as Doak Barnett and Simei Qing have argued that the hard-line containment policy toward China can be explained by the ideological beliefs of American policymakers that shaped their interpretations of Chinese intentions.[4]

In this article, I re-examine the causes of the Eisenhower administration's containment policy toward China. I assess the relative effects of structural, domestic political, and ideological factors by analysing the power structure and tracing the policy process. Countering domestic political and ideological explanations, I argue that this policy was determined primarily by the power structure. Domestic political factors operated strongly but were largely under the control of the administration, making some reinforcing effects on the policy. Ideological beliefs certainly influenced American leaders' suspicion and hostility toward Chinese communists. However, Dulles and most leaders made decisions primarily on the basis of hard-nosed assessments of strategic situations and national interest that were largely consistent with the reality.

In contrast to Europe, the US was in an advantageous position *vis-à-vis* the Soviet Union in Asia. China thus chose to balance the stronger US power by cooperating with the Soviet Union. During the very early years of the Cold War, Acheson miscalculated the power relations and pursued a policy to draw China away from the Soviet Union. Yet Dulles and other policymakers clearly understood the threat that US power posed to China and the strength of the Sino-Soviet alliance based on common power interests and ideological affinity. As a result, the Eisenhower administration decided to pursue a containment policy rather than an accommodation. Its primary goal was to maintain the favourable balance of power in Asia by containing China allied with the archenemy through military, political, and economic pressures. The secondary and more creative goal was that, in the long run, the US would magnify the presumed potential conflicts between China and the Soviet Union through stronger pressure on China by forcing it to demand excessive commitments from the Soviet Union. On the basis of the support of the majority in Congress and among the public, American leaders could maintain tactical flexibility in implementing the containment policy and thus avoid excessive risks, often brushing aside the demands of the China bloc and the extreme anti-communists for rollback.

Little, Brown, and Company, 1973); Simei Qing, *From Allies to Enemies: Visions of Modernity, Identity, and US-China Diplomacy, 1945–1960* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007). For the argument combining domestic political and ideological factors, see Harold Hinton, *China's Turbulent Quest: An Analysis of China's Foreign Relations Since 1949* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972); *Three and a Half Powers: The New Balance in Asia* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975).

[2] Morgenthau, 'John Foster Dulles'; *Politics in the Twenties Century*, pp. 416–9; 'the US and China'.

[3] Snyder, *Myths of Empire*, p. 261 and Conclusion.

[4] Barnett, *China and the Major Powers in East Asia*, pp. 167, 182–4; Qing, *From Allies to Enemies*, pp. 172–201.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210511000477 Published online by Cambridge University Press

The arguments emphasising domestic attributes have long dominated the study of this case. Indeed, political and ideological factors were powerful. However, my study finds that driven by power competition with the Soviet Union in the dangerous anarchic system, US policy toward China was primarily shaped by assessments of distributions of power and national interest. Thus even this case long considered as an important anomaly actually validates balance of power theory. And my study proposes that although it is possible for states to deviate from balance of power logic for domestic political and ideological reasons, those deviations are rare in major security policy decisions because of powerful structural pressure.[5]

In the first section, I lay out the basic logic of contending explanations. In the following sections, I present my structural explanation by analysing the power structure and policy process. I then assess the impact of domestic politics and ideology. I sum up my findings in the conclusion.

Contending explanations

Different arguments have been presented to explain the reasons why the Eisenhower administration chose a hard-line containment policy in dealing with China. Many scholars have conventionally made domestic political arguments to explain the China policy of the Eisenhower administration since Morgenthau laid its foundation.[6]

For Morgenthau, the hard-line containment policy of the Eisenhower administration cannot be rationally explained by the power structure in Asia. He argues that the China policy resulted from domestic political pressures from the Republican right. Thus even the quintessential realist considers the Eisenhower administration's China policy as an anomaly that shows the possibility of irresponsibility of state leaders in conducting major foreign policy.

Morgenthau estimates that despite its overall superiority based on nuclear, air, and naval power, the US was locally weaker than the Soviet Union, the greatest continental power. Further, he maintains that the relations of China with the

[5] Recently, many realist scholars have downplayed the effects of structure and emphasised that domestic factors systemically intervene in foreign policymaking and often override structural factors. For representative works, see Snyder, *Myths of Empire*; Thomas Christensen, *Useful Adversaries: Grand Strategy, Domestic Mobilization, and Sino-American Conflict, 1947–1958* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); Randall Schweller, *Unanswered Threats: Political Constraints on the Balance of Power* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); Fareed Zakaria, *From Wealth to Power: The Unusual Origins of America's World Role* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998). For a review of neo-classical realism, see Gideon Rose, 'Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy', *World Politics*, 51:1 (October, 1998), pp. 144–72. In contrast, Mearsheimer argues that state behaviours are primarily determined by structural factors in anarchy. For his structural analysis of state behaviours based on offensive realism, see John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: Norton, 2001). Waltz also emphasises structural factors in his analysis of state behaviours although he argues that domestic factors also should be considered in explaining specific behaviours. See Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1979); 'Emerging Structure of International Politics', *International Security*, 18:2 (Fall 1993), pp. 44–79. For a classical balance of power analysis, see Hans Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations, 4th edition* (New York: Knopf, 1967).

[6] Morgenthau, 'John Foster Dulles', p. 301.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210511000477 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Soviet Union were characterised by traditional power rivalries and mutual security concerns. Consequently, the national interests of the US and China were basically compatible in terms of power relations. Thus Morgenthau criticises that the hostile containment policy of the Eisenhower administration was counterproductive since it only 'forces China to the side of the Soviet Union.'[7] He argues that in this situation, the accommodation policy to draw China to the US side was the only rational choice even if it allowed the predominance of China on the Asian mainland.[8]

According to Morgenthau, however, the Eisenhower administration adopted an unsensible containment policy toward Communist China in order to accommodate the powerful Republican right which was seen as taking hold of public opinion under the impact of the Korean War and McCarthyism. He argues that this policy outcome also resulted from the flawed political strategy of the Eisenhower administration to gain the support of the Republican right for party unity rather than to build a coalition between Republican internationalists and Democrats on the basis of rational policy.[9] Thus he criticises that this domestically motivated containment policy of the US caused the confrontational relationship with China despite the possibility of accommodation based on their common security interests against the stronger Soviet power.

In the same vein, Snyder has recently attempted to explain the China policy of the Eisenhower administration with coalitional politics while using it as an important case for exposing the limits of structural theory and for developing his domestic theory of overexpansion.

He also posits that the US and China had basically converging power interests against their common Soviet enemy and thus the containment policy of the Eisenhower administration was 'inexplicable in Realist terms.'[10] He agrees with Morgenthau that domestic politics was the main cause of the unsensible containment policy that 'made an enemy of China, a great power whose cooperation in balancing Soviet military power should have been enlisted earlier.'[11]

Somewhat different from Morgenthau, however, he maintains that the specific domestic political cause was the logrolling between Europe-first internationalists and Asia-first nationalists of both parties. In the domestic coalitional politics, Eisenhower and Dulles actively pursued the strategy to create 'a Cold War Consensus' in order to achieve the main internationalist objectives in Europe. He argues that they could achieve their objectives through the tacit logrolling of 'giving both internationalists and nationalists what they want[ed] on the issues they cared about most'. Their efforts were concentrated on appeasing the Republican conservatives that wanted a hard-line Asian policy in order to gain their support for Europe-first internationalism.[12] As a result, the Eisenhower administration was able to achieve party harmony and foreign policy consensus on European policy.[13]

[7] Hans Morgenthau, *In Defense of the National Interest: A Critical Examination of American Foreign Policy* (New York: Knopf, 1952), p. 15.
[8] Morgenthau, *Politics in the Twenties Century*, p. 416; 'the US and China', p. 102.
[9] Morgenthau, 'John Foster Dulles', p. 301.
[10] Snyder, *Myths of Empire*, pp. 292–3.
[11] Ibid., p. 258.
[12] Ibid., p. 297.
[13] Ibid., p. 257.

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The offshoot of this coalitional politics, however, was the hard-line containment policy toward communist China in Asia.[14]

Another conventional argument emphasises the impact of ideology as a powerful intervening variable that translates reality to policy by framing perceptions of policymakers. This argument proposes that anti-communist ideology and liberal values deeply ingrained in the minds of American leaders caused the hard-line containment policy toward China.

