

The Korean War of 1950~1953 : U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff and U.S. Strategy

(한국전쟁, 1950-1953: 미국의 합동참모본부와 미국의 군사전략)

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Prologue

As a top military advisory group in the U. S. government, the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff(hereafter JCS) was created after the American entry in the Second World War. Soon after the United States entered the war, President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston S. Churchill established the Combined Chiefs of Staff(CCS) to provide strategic guidance in the American-British war effort. President Roosevelt then formed the JCS as the U. S. representative to the CCS. After this seemingly simple beginning, the JCS assumed the role of coordinating the American military and its cooperate leadership. The JCS systems received much credit for the Allied victory in the Second World War. The National security Act of 1947, which instituted the National Security Council and the United States Air Force as a separate military department, legalized the JCS as a permanent organization within the whole defense establishment of the executive branch.¹⁾ Thus constituted, the JCS became a contributor to major

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주1) Historical Office, Office of the Secretary of Defense, The Department of Defense: Documents on Establishment and Organization, 1944-1978(Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office...hereafter G. P. O. ...1978); Lawrence J. Korb, The Joint Chiefs of Staff: The Twenty-five Years (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976).

decisions relating to the Korean issue in general and the way to conduct the fighting during the Korean War in particular.

Before the end of the Pacific War, the JCS concentrated its efforts on defeating Japan, if possible, inexpensively, and therefore, tried to avoid to touch the political issues that might perturb the Allied alignment in the Pacific area. The Korean problem was one of those. From a military viewpoint, the JCS agreed to the State Department's inaction policy in dealing with the various groups of the Koreans that had been willing to help the United States in defeating Japan, emphasizing the necessity not to alienate any factions that might be helpful to the future military or political activities.²⁾ The sudden collapse of Japan, furthermore left little time for the JCS to change the thrust of U. S. Army planning from defeating Japan to dealing with the surrender of the Japanese forces. Consequently, the 38th parallel was hastily drawn to facilitate the Japanese surrender, Lieutenant General John R. Hodge, the commanding general of the 24th Corps, who was in charge of the occupation of South Korea, embarked on an unenviable mission without precise guidance and necessary preparation.

Like many thorny issues in the immediate postwar period, the Korean matter demanded a close cooperation between the United States and the Soviet Union--the two surviving powers--on the one hand and these two powers and the indigenous people, in this case, the Koreans on the other. Multinational tutorship was the American panacea for the Korean problem, since the American government judged that only the international agreement would prevent a possible power struggle among the major neighboring powers concerned for Korea, and that the Koreans were considered not yet capable of exercising and maintaining an independent government. Neither the Russians nor the Koreans accepted this American prescription. Furthermore, the 38th parallel--an artificial line drawn to accept the Japanese surrender--only promised to exacerbate the situations in the two zones.

Unable to find a viable solution for the future of Korea through a bilateral agreement with the Soviet Union which asserted that a unified Korea should be loyal to it, the United States, which felt that the Soviet dominance in Korea should

2) Letter, from George C. Marshall to the Secretary of State; and E. S. King, Chief of Naval Operations, April, 1942, Record Group(RG) 218: Records of the JCS, CCS 383, Korea(3-16-42), National Archives(NA), Washington, D.C.

be prevented at all cost, turned to the United Nations marked the next phase of the Soviet–American confrontation in dealing with Korea. The result of this phase was the establishment of the two Koreas in the north and south of the tiny peninsula under the guardianship of the two occupiers. The 38th parallel became an international boundary, intensifying hostile mood between the two.

Upon submitting the Korean problem to the United Nations, the United States government pondered over how far it should go in Korea. Facing the almost impossible situation, the occupation authority in the American zone raised an important questions: whether Korea was sufficiently vital to the United States in its global confrontation with the Soviet Union, and whether South Korea could be abandoned in favor of necessary safeguarding measures in Japan or elsewhere nearby.³⁾ President Harry S. Truman ordered the State and Defense Departments “to weigh our commitments and consider where we might safely withdraw.”⁴⁾ The JCS made a study about the troop withdrawal from Korea and its strategic implications. This study concluded in part:

The Joint Chiefs of Staff consider that, from the standpoint of military security, the United States has little strategic interest in maintaining the present troops and bases in Korea for the reasons hereafter stated. In the event of hostilities in the Far East, our present forces in Korea would be a military liability and could not be maintained there without substantial reinforcement prior to the initiation of hostilities. Moreover, any offensive operation the United States might wish to conduct on the Asiatic continent most probably would bypass the Korean peninsula.

...

In the light of the present severe shortage of military manpower, the corps of two divisions, totalling some 45,000 men, now maintained in South Korea, could well be used elsewhere, the withdrawal of these forces from Korea would not impair the military position of the Far East Command unless, in consequence, the Soviets establish military strength in South Korea capable of mounting an assault on Japan.

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3) Jacobs to Secretary of State, September 19, 1947, U. S. Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS), 1947, VI (Washington, D. C.: G. P. O., 1972), pp.803–7.

4) The Department of Defense, pp.1–50; Harry S. Truman, Years of Trial and Hope (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1956), p.325.

Further, the JCS pointed out burdensome expenditures for preventing disease and disorder "with little, if any, lasting benefit to the security of the United States".⁵⁾

Based on the studies done by the various agencies, the American government concluded that the U. S. position in Korea would be untenable even with "expenditure of considerable U. S. money and effort," and decided to withdraw from Korea "as quickly and gracefully as possible" without giving the world the impression that the United States had been forced to "scuttle and run" from Korea.⁶⁾ The National Security Council policy paper Number 8 (NSC-8), a cornerstone of U. S. policy and strategy for Korea before the Korean War, spelled out the policy to withdraw from Korea with certain necessary measures: expansion of the South Korean constabulary to a strength of 50,000 and a "feasible" amount of economic aid to Korea.⁷⁾ American troops completed their departure on June 30, 1949 before the uneasy Koreans would have preferred, leaving the suggestion to ask the United Nations for help in case of a communist attack from the north.⁸⁾ Thus, the United Nations became the protector of the Republic of Korea (ROK).

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- 5) Memo for the Joint War Plans Committee, sub.: Guidance for the Preparation of a Joint Outline War Plan, August 29, 1947, RG 319: Records of the Army Staff, ABC 381 Global Estimate(16 July 47), NA; A Report by the Joint Strategic Survey Committee on Military Importance of Korea, September 24, 1947, RG 218, CCS 383. 21 Korea(3-19-45), sec., 13 and RG 165: Records of War Department General and Special Staffs, ABC 014 Japan(13 Apr 44), sec., 17-E, NA; Memo for the Secretary of Defense from Fleet Admiral William D. Leahy, Chief of Staff to the Commander-in-Chief to the Armed Forces, September 25, 1947, Selected Records Relating to the Korean War, Department of Defense(DoD), Truman Papers, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri, U. S. A.: Memo by the Secretary of Defense(James Forrestal) to the Secretary of State(George C. Marshall), September 26, 1947, FRUS, 1947, VI, pp.817-8; Truman, Memoirs, II, pp.325-6. At that time, the JCS was composed of Admiral William D. Leahy, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, and General Carl Spaatz.
- 6) Memo by the Director of the Office of Far Eastern Affairs(Butterworth) to the Under Secretary of State(Lovett), sub.; Presentation of Korean Problem to the United Nations, October 1, 1947, FRUS, 1947, VI, pp.820-1.
- 7) NSC-8, April 2, 1948; NSC 8/1, March 16, 1949; NSC-8/2, March 22, 1949; National Security Council(NSC) File, NA; NSC-8, FRUS, 1948, VI, pp.1164-9; NSC-8/2, FRUS, 1949, VII, pp.969-78.
- 8) President Rhee's statements, in Muccio to Secretary of State, May 7, 16, 19, and June 6, 1949, FRUS, 1949, VII, pp.1011-2, 1023-4, 1030-1, 1035-6, 1039. In these reports, Ambassador Muccio informed the State Department that

The idea that Korea was excluded from the U. S. defense perimeter in the Far East became widely known when Secretary of State Dean Acheson delivered a speech at the National Press Club in Washington on January 12, 1950.⁹⁾ No one blinked. Secretary's statement was a straightforward expression of the JCS and other military policymakers. The JCS found no justification for maintaining U. S. troops and bases in Korea and excluded the possibility of unilateral military involvement in Korea. Indeed, it may be claimed that Korea was considered a burden rather than a responsibility and certainly not an asset to the U. S. strategic vision.

Then, why did the United States intervene in Korea militarily? Why did the JCS oppose General MacArthur's dramatic way of conducting the war? What was the justification of U. S. assuming a unilateral responsibility for the defense of South Korea that U. S. government had tried to avoid for years? This piece tries to find some clues to these questions, stressing the role of the JCS.

Military Intervention for American Prestige

The unprovoked North Korean Communist attack on the early morning of June 25, 1950 came as a shock to Washington, and the most significant feature of Washington's reaction was the emotional character of "no appeasement" and "get tough". President Truman drew up historical examples in which "the strong had attacked the weak," and compared this overt aggression with what "Hitler, Mussolini, and the Japanese had acted ten, fifteen, and twenty years earlier." He judged that the possibility of another war was there "if this was allowed to go unchallenged," and concluded: "The foundations and the principles of the United Nations were at stake unless this unprovoked attack on Korea could be stopped."¹⁰⁾

"the clamor and fear" of the Koreans "aroused by troop withdrawal...have far exceeded my expectations." Secretary of State to Seoul, Dec. 14, 1949, *Ibid.*, p.1108.

