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MAUCK, KENNETH R.
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THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA, PH.D., 1978

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GRADUATE COLLEGE

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A DISSERTATION

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in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

KENNETH R. MAUCK

Norman, Oklahoma

1978

THE FORMATION OF AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY IN KOREA, 1945-1953

APPROVED BY

Russell D. Buhite

Dwayne Mamos

Henry J. Tobias

Sidney D. Brown

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

THE FORMATION OF AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY IN KOREA, 1945-1953

BY: KENNETH R. MAUCK

MAJOR PROFESSOR: RUSSELL D. BUHITE, Ph.D.

This study is intended to explore, at the highest levels of the U.S. government, the formation of U.S. policy toward Korea in the 1945-1953 period, which resulted in a bilateral security pact that is still in effect today.

The U.S. involvement in Korea grew out of a deeper commitment to Asian affairs in the immediate post-WW II period. Initially hoping for a united, democratic Korea, established under Atlantic Charter principles, the United States saw what was at best an ambiguous Russian-American agreement flounder under the burden of increasing Soviet-American tensions and suspicions. Suffering from inadequate resources to meet its worldwide obligations, the United States turned to the United Nations to solve the problem. Continued inability to agree with the Soviet Union led to an altered plan, which established a separate South Korean government in 1948.

The Republic of Korea had a very ambivalent place in the U.S. security system, as the State Department, the Defense Department, and American Military Government in South Korea, differed over the best policy to follow. The result of this conflict was the decision, which the military favored,

to withdraw U.S. troops from Korea in 1949, with U.S. aid and the moral force of the United Nations involvement in the creation of the Republic of Korea designed to ensure its security.

With the onset of the Korea War, the U.S. commitment to South Korea's continued existence, which had been clearly outlined in 1949-1950, was given substance as the United States intervened in order to maintain its credibility both in Asia and in the world. The initial U.S. commitment of June 25, 1950, to restorce peace, was altered, after intense debate in Washington, to the goal of unifying all of Korea. The bureaucratic consensus reached in this matter, which military success determined, was altered quickly when the People's Republic of China intervened in December, 1950. The U.S. commitment was now to the Republic of Korea's survival. The period leading up to the signing of an armistice and then a bilateral security pact, was a complex and often bitter one, that threatened to degenerate into a U.S.-led coup against Syngman Rhee.

This study explores in detail the process which eventually led the United States to commit itself to the Republic of Korea's continued existence.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

		Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS		iii
INTRODUCTION		1
Chapter		
I.	THE INITIAL U.S. COMMITMENT IN KOREA	4
II.	TRUSTEESHIP AND THE MOSCOW AGREEMENT	28
III.	TRUSTEESHIP AND THE SOVIET-AMERICAN JOINT COMMISSION	57
IV.	THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE AMERICAN DECISION TO WITHDRAW FROM KOREA	90
V.	THE CREATION OF THE REPUBLIC KOREA AND U.S. WITHDRAWAL	118
VI.	THE UNWRITTEN COMMITMENT TO SOUTH KOREA, 1949-1950	146
VII.	INTERVENTION IN THE KOREAN WAR	182
VIII.	THE DECISION TO UNIFY KOREA: THE DEBATE OVER CROSSING THE 38TH PARALLEL	209
IX.	THE 38TH PARALLEL BREACHED AND CHINESE INTERVENTION	240
X.	THE AMERICAN COMMITMENT IS ALTERED	286
XI.	THE UNITED STATES SEEKS A CEASE-FIRE	315
XII.	THE ARMISTICE ACHIEVED	348
XIII.	CREATION OF A BILATERAL SECURITY PACT	373
CONCLUSIONS		402
BIBLIOGRAPHY		413

INTRODUCTION

The involvement of the United States in the Korean War has been cited correctly as an extremely critical event in the formation of American foreign policy in the postwar period. It had the effect of insuring that Sino-American relations would remain almost nonexistent; it accelerated both the trend toward integrating Germany into the Western European defense system, and the decision to conclude a peace treaty with Japan and to rearm that country; it gave credence to the theories expressed in NSC 68 about Soviet intentions and insured its adoption, and concurrent with it, massively increased defense expenditures; and finally, it set a precedent for American involvement in a land war on the Asian continent that later would affect, to a degree, the U.S. decision to commit troops to South Vietnam. While the Korean War had all of these effects, prior to 1945 the United States had at best a very minor interest in Korea. With the onset of World War II, the United States inevitably became involved in this major Japanese "colony", though Korea did not become an important consideration until near the end of the war.

The purpose of this study is to trace the formation of U.S. policy toward Korea from the time of America's commit

ment in 1943 to the establishment of a free, independent, unified Korea, through the period of joint Soviet-American plans in 1945-1947 for a trusteeship for Korea, through U.S. efforts in 1947 to establish under the auspices of the United Nations a national state in South Korea, through the decision in 1947-1949 to withdraw American troops from Korea on the basis of U.S. strategic interests with the possible result that eventually the communists would dominate all of Korea, through the formation of the groundwork that led the United States to re-enter South Korea in 1950 on the basis of U.S. strategic interests, and finally through the signing in 1953 of a bilateral security pact that insured a prominent place for the Republic of Korea in the American security system.

This study will concern itself primarily with policy formation at the highest levels of the U.S. Government. Answers will be sought to such questions as where policy making responsibility lay and what the key influences were in the decision-making process, and whether the relative importance of policy influences shifted. In answering these questions, the major emphasis will be on interdepartmental discussions, though certain intradepartmental conflicts will be examined.

This study is not intended to tell a detailed story of the Cold War or of Korea's internal history from 1945 to 1953. Yet it is obvious that the events of the Cold War (for example the Truman Doctrine, the fall of China, or

George Kennan's lengthy telegram from Moscow in 1946) had direct influence on policy formation. These events, as well as internal events in Korea, will be discussed, however, only to place the decision-making process in its proper context. In addition, this study is not designed to delineate what policy the United States should have followed or what perceptions that United States ought to have had. While at some points such judgments are made, they are very secondary to the purpose of this study.

One problem that developed in preparation of this study was that the absence of relevant documents stymied attempts to tell the full story or to reach definite conclusions on certain subjects. From the 1951-1953 period, most State Department documents will not be available until 1979-1980. There were, however, substantial numbers of Joint Chiefs of Staff and other military documents available for this period. Enough documents have been released to fill in substantial gaps that have existed in the story of U.S. involvement in Korea, especially in the 1950 period and to a lesser extent for the 1951-1953 period.

THE FORMATION OF AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY IN KOREA, 1945-1953

CHAPTER I

THE INITIAL U.S. COMMITMENT IN KOREA

Korea, the Land of the Morning Calm, has had a history that belies its name. Particularly in the 19th and 20th century, Korea was the plaything of its stronger neighbors. As early as 600 A.D., however, it was subject to the attacks of its powerful neighbor, China. Continued depredations over ten centuries led the Korean people tc realize the hopelessness of defending their borders militarily. Thus in the aftermath of the Manchu invasions of 1627 and 1636, Korea adopted a policy of isolation, except that China, in exchange for Korea's acknowledgement of the suzerainty of the Middle Kingdom, would provide protection.[1]

China's decline as a formidable power was exposed during the Opium War. Her obvious inability to provide protection opened Korea to a renewed influx of outside influences. Two other powers showed a special interest in Korea because of its geographic location and year-round harbor

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[1]Gregory Henderson, Korea: The Politics of the Vortex(Cambridge: Harvard Press, 1968), 14-15.

facilities. The two countries, Russia and Japan, emerged as major Asiatic powers in the 19th century, and from the 1870s until the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-5, they vied for ascendancy in Korea. Annexation of Korea in 1910, as a colony, followed Japan's victory over Russia; Korea as an international state ceased to exist.[2]

Japan's generally recognized domination of Korea did not dim the sense of Korean nationalism, for "Korea has one of the longest traditions of unity within approximately the same borders of any nation in the present world." A cultural homogeneity of an exceptional degree existed along with this tradition of unity. These factors worked to create, despite Japanese annexation, an unshakable sense of nationalism.[3]

Exiled Koreans organized themselves with the goal of re-establishing a Korean national state. In 1919, 33 liberal leaders published the "Proclamation of Korean Independence." In the same year, the Korean Provisional Government was established in Shanghai with Syngman Rhee as president.[4] The establishment of a newspaper, a military

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[2]U.S. Department of the Army, Korea--1950 (Washington: GPO, 1952), 1-3.

[3]Henderson, Korea, 15-21.

[4]Rhee was from a typical hyangban family (a rather ill-defined social group of "local squires" who had lost official state positions) and was from an impoverished and powerless branch of the royal clan. Rhee's long career

school, and branch associations in other cities, indicated that the Korean Provisional Government was prospering, but in reality it was hopelessly split over both objectives and strategy. Not until June, 1940, when Kim Koo[5], Finance Minister of the Korean Provisional Government, set up the Korean Independence Party in Chungking, did a semblance of unity appear. In Korea proper, Japanese administration was so tight and severe that no large native organization

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as a Korean nationalist began in 1898 when he joined the Independence Club, a liberal group critical of their government's supineness before foreign powers. Rhee, arrested when the Club was broken up, was imprisoned and severely tortured. Released in 1904, Rhee, a Christian convert, went to America with the aid of missionaries. There he received three university degrees, including a doctorate in international relations from Princeton, where he took seminars from Woodrow Wilson. He was too closely watched on his return to Korea, so he made America his home base from 1912 to 1945. He worked tirelessly for Korean nationalism and in the process of surviving the various factional disputes that wracked Korean nationalist groups, he became an extremely skilled politician. See Henderson, Korea, 422-423. No first-rate English language biography of Rhee exists, but the best available is Richard C. Allen, Korea's Syngmann Rhee (Rutland, Vt.: C.E. Tuttle, 1960).

[5]Kim Koo, like Rhee, was a hyangban. His ancestors had been forced to flee the capital and to take up the "mean" existence of tilling fields. Kim admits that his family was treated as if they were less than commoners. In his youth, Kim was a member of the Tonghak, a religious, social, political group that served as a channel for oppressed members of society who wished to destroy the existing sociopolitical structure. He also attended an American Protestant missionary school. A fiery Korean patriot, Kim killed one of the Japanese responsible for murdering Queen Minh and he was a primary leader of terrorist activities against the Japanese in the 1930s. Henderson, Korea, 391; Chong-sik Lee, The Politics of Korean Nationalism (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963), 24-25.

developed to lead an independence movement.[6] Thus at the end of WWII the Korean people were a highly nationalistic group that was both leaderless and hopelessly split.

The United States, rapidly developing as a major power, generally followed a hands-off policy vis-a-vis Korea. The initial American interest in Korea in 1834 was rooted in a desire for expanded trade, but little of substance was accomplished in this direction. Not until the signing of the Tientsin Treaty of 1882 did the United States gain even minimal diplomatic relations with Korea.[7]

Two factors dominated the newly formed Korean-American relationship. First was the U.S. attitude on the subject of Chinese suzerainty over Korea. Second was the U.S. position on the international struggle for domination of Korea. While consistently stating that Korea was an independent state, not a vassal of China, the United States nonetheless was willing in 1890 to concede that internally Korea had some kind of feudal obligations to China.[8]

The American position toward the Chinese, Russian, and Japanese struggle for control of Korea also was a

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[6]Henderson, Korea, 85-86; E. Grant Meade, American Military Government in Korea(New York: King's Press, 1951), 38-40; Lisle Rose, The Roots of Tragedy: The United States and the Struggle for Asia, 1945-1953(New York: Greenwood, 1976), 32.

[7]U.S. Department of State, A Historical Summary of U.S.-Korean Relations (Washington: GPO, 1962), 3-4.

[8]Ibid., 4-6.

cautious one. American consuls, instructed to avoid any entanglements in disputes concerning Korea, refused to become involved in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-5. Japan's growing influence in Korea's internal affairs was accepted as was the rapidly escalating rivalry between Russia and Japan. When the Russo-Japanese War broke out, the United States went so far as to instruct its Ambassador in Japan that the Consultate in Seoul "Should be extremely careful not to encourage any belief that the United States will assist Korean nationalists in carrying out their plans." Rather than become involved deeply in a rivalry over Korea, the United States restricted its relations with Korea almost totally to trade and missionary activities in the period from WWI to WWII.[9]

The war with Japan forced the United States to reconsider its Korean policy. The Korean Provisional Government in Chungking formally requested U.S. recognition as the official government of Korea. This request, in the form of a letter from Syngman Rhee, was declined. Soon the United States was faced with a number of groups seeking recognition as the "official representatives" of Korea. All requests were denied, and the United States instead suggested that the myriad groups unite themselves. At most the United States in March, 1942, expressed its

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[9] Ibid., 6-9.

utmost sympathy for Korean nationalist activities, while reassuring all that Korea was receiving careful consideration.[10]

Ideally, Roosevelt considered Korea, indeed most of colonial Asia, as a problem that a postwar world organization could best handle. The people of the liberated countries deserved independence and democracy, but they would need to be prepared for the complexities involved in operating such a system. To create a "true democratic order on the American model," trusteeships would have to be established first to tutor these backward people, preferably under the guidance of a world organization formed around Atlantic Charter principles. What the United States wanted to do in Asia was "establish a new international order where idealistic visions would be provided with a structure of power."[11]

The problem of Korea was first discussed among the Allied powers at Cairo in November, 1943, with Roosevelt leading the discussion. The resultant Cairo Declaration released December 1, declared that the Allies, "mindful of the enslavement of the people of Korea," were determined "that in due course Korea shall become free and independent." At Teheran, before the Declaration was published, Stalin

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[10] Ibid., 9.

[11] Rose, Roots, 508, 21-23, 27-29; Herbert Feis, Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin: The War They Waged and the Peace They Sought (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2nd ed., 1967), 58-59, 68; Akira Iriye, The Cold War In Asia: A Historical Introduction (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1974), 69-75.

tentatively agreed to the idea of a trusteeship or a period of tutelage, though he would not commit himself to the form or the length of apprenticeship needed.[12]

The ambiguous phrase "in due course" contained the seeds of discontent and frustration for both Koreans and Americans, because it had no exact equivalent in the Korean language. The Korean Provisional Government, in order to make the Declaration as appetizing as possible, translated the phrase as "in a few days" or "very soon", and printed and smuggled into Korea thousands of copies of its translation and had them widely distributed; the United States did not discover this until September, 1945.[13]

While there was a "strong idealistic component" in U.S. policy, there were more practical reasons for the still-developing policy. One memorandum, prepared on April 18, 1945, in the Far Eastern Affairs Division of the State Department, noted that "the area of the Pacific and East Asia is of greater importance, both absolutely and relatively, to the United States than most realize." America had long Pacific coastlines, a great deal of trade, and many "wide-flung cultural interests in the Pacific." After the war, America's task

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[12]State Department, Historical Summary,10; Minutes of Meeting of Pacific War Council, January 12,1944, U.S. Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States: The Conferences at Cairo and Teheran, 1943 (Washington: GPO, 1961), 869.

[13]The Political Adviser in Korea(Benninghoff) to the Secretary of State, September 15, 1945, U.S. Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1945: The Far East, Volume VI (Washington: GPO, 1973), 1049.

would be to make the area secure for all peace-loving people, so that great opportunities could be opened for the natives, for the United States, and for "all who seek honest and mutually profitable relations."[14]

The question, according to the memorandum, was how best to achieve these goals. Neither an Allied victory nor any balance of power concept would eradicate the roots of conflict in Asia. Instead, Allied cooperation was necessary. How to accomplish this was not disclosed, since no blueprints existed. Asia, however, would have to be helped to develop materially and educationally if it was to accept the duties and responsibilities of self-government and liberty. An excellent example was America's record in the Philippines.[15]

No plans existed for achieving U.S. goals, though it generally was accepted that China, America, Great Britain, and Russia would take part in liberation of Korea. Assumption of a substantial role in the liberation, as well as in any future civil or military interim administration of Korea, would be in America's best interest. In addition, administration of any occupied area was "to be left to the discretion of the local commander because of the need in fitting

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[14]Memo Prepared in the Office of Far Eastern Affairs, April 18, 1944, U.S. Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1944: The Far East, Volume V (Washington: GPO, 1972), 1232.

[15]Ibid., 1233-1234.

in military administration with the local situation."[16]

Some apprehension was expressed about the Soviet Union's role in liberation. The Soviets, attacking from Manchuria into northern Korea, were in an excellent position to occupy a considerable part of Korea with a force that might consist of around 35,000 Russian-trained Koreans, who had been "thoroughly indoctrinated with Soviet ideology." While apprehensive about these troops, the State Department acknowledged Russia's natural interest in Korea.[17]

Another memorandum, prepared May 4, 1944, noted that exclusion from government for 35 years had deprived the Korean people of all experience in managing a state. This factor, when combined with the possibility that an independent Korea might again become subject to international pressures and intrigues, thus threatening stability and peace in the Pacific, made formation of an interim supervisory government highly desirable. The security of the Northern Pacific was of great concern to the United States and since Korean political division would affect U.S. security, America naturally would participate in any Korean administrative body.[18]

While the Cairo Declaration had committed the United

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[16]Memo Prepared by the Inter-Divisional Area Committee on the Far East, March 29, 1944, Ibid., 1225-26; JCS to General Stilwell, September 15, 1944, quoted in Iriye, Cold War, 72.

[17]Memo, March 29, 1944, FR,1944, V, 1226.

[18]Memo Prepared by the Inter-Divisional Area Committee on the Far East, May 4, 1944, Ibid., 1239-1240.

States to participate in postwar Korean activities, America did not want sole responsibility for a Korean trusteeship.[19] With limited resources available to participate in the postwar world and a recognition of China's and Russia's proximity to and interest in Korea, policy makers were aware of the limitations on America's ability to control events in Korea.

The State Department's briefing books for Roosevelt's use at Yalta repeated the wish to avoid a zonal arrangement in favor of a centralized administration, multiple in nature, to avoid the "serious political repercussions" inherent in a single power occupation. An American presence was necessary to balance off any suspicions that existed between China and Russia.[20]

The State Department believed that some form of agreement on participation had to be reached as soon as possible and that the Soviet Union's traditional interest in Korea made it almost mandatory that it be included whether it joined the Pacific War or not.[21] If an agreeable, trouble-free military occupation including the vitally interested powers was established, a trusteeship could be set up much more easily and would have a framework of established relationships within which to work.

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[19] Ibid., 1241.

[20] Postwar Status of Korea, Briefing Book Paper, U.S. Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1945: The Conferences at Malta and Yalta (Washington: GPO, 1955), 358-359.

[21] Ibid., 359-361.

It seems likely that a tired and distracted Roosevelt never read the State Department briefing books on Korea. Instead of a set, detailed program outlining a four-power military occupation, discussion of Korea at Yalta was limited to one brief exchange between Roosevelt and Stalin-a discussion that indicated that Soviet-American relations would determine Korea's future. On February 8, 1945, Roosevelt expressed a desire to see a trusteeship, of perhaps 20 to 30 years in duration, set up in Korea, to be composed of the United States, China, and the Soviet Union. Stalin agreed, but felt the shorter the trusteeship's length, the better. Stalin was not receptive, however, to Roosevelt's suggestion that British participation be avoided, since he believed Churchill's resentment would be strong and that Britain must be invited to participate.[22]

Roosevelt's attempt to exclude Britain reflected a growing disenchantment with what he saw as Britain's post-war imperialistic ambitions, since he felt it was imperative for America to take a stand for "liquidation of imperialism." The President's actions also indicated a serious lack of commitment to coalition consultation. Apparently Korea's future, indeed the world's future, would depend on Roosevelt's "grand design" for close Soviet-American cooperation. This cooperation could be achieved only "by meeting

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[22]Rose, Roots, 33.

legitimate Russian security needs."[23] The agreements reached at Yalta were designed to correspond to the realities of power politics at the end of the war, to the perceptions of the three leading nations of those realities, and "to their visions of a new world order which would provide a framework for postwar international relations and accomodate their respective interests and desires."[24]

While Stalin and Roosevelt briefly pondered Korea's fate at Yalta, the Korean exiles, especially Rhee and the Korean Provisional Government, grew increasingly restive. America's refusal to recognize Rhee's organization was resented particularly since China and France had expressed a willingness to do so if the United States took the lead. America, however, continued to refuse recognition, refused to employ the group in the war effort, and adamantly opposed issuing it an invitation to attend the United Nations meetings in San Francisco.[25]

The growing resentment among Koreans went beyond displeasure with America's inaction. In February, 1945, Rhee

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[23] Ibid., 21-27; John L. Gaddis, The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1947 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), 6-7; Iriye, Cold War, 71, 94.

[24] Iriye, Cold War, 94, 100.

[25] Acting Secretary of State to the Ambassador in China (Hurley), February 20 and March 20, 1945, and the Acting Secretary of State to the Charge in China (Atcheson), April 9, 1945, FR,1945, VI, 1022, 1025.

expressed the fear that the Soviet Union might advance into Korea with its Korean Communist Army and establish a government under a "Korean Liberation Committee" allegedly existing in Manchuria. The State Department believed that Rhee's fear was unsubstantiated and the Far Eastern Division recommended that Rhee's letter not be answered.[26]

Washington's silence did not still Rhee's fears. This became clear in a May 15 letter in which Rhee made known his "recent discovery of a secret agreement at Yalta contrary to the Cairo Declaration." He asked for a denial of this, noting that it would not be the first time that Korea had been the victim of secret diplomacy.[27] Rhee's letter apparently struck a raw nerve somewhere, for it elicited a reply that was at best undiplomatic if not insulting.

Replying on June 5, Frank P. Lockhart, Acting Director of the Office of Far Eastern Affairs, told Rhee that he should give no credence to the unfounded reports about secret commitments made at Yalta. Rhee was informed that the Korean Provisional Government and other Korean organizations did not possess the necessary qualifications for obtaining recognition. Rhee's organization had never held administrative authority over any part of Korea, it was not

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[26]Acting Secretary of State to Ambassador in China, March 20, 1945, and Footnote 23, Ibid., 1022-1023.

[27]Rhee to Truman, May 25, 1945, Ibid., 1028.

representative of the Korean people today, and even its following among exiled Koreans was limited. The policy of the United States was to do nothing "to compromise the right of the Korean people to choose the ultimate form and personnel of the government they may wish to establish."[28]

Lockhart pointed out that the State Department's position did not, of course, imply a lack of sympathy for the Koreans and their hopes for freedom. He was sure that Rhee was aware that the State Department had "spent a great deal of time in studying the problems relating to Korea." Rhee further was reminded that U.S. officials had "talked at great length with you and other individuals interested in the welfare of Korea," and had always tried to explain U.S. policy clearly and fully.[29] Lockhart's message to Rhee is difficult to correlate both with the tacit secret agreement reached at Yalta concerning Korea and with the lack of any written evidence that a great deal of time had been spent studying the Korean problem.

Rhee's reply was received on July 25. The three week delay in answering did not serve to soften an equally blunt response, couched in the rhetoric of anti-communism, which made it clear that the Korean Provisional Government's

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[28] Lockhart to Rhee, June 5, 1945, Ibid., 1029-1030.

[29] Ibid., 1030.

doubts had not been dispelled entirely. The "other Korean groups" and "other organizations" which the officers of the State Department had placed on the same level as the Korean Provisional Government were nothing more than a handful of Korean Communist agitators and pro-Communist groups. These elements were working toward a Lublin-type government and were receiving the cooperation of American officials. Rhee believed it was obvious that the good intentions of America to give the Korean people a chance for a freely-chosen government would be impossible under Soviet domination.[30]

The wisdom of Washington's condescending and "cavalier" treatment of Rhee and the Korean Provisional Government can be questioned. No attempt had been made to raise up any other groups within or without Korea to assume a leading position in promoting nationalism and democracy in Korea as an alternative to the "unpalatable Rhee group."[31] While this was unwise, the failure to achieve a concrete program for postwar Korea at Potsdam was even more unwise.

Truman agreed to the Potsdam Conference because the "striking deterioration in relations with Russia which took place in the month following Roosevelt's death . . ." had created great alarm in Washington. Germany, Eastern Europe, Soviet entry into the Far Eastern War, and the solution of

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[30]Rhee to Lockhart, July 25,1945, Ibid., 1032-1036.

[31]Rose, Roots, 35-36.

remaining European problems which were delaying a peace conference, were to be the main topics. Truman went to Potsdam still holding firm to the belief that "only continued Big Three unity could guarantee lasting peace."[32]

Once again, as at Yalta, a gap existed between the concerns expressed about Korea in State Department briefing books and what was decided at Potsdam. The minimum objective stated in the briefing books was to gain Soviet adherence to the Cairo Declaration and to prevent any of the three concerned powers from taking unilateral action to establish a "friendly" government in the territories considered.[33] The State Department provided a lengthy paper outlining the need for some form of Allied military occupation followed by an "interim international supervisory administration or trusteeship," consisting at least of the United States, Britain, China, and Russia. No firm plans, however, were provided for achieving this goal. State Department officials believed that some form of detailed agreement should be reached concerning future Soviet-American actions in the Far East, including plans for a combined zone of operation in Korea under a single Allied commander. Korea's strategic position,

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[32]Gaddis, Origins, 230-231, 239.

[33]Briefing Book Paper, U.S. Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1945: The Conference of Berlin, Volume I (Washington: GPO, 1960), 310-313.

which vitally influenced the peace and security of East Asia, made such plans mandatory.[34]

Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson sent a message to Truman at Potsdam, which strongly reinforced the State Department's belief that Soviet dominance of the Korean occupation should be avoided. Stimson noted that the Soviets had agreed to the trusteeship idea, but that details had not been agreed to. Since the Russians already had trained one or two divisions of Koreans, undoubtedly for use in Korea, Stimson warned that "if an international trusteeship is not set up, and perhaps if it is, these divisions will probably gain control, and influence setting up a Soviet-dominated local government, rather than an independent one." This would be "the Polish question transplanted to the Far East." Stimson warned Truman to press for a trusteeship with at least a token force of U.S. troops stationed in Korea during the trusteeship period.[35]

Events at Potsdam indicated that little consideration was given to either the State Department's policy thinking or to Stimson's fears, since there was no effort to obtain a detailed program for Korea. General George C. Marshall, U.S. Army Chief of Staff, expressly refused the Soviet offer to

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[34]Briefing Book Paper, Interim Administration for Korea and Possible Soviet Attitudes, Ibid., 311-313; Briefing Book Paper, Relationship of Soviet Union to the War Against Japan, Ibid., Vol. II, 925.

[35]Stimson to Truman, July 16,1945, Ibid., I, 631.

consider the possibility of U.S. forces cooperating in conjunction with Russian forces to carry out an offensive in Korea. American troops and resources were committed too heavily to amphibious assaults on Japan's home islands for the United States even to consider operations in Korea. America's default of Korea to Russia at the military level might have been understandable if some balancing arrangements had been made at the political level. The only agreement reached at that level, however, provided for "a line of demarcation in the general area of Korea between American and Russian air and sea operations."[36]

At this point, two questions might be asked. Why had the State Department failed to produce a concrete proposal for Korean occupation? Why did Truman and his political and military advisers fail at Potsdam to reach a firm, detailed agreement with Russia vis-a-vis Korea? Aside from the unknowns involved in evaluating the military situation, one could speculate that the trouble that developed over agreeing to a successful formula for trusteeship might have discouraged reaching concrete plans for Korea. The Soviets desired a generalized trusteeship system that would apply to Italian and German possessions, as well as to Korea. The United States and Great Britain wanted to limit consideration

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[36]Princeton Seminars, Dean Acheson Papers, Harry S. Truman Library; Rose, Roots, 37; Harry Truman, Years of Trial and Hope (New York: Doubleday, 1956), 317.

of trusteeship to less strategic areas. The Soviet desire to gain, at Italy's expense, a colony or base in the Mediterranean, under the guise of a trusteeship, seemed a clear signal to Secretary of State James F. Byrnes that the Russians wanted a strategic position from which to threaten the West. The problem then, was to agree to a trusteeship formula applicable to Korea, that at the same time would not aid Soviet expansionism in the strategic Mediterranean area. Unfortunately, no such agreement could be reached.[37]

The U.S. experience at cooperative action with the Russians on the Allied Control Commissions for Eastern Europe and Italy, as well as Soviet actions in Poland, also were factors in discouraging a formal agreement. The Russian and American interpretation of self-determination and democracy were drastically different. By taking unilateral actions in the occupied countries where they were the strongest the United States and the Soviet Union made the Control Commissions impotent. Soviet actions in Poland were viewed also as violations of agreements made at Yalta. Truman, unlike Roosevelt, expected agreements to be carried out literally. When they were not, as in Poland's case, the domestic furor had made both Roosevelt's and Truman's political life very uncomfortable.[38] Truman probably thought it best

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[37]Herbert Feis, Between War and Peace: The Potsdam Conference (Princeton: Princeton Press, 1960), 306-309.

[38]Gaddis, Origins, 139-171, 200-206.

to avoid making commitments that might not be carried out.

Whatever the answer, it is clear that contrary to Lockhart's contention, "a great deal of time" had not been spent in studying the Korean problem. This is hard to explain when consideration is given to the importance which the United States attached to Japan. A much clearer relationship between Korea's fate and Japan's future should have been perceived. In addition, failure to reach any specific Korean solutions at Potsdam led in part to the hastily considered 38th parallel decision, which proved to be a source of considerable trouble for the United States.

Japan's swift collapse, following use of the atomic bomb and Soviet entry into the war, forced America to decide quickly what it was going to do in Korea. The State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee held long sessions from August 10 to August 15, to coordinate and make decisions concerning Japan's surrender. At a meeting on the night of August 10-11, the subject of Korea was discussed. The State Department had suggested, through Byrnes, that American forces receive Japan's surrender as far north as possible. Unfortunately, the military was faced both with a lack of troops that were needed elsewhere immediately and with the prospect that it would be difficult to reach very far north into Korea before Soviet troops could enter the area. Dean Rusk, then in the Far Eastern Affairs Division, recalls that "The military view was that if our proposals for receiving surrender

greatly overreached our probable military capabilities, there would be little likelihood of Soviet acceptance."[39]

Rusk and Colonel Charles Bonesteel, Chief of the Policy Planning Section of the War Department, were asked to retire to an adjoining room and prepare with all haste a proposal which would "Harmonize the political desire to have the United States receive the surrender as far north as possible and the obvious limitation on the ability of the United States forces to reach the area." Rusk recalls that the 38th parallel was selected because, even though it was further north than U.S. troops could reach in the event of Soviet disagreement, it was believed important to include Korea's capital in the U.S. zone. Bonesteel believed the primary consideration was to get as far north as the Soviets would accept. There were no adequate maps present, so the 38th parallel was taken as a dividing point because it cut Korea almost in the middle and gave the United States Seoul and a nearby prisoner-of-war camp.[40]

The State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee considered the proposal in the early morning hours of August 11. The Navy suggested moving the line to the 39th parallel, which Secretary of the Navy James C. Forrestal apparently favored,

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[39]Memo from Rusk to Chief of the Division of Historical Policy Research(Noble), July 12, 1950, FR,1945, VI, 1039.

[40]Ibid.; James F. Schnabel, Policy and Direction: The First Year (Office of the Chief of Military History, 1972), 9.

but the Army thought such a move would be unacceptable to the Soviets as it would bar them from Dairen, Port Arthur, and other parts of the Liaotung Peninsula. More important, there was little chance of American forces beating the Soviets to the 39th parallel. Assistant Secretary of State James C. Dunn added that Korea was more important politically to the United States than Manchuria. Thus the 38th parallel subsequently was used in General Order No. 1 as the demarcation line for accepting Japan's surrender. The Soviets, contrary to Rusk's expectations, accepted the line.[41]

Truman later recalled that the line was intended to be only a temporary expedient to be used to accept Japan's surrender prior to establishment of a joint trusteeship throughout the Korean peninsula.[42] It was, however, an expedient which ignored long-range questions concerning occupation policy. In fact, an August 24 memorandum for MacArthur which declared that the initial occupation was to be only a two-power concern, demonstrates that only at this point in time was the State Department instructed to prepare a directive for MacArthur on political, economic,

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[41] Ibid.; Truman, Trial, 317. General Order No. 1 stated in part that "by virtue of the authority vested in me as CIC, U.S. Army, Pacific, I hereby establish military control over Korea south of the 38 degree north latitude and the inhabitants thereof."

[42] Truman, Trial, 317.

and other matters pertaining to Korea.[43]

Military expediency dictated the decision to divide Korea at the 38th parallel. From the American point of view, it probably was a better deal than could have been gained through military means and additionally it served the purpose of testing, to a degree, Soviet intentions in the Far East. The United States also was assured of an opportunity to uphold the Cairo Declaration. Finally, the decision ratified agreements made at Yalta that the Soviet Union would maintain a predominant influence in northern Asia.

From the Soviet point of view, the hope for a postwar U.S. loan, a wish to participate in the Japanese occupation, and a desire to gain a better position in the Mediterranean, influenced Russia's acceptance. It might be added that historically the 38th parallel had long been acceptable to Russia as a demarcation point for spheres of influence and it must have seemed that the United States proposal was a realistic recognition of Soviet interests in Korea. In sum, the Soviet Union wished to avoid raising any suspicions or antagonizing the United States when there were more important fruits still to be gained in areas of greater strategic importance to Russia.[44]

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[43]Memo by the SWNCC to Brigadier General Andres MacFarland, Secretary of the JCS, August 24, 1945, FR, 1945, VI, 1040.

[44]Rose, Roots, 38; Arthur Gray, "The 38th Parallel," Foreign Affairs, 27(April 1951), 484-486.

The Soviet decision reflected the caution with which Stalin approached the Far East when compared with Eastern Europe. The Soviet leadership concentrated on the area that was of direct importance to the Soviet Union: Eastern and southeastern Europe. This enabled the Soviet Union to avoid "any appearance of a many-sided attack on the Old World's positions that would increase American suspicions and countermeasures . . . ." With the exception of China and Japan, Asia was not a primary concern of Soviet foreign policy between 1945 and 1948.[45]

However one views the motives behind the proposal and acceptance of the 38th parallel as a demarcation line, it was a fateful decision for the United States because it resulted in a permanent boundary that American policy makers had not envisaged. The initial occupation experience and the hardening of the 38th parallel into an uncrossable boundary, quickly soured America's involvement in Korea.

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[45]Adam B. Ulam, Expansion and Coexistence: The History of Soviet Foreign Policy, 1917-1963 (New York: Praeger, 1968), 514, 457.

CHAPTER II

TRUSTEESHIP AND THE MOSCOW AGREEMENT

During the period of Japanese domination, Korea's population had doubled and its urban, industrial, educational and communication facilities had grown. Alien colonialism had the effect of whetting the political appetites of the Korean people through repression and the economic ones through a desire to emulate the colonial power. With the onset of the war came the further stirrings of mass mobilization. Society in Korea was fluid, lacking strong intermediary institutions or class identities. Strong leadership was needed to lead an aroused and impatient people through a mass of economic and political troubles, but Korea's own institutions were useless, with the result that the forces of chaos arose.[1]

The lack of direction given to Korean affairs and the resulting chaos in large part must be blamed on the complete lack of U.S. preparation for the occupation. Japan's dramatic collapse allowed little time for proper preparation

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[1]Henderson, Korea, 113.

of occupation troops. General MacArthur had to select units for occupation duties on the basis of availability of troops and transport. Lt. General John Hodge commanded the troops selected for Korea, the 24th Corps. Hodge had a distinguished combat record at Bouganville, Leyte, and Okinawa, and was well-prepared for a military invasion--but not for the military occupation and administration of Korea.[2]

Hodge was keenly aware of his need for guidance. He cabled the State Department on August 26, 1945, noting that he had received no directives with regard to Korea. Hodge concluded that the Japanese directive was the initial plan to be utilized for the administration of Korea, which meant that Japanese Governor-General Abe Nobuyuki and his staff would be used for administration under the direction of the American Military Government (AMG). Hodge requested an immediate Korean directive for guidance.[3]

General Hodge received no directives prior to the first American entrance into Korea on September 8, 1945. Instead, Hodge used MacArthur's Proclamation No. 1, signed September 2, which restated that "in due course" Korea would become free and independent. The purpose of the occupation

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[2]Robert K. Sawyer, Military Advisers in Korea: KMAG in War and Peace (Washington: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1952), 3-4; General John Hodge File, 3290, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

[3]Consul General at Manila(Steintorf) to the Secretary of State, August 26, 1945, FR,1945, VI, 1041.

was to enforce the surrender and to protect Koreans in their personal and religious rights. Korean help and compliance was required--all acts of disturbing public peace would be punished severely. Finally, the Proclamation directed all those engaged in essential services to continue in the performance of their usual functions and duties.[4]

Hodge also lacked adequately trained personnel. The first civil affairs team, which did not reach Korea until October 20, was trained for work in the Philippines and subsequent teams were trained for service in Japan. One participant, E. Grant Meade, recalled that his one year's training and instruction included a "single one-hour lecture on Korea." But "despite ignorance of their duties and their lack of background, civil affairs teams were charged with the execution of vital American policies."[5]

Hodge's problems in the initial weeks of occupation went beyond inadequate preparation and direction. The artificial division of the country at the 38th parallel compounded Korea's basic existing problems. The Korean people desired quick liberation and independence, but Japan's forty-year occupation had made Korea a Japanese colony. A bureaucracy had arrived from Japan and had taken complete control of all important phases of Korea's life. The Korean economy was

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[4]Proclamation No. 1, by General of the Army Douglas MacArthur, Signed September 2, 1945, Ibid., 1043.

[5]Henderson, Korea, 124-25; Meade, American Military, 51-52.

tied securely to Japan, as Korea became Japan's rice bowl and a one-crop country. Japan's total control prevented the development of any "trained, native administrators, technicians and military leaders."[6]

The absence of trained Koreans led Hodge to continue all Japanese in their posts on a temporary basis. This caused considerable discontent among Koreans, leading officials in Washington to note that the decision had "an unfortunate effect on our position in Korea." Hodge was instructed to remove Governor-General Abe, chiefs of all bureaus of the Governor-General, and provincial governors and police chiefs, and to proceed "as rapidly as possible with the removal of other Japanese and collaborationist Korean administrators."[7]

It became increasingly clear that division of Korea exacerbated the basic problems facing the country. The economies of north and south Korea were intimately linked. The southern half of Korea, besides containing two-thirds of the people and being the primary food supplier, had produced 74% of Korea's light consumer goods in 1940. Plants in the south had been built "to process raw materials from northern Korea." The north had valuable mineral deposits and provided almost all of south Korea's electrical power as well as the

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[6]Sawyer, Military Advisers, 5-7.

[7]Ibid.; Memo by Acting Chairman of the SWNCC, September 10, 1945, FR,1945, VI, 1044-1045.

iron, steel, wood pulp, and industrial chemicals that her light industries needed. Division shattered these economic connections and made recovery difficult.[8]

Hodge's treatment of a government that had been established prior to his arrival in Korea made his duties more difficult. The Japanese Governor-General, hoping to create a pro-Japanese atmosphere to protect Japanese lives and property, decided to form a transitional government made up of prominent Koreans. After a few failures, General Abe on August 15 persuaded the enigmatic Lyuh Woon-hyung, a long-time popular liberal, and one-time communist, patriot and former Japanese political prisoner, to head the Committee for Preparation of Korean Independence. This organization was "packed" with leftists as Abe had anticipated Russian control over most of Korea. Pak Hong-yong, the most influential Communist leader in southern Korea, helped to increase the Communist role in the Committee. At the same time, hundreds of People's Committees were created all over Korea, some spontaneously and some by design. They exercised varying degrees of local and administrative control and generally were leftist leaning. The Korean Communist Party wielded "an extraordinary influence over the Korean People's Republic and so over the People's Committees throughout the country."[9]

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[8]Schnabel, Policy, 12.

[9]Henderson, Korea, 114-119; Robert Scalapino and Chong-sik Lee, Communism in Korea, 2 Volumes (Berkley: University of California Press, 1972), I, 239-247, 257.

A desire "to prove their ability for self-government" inspirited the Committee for Preparation of Korean Independence and it quickly established itself as a powerful political force. On September 6, the Committee called a "National Assembly" of about 1,000 delegates, which declared itself the People's Republic of Korea. The need to achieve a semblance of legitimacy led the newly-formed Republic to appoint Rhee as its president and other exiled Koreans to cabinet posts. All those named were abroad and could not function in their posts. Vice-ministers, inevitably Communists or extreme leftists, assumed their positions. By the end of 1945, the left had organized enough front organizations to enable it to be the predominant political force in Korea. The Korean Communist Party had virtual control of numerous youth, labor, and peasant front organizations, thus increasing its power greatly.[10]

Delegates from the People's Republic of Korea met Hodge when he landed in Korea on September 8 and offered itself as the government of Korea. It was rejected immediately because Hodge's instructions did not allow him to recognize any group which challenged his authority. The Soviets, however, initially used the People's Committees to administer their zone.[11] Hodge, instead, tried to assess the situation

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[10]Soon Sung Cho, Korea in World Politics(Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 68-69; Scalapino and Lee, Communism in Korea,I,257,268,312;Henderson, Korea, 119.

[11]Soon, Korea, 88; Meade, American Military, 59.

before deciding on the best administrative course. Hodge's assessment was reflected in a September 15 memorandum to the State Department from his political adviser H. Merrell Benninghoff.

Benninghoff described Korea as a "powder-keg ready to explode," because the Korean people, expecting immediate independence, failed to understand the meaning of the term "in due course." The failure to sweep out the Japanese and to gain their independence immediately had left them disappointed and agitated. While acknowledging the desirability of removing Japanese officials, Benninghoff felt they had to be continued in their work in the absence of qualified Koreans. Benninghoff believed the political situation was chaotic because Koreans had been on a "prolonged holiday since August," interpreting independence to mean freedom from work. He admitted, however, that continued Japanese ownership or control of most business and industrial establishments made it difficult "to convince Koreans to stay on the job and to build up their country."[12]

To Benninghoff, the single most encouraging factor in Korea was the "presence in Seoul of several hundred conservatives among the older and better-educated Koreans." They tended to favor the return of the Chungking-based "Korean Provisional Government" and were the largest single political

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[12]Benninghoff to the Secretary of State, September 15, 1945, FR,1945, VI, 1049-1052.

group in the American zone, though not a majority.[13]

There was no doubt, Benninghoff continued, that Soviet agents were spreading their ideology throughout south Korea, hoping to bring chaos and a repudiation of America in favor of "Soviet freedom and control." This activity might prove successful because Hodge lacked sufficient troops to control wide areas of south Korea.[14]

Benninghoff sounded what became a constant theme of American Military Government in Korea. "The splitting of Korea into two parts for occupation by armed forces of nations having widely divergent political philosophies, with no common ground, is an impossible situation." The lack of information and direction concerning Korea's future, and the inadequacy both in numbers and training of U.S. officials, made the situation even more impossible.[15]

Benninghoff's report closed with a summary of Hodge's recommendations. Some of the more important included: a desire for instructions on future policy in Korea; efforts to upgrade the quality of Hodge's staff; and a request that the Chungking government-in-exile be returned to Korea to act as a figurehead provisional government during the occupation until the situation was stable enough for an election to be held.[16]

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[13] Ibid. [14] Ibid. [15] Ibid. [16] Ibid.

A portion of one of Hodge's recommendations was agreed to reluctantly on September 21. The State Department had no objections to allowing Rhee and other exiles to return to Korea as long as all Koreans were treated equally. On September 27, the State Department declared that returning Koreans would have to sign an agreement recognizing the supreme authority of American Military Government over south Korea. While outright support of any one political group outside Korea was not being contemplated, any groups willing to operate constructively in the military government framework were to be encouraged to do so.[17]

While one of his recommendations had been accepted, Hodge still perceived a dangerous situation in Korea. He detected a growing, deep distrust of Allied intentions and a growing criticism of division of the country. Many intelligent Koreans had concluded that the Allies had no intention of rebuilding a free and independent Korea. This was understandable, since based upon policies to date there was nothing to encourage a belief that the Allies would fulfill their pledge for an independent Korea.[18] To many it must have seemed that the Japanese had been exchanged for Americans.

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[17]Acting Secretary of State to the Ambassador in China, September 21, 1945, Ibid., 1053-54; Acting Secretary of State to the Charge in China, September 27, 1945, Ibid., 1050; Henderson, Korea, 129-130.

[18]Hodge to MacArthur, in Tokyo, September 24, 1945, Ibid., 1054-1055.

Hodge felt that the Allied decision to divide Korea had "created a situation impossible of peaceful correction" in a way that would be a credit to the United States. Immediate action on an international level was needed to set up a single provisional government with a common policy. Hodge believed that only the Soviet Union had given serious thought to the problems involved in the Korean occupation, but the Soviets were talking to no one. All efforts to set up a working arrangement with the Russians had failed.[19]

Benninghoff's September 29 analysis of the political situation in Korea quickly followed Hodge's pessimistic evaluation. South Korea was described as politically divided into two distinct groups. The first was the democratic or conservative group, composed in part of the progressive and educated leaders trained in the United States or in American missionary schools. This group, desiring to follow the western democracies, almost unanimously wished to see Rhee and the Chungking group returned as soon as possible. The second group was the radical or communist group composed of smaller groups from left-of-center to radical. The communist group was the most radical and provided most of the leadership. While Benninghoff professed no explicit preference, his starkly drawn report left little doubt which group he believed should be supported.[20]

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[19] Ibid.

[20] Benninghoff to Byrnes, September 29, 1945, Ibid., 1061-1065.

Benninghoff was concerned that little was known about what the Soviets were doing in north Korea, beyond having ejected the Japanese and having set up local governments based on a one-party system. North Korea probably would be sovietized as Eastern Europe had been and the United States would have to deal with a similar set of problems. When the situation became clearer, north Korea would be under Communist domination, while American-occupied south Korea would have a large communist following.[21]

Benninghoff's analysis reached a logical conclusion in an October 10, 1945, memorandum to General MacArthur's political adviser, George Atcheson. Benninghoff reported that evidence indicated that radical or communist groups, who had organized the People's Republic of Korea, "were receiving support and direction from the Soviet Union." The conservative groups, while less aggressive than the radicals, represented "the thought of the majority of thinking Koreans." This group was willing to cooperate with the military government and realized that a period of tutelage, preferably American, was necessary.[22] Benninghoff's report made it clear once more which group he wished America to support.

Later, this preference for the conservative group would force American Military Government officials to defend

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[21] Ibid.

[22] Benninghoff to George Atcheson, October 1, 1945, Ibid., 1070.

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themselves against press reports of bias. On November 26, William Langdon, the acting U.S. political adviser in Seoul, admitted that in the beginning U.S. officials may have favored "plutocracy" at the expense of "left-wingers", but this was being corrected so as to include a more broadly-based structure.[23] Relaxation of a non-fraternization rule had an important effect in favoring conservative elements, because the Koreans with attractive homes, who could entertain well, who could speak English and talk of Western culture, were the wealthy. Wealth in Korea usually indicated a desire to maintain the "existing social, political, and economic order with a minimum of change."[24] Americans in Korea in a conscious or unconscious manner, tended to favor a conservative, minority, landlord group. Yet at the same time, they avoided open clashes with the left during the initial occupation, hoping to build a system on a consensual basis.[25]

On October 5, American Military Government moved to provide order to the chaotic political situation described in its memoranda. Major General Victor A. Arnold, Military Governor, appointed an Advisory Council of eleven carefully chosen prominent Koreans, including educators, lawyers, businessmen, patriots, and leaders of the two major political

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[23]Acting Political Adviser in Korea (Langdon) to the Secretary of State, November 26, 1945, Ibid., 1135.

[24]Meade, American Military, 104.

[25]Scalapino and Lee, Communism in Korea, I, 269.

groups. The Council was to give advice on political and economic matters and to build up in the consciousness of Koreans the feeling of participation in their government. Arnold followed this on October 9 with an announcement that a number of groups had either issued official statements or had assumed authority on no basis other than that they represented some "Government." Arnold wanted it clearly understood that American Military Government was the sole authority south of the 38th parallel and he implied that force would be used if necessary to stop activities designed to disturb peace and order.[26]

Atcheson supported these actions and advocated others in an October 15 memorandum to Byrnes, in which he reluctantly recommended that the State Department consider using "some progressive, popular and respected leader, or small group, to act as a nucleus of an organization" to work with and under AMG direction, perhaps to develop into an executive and governmental agency. Rhee was widely respected and could serve as an initial nucleus along with Kim Koo and Kimm Kiu-sic[27], two other popular Korean leaders. The time had come for positive U.S. action in the political field. While open support of any one group or leader was contrary to past

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[26]Benninghoff to Atcheson, October 9, 1945, FR,1945, VI, 1068-1069.

[27]Kimm was American-educated at Roanoke College. An early foe of Japanese domination of Korea, he was Ambassador Plenipotentiary to the Versailles Conference, where he spoke out against Japan. See Lee, Korean Nationalism, 104.

U.S. policy, the present situation fully warranted such a step; to fail to do so would increase the present difficulties. The Communist group in north Korea, which the Soviets had set up and encouraged, would profit if the United States did not act, expanding its influence into south Korea "with results that can readily be envisaged."[28]

Atcheson's recommendations, a sharp break from previous policy, reached Washington at about the same time as the initial Korean policy directive was sent to Hodge on October 17, 1945. The State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee directed that Korea should be developed progressively from the interim period of military government to a period of trusteeship, and finally to the establishment of a free and independent nation, capable of joining the United Nations. Achievement of this goal would require the elimination of all traces of Japanese control over Korea's economic and political life and "eventual substitution of an independent Korean government, economy, and social institutions."[29]

In carrying out this policy, the State Department gave permission to employ any Japanese and Koreans deemed essential by reason of their technical qualifications.

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[28]Atcheson to Byrnes, October 15, 1945, FR,1945, VI, 1091-1092.

[29]SWNCC 101-4, Basic Initial Directive to CIC, USAF, Pacific, for the Administration of Civil Affairs in Those Areas of Korea Occupied by U.S. Forces, Sent October 17, 1945, Ibid., 1073-1090 and 1094-1097.

Political parties and organizations were to be encouraged if their activities were consistent with the requirements of the military government. The State Department added that "You will not extend official recognition to, nor utilize for political purposes, any self-styled Korean provisional government or similar political organizations . . . ."[30]

In light of this clear statement, the State Department was bound to be unhappy about Hodge's actions, which seemed to favor Rhee. Rhee was Hodge's dinner guest October 17, at which time Rhee was "outspoken in his criticisms of Soviet policy." Secretary of State Byrnes, replying October 15 to Atcheson's earlier memorandum, expressed his unhappiness with this. The Secretary strongly opposed "Unguarded references to international questions made locally" as likely to complicate negotiations with the Soviet Union.[31]

Neither the policy directive nor Byrnes' comments appeared to affect Hodge, who believed that Communist activities were reaching the point "where they may gain control unless positive action is taken." The best response to this threat was utilization of "the services of Rhee and Kim Koo to help screen additional Koreans to be brought to Korea," and to use them to place suitable and representative Koreans in responsible government positions. Hodge made a point of

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[30] Ibid.

[31] Byrnes to Atcheson, October 25, 1945, Ibid., 1104.

noting that the presence of Rhee appeared to have a favorable influence on consolidation of political parties.[32]

Hodge's actions brought a sharp rebuke on November 7 from John Carter Vincent, Director of the Office of Far Eastern Affairs. The State Department, Vincent said, was aware of the difficulties and complexities of the political situation confronting Hodge. Nonetheless, the consistently stated policy of the U.S. government was that nothing should be done to give the impression that any Korean individual or Korean group was being favored or supported over others. Any acts of favoritism prior to the free expression of the will of the Korean people would complicate the political problems the United States faced in Korea and would encourage the Soviet Union to set up a similar group in its zone, thus delaying the establishment of a unified Korea.[33]

Vincent believed that Hodge should be instructed to refrain from taking the actions mentioned in his November 5 telegram as they would jeopardize the success of negotiations in progress regarding the opening of the 38th parallel. A final jab was added as Vincent noted that Hodge had not described adequately the "objectionable Communist activies"

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[32]Hodge to MacArthur, November 2, 1945, Ibid., 1106; MacArthur to Marshall, November 5, 1945, Ibid., 1112.

[33]Memo by the Director of the Office of Far Eastern Affairs (Vincent) to Colonel Russell Vittrup, War Department, November 7, 1945, Ibid., 1113.

referred to in his telegram. Any actions he might find it necessary to take, should be outlined specifically for State Department consideration.[34]

On November 13, the Assistant Secretary of War, John McCloy, in replying to Vincent's criticisms of Hodge, pointed out that Communist activities were being carried out actively and intelligently in the American zone. The best way to combat this was to build up under Hodge a "reasonable and respected government or group of political advisers" to bring order out of the political, social, and economic chaos now rampant in south Korea. This task would not be easy since "the local Koreans are most narrow, selfish and confused in their political thought." They did have, however, great "respect and confidence in the exiled Koreans" and were surprised that the United States had not employed them immediately in the government. The failure to utilize these Koreans also puzzled McCloy, especially since the Soviet Union was using "two divisions of Koreans thoroughly indoctrinated in the Communist creed" in its zone to replace forcibly all officials with Korean Communists.[35]

McCloy felt that Vincent's memorandum had the effect of telling Hodge that "we really repose little confidence in him" and that Washington was not prepared to do those "few

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[34] Ibid.

[35] McCloy to the Under-Secretary of State(Acheson), November 13, 1945, Ibid., 1123-1124.

things" which could be useful toward achieving U.S. aims. Hodge should be told to use at his discretion as many exiled Koreans as possible. To continue to do nothing would threaten the chance of the Korean people to choose freely their own government, the goal that American policy was supposed to achieve. McCloy added that the United States should consider what to do if the Soviets "continue to refuse to cooperate."[36]

Vincent later attempted to gloss over the disagreements between the State and War Department[37], but he could not hide the clear policy differences that existed. These differences also were reflected in attitudes toward cooperation with Russia in Korea and the whole trusteeship concept. The divisions between the State Department and American Military Government especially were obvious.

From the beginning, Hodge experienced little success in dealing with the Russians.[38] The Soviets had replaced forcibly self-rule councils with a Communist-dominated "People's Political Committee." A Communist Party was formed, while an opposition "Democratic Party" was forced to disband. These considerations, Hodge believed, would make it difficult to bring about collaboration at the military level to produce

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[36] Ibid.

[37] Vincent to Acheson, November 16, 1945, Ibid., 1127-28.

[38] Hodge to MacArthur, September 24, 1945, Ibid., 1055.

the desired results. While some "small and strictly military problems of a local nature" might be settled, it was not likely that "fundamental matters involving questions of broad principle" would ever be discussed unless "negotiations at the highest levels in Washington and Moscow" resulted in instructions to the commanders in Korea.[39]

On the same day that Hodge was downgrading the chances of successful Soviet-American cooperation based on military discussions alone, he was told to seek a "strengthened and expanded liasion" between the American and Russian zones to gain a uniformity of administrative practice in Korea. The disadvantages of the "highly artificial" division of Korea had to be minimized to insure the successful establishment of an international trusteeship at the earliest possible date.[40]

Hodge's efforts continued to be unsuccessful. The Soviets informed him that negotiations on the military level were out of the question until "decisions are made and relationships established" between the respective governments. Hodge again urged Washington to consider negotiations at the highest level. Additionally, he expressed suspicion that the Soviet Consul General in Seoul was assisting the communists in south Korea and was attempting to discredit the United

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[39]Benninghoff to Byrnes, October 1, 1945, Ibid., 1066.

[40]Marshall to MacArthur, October 1, 1945, Ibid., 1068.

States.[41]

The State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee remained insistent on the point that Hodge should try to attain the "maximum possible coordination with the Soviet Commander through liasion on a military level." United States policy sought to eliminate as quickly as possible the zonal occupation, in order to introduce a trusteeship. Rivalry among foreign powers for the control of Korea could develop once more unless prompt agreement was reached among the four major powers on the form of trusteeship.[42]

Byrnes passed on Hodge's rather disquieting evaluation to Ambassador W. Averell Harriman in Moscow. Byrnes pointed out that the 38th parallel had become a "closed border," leading to a great disruption in Korean national life. Harriman was to seek an agreement in principle to regular delivery of coal and electric power, resumption of rail traffic and coast-wise shipping, adoption of uniform fiscal policies, orderly settlement of displaced persons including Japanese to Japan, and resumption of normal trade between the two zones. On November 8, these requests were given to Vyacheslav Molotov, the Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs.[43]

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[41]MacArthur to JCS, October 11,1945, Ibid., 1071-72; Hodge to MacArthur, October 12, 1945, Ibid., 1072-73.

[42]Report by SWNCC for the Far East, October 20-22, 1945, and October 24, 1945, Ibid., 1094-1101.

[43]Byrnes to Harriman, November 3,1945, Ibid., 1107-9.

Harriman was not optimistic about Soviet acceptance of Byrnes' proposals, since the Soviet Union had made it clear that historically Korea was regarded in the same light "as Finland, Poland, and Rumania--springboards for attack on the Soviet Union." He concluded that "the Soviet Union may be expected to seek predominate influence in Korea." A trusteeship would not insure Soviet predominance since it would divide governing strength. The Ambassador believed there was nothing to suggest that the Soviet Army was behaving any differently than it had in Europe. Harriman accurately predicted that once the Soviet Union had created an obedient and relatively strong Korean military force and militia, it was quite possible that the Soviets would want to withdraw the Red Army from Korea and bring pressure to bear on the United States to withdraw its troops too.[44]

In late November, the Acting Political Adviser in Korea, William Langdon, attacked the whole concept of a trusteeship for Korea, giving added weight to Hodge's suspicions and Harriman's gloomy evaluation. Langdon was unable "to fit trusteeship to the actual conditions" then existing in Korea or to be convinced of its suitability from moral and practical standpoints. The trusteeship idea should be dropped because Korea's long existence as a distinct nation with high literacy and cultural standards made the

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[44]Harriman to Byrnes, November 12, 1945, Ibid., 1121-1122.

idea unsuitable. The Korean people would not accept it and force would have to be used to maintain the trusteeship. The initial warm feelings for U.S. liberation forces had soured quickly when American Military Government was set up; yet the Korean people worked amicably with American officials because of their abiding trust in the United States. Unfortunately, recent State Department press releases supporting trusteeship had caused great consternation among many Koreans.[45]

Langdon felt that American caution over becoming associated with the Chungking "Korean Provisional Government" was unwarranted. This organization had no rival as the first government of liberated Korea and was regarded as "quasi-legitimate by all elements and parties." Kim Koo enjoyed great esteem and this offered the United States a chance to attempt a constructive Korean policy. To continue the present policy of abstaining from action which might seem to favor a particular group was unwarranted and inappropriate in light of present conditions in Korea. While Langdon would later back away from his enthusiastic support of the Kim Koo-Rhee group, he would not give up advocating U.S. action to form a provisional government organization.[46]

The State Department responded to Langdon in a

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[45] Langdon to Byrnes, November 20, 1945, Ibid., 1130-31.