Barnett presents a straightforward ideological argument. He argues that the Eisenhower administration's China policy was directly shaped by the ideological predispositions of its leaders. He holds that the basic premises of American policymakers were that the Chinese communist regime was not only inherently evil but also inherently vulnerable due to its lack of public support, that it was an integral part of 'monolithic' international communism subordinate to the Soviet Union, and that it was fundamentally aggressive and thus posed great military and political dangers to other nations in Asia.[15]

Barnett argues that impelled by faith in such ideological premises, American leaders adopted a crusading anti-communist policy toward China. Seeing the Chinese threatening everywhere on China's periphery as part of the worldwide expansion of international communism, they pursed a policy to contain Chinese expansion in Asia and to eventually liberate China by exerting 'constant external pressure on it in the hope that it would prove to be a "passing" phenomena.'[16] With deep suspicion, American leaders also rejected China's policy initiative to reduce tension in the mid-1950s. Barnett maintains that despite his tactical flexibility, Mao was also deeply committed to revolution and anti-imperialism and perceived the US as a direct threat to China's security.[17] Thus, according to Barnett, the mutual fear and suspicion resulted from the ideological beliefs of American and Chinese leaders caused their hostile policies toward each other.

Qing recently developed a sophisticated ideological argument on the basis of cultural theory. She argues that the containment policy of the Eisenhower administration resulted from the misinterpretations of China's domestic programs and its foreign policy intentions. Those misinterpretations were in turn caused by the ideological beliefs and cultural predispositions of the majority at the State Department led by Dulles.[18]

She posits that there were two competing policy assumptions in the debates on China policy within the Eisenhower administration. President Eisenhower and the minority assumed that China was independent, nationalistic, and mainly concerned about its security. This group perceived the possibility of reconciliation with independent China and thus advocated inducement of China to the US side through accommodation, especially trade. On the other hand, Dulles and the majority of the State Department assumed that Chinese leaders were driven by ideological fanaticism, ideologically committed to the Soviet Union, and revolutionary in its foreign policy. This group thus perceived China as an evil and inherently aggressive power controlled by the Soviet Union. Therefore, they argued

[14] Ibid., pp. 256, 261.
[15] Barnett, *China and the Major Powers in East Asia*, pp. 178–9.
[16] Ibid., p. 179.
[17] Ibid., p. 162.
[18] Qing, *From Allies to Enemies*, p. 175.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210511000477 Published online by Cambridge University Press

for all-out containment of China to prevent further communist expansion and promote liberty in Asia.[19] Qing argues that in reality, China was pursuing modernisation and new identity based on equality and independence and thus, during the 1950s, adopted a moderate policy of a peaceful coexistence toward the US to achieve those goals. Policy of inducement was a better choice based on the assumptions consistent with reality, and might have led to an earlier US-China reconciliation. However, Dulles and his supporters won the debates.[20] Their ideological and moral convictions led to repeated misjudgements of Chinese intentions and caused a counterproductive policy of containment. Thus, Qing argues, the hostile relationship between the US and China was the result of 'illusory or perceived conflicts of vital interests' rather than real conflicts over vital national interests.[21]

On the other hand, scholars such as David Mayers, John Lewis Gaddis, and Gordon Chang have recently argued for the importance of strategic calculations of American leaders in explaining the Eisenhower administration's China policy.[22] They commonly argue that the China policy resulted from the sophisticated strategic calculations of the nature of the Sino-Soviet alliance rather than Dulles's simplistic ideological view or moralism. However, Mayers and Gaddis mischaracterise the policy's main aim to splitting the Sino-Soviet alliance through pressure, overly emphasising its secondary goal. Importantly, none of them present any consistent causal explanations of the policy. In the following sections, I will present a structural explanation that links power relations and the policy outcome.

Power structure[23]

The rough balance between the two great powers was maintained in bipolarity during the 1950s. Different from the assessments of Morgenthau and Snyder,

[19] Ibid., pp. 201–3, 292.
[20] Ibid., pp. 183, 295.
[21] Ibid., p. 298.
[22] David Mayers, *Cracking the Monolith: US Policy toward the Sino-Soviet Alliance, 1949–55* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986); John Lewis Gaddis, *The Long Peace: Inquiries into the History of the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 174–93; 'The American "Wedge" Strategy, 1949–1955', in Harry Harding and Yuan Ming (eds), *Sino-Soviet Relations 1945–1955: A Joint Assessment of a Critical Decade* (Wilmington: A Academic Resources Imprint, 1989); Gordon Chang, *Friends and Enemies: the US, China, and the Soviet Union, 1948–1972* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), chaps 3–7; Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, 'A House Divided: The US, The Department of State, and China', in Warren Cohen and Akira Iriye (eds), *The Great Powers in East Asia 1953–1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990); Robert Ross and Changbin Jiang (eds), *Re-examining The Cold War: US-China Diplomacy, 1954–1973* (Cambridge: The Harvard University Asia Center, 2001). For an important argument combining power and ideological factors, see Michael Yahuda, *The International Politics of the Asia-Pacific, 1945–1995* (New York: Routledge, 1996).
[23] I define power as material capabilities. I measure power in terms of economic and military capabilities. Economic capability is important to measure long-term ups and downs of states and their ability to wage attrition war. However, military capability makes more important impact on power balance because it poses a more immediate threat to other states. See Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, chap. 3. I also measure power balance at global and regional level. It is difficult to measure the relative importance between them. However, for regional powers such as China, regional balance is more critical because it poses a direct threat to their security.

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however, the US was in an advantageous position in relation to the Soviet Union globally and in Asia.[24]

At the global level, the US maintained its substantial advantages *vis-à-vis* the Soviet Union on the basis of its superior economic and strategic capabilities. First, the US retained its superiority in economic capability. In 1953, the ratio was roughly 3:1. Although the Soviet Union had steadily closed the gap through more rapid economic growth, the US maintained its superiority by at least 2:1 in 1960.[25]

In the increasingly important competition in strategic capability, the US also maintained its overwhelmingly superior position relative to the Soviet Union. In numbers of nuclear weapon, the US had stockpiled 1,350 weapons while the Soviets possessed only 120 in 1953. This great gap continued through the 1950s. By 1960, the US had increased its arsenal to 18,700 in contrast to 1,700 of the Soviet Union.[26]

Furthermore, the US also firmly maintained its quantitative and qualitative superiority in strategic air power. It was not until 1955 that the Soviet Union introduced twenty Bear and twenty Bison heavy bombers due to technological difficulties.[27] Although the bombers could reach the US on a one way mission, they were very vulnerable to interception because of their low speed and poor navigational equipment. Thus, after deploying 120 by 1959, their number was stabilised below 200 as the focus shifted to ICBMs after its development in 1957. Since then, the Soviet Union concentrated on the missile development to cope with its inferiority in strategic air power. Yet the actual deployment of the ICBMs in quantity did not begin until 1961.[28]

In contrast, besides its technological superiority, the US greatly increased its number of strategic bombers. The operational bomber force of the Strategic Air Command (SAC) increased from 962 (2 heavy and 12 medium bomber wings) in 1950 to 2,640 (6 heavy and 24 medium bomber wings) in 1954. This force reached 500 heavy bombers, more than 2,500 medium bombers, and over 1,000 tanker

[24] Perceptions matter in measuring power structure. For various perceptive reasons of miscalculation, see Robert Jervis, *Perceptions and Misperceptions in International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976); William Wohlforth, *The Elusive Balance: Power and Perceptions during the Cold War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993). For the argument emphasising the importance of contexts in determining the different effectiveness of power resources, see David Baldwin, 'Power Analysis and World Politics: New Trends Versus Old Tendencies', *World Politics*, 28 (1970). However, state leaders have very strong incentives to measure power structure as accurately as possible to defend national security under the intense power competition in anarchy although they still make miscalculations.

[25] Mearsheimer, *Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, p. 74.

