

The Korean War: An Interpretative Essay

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THIS IS an interpretative essay on the origins of the Korean War and the American response to its outbreak. I do not attempt to review various interpretations systematically. I comment on them only to develop my own views on the meaning of the Korean War. The first part of the essay emphasizes the thesis that the outbreak of the Korean War gave the Americans an opportunity to draw a clear line of containment in East Asia and thus relieved them from psychological tension caused by ambiguity in the containment policy in East Asia. In the second part of the essay, I discuss the significance of the Korean War, taking my cue from Lisle A. Rose's remark that Korea did for the Cold War what Pearl Harbor had done for World War II.

I

A CHANCE TO "DRAW THE LINE"

Convergence of Three Lines

According to the Republic of Korea Army (ROKA) reports, which were partly confirmed by the U.S. Military Advisory Group to the Republic of Korea (KMAG) members, on Sunday, June 25, 1950 at 4:00 a.m. (3:00 p.m., June 24, Washington time), North Korean forces suddenly opened fire across the 38th parallel and at about 6:00 a.m., then

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crossed the parallel and invaded South Korea. At 9:26 p.m., June 24, the State Department received a telegram from the American ambassador in Seoul, John J. Muccio, which concluded: "It would appear from the nature of the attack and manner in which it was launched that it constitutes all-out offensive against ROK."¹

Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs Dean Rusk, on the basis of this single telegram from Muccio and without any other verifying report, decided to lodge an appeal with the United Nations. After conferring with Assistant Secretary of State for United Nations Affairs John D. Hickerson concerning the draft of a written protest to the U.N. Security Council, Rusk urgently telephoned Secretary of State Dean G. Acheson.

In retrospect, it seems strange that Rusk drafted this appeal to the United Nations solely on the basis of a single telegram from Ambassador Muccio, without other verification. His action suggests that there might be substance to the "conspiracy theory" advocated by revisionist scholars. However, according to State Department records:

By 2 a.m. no further information about the course of events in Korea had been obtained. It was considered, however, of utmost importance that *the decision to present the case to the Security Council should appear in the morning papers simultaneously with the news of the North Korean attack*. Therefore the Secretary made the final decision to go to the Security Council shortly in advance of the press deadline.²

Furthermore, Ambassador Muccio's reputation in the State Department for careful reporting increased the telegram's credibility.³

While waiting for Acheson to arrive at the State Department, Rusk and Hickerson polished the draft of a U.N. resolution and, with Acheson's approval, at 11:20 p.m. reported by phone to President Harry S. Truman at his home in Independence, Missouri. Truman agreed to an emergency convocation of the U.N. Security Council. By 11:30 p.m. Hickerson had contacted Secretary-General Trygve Lie, and on the morning of June 25, aided by the absence of the Soviet Union's representative, the United States and its allies passed a resolution calling for the immediate cessation of hostilities by the Democratic People's

¹ *Foreign Relations of the United States* (hereafter cited as *FRUS*) 1950, Vol. 7, pp. 125–26.

² *Ibid.*, editorial note, p. 128 (emphasis added).

³ Glenn D. Paige, *The Korean Decision* (New York, 1968), p. 91.

Republic of Korea (DPRK) and the complete withdrawal of its forces.⁴

Initial reports from the battlefield in Korea were fragmentary and unclear due to the rapidly shifting and confusing situation. Even the ROK government was unable for some time to determine whether a full-scale attack had begun; however, there was general optimism in Seoul that the South Korean army could repulse the North Korean attack. In Tokyo, the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, General Douglas MacArthur, at first thought the fighting was one of the many limited border skirmishes that had recently taken place. During the morning of June 25, shortly after the South Korean army reported the attack, Pyongyang issued an official statement that reported resistance by North Korean forces to an invasion by the South. Communist Chinese newspaper accounts showed uncertainty about the events, in contrast with Moscow, which parroted Pyongyang's reports.

Washington quickly responded militarily. During the morning of June 25, an official telegram from William Sebold, the State Department's Acting Political Adviser in Japan, conveyed the hard-line views of State Department Adviser John Foster Dulles and the director of the Office of Northeast Asian Affairs, John Allison, who were in Tokyo:

It is possible that South Koreans may themselves contain and repulse attack and, if so, this is best way. If, however, it appears that they cannot do so then we believe that US force should be used even though this risks Russian counter moves. To sit by while Korea is overrun by unprovoked armed attack would start disastrous chain of events leading most probably to world war. We suggest that Security Council might call for action on behalf of the organization under Article 106 by the five powers or such of them as are willing to respond.⁵

⁴ The Soviet Union's boycott of the U.N., which had begun six months prior to the outbreak of the Korean War, enabled the organization to authorize American intervention and was a major failure for Moscow. However, Robert R. Simmons' interpretation, that this factor can be understood only as part of the Soviet Union's strategy to prevent an approach to the West by the People's Republic of China (PRC) and that it proves that the timing of North Korea's attack was earlier than the Soviets had expected, is too pat. Simmons' work is a typical interpretation of the facts on the basis of hindsight. His theory assumes what Graham T. Allison has called "the rational actor model." In assuming that foreign policy decision-makers can foresee everything and predict all the results, Simmons shares a similarity with many revisionists. Robert R. Simmons, *The Strained Alliance, Pyongyang, Moscow, and the Politics of the Korean Civil War* (New York, 1975), Chapter 4.

⁵ *FRUS, 1950*, Vol. 7, p. 140.

According to the analysis of the situation on June 25 by the State Department's Office of Intelligence and Research:

I. Prospects in Korea

- A. The North Korean objective in invading South Korea is outright control over the Korean peninsula. North Korea presently intends to attain a decisive victory through the capture of Seoul in the next 7-day period. . . .

II. U.S.S.R. Motivations

- B. The North Korean Government is completely under Kremlin control and there is no possibility that the North Koreans acted without prior instruction from Moscow. The move against South Korea must therefore be considered a Soviet move.⁶

It is particularly significant that this analysis did not regard the Kremlin objectives as a "limited response" to impending negotiations on a Japanese peace treaty or U.S. economic aid to Indo-China and Korea, but as part of a global strategy which assumed there was no threat of intervention in South Korea by the U.S. military.