9) Speech, Dean Acheson to the National Press Club, January 12, 1950, in *MacArthur Hearings*, pp.1812–2; Dean Acheson, *Present at the Creation: My Years in the State Department* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1969), pp.357–8.

10) Truman, *Memoirs*, II, pp.332–3.

Secretary of State Acheson also figured out the idea that the United States, as a major sponsor to create the Republic of Korea through the United Nations, could not accept the result of this challenge against American prestige with “no more resistance than words and gestures in the Security Council.”¹¹⁾ Considering that this attack would be “the first in a series of ‘wars of liberation’, “General J. Lawton Collins, the U. S. Army Chief of Staff and one member of the JCS, believed that “we would not stand by idly in the face of this naked aggression against a country the United States had helped to liberate from Japanese domination”.¹²⁾ The emotional character of Washington’s reaction became clearly visible when political and military leaders gathered at the Blair House on the evening of June 25, 1950.

At the request of the President, policymakers assembled at the Blair House on the evening of June 25, 1950. The dinner guests included Secretary of State Dean Acheson, Secretary of Defence Louis A. Johnson, the three Service Secretaries, Francis P. Matthews of Navy, Frank Pace, Jr of Army, Thomas K. Finletter of Air Force, Chairman of the JCS, General Omar N. Bradley, the three service chiefs-- Admiral Forrest P. Sherman of Navy, General Hoyt S. Vandenburg of Air Force, General J. Lawton Collins of Army-- Under Secretary of State James E. Webb, Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs Dean Rusk, Assistant Secretary of State for UN Affairs John D. Hickerson, and Ambassador at Large Philip C. Jessup.¹³⁾

After dinner, the President asked Secretary Acheson to open the discussion. Acheson explained the resolution adopted by the UN Security Council on the afternoon that day, and summarized the various problems for the President to consider. Then, he recommended some concrete steps to be taken: authorizing MacArthur to dispatch ammunition above the quota under the MDAP program, sending the 7th Fleet to Formosa, and stepping up the aid to Indo-China. General Collins suggested the transfer of F-51 fighter planes in Japan to Korea and

11) Acheson, The Korean War(New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1969), p.20; Present at the Creation, p.405.

12) J. Lawton Collins, War in Peacetime: The History and Lessons of Korea (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969), p.4.

13) Memo of Conversation by Jessup, June 25, 1950, FRUS, 1950, VII, pp.157-61.

giving the authority to MacArthur to dispatch a survey team to Korea. Admiral Sherman sided with General Collins. General Bradley, however, argued against sending such material that the Koreans could not properly handle as fighter planes, and instead suggested to dispatch the fleet units in the Subic Bay to Korea "to frighten off the North Korean amphibious forces." When the Air Force Chief briefed the guests on Russian air strength in the Far East, the President asked if the U. S. Air Force could "knock out their bases in the Far East." The Air Force Chief replied that "it could be done if we used A-Bombs." At this point Army Secretary Pace expressed his doubts about "putting ground forces into Korea." Defense Secretary and Air Secretary were opposed to committing ground troops in Korea. Notably, General Bradley also questioned "the advisability of putting in ground units, particularly if large numbers were involved." President Truman listened without making any comment on this issue. Then, he ordered the support of South Korea with additional supplies, a complete survey of the situation, and the preparation of "plans to wipe out all Soviet air bases in the Far East." But he cautioned that "this is not no order for action but an order to make the plans." Instructing the Navy to move the 7th Fleet to Formosa the President said, "we are working entirely for the United Nations."¹⁴ The U. S. government thus began to intervene in Korea in the name of the United Nations.

The same group met with the President again at the Blair House at 9:00 P.M. the next day and confirmed the principle "to do something." Secretary Acheson recommended lifting all restrictions on sea and air operations in Korea. The President readily approved, saying that "No action should be taken north of the 38th parallel," and added, "Not yet." Then, the President reemphasized the necessity to do everything for the United Nations without going into the war with the Soviet Union. When the President asked General Bradley if the mobilization of the National Guard was necessary, the Chairman of the JCS replied that "if we commit our ground forces in Korea we cannot at the same time carry out other commitments without mobilization." Too, General Collins, the Army Chief, stated,

14) Ibid.

“if we are going to commit ground forces in Korea we must mobilize.”¹⁵⁾ Clearly the JCS was quite disinclined to send large ground forces to Korea.

It was Secretary of State Acheson who favored sending “limited” American ground troops to Korea in order to prevent a disaster, but General MacArthur made it happen by “shaking up” Washington at the dawn of June 30, 1950. On June 28, the President opened the National Security Council (NSC) meeting with a desperate report from Korea. The members discussed how far the NATO countries would cooperate with the United States and the unanimous approval of the Congress over what the administration had done during the weekend. When Secretary Acheson suggested dispatching limited number of combat troops to Korea, the President did not make any comment on the recommendation but ordered to watch over other areas and Soviet activities in and near Yugoslavia and northern Europe, especially, “in Bulgaria.”¹⁶⁾

Indeed, it was General MacArthur who hastened the decision-making process in Washington. After returning his dramatic inspection of the battle-zone in Korea, General MacArthur flashed an urgent message, asking for authorization to send one regimental combat team and two divisions from Japan for an early counteroffensive.¹⁷⁾ Because of the urgency of the message, General Collins arranged for a teleconference with MacArthur at 3:00 A. M. June 30, Washington time (5:00 P. M., Tokyo time). Facing MacArthur’s intransigence for immediate authorization, General Collins telephoned and asked Army Secretary Race to obtain approval from President Truman. The President agreed forthwith. Less than an hour from the receipt of the request from the field commander, fateful

15) Events in Korea, June 26, 1950, Papers of George M. Elsey, Truman Library; Memo of Conversation, June 26, 1950, FRUS, 1950, VII, pp.178-83; Truman, Memoirs, II, pp.338-9.

16) Truman, Memoirs, II, pp.340-1; Acheson, The Korean War, pp.26-7; Present at the Creation, p.411; Glenn D. Paige, The Korean Decision, June 24-30, 1950 (New York: Free Press, 1968), pp.221-6.

17) MacArthur to JCS June 30, 1950, RG 218, CCS 383. 21 Korea (3-19-45), sec., 23, NA; FRUS, 1950, VII, pp.248-50; Courtney Whitney, MacArthur: His Rendezvous with History (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1956), pp.332-3; War in Peacetime, pp.18-20; Roy E. Appleman, South to the Nakdong, North to the Yalu (Washington, D. C.: G. P. O., 1961), p.44.

words were flashed to Tokyo: "Your recommendation to move one RCT to combat area is approved. You will be advised later as to further build-up." 18) The decision to commit U. S. combat troops to Korea was made by the President at the dawn of June 30. The next day, after another NSC meeting, the JCS informed MacArthur of the presidential approval to utilize all available ground forces under his command, only being subject to "requirements for safety of Japan in the present situation which is a matter for your judgment." 19) The Korean War thus became "MacArthur's War."

The Korean War soon was given another sobriquet, "Mr. Truman's War." In the process to commit American ground forces in Korea, President Truman did not consult with the U. S. Congress. Instead, he simply notified the Congressional leaders what he had done for the peace-keeping efforts of the United Nations. The resolutions adopted by the United Nations, he considered, were enough to justify U. S. actions in Korea. In retrospect, it appears that the President never intended to ask for a congressional declaration of war, presumably, because he did not want to lose his freedom of action in handling the crisis. Perhaps, too, pride did not permit to seek a declaration of war against a small puppet state in the Soviet bloc. There also was the possibility that the "war" could be lost whereas a "police action" could simply be declared at an end. The UN Security Council had played the role of "a weekend U. S. Congress" by authorizing the U. S. government to act in Korea and empowering it to coordinate the aid from other countries of the organization. President Truman designated the JCS as his military agents for the UN operations in Korea and named General MacArthur as the Commander of all UN forces in Korea. 20) What the President needed was "a company or two" of foreign forces. Thus, the Korean War became "Mr. Truman's War" under the disguise of police action

18) The JCS to MacArthur, June 30, 1950, FRUS, 1950, VII, pp.250–3; Collins, pp.22–3; Truman, pp.342–3; Transcript, General Almond Oral History Interview, pp.13–4, The US Army Military History Institute, Carlisle, Pennsylvania

19) JCS to MacArthur, June 30, 1950, FRUS, 1950, VII, pp.240, 248.

20) Department of State, A Historical Summary of the US–Korean Relations, 1834–1962 (Washington, D. C.: G. P. O., 1962), p.81; The New York Times, July 8, 1950.

for the United Nations. The United States became involved in a “strange” war in a “strange” country on the edge of mainland-- a conflict which began and ended without a declaration of war.