[26] *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* (November 1989), p. 53; David Allen Rosenberg, 'The Origins of Overkill: Nuclear Weapons and American Strategy, 1945–1960', in Steven E. Miller (ed.), *Strategy and Nuclear Deterrence: An International Security Reader* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), pp. 134, 137–42. Actually, the importance of the quantitative gap was becoming increasingly controversial as the absolute number of both sides and the destructive power of the weapons increased. However, both sides did not reach to a clear Mutual Assured Destruction situation by the late 1950s. Thus the numerical superiority was still important due to the presumed vulnerability of the weapons to a first strike during this period.

[27] NIE 11-56, 'Soviet Gross Capabilities for Attack on the US and Key Overseas Installations and Forces through Mid-1959' (6 March 1956), RG 263, Records of the CIA (CIA), Entry 29, National Intelligence Estimates Concerning the Soviet Union 1950–1961 (Second Set), Box 2, The National Archive (NA); International Institute for the Strategic Studies (IISS). *The Military Balance, 1961–1962* (London: IISS, 1961).

[28] NIE 11-8-59, 'Soviet Capabilities for Strategic Attack through mid-1964' (9 February 1960), RG 283, CIA, Entry 29, NIE Concerning the Soviet Union 1951–1983 (Second Set), Box 5, NA.

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aircrafts in 1959. The relatively weak Soviet air defence and the extensive chain of overseas air bases of the US made the American strategic air superiority more salient during this period. Moreover, the US was able to deploy ICBMs more rapidly than the Soviet Union although the latter had first succeeded in developing them. By 1963, the US had deployed 450–500 ICBMs in contrast to about 75 of the Soviet Union.[29]

In conventional capability, the numerical advantage of the Soviet armed forces was eroded during this period. Despite some changes during this period, the Soviet ground force basically remained at the same level as in the late 1940s.[30] Meanwhile, the US increased its ground force from 593,167 in June 1950 to 1,594,639 in June 1952. And despite the partial demobilisation after the Korean War, it maintained an army of over 1,000,000 men until the early 1960s.[31] In tactical air force, the changes in the balance were somewhat mixed but the US advantage was maintained. The Soviets improved the quality of their air force after 1950 by replacing the obsolete aircrafts with jet fighters although they reduced the number of aircrafts. Meanwhile, the US greatly increased its tactical air power in quantity as well as quality.[32] Lastly, the US navy maintained its dominant position based on aircraft carrier forces while the Soviet navy basically remained as a defensive force to prevent close attacks with an exception of its capability of submarine interception throughout the 1950s.[33]

The Soviet Union kept the rough balance with the US by maintaining its superiority in conventional balance in Europe and posing a serious threat to overrun Western Europe while obtaining some strategic capabilities to attack the US after the mid-1950s.[34] Still, in the global balance, the US maintained its advantageous power position *vis-à-vis* the Soviet Union on the basis of its greater nuclear, air, and naval forces and the far greater potential power to prosecute an attrition war during the 1950s.

In Asia, the US maintained its advantages relative to the Soviet Union, reflecting the overall balance. In spite of the gradually increasing Soviet challenge in air, US superiority was maintained by the greater strength of American armed forces in nuclear and strategic air capabilities supported by its economic and naval power as well as the extensive alliance system in the Asian theatre.

[29] See Norman Polmar (ed.), *Strategic Air Command: People, Aircraft, and Missiles* (Annapolis: Nautical Aviation Pub. Co. of America, 1979); Rosenberg, 'the Origins of Overkill'.

[30] In 1948, Soviet manpower strength was 2,874,000 including ground forces in contrast to about 1,500,000 of US manpower. See Matthew Evangelist, 'Stalin's Postwar Army Reappraised', *International Security*, 7:3 (Winter 1982/3), pp. 286–8.

[31] After the Korean War, the number of US armed forces was maintained at the level of 2,800,000 until the early 1960s. NIE 100-5-59, 'Implications for the Free World and the Communist Bloc of Growing Nuclear Capabilities' (3 February 1959), ibid., Box 3.

[32] Rosenberg, 'the Origins of Overkill'; Walter S. Poole, *The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff: The Joint Chiefs of Staff and National Policy, Vol. IV, 1950–1952* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier Inc., 1980). NIE 65, 'Soviet Bloc Capabilities through 1957' (16 June 1953), RG 263, CIA, Entry 29, NIE Concerning the Soviet Union 1950–1961 (Second Set), Box 2, NA; NIE 100-5-59.

[33] Walter S. Poole, *The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1950–1952; Military Balance, 1962–1963*; NIE 11-3-55, 'Soviet Capabilities and Probable Soviet Courses of Action through 1960' (17 May 1955), RG 263,CIA, Entry 29, NIE Concerning the Soviet Union 1950–1961 (Second Set), Box 2, NA.

[34] The Soviet Union deployed about 100 full strength divisions in eastern Europe and western Russia. This formidable Soviet military power compelled western European states to ally with the US. Matthew Evangelist, 'Stalin's Postwar Army Reappraised', pp. 288, 300.

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The Soviet Union continued to maintain its ground forces at the level of about 15 understrength divisions in Asia while concentrating its forces in the vital European front.[35] This sparsely deployed army posed a limited threat until its major build-up since the mid-1960s. Further, the Far Eastern Fleet of the Soviet Union was too weak to challenge the 7th Fleet of the US, thus making the possibility of an amphibious attack almost irrelevant.[36]

In this strategic situation, the key to the US-Soviet balance in Asia was still the nuclear and strategic air capabilities to neutralise the enemy with a sustained attack. There was no significant challenge to the American strategic superiority until the mid-1950s. Then, the gradually developing bomber force of the Soviet Union somewhat increased its strategic threat to US forces and its allies in Asia. In particular, in the late 1950s, it deployed some medium jet bombers with a range effectively covering Japan.[37] Throughout this period, however, the US maintained the far superior nuclear and air force *vis-à-vis* the Soviet Union, which also suffered from weak air defence and logistical vulnerabilities in the Asian theatre.

Policy process

American policymakers continued to debate on US national interest in Asia and China policy during 1953–54. The contending options advanced by different groups included containment, accommodation, and rollback. Under the leadership of Dulles, however, American policymakers' assessments of the power structure and Sino-Soviet relations increasingly converged in spite of the remaining differences between them. The Eisenhower administration chose a tough containment policy as the best option in dealing with China.

In the bipolar system characterised by US advantage, much weaker China actually acted according to balance of power logic to restrain the aggressive actions of the greatest power for ensuring its survival. Although they knew the advance of the Soviet power, the Chinese leaders continued to perceive the US as the greatest power during this period. And their assessments of US advantages continued to be somewhat exaggerated, perceiving the US as a clearly superior power in bipolarity. Thus, after the Soviet successes with Sputnik and ICBM, Mao assessed at the Supreme State Council meeting in 1958 that 'the East Wind will prevail on the West Wind' in the long run but 'a bourgeois monopoly still exists in the world. I

[35] NIE 11-14-16, 'Capabilities of Soviet General Purpose Forces, 1964–1970' (10 December 1964), RG 263, CIA, Entry 19, NIE Concerning Soviet Military Power 1950–1984 (Second Set), box 16, NA; *Military Balance 1968–69*; Allen S. Whiting, *Siberian Development and East Asia: Threat or Promise* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1981), pp. 89–90; Thomas W. Robinson, 'The Sino-Soviet Border Conflict', in Stephen Kaplan (ed.), *Diplomacy of Power* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1981), p. 287. During the Korean War, the US ground forces in Asia increased to 9 divisions including 1 marine division. After 1954, the forces were reduced to 3 army divisions and 1 marine division (about 150,000). The total number of US armed forces in Asia was about 280,000.

[36] NIE 80, 'Communist Capabilities and Probable Courses of Action in Korea' (3 April 1953), RG 263, CIA, Entry 29, NIE Concerning the Soviet Union 1950–1961 (Second Set), Box 1, NA; House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Selected Executive Session Hearings of the Committee 1951–56, Vol. XVIII: US Policy in the Far East Part 2, pp. 498–9.

[37] The Soviet T/O&E indicates that 85 per cent of their medium bomber force was concentrated in Europe. NIE 65, 'Soviet Bloc Capabilities through 1957'.

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am afraid that such a monopoly might be reckless of consequences and risk a war against us.'[38] And despite their partial success in the limited war in Korea, the Chinese leaders continued to be extremely fearful of the possibility of a full-scale war with the US which possessed overwhelming capabilities to inflict massive destruction on vulnerable China.

