

Lessons for Strategists

Chinese Policy, Strategy and Decision Making in Korean War (1950 – 1953)

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A*bstract:* Korean Peninsula remained epicentre of power politics amongst its three neighbouring powers, China, Japan and Russia, due to its geographical linkage as conduit to the Asian heartland from Japanese archipelago. This struggle had impacted socio-political and socio-economic outlook of the peninsula, yet its rulers managed to maintain its distinct culture throughout the ages. The Korean War of 1950 is an ideal case study for policy makers and strategists due to its complexity in terms of policy and war strategies, wherein the US, USSR and China pursued their divergent national objectives. This article focuses on the analysis of Chinese foreign policy, strategy and decision-making during Korean War (1950-1953), applying different theoretical lens and models.

Keywords: International Politics, Foreign Policy Formulation, Diplomacy, Military Strategy and Decision Making.

Introduction

Korean Peninsula remained epicentre of power politics amongst its three neighbouring powers, China, Japan and Russia, due to its geographical linkage as conduit to the Asian heartland from Japanese archipelago. This struggle had impacted socio-political and socio-economic outlook of the peninsula, yet its rulers managed to maintain its distinct culture throughout the ages. In the 19th century, the Western powers attempted to gain access to the region; fearing dilution of their culture and values, its rulers resisted by isolating themselves. This paved the way for occupation by Japanese (started at the end of the Joseon dynastic monarchy in Korea in 1910 and ended at the conclusion of World War II in 1945),¹ its exploitation and weakening to an extent that it was unable to cope with the challenges that post-World War period posed to it.

With the onset of Cold War era, the Korean Peninsula, due to its geostrategic location and socio-political landscape became the first contesting ground between capitalism and Marxist-socialism. The fall out resulted into emergence of North and South Korea, having opposing ideologies.

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The Korean conflict (1950-1953) is an ideal case study for foreign policy analysis as it signifies a paradigm policy shift in the post-Second World War era; wherein, the US, USSR and China aimed at keeping the war limited to the Korean Peninsula. The belligerents applied military power in pursuance of their foreign policy objectives and managed conflict under nuclear overhang. The United Nations (UN) with the US and Western support, sanctioned military action in support of South Korea. Chinese bold entry to the Korean Peninsula to support the DPRK against the US/UN troops turned war into a Chinese-American conflict with festering insecurity in the Korean Peninsula even today. The war re-invigorated proxies that were to become a key characteristic of the Cold War for coming decades.²

Historical Perspective

The Korean Peninsula was a conduit for access to Asian heartland from the Pacific. Chinese and Japanese, thus, contested for influence with Russians getting attracted to it in the mid-17th century. Centuries of struggle established trends for competing powers to exercise influence over the region through various leverages.

Korea Under Japanese Colonialism

Korea had long been a Chinese protectorate before Japanese occupation.³ In the late nineteenth century, the Korean Peninsula, as a whole, witnessed contested influences of China, Russia, and Japan. Rapidly industrializing Japan especially after Sino-Japanese's War (1895) was eyeing on Korea and Manchuria for its industrial and agricultural expansion. Japanese influence over Korea was cultivated after Russian defeat in 1905 by Japanese. Japan successfully took control of Korea in 1910 and renamed it as Chosen.

Japanese occupation of Korea lasted until 1945, when they were finally defeated in the World War II. From 1910 to 1945, Koreans bore the brunt of Japanese atrocities and struggled to maintain their culture. Japanese colonial rule remained exacting and ambivalent for Koreans. Till 1920, Japanese military ruthlessly crushed dissenting ideas in Korean masses. However, it was early 1919, when after a nationwide protest against Japanese colonialism, a limited degree of freedom of speech was allowed for Koreans. Despite the oppressive Japanese rule, Korean society grew considerably as Japanese toiled to enrich Japan for fighting wars in China and the Pacific. Urbanization, commerce growth, development of mass communication and Industrial development became widespread.

