

Forum: Historical Security Council (HSC)

Crisis Issue: The Korean War

Student Officer: Aazam Alam

Position: Deputy Chair

Introduction

The defeat of the final axis power, Japan, may have freed the Korean Peninsula from the shackles of a 35-year Japanese Occupation, but destined it into warfare and disunity. The territorial repercussions imposed on Japan by the allied forces split the region into two different occupation zones. The hastily drafted terms of the surrender indicated that the Japanese forces above the 38th Parallel surrender to the Soviets while the Japanese forces south of the latitude surrender to the US forces. Despite this division along the 38th parallel, the Korean population had a burning desire to unify the peninsula in one. In late 1945, the foreign ministers of the Allies advocated creating a four-power trusteeship that would last for a period of up to 5 years. This proposed trusteeship consisted of a joint commission comprising of representatives from each ally as well as a provisional Korean democratic government nation that assists the trusteeship and strives for regional progress. Despite the best intentions of the trusteeship, the population highly opposed this idea which triggered social unrest and also pushed the citizens to demand independence immediately.

The initial intentions of reunification and independence of Korea inevitably foundered because of the continuous political polarization between the USA and USSR. In 1947, the USA raised the issue of the Korean Peninsula within the General Assembly. The outcome of the General Assembly was resolution 112 (II) which called for elections to be arranged within the Korean peninsula under the supervision of the United Nations

Temporary Commission of Korea (UNTCOK). This resolution faced staunch opposition from the Soviet Union as the nation questioned the legitimacy of the intervention of the general assembly within this issue - the Soviets claimed that this resolution violates article 107 of the UN Charter which denies the UN the authority to interfere within postwar settlement issue. The Soviets further disallowed the UNCTOK in the Soviet-occupied zone. Although the Soviet Union opposed the resolution, they were not allowed to veto it since the resolution was non-binding and hence not all nations were obliged to carry it out. Consequently, the UNCTOK were only permitted to hold elections within the south zone controlled by America which squashed any hopes of reunification within the peninsula.

On July 20th 1948, President Syngman Rhee was elected as the president of the Republic of Korea, while the Republic of Korea was officially formed on August 15th. ROK quickly adopted the capitalist system and aligned with the USA to form a strategic alliance to secure itself from future communist threats. On August 25, Kim Il Sung won the election hosted by the Soviets in the North and became the first premier of DPRK (Democratic People's Republic of Korea); the Soviets installed the communist regime as a puppet state on September 9th 1948 and positioned Pyongyang as the capital of DPRK. With the establishment of these governments, the Soviets withdrew their forces in 1948, and the Americans shortly followed by withdrawing their troops in 1949.

First blood of the cold war - a term coined by Bernard Baruch, to describe the increasingly chilly relations between the two rising superpowers of the world - was drawn in the Korean Peninsula. With both governments iterating claims over the entire peninsula, low-intensity conflict arose along the 38th parallel. Diplomatic relationships further worsened when the north, which possessed most of the critical infrastructure, began to cut the supply of electricity which created several power shortages within the

south. The south also encountered an armed communist uprising in the form of the Yeosu-Suncheon Rebellion, which continues up to this date. This bolstered the fears of the US of the domino effect - a theory that suggests that a nation that adopts communism would lead to more neighboring nations to fall to communism, quite similar to a row of dominos. Therefore, these fears motivated the USA to rapidly modernize ROK's army by equipping and training the ROK forces as stated in National Security Council (NSA) paper 8/2. These actions initiated a series of border clashes at the line of contact and fears of military escalation grew. Thus, the American government was reluctant to provide heavy military equipment to ROK to prevent a full-fledged invasion spearheaded by President Syngman Rhee.

Tension mounted between the two states in the months prior to the invasion with the escalation eventually commencing the DPRK offensive on July 25th 1950 where approximately 100,000 troops spilled over the 38th Parallel into ROK. DPRK, supported by heavy artillery and aerial offense, made great inroads within ROK and overwhelmed the defenders on several measures. ROK forces along with the remaining population retreated to the port city of Pusan awaiting for capitalist reinforcements. The newly established UNSC responded quickly to DPRK's invasion and deemed it a breach of peace. In the aftermath of DPRK's invasion, the USA proposed and passed several resolutions, in some cases unanimously, to aid ROK's effort at repelling the invaders, most notably resolution UNSCR 84 which formed a unified army to strengthen the ROK forces. Although it must be noted that these resolutions were passed in the absence of the USSR as it was boycotting the UNSC to vocalize its demand for international recognition of the People's Republic of China over the Republic of China - after the former won the civil war and pushed their capitalist foes (ROC) to Taiwan in 1949.