In the existing power structure, the Soviets were in a disadvantageous position relative to the US and had limited offensive capabilities in Asia. Thus they also had the strong incentives and the opportunity to maintain a balancing alliance with China against the stronger US power. As an ally, China could enhance the Soviet position *vis-à-vis* the US by adding military and political resources. In the event of a major war, China also could give it a depth in defence, manpower, and possibly bases for offense. At a minimum, the Soviet Union needed to avoid forcing China to the side of the US in order to secure its weak Far East as long as China did not pose a serious military threat to its security.

In this strategic situation, it was very likely for China to attempt to maintain the balance of power in Asia through an alliance with the Soviet Union against the greatest American power. Above all, the Soviet Union could provide deterrence to the menacing nuclear threat of the US. In the event of actual war, it also would be able to provide essential supports while reducing the chance that local conflicts could escalate into a major war with the greatest power. Reinforced by the somewhat exaggerated perceptions of US advantages and ideological hostility, the structural factor caused Chinese leaders to keep balancing the US as an actual or potential ally of the Soviet Union during the 1950s.

In this condition, a consensus on tough containment among American policymakers was in the making after the Korean War. Dulles articulated its logic most clearly. He argued that the primary interest of the US was to contain the expansion of the implacable enemy allied with the Soviet Union into the weaker neighbours and to retard its internal growth. Additionally, it was in the long-term interests of the US to weaken the Sino-Soviet alliance in a way that was compatible with the primary interest.

On the other hand, alliance through accommodation was infeasible option for the US. Limited accommodation was futile and costly although feasible. China would agree on a limited accommodation with the US to reduce tension. However, it would not significantly weaken the balancing alliance with the Soviet Union in order to accommodate the US. Thus accommodation policy with either goal would only give the Chinese enemy the best of both worlds while sacrificing the primary

[38] Shu Guang Zhang, *Deterrence and Strategic Culture: Chinese-American Confrontations, 1949–58* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), p. 251. Later in his talk with Kissinger, Zhou Enlai revealed his similar perception by stating that 'there is the fact that twenty-five years after the Second World War, your hands are stretched out too far … After 25 years it's no longer possible for the US to exercise a position of hegemony'. 'Memorandum of Conversation between Zhou and Kissinger (Philosophy)' (9 July 1971), Nixon Presidential Material Project (NPMP), NSC Files, File for the President-China Materials, Box 1032, Polo I Peking MemCons (by Subject) (9–11 July 1971), p. 9, NA. Foreign Minister Chi also remarked in 1972, '[I]n the 1950's the economic and military strengths of the US expanded enormously. In the words of the 1971 Foreign Policy Report, the US had "indisputable superiority in strategic strength"'. 'Memorandum of Conversation between Rogers and Chi' (24 February 1972), NPMP, NSC Files, Henry A. Kissinger Office Files, Country Files-Far East, Box 91, Memoranda of Conversation between Secretary Rogers and PRC Officials (February 1972), p. 2, NA.

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and immediate goal of containment for dubious strategic gains. Finally, rollback through war with the secondary enemy was too costly and too risky an option for the US.

By early 1953, most policymakers in the State Department supported a containment policy against the solid Sino-Soviet alliance as many former advocates of accommodation changed their policy views.[39] And other agencies generally agreed on the estimate of the common power interests between China and the Soviet Union against the greatest American power.[40] Thus the majority in the administration finally agreed with the argument of Dulles that China was inevitably an ally of the Soviet Union and thus the US should contain it rather than pursuing an infeasible alliance through accommodation with it.[41] Further, many policymakers came to agree with the pretty creative policy idea of Dulles that tough containment could accelerate long-term potential conflicts between China and the Soviet Union by putting hard pressure on China and thus forcing it to make excessive demands for Soviet commitments.

Yet advocates of accommodation still persisted in the administration. And the China lobby and its allies in the Congress demanded rollback beyond containment.

[39] Acheson and other policymakers pursued an accommodation policy to form an alliance with Communist China, or at least neutralise it, from late 1949 to June 1950. The policy of the Truman administration was based on the calculation that the Soviet Union was the predominant power in Asia and its stronger power would push China to the US side despite the ideological differences. 'Progress Report on NSC 48/5' (25 September 1951), *Foreign Relations of the US(FRUS) 1951*, VI, p. 82. Since late 1950 following the military confrontation with China in Korea, the US had largely pursued containment policy in practice. However, the policy consisted of *ad hoc* measures adopted at the war contingency. Furthermore, the Truman administration failed to clearly define the policy objective during this period mainly because Acheson still thought that the US and China had common power interests against the Soviet Union and they had to be exploited at least in the long run. Thus various objectives of Titoist detachment, containment, and regime change were simultaneously laid out without a consistent logic in NSC 48/5, the basic policy directive until 1952. See Wooseon Choi, 'Structure and Perceptions: American Policy toward China (1949–1950)', *Security Studies*, 16:4 (Fall 2007); 'Memorandum of the 91st NSC Discussion' (17 May 1951). Also see President's Secretary's Files, NSC Files-Meetings, Box 220, The Harry S. Truman Library; 'NSC 48/5, US Objectives, Policies, and Courses of Action in Asia' (17 May 1951), *FRUS 1951*, VI.

[40] State Department estimate was that '[i]n its most general features the Sino-Soviet relationship may be compared to that between Great Britain and the US. Compelling considerations of military security cement the alliance of the two countries. There are strong ties of trade and similarity of political institutions'. 'Background Paper Prepared in the Department of State for the US Delegation to the Geneva Conference: The Sino-Soviet Relation and Its Potential Sources of Differences' (6 April 1954), *FRUS 1952–54*, XIV, p. 401. Also see 'the Sino-Soviet Alliance' (Undated, 1955), RG 59, Records of the Office of Chinese Affairs 1945–1955, C0012, Reel 40, NA.; 'US Policy toward China' (12 June 1957), RG 59, State Department Central Files, China: Foreign Affairs 1955–1959, LM 153, Reel 5, NA. Another estimate assesses that 'the interests of both as well as the ideological gulf which separates both from the non-Communist world, will continue to dictate policies of hostility against the West. The contribution which each makes to the military security of the other may assume even greater importance if the Western alliance is able to add substantial military power in Germany and Japan to its present strength.' NIE 11-3-55, p. 9.

[41] Dulles had formed his basic ideas of China policy before he became secretary of state. 'Letter from Dulles to Bowles' (25 March 1952), Chester Bowles File, Dulles Papers, Box 58, Mudd Library, Princeton University; 'Letter from Dulles to Bowles' (1 May 1952), Ibid. Also see, 'Memorandum prepared by John Foster Dulles' (18 May 1950), *FRUS 1950*, I, pp. 314–16; 'Memorandum of Conversation between British Ambassador and Dulles' (3 August 1950), RG 59, Records of the PPS, Box 14, NA. For his early view on the pressure strategy to split the Sino-Soviet alliance, also see 'Memorandum of Luncheon Meeting with George Yeh and Wellington Koo' (19 November 1952), Dulles Papers, Box 58, Mudd Library.

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Through the extensive strategic debates during 1953–54, however, the Eisenhower administration came up with a coherent policy based on a realistic assessment of the power structure.[42]

The first review of the China policy began in early 1953. The first attempt was NSC 148. This policy paper prepared by the National Security Council (NSC) Planning Board defined the main policy objective as 'reduction of the power and influence of the USSR in the area, primarily through detachment of China as an effective instrument of Soviet policy.'[43] It laid out a pressure strategy to achieve the goal of splitting the Sino-Soviet alliance while criticising accommodation as sacrificing important strategic objectives for a very uncertain prospect. It posited that a policy of increasing political, military, and economic pressures on Communist China would promote its defection from the Soviet Union by showing the increasing hardships that resulted from its pro-Soviet posture and thus by stimulating the desire for an avenue of escape.[44] However, it missed the objective of containment and overly emphasised the long-term goal of a split on the basis of an unrealistic estimate of the external effects on the disruption of the Sino-Soviet alliance. As a result, Dulles pigeonholed this first policy paper.

