

**Hsiao-ting Lin.** *Accidental State: Chiang Kai-shek, the United States, and the Making of Taiwan.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016. Maps. 352 pp. \$39.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-674-65981-0.

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On December 2, 2016, Tsai Ing-wen, a member of the Democratic Progressive Party elected the previous February as Taiwan's first female president in its history, called Donald Trump to congratulate him on his own recent election victory. In what may be described as the first "Trump Shock" before Trump could even be inaugurated, the conversation, regardless of the circumstances behind it, certainly caused a stir because it suggested a potential major shift in US foreign policy. Ever since the Shanghai Communiqué of 1972, the United States and the People's Republic of China (PRC) have agreed that Taiwan is part of China, and various presidents since Richard Nixon have reaffirmed that position in joint communiqués or statements, such as Bill Clinton's Three Noes of 1998. Although Ronald Reagan threatened during the election campaign of 1980 to pursue a Two China Policy after Jimmy Carter normalized relations with the PRC and announced expiration of the US-Republic of China Mutual Defense Treaty, neither Reagan nor any other US president since has suggested according Taiwan official diplomatic recognition as an independent state. However, such pronouncements have not prevented the United States from treating Taiwan as a de facto state. In addition to maintaining unofficial diplomatic consulates (the American Institute in Taiwan and the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office)

and other channels with US agencies, Washington continues to sell "defensive weapons" to Taiwan, including most recently four Oliver Hazard Perry frigates and other systems, even if outdated, for over 1.8 billion dollars. Word games are played to avoid any suggestion that Taiwan is an independent state to prevent any conflict between the three sides. Trump's phone call represented, for the moment, a symbolic departure from past policies and practices, and time will tell if substantive actions will be taken to recognize Taiwan as a sovereign, independent state.

For those interested in understanding the origins of the Taiwan question and the PRC, Taiwan, and US triangle, there are numerous books available, but Hsiao-ting Lin's *Accidental State* sheds new light and revises to a certain extent previous accounts of how Taiwan became a Cold War front-line. As a research fellow and curator of the Hoover Institution's East Asian Collections, Lin has taken advantage of easy access to Chiang Kai-shek's diaries and other personal collections housed at the institution as well as declassified records in Taiwan to explain that Chiang did not immediately intend to convert the island into an anti-Communist redoubt for himself and his followers. Instead, "the accidental state on Taiwan, separate from the Chinese mainland, was the outcome of many ad hoc and unique factors, deci-

sions, and even serendipity, as well as an accumulation of various internal contentions within the Nationalist camp, the KMT-CCP [Kuomintang-Chinese Communist Party] civil war, and political struggles intersected with the broader geostrategic concerns of world powers” (pp. 239-240). All of this occurred in a period beginning with the Cairo Declaration of 1943, which promised that Taiwan, a Japanese colony since 1895, would be returned to the Republic of China (ROC) at the war’s end, and culminating with the mutual defense treaty in which the United States committed itself to defending Taiwan and the nearby Pescadores. In fact, before January 1950, Chiang only envisioned Taiwan playing a supporting role to the wider effort to defeat and then contain Chinese Communist expansion.

Following Japan’s surrender in August 1945, Nationalist forces liberated Taiwan from Japanese control with the help of the United States. They also imposed a command economy in which 70 percent of Taiwan’s industrial wealth and 72 percent of its land fell under the control of the provincial administration. Exploitation of Taiwan’s resources fit within Chiang’s scheme to use Taiwan as a supply base for his anti-Communist bastion on the mainland, but it led to massive unemployment, inflation, and near bankruptcy of Taiwan’s middle class. It also resulted in anger against Nationalist monopolies that sparked the February 28 incident of 1947 in which riots and Taiwanese demands for reforms were answered by a crackdown that killed thousands of Taiwanese and mainland Chinese. To the disappointment of some State Department officials like George Kerr, a former vice consul to Taiwan who urged US military and economic intervention in Taiwan in the name of the United Nations, the United States merely urged Chiang to fire the incompetent administrators. Afterward, Taiwan became a province of China with a new leader, and economic policies were modified to placate Taiwanese and make it a model for other Chinese provinces. Thus, Lin argues, this was an accident

that “inadvertently laid the foundation for the subsequent formation of a Nationalist island state and unwittingly sowed the seeds of Taiwan’s free-market economy” (p. 56).