The analysis linked the invasion of South Korea to the four conceivable objectives: 1) a *test* of U.S. determination in connection with such possible actions as Chinese Communist support of Ho Chi Minh and communist insurgents in Burma and Malaya, an attack on Yugoslavia by Soviet-bloc satellites or Russian moves in Germany and Iran; 2) a blow to U.S. prestige throughout Asia; 3) the establishment of Soviet military control of the Korean peninsula, one of the approaches to the Soviet mainland, the same objective that Moscow pursued in the Baltic Sea, the Black Sea, and Iran; 4) the control of whole Korea as a strong weapon to threaten Japan if she allied herself with the U.S. in the future. The analysis stressed that "the invasion will be most important in Japan," and warned that the "failure of the United States to take any action in Korea would strengthen the existing widespread desire for neutrality in Japan and would cause significant damage to U.S. prestige in Western Europe."⁷

As Truman later recalled, during the flight back to Washington on the presidential plane *Independence* on the afternoon of June 25, the surprise attack by North Korea reminded him of "some earlier instances:

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 148-49.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 148-54. Intelligence Estimate Prepared by the Estimates Groups, Office of Intelligence Research, Department of State.

Manchuria, Ethiopia, Austria” and “how each time that the democracies failed to act it had encouraged the aggressors to keep going ahead.” Truman resolved to respond firmly to “the communists who were acting in Korea just as Hitler, Mussolini, and the Japanese had acted ten, fifteen, twenty years earlier.”⁸

That night at 7:45 p.m., immediately after his arrival in Washington, the President met at Blair House with the following: Acheson, Under Secretary of State James Webb, Hickerson, Rusk, Ambassador-at-Large Philip Jessup, Secretary of Defense Louis A. Johnson, Secretary of the Army Frank Pace, Secretary of the Navy Francis P. Matthews, Secretary of the Air Force Thomas K. Finletter, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Omar Bradley, and the chief of staff for each service, General J. Lawton Collins (Army), Admiral Forrest P. Sherman (Navy) and General Hoyt S. Vandenberg (Air Force). The conference lasted nearly three hours and, with Acheson often speaking forcefully, approved five orders to be sent to General MacArthur, including the transfer of arms and ammunition to South Korea. According to recently released records, half of the conference was devoted to an analysis of the military strength and intentions of the Soviet Union. The discussion also touched upon the problem of intervention with ground forces on the Asian mainland. According to a memorandum of the meeting, “General Bradley said that we must *draw the line somewhere*” and again: “Russia is not yet ready for war. The Korean situation offered as good an *occasion for action in drawing the line* as anywhere else, and he agreed with the actions suggested by Mr. Acheson” (emphasis added). These included the use of air power in Korea, the isolation of Taiwan from the Chinese mainland by the Seventh Fleet, and aid to French Indo-China.⁹

U.S. cold-war strategy for Asia had drawn three lines: 1) a “line of demarcation,” e.g., the 38th parallel; 2) a “defensive perimeter” based on a calculation of costs in terms of wartime strategy; and 3) a “line of defense against communist subversion,” a concept which had been gaining support in Congress and with the public. Unlike Europe where the “containment” policy held firm, the inconsistencies among these lines were increasingly more apparent in Asia. The attack on South

⁸ Harry S. Truman, *Memoirs: Years of Trial and Hope, 1946–1952* (Garden City, N.Y., 1956), pp. 332–33. On the relationship between Truman’s decision to intervene and the “lessons of the past,” see Ernest R. May, “*Lessons*” of the Past: *The Use and Misuse of History in American Foreign Policy* (New York, 1973), pp. 52–86.

⁹ *FRUS, 1950*, Vol. 7, p. 158.

Korea provided a chance to end the ambiguity and *unilaterally* draw a *clear* "line of containment" against communism in Asia. Navy and Air Force leaders were excited about this golden opportunity.

State Department documents show clear differences among the military services. At the Blair House conference, Navy and Air Force leaders endorsed intervention, while the Army was unenthusiastic about committing ground forces. Sherman reportedly said: "The Russians do not want war now but if they do, they will have it. The present situation in Korea offers a valuable opportunity for us to act." He noted that "Korea is a strategic threat to Japan." Vandenberg also agreed to the use of ground forces in order to check the North Korean advance but said "he would not base our action on the assumption that the Russians would not fight." When Truman asked about Russian air power in the Far East, Vandenberg explained Soviet force dispositions, including the fact that "a considerable number of Russian jets are based on Shanghai." In response to the president's question whether "we could knock out their bases in the Far East," Vandenberg replied nonchalantly: "This might take some time. . . . [But] it could be done if we used A-Bombs."¹⁰

Army Secretary Pace disagreed with Finletter and Navy and Air Force leaders and "expressed doubts about the advisability of putting ground forces into Korea."¹¹ Defense Secretary Johnson also cautioned against giving too much discretionary authority to General MacArthur and "was opposed to committing ground troops in Korea."¹²

Another intriguing aspect of the first Blair House conference is that at the outset Acheson read a memo from MacArthur stating the importance of the defense of Taiwan and then proposed that Taiwan be neutralized by the Seventh Fleet. Truman did not make a decision on this proposal at the meeting but cautiously deferred it until later. But this does not mean, as far as the records show, that any of the participants challenged Acheson's proposal.¹³

On June 26, reports that North Korea had ignored the U.N. resolution and was breaking through South Korean lines on all fronts reached Washington. That night President Truman held another meeting at Blair House that lasted about one hour. Truman authorized the

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 160.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 157-61; Paige, *Korean Decision*, pp. 125-41.

Seventh Fleet to blockade the Taiwan Straits, military aid to the French in Indo-China and combat operations by the U.S. Air Force and Navy to support South Korea.

Early in the morning on Tuesday, June 27, State Department officials hurriedly drafted a public statement for President Truman. At 11:30 a.m., following Acheson's briefing to Congressional leaders about the situation in Korea, the President made his announcement:

“ . . . The attack upon Korea makes it plain beyond all doubt that Communism has passed beyond the use of subversion to conquer independent nations and will now use armed invasion and war. . . .

Accordingly I have ordered the Seventh Fleet to prevent any attack on Formosa. As a corollary of this action I am calling upon the Chinese government on Formosa to cease all air and sea operations against the mainland.”