This Korean war poses several challenges to the global community and newly founded peace and stability especially when either belligerent are backed by superpowers with a capacity of mass destruction. If the Korean war extends from the peninsula, it has the potential to spark a hot war between the communist bloc and the capitalist bloc. The fall of the ROK would also trigger the widely feared “domino effect” that may engulf several nations into communism and shift the power from a balanced bipolar world to a dominant and aggressive global communist regime.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

United Nations Command (UNC)

The United Nations Command was established after the UNSC adopted Resolution UNSCR 84 on June 7th 1950. The command was formed as a reaction to DPRK’s aggression in the Korean Peninsula and aimed to restore peace and security within the region. This multinational army comprised 22 UN member states which vowed to aid ROK’s forces by contributing military assistance or humanitarian relief under the UN flag. This collective military appointed General MacArthur as the supreme commander while the USA spearheaded the initiative of the unified army.

United States of America (USA)

The United States of America was initially reluctant to intervene within the conflict, but the wide ideological differences and the Soviet’s ambition to expand their sphere of influence was recognized as an apparent threat in this bipolar world. The American doctrine greatly feared that a domino effect would occur all around the world and engulf nations to adopt communism. In fact, President Truman had bolded these concerns by remarking, “If we let Korea down, the Soviet[s] will keep right on going and swallow up one [place] after another.” Inevitably, this pushed America to promptly contain the influence and spread of communism throughout the world and align with the

Republic of Korea. Under President Truman's leadership, the United States committed immense American forces and resources to the UNC military efforts and named General MacArthur as the Supreme Commander of the UNC. Even though the USA may not have announced a declaration of war on the DPRK or any other communist nation involved in the conflict, it was heavily involved in military assistance and policing action to restrain the presence of communism within the Pacific.

Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR)

The Soviet Union has enjoyed a strong diplomatic relationship with DPRK which is solidified by the ideology and the views of DPRK being parallel to the Soviet Union. Although, the USSR, which has been boycotting the UNSC to vocalize its demand for international recognition of the PRC instead of ROC, is still legally bound to the guidelines in the recent resolutions passed, especially resolution UNSCR 84. Therefore, the Soviet Union is legally denied to actively aid the DPRK within this conflict. It also seems in USSR's best interest to restrain from intervening in this conflict in any direct or meaningful capacity if they wish to avoid any escalation in the Korean conflict beyond the peninsula. However, it must be accounted that the Soviet Union have trained and supplied the armies of the communist bloc prior to the invasion including nurturing the DPRK army and preparing the Air Force of PRC and DPRK; this plays a vital role in the military success of DPRK and exhibits the strength of DPRK's forces.

Republic of Korea (ROK)

President Syngman Rhee's extreme anti-communist beliefs drew concerns within the capitalist bloc and several leaders feared his approach to unify the Korean Peninsula with a formidable army. Therefore, several allies of the ROK including the USA denied ROK the supply of heavy offensive military equipment such as heavy artillery or armor. This apparent deficiency between their well-armed enemy forces and the overwhelmed

defenders was the primary reason behind the staggering losses and significant retreat. Although, the DPRK's aggressive offensive has secured ROK the trust and support of the American government (which it is heavily reliant upon) along with the UN's 60 member states for military assistance and humanitarian resources.

Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)

DPRK, under the leadership of Kim Il Sung, has developed a unique ideology, inspired by the PRC's successful occupation of the homeland, Juche. Kim Il Sung wishes to replicate the success of the PRC within the Korean Peninsula and unify the region under Communist rule through brute force if required. DPRK has received the reassurance and is backed by the USSR and PRC, however, neither nation has provided any direct military forces to the Korean conflict - at least at an official level. Although, DPRK's military and the air force have been extensively trained and supplied by the Soviets prior to the invasion; this provides DPRK the upper hand over their enemies until the UNC and US forces arrive at Pusan.

People's Republic of China (PRC)

Despite facing economic struggles and agricultural woes in the aftermath of a bloody world war and a communist revolution, the Chinese government was wary of the threat of the UNC forces and American forces approaching the Yalu River and closer to the Chinese Mainland. In a bipolar world, PRC was also pressured by the Soviets and the communist bloc to intervene within the conflict and defend its communist neighbors. Although the Chinese scars from decades of fighting have disincentivized China to commit their regular military forces to DPRK, PRC has sent dozens of its People's Volunteer Army (PVA) divisions into the Korean Peninsula to fight alongside the DPRK forces.