When the tide of war shifted against the Nationalists in 1946 and early 1947, Chiang spent the next two years considering alternatives to Taiwan, which he viewed “as a safe haven for military training” (p. 62). He put General Sun Liren, a graduate of the Virginia Military Institute, in charge of the program located in southern Taiwan. In 1947, Chiang envisioned South China, everything south of the Yangtze River, as an anti-Communist bastion. By 1949, military defeats and declining political power forced Chiang to resign as ROC president, though it did not stop him from seeking a last redoubt. Having already weighed and rejected the idea of turning northwest China into a “last territorial bastion,” Chiang now pondered southeast China and converting the Fujian-Guangdong-Taiwan triangle into an “effective regional citadel” (p. 85). Yet Chiang did not enjoy total political and military support even in Taiwan. Chen Cheng, the man whom Chiang appointed as Taiwan’s provincial governor, defied Chiang by keeping in contact with the acting ROC president, maintained ties to anti-Chiang militarists, and tried to bring financial stability to Taiwan including severing its currency ties with the mainland after the fall of Shanghai. Meanwhile, officers of the Nationalist air force demanded that Chiang put Taiwan under the air force’s control while both Zhang Zhirou, head of the air force, and Chen refused to support Chiang’s military command structure for the Fujian-Guangdong-Taiwan triangle. Even Sun opposed accommodating defeated Nationalist forces in southern Taiwan. When Chiang traveled to Kaohsiung, Taiwan’s southern port city, in May 1949, he purportedly asked Sun, “Am I safe here?” (p. 96). In the meantime, the Communist advance ruled out any hope of a bastion in the southeast or northwest, but Yunnan Province in southwest China initially looked inviting. Chiang could use the province’s

high plateaus and border with Thailand and Burma to his advantage while he concentrated his forces there and allied with Tibetan Khampa warriors. The scheme depended on the support of Lu Han, Yunnan's provincial governor, but Lu preferred independence and secretly sought support of the United States. The Americans, though, refused to back Lu in a manner that looked like US interference in China's internal affairs, so Lu gave his allegiance to the Communists and plotted Chiang's kidnapping. In December, Chiang and his son, Chiang Ching-kuo, flew to Taiwan with their options dwindling, never to return to China again.

Taiwan, though, did not hold much appeal as a place to make a last stand. Sun had already warned that a Communist invasion of two hundred thousand men in one thousand junks could doom the island. Then there was the attitude of the United States. Secretary of State Dean Acheson fully expected Chiang to lose Taiwan just as he lost China, and American diplomats held secret conversations with Sun; K. C. Wu, a graduate of Princeton and Taiwan's new provincial governor; and certain Taiwanese elites who advocated that Taiwan become a UN trusteeship and ultimately independent. None of this suggested a definitive policy toward Taiwan, but such contacts certainly annoyed Chiang. Any trepidation only worsened in January 1950 when President Harry Truman and Acheson announced that there would be no more military aid for Taiwan. Although the Truman administration increasingly viewed Taiwan as critical to defending the island chain stretching from Japan to the Philippines, Paul Nitze, of the National Security Council, devised a "hypothetical plan" to remove Chiang from power and put Taiwan under US or UN control.

In the months prior to the Korean War, the situation for Chiang was not entirely hopeless. In early 1950, General Douglas MacArthur, supreme commander of Allied Powers in Japan, allowed Charles M. Cooke, a former commander of the US Seventh Fleet, to secretly visit Taiwan under the