Post-World War I to World War II

Korean nationalists attempted to gain independence from the Japanese Colonial rule at the peace conference in Paris (1919). In Seoul and Shanghai, shadow governments

were established, but no success was achieved. The Bolshevik Revolution in Russia inspired Korean Communist Movement in Manchuria and Eastern Serbia, where thousands of Koreans were living in exile. The provisional government in Shanghai attempted to gain independence, but the exiled community was too scattered to achieve any meaningful impact.

During the pre-Second World War, Koreans were divided into two political factions with confronting ideologies; the leftists influenced by Marxism-Leninism (Russian and Chinese Communists) and the rightists influenced by Western Liberal ideas. Within each political thought, there were numerous factions, but the significant ones were those associated with Russians and Chinese, the Liberalist exiled government in the US under Syngman Rhee and communists exiled government in Shanghai.⁴

During the World War II, Japan reintroduced harsh measures. Koreans were subjected to forced labour in Japanese factories and were sent to different war fronts, as soldiers. An estimated 2 million Koreans served Japan during the war, of which 1,340,000 were repatriated after the war.⁵ Following Cairo Conference (December, 1943), it was decided that Japan would be expelled from Korea and with its independence restored.⁶ It was also concluded that Chinese territories under Japanese occupation would be restored and that China would have a pre-eminent role in the post-war Asia.⁷ With the establishment of a Chinese Nationalist Government aided by the US in Taiwan, the decision of Cairo Conference became a source of concern for Mao as it threatened to place the Nationalists in Korea. At the Yalta Conference, in return for favours in China and outer Mongolia, Stalin promised President Roosevelt that he would not support Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in the internal conflict of China.⁸ This severely offended Mao and the CCP.

On August 8, 1945, the Soviets declared war on Japan followed by amphibious landing by Soviet troops. The US feared Soviet occupation of whole of Korea and proposed the 38th Parallel to demarcate zones of occupation between Soviets and Americans.⁹ The Soviet Union immediately accepted the division and an agreement was incorporated into the General Order for surrender of Japan. On 27 December 1945, at Moscow Conference, a trusteeship in respective zones across the 38th Parallel for a period of five years, was established. This was to function till such time that Koreans formed their own unified government.¹⁰ The Soviets and Americans failed to reach an agreement on a unified Korean government, and in 1948, two separate governments were established, each claiming to be the legitimate government of all Korea; the Republic of Korea (ROK) in Seoul, in the American Zone, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) in Pyongyang, in the Soviet Zone.¹¹

Social-political Dynamics (North Korea)

The Japanese colonial rule established in 1905, forced thousands of Koreans to migrate to Russia and China (primarily from north due to its geographical contiguity to China and Russia), where they not only got politically indoctrinated, but also participated in the Revolution. This indoctrination affected the political landscape of Korea, making it easy for establishment of a communist regime in North Korea, very quickly. The Soviets successfully articulated North Korea and ensured that Communist Party retained Leninist communism and remained closely attached to Moscow. Soviet Union strengthened Kim Il Sung regime, 1948 onward.

Kim prompted unification by force, which Stalin did not agree, considering possibility of US intervention. Kim fermented a communist movement in South Korea, while demanding withdrawal of foreign troops from the Peninsula, which was accomplished by January 1950.¹² Despite enjoying ideological affinities and revolutionary bondages with China, Kim did not confide to Mao for his plans for unification unless endorsed by Stalin as he never wanted increased influence of Mao. Instead, Kim was even weary of communist sympathizers of CCP in his government and kept resisting Chinese assistance unless overwhelmed by UN forces.

Social-political Dynamics (South Korea)

The common people of Korea were subjected to a long period of oppression, both by ruling elite of Chosen Dynasty and Japanese colonial powers. After Soviet acceptance of the 38th Parallel and forming of trusteeship for Korea, US forces landed at Inchon on September 8, 1945 and a military government was established in South Korea. Liberalist ideas and American modernist social values appealed to the elite significantly and they were quick to absorb the new-found independence. Nevertheless, under ill experienced Lieutenant General John R. Hodge, the US military had no knowledge of the language, culture or political situation. Thus, many of their policies had unintended destabilizing effects. Deadlocked between the Soviet Union and the US over the issue of establishing a national government for Korea prolonged and in September 1947, with no solution in sight, the US submitted the Korean question to the UN General Assembly.