[46] Ibid.; Langdon to Byrnes, December 14, 1945, Ibid., 1142.

somewhat equivocal fashion. Langdon was told that "careful consideration" was being given to his suggestion that an international trusteeship be abandoned. The key was to gain from the Soviet Union "adequate specific guarantees for the unification and independence of Korea." Since negotiations with the Soviets would continue, it was best that American Military Government not prejudice these talks by forming a "Provisional Government" or a "Governing Committee".[47]

Langdon was "glad to note that we might be willing to abandon international trusteeship for Korea" under the conditions mentioned. American officials in Seoul sensed the "beginnings of a tugging to get the troops and military government out of the liberated land," and thought that it might not be possible to form an adequate trusteeship structure in time. American Military Government believed that U.S. Korean policy "had been predicated solely on Russia's cooperation, with no planning beyond this premise." Washington apparently had given little consideration to the present mood of the Korean people--a vital factor if a successful policy was to be formulated.[48]

On December 16, Hodge, in another evaluation, clearly outlined the differences existant between the State Department and American officials in Seoul. The dual occupation,

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[47]Byrnes to Langdon,November 29, 1945, Ibid., 1138.

[48]Langdon to Byrnes,December 11,1945, Ibid.,1140-41.

Hodge believed, created an impossible condition. Koreans blamed the United States for the partition of their country, which resulted in growing resentment against all Americans. The situation was being allowed to drift, making the U.S. position more untenable and decreasing U.S. popularity. South Korea was fertile ground for the establishment of communism and the steady influx of Manchurian and Chinese-trained Korean communists made the situation worse. Hodge also found Soviet methods of occupation puzzling, because evidence indicated that they had established an "effective field works system of defense against invasion just north of the 38th parallel." Dangerous border incidents could occur easily under the existing conditions.[49]

The time had come, Hodge felt, either for positive action on the international level or for the United States to seize the initiative in south Korea in order to stop the dangerous drift. Clarification and removal of the 38th parallel to unify Korea, a clear statement abandoning the concept of trusteeship for Korea, and a policy governing the status of former Japanese property in Korea was needed urgently. If no corrective was forthcoming, an agreement should be reached for simultaneous withdrawal of Soviet-American troops, leaving "Korea to its own devices and

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[49]MacArthur to the JCS, December 16, 1945 (read by Acheson on December 19, 1945), Ibid., 1145-1147.

inevitable internal upheaval for its self-purification."[50]

The stark contrast between the positions of the State Department and American Military Government was obvious before Byrnes discussed the Korean question in December, 1945, at the Moscow Foreign Minister's Conference. On three different occasions in October, State Department representatives had committed the United States firmly to an international trusteeship based on cooperation with Russia. This was reaffirmed in various memoranda to Seoul and most emphatically in Vincent's memorandum criticizing Hodge. American policy was based on the unquestioned assumption of Korean acceptance of a trusteeship. However, McCloy's reply to Vincent, and memoranda from Harriman in Moscow and Hodge in Seoul, indicated that commitment to the State Department's policy was far from unanimous. American officials in Korea were given the task of implementing a State Department policy they did not believe in from either a practical or moral viewpoint.

Doubts about the State Department's policy went beyond Hodge, Harriman, McCloy, and the Korean people. Great Britain and China both thought the policy neither practical nor helpful. The Chinese gave lukewarm assent to trusteeship, while urging the return of the Chungking Koreans to form a new government. The Chinese, fearing possible Soviet domination of Korea, urged this as an alternative to

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[50] Ibid.

trusteeship. The British thought trusteeship was a good idea but they questioned whether it would work in Korea.[51]

The repetition of doubts about the feasibility of a joint Soviet-American trusteeship would not have had the effect of shaking Washington's commitment, had the autumn of 1945 not seen a steady growth of new problems, sources of tension, and suspicions between America and Russia.[52] Byrnes moved away slightly from the idea of trusteeship on November 19, when he said that the United States "was prepared to press for the establishment of an independent Korean Government," and if this could not be obtained, the United States would favor a trusteeship of limited duration under the United Nations. Byrnes recognized, however, that the United States had made an informal commitment to trusteeship prior to occupation and that retention of the form agreed to previously might be necessary to "secure the elimination of the 38th parallel barrier."[53] The question of trusteeship would be decided at the Moscow conference, with the final decision resting on Soviet intentions.

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[51]Charge' in China to Byrnes, September 25, 1945, Ibid., 1057; Ambassador in the United Kingdon to Byrnes, November 14, 1945, Ibid., 1124-1125.

[52]Lisle Rose, After Yalta (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973), 139-150.

[53]General Political and Economic Matters, the Moscow Conference, U.S. Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1945: Russia, Volume II (Washington: GPO, 1970), 578; Byrnes to Langdon, November 29, 1945, FR,1945, VI, 1137-1138.

The United States proposed that a Foreign Ministers Conference be held in Moscow in December, 1945, in order to "resolve the impasse over Rumania and Bulgaria, so that work on peace treaties with Germany's former satellites could begin." Byrnes also hoped to deal with the issue of atomic energy. Both sides made a few token concessions, but the Soviets were left predominant in Eastern Europe and the United States retained its absolute authority in Japan. The Soviet Union accepted Byrnes' atomic energy proposals and reiterated its recognition of Chiang Kai-shek.[54]

Byrnes' efforts were not well received in the United States and his atomic energy agreement was repudiated. Many Americans, including a number of policy makers, had begun to feel that they had misjudged the Kremlin's policy. The actions of the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe in 1945, together with the international communist movement's change in tactics, convinced many U.S. officials "that Moscow had embarked on a program of unlimited expansion which threatened the very survival of the United States and its Western allies." The result of this pattern of thinking was a fundamental reorientation of U.S. policy toward Moscow in the first three months of 1946, that held "that compromise with the Soviet Union was no longer politically feasible."[55] This toughening of U.S.

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[54]Gaddis, Origins, 276-290.

[55]Ibid.; Rose, After Yalta, 140-155; Adam Ulam, The Rivals (New York: Viking Press, 1971), 114-115.

policy was also reflected in the way Washington viewed implementation of the agreement reached concerning Korea.

At the first Foreign Ministers meeting on December 16 Byrnes stated that America's immediate goal was a unified administration of Korea as an initial step toward a "non-military administration of Korea." The vital first step was reunification to alleviate the chaotic conditions in Korea. Byrnes provided a brief outline of the form that a trusteeship should take. Molotov declared that there had never been a formal agreement for a trusteeship, only an exchange of views, and with this Korea passed from the discussion.[56]

On December 20, the Soviets presented their own proposal for Korean independence. After two minor changes, the United States, China, and Britain accepted the Soviet proposal. The final Moscow communique or agreement regarding Korea provided for the creation of a "provisional democratic Korean government" to develop the industry, transportation, and agriculture of Korea. A joint commission composed of the Soviet and American military commands in Korea was to be formed to assist in formation of a provisional government by consulting with democratic parties and social organizations in Korea. The commission's recommendations would be presented for approval to Russia, Britain, China, and the United

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[56]Memo by U.S. Delegation at the Moscow Foreign Ministers Conference, December 17, 1945, FR, 1945, II, 642-643.

State prior to any final agreement.[57]

The joint commission, working with the provisional government and Korean democratic organizations was to develop measures to aid in the democratic, social, and economic progress of Korea for a period of up to five years (in other words, a trusteeship). Finally, the commission was to convene a joint meeting of the Soviet and American commands in Korea to work out measures for establishment of permanent coordination in the administrative-economic sphere.[58]

The Moscow agreement was the basis on which Korea's future would depend. The declaration was vague and lacking in specifics, especially in relation to procedures leading to the formation of the provisional government, but it did at least set up a procedure for creation of an independent Korea. Perhaps equally important was that some form of agreement had been reached after a long period of indecisiveness and stagnation. While imperfect, the agreement at least provided a method for resolving the situation. It remained to be seen whether the mechanism of the joint commission could be made to work--and whether the Korean people would accept a decision reached without their knowledge.

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[57]Moscow Communique Regarding Korea, December 27, 1945, FR, 1945, VI, 1150.

[58]Ibid.

CHAPTER III

TRUSTEESHIP AND THE SOVIET-AMERICAN JOINT COMMISSION

With the agreement reached at the Moscow Foreign Ministers Conference in December, 1945, the Korean question entered a new phase. An apparatus, the Joint Commission, had been established to deal with the problem of reunifying Korea and setting up a trusteeship. The agreement did not spell out specifically the steps to be taken, nor did it indicate that both sides had varying degrees of commitment to the ideas embodied in the Moscow agreement.

Perhaps the most severe fault of the Moscow agreement was that it failed to gauge correctly the intensity of the Korean reaction to the idea of trusteeship, which varied "from depression and disillusionment to anger and open defiance." The very mention of the word trusteeship caused "unreasoning resentment and violent opposition in the Korean mind." The initial reaction was limited to handbills, posters, newspaper articles, and demonstrations expressing the strongest possible opposition to trusteeship.[1]

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[1]Aide to the Political Adviser in Seoul(Emmons) to Byrnes, December 30, 1945, FR,1945, VI, 1152-1153.

Preliminary indications were that the resentment was directed not at the United States, but more towards the Soviet Union and local politicians who had failed to unify the country, thus providing an excuse for a trusteeship. Hodge, trying to quiet the situation, emphasized that the question of trusteeship had not been decided yet, and that removal of the 38th parallel barrier and creation of a provisional government would be significant first steps toward Korean independence.[2]

Hodge's belief that trusteeship was not a keystone of U.S. policy was based on more than wishful thinking. In addition to Byrnes' statement prior to the Moscow conference that consideration was being given to dropping the trusteeship concept, must be added his public statement of December 30, that "the Joint Commission . . .may find it possible to dispense with trusteeship." John Carter Vicent said much the same thing in a radio address, noting that the clear implications of the Moscow agreement were that "self-government and independence are the goal, and that trusteehip is only a procedure, which may or may not be necessary."[3] Hodge could be forgiven for thinking that America no longer was pressing for trusteeship.

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[2] Ibid.

[3] Radio Address, December 30, 1945, Department of State Bulletin, XIII, 340(December 30, 1945), 1036; Radio Address, Ibid., XIV, 344(January 27, 1945), 107-108.

The Russians apparently had a different view of the importance of trusteeship to the Moscow agreement. On January 23, Stalin informed Harriman that Soviet-American relations in Korea had not gotten off to a favorable start. Information had been received from Korea that U.S. representatives were advocating abrogation of trusteeship. In addition, newspaper articles stated that "only the U.S.S.R. and not the U.S. had insisted on trusteeship." Harriman could do nothing but note that the "alleged statements" attributed to U.S. officials in Korea were not representative of his government's policy.[4] Stalin's concern, which indicated the importance the Soviets attached to trusteeship, became even clearer as discussions in the Joint Commission proceeded.

While general disorder over trusteeship declined somewhat, orderly demonstrations continued. On January 12, the National Mobilization Committee Against Trusteeship staged a large demonstration in Seoul. Hodge continued to assure the Korean people that a final decision on trusteeship had not been reached, and that it was Russia, not America, that was pushing the idea.[5]

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[4]Harriman to the Secretary of State, January 25, 1946, U.S. Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1946: The Far East, Volume VIII(Washington: GPO, 1971), 622.

[5]Benninghoff to the Secretary of State, January 23, 1946, Ibid., 615; Soon, Korea, 105.

The Russians were understandably reluctant to accept the "blame" for trusteeship. In a statement published in Tass on January 25, 1946, the Soviet Union claimed that incorrect reports were being spread that made it seem like the Soviet Union alone had sought the establishment of a trusteeship in Korea, despite American opposition. According to Tass, this was untrue as the United States had initiated discussion of the subject at Moscow and had always wanted a trusteeship for Korea. The Russian proposal had been much more generous than the American plan, since it limited the trusteeship period strictly to five years, and provided for creation of a national Korean government.[6]

The Korean reaction to this report was both swift and critical of America's "betrayal" of Korea. Hodge was equally quick to criticize the State Department in a stinging memorandum. He accused State Department officials of failing to pass on vital information that would have confirmed that little attention had been paid either to the information sent from Seoul on the psychological state of the Korean people or to Seoul's repeated recommendations. The accuracy of the Tass statement was a surprise to Hodge, especially in light of recent indications from the State Department that trusteeship might not be necessary.[7]

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[6]Charge' in the Soviet Union(Kennan) to the Secretary of State, FR. 1946, VIII, 617.

[7]MacArthur to JCS, February 2, 1946, Ibid., 628-630.

What was particularly galling to Hodge was that the Tass statement came after the quelling of the revolts and riots that had accompanied the announcement of the trusteeship. America's position in Korea had been the strongest since the initial landing, but now the Korean people felt the United States had "sold them down the river," this time to Russia instead of Japan. The whole situation led many thinking and educated Koreans to feel that they would have to fight for their freedom and independence. Hodge closed with the observation that the experts who guided the State Department's policy were people who either had never seen Korea or had not been in Korea since the war. In the future, Hodge wanted to be informed fully about U.S. policy in Korea.[8]

There was more at the center of Hodge's discontent than the issue of being properly informed about U.S. policy. The essence of the split between the State Department and Seoul was the question of whether any element of the Moscow agreement could be implemented in a way that would reflect favorably on America. Hodge believed that the Moscow agreement, with its emphasis on collaboration with the Soviet Union, would not work. The Russians had done nothing to indicate that they would help to unify Korea as long as the United States kept forces there. Hodge believed that the

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[8] Ibid.

north and south would never be united until the Russians were sure that the whole country would be soundly communistic. George Kennan, the Chargé in Moscow, supported this sentiment when he said, "There can now be little doubt that the U.S.S.R. wishes to assure earliest and most complete exclusion of other great powers from all connection with Koream aims."[9]

Hodge's criticisms and doubts caused Byrnes considerable concern. Byrnes was unwilling to admit either that policy had shifted in the December period or that Hodge had been uninformed about policy. Byrnes was "somewhat perturbed by the attitude taken by General Hodge" at a time when the Joint Commission discussions had just commenced. The Secretary admitted that he would "feel less concern as to the outcome if Hodge were not so convinced of failure at the very outset of the discussions."[10] Byrnes discomfort is understandable since Hodge was charged with executing a policy he disagreed with.

Hodge's initial responsibility was to carry out the provisions of section four of the Moscow agreement to set up a joint conference with the Soviets "to work out measures for the establishment of permanent coordination" between the two in the "administrative-economic sphere". Political matters were not to be included in the discussions. Hodge arranged

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[9] Ibid.; Kennan to Byrnes, January 25, 1946, Ibid., 619-620.

[10] Byrnes to the Secretary of War(Patterson), April 1, 1946, Ibid., 655-656.

with his Soviet counterpart, General Ivan Chistiakov, for discussions to begin in Seoul on January 15, 1946.[11]

The discussions, which met with little success, quickly demonstrated that while the United States wished to discuss matters on a broad scale, Russia hoped to limit the talks to specific issues. According to Benninghoff, "the United States and Soviet delegations approached the solution of economic and administrative problems from widely divergent angles." The U.S. position was based on a belief that it was necessary to remove the 38th parallel barrier in order to treat Korea as a single economic and administrative unit. The Soviet Union was intent on limiting discussions to a very narrow range of subjects. While the United States sought to do everything "to open up the country" and unify its economic and administrative facilities, the Soviets approached the problem as one of "exchange and coordination between two adjoining but separate zones of military responsibility."[12]

Some agreements were made: rail, motor, and water transportation on a limited basis; establishment of joint control posts along the parallel; limited exchange of first class mail; limited movement of Koreans from zone to zone;

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[11]JCS to MacArthur, January 15, 1946, Ibid., 6-7; Hodge to Byrnes, January 12, 1946, Ibid., 608-609.

[12]Benninghoff to Byrnes, February 15, 1946, Ibid., 634-635.

allocation of radio frequencies; and measures for future coordination between the two commands. The question of exchanging rice for raw material from the north proved to be the issue on which the discussions halted. The United States faced a serious rice shortage in south Korea and had no rice available for exchange. The Russians did not believe this, leading to an end of the discussions.[13]

Benninghoff felt that the Soviet Union contemplated "a lengthy occupation of at least the northern half of Korea." Moscow probably would resist all U.S. efforts to open the country and treat it as a single unit until it had "gained political ascendance in the country" or was forced to change because of political necessity.[14]

Officials in Korea probably saw Soviet behavior as little more than a repeat of its performance in Eastern Europe (though America's total exclusion of Russia from the occupation of Japan undoubtedly affected Moscow's attitude). Hodge, determined to avoid such a repetition, wanted to make a key issue of the Soviet "blackout" of north Korea--that is, the closing of the Soviet zone to Western visitors and reporters as well as south Koreans. In order to solve the problems facing Korea, Hodge believed this "blackout" had to be broken down. The initial efforts to

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[13] Ibid., 635. [14] Ibid., 636.

accomplish this failed, and Hodge decided to instruct the American delegation to the Joint Commission to begin proceedings with "a strong demand for complete freedom of speech, press and movement within Korea of Koreans . . . ." The task of freely consulting Korean parties and leaders would be impossible if this was not accomplished. Hodge was willing to postpone consideration of the structure of the interim government until the Russians agreed.[15]

The State Department was reluctant to take up Hodge's suggestions as "make or break" propositions. While U.S. delegation members should press for freedom of speech, press, and travel, the issue should not be used as an excuse to delay or abandon the Joint Commission talks in the event of Soviet intransigence. Negotiations on the structure of an interim government should be pursued.[16]

There were, however, officials in the State Department who agreed with Hodge. A February 28 memorandum, intended for MacArthur, severely criticized the Soviet Union for employing the same tactics it had used in Eastern Europe to gain control through utilization of Soviet-controlled minority groups. Because of this, Hodge should make a public statement about the primary reason for the previous deadlock--Soviet refusal to open north Korea--and should

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[15]MacArthur to JCS, February 12, 1946, Ibid., 632.

[16]JCS to MacArthur, February 28, 1946, Ibid., 644.

pressure the Kim Koo group to adopt and implement a progressive program, which would lead to U.S. support for the group.[17] While the suggestions in this proposed directive would not have provided an auspicious start for the Joint Commission discussion, they nonetheless reflected a growing tendency among some U.S. officials "to offer no further concessions of the kind Byrnes had made at Moscow."[18]

The Joint Commission talks began on March 20, 1946. The State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee sent Hodge a policy paper on February 11, making his goals first and foremost the formulation of plans for creation of a provisional government and utilization of that government to gain economic, social, and political progress in Korea. It provided a specific procedure for consultation with Korean democratic parties and social organizations. The United States was to encourage a coalition of parties to achieve a unity of principle and the Joint Commission was to choose a group of Korean leaders for consultation on formation of a provisional government. Such leaders should be selected after full consultation with all democratic parties and social organizations throughout Korea. Extremists of the right and left were to be avoided.[19]

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[17]Proposed Memo for MacArthur, Drafted in the Department of State, February 28, 1946, Ibid., 645.

[18]Gaddis, Origins, 284.

[19]Policy Paper Adopted by SWNCC, January 28, 1946, FR,1946, VIII, 624-626.

The proviso to avoid extremists of both left and right presented a growing dilemma for the United States. On February 12, Moscow announced completion of an all-Korean Central Government of North Korea. According to Seoul's evaluation, its members were "violent Communists or unknown Koreans" from Russia and Manchuria. American Military Government believed that the Soviets wanted the Joint Commission to accept this government as the democratic representatives of north Korea, while at the same time trying to force the United States to accept enough south Korean Communists to insure domination of the provisional government.[20]

Hodge found it difficult to induce the same kind of unity among south Korean parties that the Soviet Union had induced in north Korea. The Kim Koo and Rhee groups had never been popular with Washington, and their criticism of trusteeship and their personal attacks on American Military Government and Hodge made them increasingly unpopular with Americans in Korea. The State Department had given Hodge the task of finding a group of centrists to formulate a detailed progressive program that would appeal to the vast majority of Koreans. This group would receive full U.S. backing as a counterweight to the Soviet-backed communist groups. Hodge had the difficult task of conducting negotiations with the Soviets, of operating American Military

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[20]MacArthur to Byrnes, February 24, 1946, Ibid., 640.

Government, and of restructuring the internal political situation in south Korea in a way that would not lead to open conflict with the left and Russia.

Hodge had little success uniting the left and right. When he called a National Emergency Congress in early February, drawing representatives from all announced parties, the Communists refused to participate. The result of the meeting was formation of the Korean Representative Democratic Council, which sought a balance between the left and right. At the last moment the leading leftist, Lyuh Woon-hyung, refused to participate with the result that Rhee led a rightist-dominated Council. The left responded on February 15 with formation of the Democratic National Front. Hodge, however, still intended to keep up the prestige of the Council while trying to gain the full backing of the Korean people to discredit the Communists. He believed this probably would "get the liberal and pink press" of America on his neck, but he felt any other action would be dangerous.[21] With both powers suspicious of the other's actions, and with both building up antithetical political forces in their respective zones, the prospects for successful discussions in the Joint Commission were not bright.

Soviet-American talks in the Joint Commission quickly bogged down in a dispute over the issue of which parties and

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[21] Ibid., 641-642.

social organizations would be eligible to be consulted on the formation of a provisional government. The Soviet Union was opposed to consultation with any groups that publicly opposed the Moscow agreement provision for trusteeship. These groups were invariably rightists, since the Communist groups had been "induced" to change their position from opposition to support on instructions from north Korea. In the process, the Korean Communist Party was "never able again to command the degree of public support that it garnered in the opening months after liberation." The tactical advantage had shifted to the rightists and centrists. While believing there was no point in debating trusteeship since the final decision would rest with the powers who had agreed to the Moscow communique, Byrnes agreed that Korean opposition to trusteeship could not be used as an excuse for exclusion from consultation. While the United States wished to see the Korean situation favorably resolved, it would not be forced into a hasty settlement which denied the Korean people a freely chosen government.[22]

In the first weeks of April, the Joint Commission appeared hopelessly deadlocked over the issue of consultation. The apparent deadlock was broken in the middle of April after America exerted great pressure on the Soviet

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[22]Byrnes to Langdon, April 5, 1946, Ibid., 657; Byrnes to Certain Diplomatic Officers Abroad, April 11, 1946, Ibid.,659; Scalapino and Lee, Communism In Korea, I,276-78.

Union--including a threat of a full press release of Joint Commission proceedings. The Soviets agreed to a formula by which all parties upholding the aims of the Moscow agreement would be consulted. This apparently insured that "moderate rightist elements" would not be excluded.[23] Hodge, however, foresaw a dispute arising over selection of representatives from the parties. He decided to press for immediate consultation, provided the 38th parallel barrier was raised to enable non-leftists complete freedom of political activity in north Korea. An alternate solution would be acceptance of the U.S. view regarding the composition of the provisional government or a full public release of the discussions.[24]

It quickly became apparent that the deadlock had not been resolved. As Hodge predicted, trouble arose over the selection of representatives. The Soviet proposal required that Korean political parties select for consultation only those representatives who had not compromised themselves "by active opposition to the Moscow agreement and the Allies." This was totally unacceptable to Hodge.[25]

On May 6, the Joint Commission adjourned sine die. Accompanying that adjournment was a lengthy press release

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[23]Langdon to Byrnes, April 14, 1946, Ibid., 660.

[24]Acheson to Certain Diplomatic Officers, April 23, 1946, Ibid., 661.

[25]Acheson to Certain Diplomatic Officers, April 25, 1946, Ibid., 661-662.

summarizing both the Joint Commission discussions and the Soviet-American dispute over the issue of consultation. After four weeks of negotiations it was agreed that groups would be consulted if they showed a reasonable degree of cooperation with the Joint Commission. This agreement, published in Communique No. 5 which all parties were to sign, did not require support of trusteeship, but merely that organizations should "cooperate with the Joint Commission in working out of proposals" regarding the trusteeship. The United States interpreted this to mean that parties and organizations could express themselves freely against trusteeship when work began on trusteeship proposals.[26]

In reaching this agreement, the United States continually emphasized that south Koreans were free to speak their minds on the subject of trusteeship. The Soviets interpreted the agreement differently, holding that parties and organizations must not select representatives who had compromised themselves by opposition to the Moscow agreements. While the point was debated, the Chairman of the Representative Democratic Council of South Korea, Syngman Rhee, declared that study of Communique No. 5 had led to the conclusion that signing the document meant "cooperation with the American-Soviet Joint Commission in the matter of forming a provisional government," and that after the government was

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[26]Hodge to Byrnes, May 9, 1946, Ibid., 665-667.

formed, opposition to trusteeship could be expressed openly. The Soviets viewed Rhee's comments as grounds for disqualifying from consultation all parties and organizations affiliated with the Council. The Soviet Union would not consult with these parties until they renounced such views--even if they had signed or intended to sign Communique No. 5.[27]

The United States realized this new situation would lead to a long delay and suggested that the Joint Commission move on to consider the removal of the "38th parallel boundary as an obstacle to reunification." The Soviets refused and there was no choice but to adjourn on May 6, 1946, sine die. In so doing, the United States made it clear that it would not agree to any action that denied the right of participation in consultation to more than 100 Korean parties and social organizations. To do so would violate "the universally accepted right for all people to freedom of expression promised them in the Atlantic Charter."[28]

The Joint Commission discussions presented two dilemmas to the United States. The first involved the desirability of a trusteeship. Hodge, and Byrnes to a lesser extent, viewed trusteeship as either impractical or unnecessary. The Soviet Union, Langdon declared, viewed trusteeship very differently. American authorities in south Korea had played the theme of trusteeship "pianissimo" and had placed

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[27] Ibid. [28] Ibid.

much stock in Byrnes' remarks of December 30, 1945, that the Joint Commission might find it possible to dispense with trusteeship. The Soviet Union, however, made it clear that trusteeship is "the meat of the Moscow communique, that there is no alternative to it and that opposition to it is subversive." Since the Soviets treated trusteeship as "sacred and absolute," Langdon believed it would be wise for the United States to decide firmly for trusteeship.[29]

The importance of the trusteeship issue was confirmed several months later, in a discussion between Arthur Bunce, Seoul's Economic Adviser, and G.M. Balasanov, Russian Political Adviser in north Korea. Both accused the other's government of having tried to insure that friendly parties would dominate a provisional government. Balasanov interpreted Hodge's comments about Communique No. 5 to mean that signing the declaration did not indicate support for trusteeship and that the rightist parties could criticize trusteeship "as a means of whipping up opposition to the JC, the Provisional Government, and the Moscow Declaration." Bunce denied this, but agreed that trusteeship should not be used to make political capital or to sabotage the work of the Joint Commission. He reaffirmed, however, that America would not exclude from consultation all those who might oppose trusteeship.[30]

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[29]Langdon to Byrnes, May 8, 1946, Ibid., 669-674.

[30]Langdon to Byrnes, October 9, 1946, Ibid., 745-746.

The Soviet desire to exclude the rightist elements is quite understandable if it is accepted that a free, independent democratic Korea was never a Soviet goal. Trusteeship seemed the best alternative to achieving, in a way that would not alarm the United States, the Russian goal of a state tied securely to the Soviet Union. The Kremlin, however, clearly had made a mistake in forcing the Korean Communist Party to support trusteeship. The predominant political force in Korea in late 1945, the Korean Communist Party had suffered severe losses because of its support of trusteeship. The rightists used the issue as a "catalytic agent to induce political unity" and to gain increased support. The Soviet Union, stuck with the trusteeship agreement, could make its plans for domination of Korea work only by excluding what they saw as the American-sponsored rightists to make up for the left's losses.[31] Though not planned, a trusteeship probably worked in America's favor by preventing a communist takeover in south Korea.

The internal political situation in south Korea presented another dilemma to America. American Military Government continued to uphold the "civil rights" of all south Koreans because it had failed to produce an effective political force of moderate Koreans. As a result, exclusion of rightist parties from participation would have insured a

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[31]Scalapino and Lee, Communism in Korea, I, 278.

Soviet-dominated state. The United States may have viewed the trusteeship question from the rather impractical point of view of principle. Discussion of trusteeship could have been prohibited until after formation of a provisional government. This would have given Russia concrete proof that the United States did not exclusively favor rightist elements and would have insured rightist participation; it also would have been "un-American".

The breakdown of Joint Commission discussions forced a re-examination of the assumptions on which U.S. policy had been grounded. Should the United States continue to base its Korean policy on Soviet cooperation or should America go it alone or take some middle course? Should the Rhee-Koo rightist groups continue to be bypassed in favor of attempts to create a moderate centrist group? Washington and Seoul had different answers to these questions.

Some of the questions received tentative answers in a May 22 meeting of the Secretaries of State, War, and Navy. In that meeting, the Assistant Secretary of State for Occupied Areas, Major John H. Hilldring, said that the Office of Far Eastern Affairs believed there was not much hope for future Joint Commission accomplishments and suggested that the United States proceed immediately to hold elections in south Korea. These elections would not be for a national government, but for higher political offices than those created in Germany. The United States needed to stimulate political

activity to produce new leadership. Hilldring believed that the use of only American officials in administrating Korea had weakened the U.S. position. The Soviets employed many Koreans in office and they were making capital out of the lack of Koreans in American Military Government. Byrnes agreed that something should be done about that. Secretary of War Robert Patterson sounded a cautionary note on the question of elections, repeating Hodge's characterization of the Koreans as unruly and very backward.[32]

The trend exhibited in the May 22 discussion toward some kind of unilateral U.S. action in Korea, received support in a pessimistic memorandum from William Langdon on May 24. Langdon believed it now was clear that Moscow "intended to impose a united front policy throughout the country" similar to those in Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and Rumania. United States acquiescence in this Russian design would hasten and simplify Soviet control over the entire peninsula. The Soviet Union might delay resumption of negotiations until America's natural impatience, demobilization problems, declining American interests in Korean affairs, and local dissatisfaction with the division of the country obliged the United States to supply solutions on terms that included a united front excluding all elements but those the Communist Party could control. If the United States stood firmly,

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[32]Memo of a Meeting of the Secretaries of War, State, and Navy, May 22, 1946, Ibid., 681.

however, it was likely that Russia would find a compromise solution on a government acceptable to America would best serve long-range Soviet interests, "thereby accelerating our departure from Korea and thus, in her estimate, leaving the Soviets a free hand to pursue their political aims here."[33]

In Langdon's opinion, the United States should show both a firm determination to resist Soviet domination of Korea, and a readiness to stay as long as necessary both to prevent Soviet domination and to consolidate the position of moderate elements in the south and encourage their resistance in the north. Increasing Korean participation in American Military Government, to better prepare Koreans to takeover when the United States departed, was the best way to achieve consolidation. A true coalition of patriotic societies was needed and if one could be obtained, Hodge proposed to increase Korean participation through creation of a Korean Non-Administrative Cabinet and Legislative Body which would enact regulations and laws, subject to U.S. approval, for the period prior to establishment of a provisional government under the Moscow agreement. Elections probably would be received favorably and if carried out at the provincial level would not complicate negotiations if the Joint Commission was reconvened.[34]

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[33] Langdon to Byrnes, May 24, 1946, Ibid., 685-689.

[34] Ibid.; Langdon to Byrnes, June 3, 1946, Ibid., 690.

Langdon denied that Seoul had backed only conservative elements. Kim Koo had been ignored because of his political ineptitude. Rhee, however, had been very helpful in rallying public opinion toward unification and in preventing excessive anti-allied demonstrations. While Hodge did not feel Rhee was essential or even desirable for the success of a future provisional government, he did remain an influential national leader whose cooperation could not be dispensed with at the present time.[35]

The State Department, in a policy planning paper which the War Department and the Navy concurred in, showed a similar trend of thinking. The problem facing America was how to achieve U.S. policy goals through Joint Commission negotiations and through unilateral action in south Korea. The United States still intended "to achieve its objectives in Korea within the framework of the Moscow agreement." Talks with the Soviet Union would be resumed whenever there was any reason to believe there might be a basis for an agreement consistent with American principles. The United States intended to stay in Korea as long as its presence contributed to its basic objectives.[36]

The State Department believed, however, that the impasse in Korea could be resolved favorably only if a

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[35]Langdon to Byrnes, May 24, 1946, Ibid., 685-689.

[36]Hilldring to the Operations Division, War Department, June 6, 1946, Ibid., 692-698.

unilateral course of action was undertaken to win popular support for U.S. principles. This would force Russia to modify its position and would make it easier to reach an understanding. To achieve popular support Hodge would have to broaden Korean participation in posts of responsibility. He should use "popular electoral processes for the election of Koreans to occupy key posts in local and provincial administrations and in the administration of the U.S. zone as a whole." The United States intended to establish through broad electoral processes an advisory legislative body to supersede the Representative Democratic Council. The duty of this body, the South Korean Interim Legislative Assembly, was to formulate and draft laws, to be used at Seoul's discretion, for political, economic, and social reform.[37]

An election was necessary to choose a body more representative of Korean political opinion since the Representative Democratic Council had no leftists. Such a body would be stronger and yet would be more acceptable to Moscow, making the possibility of agreement much better.[38] Thus, while the State Department was willing to pursue a unilateral course, it was a course directed toward reaching an agreement with the Soviet Union.

At the same time, the State Department's policy paper was critical of Seoul's alleged preference for the rightists.

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[37] Ibid. [38] Ibid.

Washington wanted a program which included all political groups and a legislature which would be more representative than the AMG-created Council. Washington also believed the situation in Korea would be much improved if certain personalities who had been storm centers of political controversy would retire temporarily from the scene. This group was described as "older emigre Koreans who have returned to Korea since the capitulation of Japan." They were not representative of Korean political opinion and their presence only hampered U.S. objectives in Korea. American Military Government rejected the references to favoritism, and noted that the State Department's suggestions would achieve the Communist goal of eliminating the rightists from the political scene.[39]

Edwin Pauley, Truman's personal representative on a special mission to the Far East, echoed the growing feeling in U.S. circles that some kind of action was needed to get the Korean situation off dead-center. In a June 22 report to Truman, Pauley expressed great concern that Korea was not receiving the attention and consideration it should. Korea was an "ideological battleground upon which our entire success in Asia may depend." The resolution of the Korean situation would test whether a democratic system could meet

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[39] Ibid.; Langdon to Byrnes, June 7, 1946, Ibid., 700.

the challenge of "defeated feudalism" or of Communism.[40]

The Soviet Union, Pauley believed, had no intention of withdrawing early from Korea, because its actions were designed to stall any agreement while it propagandized Communism in Korea. The Soviet Union and the United States had radically different definitions of "democracy", making true agreement difficult. Korea was a fertile ground for Soviet moves, which probably would be taken over a long period of time since the Soviet Army gave every indication of preparing for a long stay. The Soviets wanted nothing less than dominance in Korea. To avoid this, the United States had to compel compliance with the Moscow agreement. America should counter with its own propaganda campaign, continue to build up south Korea, and should consider taking the issue to the United Nations or the Big Four.[41]

Truman agreed with Pauley's assessment of Korea as an ideological battleground. The President believed the best way to persuade the Soviet Union to comply with the Moscow agreement was "to intensify and persevere in our present efforts to build up a self-governing and democratic Korea, neither subservient to nor menacing any power." In broadening the basis of Korean participation in south Korean administration, a separate south Korean government would not

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[40]Pauley to Truman, June 22, 1946, Ibid., 706-709.

[41]Ibid.

be set up, but increased representation should make it easier to negotiate with the Soviets. Truman also thought that a policy of unilateral action could provoke the Soviets to negotiations. But even if such a plan did not lead to discussions, some kind of action was necessary.[42]

The United States, then, had decided on a unilateral course that would broaden the basis of south Korean participation in administration and would form an interim legislative body designed to strengthen south Korea and America's position in Korea. The success of such a policy depended on the cooperation of Korean political parties.

After the breakdown of Joint Commission talks, Hodge spent a great deal of time trying to persuade Lyuh and Kimm Kiu-sic to form a coalition consisting of the left and right that would eliminate both extremes--the Rhee rightists and the Pak communists. The right would be under Kim Koo, the left under Lyuh, and Kimm in the middle. Negotiations progressed throughout the summer to the point where proposals were formally exchanged for formation of a Coalition Committee, allowing for a ratio of five rightists to five leftists, with Kimm and Lyuh alternating the chairmanship.[43]

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[42]Truman to Pauley, July 16, 1946, Ibid., 713-714.

[43]Langdon to Byrnes, May 14, 1946, Ibid., 677-679; Memo of Conversation Held in the Division of Japanese Affairs, July 16, 1946, Ibid., 715; Langdon to Byrnes, July 13, 1946, Ibid., 710-711; Scalapino and Lee, Korean Communism, I, 281-283.

At a time when the prospects for a balanced coalition appeared to be improving, two events conspired to dim those chances. Hodge's July announcement of elections for formation of the South Korean Interim Legislative Assembly was not greeted favorably. A number of leftists believed such an assembly was premature and served no useful purpose. The support that the announcement did receive came from the rightists, who saw in the proposal a chance to dominate temporarily the South Korean political scene through domination of the Assembly.[44]

The other event which caused gloom in Seoul was the militant opposition of Pak and other south Korean communists to both the Assembly and all coalition efforts with the right. After a trip to north Korea in late July, Pak began a series of strong criticisms of the Coalition Committee. At the same time he launched a drive to form a left coalition, to match a similar coalition drive being carried out in the north. Lyuh was caught in the middle--he was committed publicly to coalition with Kimm, yet he continued to consort secretly with both north and south Korean communists. Lyuh seemed to be trying to gain favor with both sides.[45]

Lyuh's actions, the threat to the coalition talks, and the increased militancy of the communists led Langdon to

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[44]Langdon to Byrnes, July 28, 1946, FR,1946, VIII, 720-721.

[45]Scalapino and Lee, Communism in Korea, I, 282-85.

make a pessimistic report on August 23. Langdon believed that "a small articulate element of the population" felt the U.S. job in Korea was finished. While grateful for U.S. efforts, they now wished to concentrate on the "establishment of their own National Provisional Government and union of their country . . . ." In light of this attitude, the leftists were opposed to Seoul's innovations, while the rightists received them apathetically. The leftists were especially unhappy with U.S. officials, because it was believed they had perpetuated the traditional social order, thus cheating the leftists out of a social revolution. The leftists seemingly were committed to noncooperation.[46]

Langdon felt that State Department proposals had overlooked "Korean pride of stolid conceit in their own institutions." American Military Government under its directives thought it necessary to effect fundamental and long-range reforms, while the Korean people felt this was a task for a Provisional Government and the trusteeship agency. Thus they resented the "raw enthusiasm on our part" to remake Korea. If the United States did not do something very soon, there would be widening sectional and ideological cleavages in Korean society, a diminishing popularity of America, apathy from the right and opposition or non-cooperation from the left to any non-essential administrative activity or any

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[46]Langdon to Byrnes, August 23, 1946, FR, 1946, VIII, 726-729.

innovation in American Military Government, and entrenchment of Soviet influence and a Soviet system in north Korea.[47]

The radical course of action that Pak's Communists had initiated in September did not lighten Langdon's gloom. Violent demonstrations accompanied a series of strikes which started with the railroad workers. Seoul tightened internal policy to match the communist move to radicalism. Three leftist newspapers were suspended and raids were carried out on a number of leftist party offices.[48]

Elections of electors for the South Korean Interim Legislative Assembly were held on October 17 and 22, and went smoothly despite the disturbances and the communist boycott. The left was critical of the short notice given and charged that there were many irregularities. Their criticism of rightist dominance of the election procedures was valid only because the left consistently had refused to cooperate or participate with American Military Government. The election produced, to no one's surprise, an overwhelming majority of rightists among the 45 elected members.[49]

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[47] Ibid.

[48] Scalapino and Lee, Communism in Korea, I, 287-301.

[49] Langdon to Byrnes, November 3, 1946, FR,1946, VII, 761-763; Langdon to Byrnes, November 14, 1946, Ibid., 766-768; Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Smith) to Byrnes, November 13, 1946, Ibid., 765.

While the elections proceeded, the pace of disturbances in south Korea reached a crescendo, as attacks continued on police and other Korean officials. Sabotage of transportation and communication facilities occurred in many areas, with casualties on both sides.[50] The leftist-inspired troubles occurred just as problems with Rhee were growing.

Messages to and from Rhee, intercepted in December, indicated that he intended to fight and wreck U.S. policy in Korea by building up opposition to American policy in the United States and the United Nations. Rhee's "deception and disregard of reality" was unfortunate because of his large and loyal national following.[51] In late December, the indications were that Rhee planned to instigate mass demonstrations against American Military Government. Hodge believed Rhee was a considerable nuisance, but one that could be handled, though cautiously since he had the potential to do irreperable damage.[52] Troubles with Rhee were to become a constant factor in the American experience in Korea.

As 1946 drew to a close, the United States had succeeded in implementing one part of the policy promulgated after the Joint Commission breakdown. A need for action had

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[50]Langdon to Byrnes, November 16, 1946, Ibid.,766-68.

[51]Langdon to Byrnes, December 10, 1946, Ibid., 775-778.

[52]Hodge to Byrnes, December 31, 1946, Ibid., 785-786.

been perceived that would induce the Soviets to return to the talks. The course chosen was to hold elections to form the South Korean Interim Legislative Assembly to provide Koreans with a greater sense of participation in and control over decisions involving their destiny. In gaining this objective though, the United States saw its hopes for a coalition of the right and left dashed. The strength of the right was on the rise and would predominant in the newly elected Assembly. The United States had to decide whether to give its blessing publicly to the rightists.

While pursuing a unilateral course, the United States continued to seek a resumption of the Joint Commission talks, which in part would depend on Washington's and Moscow's perceptions of their desirability. The success of any future discussions, however, would depend on Moscow's willingness to concede on the issue of consultation rights. During 1946, the United States had toughened its policy toward Russia. Soviet machinations in Iran and Turkey, Stalin's February 9 "wars are inevitable" speech, Soviet refusal to join the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, disputes in Germany, Soviet rejection of the Baruch atomic energy plan, the continued rise of Communist parties in France and Italy, combined to make U.S. policy makers especially receptive to the ideas George F. Kennan expressed in his famous February 22 telegram analyzing Soviet behavior.

Kennan's analysis, arriving with perfect timing, articulated emotions deep in the subconscious of official Washington, and thus was powerfully persuasive in providing a framework for viewing Soviet-American relations. Briefly, Kennan saw Soviet foreign policy as based on internal factors. The Soviet view of the world divided into two irreconcilable camps, socialist and capitalist, resulted from the need to justify their totalitarian rule in Russia. The Soviets "relentlessly forced their country onto ever new heights of military power in order to guarantee external security for their internally weak regime."[53]

If, as Kennan believed, Moscow's policy was based only on internal considerations that came from a "traditional and instinctive sense of insecurity," no U.S. actions could mitigate Soviet hostility to the West. The United States faced a political force committed fanatically to the belief that if Soviet power was to be secure, there could be no permanent modus vivendi with the United States, that it was desirable and necessary that the internal harmony of American society be disrupted, that the traditional American way of life be destroyed, and that the international authority of the United States be broken. To meet this challenge, the United States had to resist communist

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[53]George F. Kennan, Memoirs, 1925-1950 (New York: Bantam Edition, 1967), 309-310, 583-588; Gaddis, Origins, 302-303.

efforts to overthrow Western institutions, and then had to await for internal defects in the Soviet system to lead to a change in policy.[54]

The "get tough with Russia" policy became a reality in 1946. Truman was convinced that further compromises with the Soviet Union "would mean political disaster at home." Kennan's analysis of Soviet behavior also convinced Washington officials that Stalin and his associates were "ideological zealots", as they picked out those features of Kennan's evaluation which portrayed the Soviet Union as uncompromising, warlike, aggressive, neurotic, and subversive. In the future, "negotiations would continue, but from now on all concessions would have to come from the other side."[55] For Korea, this attitude meant that unification was not likely to occur as a result of Joint Commision discussions. Already in the spring and summer of 1946, Korea was perceived through the ideological prism of the Cold War. Korea's fate would be decided in the context of the struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union.

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[54]Kennan, Memoirs, 594-596; Gaddis, Origins, 303; Thomas G. Paterson, "George Kennan", in Frank Merli and Theodore Wilson, Makers of American Diplomacy, Volume II, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974).

[55]Gaddis, Origins, 313; Paterson, "George Kennan," Makers.

CHAPTER IV

THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE AMERICAN DECISION TO WITHDRAW FROM KOREA

After the Joint Commission was adjourned in early May, U.S. policy makers implemented a two-pronged approach to solving their problems in Korea. One approach was based on unilateral U.S. actions to strengthen south Korean and to raise U.S. stature among Koreans. With the election and inauguration of the South Korean Interim Legislative Assembly the first phase was completed. The second approach was to seek resumption of the Joint Commission discussions.

Almost immediately after the May breakdown of the Joint Commission talks, Hodge, on instructions from Washington, began corresponding with General Ivan Chistiakov on the subject of resuming negotiations. The exchange initially bore little fruit. The U.S. maintained that there was nothing in the Moscow agreement to justify excluding groups from consultation because of their opposition to trusteeship. In addition, regardless of the Soviet claim to the contrary, there was nothing in the agreement or in the

general usage of the word "democratic" that restricted its application to groups belonging to schools of thought favoring certain classes over others. The Soviets were unilaterally interpreting the Moscow agreement to prohibit Koreans from expressing freely their wishes and desires.[1]

The Soviet Union denied the U.S. charges, claiming that the aims and spirit of the Moscow Declaration made it impossible to consult with parties that declared their support of the agreement, while at the same time adding stipulations which turned their support into empty statements. As far as the term "democracy" went, the Soviet Union believed that it was necessary to consider the actual policies and actions of any party, not its announced intentions.[2]

Both sides continued to argue along these lines throughout the summer and fall of 1946. American Military Government on more than one occasion suggested to Washington that the only way to resolve the deadlock and stop the declining political situation in Korea was for the United States to approach the Soviet Union on the highest possible governmental level, where statements of U.S. intention and determination to stay in Korea would have more effect.[3] The

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[1]Hodge to Chistiakov, August 12, 1946, U.S. Department of State, Korea's Independence (Washington: GPO, 1947), 22-23.

[2]Chistiakov to Hodge, October 26, 1946, Ibid., 23-26.

[3]Memo by State Department Member (Hilldring) of SWNCC, to Marshall, July 25, 1946, FR, 1946, VIII, 718-719; Langdon to Byrnes, August 3, 1946, Ibid., 722-723.

State Department had consistently declined to do this, feeling it would indicate impatience and a weakening of American resolve. The best policy for the United States was to continue to implement vigorously the program that was to culminate in the South Korean Interim Legislative Assembly.[4]

In October, 1946, the State Department seemed ready, after months of frustration, to adopt Seoul's suggestions. A conversation on October 9, between General Arnold and the State Department's top Far Eastern officials, resulted in agreement that a memorandum should be prepared for the Secretary of State suggesting the need for an approach on the governmental level. Later, General John Hilldring said he was prepared, if local efforts obviously were failing to reconvene the Joint Commission, "To recommend to the Secretary that he discuss outstanding problems on Korea with Mr. Molotov," including reconvening the Joint Commission.[5]

While the State Department was contemplating the possibility of making a high-level governmental approach to the Soviet Union, an exchange of letters between Hodge and Chistiakov in late November-December brought near agreement. On February 28, 1947, Chistiakov accepted most of Hodge's

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[4]Acting Secretary of State (Clayton) to Langdon, September 13, 1946, Ibid., 736-737.

[5]Memo of Conversation with General Arnold, October 9, 1946, Ibid., 743; Memo of Conversation by the Acting Chief of the Division of Japanese Affairs (Borton), October 16, 1946, Ibid., 747-748.

modifications and interpretations of an earlier Soviet plan. Some of the accepted proposals included: a declaration in good faith to uphold the Moscow decision would make a group eligible for consultation; a declarant party had the right to appoint the representative it believed would best present its views , though if such individuals were antagonistic the Joint Commission after mutual agreement could require a substitute; a party or organization which had signed Communique No. 5 could not instigate active opposition to the work of the Joint Commission or to any of the Allied powers and if they did so the Joint Commission could, after mutual agreement, exclude them from consultation.[6] The State Department did not feel, however, that Chistiakov's reply provided a "sound basis" for reconvening the Joint Commission and it had been given "no publicity here or in Korea and will not be answered for the time being."[7] This decision reflected a slowly developing change in Washington's commitment to the Moscow declaration.

The internal situation in south Korea in early 1947 forced Hodge to re-emphasize the U.S. commitment to the Moscow agreement. Rhee and his followers were fomenting

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[6]Chistiakov to Hodge, November 26,1946 and Hodge to Chistiakov, December 24, 1946, Korea's Independence, 28-31.

[7]Chistiakov to Hodge, February 28, 1947, Ibid., 31-32; State Department to the Ambassador in Moscow, March 15, 1947, cited in footnote 38, in U.S. Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1947: The Far East, Volume VI(Washington: GPO, 1972), 619.

confusion about the United States, claiming America was committed to an independent south Korea, while at the same time accusing the United States of selling Korea down the river to Communism by negotiating with the Soviet Union.[8]

Hodge continued to urge a governmental approach to reconvene the Joint Commission discussions, feeling that without such an approach, the United States could lose the chance to accomplish its mission in Korea and lose the support of the Korean people, with a resultant danger of violent outbreaks. MacArthur, in transmitting Hodge's memorandum, expressed his serious concern over the Korean situation. He recommended that the entire question be submitted to the United Nations or to a Four Power conference or to a group of disinterested nations. He too felt a government-to-government meeting at the highest levels possible was the best hope of reaching a solution to the Korean problem.[9]

John Vincent's reply reiterated the State Department's policy--for the time being the initiation of an approach to the Russians on a governmental level would not produce the desired results. Such an approach might be misinterpreted as an indication of American over-anxiety to get out of Korea as soon as possible. Yet Vincent did note that

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[8]Langdon to Marshall, January 4 and January 17,1947, FR, 1947, VI, 596-600.

[9]Memo by the Director of the Office of Far Eastern Affairs (Vincent) to the Secretary of State, January 27, 1947, Ibid., 601-603.

in the past months the State Department had considered many of MacArthur's recommendations.[10]

Vincent's memorandum indicated that no change in policy was being contemplated, yet on January 29, a new Secretary of State, George C. Marshall, had Vincent draft a plan to organize a government of south Korea that would be connected economically to Japan and the United States. Both the War Department and the State Department supported a grant-in-aid for south Korea.[11] Assistant Chief of the Division of Japanese Affairs, John Allison, further suggested that the United States submit the Korean problem to the United Nations independent of Russia.[12]

On February 4, General Albert Brown, Chief Commissioner of the U.S. Joint Commission delegation, concluded that the intense efforts of the "extreme rightist block" had made trusteeship such an issue in south Korea that all other political issues were eclipsed. The leaders of this group would keep this "sure-fire issue" in the forefront for its explosive appeal.[13] The situation was slipping away from the optimistic attitude that had prevailed after the elections for the South Korean Interim Legislative Assembly.

In February, Washington had decided "to convene a high-level State Department and War Department Committee to

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[10] Ibid. [11] Ibid.,603. [12] Ibid., fn. 38, 613.

[13] Langdon to Marshall, February 20, 1947, Ibid., 607-608.

make recommendations on future policy in Korea." The Inter-Departmental Committee's report on Korea was produced on February 25 and represented a considerable shift away from past U.S. policy--or as Vincent had stated that policy in late January. The deteriorating situation in Korea, the ascension of a new Secretary of State, and the frustrations of nine months of stagnation produced a willingness to approach Russia on a governmental level.

The Inter-Departmental Committee concluded that Marshall should discuss "the question of Korea with the Soviets on his upcoming trip to Moscow." This approach, along with funds "for economic rehabilitation, educational and governmental improvement, and political guidance," was necessary for a satisfactory solution of the Korean problem. A properly planned, aggressive approach would minimize the appearance of weakness, would be of great assistance to Hodge, would clarify America's position with regard to its intentions in Korea, and would show Congress "that all possible efforts had been made to achieve a Korean settlement."[14]

To give the impression of a strong U.S. commitment in Korea it was essential that Congress approve a three year program of aid for Korea--this would enable the United States to approach "the Soviets on a sufficiently strong basis to

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[14]Marshall to MacArthur, February 7, 1947, Ibid., 605-606; Memo by the Special Inter-Departmental Committee on Korea, February 25, 1947, Ibid., 608-609.

give hope of securing a settlement satisfactory to the United States." The figure of $600 million for the three year program was mentioned, of which $250 million would be provided in 1948. If such a program were not approved, Washington feared that the Korean situation would so deteriorate that America's world position would be seriously impaired.[15]

Other recommendations were: bring civilians into American Military Government; end MacArthur's political but not military responsibilities in Korea; issue a new directive to Hodge; intensify efforts to include Koreans in government; and dispatch business, industrial, and educational groups for reform and rehabilitation of Korean society. The Committee's report also noted that there was some pressure, primarily from the Rhee group, for U.S. recognition of an independent south Korea. While this step might enable the United States to rid itself of some onerous burdens, the report concluded that no single act could solve the present problems facing Korea. Recognition of south Korean independence would not solve her economic problems--only unification and a program of aid could do that.[16]

An independent south Korea might provide an excuse to end U.S. financial assistance, but such a course would

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[15]Inter-Departmental Committee Report, Ibid., 614. It is likely that Truman Doctrine requests made it impossible to ask for funds in the magnitude suggested in the report.

[16]Ibid., 611, 617.

mean starvation and economic chaos. Even more important, the Committee believed it would be a "direct break of our commitments,both to our allies and to the Koreans," commitments that were being watched with great concern "by all small powers and dependent peoples throughout the world." Fulfillment of U.S. pledges would show that American foreign policy was based on fundamental principles that would not be abandoned. The rest of the world would perceive recognition and withdrawal of U.S. forces as a complete defeat for the United States in a test of strength with the Soviets. In terms of world power relations, the effect would certainly far transcend a mere transfer of south Korea from U.S. to Soviet control. The resulting loss of prestige and influence, and the consequent increase in Soviet influence and power "would have prejudicial repercussions not only on the U.S. interests in the Far East, but on the entire U.S. world position."[17]

The Committee, however, did not totally reject the feasibility of seeking a solution outside the Moscow agreement. Presenting the problem to the United Nations would be unsatisfactory for three reasons: first, it would be an admission of America's failure in Korea and would damage U.S. prestige; second, the Soviets could counter with a claim that America was committed to an international agreement regarding Korea which she refused to implement; third, such

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[17] Ibid., 611-612.

action probably would not result in a speedy solution of the problem. If all other efforts to solve the Korean problem failed, however, referral of the question to the United Nations might become desirable. This could be done only when it could be shown conclusively that Russia was deliberately preventing a solution to the Korean problem.[18]

Secretary of War Robert Patterson had reached a different conclusion than had the State Department's Committee. He believed the situation in Korea was so potentially explosive that an internal situation could develop which would force a precipitate American withdrawal under conditions gravely detrimental to its position in the Far East and in the world. As long as the United States remained in Korea this danger would continue, since no program could satisfy the intense desire for independence felt in Korea. On the basis of the relative strength of the two occupation forces, the Korean occupation was a most difficult one to maintain. From the standpoint of U.S. security "the probabilities of long-term remunerative results are low," especially if a speedy solution uniting the country was not attained.[19]

Patterson was convinced that America should "get out of Korea at an early date," and that all measures "should have early withdrawal as their overriding objective."

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[18] Ibid., 613.

[19] Patterson to Acheson, April 4,1947, Ibid., 626.

Patterson was aware of the importance of a solution that did not abandon Korea to the Soviet Union. He also was cognizant that America's failure to carry out its policies would have a negative effect on Japan and on U.S. security interests in the Far East. But it equally was clear that from the standpoint of U.S. security interests, American policy in Asia could not be viewed on a piecemeal basis; Korean policy had to be an integrated part of an overall strategy.[20]

Patterson also believed that requests for funds should be made only after it could be shown that the following had been done: that every effort had been made on the international level to solve the economic ills arising from the division at the 38th parallel; that the United States had developed a program that would insure reduction of the cost of the Korean commitment at an early date; and, that if an agreement with the Soviet Union could not be reached, there was a program available that included alternatives such as referral of the problem to the United Nations or establishment of an independent south Korean government.[21] Thus, in April, 1947, the War Department had decided that if negotiations bogged down again, the two policy alternatives to be pursued were to refer the problem to the United Nations and to establish an independent south Korea, thus enabling the United States to withdraw. This policy eventually was

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[20] Ibid., 626-627. [21] Ibid., 627.

accepted, and during the next few months the War Department and then the Defense Department pushed these alternatives against opposition from the State Department.

The State Department's reaction to Patterson's comments indicated that as yet its thinking had not developed along the same lines. Vincent, in a conciliatory memorandum, pointed out that there was a consensus of opinion between the two departments and that Patterson's extreme pessimism was the only real difference. While agreeing with Patterson about the intensity of the Korean desire for independence, Vincent believed the dangers arising from this desire were being exaggerated. Early withdrawal was desirable, but a definition of "early" would have to be reached; Vincent believed three years was early. Finally, while Patterson felt that an independent south Korea and referral of the problem to the United Nations were definite policy alternatives, Vincent was able only "to envision the possibility" of such a course.[22] Vincent's comments were designed to give the impression that a consensus existed where there was none.

While Vincent tried to smooth over inter-departmental differences, Acheson informed Marshall of the Committee's recommendation that while in Moscow he should approach the Soviets on the subject of reconvening the Joint Commission.

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[22]Vincent to Acheson, April 8, 1947, 740.00119 Control(Korea)/4-847, in Central File Records, Decimal Files, 1910-1949, Record Group 59, Department of State Branch, National Archives, Washington D.C.