In accepting foreign troops under the UN Command, the JCS considered military effectiveness, not political necessity, as a main criterion. Chiang Kai-shek in Taiwan offered 33,000 men to fight in Korea. The JCS was in opposition to accepting these troops for the helplessness of unsupported infantry against North Korean tanks, though President Truman was inclined to accept Chiang's offer. Secretary of State Acheson opposed it for political reasons, arguing that it would give the Chinese Communists a pretext to enter the conflict and reduce Taiwan's capability to defend itself against the possible invasion. Although political considerations compelled the JCS to accept foreign troops, its members were clearly worried about the disadvantages of an unbalanced military team as a result of indiscriminate acceptance.²¹⁾

Not paying much attention on this face-saving measure of political nature, the JCS found it desperate to rearm the United States. UN contributions were far from meeting the basic requirements even in Korea. An easy way to solve the manpower shortage in Korea was to increase the ceiling of the South Korean forces. This measure, too, was insufficient of itself. The best way to meet the demands, immediate and long-term, the JCS judged, was to increase the authorized strength of the U. S. Armed Forces. The drastic reduction of manpower in the services done after World War II had left big scars on the defense capability of the United States. Knowing this, the Truman administration

21) Preliminary Views of the JCS re Ground Forces Contributions, July 19, 1950 FRUS, 1950, VI, pp.432-5. Memo for the Secretary of Defense, sub: United States Course of Action in Korea, July 28, 1950, Truman Papers, DoD; Memo for the Secretary of Defense, sub.; Proposed Military Assistance in Korea from Certain UN Nations, August 7, 1950, RG 218, CCS 383. 21 Korea(3-19-45), sec., 27, NA. According to these views, the JCS considered as follows:

<u>Want</u>	<u>Considering</u>	<u>Don't Want</u>
England	India	Italy
Canada	Lebanon	Turkey
Pakistan	Argentina	Philippines
New Zealand	France	Saudi Arabia
Australia	Benelux	Taiwan and Bolivia

had developed its own blue-print to rearm the country, which finally turned out to be National Security Council Document Number 68, known as NSC-68. It recommended a bold military buildup, about \$ 50 billion a year for American defence.²²⁾ However, the administration was worried over how to sell this expensive program to the American public.

In fact, "police action" for the United Nations in Korea solved almost all thorny problems relating to persuading the Congress to appropriate the rearming program of the United States. At the request of the JCS, President Truman asked the Congress to remove the limitation on the size of the armed forces. The Congress had always been reluctant to commit itself to authorizing large standing armed forces for political and financial reasons. Under the urgent pressures, existing and anticipated, however, the legislative branch approved early in August, 1950 the President's plea to remove the restrictions on the manpower of the armed forces.²³⁾ When the President called four National Guard divisions into federal service on August 10, Army's authorized strength was well over one million.²⁴⁾

The situation in the battlefield was not encouraging, but finally stabilized along the Pusan Perimeter. The first weeks of August were marked by brutal fighting. In order to complete, what they called, "liberation of southern half of Korea" by August 15, the day Korea had been liberated from the Japanese yoke, North Korean Commanders employed "all-front-pressing" tactics so that they could exploit and pursue wherever successful. UN Forces, on the other hand, used "all-front-filling" tactics with highly mobile reserve task forces so that they could prevent local breakthrough being exploited. By September 12 the North Korean attacks were largely spent. The U. S. 8th Army and South Korean Army prevented a Dunkirk in the Far East and saved American prestige as the champion of the free world.

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22) NSC-68: U. S. Objectives and Programs for National Security, April 14, 1950, NSC File, NA.

23) P. L. 655, 81st Congress, 2nd Session.

24) U. S. Department of the Army, Policy and Direction: The First Year, prepared by James F. Schnabel (Washington, D. C.: G. P. O., 1972), pp.119-125.

From the very beginning of the Korean War, the JCS and intelligence communities in Washington began to ponder over why the Soviet Union had chosen Korea as an area of attack and what should be done in the event of the direct Soviet intervention with its ground forces in Korea. The Central Intelligence Agency(CIA), on June 28, 1950, produced an information report, in which it analyzed that North Korean adventure, being “undoubtedly” undertaken at Soviet direction, aimed at “the elimination of the last remaining anti-Communist bridgehead on the mainland of northern Asia, thereby undermining the position of the US and the Western Powers throughout the Far East.”²⁵⁾ But, mainly because of the US prompt action, the CIA predicted that the Soviet Union would seek to localize the conflict and support North Korea with “short of open participation by Soviet forces.”²⁶⁾ According to another report issued by the CIA on July 8, 1950, the four possible Soviet actions were possibilities: 1) the Soviet acceptance of status quo ante-bellum to be recovered by the US action; 2) the Soviet employment of the Chinese Communists in order to prolong US involvement in Korea; 3) while attempting the alternative “2”, the Soviet provocation of a series of incidents similar to the Korean affair in order to disperse and overstrain U.S. military strength, 4) the deliberate attack on the United States and its major allies, accepting an inevitability of global war. In Conclusion, however, the CIA estimated that the Soviet Union was unlikely “to choose the alternative of deliberately provoking global war.”²⁷⁾

Based on these “if” and “may” Soviet courses of action, the JCS studied the possible U. S. courses of action-- “if” and “may” options of American version. The JCS assumed that, should the Soviet Union intervene with its combat troops in Korea, the United States should interpret it as a clear Soviet willingness to engage in hostilities against the United States and its major allies and be prepared to execute war plans, minimizing its commitment in Korea. Further,

25) Intelligence Memo No. 300, sub.: The USSR and the Korean Invasion, June 28, 1950, CIA File, Presidential Secretary's File, OF 471 B(SF), Truman Papers, Truman Library.

26) Ibid.

27) Intelligence Memo No. 302, sub.: Consequences of the Korean Incident, July 8, 1950, CIA File, OF 471 B(SF), Truman Papers.

the JCS argued that “it would be militarily unsound for the United States to commit large forces against the USSR in an area of slight strategic importance, as well as one of Soviet choice.”²⁸⁾ The State Department agreed to the idea that “full-scale mobilization” should be initiated if the Soviets should enter the conflict with their major combat troops in Korea, provided that only the President should decide whether the United States would initiate the necessary measures. The idea of the JCS was incorporated in the NSC policy paper numbered 76. NSC-76 also emphasized the importance of close cooperation with European U. S. allies in preparing and executing war plans against the Soviet Union.²⁹⁾ Thus, the JCS considered that Korea was not a place in which the United States might take showdone with the Soviets.

Synthesizing the various views and recommendations, the NSC prepared a report on United States Courses of Action with Respect to Korea, “entitled NSC-81, distributed it to the State and Defense Departments, the JCS, and other agencies concerned. NSC-81 clearly set U. S. objective to reoccupy Korea up to the 38th parallel, and eliminated the possibility to engage in a general war with either the Soviet Union or Communist China for the sake of Korea.³⁰⁾ The JCS accepted the notion that the United States should not permit itself to enter a general war with the the Soviet Union or Communist China in Korea, but the members of the JCS rejected the idea that the battle situation should be stabilized along the 38th parallel.³¹⁾ The final compromise was “decision in abeyance” on the parallel issue. James S. Lay, Jr., the Executive Secretary of the NSC, redrafted NSC-81 and submitted revised one-- NSC 81/1-- to the NSC for approval

28) Memo for the Secretary of Defense, sub.: U. S. Couress of Action in the Event Soviet Forces Enter Korean Hostilities, July 10, 1950, RG 218, CCS 3 383. 21 Korea(3-39-45), sec., 24, NA; NSC Meetings File, OF 471 B(SF), Truman Papers.

29) NSC-76: U. S. Courses of Action in the Event Soviet Forces Enter Korean Hostilities, July 25, 1950, NSC File, NA.

30) NSC-81: U. S. Courses of Action with Respect to Korea, September 1, 1950, NSC File, NA.

31) Memo for the Secretary of Defense, sub.,: U. S. Courses of Action with Respect to Korea, September 7, 1950, Selected Relating to the Korean War, DoD., Truman Papers.

President Truman approved NSC 81/1 on September 11, 1950, and ordered its implementation by all appropriate executive departments and agencies of the administration.³²⁾ Now, the U. S. government firmly committed itself to the principle of “localizing” Korean hostilities and “minimizing” U. S. military commitments in Korea, should the President judge that a general war with the Soviet Union was imminent.

In the process of formulating a proper U. S. strategic posture, the JCS and the Service Secretaries divided the world into three areas: the area in which satellite thrusts were possible... Formosa, Yugoslavia, Berlin, Burma, Indochina, Thailand, Hong kong and Macao, Greece, Trieste(if Yugoslavia falls), Phillippines (if Formosa falls), and Austria; the area of direct engagement of the Soviet forces... Iran, Saudi Arabia(if Iran falls), Afghanistan; and the “soft spots” that North Koren successes or any additional moves increased the possibilities of internal communistic coup detat... Burma, Formosa, Thailand, Indochina, Indonesia Afghanistan, Trieste, Malaya, Phillippines, Berlin, India, Pakistan, Italy, France, Austria, and Iceland.³³⁾ Having reviewed these possible encroachments throughout the world, the JCS reiterated its position to minimize U. S. military commitment in Korea. Thus, the JCS was very cautious in conducting the war in Korea, fully emphasizing U. S. capability and the possible Soviet moves in other areas, especially, in soft spots in Europe and the Middle East.