This action initiated Truman's policy of “neutralizing” Taiwan.¹⁴ At the same time, he made important commitments such as the reinforcement of the United States military in the Philippines and the offer of military assistance and the dispatch of a military mission to aid the French and the Associated States in Indo-China.¹⁵

The President's statement was warmly endorsed by public opinion. This was best symbolized by the support of Senator William F. Knowland, who had been a strong opponent of Truman's Asian policy. Knowland said the United States had drawn a line in the Far East which would eventually have had to be drawn.¹⁶

On June 29, President Truman, on the recommendation of his military

¹⁴ Although the significance of the President's action was not fully understood in the United States, the PRC saw Truman's decision on June 27 to close the Taiwan Straits as a major shift in America's China policy and a direct challenge. As Chou En-lai said to Edgar Snow in 1960, “*Beginning from that time the United States started a new aggression against China.*” Edgar Snow, *The Other Side of the River: Red China Today*, (New York, 1962), p. 88. As Warren I. Cohen comments, “Once the United States decided to defend South Korea, which had also been placed beyond the ‘defensive perimeter,’ it would be increasingly difficult to explain why Taiwan should not be defended.” Warren I. Cohen, *America's Response to China* (New York, 1971), p. 202. Yet an examination of Acheson's July 10 memorandum to the British Embassy suggests that in addition to this negative reasoning, the “neutralization” was a precautionary measure to prevent Taiwan from becoming a Russian naval and air base if the fighting in Korea turned into war with the Soviet Union. *FRUS, 1950*, Vol. 7, p. 350.

¹⁵ *FRUS, 1950*, Vol. 7, pp. 178–83.

¹⁶ Fujii Kamiya, *Chōsen sensō—Beichū taiketsu no genkei* [The Korean War: Prototype of Sino-American Confrontation] (Tokyo: Chuo Koron-sha, 1966), p. 43.

advisers, approved bombing raids north of the 38th parallel, which General MacArthur had already authorized on his own initiative. He also approved the first commitment of ground combat forces in order to defend a port, an airfield, and the communications facilities in the vicinity of Pusan.¹⁷ At 5 a.m., June 30, President Truman, after consulting Secretary Pace, approved the request for ground forces made on the basis of MacArthur's personal reconnaissance of the battle area and evaluation of the situation. Truman approved the dispatch to Korea of one regimental combat team formed from the Twenty-fourth Infantry Division, one of the four U.S. divisions stationed on the Japanese mainland.¹⁸

There was no consideration of a limit to the ground forces being committed, the possibility of intervention by Soviet ground forces, or the maximum acceptable number of casualties when these commitments were made. The decision on the first post-World War II intervention by U.S. ground forces on the Asian continent was made over the telephone. At the White House meeting several hours later, the President, by way of confirmation, consulted Acheson, Johnson, the three chiefs of staff, and Averell Harriman, who had on his own initiative hastily returned from Paris, and several others. The meeting lasted one and a half hours, and Truman approved all of General MacArthur's recommendations. Truman decided to mobilize all resources, including ground units, in order to prevent, at all costs, communist forces from overrunning South Korea. A full-fledged military intervention on the Asian continent had begun. It included the previously decided blockade of the Taiwan Straits by the Seventh Fleet to protect the Nationalist government and greatly increased economic and military assistance to the Philippines and Indo-China. The "cold war" that had begun in Europe three years earlier was suddenly a "hot war" in Asia.

The Depth Psychology of the American Response

From 1947 American attention was focused on the East-West confrontation in Europe: the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, the Berlin airlift, the *coup d'état* in Czechoslovakia, the formation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and the rearmament of West Germany. Interest in Asia after the summer of 1949 centered on the "containment of Communist China"; there was little concern with

¹⁷ Paige, *Korean Decision*, p. 245.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 256.

realpolitik in Asia. As long as Europe was the main theater of confrontation, both the American and Soviet blocs were very cautious even in Europe's peripheral areas; because of the interests at stake and the strategic importance, the risk and cost of a direct clash were prohibitively high. The confrontation was kept at the cold war level. On the other hand, since Asia was merely a "second front as in World War II," military actions there could be regarded as "risk-free." U.S. leaders predicted that their intervention in Korea would not develop into a military showdown with the Soviet Union or China.¹⁹

In his decisions during the Korean crisis Truman scrapped the cold war strategy for Asia that had been carefully worked out by specialists in the bureaucracy, including the withdrawal of U.S. troops from the Korean peninsula between late 1948 and June 1949. Truman's decision to commit American forces surprised General MacArthur, Vice-Admiral C. Turner Joy and other senior military officers in the Far East.²⁰

As shown in various public documents, the "line of containment" in Asia differed from the "line of demarcation" at the 38th parallel in Korea and the 16th parallel in Indo-China. As indicated in both Truman's "non-intervention in Taiwan" statement on January 5, 1950, and Acheson's famous National Press Club speech one week later, the "line of containment" was a minimum "defensive perimeter" calculated from a strategic cost-benefit analysis. In such aspects as respect for Asian nationalism, the long-term assessment of a Sino-Soviet split, emphasis on the self-reliance and independence of Asians, and the principle of non-intervention on the Asian continent, the defensive perimeter policy was very similar to the Nixon Doctrine twenty years later and the Asian policy of the Carter administration. Unlike the earlier "romantic" Asian policy, it had a realistic basis. Nevertheless, the United States seized the opportunity afforded by the outbreak of fighting in Korea to abandon the relatively limited concept of "containment" and opened the way toward the "globalization and militarization of containment."²¹

¹⁹ Comment by Prof. George Kahin in *Sengo Ajia no kokusai kankyō* [The International Environment in Postwar Asia], *Kokusai kankyō ni kansuru kisoteki kenkyū* [Basic Problems in the International Environment] (Tokyo, Office of Kokusai Kankyo-ken, Tokyo Institute of Technology [Mimeograph], 1977) pp. 50–51.

²⁰ For a statement by Vice Admiral C. Turner Joy in October 1950, see Paige, *Korean Decision*, pp. 181–82.

²¹ Raymond Aron, *The Imperial Republic: The United States and the World, 1945–1973* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1974), pp. 43–53, 297–310; John Lewis Gaddis,

Why did this change occur? According to Ernest R. May: "The answer is not, I think, that American policy had changed, nor, though closer to the truth, that there were two policies which happened to collide. Rather, it is that the United States had two *kinds* of policies, namely, a calculated policy and an axiomatic policy." Acheson's National Press Club speech (and NSC 48 documents) represented the former "calculated policy"; the actions taken by Truman five months later, like the unexpected response of Dulles to the Suez Crisis of 1956, did not.²² Truman's actions were based on the bitter lesson of Munich—that appeasement whets an aggressor's appetite—but they were also an instinctive response, which is "axiomatic" in that it is deeply rooted in the historical experience and traditions of America. This reversion phenomenon is like the sudden use of a childhood dialect in a crisis situation. If rational policy is the product of "conscious" calculation, "axiomatic policy" stems from the "collective subconscious" of the American people. In this sense, May has described the essence of the problem.