Development of Issue/Timeline

Date	Event	Outcome
08/02/1904 - 05/09/1905	The Russo-Japanese war was fought between the Russian and the Japanese empires, both with imperial ambitions to possess control over Manchuria and Korea.	Imperial Japan was victorious in the war and officially annexed the Korean Peninsula 5 years later. This event signaled the beginning of the Japanese occupation which would be decisive in the aftermath of WWII.
15/08/1945	Japanese surrender marks the end of WWII. All territories of Japan, excluding the mainland, are liberated from Japanese control including Korea.	Two US Army officers decide that the partitioning between the south and North should be the 38th Parallel. This line of division was chosen based on the tentatively decided division in the Potsdam conference since there were no other natural barriers. In addition, this division also placed the capital, Seoul in the American-controlled zone although it was just 35 miles away from the division line.
15/08/1948	The Republic of Korea is established with the capital positioned in Seoul and led by the intensively anti-communist leader, Syngman Rhee. Shortly afterward, the Soviets also establish the Democratic Republic of Korea under the leadership of Kim il-Sung with its capital Pyongyang.	The creation of these two satellite states by the superpowers of the world plowed the seeds of the Korean conflict and the Cold War. The situation was further worsened when both leaders aspired to unify the Korean peninsula under their respective ideologies.

12/01/1950	In a speech to the national club, the US secretary of state Dean Acheson discusses future plans to adopt a defensive posture within the Pacific but fails to explicitly address the Republic of Korea.	The lack of the US's initiative to provide military security to the Republic of Korea weakens ROK's position and eventually ignites DPRK's ambition to annex and unify the peninsula.
17/01/1950	DPRK's leader, Kim Il Sung proposes the "liberation" of the Republic of Korea to Soviet officials.	This idea of "liberation" leads to weeks of telegram exchanges between Moscow, Beijing, and Pyongyang. Eventually, Kim Il Sung receives assurance from the Soviet premier Joseph Stalin and Chinese leader Mao Zedong. The communist bloc, more specifically DPRK, began preparation for the invasion of the ROK.
25/06/1950	A massive artillery barrage from DPRK marks the beginning of the Korean war. 100,000 DPRK soldiers cross the 38th Parallel and invade ROK.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The invasions commenced by DPRK overwhelm the ill-equipped defenders on numerous fronts. Consequently, the ROK forces retreated, although in an orderly fashion, as they awaited foreign assistance. - The UNSC approves a resolution that condemns DPRK's Invasion. The USSR was unable to veto the resolution as they were boycotting UNSC at the time.
27/06/1950	The UNSC adopts Resolution 83 which authorizes member states to provide	The UNSC, in the absence of the USSR, determined that DPRK's action breached

	assistance to the Republic of Korea. The final vote was 7 to 1, although, USSR was once again not able to veto since they were boycotting the UNSC.	regional peace and called for foreign military assistance to repel DPRK's invasion. This event clearly weakens DPRK's position in the international arena and provides an opportunity for ROK to garner international support.
28/06/1950	Seoul, ROK's capital, is captured by DPRK forces	ROK forces and civilians are pushed to seek refuge in the port city of Pusan.
07/07/1950	The United Nations Security Council, with the absence of the Soviet Union, adopts resolution UNSCR 84	The resolution requests to create a unified multinational army that supports the Republic of Korea to defeat the DPRK forces. General MacArthur was appointed as the supreme commander to lead the UN army to resist and repel the DPRK forces.
31/07/1950	The United Nations Security Council, with the absence of the Soviet Union, adopts resolution UNSCR 85	This resolution requests the appropriate UN bodies to support the civilians within the Korean peninsula. This resolution builds a framework based on the reports and requests of the United Nations Command.
04/08/1950	The ROK and UNC forces set up a defensive perimeter around the last key location controlled by ROK, Pusan.	The Battle of Pusan ends as a strategic victory for the ROK and UNC forces. The military victory allows the UNC and ROK forces to successfully advance outside the defensive perimeter and temporarily halt DPRK's advance.

Crisis Stages

Prelude

August 1950

The United Nations command under the authorization and supervision of the United Nations is at war within the Korean Peninsula. The Soviet-backed DPRK has launched a successful offensive against the ROK, which has pushed the defenders to the southernmost port city of Pusan. The ROK forces, reinforced by the UNC and American forces, have successfully established a defense perimeter around Pusan and have temporarily repelled the DPRK advance, at least for now.