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The JCS, set its own strategic posture about how far the United States should go in Korea, opposed General MacArthur’s way of conducting the fighting in Korea. General MacArthur, who had brought a total victory to the United States by employing a series of amphibious operations in the Pacific War, had Planned to recover Seoul, the capital of South Korea, by landing at Inchon. Although the first plan had died stillborn for the failure of the UN troops to halt the enemy advance, the continuous southward adjustment of the front convinced MacArthur that the only way to recover the lost ground was to strike the enemy by a

32) Memo for the President, September 11, 1950; NSC-81/1: U. S. Courses of Action with Respect to Korea, September 9, 1950, NSC File, NA.

33) Memo for the Secretary of Defence, August 1, 1950, FRUS, 1950, I, p.354.

seaborne attack in his rear. When General Collins and General Vandenberg visited Tokyo on July 13, MacArthur outlined a tentative plan for a strategic maneuver by an amphibious operation in the enemy's rear. The two members of the JCS, however, remained unpersuaded about Inchon. Other members of the JCS considered it "a reckless gamble" and were more concerned about the questionable capability of the UN forces to stop the rampaging North Koreans. The JCS also took seriously the possible communist pressure in Europe and the Middle East.³⁴⁾

Until the end of August General MacArthur was almost alone in favoring the risky Inchon landing operation. The JCS opposed it because of the concern about maintaining freedom of action elsewhere and avoiding a possible calamity. MacArthur's own staff members were not enthusiastic about the plan. Navy planners were worried about the narrow sea approaches and the huge tides on the west coast of Korea. They estimated a 23-foot minimum tide required before LSTs could come into Inchon beach, which meant they ought to land men and supplies a period of three hours, the interval between an incoming tide of 23 feet and an outgoing tide of that level. Marine officers did not favor the operation for the lack of time for landing and a two-mile-long silt belt at low tide. The entire staffs argued against the plan on the ground that the landing site was located too far from the supporting bases. General Walton H. Walker, the Commander of the 8th Army, fearing that his forces would be weakened to augment the landing forces, opposed. Walker argued that his forces would be overwhelmed by the North Korean if anything went wrong at Inchon. Also, MacArthur himself acknowledged all of these obstacles and assessed the Inchon operation as a 5000-to-1 risk. Nonetheless, he was convinced that all of these factors, which seemed insurmountable, would produce an essential element for success-- strategic surprise.³⁵⁾

Two members of the JCS, General Collins and Admiral Sherman, arrived in Tokyo on August 21 for a final "showdown" about the projected operation.

34) MacArthur: His Renuevzous with History, pp.342-3; Policy and Direction, pp.139-40; War in Peacetime, pp.114-8.

35) MacArthur, pp.345-50.

In fact, the most important debate on strategy in the Korean War was held in MacArthur's conference room on the 6th floor of the Dai Inhi Building at a around 5:30 P. M. on August 23, 1950. The participants included MacArthur, the two JCS members, and General Lemuel C. Shephard, the Commander of the Pacific Fleet Marine Force; General George E. Stratemeyer, MacArthur's Air Commander; the X Corps Commander designate and MacArthur's chief of staff, General Edward M. Almond; Admirals Arthur D. Struble, C. E. Turner Joy; and other staff officers and aides. While General MacArthur sat quietly, puffing on his conncob pipe, the Navy presented its case and pointed out the tide and terrain problems that would make the landing hazardous and dangerous. After the presentation, the Navy Chief Sherman summed up the briefing by saying, "If every possible geographical and naval handicap were listed... Inchon his 'em all." Other staff members enumerated all kinds of difficulties and handicaps... the landing time, mud belt, tide, logistical burdens, and risks involved. General Collins argued that Inchon was too far from UN-held areas to be supported effectively, and proposed a landing at Kunsan, 180 miles south of Inchon. Admiral Sherman sided with Collins. All eyes were upon General MacArthur, but he remained silent for a moment, smoking his pipe. Then, he started talking in a low voice. "The very arguments you have made as to the impracticabilities involved will tend to ensure for me the element of surprise, for the enemy commander will reason that no one would be so brash as to make such an attempt." "... Surprise is the most vital element for success in modern war." he continued, "If my estimate is inaccurate and should I run into a defense with I can not cope, I will be there personally and will immediately withdraw our forces before they are committed to a bloody setback. The only loss then will be my professional reputation." He concluded prophetically, "Inchon will not fail and it will save 100,000 lives." General MacArthur did not ask immediate approval, the two JCS members did not make any definite commitment, but Admiral Sherman murmured "A great voice in a great cause."

Despite the urgent demand for the information of the plan, the JCS did not know the details of the operation until a few hours before the first landing forces hit the beach. Finally, the JCS abandoned its objections to the landing plan and gave MacArthur a green light on September 8, 1950, one week before D-Day of

the actual landing on Inchon. General MacArthur had proceeded with preparations for his pet project without paying much attention to the JCS. Whenever the JCS demanded the information about the details of the plan, MacArthur said, "It is too important to be radioed. A responsible officer will be sent." Lieutenant Colonel Lynn D. Smith, the courier carrying the operations order for the landing operation, left Tokyo with MacArthur's injunction, "Don't get there too soon", ringing in his ears, and arrived in Washington at eleven o'clock on the evening of September 13. "If they say it is too big a gamble", MacArthur's special directive stipulated, "Tell them I said this is a throwing a nickle in the pot after it had been opened for a dollar. The big grmble was Washington's decision to put American troops on the Asiatic mainland."³⁶⁾ By the time Lt. Colonel had completed his presentation, it was too late for the JCS to cancel or even modify the details of the plan. The operation was well being under way.

There was no fundamental differnce between the JCS and General MacArthur in handling the Korean crisis. The members of the JCS and MacArthur found Korea to be an area of little strategic value and desired to withdraw U. S. troops as early as practicable after the cessation of actual fighting.³⁷⁾ Their paramount concern was to preserve American troops and prestige intact. Differences arose about how to carry out this goal without a "reckless gamble," whereas General MacArthur advocated hitting the enemy a decisive blow in his rear and thereby avoiding a war of attrition. The JCS acquiesed finally when confronted with the intransigence of the old General. It was his show. The subsequent dazzling success of the operation saved American prestige as one head of the bi-polar world system, and seemed to be able to solve a politicauly unsolvable issue--the Korean problem--militarily.

36) Lynn D. Smith, "A Nickel After A Dollar," Army(September, 1970), pp.25, 32-4; James F. Schnabel and Robert J. Watson, The Joint Chiefs of Staff and National Policy, vol, III: The Korean War(Historical Division, Joint Secretariat, JCS, 1979), p.315.

37) Memo by the JCS for the Secretary of Defense, September 7, 1950, FRUS, 1950, VII, p.707.

Safeguarding U. S. Troops First, Defending Japan Next

Armed with the JCS message that “We want you to feel unhampered tactically and strategically to proceed north of the 38th parallel,” General MacArthur, after issuing the surrender message to the Communists, launched a full-scale offensive operation across the parallel.³⁸⁾ The operation proceeded without much difficulties as if it had guaranteed the “October” optimism that Korea would soon be freed from the communist control without being plunged into a general war. Washington also took a stance of “let action determine the matter,” and informed MacArthur that “our government desires to avoid to make an issue of the 38th parallel until we have accomplished our mission of defeating the North Korean forces.”³⁹⁾ Furthermore, the United Nations, in spite of some questions of the U.S allies about the wisdom of crossing the 38th parallel, blessed the UN Commander with adopting an ambiguous resolution calling for the establishment of “conditions of stability” throughout Korea and thereby the creation of a unified, independent, and democratic government under UN auspices.⁴⁰⁾ General MacArthur, blessed from all the corners, launched a full-scale attack to end the war and bring American boys back home by Christmas, known as “Home by Christmas” offensive, on the morning of November 24, 1950, and, consequently, only in order to find the fact that the Communist Chinese had entered the fighting.

The Chinese intervention in full force in Korea, in fact, hastened the decision-making process in determining the issue of “how far is far enough.” Notably, the first reaction of Washington policymakers was that, as Dean Acheson later wrote, “our object is not ‘real estate’ but an army.”⁴¹⁾ At the NSC meeting (much larger than usual) on the afternoon of November 28, 1950, the participants agreed that holding a line on the military and diplomatic fronts was most crucial and that... over the situation stabilized... the United States should get out of Korea as

38) JCS to MacArthur, September 29, 1950, FRUS, 1950, VII, p.826; Truman, Memoirs, II, p.361.

39) JCS to MacArthur, October 1, 1950, RG 218, CCS 383. 21 Korea(3-19-45), sec., 34, NA.

40) Department of State, Bulletin, XXIII, pp.648-9; FRUS, 1950, VII, pp.904-6.