Then, under the instruction of Dulles, the Far Eastern Bureau of the State Department in collaboration with the Policy Planning Staff (PPS) wrote a new policy paper, NSC 166/1. It defined the main policy objective as 'to reduce the relative power position of Communist China', the major ally of the Soviet Union in Asia.[45] And it adopted a containment policy to prevent Chinese expansion and to keep a more favourable balance of power in Asia while excluding the options of alliance through accommodation and rollback.[46]

Above all, this policy choice was resulted from the estimate of the solid Sino-Soviet alliance based on mutual power interest.[47] National Intelligence Estimate 47 assessed that '[t]he Communists probably also estimate that the economic and military vulnerabilities of Communist China and the Soviet Far East would make the outcome of a general war in the Far East at best uncertain.'[48] The staff study attached to NSC 166/1 thus estimated that '[t]he Chinese Communists and the Russians share the grand objective of eliminating Western power and influence from the Far East' for their national and security impulses.[49] And it estimated that '[i]t also seems improbable that the West can through accommodation create a situation in which Chinese conflicts of interest with the Russians are

[42] For evidence showing the thinking of American leaders behind policy decisions, I mainly use records of internal policy discussions and secret policy documents rather than public statements. Considering the nature of those internal discussions and analyses made for policy decisions, they can be considered serious and genuine policy analyses rather than mere justifications for policy although we still need to discern the effects of ideology in those discourses.

[43] NSC 148, 'US Policy in the Far East' (6 April 1953), *FRUS 1952–1954*, XII, p. 287.

[44] 'Staff Study on Basic US objectives toward Communist China', ibid., pp. 295–6.

[45] NSC 166/1, 'US Policy towards Communist China' (6 November 1953), *FRUS 1952–1954*, XIV, p. 281.

[46] 'Memorandum of Discussion of the 139th Meeting of the National Security Council' (5 November 1953), ibid., p. 270.

[47] NSC 166/1, p. 280.

[48] NIE 47, 'Communist Capabilities and Intentions in Asia through Mid-1953' (31 October 1952), RG 263, CIA, Entry 29, NIE Concerning the Soviet Union 1950–1961 (Second Set), Box 1, p. 1, NA.

[49] 'NSC Staff Study on US Policy toward Communist China', *FRUS 1952–1954*, XIV, pp. 295–6.

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greater than Chinese conflicts of interest with the West.'[50] Thus alliance through accommodation was eliminated as an ineffective policy which only would allow the best option to China and greatly sacrifice the US security position in Asia. On the other hand, based on the estimate of firm communist control in China, NSC 166/1 also dismissed rollback through war or support of non-communist forces as too risky and too costly an option.[51]

NSC 166/1 concluded that containment of China was the only realistic policy to prevent the dominance of the powerful Sino-Soviet alliance in Asia. It directed that the US should provide the main counterweight to check the military and political expansion of China in the situation of great imbalance between China and its neighbour states.[52] As envisioned in massive retaliation doctrine, the main power to deter China from attacking its weak neighbours lay in the mobile and nuclear forces of the US.[53] It was assessed that the US possessed sufficient capabilities to inflict decisive damage on China.[54] The NSC 166/1 further directed the US to redress the regional balance by assisting its Asian allies to build up their power while reducing or at least retarding the relative power of Communist China. The principal means to achieve the latter goal were economic restrictions. In addition, political isolation through non-recognition and non-UN admission was designed to prevent the increase of Chinese prestige and influence.

NSC 166/1 adopted a secondary goal of impairing the Sino-Soviet alliance through military, political, and economic pressures. It expounded that there existed potential conflicts between China and the Soviet Union which would be realised in the long run as a result of their power rivalry.[55] The basic logic of the strategy presented by Dulles was that 'pressure and strain would compel them to make more demands on the USSR which the latter would be unable to meet and the strain would consequently increase.'[56] Different from NSC 148, however, the priority of this goal was lowered on the basis of its realistic estimate that those conflicts would stem primarily from internal workings of the alliance over a long period of time and only secondarily from external pressures.

[50] Ibid., p. 297.

[51] For the NSC discussion on the war option, see 'Memorandum of Discussion at the 234th Meeting of the National Security Council' (27 January 1955), *FRUS 1955–1957*, III, pp. 138–9.

[52] On the US policy objective, Dulles cogently stated that '[w]e hoped, as probably the UK does, that ultimately there will come about sufficient independence between Peiping and Moscow as to create the beginning of a balance of power relationship. As a result the US would not have to be so fully involved in the Far East as it now is. With Japan weakened by the last war and the two Communist powers closely allied, it was necessary for the US to put its power into the scales'. 'Memorandum of a Conversation, Department of State' (7 February 1955), *RUS 1955–1957*, II, p. 236.

[53] Specifically referring to US preponderance in 'air and naval power and atomic weapons', Dulles estimated that a major war 'would mean the use of atomic weapons which would lead to the total devastation of Chinese communications and other facilities, leaving 600,000,000 Chinese destitute, and in ruin.' 'the Secretary of State to the Embassy in Japan', *FRUS 1952–1954*, XIV, pp. 545–6. For massive retaliation doctrine, see John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of American Security Strategy During the Cold War*, rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), chaps 5–6; Robert Bowie and Richard Immerman, *Waging Peace: How Eisenhower Shaped an Enduring Cold War Strategy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), chap. 12.

[54] 'NSC Staff Study', pp. 302–3.

[55] Ibid., pp. 296–7.

[56] 'Minutes on Second Restricted Tripartite Meeting of the Heads of Government, Bermuda' (7 December 1953), *FRUS 1952–1954*, V, p. 1809. Also see, Mayers, *Cracking the Monolith*, pp. 119–20.

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Overall, NSC 166/1 presented a fairly realistic and coherent policy based on the sound assessments of the existing structural conditions. It was adopted by the NSC as the basic China policy guide on 5 November 1953.

Despite the formal adoption of containment policy, however, debates on China policy continued in the NSC discussions from late 1953 to late 1954. The main challenge to the wisdom of tough containment policy came from the advocates of various kinds of accommodation. Importantly, President Eisenhower was not yet convinced of the soundness of a tough containment policy as a split strategy although he followed the lead of Dulles in the specific policy area. In the NSC discussion of 5 November 1953, Eisenhower stated that 'trade might be a very useful tool in accomplishing' a weakening of the Sino-Soviet alliance.[57] And supported by Secretary of Treasury Humphrey and Secretary of Commerce Weeks, he continued to argue for more relaxed trade with China as an effective way to split the Sino-Soviet alliance through inducement while not denying the necessity of containment. And he urged his advisers to develop a possible strategy for split.[58] However, Eisenhower failed to present a coherent logic to support the strategy combining inducement and containment. This accommodation argument was countered by Dulles, Vice President Nixon, Secretary of Defense Wilson, and Chief of Staff Radford as unrealistic.

The NSC discussion on NSC 5416 in late 1954 finally settled the basic debate. The new policy paper prepared by NSC staff laid out alternative China policies of limited accommodation, tough containment, and rollback for debate. In the ensuing discussion, Dulles supported the existing containment policy. Other policymakers agreed with him except for Humphrey and Army chief of staff Ridgway.[59] Criticising the accommodation argument, Dulles argued that 'he was inclined to believe that over a period of perhaps 25 years China and Russia would split apart because of the pressure of basic historical forces and because her religious fervor of communism would have died down ... the problem for us was whether we could play this thing for 25 years. Could we afford to wait that long for a split between these two enemies?'[60]

At this time, Eisenhower fully agreed to this argument, stating that 'it was hopeless to imagine that we could break China away from the Soviets and from communism short of some great cataclysm. In any event, we should not count on such a split although history did seem to indicate that when two dictatorships become too large and powerful, jealousies between them spring up. Then, only then, is there a chance to split them up.'[61] This change of Eisenhower's thinking

[57] 'Memorandum of Discussion at the 169th Meeting of the National Security Council' (5 November 1953), *FRUS 1952–1954*, XIV, p. 268.

[58] 'Memorandum of Discussion at the 193rd Meeting of the National Security Council' (13 April 1953), ibid., pp. 409–10. For Eisenhower's interest in Chinese Titoism, see 'Memo, Meeting with T. F. Tsiang' (10 June 1953), Wellington Koo Papers, Box 219, Butler Library, Columbia University. Also see Chang, *Friends and Enemies*, p. 87.