However, we must treat policy formation in the context of U.S. political dynamics. Various domestic forces including Congress, public opinion, and the military, had been profoundly shocked twice before the Korean War: first with the "loss of China" and next with the end of the U.S. monopoly of the atomic bomb. From the summer of 1949 through early 1950 these developments caused a rapid change of mood and generated momentum toward the "globalization and militarization of containment." Since the summer of 1949 the change in public opinion had been lowering day by day the threshold of response to outside stimuli, and the Korean war was indeed a "catalyst."

Facts are, of course, eloquent and persuasive. Historical facts, however, do not exist in a vacuum. We want to know in what context the American ruling elite perceived the series of developments in Korea; through what "conceptual lens" they defined the situation; on the basis of their perception of the situation, how they acted and reacted.

Due to the vast flow of information and the overload of "static" in the huge, complex policy-making mechanism, there is a tendency to avoid the cost of "cognitive dissonance" which accompanies the revision of

"Was the Truman Doctrine a Real Turning Point?" *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 52, no. 2 (January 1974), pp. 386–402.

²² Ernest R. May, "The Nature of Foreign Policy: the Calculated versus the Axiomatic," *Daedalus*, Vol. 91, no. 4 (Fall 1962), pp. 653–67.

“operating assumptions.” Therefore the “past experience” and the “lessons of history” buried in the “collective subconscious” of the policy-making elite of the same generation, plus their prejudices (*idées fixes*) and presuppositions, are often the basis for their actions and decisions.²³

Accidental Empire?

Raymond Aron’s and John L. Gaddis’ interpretation of the Korean War as a “true turning point” in America’s foreign policy is correct as far as it goes. But it is more fruitful to view the Korean War as having a strong “catalytic effect” on the formation of a domestic “cold war consensus” which was already emerging. This interpretation does not imply that the American elite had *foreseen* and prepared for the Korean War. To U.S. leaders, it was literally a “surprise attack” in terms of where and when it occurred, and in many ways the invasion of South Korea resembled the attack on Pearl Harbor. Contrary to the proponents of historical inevitability, events are fraught with chance occurrences and insane twists. As A. J. P. Taylor continually emphasizes, for the most part political leaders cannot control situations and tend to be the “prisoners of events” following in their wake. They can sometimes use a chance event to accomplish a cherished political goal (for example, Acheson’s strategy after the Korean War began). However, is Aron correct in asserting the following?

The extension of the doctrine of containment to Asia, the result of an event, or perhaps an accident, was precisely as reasonable as the United States’ replacing of Great Britain as the power which guaranteed the balance in Europe and as the protector of the peripheral states (Turkey and Greece). Japan would not have tolerated the reconstitution of a unified Korea under a

²³ The leaders of the United States were predisposed to view the various developments in Asia not as *limited* geographically and temporally, but as malignantly *expansionist*. The standard reference used to expand a development *temporally* was to equate it with the “lesson of Munich”; the technique *spatially* was to equate communism with Nazism, using the symbol of “totalitarianism.” Ernest R. May, quoting the work of Thomas Lifka, notes that American government leaders had developed a symbol of “totalitarianism” in which the Soviet Union was equivalent to Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany.²⁵ Both traditionalists and revisionists generally agree that Stalin’s postwar interventions in other countries were for limited goals (although in terms of method and style, he seemed a reincarnation of Genghis Khan, in Stanley Hoffman’s phrase). Thus to equate the Soviet Union with Nazi Germany by the word “totalitarianism,” and to label Soviet foreign policy as expansionism and adventurism by using the rallying cry, “the lesson of Munich,” caused many serious errors of interpretation and policy.

hostile government, and the United States, which had taken over the burdens of Japanese sovereignty, acted as any Japanese government would have acted; even if Truman and Acheson were not thoroughly conscious of their historical role, their action lay in a direction consistent with an objective logic which philosophers would ascribe to Hegel's Cunning of Reason.²⁴

According to this view, the "accident" of the Korean War made the United States, against its will, take "imperialist actions" and America's postwar global intervention created the unavoidable evil of an "Accidental Empire."²⁵ Let us take this interpretation to its logical conclusion: on the one hand, the policy of the Truman administration until immediately prior to the Korean War becomes extremely rational; on the other hand, all responsibility for the later anti-communist or cold war policy falls on the "chance incident" of the Moscow-instigated North Korean attack. Ultimately, this logic leads us to Gaddis's supposition:

Speculation about what did not happen is always perilous, but it does seem possible that the policies of Truman, Marshall, and Acheson, had they been allowed to run their course, might have resulted in the evolution of a multipolar world operating on balance-of-power principles, a world closely resembling the 19th-century international order . . . a world not too different, ironically enough, from that now apparently sought by Henry Kissinger and Richard M. Nixon.²⁶

Aron and Gaddis go too far on both fronts: the rational aspect "calculated" by a small decision-making elite and the "contingent" quality of historical events. This is analogous to explaining the indiscriminate bombing of cities during World War II, which led to the incendiary attacks on Tokyo and Dresden and the use of atomic bombs against Hiroshima and Nagasaki, as the result of a navigational error by a few of the 170 German bombers that attacked England at dawn on August 12, 1940. It was during that raid that ten German planes inadvertently attacked civilian targets. A more plausible explanation would be that unrestrained air power was the inevitable result of the

²⁴ Aron, *The Imperial Republic*, p. 301.

²⁵ Ronald Steel, *Pax Americana* (New York, 1968), revised edition, p. 17. Concerning the argument on America's globalism and imperialism, see Robert W. Tucker, *The Radical Left and America's Foreign Policy* (Baltimore and London, 1971). See also in the same Johns Hopkins University series: Robert W. Tucker, *Nation or Empire? The Debate over American Foreign Policy* (Baltimore, 1968); and George Liska, *Imperial America: The International Politics of Primacy* (1967) and *War and Order: Reflections on Vietnam and History* (1968).

²⁶ Gaddis, "Was the Truman Doctrine a Real Turning Point?" p. 393.

basic American and English strategy of maximizing their technological efficiency, a characteristic of metropolitan powers.