The UN General Assembly called for an UN-supervised general election in Korea, but due to North's refusal, general election for a Constitutional Assembly took place only in the South, during May 1948, ending up establishing a Presidential form of government in South Korea.

Syngman Rhee, a man with dubious loyalty branded as candidate of elite was appointed as head of the Government, which caused frustration and resentment amongst lower classes. Social, political and economic injustice by the Rhee

Administration gave credence to communist ideas being implemented in the North, thereby, establishing a strong communist undercurrent. Political and economic chaos arising from a variety of causes plagued South Korea in this period and these systemic weaknesses became pivotal in facilitating invasion by North Korea.

Post-World War II (Foreign Policy Perspective)

Foreign policy perspective of key stakeholders, pre-Korean War era, can be perceived by capturing the prevailing global and regional environment of that time in the immediate aftermath of World War II. It was the beginning of a long struggle between communist revolutionaries and the Western Capitalist World. Many of the popular thesis projecting a prolonged stint of relative peace, demise of large scale conventional conflicts and unchallengeable invincibility of US military might after nuking Japan, were also to be proven fallacious, sooner than expected. Far East was to witness the first limited war and one of the bloodiest manifestations of the Cold War on Korean Peninsula.

The United States (USA)

After Second World War, once the US under President Truman was committed in post-war recovery of European countries, the influence of communism with the USSR, establishing governments across Eastern Europe including Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and Yugoslavia, was growing exponentially. China, North Korea, Vietnam, Malaya, and other countries also witnessed rise of communist movements. Reciprocally, in 1947, US President launched 'Truman Doctrine' expressing US commitment to render politico-military and economic assistance to all democratic nations against external or internal threats. Truman Doctrine effectively reoriented the US foreign policy, away from its usual stance of withdrawal from regional conflicts not directly involving the US to the one with built-in possibility of intervention in far-away conflicts. With Russian influence getting more pronounced, NATO alliance was established extending security umbrella to allies in Europe.¹³ Serious confrontation between the US and the Soviets led to the partition of Germany into Eastern and Western halves.

The National Security Policy document-1950 of the US, highlighted formidable power of the USSR and termed the Soviet-system as a serious threat with dangerous potentialities for weakening relative position of the US, and disrupting its traditional institutions by means, short of war.¹⁴ In Eurasia, the US resorted to containment of Soviet domination through armed aggression or by political and subversive means. In the Pacific region, after disbanding the Imperial Army of Japan, the US was maintaining significant military presence. US monolithic view of all communist

movements denied Mao's desire to develop relations with the US; rather US administration continued to support Kuomintang.¹⁵

Some of the US policy objectives (as perceived from available data) bearing direct relevance to Korea and Far East are:

- Global containment of communism (saving the next domino) by extending assistance to forces of freedom pursuing the Western democratic ideals.¹⁶
- Protection of US strategic and economic interests in the Far East.
- Drawing a wedge between China and the Soviet Union, capitalizing on existing divergences and fault lines.¹⁷

The Soviet Union (USSR)

The USSR, being a major stable player, was influencing geo-strategic developments in Eastern as well as Western Europe by converting coalition governments of East European states into Communist regimes.¹⁸ The Soviet conquest of Germany coupled with overall victory over axis powers bolstered Russian nationalism and their dislike for the US hegemonic and capitalist designs.

Stalin sought refinement of internal issues by using external threat as means of exerting control over party affairs internally. Rallying under leadership of Stalin, Soviet military emerged more powerful and, thus, acted as a deterrent against centrifugal forces. Development of nuclear weapons further allowed the USSR to extend influence over other countries. The Soviet Union wanted to limit powers of Japan, creating conditions for it to remain so in the Pacific theatre.¹⁹ The Chinese revolutionary struggle was successfully expanding communist influence in Asia; however, Stalin was suspicious of Mao and feared China becoming a US ally²⁰ or Mao becoming Tito.