[59] 'Memorandum of Discussion at the 211th Meeting of the National Security Council' (18 August 1954), idid., pp. 526–40.

[60] Ibid., p. 534. On another occasion, Dulles said, 'Some people argued that if you accept the Communist regime on the mainland, it would be possible to wean it away from the Soviet Union. This was risky advice. The US must avoid enhancement of the power position of the Chinese Communist regime in the absence of a break between Moscow and Peiping.' 'Memorandum of a Conversation, Department of State' (31 January 1956), *FRUS 1955–1957*, III, pp. 291–2.

[61] 'Memorandum of Discussion at the 211th Meeting of the National Security Council', p. 534.

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was the result of intense discussions with Dulles during the preceding months.[62] Thereafter, Eisenhower continued to support the existing containment policy although he retained moderate positions on specific issues.[63]

The discussion on NSC 5429 also clarified other specific policy issues. After delaying his endorsement of the original NSC 5429 paper, Dulles ordered the State Department to rewrite the paper. Subsequently, NSC 5429/3 was prepared mainly by the Far Eastern Bureau and the Policy Planning Staff (PPS). In the following NSC discussion, Weeks and Stassen, Director of Foreign Operations Agency, advocated more open trade and UN admission and recognition of communist China in exchange for Korean unification and China's abandonment of subversion in South Vietnam. This last attempt for accommodation was rebuffed by Dulles and others as unrealistic and dangerous in its effects on allies.

The subsequent debate was focused on trade control. Commerce, Defence, JCS, and the Office of Defence Mobilisation made a more hard-line proposal for a complete trade embargo by the allies as well as the US. In opposition, State, Treasury, Bureau of Budget, and the CIA supported the maintenance of US trade embargo and the higher level of allied control on China than that on the Soviet Union and eastern European countries. The debate ended in a stalemate. The President entrusted the decision to Dulles after defining the issue as a matter of degree within the agreed containment policy not to contribute to the build-up of Chinese war potential.[64] Dulles decided to maintain the present level of trade control without exerting undue pressures on allies for its maintenance.

The revised NSC 5429/5 was adopted as the basic policy guide on 21 December 1954.[65] Despite some semantic compromises, it reaffirmed the main policy objective of NSC 166/1 to contain Chinese expansion and to reduce or at least retard its relative power position. In regards to containment, it directed the maintenance of sufficiently strong US power in Asia, strengthening the offshore island chain from Japan to the Philippines, and military commitment to defence of Korea, Taiwan, and the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) if necessary and feasible. To redress the balance, NSC 5429/5 programmed quite vigorous military and economic assistance to build up military capabilities of allies and to counter subversion. It also reaffirmed strict trade control, non-recognition, and non-UN admission in order to weaken or retard the growth of power and prestige of China. On the other hand, the goal of splitting the Sino-Soviet alliance through maximum

[62] 'Memorandum of Conversation with the President' (22 December 1954), Dulles Papers, White House Memoranda Series, Box 1, The Dwight D. Eisenhower Library (Eisenhower Library); 'Memorandum of Discussion at the 214th Meeting of the National Security Council' (12 September 1954), *FRUS 1952–1954*, XIV, p. 621.

[63] Revisionist interpretations of Eisenhower have posited that he rather than Dulles was in firm control of American foreign policy. See Robert Divine, *Eisenhower and the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981); Fred Greenstein, *The Hidden-Hand Presidency: Eisenhower as Leader* (New York: Basic Books Inc., 1982); Stephen Ambrose, *Eisenhower: The President* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984). Eisenhower was clearly in control as the final decision maker. In China policy, however, Eisenhower largely followed the lead of Dulles except crisis management.

[64] 'Memorandum of Discussion at the 226th Meeting of the National Security Council' (1 December 1954), *FRUS 1952–1954*, XIV, pp. 971–5.

[65] NSC 5429/5, 'Current US Policy toward the Far East'. (22 December 1954), *FRUS 1952–1954*, XII, pp. 1062–68.

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pressure was also adopted as a long-term and secondary goal. At last, the China policy of the Eisenhower administration was firmly established.[66]

Impact of domestic politics

The military confrontation in Korea and the ensuing adversarial relations with China naturally intensified anti-communism and hostility toward Communist China among the public. Manipulating the strong anti-communist sentiments to their advantages, the Republican right further increased political and ideological constraints on the strategic flexibility of the administration. These domestic constraints were especially strong in the early years after the Korean War.

As we have seen above, however, the Eisenhower administration chose containment policy primarily on the basis of its strategic assessments. It pursued non-recognition, non-UN admission, and trade embargo of China to prevent the increase of its power and prestige although there were actually powerful political pressures on those issues. Dulles had come up with the idea of splitting the Sino-Soviet alliance through pressure even before he became the secretary of state.[67] This policy also had a sound strategic logic consistent with the basic aim of containment. Importantly, the strategically sensible China policy was able to gain wide bipartisan support that included most of the Republican right and liberals with the exception of some extreme forces.

Thus, in the policy process, domestic political factors operated largely in a direction similar to that prescribed by balance of power logic. The wide congressional and public majority supported strong containment measures against China, certainly making reinforcing effects on the decisions of policymakers. With their support, the Eisenhower administration also kept the basic policy direction from political pressures of extreme forces. Thus the pressures of the China bloc for the adoption of a rollback policy did not make any significant effect.

Indeed, in relations with the Congress, the Eisenhower administration was in a quite favourable position to deal with the domestic constraints without sacrificing important foreign policies. Besides its traditional prerogatives and larger resources, the administration could achieve this position because of its strong internationalist allies in the Congress.[68] Throughout the 1950s, the administration was able to

[66] The China policy in NSC 5416/5 was reaffirmed by the NSC in 1959. See NSC 5913/1, 'Statement of US Policy in the Far East' (25 September 1959), *FRUS 1958–1960*, XVI, pp. 134–44.

[67] See 'Letter from John Foster Dulles to Chester Bowles' (25 March 1952); 'Letter from John Foster Dulles to Chester Bowles' (1 May 1952).

[68] During 1953–4, when the GOP held the majority by narrow margins in both Houses, the balance between the Republican internationalists and the Republican right was largely maintained. After that, the latter was gradually weakened. And in the 1958 election, the number of the Republican right was greatly reduced. On the other hand, Democrats maintained a slim majority in both Houses since 1955. After 1959, they dominated both Houses. Importantly, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (SFRC) and the House Foreign Affairs Committee (HAFC) were heavily represented by internationalists throughout the period. See Gary Reichard, *Politics as Usual: The Age of Truman and Eisenhower* (Arlington Heights: Harlan Davidson Inc., 1988); David Kepley, *The Collapse of the Middle Way: Senate Republicans and Bipartisan Foreign Policy, 1948–52* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988); David Divine, *Since 1945: Politics and Diplomacy in Recent American History* (New York: John Wiley & Sons Inc., 1975); Gary Reichard, *The Reaffirmation of Republicanism: Eisenhower and the Eighty Third Congress* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1975); David

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pursue its internationalist policies with the firm supports of the Republican internationalists and most Democrats even though it did not actively cultivate Democratic support. The power of internationalist coalition was strong enough to defend its China policy from the occasional extremist demand of the Republican right without logrolling.[69]

Fundamentally, this wide congressional support reflected the increasing consensus that the internationalist policies were serving national interests in the existing strategic situation. Actually, as global competition with the Soviet Union progressed, a considerable number of isolationists were gradually converted to strong anti-communist internationalists, a position that was strategically more sensible and politically more popular.[70] Thus, on the basis of the broad internationalist support in the Congress, the Eisenhower administration could successfully pursue flexible coalitions on specific policy issues without sacrificing major policies.

As the bipolar competition continued, the public support of the major internationalist policies was strong as well.[71] In particular, the China policy of the administration was consistently supported by the strong majority of the public and the press throughout this period. Despite its strong anti-communist sentiments, the public majority also supported some flexible initiatives of the government toward Communist China, especially during the crises.[72]

Yet there were political forces which demanded a more aggressive China policy. With the wide congressional and public support, the Eisenhower administration could control the effects of extreme groups on foreign policies. It had successfully prevented the influence of McCarthy and his allies from affecting the substance of foreign policies until it eliminated his power in tacit cooperation with Democrats and moderate Republicans in 1954.[73] More powerful and persistent political pressures came from the China bloc.[74] As of 1953, the so-called China lobby was organised into 'Committee of One Million'. The Committee could successfully mobilise a considerable number of congressmen for their propaganda activities.[75]

Reinhard, *The Republican Right Since 1945* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1983).