The result was that Marshall and Molotov agreed to reconvene the Joint Commission on May 20, on a basis that closely resembled the one Hodge had outlined on December 24, 1946, and which Chistiakov had accepted on February 20, 1947.[23]

Announcement that the Joint Commission would be reconvened was not met with unanimous enthusiasm in south Korea. The "Rhee, Kim Koo, anti-trusteeship, anti-Soviet elements" were trying desperately "to bulldoze all rightist parties and groups" into their opposition movement. Mass political meetings were forbidden in an attempt to head off demonstrations that would eliminate the rightists from consultation, which some rightists may have desired. If excluded, only the leftists would remain, making a communist-dominated state a certainty, an outcome America would not accept in light of "our Government's declaration of war on Communism."[24]

While the internal situation in south Korea did not bode well for the Joint Commission, rapid progress marked the "easy and informal" first session. By June 7, agreement had been reached on both the order of consulting the parties and on unlimited oral consultation, and questionnaires had been printed. Langdon concluded from the relatively cordial

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[23]Acheson to Marshall, April 11, 1947, FR,1947, VI, 630-631; for the exchange of letters see Ibid., 632, 638, 640, 643, 644.

[24]Political Adviser in Korea(Langdon) to Marshall, May 19, 1947, Ibid., 645,

manner of the talks that the Soviets might be trying "to produce concrete results by July or August." By June 11, Langdon could report that the delegations had exchanged "detailed written data on the structure, functions, and directing personnel of the executive, legislative, and judiciary organs of authority of North and South Korea."[25]

The early success in the Joint Commission allowed political parties in both zones to apply for recognition for consultation. In the north, three parties and 35 social organizations, with an all-leftist membership of 13 million, applied. In the south, 425 parties with a membership of 62 million applied, indicating duplication since Korea's entire population was only 30 million. Hodge estimated that the rightists held a slight majority of the total membership of all parties in Korea.[26]

With the negotiations progressing to an apparent settlement, the Soviet Union reverted to its old position on consultation. In discussions on June 27, the Soviet Union announced that it would insist on excluding from consultation eight rightist parties, with a membership of over three million. Other parties also would be excluded if it appeared that they were opposing trusteeship or the Moscow declaration. On the 28th, the Russian delegation insisted that

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[25]Langdon to Marshall, June 9, 1947, Ibid., 668-71; Ibid., June 11, 1947, Ibid., 673-674.

[26]Hodge to Marshall, June 26,1947, Ibid., 679.

approximately 35 groups belonging to an anti-trusteeship committee formed in January, 1947, be excluded unless they quit. The United States refused a blanket exclusion based on membership in an inactive committee. Each case should be considered on its individual merit.[27]

In large part, the Soviet reversal was another attempt to ensure a leftist-dominated Korean Provisional government. If the groups involved had to quit publicly the anti-trusteeship committee, they undoubtedly would bolt the Joint Commission, carrying almost all rightist support with them. But another element in Soviet thinking was the violence with which the Rhee rightists attacked trusteeship and the Soviet Union, equating cooperation with the Joint Commission with Communism and Russian control. Hodge was disturbed too, believing that Rhee's propaganda served only to confuse a "politically infantile people." The rightist groups, Hodge thought, had not changed their opposition to the Moscow agreement, but had agreed to cooperate with the Joint Commission only to gain a provisional government opposed to trusteeship.[28]

Hodge's bitter criticism of the right continued on July 7, when he reported that Rhee's activities were all

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[27]Political Adviser in Korea (Jacobs) to Marshall, June 28, 1947, Ibid., 680-682; Marshall to Jacobs, July 2, 1947, Ibid., 682.

[28]Jacobs to Marshall, June 28, 1947, Ibid., 682; Hodge to Marshall, July 2 and July 3, 1947, Ibid., 682-684, 686.

part of a campaign to break up the Joint Commission and establish a separate south Korean government. On the 16th, he wrote that "Rhee and his gang are engaged in all-out opposition to the Russians, the Joint Commission, General Hodge, and military government . . .", using the anti-trusteeship issue as a rallying point.[29] The next day, after a conversation with Rhee, Hodge reported that Rhee "would not participate in the work of the Joint Commission and would not cooperate unless the results satisified Rhee and his party.[30]

Hodge's growing and intense dislike of Rhee once again presented the United States with a problem of whom to support in Korea (especially since Lyuh Woon-hyung,the only hope for forceful moderate leadership, had been assassinated on July 19). The difficulty developed because no matter how flexible and open to compromise the United States was, the Soviet Union adamantly refused to change its Joint Commission position. With no prospect of progress in sight, the State Department instructed the U.S. delegation not to call any more meetings except for the purpose of preparing a joint report on Joint Commission proceedings.[31]

With the onset of the Joint Commission deadlock, the United States had to develop a new course of action. Joseph

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[29]Hodge to Marshall, July 16,1947, Ibid., 703-704.

[30]Jacobs to Marshall, July 16,1947, Ibid., 704-706.

[31]Henderson, Korea, 133-34; Jacobs to Marshall, July 25, 1947, Ibid., 732-733; Acting Secretary of State to Jacobs, August 27, 1947, Ibid., 774.

Jacobs, the new Political Adviser in Seoul, concluded, after a trip to north Korea, that the Soviet Union had established a "Korean Communist State with all its trappings." Even if the Joint Commission was successful in implementing the Moscow agreement, the situation in North Korea would make integration of the two zones extremely difficult. On July 25, he added that the U.S. delegation to the Joint Commission believed that the present lines of arguments "are virtually exhausted and that new lines must be adopted."[32]

John Allison's memorandum of July 29, added substance to Jacobs' suggestion that a new course be considered. Allison, Assistant Chief of Northeast Asian Affairs, recommended that in case the Soviets broke off the Joint Commission talks prior to August 5, the United States should seek a Four Power plan for early, secret, multi-party elections in both zones to choose provisional legislatures, leading eventually to formation of a Provisional Government. This Government would consult with the Four Powers for aid and assistance "needed in order to put Korea on a firm economic foundation." This should be done with speed, as "no undue delay can be permitted." If a speedy arrangement could not be reached, the United States should present the United

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[32]Jacobs to Marshall, July 7, 1947, Ibid., 690-691; Jacobs to Marshall, July 25, 1947, Ibid., 731-733.

Nations the problem at its next general session.[33]

Meanwhile, Allison believed the United States should carry out immediately the previously mentioned elections. If the United Nations failed to solve the problem the United States should be ready to grant independence to south Korea, and should be actively preparing a study of the economic and political consequences of such a step. Allison's recommendations took form in a telegram of August 26, from Washington to the Soviet Foreign Office. The Soviet Union unequivocally rejected the program on September 5, 1947.[34]

Following in September on the heels of the Soviet refusal to compromise were a series of vitally important policy discussions. On September 9, 1947, Francis Stevens, Assistant Chief of the Eastern European Affairs Division, after a meeting in the State Department, wrote to George Kennan and John Allison that he was "increasingly concerned as to whether what seemed to be a fairly unanimous agreement to abandon the Koreans to their fate may not be a rather short-sighted policy from the standpoint of our long-range interests." While conceding that militarily Korea was a strategic liability, Stevens nonetheless felt there were important "ideological imponderables" that should not be

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[33]Memo by Allison, July 29, 1947, and Ad Hoc Committee Report on Korea, August 4,1947, Ibid., 734-35,736-40.

[34]Lovett to the Embassy in the Soviet Union, August 26, 1946, Ibid., 771-774; Molotov to the Secretary of State, September 5, 1947, Ibid., 779-780.

overlooked in making a final decision on Korean policy.[35]

Stevens believed that "in the ideological struggle between East and West, between Communist and Western political concepts," decisions based on local considerations could have a worldwide impact. Only in Korea were Soviet and American forces in direct contact, sharing the administration of the country. America's pledge to establish an independent Korea had made the country a symbol of both the East-West struggle and of the sincerity of America's commitment to the national aims of Asian people. To allow Korea to fall by default to the Soviets would present the world with another U.S. defeat, thus damaging America's prestige. The faith of Asian national movements would be shaken and the consequences would be far-reaching. Stevens hoped that these factors would receive "serious consideration before a hasty decision is taken to withdraw entirely from Korea."[36]

General Albert Wedemeyer's report to Truman reiterated Stevens concerns. Wedemeyer believed that a withdrawal of all U.S. aid from Korea would result in the creation of a Soviet satellite, an event that "would cost the United States an immense loss in moral prestige among the peoples of Asia" and would have serious repercussions in Japan. Soviet prestige in Asia would increase, as would chances for "further

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[35]Memo by Stevens to George Kennan and John Allison, September 9, 1947, Ibid., 784-785.

[36]Ibid.

Soviet expansion among nations close in proximity to the Soviet Union." If the United Nations provided no solution, the United States would have to decide whether to withdraw or whether to organize an independent south Korea that America would support economically and militarily. Wedemeyer felt it was vital for the United States to prevent direct or indirect Soviet control of Korea.[37]

On September 19, Joseph Jacobs added a probing and perceptive analysis of U.S. policy in Korea. According to Jacobs, the United States needed to reorient its Korea policy in light of the present world situation. Any decision to undertake heavy commitments in south Korea should be based on the carefully considered question of whether Korea was of sufficiently vital importance in the context of Soviet-American relations within the foreseeable future for the United States to undertake the risk and expense of holding south Korea. A corollary question was, if the United States did not have the resources to enter into all the undertakings around the Soviet perimeter considered strategically necessary, was south Korea one area that could be safely abandoned in favor of some other nearby undertaking?[38]

If the answer was that Korea was so vital to

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[37]Report to the President on China-Korea, Submitted by LT. General A.C. Wedemeyer, Dated September 19, 1947, Ibid., 796-803.

[38]Jacobs to Marshall, September 19, 1947, Ibid., 805.

America's policy of containment of the Soviet Union that it had to be held, then the Moscow agreement should be liquidated as quickly and gracefully as possible and plans should be implemented to develop south Korea "with the utmost vigor." The costs simply would have to be borne; there was no other alternative. If policy makers, however, decided south Korea was not vital to America's defense or that it could not be held with existing available resources, then America should compromise with the Russians to work out a plan for the formation of an all-Korean government, with simultaneous withdrawal of all forces to follow. Such withdrawal would result in a "state of anarchy and bloodletting", thus eliminating the need for aid or assistance. Jacobs concluded that "We cannot give democracy, as we know it, to any people or cram it down their throats."[39]

The State Department had put the question of the strategic value of Korea to the military on September 15.[40] Secretary of Defense James Forrestall answered on September 29. The Joint Chiefs of Staff concluded that the United States, from a military standpoint, had little strategic interest in maintaining its present troops and bases in Korea. If hostilities broke out in the Far East, American forces in Korea would be a military liability and could not be

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[39] Ibid., 805-806.

[40] Memo by SWNCC to the Secretary of the JCS, September 15, 1947, Ibid., 817-818.

maintained there without substantial reinforcements prior to the initiation of hostilities. In addition, the Korean peninsula probably would be bypassed should the United States wish to conduct offensive operations on the Asiatic continent. Yet the presence of strong enemy air and naval bases in Korea could interfere "with U.S. communications and naval bases in East China, Manchuria, the Yellow Sea, the Sea of Japan, and adjacent islands."[41]

The Joint Chiefs felt that the 45,000 men in south Korea could be better used elsewhere. Their withdrawal from Korea would not impair the Far East Command's military position unless Russia established military strength in Korea sufficient to assault Japan. The military warned, however, that a precipitate withdrawal could possibly lower U.S. military prestige "to the extent of adversely affecting cooperation in other areas more vital to the security of the United States." A program of economic, political, and cultural rehabilitation should accompany withdrawal.[42]

The Defense Department's view of withdrawal seemed to crystallize previous thinking on the subject. Vincent, in November, 1946, had expressed fears about the effects of a precipitate withdrawal when he noted that the United States "would get into all kinds of trouble" if a

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[41]Forrestal to Marshall, September 29, 1947, Ibid., 817-818.

[42]Ibid.

simultaneous troop withdrawal occurred before the establishment of a unified Korean administration. Hilldring agreed that a strong central government was a necessity for Korea, but he also concluded that should the Russians present a program for dual withdrawal the next day, the United States "very properly" should decide to "haul our freight." In the February 1947, Inter-Departmental report, withdrawal had been predicated on establishment of safeguards to guarantee Korean political and territorial integrity.[43]

The last and most important of the many September policy discussions came on September 29, in a meeting in the State Department, during which it was agreed that the U.S. position in Korea ultimately would be untenable even with a considerable expenditure of money and effort. But the United States could not "scuttle and run" from Korea without a great loss of prestige and standing in Asia and the world. Therefore, a settlement in Korea should be reached that would allow the United States to withdraw as soon as possible with a minimum of bad effects. Nothing should be done to make it impossible for a Soviet-American agreement on Korea to be reached. Thus, any U.S. resolution for the United Nations should be written in a manner which presented both the American and the Russian position.

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[43]Vincent to Hilldring, November 4, 1946, FR,1946, VIII, 764; Hilldring to Vincent, November 8, 1946, Ibid., 764-765; Memo by Inter-Departmental Committee on Korea, February 25, 1947, FR, 1947, VI, 608-617.

Finally, it was essential that the U.S. proposals not be perceived "in a take-it-or-leave-it manner."[44]

By the end of September, 1947, the United States had reached three conclusions regarding its commitment in Korea. First, policy makers had concluded that Korea was not vital strategically to U.S. secu ity interests and given the limited availability of resources it could be a strategic liability in case of an Asian conflict. Second, a precipitate withdrawal that did not provide even a chance for a free and independent Korea would cause a potentially serious loss of U.S. prestige in Asia and in the world. With this in mind, the third conclusion was that the best way for the United States to achieve a quick withdrawal, with a minimum of bad effects, was to build up south Korea's strength while presenting the problem to the United Nations. These conclusions were reached in the context of the Soviet-American conflict then in progress, within which the Soviets and Americans viewed the other's actions through a veil of suspicion.

The gradual deterioration in Soviet-American relations that began before the end of WWII, accelerated rapidly in 1946 and climaxed with enunciation of the Truman Doctrine on March 12, 1947. The Truman Doctrine's significance did not lay in its being a fundamental reorientation of policy

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[44]Memo by the Director of Far Eastern Affairs (Butterworth) to the Under-Secretary of State (Lovett), October 1, 1947, Ibid., 820-822.

nor in being the first step in the containment of the Soviet Union, for it was neither of these. Rather, it was significant because it was "the first real situation in which special appropriations were necessary to carry out the Administration's program." The need to scare Congress into providing $400 million in military aid for Greece and Turkey, led the Truman administration "to state its intentions--or overstate them--in universal terms."[45]

Truman, in his speech to Congress, committed America to support free people "who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures." At the present time every nation had to choose between two basic, alternative ways of life--democratic versus communist. The United States had a duty to support democracy against communism. In July, 1947, George Kennan argued that the only way to deal with inevitable Soviet expansion directed at the West was to contain the Soviet Union "by the adroit and vigilant application of counterforce at a series of constantly shifting geographical and political points, corresponding to the shifts and maneuvers of Soviet policy." Many interpreted Truman's and Kennan's remarks as a commitment "to police the world against communism."[46] The reality, however, was quite different and this was obvious in Korea.

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[45] John Gaddis, "Was the Truman Doctrine a Real Turning Point?", Foreign Affairs, 52(January 1974), 389.

[46] Ibid., 389-393; Rose, Roots, 242-243.

The conclusions reached in September, 1947 concerning Korea, demonstrated that the concept of containment had not yet become a worldwide consideration. The United States evinced a willingness, albeit a reluctant one, to see Korea eventually fall into Soviet hands. The "author" of containment, George Kennan, in a September 24, 1947 memorandum, noted that discussions with the military had led to the conclusion that holding Korea was not essential militarily--thus U.S. policy should be "to cut our losses and get out of there as gracefully and promptly as possible."[47]

The decision to reconvene the Joint Commission in order to negotiate with the Soviet Union,and the later decision to turn the problem over to the United Nations and to withdraw from Korea, came at a time when Truman had roused the American people to a holy war against communism in Europe. That the United States would consider a policy that many believed might lead to communist domination of Korea, is a clear indication of a flexible, selective containment policy. While cooperation with the Soviet Union in Korea had failed, possible confrontation with Russia over Korea was calculated as not in America's best interests. In this case, U.S. policy makers showed a clear awareness of the limits on the ability of American power to influence decisions and developments in the world.

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[47]Memo by the Director of the Policy Planning Staff, (Kennan) to Butterworth, September 24,1947, FR,1947,VI,815.

Yet the United States was not conceding south Korea to the Soviets without a struggle. Dean Acheson, in Senate hearings on the Truman Doctrine noted that the United States did not have access to all parts of the world, especially those "in the Russian sphere of physical force." While excluded from those areas, Acheson pointed out that there were other places where the United States could be effective. One of those places was Korea and there "the line had been clearly drawn between the Russians and ourselves."[48] Korea occupied a position lower that a vital strategic interest, but nonetheless had real political value to the United States. What Washington wanted, in effect, was to multilateralize the containment policy in Korea by turning the problem over to the United Nations. This would allow the United States to withdraw troops that the military believed were needed elsewhere, while providing the symbolic moral force of the United Nations as protection for Korea. At the same time, the United States would give economic aid to strengthen south Korea as much as possible before withdrawal.

In sum, the United States sought to dilute its responsibilities in Korea in a way that would minimize the potential bad effects resulting from withdrawal of American

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[48]U.S. Congress, Senate, Legislative Origins of the Truman Doctrine: Hearings Held in Executive Session Before the Committee on Foreign Relations, March 13 and 28, and April 1, 2, 3, 1947, 80th Congress, 1st Session(Washington: GPO, 1973), 22.

forces. This policy was necessary because a sense of weakness permeated U.S. thinking about Korea. The absurd tradition of dismantling American armed forces after a war had left the United States in a position where its available resources could not be stretched to match its commitments as a responsible world power. The Military Establishment made its plans only within the framework of an outbreak of a general war, when the powerful U.S. bomber force could be used in an all-out effort. They failed to prepare the United States to react to local aggressions that did not call for a general war, but were nonetheless important enough to require some kind of U.S. reaction. Being unprepared to deal with local aggressions made Korea a strategic liability.

There were many in the State Department, and even within the military, who were uncomfortable with the withdrawal policy that had been established. While recognizing the validity of the military's evaluation of Korea's relative lack of strategic value in a general war, many in the State Department still believed that Korea's political value in the context of the Cold War was tremendously important. As a result, some State Department officials fought a delaying action against the Military Establishment's policy from 1947 right up to the time of withdrawal from Korea in 1949.

CHAPTER V

THE CREATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF KORE . AND UNITED STATES WITHDRAWAL

The U.S. decision in September, 1947 to submit the Korean problem to the United Nations seemed to end the flexibility that had marked Washington's Korea policy in the past months. In October, a plan surfaced, which the Soviets supported, calling for a meeting of prominent Korean leaders of both zones to work out a program for uniting Korea. Eleven leaders were to be invited, seven from the south and four from the north, a ratio corresponding to the population of the two zones. Feeling that the committee would be "predominantly leftist", Jacobs believed it was a Soviet-inspired plan designed to enable Russia to claim that Koreans could work out their destiny alone if all troops were withdrawn.[1] This plan, which on the surface gave America a chance to withdraw even sooner with prestige intact, was ignored.

The United States also rejected a Soviet proposal of September 26, suggesting that all troops be withdrawn from

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[1] Jacobs to Marshall, October 8, 1947, FR, 1947, VI, 823-824,

Korea at the beginning of 1948, because the Joint Commission did not have the authority to consider the question. Molotov forwarded a similar suggestion to Marshall on October 9, 1947, which was rejected because the question of withdrawal had to be considered as an integral part of the solution of the Korean problem now before the United Nations. On September 23, the General Assembly voted 41 to 6, to place the Korean question on the agenda for the current session.[2]

The U.S. representative to the United Nations, Warren Austin, presented the U.S. resolution to the Assembly on October 17. In the resolution the United States expressed its desire to do everything practical to speed the establishment of a truly independent Korea. After calling attention to the Soviet proposal for troop withdrawal, Austin called on the occupying powers to hold elections in their respective zones, no later than March 31, 1948, for the establishment of a National Assembly and a National Government. Further, a U.N. Temporary Commission on Korea would be established to supervise the elections, give advice, and report to the General Assembly on the elections.[3]

While the United Nations considered the Korean question, Hodge reported that the prospect of a mutual troop

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[2]U.S. Department of State, Korea, 1945-1948: A Report on Korea With Selected Documents (Washington: GPO, 1948),6-7; State Department, Korea's Independence, 15-16.

[3]Austin to the Secretary General of the U.N. (Lie), October 17, 1947, FR,1947, VI, 832.

withdrawal was growing in popularity among many south Koreans. The United States needed to push for a speedy solution in the United Nations to head off troubles that might arise from the appealing prospect of finally ridding Korea of foreigners. The next Soviet move might be unilateral withdrawal, which would put America in a difficult moral and practical position in maintaining its troops in south Korea.[4]

The Joint Chiefs already had concluded that Russia probably would refuse to cooperate with the United Nations, in which case America would implement the resolution in south Korea only. Even if the Soviet Union accepted the U.N. resolution, the United States might withdraw after establishment of a national government. MacArthur was instructed to prepare an outline plan for orderly withdrawal.[5]

The General Assembly adopted a resolution on November 14, calling for elections in Korea no later than March 31, 1948, to choose representatives for a National Assembly, which would establish as soon as possible after the elections a National Government of Korea. To facilitate and expedite the elections, a U.N. Temporary Commission on Korea, composed of nine nations, was to be set up, "to be present in Korea, with right to travel, observe and consult

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[4]Hodge to the JCS, November 3, 1947, Ibid., 852-53; Ambassador in the United Kingdom(King) to the Secretary of State, November 5, 1947, Ibid., 854.

[5]Wedemeyer to MacArthur, November 10, 1947, Ibid., 855-856.

throughout Korea." On being established, the National Government would arrange for the complete withdrawal from Korea of the occupying powers forces as early as possible, hopefully within ninety days. The Government then would assume "the functions of government from the military commands and civilian authorities of north and south Korea."[6]

The success of the U.N. plan depended on the two powers cooperating, since elections would be valid only if the U.N. Commission observed them. During the U.N. debates Russia made it clear that it would not cooperate in patently "illegal" elections. Despite this, the United Nations did not consider the crucial question of whether the U.N. Commission would consider holding elections in case they could not be held throughout Korea.[7] This question became the center of debate between the United States and certain members of the U.N. Commission, for elections observed only in one zone would almost certainly legalize and finalize division of Korea into two disparate zones.

Prime Minister MacKenzie King of Canada did not want his country to serve on the U.N. Commission. He feared that the United Nations was not yet ready to deal "with this basic conflict between East and West." The Korean question

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[6]Resolution Adopted by the U.N. General Assembly on November 15, 1947, Ibid., 857-859.

[7]Leland Goodrich, Korea: A Study of U.S. Policy in the U.N. (New York: Council of Foreign Relations, 1956), 30-35.

might become another field of conflict between America and Russia "such as existed in Berlin today, which ill-considered action might ignite . . . ." The nations most interested should resolve the Korean problem, not an "underweighted commission" that might precipitate a crisis. The United States replied that agreement was not possible between America and Russia--acceptance of the Soviet Union's plan "would lead to the early establishment of a dictatorship in Korea." Under considerable pressure from the United States, King finally agreed to allow Canadian participation.[8]

The U.N. Commission was also due for trouble from Rhee and other rightists. Rhee wanted the South Korean Interim Legislative Assembly to administer immediate general elections to set up a government to consult and cooperate with the U.N. Commission. He was effectively using in his campaign for a general election, the rather embarrassing question of what the United Nations and the United States would do "if the Soviets refused to cooperate with the Commission?"[9]

The issue was joined during the first meeting of the

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[8]Memo of Conversation by Ambassador in Canada (Atherton), December 27,1947,FR,1947, VI, 880-83; Acting Secretary of State to King, December 30,1947,Ibid., 883-86; Memo by Chief of the Division of British Commonwealth Affairs(Waites) to Lovett, January 9, 1948, U.S. Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States,1948: The Far East and Australia,Volume VI(Washington:GPO, 1974), 1084.

[9]Jacobs to Marshall, November 19,1947,FR,1947, VI, 863-64; Hodge to Marshall, December 2, 1947,Ibid., 866-67.

U.N. Commission on January 12, 1948, when the Soviet Union announced it would not cooperate with the Commission or the elections. The United States then went on record in favor of elections in south Korea only, announcing that it was "eager to have the assistance of the United Nations" in bringing a freely elected government to south Korea.[10]

In south Korean circles, Rhee was most outspoken in favoring separate elections, but since he had advocated a separate south Korea in 1947, his support was to be expected. Kimm Kiu-sic, the leading centrist, was opposed to holding separate elections, feeling they would perpetuate the division of the country. If agreement with the Russians was impossible, he could support an election for creation of a south Korean government. But he insisted that there should be a conference between the political leaders of north and south Korea under supervision of the U.N. Commission. Kim Koo agreed with Kimm in opposing the elections and in calling for a north-south conference.[11]

On February 11, a tentative agreement between Rhee, Kimm, and Kim had been reached on the desirability of a north-south conference. The apparent accord soon broke down when Rhee publicly claimed that all three men supported a

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[10]Jacobs to Marshall, January 31, 1948, FR,1948,VI, 1088-1089;Truman to King, January 5, 1948, Ibid.,1081-1083.

[11]Jacobs to Marshall, January 29, 30, and February 10, 1948, Ibid., 1087-88, 1099-1100, 1101-1102.

a south Korean state, which the other two denied. On the 20th, Hodge met with the three leaders for over three hours in a futile attempt to gain a degree of unity. Rhee was the only one who would put "it on the line for elections in south Korea." Hodge felt, however, that if the Interim Committee (the "Little Assembly" which was in session when the General Assembly was in adjournment) directed the U.N. Commission to proceed with elections in south Korea alone, Kim and Kimm would support the decision.[12]

The U.N. Commission had decided on February 5, 1948, to submit to the Interim Committee the question of what to do in light of Soviet non-cooperation. This decision caused considerable unhappiness in Seoul. In February, Jacobs charged that S.H. Jackson of Australia, George S. Patterson of Canada, and Krishna Menon of India, constituted an anti-American block on the U.N. Commission.[13] This view would be repeated often as Seoul's attitude toward certain U.N. Commission members grew more and more bitter.

The Soviets announced on February 8, 1948, the formation of the North Korean Peoples Army, and a subsequent review in Pyongyang exhibited a well-organized, well-equipped, and well-armed North Korean Army. This accelerated the trend toward separate south Korean elections, as did the

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[12]Langdon to Marshall, February 28, 1948, Ibid., 1121-1122.

[13]Jacobs to Marshall, February 5 and 12, 1948, Ibid., 1093-1094, 1106-1108.

March announcement of a North Korean plebiscite to draft a constitution for a democratic peoples republic.[14]

As the U.N. Commission was making its report to the Interim Committee, Hodge once more bitterly criticized the "Patterson-Jackson pattern of thinking" on the Commission. According to Hodge, neither man had any concept or consideration of the bitter "cold war" against communism that was going on in Korea. Most delegates and all of the secretariat gave the appearance of wishing to appease the Soviet Union. If the United Nations was indecisive, the United States had to proceed with the elections, because further delay in positive action in south Korea would be fatal.[15]

The Interim Committee opened its consideration of the matter on February 19, 1948. The U.S. resolution called for elections to be held in those parts of Korea which were accessible to the Commission.[16] On February 26, the Interim Committee adopted, 31-2, a resolution calling for the elections to be implemented. The U.N. Commission was to observe the situation to insure that the elections, scheduled for May 9, 1948, would occur in a free atmosphere.[17]

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[14]Hodge to Marshall, February 14, 1948, Ibid., 1110; Langdon to Marshall, February 17, 1948, Ibid., 1114-1115. In 1948 North Korea received enough matériel from Russia to equip 60,000 men. See Schnabel, Policy, 37.

[15]Hodge to Marshall, February 22,1948,Ibid., 1125-27.

[16]Austin to Marshall, February 24,1948,Ibid.,1128-29.

[17]Ibid., March 1,1948, Ibid., 1134-36; Langdon to Marshall, March 10, 1948, Ibid., 1146-1147.

The clear-cut U.N. victory for the United States led the Department of the Army to renew its pressures for a firm withdrawal program. The State Department continued to remind the Army of the need to maintain flexibility in its withdrawal plans. The United States had a moral commitment to withdraw only after the creation of an adequate native security force, which meant that no firm timetable could be established. Withdrawal would depend on the success of building up a South Korean security force to a strength of 50,000, an effort the Army should be expediting to the fullest. The Army also was criticized for having assigned an unfortunately low priority to equipping Korean forces, an action that should be remedied immediately.[18]

An extremely important policy statement from the National Security Council, entitled NSC 8, followed the State Department's request for flexibility in withdrawal plans. The policy paper clearly supported the position that while America had security interests in Korea, they were minimal and thus the United States should strive for withdrawal as early as possible with a minimum of bad effects.[19]

There were three possible policy alternatives

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[18]Memo by the Director of Far Eastern Affairs (Butterworth) to Marshall, March 4,1948, Ibid., 1137; Memo of Conversation by the Chief of Northeast Asian Affairs (Allison), March 4, 1948, Ibid., 1139-1140.

[19]Note by the Executive Secretary of the NSC(Souers) to Truman, subj.: NSC 8, Report by the NSC on the Position of the United States With Respect to Korea, April 2, 1948, Ibid., 1163-1168.

outlined in NSC 8. One, the government of South Korea established under U.N.-U.S. auspices could be abandoned. This was unacceptable because it "would violate the spirit" of every international commitment observing Korea which the United States had undertaken during and since the war and also would indicate that the United States had used the United Nations "merely as a convenient vehicle for withdrawing from Korea," thus damaging the U.N.'s prestige. But most critical, if the United States did not leave behind a sufficiently strong native military force for defense "against any but an overt act of aggression," America's friends would see withdrawal as a betrayal, leading to a fundamental realignment of forces in Asia favorable to Russia.[20]

A second course was to establish support "within practicable and feasible limits" for South Korea which would allow America to withdraw with the minimum of bad effects. This would require a program to train and equip a native army capable of protecting South Korea's security against any aggression but an overt act. Aid to forestall an economic breakdown would also have to be given, an action which in the long run "would reduce the drain on U.S. resources" and would avoid "a commitment so deep as to preclude disengagement." What was "practicable" and "feasible" was not defined, but continuing post-withdrawal military and economic assistance

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[20] Ibid., 1167-1168.

was not ruled out if it was deemed desirable in light of developments in Korea.[21]

The third alternative was "to guarantee the political independence and territorial integrity of South Korea by force of arms if necessary" against external or internal aggression. This course would commit America to direct political, economic, and military responsibility including the possibility of involvement in a major war, in a situation where "virtually all the natural advantages accrue to the Soviets," but it was the only certain course short of war that would insure South Korea's continued independence.[22]

The authors of NSC 8 concluded that the second course was the best choice. The United States would expedite plans for expanding, training, and equipping the South Korean constabulary to provide security forces adequate to resist any but an overt act of aggression. The United States would prepare to withdraw following formation of a South Korean government, consonant "with the relevant commitments of the United States vis-a-vis the U.N." Every effort should be made to withdraw by December 31, 1948. It was essential that "The United States not become so involved in South Korea that any action taken by a group in South Korea or by any other power in Korea would be considered a casus belli for the United States."[23]

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[21] Ibid., 1168. [22] Ibid. [23] Ibid., 1168-1169.

Nothing in NSC 8 precluded a U.S. involvement or action if national interest was threatened. Two related ideas in NSC 8 should be kept in mind. One, the United States in specifically rejecting abandonment of the South Korean government established under U.N.-U.S. auspices, clearly recognized the U.N.'s pivotal role in South Korea's birth. Just as clearly, U.S. interests were "parallel to, if not identical with, those of the U.N." As noted earlier, withdrawal had to be consonant with "the relevant commitments of the United States vis-a-vis the U.N." In addition, NSC 8 stated that the "United States should encourage continued U.N. interest and participation in the Korean problem and should continue to cooperate with the U.N. in solution of that problem."[24] What the relevant commitments were is not spelled out, but one could interpret these statements to mean that the U.S. commitment to the United Nations and its sponsorship of the creation of the South Korean state was such that a strike at that creation would be a strike at the United Nations and America, requiring an aggressive response.

At the same time that NSC 8 was being prepared, events in south Korea were conspiring to bring the United States and the rightists closer together. Kimm and 29 other moderates and leftists resigned from the South Korean Interim Legislative Assembly in early March as a result of the

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[24] Ibid.

Assembly's call for early elections in south Korea. The Communists and extreme leftists staged strikes and violent demonstrations from the time of the announcement of elections up to the election day. In one months time, over 1,000 were killed, including 33 policemen, and over 8,000 arrests were made. American Military Government felt itself irresistibly drawn to the rightists because they supported the elections while the left announced its intention to boycott them. Rhee in order to take advantage of this situation moderated his criticisms of the United States and Hodge.[25]

Preparation for the elections continued despite leftist opposition. Registration as of April 9 showed that 85% of those eligible had registered. On April 1, Hodge issued a proclamation of Korean civil liberties and released 3,140 political prisoners who were allowed to participate in the election. The U.N. Commission concluded on April 28, that since a reasonable degree of free atmosphere existed the Commission would observe the elections on May 9, 1948. Despite leftist opposition and continuing violence, 95% of the registered voters went to the polls and better than half of those elected were rightists and none were Communists.[26]

The day after the elections, the State Department

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[25]Henderson, Korea, 155; FR,1948, VI, see 1155, 1158-1160, 1170-1171, 1175-1176.

[26]Soon, Korea, 206; Henderson, Korea, 155-157; Jacobs to Marshall, April 29, 1948, FR,1948, VI, 1184.

moved to cement relations with the right. At the State department's insistence, the Joint Chiefs ordered that at the earliest date possible following the May 10 elections, General Hodge was to be reassigned, with Major General John B. Coulter assuming his duties. Officials in the Far Eastern Division had long felt that the personal animosity existing between Rhee and Hodge could jeopardize negotiations for transfer of governmental authority, especially since Rhee was expected to emerge as the dominant figure in the new South Korean government. The removal was to be accomplished before Rhee's elevation to authority to avoid the impression of placating Rhee.[27]

The State Department was correct in assuming that Rhee would be the head of the new government. The National Assembly had its initial meeting on May 31, and on July 17 a constitution was adopted, which provided for a strong executive, so strong "it could evolve into a government by a strong man or a strong party."[28] Rhee was elected President on July 20, and the government of the Republic of Korea was inaugurated on August 15, 1948.[29]

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[27]Butterworth to Lovett, May 11, 1948, FR,1948, VI, 1192-1193.

[28]Henderson, Korea, 158-159; Butterworth to Lovett, July 20, 1948, FR,1948, VI, 1248.

[29]Soon, Korea, 209-210; Editorial Note, FR, 1948, VI, 1275.

These events provided the United States with a number of new problems. The first involved the timing of recognition of the new government. The United States decided not to wait for a U.N. decision. On July 10, a policy memorandum concerning Korean recognition was sent to various diplomatic officers abroad. The United States was anxious to avoid any action derogatory of the U.N.'s right to make its own decision as to whether the new government fulfilled the aims of the U.N. resolution of November 14, 1947. As an occupying power, however, America had to define immediately its rights toward the new government before the other provisions of the U.N. resolution relating to transfer of governmental functions and withdrawal of troops could be implemented. In light of the special relationship the United States had as initiator and leading proponent of the General Assembly's Korean resolutions, and as the occupying power turning over the attributes of sovereignty, any failure to grant recognition promptly would weaken dangerously the prestige and authority of the new government, to the advantage of the Soviet puppet regime in the north.[30]

The State Department rejected the argument that South Korea must not be recognized because to do so would lead to a Soviet recognition of a North Korean regime. To accept this line of reasoning would be to admit the impotence of

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[30]Marshall to Certain Diplomatic and Consular Officers Abroad, July 10, 1948, Ibid., 1235-1237.

"The U.N. to give effect to the clearly expressed will of an overwhelming majority of its members in face of opposition of a single power acting in defiance of that majority." On the basis of these conclusions, the State Department was contemplating the issuance of a statement soon after formation of the new government to the effect that the United States recognized it as the "National Government of Korea envisaged by the General Assembly Resolution." In addition, a special American representative, John Muccio, would be sent to negotiate with South Korea "concerning implementation of the further provisions of the General Assembly resolutions."[31]

The U.S. representative to the United Nations, Warren Austin, opposed the position Butterworth outlined. Austin believed that a formal U.S. recognition of the Korean national government without prior U.N. support would seriously compromise the American case in the General Assembly. Joseph Jacobs replied that Austin's views were out of date. The United States did not dare show any vacillation or weakness in its support of the new government.[32] The State Department was willing to remove the title of Ambassador from Muccio, designating him instead as the Special Representative of the President, with a personal rank of Ambassador. He would still be able to negotiate agreements for a transfer

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[31] Ibid.

[32] Jessup to Marshall, July 20, 1948, Ibid., 1251; Jacobs to Marshall, July 24, 1948, Ibid., 1255-1258.

of authority.[33] The United States released a statement on August 12 which followed precisely the July 10 memorandum.

On August 24, Rhee and Hodge signed an interim agreement providing for the progressive relinquishment of jurisdiction to South Korea.[34] On September 1, Rhee requested financial and economic assistance from America to reconstruct basic industries essential to a strong Korean economy.[35] Charles Saltzman, Assistant Secretary of State for Occupied Areas, prepared a lengthy analysis of future economic assistance plans for Korea. There was no guarantee that an aid program would maintain South Korea's independence, but without substantial aid there could be no hope for her survival. It was in the best interest of the United States to plan a grant program of relief and economic development of several years duration, so that South Korea could attain a nearly self-supporting basis as rapidly as possible. Accordingly, an economic agreement was signed on December 10, 1948.[36]

With limited recognition accomplished, the United States tried next to gain U.N. recognition for South Korea. At the same time the United States continued to advocate a

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[33]Lovett to Truman, July 28,1948, Ibid., 1264.

[34]Jacobs to Marshall,August 24,1948,Ibid., 1287-88.

[35]Special Representative to Korea (Muccio) to Marshall, September 3, 1948, Ibid., 1290-1292.

[36]Memo by Saltzman,September 7, 1948, Ibid., 1292-1296; State Department, Summary, 71.

plan supporting a new U.N. Commission on Korea to observe the simultaneous withdrawal of troops, to facilitate the removal of barriers to reunification of Korea, and to report to the Interim Committee on Korean conditions.[37]

After lengthy debate, the United Nations adopted a resolution on December 12, that "placed its stamp of legal validity" on South Korea and promised "moral support." The resolution called for troop withdrawal as soon as possible and set up a permanent U.N. Commission on Korea, with no enforcement powers, to help remove the barriers between north and south, to work to integrate the two peoples, to observe troop withdrawal and to be available to give advice.[38]

The U.N. call for troop withdrawal fit the Army's plans quite well, but the State Department since early summer had continued to drag its feet on the withdrawal issue. Events in North Korea, South Korea, and China, were creating second thoughts among some State Department officials. In June, Marshall wrote to Secretary of the Army, Kenneth C. Royall, that every effort was being made to achieve withdrawal by the end of 1948, but that it still was necessary to maintain flexibility in U.S. withdrawal plans.[39]

Royall replied that the Army's plans were based on

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[37]U.S. Delegation Position Paper, October 22, 1948, FR,1948, VI, 1315.

[38]Goodrich, Korea: U.N., 69.

[39]Marshall to Royall, June 23, 1948, FR,1948, VI, 1224-1225.

the President's directive of April 8, 1948. American Military Government had sufficient forces to continue to function until it turned over its responsibilities to the new government and to continue training and equipping the South Korean security force. The Army, as directed, had set August 15 as the date to commence tactical withdrawal and on September 2 would surrender all but troop withdrawal responsibilities to the U.S. diplomatic mission in Korea. Unless otherwise instructed, this timetable, designed to achieve withdrawal by December 31, 1948, would continue in force.[40]

The North Korean decision to form its own government caused more second thoughts both in the State Department and in South Korea. On July 10, Pyongyang announced that elections would be held on August 25 for the Supreme People's Council. On September 9 the Supreme People's Council announced creation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, claiming jurisdiction over all of Korea. A request for immediate withdrawal of foreign troops followed and Russia agreed to do so before the end of 1948.[41] The United States replied that the question of withdrawal would be left for the United Nations to consider at is forthcoming meeting.[42]

During a September 23 meeting in the State Department

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[40]Royall to Marshall, June 23,1948, Ibid., 1225-1226.

[41]Jacobs to Marshall, July 11,1948,Ibid., 1238-39; State Department, Summary, 71; Muccio to Marshall, September 18, 1948, FR,1948, VI, 1305-1306.

[42]Lovett to Muccio,September 20,1948, Ibid., 1307.

Dr. Chough Pyung-ok, Rhee's special representative, requested that the United States retain its occupation forces in Korea until an effectively trained and equipped Korean security force could be formed. Chough believed that a North Korean invasion would soon follow U.S. withdrawal. The North, Chough estimated, had four divisions fully equipped with modern Soviet arms and a total regular and paramilitary strength of between 200-350,000 men.[43]

Ominous developments in South Korea matched the disquieting prospect of the development of a powerful North Korean Army. On October 19, the 14th Regiment of the South Korean Army mutinied and the revolt spread. Five towns were captured and "people's committees" executed hundreds before the revolt was put down in late October, with a loss of over 2,000 lives. A group of young officers associated with the Communists instigated the Yosu revolt under the leadership of Kim Tal-sam, the Korean Communist Party secretary in the area.[44]

On November 2, Rhee requested the immediate establishment of a military and naval mission in Korea. The Korean constabulary of 50,000 men was entirely inadequate in number. MacArthur had suggested creation of the

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[43]Memo of Conversation by Lovett, September 23, 1948, Ibid., 1310-1311.

[44]Henderson, Korea, 162; Muccio to Marshall, October 28, 1948, FR, 1948, VI, 1317-1318; Scalapino and Lee, Communism in Korea, I, 308.

constabulary in October, 1947, as a substitute for formation of a South Korean Army, which he opposed. Rhee believed an additional 50,000 men were needed to alleviate feelings of insecurity which a powerful North Korean Army had created. The sooner this was accomplished, the sooner the United States could withdraw its troops. Rhee was told that the present Provisional Military Advisory Group would continue to advise and assist South Korea in the development of the Korean security forces now in existence.[45]

Lovett, on November 5, sought Marshall's concurrence in delaying entrance into an irreversible stage of troop withdrawal pending developments in the General Assembly. On the 9th, the State Department informed Wedemeyer that "the reduction of forces now being carried out in Korea should not be permitted to progress beyond" November 15, the point at which the Army had to know if withdrawal was to continue.[46]

On November 12, a military intelligence estimate concluded that North Korea was capable of victory if a civil war broke out. This was made even more certain if units serving in the Chinese Communist Army were made available, which seemed likely in light of Chinese Communist successes

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[45] Muccio to Marshall, November 5, 1948, FR, 1948, VI, 1320-1321; Schnabel, Policy, 33.

[46] Lovett to Marshall, November 5, 1948, FR, 1948, VI, 1319; Saltzman to Director of Plans and Operations, Department of Army(Wedemeyer), November 11,1948, Ibid., 1324.

in Manchuria. Invasion fears were growing as North Korean troops concentrated between the 38th and 39th parallels. The situation was a grave one, and while retention of U.S. troops was no panacea for Korea's problems, at present the U.S. Army alone presented guarantees of a minimum of Korean security. The present withdrawal schedule was inopportune because the situation in Korea was in a state of flux. A postponement of final withdrawal for several months would allow for a better appraisal of the strengths and intentions of North Korea, and would allow for a better preparation of South Korean security forces.[48]

One week later, both Rhee and the South Korean National Assembly appealed to Truman to retain U.S. troops in Korea. Because of recent developments in China, the Korean people were worried about the reported total withdrawal of U.S. troops. Until adequate Korean security forces could be trained, it was essential that U.S. troops remain. Muccio in a following note, said that Korean officials constantly sought some statement of U.S. intention to retain its troops in Korea. Muccio could only reassure them that the United States had no intention of abandoning Korea.[49]

The clamor against withdrawal had the intended impact, as a group of officials in the Far Eastern Division

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[48] Ibid.

[49] Muccio to Marshall, November 19,1948, Ibid.,1331-32.

of the State Department, prepared a memorandum in December that called for a halt to withdrawal on the grounds that complete evacuation at this time "would seriously jeopardize the security and stability" of the Republic of Korea. The State Department agreed that prompt withdrawal should be sought, but only if it could be carried out in a way that would not contribute "to the expansion of a hostile Communist politico-military system in Northeast Asia."[50]

Communist domination of Korea would threaten Japan and would lead to intensification of efforts to bring Japan into the Communist sphere of influence. With the loss of America's only friend on the northeast Asian continent, there soon would develop among the Japanese a greater uneasiness flowing from their exposed position. Retention of U.S. troops would entail meeting problems both onerous and burdensome, yet a failure to face these problems eventually could destroy U.S. security in the Pacific.[51]

The indefinite maintenance of U.S. troops in Korea and Japan could not insure the achievement of the basic policy objectives or the security goals of the United States in the Pacific. Nonetheless, the Communist consolidation in Northeast Asia had to be recognized as a breach in the U.S.

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[50]Draft Memo by Director of Far Eastern Affairs (Butterworth), Prepared by the Chief of the Division of Northeast Asian Affairs, Max Bishop, December 17, 1948, Ibid., 1337-1340.

[51]Ibid.

security system, making attainment of U.S. objectives impossible. The United States needed to examine several questions. First, had communist expansion in northeast Asia reached the point where the security interests of the United States required positive efforts to prevent further expansion? Second, was it necessary that the communist power system, already brutally frank and outspoken in its hostility to the United States, be made to draw back from its present extensive holdings? Finally, could the United States afford to allow further Soviet advances, while continuing measures designed merely to retard those advances? It was imperative that the National Security Council review the decisions reached in NSC 8.[52]

The Department of the Army had reached different conclusions about Korea than had the State Department. William Draper, Under-Secretary of the Army, pointed out that the Army had cooperated with the State Department's request of November 9, when MacArthur was ordered to retain in Korea, for an indefinite period, one reinforced regimental combat team not to exceed 7,500 men. In light of the United Nations favorable consideration of the Korean question, Army believed that the time had come for a firm decision to complete withdrawal. Draper requested approval to recommence withdrawal on February 1, 1949, to be completed by March 31, 1949.[53]

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[52] Ibid.

[53] Draper to Saltzman, December 22,1948, Ibid., 1342-43

Both the State Department and the Army continued to press their opposing views into 1949. A January 19, 1949, memorandum from General MacArthur buttressed the Army's desire to complete withdrawal. MacArthur believed that the United States did not have the capacity to train and equip Korean forces to enable them to resist a full-scale invasion. In MacArthur's words, "If a serious threat developed, the United States would have to give up active military support of the ROK . . . ." MacArthur was anxious for the United States to withdraw from Korea since it had relatively little importance militarily. South Korean defense forces should be capable of offering resistance to internal problems, not overt aggression. MacArthur consistently opposed the idea of building up South Korean forces, especially if he had to provide the matériel.[54]

The reopened debate on U.S. policy in Korea culminated in NSC 8/2, a clear-cut victory for Army objectives. NSC 8/2 was a reassessment of the U.S. position in Korea as defined in NSC 8 of April 3, 1949. The paper restated NSC 8's belief that the predominate goal of Soviet policy

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[54]Memo by the Director of the Office of Far Eastern Affairs (Butterworth) to the Acting Secretary of State, January 10, 1949, U.S. Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1949: The Far East and Australia (Part 2), Volume VII (Washington: GPO, 1976), 942; Schnabel, Policy, 34-35; William Stueck, "Cold War Revisionism and the Origins of the Korean Conflict," Pacific Historical Review, 42(No. 4, 1973), 541-542; William Sebald, With MacArthur in Japan (New York: Norton, 1965), 177.

in Korea was to achieve domination of the entire country. NSC 8/2 agreed with the original estimate that Communist control of all of Korea would adversely affect the political and strategic position of the United States throughout the Far East. The fall of South Korea following an abrupt withdrawal of American forces would appear to be a U.S. betrayal of its friends and allies and would constitute a severe blow to U.S. prestige and influence.[55]

The authors of NSC 8/2 agreed that the middle course chosen in NSC 8 was the correct one--to support within practicable limits a South Korean government with a reasonable chance for survival, while reducing the U.S. commitment of men and money. While significant gains had been made "in terms of both the welfare and aspirations of the Korean people and of the national interest of the United States," in order to consolidate these gains "the United States must continue to give political support and economic, technical, military, and other assistance to the Republic of Korea."[56]

In pursuance of its objectives, the United States planned to provide military assistance for a "well-trained and equipped Army of 65,000 men, including air detachments suitable for maintaining internal order . . .and for

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[55]Report by the NSC to the President, March 22, 1949, FR, 1949, VII(2), 969-978.

[56]Ibid.

maintaining border security . . . ." Assistance also would be provided for a 4,000 man Coast Guard to suppress smuggling, piracy, illegal entry, and hostile infiltration. Finally, assistance would be given in the form of small arms and ammunition for a 35,000 man police force. The United States in each case would provide, through a military advisory group, training and materiel. The Economic Cooperation Administration would provide funds for other than military purposes. NSC 8/2 thus committed the United States to maintaining South Korea's security forces.[57]

The basic decision of NSC 8, however, was reaffirmed--American troops would complete their withdrawal not later than June 30, 1949. The National Military Establishment believed that further temporary postponement of withdrawal "would not appreciably diminish the risk of an attempt by the Soviet-dominated North Korean regime to overthrow the Republic of Korea through direct military aggression."[58] This view, when combined with MacArthur's estimate that the United States could not train a South Korean force capable of resisting a full-scale invasion, led the military to decide firmly in favor of withdrawal. An "unmistakably clear" announcement that withdrawal in no way indicated a lessening of U.S. support for the Republic of Korea, was to accompany U.S. troop withdrawal.[59]

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[57] Ibid. [58] Ibid. [59] Ibid.

The United States had decided to withdraw its forces from Korea with a full knowledge of the risks involved. Those risks included a possible Communist takeover of South Korea. This decision was made despite the "loss of China" and the Soviet blockade of West Berlin, clear signs that reinforced the belief that Communism was on the move. The loss of China was a particularly embittering experience for many Americans, yet NSC 8/2 confirmed the decision to withdraw from Korea. Yet it did so in a way that set up a framework for providing South Korea with aid in the future should it be needed. This framework was strengthened in 1949-1950 in a manner that would insure U.S. involvement in the Korean War.

CHAPTER VI

THE UNWRITTEN COMMITMENT TO SOUTH KOREA, 1949-1950

The decisions reached in NSC 8/2 supported the military's position that Korea had little strategic importance and reaffirmed the decision to withdraw U.S. troops. But from March, 1949 to June, 1950, a series of statements from major U.S. policy makers laid a firm foundation for U.S. intervention in Korea in the event of Communist aggression.

The conclusions of NSC 8/2 initially met with Muccio's approval, but by April he was anxiously requesting information regarding equipment for the Korean Coast Guard, for repair of arms and matériel, and for aircraft.[1] Muccio's anxiety was amplified many times over among Korean leaders. Rhee pointedly asked Muccio what the U.S. response would be to aggression against South Korea, because many Koreans questioned whether the United States could be relied upon. Placing heavy emphasis on the influence of the "loss of China," and the rumor of the contraction of the U.S. defensive perimeter in the Pacific, Rhee wondered how much

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[1]Muccio to the Secretary of State, April 12, April 22 and April 26, 1949, FR,1949, VII(2), 986-87,994-996.

Korea could count on the United States if an outside aggressor attacked. Muccio's only reply was that the United States had aided, was aiding, and would continue to aid Korea.[2]

Rhee was not reassurred and he continued to resist agreement to an early withdrawal date. In a press release of May 7, 1949, he asked whether South Korea fell within America's first line of defense. Could South Korea count on all-out U.S. military aid if attacked? This concern went beyond the question of troop withdrawal, according to Rhee. Since the United States had invited the Soviet Communists into Korea by their division of Korea, the United States had a responsibility to support the Republic of Korea. While Rhee criticized U.S. Korean policy, Muccio continued to press for action in the area of supplies for a Coast Guard and for air support, especially as inducements to gain Rhee's agreement to an early withdrawal date.[3]

Muccio's pleas brought a sharp reply from the State Department that tempered future comments about South Korea's military weaknesses. Muccio was informed that Washington too shared his concern for Korea's security, but his requests for additional naval vessels and for aircraft "prior to or within a reasonable time after June 30 withdrawal was absolutely

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[2]Memo of Conversation, Muccio, May 2, 1949, Ibid., 1003-1005.

[3]Muccio to Acheson, May 6, 7, 9, 1949, Ibid., 1009, 1011, 1013.

out of the question due to the lack both of funds and equipment." Washington believed that Rhee was attempting to raise the price of his concurrence in withdrawal to gain as many concessions as possible. Muccio's responsibility was to make it unmistakably clear to Rhee that worldwide demands, which exceeded America's capacity to fulfill, severely limited U.S. capability to aid south Korea. The United States would withdraw by June 30 with or without Rhee's assent.[4]

The State Department added that if Muccio's requests reflected a basic revision of his estimate of the circumstances under which the United States should withdraw its forces, this would call for a reopening of the entire question of withdrawal and for a reappraisal of the conclusions of NSC 8/2. Muccio's defensive reply was that the best advice available had provided the modest estimates he had sent to Washington. His recent messages did not reflect a desire for revision of national security policy.[5]

As the process of American troop withdrawal continued in late May and early June, Rhee became more concerned about obtaining public assurances of continuing U.S. support than about troop retention. Rhee was not satisfied with Acting Secretary of State James Webb's June 1 press conference

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[4]Acheson to Muccio, May 9, 1949, Ibid., 1015.

[5]Ibid.;Muccio to Acheson,May 11,1949,Ibid., 1018-19.

statement to the effect that recent U.S. moves in Korea in no way represented a change in American support for the U.N. resolutions dealing with Korea.[6]

Further support for Korea came in Truman's June 7 message to Congress concerning the Korean aid bill. The continuation of aid to Korea was of great importance to the succesful achievement of U.S. foreign policy aims because Korea had become "a testing ground in which the validity and practical value of the ideals and principles of democracy which the Republic is putting into practice are being matched against the practices of Communism which have been imposed upon the people of north Korea." South Korea's survival and its progress toward a self-supporting stable economy would have an immense and far-reaching influence on the people of Asia, "demonstrating the success and tenacity of democracy in resisting communism," and would stand "as a beacon to the people of northern Asia in resisting the control of the Communist forces which have overrun them."[7]

Other officials privately reiterated Truman's strong words of support. In hearings before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on economic assistance to South Korea, a constantly repeated theme was Korea's symbolic value and its relations to the United Nations. Under-Secretary of State

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[6]Muccio to Acheson, June 6, 1949, Ibid., 1039.

[7]Glenn Paige, The Korean Decision (New York: Chelsea House, 1970), 28.

Webb, on June 28, declared that "the rest of Asia is watching us in Korea." If the United States did not do all in its power, consistent with its worldwide obligations, to assist this outpost of freedom, "countless millions of the peoples of Asia will begin to doubt the practical superiority of democratic principles." Paul Hoffman, head of the Economic Cooperation Administration, observed that "if we fail in South Korea, which is the only place left on the mainland where you have any effort being made to live in a democratic way, that failure might very disastrously affect the whole future of Asia . . . ."[8]

Throughout the hearings, Senator Arthur Vandenberg referred to Korea's value as "the only symbol left of any constructive interest on the part of the United States in assisting affirmatively to contain the Communist menace in Asia." Vandenberg was even clearer when questioning General W.E. Todd, Director Joint Intelligence Group, Joint Chiefs of Staff, about Korea. Todd emphasized that it was the estimate of the Joint Chiefs that the Soviet Union had little to gain in aggression against South Korea. Vandenberg felt the issue was not Soviet intentions, but U.S. intentions. The United States had Korea and "if we should abandon it, it would look like to the whole of Asia that we were

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[8]U.S. Congress, Senate, Economic Assistance to China and Korea: 1949-1950, Hearings Held in Executive Session Before the Committee on Foreign Relations, 81st Congress, 1st and 2nd Session(Washington: GPO, 1974), 120-121, 129.

washing our hands of it and letting it go away." Vandenberg believed that Korea was of such symbolic importance that it could not be abandoned to communist aggression.[9]

All of these statements might have been reassuring to Rhee, but what he really wanted to know was what specific measures the United States would take in case of outside aggression against South Korea. Unfortunately both NSC 8 and NSC 8/2 had ignored this subject. While acknowledging the very real possibility of a North Korean invasion following U.S. withdrawal, these National Security Council papers failed to outline the options available if such an event occurred or to suggest a pertinent course of action. Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army, General Omar Bradley, however, did address himself to these questions. In an attempt to reopen discussion on Korea's place in America's national security policy, Bradley prepared a report that was intended for both the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the State Department.[10]

The report, entitled "Implications of a Possible Full Scale Invasion from North Korea Subsequent to Withdrawal of U.S. Troops from South Korea," outlined five basic courses of action for the United States should South Korea be invaded. The options had to be considered because South Korea might be overthrown and the Korean peninsula lost to

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[9] Ibid., 179, 185.

[10] Memo by the Department of the Army to the Department of State, June 27, 1949, FR, 1949, VII(2), 1046-1055.