The ultimate political aim of the USSR can be inferred as establishment of Soviet dominance in South-East Asia, promoting communism and exploiting regional resources for economic recovery. Nevertheless, Soviets were not seen seeking confrontation with the US instead preferred using political means accompanied by calibrated use of military intimidation for pursuing national security interests.²¹ It was, not as late as December 1945, when, Stalin realized that in prevalent environment, controlling Pusan, Inchon and Cheju Island was not possible; and hostility of right-wing South Koreans and politically dominant elite of South Korea, due to their economic advantages, barricaded possibility of installing a unified pro-Russian Government. Soviet objectives were modified from seeking to establish friendly government in Korea to installing a friendly government "North of the 38th Parallel." Russian leadership appeared pursuing following policy in the Far East:

- Avoiding physical intervention leading to direct confrontation with the US, while extending political, diplomatic, financial and military hardware support to communist revolutionaries worldwide.
- Enhancing Soviet influence over China and North Korea pre-eminently playing a trusteeship role over Korea.²²
- Sponsoring communist uprising for establishing physical control over Pusan, Inchon and Cheju Island.²³
- Dissuading Chinese from forcible integration of Taiwan, reducing possibility of armed intervention by the US in Taiwan/China.²⁴
- Liquidation of political and economic interests of West and Japan in Korean Peninsula.

North Korea

The North Korean Communist regime had a historic association with CPC with its leader Kim II Sung having fought with the Chinese Communist forces in Manchuria during the WW II. A large number of ethnic Koreans also fought as part of PLA during Chinese civil war. As the threat of American direct intervention in Chinese civil war began to recede in the 2nd half of 1949, an estimated 50,000-70,000²⁵ ethnic Korean PLA soldiers returned to North Korea in the fall of 1949 and spring of 1950, on the request of Kim II Sung. By January 1950, North Korean military strength with assistance of the USSR and China rose to 10 Divisions (including T-34 tanks and 122 mm Guns), 200 aircraft and a navy with amphibious and battleships.²⁶ Mao favoured establishment of Communist rule in a unified Korea,²⁷ but was, somehow, ambivalent about intimacy of Kim's Soviet connection.²⁸ Mao was also not initially keen for Chinese military intervention in the Korean conflict, unless occupation of complete Korean peninsula by Americans was seemingly unavoidable. Kim's envisaged policy parameters for Korean War were:

- Unification of the Korean Peninsula under the Communist regime, led by Kim-II Sung, capitalizing over prevailing disillusionment of masses in South Korea from Syngman Rhee's corrupt regime with assured Sino-Soviet political, moral and military support.
- Application of military instrument for serving political aim of unification, exploiting favourable regional environment (in the aftermath of communist victory in neighbouring China and presence of strong communist undercurrent in South Korea), and seizing the opportunity through application of superior military strength (further bolstered by repatriation of over 70,000 Korean veterans with arms and ammunition on Kim's request) in a relative vacuum in South after departure of US contingent.

South Korea

Being low at US strategic priority, the US rendered limited military support to South Korea.²⁹ As of 25 June 1950, the ROK Army had 98,000 soldiers (65,000 combat, 33,000 support), no tanks, and a small air force comprising 22 airplanes. There were no large foreign military garrisons in Korea at the time of the invasion, but there were large US garrisons and air forces in Japan.³⁰ In the absence of assured protection, in case of an attack on the lines of NATO, South Korea became vulnerable to invasion. Moreover, the South Korean Army was extensively involved in counter insurgency operations against communists and lacked combat preparation and training to fight conventional battles.

Brief Account of Korean War

Strategic Geography of Korean Peninsula

The Korean Peninsula protrudes out and splits the Sea of Japan from the Yellow Sea and contains a complex geographic environment involving nations and resources from the whole region. The Yalu River separates the Korean Peninsula from China in the Northwest, and the Duman River separates Korea from China and Russia in the Northeast. The Korean Strait in South always served as the doorway for the invading forces. This creates a significant strategic vulnerability for China. Chinese 1000-mile long border with Korea would turn insecure in presence of hostile forces in the peninsula, thus, a strategic concern for China.