41) Acheson, The Korean War, p.69; Truman, Memoirs, II, pp.385-6; The JCS and National Security, III, pp.337-8.

promptly and gracefully as possible. After briefing about the military situation in Korea, General Bradley clearly argued against any preventive attacks across the Yalu River which divided Korea from Manchuria. Secretary of Defense George C. Marshall, who had replaced Secretary Johnson, expressed his opinion that the United States should get out of Korea with honor and without “getting sewed up” there. Secretary Acheson, too, stood with those who wanted to limit and terminate the American involvement in Korea, arguing against any air action over Manchuria unless it would be crucial to save American lives. According to Acheson, one imperative step was to find the line that the United States could hold and hold it. The participants raised no objection to the ideas put forward. Even under these circumstances, the JCS members opposed the possible utilization of Chiang Kai-shek’s forces for the political and diplomatic complications and combat in effectiveness as well.⁴²⁾

At this time of great frustration, President Truman held a news conference and touched on a very explosive issue—the possible use of the atomic bombs. He told the press about how the administration intended to handle the new situation: “We shall meet the new situation in three ways. We shall continue to work in the United Nations for concerted action to halt this aggression in Korea. We shall intensify our efforts to help other free nations strengthen their defenses in order to meet the threat of aggression elsewhere. We shall rapidly increase our own military strength.”⁴³⁾ When the President told the reporters that the government would take “whatever steps” necessary to meet the situation, one reporter asked if that would include the use of the atomic bombs. Truman replied, “That includes every weapon that we have.” Answering the follow-up question

42) Memo for the President, sub.: A Summary of the Discussion of the 73rd Meeting of the NSC, November 28, 1950, NSC Meetings, PSF, OF 471B(SF), Truman Papers; Memo of Conversation by Jessup, November 28, 1950, FRUS 1950, VII, pp.1242–9 and in Official Conversations and Meetings of Dean Acheson, UPA Microfilm, reel 3, pp.439–446; The JCS and National Policy, III, pp.337–44; For the view of one Three Service Secretaries, see, Memo for Defense Secretary, November 28, 1950, RG 330, CD 092 Korea 1950, NA; MacArthur to JCS, November 29, 1950, RG 218, CCS 383. 21 Korea(3–19–45) sec., 40, NA.

43) The New York Times, December 1, 1950; Truman, Memoirs, II, p.389.

asked, he indicated that there had been active consideration of the use of the atomic bombs, though he was reluctant to use it.⁴⁴⁾ The very fact that the American government had actively considered the use of the bomb without proper consultation with the British government alarmed the British Prime Minister and made him scurry over the Atlantic to register his objections.

Truman's military and civilian advisers held several meetings to find out the ways of coping with the situations in Korea and prepare for the meeting between President Truman and Prime Minister Clement Attlee. Military leaders argued about the necessity of total withdrawal from Korea. At one meeting, General Collins set forth his view that "Korea was not worth a nickel while the Russians hold Vladivostok and positions on the other flank."⁴⁵⁾ CIA Director Bedell Smith sided with Collins. Disturbed by this spectacle of complete withdrawal, Secretary Acheson, who hoped to find a solution short of complete withdrawal, inquired if it would be sufficient to obtain a cease-fire based on the status quo ante. The members of the JCS agreed to it. Almost imperceptibly, a policy was emerging.

Prime Minister Attlee's visit to Washington also accelerated the process. The outcome of the five-day-long conference from December 4 was a general confirmation of the American position. The two countries agreed not to appease nor reward aggression. Although the conferees agreed that a cease-fire and peaceful solution of the conflict would be desirable, if no peaceful solution could be secured, they confirmed that U. S. and British forces would fight on unless forced out of Korea. Since the American government was not prepared, the two sides disagreed to the issue of the Chinese representation in the United Nations. On the issue of the bomb, the British government finally accepted the statement of "hope" and "desire" that it would be properly informed of the possible change if there would be any. The two parties also agreed to enhance physical preparedness in order not to have another "big" war.⁴⁶⁾ Both parties acknowledged

44) The New York Times, December 1, 1950; Truman, pp.395-6

45) Memo of Conversation by Jessup, December 1, 1950, FRUS, 1950, VII, pp.1276-81; Notes Prepared by Rusk for Secretary Acheson, December 1, 1950, Official Meetings and Conversations of Acheson, UPA Microfilm, reel 3 pp.455-60.

46) US Delegation Minutes of the First Meeting of President Truman and Prime Minister Attlee, December 4, 1950, FRUS, 1950, VII, pp.1361-74; Memo of

the notion that the Korean problem could not be solved by military means alone.

The hope of unifying Korea by force that had been haunted in Washington and Tokyo since the dazzling success of the amphibious landing at Inchon was finally laid to rest. The military and political implications of “limited war” were emerging.

Based on what had been discussed and agreed in Washington, the JCS sent a directive to General MacArthur, fully stressing the paramount importance of safeguarding U. S. troops. Therefore, it instructed MacArthur to be prepared for a withdrawal to Japan, should UN forces be forced back to positions “in the vicinity of the Kum River and a line generally eastward therefrom.”⁴⁷⁾ In his response to the JCS directive, MacArthur suggested a crusade against Communism in Asia. He recommended the measures to “severely cripple and largely neutralize China’s capability to wage aggressive war and thus save Asia from the engulfment otherwise facing it,” which included a naval blockade of China, utilization of the Chinese Nationalist forces in Korea and against the Chinese mainland.⁴⁸⁾ Quite naturally, the JCS’s response to MacArthur’s proposal was negative. Instead of accepting the proposal the JCS ordered MacArthur as follows: “Defend in successive position..., inflicting maximum damage to hostile forces in Korea, subject to primary consideration of the safety of your troops and your basic mission of protecting Japan. Should it become evident in your judgment that evacuation is essential to avoid severe losses of men and material you will at that time withdraw from Korea to Japan.”⁴⁹⁾ The position of the JCS was succinctly clear: safeguarding American troops and defending Japan were the prime concern of the United States.

Conversation, December 4, 1950, Ibid., pp.1374–7; Minutes of the Second Meeting of President Truman and Prime Minister Attlee, December 5, 1950, Ibid., 1392–1408; Minutes of the Fifth Meeting of President Truman and Prime Minister Attlee, December 7, 1950, Ibid., pp.1449–61; Communiqué Issued at the Conclusion of the Truman–Attlee Discussions, undated, Ibid., pp.1476–9.

47) JCS to MacArthur, December 29, 1950, DoD Records, Truman Papers, Truman Library; FRUS, 1950, VI, pp.1625–6.

48) MacArthur to JCS, December 30, 1950, Ibid., pp.1630–3.

49) JCS to MacArthur, January 9, 1951, RG 218, CCS 381 Far East(11–28–50) sec., 2, NA.

While General MacArthur was debating with the JCS, General Matthew B. Ridgway, the new 8th Army Commander, had launched a limited attack, codenamed "Wolfhound," against an enemy concentration between Osan and Suwon, which set an example for the subsequent military operations. Having failed to locate any large enemy forces south of the Han River, Ridgway ordered a cautious penetration with I and IX Corps. This was named "Operation Thunderbolt," which was followed by another attack, "Operation Roundup, in the east by Almond's X Corps and the ROK II Corps. The 8th Army recaptured Seoul on March 15, 1951 through a series of sensible counteroffensive operations, and reached the 38th parallel by the end of March. Then, Ridgway established the Kansas-Wyoming line north of the parallel and reported to the JCS that, once his troops secured this line, he intended to conduct battalion-size operations in order to contact with the enemy.⁵⁰⁾ Thus, the battle-front was finally stabilized.

A stabilized diplomatic front in the United Nations was a bright promise, too. Peking's rejection of the UN proposal for a cease-fire and its full-scale offensive across the 38th parallel made easy American efforts to condemn the Chinese aggression. On January 20, U. S. Ambassador to the United Nations Warren Austin presented a draft resolution before the First Committee of the General Assembly, characterizing the Chinese action in Korea as an aggression and calling upon the UN members to refrain from assisting the aggressors in any way.⁵¹⁾ Congress stood firmly behind the US resolution. The British government also backed up the US move. Under these circumstances, on January 25, 1951, President Truman confidently proclaimed that he believed in "calling an aggressor an aggressor."⁵²⁾ After days of debate, the UN General Assembly adopted the US resolution. Communist China became another aggressor in Korea.

At this juncture, the American government intended to issue a presidential statement notifying the enemy of American preparedness to negotiate the satisfactory arrangements for a truce. But, this was replaced by, what President Truman termed, "a most extraordinary statement for a military commander of

50) War in Peacetime, p.268.

51) Text of US Resolution, Department of State, Bulletin, XXIV, pp.164-6.

