

The Aborted Glory of the Nation: Taiwan's War Planning of Retaking China

Dr Isabelle Cheng

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Enabled by the gradual opening of previously unavailable archives, there have been new waves of investigation of the Cold War. These literatures look back into how the polarisation of the international system came into being, and how this polarisation has a far-reaching impact on the actions of the state and individuals. In terms of the unfolding of Cold War in East Asia, this latest scholarship is more interested in how the bipolar order was forged between the two superpowers, rather than how the regional actors struggled for their survival in the given international power structure. The invisibility of Taiwan on the radar screen of this rekindled interest in the Cold War is a case in point, in spite that the stand-off across the Taiwan Strait is a living legacy of the Cold War.

This research is a preliminary attempt at how the military confrontation across the Taiwan Strait became an integral part of the Cold War in East Asia. By looking at secondary literature and a collection of interview transcripts of top military leadership who were involved in a secret planning of retaking China, this research tries to re-examine the foregone consensus that Chiang Kai-shek's commitment to military retaking China is no more than a political convenience for securing the legitimacy of the Kuomintang regime in Taiwan. This research argues that this planning is more than the usual story between a military strongman's immovable stubbornness and his subordinates' personal loyalty demanded by an authoritarian military-political complex. Not only were the staff politically socialised with the state ideology, they also seemed drawn into the fictional paternity with Chiang Kai-shek. Chiang's promise of 'bringing them back home' transformed the restoration of the government and geopolitics of the Cold War into a personal aspiration for returning home.

DR ISABELLE CHENG received her PhD in 2012 from the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS). She is the Lecturer in East Asian Studies at the School of Languages and Area Studies of the University of Portsmouth. She currently serves on the Board of the European Association of Taiwan Studies (EATS) and is a Research Associate of SOAS Centre of Taiwan. Her research concentrates on marriage migration, citizenship, multiculturalism, and national identity. Her new research interest is military confrontation across the Taiwan Strait during the Cold War.



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