Communist domination by default if America did not adopt a course of action to counter a full-scale Communist invasion. The fall of Korea would mean that U.S. rehabilitation efforts and sponsorship had been a "fruitless undertaking." There would be far-reaching international recrimination to the effect that U.S. pronouncements to continue to support South Korea had not been fulfilled. It therefore appeared that some action would have to be taken.[11]

One course would be to "implement current emergency evacuation plans to extricate U.S. nationals and military advisory personnel now accredited to the Government of the ROK." This course would remove U.S. nationals from the scene, thus lessening American responsibility for their security, and would minimize U.S. involvement in a dangerous situation. Unfortunately it also would be an acknowledgement of South Korea's weakness and would indicate that America would not fulfill promises of support. Prudence directed, however, that this course of action be invoked if the situation became alarmingly dangerous.[12]

A second course of action was "to present the problem to the U.N. Security Council for consideration as a threat to the general peace." The problem thus would be recognized as an international one and the United Nations could operate in a situation it was created for. In

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[11] Ibid., 1052. [12] Ibid., 1053.

addition, the Soviet Union would be forced to declare its cooperative or noncooperative intentions and such a move would remove the "onus of U.S. unilateral responsibility and action." The disadvantages were twofold. The United Nations would have to act without "properly organized machinery to enforce its dictums . . .", and this course involved delays, debate, and recrimination. Bradley believed, however, that this course appeared to be logical and necessary.[13]

A third option was to initiate police action with U.N. sanction by introduction of an international force "with the objective of restoring law and order and restoration of the 38th parallel boundary invioability." This action would enhance the prestige of the United Nations, might lead to an effective and early restoration of the status quo ante bellum and could provide a recognized procedure that might discourage future violations of law and order. Such an action, however, might require Congressional authority, with consequent delays, and would involve an expenditure of U.S. manpower and resources at a critical time in European affairs. Bradley concluded that this course of action was unsound militarily and should be used only if all other methods failed and if other member nations fully participated.[14]

A fourth course of action was to reconstitute a U.S. joint task force at the special request of South Korea. This

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[13] Ibid., 1053-1054. [14] Ibid., 1054.

resolute action would command universal respect and would inspire anti-Communist movements around the world. Of course, this maneuver would be unilateral, would commit resources needed elsewhere, and would give the Chinese Communists the opportunity to align themselves openly with North Korea. This approach carried the risk of bringing Soviet re-entry into North Korea and could lead "to a long and costly involvement of U.S. forces in an undeclared war." Bradley felt this plan was unacceptable since it would not finalize the situation and might lead to world conflict, but he did not rule out this course if political necessity required it.[15]

A final option was to extend and apply the Truman Doctrine to Korea. This would serve as a "tangible indication of an interest in and support of a part of the world rapidly succumbing to Communism," and would serve as a deterrent to Communist advances toward Japan. But it also could give the appearance that the United States was trying to perpetuate a government which the popular will did not totally support. Such an action also would place a further strain on the U.S. Government, already faced with deficit spending, perhaps leading to a dilution of funds available for military assistance programs of greater strategic importance. Bradley felt that a comparison could be made to the situation in Greece, where a legally constituted government

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[15] Ibid., 1055.

was threatened, but thereafter any similarity disappeared. In Bradley's view, "To apply the Truman Doctrine to Korea would require a prodigious effort and vast expenditures far out of proportion to the benefits to be expected."[16]

Bradley concluded that in case of a full-scale military invasion from North Korea, which South Korea could not counter successfully, the United States should adopt the first two options of evacuation and presentation of the problem to the U.N. Security Council. He further recommended that both the Joint Chiefs and the State Department consider this report for reference to the National Security Council for a reopening of discussions about U.S. Korean policy.[17]

The Joint Chiefs reaction was to restate previous policy--that is, Korea was of little strategic importance to the United States and any commitment of U.S. forces would be ill-advised and impracticable in view of America's heavy international obligations and her limited resources.[18] While the Joint Chiefs rejected it, and while it did not lead to a reconsideration of NSC 8/2, Bradley's report served to place the issues before the key policy makers. The report was an attempt to reach a balanced politico-military assessment of both the problems faced in Korea and of their possible solution. Bradley expressed a keen political sense in concert with his military expertise in evaluating the various

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[16] Ibid., 1056. [17] Ibid., 1048. [18] Ibid., 1056-57.

options open to the United States in Korea--something that many policy makers in the State and Defense Department had failed to address themselves to.

One of the report's important points was that the rejection of application of the Truman Doctrine to Korea was another sign that containment was not a worldwide U.S. policy--the United States had vital commitments elsewhere of greater strategic importance than South Korea. Nonetheless, Bradley was not ready to write-off Korea. As Acheson had tried to do in 1947 in discussing the Truman Doctrine in Senate hearings, Bradley sought a middle ground for U.S. policy between the two extremes of areas of vital strategic importance, such as Germany and Japan, and areas which had to be written off as within the Russian sphere of physical force, such as Eastern Europe. For Bradley, policy for such areas appeared to be predicated on multilateral rather than unilateral action.

Bradley was not alone in the summer of 1949 in reassessing U.S. policy in Korea and Asia as a whole. Dean Acheson in July, 1949, asked Ambassador at Large Philip Jessup, to draw up a program of action for Asia, with estimates of its cost to America, that would be applicable to areas not under Communist control. The program was to be based on the "assumption that it is the fundamental decision of American policy that the United States does not intend to permit further extension of Communist domination

on the Continent of Asia . . . ." The practical admission that it might be beyond the capabilities of the United States to pay the costs of such a program tempered Acheson's request.[19] The request was an indication, however, that the feasibility of extending the containment policy to Asia was at least being contemplated.

The first result of Acheson's request was a November 16, 1949 paper entitled "Outline of Far Eastern and Asian Policy for Review With the President." This searching paper recognized that a tide of revolution was sweeping Asia, composed both of a "national revolt against colonial imperialism and discontent with existing economic and social conditions." The source of this revolutionary fervor arose from "long-range indigenous problems" which would continue to plague Asia for decades and which quick panaceas could not solve. To a certain extent, the Communists had captured this revolutionary movement.[20]

The most important fact in determining the U.S. position in Asia would be the basic attitude of the people of Asia toward the United States. That attitude would be shaped largely by U.S. policy and actions in regard to the Asian revolution, especially in how the United States treated

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[19]Philip C. Jessup, The Birth of Nations (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974), 29.

[20]Memo by Jessup to Acheson, November 16, 1949, FR, 1949, VII(2), 1209-1214.

problems in the areas where it assumed primary responsibility--Japan, the Philippines, and Korea. One immediate U.S. objective was to check the spread of Soviet Communism, but because of the revolutionary nature of the movement in Asia, this objective had to be reached "principally by means other than arms." In dealing with countries firmly Communist-controlled, the United States had to meet the situation "by a recognition of realities rather than by a fruitless attempt to reverse or ignore the tide of events."[21]

Jessup believed that in dealing with direct aggression against Asian countries not covered by treaty, the United States should act through the machinery of the United Nations. To combat indirect aggression, America should implement programs of political and economic support, buttressed by an expanded propaganda program. The United States also should work rapidly toward recognition of Communist China, should build up Japan to relieve the present U.S. burden, and should continue to support Korea "as a yardstick of U.S. ability to cope with Asian problems." In general, the United States should work toward developing common action and interests among the non-Communist nations of Asia.[22]

While Acheson picked up many of Jessup's conclusions and interpretations, his paper was not fully accepted as U.S. policy. On June 10, Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson

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[21] Ibid., 1210. [22] Ibid., 1212-1214.

had sent a memorandum to the National Security Council stating that he was very concerned about the course of events in Asia and especially about the success of the Chinese Communists. These developments had affected U.S. security seriously and he wanted the National Security Council to prepare a course of action for the United States to undertake in Asia. The result of his request was NSC 48/2, which Truman approved on December 30, 1949. Four basic security objectives in Asia were outlined: first, to develop Asian nations in conformity with U.N. Charter principles; second, to develop military strength in certain non-Communist Asian nations to maintain internal security and to prevent further communist encroachment; third, to reduce gradually and eventually to eliminate the preponderant power and influence of the Soviet Union in Asia so that it could not threaten the United States and its allies in that area; finally, power relationships in Asia that would threaten U.S. security were to be prevented.[23]

Some of the components designed to achieve these policy goals were: support of regional associations of non-Communist Asian states; development and strengthening, within available means, of the security of the area from

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[23]Johnson to NSC, June 10,1949, U.S. State Department, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1949: National Security Affairs, Volume I(Washington: GPO, 1976); Memo by NSC, subj.: The Position of the United States with Respect to Asia,NSC 48/2, December 30,1949, FR,1949, VII(2), 1215-1220.

Communist aggression through political, economic, and military aid; multilateral or bilateral arrangements to combat Communist subversion; continue to support South Korea and continue to recognize Nationalist China until the situation was further clarified; continue the policy of attempting to deny Formosa and the Pescadores to the Chinese Communists through diplomatic and economic means; place primary strategic emphasis on strengthening the overall U.S. position in the Philippines, the Ryukyus, and Japan; and finally, try to to resolve the colonial-nationalist conflict in Asia in such a way as to gain friends in the area while not hurting the colonial powers who were America's European allies.[24]

The basic position of NSC 48/2 was aimed toward the containment of communism in Asia, and hopefully to rolling back the red tide. But underlying the policy was a firm commitment to balancing ends and means. While nothing in the study committed America to a particular course of action in the event of aggression in Korea, nothing ruled out the possibility of armed intervention. The major concern of U.S. policy makers was internal subversion, not overt aggression. Finally, the report reiterated a firm U.S. commitment to the offshore littoral defense of Asia that MacArthur had first outlined in 1948 to George Kennan and again in June, 1949, and which Dean Acheson

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[24]NSC 48/2, FR,1949, VII(2), 1215-1220.

restated in his famous National Press Club speech.[25]

On January 12, 1950, Secretary of State Dean Acheson gave his controversial National Press Club speech. Speaking for over an hour from a single page of rough notes, Acheson outlined the problems facing the United States in Asia. A nationalistic fervor that symbolized a growing rebellion against both foreign domination and the normal condition of life in the area was sweeping across Asia. The danger was that Russian imperialism, employing the new methods, skills, and concepts of Communism, would subvert the nationalist movement to Russia's advantage.[26]

In outlining America's defense perimeter in Asia, Acheson repeated both MacArthur and NSC 48/2, by placing the emphasis in Asia on an offshore littoral defense. But he added that no one person could guarantee against a military attack in the Pacific. Such a guarantee, however, "was hardly sensible or necessary within the realm of practical

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[25]Report by the Director of the Policy Planning Staff(Kennan), March 25, 1948, FR,1948, VI, 709; New York Times, March 2, 1949. In a May 4, 1949 paper entitled "The Strategic Importance of the Far East to the United States and the U.S.S.R.," the CIA concluded that "U.S. strategic interests in the Far East, therefore, are immediate and continuing, even if limited to denying consolidated Soviet control of the region. Key to this denial is integrated U.S. control of the offshore island chain extending from the Philippines to Japan." See CIA File, Modern Military Branch, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

[26]Princeton Seminars, Dean Acheson Papers, Harry S. Truman Library; U.S. Department of State, American Foreign Policy, 1955: Basic Documents, 2 vols. (Washington: GPO, 1957), II, 2311-2320.

relationship." When attacks occurred the initial reliance had to be on the people attacked to resist and then upon "the commitments of the entire civilized world under the Charter of the United Nations, which so far has not proved a weak reed to lean on by any people who are determined to protect their independence against outside aggression." Acheson, however, reflected the tone of NSC 48/2 when he warned against becoming obsessed with military considerations. The major fears he expressed were about internal threats rather than external ones.[27]

Acheson added a clear warning about Korea. The United States had given South Korea "great help in getting established" and the President was asking Congress to continue to help until the Republic of Korea was established firmly. In Acheson's view, "The idea that we should scrap all of that, that we should stop half-way through the achievement of the establishment of this country seems to me to be the most utter defeatism and utter madness in our interests in Asia."[28]

On January 31, 1950, the same day he authorized the Atomic Energy Commission to proceed with development of the hydrogen bomb, Truman set in motion a re-examination of American objectives in peace and war, and the effect on these

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[27] State Department, Basic Documents, II, 2311-2320.

[28] Ibid.

objectives "of the probable fission bomb capability and possible thermonuclear capability of the Soviet Union."[29] Truman's request resulted from more than Soviet explosion of an atomic bomb, which he had announced on September 23, 1949. The "loss of China", and the subsequent Sino-Soviet treaty, had shocked and alarmed many Americans. China became a bitter bipartisan issue that put the Truman Administration on the defensive. Soviet possession of the atomic bomb, establishment of the People's Republic of China in October, 1949, Sino-Soviet negotiations in December, 1949, and increased domestic furor over Communism, led Truman to request a re-evaluation of U.S. foreign policy objectives.

The report Truman requested was produced on April 7, 1950, and later became NSC 68. This paper concluded that the historical distribution of power in the world had been basically altered. As a result of WWII, power had gravitated to the Soviet Union and the United States. Redistributions of power, however, had occurred before. What made this situation different was that the Soviet Union was "antimated by a new fanatic faith, antithetical to our own, and seeks to impose its absolute authority over the rest of the world." Thus conflict had become endemic and was waged "on the part of the Soviet Union by violent or non-violent methods, in

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[29]Truman to Acheson, January 31, 1950, U.S. Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1950: National Security Affairs, Volume I(Washington: GPO, 1977), 141-142.

accordance with the dictates of expediency." The development of nuclear weapons threatened world annihilation and any substantial extension of present Soviet holdings would raise the possibility that no adequate coalition could be formed to confront the Soviet Union with a greater strength, making war very likely. Thus, the United States, at the point of its greatest strength, was also in its deepest peril.[30]

The Soviet Union believed that to retain its absolute power in Russia and in the areas it presently held, it was necessary to expand dynamically in order to eliminate any effective opposition to its authority. The Soviet design called "for the complete subversion or forcible destruction of the machinery of government and structure of society in the countries of the non-Soviet world . . .To that end Soviet efforts are now directed toward the domination of the Eurasian land mass." As the primary center of opposition to Soviet expansion, the United States was Russia's principal enemy, and America's integrity and vitality had to be subverted or destroyed if the Kremlin was to achieve its fundamental policy goals.[31]

The Soviet Union viewed the United States as its

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[30]Report to the NSC by the Executive Secretary (Lay), NSC 68, U.S. Objectives and Programs for National Security, April 14, 1950, Ibid., 237-238.

[31]Ibid., 238.

greatest enemy because the implacable purpose of the slave state was to eliminate the challenge of freedom. This fact placed the two great powers at opposite poles. The idea of freedom was the most contagious idea in history, more so than the idea of submission to authority. This explained why the existence and persistence of the idea of freedom was a permanent and continuous threat to the foundation of the Soviet "slave society." The result was the Soviet Union's continual hostility to free societies. The Kremlin's assault on "free institutions was now worldwide," and "in the context of the present polarization of power a defeat of free institutions anywhere is a defeat everywhere." Thus, America's free society unwillingly found itself "mortally challenged by the Soviet system."[32]

The only way the free world could meet the challenge was to develop its material and moral strength. In the absence of an affirmative decision on America's part, the rest of the free world was almost certain to become demoralized. Force should be applied to compel Soviet acceptance of terms consistent with U.S. objectives. To achieve this, the United States had to be able to apply power on both a worldwide basis and on a limited local basis.[33]

The Soviet Union's possession of atomic weapons and a realization on its part of the improbability of the United

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[32] Ibid., 239-240. [33] Ibid., 242, 255.

States prosecuting a preventive war, put a premium on piecemeal aggression against others. The risk of having no better choice than to capitulate or to precipitate a global war at any of a number of pressure points was a danger that was multiplied by the weakness it imparted to the U.S. position in the Cold War. Instead of appearing strong and resolute, the United States was continually on the verge of appearing and being alternately irresolute and desperate. When related to the world situation confronting the United States, it was clear that America's military strength was dangerously inadequate. A program was needed to build up the strength of the free world to support a firm policy intended to check and roll-back the Kremlin's drive for world domination.[34]

NSC 68 concluded that "Soviet domination of the potential power of Eurasia, whether achieved by armed aggression or by political and subversive means, would be strategically and politically unacceptable to the United States." It thus was imperative for America to "organize and enlist the energies and resources of the free world in a positive program for peace which will frustrate the Kremlin design for world domination by creating a situation in the free world to which the Kremlin will be compelled to adjust." The execution of such a build-up required a positive program.[35]

Not everyone, however, accepted the concepts of

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[34] Ibid., 264. [35] Ibid., 282-283, 287.

NSC 68 in April, 1950. For example, George Kennan and Charles Bohlen of the Policy Planning Staff, both opposed the document as being simplistically dangerous.[36] More important, President Truman was deeply concerned about the costs of the program envisaged in NSC 68. Paul Nitze, Director of the Policy Planning Staff and one of the authors of NSC 68, recalls that no one dared to put in any specific figures because they were thinking along the lines of $50 billion a year for defense.[37] The conclusions and theories of NSC 68 needed a concrete event to prove their validity. When the Korean War came along, U.S. policy makers had a ready-made explanation for the conflict, with an appropriate response and course of action to follow at hand. But until the North Korean invasion occurred, the ideas expressed in NSC 48/2 and in Acheson's January 12 speech, were operative.

The ideas expressed in those documents were that while Korea did not have great military value, it did have tremendous political value in the Cold War. The official statements made in 1949 and 1950, outlined in this chapter, make it clear that a firm foundation for U.S. intervention in Korea had been laid well before NSC 68 was written. This unspoken commitment was based both on the power

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[36]Kennan to Acheson, February 17, 1950, Ibid., 160-163; Bohlen to Nitze, April 5, 1950, Ibid., 221-223.

[37]Princeton Seminars, Dean Acheson Papers, Harry S. Truman Presidential Library.

and prestige of the fledgling United Nations, and on the existence of a balance of strength between the two Koreas. It is important to remember that what surprised the United States in June, 1950 was not North Korean aggression, but the type of aggression. Policy makers expected U.N. protection to be sufficient to prevent overt acts of aggression, especially by the Soviet Union, and they believed South Korea was capable of dealing with internal subversion. Thus the United States expected trouble in Korea, but trouble of a covert nature, not an outright invasion. These points were made several times in 1949 and 1950.

In the Senate hearings on economic aid for Korea and China, Major General W.E. Todd listed four possible actions that would be detrimental to South Korean survival. First was the indirect type of North Korean aggression taking place at that moment under direction of a Communist underground from North Korea. Second, were border clashes that had been going on for some time. Third, was aggression on the part of the North Korean Army. Last, was "direct action on the part of Soviet armed forces."[38]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff believed that any direct Soviet action was the most unlikely of all possible events. Any action on the part of the North Korean Army also was improbable because numerically the forces of the North and

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[38]U.S. Senate, Economic Assistance, 175.

South were almost equal. Without outside armed aid, the North Korean Army could not "pay the price" of aggression. Todd believed that if "the Soviets attach any priority to areas in which they would like to move by means of armed aggression, Korea would be at the bottom in that list of priorities." Todd also did not feel that the Soviet Union "would even encourage the North Korean Army to invade South Korea." He believed that Russia "would improve its strategic position very little in the Far East by occupying South Korea."[39]

Another factor would make the Soviet Union reluctant to take aggressive action--South Korea had been given "some degree of recognition by the United Nations . . . ." Senator Vandenberg agreed with Todd, noting that an attack on South Korea "would be a fundamental challenge to the entire United Nations, and I doubt whether that will be lightly undertaken . . . ." At another point, he observed that a Soviet attack "would be a frontal attack on the United Nations and I do not believe they are going to do any such thing. There are too many others places where they can operate without that moral handicap . . . ."[40]

Ambassador Muccio reiterated this opinion on August 20, in a dispatch to Acheson. Muccio noted that since America's policy was to support South Korea diplomatically,

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[39] Ibid., 175-177. [40] Ibid., 179-182.

economically, and militarily, it was of prime importance that the United Nations "should remain seized with the Korean problem . . . ." Muccio wanted some kind of U.N. commission present in Korea, because "Apart from evidencing the moral responsibility of the United Nations to Korea, the primary value of the U.N. Commission is to serve as a barrier to Communist aggression." The U.N. blessing of South Korea had exercised a profound influence on both sides of the parallel and served to make North Korea and the Soviet Union hesitant to invade the Republic of Korea.[41]

The sense of the Senate hearings and Muccio's August 20 dispatch was that it was very improbable that the Soviet Union would invade South Korea. The strategic value of South Korea did not outweigh its liabilities for Russia in light of South Korea's close relationship to the United Nations. A North Korean invasion was discounted because military parity supposedly existed between the two countries. Both Acheson's speech and Jessup's paper agreed about the improbability of an invasion as they placed their emphasis on the threat of internal subversion. Acheson, Jessup, and Muccio believed, or wanted to believe, that the United Nations would serve as a break against a possible invasion.

The United States evinced little alarm about a

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[41]Muccio to Acheson, August 20, 1945, FR, 1949, VII(2), 1068.

possible invasion of South Korea.[42] The belief that the forces of the two countries were balanced was a key element in explaining this feeling. The United States in 1949 had left behind $110 million in matériel, enough to equip 50,000 men--this was, however, all that South Korea was to receive before June, 1950. Colonel John Baird, Acting Chief of the Korean Military Adviser Group, informed Muccio in October, 1949, that "the type and quality of matériel available to South Korea was inadequate for war." South Korea was outnumbered in everything but individual weapons.[43]

Muccio informed Washington on November 6, 1949, that something had to be done "to enable the ROK to put up an effective defense against expanding North Korean air power." Without such aid, South Korean security would be jeopardized and "we will consequently risk loss of our objectives in Korea." He followed on the 10th, with a plea for more and heavier artillery and a strengthening of the coast guard.[44]

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[42]In February, 1949, the CIA concluded that "Withdrawal of U.S. forces from Korea in the spring of 1949 would probably in time be followed by an invasion, timed to coincide with Communist-led South Korean revolts, by the North Korean People's Army, possibly assisted by small battle-trained units from Communist Manchuria." It further was concluded South Korean security forces could not resist such an attack in the spring of 1949, and probably not before January 1950. See CIA-ORE 3-49, February, 1949,"Consequences of U.S. Troop Withdrawal From Korea in Spring, 1949," in CIA files, Modern Military Branch, National Archives, Washington D.C.

[43]Schnabel, Policy, 36.

[44]Muccio to Acheson, November 8 and 10, 1949, FR,1949, VII(2), 1094-1095.

On November 28, 1949, the State Department responded to the pleas of Muccio and General William Roberts, Chief of Korean Military Advisory Group, that aid for Korea not be reduced to $10.23 million, as proposed. Seoul was told that decisions had to be based on both overall national interest and on evaluations of the comparative risks of an inadequate program in one country as against a similar situation in another country. The State Department wanted to know if the risks involved in implementing only a $10.23 million program in Korea were unacceptable. If so, what minimum increase was needed to make the risks acceptable? If the $10.23 million could not be increased, should the Military Defense Assistance Program for Korea be abandoned? The State Department's note was not designed to encourage continued criticism about the inadequacies of U.S. aid. Muccio informed Washington that while the money was insufficient to meet all the contingencies involved in repulsing an all-out attack, it was still a sum that would be very valuable.[45]

On April 20, 1950, the Chargé in Korea, Everett Drumright, pointed out that the recently approved $110 million military aid program for Korea delivered only $108 of aid in 1950. This was especially serious because "all vehicle and weapons spare parts and all powder and primers for

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[45]Acting Secretary of State to Embassy In Korea, November 28, 1949, Ibid., 1102; Muccio to Acheson, December 1, 1949, Ibid., 1102-1103.

the arsenal program are scheduled for delivery in FY 1952."[46] The parts situation for the South Korean Army was equally disturbing to General Roberts. On May 5, he reported that "The six months supply of parts is exhausted and it is estimated that 10-15% of the weapons, and 30-35% of the vehicles are unserviceable." Roberts believed it was significant that spare parts for South Korea were not scheduled to arrive until 1952, because unless "prompt, effective and vigorous measures" were taken, the Army would be dangerously reduced in firepower, mobility, and logistical support. The best fighting troops were "virtually worthless" if they could not support themselves logistically.[47]

General Roberts informed G-3 in March, 1950, that the South Korean Army would do an excellent job against "inferior ground forces of North Korea . . .," but if the North Korean Army attacked with its superior air force, "South Korea would take a bloody nose," and the people would follow the winner and "South Korea would be gobbled up to be added to the rest of Red Asia." On June 6, Muccio told a Senate Committee that the matériel superiority of the North Korean Army would provide the margin of victory in any conflict between the two Koreas. On the 14th, while citing superior South Korean

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[46]Drumright to Acheson, April 20, 1950, U.S. Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1950: Korea, Volume VII (Washington: GPO, 1976), 47.

[47]Muccio to Acheson, May 5, 1950, Ibid., 93-96.

training, leadership, morale, and better small arms, Muccio was forced to report that North Korea's air power, tanks, and heavier artillery gave it the preponderance of strength.[48]

Optimistic reports, however, balanced the pessimistic ones that struck at a key assumption of policy makers. One such optimistic report was from Ambassador at Large Philip Jessup, on January 14, 1950, after an on-the-spot inspection. While acknowledging the need for at least a few aircraft, anti-aircraft guns, and light tanks, overall Jessup gave the South Koreans high marks. Additionally, on several occasions both Muccio and Roberts undercut or backed-off earlier estimates and requests for increased military aid. General Roberts also often contradicted his pessimistic reports. Finally, William Foster, of the Economic Cooperation Administration, informed the same Senate Committee that Muccio had testified before on June 6, that the South Korean Army could meet any North Korean challenge.[49]

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[48]Roberts to General Bolte, G-3, March 8, 1950, Recently Declassified Documents on Korea, Modern Military Branch, National Archives; Muccio to Acheson, June 14, 1950, FR,1950, VII, 105; Schnabel, Policy, 39. In 1949, 20,000 combat-seasoned Koreans were released from the Chinese Communist Army to return to North Korean. In addition, 40,000 draftees were added to the North Korean Army in 1949. By the time of the invasion, North Korea had 150,000-200,000 men in its army, including 40,000 Korean returnees from China's army. See Scalapino and Lee, Communism in Korea, II, 392-3.

[49]Jessup to Acheson, January 14, 1950, FR,1950, VII, 1-3; Memo of Conversation by Officer in Charge of Korean Affairs(Bond), May 10, 1950, Ibid., 79; Memo by Acting Director of the Mutual Defense Assistance Program(Ohly) to Rusk, May 10, 1950, Ibid., 82; Schnabel, Policy, 40.

The last pre-invasion CIA evaluation of the current capabilities of the North Korean regime, however, could not have inspired confidence among U.S. officials. According to the CIA, North Korea was a "firmly controlled Soviet satellite that exercises no independent initiative and depends entirely on the support of the U.S.S.R. for existence." North Korea was capable of continuing and increasing its present program of internal subversion, but this would not be sufficient to achieve its goal of control of all of Korea so long as U.S. economic and military aid to South Korea was continued.[50]

But the CIA warned that the capability of the North Korean Army for both short and long-term overt military operations was being further developed. North Korea possessed a "superiority in armor, heavy artillery and aircraft." Thus its armed forces "had the capability for attaining limited objectives against South Korea, including capture of Seoul." Despite the North Korean superiority, it was uncertain that they could control South Korea without the active participation of Soviet or Chinese military units. This was unlikely, as the threat of a general war would restrain Russia from intervening, and because Moscow would oppose Chinese intervention as being a threat to Soviet control

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[50]Memo by the CIA, Current Capabilities of the North Korean Regime, June 19, 1950, FR,1950, VII, 109-120.

over North Korea.[51]

The CIA made it clear, however, that the "ultimate objective of the Soviet Union and of the North Korean regime was the elimination of the ROK and the unification of the Korean peninsula under Communist domination." Open invasion had "thus far been delayed in favor of a coordinated campaign involving political pressure within South Korea, subversion, propaganda, intimidation, economic pressure, and military action by infiltration of guerilla forces." So far, although this campaign had not been decisive, it had been successful in damaging seriously the South Korean economy at a relatively slight cost to the Communists.[52]

The CIA evaluation was not an optimistic one. An invasion was not ruled out if present Communist tactics failed, and the CIA was less than confident about South Korea's ability to resist a North Korean invasion under the present conditions. Yet in the final analysis, the CIA saw no need to be on guard against an imminent invasion.[53]

While the CIA report did not reflect the current feelings of outward confidence then evident in Washington

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[51] Ibid., 109-111. [52] Ibid., 120.

[53] Ibid. A G-2 report of June 19, presented strong evidence of North Korean plans to invade South Korea. But this report, like most others in the spring of 1950, which showed significant troop movements and concentrations around the 38th parallel, were "poorly evaluated in the field and at the higher echelons." See Schnabel, Policy, 62-64.

about South Korea's future, the official attitude toward South Korean estimates of North Korean strength did. These estimates were routinely dismissed as being 50%-70% too large[54], though as it turned out they were much more accurate than U.S. estimates. The United States also dismissed the anxiety that Acheson's January 12 speech had created in South Korea. Korean Ambassador John Chang on January 20 said that Acheson's statement when combined with the House rejection on January 19 of the Korean aid bill, raised a serious question as to whether the United States was abandoning South Korea.[55]

Chang, in an April 3 discussion with Rusk and Niles Bond of the State Department, wanted "to impress upon the Department the importance which the Korean Government and people attached to their apparent exclusion from the defense plans of the United States in the Far East." Rusk informed Chang that he should not put "too much faith in what he read in the newspapers." After denigrating the significance of the "so-called 'defense line'", Rusk added that the "inference that the United States had decided to abandon the ROK to its enemies was scarcely warranted . . . ."[56]

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[54]Drumright to Acheson, May 11, 1950, FR,1950, VII, 83; Ibid., May 11, 1950, Ibid., 84.

[55]Memo of Conversation by John Williams of the Office of Northeast Asian Affairs, January 20, 1950, Ibid., 12.

[56]Memo of Conversation by Niles Bond, April 3, 1950, Ibid., 64-65.

South Korean confidence was not fortified when Senator Connally on May 5, said that abandonment of South Korea was going to happen, "whether we want it to or not . . .Whenever North Korea takes a notion to, she can just overrun Korea . . . ."[57] Rhee regarded Connally's remarks as "an open invitation to the Communists to come down and take over South Korea." According to Drumright, "Rhee's faith in the determination of the United States to assist Korea in event of North Korean aggression had been shaken to an appreciable extent by Senator Connally's remarks." The U.S. failure to meet South Korea's request for air support and the apparent failure to supply Korea with military supplies and equipment under the terms of the Mutual Defense Assistance program had further shaken Rhee's faith. Drumright believed that these factors, when coupled with persistent "talk" that Korea was outside the U.S. Far Eastern strategic defense zone, was having a very unsettling effect on Korean officials and the public.[58]

How unsettling these remarks had been, was made clear in a May 12 press conference, during which Rhee pointed out that North Korean troops were concentrating near the 38th parallel--and not to invade Japan or China. Rhee caustically noted that the "In South Korea the United States has

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[57]Rusk to Webb, May 2, 1950, Ibid., 64-65.

[58]Memo of Conversation by Drumright, May 9, 1950, Ibid., 77-78.

one foot in South Korea and one foot outside so that in case of an unfavorable situation it could pull out." Rhee felt that if the United States wanted to aid South Korea, it should go beyond mere "lip service."[59]

In part, John Foster Dulles' stopover in Korea, while visiting Japan, was intended to give some reassurance to the South Korean government. Dulles told the South Koreans that formal pacts were not necessary prerequisites to common action against a common foe and that the important thing was for a government to prove by its actions that it was in fact a loyal member of the free world, in which case it could count on the support of the other members of the free world against an act of communist aggression.[60]

The success of Dulles' efforts to reassure the Korean leadership is a moot point, since in less than one week North Korea launched its invasion of South Korea. Not only the invasion, but its swift and overwhelming success came as a shock to U.S. officials. Some officials, however, had not been entirely honest with themselves, as they ignored clear signs of weakness in the South Korean military and they disregarded the growing strength of the North Korean Army. To do so made it possible to avoid making hard decisions about future U.S. actions in Korea.

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[59]Footnote 2, Ibid., 85.

[60]Memo of Conversation by Director of the Office of Northeast Asian Affairs(Allison), June 19,1950, Ibid., 108-9.

In a memorandum prepared on June 29, 1950, Dulles did an excellent job of summing up why the United States had been surprised and why South Korea had done so poorly in defending itself. Dulles believed there were four basic reasons for the large initial success of the North Koreans. First, the South Korean Army was, by U.S. decision, without combat planes, tanks, and heavy artillery, although the United States was aware that the enemy possessed these weapons in substantial quantity and in good quality. Second, there was a failure to evaluate properly intelligence information, which showed that over several weeks there had been a gradual concentration of troops and tank formations along the 38th parallel. Third, there was a mood of complacency on the part of U.S. military advisers, the result of overconfidence in the morale and discipline of the South Korean Army. Finally, Tokyo was not informed promptly, and when informed did not evaluate the attack as serious until the third day when Seoul was within the enemy's grasp.[61]

Dulles' assessment was probably correct, but it was not terribly pertinent on June 29, 1950. The question that had to be dealt with immediately was what response the United States would make to the North Korean invasion. In 1949-1950, numerous American officials had stressed both South Korea's continued existence as a symbol of U.S.

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[61]Memo by Dulles, Consultant to the Secretary of State, June 29, 1950, Ibid., 237-238.

credibility in Asia and that America could not afford to abandon South Korea to Communist aggression. Given the importance placed on South Korea's survival and on the role of the United Nations as the moral force underpinning that survival, the U.S. response in June, 1950, was predictable and almost inevitable.

CHAPTER VII

INTERVENTION IN THE KOREAN WAR

At 4:00 a.m., June 25, 1950, North Korean forces invaded South Korea.[1] Coordinated columns of Russian-made tanks and Russian-trained troops followed massed artillery fire and "rolled back the South Korean defenders, engulfing and destroying whole units in a well-conceived and carefully prepared military operation. North Korean planes, giving tactical support, were virtually unchallenged."[2]

At 9:26 p.m., June 24, the State Department received Muccio's first report of the attack. Within the hour, Assistant Secretary of State Dean Rusk and Secretary of the Army Frank Pace arrived at the State Department--to be joined shortly by Deputy Under-Secretary of State Freeman Matthews, Ambassador at Large Philip Jessup, Assistant

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[1]Korean time is 13 hours ahead of Washington's time. Dates cited in documents in the footnotes correspond to the sender's time.

[2]Schnabel, Policy, 61. Captured and authenticated North Korean attack orders leave no doubt about North Korean initiation of the attack. See General Maxwell Taylor, G-3, to CINCUNC (Ridgway), April 28, 1951, DA 89832, Box 31, Records of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Geographic File (Korea), 1951-1953, Record Group 218, Modern Military Branch, National Archives, Washington D.C.

Secretary of State for the United Nations John Hickerson, Ruth Bacon of Far Eastern affairs, and Theodore Achilles of of the Western European Affairs Division.[3] At around 11:00 p.m., this group made the initial report and recommendation to Acheson, who was spending the weekend at Harewood Farm, that the matter be brought before the U.N. Security Council. Acheson informed Truman, and suggested that the Security Council meet, to which Truman agreed if Acheson believed it was necessary.[4]

The decision to place the problem before the United Nations was made on the strength of Muccio's first telegram, as all attempts to gain further clarification failed. By 2:00 a.m., June 25, Acheson approved the decision to go to the Security Council in order that both news of the attack and of the decision to submit the case to the United Nations could appear in the morning papers.[5] While Acheson was not a great supporter of the United Nations, viewing it as "an arena for troublemaking," his decision was in keeping with the tenor of U.S. policy in Korea since 1947.[6] The United

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[3]Muccio to Acheson, June 25, 1950, FR, 1950, VII, 125; Editorial Note, Ibid., 167-127.

[4]Memo, Acheson's Phone Call to the President, June 24, 1950, George Elsey Papers, Harry S. Truman Library; Editorial Note, FR, 1950, VII, 127.

[5]Editorial Note, FR, 1950, VII, 127.

[6]Gaddis Smith, The American Secretaries of State and Their Diplomacy: Dean Acheson, Volume XVI (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1972), 383.

States had tied South Korea's existence to the United Nations and had relied on the organization as a deterrent to actions precisely such as North Korea had taken. To ignore the United Nations now would have been impolitic, if not illogical.

Ruth Bacon and David Wainhouse completed the U.S. draft resolution for the Security Council at 2:00 a.m., June 25.[7] The resolution was prepared in haste, without the aid of a full-scale policy discussion or review, and as such, it represented only a temporary measure designed to "make do" until U.S. officials of the highest rank could determine the best American course of action.

While the United States was preparing to go before the United Nations, the situation in Korea continued to deteriorate. Muccio informed MacArthur that South Korea's ammunition supply would run out in ten days.[8] On his own initiative MacArthur ordered supply ships to Pusan under the protection of U.S. air and naval forces. On June 25, in a teletype conference, MacArthur informed Washington that this was an all-out North Korean attempt to subjugate South Korea and not a limited offensive.[9]

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[7]Editorial Note, FR, 1950, VII, 127.

[8]Muccio to Acheson, June 25, 1950, Ibid., 129; Schnabel, Policy, 65-66.

[9]Memo of Teletype Conference, Prepared in the Department of the Army, June 25, 1950, FR,1950, VII, 136.

On Sunday afternoon, June 25, U.S. Deputy Representative to the United Nations, Ernest Gross, placed the American resolution before the Security Council. The resolution, after briefly describing U.N. involvement in Korean affairs, called for all hostilities to cease immediately and for the North Koreans to withdraw behind the 38th parallel. The resolution also called upon "All members to render every assistance to the United Nations in the execution of this resolution and to refrain from giving assistance to the North Korean authorities." The resolution passed 9-0, since the Soviet representative was absent because of a dispute over the seating of Communist China.[10]

The U.S. resolution was open-ended in its potentialities--the phrase "to render every assistance" in executing the resolution presented a number of possibilities, including commitment of U.S. ground forces to Korea. The Joint Chiefs in a June 25 teletype conference with MacArthur indicated that they did not believe the resolution sufficient for such action. MacArthur was told that he might be called on to employ U.S. ground and naval forces "to stabilize the combat situation, including if feasible the restoration of the original boundaries at 38 degrees parallel," in the event the Security Council called on member nations

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[10]Resolution Adopted by the U.N. Security Council, June 25, 1950, Ibid., 155-156.

to take direct action in Korea.[11]

At the time the first U.N. resolution was prepared and presented, U.S. policy makers had not reached a decision on a proper course of action. John Foster Dulles expressed a generally held hope when he said, "It is possible that the South Koreans themselves may contain and repulse the attack, and, if so, this is the best way." MacArthur's estimate that South Korea would be able to hold reinforced this hope.[12]

A more widely held feeling, however, was that the United States would be required to take some sort of action. At 11:30 a.m., June 25, a high-level State-Defense Department conference was held, during which John Davies of the Policy Planning Staff noted that the extreme Russian move indicated the Soviet Union "thought all the Far East their 'oyster'", and added that "if they could get away with this move they would probably move in other areas." The general consensus of those present was that the U.S. reaction would be critical and that half-measures would not suffice.[13]

The U.S. Ambassador in Moscow, Alan G. Kirk, and Special Representative John Foster Dulles, then in Tokyo,

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[11]Teletype Conference with MacArthur, 7:30 p.m., June 25, 1950, Elsey Papers.

[12]Acting Political Adviser in Japan (Sebald) to Acheson, June 25, 1950, FR, 1950, VII, 140; Glen Paige, The Korean Decision: June 25-30, 1950 (New York: Free Press, 1968), 100; Sebald, MacArthur, 184.

[13]Editorial Note, FR, 1950, VII, 143.

reiterated the need for action. Kirk saw the aggressive North Korean military move as a clear-cut Soviet challenge, "which in our considered opinion the United States should answer firmly and swiftly as it constitutes a direct threat to our leadership of the free world against Soviet Communist imperialism." The Soviet Union was counting on a U.S. inclination to allow "neutralization of the conflict so that numerically superior North Korean troops could gain a victory." The Embassy believed the Soviet Union was not prepared to risk a full-scale war over Korea. South Korea should be aided with all the means at America's disposal. Dulles spoke in a similar fashion, noting that if South Korea could not stop the invasion, "U.S. force should be used even though this risks Russian counter moves." If the United States sat back while an unprovoked armed attack overran South Korea, it "would start a disastrous chain of events leading most probably to world war."[14]

Late in the afternoon of the 25th, Rusk, George Kennan, and other members of the Policy Planning Staff, received from the Estimates Group of the State Department, a lengthy intelligence evaluation of the situation. It was the judgment of the Estimates Group that North Korea intended to attain a decisive victory in South Korea within the next seven days. South Korea, militarily inferior

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[14]Kirk to Acheson, June 25, 1950, Ibid., 139; Sebald to Acheson, June 25, 1950, Ibid., 140.

because of its lack of air, armor, and heavy artillery, could offer only limited resistance. Limited aid only in lieu of a full U.S. commitment, would insure the end of organized resistance.[15]

The State Department's intelligence estimate concluded that North Korea was under Soviet control completely. It was impossible that the invasion had occurred without prior instructions from Moscow. This open aggression, while "in line with the increasing militancy that has marked Soviet policy during the past eight months," was unique in that it clearly carried with it the risk of involving U.S. forces and hence the risk of general war. The only explanation possible for the invasion in light of "the apparent U.S. commitment to South Korea . . .", was that Soviet global strategy must have required the attack.[16]

Elimination of South Korea would fit Soviet global strategy in several ways. First it offered a test on militarily favorable grounds of the U.S. commitment to its recently announced policy of "total diplomacy". The outcome of this test probably would influence both Russian and Chinese moves to support Ho Chi Minh, and Burmese and Malaysian Communists, as well as Soviet moves against Yugoslavia,

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[15]Intelligence Estimate Prepared by the Estimates Group, Office of Intelligence Research, Department of State, June 25, 1950, Ibid., 148-149.

[16]Ibid., 149.

Germany, or Iran. Second, a severe blow would be dealt to U.S. prestige throughout Asia and conversely Soviet advances would appear inevitable. Third, Soviet control of South Korea would "secure the approaches to the U.S.S.R." Finally, Soviet domination of South Korea would be a vital weapon for "the intimidation of the Japanese in connection with Japan's future alignment with the United States."[17]

The consequences of the invasion would be most important in Japan and secondly in Western Europe. Japan's reaction would depend almost entirely upon what the United States did or did not do in Korea. Rapid and unhesitating U.S. support for South Korea would reassure Japan and would weaken existing desires for neutrality. In Europe, a successful Soviet-sponsored invasion in Korea would severely damage U.S. prestige, because "the capacity of a small Soviet satellite to engage in a military adventure challenging as many Europeans see it, the might and will of the United States, can only lead to a serious questioning of that might and will."[18]

Well before the first meeting of high-level government officials at Blair House at 8:00 p.m., on June 25, the general tenor of thinking among important U.S. officials was taking definite form. The invasion was perceived as Soviet-inspired, requiring from America a positive and

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[17] Ibid., 150-151. [18] Ibid., 151-154.

immediate reaction. As the first Blair House meeting began, the character and degree of that reaction was undetermined.

During the meeting there was a rambling exchange of assessments and opinions from the various Chiefs and Secretaries present. At the outset, Truman put off Secretary of Defense Johnson's and General Bradley's attempt to make Formosa the keystone of the discussion. Acheson made a series of recommendations, among which were authorization for MacArthur to supply arms and ammunition, to provide U.S. air cover for evacuation of women and children from Seoul, and to send a survey team to Korea. Finally, Acheson recommended that the 7th Fleet be placed in the Formosa Straits to prevent an attack on or from Formosa. He added that in so doing, the United States should not become involved with Chiang Kai-shek and that the United Nations should determine Formosa's future.[19] Acheson's Formosa recommendation "flowed directly from the complicated deliberations of the previous eighteen months during which time Taiwan underwent the transformation from a tentative major interest to a full-fledged one." Thus, the shock of the Korean War became "more the occasion for U.S. intervention than the reason for it."[20]

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[19]Memo of Conversation by Jessup, June 25, 1950, Ibid., 157-158.

[20]Russell D. Buhite, "'Major Interests': American Policy Toward China, Taiwan, and Korea, 1945-1950," Pacific Historical Review (Fall, 1978), 439-440. For a complete discussion of this question, see the entire article.

General Bradley expressed the consensus opinion that the United States had to draw the line somewhere on Communist expansion. Russia was not ready for a general war and Korea offered as good occasion as any for demonstrating American determination. He added that the United States "should act under the guise of aid to the U.N." While Bradley and the rest of the military officials present agreed to the need for action, they all expressed keen doubts about the advisability of committing U.S. ground forces to Korea.[21]

President Truman accepted Acheson's recommendations, except the one concerning Formosa. MacArthur was ordered to send supplies and a survey team to Korea. Plans were to be drawn to destroy Soviet air bases in the Far East and U.S. air and naval forces were to prevent the North Korean Army from interfering with the evacuation of U.S. dependents from the Seoul-Inchon area. Finally, it was imperative that possible future Soviet moves be assessed. Truman emphasized that since the United States was "working entirely for the United Nations," further actions would be considered only if and when the "U.N. order was flouted."[22]

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[21] Jessup Memo, June 25, 1950, FR, 1950, VII, 158-160.

[22] Ibid., 160-161.

The decision to employ U.S. air and naval forces in maintaining the Seoul-Inchon area was reached without reference to the United Nations. Inherent in this decision was the very real possibility of combat with North Korean forces. It also was an action that "established a precedent for the later commitment of U.S. ground troops."[23]

The situation in Korea soon outdated Washington's initial, limited steps. Muccio, early on the 26th, informed the State Department of a dangerous, rapidly deteriorating situation, with imminent collapse of South Korea a possibility. Acheson felt compelled to urge another Blair House meeting in light of Seoul's inability to make a stand.[24] Prior to that meeting, Truman had a revealing conversation with his personal secretary, George Elsey. Truman told Elsey that "Korea is the Greece of the Far East. If we are tough enough now, if we stand up to them like we did in Greece three years ago, they won't take any next step . . . There is no telling what they'll do if we don't put up a fight now." Elsey believed that Truman was determined "to go very much further than MacArthur's initial orders."[25]

At the June 26 meeting, Acheson suggested that all

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[23]Schnabel, Policy, 70.

[24]Muccio to Acheson, June 26, 1950, FR, 1950, VII, 170; Notes on Blair House Meeting, June 26, 1950, Elsey Papers.

[25]Memo of Conversation Between Truman and Elsey, by George Elsey, June 26, 1950, Elsey Papers.

restrictions be waived on air and naval operations in South Korea and that full support be given to South Korean forces to destroy North Korean tanks, guns, and troops. This could be done in conformity with the June 25 Security Council resolution. Truman approved the action, adding that as yet no action was to be taken north of the 38th parallel. Approval was given to increasing U.S. military forces in the Philippines and to accelerating aid and sending a strong military mission to Indochina. Finally, Truman agreed to place the 7th Fleet in the Formosa Straits. Placement, however, was purely verbal, since the understrength Fleet was needed for the Korean conflict. Not until October, 1950, did the 7th Fleet enter the Formosa Straits, and even then it probably was not in strength sufficient to prevent an invasion of Formosa. Acheson was careful once again to add that the United States should not get mixed up in the question of Chinese administration of Formosa.[26]

While there was agreement over these moves, the military continued to express doubts about committing ground forces to Korea. The U.S. Army, under the pressures of a penny-pinching, irresponsible Congress and an uninformed public, had been cut to an active strength of 591,000 men

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[26]Memo of Conversation by Jessup, June 26, 1950, FR,1950, VII, 178-180; Robert Simmons, The Strained Alliance (New York: Free Press, 1974), 145; Malcolm Cagle, and Frank Manson, The Sea War in Korea (Annapolis: U.S. Naval Institute, 1957), 33.

in June, 1950. Bradley believed that the United States could not enter Korea and still carry out other commitments without mobilization. Truman instructed the Joint Chiefs to think about that possibility, but made it clear that the United States was going to do everything it could in Korea "for the United Nations."[27]

While claiming to be willing to justify future actions under the first U.N. resolution, U.S. policy makers felt the need for a much clearer resolution to provide a veneer of legality to those actions. An additional resolution also might incite others to act with the United States. The result was a June 27 Security Council resolution which called on members of the United Nations "to furnish such assistance to the ROK as may be necessary to repel the armed attack and to restore international peace and security to the area."[28] The belief that Russia, because of its cumbersome bureaucracy, still would be absent from the June 27 Security Council meeting, undoubtedly aided the decision to seek this resolution.[29]

Once more the pace of events in Korea forced the

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[27] Ibid., 183. James Schnabel has described the U.S. Army on the eve of the Korean War as "flabby and soft, still hampered by an infectious lassitude, unready to respond swiftly and decisively to a full-scale military emergency." See Schnabel, Policy, 45, 60.

[28] Resolution Adopted by the United Nations Security Council, June 27, 1950, FR, 1950, VII, 211.

[29] Dean Acheson, Present at the Creation (New York: Signet Edition, 1969), 531.

United States to go beyond the decisions reached at the June 26 Blair House meeting. MacArthur, in compliance with his orders, sent General John Church and a survey team to Korea on June 27. On the 28th, Church reported that the United States would have to commit ground forces to stabilize and restore the situation. MacArthur, on receiving this report, decided to survey the situation himself.[30]

While MacArthur was in Korea, Truman approved another escalation in America's involvement. At the urging of the Joint Chiefs he agreed to authorize air attacks against military targets in North Korea and to use U.S. troops to secure the area around Pusan. At the same time he rejected a Defense Department directive to MacArthur because it implied that the United States was ready to go to war with the Soviet Union. Truman stated that "We must be damn careful . . .We want to take any steps we have to to push the North Koreans behind the line, but I don't want us overcommitted to a whole lot of other things that could mean war."[31]

MacArthur was authorized on June 30, to bomb military targets north of the 38th parallel, though he was ordered to stay "well clear" of the Manchurian and Siberian borders.

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[30]Roy Appleman, South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu (Washington: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1961), 43-45.

[31]Notes on the June 29, 1950, Blair House Meeting, Elsey Papers.

In addition, MacArthur was authorized to employ U.S. forces to guard Pusan. He was cautioned, however, that this measure did not constitute "a decision to engage in war with the Soviet Union if Soviet forces intervened." But the decision had been reached with a full realization of the risks involved. If Soviet forces did intervene, MacArthur's troops were to defend themselves, being sure to take no action that would aggravate the situation. Washington was to be informed immediately of the situation for a determination of proper courses of action.[32]

The military was willing to employ U.S. air and naval forces to aid South Korea, but it consistently expressed doubts about using U.S. ground forces in Korea--the United States had limited resources and Korea was of little military significance. General Charles Bolté, head of G-3, reinforced this opinion as late as June 28, when he informed the Secretary of the Army that the commitment of major U.S. ground forces to Korea could have serious effects on the overall U.S. military position.[33] But a different view was received on June 29, from the Joint Strategic Survey Committee.

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[32]JCS to MacArthur, June 30, 1950, FR, 1950, VII, 240-241; Courtney Whitney, MacArthur: His Rendezvous With Destiny (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1956), 326.

[33]General Bolté (G-3), to the Secretary of the Army, Memo, "Situation in the Far East," June 29, 1950, Carrollton Press, Declassified Documents Reference System, DDRS 64D.

The Joint Chiefs were informed that South Korean capitulation to North Korea was unacceptable politically to the United States because of the resultant loss of prestige and leadership that would occur. MacArthur should be ordered to drive the North Koreans north of the 38th parallel, employing all the forces under his command, as well as other appropriate forces which should be made available to him.[34] This report, suggesting the necessity for political considerations to override military ones, was an important factor in gaining military acquiescence to the use of U.S. troops in Korea. The Soviet Union's reply to an American note of June 25 and MacArthur's assessment of the situation, however, were more important factors.

On June 25, the United States sent a note to the Soviet Union, asking them to disavow any responsibility "for this unprovoked attack and that it will use its influence with North Korean authorities to withdraw their invading forces immediately."[35] On June 29, the Soviet Union replied that South Korea had initiated the attack and therefore Seoul had to accept the responsibility for the events now occurring. The Soviet Union added that it adhered "to

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[34]Report by the Joint Strategic Survey Committee to the JCS, "U.S. Courses of Action in Korea," June 29, 1950, DDRS 250E.

[35]Acheson to the Embassy in the Soviet Union, June 25, 1950, FR, 1950, VII, 148.

the principle of the impermissibility of interference by foreign powers in the internal affairs of Korea."[36] Consultants to the National Security Council concluded that this answer "was reassuring in indicating that the USSR was not directly involving itself . . ." in the Korean hostilities, though the same could not be said for Communist China.[37] Moscow's reply, disassociating itself from any involvement in the Korean situation, encouraged the belief that there would be no Soviet intervention in Korea.

MacArthur's pessmistic evaluation of conditions in Korea, based on first-hand observation, reached Washington in the early morning hours of June 30. The only way to hold the present line in Korea and to regain lost territory was "through introduction of U.S. ground combat forces into the Korean battle area." Unless otherwise directed, he intended to move immediately a regimental combat team to South Korea and to follow this later with two divisions from Japan. MacArthur was given almost immediate Presidential approval to send the regimental combat team, but any further build-up was postponed until the President and his top advisers could give careful consideration to the request.[38]

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[36]Kirk to Acheson, June 29, 1950, Ibid., 229.

[37]Memo of NSC Consultants Meeting, June 29, 1950, FR,1950, I, 327.

[38]MacArthur to Acheson, June 30, 1950, FR,1950, VI, 248-249; Memo of Teletype Conference Prepared in the Department of the Army, June 30, 1950, Ibid., 250-252.

At 9:30 a.m., June 30, the President met again with his advisers at Blair House. No opposition was expressed to the decision to approve the reinforcement of U.S. troops already committed to Korea. The Joint Chiefs did not speak in favor of the proposal, but they voiced no objections.[39] At 1:22 p.m., June 30, MacArthur was informed that he could utilize in Korea all U.S. Army forces available to him, subject only to Japan's security.[40] A short time later, the United Nations and South Korea placed their troops under U.S. command, and America became the U.N.'s agent in Korea.

The commitment of U.S. ground forces to Korea, a political decision rather than one which military necessity required, was made over the initial objections of the military, which had long opposed the use of U.S. troops on the Asian mainland. The military acquiesced only after Truman and Acheson made it clear that the United States, for political reasons, could not allow South Korea to fall. General Bradley, in his June, 1949 memorandum, had foreseen that such a political decision might become necessary.

John Foster Dulles, five weeks before the attack, expressed the kind of thinking that would later lead the

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[39]Editorial Note, Ibid., 255; Louis Johnson Testimony, U.S. Congress, Senate, Military Situation in the Far East, 82nd Congress, 1st Session (Washington: GPO, 1951), 2584.

[40]JCS to MacArthur, June 30, 1950, FR, 1950, VII, 263; Schnabel, Policy, 100-101.

United States to intervene in Korea. In a memorandum to Dean Rusk and Paul Nitze, Dulles wrote that the United States faced a new and critical period in its relations with the rest of the world. The loss of China had had tremendous repercussions throughout the world and had marked a shift in the balance of power in favor of the Soviet Union. Dulles believed that if U.S. conduct indicated a continued willingness to fall back and allow doubtful areas to fall under Soviet control, then many nations would feel confirmed in the impression that the United States did not expect to stand firm short of the NATO area and regions which the Monroe Doctrine traditionally covered. If U.S. conduct confirmed this conclusion, then an accelerated deterioration of U.S. influence in the Mediterranean, Northeast Asia, and the Pacific was inevitable. The situation in Japan, the Philippines, Indonesia, and the Middle East were not places for "good holding operations once the people feel that Communism is the wave of the future and that even we are retreating before it." Dulles felt that it might be possible to prevent a series of disastrous losses if "at some doubtful point we quickly take a dramatic and strong stand that shows our confidence and resolution."[41]

Dulles' type of thinking dominated among U.S. officials in late June, 1950. The United States, as the

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[41]Dulles to Nitze and Rusk, May 18, 1950, FR, 1950, I, 314-316.

principal center of the free world, could not allow South Korea to fall, for as NSC 68 put it, in the mortal conflict then in progress between the Soviet slave society and the free world, "a defeat of free institutions anywhere is a defeat everywhere." In the present biploar world of good and evil, it was absolutely necessary that the United States make a stand in Korea and check the advance of evil before its momentum overwhelmed the free world. Step by step, as South Korean resistance disintegrated, the United States was drawn into a land war in Asia. The decision was predictable and certain given past U.S. policy in Korea and its present perception of a world divided between a "good" free world and an aggressive, expansionistic Soviet slave society.

Whether that perception was correct is open to question. Nikita Khruschev has said that the idea for the invasion originated with North Korea's Kim Il-sung and that Stalin agreed to it after consultation with Mao Tase-tung. According to Khruschev, "We were inclined to think that if the war were fought swiftly . . .then intervention by the USA would be avoided." It has been suggested that the timing of the war can best be understood in terms of indigenous conditions on the Korean peninsula. While the Soviet Union certainly armed the North Koreans and expected a war, the specific timing of the invasion "was caused by intense intra-Korean Worker's Party rivalry in the North,

combined with appeals from South Korean-based guerillas who had powerful supporters in the North." These pressures may have forced Kim Il-sung into war before the date, probably August 7, on which his Soviet mentors had agreed. North Korea then "was neither a completely passive 'gun' for an itchy Soviet trigger finger nor a monolithic system totally subservient to Moscow."[42]

The precise origins of the invasion may never be known, but there can be little doubt about American perceptions or that the Soviet Union did little to discourage North Korea's attack. One can only guess about Soviet motives, but some of the reasons generally advanced for its approval of the attack include: a desire to prevent the military and industrial resurgence of Japan on the side of the free world; a desire both to regain the initiative in Asia from the recently victorious Chinese Communists and to compensate for the loss of Manchuria; and finally, the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Korea, as well as America's failure to intervene

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[42]Nikita Khruschev, Khruschev Remembers (Boston: Little Brown, 1970), 368; Simmons, Strained Alliance, 103, 121. North Korea's premature invasion explains, Simmons believes, why supplies from the Soviet Union were still in the pipeline on June 25, why North Korea was not totally mobilized, why the Russians were absent from the Security Council, why both the Russian and Chinese propaganda machines were slow to react at the beginning of the war, why China did not attempt an attack on Taiwan before this more incendiary event, and finally, why the Russians did not offer as much aid as North Korea wanted, and why China was slow to offer assistance. See Simmons, Strained Alliance, 128.

when China fell, led the Soviet Union to conclude that South Korea could be taken swiftly and without a U.S. response.[43]

Whatever the Soviet motives, it is clear that the United States perceived them as harsh confirmation of the premises of NSC 68. On September 30, Truman approved the conclusions of NSC 68 "as a statement of policy to be followed over the next four or five years." The immediate result was an increase in the defense budget for 1951 from $13.5 billion to $48 billion, and in the long run, vastly expanded defense expenditures. Acheson, Nitze, and others believed that without the onset of the Korean War, the program envisaged in NSC 68 could never have been implemented.[44]

Some Washington officials, the most articulate being George Kennan and Charles Bohlen, opposed the prevailing interpretation of the Korean hostilities. Kennan did not believe Moscow had launched the Korean operation "as a first step in a world war or as the first of a series of local operations designed to drain U.S. strength in peripheral theaters." The Soviet Union simply wanted control of South Korea, saw what looked like a favorable set of circumstances in which to achieve it, and feared that if it was

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[43]Iriye, Cold War, 177-178; Ulam, Expansion, 518-519; Ulam, The Rivals, 170-171; Charles Bohlen, Witness to History, 1929-1969(New York: Norton, 1973), 293.