In the early 1970's Richard M. Nixon and Henry A. Kissinger, seeking a 19th-century style balance of power, introduced a "Royal-Court" model of foreign policy making in which "the personality of the key decision-maker and his operating style become crucially important."²⁷ The domestic political cost of this diplomacy turned out to be high for its practitioners: the Watergate scandal and Nixon's resignation. A liberal reaction led to the Carter administration's "human rights diplomacy" and "open diplomacy." American foreign policy is now enveloped, in George F. Kennan's phrase, in "clouds of danger." Such recent trends indicate the extent to which U.S. foreign policy decisions are ultimately controlled by domestic factors—the political system, style, and values.

II

A COLD-WAR PEARL HARBOR

"Was it a surprise?"

The Korean War's importance to the cold war is analogous to the significance of Pearl Harbor for World War II. There are five noteworthy similarities.

First, a lively debate over the origins of the Korean War continues but, as John Gaddis states, "there does appear to be general agreement at least that the timing and location of the attack came as a surprise to Washington officials."²⁸ In December 1941 and June 1950, despite the superfluity of "warnings" from intelligence agencies, the confusion of "signals" and "noise" based on an "information and communications overload" made it impossible to select the correct signals from the mass

²⁷ Wilfrid L. Kohl, "The Nixon-Kissinger Foreign Policy System and U.S.-European Relations: Patterns of Policy Making," *World Politics*, Vol. 28, no. 1 (October 1975), p. 3.

²⁸ See Gaddis' article, "Korea in American Politics, Strategy, and Diplomacy, 1945-50," in Yonosuke Nagai and Akira Iriye, eds., *The Origins of the Cold War in Asia* (Tokyo and New York, 1977), p. 286. However, Gaddis errs in including Robert Simmons' interpretation among the surprise-attack theories.³¹ Simmons states: While Washington may have been surprised by the *location* of the war, however, the record unambiguously demonstrates that it saw the war as the serendipitous occasion needed to legitimize an international posture that had already been decided upon at the highest levels of American government.³²

of information.²⁹ As an intelligence failure, Korea closely resembled Pearl Harbor; and this was one reason why a “conspiracy theory” developed about the U.S. government’s role in the outbreak of the Korean War.

In I. F. Stone’s famous *The Hidden History of the Korean War*, which corresponds to Charles Beard’s research on Pearl Harbor, Stone asserts that “. . . the attack in Korea was not a surprise at all,” and cites the testimony of Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Director Rear Admiral Roscoe H. Hillenkoetter.³⁰ It is true that Hillenkoetter attended an unofficial hearing of the Senate Appropriations Committee on June 26 and attempted to prove that the CIA had not been caught napping. Stone points out that the evaluation of these intelligence reports was mainly the responsibility of MacArthur’s headquarters in Tokyo. He suggests that to have ignored the reports of danger on the Korean peninsula, despite the constant concern of SCAP headquarters for several months with the danger of a Communist attack on Taiwan, was unlike MacArthur. Stone exhibits a typical confusion of motive and effect based on hindsight when he asserts: “It would be easier to believe, in the light of what happened afterward—when the Korean War reversed American policy not only on Korea, but also on Formosa—that MacArthur preferred to ‘play dumb,’ that Korea was a pawn to be sacrificed in a bigger game. . . .”³¹

In Seizaburo Shinobu’s *Chōsen sensō no boppatsu* [The Outbreak of the Korean War] the author gives detailed criticism of Stone’s assertion, what Stone called “only surmise,” so I will omit a critique here. However, it should be pointed out that the contents of the CIA memorandum (June 19, 1950) quoted by Hillenkoetter can now be verified from U.S. diplomatic documents.³² Shinobu is clearly correct and Stone is wrong. The CIA memorandum is a typical bureaucratic document, full of conditional expressions and subject to various interpretations. It concludes: “Despite the apparent military superiority of northern over southern Korea, it is not certain that the northern regime, lacking the active participation of Soviet and Chinese Communist

²⁹ Roberta Wohlstetter, *Pearl Harbor: Warning and Decision* (Stanford, Calif., 1972).

³⁰ I. F. Stone, *The Hidden History of the Korean War* (New York, 1952), p. 1 ff. See also Stephen E. Ambrose, *Rise to Globalism: American Foreign Policy Since 1938* (Baltimore, 1971), pp. 109–121.

³¹ Stone, *Hidden History*, p. 20.

³² *FRUS, 1950*, Vol. 7, pp. 109–21. Memorandum by the Central Intelligence Agency.

military units, would be able to gain effective control over all of southern Korea.”³³ In Annex D “Current Military Situation,” there was a tentative warning:

Northern Korea’s military forces are still being expanded. So far as the ground forces are concerned, this process involves the integration into the ‘People’s Army’ of local recruits and of Korean troops that have seen service under the Chinese Communists in Manchuria, as well as the equipping of this force with small arms, artillery, vehicles, aircraft, and armor from the U.S.S.R. Trained and equipped units of the Communist ‘People’s Army’ are being deployed southward in the area of the 38th Parallel. . . . ”³⁴

However, the general thrust of the analysis is that North Korea’s main strategy is guerrilla warfare to weaken and destroy South Korea from within; nowhere in the report is there an urgent warning that an attack by regular North Korean forces was imminent.

The problem is the conceptual framework, premises and pre-suppositions with which the decision-makers selected and evaluated information from the mass of reports. Rumors of an attack by North Korea supported by the Soviet Union had been continuous since 1945, but they increased in the summer of 1949 after the withdrawal of the U.S. troops. However, as I have discussed elsewhere, from late 1949 to early 1950 military planners in Washington were preoccupied with a strategic analysis of an all-out nuclear war against the Soviet Union in which Europe would be the main theater. In such a war, entanglement in Korea would add responsibilities and drain off the numerically inferior American forces; therefore military strategists strongly preferred to avoid intervention. It is true that after April 1950, Washington began, on the recommendations of Acheson and Kennan, to consider the possibility of a “limited war.” U.S. leaders were concerned about limited attacks on “soft-spots” along the periphery of the Soviet block—Berlin, Turkey, Greece, Iran and elsewhere, and these considerations were reflected in NSC 68. However, among the many possible targets, the Korean peninsula was considered the least likely. In mid-July 1949, Major General W. E. Todd, director, joint intelligence group, Joint Chiefs of Staff, testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that, “We feel that if the Soviets attach any priority to areas in which they would like to move by means of armed aggression, Korea would be

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

at the bottom in that list of priorities.³⁵ There is no evidence that the list was revised before June 25, 1950.³⁶

The case of Pearl Harbor again comes to mind. In 1941 U.S. officials were convinced that if Japan attacked in the Pacific, it would be in the south, Malaya or the Philippines. Similarly, in 1950 Washington analysts anticipated an attack by the Chinese Communists against Taiwan. But since the North Korean forces were considered completely under Moscow's control, U.S. officials thought the Soviet Union would be unlikely to provoke an incident in Korea which, to the United States, seemed of little importance. The Korean peninsula was a blind spot.