52) The New York Times, January 26, 1951.

the United Nations.”⁵³⁾ Stressing the basic weakness of Red China, General MacArthur demanded that China avoid “immediate military collapse... without being burdened by extraneous matters,... such as Formosa or China’s seat in the United Nations.”⁵⁴⁾ Some observers dubbed this an ultimatum to the Communists. President Truman was furious at MacArthur’s “insubordination” and “defiance” of the presidential order of December 6, 1950 to refrain from issuing any statement on American foreign policy. The disclosure of General MacArthur’s letter to Joseph W. Martin, Jr., the minority leader of the House, on April 5, 1951, which concluded with a rather contentious phrase-- “There is no substitute for victory” -- was the trigger in a series of events that led to firing MacArthur. MacArthur’s concept was directly contradictory to the President’s view that “There is a right kind and a wrong kind of victory.”⁵⁵⁾

The infighting between, what the two called each other, “a temporary occupant of the White House” and “a recalcitrant and insubordinate soldier” ended in the latter’s defeat. The dismissal of General Douglas MacArthur typified a direct clash between the two uncompromising concepts on war and victory. President Truman and his advisers judged that a war with the the “second team,” while the first team-- the Soviet Union-- remained untouched, would not contribute to American prestige in a worldwide conflict with the Communists. European allies had insisted and were insisting on “enough is enough” General MacArthur, who had been trained to espouse the traditional military concept, “In war, there is no substitute for victory,” and who had orchestrated American war efforts in the Pacific with the concept of “unconditional surrender,” on the other hand, could not and did not accept the notion of protracted fighting without a clear-cut military victory. Personal rivalry between the two domineering figures made the collision sour further.

53) Presidential Statement Planned re UN Prepared to Discuss Conditions of Settlement in Korea, March 19, 1951, Selected Records Relating to the Korean War, DoD, Truman Papers, Truman Library; Truman, Memoirs, II, pp.439–41

54) Text, MacArthur Hearings, pp.3541–2; Truman, Memoirs, II, pp.440–1.

55) Truman, Memoirs, II, pp.446.

For the first time since the unwelcome Chinese intervention, however, the U.S. government achieved relative stability on the three fronts: the battlefield through a series of determined and sensible counterattacks by the UN forces; the diplomatic front in the United Nations by castigating Communist China as an aggressor; and the Tokyo front by appointing a new military commander--General Matthew B. Ridgway -- who was quite amenable to Washington's direction. The JCS and their colleagues were prepared to find an "honorable" solution to the problem of Korea without being impaired the safety of American troops and the defense of Japan.

There Was A Substitute for Victory

In the hearings before the Senate Armed Service Committee and the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations on May 15, 1951, General Omar N. Bradley, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, remarked that even a "limited war" with Communist China "would involve us in the wrong war, at the wrong place, at the wrong time, and with the wrong enemy." Then, he presented a "military" definition on the nature of appeasement:

Some critics of our strategy say if we do not immediately bomb troop concentration points and airfields in Manchuria, it is "appeasement." If we do not immediately set up a blockade of Chinese ports--it is "appeasement." These some critics would say that if we do not provide the logistical support and air and naval assistance to launch Chinese Nationalist troops into China, it is "appeasement."

These critics ignore the vital questions: Will these actions, if taken, actually assure victory in Korea? Do these actions mean prolongation of the war by bringing Russia into the fight? Will these actions strip us of our allies in Korea and in other parts of the world?

From a military viewpoint, appeasement occurs when you give up something, which is rightfully free, to an aggressor without putting up a struggle, or making him pay a price. Forsaking Korea--withdrawing from the fight unless we are forced out-- would be an appeasement to aggression. Refusing to enlarge the quarrel to the point where our global capacities are diminished, is certainly not appeasement but is a militarily sound course of action under the present circumstances.⁵⁶⁾

56) Statement by General Bradley before the Senate Armed Service and Foreign Relations Committees, RG 218, General Bradley's Files(1951), NA; MacArthur Hearings, pt. II, pp.731-2.

Clearly, this statement revealed the basic stance of the JCS's strategy.

Based on NSC-48/5, a comprehensive analysis about U. S. objectives, policies, and courses of action in Asia, the JCS placed specific restrictions on Ridgway's authority. He could not withdraw UN troops from Korea unless the JCS ordered in case of the Russian attack against Japan. The JCS, for the first time, explicitly limited the advance of UN forces beyond the Kansas-Wyoming line without prior approval, fearing that the enemy might not accept a cease-fire if the military balance remained destabilized. No preventive action against concentrations in the Chinese mainland without the approval from the President was permitted. The JCS instructed that the international boundaries between Korea and Manchuria and the Soviet Union should not be violated.⁵⁷⁾ Because there was no possibility to count on other troops outside Korea for the defense of Japan, Ridgway was authorized to utilize the atomic bomb for the mission. But the JCS specially cautioned not to leak the plan to non-US personnel and not to implement the plan without prior permission.⁵⁸⁾

Now, the political objectives, military strategy and tactics to pursue in the Korean War were set. The chief political objective was to stop aggression while leaving the unification of Korea to time and future political negotiations. Military strategy was not so dramatic--to hold the Kansas-Wyoming line until the enemy accepted an honorable cease-fire. The tactical aim was to inflict maximum damage upon the enemy by an effective utilization of the superior fire-power of the UN Command wherever and whenever feasible within the Korean peninsula. There was to be little regard to holding terrain. One remaining problem, however was how to manage the casualties in this protracted and grinding fighting with a tough, unyielding, unattractive enemy, so called, "volunteers" of Communist China and the North Korean troops.

Three possible ways were feasible to meet the demands. Of course, the best way was to increase U. S. personnel fighting in Korea. But there were

57) JCS to Ridgway, May 31, 1951, RG 218, CCS 383. 21 Korea(3-19-45), sec., 49, NA.

58) JCS to Ridgway June 1, 1951, *Ibid.*: JCS to Ridgway, July 11, 1951, RG 218, CCS 381 Far East(11-28-50), sec., 7, NA.

psychological reluctance and practical limitation. One way was the arrangement for the expansion of South Korean units. Generals Ridgway and Van Fleet, the new 8th Army Commander, recommended against the expansion, pointing out that "the basic problems with ROK Army are leadership and training: not manpower or equipment," and that "lack of leadership extends throughout in rare instances."⁵⁹ The expansion of the South Korean Army had to be postponed until it could develop satisfactory leadership. Another way to strengthen the UN forces was to increase the various national contingents in Korea. The field commanders wanted a regimental combat team(RCT) or brigade-size units with self supporting units. The JCS accepted this view and referred it to the State Department for guidance. Being concerned about not jeopardizing the defense of Europe, the JCS considered the Latin American countries as the most promising source of substantial contributions, especially, Mexico, Argentina, and Brazil.⁶⁰ For the JCS, however, the best way not only to solve this immediate demand but also to strengthen the defense capabilities of the Western World was to reach an agreement for a cease-fire in Korea, an honorable one if possible.

Another important contingent plan of the JCS was where and how to shift the South Korean evacuees possible in case of an emergency withdrawal of UN forces from Korea. Because of the possible detrimental effects on the morale of the South Korean forces the plan was kept secret. The military estimated 750,000 South Koreans would be relocated. During the discussion State and defense representatives considered the United States, Hawaii, the Philippines, Okinawa, the Marianas, and Quelpart Island as possible places for the evacuees. After a lengthy discussion, they concluded that all the proposed places were unsuitable for one reason or another. The continental United States was excluded because of the magnitude of the evacuation and the fact that the problem was basically a UN issue. Hawaii was put aside for the same reason. The Philippines was not recommended for the lack of ethnic similarity. Other places were ruled out for

59) Van Fleet and Ridgway to JCS, April 28, 1951, RG 218, CCS 383. 21 Korea (3-19-45), sec., 48, NA; Truman, p.455.

60) Memo by the JCS for Secretary of Defense, June 8, 1951, RG 218, CCS 383. 21 Korea(3-19-45), sec., 49; Memo for Secretary of Defense, June 28, 1951, the same file, sec., 50, NA.

their military use. Thus, all sites were judged to be unsuitable for the reasons mentioned⁶¹⁾ The final version of the plan approved by the NSC and sent to Ridgway by the JCS projected Cheju-do, Japan, the Ryukyus (less Okinawa for military reasons), and Formosa as suitable areas for South Korean evacuees. That act raised the possibility of creating another Formosa proximate to Formosa or the two governments-in-exile on Formosa in case of the forced withdrawal of UN forces from Korea.⁶²⁾

By the spring of 1951, Washington appeared to agree that the Korean problems could not be solved by military means alone but should be solved by political negotiations if possible. The civilian and military leaders accepted an honorable armistice along the 38th parallel as a viable solution for the Korean issue. UN diplomats dropped the idea of unifying Korea by military means and maintained the unification issue as a wishful political objective to be achieved sometime in the future. Too, the allies of the United States strongly desired to end American involvement in Korea so that the United States should not lose its freedom of action for the defense of Europe, they saw, strategically crucial area. Only the South Koreans buoyed by their own President Syng-man Rhee opposed any settlement short of completing the unification of Korea. But their outcry was fully ignored as a presumptuous attitude. The remaining problem was how and where to start the negotiations for a cease-fire.

* * *

After several abortive attempts in early May, 1951, the U. S. government made a successful contact for a cease-fire talks through George F. Kennan who was then on leave from the State Department and working at Princeton. At the request of Secretary of State Acheson, Kennan wrote a longhand note to Jacob Malik, Deputy Foreign Commissar of the Soviet Union and Soviet Delegate to the United Nations, expressing his desire to see Malik. On June 1, the two diplomats discussed the possible ways to solve the Korean problem at Malik's summer house

61) Memo by W. G. Lalor, the Secretary of the JCS, for the JSPC, sub.:
Evacuation of ROK Personnel from Korea, June 15, 1951, RG 218, CCS 383.21
Korea(3-19-45), sec., 50, NA.