[44]Report to the NSC by the Executive Secretary(Lay), September 30, 1950, FR,1950, I, 400; Bert Cochran, Harry S. Truman and the Crisis Presidency (New York: Funk&Wagnalls, 1973), 290; Acheson, Creation, 546-547; Princeton Seminars, Dean Acheson Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

not achieved now, time might run out.[45]

Kennan and Bohlen were, however, in the minority. NSC 73, first submitted July 1, 1950, noted that while the Soviets were not prepared to engage in a general war, they would "make every effort to probe the firmness of our purpose and our nerves at other sensitive points, above all in Germany and Austria . . . ." A real possibility existed that Moscow would utilize its "satellite", Communist China, not only in Korea but in Asia generally, "to embarrass us in every conceivable way . . . ."[46] On August 1, the Joint Service Secretaries in the Defense Department stated that "the Korean incident has clearly revealed the new pattern of Soviet aggression and demonstrates that the Soviets have moved openly into the use of force through puppets in their attack on the non-Communist world." The U.S. Ambassador in the Soviet Union believed the Russians "were prepared to follow up a quick and complete victory in Korea with another attack where there were adequate prospects for localizing the conflict or for a great display of saber rattling at sensitive points."[47] These men reflected the thinking expressed in NSC 68 about Soviet desires for world hegemony.

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[45]Kennan to Acheson, August 8, 1950, FR,1950, I, 361; Bohlen, Witness, 291-292.

[46]Report to the NSC by the Executive Secretary (Lay), NSC 73, July 1, 1950, FR,1950, I, 331-338.

[47]Memo by Pace, Matthews, and Finletter to Johnson, August 1, 1950, Ibid., 353-355; Kirk to Acheson, August 1, 1950, Ibid., 367-368.

The effects of the Korean situation immediately touched other areas of U.S. policy. In September, Truman instructed Acheson to propose that Germany be enlisted in a plan for the integrated defense of Europe.[48] He also told Acheson to begin negotiations to conclude a peace treaty with Japan, which the U.S. military had long opposed. Japan's rearmament also was to be accelerated. Kennan has suggested that the Korean War destroyed the slight chances that might have existed for a "Russian-American understanding in relation to the problems of that region based on the neutralization and demilitarization of Japan."[49] The effects on Sino-American relations were even greater. Political considerations, a desire to keep the conflict in Asia from spreading to another front, the need to keep Formosa from becoming an advance base for anti-American activities, and a desire to gain military acquiescence in committing U.S. ground forces to Korea, led Truman to place the 7th Fleet in the Formosa Straits. The decision was a departure from

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[48]Lawrence S. Kaplan has suggested that the Korean War resulted in a transformation of a "vague commitment of American assistance to Western Europe in the event of attack . . ." into "specific guarantees of American involvement . . . ." The NATO system was transformed into an organization capable of defending Europe from a Soviet ground attack. Kaplan concludes that the major impact of the Korean War was in Europe. See Lawrence Kaplan, "The Korean War and U.S. Foreign Relations: The Case of NATO," in Francis Heller, ed., The Korean War: A 25-Year Perspective (Lawrence: Regents Press, 1977), 36-70.

[49]Acheson, Creation, 533, 556-557; Kennan, Memoirs, 416-417; Iriye, Cold War, 182.

the expectations expressed in NSC 48/2 that Formosa was bound inevitably to fall to Communist China unless the United States directly intervened, which was considered militarily unsound. NSC 48/2 had emphasized that U.S. policy should be directed to exploiting rifts between the Chinese Communists and the Soviet Union, to America's advantage.[50]

The U.S. announcement of the placement of the 7th Fleet in Communist China's path to Formosa was made even more provocative since it was a purely verbal imposition. Secretary of Defense Johnson acknowledged in July that the Fleet might not be able to prevent a successful Communist invasion, because it lacked the power to participate in both Korea and the Formosa Straits.[51] This action could not help but provoke the Chinese, yet Acheson continued to believe throughout the summer of 1950, that a conflict would develop between Russia and China eventually.[52] He does not seem to have perceived the way China would interpret the U.S. reversal of policy. In the Blair House meetings, Acheson could disclaim any intention of becoming involved with Chiang Kai-shek, but the Chinese Communists could see

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[50]NSC 48/2, FR,1949,VII(2),1219; Iriye,Cold War, 79.

[51]JCS to Johnson, July 23, 1950, and Johnson to Acheson, July 29, 1950, U.S. Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1950: East Asia and the Pacific, Volume VI(Washington: GPO, 1976), 393, 401.

[52]Smith, Acheson, 201-202.

only the action, which appeared to them as "new premeditated aggression of American imperialism against the Asian people." The Chinese viewed American policy as "the major obstacle in the way of China's emergence as a power." Acheson clearly underestimated the "revolutionary fervor, the ideological perspective, and the mental image of the United States" that shaped China's view of the world.[53] When the Chinese intervened in Korea, an angry Acheson concluded that Peking was a puppet of Soviet imperialism, and thus should be treated accordingly. The result was abandonment of an intention to reach a modus vivendi with Communist China.[54]

The decision to intervene in Korea, then, had immediate and extensive effects on U.S. foreign policy. Yet the decision, made by degrees and with caution, was carried out with a full awareness of the possible risks involved if Soviet or Chinese forces should enter the conflict. This was apparent when Truman denied MacArthur's request for air reconnaisance of Dairen, Port Arthur, Vladivostok, and the Kuriles, because such operations "would raise political questions of the gravest importance . . . ."[55] Also

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[53]Tang Tsou, America's Failure in China, 1941-1950, Volume 2(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 563-564; Iriye, Cold War, 183-185.

[54]Smith, Acheson, 218; Robert Ferrell,"Dean Acheson" in Merli and Wilson, Makers of American Diplomacy, II.

[55]Memo of Teletype Conference Prepared in the Department of the Army, July 6, 1950, FR,1950, VII, 311.

reflecting an awareness of the delicacy of the situation was Dulles' rather prescient recommendation that President Truman should, in order to prevent the Korean conflict from developing into a world war, emphasize to MacArthur the delicate nature of the dual responsibilities he was now carrying on behalf of the United States and on behalf of the United Nations. It was vital that MacArthur instruct his staff "to comply scrupulously with political and military limitations and instructions which may be sent, the reason for which will often have behind them political considerations of gravity."[56]

The United States entered the Korean War calmly and cautiously, with an awareness of the risks involved. While certain imponderables underlay U.S. policy, at the heart of the Korean involvement was the issue of American credibility. While it was not essential to stand in South Korea "because its defense was militarily feasible or sensible in terms of the overall global strategy," it was vital to resist because abandonment of south Korea would have signified " a lack of will, determination, and confidence to bolster up the structure of Asian-Pacific international relations which had begun to be redefined by the United States after the fall of China to the Communists."[57]

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[56]Dulles to Acheson, July 7,1950, Ibid., 328.

[57]Iriye, Cold War, 178.

CHAPTER VIII

THE DECISION TO UNIFY KOREA:

THE DEBATE OVER CROSSING THE 38TH PARALLEL

The steady disintegration of South Korean resistance led to the American decision to commit U.S. troops to the Korean War. The situation was so critical and the resources available to the United States for employment in Korea so limited, that at the outset there was doubt whether enough aid would arrive in time to prevent North Korea from capturing all of Korea. The military situation at the end of the first six weeks of fighting found "the U.S. and ROK forces compressed into the Pusan perimeter and still fighting desperately to stabilize the situation."[1]

Despite the rather tenuous position of the United States in Korea, the beginning of July marked the onset of a lengthy and intense debate among U.S. policy makers about the ultimate goal of U.N. operations in Korea. The complex debate centered on what should be done if and when North Korean forces were driven or retreated back of the 38th

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[1]Appleman, Naktong, 32.

parallel. Should the parallel be crossed and Korea unified by military force? The answer to this question involved an assessment of Soviet and Chinese reactions and intentions, and the meaning of an invasion of North Korea to continued U.N. support. The general feeling in July favored the status quo ante bellum, and John Allison and Dean Rusk played key roles in sustaining a debate, in the early stages of the war, in favor of crossing the 38th parallel.

On July 1, John Allison, Director of the Office of Northeast Asian Affairs, raised the question of whether the ultimate objective of the United States ought not be the re-unification of Korea. In a memorandum to Dean Rusk, Allison noted that some suggestions had been made that Truman include in an upcoming speech on Korea, a statement that U.S. forces would attempt only to drive the North Koreans back of the 38th parallel and no further. This should not be done, since it not only would destroy remaining South Korean morale, in the present situation it was unrealistic.[2]

Allison believed that the second Security Council resolution, calling for appropriate action to restore peace and stability to the area, allowed ample room for the United States to cross the 38th parallel. There could be "no permanent peace and stability in Korea as long as the artificial division at the 38th parallel continued." Allison

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[2]Allison to Rusk, July 1,1950, FR,1950, VII, 272.

felt it was time to be bold and willing "to take even more risks than we already have . . . ." While not advocating that the speech should announce that the United States was going to proceed beyond the 38th parallel, nevertheless, there should be no commitment at the present time not to do so. If possible, and Allison was not sure it was possible, America should continue on up to the Manchurian and Siberian border, and then call for a U.N. supervised election for all of Korea. Allison thought that any action which would inhibit such a future move would be most unwise. Rusk agreed completely with Allison's memorandum.[3]

Allison continued his campaign when he drew Rusk's attention to remarks an Army spokesman made in Korea on July 13, to the effect that the United States was fighting only to drive the North Koreans back of the 38th parallel and would employ force to prevent South Korea from crossing that line. As a result, Acheson ordered that no official statements should be made on the course of action to be taken subsequent to expelling the North Koreans for South Korea. Truman reiterated this point at a press conference, when he noted that the decision to cross the 38th parallel would be made when it became necessary.[4]

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[3] Ibid.

[4] Allison to Rusk, July 13,1950, Ibid., 373; Acheson to Embassy in Seoul, July 14, 1950, Ibid., 387; Public Papers of the Presidents: Harry S. Truman, 1950, 523.

News that the Policy Planning Staff was considering the desirability of issuing a statement committing the United States to stopping at the 38th parallel, moved John Foster Dulles to enter the debate. Dulles was totally opposed to any such move. The 38th parallel was not intended as a political line and its continued existence would perpetuate friction and the risk of war in the area. The United States if possible ought "to obliterate the line as a political division . . .in the interest of peace and security in the area." In so doing, the North Korean Army should be destroyed, even if this required crossing the 38th parallel. No statement should be made tying the hands of the United States and the decision to cross the parallel should be made when practicality demanded it, which could be months in the future under circumstances that no one could predict.[5]

Some State Department officials believed that breaching the 38th parallel presented unacceptable risks. Charles Bohlen, while not addressing himself directly to this question, did warn against actions that would present the Soviet Union with the alternative either of allowing U.S. power "to come up to the Soviet frontier" next to vital ports and military facilities or of reoccupying North Korea

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[5]Dulles to Nitze, Director of the Policy Planning Staff, July 14, 1950, FR, 1950, VII, 386.

with Soviet forces as U.N. troops approached the 38th parallel.[6]

Herbert Feis of the Policy Planning Staff urged the United States to "positively and publicly disassociate itself" from any notion that the North Korean invasion had obliterated the 38th parallel. To cross into North Korean territory would affect adversely the attitude of our allies and would encourage Chinese or Soviet intervention. Feis concluded that the Soviet Union would not allow substantial U.S. armed forces to reach the Russian frontier.[7]

The prevalent view of the Policy Planning Staff opposing a crossing of the 38th parallel, brought Allison's most forceful statement of dissent. Allison disagreed completely with a July 5 Policy Planning Staff study which recommended that MacArthur publicly announce that neither United Nations nor South Korean troops would cross the parallel. To do this would make it impossible to carry out the June 26 U.N. resolution. Perpetuation of what was intended to be only a temporary dividing line would insure that international peace and security in the area would never be restored.[8]

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[6]Bohlen to the Deputy Under-Secretary of State (Matthews), July 7, 1950, Ibid., 367.

[7]Allison to Rusk, July 15, 1950, Ibid., 393.

[8]Ibid., July 15, 1950, Ibid., 394.

According to Allison, the majority view in the Northeast Asian Affairs Division of the State Department and among representatives of the Embassies of America's allies, was that a return to the status quo ante bellum would be unrealistic. A program of persuasion carried on through diplomatic channels, the U.S. Information Service, and the Voice of America, could obviate any opposition that existed.[9]

Allison believed the minimum objectives of the United States should be to make clear that aggression would not go unpunished, and that the North Korean Army should be destroyed. No statements to the contrary ought to be made. Allison believed that one reason for the difficulties America faced in Korea was that the United States had "failed to realize that political forces would be more compelling than military and hence did not insist upon our military establishment being prepared to implement the political decision we made when the test came." Allison hoped that America would realize that "political necessity will compel us to act in such a way as to bring about a real restoration of international peace and security in Korea . . . ." Allison admitted that the risks were great, but in his opinion, the risks of accepting a partial solution or a compromise were "infinitely greater."[10]

While the debate developed in State Department

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[9] Ibid., 393. [10] Ibid., 394-395.

circles, General MacArthur was informing the Defense Department that he intended not only to drive the North Koreans back of the 38th parallel, but also to destroy all North Korean forces and to occupy all of Korea if necessary.[11] MacArthur's evaluation of the necessity for doing this undoubtedly carried great weight in Defense Department discussions, given the traditional unbending support for the field commander's opinion.

With these differing opinions swirling about him, Truman requested on July 17 that the National Security Council prepare a report on the policy that America should pursue after North Korean forces had been driven beyond the 38th parallel. On July 22, George Butler of the Policy Planning Staff produced the latest study on the subject. Butler believed that the problem was that as U.N. forces approached the 38th parallel, decisions and actions of Washington and Moscow would determine whether the Korean hostilities would escalate into a world war or would remain isolated to Korea. The primary purpose of U.S. military action in Korea was the cessation of hostilities and the withdrawal of North Korean forces from South Korea.[12]

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[11]Memo, Colonel Dickson for General Bolte, July 15, 1950, subj.: Report of a Trip to the Far Eastern Command, July 10-15, 1950, JCS Geographic File.

[12]Memo by Lay to the NSC, July 17, 1950, FR,1950, VII, 410; Draft Memo Prepared by Butler, July 22, 1950, Ibid., 449.

As the North Korean defeat became apparent, the Kremlin would be forced to decide on a new course of action. In the opinion of the Policy Planning Staff, there was ample evidence of the high strategic importance the Kremlin placed on the Korean peninsula, and this made it extremely unlikely that Russia would accept the establishment in North Korea of a regime that it could not dominate and control. The Policy Planning Staff believed that once it became clear that North Korean aggression was going to be defeated, there might be a Soviet-North Korean agreement "which would mean in substance that U.N. military action north of the 38th parallel would result in conflict with the USSR or Communist China."[13]

Further compounding the problem was the likelihood that majority support could not be gained in the United Nations for continued U.N. military action to impose a settlement involving a unified Korea. Opinion in South Korea, as well as public and Congression opinion in America, however, probably would be dissatisfied with "any conclusion falling short of what it would consider a 'final' settlement of the problem. A sentiment to continue operations beyond the 38th parallel might create serious problems for the execution of U.S. policy."[14]

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[13]Butler Memo, July 22,1950, Ibid., 450-451.

[14]Ibid., 452.

The Policy Planning Staff reached several conclusions. First, that military action north of the 38th parallel for reasons other than tactical necessity would increase the danger of Soviet or Chinese intervention greatly. Second, from the viewpoint of U.S. military commitments and resources, the United States should restrict ground operations to south of the 38th parallel in order to end hostilities and to work for a situation requiring a minimal commitment of U.S. resources in South Korea. Third, U.N. action north of the 38th parallel would require a new Security Council resolution, which might be difficult to obtain. Fourth, the risks of bringing major conflict with Russia or China outweighed the political advantages to be gained from military actions north of the 38th parallel. Thus it was recommended that the United States make clear to the world that it intended only to repel aggression and end the hostilities in Korea. Withdrawal of North Korean forces to north of the 38th parallel would be required and future measures in regard to Korea would be left to the discretion of the United Nations.[15]

Allison emphatically dissented from the philosophy and conclusions of Butler's study, because it did little more than inform the aggressor that all he had to fear from aggression was being compelled to start over again. Allison

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[15] Ibid., 453.

stated that Butler had given only cursory attention to the feelings of twenty million South Koreans who were the object of North Korean aggression.[16]

While the paper was correct in noting Korea's strategic importance to Russia, Allison believed it failed to point out that the reason for Korea's importance was that ultimately it would make it easier to conquer Japan. Nothing in the paper acknowledged the strategic importance of a Korean regime hostile to Japan. To Allison, this paper seemed both to recommend appeasement and to advocate a "timid, half-hearted policy designed not to provoke the Soviets to war." No advantage could be gained by compromising "with clear moral principles and a shirking of our duty to make clear once and for all that aggression does not pay . . . ."[17]

Allison recommended that the United States adopt a policy designed to eliminate the North Korean Army, to implement previous U.N. resolutions calling for an independent, unified Korea, and to maintain order in Korea until she could provide for her own security. This was the minimum policy acceptable, for Allison believed that the issue clearly was whether "we should decide to stand up to what

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[16]Allison to Nitze, July 24, 1950, Ibid., 458-459.

[17]Ibid., 460.

our President has called 'raw aggression', or we should admit that Soviet Communism has won and be prepared to take the consequences."[18]

Allison's comments and Rusk's support of them apparently carried weight, as on July 25, Butler drafted a new position paper in consultation with Philip Jessup, Max Bishop, the State Department representative on the National Security Council, and representatives of the Far Eastern and U.N. Divisions of the State Department. This paper concluded that while U.S. policy was aimed toward establishment of an independent, unified Korea, there was no commitment to accomplish this through military force. Korea had to be dealt with within the wider framework of the Cold War struggle. In order to maintain a realistic balance between U.S. military strength and U.S. commitments and risks, together with the need for additional information, it was impossible at the present time to make decisions regarding America's future course of action in Korea. A flexible, unfettered policy would best serve national security and national interests. The basic recommendation was that decisions concerning the course of action to be followed when U.N. forces reached the 38th parallel "should be deferred until military and political developments provide additional information." This would enable the United States to reach

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[18] Ibid., 461.

a decision based on the existing world situation, would allow for consultation with U.N. members supporting the Security Council resolution, and would keep U.S. military capabilities and commitments in a safe balance.[19]

Allison, whom Rusk had designated "as the responsible officer to act as steering member for the State Department's studies on future U.S. policy with respect to North Korea," generally approved the new study though the conclusions and recommendations did not go as far as he personally would have liked. While he went along with the present study, Allison stressed the need for continued studies.[20]

The Policy Planning Staff paper of July 25 came up for discussion at a regularly scheduled State Department meeting which Under-Secretary of State Webb chaired. Those present agreed to the recommendation to put off any decision concerning crossing the 38th parallel. It also was agreed that the North Koreans "should not be left in exactly the same position they were before they started." Representatives of the State Department's U.N. Division agreed that U.N. support of a move across the parallel was possible. All of those present agreed that the policy just adopted would make it difficult to conduct an effective public campaign of persuasion. Finally, the State Department

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[19]Draft Memo by PPS, July 25, 1950, to be Forwarded to NSC Staff for Appropriate Processing, Ibid., 472.

[20]Allison to Rusk, July 27, 1950, Ibid., 480-481.

officials agreed that while U.S. public and Congressional opinion would not be satisfied with the status quo ante bellum, it also was unlikely they would support elimination of the 38th parallel as a U.S. war objective.[21]

At the end of July 1950, the opposition of Allison and Rusk had modified, if only partially, the general tenor of opposition in the State Department to crossing the 38th parallel, as expressed in earlier Policy Planning Staff papers. Instead of an outright commitment to either crossing or not crossing the parallel, a "wait and see" attitude, which was intended to be flexible and opportunitistic was adopted. Caution remained the byword even among those who favored crossing the parallel. John Foster Dulles, for example, believed there was every reason for crossing the 38th parallel except one, "and that is our capacity to do so and the fact that the attempt might involve us more deeply in a struggle on the Asiatic mainland with Soviet and Chinese Communist manpower . . . ."[22]

While the State Department cautiously shifted its policy views, the Defense Department was preparing its estimates of possible U.S. courses of action in Korea. In the Defense Department's opinion the present military

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[21]Memo for the Files of a Meeting Held in the Office of Under-Secretary of State, July 28, 1950, Ibid., 486. For a revised draft, see Butler to Bishop, August 1, 1950, Ibid., 514-516.

[22]Dulles to Nitze, August 1, 1950, Ibid., 514.

objective of the United States was to defeat North Korean forces and to restore international peace and security to the area. In accomplishing this, nothing in the Security Council resolutions limited military actions to south of the 38th parallel. The military believed that the 38th parallel had no more significance than any other meridian. The principle deterrent to military action north of the parallel was the chance of major Chinese or Soviet intervention.[23]

The Defense Department saw three possible courses of action which would be in consonance with the U.N. resolutions of June 25 and June 27. First, the minimum effort would be to drive the North Koreans back of the 38th parallel--that is, put the United Nations back where it stood on June 24. A return to the status quo ante bellum would not insure security nor would it provide for the unification which all Koreans desperately desired. But this action would make less likely any military action on the part of the Soviets or Chinese and might lead to a negotiated settlement.[24]

A second alternative objective would have MacArthur occupy Pyongyang and vicinity, generally along the 39th-40th parallel lines. An occupied demilitarized zone could be set up in depth along the Chinese and Soviet frontiers,

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[23]Draft Memo by Department of Defense, For NSC Staff Consideration Only, August 7, 1950, Ibid., 528-529.

[24]Ibid., 529.

thus allaying their suspicions. Korea, however, would still not be united and the security problem would be as great if not greater than ever. The final alternative was pacification and occupation of all Korea.[25]

The Defense Department based its choice of an appropriate course of action in Korea on twin assumptions. First, that the United States would mobilize and employ sufficient resources to reach its Korean objectives, while building its strength for execution of emergency war plans. A second assumption was that the Soviets or Chinese would not enter overtly into the hostilities in Korea or initiate a general war.[26]

According to the Defense Department, the Korean situation provided the United States and the free world with its first chance to regain territory from the Soviet bloc. This would be in keeping with the American policy of checking and rolling back the preponderant power of Russia in Asia and elsewhere, as stated in NSC 48/2. Penetration of the Soviet sphere "would disturb the political, economic, and military structure which the U.S.S.R. is organizing . . . The bonds of Manchuria, pivot of this complex outside the U.S.S.R. would be weakened." In Asia, the effects of U.N. unification of Korea would be incalculable. The Japanese would be encouraged and Communist China might be inclined to

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[25] Ibid., 529-530. [26] Ibid., 530.

question its dependence on Moscow. All of Asia would take hope.[27]

All of these advantages for the free world, of course, were disadvantages for Russia, and thus it was probable that the Kremlin would try to prevent the total loss of Korea. At any time the Soviet Union could launch a vigorous mediation attempt, or could deploy Russian or Chinese forces to hold North Korea. But the real possibility remained that Russia would not jeopardize "its uncompleted strategic arrangements in the Far East to risk a general war to prevent a full-fledged, rapid, and determined U.N. effort to unite Korea."[28]

The Defense Department concluded that the political value to the United States of establishing a free, united Korea justified the current military effort. This effort should be directed toward establishment of a united Korea as envisaged in the U.N. resolutions of November, 1947 and October, 1949. The President, at an appropriate time, should announce that America's aim was a united, free, independent Korea; U.N. acceptance of this objective ought to be gained. The military should occupy all of Korea and defeat North Korean forces without regard to the 38th parallel. Until the military was prepared to carry out this action, no statements about general objectives should be made--

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[27] Ibid., 533. [28] Ibid.

"Great caution and discretion should be taken in public discussion of the 38th parallel." Finally, the United States should forestall any Soviet mediation efforts that fall short of complete unification of Korea on a free and representative basis under U.N. direction.[29]

In early August, 1950, the State Department and the Defense Department had different positions on crossing the 38th parallel. The State Department, arguing on military grounds, feared the Soviet Union would not tolerate the damage to its Far Eastern position which would result from a crossing the 38th parallel, and wanted the decision put off as long as possible. The Defense Department, arguing on political grounds, favored a policy directed to the creation of a free, unified and independent Korea. These different attitudes could be seen also in opinions concerning military tactics--specifically, the August 12 bombing of Rashin and the August 14 bombing of Naijin, both about 17 miles south of the Manchurian border.

On August 12, B-29s delivered 550 tons of bombs on Rashin. Deputy Under-Secretary of State Freeman Matthews informed Lt. General Lauris Norstad, Acting Vice-Chief of Staff, U.S. Air Force, that this action was very disturbing. The Russians were touchy about military missions near their frontiers. Most important, Matthews felt this action did

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[29] Ibid., 534-535.

not comply with MacArthur's June 29 directive to stay "well clear" of the Manchurian and Siberian borders.[30] On August 16, after the Naijin bombing, Under-Secretary of State Webb informed Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson that extreme concern existed in the State Department as a result of the recent bombings, which, he felt, did not comply with the directive sent to MacArthur.[31]

Johnson replied that the bombings were well within the terms of the Presidential directive. The Secretary believed that when war operations were undertaken, "they must be conducted to win." He interpreted the nebulous expression "well clear" to mean that U.S. planes must not violate Soviet frontiers, which they had not done.[32] Johnson's views were not received well in the State Department. Webb believed the letter should not be answered, as continuing the discussion would serve no useful purpose. The Defense Department's letter, Webb felt, "showed a lack of understanding of the important issue involved and a lack of willingness to integrate military and political policies." He recommended to Acheson that the State Department do nothing that "could be interpreted as interference in the conduct of military operations."[33]

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[30]Memo by Matthews, August 12,1950, Ibid., 566.

[31]Webb to Johnson, August 12, 1950, Ibid., 588-589.

[32]Johnson to Acheson, August 21,1950,Ibid., 613-14.

[33]Ibid., Footnote 1, 614.

The State Department's fears, as reflected in this exchange, were echoed to a degree in an August 18 CIA estimate entitled "Factors Affecting the Desirability of a U.N. Military Conquest of All of Korea." The CIA stated its conclusions first--that although a U.S. invasion of North Korea could bring several important advantages, grave risks would be involved in such a course. The military success of such an operation could not be assured because cooperation of non-Communist U.N. members was not guaranteed. There was a grave risk of general war should U.N. forces become involved in hostilities with Soviet or Chinese troops.[34]

The advantages of a move across the parallel for unification were the ones usually mentioned--it would be a major diplomatic defeat for Russia and a decisive, inspiring victory for the West. The prestige of the United Nations and the United States would be increased greatly, and the stated policy of both would be achieved. Finally, a potential threat to Japan would be removed and a wedge into Communist territory would be established.[35]

There were, however, grave risks. The United States might not be able to gain the support of its allies and other non-Communist nations for such an action since they had no desire to become more deeply involved in Korea.

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[34]Memo Prepared by the CIA, August 18, 1950, Ibid., 600.

[35]Ibid., 601.

Thus, any U.S. action would give the Soviet Union a weapon to separate the United States from its Western European allies. Invasion also would alarm a number of habitually distrustful Asian nations and perhaps create an image of an aggressive, self-interested America.[36]

The risk that invading forces might become involved with Chinese troops was equally grave. The Soviet Union would welcome a conflict between the United States and China, since the United States would be tied down in Asia and dissension would be created among America's allies. The CIA believed "the U.S.S.R. might use Chinese Communist troops at any stage in the fighting . . . ." Of course, involvement with Soviet forces also was a possibility. Since the invasion of North Korea would be a strategic threat to Russia, the Soviet Union, in a high state of military readiness, might decide that now was the time for a full-fledged test of strength.[37]

The final risk involved with invasion was that true unification and stability could never be attained. The Soviet Union undoubtedly would withdraw North Korean forces into Manchuria, and from there use them to threaten and infiltrate, an action that would require the continued presence of U.S. troops. Rhee's lack of popularity and his questionable ability to extend his authority to all of

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[36] Ibid. [37] Ibid., 602.

Korea, if done on a popular basis, added to the problem.[38]

In a memorandum for Dean Acheson written shortly before he left the State Department, George Kennan generally expressed some of the same fears mentioned in the CIA estimate. Kennan believed that the United States was on a course "so little promising and so fraught with danger that I could not honestly urge you to continue to take responsibility for it." The United States had not achieved a clear, realistic, and generally accepted view of American objectives in Korea. Certain sectors of American public and official opinion were engaged in "emotional moralistic attitudes toward Korea" which could lead easily to real conflict with the Soviet Union, thus preventing a realistic agreement about the area. MacArthur's retention of a "wide and relatively uncontrolled latitude in determining our policy in north Asia and Western Pacific areas . . .," was equally dangerous. Washington did not have real control over MacArthur, leading to statements being made and actions being taken in Washington's name, without prior approval. Finally, the United States in Indochina was getting into a position to guarantee a French undertaking "which neither they nor we, nor both of us together, can win."[39]

In Kennan's opinion, the objective of U.S. policy

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[38] Ibid.

[39] Memo by Kennan to Acheson, August 21, 1950, Ibid., 623-624.

should be to "terminate our involvements on the mainland of Asia as rapidly as possible and on the best terms we can get." This especially was vital in Korea, because it was "beyond our capabilities to keep Korea permanently out of the Soviet orbit." The United States could tolerate a nominally independent Korea amenable to Soviet influence, if a strong and stable Japan existed to counterbalance the situation. While supporting the U.S. decision to intervene in light of the type of aggression the Soviets employed, Kennan still believed it was not essential for an anti-Soviet regime to be extended to all of Korea for all time.[40]

Kennan concluded that U.S. policy should consist of: a willingness to abstain from a decision to seat Communist China in the United Nations; adoption of a military policy of readiness; a determination to strengthen and equip Japan to take care of itself; and an approach to the Formosa question based on a U.N. plebiscite. Kennan knew, however, that attempts to proceed along these lines would meet "violent and outraged opposition both within sectors of the Executive branch and in Congress." Despite this, there was a problem of responsibility involved that demended attention.[41]

Kennan's memorandum did not have widespread influence because Acheson ordered that it not be circulated within the State Department. It is unlikely that it would have

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[40] Ibid., 625-626. [41] Ibid., 627-628.

had much effect since the momentum in thinking had shifted slightly in the opposite direction, as an August 24 National Security Council Staff Assistants meeting demonstrated. At this meeting, objections were expressed to the State Department's inconclusive "wait and see" attitude about the 38th parallel. The State-Defense differences could be reconciled if the State Department could bring itself to participate now in making the essential decision. Delays meant postponement of the necessary military build-up should the decision be made to cross the 38th parallel.[42]

While a decision was essential, the conferees did not have a firm view of what that decision should be. The consensus was that ground operations north of the 38th parallel, after North Korean withdrawal, probably would lead to direct involvement of Soviet or Chinese forces in the hostilities. An important question then was whether there was some intermediate line north of the 38th parallel, but well short of the Manchurian and Siberian borders, which the United Nations could hold without provoking a Soviet or Chinese response. The thinking was that such a line would be less provocative. Those present agreed that the Senior Staff of the National Security Council should decide whether all of Korea would be occupied and whether North Korean

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[42]Footnote 1, Ibid., 623; Memo by McConaughy to Jessup, August 24, 1950, Ibid., 641-642.

forces should be eliminated wherever located.[43]

The Senior Staff met on August 25, 1950, to consider the questions raised. Secretary Thomas K. Finletter of the Air Force, felt the group should adopt the position that there was no difference between air, sea, and ground operations north of the parallel. Philip Jessup added the caveat that such operations should stay well clear of the Soviet or Chinese borders. Operations in the area between the 38th-39th parallels would be permissible, though consultation with the United Nations would be necessary before proceeding. If U.N. troops were in hot pursuit of enemy forces when the parallel was reached, they should proceed while minimizing U.S. participation and maximizing that of South Korean forces. While not seeking a firm restriction on use of U.S. troops above the parallel, the need to minimize their participation was deemed desirable as any connotation of a U.S. occupation of Korea was to be avoided.[44]

The conferees all agreed that the Korean War should not be permitted to escalate into a general war. If China entered, NSC 73/4 would guide policy--that is, no general war with China, but the action in Korea would be continued as long as there was a reasonable chance of success. If the Soviet Union intervened, the United States should go to

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[43] Ibid., 642-643.

[44] Memo by McConaughy of Jessup's Staff, August 25, 1950, Ibid., 649-650.

the United Nations. In no case would America become further involved if Soviet forces reoccuppied North Korea prior to U.N. forces reaching the 38th parallel. If either Chinese or Soviet troops entered the conflict unannounced, they were to be treated as North Korean troops.[45]

The general principles agreed to were that the U.N. offensive should not be stopped suddenly at the 38th parallel; that Soviet or Chinese intervention should be referred to the United Nations; and finally, in case of "complications" requiring U.N. action, "defend, localize and stabilize" until Washington and its allies could be consulted.[46]

With all of the discussion that had occurred since Allison's first memorandum of July 1, it might be thought that some consensus would have been reached. The NSC Senior Staff meeting seemed to indicate that the National Security Council policy decision that Truman had requested would be one favoring a crossing of the 38th parallel in pursuit of North Korean troops. Yet at this point a difficulty arises when consideration is given to August 30 and August 31 State Department memoranda prepared for NSC consideration.

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[45] Ibid.,650-52. For NSC 73/4 see FR,1950, I, 375-89.

[46] Ibid., 652. Prior to the August 25 NSC Senior Staff meeting, a State Department meeting was held to determine the State Department's position. Those present included Rusk, Matthews, Jessup, Butler, Hickerson, McConuaghy, Sandefir, Merchant, Emmerson, and Barco. The discussion and the conclusions reached at the NSC Senior Staff meeting were nearly identical to those reached at this State Department meeting. See Memo of Conversation by Mr. James A. Barco, Special Assistant to Jessup,August 25,1950, Ibid., 646-648.

The August 30 draft, with no acknowledged author, is a bold statement of the Allison position. While acknowledging the risks of possible Soviet intervention, this paper concluded that it was very desirable that MacArthur be given the maximum degree of latitude in strategic and tactical decisions so as to carry out his mission in a minimum of time and at a minimum of cost. The U.N. Commander immediately should be authorized at his discretion to carry out operations north of the 38th parallel. The only restriction on the U.N. operations would be that in rolling back the North Korean troops, MacArthur should, as militarily expedient, employ South Korean forces to spearhead the move north. The ultimate goal of these military actions would be the pacification and unification of Korea.[47]

The August 31 draft memorandum was a compromise between the two extremes. The only contingency under which U.N. forces should be allowed to cross the parallel was if the Soviets or Chinese had not, prior to U.N. forces reaching the parallel, indicated an intention in any way to prevent U.N. occupation of North Korea. Even then a risk of general war would exist. Under no circumstances should U.N. forces be used in the provinces bordering Siberia and Manchuria. Current U.N. resolutions did not sanction military action designed to accomplish the political objective of unifying

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[47]Draft Memo Prepared in the Department of State for NSC Consideration Only, August 30, 1950, Ibid., 660-664.

Korea, which would require further U.N. resolutions.[48]

This paper concluded that no final decision could be reached at the present time. American actions to advance the national interest would be based on the "action or inaction of the Soviet Union and the Chinese Communists" and in consultation with the United Nations. Any major action to occupy North Korea should not be undertaken without specific prior authorization from the President, and then only after he had consulted with supporting U.N. allies.[49]

The August 31 State Department draft was adopted almost totally as NSC 81. This policy paper acknowledged that U.N. forces had a legal basis for carrying out operations north of the 38th parallel to force the withdrawal or defeat of North Korean forces. It was concluded that the U.N. Command "should be authorized to conduct military operations . . .north of the 38th parallel for the purpose of destroying North Korean forces," provided the Soviet Union or China had not given <u>any</u> indications they would counter such operations. In addition, plans should be drawn for a possible occupation of Korea, which would be implemented only with explicit approval of the President, dependent on his prior consultation with the United Nations.[50]

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[48]Draft Memo Prepared in the Department of State for NSC Consideration Only, August 31, 1950, <u>Ibid</u>., 671-674.

[49]<u>Ibid</u>., 674-675.

[50]Memo by Lay, subj.: NSC 81, September 1, 1950, <u>Ibid</u>., 687.

If North Korea was reoccuppied, the U.N. Command should conduct no ground operations north of the 38th parallel, but bombing operations would continue as before. If the Soviet Union occuppied North Korea and in advance warned against attacks on its forces, the matter should be referred to the Security Council. If cooperation with the Soviets proved impossible, a U.N. condemnation of the Russians (or Chinese) would be sought. In case of Soviet intervention south of the 38th parallel, the U.N. Commander should defend his forces, not aggravate the situation and report to Washington. This would also apply if U.N. forces were operating north of the parallel and major Soviet units intervened. In either event, the United States would operate on the assumption that global war was imminent.[51]

In the event Chinese forces intervened, the United States would not permit itself to become involved in a general war with China. The U.N. Commander would continue his operations so long as they offered a reasonable chance of success. The matter would then be taken to the United Nations to have the Chinese condemned as aggressors.[52]

Perhaps more expressive of wishful thinking than realistic calculation was the request for preparation of surrender terms in case North Korean forces collapsed or retreated. This idea envisaged stabilizing a line at the

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[51] Ibid., 689-690. [52] Ibid., 690.

38th parallel while North Korea considered the terms offered. Only if refused and if no sign of outside intervention was seen, would the United Nations work to develop support for action north of the parallel to accomplish unification of Korea. The rest of NSC 81 concerned itself with lenient occupation policies which the United Nations was to employ.[53] After lengthy explication of the issues involved, the decision reached in NSC 81 was not to make any decision at the present time. Future U.S. actions would be made on the basis of Soviet or Chinese action, and on the basis of consultations with friendly members of the United Nations.

NSC 81 was revised slightly on the recommendation of General Bradley.[54] This revision resulted in a more conservative statement concerning crossing the 38th parallel. The phrase "The U.N. Commander should be authorized . . . .," was altered to read, "It would be expected that the UNC would receive authorization to conduct military operations north of the 38th parallel for the purpose of destroying North Korean forces." A substantially revised paragraph was added, noting that since operations north of the 38th parallel involved a risk of major war with the Soviet Union and directly involved the interests of other friendly governments, the U.N. Commander prior to putting any such plan

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[53] Ibid., 690-691.

[54] JCS to Acheson, subj.: U.S. Courses of Action With Respect to Korea, September 7, 1950, Ibid., 707-708.

into execution, should obtain Presidential approval so that consideration might be given at the time to the various elements involved. U.N. operations were not to extend across the Manchurian or Soviet borders of Korea and American policy should be not to include any non-Korean units in any U.N. ground forces in the northeastern provinces bordering the Soviet Union or in the area along the Manchurian border.[55] Bradley had gained a clarification of the ground rules for crossing the 38th parallel, but he did not gain the provision he sought limiting the forces to be used north of the parallel exclusively to South Korean troops.

Where did all of this discussion leave U.S. policy six days before MacArthur's Inchon landing? The United States was left with no clear-cut decision to guide military planning should MacArthur succeed. No decisions had been reached because there were too many unknowns and because the risks involved in crossing the 38th parallel were perceived as being so grave that U.S. policy makers wished to delay the decision and only when faced with imminent need would it be made.

The best that those supporting the Allison-Rusk position had gained was a compromise statement that the U.N. Commander could expect to receive permission to cross the parallel, under a very clear set of circumstances and after

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[55]Report by the National Security Council to the President, NSC 81/1, September 9, 1950, Ibid., 716.

receiving Presidential authorization. The August 30 State Department memorandum had been rejected in favor of the more cautious and tentative memorandum of August 31. The minutes of the August 25 NSC Senior Staff meeting and the State Department meeting of the same day, indicated a definite trend in favor of the August 30 memorandum. Higher ranking or more influential U.S. officials probably opted for the earlier Policy Planning Staff study, which had been modified from opposition to crossing the parallel to the position of "wait and see", as the best compromise solution.

The minutes of the National Security Council meetings concerning NSC 81 are not available, so the discussions that led to the adoption of the moderate, compromise solution remain obscure. In light of the conclusions reached in NSC 81/1, the Allison-Rusk position takes on greater importance as an ameliorating influence on a clear tendency in the State Department in favor of stopping at the 38th parallel. The Defense Department supported the bolder Allison-Rusk position, and events in Korea were soon to tip the scales in favor of crossing the 38th parallel, not only to destroy North Korean forces, but to attain the political objective of the reunification of Korea. This decision would start a chain of events that would lead to an entirely new war.

CHAPTER IX

THE 38th PARALLEL BREACHED AND CHINESE INTERVENTION

Early in the morning of September 15, Operation Chromite began. Marines landed at Inchon, completely surprising weak North Korean forces--MacArthur's daring and brilliant plan had paid off. On September 23, the 8th Army broke out of the Pusan perimeter and began the route of the North Korean Army. By the 26th, both U.N. military groups had converged on and liberated Seoul.[1] The rapid success of MacArthur's offensive forced Washington to reach new decisions and military success pushed the balance in favor of bold action.

On September 21, the Far Eastern Affairs Division drafted a memorandum entitled "Program for Bringing Korean Hostilities to an End," which recognized that the opportunity existed "to bring about the complete independence and unity of Korea . . .", though this would depend on U.N. authorization and non-intervention on the part of the Soviet Union and China. This paper envisaged an occupation force

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[1]Schnabel, Policy, 177-177.

predominantly South Korean in make-up, but under the U.N. Commander in consultation with Seoul. The posture of U.N. forces was to be one of liberation rather than retaliation. North Korea's civil officials would maintain law and order until South Korea could assume jurisdiction. United Nations forces remaining in the post-hostilities period would be Asian primarily, as U.S. troops were to be reduced and removed as soon as possible.[2] The Defense Department had no objections to this program and informed the State Department that MacArthur felt its execution was feasible and practicable.[3] The program was very attractive because it called for a speedy reduction of U.S. troop involvement.

On September 22, John Paton Davies, of the Policy Planning Staff, drafted a memorandum calling for an advance across the 38th parallel as soon as possible. According to Davies, the Soviet Union must have become aware within the last few weeks that "it could not count on its North Korean stooges to hold North Korea." At that point, the Kremlin had two choices. The first was to commit itself in some way to the defense of North Korea. Given what the Soviets must have regarded as the "mercurial American temperment," such an action would carry a grave risk of war with the United

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[2]Deputy Under-Secretary of State(Matthews) to the Special Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Foreign Military Affairs(Burns), September 22,1950, FR,1950, VII, 755-59.

[3]Marshall to Acheson, October 3,1950, Ibid., 853-54.

States and also would produce unfavorable worldwide repercussions. Russia's second choice was to remain uncommitted. The optimum time for involvement had passed and any delay in moving decisively to hold North Korea raised the risks involved.[4]

The United States could draw two alternative conclusions. First, that the Soviets intended to hold North Korea, a course that deliberately accepted an increased risk of war with the United States. The second conclusion was that Russia was prepared to accept the loss of North Korea as it had that of Azerbaijan. Davies concluded that the Kremlin was prepared to lose North Korea, though this did not mean that the Soviets would be passive. Russia would attempt to prolong North Korean resistance and would pressure (or continue to pressure) Peking to enter the conflict, while seeking a deal to end the hostilities before North Korea's destruction was completed. The best course to follow was one that tested Soviet and Chinese intentions "by a probing military action well north of the 38th parallel." If there were no reactions, U.N. forces would hold and expand their military position while simultaneously announcing the conditions for peace, liberation, and unification.[5]

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[4]Draft Memo by John Davies of the Policy Planning Staff, September 22, 1950, Ibid., 753.

[5]Ibid., 754-755.

On September 23, Dean Rusk, while briefing America's U.N. representatives, noted that the problem now facing America was not to commit itself publicly to the war aim of uniting Korea, while at the same time continuing to seek U.N. action in favor of unification. Washington believed that the United States "should let the Soviets make the decision for us as much as possible so that United Nations forces would carry on until we get some indication of Soviet reaction to their northward movement." MacArthur had received authorization to broadcast a call to North Korea to cease all hostilities and to lay down its arms under supervision of the U.N. Commission on Korea.[6]

On the same day, Great Britain, after consultation with the United States, submitted for Washington's approval a U.N. draft resolution calling for establishment of stability and security throughout all of Korea, to be followed by elections designed to create a "unified, independent,and democratic government of all Korea." Any U.N. forces which entered North Korea would remain only long enough to attain these objectives. The resolution included a provision for a U.N. commission to supervise this process.[7]

MacArthur's success and Soviet inaction apparently

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[6]Memo of Conversation by the Director of the Office of U.N. Political and Security Affairs (Bancroft), September 23, 1950, Ibid., 760-763.

[7]Minutes of Sixth Meeting of U.S. Delegation to the U.N. General Assembly, September 25,1950, Ibid., 768-774.

was forcing a decision on the United States that it was reluctant to make. With Britain taking the initiative to gain a U.N. resolution calling for unification of Korea, and with U.N. forces driving northward without comment or action from either China or Russia, the decision seemed inevitable. Nonetheless, that decision was not made rapidly. As of September 26, MacArthur still had not received a new directive based either on NSC 81/1 or on his military success--a situation that alarmed General Bolté of G-3. He felt that MacArthur needed a new directive before he had to pause at the 38th parallel, which would cause him to lose momentum and the initiative, giving the enemy a valuable respite.[8]

On the same day that Bolté sent his memorandum, General Marshall received approval from the President to send MacArthur a new directive drawn up in consultation with the State Department. The instructions were not final since developments could require modifications, especially if a Soviet or Chinese threat developed. MacArthur's military objective was the destruction of the North Korean Army and to attain this objective he was authorized to conduct military operations north of the 38th parallel, provided there had been no indication of any kind of outside intervention. He was to use only South Korean forces in the northeast

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[8]Memo from Bolté to the Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, September 27, 1950, JCS Geographic Files.

provinces bordering China and the Soviet Union, and he was prohibited from supporting his operations with air or naval actions against Manchuria. If China intervened, MacArthur was to continue the action as long as he had a reasonable chance of success.[9]

When organized resistance had ended, MacArthur was to have South Korean forces take the lead in disarming any remaining North Korean units and in dealing with any guerilla activities. Circumstances would dictate the necessity for and character of an occupation of North Korea. Any plans for occupation should be forwarded to the Joint Chiefs of Staff for approval, as well as any plans for future operations north of the 38th parallel. At the State Department's insistence, a political guidance paragraph was added. MacArthur was instructed to facilitate restoration of the South Korean government to Seoul, but he was reminded that South Korean sovereignty was recognized only south of the 38th parallel. Political questions such as the formal extension of South Korean sovereignty over North Korea had to await U.N. action. The actions of the Republic of Korea in North Korea would be considered U.N. actions.[10]

This directive received emphasis on September 29

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[9]The Acting Secretary of State to the U.S. Mission at the U.N., September 26, 1950, FR,1950, VII, 781.

[10]Acheson to the Acting Secretary of State (Webb), September 26, 1950, Ibid., 785.

when Secretary of Defense Marshall informed MacArthur that "We want you to feel unhampered tactically and strategically to proceed north of the 38th parallel." MacArthur was told that the United Nations did not wish to vote on the issue of crossing the parallel, but rather hoped that he would find "it militarily necessary to do so."[11]

The decision had been made at last. MacArthur was authorized to cross the 38th parallel to destroy North Korean forces. Any use of his forces for the political objective of unifying Korea would have to await U.N. action, but his directive strongly suggested that such action would be forthcoming soon. After extended debate in Washington, the final decision was made on the battlefield in Korea and on the basis of the reactions of Moscow and Peking. MacArthur's stunning success and the lack of Soviet or Chinese reactions to the rapid U.N. northward move, decided the issue in favor of proceeding into North Korea. A future decision to unify Korea militarily awaited U.N. approval.

The U.N. General Assembly, also intoxicated with MacArthur's success, voted 45-5, on October 7, to unify Korea. The British resolution, ably pushed by the Netherlands, Australia, the Philippines, Brazil, and others, recommended that "All appropriate steps be taken to ensure conditions of stability throughout Korea" with a view toward

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[11]Marshall to MacArthur, September 29, 1950, Ibid., 826.

establishment under U.N. supervision of a unified, independent and democratic Korean government. U.N. forces would remain in Korea only so long as necessary to achieve these goals. The action was taken in the General Assembly to avoid a possible Soviet veto in the Security Council.[12]

The decision having been made to employ U.N. forces to achieve the political objective of unifying Korea, the task of both Washington and the U.N. Commander was to be alert to signs of Soviet or Chinese intentions to intervene in the hostilities. The available evidence suggests that the greatest concerns were expressed about Chinese designs.

There were signs as early as July,1950, of Chinese troop movements from central China to Manchuria, where troop strength was estimated to be around 246,000. The U.N. Command did not feel that these troops would be used for a massive intervention in Korea.[13] On September 5, the Consul General in Hong Kong reported that a Shanghai journalist had quoted Chou En-lai, Foreign Minister of the People's Republic of China, as saying that if North Korean troops were pushed back to the Manchurian border, China would fight "the enemy outside China's border and not await until the enemy came in." Yet on September 22, this same source quoted

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[12]Editorial Note, Ibid., 903; Resolution 376, Adopted by the U.N. General Assembly, October 7,1950,Ibid., 904-06.

[13]Memo of Teletype Conference Prepared by the Department of the Army, August 30, 1950, Ibid., 659.

Chou as saying that China would not become involved in the Korea War.[14] On September 27, the United States indirectly received information from K.M. Pannikar, Indian Ambassador to China, that suggested China was prepared to follow a much more aggressive policy in Korea, with direct intervention expected. Hubert Graves, the British official who brought Pannikar's news to Washington's attention, said he did not take Pannikar's fears too seriously, because he believed him to be "volatile and an unreliable reporter."[15] In August and September a pattern was developing, as signs of China's intention to intervene in Korea were balanced by reports casting doubt on the reliability of the information. The result was a reluctance to reach any firm conclusions or decisions.

In late September, O. Edmund Clubb, Director of the Office of Chinese Affairs, acknowledged that elements of Lin Piao's 4th Field Army had moved to Manchuria. Peking also had reported that "certain Korean personnel have returned to Korea to defend it . . . ." A most "interesting possible explanation" was that this movement indicated the Chinese were going to intervene in Korea. Clubb believed it likely that the Soviet Union would encourage such an

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[14]Consul General at Hong Kong (Wilkinson) to Acheson, September 5, 1950, Ibid., 698; Wilkinson to Acheson, September 22, 1950, Ibid., 765.

[15]Memo of Conversation by Merchant, September 27, 1950, Ibid., 793-794.

action. Though the Chinese might be bluffing, their military activity remained strong and had to be watched.[16]

Reports from sources outside the United States concerning possible Chinese intervention arrived with regularity. On October 2, Dean Rusk received an alarmist telegram from the British Foreign Office. The British wanted to remind the United States that a Chinese Communist military occupation of North Korea should not be excluded as a possibility, as the prospect of elimination of the North Korean buffer state could be perceived as a serious threat to China's security. In addition, the Soviet Union might feel that the chances of a dangerous expansion of hostilities would be relieved if Chinese rather than Russian troops were to intervene. Of course, seeing the United States involved in a bigger Asian war, draining its resources, would please the Soviet Union.[17]

But more than speculation elicited the British telegram. An analysis of Peking's internal and external propaganda showed an increasingly violent emphasis on "U.S. aggressive action both against Korea and China." Peking's notes to the United Nations were not designed to secure early admission to that body, but to "demonstrate that U.N. action in Korea is illegal and is serving to cloak U.S.

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[16]Clubb to Rusk, September 27, 1950, Ibid., 795.

[17]The British Embassy to the Department of State, Given to Rusk, October 2, 1950, Ibid., 814.

plans for aggression." Yet the British, in the next breath, concluded that China was not likely to intervene since it would risk hostilities "on an issue which would not appear to be vital to China." But if an intervention in Korea did occur, China was more likely to do so than Russia.[18]

On October 3, the State Department received word that Chou En-lai had informed Pannikar that if U.N. forces crossed the 38th parallel, China would intervene, but would not if only South Korean troops crossed the parallel. The Netherlands Chargé in Peking confirmed this report, although he was inclined to believe it was a bluff.[19] The State Department reacted cautiously, feeling that while it probably was a bluff, the statement was still serious enough to be concerned about.[20] Some officials viewed Pannikar's report with great alarm. The Deputy Director of Northeast Asian Affairs believed that since America was not committed to crossing the 38th parallel, it would be worthwhile "to explore the possibility of using entirely ROK forces for the subjugation of North Korea."[21]

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[18] Ibid., 814-816.

[19] Chargé in the United Kingdon(Holmes) to Acheson, October 3, 1950, Ibid., 839; Ambassador in the Netherlands (Chapin) to Acheson, October 3, 1950, Ibid., 858.

[20] Memo by Deputy Assistant Secretary of State For Far Eastern Affairs (Merchant) to Rusk, October 3, 1950, Ibid., 848; Wilkinson to Acheson, October 7, 1950, Ibid., 912-913.

[21] Johnson to Rusk, October 3, 1950, Ibid., 849.

Edmund Clubb agreed that Chou's statement could not be regarded safely as mere bluff, since it had to be made with the foreknowledge of the Soviets. If China and Russia were now prepared to accept the dangers of a clash with U.N. forces, it meant they were ready to risk the danger of WWIII. In such a case the United States could not avoid the danger either by retreating from it or by surrendering to Peking's threats. The United States should continue to advance in Korea if it had the support of the United Nations and if it was in its best interests to do so.[22]

Chou's warnings created enough alarm for Washington to seek to reassure the Chinese about U.S. intentions. In a cable to the U.S. Ambassador to India, Loy W. Henderson, it was pointed out that it was very important for Washington to disabuse the Chinese of any misconceptions they might hold about U.S. objectives in Korea. The United States had been forced to rely for information on the sole channel of the "dubiously reliable intermediary Pannikar" and given Pannikar's "predispositions and free-wheeling proclivities," Washington could never be sure what Chou En-lai really had said. The State Department hoped Henderson could arrange through Indian intermediaries a meeting with the Chinese Ambassador to India or, if this was impossible, to convey to him through a secondary source the message that U.N.

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[22]Clubb to Merchant, October 4, 1950, Ibid., 864.

operations in Korea constituted "no threat whatsoever to Korea's neighbors," and that America scught "no special position whatever in Korea." The Chinese Ambassador rejected all of Henderson's efforts to contact him.[23]

The United States was not alone in being concerned about Chou's statements. The Netherlands representative to the United Nations informed the U.S. representative that his government had instructed him to introduce a resolution in the General Assembly that would suspend all U.N. military operations north of the 38th parallel until October 31, while an attempt was made to reach a diplomatic settlement. Webb instructed the U.S. representative to the Netherlands to protest this action in the strongest possible terms, making it clear that the United States believed that China's threats were designed primarily to dissuade U.N. members from continuing to support U.N. action in Korea. The Dutch agreed not to introduce the resolution.[24]

The bellicose reports concerning China's intentions led the Joint Chiefs to send MacArthur an amplification of his previous directive. He was reminded that in case of Chinese intervention he was to continue his operations so long as there was a reasonable chance of success. He also

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[23]Webb to Henderson, October 4,1950, Ibid., 875-76; Henderson to Acheson, October 10, 1950, Ibid., 921.

[24]Acheson to Webb, October 3,1950, Ibid., 883-84; Webb to Embassy in Netherlands, October 5, 1950, Ibid., 884-885; Footnote 1, Ibid., 885.

was reminded that he must obtain authorization from Washington prior to taking military action against objectives in China.[25]

MacArthur, and of course Washington, had access to U.N. Command intelligence estimates concerning China's intentions. On October 5, General C.A. Willoughby, MacArthur's Chief of Intelligence, noted that recent reports about China were taking on "a sinister connotation," and that the potential existed for Chinese intervention should U.N. forces cross the parallel. Willoughby believed that reports of a massing of Chinese troops on the Manchurian border were conclusive and their use in Korea would suit the Soviets, since U.S. resources would be drained with little or no cost to Russia. There are no indications, however, that Willoughby tried to persuade either MacArthur or Washington to reconsider crossing the 38th parallel. On October 9, General Walton Walker's 8th Army began its move on Pyongyang, while MacArthur broadcast a call for North Korean surrender.[26] Negative reports had not dissuaded MacArthur or Washington from driving north, as there were positive reports available tc balance the negative ones--thus justifying the move across the 38th parallel.

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[25]JCS to MacArthur, October 9, 1950, Ibid., 915.

[26]Schnabel, Policy, 200.

Since for some time MacArthur's public criticisms of U.S. policy had strained the President's patience with his subordinate, Truman decided to have a meeting with MacArthur on Wake Island for the purpose of clarifying his relationship with the General.[27] Philip Jessup was concerned that such a meeting would be perceived in China and Russia as foreshadowing "some major new American move in the Far East." If the Chinese and Soviets really believed the United States intended to stay in Korea, this meeting might be interpreted as bearing upon U.S. plans to this end. While not arguing that the project should be abandoned, Jessup felt Truman should be aware of the possible interpretations and repercussions of the meeting, and should issue a very carefully prepared statement in advance emphasizing America's desire to localize the conflict, to restore peace, and to withdraw from Korea as soon as possible.[28]

Prior to the October 15 meeting at Wake Island, the CIA prepared estimates on the threat of Soviet or Chinese intervention in Korea. The CIA believed that there were no convincing indications of a Chinese intention to intervene in large numbers in North Korea. While such a maneuver would gain much prestige for both China and world communism, a war with the United States, even one limited to Korea, would

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[27]Acheson, Creation, 589-591.

[28]Memo by Jessup to Acheson, October 9, 1950, FR,1950, VII, 915-916.

place a serious strain on China's economy and would exacerbate its domestic problems. Without Soviet air and naval aid, Chinese intervention would be extremely costly in terms of manpower. The need for Soviet resources to fight such a war would increase China's dependence on Russia, which would be a serious blow to China's prestige. These and other factors made it unlikely that China would intervene in 1950.[29] In addition, the CIA concluded that Russia had given no indications of an intention to intervene since its prospective losses did not justify taking such a grave risk. Soviet intervention would occur only when it was in its interest to precipitate a global war.[30]

The meeting at Wake Island covered a number of topics, including rehabilitation and elections in Korea. MacArthur assured Truman that while interference in the first or second months of the war would have been decisive, he was no longer fearful of Soviet or Chinese intervention. The Chinese had 300,000 men in Manchuria, but they had no air force, and any attempt to move south to Pyongyang would result in "the greatest slaughter." Having reassured the President, MacArthur sought assurances from Truman that the South Korean government would not be treated on the same

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[29]Memo by the CIA, subj: Threat of Full-Scale Chinese Communist Intervention in Korea, October 12, 1950, Ibid., 933-934.