Although it is difficult to accept now, in 1950 U.S. military leaders from MacArthur down, and prominent civilians like Dulles, also overestimated the capabilities of the South Korean army. We may recall, for example, the Dulles-Allison telegram to the State Department cited earlier: "It is possible that South Koreans may themselves contain and repulse attack and, if so, this is best way."³⁷

Some suspicious revisionists may regard this telegram as part of a plot by Dulles and MacArthur to hoodwink Washington. Thus it is better to quote the aforementioned CIA memorandum, which was the most pessimistic analysis of the situation. Annex E noted that while South Korea's military position was not substantially inferior to the North's, a

³⁵ U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, *Economic Assistance to China and Korea, 1949-50*, 81st Congress, 1st and 2nd Sess. (Washington, 1974), p. 176.

³⁶ Simmon's partial quotation of Kennan is unfair. According to Kennan's *Memoirs*: "At some time in late May or early June, 1950, some of us who were particularly concerned with Russian affairs in the department were puzzled to note, among the vast 'take' of information that flows daily into the ample maw of that institution, data suggesting that somewhere across the broad globe the armed forces of some Communist power were expecting soon to go into action. An intensive scrutiny of the Soviet situation satisfied us that it was not Soviet forces to which these indications related. This left us with the forces of the various satellite regimes, but which? Summoning the various experts to the table, we toured the horizon. Korea came up in due turn. For information about military matters in that country, we were dependent on a long and indirect chain of communication, passing through two military establishments, as I recall it; the one in Japan and the Pentagon in Washington. The word that reached us through this indirect route was that an inauguration of military operations from the Communist side in that country was practically out of the question; the South Korean forces were so well armed and trained that they were clearly superior to those of the Communist north; our greatest task, we were told, was to restrain the South Koreans from resorting to arms to settle their differences with the north. Having no grounds to challenge this judgment, I accepted it (I have always reproached myself for doing so) and we passed on to other things." George F. Kennan, *Memoirs: 1925-1950* (Boston, 1967), pp. 484-85. The military authorities and the intelligence agencies were clearly captives of their "preconceptions" and ignored Kennan's tentative alarm.

³⁷ *FRUS, 1950*, Vol. 7, p. 140.

major portion of the ROK army was engaged in suppressing Communist guerrillas and could not be deployed along the strategic corridors near the 38th parallel. Nonetheless, it asserted that “the Republic’s anti-Communist program has also materially reduced the Communists’ ability to infiltrate Southern Korean government and political organizations.”³⁸ From the wording of this section and the report’s conclusion, the memorandum clearly did not emphasize an increase in South Korea’s military strength; it advocated expanding the anti-guerrilla campaign by strengthening the South’s political infrastructure through economic aid.

The memorandum concluded by listing four “key factors” in preventing Communist domination of South Korea: “1) the anti-Communist attitude of the Southern Koreans; 2) a continuing will to resist on the part of Southern troops; 3) the Communist regime’s lack of popular support; and 4) the regime’s lack of trained administrators and technicians.” Nowhere in the memorandum did its authors advocate the expansion of the South Korean army against a possible attack by regular North Korean forces.³⁹

A Classic Example of a Surprise Attack

Max Beloff has written that Pearl Harbor was technologically and strategically a classic case of a preemptive attack launched to compensate for a lack of real strength. The North Korean attack was also, in terms of military tactics and foreign policy strategy, a preemptive attack induced by rapid changes in the balance of power in Asia—the collapse of the Yalta system—following the Chinese Communist victory in the summer of 1949.

The breakdown of the Yalta system had created a *spatial* and *temporal* vacuum in the Korean peninsula. On the *temporal* horizon, Simmons asserts: “Probably a contributory factor in Pyongyang’s decision to invade was a desire to disarm Rhee’s military machine before—as seemed likely to happen in the near future—it became too powerful to contend with.”⁴⁰ Japanese military leaders had a similar fear just prior to World War II: afraid of a “slow death” through economic strangulation, they took drastic action which resulted in a “violent death.”

In other words, the North Koreans, who had tried by political

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 121.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

⁴⁰ Simmons, *The Strained Alliance*, p. 114.

subversion and guerrilla violence to topple South Korea without success, saw that their long-term prospects were unfavorable. North Korea's leaders foresaw that *as time went on*, the United States would provide more economic and military assistance to Seoul and the South would become militarily more formidable. In the international arena as well, the United States was moving toward a separate peace treaty with Japan which, to the Communists at least, portended the rearmament of Japan under a U.S.-Japan military alliance, vast military assistance to the Chinese Nationalists on Taiwan, and permanent U.S. military bases on the Japanese mainland and Okinawa.

In the *spatial* dimension, Acheson's National Press Club speech and other authoritative statements by U.S. officials had placed South Korea outside the defensive line. There was a widening gap between the "line of demarcation" at the 38th parallel and the "line of military defense." Thus, although *the long-term outlook was pessimistic* for the North Koreans, in the short term there was suddenly a spatial and temporal vacuum. Conditions were optimum for a "surprise" or "preemptive" attack. The study by Scalapino and Lee, and those by Okonogi, Simmons, and others, who have examined the internal political forces, suggest that the North Koreans' analysis of the political situation in South Korea led them to believe they had a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. It is quite conceivable that the North Korean leadership secretly prepared for the attack with great speed from June 10 to June 25.⁴¹

Globalization of a Regional Civil War

A third similarity with Pearl Harbor is the ripple effect. The Japanese attack in 1941 suddenly escalated the regional wars in Europe and Asia, which until then had developed independently, into a global conflict, the Second World War. Likewise, the Korean War linked the regional cold

⁴¹ Robert A. Scalapino and Chong-Sik Lee, *Communism in Korea*, 2 parts (Berkeley, Calif., 1972), Part I, pp. 394–95. See also, Simmons, *The Strained Alliance*; Masao Okonogi, "Minzoku kaihō sensō toshite no Chōsen sensō—kakumei ninshiki no sanruikei" [The Korean War as a War of National Liberation—Three Types of Revolutionary Consciousness] *Hōgaku kenkyū*, Vol. 48, no. 3 (March 1975); "Minzoku kaihō sensō toshite no Chōsen sensō—kakumei to sensō no kōsaku" [The Korean War as a War of National Liberation—A Combination of Revolution and War], *Kokusai mondai*, no. 182 (May, 1975); and "The Domestic Roots of the Korean War," in Nagai and Iriye, eds., *The Origins of the Cold War in Asia*, pp. 299–320. Concerning recent issues in research on the Korean War, see Hajime Izumi, "Chōsen sensō kenkyū no shindankai" [A New Stage in Research on the Korean War], in *Kyōsanshugi to kokusai seiji* [Communism and International Politics], Vol. 1, no. 1 (September 1976).

wars in Europe and Asia, and U.S. policy shifted dramatically from “limited containment” to a global, militarized “unlimited containment.”