[69] Most influential leaders of both parties including chairmen of the SFRC and the HFAC were supportive of the Eisenhower administration throughout this period. Reichard, *Reaffirmation of Republicanism*; Reinhard, *Republican Right*.

[70] For a study based on the congressional record of roll call voting during 1953–4, see Reichard, *Reaffirmation of Republicanism*.

[71] See the series of Monthly Survey, RG 59, Office of Public Opinion Studies, Boxes 12 and 13, NA.

[72] For opinion polls on various policy issues, see the series of Monthly Survey; the series of Special Report on American Opinion, RG 59, Office of Public Opinion Studies, Box 33, NA.

[73] For McCarthyism, see Robert Griffith, *The Politics of Fear: Joseph R. McCarthy and the Senate* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1970); Earl Latham, *The Communist Controversy in Washington: From the New Deal to McCarthy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966); Richard M. Fried, *Men Against McCarthy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976).

[74] The core members of the China bloc were Senators Knowland (R), Smith (R), Bridges (R), Jenner (R), and Representative Judd (R).

[75] The prime mover of the Committee was Representative Judd. Other active congressional members in early years were Senator Smith, Senator Sparkman (D), and Representative McCormack (D). After 1955, Senator Douglas (D) and Representative Walter (D) replaced Sparkman and McCormack in the Steering Committee. The Committee concentrated its activities on the campaign against the UN admission of Communist China. It claimed that 53 member of the Congress signed for the campaign in 1953 and 77 (23 in the Senate) in 1955. Stanley Bachrack, *Committee of One Million: 'China Lobb' Politics, 1953–1971* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976); Ross Koen, *The China Lobby in American Politics* (New York: The McMillan Company, 1960).

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It concentrated on public campaigns to support the containment policy of the government as a minimalist strategy for maintaining bipartisanship and more popular support. The China bloc was in fact able to strengthen its influence through the moderate activities of the Committee. However, supported by some extreme anti-communists, it often criticised the administration's China policy as an immoral *status quo* policy. And the core members actually called for a preventive war and other extreme measures against Communist China while opposing any flexible measures.[76]

The real power of the China lobby, however, was in its political alliance with the Republican right in its pursuit of a strong anti-communist China policy. Beyond containment, however, the support of the Republican right was meagre.[77] Thus, with the backing of the strong public and congressional majorities, the Eisenhower administration could deflect unrealistic demands of the China bloc and its extreme allies and could successfully insulate the policy from their influence.[78] As a result, it could maintain its containment policy based on balance of power logic while maintaining its capacity for flexible diplomatic manoeuvres.[79]

Impact of ideology

Ideology affects the policymaking of state leaders by providing a perceptive and a normative framework through which they perceive reality and make judgments or

[76] See 'telephone Call from Senator Knowland' (27 April 1955), Dulles Papers, Telephone Conversations Series, Box 3, Eisenhower Library; 'telephone Call from Senator Hickenlooper' (27 April 1955), ibid; 'telephone Calls from Congressmen Judd' (26 April 1955), ibid. Knowland stated in his 1954 article, 'We must not fool ourselves into thinking we can avoid taking up arms with the Chinese Reds. If we don't fight them in China and Formosa, we will be fight them in San Francisco, in Seattle, and in Kansas City'. Cited in Graebner, *New Isolationism*, p. 120. Jenner also said that 'All American policy must start from a firm decision to reestablish the legitimate anti-Communist government on the China mainland', *Congressional Record*, 83rd Congress, 1st Session, Vol. 99, Pt. 8, pp. 11,000–1.

[77] On power of the China bloc, Dulles said to Yeh, Foreign Minister of Taiwan, that 'there was a group of senators quite dedicated to anything which would help the Chinese Government position. But actually this group constitutes a minority of the Senate.' 'Memorandum of Conversation by the Director of the Office of Chinese Affairs (McConaughy)' (27 October 1954), *FRUS 1952–1954*, XIV, p. 798.

[78] After the 1958 Taiwan Straits Crisis, Eisenhower revealed his firm strategic choice by stating that the containment policy should be maintained until changes occurred within the Sino-Soviet alliance and that '[h]e felt these were inevitable but realized that the policy we were following might not be popular. There were some who want to give in; other who want to attack.' Cited in Gaddis, *Long Peace*, p. 187.

[79] Interestingly, as the power relations basically remained the same, US policymakers continued to base their policy on a similar estimate of the converging interests of China and the Soviet Union even after their split. In this regard, Rusk stated in 1962 that '[w]e should not suppose that the basic power relations, seen worldwide, is changed yet in terms of this rivalry between Moscow and Peiping, because if there were an all out confrontation with either Moscow or Peiping by the West or by the US, it would be very doubtful that either Moscow or Peiping could afford to see the other submerged in a struggle with the US. In other words, they have an underlying basic power interest in the existence of the other in somewhat like their present form ... If this break should move to the point of completion ... then it may be this split could work very dramatically to our advantage.' 'Briefing on World Situation' (15 January 1962), *Executive Sessions of the SFRC*, Vol. XIV, p. 68.

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by constraining their choice as a widely held social belief or political force.[80] As Stephen Krasner points out, it is more likely that the foreign policy of very powerful states such as the US would be driven by ideational not just material concerns because they have greater capability to secure their survival.[81]

In this case, anti-communism and liberal values certainly influenced the ultimate goals of American policymakers in dealing with China. Their ideological beliefs also increased their hostility toward the communist regime and magnified their apprehension and suspicion of its intentions, reinforcing the effects of the power factor.

Nonetheless, under the powerful pressure of anarchy and bipolar competition, the Eisenhower administration's China policy was primarily driven by balance of power logic and national interest as perceived by its leaders. The practical goals and means of the China policy directly resulted from their hard-headed assessments of specific strategic conditions.

Despite their public pronouncements on the monolithic communist bloc and the subservience of China to the Soviet Union, evidence clearly shows that the policy decisions of Dulles and most other policymakers were based on sober and sophisticated assessments of the existing balance of power and the nature of Sino-Soviet relations rather than ideological assumptions. Different from Qing's analysis of the ideological assumptions underlying Dulles's policy preference, he

[80] For the study of the impact of cultural ideologies on foreign policy, see Michael Hunt, *Ideology and US Foreign Policy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987). Various theories have tried to explain the effects of ideational factors on perceptions of interest and policy decisions. For the effects of belief systems or operational codes, see Nathan Leites, *The Operational Code of the Politburo* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1951); Richard Little and Steve Smith, *Belief Systems and International Relations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988); Alexander George, 'Causal Nexus between Cognitive Beliefs and Decision-Making Behavior: the "Operational Code"', in Lawrence Falkowski, (ed.), *Psychological Models in International Politics* (Boulder: Westview, 1979); Ole Holsti, *The 'Operational Code' as an Approach to the Study of Belief Systems*, Final Report to the National Foundation, Grant SOC 75–15368, Duke University; 'the Operational Code Approach to the Study of Political Leaders: John Foster Dulles' Philosophical and Instrumental Beliefs', *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 3 (1970). For psychological approach, see Jervis, *Perceptions and Misperceptions in International Politics*. For the study of the impact of instrumental and normative ideas on policy, see Judith Goldstein and Robert Keohane (eds), *Ideas and Foreign Policy: Beliefs, Institutions, and Political Change* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993). For constructive theories of the relationship between cultural meanings and state behaviours, see Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); David Campbell, *Writing Security: US Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992). For an excellent study of how discourses construct national interests, see Jutta Weldes, *Constructing National Interests: The US and the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999). Policymakers understand the world through their own ideational frameworks. Thus ideology and culture cannot but affect their perceptions of reality and tend to strongly influence their ultimate goals. In deciding major security policies, however, competition for survival in anarchy tends to force state leaders to perceive reality and interests as objectively as possible and to come up with realistic options to protect state interests. State leaders sometimes fail do so for ideological or other reasons. In most cases, however, their decisions of practical policy goals and means tend to be guided by their rational assessments of conditions rather than ideology or cultural ideas because major policy failure can be fatal in anarchy. Thus the structural conditions of international system make state leaders realistic enough not to submit important security concerns to ideological or cultural preferences. These conditions make the effects of ideology and culture on major security policies limited in most cases. Further, ideology and culture are too broad factors in explaining and predicting specific policy choices. Different policies are mostly explained by specific strategic conditions and calculations of policymakers.