[30]Memo by CIA, subj.: Threat of Soviet Intervention in Korea, October 12, 1950, Ibid., 935-936.

basis as North Korea in the postwar period, as he had inferred from recent statements from the United Nations. Truman agreed that America should make it clear that "we are supporting the Rhee government and propaganda can go to hell." The conference ended with Truman apparently satisfied that he and MacArthur understood each other's views.[31]

The Chinese reaction to the Wake Island meeting was not positive. The Dutch Chargé reported the initial reaction as suspicion that the meeting was the final phase leading to U.S. aggression against China. An October 17 report from Hong Kong stating that Peking's support of North Korea would be limited, balanced this report. On the 20th, the same source passed on a report that at an emergency meeting in Peking the previous week, the Chinese had decided to intervene in Korea and had 300,000 troops on the Manchurian border ready to cross into North Korea.[32]

In the third week of October, the U.S. position vis-a-vis a possible Chinese intervention was that it was unlikely to occur since the most favorable moment for overt intervention had passed. Current estimates indicated that if intervention did occur, it would be limited in amount and would be covert rather than overt. Pannikar's biases and

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[31]Substance of Statements Made at Wake Island Conference on October 15, 1950, Compiled by General Omar Bradley, Ibid., 948-960.

[32]Chapin to Acheson, October 17, 1950, Ibid., 974; Wilkinson to Acheson, October 17, 1950, Ibid., 976-977.

political sympathies left the accuracy and objectivity of his reports open to serious question.[33]

While Chinese intervention was estimated as unlikely, the United States nonetheless wished to do nothing to irritate China unnecessarily. The State Department wanted MacArthur to issue a report making it clear that his present operations would not interfere with the Suiho Hydroelectric Power complex on the Yalu. This was to be done in consultation with Rhee, who should understand "the importance of doing everything possible to avoid a clash with Chi Commie forces at this time."[34]

MacArthur felt it was inadvisable to issue such a statement. He had no intention of disturbing any peaceful and reasonable application of this power supply. Having the U.N. Commander to predict publicly future policies, decisions, and actions was most unwise.[35] Since the Joint Chiefs suggested, but did not order, that MacArthur issue the statement, it was not done. Instead of avoiding actions that might provoke the Chinese, MacArthur issued orders in October removing all restrictions on the use of U.N. forces in North Korea and issued instructions to proceed with all

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[33]Deputy Under-Secretary of State(Matthews) to Special Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Foreign Military Affairs(Burns), October 19, 1950, Ibid., 980-981.

[34]Acheson to the Embassy in Seoul, October 21, 1950, Ibid., 987.

[35]MacArthur to JCS, October 22,1950, Ibid., 991-992.

available troops to the northern frontier of North Korea. The Joint Chiefs protested this action as being contrary to MacArthur's directive of September 27, but the General argued that military necessity required him to lift the restrictions, since South Korean troops were incapable of accomplishing the task alone.[36] Once more, the Joint Chiefs bowed to the judgment of the commander in the field.

Five days after MacArthur removed restrictions on the use of U.N. troops in North Korea, the 8th Army took its first Chinese prisoners. The 8th Army believed, however, that there were no sizeable numbers of Chinese troops in Korea. Later information indicated that perhaps two regiments of Chinese Communists had entered the 8th Army sector. South Korea forces were meeting stiff resistance in the Onjong-Huichon area that might be Chinese-inspired.[37] On October 31, the Hong Kong Consulate passed on the report that at a preliminary meeting of the Central People's Governing Council on October 24, a decision was reached for China to enter the Korean hostilities. This same source indicated that for the past two months troops had been massing in Manchuria and vital machinery had been removed from that area in preparation for war. On November 1, however, the

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[36] Editorial Note, Ibid., 995-996.

[37] Chargé in Korea (Drumright) to Acheson, October 29, 1950, Ibid., 1012; Drumright to Acheson, October 30, 1950, Ibid., 1014; Memo by William McAfee of the Office of Chinese Affairs to Clubb, October 31, 1950, Ibid., 1019.

U.S. Embassy in Seoul and the 8th Army informed Washington that the Chinese would avoid any overt intervention.[38]

Edmund Clubb of the Chinese Affairs Division viewed these various reports with greater concern than did Seoul or the 8th Army. With the presence of Chinese troops in North Korea confirmed, he concluded that it was unlikely that intervention would be in such limited numbers that China would be promptly bloodied and thrown out by a force it had consistently labeled as a "paper tiger." The renewal of propaganda calling for "resistance to aggression in Korea" appeared to indicate a large effort might be involved. Such intervention probably would not occur without coordination with and an understanding of, the Soviet contribution to be made. Any "intervention would be designed . . .to achieve some real measure of victory." While firm information was lacking, the safest assumption was that Chinese intervention would be in considerable force and would have the backing of the Soviet Union. Intervention would not occur merely to protect the Suiho power complex.[39]

John Leighton Stuart, also of the Chinese Affairs Division, was deeply concerned about the situation too. The growing possibility of being pulled into a war with China

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[38]Wilkinson to Acheson, October 31, 1950, Ibid., 1019-1021; Drumright to Acheson, November 1, 1950, Ibid., 1022.

[39]Clubb to Rusk, November 1, 1950, Ibid., 1023.

was disturbing since it would be contrary to U.S. interests and could benefit only the Soviet Union. The United States should leave no stone unturned to avoid this. China should be called on to cease its aggression and the United Nations should issue assurances that China's border would not be violated. Rusk was agreeable to this line of thinking.[40]

Edward Barret of the Public Affairs Division of the State Department also expressed concern. He felt it necessary to be an alarmist both on the basis of China's propaganda and on the build-up of Chinese "volunteers" in Korea and because of the hundreds of thousands of troops they had massed in Manchuria. The only possible explanation was that intervention would not be limited to the present number of Chinese troops in Korea.[41]

The CIA rejected the "alarmist" viewpoint, even though it agreed that Chinese troops were now opposing U.N. forces in Korea. A total of 15-20,000 troops were now in North Korea and the presence of Soviet-type jets indicated that the Kremlin might be providing at least logistic support. A fear of a U.N. invasion of Manchuria existed in Chinese minds despite the clear-cut definition of U.N. objectives. The present Chinese intervention, however,

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[40]Memo by Acting Officer in Charge of Political Affairs, Office of Chinese Affairs(Stuart), November 3, 1950, Ibid., 1029-1031.

[41]Barret to Rusk, November 3, 1950, Ibid., 1030.

appeared to be only to establish a "cordon sanitaire" south of the Yalu to guarantee the security of the Manchurian border against "invading" U.N. forces and to insure the continued flow of electric power from the Suiho power plants.[42]

The CIA's calming estimate received support from other sources. The Consul General at Hong Kong acknowledged that since October 29 there had been a sharp increase in the quantity and the bellicose nature of Chinese propaganda. While it was difficult to assess precisely the available information, the Consulate still believed that China "would not openly send Chinese troops across the border." The increased propaganda represented a decision to increase aid to North Korea, though it would not be all-out in nature.[43]

Carrying greater weight was MacArthur's November 4 assessment in which he said "I recommend against hasty conclusions which might be premature and believe that a final appraisement should await a more complete accumulation of military facts." MacArthur suggested nowhere in his message that full-scale Chinese intervention was likely, because he was unaware that the Chinese, between October 14 and November 1, had sent 180,000 troops from the elite Fourth Field Army into North Korea.[44]

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[42]Memo by Director of CIA(Smith) to the President, November 1, 1950, Ibid., 1025-1026.

[43]Wilkinson to Acheson, November 3,1950,Ibid.,1034-35.

[44]Schnabel, Policy, 234-239; Editorial Note, FR,1950, VII, 1036.

The same day that MacArthur expressed his doubts about a massive Chinese intervention, Clubb once more sounded a warning. The Chinese intervention, viewed in light of their earlier warnings against U.N. forces crossing the 38th parallel, was a calculated, well-prepared move. At this point it was doubtful that a return to the 38th parallel would meet "the present joint designs of the Chinese Communists and the Moscow strategists . . . ." Clubb concluded that China's intervention was not limited to protection of the Yalu power installations and/or the establishment of a cordon sanitaire, which would be less than a minimum objective. The minimum objective for China was either restoration of the status quo ante bellum in North Korea or complete expulsion of U.N. forces from all of Korea. Clubb recommended that the United Nations maintain its united front and that the essence of MacArthur's directives remain unchanged until the military situation was further clarified. Clubb added the hopeful thought that "if a sound drubbing could be administered to the Chinese Communist forces, with the war localized within Korea, this could have only a salutary effect in Asia."[45]

Clubb's concern reflected a generally uneasy, but not panicked, attitude in the State Department, where it had been decided that the matter of Chinese intervention would

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[45]Clubb to Rusk, November 4, 1950, FR, 1950, VII, 1038-40.

be brought before the United Nations in hopes of localizing the fighting in Korea. The State Department felt that for the present nothing provocative should be done, such as labeling China as an aggressor or seeking sanctions against China through the United Nations.[46] Thus the State Department was concerned and irritated when informed almost accidentally of MacArthur's plans to bomb, on November 6, the international bridges across the Yalu on the Manchurian border, an action apparently impelled by the evidence of growing numbers of Chinese troops in North Korea.[47]

The problem of air operations near the border of Manchuria and Siberia often had been a sore point between MacArthur and the State Department. The accidental bombing on October 8 of a Soviet airfield 100 kilometers from the Korean border, had brought a strong message from Acheson to Lt. General George C. Stratemeyer, Commander of the Air Force in the Far East, informing him that such an attack should not reoccur under any circumstances. The incident brought an attempt to delimit explicitly air operations in the vicinity of North Korea's borders.[48] The Joint Chiefs

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[46]Acheson to Certain Diplomatic Offices, November 5, 1950, Ibid., 1049; Acheson the Embassy in the United Kingdom, November 6, 1950, Ibid., 1052.

[47]Memo of Conversation by Acheson, November 6, 1950, Ibid., 1050; Schnabel, Policy, 241.

[48]Ambassador in the Soviet Union(Kirk) to Acheson, October 10, 1950, FR,1950, VII, 917; Memo by Acheson of Conversation with Lovett, October 10, 1950, Ibid., 922.

believed that the need for air interdiction operations in areas contiguous to North Korea's boundaries was sufficient justification for no further imposition of limitations. American ground forces would be needed up to the international borders and it was undesirable to deny them air support in those areas; the loss of lives could not be justified. Moreover, air reconnaisance would be a continuing requirement. Since MacArthur and his subordinates were aware of the need to avoid violations of Soviet or Chinese territory, any further directive would be superfluous.[49]

With this in mind, the State Department's consternation is easy to understand when Lovett, on his own initiative, informed Acheson and Rusk of MacArthur's plans three hours before they were to be implemented. Lovett did so because he felt the bombing, from an operational viewpoint, would not interrupt traffic across the Yalu decisively, and because the operation carried the risk of bombing Antung on the Manchurian side of the Yalu. Rusk pointed out that the United States had promised to consult the British prior to any action that involved attacks on the Manchurian side of the Yalu. The United States was pursuing a resolution in the United Nations calling on China to cease its Korean activities, in an attempt to gain U.N. support for future actions should the Chinese refuse to heed the United Nations.

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[49]Lovett to Acheson, November 4,1950,Ibid., 1037.

The proposed bombing would only inflame the situation, and Lovett, Rusk, and Acheson agreed it should be postponed.[50]

Secretary of Defense Marshall was informed and he agreed that the bombing was an unwise move unless there was a mass movement of Chinese troops across the Yalu. The action was ordered postponed until the President could be consulted. Truman, when informed, said he would approve the action if it was needed to insure the security of U.N. troops. The President then instructed Acheson to question MacArthur on what the facts were, and for Lovett and Acheson to handle the situation solely on the basis of the facts that bore on the security of U.N. troops.[51]

The Joint Chiefs directed MacArthur to postpone all bombing within five miles of the Manchurian border and to explain his reasons for ordering such a strike. MacArthur's reply of November 6 was a notable departure from his November 4 estimate. He informed Washington that "Men and matériel in large force are pouring across all bridges over the Yalu from Manchuria." This movement threatened to destroy the forces under his command. The only way to halt this movement was to destroy the bridges and subject all enemy installations in the north, which were supporting the advance, to the maximum possible air destruction. MacArthur

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[50]Memo of Conversation by Acheson, November 16, 1950, Ibid., 1055-1056.

[51]Ibid., 1056-1057.

warned that "Every hour that this is postponed will be paid for dearly in American and other United Nations blood." MacArthur went on to say that the restrictions imposed on him would be disastrous and would result in a calamity of major proportions for which he could not accept responsibility without the President's personal and direct understanding of the situation. MacArthur requested an immediate reconsideration of Washington's decision.[52]

The Joint Chiefs replied that the situation MacArthur depicted had changed considerably from his report of November 4. In light of this new evaluation, he was authorized to proceed with the planned bombing, though this did not include bombing of dams or power plants on the Yalu. The Joint Chiefs indirectly criticized MacArthur when they added that the national interest required that "we be kept informed of important changes in the situation as they occurred." MacArthur's estimate of the present situation, as requested on November 6, was to be submitted as soon as possible.[53]

MacArthur replied on the 7th, noting that invioability of Manchuria and Siberia had been cardinal principles of his headquarters and would continue to be. He added that destruction of hydroelectric installations had never been contemplated. As to the present situation, MacArthur

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[52]JCS to MacArthur, November 6, 1950, Ibid., 1057-1058; Truman, Trial, 375.

[53]JCS to MacArthur, November 6, 1950, FR,1950, VII, 1075-1076.

believed that China had committed sufficient forces to have seized the initiative in the western sector, and to have delayed materially the offensive in the eastern sector. The Chinese seemed to be operating on the principle that their "forces will be used and augmented at will, probably without any formal declaration of hostilities." Should reinforcement continue, the point could be reached where "resumption of the U.N. advance would be impossible and might even be forced into retrograde." The U.N. offensive would be resumed in the west, however, since this was the only way to measure the enemy's strength accurately.[54]

As a result of MacArthur's latest estimate, more moderate than his November 4 report, and the reports and estimates about possible full-scale Chinese intervention, a National Security Council review of the Korea situation was called for. With the critical meeting scheduled for November 9, John P. Davies of the Policy Planning Staff, prepared a draft memorandum on November 7 for consideration and discussion. Davies admitted that Chinese intervention possibly could remain at the present level and that the Chinese were making a token show of force, seeking to intimidate the United Nations in hopes of gaining a negotiated settlement providing for a buffer zone on their frontier. Other considerations, however, suggested the situation was more

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[54]MacArthur to JCS, November 7,1950,Ibid., 1076-77.

ominous than this. The Chinese could greatly expand their intervention, and ideologically they had every reason to foster Korean Communist resistance and to expand on the peninsula. The United States, as the guiding spirit behind the United Nations presence in Korea, was the key factor in determining Peking's reactions. The Chinese, besides having an ideological antipathy to America, viewed the United States with a morbid distrust and hatred.[55]

Davies believed the Soviets were encouraging China's intervention. Both governments knew the risks involved, as U.S. intervention in Korea had indicated that the American people were very unpredictable. Thus, the Chinese were prepared to accept a violent U.S. reaction. The Soviets, whose main interest lay in Europe, were only too glad to see the United States, Britain, and France drawn into a deeper military commitment in Asia. Whatever Russia had to pay to induce Chinese intervention was worth it to the Kremlin.[56]

Davies concluded that on the evidence at hand, the United States could not know what Peking's or Moscow's course would be in the coming months, as the situation presented a wide range of possible developments. One thing was clear--China's actions were in defiance of the law-abiding members of the world community. The United States had several alternatives open to it. It could withdraw its forces

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[55]Davies Draft Memo, November 7,1950,Ibid., 1078.

[56]Ibid., 1079-1080.

in order to avoid provocations and to husband its strength. This might alleviate the present crisis but would lead immediately to new dangers elsewhere. Another alternative was to break-off contact with the enemy and go on the defensive. This would be a temporizing course at best. A third course was to seek a negotiated settlement immediately, but this was a weak and unsatisfactory course. Finally, the United States could carry the hostilities into China and Manchuria proper, with the risk of a general Asian war.[57]

Davies believed the United States should "seek a localized solution in Korea and prepare for possible imminent outbreak of WW III." This policy should be developed and made public simultaneously. In order to localize the conflict, the United States had to avoid any acts that would bring the Chinese overtly into Korea--the same applied to the Soviet Union. Tactically this meant the Manchurian border should not be violated on land or in the air.[58]

What Davies had concluded, in effect, was that the United States should continue its present policy. Not unexpectedly, Edmund Clubb seconded this opinion in a memorandum to Dean Rusk on November 7, in which he urged that MacArthur's directive of October 9 be continued pending definitive developments. But any all-out offensives should be abandoned in favor of more wary, testing tactics that would

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[57] Ibid., 1083. [58] Ibid.

allow for an orderly withdrawal to strong defensive positions if real danger threatened. In effect, military operations should be slowed so as to test Chinese intentions and in order that Washington could make political estimates.[59]

The Joint Chiefs informed MacArthur of the upcoming National Security Council meeting. They thought that the introduction of Chinese forces to the extent reported, constituted a major Chinese Communist entry into North Korea. This new situation meant that MacArthur's objective of destruction of North Korean armed forces might have to be re-examined and MacArthur's opinion was desired.[60]

MacArthur's reply was immediate and firm in its opposition to any re-examination of his mission. The October directive fully covered the present situation. In his opinion, "it would be fatal to weaken the fundamental and basic policy of the United Nations to destroy all resisting armed forces in Korea and bring that country under a united and free nation." Even under the present restrictions on his use of air power, MacArthur believed he could deny Chinese reinforcements the ability to cross the Yalu in numbers sufficient so as to enable him to destroy those forces now facing the United Nations. An attack to achieve this goal would begin November 17, with U.N. forces driving to the

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[59]Clubb to Rusk, November 7, 1950, Ibid., 1088-1092.

[60]JCS to MacArthur, November 8, 1950, Ibid., 1097-1098.

border and securing all of North Korea. To do anything less "would completely destroy the morale of my forces," and would result in "an indefinite retention of our military forces along difficult defensive lines in North Korea . . . ." The United States should press the United Nations to condemn Chinese aggression and should call for their withdrawal on pains of military sanctions should they fail to do so.[61]

The CIA also presented an evaluation of the situation prior to the November 9 NSC meeting. While estimating present Chinese strength in Korea at only 30-40,000 men, the CIA believed there were some 700,000 troops in Manchuria. These forces were capable of halting and reversing the U.N.'s advance and of insuring the continued existence of a Communist regime on North Korean soil. In accomplishing this, the Chinese presently retained full freedom of action and could adjust their actions to meet developments in Korea.[62]

The CIA felt that the Chinese Communist intervention in Korea, undoubtedly done with Soviet support, was carried out with full recognition of possible retaliation and a general war--thus, they probably would ignore an ultimatum requiring their withdrawal. The immediate reason for their intervention was the U.S. crossing of the 38th parallel and the resulting swift collapse of North Korean resistance.

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[61]MacArthur to JCS, November 9,1950,Ibid., 1107-09.

[62]Memo Prepared by CIA, November 8, 1950, Ibid., 1101.

Without Chinese intervention, U.N. forces would soon have reached the Yalu River and the Korean People's Republic would have ceased to exist. China intervened rather than accept the presence of an openly unfriendly "U.S.-controlled" regime on its border. The Chinese failure to intervene earlier at two more critical phases, when the United States held only the Pusan perimeter and later when the Inchon landings were made, confirmed this interpretation.[63]

The CIA did not think Soviet intervention was likely. The Soviet Union probably believed the United States would not risk a general war over Chinese intervention alone. Moscow realized that the principal risk of a general war lay in the exercise of Soviet intervention. A decision to pursue enemy aircraft into Manchuria and to bomb troop concentrations and airfields there, would not greatly influence a Soviet decision to act, but such maneuvers would increase materially the extent of Chinese intervention in Korea.[64]

The last department heard from before the NSC meeting was the Joint Chiefs of Staff. They believed that only a determined military effort could defeat the Chinese then present in Korea. China's reasons for being in Korea were not clear, but certainly included a desire to protect the Yalu power installations, establishment of a cordon sanitaire

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[63] Ibid., 1104.

[64] Memo by Director of the CIA (Smith) to the NSC, November 9, 1950, Ibid., 1122.

in North Korea, continuation of the undeclared war in North Korea in order to sap U.S. strength, and a desire to drive the United Nations out of Korea. The United Nations should make every effort to reassure the Chinese about the hydro-electric plants on the Yalu.[65]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff believed that a sustained military campaign in Korea would be a heavy drain on U.S. military potential. A continued U.S. commitment in Korea would be at the expense of more useful strategic deployment elsewhere of the forces involved. There appeared to be three courses of action open: force the action to a successful conclusion; establish a defensive position short of the Korean border; or withdraw, which "if conducted voluntarily would so lower the worldwide prestige of the United States that it would be totally unacceptable, and if conducted involuntarily could only be accepted as the prelude to global war."[66]

MacArthur's arguments did not entirely convince the Joint Chiefs, since they believed that every effort "should be expended as a matter of urgency to settle the problem of Chinese Communist intervention in Korea by political means, preferably through the U.N. . . . ." This effort would include reassurances to the Chinese "with respect to our

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[65] JCS to Marshall, November 9,1950, Ibid., 1117.

[66] Ibid., 1121.

intent, direct negotiations through our Allies and the Interim Committee with the Chinese Communist Government, and by any other available means." Pending final clarification of Chinese objectives in Korea, however, MacArthur's October 9 directive should remain in force and the United States "should develop its plans and make its preparations on the basis that the risk of global war is increased."[67]

At the November 9 NSC meeting, the Joint Chiefs position was basically accepted. Acheson's attempt to gain acquiescence to a buffer zone twenty miles deep on each side of the Yalu was unsuccessful. While Bradley agreed that the chances of defending a line well south of the Yalu were better, he nonetheless believed that any U.N. backward movement would lower prestige and affect the will of South Korea to fight. The National Security Council agreed that the United States would seek a political solution to the problem of Chinese intervention, but at the present time would not alter MacArthur's basic mission.[68]

In his memoirs, Dean Acheson has said that the United States at this NSC meeting, "missed its last chance to halt the march to disaster in Korea. All the President's advisers in this matter, civilian and military, knew that something was badly wrong, though what it was, how to find

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[67] Ibid.

[68] Memo by the NSC Staff, Interim Report, November 14, 1950, Ibid., 1150; Schnabel, Policy, 254-255.

out, and what to do about it, they muffed."[69] The intense activity in Washington following this NSC meeting, up to the time of massive Chinese intervention, indicated that efforts were continued to discover what was "badly wrong".

The United States, once it had decided to intervene in the Korean War, bowed to the judgment of the military; and the military, as was traditional, was bowing to the judgment of the commander in the field. The available evidence was conflicting. A positive report throwing doubt on the chances of intervention countered every negative assessment warning of imminent and massive Chinese intervention. By November 9, however, there could be no doubt that there were huge Chinese troop concentrations on the Manchurian border. Nor could there be any doubt that China had already committed troops to North Korea. These two factors alone should have been enough to dictate a policy of extreme caution until the situation was clarified. But these two facts did not stand in isolation, as there were other indications of China's intention to intervene in Korea, and more were forthcoming.

One of the stranger signs to appear, or disappear, was the manner in which Chinese troops seemed to melt away after November 9, to reappear in massive numbers on November 25. The Chinese backed off and had gone of the defensive. American prisoners were released and one intelligence

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[69]Acheson, Creation, 602.

officer concluded that this decision on China's part had to be made at a high level. The Chargé in Seoul offered the view that the Chinese might be testing U.N. determination to continue its northward advance.[70] While this behavior was very puzzling, no one seemed to attach very great significance to it at the time. Through hindsight it is probably correct to say that the Chinese were giving the United Nations one last chance to stop its northward advance, while at the same time successfully drawing an overconfident MacArthur into an increasingly difficult terrain should the United Nations decide to continue its move north.

If, as Acheson believed, U.S. policy makers sensed something badly wrong in northern Korea, then America's U.N. allies were no less sensitive. Great Britain in particular was very anxious about the situation. The need for the United States to placate its allies led the State Department to withstand firmly pressures from both the Defense Department and MacArthur to allow U.N. air power to pursue Chinese jets into their Manchurian sanctuaries. This was a sore point with MacArthur and a delicate one with America's allies, who expressed almost unanimous opposition to the "hot pursuit" concept.[71] In this case, the State Department

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[70]Drumright to Acheson, November 11 and 18, 1950, FR,1950, VII, 1129 and 1184; Muccio to Acheson, November 23, 24, 25, 1950, Ibid., 1216, 1218, 1233.

[71]Acheson to U.S. Mission at the U.N., November 13, 1950, Ibid., 1143. For the Allies replies see Ibid., 1151, 1156, 1159, 1173-1175.

overruled the military, and political necessity overruled military practicality. By giving in on this issue, the United States could keep a semblance of support among its allies for the policy decisions reached in early November.

While trying to soothe its nervous allies, the United States also tried to reassure China. On November 15, Acheson and Rusk, in public sppeches before a National Conference on Foreign policy, assured China that America had no ulterior designs concerning Manchuria or installations on the Yalu. China's interests could be accomodated if its goal was not domination of all Korea. Truman, on the 16th, stated that "So far as the United States is concerned I wish to state unequivocally that because of our deep devotion to the cause of world peace and our long-standing friendship for the people of China, we will take every honorable step to prevent any extension of the hostilities in the Far East."[72]

While attempts were being made to reassure the Chinese, Ambassador at Large Jessup suggested the idea of a buffer zone as a concrete way to achieve this. On November 24, he advised Acheson that America had three courses of military action open: pursue the present offensive to the complete occupation of Korea up to the Yalu; establish a limit on the advance short of the border; or withdraw to a defensive line south of positions held previously. If

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[72]Editorial Note, Ibid., 1158 and 1161.

either the second or third course were taken, MacArthur still could move against Korean units north of a limiting line, if it was judged militarily desirable. Jessup added that the third course would have to be followed if the Chinese commitment was enlarged dramatically.[73]

Jessup recommended that the United States support the British proposal in the United Nations to establish a demilitarized zone in the area north of the Changju-Hankang line, under a U.N. commission responsible for the zone. The British proposal should be modified to limit the zone to from 5-25 miles in depth on the Korean side of the frontier. While doing this, the United States should use every available means to gauge China's intentions in Korea.[74]

Jessup's memorandum was in line with Acheson's thinking.[75] Another meeting with the Joint Chiefs had been scheduled for November 21, and General Bolté of G-3 learned that the State Department was considering a buffer zone proposal to stop military action in Korea and to lessen the chances for world conflict. Bolté, in a memorandum to the Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army, J. Lawton Collins, expressed his complete opposition to any such proposal. From a political point of view, such a zone "would weaken the

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[73]Jessup to Acheson, November 20,1950,Ibid., 1195-1196. America finally opposed the British DMZ proposal and it was dropped. See Ibid., 1191,1212,1213-1215,1228-1229.

[74]Ibid.

[75]Battle to Acheson, November 21,1950,Ibid., 1201-03.

fundamental and basic policy of the U.N. to make Korea a united and free nation." While acknowledging that on military grounds it conceivably might be wise to stop short of the Yalu, U.N. objectives in Korea and U.S. national objectives made such a decision unwise. Bolté, arguing on political grounds, urged that MacArthur's orders should stand and a decision to halt short of the northern frontier "should not be made on military grounds."[76]

The November 21, 1950, meeting between the State and Defense Departments opened with Robert Lovett's observation that MacArthur had said nothing to indicate that he could not accomplish his mission. He wondered, however, if the United States could count on the continued support of its U.N. allies. Both Acheson and Rusk agreed there was great anxiety among friendly members of the United Nations about becoming too deeply involved with China. General Marshall pointed out that nothing had been presented in the meeting that indicated Acheson believed MacArthur should not push forward with his offensive. This was proper, because Marshall "preferred to consider first the political action based on the premise that General MacArthur will succeed in his pending military offensive." Acheson agreed but stressed the need to find a way to end China's intervention.[77]

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[76]Bolté to Collins, subj.: State-Defense High Level Meeting on Korea, November 20, 1950, JCS Geographic File.

[77]Memo of Conversation by Jessup, November 21, 1950, FR,1950, VII, 1204-1205.

General Bradley, General Collins, and General Vandenberg, expressed the belief that "from a military point of view . . .it would not be useful to hold the line at the River but rather the high ground back of the River." Acheson thought this a good idea, especially if America could get the Chinese to accept by negotiation what the United States intended to do anyway. The military felt that a negotiated settlement should not be made under the burden of self-imposed limitations, but added that it was concerned about ending the war quickly so U.S. troops could be deployed elsewhere.[78] The consensus was that a political solution was best, but military success was a necessary first ingredient.

The meeting resulted in agreement that a new proposal should be sent to MacArthur.[79] Prepared by Dean Rusk, with a few alterations by General Collins, this November proposal, not a directive, represented an attempt to achieve a course of action that would accomplish the U.N. goal of unifying Korea while reducing the possibility of a more general engagement with the Chinese, an action that would split America from its allies and would be costly militarily.[80]

MacArthur was informed that there was a chance that proposals might be made in the United Nations to restrict

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[78] Ibid., 1206-1207. [79] Ibid., 1207.

[80] Schnabel, Policy, 266-270.

the U.N. advance and to set up a demilitarized zone. The consensus in Washington was that no change would be made in the present U.N. mission, but that immediate action would be taken to formulate a course of action that would unify Korea and reduce the risk of a more general war. The Joint Chiefs assumed that MacArthur's attack, launched November 24, would be successful, and the following measures were suggested to reduce tension. After advancing to or near the Yalu, he was to secure a position on terrain commanding the approaches from the valley of the Yalu. The forces used would be South Korean primarily, while U.N. forces would be held in readiness to insure holding the line. Such a line would be extended from the Japan Sea to a line east of the 17th Infantry's position, with an outpost at Chongjin--this buffer zone would be the limit for the present advance.[81]

The Joint Chiefs recognized that from the viewpoint of a Commander in the field, this course might leave much to be desired, but there were other considerations that had to be accepted. The procedures outlined would not seriously affect the accomplishment of the U.N. military mission. The Joint Chiefs desired MacArthur's comments upon the course of action outlined.[82]

MacArthur replied that he shared Washington's desire

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[81]Collins to MacArthur, November 24, 1950, Ibid., 1222-1223; Schnabel, Policy, 268-269.

[82]Collins to MacArthur, November 24, 1950, FR,1950, VII, 1223-1224.

to confine the spread of Korean hostilities, but the "suggested approach would not only fail to achieve the desired result but would be provocative of the very consequences we seek to avert." His personal reconnaisance of the Yalu River line had convinced him that "it would be utterly impossible for us to stop upon commanding terrain as you suggest and there be in a position to hold and effectively control its lines of appoach to North Korea." MacArthur believed that "any failure on our part to prosecute the military campaign through to the achievement of its public and oft-repeated objective of destroying all enemy forces south of Korea's northern boundary . . .would be fraught with the most dangerous consequences." All of Asia would see this action as a sign of weakness and of appeasement of China.[83]

MacArthur then pointed out that entry of China into the conflict was "a risk we knowingly took at the time we committed our forces." His troops were committed to seizing the entire border region, and in the east they already occupied a sector of the Yalu. Only by meeting this commitment could "Soviet and Chinese aggressive designs . . .be checked before these countries are committed to a course of action from which for political reasons they cannot withdraw."[84]

The Joint Chiefs once more acquiesced in MacArthur's

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[83]MacArthur to JCS, November 25,1950,Ibid.,1232-33.

[84]Ibid., 1233.

judgment, but before that decision could be debated, military events in Korea made the discussion purely academic. On November 25, the 8th Army ran into heavy enemy opposition, estimated at 200,000 men, in the western and center sectors. On the 27th, General Almond's X Corps in the east came under heavy attack from Chinese troops.[85]

On November 28, MacArthur informed Washington that "We face an entirely new war." He believed that "our present strength of force is not sufficient to meet this undeclared war by the Chinese . . .The resulting situation presents an entire new picture which broadens the potentialities to world-embracing considerations beyond the sphere of decision by the Theater Commander." He planned to pass from offense to defense and await Washington's instructions.[86]

It was indeed an entirely new war and it must be concluded that U.S. policy makers were less than brilliant in handling the situation. Nobody in Washington was willing to take the initiative and overrule MacArthur on essential and critical issues. The United States seemingly drifted into a massively enlarged conflict with China because no one of sufficient influence within the bureaucracy was willing to advocate a policy of less than total victory. The signs by November 10 were clear enought to justify a very cautious

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[85]Muccio to Acheson, November 27, 1950, Ibid., 1235; Schnabel, Policy, 274.

[86]MacArthur to JCS, November 28, 1950, FR,1950, VII, 1237-1238.

policy. The Joint Chiefs and the Defense and State Department were concerned in November and all agreed that some kind of political, that is negotiated, solution was the best way to keep the situation from dangerously escalating. Yet no one would flatly order MacArthur either to slow his offensive or to set up a buffer zone so that an approach to the Chinese could at least be attempted. While policy makers admitted to the necessity of a political solution, it had to be one made in the context of a successful military offensive--an offensive that the Joint Chiefs felt as late as November 21, was not necessary militarily.

The military had assumed policy making responsibility soon after the commitment of troops to Korea. The Department set forth its own policy objectives in Korea and had them accepted. But strangely enough, whereas the military had argued against the commitment of U.S. ground forces to Korea in June on military grounds, they now justified MacArthur's northward drive in the face of possible Chinese intervention on political grounds. In reaching the decision to cross the 38th parallel, the military had combined both military and political arguments to gain acceptance of its position. Expediency, in both the case of the military and the State Department, had made arguments that were unacceptable in June, 1950, acceptable in November, 1950.

After the September 15 Inchon landings, the momentum

of military success determined political policy objectives in Korea, even when official Washington knew there was something "badly wrong" in northern Korea. With military success came the political objective of the unification of Korea. While apparently having a firm grasp of the possibilities and risks involved, and of the alternatives available in first crossing the parrallel, and then in continuing north despite Chinese warnings, no one seemed to be willing to do anything more than observe the march of military events in Korea. All policy makers acknowledged that it was not in America's interest to become involved in a war with China, but no one would take the initiative in making decisions that might have reassured the Chinese, because to do so would be to tamper with a successful military campaign and a successful, popular and politically-powerful general. It also would have meant abandoning Acheson's comforting view of Communist China. Faced with full-scale Chinese intervention, the United States would draw back from the grandiose political objective of unifying Korea by military means, but would continue in December and January to allow the pace of military events in Korea to determine policy.

CHAPTER X

THE AMERICAN COMMITMENT IS ALTERED

The massive intervention of Chinese troops in the Korean War created an entirely new situation that required the United States to reassess all aspects of its position in Korea. The National Security Council met in the afternoon of November 28, 1950, and Bradley sketched the general situation, stating that the Joint Chiefs believed that at the present time MacArthur did not need a new directive. Battlefield conditions had to be clarified, though Bradley did note that at present no air strikes should be contemplated against the large aircraft concentrations in Manchuria, because the enemy could bomb U.S. airfields in Japan.[1]

The three Defense Department Secretaries had prepared a memorandum in which they argued that the United States had to continue to act through the United Nations and not individually. If possible, a line should be held somewhere in Korea. The United States ought not become involved

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[1]Memo of Conversation by Jessup, November 28, 1950, FR,1950, VII, 1242.

in a general war with China, since to do so would be to fall into a carefully laid Russian trap. Every possible economic, psychological, political, and military effort had to be made to localize the war, which meant that Chinese territory should not be violated and Nationalist Chinese troops should not be used in Korea. Finally, both in the United States and in Europe, an accelerated military build-up was essential and a supplemental budget request was vital. Bradley agreed in general with these views and added that no more National Guard units should be activated and that no more ground troops were available for use in Korea; MacArthur already had enough troops.[2]

Acheson feared that the United States was much closer to the danger of a general war. The power behind the Chinese move was the Soviet Union, and thus this new problem had to be considered in the context of "the worldwide problem of confronting the Soviet Union as an antagonist." He agreed with Marshall's remarks, but added that the United States at a minimum should try to have China branded as an aggressor. Acheson admitted that the United States could not defeat China in Korea, as they could "put in more than we can." Acheson felt, however, that "it would be disastrous for us simply to pull out of Korea at this stage." He concluded that the United States should find "a line that we

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[2]Ibid., 1243-1244.

can hold and hold it." This would placate America's allies and demonstrate that the United States was not aggressive and was awaiting the next Chinese move. Once MacArthur had determined what line he could hold, the United States should press forward and turn it over to the South Koreans as soon as possible. Outside Korea the United States had to push harder to build its strength and had to liquidate the French objection to the development of an European Army.[3]

On November 29, the Joint Chiefs informed MacArthur that his plans to defend were approved and that any directives in conflict with those plans were to be deferred. On November 30, MacArthur reported that the Chinese build-up continued unabated and that the 8th Army would be forced to continue to retreat. He concluded that China's objective was "the complete destruction of U.N. forces and the securing of all Korea."[4]

The continued Chinese success in Korea was taking a toll of America's nervous allies. Acheson took great pains to reassure Britain that the United States would act through the United Nations and would consult closely with Britain.[5] Truman's November 30 press conference comments did rot aid

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[3] Ibid., 1246-1248.

[4] JCS to MacArthur, November 29, 1950, Ibid., 1253; MacArthur to the JCS, November 30, 1950, Ibid., 1260.

[5] Acheson to the Embassy in the United Kingdom, November 28, 1950, Ibid., 1250.

Acheson's efforts. Truman told reporters that consideration would be given to using all available weapons in Korea and he left the impression that the use of atomic weapons in Korea would be at the discretion of the commander in the field--MacArthur. This was later clarified[6], but the damage had been done. The panic-stricken British decided that Prime Minister Clement Atlee had to come to Washington to discuss the Korean situation and other matters with Truman. The conference was set for December 4-8, 1950.[7]

Britain was not alone in giving vent to fears and doubts about U.S. policy in Korea. Nations of the NATO pact especially feared an extension of the war in Korea because it might weaken U.S. commitments in Western Europe at a time when NATO was still a fledgling, powerless organization. America's allies in Europe particularly distrusted the aggressive and seemingly independent tendencies of MacArthur, though they did so in a forceful manner only after he was unsuccessful in Korea.[8]

Acheson recognized that there was an imperative need for a program that would stop the Chinese. MacArthur needed

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[6]Editorial Note, Ibid., 1261-1262.

[7]Chargé in the United Kingdom(Holmes) to Acheson, November 30, 1950, Ibid.,1269;Editorial Note, Ibid., 1269.

[8]U.S. Representative in the U.N.(Austin)to Acheson, November 30, 1950, Ibid., 1273; Ibid., November 30, 1950, Ibid., 1270; Memo of Conversation by Raynor, Adviser to the U.S. Delegation to the U.N., November 24, 1950, Ibid., 1219; Footnote 1, Ibid., 1225; Schnabel, Policy, 287-288.

to find a suitable line to hold, and this line then should be given some kind of sanctity. A program was vital because the United States had to get its allies together and "put all the backbone we could in them."[9] At a December 1 meeting with the military and the CIA, Acheson referred to the virtual state of panic "among our friends in the United Nations." Many of them felt that U.S. leadership had failed and that the present problems in Korea were MacArthur's fault. The United States had to restore confidence and unity, and one way to do this was to establish a militarily acceptable defensive line and then through political action give it sanctity. If it was impossible to hold a line, the United States would be confronted with a new set of problems and would have to proceed on different assumptions.[10]

Bradley thought the battlefield situation had not crystallized to the point where a definite answer could be given about holding a line. General Collins suggested that someone should go to Japan and assess the situation on the spot. Marshall agreed and instructed Collins to leave that day. The Secretary of Defense went on to note that it would be difficult to establish a line across the waist of Korea, but it would be possible to hold separate positions in

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[9]Memo by Lucius Battle, Special Assistant to the Secretary of State, of a Meeting Held November 30, 1950, Compiled December 3, 1950, FR,1950, VII, 1270-1271.

[10]Memo of Conversation by Jessup, December 1, 1950, Ibid., 1276-1277.

the east and west.[11]

General Smith, head of the CIA, reported that the latest estimate was that Russia would never accept a Korea in hostile hands. He believed America should withdraw from Korea, though this would not solve the problem. Admiral Forrest P. Sherman added that from a strategic viewpoint, the United States should be on the islands off the mainland, but that abandonment of Korea would be dangerous to Japan. Generally, the military believed that America should not bomb Manchurian airfields even if this meant "that our ground forces must take some punishment from the air."[12]

Lovett expressed the consensus when he described Korea as not being decisive in military terms, when compared to Western Europe, the primary center of interest. Yet if possible, Korea should be held for political reaons. Time was needed so that a cease-fire or truce might be gained. While the Joint Chiefs agreed that from a military viewpoint the acceptance of a cease-fire and going back to the 38th parallel was the best available choice, they believed that agreement to a cease-fire would be premature. Marshall concluded the meeting by saying that "acceptance of a cease-fire would represent a great weakness on our part."[13]

Efforts at the United Nations to determine the Chinese position were met with intransigence on China's part.

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[11] Ibid., 1277-78. [12] Ibid., 1278. [13] Ibid., 1279-81.

The Soviets on November 30, vetoed a six-power resolution calling for cessation of hostilities. The United States, forced to conclude that "no further fruitful action . . .can be taken in the Security Council," decided to work through the General Assembly in the future to bring about a peaceful settlement.[14]

Acheson dispatched an outline to America's U.N. representatives recommending a series of steps to be taken in the United Nations. First, immediate submission to the General Assembly of a six-power resolution entitled "Intervention of the People's Republic of China." Concurrent with that, an explanatory memorandum would be submitted in a form that left open the nature of the resolution the General Assembly might adopt. If the military required an immediate cease-fire, three alternative methods could be pursued. One, approach the Soviets or Chinese, or both, in any way possible, to obtain an immediate cease-fire. If this was impossible, a General Assembly resolution calling for a cease-fire could be sought. A third possibility was introduction of the vetoed six-power resolution. Generally, the military agreed to these steps, but felt no cease-fire should be proposed until after Collins reported and Atlee arrived.[15]

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[14]Acheson to Certain Diplomatic and Consulate Offices, December 1, 1950, Ibid., 1298.

[15]Acheson to the U.S. Mission at the U.N., December 2, 1950, Ibid., 1276-1277; Memo by Battle of a Meeting Held December 2, 1950, Compiled December 3, 1950, Ibid., 1310-1311.

The military, in a December 2 meeting with Truman and Acheson, raised the question of what price the Chinese would ask for a negotiated settlement. Marshall believed the price was bound to be high, involving U.S. evacuation of Korea, seating China in the United Nations, abandonment of Formosa, and Chinese participation in a Japanese peace treaty. America was in a great dilemma, Marshall believed, having to determine how to save "our troops and protect our national honor at the same time." Acheson agreed that the United States would have difficulty abandoning South Korea in good conscience. There also was agreement that a military build-up should be accelerated and that Truman should make the public aware of the very serious nature of the Korean situation. Developments in Korea were critical enough for a meeting to be scheduled the next day between the top officials of the State and Defense Departments.[16]

Before that meeting was held, MacArthur sent another assessment of the current situation. MacArthur believed that Washington did not fully understand the basic changes that had occurred as a result of China's intervention. Since the nature of the terrain reduced enormously the normal benefits accruing to his superior air force, it was evident that unless major ground reinforcements were promptly sent,

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[16] Ibid., 1311-1312; Annex, Memo by Jessup, Supplement to Mr. Battle's Memo of December 3 Recording the Secretary's Conversation with the President, General Marshall, and General Bradley, Ibid., 1312-1313.

the U.N. Command would "either be forced into successive withdrawal with diminished powers of resistance . . .or will be forced to take up beachhead bastion positions" which afford little hope of anything beyond a degree of prolonged resistance."[17]

MacArthur emphasized that events had outmoded the directives he was operating under. The strategic concepts which guided operations against North Korea had no application against the overwhelming power he was facing. The relatively small U.N. forces under his command faced "the full offensive power of the Chinese Communist nation augmented by extensive supply of Soviet matériel." MacArthur believed that "unless some positive and immediate action is taken, hope for success cannot be justified and steady attrition leading to final destruction can reasonably be contemplated." The present situation called "for political decisions and strategic plans in implementation thereof, adequate fully to meet the realities involved."[18]

MacArthur's gloomy evaluation was reflected in the meeting between the State and Defense Department officials on December 3. Discussion was narrowed quickly to the basic question of whether a cease-fire was needed and what price should be paid for it. Acheson believed the United States

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[17]MacArthur to JCS, December 3,1950,Ibid., 1320-21.

[18]Ibid., 1321-1322.

had to consider both the security of its troops and the effect of the present situation of America's position in the Far East and the world. There was a danger that America might become the greatest of appeasers if Korea were abandoned. To be forced out of Korea in Dunkirk fashion would be a disaster, but not a disgraceful one. A cease-fire that agreed to withdrawal to the 38th parallel would be acceptable, but the Chinese undoubtedly would want more, which would present the United States "with a bitter choice." Negotiations, Acheson felt, were unavoidable and the United States could expect no allied support on the questions of Formosa and U.N. seating. At present, the tendency among other countries was to criticize America rather than China. In any case, it had to be expected that someone, perhaps Atlee, would propose a cease-fire.[19]

General Bradley agreed that from a military viewpoint a cease-fire would be useful, but not if the cost of gaining it was too great. He did not want a general war, which might result if the United States took direct measures against China, but that risk had to be weighed against the loss of Korea and the resultant loss of U.S. prestige in the world. Indochina and Formosa certainly would fall and the drift to appeasement among Europeans, already gaining, would

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[19]Memo of Convesation by Jessup, December 3, 1950, Ibid., 1324-1325.

be accelerated. An equally important question was how long the American people would allow the present conflict to continue without a declaration of war against China.[20]

Dean Rusk observed that "The danger is that we might lose both our principles and our troops." In order to maintain the integrity of its foreign policy, the United States had to maintain the U.N.'s integrity. Aggression in Korea must not be rewarded. The United Nations would solidify behind America it if stood for a settlement at the 38th parallel. Any Chinese move across the parallel then would result in its being labeled an aggressor, thus denying China any political profit from aggression. Rusk believed America could not "sustain her theory of an absolute priority for Europe if we surrender in the Far East." The United States should step up the current action gradually, without sacrificing too many troops, as a middle course between appeasement and full-scale war.[21]

Bradley agreed with Rusk's assessment, adding that two questions had to be answered. First, a political question of whether a cease-fire should be sought. Second, a military question of whether U.N. forces would fight or evacuate after they established beachheads. Bradley believed that firm beachheads should be set up on the principle that U.N. forces would be withdrawn in an orderly fashion.[21]

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[20] Ibid., 1325-26. [21] Ibid.,1327. [22] Ibid., 1329-31.

No real consensus could be reached at the meeting beyond agreement that a directive should be sent informing MacArthur that his primary consideration was preservation of his forces and that he should continue his plans to consolidate his troops into beachheads. Generally the military believed that the fighting should continue and evacuation should occur in an orderly fashion that would preserve the greatest number of MacArthur's forces.[23]

Later, at a meeting in the State Department, Rusk noted that since the military was demoralized it was necessary to urge them to make the best possible effort to consolidate the U.N. position. He believed the Chinese should be forced "to make a really major effort at great cost to themselves if they were to get us out of Korea." America could not bow out because the damage in Europe and the Far East would be too great. Before any substantive actions were taken, policy makers had to have a "real estimate from the Military on its capacity to resist."[24]

Since General Collins had not reported on the situation in Korea, the State Department was forced to prepare a position paper for the Truman-Atlee talks without a military estimate on the United Nations' capacity to resist. The

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[23] Ibid.; Footnote 5, Ibid., 1333; Memo of Conversation by the Director of the Executive Secretariat (McWilliams), December 3, 1950, Ibid., 1335.

[24] Memo by Battle, December 4, 1950, Ibid., 1345.

position paper suggested that Truman discuss with Atlee the possibility of gaining a cease-fire based on the 38th parallel before the Chinese reached that line. A demilitarized zone would be set up to separate the two forces. Arrangements for a cease-fire would "not be conditioned on agreement on other issues, such as Formosa, and the Chinese seat in the U.N." Truman also was to inform Atlee that MacArthur would assemble his forces into three beachheads and that X Corps would be evacuated from Korea and moved to Japan. The 8th Army would retire to the Seoul-Inchon area but would not evacuate until cease-fire results were known.[25]

The State Department felt that if China rejected a cease-fire and moved south of the 38th parallel, the 8th Army would be faced with forced evacuation from the Seoul-Inchon areas. Evacuation, however, should result from military necessity only. If U.N. forces were driven from Korea, the United Nations should brand China an aggressor and mobilize political and economic means to pressure Peking. Harassing military action might be permitted, but the lack of troops and acknowledgement that Russia would not permit it, precluded a major military effort against China.[26]

The Joint Chiefs disliked several aspects of the State Department's position paper and made appropriate

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[25]Bradley to Marshall, December 24, 1950, Ibid., 1348.

[26]Ibid., 1349.

revisions in it. A cease-fire at the 38th parallel was appropriate only if it did not "impose conditions which would jeopardize the safety of U.N. forces and not be conditioned on agreement on other issues . . . ." The Defense Department eliminated all reference to evacuating X Corps and to moving the 8th Army to a specific area, wishing nothing to tie MacArthur's hands tactically or which would set up specific conditions for withdrawal. MacArthur should be free to evacuate U.N. forces at his discretion.[27]

The Defense Department believed that the United Nations immediately should have China branded as an aggressor and should bring pressure to bear to cease its aggression. In addition, military harassment could be used, and the Defense Department mentioned a naval blockade, bombing communication lines, and utilizing Nationalist Chinese forces[28] The Defense Department's revision of the section on military actions against China indicated a definite tendency to apply some kind of retaliatory measures to China.

Truman met Atlee on December 4 for the first of six meetings. Atlee took the position that there was no choice but to negotiate with China. The Chinese were certain to make demands that would include Formosa, a seat in the United Nations, and recognition, which the British seemed willing to concede. Truman made it clear that he would never proceed

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[27] Ibid., 1348. [28] Ibid., 1349.

along this line. Both men agreed that U.S. prestige would suffer if Korea was lost, but Atlee's major concern was that America would become involved in a dangerous and unrealistic extension of hostilities with China. Atlee assured Truman that Britain was not going to desert the United States.[29]

Acheson gave vent to his displeasure with Britain while briefing State Department officials after the first meeting. The British, he said, believed that it was permissible to put down "little aggressions", but not "big ones." Acheson had tried to make it clear that "Americans would not accept surrender in the Far East in accord with the desire of some of our Allies and then cooperate in Europe with the same Allies who have urged us to be conciliatory in the Far East." He further pointed out to the British that if "we accept surrender, Japan cannot be expected to stay with us." Then the United States would have to concede that Russia and China were the real powers in Asia.[30]

Acheson outlined for his colleagues the American proposals, which the British were reluctant to accept, as follows: one, fight as hard as possible; two, if someone proposes a cease-fire, accept it but pay nothing for it; three, if a cease-fire failed America would start again and

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[29]Memo by the Director of the Executive Secretariat (McWilliams), December 5, 1950, Ibid., 1382; U.S. Delegation Minutes of the First Truman-Atlee Meeting, December 5, 1950, Ibid., 1401-1403.

[30]Memo of Conversation by McWilliams, December 5, 1950, Ibid., 1383.

do the best it could--it would not run out; four, if the United States was thrown out of Korea, try to harass the Chinese as much as possible.[31]

At this point, George Kennan advised that America did not have to limit its effort in the Far East to "a petulant effort of annoyance to the Chinese." China had committed "an affront of the greatest magnitude to the United States," one that would not be forgotten for years. He believed the United States should take its time in deciding what to do. When a course was chosen, America's allies would have to accept and understand it, and be willing to cooperate with the United States.[32]

Acheson injected Kennan's thinking into the next Truman-Atlee meeting. The United States, Acheson said, had tried to be friends with China for fifty years and now she attacked America. It might be a decade before the American people were ready to forget this, and the attitude of the American people was vital. No administration could urge "the American people to take vigorous action in its foreign policy on one ocean front while on the other ocean they seemed to be rolled back and accept a position of isolation" Acheson believed that the public's mind was not delicate enough to understand such opposing attitudes and "even if

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[31] Ibid., 1383-1384.

[32] Ibid., 1385.

it were, that difference would be wrong." Acheson stressed that it was improper to try to distinguish between big and small aggressions. Atlee asserted that this had been done in Eastern Europe, to which Acheson replied that there was "a great difference between 'taking it' and 'liking it.'"[33]

The final Truman-Atlee meeting was held on December 8. By that time General Collins had returned from his talks with MacArthur and with the commanders of the 8th Army and X Corps, who had expressed the belief that they could establish and hold beachheads for some time, and could, if necessary, evacuate their troops safely.[34]

MacArthur told Collins that the full power of the United Nations ought to be used in Korea. Reinforcements should be employed to fight a series of withdrawals designed to inflict maximum damage on the enemy. But if reinforcements were not supplied, U.N. forces should be evacuated. In any case, under his present restrictions, evacuation would be forced on him. The restrictions MacArthur mentioned included a prohibition on U.N. air action and a U.N. naval blockade against China, and no reinforcements from Nationalist China or by substantial numbers from America. With the restrictions withdrawn he could hold a line in

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[33]U.S. Delegation Minutes of Second Truman-Atlee Meeting, December 5, 1950, Ibid., 1393.

[34]Memo, General Collins for JCS, subj.: Report on Visit to FECOM and Korea, December 4-7, December 8, 1950, JCS Geographic Files.

Korea. If on the other hand a cease-fire at the 38th parallel could be gained, this would be advantageous. MacArthur was told that reinforcements were out of the question. Collins, in his report to the Joint Chiefs, noted that if the U.N. offensive in Korea was not continued and if China continued the attack, "MacArthur should be directed to take the necessary steps to prevent the destruction of his forces pending final evacuation from Korea."[35]

Collins returned to Washington in time to give his personal estimate of the Korean situation to the Truman-Atlee conferees. Collins optimistically reported that U.N. forces "were not in a critical condition today," and could defend themselves without major losses. Withdrawal to a position south of Seoul was possible--perhaps along the Han or Naktong Rivers. He believed X Corps and the 8th Army could make a junction and hold the Pusan bridgehead indefinitely.[36]

This report buttressed the decision reached in the December 7 Truman-Atlee meeting that the United Nations would hold in Korea until forced to leave. A cease-fire and a negotiated settlement to the Korean problem was to be sought but only on honorable terms which did not include giving up Formosa or seating Red China in the United Nations. There could be no thought of appeasement or of rewarding

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[35] Ibid.

[36] U.S. Delgation Minutes of Sixth Meeting, December 8, 1950, Ibid., 1470; Schnabel, Policy, 292.

aggression. In addition, the United States would exhaust all possibilities to avoid enlarging the conflict with China. Finally, both countries agreed to accelerate the build-up of their military capabilities.[37]

The decision having been made to stay in Korea until forced out, the matter of a cease-fire remained. On December 11, Acheson instructed America's U.N. representatives that an acceptable cease-fire would be one which did not place U.N. forces at a military disadvantage, and which did not involve political considerations. In order to make any cease-fire work, there had to be U.N. supervision throughout Korea of the cease-fire operations.[38]

On the 12th, the Joint Chiefs listed the necessary terms for a cease-fire settlement in Korea. Specifically, they favored a demilitarized zone on the order of twenty miles in width. Second, the cease-fire would apply to all opposing ground, naval, and air forces in Korea, wherever located. A U.N. Cease-Fire Commission would appoint military observers who would have freedom of movement everywhere in Korea. Prisoners of war would be exchanged on a one-for-one basis and refugees would not be allowed to migrate in either direction. Finally, the Joint Chiefs believed that before a

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[37]U.S. Delegation Minutes of Fifth Meeting, December 7, 1950, FR,1950, VII, 1449-1461; Sixth Meeting Minutes, Ibid., 1476-1479.

[38]Acheson to the U.S. Mission at the U.N., December 11, 1950, Ibid., 1522.

cease-fire was agreed to, provisions for a Cease-Fire Commission had to be accepted.[39]

By the middle of December two basic decisions had been reached. First, that U.N. forces would remain in Korea until forced out (though what this entailed was never spelled out), and second, the terms under which a cease-fire would be accepted. Having decided to stay in Korea, Truman on December 15 declared a state of national emergency and announced plans to increase defense production, expand the armed forces, and set up wage and price controls.[40]

On December 12, X Corps began seaborne evacuation of North Korea to Pusan, there to be placed under General Walton Walker's 8th Army. While this was occurring, the 8th Army continued its withdrawal south, not under Chinese pressure, but in order to establish "a continuous defensive line across Korea at the most advantageous position." On December 23, Walker was killed in a vehicle accident, and General Matthew B. Ridgway, one of General Collins' key aides, was appointed head of the 8th Army.[41]

MacArthur's choice of Ridgway turned out to be as wise a decision as the Inchon landing. Ridgway's leadership of forces that had suffered a month of reversals was

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[39]Marshall to Acheson, "U.S. Position Regarding Terms of Any U.N. General Assembly Cease-Fire Resolution for the Korean War," December 12, 1950, Ibid., 1529-1531.

[40]Editorial Note, Ibid., 1548.

[41]Schnabel, Policy, 300-305.

inspiring and brilliant. MacArthur gave him the 8th Army and told him to do with it as he thought best. He could "attack, defend, or withdraw, the decision was left to him." In effect, Ridgway was given carte blanche to employ the 8th Army as he saw fit, without reference to Tokyo. Even with no reinforcements, and receiving less than the promised number of replacements, Ridgway still planned to go on the offensive as soon as he could reinstill the "attack spirit" in his demoralized staff and troops.[42]

On December 30, MacArthur was told that from all estimates, China had the capacity to force the United States from Korea. This might be prevented by making it so costly that the Chinese would abandon the attempt or by committing substantial reinforcements. MacArthur, however, should expect no more troops--Korea was the wrong place to fight a major war and the United States would not commit its remaining ground forces to Korea at a time of an increased threat of a general war. The Joint Chiefs believed, though, that a successful resistance to Chinese-North Korean aggression at some point in Korea, and a deflation of Chinese military and political prestige would be of great importance to America's national interests.[43]

MacArthur was then instructed to defend in stages

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[42] Ibid., 305-308.