Despite the emphasis of recent research on the civil-war nature of the Korean conflict, we must never lose sight of the international environment; in this broader context the Korean War was an “international civil war.” This is not to imply that the North Koreans were a “puppet army” ordered to attack by Moscow. As indicated in Khrushchev’s *Memoirs* and as emphasized by Okonogi and Simmons, the internal or indigenous causes of the Korean War must be considered. However, the perception of political reality is not a debate in a university seminar: the question is not whether the Korean War was or was not a civil war. The communist side defined the conflict as a “civil war” because they hoped the United States would not intervene; Washington did not define it as a “civil war” because, for different reasons, the Truman administration thought it had to intervene. Consequently, as Marshall Shulman has pointed out, the problem is why

the communist attack against South Korea, *instead of being interpreted primarily in the local context of developments in Asia*, came to be understood in the West, and I believe wrongly, as an indication of heightened Soviet militancy generally, which might also manifest itself by overt aggression in Europe and elsewhere.⁴²

It is quite possible to regard the North Korean invasion as essentially a preemptive strike like the final attack by North Vietnam on South Vietnam. Seen in this light, the attack utilized the favorable conditions for “localization of the conflict” after the withdrawal of American and Soviet troops from the Korean peninsula, and aimed at causing the collapse of the Rhee regime, which was very shaky after its defeat in the May 1950 elections. However, as Charles Bohlen states in his memoirs, the contention that “the war was not started by the Soviet Union but by an independent act of the North Koreans . . . is childish nonsense.” It is extremely doubtful whether “an army, trained in every respect by the Soviet Union, with Soviet advisers at every level, and utterly dependent on Moscow for supplies [could] move without Soviet authorization.”⁴³ Bohlen spent a month in Washington in the summer of 1950 analyzing “whether the Korean invasion was the forerunner of similar Communist

⁴² Marshall D. Shulman, *Beyond the Cold War* (New Haven, 1966), p. 8 (emphasis added).

⁴³ Charles E. Bohlen, *Witness to History, 1929–1969* (New York, 1973), p. 294.

military moves elsewhere in the world.” Bohlen’s conclusion, shared by Kennan, was quite sound: “There was little chance of the Soviet Union’s repeating the invasion in any other place, such as Germany. The Soviet action in Korea was limited strictly to Korea.”⁴⁴

Fourth, as internationalized regional clashes the Pacific War and the Korean War were both peculiarly “asymmetric conflicts.”⁴⁵ Post-1945 “wars of national liberation” such as the first Indo-Chinese War, the Algerian War, and the Vietnam War, were all classic “asymmetric conflicts.” The expeditionary forces of the metropolitan power, France or America, could control and occupy Algeria or the Indo-Chinese peninsula, while the liberation forces lacked the capacity to attack the enemy’s mainland. Consequently, it was never possible for the liberation forces to destroy the enemy’s industrial and military ability to continue the war. In terms of their military *capability* defined narrowly as raw power, the liberation forces had no chance of victory. Their only hope lay not in winning individual battles but in finally exhausting the metropolitan country in order to destroy its political capability and *will* to continue the war.

As long as nations seeking local hegemony in Europe or Asia fought a traditional war, they could not win a final victory unless they destroyed America’s ability to continue the conflict, i.e., its industrial potential. This was the major lesson of the first and second world wars. Japan attempted to establish a limited sphere of control on the Chinese continent and its surrounding regions, the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere. However, since Japan could not land forces on continental America or destroy the U.S. industrial heartland by air raids, it never had a chance of winning a conventional war. Conversely, the United States was capable of attacking the Japanese mainland and destroying its industrial centers. Thus the war between the United States and Japan was essentially “asymmetric.”

Despite this fundamental disparity in power, Japan’s military leaders adopted a classic strategy: destroy the enemy’s main military force, the traditional objective of warfare. Even attacks on transport ships and cutting enemy supply lines were subordinated to the primary goal. This was essentially the same as the “death but no surrender” strategy with

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 292.

⁴⁵ Concerning “asymmetric conflict,” see Andrew J. R. Mack, “Why Big Nations Lose Small Wars: The Politics of Asymmetric Conflict,” *World Politics*, Vol. 27, no. 2 (January 1975).

which indigenous peoples resisted the wave of imperialist expansion from the late 19th to the early 20th century (the Boer War was the only exception). A better plan would have been, as Churchill feared, for Japan to attack only English, French, and Dutch colonies instead of striking directly at American territory. Of course, even without a direct attack on U.S. territory, Japan's strike to the south would have brought the United States into the war sooner or later. However, a bold "surprise attack" against the U.S. fleet at Pearl Harbor was militarily and politically the worst strategy. Japan won the battle and lost the war.

As an "asymmetric conflict," the Korean War has certain features—intermediate qualities—of both the Pacific War and the Vietnam War. Although not an attack on American territory and not as direct and unequivocal a challenge as the Japanese navy's raid on Pearl Harbor, the fact that North Korea crossed a "national boundary," the 38th parallel, and openly attacked a U.S. client state provided the perfect rationale to the American public for intervention and sparked a surge of national unity.

The Korean conflict, as a war of national liberation, was completely different from the imperialist Pacific War. An international civil war, it possessed both the asymmetry (native forces versus foreign expeditionary forces) noted by Andrew J. R. Mack and a different kind of asymmetry.⁴⁶ Although this other kind of asymmetry is a general feature of international civil wars, it is often overlooked. In the internal political situation (the civil war dimension) there is an asymmetry of "revolutionary forces" (the North) versus "status quo forces" (the South). North Korea and North Vietnam, by virtue of their ideology as liberation forces opposed to the status quo, were morally obligated to the cause of unification by force; peace could only be a *modus vivendi*. The liberation forces always had the moral initiative to take advantage of the political instability and weakness of the South to "infiltrate" and "liberate" the country.