62) JCS Decision on Evacuation of ROK Personnel from Korea, February 4,
1951, RG 218 CCS 383.21 Korea(3-19-45), sec., 81, NA.

on Long Island. Unable to give an outright answer to the possibility to solve the problem by political means, Malik arranged another meeting on June 5. When they met again, Malik told Kennan that the Soviet Union also desired a peaceful settlement in Korea as soon as possible. He also advised that the United States should approach the North Koreans and the Chinese, since the Soviet Union would not participate in the discussions of a cease-fire.⁶³⁾

The result of this secret meeting was disclosed when Malik delivered his speech on the UN radio on June 23, 1951, suggesting that the belligerents should start discussions for an armistice providing for mutual withdrawal from the 38th parallel.⁶⁴⁾ The U. S. Ambassador to the Soviet Union, Alan G. Kirk, confirmed it the position of the Soviet government. The Peking newspaper People's Daily endorsed the proposal as a constructive way to restore peace in Korea.⁶⁵⁾ The remaining problem was how, by what channel, and at what level the talks should be initiated.

Civilian and military planners in Washington met to discuss how to initiate and conduct negotiations with the Communists. The position of the State Department was to have negotiations at the military level as the Soviet government had suggested. The JCS, however, was somewhat reluctant to assume the responsibility for the talks and the post-armistice events. Especially, General Vandenberg, the Air Force Chief, argued that the burden of initiating the talks should be imposed on the enemy by penalizing him more severely. Assistant Secretary of State Rusk supported the idea that the talks at the military level would be highly desirable to exclude the thorny political issues such as the status of Formosa and the Chinese representation in the United Nations. General Bradley and General Collins acquiesced in Rusk's proposal. It was also accepted that General Ridgway should broadcast a message to enemy commanders to initiate the discussions for a cease-fire.⁶⁶⁾

63) George F. Kennan, Memoirs, II, 1950-1963 (Boston, Toronto: Little Brown and Co., 1972), pp.36-7; Present at the Creation, pp.532-3; The Korean War pp.120-1.

64) Department of State, Bulletin, XXV, p.45.

65) Truman, Memnirs, II, p.456.

66) Acheson, The Korean War, p.121; Present at the Creation, pp.533-4; The JCS and National Policy, III, p.566.

As directed, Ridgway broadcast the message calling for a meeting to discuss an armistice on June 30.⁶⁷⁾ The response of the Communists was very quick. On July 1, Peking radio broadcast a joint message from the North Korean and Chinese Commanders in Korea that they agreed to stop the fighting and hold the talks. They set Kaesong as the place of meeting between July 10 and 15, 1951.⁶⁸⁾ On July 3, Ridgway notified the enemy commanders that he was prepared to have his representatives meet their counterparts at Kaesong on July 10, or at any early practical date. The Communists accepted the proposal and set July 8 as the date for the liaison officers' meeting.⁶⁹⁾ After two days of stage setting, the two delegations met at Kaesong on July 10, 1951. This first meeting, in fact, rang down the curtain on the war of movement, adding one more front to the fighting in Korea. A full year of bitter fighting had served only to bring the two opposing forces into balance with slight change to the status quo ante. Thus, began what could be called Ridgway's ordeal.

Basic strategy of the JCS was the use of military actions in order to achieve an honorable truce in Korea. Whenever the Communists indicated recalcitrance or used dilatory tactics, the JCS decided to direct Ridgway to intensify and increase the scale of military actions in Korea. The JCS also enumerated many retaliatory measures in case of the failure of reaching an armistice: preparations for general war on relatively short notice; removal of all restrictions against the attacks on Najin, the Yalu River dams and the power installations; advancing to the neck of the North Korean peninsula; the support of Chiang's troops for subversive operations in China; a naval blockade of Communist China; covert assistance for recovering China by the Chinese Nationalists; indiscriminate attacks on any targets in China; and so on.⁷⁰⁾ In fact, the desire of the JCS for a cease-fire and the termination of U. S. involvement in Korea was so great that the Joint Chiefs were compelled,

67) JCS to Ridgway, June 28, 1951, RG 218, CJCS 091 Korea(1951), NA; Truman, p.458; The JCS and National Policy, III, p.568.

68) Ridgway to JCS, July 2, 1951, RG 218, CCS 383. 21 Korea (3-19-45), sec., 51, NA.

69) Ridgway to JCS, July 5, 1951, Ibid.

70) Memo for Secrets Course of Action in Korea, July 12, 1951, RG 218, CCS 383.21 Korea(3-19-45), sec., 53, NA.

ironically, to explore listing many retaliatory military measures to achieve the goal.

After a lengthy wrangling over whether the evacuation issue of foreign troops on the agenda, the two sides finally agreed to the agenda on July 26.

The agreed agenda was:

1. Adoption of agenda
2. Fixing a military demarcation line, between both sides so as to establish a demilitarized zone as a basic condition for a cessation of hostilities in Korea.
3. Concrete arrangements for the realization of cease-fire and armistice in Korea, including the composition, authority and functions of a supervising organization for carrying out the terms of a cease-fire and armistice.
4. Arrangements relating to prisoners of war.
5. Recommendations to the governments of countries concerned on both sides.⁷¹⁾

The 10th meeting of the delegations represented quite significant progress. Being still uncertain about the Communists' sincerity, Washington was somewhat surprised at this "earlier than expected" compliance to UN agenda.

The meeting of the two delegations at Panmunjom on October 25, 1951, after two months of deadlock, opened a tortuous road toward an armistice. The eagerness of the sponsors of the two Korean regimes and the mutual recognition that neither side could accomplish its aims by military means, however, made inevitable some form of compromise. Finally, the two delegations accepted the principle that the battle line, not the 38th parallel, would be a military demarcation line with a demilitarized zone of four kilometers. On November 27, 1951 both parties agreed to a provisional demarcation line with a thirtyday period of grace, and a do facto cease-fire was actually established. Since neither side questioned officially about the problem of extension after the period, this de facto truce continued under a tacit agreement not to provoke each other.⁷²⁾ This agreement on fixing a demarcation line by the two sides, even if agreed on a provisional basis, totally eliminated the two possible outcomes. It was no longer conceivable that the UN troops would be pushed out of Korea. There was equally slim prospect of the

71) Ridgway to JCS, July 26, 1951, Ibid., sec., 55, NA; The New York Times, July 27, 1951; War in Peacetime, pp.330-1

72) UNC Korean Armistice Negotiations, pt. II ch, 1, pp.84-5, RG 218, NA; The JCS and National Policy, III pp.621-2.

Communists being pushed up to the Yalu River.' The Korean War thus entered into a new stage, that a "mutally recognized" stalemate.

With regard to the concrete arrangements for implementing a viable cease-fire, the issue of the rehabilitation of military facilities, especially, the airfields, was a stumbling block for an agreement. Notably, President Truman argued strongly against allowing rehabilitation of military installations, particularly, airfields, insisting that the United Nations had expended lives, tons of bombs, and a large amount of equipments to bring the Communists to terms, and that they had given tough resistance even with these facilities in crippled condition.⁷³⁾ The Communists argued that whether military facilities should be rehabilitated was not a matter of negotiations but a matter of national sovereignty. Finally, civilian and military advisers persuaded the President to accept the notion that any such prohibition would work both ways and thereby prevent needed rehabilitation in South Korea to which the United States had already committed itself.⁷⁴⁾ Instead, the advisers suggested the option to deter the communists by proclaiming the "greater sanction" announcement of the United Nations members then participating in the war: "Should aggression be committed again in Korea, the consequences would be so great that it would, in all probability, not be possible to confine hostilities within the frontiers of Korea."⁷⁵⁾ United Nations Command(UNC) representatives and the Communists finally agreed to the measures to implement a truce by abandoning UNC's insistence on the restriction issue and Communist tenacity on the Soviet membership in the Neutral Supervisory Commission(NNSC) on May 2, 1952.⁷⁶⁾ Since the two sides had agreed to the provision of withdrawai of foreign troops to be included in item 5 on February 6, 1952, the only obstacle to the conclusion of an armistice was the question of "forced" versus "voluntary" repatriation of war prisoners, which in fact extended the fighting over a year.

73) Truman to JCS, December 8, 1951, declassified by the JCS under the FOIA Case No., 8102237.

74) JCS to Truman, December 8, 1951, Ibid.

75) Anthorny Eden, Full Circle(Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1960), pp.17–20.

76) Ridgway to JCS, May 2, 1952, RG 218, CCS 383.21 Korea(3–19–45), sec., 96, NA.