Korea's rivers and mountains have served as a lifeline and deathbeds for millions, who sought to use the physical landscape for war. Korea's climatic and geographic conditions are a nightmare for military planning, thus, a good military strategy and tactical brilliance are pre-requisites for success.

Politico-Military Objectives and Opposing Strategies of Belligerents

North Korea

The unification of entire Korean Peninsula under the Communist regime was espoused by North. It was clear to the North Korean regime that their political aim is not achievable without massive application of military instrument to dislodge South's government and liberalist forces with the already consented Sino-Soviet assistance. The strategy was:

- Employment of superior forces for speedy Southwards advance on multiple axes, overwhelming South Korean responses culminating operations, capturing Pusan, destroying maximum possible South Korean armed forces in the process.

- Inciting Communist-sponsored internal uprising (estimated strength 200,000) to embroil South Korean forces in depth.
- Capture airports of Seoul and Pohang to deny landing of foreign forces.
- Completing the military operation swiftly before foreign intervention.

United States' Politico-Military Objectives

Initially, the US entered the war with limited politico-military objectives³¹ of restoring authority of the Republic of Korea and project US credibility as guarantor against the Communist expansionist drive sponsored by Sino-Soviet alliance.³² Subsequently, after a spectacular success of military campaign, the US enlarged its politico-military objectives for complete dislodging of Communist foothold from the Korean Peninsula and eliminating perennially looming threat to ROK permanently, by securing a buffer, North of the 38th Parallel. The US politico-military objectives were premised on following strategic assumptions:

- Major Chinese or Soviet forces are not present in North Korea.
- There is no announced intention of entry or threat of countering military operations by the UN forces in North Korea by the Chinese or Soviet forces.

The US faced altogether a new war after Chinese intervention triggered by unimpeded development of UN/US operations continued North of the 38th Parallel till, the Yalu River disregarding Chinese concerns and repeated warnings. Thereon, the US recalibrated its politico-military objectives for third time in the Korean War and wanted to retain its military gains North of the 38th Parallel avoiding further escalation of hostilities and expansion of war into Chinese territory across the Yalu River contrary to MacArthur's desire for strategic bombing of Manchuria. The military strategy can be defined in following phases:

- **Phase-I (Operations for Restoration of the 38th Parallel)**
 - Undertaking amphibious landing in sufficient depth inflicting strategic military surprise.
 - Rapid expansion of beach head, re-capturing Seoul (ROK's capital), severing North-South strategic communication, cutting North Korea's logistics and routes of withdrawal.
 - Undertake swift and bold enveloping manoeuvre and destroying maximum possible North Korean forces by linking up with ROK/US forces in Pusan perimeter.
 - Destruction of all DPRK forces and elimination of communist sympathizers, thus, securing area till the 38th Parallel.

- **Phase-II (Operations North of the 38th Parallel)**
 - Continue manoeuvre of exploitation in pursuit of withdrawing DPRK forces North of the 38th Parallel, endeavouring complete destruction of any residential military potential of North Korea.
 - Dislodging the North's Communist regime by occupying Pyongyang and securing area till the Yalu River as buffer zone.
- **Phase-III (Operations Post Chinese Intervention)**
 - Retention of military gains without expanding the war any further.
 - Deterring PRC from further expanding military operations against US forces and allies by interposing 7th Fleet in Taiwan Strait (between Taiwan and mainland).
 - Maximum possible attrition of joint Sino-Korean forces, adroitly using superior airpower, artillery and armour firepower.
- **Limitations.** While giving liberty of action to the Pacific Commander, following limitations were laid down:³³
 - The UN/US forces will not cross into Manchuria or the USSR.
 - No non-Korean forces will be utilized close to Sino-Soviet borders.
 - Air action against Manchuria or the USSR will not be conducted.