Syngman Rhee and Chiang Kai-shek might call for a "march north" or "a return to the mainland" but objectively, intentions aside, they clearly lacked the capability to independently attack and conquer their opponents. As Khrushchev related in his memoirs, there were two reasons why Joseph Stalin, after consulting with Mao Tse-tung, reluctantly consented to Kim Il-sung's extremely risky proposal for the

⁴⁶ Yonosuke Nagai, "Seijiteki shigen toshite no jikan" [Time as a Political Resource], *Chūō kōron*, July, 1975.

armed liberation of South Korea. First, Kim assured him that the war could be “won swiftly,” and that it would be over before the United States could intervene. Second, in the ideology of international communism, the liberation of South Korea by force was morally justified, and Stalin could hardly refuse. Khrushchev sympathized with Stalin: “In my opinion, no real Communist would have tried to dissuade Kim Il-sung from his compelling desire to liberate South Korea from Syngman Rhee and from reactionary American influence. To have done so would have contradicted the Communist view of the world.”⁴⁷ Some may question the credibility of *Khrushchev Remembers*, which I think is fairly high, but the issue here is that according to communist values, the unification of Korea by force was an ethical act.

Scholars of the Korean and Vietnam Wars always miss this point. While the revisionists sympathize with the “liberation forces,” their analyses are based on a traditional Western, especially American, value system. Precisely because they strongly believe that an armed attack “across a national boundary” is a “war of aggression” and morally wrong, they feel obligated to justify North Korea’s action by explaining the conflict as a “civil war” and to seek its origin in provocation by the South, the corruption of the Rhee administration, and a “joint conspiracy” by the leadership of America and South Korea.

In a speech broadcast a few hours after the outbreak of fighting, Kim Il-sung said that North Korea would “sweep away the fascist puppet administration of Syngman Rhee” and that military unification of Korea . . . was a just war for the sake of the unification of the fatherland, independence, and freedom and democracy.⁴⁸

As Khrushchev noted, according to communist ideology and values, to liberate the people of the South from the corrupt puppet regime supported by reactionary American imperialism and to unify the peninsula by force was a just cause. Unlike Hitler’s cynical disdain for neutral countries, the communists always regarded a broader, “democratic” united front and the support of international opinion as indispensable elements of their strategy. They always tried to maintain the appearance

⁴⁷ Strobe Talbott, ed., *Khrushchev Remembers* (Boston, 1971), pp. 400–07. The quotation is from p. 401.

⁴⁸ “Chosen senso no boppatsu ni saisuru Kin Nissei no hōsō enzetsu,” [Broadcast by Kim Il-sung at the Outbreak of the Korean War] (June 26, 1950), *Kin Nissei senshū* [Selected Works of Kim Il-sung], Vol. 2, pp. 13–20, and Kamiya, ed., *Chōsen mondai sengo shiryō* [Documents on the Korean Affairs: 1945–50] 3 vols., (Tokyo: Nihon Kokusai Mondai Kenkyūjo, 1976–80), Vol. 1, pp. 309–313, especially p. 311.

of respect for Western concepts of “international law” and “democratic procedures” and tried to use idealists, liberals, and nationalists for their political purposes.

Impact on American Public Opinion

The fifth and greatest similarity between the Pacific and Korean wars is their impact on American public opinion. It is difficult to imagine today that the American people responded to the outbreak of the Korean War with a wave of moral indignation and intense approval of the United Nations’ cause and solidly supported Truman’s decision to intervene. The mood of near-national unity evoked by President Truman’s announcement on June 27 of U.S. military intervention was caught by Joseph C. Hersch, Washington correspondent for the *Christian Science Monitor*: “I have lived and worked in and out of this city for 20 years. Never before in that time have I felt such a sense of relief and unity pass through this city.”⁴⁹ Liberal journals such as the *New Republic*, the *Nation*, and the *Progressive*, previously cool to the Truman-Acheson containment policy, praised Truman’s decision to resist communist aggression.⁵⁰ Even Henry Wallace, who had symbolized the progressive left, opposed Truman’s cold war policies and been dismissed from office, announced his withdrawal from the Progressive party and said, “I am on the side of my country and the United Nations.” In August, 1950, Wallace said that if necessary, the United States should use the atom bomb in Korea; by November he had endorsed large-scale U.S. rearmament and was dropping his support for Communist China’s admission to the U.N.⁵¹

The influential liberal journalist Edward R. Murrow stated in July, 1950:

This new policy commits us to much more than the defense of the southern half of the Korean peninsula. We have commitments quite as binding, obligations quite as great, to Indo-China, Iran, and Turkey, as we have to Korea. We have *drawn a line*, not across the peninsula, but *across the world*.⁵²

⁴⁹ *Christian Science Monitor*, June 29, 1950, as quoted in Paige, *The Korean Decision*, p. 194.

⁵⁰ Alonzo L. Hamby, *Beyond the New Deal: Harry S. Truman and American Liberalism* (New York, 1973), pp. 404–05.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 404.

⁵² Quoted in Alexander Kendrick, *Prime Time: The Life of Edward R. Murrow* (New York, 1970), p. 367. See also Lisle A. Rose, *Roots of Tragedy, The United States and the Struggle for Asia, 1945–1953* (Westport, Conn., 1976), p. 240.

Many new anti-communist groups were formed, such as the Committee on the Present Danger, of which J. Robert Oppenheimer was a member.

With the outbreak of the Korean War, the separate cold wars in Europe and Asia were joined. Thanks to a political truce albeit temporary with the right wing of the Republican party, for the first time in several years there was bipartisan national unity. As Lisle A. Rose states, "In many ways Korea did for the Cold War what Pearl Harbor had done for World War II."⁵³ There was a similar response elsewhere. According to Charles Bohlen, who was in Paris when the war started, Foreign Minister Robert Schuman, upon hearing the report of the U.S. decision to intervene, exclaimed, "Thank God, this will not be a repetition of the past."⁵⁴

The combined pressure of such foreign and domestic public opinion and the arrogance of power fostered by the successful Inchon landing, emboldened American leaders to try to change the antebellum status quo by sending U.N. forces across the 38th parallel and unifying North and South Korea by force. This was the only case in which the United States attempted to change by force the status quo in the cold war. The result was Chinese intervention and a disastrous setback for the United States.

⁵³ Rose, *Roots of Tragedy*, p. 242.

⁵⁴ Bohlen, *Witness to History*, pp. 291–92.