A complex issue was the prisoner-of-war problem. Brigadier General Robert A. Mclure, the Army's Chief of Psychological Warfare, suggested the idea of "voluntary repatriation" in exchanging the POWs, arguing that ex-Nationalist Chinese and South Koreans who had been impressed into the Communist forces and later captured by the UNC should not be sent to the Communist camp against their will.⁷⁷⁾ The JCS was inclined to favor the voluntary repatriation idea. Faced with the oppositions from Ridgway and Secretary Acheson for the reason that the proposed idea might hamper the prompt return of UN and South Korean prisoners after the signing of the armistice, the JCS agreed to Acheson's suggestion to use a parole program of the Geneva Convention, under which those who had rendered "outstanding assistance" to the UNC and thus whose return would result in their deaths would be paroled and released from the POW status before signing the armistice.⁷⁸⁾ President Truman was strongly against any ideas short of "voluntary repatriation," proclaiming that "We will not buy an armistice by turning over human beings for slaughter or slavery."⁷⁹⁾

President Dwight D. Eisenhower also supported the idea of non-forced exchange of the prisoners of war, and, too, members of the United Nations generally did. Finally, the Communists abandoned their insistence on all-for-all forced exchange of the war prisoners. On June 8, 1953, the two parties agreed to the terms on the repatriation issue and the establishment of the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission (NNRC) to facilitate the process of exchange.⁸⁰⁾ In fact, the United States won the "ideological" battle over the issue of human rights versus legal rights. No obstacles remained for signing a truce agreement, except the South Korean opposition to the arrangements.

Anyhow, there was a substitute for victory.

77) Collins to JCS, sub.: Policy on Repatriation of Chinese and North Korean Prisoners, July 6, 1951, RG 218, CCS 000, 5(5-12-49), sec., 1, NA.

78) Letter, Acheson to Marshall, August 27, 1951, declassified by the State Department(2-17-82) under the FOIA Case No. 8102237.

79) Public Papers of the President of the United States, Harry S. Truman, 1952-1953, pp.321-2; Truman, p.460; The New York Times, May 8, 1952.

80) JCS to Clark, May 8, 1953, RG 218, CCS 383.21 Korea(3-19-45), sec., 128, NA.

To Save the Amistice: Plan “Ever Ready” and Bilateral Security Pact

In order to secure this arrangement, however, the United States had to overcome one final serious obstacle--the South Koreans' opposition to the armistice. Almost all South Koreans were mobilized in opposing an armistice which failed to unify Korea. President Syngman Rhee of South Korea was the champion of the anti-truce movement in South Korea. Rhee had warned that he and his people could not accept any truce that did not guarantee complete withdrawal of Chinese forces from Korea, complete disarmament of North Korea, UN guarantee of help for South Korea and prevention of any outside assistance for North Korea, South Korean participation in any political conference for the Korean problem, and preservation of the sovereign and territorial integrity of Korea.⁸¹⁾ After General Mark W. Clark, the new UN Commander, met President Rhee on May 12, 1953, Clark reported to Washington that “he[President Rhee] is bargaining now to get a security pact, to obtain more economic aid, and to make his people feel he is having a voice in the armistice negotiation.”⁸²⁾

Feeling that U. S. withdrawal from Korea in 1949 and the subsequent tepid attitude might have provoked the Communist adventure in Korea, President Rhee wanted to secure a definite U. S. commitment to the defense of South Korea. President Rhee made this succinctly clear when he met Clark and U. S. Ambassador Ellis O. Briggs, who had recently succeeded Ambassador John J. Muccio, on May 25. The two US officials tried to assure the old President that the United States would support him militarily, economically, and politically, should he cooperate in implementing the armistice agreement. They informed the President that a bilateral security treaty was undesirable, because it would “weaken” the “greater sanctions” proclamation to be issued by the UN members and the international character of the effort in Korea. “I am deeply disappointed” was Rhee's first comment. “Koreans will never accept the new terms,” President Rhee then said, “You can withdraw all UN forces, all economic aid. We will decide

81) UNC Korean Armistice Negotiations, p. IV, pp.5–7, RG 218, NA.

82) The JCS and National Policy, III, p.987.

our own fate. We do not ask anyone to fight for us. We made our mistakes perhaps in the beginning in relying upon democracy to assist us. Sorry, but I can not assure President Eisenhower of my cooperation under the present circumstances.”⁸³⁾ Alarmed about this situation, Clark cautioned the JCS that President Rhee might release the anti-Communist prisoners without warning.⁸⁴⁾

For the worst contingency, the 8th Army had prepared “Plan Everready.” The plan envisioned three contingency situations as follows: Condition I-- “ROK troops, while not overtly hostile, are not responsive to UN directives,” Condition II-- “ROK government and military units proceed along independent course of action,” Condition III-- “ROK government, military units or people are overtly hostile to UN troops.” Under Condition I and II, precautionary measures were to be taken, including disloyal ROK units and restricting civilian and military movements. Under Condition III, however, the 8th Army planned to execute a military coup d’etat against South Korea--a proclamation of martial law in the name of the UN and seizure of dissident military and civilian leaders--in order to secure the armistice.⁸⁵⁾

These alarming developments in Korea received immediate political consideration in Washington and produced a result. On May 30, State and Defense officials, including the two Secretaries and the JCS members, met in the office of Secretary of State and decided to recommend to the President that the United States would enter into a mutual defense treaty with South Korea, similar to the ANZUS and the one with the Philippines. Next day, President Eisenhower approved the recommendation.⁸⁶⁾

A US-ROK defense treaty first and an armistice next was the basic aim of President Rhee. After the two delegations reached an agreement on a newly revised demarcation line on June 17, 1953, President Rhee released thousands of Korean prisoners. The President promptly and frankly admitted his complicity in

83) Ibid., p.989; Clark to JCS, May 26, 1953, RG 218, CCS 383.21 Korea (3-19-45), sec., 128, NA.

84) Ibid.

85) Outline Plan “Ever Ready,” by Eighth Army, May 4, 1953, RG 218, CCS 383.21 Korea(3-19-45), sec., 130, NA.

86) Memo for Record, by Major General C. D. Eddleman, “Conference on the Current Difficulties with the ROK Government to Their Dissatisfaction with Armistice Terms,” RG 218, CCS 383.21 Korea(3-19-45), sec., 130, NA.

the event, issuing the statement that he had ordered the release of the anti-Communist Korean prisoners.⁸⁷ “Communism is still our principal enemy in Korea” was President Eisenhower’s response to this “presumptuous” action of President Rhee based on Rhee’s, what Eisenhower called, “suicidal strategy.”⁸⁸ In a sense, however, the Rhee’s “unpredictable” and “obstructive” action ensured U.S. victory in the battle for principle.

After more than two years of frustrating and bitter negotiations, it took only twelve minutes for the two chief delegates to finish the signing of the armistice documents. At 10 o’clock on the morning of July 27, 1953, the two entered the place and began to sign the documents in a “business-like manner.” When they completed the signing of eighteen copies of the Armistice agreements and eighteen supplementary agreements, twelve each in English, Chinese, and Korean, at twelve minutes after 10 o’clock, the two glanced at each other for a moment and departed simultaneously. Cold silence was the order of the day. All military actions in Korea and the surrounding waters halted at 2200 on July 27, 1953. The Korean War, after the bitter fighting with slight change, was thus ended, and an “uneasy quiet spread over unhappy Korea,” as the former Secretary of State, Dean G. Acheson, later observed.⁸⁹

The newly revised plan “Ever Ready” and the Mutual Defense Treaty between the United States and the Republic of Korea--initialled in Seoul on August 8, 1953, signed in Washington on October 1, 1953, and ratified by the South Korean National Assembly on January 15, 1954 and by the U. S. Senate on January 26, 1954--became the two measures to save the hardly won armistice. At last, the United States assumed unilateral responsibility for the security of South Korea, an obligation which it had been reluctant to accept ever since its temporary occupation after the Pacific War of 1941–1945.

87) UNC Korean Armistice Negotiations, pt. IV, p.237, RG 218, NA; The New York Times, June 18, 1953.

88) Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting, June 19, 1953, Cabinet Meetings, Ann Whitman File; Legislative Leadership Meeting, June 24, 1953, Legislative Meetings File, Dwight D. Eisenhower Papers, Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas, U. S. A.

89) The Korean War, p.150.

Epilogue

The Korean War of 1950–1953 has been defined in terms of a “limited war” in the total-war age. When the North Korean Army and border constabulary invaded South Korea on the early morning of June 25, 1950, the JCS accepted the idea of “do something,” but tried to recover the status quo ante-bellum by air and sea actions and was not enthusiastic about dispatching American ground troops to Korea which it had considered an area of little strategic importance in the light of U. S. world-wide commitment. Always, being concerned about the possible escalation of the war into a direct clash with the Soviet Union and the possible loss of freedom of action in Europe, the JCS imposed the various restrictions on the field commanders in order to confine the fighting within Korea and thereby prevent the conflict from becoming *casus belli* for another catastrophe. The members of the JCS were therefore opposed to General MacArthur’s dramatic way of conducting the fighting. After the Chinese Communists entered the scene with their so-called “volunteers,” “the JCS contemplated seriously total withdrawal from Korea, at least, temporarily, while emphasizing the importance of defending Japan for the security of the United States. The JCS finally accepted a notion of “no-win” strategy: an honorable cease-fire for military victory. When the Eisenhower administration was forced to grant a security pact to President Rhee of South Korea in order to save the armistice, the JCS justified the step on the basis that, although U. S. possession of the bases in South Korea was not significant to the American security interests in the Far East, the enemy’s fortification of those would constitute a severe threat to the defense of Japan. In this regard, the JCS was fully responsible for coining the term: “limited war” in the nuclear age. Too, the Korean War may be treated as an example of how a local war in the nuclear age could be fought and ended.