[43] JCS to MacArthur, December 29, 1950, FR,1950, VII, 1625.

and to inflict as much damage as possible to hostile forces in Korea. The Chiefs believed that since developments could force U.S. withdrawal from Korea, it was important, particularly in view of the continued threat to Japan, to determine in advance the last reasonable opportunity for an orderly evacuation. It seemed to the Joint Chiefs that if MacArthur was forced back to positions in the vicinity of the Kum River, it would be necessary to commence withdrawal to Japan. MacArthur's views on evacuation were requested "in light of his continuing primary mission of defense of Japan for which only troops of the Eighth Army are available."[44]

The Joint Chiefs directive reflected the different viewpoints of the Defense and State Department. The Joint Chiefs and the Defense Department viewed the situation primarily as one of saving enough troops from Korea to maintain Japan's security. Thus, MacArthur was told that his task was to make a stand in Korea, subject only to the security of his troops--the only ones available to carry out his primary mission of the defense of Japan. The State Department, on the other hand, viewed the situation more in terms of the damage that would be done worldwide to U.S. prestige if Korea was lost. The issue of Japan had to be seen as closely related to Korea's fate. The State Department believed that "a determined attitude in Korea is probably

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[44] Ibid., 1625-1626.

essential to a capability to defend Japan with Japanese assistance."[45]

The two departments clearly had a similar set of priorities, but each ordered those priorities differently. Worldwide military considerations and the need to salvage troops from Korea to protect Japan required Lovett to wonder if there was not some way to "withdraw from Korea with honor." The Defense Department did not disregard the issue of U.S. prestige, it simply placed it below the military consideration of adequate resources to meet more strategically important issues. The State Department acknowledged the superior priority of Japan over Korea, but worried more about the "chain reaction of defeatism and disillusionment" that would result if the United States seemed to turn away from the issue of aggression. The operation in Korea should be continued until military necessity required the United Nations to leave. Thus the Defense Department favored an orderly evacuation at some predetermined point to preserve U.S. troops for Japan's defense, while the State Department wished to hold and inflict casualties until forced out.[46]

MacArthur noted these twin strands of thought and he believed them to be incompatible. He thought that

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[45]Memo of Conversation by Rusk, and Annex: Political Factors Involved in a Voluntary Withdrawal from Korea, December 19, 1950, Ibid., 1570-1576.

[46]Ibid.; Truman, Trial, 280.

a forced withdrawal under the present conditions "would have the most adverse effect upon the peoples of Asia, not excepting the Japanese, and a material reinforcement of the forces now in this theater would be mandatory if we are to hold the Littoral Defense Chain including Japan against determined assault."[47]

MacArthur reminded the Joint Chiefs that evacuation of U.N. forces would free presently involved Chinese troops for action elsewhere. He believed that even his present small force was capable "of so draining the enemy's resources as to protect the areas to the south," which would be a greater contribution than dispersal of his forces elsewhere for purely defensive purposes. Defense in succession was the only way to accomplish evacuation and in executing this plan, the Joint Chiefs would not have "to make an anticipatory decision for evacuation until such time as we may be forced to that beachhead line."[48] MacArthur, in part, sided with the State Department's position that the best way to protect Japan was to hold in Korea as long as possible, inflicting heavy damage on the enemy.

MacArthur requested in his December 30 reply to the Joint Chiefs that he be allowed to blockade China, destroy China's war industries, and employ Chinese Nationalist

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[47]MacArthur to JCS, December 30, 1950, FR,1950, VII, 1630-1631.

[48]Ibid.

troops in Korea and in diversionary operations against the Chinese mainland. MacArthur was told that these actions were receiving consideration, but for the present they were contrary to national policy. MacArthur could not count on actions outside or inside (in the form of reinforcements) to relieve the pressure on his command. Instead, he was told to continue to defend in successive positions, inflicting maximum damage to hostile forces, subject to his primary mission of protecting Japan. In addition, he was authorized to withdraw at any time he felt it necessary to do so.[49] MacArthur was being asked to make the decision for Washington.

The General claimed again that these orders were incompatible, since it was clear that with his present insufficient strength he could not perform both tasks. This being the case, "strategic dispositions taken in the present situation must be based upon the overriding political policy establishing the relativity of American interests." MacArthur felt his forces could hold out "for any length of time up to its complete destruction if overriding political considerations so dictated." The General wanted to know specifically how long to hold--indefinitely, for some predetermined period, or until he could evacuate in a way to minimize his losses. If the primary interest of the

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[49]JCS to MacArthur, JCS 86608, January 9, 1951, DDRS 16D(75).

United States in Asia was holding Korea and pinning down a large segment of China's military potential, then the military course was implicit in political policy and the United States should accept whatever casualties resulted and the hazard to Japan's security. He recognized that this involved a "decision of the highest national and international importance," but he nonetheless felt entitled to a clear, precise directive.[50]

The Joint Chiefs would not answer MacArthur beyond saying that it was important for America's world prestige that he should stay in Korea as long as he could, killing as many Chinese as possible, but as always, subject to providing for Japan's security.[51] MacArthur's apparent confusion was justified since the State and Defense Department did not agree on priorities themselves. But the directives he was receiving were based on the estimates of Collins and others that MacArthur could hold in Korea for some time without heavy losses. MacArthur's dispatches disputed these assumptions and thus created concern among officials in Washington.[52]

Truman sent a personal message to MacArthur, assuring him that the Korean situation was being given intense study

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[50]MacArthur to JCS, C 53167, January 10, 1951, Box 31, JCS Geographic Files.

[51]JCS to MacArthur,JCS 80902,January 12,1950, Ibid.

[52]Schnabel, Policy, 324.

in Washington. Policy makers needed to know what his maximum effort could be in the U.N.'s resistance to Chinese aggression. If the United Nations succeeded it would help bring that organization through "its first great effort at collective security," and would produce "a free world coalition of incalculable value to the national security interests of the United States." On the other hand, Truman recognized that "continued resistance might not be militarily possible" with the limited forces available. Even though limited, it was necessary to preserve these forces as an "effective instrument for the defense of Japan and elsewhere." Truman believed that MacAthur had to hold in Korea until military necessity forced withdrawal upon him.[53]

Truman was caught up in the State-Defense Department disagreement over relative priorities. MacArthur was not being given clear instructions. On the one hand he was told to hold in Korea to save the world prestige of both the United States and the United Nations and for the symbolic value it would give to U.S. commitments. Yet he also was told it was necessary for American security interests to preserve his forces for use in Japan and elsewhere. Which was more important? Nothing in MacArthur's directives ever made this clear and the percent of U.N. casualties which would constitute "evacuation by military necessity" is

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[53]JCS to MacArthur,Truman(Personal) for MacArthur, JCS 81050, January 13, 1951, Box 31, JCS Geographic Files.

certainly never defined. If MacArthur was confused, it is easy to understand why. Washington was not confused, it simply was incapable or unwilling to give a straight answer to MacArthur's inquiries. One could conclude that Washington was awaiting developments on the battlefield to clarify the situation and thus determine the decision for them.

General Collins made a second trip to the Far East in January and his report on the battlefield situation did much to clear up future policy. Collins went to Korea just as Ridgway was launching Operation Wolfhound, an offensive action directed north "to kill as many enemy soldiers as possible and then to withdraw to main positions . . . ." What Collins observed was sufficient for him to conclude that the 8th Army could take care of itself. He believed U.N. forces were in good shape and morale was rising daily under Ridgway's excellent leadership. Collins concluded that "On the whole the 8th Army is now in position and prepared to punish severely any mass attack."[54]

On his return to Tokyo, Collins reported his findings to MacArthur, who concurred that a beachhead in Korea could be held indefinitely. With air and naval superiority to hit China's overextended supply and communications

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[54]Collins Memo for the JCS, subj: Report on Visit to FECOM and Korea, January, 1951, Ibid.; Schnabel, Policy, 325-327.

lines, the Chinese would be unable to mass sufficient force to drive the U.N. forces out of Korea.[55] Collins positive estimate of the battlefield situation decided the State-Defense Department split--U.N. forces would be able to hold indefinitely in Korea while the United States sought a political solution to the Korean conflict.

While the military leaned toward an orderly evacuation of Korea in order to preserve U.S. troops for service in Japan, it was military success or retrenchment in Korea that resolved the issue unequivocally in favor of a political decision, which Rusk had suggested on December 3, to remain in Korea and slug it out with the Chinese. Washington believed that this course would avoid the disastrous blow to U.N. prestige that would result from being pushed out of Korea. Of necessity this would call for a constant review of U.S. policy objectives in Korea, directed toward determining the length and extent of the U.S. commitment to Korea's security.

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[55]Schnabel, Policy, 327; Collins Memo for JCS, Janauary, 1951, JCS Geographic Files.

CHAPTER XI

THE UNITED STATES SEEKS A CEASE-FIRE

Late in January, 1951, General Ridgway had stabilized the battlefield situation in Korea so that forced evacuation was no longer threatened. In February, he launched Operations Punch and Killer, successfully designed to inflict heavy casualties on the Chinese. Operation Ripper followed on March 7 and Seoul was recaptured eleven days later. In the process, the Chinese 4th and 3rd Field Armies, their best and most experienced troops, were seriously damaged. By April, the 8th Army in a series of "manpower killing advances" had fought its way north to Line Kansas around the 38th parallel, and Ridgway then set about establishing Line Wyoming and Line Kansas as strong defensive positions. These battlefield maneuvers removed the pressures for immediate policy decisions and allowed the United States more time to explore the possibilities of a political solution to the Korean hostilities.[1]

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[1]CIA Intelligence Report, "Asian Communist Employment of Negotiations as a Political Tactic," November, 1966, DDRS 3B(77), 14-15; Acheson, Creation, 660; Schnabel, Policy, 354.

Efforts in the United Nations in December to gain a cease-fire had failed in the face of constant Chinese rejections. In January, the First Committee of the Generaly Assembly produced another resolution calling for a cease-fire, staged withdrawal of all foreign troops, arrangements for an interim administration of Korea, and a conference including Britain, the United States, Russia, and China to discuss Far Eastern problems that would include Formosa's future and China's seat in the United Nations. The United States reluctantly agreed to the resolution, hoping both that the Chinese would refuse and that its support of the resolution would regain allied solidarity so that the Korean action would remain a partnership. China rejected the cease-fire as "a breathing spell" for U.N. forces, and this paved the way on February 1, 1951, for the U.N. General Assembly to condemn China as an aggressor.[2]

With the military situation stabilized and with allied support being regained, the United States could face the question of what its objectives in Korea should be. Clearly the June 25 resolution to restore peace and security to the area was still a feasible objective. Equally clear, however, was the impossibility of militarily bringing about a unified, independent, and democratic Korea. Trouble

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[2]Acheson, Creation, 601; Schnabel, Policy, 331-32; CIA Report,"Asian Communists,", DDRS 3B(77), 14.

developed when no one in the State or Defense Department would take the lead in determining a course.

During a February 13 meeting of State and Defense Department officials, the Joint Chiefs of Staff said that while they would like to have U.S. troops out of Korea by winter, such a withdrawal was not mandatory. Bradley believed the situation in Korea "required a determination of our political objectives. Then military objectives could be determined." United Nations forces would be capable of anything but a major offensive north of the 38th parallel. The Joint Chiefs further felt that a cease-fire was one factor in an overall settlement, but was not an objective in itself. Rusk saw the problem as one of achieving military stabilization in order to make progress toward political objectives. He was willing to say that U.N. objectives were to punish the enemy to gain a cease-fire and a return to the status quo ante bellum.[3] In short, each department deferred to the other for a statement of objectives before they would declare their own opinions.

At the same meeting, Nitze and Jessup concluded that there were several possible courses of action open to the United States. One course was unilateral withdrawal, which would be a serious blow to U.S.-U.N. prestige. A second course was to hold indefinitely in Korea but this would

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[3]Memo of State-JCS Meeting, February 13, 1951, DDRS 16G(75).

require more troops. A third alternative was to withdraw in the event of a general war. The best course, however, was a political arrangement allowing the United States to withdraw. The military and the State Department agreed that this would involve both increasing China's casualties and judging how long the American people would accept continued U.S. losses.[4]

Secretary Acheson on February 23, submitted a tentative policy paper for discussion which in his words "was rather tartly described by the Chiefs as 'an unsound approach' . . . ."[5] Acheson offered the memorandum because U.N. forces were nearing the 38th parallel again, and in the process were raising fears among America's allies and some U.S. officials that the parallel would be crossed. Acheson recommended that MacArthur's directives be revised to limit severely any advance across the parallel. The objective of militarily uniting Korea was out of the question because the United States could not afford either the necessary resources or the increased threat of a general war that would result. An equally critical factor was that America's allies in the United Nations opposed any move across the parallel and the United States could not afford to lose their support. While all of South Korea was to be recaptured, MacArthur should

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[4] Ibid.

[5] Acheson, Creation, 666-667.

not be allowed to make a major crossing of the 38th parallel except to breakup enemy offensive preparations. The State Department believed that the U.N. Command should inflict as many casualties as possible on China so that she would be anxious to negotiate a political settlement to the war. But the enemy should not be pushed so far back into North Korea that they would not be willing to negotiate.[6]

As previously noted, the Joint Chiefs thought this approach to be unsound. They believed that the suggested restrictions on MacArthur's tactical freedom to cross the parallel would predetermine future military courses without consideration or determination of concurrent political courses of action in Korea. The contemplated restrictions would disclose a U.S. military decision to the enemy allowing them to adjust their course of action knowing American intentions in advance. The Joint Chiefs believed that once U.S. political objectives were reviewed and developed, the military could analyze them and offer appropriate military courses of action.[7]

The Joint Chiefs felt that as long as the present political objectives of the United Nations were retained, U.N. military forces should not be forbidden, for political

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[6]Schnabel, Policy, 351-353.

[7]Bradley Memo for Marshall, "Action to be Taken With Respect to the 38th Parallel," February 27, 1951, Box 31, JCS Geographic File.

reasons, to advance north of the 38th parallel. The restrictions Acheson proposed would lead to a Communist build-up that overtly or covertly could jeopardize the safety of U.N. forces. While the Joint Chiefs supported a political settlement, they believed it was premature for a judgment to be made with respect to the 38th parallel. The present course of action in Korea should be maintained until the State Department determined political courses of action. In conclusion, the Joint Chiefs urged that Acheson's memorandum not be submitted to Truman--to which Marshall agreed.[8]

Not until the middle of March, 1951, did the State Department feel confident enough about the military situation to propose that an approach be made to China about a negotiated settlement. Officials of the State and Defense Department met on March 19, to determine the military's position vis-a-vis an armistice agreement. The Defense Department believed the enemy was now suffering especially heavy casualties and a cease-fire would be to their advantage. Conversely, any agreement that left U.N. forces in Korea indefinitely and did not prejudice the Communist position, would be highly disadvantageous to the United States. Therefore, "an armistice arrangement of itself would not constitute an acceptable solution of the Korean situation." The Joint Chiefs did believe that "the present military

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[8] Ibid.

situation in Korea may be conducive to a satisfactory solution of the immediate overall problem by political action." This solution, however, must occur only under the armistice terms outlined in their December 12, 1950 memorandum.[9]

With this in mind, the State Department drafted and the Joint Chiefs approved a Presidential statement announcing that there was a basis for peace in Korea since aggression had been repelled and the aggressors had been driven back to the general boundaries that existed prior to their attack. Truman was to announce that the United Nations Command was prepared to enter into talks for a cease-fire arrangement.[10] MacArthur was informed March 20 that the State Department was planning such an announcement and that time would be required to determine diplomatic reactions and to permit any negotiations that might develop. The Joint Chiefs requested that MacArthur make recommendations concerning the degree of freedom of action he would need in the upcoming weeks to provide security for his forces and to maintain contact with the enemy.[11] MacArthur recommended that "no further military inhibitions or restrictions be placed on U.N. Command." He believed that his present

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[9]Bradley Memo for Marshall, 1776/201, "U.S. Position Regarding An Armistice in Korea, March 27, 1951, Box 31, JCS Geographic File.

[10]Acheson, Creation, 666-68; Schnabel, Policy, 356.

[11]JCS to MacArthur, JCS 86276, March 20, 1951, DDRS 16F(75).

directives were adequate for security of his forces.[12]

Truman's statement was never made, as on March 24, MacArthur issued a public statement that Washington felt undercut Truman's planned announcement. MacArthur in effect said that if the United Nations departed for the present limited military course of action, "Red China would be doomed to the risk of imminent military collapse." This being the case, agreement should be easy to reach and he stood ready to confer in the field with the enemy commander.[13] Washington was furious as it viewed MacArthur's statement as an ultimatum to the Chinese. MacArthur's directives, however,had not prohibited his action, and in fact, early in the war he received permission to issue statements calling for the enemy to lay down its arms.[14] Nevertheless, Truman believed his act was in violation of a December 6, 1950, directive to coordinate with Washington all public statements concerning Korea. MacArthur's pronouncement also alarmed America's allies, who had cleared Truman's statement. They wondered if a new policy had been

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[12]MacArthur to JCS, C 58203, March 21, 1951, DDRS 256B(75).

[13]Record of Actions by JCS Relative to the U.N. Operations in Korea from June,1950 to April,1951, DDRS 17B(75).

[14]Deputy Under-Secretary of State(Matthews) to the Special Assistant for Foreign Military Affairs(Burns), September 16, 1950, FR,1950, VII, 731-732; Acheson to the Acting Secretary of State(Webb), September 26, 1950, Ibid., 785-786; MacArthur to JCS, September 28, 1950, Ibid., 976-977; Schnabel, Policy, 359.

formulated and wanted to know who was making American policy. What most enraged Truman was that MacArthur's action appeared to be one more act of insubordination on the General's part.[15] Within two weeks the decision was made to relieve MacArthur from all Far Eastern duties and to replace him with General Matthew B. Ridgway.[16] Suffice it to say that the basic reason for MacArthur's relief was his public disagreement with U.S. policy in Korea. To express in private a desire for a more vigorous policy was not objectionable, but MacArthur's public criticisms of U.S. policy only served to confuse and confound friend and foe alike, leading them to wonder who was making policy for the United States.

Before MacArthur's relief, Ridgway proposed a move beyond the 38th parallel. MacArthur approved Operation Courageous and by March 30, Ridgway had cleared South Korea of enemy forces except for a small area in the west. MacArthur then approved Operation Dauntless which was designed to achieve Line Wyoming, twenty miles north of the 38th parallel. Once this line and Line Kansas slightly to

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[15]Schnabel, Policy, 359; Acheson, Creation, 667-70.

[16]Acheson, Creation, 671-75; Schnabel, Policy, 365-77. It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss in detail the Truman-MacArthur controversy. MacArthur's role in this paper has been mentioned only as it affected policy formation. For more on the controversy see Walter Hermes, Truce Tent and Fighting Front(Washington: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1966), passim; and John Spanier, The Truman-MacArthur Controversy(New York: Norton, 1965).

the south were established, Ridgway planned to maintain contact with the enemy by patrols of batallion size. Existing logistics, terrain, weather conditions, and enemy strength precluded any further advance beyond the planned objective lines, around which he planned his defense against an expected massive Chinese spring offensive.[17]

Before that Chinese offensive occurred, Ridgway on April 11 replaced MacArthur, and General James A. Van Fleet was appointed commander of the 8th Army. Ridgway immediately had his staff evaluate the various directives sent to MacArthur in an effort to ascertain precisely his mission in Korea. Once this was done he instructed his field commanders that in conducting their operations, they should remember that actions in Korea could escalate into WW III easily. Ridgway believed that it should be assumed that China still intended to drive the 8th Army from Korea and that Soviet intervention was possible at any time. He instructed Van Fleet "to repel aggression against as much of the territory of the ROK as you now occupy and, in collaboration with the Government of the ROK to establish and maintain order in said territory."[18]

Ridgway, in examining the various directives sent

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[17]Schnabel, Policy, 361-364.

[18]Ibid., 380-382; Ridgway to Van Fleet, CX 60388, April 19, 1951, Box 31, JCS Geographic File; Ridgway to JCS, C 60965, April 25, 1951, Ibid.

to MacArthur, was no happier than his predecessor about the inability or unwillingness of Washington to decide which had the greater priority--to stay in Korea or to defend Japan. Ridgway, too, believed Washington's directives were incompatible, and on April 17, he requested authorization from the Joint Chiefs to withdraw from Korea at his own discretion to defend Japan should the Soviet Union attack.[19] Ridgway probably made this request in order to force Washington to distinguish between his responsibilities as U.N. Commander in Korea and as U.S. Far Eastern Commander.[20]

The immediate reply of the Joint Chiefs was that withdrawal in the face of a Soviet attack would be appropriate. He was informed, however, that subject to the immediate security of his forces in Korea and Japan, "you will initiate major withdrawal from Korea only upon instructions furnished you after receipt of information from you as to the conditions obtaining."[21] The Joint Chiefs followed with another directive Truman had approved on May 1, 1951.

The new directive outlined Ridgway's objectives in the same fashion as previous ones. He was instructed to aid

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[19]Ridgway to JCS, C 60308, April 17, 1951, Box 31, JCS Geographic File.

[20]Schnabel, Policy, 383.

[21]JCS to Ridgway, JCS 88950, April 19, 1950, Box 31, JCS Geographic File.

South Korea in repelling aggression and restoring peace and security to the area. His military objective was to destroy the enemy forces still operating within South Korea's boundaries. In pursuing these objectives, he was cautioned to remember that his primary mission as U.S. Far Eastern Commander was security of his forces and the defense of Japan. Once again, then, there was no differentiation made between the needs and powers of U.S. Far Eastern Command and U.N. Command. Washington had "defined these unclear relationships with insufficient precision."[22]

Ridgway was not satisfied with this directive, and he continued to attempt to have it revised in a way that acknowledged clearly that his primary responsibility was Japan's defense (that is, by allowing him to withdraw from Korea at his discretion).[23] Ridgway was never satisfied in his search for a compatible directive, but adoption of NSC 48/5, altering America's basic political objectives in Korea, did somewhat ease his discomfort with his directives.

NSC 48/5, which Truman approved May 17, 1951, was the result of policy discussions among the State and Defense Departments, initiated when major Chinese intervention began. NSC 48/5 concluded that "in view of the Communist resort to force in Asia, U.S. action must be based on recognition that

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[22]JCS to Ridgway, JCS 9000, May 1, 1951, DDRS 17E (75); Schnabel, Policy, 384.

[23]Schnabel, Policy, 384-386.

the most immediate overt threats to U.S. security are currently presented in that area." The current Soviet objective was "to bring the mainland of East Asia and eventually Japan under Soviet control, primarily through exploitation of the resources of Communist China." These objectives represented an unacceptable threat to U.S. security.[24]

Two basic U.S. objectives in Korea were set in NSC 48/5. First, the United States would continue attempts politically to establish a democratic, united Korea without committing itself to do so by military means. Second, the United States would pursue through appropriate U.N. machinery a political settlement to the Korean War acceptable to the United States. Until these objectives could be reached, the United States would continue to penalize the aggressor by inflicting on the enemy maximum personnel and matériel losses. In addition, the Joint Chiefs were to prepare detailed plans for military action against China should the Chinese force the United Nations out of Korea or take aggressive action outside the Korean theater. Finally, the United States was to help strengthen and increase as rapidly as possible South Korean military capabilities in order that they might replace U.N. forces (to be withdrawn in stages) and be capable of repulsing any future North Korean aggression.[25]

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[24]NSC 48/5, U.S. Objectives, Policies, and Courses of Action in Asia, May 17, 1951, NSC Files, Modern Military Branch, National Archives, Washington D.C.

[25]Ibid.

The Joint Chiefs sent Ridgway a new directive based on NSC 48/5 on May 31, 1951. This directive was divided into two parts that delineated Ridgway's resonsibilities as Far Eastern Commander and U.N. Commander. As U.N. Commander his primary objective was to repel aggression and restore peace and security to the area. In accomplishing this, he was to "inflict the maximum personnel and matériel damage on the forces of North Korea and Communist China operating within Korea in order to create conditions favorable to a settlement of the Korean conflict." Such a settlement as a minimum would terminate hostilities under appropriate armistice arrangements, establish South Korean authority over an area south of a militarily defensible northern boundary (no less than at the 38th parallel), provide for withdrawal of all non-Korean forces, and permit the building of sufficient South Korean military power to deter or repel any renewed North Korean aggression. In so doing, he was ordered not to advance above a line generally following the Kansas-Wyoming Line.[26] Later this was altered to allow Ridgway to operate as far north as his resources would permit, so that in the event of establishment of a cease-fire and a demilitarized zone, U.N. forces would be able to retire to prepared defensive lines.[27]

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[26]JCS to Ridgway, JCS 92831, May 31, 1951, Box 31, JCS Geographic File.

[27]Schnabel, Policy, 399-402.

Previous restrictions on actions in and around Korea were repeated. Any retaliatory acts against the Chinese mainland in response to air or sea attack against U.S. forces outside Korea were to be taken only with approval of the Joint Chiefs. In addition, Ridgway was informed that it was U.S. policy "to develop dependable ROK military units as rapidly as possible and in sufficient strength eventually to assume the major part of the burden of U.N. forces in Korea." Ridgway was to keep this matter under study and was to submit appropriate recommendations.[28]

With a new statement of objectives in Korea, the task of gaining a negotiated end to the hostilities in Korea could begain again. Ridgway informed Washington on May 30, that the Chinese spring offensive had been blunted and over 170,000 casualties had been inflicted upon the enemy, with the result that an offensive on the scale just attempted could not be mounted for some time. Ridgway's estimate was that "for the next 60 days the U.S. Government should be able to count with reasonable assurance upon a military situation in Korea offering optimum advantages in support of its diplomatic negotiations."[29]

Ridgway's optimistic report encouraged Washington to

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[28] Ibid.; JCS to Ridgway, JCS 92832, May 31, 1951, Box 32, JCS Geographic File.

[29] Ridgway to JCS, C 63744, May 30, 1951, Box 32, JCS Geographic File; CIA Report, "Asian Communists", DDRS 3B(77), 15-16.

sound out the Soviet Union about possible armistice negotiations. Various attempts were made to contact the Soviets unofficially in order to ensure that Russia understood America's intentions and desires in Korea. On May 17, Senator Edwin Johnson introduced a resolution, widely publicized in Moscow, calling for an armistice at the 38th parallel, for an exchange of prisoners, and withdrawal of all troops by the end of the year. On May 29, Lester Pearson, President of the U.N. General Assembly, announced that the goal of stopping aggression was a sufficient achievement for U.N. forces. Acheson, in testifying at the MacArthur Hearings on June 1 and June 2, let it be known that the United States would accept a cease-fire at or near the 38th parallel.[30]

At the same time these statements were being made, the State Department asked George Kennan, then on a leave of absence at Princeton, to meet in an unofficial capacity with the Soviet U.N. representative, Jacob Malik, to explain America's position in Korea. Kennan met with Malik on May 31 and discussed the desirability of armistice talks in Korea. After consulting with Moscow, Malik was able, on June 5, to tell Kennan that the Soviet Union "wanted peace and a peaceful solution in Korea as rapidly as possible," though Russia "could not appropriately take part in discussions of a cease-fire." Washington was uncertain what the statement portended

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[30]CIA Intelligence Report, "Asian Communists," DDRS 3B(77), 20.

and awaited clarification.[31]

Malik's June 5 statement to Kennan was clarified on June 23, when in a radio address Malik suggested that if a sincere desire for peace existed it would be easy for discussion to begin between the two belligerents for a cease-fire and an armistice providing for the mutual withdrawal of forces from either side of the 38th parallel. Malik did not include the previous demands that the issues of Formosa, a U.N. seat for China, and withdrawal of foreign troops, be included in armistice talks. On June 28, after U.S. inquiries, Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko further clarified the Soviet position when he indicated that it would be up to the military representatives of the two opposing forces to negotiate the armistice which Malik envisaged. This armistice would include a cease-fire and would be limited strictly to military questions without involving political or territorial matters.[32]

On June 29, Ridgway was instructed to broadcast a message the next day to the Chinese suggesting that if they desired a meeting to discuss an armistice, the U.N. Command was willing to appoint a representative to meet aboard a Danish hospital ship in Wonsan Harbor.[33] The next day, the

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[31]Acheson, Creation, 681-686.

[32]U.S. Department of State, The Record on Korean Unification (Washington: GPO, 1960), 125-126.

[33]State Department, Historical Summary, 96.

Joint Chiefs sent Ridgway instructions to guide cease-fire negotiations. He was told that the primary interest of the United Nations was a cessation of hostilities. Discussions with the enemy should be limited exclusively to military matters and the terms of an acceptable armistice would follow the previous outlines of the Joint Chiefs. The agreed to terms should be acceptable over a long period of time, since it was expected that the Chinese would be reluctant to agree to any political settlement.[34]

On July 1, the Chinese agreed to meet representatives of the United Nations Command for talks concerning cessation of hostilities in Korea. They suggested, however, that the meeting take place July 10 at Kaesong, near the 38th parallel. Ridgway accepted both the location and the date for the discussions. With this agreement, the long, complex, and terribly frustrating armistice talks began, and would continue intermittently for nearly two years.[35]

From the beginning, the United States believed the talks were going to continue for an extended period, and indeed, some were less than optimistic that the talks would succeed. One of the early snags in the discussions hinged on the agenda to be adopted. China wished the first point of

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[34]JCS to Ridgway, JCS 95354, June 30, 1951, Box 32, JCS Geographic File.

[35]Acheson, Creation, 687. For details of the various issues see Hermes, Truce Tent, and William Vatcher, Panmunjom: Story of the Korean Military Armistice Negotiations (New York: Praeger, 1958).

discussion to center on a return to the status quo ante bellum with all foreign troops withdrawing from Korea.[36]

The Joint Chiefs informed Ridgway that U.S. policy was that "We cannot withdraw U.N. forces from Korea for a long time nor can we now undertake a commitment to do so in the future." While at some future date a mutual reduction of forces might be discussed to save the talks from breaking down, for the present the question of troop withdrawal was considered a political issue, outside the purview of purely military discussions. Acheson publicly stated a similar theme when he said, "If there is an effective armistice, a U.N. force must remain in Korea until a genuine peace has been firmly established and the Korean people have assurance that they can work out their future free from the fear of aggression."[37]

The Joint Chiefs, in July, requested that increased military pressure on China be considered if the current armistice talks failed. While not in response to the memorandum, Ridgway planned a massive air strike against Pyongyang for July 24. Washington was alarmed that such a strike was to occur two weeks after the beginning of negotiations, and they informed Ridgway that his proposed strike had such "serious

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[36]Ridgway to JCS, DA IN 15062, July 16, 1951, Box 32, JCS Geographic File.

[37]JCS to Ridgway's Adviser, JCS 96802, July 19, 1951, DDRS 18B(75).

and far-reaching political implications" that he should delay it.[38] Ridgway protested, noting that there had been a substantial build-up of enemy offensive potential since the first positive steps toward an armistice. He believed that deferral of the air attack would result in serious and avoidable losses, since a successful attack would inflict serious logistical losses and would materially reduce the enemy's offensive capability.[39] The Joint Chiefs approved the attack, but ordered that it should be given little publicity and should not be pictured as being out of the ordinary.[40] The United States was anxious to achieve a political settlement to the Korean War, but only if it would not compromise the security of its forces or of South Korea.

The negotiations continued through summer and fall with limited success. Disputes over a demarcation line and a two month recess frustrated the negotiators. By December, the Joint Chiefs believed four basic issues remained to be resolved. The first was U.S. insistence that there be no increase in present strength levels and in equipment versus the Chinese position of no introduction of new personnel or materiel. A second issue dealt with the prohibition and

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[38]JCS to Marshall, JCS 1776/280, July 13,1951,DDRS 18A(75); Ridgway to JCS, C 67474, July 21,1951, Box 33, JCS Geographic File; JCS to Ridgway, JCS 96938,July 21,1951,Ibid.

[39]Ridgway to JCS, C 67520, July 23, 1951, Ibid.

[40]JCS to Ridgway, JCS 97723, July 25, 1951, Ibid.

rehabilitation of airfields and other installations--the United States was willing to forego all but those airfields capable of handling jets. A third issue was U.S. insistence that the Chinese withdraw from offshore islands below the chosen demarcation line. Finally, there was a dispute over the composition of cease-fire observation teams.[41] As yet, the Joint Chiefs did not see that the issue of prisoners of war would be the major stumbling block to successful negotiations. The Joint Chiefs thought that an exchange would occur on a one-for-one basis until the enemy's supply of prisoners was exhausted, and then voluntary repatriation would come into effect.[42]

The Joint Chiefs believed that a continuation of the stalemated negotiations would raise severe public opinion problems. They recommended that a determination be made of the extent of U.S. resources that were to be committed to Korea and whether the concept of Chinese "volunteers" should continue to be accepted. They advised that the National Security Council undertake a policy review to determine future actions if the armistice failed.[43]

The need to find a method to resolve the stalled

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[41]JCS to Ridgway, JCS 89173,December 10, 1951, Box 35, Ibid.

[42]JCS to Ridgway, JCS 90083, December 19, 1951, DDRS 18D(75).

[43]JCS to Defense, November 3,1951, DDRS 18C(75).

negotiations included consideration of the use of the atomic bomb in Korea, under Operation Hudson Harbor. An officer team was sent to Tokyo and Seoul to evaluate the situation in November, 1951. They concluded that the policies, procedures, and means available for Operation Hudson Harbor were inadequate for successful tactical employment of atomic weapons. The major problem lay in the timely identification of large troop concentrations. They concluded that the atomic bomb should be used only if and when necessary to save the 8th Army or in case of general war. Ridgway was to be instructed "to draw up contingency plans for possible use of atomic weapons in Korea."[44]

This was not the first time that use of the atomic bomb had been discussed.[45] On November 14, 1950, the Defense Department had raised the question with Paul Nitze, Director of the Policy Planning Staff. It was thought that the atomic bomb, to be used against troop concentrations, might be a deterrent against further Chinese participation in Korea. Nitze felt that it did not appear tactically useful to employ the bomb then, and it might help arouse the people of Asia

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[44]G-3 to the Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, November 20, 1951, DDRS 69A(75).

[45]In testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committe on February 10, 1953, Bradley said that the United States would have to "consider very seriously the use of the atomic bomb if we found a suitable target now in Korea . . ." See U.S. Senate, Executive Sessions of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 1953, Volume V, 83rd Congress, 1st Session(Washington: GPO, 1977), 114.

against the United States. The atomic bomb had the status of a "peculiar monster conceived by America." The mass destruction resulting from its use in Korea or China would damage seriously both America's moral and allied support. It was concluded that only overriding military considerations could justify use of the atomic bomb, in light of the political damage that would result from its use.[46] It perhaps is an indication of the growing frustration among some officials that use of atomic weapons should even be considered at a time when negotiations were underway to end the Korean War.

In December, NSC 118/2 was produced, in response to the Joint Chiefs request for a new assessment of U.S. policy in Korea in light of the stalemated negotiations. NSC 118/2 concluded that the United States should continue to seek the basic objectives set forth in NSC 48/5 to seek politically, as an ultimate objective, a solution of the Korean problem which would provide for a united, independent, and democratic Korea. As a current objective, the United States was to seek through appropriate U.N. machinery, a settlement of the Korean conflict acceptable to American security interests.[47]

The National Security Council believed that it was

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[46]Memo by the Director of the Policy Planning Staff (Nitze), November 4,1950,FR,1950, VII, 1041; Memo by the Planning Adviser, Burea of Far Eastern Affairs (Emmerson) to Rusk, November 8, 1950, Ibid., 1098-1099.

[47]NSC 118/2, U.S. Objectives and Courses of Action in Korea, NSC Files.

necessary to balance two countervailing considerations. First, from a military point of view, the immobilization of U.S. forces in "inconclusive operations in Korea during long and protracted negotiations over an indefinite period of time with the attendant attrition of manpower and matériel may become unacceptable." China's increasing military power threatened America's basic security interests in the Far East. In the event that armistice talks failed, it could be expected that U.S. public opinion would demand "adoption of military measures adequate to achieve a political and military decision of the Korean struggle."[48]

NSC 118/2 noted, however, that "the pressure on the United States to reach an early settlement in Korea through a cease-fire and an armistice also were becoming stronger." The presence of U.S. troops in Korea reduced the power available for use in Western Europe and the Near East. America's allies were pressing continually for an armistice, were reluctant to apply additional pressures to China, and were unable or unwilling to contribute any more forces to Korea. The National Security Council concluded that on the balance, it was apparent that both America and Russia would find it advantageous not to attempt at this time to achieve their respective maximum objectives in Korea by force.[49]

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[48] Ibid.; Annex to NSC 118/2, NSC Staff Study, December 20, 1951, Ibid.

[49] Ibid.

One other point of significance in NSC 118/2 is the implication of a long, continued American presence in Korea. One U.S. objective that was cited was the development and equipping of dependable South Korean military units with a view to their "assuming eventual responsibility for the defense of Korea." Following an armistice, the principal U.S. objective would be establishment of South Korean authority over all of Korea south of the demilitarized zone and the development of sufficient Korean military strength to deter or repel renewed North Korean aggression. Until circumstances permitted there would be no withdrawal of non-Korean forces.[50]

This point was emphasized to Ridgway in January, 1952. Ridgway had informed Washington that current plans with respect to the composition of a peacetime South Korean Army were based on the assumption that after its withdrawal, the United States would intervene in the event of renewed Communist aggression against Korea. The Joint Chiefs informed Ridgway that this concept ignored a key principle of NSC 118/2, which stated that until South Korea was strong enough militarily to deter or repel new aggression from North Korea, the United States would not be prepared to withdraw. Thus any aggression that occurred subsequent to American withdrawal, if from North Korea alone, should not require automatic U.S. re-entry. The United States might, but not

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[50] Ibid., 10.

necessarily would, renew its intervention in the event of renewal of Communist aggression after U.S. withdrawal.[51]

The implementation of any plans to strengthen the South Korean military in the post-armistice period depended to a great extent on gaining Rhee's support for an armistice agreement. Since the October resumption of the talks after a two-month recess, Rhee had expressed his opposition to them in a variety of ways, the most common being "spontaneous" demonstrations.[52] In February, 1952, Ridgway requested that the earliest possible consideration be given to measures to counteract the increasingly frequent South Korean attacks against the armistice agreements. Unless stopped, these actions would gravely endanger achievement of an agreement or seriously handicap political discussions following the armistice. Rhee's threat to withdraw his troops from the U.N. Command and to fight independently was particularly serious because if an extended truce was to be achieved, South Korean troops had to remain under U.N. control. Ridgway believed the United States should try to get a formal, written agreement with Rhee to prevent South Korean withdrawal.[53]

After consultation with the State Department, the

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[51]Memo by Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, for the JCS, "Renewed U.S. Intervention in Korea in the Event of Post Armistice Treaty Communist Aggression," JCS 1776/273, January 10, 1952, Box 36, JCS Geographic File.

[52]Hermes, Truce Tent, 214.

[53]Ridgway to JCS, February 25, 1952, DDRS 161A(75).

Joint Chiefs informed Ridgway that while they agreed that U.N. Command control over South Korean troops had to be retained, they believed no formal agreement to insure control should be made at the present time. The resolution of this sensitive question might affect adversely the armistice talks. In addition, such negotiations at a time when Rhee and the South Korean government were in a highly "emotional and unstable state of opinion", might give then the opportunity to impose unacceptable conditions on the U.N. Command. Ridgway as an alternative, should try to keep Rhee in line by presenting an armistice agreement as a fait accompli. Rhee then should be reminded that full South Korean cooperation inevitably would influence the quantity and quality of military assistance and training that the United States would provide for South Korean troops. Full cooperation included retention of Korean troops under the control of U.N. Command until conditions merited their release.[54] The Joint Chiefs, then, wanted Ridgway to use the promise of a future U.S. security commitment to Korea to pressure Rhee into complying and cooperating with an armistice.

Truman reiterated the substance of the Joint Chiefs memorandum in a March 4 letter to Rhee. Truman, too, tied future aid to South Korean cooperation and added that unity

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[54]JCS to Ridgway, JCS 902158, February 27, 1952, Box 37, JCS Geographic File.

of the Korean people and a "devotion to democratic ideals" should be maintained.[55] Rhee's lack of devotion to democratic ideals, however, led to a major crisis in U.S.-Korean relations.

National elections were scheduled in Korea for the summer of 1952. The Republic of Korea's constitution called for the National Assembly to elect the President, and it was this body that contained Rhee's most vociferous critics. Rhee had never won an overwhelming mandate from the people and he had relied upon a coalition to keep himself in power after the 1950 elections--which he had sought to postpone until U.S. pressure forced him to relent. As a wartime President his popularity had risen and Rhee was determined in 1952 to change the constitution to have the President elected by popular vote, a move which opposition elements opposed bitterly. Rhee, on May 24, declared martial law in the temporary capital, Pusan, and had the South Korean Army arrest approximately 30 assemblymen for treason.[56]

Rhee' actions presented United Nations Command and the United States with a severe dilemma. South Korea, since July 14, 1950, had placed its forces under U.N. Command and using these forces for domestic political purposes seemed improper. Yet at the same time, U.N. Command was aware that

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[55] G-3 to Ridgway, March 6, 1952, DDRS 161B(75).

[56] Hermes, Truce Tent, 345-346.

it was in Korea at the sufferance of a sovereign state. The dilemma was intensified because Rhee's actions threatened both the war at the front and the unity of America's allies in the United Nations. Rhee's use of the army, done without the knowledge or participation of Chief of Staff General Lee Chang Chan, could produce a split in South Korean Army ranks. Allied support already was lukewarm at best, and Rhee's anti-democratic maneuvers would not increase that support. Another factor was that Pusan was the major port of South Korea and handled the great majority of the 8th Army's supplies. The United States could not tolerate any interruption in the flow of supplies to U.N. troops at the front.[57]

On May 30, the Joint Chiefs told General Mark Clark[58], to inform Rhee that Washington was seriously disturbed over the political and military implications of South Korea's internal crisis. There was a grave danger to the continued success of U.N. military operations in Korea as a result of the increasing political instability in South Korea. The United States did not believe that the facts justified a declaration of martial law.[59] Both Clark and Van Fleet talked to Rhee, but without success.

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[57] Ibid., 346.

[58] In April, Clark replaced Ridgway, who became Commander of NATO forces.

[59] Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, to Clark, DA 910149, May 30, 1952, Box 39, JCS Geographic File.

The United States was so displeased and alarmed, that on June 25, Clark was informed that the situation could deteriorate to the point where "in order to prevent interference with U.N. military operations, direct intervention in the situation cannot be avoided." Clark was instructed to develop and submit, for Washington's approval, a detailed political and military plan for intervention if Rhee refused to lift martial law. Such a plan hopefully would be implemented at the request of the U.N. Commission for the Unification and Rehabilitation of Korea. This would enable the U.N. Commander to recommend the action to the United States, which could carry out the plan as the executive agent of the United Nations in Korea.[60]

Clark, in submitting his plans on July 5, informed the Joint Chiefs that neither the Security Council nor the U.N. Commission had been informed, for fear that the plans would become known prematurely, allowing Rhee time to organize resistance or to withdraw South Korean troops from U.N. Command authority. Clark recommended that any action short of establishing a U.N. Command Government should preserve the symbol of South Korea's government and that this action should be labeled as "assistance." He further believed the South Korean Army should not be used as "it might precipitate

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[60]JCS to Clark, JCS 912098, June 25, 1952, Box 40, Ibid.

a civil-type war."[61]

Clark's plan envisaged inviting Rhee to visit Seoul or somewhere else to get him out of Pusan. At an appointed time U.N. forces would move into Pusan and seize five or ten South Korean officials who had been leaders of "Rhee's dictatorial actions." All U.N. installations would be protected and control over Pusan would be established through imposition of martial law through the Chief of Staff of the South Korean Army. Rhee then would be informed of the fait accompli and would have to sign a proclamation lifting martial law, permitting the National Assembly freedom of action, and establishing freedom of press and radio. If Rhee did not agree, he would be held in protective custody incommunicado and Prime Minister Chang Taek-song would be approached. When agreement was reached, a statement would be issued justifying the action on military grounds and as the result of the "request of nations participating in the conflict."[62]

Clark's plan was never put into effect, as negotiations between Rhee and his opponents led to constitutional changes acceptable to Rhee. Martial law finally was lifted on July 28.[63] The plan to intervene in Korean domestic affairs certainly was a vivid example of self-interest

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[61]Clark to JCS, July 5, 1952, DDRS 162D975).

[62]Ibid.

[63]Hermes, Truce Tent, 346.

at work in a nation's foreign policy--and it was, as shall be seen, an approach that would be considered once more in 1953 when troubles with Rhee arose again.

The stabilization of the battlefield situation had allowed Washington the time to consider carefully its future policy in Korea. The near total disaster of November and December, 1950, led the United States to draw back from its policy of unifying Korea militarily, to the more limited goals stated in NSC 48/5 of attaining a political settlement to the Korean War and of seeking politically to establish a united Korea. At the same time, NSC 118/2 carried the clear implication that the American presence in Korea was going to be an extended one. Not until Korea was capable of resisting renewed North Korean aggression would the United States even consider withdrawing.

The United States entered the armistice negotiations with the Communists under difficult conditions, because it had been decided prior to the talks that there would be no withdrawal of U.S. troops from Korea for some time well into the future. It also had been decided that such political issues as Formosa or a U.N. seat for Communist China would not be discussed. Finally, it had been decided that U.N. forces would maintain a largely defensive posture vis-a-vis ground operations, thus leading to a frustrating military situation in which the United States tried to substitute the panacea of air power for ground power. Since the United

States would not negotiate on many points, it was necessary to be flexible on other issues. For example, U.S. policy on airfield rehabilitation shifted from outright prohibition, to limited rehabilitation, to concession on the issue to gain a compromise. The United States refrained from taking any "final stands" that might lead to a dissolution of the talks. This flexibility in negotiations served America well in keeping the talks alive, until all but one issue had been resolved--that of the disposition of prisoners. On that one issue, both sides maintained a stubborn, unyielding stand that cost thousands of casualties.

CHAPTER XII

AN ARMISTICE ACHIEVED

The Korean armistice negotiations began on July 10, 1951, at Kaesong and were moved to Panmunjom in October. Progress was slow and bitter disputes were common. By March, 1952, agreements had been reached on a demarcation line corresponding to battlefield position, on creation of an Armistice Commission and on a Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission, on establishment of a demilitarized zone and on levels of troop and matériel replacement and rotation. The United States had achieved these agreements through a flexible policy, within which the United States played "The Communist game of shifting, adjusting, and maneuvering for advantages and avoiding fixed positions that might precipitate a break in the negotiations." The United States believed that as long as the U.N. Command was willing to negotiate, the Communists would have to bear the onus for breaking off at the conference table.[1]

There were three remaining issues to be dealth with before an armistice could be agreed to. One issue was U.S.

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[1]Hermes, Truce Tent, 130.

opposition to construction of airfields in North Korea during the cease-fire period. A second issue revolved around the composition of the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission--North Korea desired Russia as a member. The third problem was the question of voluntary versus forced repatriation of prisoners of war.[2]

On April 25, the U.N. Command offered a package proposal that narrowed disagreement to one issue. China's reply on May 2 to the U.N. proposals paved the way for agreement on the composition of the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission, with the Communists dropping their demand for Soviet participation. The U.N. Command proposal dropped the prohibition against airfield construction if voluntary repatriation was recognized. On May 22, 1952, Ridgway said, "The really fundamental issue . . .was the prisoner of war thing. That strikes at a fundamental concept of the value of human life between the Communists and the free world."[3]

The prisoner-of-war issue was a difficult one for Washington to deal with. As a signator of the Geneva Convention of 1949 (though the Senate had not ratified it), the United States should have accepted Article 118, which provided

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[2]Mark Clark, From the Danube to the Yalu(New York: Harper and Brothers, 1954), 104.

[3]U.S. Senate, Executive Sessions of the Senate Foreign Relations Committe, 1952, Volume IV, 82nd Congress, 1st and 2nd Sessions(Washington: GPO, 1976), 133; Clark, Danube, 104; Vatcher, Panmunjom, 111-112.

that prisoners were to be released and repatriated immediately at the end of the hostilities. The problem was that large numbers of the over 130,000 enemy prisoners did not want to be repatriated. Many were South Korean Army personnel forcibly incorporated into the North Korean Army, some were disenchanted North Koreans and Chinese, and some were Chinese Nationalist deserters now dissatisfied with life in China.[4]

In such an intensely and starkly ideological conflict as the Korean War, the issue of what to do with prisoners who refused repatriation inevitably became enmeshed in ideology. The enemy could not tolerate the prisoners' obvious and overt rejection of the Communist way of life--the propaganda damage would be too great. The United States, of course, saw the obvious propaganda possibilities. Conversely, the United States faced serious propaganda problems if it employed force to return these prisoners to a Communist state. Could such an action be justified ideologically, morally, or practically? The real dilemma came when Washington had to consider that U.S.-U.N. forces on the battlefield front lines would be called on to make the ultimate sacrifice if the United States refused to concede on the prisoner issue.

The United States almost drifted into its commitment to voluntary repatriation. General Robert McClure, Army Chief of Psychological Warfare, initially proposed the idea

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[4]Hermes, Truce Tent, 135-136.

in July, 1951, and Army Chief of Staff Collins pushed the concept because the military generally considered voluntary repatriation to be a desirable objective. Yet there were those, including the new Secretary of Defense, Robert Lovett, who expressed uncertainty about whether the issue should be adhered to in the face of rigorous Chinese opposition. When the issue came up for discussion at Panmunjom in December, 1951, the United States still had no firm policy position.[5]

The details of the decision-making process that led the United States to propose voluntary repatriation on January 2, 1952, is unknown. State Department documents are not available and published memoirs provide little help. At best, one may reach a tentative conclusion on the scant evidence available. In the period from December 11, 1951, when the issue of prisoners was brought up in the talks, to January 2, when Admiral Ruthven E. Libby presented the principle to the Communists, the United States reached a decision to press for voluntary repatriation.[6] The decision had to be based in part on the propaganda value of thousands of prisoners refusing to return to their Communist homeland--but this potential existed in December. In part, the decision was based on moral and humanitarian grounds, though these too existed in December. In part, it was based on South

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[5] Ibid., 136-139; Acheson, Creation, 832-833.

[6] Hermes, Truce Tent, 142-144.

Korean opposition to forced repatriaion, though this was known also before the prisoner issue came up for discussion.[7] Opposing each of these considerations was the terrible prospect of further casualties if the talks became stalemated over the issue.

Given these factors, it is logical to conclude that the actions of the Communists in the December talks had a decisive influence on the decision the United States reached. Early in the discussions the United States had requested a complete accounting of all prisoners of war. The Communists agreed and data was exchanged. The results shocked and angered American officials. The Communists had claimed in radio broadcasts to have captured 65,000 of the enemy; the U.N. Command knew it had 99,000 men missing, yet the Communists presented a list of only 11,599 prisoners. The Communists blithely dismissed this wide discrepancy as resulting from having "re-educated and released" thousands of prisoners, who either had volunteered to join the North Korean Army or had been returned to U.N. lines. In effect, the Communists' excuse was that they had practiced voluntary repatriation. The United State knew better than this--the North Korean Army had forced South Korean personnel to join its military and

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[7]Acheson states in his memoirs that the decision was made on humanitarian grounds and for propaganda potential, in the face of military opposition. See Acheson, Creation, 833. The documents do not substantiate a military opposition to the principle of voluntary repatriation.

and only a few prisoners had reached U.N. lines. The Communists had provided "the U.N. Command with a propaganda lever." While the doctrine of voluntary repatriation was unusual, "its humanitarian aspects were bound to appeal to a large part of the world."[8]

The United States had found a practical way to implement an ideologically and morally appealing policy. The policy, however, once accepted, would almost be impossible to back away from, for it struck at the very essence of the Cold War conflict. The picture of a freedom-loving, democratic coalition of the free world forcibly returning people to a repressive, Communist "slave" society, was not a pleasant one for the United States to contemplate.

The result of the decision to press for voluntary repatriation was a stalemate in the discussions. Various ideas were put forth to break the stalled talks. One proposal, made in late February, 1952, was to release unilaterally those prisoners in U.N. custody who violently opposed repatriation. The Communists would be presented with a fait accompli. Ridgway opposed this plan, feeling that adoption of a "subterfuge" would destroy the prestige the United Nations had gained in supporting voluntary repatriation and would harm the chances for a safe return of U.N. prisoners. He believed the best course was to present a package proposal

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[8]Hermes, Truce Tent, 135-136.

involving a trade-off on airfield construction for voluntary repatriation. He felt the repatriation issue was the wrong one to take a final stand on, but he realized a U.N. reversal was unacceptable as it would "tarnish" the U.N.'s good name.[9]

The Joint Chiefs instructed Ridgway at an appropriate time "to seek Communist acceptance of the principle of voluntary repatriation in exchange for UNC concessions on the airfield issue." If this was unacceptable, he was told to remove from "POW status those prisoners who could be expected violently to resist repatriation . . .", and then attempt to have the Communists "agree to an all-for-all exchange on the basis of the revised lists."[10]

As previously noted, the Communists rejected a trade-off on airfields, but conceded on membership in the Neutral Nations Commission. They flatly rejected any attempt to delete names from previous lists and demanded forced repatriation if necessary, which the United States refused to accept. The prisoner issue remained the last unresolved question in the negotiations. General Mark Clark took over Ridgway's command at this time, and one of his first acts was to endorse Chief U.N. Negotiator Admiral Turner Joy's recommendation that the talks be suspended until the Communists

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[9]Ridgway to the JCS, C 64383, February 27, 1952, Recently Declassified Documents on Korean War, Modern Military Branch, National Archives, Washington D.C.

[10]Memo, Eddleman(G-3) to the Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, March 4, 1952, Ibid.

accepted the U.N. package proposal. Clark believed that to sit and listen to a "daily fare of insult, arrogance, and vituperation could only strengthen the Communists in their belief that we were so anxious for a cease-fire in Korea that eventually we would knuckle under . . . ."[11]

The State Department and the Defense Department both opposed such a unilateral move, as being "premature in view of the confused attitude at home and among our Allies as a result of the Koje affair . . . ."[12] Koje-do, an island off southern Korea, was the main Chinese prisoner-of-war camp. The prisoners were aware that the debate at Panmunjom would determine their future. The Communist prisoners organized themselves effectively both to harass those prisoners not desiring repatriation and to protest their delayed repatriation, in a manner designed to embarrass the United Nations severely. The non-Communists then organized and the result was a bloody struggle for control of the compounds. Under these conditions it was extremely difficult for the United States to screen prisoners to determine the number of nonrepatriates they held. One such attempt in February resulted in 77 prisoners being killed and 150 other casualties--and in a considerable amount of bad publicity for the United Nations.[13]

The State Department did give Clark permission to

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[11]Clark, Danube, 104-105. [12]Ibid., 105.

[13]Hermes, Truce Tent, 233-239. For a thorough discussion of the events at Koje-do, see Chapter XI of Hermes.

recess the talks for up to three days at a time and he was authorized to release 27,000 civilian internees, which he did in June.[14] Throughout the summer, the talks remained stalemated. On September 1, Clark submitted to Washington a list of alternative approaches which he thought should constitute the final U.N. approach to the Communists.

Clark believed that any course of action would require "a continued display of firmness . . .supported at all levels and by all elements of our Government." The best way to demonstrate firmness was to continue both unilateral recesses and the present heavy bombing attacks. In developing the proposed course of action, Clark "assumed that the U.N. would not retreat from the principle of no forced repatriation." Clark listed five proposals, but there were only two basic ones, with variations. Four of the plans envisaged turning over the prisoners to variously composed neutral nations for disposition. The fifth alternative was to deliver all nonrepatriates to the demilitarized zone, there to be released and "without interview or screening, be free to go to the side of their choice." Clark wanted General William K. Harrison, the new U.N. Negotiator, to review past proposals carefully and then present the new proposals as the best U.N. effort to produce a final agreement. Acceptance would be contingent

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[14]Clark, Danube, 107-109; Hermes, Truce Tent, 268-69.

[15]Clark to the JCS, C 54499, September 1, 1952, Box 39, JCS Geographic File.

upon first signing an armistice.[16]

After Harrison presented the new proposals, which were to be given the widest possible publicity immediately following the meeting, he would recess the talks for ten days so that the Communists might consider the proposals. Coincident with the recess, the U.S. Government should try to have issued strong supporting public statements from allied and U.S. leaders. If the proposals were rejected, it then would be apparent that the Communists did not desire an armistice on mutually acceptable terms. At that point the U.N. Command should recess the talks indefinitely until the Communists submitted written proposals. With a recess, Clark believed the military aspects of the negotiations would be over, and that "it might then be logical to remove the question of peace in Korea from the hands of the UNC." He felt that "Further discussion on a military basis by the UNC would be pointless and would in fact further contribute to the serious loss of prestige which we have already suffered . . . ."[17]

On September 9, the Joint Chiefs informed Clark that the State Department was considering a different approach, which would involve leaving the disposition of nonrepatriates to later negotiations.[18] The impetus for this plan lay in

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[16] Ibid. [17] Ibid.

[18] Eddleman(G-3) to Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, "Summary of Actions with Respect to the Armsitice Negotiations, October 6, 1952, Recently Declassified Documents on Korean War.

discussions between representatives of the State Department and the British Foreign Office. According to Acheson, the May outbreaks of violence at Koje-do, which included the capture of the U.S. Commanding officer, had shaken "our allies faith in the good judgment and competence of our command, creating doubt about our ability to furnish leadership . . . ." The prisoner issue, in the fall of 1952, became "the principle question before the General Assembly." In an effort to break the stalemate, the State Department and Great Britain agreed that Pannikar should probe China's intentions on the prisoner issue. The result was a plan to hold nonrepatriates for future political negotiations in the post-armistice period.[19]

General Clark was opposed to the suggested procedure and believed it should be accepted only as a last resort. The Joint Chiefs and the Defense Department supported Clark in opposition to the State Department's plan to have the President issue a statement advocating such a proposal.[20] From September 15 to September 17, the State Department, the Defense Department, and the Joint Chiefs met in an attempt to reach a consensus on policy. The Defense Department and the Joint Chiefs opposed the plan for three reasons.

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[19]Acheson, Creation, 835-836.

[20]Eddleman Memo, Summary Armistice, October 6, 1952. Acheson, in his memoirs, gives the impression that the State Department opposed this plan, when the available documents suggest that he argued for adoption of the plan. See Acheson, Creation, 836.