[81] Stephen Krasner, *Power, the State, and Sovereignty: Essays on International Relations* (New York: Routledge, 2009), pp. 6–34.

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realistically assessed that China was independent and that Chinese leaders were acting primarily according to their calculations of national interest.[82] However, Dulles thought, the common power interests of China and the Soviet Union and their ideological bondage made it inevitable that the US would confront the allied powers as enemies. Thus he decided to pursue containment in order to retard the power growth of the implacable enemy allied with the archenemy. On the other hand, Dulles assessed that potential conflicts existed between the two communist allies with a long land border. And as he revealed in his personal letter to Charles Bowles, he calculated that 'the best way to get a separation between the Soviet Union and Communist China is to keep pressure on Communist China and make its way difficult so long as it is in partnership with Soviet Russia.'[83] Thus, while pursuing a hard-line containment, he continued to rebuff the Chinese offer of limited accommodation during 1955–7 in order to avoid giving advantages to the enemy and weaken the hostile alliance.[84]

Further, despite his ideological preference, he was realistic enough to envision a different policy choice in a different situation. In his talk with Roger Makins, Dulles said that his long-term goal in Asia was 'to attain a degree of independence between China and Russia and achieve some balance of power' to reduce US commitment.[85] He also stated in his confirmation hearing that 'if People's China declared itself independent of Russia, it might then be advisable for the US to seek normal relations with the government in Peking.'[86] Reflecting Dulles's thinking, NSC Staff Study also proposed that '[p]ressure strategy would provide no immediate "avenue of escape", but it would, over time, stimulate a desire for an avenue of escape. When that happened, Washington could reexamine its options.'[87] Thus presaging Nixon and Kissinger's policy, Dulles actually considered cooperation with Communist China in case it split from the Soviet Union in order to achieve a more favourable balance in Asia.[88]

Personally, Dulles was ideologically hostile toward the inhumane totalitarian regime in China, and believed that it would eventually collapse or change its nature due to internal problems.[89] Nonetheless, he did not submit important national interests to ideological or moral convictions. Dulles and most other leaders made decisions mainly on the basis of their assessments of the existing situation and their

[82] See Qing, *From Allies to Enemies*, pp. 293.
[83] 'Letter from Dulles to Bowles' (25 March 1952). For Eisenhower's similarly pragmatic but more sanguine view that China can be induced by practical economic gains, see Qing, *From Allies to Enemies*, p. 173; Chang, *Friends and Enemies*, p. 82.
[84] U. Alexis Johnson, *The Right Hand of Power* (Upper Saddle River: Prentice-Hall, 1984); Kenneth Young, *Negotiating with the Chinese Communists: The US Experience, 1953–1967* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968); 'Memorandum of Conversation with the President' (5 August 1955), Dulles Papers, White House Memoranda Series, Box 3, Eisenhower Library. Also see Chang, *Friends and Enemies*, pp. 156–7.
[85] 'Talk with Roger Makins of the British Foreign Office' (February 1955), cited in Chang, *Friends and Enemies*, p. 207. In another conversation, Dulles said that he hoped that 'China could play an independent role in Far Eastern international affairs and contribute to a stable balance of power.' 'Memorandum of Conversation with George Yeh and Wellington Koo' (14 November 1952), Dulles Papers, Box 58, Mudd Library, Princeton University.
[86] Mayers, *Cracking the Monolith*, p. 118.
[87] NSC Staff Study, 'Basic US Objectives toward Communist China', (6 April 1953), *FRUS 1952–1954*, XIV, p. 534.
[88] Gaddis, 'the American "Wedge" Strategy', p. 170.
[89] John Foster Dulles, *War or Peace* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1950), pp. 227, 245.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210511000477 Published online by Cambridge University Press

calculations of the costs and risks of alternative courses of action. These strategic calculations made Dulles's choices different from those of ideologically-oriented groups.

Radford and the extreme anti-communists of the China bloc often argued for the policy of rollback and the use of force against Communist China, which was assumed inherently vulnerable due to the nature of its system. Dulles and most other policymakers clearly realised the staying power of the communist regime. They estimated that only major war could change the regime in the foreseeable future and that the costs and risks of war with China were too high. Thus, based on these strategic calculations, there was a strong consensus against a rollback policy in the administration, with Radford the only exception.

Still, despite the overwhelming superiority of the US, the strong containment of China involved some risks. During 1954–5 and 1958, Mao actually provoked crises in the Taiwan straits in part to show his resolve against the military pressures from the US. Eisenhower and Dulles issued stern warnings of possible nuclear attack to deter further aggressive action by China. At the same time, they tried to maintain flexibility in their commitment to the defence of the offshore islands to manage the risk, firmly rejecting the demands of Radford and extreme anti-communists in the Congress to roll back Communist China.[90]

Dulles often made crusading ideological statements on China policy. They reflected his personal convictions. Dulles often justified his policy with ideological languages, and he used ideological appeal to enlarge political support for his policy as his ideological beliefs were largely consistent with his strategic calculations. However, when he made and conducted policies, Dulles acted primarily on the basis of his strategic calculations. When ideology contradicted reality, he followed the imperative of the latter and was ready to adapt to the reality. Thus, despite the enduring impression of a China policy driven by ideology, the effects of ideology on the Eisenhower administration's China policy should not be overestimated.

Conclusion

This case thus confirms the validity of balance of power theory in explaining alliance policies and their outcomes. In the 1950s, the US China policy and the inimical relationship between the US and China were mainly caused by the existing power structure in Asia characterised by the US advantage in bipolarity. This

[90] Zhang, *Deterrence and Strategic Culture*, p. 220. During the first Taiwan Straits crisis, Mao was extremely cautious to avoid direct conflicts with the US forces. He postponed the plan to attack the Dachens several times after August 1954. Only after the Nationalist troops had evacuated did the Chinese occupy the Dachens. Ibid., pp. 198–9, 218–9. During the 1958 crisis, Chinese immediately backed down after Dulles had issued a stern warning of nuclear retaliation on 4 September. At the Supreme State Council meeting held after Dulles's blackmail, Mao expressed concern about the possible recklessness of the predominant US power. He anticipated that if the US decided to launch an attack against China, it would 'probably be a nuclear strike'. Ibid., p. 251. Also see J. H. Kalicki, *The Pattern of Sino-American Crisis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975); Di He, 'the Evolution of the People's Republic of China's Policy toward the Offshore Islands', in Cohen and Iriye (eds), *The Great Powers in East Asia*; Divine, *Eisenhower*, p. 65; Bennett Rushkoff, 'Eisenhower, Dulles and the Quemy-Matsu Crisis, 1954–1955', *Political Science Quarterly*, 96:3 (Fall 1981), pp. 465–80.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210511000477 Published online by Cambridge University Press

structure forced China to ally with the weaker Soviet power against the stronger US power to protect its security. In this condition, the rational strategic choice left to the US was to contain the major ally of Soviet power in order to maintain the balance in Asia. My study finds that US policymakers made their policy decisions mainly on the basis of the hard-headed calculations of power relations under powerful structural pressures although political and ideological factors had some reinforcing effects on their decisions, largely paralleling structural factor. With strong majority support, they successfully implemented the policy while restraining the China lobby and its allies demanding a more aggressive policy.

After the short period of miscalculation and policy failure during the Truman administration, Dulles and other US policymakers clearly understood the structural constraints and decided the containment policy conceived as the best option to keep the favourable balance of power in Asia. Under the structural constraints, the US continued to pursue containment rather than a dubious accommodation until the structural change resulting from a massive Soviet build-up in Asia pushed China to its side in the late 1960s and thus created a strategic opportunity for making real gains through strategic cooperation with China against the Soviet Union. Thus this case long considered as an important anomaly to balance of power theory actually demonstrates how powerfully distributions of power shape state behaviours by creating constraints and opportunities in the anarchic international system.

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