guise of selling fertilizer. A private citizen who became Chiang's military adviser, Cooke established a Special Technician Program that had financial support from American capitalists with connections to the China Lobby and former members of the Office of Strategic Services. Cooke made weapons purchases through private channels, but Lin claims that he also had considerable impact on policy. Cooke prevailed on Chiang to abandon certain islands that he judged indefensible to Communist attack. Most surprising, Chiang considered abandoning Quemoy (Jinmen) but Cooke vehemently argued against the evacuation because such a move made the Nationalists look weak and would have negative psychological ramifications for Taiwan and beyond. The author concludes, "This was a decisive moment; had the proposed withdrawal from Quemoy ever come to pass, it would have removed the principal local point of the later Sino-American military crisis" (p. 165). Cooke, though, faced opposition from US diplomats in Taiwan, who were angry at being bypassed by Cooke and MacArthur's intelligence officers, and Nationalist commanders, who believed he gave bad advice and/or also felt bypassed in their efforts to secure weapons for Taiwan. Eventually, two Nationalist officers in the United States went to the Federal Bureau of Investigation and accused Cooke and the US organization behind him of illegally acquiring weapons for Taiwan. These accusations and the arrival of a US Military Advisory and Assistance Group (MAAG) in 1951 brought Cooke's activity to a close, ending what the author describes as a "unique military and security relationship between Nationalist China and the United States" (p. 169).

By then, though, events outside of Taiwan helped to make the "accidental state" a reality. The Sino-Soviet Alliance and the Korean War changed how the United States viewed Taiwan in geostrategic terms. The Truman administration put the Seventh Fleet in the Taiwan Strait to neutralize the civil war but then announced that Taiwan's status should be determined by an interna-

tional agreement, implying that Taiwan was not Chinese territory in order to claim that American intervention did not constitute interference in Chinese internal affairs. Although he complained in his diary that this lowered Taiwan's status to "a mere piece of American colony," Chiang accepted the "client-patron relationship" because it kept him in power. Lin observes, however, that he paid a price: "Chiang would find that the autonomy he had enjoyed in the decision-making process in the mainland era would be long gone in the post-1950 Taiwan era" (p. 173).

In the meantime, Chiang consolidated his position on Taiwan by reforming the Nationalist Party and carrying out land reform. In what Lin describes as "a 'not-so-accidental' aspect of the accidental formation of the island state," his son launched what became known as the "white terror" in which dissidents were imprisoned and people were spied upon in order to stabilize "Nationalist rule domestically" and reestablish "Chiang Kai-shek's supremacy in the political hierarchy" (p. 162). Chiang made Zhang his chief of staff and Chen premier and ultimately vice president. Eventually, he dealt harshly with people favored by the Americans; for example, he demoted Sun and put the general on trial and house arrest because Americans still saw Sun as Chiang's natural replacement and because Chiang no longer saw him as useful in getting American aid. With the help of the United States, Japan and the ROC signed an agreement in 1952 that settled Japanese claims for Taiwan and the Pescadores, suggesting that the ROC possessed sovereignty over those areas and taking what Lin called "one very important step toward creating a legally and territorially [re]defined Taiwan-based Republic of China, whose political repercussions continue to this day" (p. 180). Under pressure from MAAG and other US agencies, the ROC carried out military reforms and modified military budgets to reduce costs even though Chiang complained in his diary that he might forego US aid in order to protect his sovereignty. Although he obviously never fulfilled

the threat, Chiang did reject MAAG's advice to abolish the political commissars in the military. To check MAAG's influence, he allowed a secret Japanese military advisory team to operate on Taiwan from 1950 to 1969 where it trained approximately ten thousand Nationalist officers. Lin also claims that Chiang proved more defensive-minded than American military leaders who urged Nationalist military operations against the mainland in the early 1950s. In 1951, Cooke and other Nationalist commanders drew up a plan for an operation against Hainan Island, but Chiang scoffed at what he called a Western imperialist plot hatched at his expense and even questioned in his diary if a mainland counterattack would occur in his lifetime. When the Pentagon pushed several times over the next year for a similar operation, Chiang continued to balk, deeming the cost in troops too high a price. He only signed off on joint Central Intelligence Agency-Nationalist raids carried out along the PRC coast between 1951 and 1953 because there were fewer risks. Lin observes that, "in hindsight, Chiang's reluctance to contemplate mainland recovery at the height of the Korean War may have inadvertently shaped Taiwan's military as defensive rather than offensive in nature" (p. 204).