The United Nations and the capitalist bloc may unanimously agree that DPRK's action has breached international law and threatened global peace and security, although, there has been a dispute on the course of action that should be implemented to regain control over the Korean peninsula. Commander MacArthur, supreme commander of the UNC, supported by the USA, has proposed an ambitious counteroffensive that entails an amphibious landing at Inchon near the 38th Parallel in order to cut the DPRK forces from North Korea and recapture ROK's territory including Seoul. Skeptics of this overly idealistic counteroffensive fear that the failure of this landing may terminate any hope for democracy within the peninsula and the existence of the ROK.

Crisis Stage 1: Successful Inchon Landing & Potential Chinese Involvement

September 1950

The ambitious Inchon Landing proposed by General MacArthur was successful to drive the DPRK forces from ROK's territory and eventually liberate the capital of the Republic of Korea, Seoul. This rapid success of the UNC, USA and ROK forces has triggered chaos within the communist bloc and has pushed neighboring nations to

reinforce DPRK forces with the national military. The CIA has indicated that the PRC is mobilizing its divisions near the Korean-Chinese border and concentrating them in the masses. This strategic move indicates that neighboring nations are threatened by the progress of the capitalist forces within the Korean Peninsula and it could potentially spark a Regional war if the advance continues.

The UNSC stands at a crucial juncture to determine the trajectory of this war. A Chinese offensive has the potential to prolong this war for decades and cease any hope for peace or even democracy within the peninsula. The situation could even further worsen if the Soviets decide to interfere within the conflict on the communists' behalf. Although, leaving the communist forces off the hook and DPRK with no repercussions would inevitably trigger a "domino effect" across the world and provide the communist bloc reassurance for future invasions and communist revolutions.

Crisis Stage 2: Failed peace talks leading to a Presidential assassination attempt

June 2nd 1952

In the light of the Chinese involvement, fighting stabilized near the 38th parallel with neither side's military able to break through the line of contact. The communist nations (along with the capitalist nations) have realized that a quick offensive that seizes the Korean Peninsula seems impractical and the war is expected to continue for decades without a proper armistice. After weeks of exchange between the key stakeholders, neither blocs were willing to tolerate a compromise and the belligerents that were backed up by their superpowers were insisting upon superficial demands of territorial repercussions - in some cases also demanding upon unification of the Korean Peninsula.

The frustration of reaching a permanent armistice reached the peak when the ROK's extremely anti-communist president was nearly assassinated by a sniper during a

Presidential speech in Seoul. Hours after capturing the assassin, the CIA declared that the sniper was a notable KGB agent. However, the claim was denied by numerous Russian governmental officials and pointed at a mere coincidence of this misfortune event. Yet the underlying motive for this assassination is difficult to ignore as the death of the president would pave the way for a more moderate leader who would be willing to compromise in a bid to reach an armistice and cease this bloodshed. This failure also shows the desperate attempt of the communist bloc to end this war and also reveals the surprisingly aggressive nature of the communist nations.

The UNSC and the capitalist nations must decide whether their course of trajectory of reaching peace still seems pragmatic with the recent developments. It seems that an overcorrection would have fatal results, especially when both the Soviets and the Americans have developed the atomic bomb and have the capacity to increase the violence by a hundredfold. However, this assassination attempt only portrays a cloud of uncertainty over the peninsula and indicates the level of desperations and commitment to produce fruit from this proxy war.

Crisis Stage 3: American Blunder & Soviet Expansion

June 5th 1952

In the light of the president's assassination attempt, the CIA regretfully admitted the mistake of assuming that the assassin was a KGB agent upon further investigation. In fact, the assassin's identity was confirmed to be an unstable Yeosu citizen who had participated in the Yeosu Suncheon rebellion and therefore wished to aid the communist bloc in their quest to a unified communist bloc. The unstable man was unwilling to assist CIA with the interrogation initially and therefore was assumed to be a KGB agent loyal to the Soviets. This also highlights the poor aim of the assassin that resulted in the failed assassination attempt.

However, this revelation came too late as the Soviets, cautious for a surprise attack, began a major offensive a couple of days earlier. The Soviets managed to overpower its opposition as its strength in numbers, military equipment, and logistical factors changed the tide of the war as the UNC forces were driven to Anong. With the UNC forces backed to the wall, Soviet involvement and CIA blunder, the capitalist forces have dug a grave within Korea.

