

UN Involvement in the Korean War

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This report can be divided into 3 parts in terms of the time period covered. The first part is about the relationship the UN came to form with Korea from the end of World War II to the establishment of two separate governments on the Korean peninsula. The key issues of those days include: 1) from what standpoint did the USA react to the Soviet Union's occupation of and lingering on the Korean peninsula? 2) why did the USA collaborate with those opposed to the UN trusteeship of Korea when it was the USA who originally proposed such a trusteeship? and 3) why did the USA hand the Korean peninsula's problem over to the UN? Equally important issues are "what effect did the UN have on the independence of Korea?" and "what is the meaning of the UN decision to establish two separate and independent governments in the southern and northern parts of the Korean peninsula?"

UN involvement in the Korean peninsula issue is attributable to the emergence of the Cold War structure after the end of World War II. The Soviet Union's interests in and ambitions for the Korean peninsula were clearly demonstrated by its efforts to set up a pro-Soviet government on the Korean peninsula, particularly in the northern part of the peninsula, as well as by its recovery of interests in Manchuria, once lost to Japan after its defeat in the Russia-Japan War (1904-1905) and requested by the Soviet Union as a reward for its participation in the war against Japan during World War II.

The US's basic strategy on the Korean peninsula was linked to its strategy of solely occupying and dominating Japan after the end of World War II: unlike Germany and Austria, which were occupied jointly by the Allied Forces of the USA, England, France and the Soviet Union, Japan was occupied and dominated solely by the USA. This strategy was known to have been further strengthened after the US dropped atomic bombs over Hiroshima and Nakasaki in Japan. Furthermore, the USA became increasingly leery of the Soviet Union after the Soviet expressed its territorial ambition to snatch up Hokaido in Japan. The question "is the

USA willing to participate in Inchon Landing Operations jointly with the Soviet Union?" asked by Soviet Chief of Staff General Antonov of General Marshall, his American counterpart, was meaningful and was interpreted by some as an indication that the Soviet Union intended to have its army to march into and occupy even the Southern part of the Korean peninsula.

It was immediately after the two rounds of the negotiations by the US-Soviet Joint Commission failed to result in an agreement. The key issues facing this Commission included: 1) the establishment of a temporary government on the Korean peninsula, 2) mediation of the fierce stand-off between the Korean people who supported a UN trusteeship and those against it, and 3) the differing opinion of the US and the Soviet Union regarding the definition of a Democratic Party and of a social organization. The US seemed to have reached its own conclusion that establishment of a temporary government for the entire Korean peninsula was impossible and it was therefore inevitable a government would be established for only on the southern part of the peninsula. After the failure of the second round of the negotiations by the Commission, the Soviets withdrew to North Korea, dismissing the US's proposal to solve the problems through four-party debate.

The second part is about the relationship between Korea and UN during the Korean War. Defining the nature of the Korean War as either an international war or as an internal war has much to do with nominal causes and legal issues associated with the UN troops' involvement in the Korean War. Most of those who have studied the Korean War say that the Korean War is by nature an internal war, with which I don't agree. In my opinion, it more closely resembles to an international war because it was produced by the Cold War structure, catalyzed by the joint occupation of the Korean peninsula by the USA and the Soviet Union, and directly triggered by the invasion of South Korea by Kim Il-Sung. If my claim is correct, the purpose of the Korean War was two-fold: to prevent, from the US point of view, the spread of Communism into Asia, particularly to Japan, and from the standpoint of North Korea, the Soviet Union and China, to solidify their ideological unity and to further expand Communism, rather than being a national liberation war.

The third part is about the ceasefire on the Korean peninsula. A peace treaty declaring a truce was enacted in July 1953. This treaty was signed first by General Nam Il, the senior delegate representing the Korean People's Army and the Chinese People's Volunteers, and William K. Harrison, Jr., a US army lieutenant general and the senior delegate of the United Nations Command Delegation, and then by Kim Il-Sung in the capacity of Supreme Commander of the Korean People's Army, Peng Teh-huai, commander of the Chinese People's Volunteers, and Mark W. Clark, commander-in-chief of the United Nations Command. In light of the contents of that treaty, the Korean War is still not over (it was called a "cease-fire" by the US, an "armistice" in the treaty itself and a "truce" by the Pentagon).

What impact did the UN's have on the signing of the ceasefire and on the Korean peninsula after the ceasefire's establishment? Now, 50 years after the signing of the ceasefire, the war is not yet over and the current issue is how to shift the ceasefire situation toward peace. In this regard, the primary matter of interest is the relationship between the issues of the continued presence of the UN forces in South Korea and of the pursuit of peace, collective security and multilateral cooperation.