In the end, Lin speculates that Chiang ultimately wanted Taiwan to be "both a secure power base and a safe haven for 'Free China.'" In 1953, Chiang acquiesced to the decision to withdraw Nationalist troops from Burma and Vietnam, leaving him "no military presence on the Asian mainland visible and hefty enough to convince the world and the people of Taiwan that, even without foreign assistance, military conquest of the Chinese mainland was still possible" (p. 215). Even though he "knew there was no realistic hope of launching a 'mainland counteroffensive,'" this did not stop Chiang from proposing invasion plans in 1953 in order to win more US military aid (p. 225). Although the Americans did not go along with the schemes, it did not matter. For several months, Chiang pursued a mutual defense pact to no avail

until the PRC's shelling of the offshore islands in 1954-55 gave him an opportunity "to maneuver the Quemoy Crisis and play a double-game with the Americans" by complaining about the lack of support for Taiwan compared to Korea or Indochina. Chiang prevailed and got a pact that elevated him to a status similar to other US allies in Asia and ensured that "Taiwan, his last power redoubt, was now finally secured" (p. 234).

Overall, *Accidental State* is a well-written and well-researched contribution to the new scholarship on Chiang that has emerged since his diaries became available to the public in 2009. Lin hoped that this work would answer the questions of how the Nationalist state was created on Taiwan and what role the United States played "in the process of this state construction." To a certain degree, he achieved his goal and he does note some of the latter's contributions, but he may give Chiang too much credit when he says "it was Chiang Kai-shek who, at every crucial juncture in an extremely fluid and uncertain situation, made decisions that would translate into institutional arrangements and eventually lead to the accidental formation of an island state, his last territorial refuge" (p. 240). Communist success and military weakness left him no choice but to turn Taiwan into a state because otherwise where else could he have gone? One can only speculate as what would have happened if there had been no Korean War or American presidents seeking to contain Communism and preventing dominoes from falling. As Lin shows, even Chiang found it ironic that PRC intervention into the Korean War saved him from Communist attack. Thus, Chiang knew that he was not total master of his fate and could not strengthen his redoubt without allies or distracted enemies. At the same time, no matter how much Americans wanted to pursue a Third Force, there was no one else with the military support and the political clout to unite the many political factions like Chiang.

Moreover, by focusing almost entirely on the military side of the equation when discussing state construction and legitimacy, much has been left out. To be fair, only but so much ground can be covered in such a work. Nevertheless, it does leave out deeper discussion of Chiang's views on other aspects of building an island state: laying the foundation for Taiwan's economic miracle; the political and social impact of the ROC's one-party rule in which Taiwan remained a province while mainlanders pretended to represent all of China and make laws for the ROC; the indoctrination and integration of the eight million people of Han Chinese, Hakka, and aboriginal descent into political, military, and economic structures dominated by mainlanders; and the ROC's role as member of the UN Security Council and its broader diplomatic efforts.

What is ironic is that even if Chiang and the United States established an island state, both took steps to officially diminish its status as a state. On Chiang's part, he would have abandoned it to return to China if the opportunity arose. Lin claims that Chiang became hawkish in the late 1950s and considered launching the counteroffensive at the moment that Mao Zedong implemented his Great Leap Forward. One suspects he would not have launched such an attack without complete American support. At any rate, what Lin did not discuss was Chiang's rejection of the Two China Policy proposed by the Americans in the 1950s that would have made Taiwan comparable to South Korea or West Germany or that in the 1950s, he ordered the ROC to leave every international organization that admitted the PRC. Losing its seat in the United Nations in 1971 and the normalization of relations between the United States and the PRC only further diminished the ROC's standing as a state and isolated it politically. In the late 1980s, the ROC abandoned martial law and democratized in the 1990s, but it failed in efforts to rejoin the United Nations and remains a de facto state to all but the twenty-two countries that currently accord it diplomatic recognition. Al-

though there have been tensions between the United States and the PRC over the Taiwan question, Lin speaks of the “thaw in the China-Taiwan relationship” (p. 240). With a new president in Taiwan who refuses to voice support for the One China concept and a new administration in Washington that has threatened to get tough with China over trade and the South China Sea, the thaw may be over.

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