Member nations have realized that peace seems the ideal option with the recent developments, however, it is unclear what approach the UNSC and the capitalist nations must adopt to draw peace. A final offensive to seek leverage and liberate Seoul before the armistice, as proposed by the newly appointed Supreme commander Clark, may give an advantage to the capitalist forces during peace talks. Although, skeptics have underlined that the failure may cost the existence of democracy within the region due to the Soviets likely installing a communist regime that governs under authoritarian principle. However, a defensive posture is likely to yield unfavorable territorial repercussions within the armistice that are likely to make the nation vulnerable to any future invasions and weaken its economy significantly. The UNSC must dissect this situation carefully and weigh the odds before gambling on either of the options.

Positive Outcome

The positive outcome would be an armistice that ensures the sovereignty of the Republic of Korea which governs under the principles of democracy and capitalism even in unfavorable conditions (territorial repercussions). This would likely stem from clever diplomacy from the capitalist delegations that secure some fruit from the situation. It must also be noted that such an outcome would only be possible if the capitalist and UNC

forces adopt a defensive posture rather than an offensive as it currently seems highly unlikely to materialize. Even in the unlikely event of success, it will only plow the seeds for further fighting as neither side would wish to compromise a promising situation. It is also possible that both nations may engage in future proxy wars if the diplomacy between the two states remains bitter, hence, the Security Council should also bridge the gaps between the respective superpowers to avoid any future wars or invasions that threaten global peace and stability. This would also hopefully secure the world from the “Red Scare” and prevent any major global confrontation based on ideological differences between the Soviets and Americans.

Negative Outcome

The negative outcome would be the successful annexation of the Korean peninsula by the communist bloc. The likely conclusion of this war would witness millions of civilians dead with the American and ROK armies decimated before a desperate evacuation from the port city of Pusan or an unconditional surrender from ROK forces. This would permanently spell the end of democracy and capitalism within the region and provide the bloc with confidence to initiate the greatly desired domino effect within Southeastern Asia and later expanding communism elsewhere. Communist Korea is likely to be headed by DPRK’s premier Kim Il Sung and greatly influenced by the Soviet Union in the decades to come. DPRK is likely to gain further presence within the Pacific region as more nations succumb to communist pressure. Their rise within the Pacific would make it impossible for the resurrection of ROK, and in the unlikely case of an armed uprising within the South Provinces, it would be brutally suppressed. This failure would also greatly prolong the Cold War as the difficulty to contain the mass export of communism would be increased by tenfold for the USA. The horizon also looks grim as this conflict would spark numerous proxy wars between the two superpowers. In fact, a direct confrontation between the two superpowers also seems to be on the cards.

Works Cited

Bryson, Scott. "Korean War." *Korean War* | *Eisenhower Presidential Library*, 2012,

www.eisenhowerlibrary.gov/research/online-documents/korean-war.

Clayton Knowles, "All-Out War Move Urged in Congress," *New York Times*, July 19, 1950,

<https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1950/07/19/86446665.html?pageNumber=14>.

Cabell Phillips, "What Russians Say About Korean War," *New York Times*, July 30, 1950,

<https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1950/07/30/113395181.html?pageNumber=104>.

"History of the Korean War." United Nations Command & History > 1950-1953: Korean War (Active Conflict), www.unc.mil/History/1950-1953-Korean-War-Active-Conflict/.

History.com Editors. "Inchon Landing." History.com, A&E Television Networks, 10 June 2010, www.history.com/topics/korea/inchon.

History.com Editors. "Korean War." History.com, A&E Television Networks, 9 Nov. 2009, www.history.com/topics/korea/korean-war.

J. R. Wiggins, "Should We Cross the 38th Parallel?," *Washington Post*, August 13, 1950, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/152282728?pq-origsite=summon>.

Kane, Rooney. "The Korean War." *PBS*, Public Broadcasting Service, 2014,

www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/bomb-korean-war/.

Loudermilk, Ben. "Third Battle Of Seoul - Korean War." *WorldAtlas*, WorldAtlas, 25 Apr. 2017, www.worldatlas.com/articles/third-battle-of-seoul-korean-war.html.

"Rethinking the Korean War : a New Diplomatic and Strategic History : Stueck, William Whitney, 1945- : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming." Internet Archive, Princeton, NJ : Princeton University Press, 1 Jan. 1970,

www.archive.org/details/rethinkingkorean000stue/page/32/mode/2up?q=trust.

“US Enters the Korean Conflict.” National Archives and Records Administration, National Archives and Records Administration, www.archives.gov/education/lessons/korean-conflict.