First, the plan was such a complete departure from the previous U.S. package proposal that the Communists inevitably would view its presentation as an indication of "a weakening in our position from the principle of nonrepatriation and therefore lead the Communists to expect further concessions on our part." A second reason for opposition was that acceptance would allow the Communists, during the armistice period, to "build-up their forces in overwhelming strength and then renew hostilities on the basis of the absence of a resolution of the question of the POWs . . . ." They could, alternatively, extort further concessions from the United States in post-armistice talks in exchange for agreement on the prisoner issue. The third reason for opposition was that with the signing of the armistice, the U.S. public would begin its usual demand "to bring the boys home." The United States military position then would deteriorate and subsequent negotiations with the Communists would be carried on at a decided military disadvantage.[21]

Acheson did not believe this line of argument was valid. The major incentive in the plan was that it would gain the release of U.N. prisoners. If the Communists wanted to renew aggression in Korea "there were many other prextexts other than the prisoner issue upon which they could do so."

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[21]Memo of Conversation in the State Department by Alexis Johnson, "Future Tactics in Korean Armistice Negotiations," September 17, 1952, Recently Declassified Documents on Korean War.

Acheson thought that an armistice did not depend on a subsequent resolution of the prisoner question. A Communist resumption of hostilities would be "in the face of 'greater sanctions'." Since the U.N. Command would retain the nonrepatriates pending a final settlement, there was no compulsion to reach an agreement with the Communists. Acheson also believed that post-armistice talks would be so clogged with problems that the addition of the prisoner question would not be a significant additional burden. The Secretary's most pointed argument for the plan was that it would, even if rejected, place the United States "in a much more favorable position in the U.N. General Assembly by having unmistakably demonstrated that we have exhausted every reasonable effort to obtain an armistice." Noting that the United States was under pressure from several of its allies to present such a plan, Acheson felt the United States should submit the plan to avoid having others propose it in the United Nations and to avoid recommendations to have the negotiations switched to the General Assembly.[22]

The State-Defense Department talks did not result in an agreement, leaving the decision to Truman, who decided on September 24 in favor of the Defense Department's position. On the 25th, Clark received new instructions which listed three proposals involving a neutral nations, a Red Cross, or

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[22] Ibid.

a non-screened release of prisoners. These voluntary repatriation proposals were to be presented to the Communists, who would be given ten days to consider them. If rejected, the U.N. Command would recess the talks indefinitely, until the Communists submitted new written proposals.[23]

Clark implemented the new approach, with the result that on October 8, the U.N. Command recessed the negotiations. Clark, on Truman's orders, continued the military pressure on the Communists. Attempts in the proceeding months failed to shake the U.S. position, which both the State and Defense Departments forcefully supported. Not until March 28, 1953, did anything of significance occur in the stalled talks.

Truman's decision to support the Defense Department against the State Department's plan for a delayed determination of the nonrepatriates' fate was a difficult one for the President to make. While there was no guarantee that China would accept the plan, U.S. support would have had a positive affect on America's allies. Neither the documents nor his memoirs shed any light on the reasons for Truman's decision. It seems likely that he would have desired an armistice before he left office. But that fact itself may have worked against supporting the State Department's position. The suggested proposal was quite a departure from the previous U.S. position on the prisoner issue, a position sold on moral and

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[23]Eddleman Memo, Summary Armistice, October 6, 1952, Recently Declassified Documents on Korean War.

humanitarian grounds. Many would have interpreted even the appearance of a weakening of that stand as a political move to aid the Democratic presidential candidate. People could ask logically why this approach had not been tried earlier before thousands of U.S. troops had been killed or wounded.

Truman's very tough attitude concerning negotiations with the Communists was another ingredient in his decision. He had been angered when the U.N. Command conceded on the issue of airfield rehabilitation and other construction, because it represented a potential threat to U.N. troops. Truman also was a life-long admirer of most generals, and the opinion of the Defense Department and the Joint Chiefs that the State Department's plan would weaken the U.S. position and was undesirable from a military point of view, had to carry great weight. Finally, Truman's own experience in dealing with the Communists for the past seven years must have militated against his ever conceding on the issue in any way.

After Eisenhower's victory in the November elections, it would have been unrealistic for the United States or the Communists to make any major moves, if for no other reason than the obvious one that the enemy would wait to see what kind of deal they could get from the new administration. So in the interim, both sides continued to fight sporadically, and the United States kept up a constant, heavy bombing of

Communist positions.[24] Acheson's efforts in relation to Korea were limited to attempts to keep America's allies in the United Nations from undermining the U.S. position against forced repatriation.

India's Krishna Menon wanted to introduce a U.N. resolution to turn the prisoners over to a commission, which in Acheson's opinion would have held the nonrepatriates as prisoners until they agreed to be repatriated. This plan was designed to give the appearance of voluntary repatriation. Lester Pearson of Canada, and Selwyn Lloyd, British Minister of State, were behind-the-scenes members of the "Menon cabal." Acheson worked assiduously in October and November in opposition to this resolution. With the timely aid of a bitter Soviet attack, Acheson had Menon's resolution amended to set up a commission which would have 90 days to deal with the nonrepatriates. The fate of any remaining prisoners would be left to a political conference. The United Nations passed the Indian resolution on December 3 and ten days later the Chinese rejected it vigorously. The result was a propaganda victory for the United States.[25]

While Acheson worked to maintain the U.S. position in the United Nations, Eisenhower was in Korea reaffirming to Clark that the basic decision to seek a political

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[24]Hermes, Truce Tent, 330-332.

[25]Acheson, Creation, 891-898.

settlement in Korea would be retained. Clark was not given a chance to present detailed plans designed to bring increased military pressure on the enemy in order to break the stalemated battlefield situation and win the war. Clark had long chafed under the restrictions placed on U.S. military activities in Korea, believing as David Rees has said, that the purely defensive nature of the U.N. effort from the end of 1951 onwards, removed the only incentive the Chinese had to reach a settlement. Eisenhower made it clear, however, that he would continue Truman's policy and seek an honorable truce.[26]

The new administration took office on January 20, 1953, with John Foster Dulles as Secretary of State, Charles E. Wilson as Secretary of Defense, and Admiral Arthur W. Radford as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. One of Eisenhower's first acts was to reverse one part of Truman's policy, when he announced that the 7th Fleet would no longer shield China from attacks from Formosa. In addition to "unleashing Chiang Kai-shek," Eisenhower let it be known in diplomatic channels that if a truce was not achieved soon, the United States would "move decisively without inhibition in our use of weapons,and would no longer be responsible for confining the hostilities to the Korean peninsula." These threats probably did little to move the Communists closer

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[26]Clark, Danube, 230-233; David Rees, Korea: The Limited War (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1964), 395.

to a settlement, but they did succeed in thoroughly alarming America's timid allies.[27]

More important than threats in getting the negotiations moving again, was Stalin's death on March 5, 1953, which accelerated the trend begun in 1952 among the three Communist participants toward ending the war. Russia initially had profited from the Korean War, as American troops were tied down in Asia and U.S. resources were drained away from potential use in the major arena of concern--Europe. By the middle of 1952, however, Stalin probably wanted to end the war since it was a constant drain on Soviet economic resources. The conflict also helped to build up the Chinese military for a future which Stalin felt he could not completely manipulate. The war further provoked continual increases in the belligerency of the American military forces in Europe and also was itself in constant danger of re-escalation. Finally, Stalin was preparing for a major purge, which in the past had led "to a lower-profile foreign policy."[28]

China, too, initially had profited from the Korean War, as its prestige soared and as its armed forces grew dramatically with Soviet arms. These arms, however, were lent and not given. The war thus became a drain on Chinese

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[27]Ulam, The Rivals, 199-200.

[28]Simmons, Strained Alliance, 227.

resources, which were needed desperately for internal reconstruction. In 1951, for example, over 60% of China's tax revenues went to the defense budget. The Korean War also was a drain on trained personnel who were needed urgently to rebuild a civil-war ravaged China. China's frightful casualties were a further burden, as by June, 1951,alone, they had suffered 577,000 casualties.[29] After the war had been stalemated at the 38th parallel, it became China's best interest to end the hostilities, since it had gained the maximum in prestige and further fighting would gain only more casualties.

North Korea had gained the least from the war. By 1952 North Korea had suffered terrible losses among the military and civilian populace. The land itself had been ravaged and North Korea found itself in critical condition. Starvation was staved off only by the timely arrival of food shipments from other Communist countries--rarely from Russia, however, which was a sore point.[30] By 1953, North Korean morale "was dangerously close to the breaking point." A substantial breakdown of discipline had occurred, bringing enormous pressure on the government to end the war.[31]

With Stalin's death, these trends picked up renewed momentum. In March, the new Soviet Premier, Georgi Malenkov, announced that "At the present time there is no disputed or

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[29] Ibid., 212. [30] Ibid., 214-215.

[31] Scalapino and Lee, Communism in Korea, 422-423.

unresolved question that cannot be settled peacefully by mutual agreement of the interested countries."[32] Concrete evidence of a willingness to resume the search for peace soon arrived.

Clark had read of a December 13 Red Cross resolution recommending an exchange of sick and wounded prisoners in advance of a truce. He suggested to Washington that while he did not believe the Communists would accept such a proposal, it still had a psychological and propaganda value. On February 19, Clark was informed that such a resolution might be introduced in the United Nations, and it was suggested that he make such a proposal in advance of this.[33] He made the proposal on February 22 in a letter to the Communists. It was not until March 28 that a reply was received, agreeing to an exchange of the sick and wounded and adding that this exchange "should be made to lead to the smooth settlement of the entire question of prisoners of war, thereby achieving an armistice in Korea . . . ." The Chinese then proposed that both sides resume negotiations at Panmunjom.[34]

Agreement was not reached without dispute, but by April 20, Operation "Little Switch" began, and when it ended

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[32]Walter LaFeber, America, Russia, and the Cold War, 1945-1975 (New York: Wiley and Sons, 3rd. edition, 1976), 147-154; Ulam, Rivals, 199-200.

[33]Clark, Danube, 240; Hermes, Truce Tent, 411; JCS to Clark, JCS 931724, February 19,1953, JCS Geographic File.

[34]Clark, Danube, 241-243.

on May 31, 6,670 Communists had been exchanged for 684 U.N. personnel. Attempts to resume the Panmunjom talks followed this first step forward. General William K. Harrison, at an April 17 liaison meeting with the Communists, suggested that Switzerland or some other nation with a tradition of neutrality, should be named as neutral custodian of the nonrepatriates. He believed a sixty day period of explanations or persuasion was adequate, after which time the neutral nation would determine the disposition of the remaining nonrepatriates. This outline was given so that the Communists would know what the United States believed to be an acceptable settlement.[35]

The talks were resumed on April 26, and by May the Communist position had moved generally to that expressed in the December 3 Indian U.N. resolution, agreeing to turn over the nonrepatriates to a Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission in Korea to be composed of Poland, Czechoslovakia, Switzerland, Sweden, and India. They suggested a persuasion period of four months, down from the previous figure of six. The United States wished only the Chinese nonrepatriates to be given over to the Commission, with the remaining Koreans to be freed as civilians on armistice day. The United States also wanted "concrete, foolproof procedures by which a prisoner could obtain political asylum." The Communists,

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[35] Ibid., 247-248.

already having made several concessions, were outraged that the U.N. Command did not offer any concessions in return, and in fact sought more concessions. This led to a recess in the talks in late May.[36]

On May 16, Clark suggested to the Joint Chiefs that the time had come "to take positive steps" either to secure an armistice with the Communists, or "to demonstrate to the world that they are acting in bad faith in seeking an armistice only on their own terms by exacting forcible repatriation of POWs." He recommended that Kaesong's immunity as a neutral site be dropped so that it could be bombed. He also wanted authorization to release unilaterally North Korean nonrepatriates. Finally, the U.N. Command should present the Communists with some kind of a "final proposal."[37]

The State and Defense Departments answered Clark on May 23, informing him that the United States was "under intensive pressure from our allies to adhere closely to the principles" outlined in the December 3 Indian resolution. Clark was ordered to agree to the plan, but was to "sustain the principle of no forced repatriation and insure that coercion and force not be used against nonrepatriates." He also was instructed both to turn over to the Commission all North Korean nonrepatriates and to agree to a majority vote

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[36] Ibid., 259-266; Hermes, Truce Tent, 425.

[37] Clark to the JCS, CX 62456, May 16, 1953, Recently Declassified Documents on Korean War.

on procedural matters on the Commission. Finally, he was told to limit the number of Communist persuaders to be used and to limit the persuasion period to 90 days. If the Communists rejected this proposal and offered no constructive alternatives, he was informed that "we consider that negotiations should be terminated rather than recessed and arrangements affecting the Kaesong-Panmunjom-Munsan area should be voided." Such a decision would be made only after consultation with Washington.[38] Clark opposed the plan, for as shall be seen, he knew that Rhee's vehement opposition to it had not been taken into account.[39]

The U.N. Command plan was presented on May 25 and except for a few minor changes the Communists agreed to it on June 4. On June 8, the terms of reference on prisoner exchange were signed.[40] The issue of voluntary repatriation had been decided in America's favor after 18 months of both intermittent talks and conflicts on the battlefield. The adherence of the United States to this principle in the face of both enemy and occasionally Allied opposition, cost the U.N. Command, according to 8th Army estimates, an extra 125,000 casualties and the Communists over 250,000. Some 50,000 prisoners took advantage of the U.S. stand and refused to be returned to their homeland. Of the 21,014 Chinese

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[38] JCS to Clark, JCS 937205, April 23, 1953, DDRS 19B(75).

[39] Clark, Danube, 268. [40] Ibid., 275-276.

prisoners, 14,325 refused repatriation.[41]

Whether the U.S. position was worth it or not is open to debate. What is important to understand is the motivation behind the principle. The United States from the beginning leaned toward the principle because of its moral and propaganda appeal, but there were many who did not believe it to be worth prolonged negotiations. The American people just as well could have supported an all-for-all exchange. The dishonest approach of the Communists to the prisoner issue pushed the scales in favor of voluntary repatriation. Once adopted, the principle became ensnared in the propaganda conflict that was carried out almost daily at Panmunjom. Once adopted and incorporated into the public's mind on moral and humanitarian grounds, voluntary repatriation became a principle almost impossible to back away from. The United States withstood both severe pressure from its allies and large numbers of casualties, that might have been avoided, in order not to concede to the Communists on this point. It is difficult to say whether the propaganda points that were gained, were equal to the lives lost.

Resolution of the prisoner issue did not bring an immediate end to the Korean War. America's troubles with the enemy may have been near resolution, but South Korea was just

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[41]Hermes, Truce Tent, 500; William C. Bradbury, Mass Behavior in Battle and Captivity: The Communist Soldier in the Korean War (Chicago: Chicago University Press,1968),vi.

beginning to create troubles for the United States. In determining the policy that led to an agreement with the Communists, the United States had practically ignored Syngman Rhee, a gentleman with a penchant for creating problems for America. The United States would pay for that mistake.

CHAPTER XIII

CREATION OF THE BILATERAL SECURITY PACT

The Communist acceptance on March 28, 1953, of General Clark's proposal to exchange sick and wounded prisoners as well as their suggestion that the stalemated negotiations should be resumed, revived Syngman Rhee's resistance to an armistice agreement. Rhee found himself in a difficult position. His life's work had been dedicated to establishing a free and independent Korea. He had fought against Japanese control of Korea and had fought against division of his country into two parts. With the establishment of two politically antithetical Koreas, Rhee's goal became unification of the country under his leadership. He was wise enough to realize that South Korea could not accomplish this without external help, so he tried desperately to prevent the United States from withdrawing its troops from Korea in 1949.

The United States, however, withdrew and left behind an inadequately trained and equipped South Korean Army that crumbled before the North Korean onslaught in June, 1950. The United States came to South Korea's aid, first with air and naval forces, then with ground forces. A U.N. Command

was established to coordinate the war effort, and Rhee, under Washington's prodding, placed South Korea's armed forces under U.N. Command. Military success brought revived hopes of achieving unification of Korea, but Chinese intervention promptly dashed these hopes. As U.N. forces drove back up the peninsula, hopes rose again, but at the 38th parallel the United Nations went on the defensive. The United States treated South Korea as a junior member in a partnership and catered to its U.N. allies--allies whose consideration for the enemy often gave the impression that South Korea had precipitated the war.

Rhee feared that the United States again might leave South Korea unprepared to resist aggression. While still fervently desiring unification, Rhee was aware that South Korea was dependent on the United States for continued military aid and economic rehabilitation. Already the United States had expanded and equipped South Korea's Army to new levels of strength and efficiency. But with an armistice on the horizon, Rhee wondered what guarantees he had that the United States would continue to be generous in the post-hostilities period. Rhee's popularity had risen rapidly after the start of the war, in part because of his militant stance concerning reunification. Domestic considerations would force him to maintain that militant stance.

The United States was in a difficult position too. National policy as set down in NSC 48/5 and reaffirmed in

NSC 118/2, called for a political settlement of the Korean War. This settlement was dependent upon the conclusion of a durable armistice agreement. Achievement of a workable armistice would be difficult, if not impossible, without South Korea's support. There were several methods Rhee could employ to invalidate an armistice agreement. He could withdraw the South Korean Army from under U.N. Command control and actively oppose an armistice, or he could leave his troops in the U.N. Command and oppose the armistice. He also could, and the United States hoped he would, remain in the U.N. Command structure and accept, if not support, an armistice.

Rhee had the capacity to stall, if not destroy, the conclusion of an armistice agreement. But the United States was not at a complete disadvantage, since Korea needed continued U.S. aid and support. Both sides then, had levers with which to work on the other, and neither side was reluctant to use them. The issues were resolved to one simple question--what was Rhee's price for agreement and was the United States willing to pay it?

The newest signs of trouble with Rhee appeared in April, 1953. Rhee's 1952 spring and summer campaigns against the armistice had been recessed along with the talks at Panmunjom. In early April, after the Communist acceptance of the sick and wounded prisoner exchange, Rhee reinstituted the campaign of "spontaneous" demonstrations. In early April, the National Assembly passed a resolution calling for the

complete unification of Korea. Rhee echoed this on April 5, in an address before the II Corps of the South Korean Army. The next day, 50,000 demonstrated in Seoul against any armistice that did not guarantee unification, and on the 10th, 50,000 students demonstrated in Pusan carrying "Unification or Death" posters. These calls were repeated at every level of the South Korean government.[1]

The most important South Korean efforts were not made in public. On April 3, Foreign Minister Pyun Yung-tai, informed Ellis O. Briggs, American Ambassador to South Korea, that acceptance of an armistice might be dependent on a bilateral security agreement. Dulles replied through the American Ambassador that a bilateral pact might better be considered after an armistice had been signed. Dulles' reply was not well received, and on April 9 Rhee wrote Eisenhower that if a peace agreement was reached which allowed the Chinese to remain in Korea, he would feel justified in asking South Korea's allies to leave the country unless they were willing to join in a drive to the Yalu. If this was impossible, the United States could remove its forces from Korea if it wished. Eisenhower replied that the United States was committed to unification of Korea, but not by force. With aggression repelled the time had come to achieve the honorable peace that the United States was committed to gaining.

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[1]Hermes, Truce Tent, 441-442.

Eisenhower hoped that Rhee would do nothing that would cause the United States to reconsider its efforts for South Korea.[2]

General Thomas Herran, Commander of the Korean Communications Zone, worried that Rhee might do something rash to achieve his objectives. South Koreans feared both the Sino-Soviet power that surrounded them and the possibility that the United States might not come to Korea's aid again if she was attacked. Rhee's ability to initiate both mass demonstrations and vicious propaganda campaigns led Herren to recommend that the United States offer Rhee a bilateral security pact and guaranteed economic and military aid.[3]

Clark was worried too about Rhee's present actions and the potential for even worse trouble in the future. The U.N. Command was in a weak position because Rhee could employ the South Korean Army independently after the signing of an armistice since no arrangement existed to extend U.N. control over South Korean troops into the post-truce period. This raised the question "of obtaining an agreement with the ROK which would provide for UNC control of ROK forces during the post-armistice period." Clark pointed out that Rhee had placed South Korean troops under U.N. authority for the

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[2]U.S. Department of State, Relations Between the United States and the ROK: A Chronology of Major Developments, April 1-June 22,1953, Research Project 337, July 1953, Division of Historical Policy Research, Recently Declassified Doccuments on Korean War, 1; Dwight David Eisenhower, The White House Years: Mandate for a Change, 1953-1956 (New York: Signet Edition, 1965), 231-232.

[3]Hermes, Truce Tent, 442.

duration of the hostilities and Clark believed that conclusion of an armistice would not legally end the hostilities. He was aware, however, that Rhee would interpret the matter differently. The U.N. Commander wanted the post-armistice relationship with South Korea clarified, but he did not believe that it was the proper time to buy an agreement with a security pact.[4]

In late April, the South Korean Ambassador in Washington delivered a note informing the United States that Korea "was prepared to withdraw its military forces from the U.N. Command . . .if the United Nations makes with the Communist aggressors any arrangement which after a cease-fire agreement, would either permit or allow Chinese Communists to remain south of the Yalu River." After withdrawal, South Korean forces would fight on alone.[5] On the 26th, Clark informed Washington that any action to withdraw South Korean troops from the U.N. Command on signing of an armistice that did not require the Chinese to withdraw, would be very dangerous. Clark was developing plans for a "drastic course" of action to insure the continued security of the U.N. Command.[6] The next day, after a meeting with Rhee, Clark

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[4]Clark to JCS, C 61976, April 18, 1953, Box 43, JCS Geographic File.

[5]State Department, Chronology, 9.

[6]Clark, Exclusive for Collins, C 62098, April 26, 1953, DDRS 163A(75).

reported that Rhee was not thinking of "fighting alone or withdrawing his troops from UNC without taking a good long look at the consequences of his actions and discussing the matter with me prior to such action."[7] On the 30th, Rhee informed Clark that U.N. troops should not be withdrawn from Korea unless the United States granted a bilateral security agreement and guaranteed continued aid to the South Korean Army.[8]

Clark's plans for "drastic action" in Korea, Plan EVER READY, were completed on May 4. The mission of the plan was to have the 8th Army take prompt action to protect U.N. forces and supplies, and "to insure that the U.N. position with regard to the armistice agreement is maintained, in the event that operational control of Republic of Korea forces is weakened or lost prior to or after conclusion of an armistice."[9]

The assumption of plan EVER READY was that "the government and people of the ROK may be reluctant to accept the terms of an armistice," and as a result, relationships between U.N. forces and South Koreans might decline gradually or suddenly. This declining relationship could take three

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[7]Clark to Collins, C 62143, April 29, 1953, DDRS 163B(75).

[8]State Department, Chronology, 13.

[9]Outline Plan EVER READY, 8th Army, Seoul CS 52056, May 14, 1953, Box 43, JCS Geographic File.

possible forms. Under the first contingency, if South Korean troops were unresponsive to U.N. orders, U.S. Army units were to secure Seoul, Pusan, Taegu, Uijonchu, and other key areas, and supplies to the South Korean Army in forward areas were to be reduced. In case of the second possibility, Korean independent action, the U.S. Army would have the added duties of relieving South Korean security units and of securing vital installations. In addition, movement of civilian population was to be limited and only loyal South Korean units would be supplied from U.S. depots. If the third possible condition occurred, South Koreans overtly hostile, the U.S. Army would "relieve disloyal and recalcitrant leaders" in the military, would discontinue supplies of food, fuel, and munitions to disaffected units, would confiscate arms and munitions in South Korean supply channels, would withdraw air and artillery support from hostile units, would proclaim and establish martial law, and would secure the custody of dissident military and civil leaders and set up a military government in the name of the United Nations.[10]

At about this time, new problems with Rhee arose. South Korea made it clear that it would not accept any plan which would remove Korean nonrepatriates from Korea to a neutral state. The Chinese had dropped this demand on May 7 when they accepted a five-member Repatriation Commission to

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[10] Ibid., 2-4.

take custody of the prisoners. To screen and guard these prisoners, foreign troops would have to be stationed in Korea and large numbers of Communist "persuaders" would have to be allowed into South Korea. Rhee informed Clark that he was opposed completely to turning over Korean nonrepatriates to any group of nations that had Communist leanings and to allowing Communist "persuaders" into South Korea. Clark tended to agree with Rhee's opposition to allowing "this crowd of potential spies, sabateurs, and agitators into his rear areas." Rhee added that Indian troops would never be allowed in Korea and that he would release Korean nonrepatriates unilaterally before allowing such a plan to be implemented.[11]

During a meeting with Clark, Rhee again raised the question of a bilateral security agreement. Clark informed Rhee that Washington was considering this course. At the same time, he admitted that an armistice would not include simultaneous withdrawal of U.N. and Chinese troops. He hoped Rhee "would not confront the United States with unilateral action . . . ." Clark's impression was that Rhee would take such a course only as a last resort and if the United States ignored his opinions about an armistice. Clark recommended to Washington that a bilateral security pact with South Korea should be worked out as soon as possible to avoid possible future dangers. Rhee was aware the United States could and

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[11]State Department, Chronology, 16; Clark, Danube, 263-265.

would obtain an armistice despite his objections. His actions now were designed to gain a security pact and increased economic aid, and to save face with his supporters. Clark also suggested to Washington that Korean nonrepatriates should be released as civilians at the time of signing of an armistice.[12]

On May 22, Clark was informed that he was to accept the proposition of turning Korean nonrepatriates over to a repatriation commission. More important, he was told that a bilateral pact was out of the question at the present time. Such a pact would tarnish the U.N. features of the Korean operation and would be difficult to sell to the American people and Congress in light of Rhee's recent actions in opposition to an armistice. Washington, however, did offer other inducements based on South Korea's agreement to an armistice: U.N. forces would remain in Korea as long as circumstances permitted; the United States was going to maintain armed forces in the area on a long-term basis; at the subsequent planned political conference the United States would vigorously seek a unified, democratic Korea; the United States would discuss an agreement for comprehensive military aid, including support for a twenty division South Korean Army; finally, Rhee would be told that the "greater sanctions" statement, then being prepared in cooperation with America's

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[12]State Department, Chronology, 16-17.

allies in the United Nations would be preferable to a treaty and was the strongest possible guarantee of security. All of these inducements, of course, would be dependent upon a "cooperative attitude and compliance with an armistice agreement."[13]

Clark, who opposed these plans, informed Rhee of the decision. Rhee was very disturbed, noting that the proposed "greater sanctions" statement was meaningless. He was angered that the United States had paid "no attention to the view of the ROK Government," and he could not assure Clark of continued cooperation. Rhee once again insisted that no Indian troops would be allowed on South Korean soil. He concluded that he could not accept U.S. proposals and, if need be, South Korea would fight on alone.[14]

Clark was not in the best of positions, since he opposed Washington's policy. He could see no reason for denying Rhee a mutual defense treaty when he attached such great importance to one. Such an agreement would serve admirably to soften the blow of concessions that the United States was making at Panmunjom. Clark cautioned Washington that Rhee had the capability to release all Korean nonrepatriates unilaterally and there was nothing Clark could do to prevent such a maneuver. Since it would be "practically impossible

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[13]State Department, Chronology, 18-19.

[14]Clark, Danube, 268-271.

to avoid charges of UNC duplicity, not only from the Communists, but from our Allies as well," Washington had to reach a policy decision about how to handle the situation.[15]

When the U.N. Command proposals at Panmunjom became known, both South Korean public and government alike blasted the provisions.[16] With the situation reaching dangerous proportions, Washington had to examine its options. On May 29, the State Department met with the Joint Chiefs to consider the alternatives. Those in attendance included Army Chief of Staff Collins, Secretary of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Walter Lalor, Assistant Chief of Plans General C.D. Eddleman, Undersecretary of State Freeman Matthews, Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs Walter Robertson, Deputy Secretary of the National Security Council S. Everett Gleason, and Frederick Nolting, Alexis Johnson, and Kenneth Young of the State Department.[17]

General Collins outlined the three alternatives available to the United States: to give Rhee a mutual defense treaty, to take Rhee and other South Korean intransigents into custody, or obtain an agreement from Rhee to cooperate until the United States could remove its forces from Korea. Collins believed the United States should put Rhee under

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[15]Clark to JCS, C 62631, May 26, 1953, Box 44, JCS Geographic Files; Hermes, Truce Tent, 446.

[16]Hermes, Truce Tent, 447.

[17]Summary of Notes of JCS-State Department Meeting, U. Alexis Johnson, May 29, 1953, DDRS 163C(75).

protective custody "rather than submit to blackmail." He should be taken into custody "on the basis of its being necessary for the security of our troops." Collins believed that "We must give Clark authority or deny him the authority to take Rhee into custody. If a crisis occurs, there won't be time for Clark to come back for authority."[18]

Robertson opted for allowing Rhee to go it alone, but Matthews said "this would be a bluff as we can't let him go it alone." This short exchange generally summed up one consensus--the United States, after the losses it had suffered, was not going to withdraw from Korea and leave her defenseless. Collins continued to press for Plan EVER READY, suggesting that Eisenhower meet with South Korean Chief of Staff Park Sun-yap, then in Washington, to gain his formal agreement to backing a U.S. move against Rhee; Collins noted that Park had tacitly agreed to do so already. The State Department believed such a "sub rosa meeting" would be inadvisable, since "if it leaked, things might be bad." Collins recommended that the State Department think about the proposition a little more.[19]

Robertson, summing up the State Department's position, pointed out that General Clark, Ambassador Ellis O. Briggs, and Robert Murphy, outgoing Ambassador to Japan and General Clark's political adviser, all favored a mutual

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[18] Ibid. [19] Ibid.

defense treaty as the best way to get Rhee to accept an armistice. Collins disagreed, feeling a treaty would give Rhee "the whip hand." Admiral Duncan, of the Joint Chiefs, believed that if Rhee could not be brought to support U.S. policy "it would be a disastrous military defeat for U.N. forces. I think that it would be worth it to give him a security pact in order to keep him in line." No policy consensus was reached, though it was decided to prepare a memorandum for Eisenhower setting forth the situation and the steps which Clark proposed to take.[20]

The resulting memorandum favored Collins' position, concluding that action at the present time should be limited to approval of Plan EVER READY. A proposed directive to Clark authorized him to implement EVER READY, including those provisions entailing taking Rhee and other South Korean officials into custody.[21]

Neither the Secretary of State nor the Secretary of Defense concurred in the proposed memorandum, which was presented to them late in the afternoon of May 29. Instead, a message was dispatched to Clark informing him that "the seriousness of the situation was appreciated and would be presented to the President on May 30." In the meantime, he was

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[20] Ibid.

[21] Eddleman Memo for the Record, "Conference on Current Difficulties with the ROK Government Due to Their Dissatisfaction with Armistice Terms," June 1, 1953, Enclosure A and Appendix, Box 44, JCS Geographic File.

authorized to take preliminary steps to meet any threatened emergency resulting from difficulties with South Korea and to take such action as necessary in the event of a grave emergency to insure the security of his forces. Clark was also given permission to inform Rhee that Dulles "would strongly recommend to the President that the United States agree to negotiate a bilateral security pact with the ROK Government." Clark was to utilize this authority at his discretion, if it appeared such action would avert a dangerous and provocative situation. Finally, Clark was asked to comment on whether a pact at this time would reconcile Rhee to an armistice along the currently proposed lines.[22]

The morning of May 30, a meeting was held among top State-Defense Department officials to consider the subject of a bilateral security agreement. Those present agreed that the United States could not concur in that part of Plan EVER READY which would establish a U.N. Command government. Instead, it was agreed that South Korea would be offered a mutual defense treaty "along the lines of our current Philippines and ANZUS treaties," and conditioned upon acceptance and cooperation with an armistice agreement and agreeing to leave its troops under U.N. Command operational control until it was mutually agreed to be no longer necessary.[23]

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[22] Ibid.; Collins to Clark, DA 942038, May 30, 1953, DDRS 164B(75).

[23] Eddleman Memo for Record, June 1, 1953, JCS Geographic File.

The conferees then met with the President, who approved the offer of a security treaty. Two messages were sent to Clark late on May 30, one informing him of disapproval of that part of Plan EVER READY calling for a U.N. Command government, and the other authorizing him to inform Rhee that the United States was prepared "to undertake negotiations for a mutual defense treaty with the ROK . . . ."[24]

The United States had rejected both withdrawal from Korea and a U.N. Command coup as policy alternatives, choosing instead to offer Rhee a mutual defense pact. The problem was that the decision was reached so slowly that there was no guarantee that Rhee would find the offer satisfactory. Clark said as much on May 30, pointing out that Rhee might feel this action was late in arriving. He believed, however, that a defense pact "would improve our relations with Rhee and the ROK Government materially and diminish active opposition to the new UNC armistice proposal." Clark, with Briggs concurrence, decided to put off informing Rhee of the security pact offer until it became clearer how close an armistice was.[25]

Clark was correct in assuming that an offer of a bilateral treaty would not end South Korea's opposition to an

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[24] Ibid.; JCS to Clark, DA 940241, May 30, 1953, DDRS 19C(75); Collins to Clark, DA 940242, May 30,1953, DDRS 164D(75).

[25] JCS Decision 1776/373, A Report by the Joint Strategic Plans Committee, "Command of ROK Armed Forces," June 17, 1953, Box 44, JCS Geographic File; Clark to JCS, Cx 62747, May 30, 1953, DDRS 164A(75); Clark, Danube, 273.

armistice. On May 30, Rhee wrote to Eisenhower that an armistice "which would allow the Chinese Communists to remain in Korea would mean to the Korean nation . . .an acceptance of a death sentence without protest." Rhee proposed a simultaneous withdrawal of foreign troops, provided a mutual defense treaty had been signed first. He also wanted increased aid and a retention of U.S. air units in Korea.[26]

Rhee's proposals were not acceptable to the United States. To Washington, it appeared that Rhee's request for simultaneous troop withdrawal was an attempt to gain both an armistice "which would leave superior ROK forces to deal with North Korea," and a mutual defense treaty with the United States to insure U.S. intervention if the Chinese or Soviets came to North Korea's aid. Simultaneous withdrawal was inappropriate, since the question of withdrawal of foreign troops from Korea had been the subject of lengthy and intense discussions in Washington, with a resulting firm decision that mutual withdrawal was a subject for a post-armistice political conference. Changing this policy now would be a sign of weakness and would lead to a loss of U.N. operational control over South Korean troops--a key principle of U.S. policy.[27]

Clark was instructed to introduce the subject of a

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[26]U.S. Senate, Executive Sessions, 1953, Volume V, Appendix E: Armistice in Korea, 830-831.

[27]Collins to Clark, DA 940543, June 4, 1953, DDRS 165B(75).

mutual defense pact at his discretion and to remind Rhee that failure to reach an understanding with the United States on an armistice would threaten the foundations upon which the United States then was examining South Korea's economic aid requirements. Any unilateral actions to resume hostilities "would make it impossible for the United States and other U.N. Governments to continue economic aid to the ROK."[28]

With Communist acceptance on June 4 of the basic U.N. proposals, South Korea increased the public tempo of its criticisms of the proposed armistice. Rhee publicly called for simultaneous troop withdrawal and imposed extraordinary security restrictions over all of South Korea. He rejected Eisenhower's June 6 letter proposing a bilateral pact in exchange for South Korean cooperation, noting the price for acceptance would be "to accept a death warrant."[29] With the signing on June 8 of the terms of reference for prisoners, the public campaign intensified with demonstrations and resolutions of support for Rhee's stand coming from the National Assembly and the Cabinet. In private, Rhee informed Clark that "he would feel free to take any action he deemed appropriate."[30]

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[28] Ibid.; Collins to Clark, DA 940728, June 5, 1953, Box 44, JCS Geographic File.

[29] U.S. Senate, Executive Sessions, 1953, Volume V, Appendix E, 832-836; Hermes, Truce Tent, 448-449.

[30] Clark to JCS, CX 62890, June 7, 1953, Box 44, JCS Geographic File; State Department, Chronology, 32; Clark, Danbue, 275.

With South Korea's disenchantment growing and world opinion reacting favorably to the progress at Panmunjom, Secretary of State Dulles proposed on June 12, that Rhee come to Washington for "a confidential exchange of views." Rhee was pleased with the invitation, but refused it, citing the unsettled situation in Korea as the reason. Instead, Rhee suggested that Dulles visit Seoul. Dulles declined, but did agree to send Walter Robertson, to help clear up "any misunderstandings as to U.S. post-armistice policies . . . ." Rhee agreed on June 17 to receive Robertson.[31]

On June 18, in Clark's words, "all hell broke loose." In a well-planned and well-executed maneuver, and with the cooperation of the South Korean government, military, and civilian populace, 27,000 Korean nonrepatriates "escaped" from prisoner-of-war camps at four different locations. According to the U.N. Command, it was clear that the "action had been secretly planned and carefully coordinated at top levels in the Korean Government . . . ." While not surprised, Clark nonetheless told Rhee that he was "profoundly shocked" by the unilateral abrogation of his personal commitment "that you would not take unilateral action . . .until after full and frank discussions with me."[32]

Rhee's actions raised the basic question of whether

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[31]Eisenhower, Mandate, 234-235; State Department, Chronology, 32-33.

[32]Hermes, Truce Tent, 451; Clark, Danube, 281.

U.N. Command had operational control over South Korean forces. The Communists, having conceded on the voluntary repatriation issue, would be justified in questioning, as they did, whether the United States had sufficient control and authority to conclude an armistice. While both the Chinese and Soviets took the line in their propaganda that the United States was "powerless" to prevent Rhee's actions, the North Koreans reacted violently, accusing the United Nations of complicity in the action, and inquiring whether the United States could control South Korea and if an armistice would include the "Rhee clique." If not included, how would America insure that South Korea would live up to an armistice agreement.[33]

Eisenhower, in a message to Rhee on June 18, pointed out that South Korea had responsibility for the prisoners as agents of U.N. Command. Release of the prisoners was carried out by the use of open violence against the authority of the U.N. Command. Eisenhower warned Rhee that unless he was prepared unequivocally "to accept the authority of the U.N. Command to conduct the present hostilities and to bring them to a close, it will be necessary to effect another arrangement." Clark "has now been authorized to take such steps as may become necessary in light of your determination."[34] Just what the new arrangements and necessary steps might be, is unknown,

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[33]Simmons, Strained Alliance, 236-38; Clark, Danube, 282.

[34]Eisenhower, Mandate, 235-236.

though the President probably had Plan EVER READY in mind.

During the next few days Rhee switched from conciliation to opposition and back to conciliation, as he probed U.S. intentions and reactions, and continued to bargain for the best possible deal for South Korea. On June 19 and 20 he indicated that signing of an armistice would make it almost impossible for South Korean forces to remain under U.N. Command control. Yet he indicated to other U.S. officials that he hoped withdrawal would be unnecessary.[35]

In a June 22 meeting with Clark, Rhee sought to assure America that he desired to work with Eisenhower. Clark informed Rhee that it was necessary to accept two premises: first, that the United States was committed firmly to gaining an honorable armistice; second, that the United States would not use force to eject the Chinese from Korea or to introduce the issue of withdrawal into the talks. Rhee, in turn, "expressed intense interest in a mutual defense treaty . . . ." He added that although Korea could not possibly sign an armistice, it could support one. Clark in closing the meeting reiterated that it was necessary to retain South Korean troops under U.N. Command control.[36]

The next day, Clark was given a Korean aide memoire

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[35]Hermes, Truce Tent, 452-453.

[36]U.S. Department of State, The Rhee-Robertson Conversations and Their Aftermath, Division of Historical Policy Research, Project No. 339, July, 1953, DDRS 134C(75).

which set down the necessary conditions for retention of U.N. Command control over South Korean forces and for Korean adherence to an armistice. Rhee's conditions included: a limitation of 90 days for a political conference, 60 days after which the United States would support by air and naval action a South Korean move north; a mutual defense treaty signed before an armistice; granting of adequate military and economic aid to achieve self-sufficiency; and no foreign forces to enter South Korea.[37]

On June 24, when Robertson arrived in Tokyo, the future of South Korean-American relations was unpredictable. The North Koreans, starting on July 19, began shifting the blame for the prisoner release almost exclusively to Rhee and South Korea. This indicated to Clark that the Communists still wanted a truce. It was in this atmosphere of both optimism and pessimism that top U.S. military and civilian officials met with Robertson to consider the situation. They concluded that the United States should sign an armistice as quickly as possible, with or without South Korean agreement. If Rhee continued his opposition, the United States should be prepared to sign an armistice, regain its prisoners and withdraw from Korea. General Clark believed the United States also should encourage the South Korean Army to take action to replace the present government by making the Army believe

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[37] Ibid.

that the United States was prepared to withdraw unless Rhee agreed to an armistice.[38]

Washington did not completely support these propositions. Clark was authorized to conclude an armistice at any time on a basis which did not include either forced repatriation or forced South Korean compliance with the armistice. He was told, however, not to make "any commitment, agreement, or action which would require total UNC withdrawal from Korea." Finally, Clark was authorized to give the impression to South Korea's military and political leaders that U.N. Command would withdraw if South Korea did not comply with the armistice.[39] This last point was repeated on June 30, when the Joint Chiefs informed Clark that the most promising approach at present was to cause Rhee and his followers to believe that the United Nations was ready to withdraw. If this did not change Rhee's attitude, it was hoped "that influential ROK political and military elements would themselves take steps to bring about a situation in the ROK Government which will assure ROK cooperation with an armistice."[40] This approach ignored Rhee's greatly increased popularity.

The Rhee-Robertson talks began on June 25 and

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[38]Simmons, Strained Alliance, 238-239; Clark, Danube, 284-85; Clark to JCS, CX 63325, June 25, 1953, DDRS 165C(75).

[39]JCS to Clark, JCS 942368, June 25, 1953, Box 44, JCS Geographic File.

[40]JCS to Clark, DEF 942613, June 30, 1953, Recently Declassified Documents on Korean War.

continued for 18 days. It soon became clear that there were two major stumbling blocks to an agreement. The first was the South Korean desire to limit the length of a post-armistice political conference to 90 days, and to follow it with combat operations if the Chinese were still present in Korea. The second, and most troublesome problem, was Rhee's desire for an immediate guarantee of a mutual defense treaty.[41] On June 27, Robertson was able to inform Rhee that while it was impossible to impose a 90 day limit on other countries participating in a political conference, Eisenhower did feel that if at the end of 90 days "it was clear that the conference was not making progress and was being abused by the Communists . . .he would be prepared to act in concert with the ROK with a view to having the United States and the ROK retire jointly . . . ." On the second disputed point, Eisenhower said he could not "guarantee" a mutual defense pact because such an agreement was subject to Senate approval, but he was ready to begin negotiations for such a treaty immediately.[42]

Rhee was not satisfied with Eisenhower's assurances, as he continued to insist on concluding a security pact prior to the signing of an armistice. In addition, Rhee continued to insist on a resumption of hostilities if the planned

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[41] Robertson to Dulles, June 26, 1953, 795.00/6-2653, DDRS 31A(75).

[42] Ibid., June 27, 1953, 795.00/6-2753, DDRS 31B(75).

political conference did not lead to Chinese withdrawal from Korea.[43] On July 3, the United States reiterated its willingness to begin negotiations immediately for a mutual defense treaty, subject to final Senate approval. The United States also offered to withdraw from the political conference to consult with South Korea on what steps might properly and reasonably be taken if Chinese troops had not withdrawn from Korea or if a unified Korea had not been agreed to after 90 days. In return, South Korea would be expected to support the armistice and to leave its troops under U.N. Command control.[44] On the same day. W. Bedell Smith, Acting Secretary of State, informed Robertson that if Rhee found the July 3 proposal unacceptable, "the time had probably come for you to leave if you feel your continued presence will serve no useful purpose."[45]

The United States had met every South Korean demand but the one requiring a resumption of hostilities. Rhee still was reluctant because negotiations for a mutual defense treaty would be useless without Senate approval. While Rhee's actions had not inspired confidence among a number of Senators, both Dulles and Senator William F. Knowland and Senator

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[43]State Department, Rhee-Robertson, 19-20.

[44]Robertson to Dulles, July 2, 1953, 795.00/7-253, U.S. Senate, Executive Sessions, 1953, Appendix E, 837.

[45]W. Bedell Smith to Robertson, July 3, 1950, 795.00/7-353, DDRS 31F(75).

H. Alexander Smith, assured Rhee that they were confident of favorable Senate action on a security pact. Of course, South Korean cooperation would go far to assure approval.[46] Rhee remained reluctant, but the United States stepped up its pressure on the political level, by inducing speculation that the United States intended to sign an armistice and withdraw without consulting South Korea. On the military level, the United States tightened the screws on supplies both for new South Korean Army divisions and for Korea in general.[47]

The Communists also were adding to the pressure on Rhee. Walter Hermes has noted that "The brief respite on the battlefield ended on June 24 and the Communists disclosed their decision to devote special attention to the ROK divisions along the front." Both sides suffered severe casualties. On July 13, the Chinese launched a large offensive against the elite Capital Division of the South Korean Army, driving it back as deep as six miles beyond South Korean-held lines. They inflicted heavy casualties and routed several other South Korean units. Only combined American-South Korean ground operations halted the Communist advance and regained the lost territory. The message, however, was clear--the South Korean Army was not ready to stand on its own, much less contemplate an independent move north. The

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[46]State Department, Rhee-Robertson, 28, 40, 54.

[47]Clark to JCS, CX 63500, July 5, 1953, Box 44, JCS Geographic File.

Communists added political pressure by announcing on July 8 that they would resume the armistice talks, which had been recessed since the release of the Korean nonrepatriates.[48]

On July 9, Rhee very reluctantly conceded. He informed Robertson that while South Korea could not sign the truce agreement, it would not obstruct the implementation of its terms. In exchange Rhee received the promise of a mutual defense treaty, long-term economic aid, expansion of the South Korean Army to twenty divisions, an agreement to withdraw after 90 days from a post-armistice political conference if it became stalemated, and a guarantee to hold high-level American-Korean talks on objectives prior to the political conference.[49]

The armistice talks resumed on July 10, and the immediate question was whether the United States could guarantee South Korea's actions in the post-armistice period. On the 13th, the U.N. Chief Negotiator informed the Communists that U.N. Command would withdraw all military aid and support if South Korean forces violated the truce arrangements.[50] This was an adequate guarantee, but since the talks were occurring during the last Communist offensive, no agreement could be

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[48]State Department, Rhee-Robertson, 39, 45; Hermes, Truce Tent, Chapter XXI; Simmons, Strained Alliance, 239.

[49]State Department, Rhee-Robertson, 60; Robertson to Dulles, July 8 and 9, 1953, 795.00/7-853 and 795.00/7-1053, U.S. Senate, Executive Sessions, 1953, Volume V, Appendix E, 841-846; Clark, Danube, 287-288.

[50]State, Department, Rhee-Robertson, 38.

expected until the outcome of that offensive became clear. By July 19, the Communist push was over, lines were stabilized and the enemy was ready to complete an armistice. Working out the details came slowly, but on July 27, the armistice was signed at Panmunjom. Coincident with this, was issuance of the "greater sanctions" statement, which U.N. members with troops participating in the Korean War signed. This statement warned that if aggression was renewed, the reaction would be united and swift and the consequences would be so grave that "it would not be possible to confine the hostilities within the frontiers of Korea."[51]

Rhee's assent to the armistice was gained at the cost of a bilateral security pact that commited America to a continued role in South Korea's future. The United States worked patiently on Rhee, refusing to withdraw or to force his downfall. Many other pressures were applied unrelentingly and they finally outweighed the fears Rhee felt as a result of domestic pressures not to compromise.

From the time of the promising Communist agreement on March 28 to exchange sick and wounded prisoners, to the time of the signing of the armistice on July 27, the U.N. Command suffered over 64,000 casualties and the Communists an estimated 135,000. From June, 1950 to July 27, 1953, the U.N. Command suffered over 500,000 casualties (the United

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[51]Hermes, Truce Tent, 480-490.

States 142,019) and the Communists an estimated 1.5 million. The cost, according to one projection, reached $83 billion by 1956, including direct and indirect costs.[52] The United States decision to stand in Korea, against what was seen as naked Communist aggression, had proven to be a costly one. With the signing of a bilateral security pact, a continued U.S. commitment to the survival of South Korea was guaranteed, as was a continued expenditure of lives and money.

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[52] Ibid., 501.

CONCLUSIONS

The onset of World War II led the United States to assume major new commitments in Asia. First at Cairo and Teheran, and then at Yalta and Potsdam, the United States formally committed itself to a larger and more active role in Asian affairs. This was manifested primarily in U.S. policy toward China, but it also could be seen in America's pledge to establish in due course a free, independent, and democratic Korean state. The United States, however, had prepared no specific plans to implement such a program. In part, this was the result of the State Department's failure to give more than minimal thought to a postwar plan for Korea. The United States could not be sure what the local military situation would be, which limited its ability to formulate plans. Roosevelt and then Truman largely ignored the thinking that had been done about Korea prior to Yalta and Potsdam.

While the State Department's policy papers on Korea were given little attention at Yalta and Potsdam, in the immediate postwar period the State Department assumed policy making responsibility for Korea. The State Department based its planning on a desire to have a non-Communist, independent

Korea established through Soviet-American cooperation. The best way to accomplish this goal, it was believed, was through a trusteeship and the State Department's policy was to maximize cooperation between the two occupation zones so this could be achieved. At Moscow in December, 1945, a plan was formulated whereby a Joint Commission was established to consult with all democratic social organizations and political parties in Korea to form a provisional government.

While playing a subordinate role in policy making, the military was the agency designated to implement the State Department's policy. Implementation of Washington's policy became increasingly difficult as the military more and more questioned the feasibility of any plan for Korea which relied on Soviet cooperation--especially a plan for a non-Communist Korea. Strains in Roosevelt's "grand strategy" had begun to show even before the end of the war and the frustrations the military faced in Korea in its attempts to reach agreements with the Soviet Union only served to reinforce its belief that Soviet-American cooperation was impossible. The American Military Government in Korea directed its policy towards establishing representative democratic political parties. Eventually its policy was geared to preparing South Korea for independent, democratic status. The occupation experience itself led American Military Government to work at cross purposes with the State Department's policy of

cooperation with the Soviet Union, while at the same time recommending that American policy should be changed. This was an important factor in altering U.S. policy in Korea.

A second factor was the difficult position the military found itself in as the postwar period progressed. Congress was wielding a penny-pinching axe and U.S. demobilization was carried out with breathtaking speed and efficiency. As distrust and suspicion between Moscow and Washington grew, it became increasingly apparent that a permanent peace had not been established at the end of the war. Faced with cuts in manpower and matériel, the military was forced to take a serious look at the relative strategic importance of all areas of the world so that American commitments could be brought into line with available resources. Korea seemed to be a particularly weak spot since the Soviet Union had the potential to pour in masses of troops while the United States, because of the military's relative state of weakness, found it difficult to provide even the small number of U.S. troops then occupying Korea. With this in mind, the military concluded that Korea had little strategic value, and that America's interests in Asia lay in other more vital and defensible areas.

The military began, as early as 1946, to urge the State Department to adopt a policy in Korea that would result in U.S. withdrawal at the earliest possible time with a "minimum of bad effects." By 1947, the military had succeeded

in persuading a reluctant State Department to adopt a policy designed to have the United States turn the Korean problem over to the United Nations, where American responsibility would be multilateral in nature. At the same time, the United States would provide economic aid to build-up South Korea's economy and its military strength.

Being reluctant to accept this policy because it believed Korea's political value was of great importance in the Cold War, the State Department fought various delaying actions, but in the end the military won out and U.S. troops were withdrawn from Korea in 1949. In August, 1948, an independent Republic of Korea was established in the American zone under the auspices of the United Nations, and the United States hoped that it would be able to survive with American aid and with the symbolic moral force of the United Nations underpinning it. Officials in Washington acknowledged, however, that there was a good chance that the Communists would eventually gain the upper hand throughout the peninsula.

The United States decided tentatively at that time not to extend a policy of containment to Korea. Given the means available to achieve U.S. ends, the military believed that it could not afford to make containment a worldwide policy. But there were elements in the military, Secretary Forrestall, General Wedemeyer, General Bradley, and others, who favored the retention of U.S. troops in Korea. The State Department saw the Korean situation from a political point

of view. Korea was a battleground between the Soviet Union and the United States and to allow South Korea to fall into Communist hands would be a very serious blow both to U.S. prestige and to the validity of U.S. commitments around the world. Some State Department officials, however, favored withdrawal, and with neither department unanimous in its support or opposition, the decision had to be tentative and subject to easy change when different circumstances arose. Political and military objectives had proven to be incompatible in reaching this decision, though both departments agreed that the other's position was valid.

With the fall of China in 1949 and its consolidation as a communist state, the Army Chief of Staff, the Secretary of State, and the Secretary of Defense requested a reappraisal of U.S. policy in Asia--the eventual result was NSC 48/2, which called for a more vigorous policy in the Pacific. In addition, Army Chief of Staff Bradley split with his colleagues on the Joint Chiefs of Staff, as he attempted to gain a balanced politico-military estimate of the Korean situation. He concluded that the United States should leave a token force in South Korean for its symbolic value. All three men laid a clear groundwork for U.S. intervention in Korea in June, 1950.

By the eve of the North Korean invasion, the impetus of the Cold War had turned Korea into an arena for Soviet-American confrontation. While both sides exacerbated

previously existing problems in Korea, forces outside the influence of events within Korea determined that country's fate. Korea became one more symbol of the conflict between the two great powers. This conflict flared into a hot war in Korea--a war that the United States had left South Korea unprepared to fight.

With the outbreak of the Korean War, the State Department overcame military opposition to gain the commitment of U.S. ground forces to counter what was perceived as Soviet-inspired aggression in Korea. Only at this point did Truman really intrude himself in Korean policy discussions. In the previous five years policy for Korea had been the result of interdepartmental conflicts. With the decision to intervene, Korea was transformed into a "vital security interest" within the framework of America's Asian policy. The process of intervention also led the United States to the verbal imposition of the 7th Fleet in the Formosa Straits--thus putting the United States on a collision course with China. By July 7, 1953, NSC 154/1 would state that "it is important to our national security that political and economic pressure against China be developed and maintained during the immediate post-armistice period."[1]

Once the President and the State Department set the policy of intervention, it naturally fell to the military to

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[1]NSC 154/1, July 7, 1953, National Security Council File, Military Branch, National Archives, Washington D.C.

implement that policy and it would be implemented in a way that was agreeable to the military's objectives. The "decision" to cross the 38th parallel and to unify Korea was reached almost by default. The Defense Department, arguing on political grounds, favored a move across the parallel to unify Korea. The State Department was much less sure about such an action, fearing possible Soviet or Chinese intervention. Elements in the State Department, led by John Allison, Dean Rusk, and John Foster Dulles, favored a position similar to that of the Defense Department. With MacArthur's tremendous success at Inchon as the major motivating factor, the State Department, in the process of hammering out a consensus, was willing to be convinced that the General's northward drive should not be stopped. Thus the attempt to capture a clear Soviet sphere of interest was less a positive decision and more a case of submitting to the exigencies of the bureaucratic decision-making process.

The discussions that occurred concerning the decision to continue the drive north in the face of possible Chinese intervention saw the State Department arguing that the military threat of intervention was such that a policy of great caution should be adopted, while the military argued that political considerations made it necessary not to show any signs of reluctance in the drive north. The Joint Chiefs admitted in November, 1950, that it was not militarily necessary to drive right up to the Yalu River, but they argued

against any change in MacArthur's directives. The most they would agree to do was propose to MacArthur that he set up a buffer zone. Military success became the overwhelming factor determining policy after the Inchon landing. MacArthur's rapid northward drive presented the free world with too great of an opportunity to gain a victory at Communist expense. Thus policy makers let their desire to maintain a successful consensus outweigh the very clear signs of Chinese intervention, so that MacArthur could continue his drive to sweep the entire Korean peninsula into the Western camp.

After the Chinese intervention, both the State Department and Defense Department were shaken and both were willing to delay decisions until the military situation made the choice an obvious and safe one. The State Department deferred to the military to describe military potentialities so that political objectives might be set, while the military deferred to the State Department to reassess political objectives so that military policy could be adjusted. Only with the stabilization of the battlefield situation was the decision made to remain in Korea and to inflict the maximum possible casualties on the enemy while seeking a political solution to the conflict. In reaching this decision, both the State Department and the Defense Department operated from opposing points of view. The Defense Department placed primary emphasis on maintaining the integrity of MacArthur's forces for the defense of Japan, while the State Department placed

its primary emphasis on standing in Korea as the best method to defend Japan. The result was that the U.N. Commander never received clear and compatible directives from Washington, though the easing of the military situation in January and February, 1951, made this less of a problem than it was in the critical weeks immediately after China's intervention.

The State Department and the Defense Department also differed on the best way to handle the repatriation issue. The President was forced to decide the issue in favor of the military and voluntary repatriation. There was less of a split over how to handle Rhee's opposition to an armistice, though there were those in the military who favored the option of a U.N. coup that would force Rhee to acquiesce to an armistice. Both the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense decided this action would be inconsistent with America's stated goals in Korea, and decided that to gain Rhee's assent to an armistice agreement the United States would offer a bilateral security pact--even though this threatened to undermine the collective security aspects of the Korean intervention.

Washington created unnecessary problems for itself by failing to have firm control over the subordinates assigned to implement American policy. Washington also created problems for itself by failing to make it very clear in 1950 that it had a substantial interest in Korea's future despite the absence of American troops. Finally, Washington created

problem by failing to restrain MacArthur's military moves in Korea adequately, because no one in the bureaucracy wanted to take a chance on advocating such a policy--which is the nature of any bureaucracy. While it is possible that restraining MacArthur in November might have come too late, there can be little doubt that Washington sensed a dangerous situation in Korea and allowed it to explode without taking a decisive stand to prevent it.

United States policy in Korea from 1945-1953 was an extension of the development of a growing American involvement in Asia. Japan and China received the primary emphasis, with the Philippines, Indonesia, Indochina, and Korea occupying lesser positions in U.S. plans. With the fall of China in 1949, the United States moved to strengthen its position in those areas still remaining open to a U.S. influence. Japan was to be strengthened and the U.S. military presence on Okinawa was to be increased. At the same time, the United States re-examined its policy in Indochina. A number of high-ranking U.S. officials made statements in 1950, not all of which were public, demonstrating America's interest in maintaining South Korea's existence as part of the existing power structure in Asia. The invasion of South Korea was seen as a Soviet attack on the system the United States was trying to build in Asia, thus requiring a response if American policy was to have any credibility. Though the imponderables of ideology or idealism influenced the decision to intervene,

the United States acted in Korea in consonance with what was perceived to be America's self-interest.

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