Chinese Politico-military Objectives

Mao was not keen to seek military intervention in Korea confronting the UN/US forces with known superiority in hi-tech airpower, firepower and above all nuclear weapons. China entered the war with limited politico-military objectives of restoring the North Korean control till pre-war boundary at the 38th Parallel, thereby, securing the lost buffer between mainland China and US forces, and deterring the US for expanding the conflict any further. The officially issued order to the Chinese People Volunteers by Mao directed “to support the Korean People’s liberation war and resist American imperialists’ aggression in order to protect the common interests of Korean people, Chinese people and all peoples of the East; the Chinese People Volunteers to enter Korea immediately. They should assist the Korean comrades fight the war against the invaders and strive for glorious victory”.³⁴

Nevertheless, after successfully pushing back the UN forces, South of the 38th Parallel, China expanded its politico-military objectives (rejecting international calls for ceasefire) and aimed for total elimination of the ROK forces and UN footprint (especially US forces) from the Korean Peninsula as a national security imperative. Being unable to overwhelm the UN forces despite repeated large-scale offensives, spread over the years, Chinese re-calibrated their politico-military objectives to retain control of area North of the 38th Parallel (pre-war boundary), while

endeavouring to aggressively inflict casualties on the UN forces till final signing of armistice. The military strategy includes:

- All assaulting forces (Chinese People's Volunteers)³⁵ to cross the River Yalu, before crossing sites are destroyed by UN/US airpower.
- Lure in maximum possible allied forces in pre-selected killing zones and annihilate by well-coordinated encircling manoeuvre mostly during night, capitalizing on superior knowledge of terrain and offensive spirit.
- Conducting operations with maximum possible speed against ROK Army's Divisions and UN forces with overwhelming numbers and with maximum possible momentum for total elimination to annihilate them and compensate for lack of firepower.
- Taking requisite safe guards against superior UN/US airpower, resorting to unconventional tactics at night (where possible) capitalizing superior knowledge of terrain.
- Encouraging uprising among Korean People against Imperialist Forces.
- Remaining close to Imperialist forces precluding possibility of employing nuclear weapons.
- Inflicting maximum possible casualties by continuous probing and aggressive actions to erode enemy's will to fight and making this war unviable for UN/US in cost benefit equation.

War South of the 38th Parallel

On 25 June 1950, North Korean massive offensive was unleashed across the 38th Parallel, leading to routing out defenders at each thrust line. On 27 June 1950, the North Korean forces captured Seoul, and by 4th July 1950, line Suwon - Samchok was secured, inflicting heavy losses to the South Korean forces. Failing in mounting coherent defensive effort, the South Korean forces and government offices fell back to Pusan. President Truman ordered US air and naval forces (present in Japan) to assist South Korea on 27 June 1950. Some elements of the US 24th Infantry Division were transported from Japan in a haste, which posed some delay to advancing forces, while withdrawing to Pusan. By 14th of July 1950, Taejon - Yongju, and 25th of July 1950, Kwangju - Hamchang had capitulated. Insignificant impact from Communist guerrilla and stretched logistics gradually slowed down the



North Korean advance. Depleted the 24th US Infantry Division and remainder of the South Korean forces gradually fell to Pusan and perimeter defence was taken up. Meanwhile, forces from the 8th Army and some allied troops kept pouring into Pusan strengthening the foothold. A concerted effort by North Koreans to take Pusan perimeter by 10 September 1950, failed. Air interdiction of North Korean logistics continued and took a heavy toll.

Restoration of the 38th Parallel by UN/US Forces

On outbreak of hostilities on 25 June 1950, the US took the matter to the UN Security Council (UNSC). The UNSC in Resolution 83 of 27 June 1950, recommended that “member states render such assistance to the ROK as may be necessary to repel the armed attack and to restore international peace and security.”³⁶ The resolution also called for the North Korean Army to cease hostilities and withdraw to the 38th Parallel. The USSR had boycotted the UN since January 1950, hence, could not veto the resolution.

Following North Korean offensive, President Truman came under tremendous pressure to act decisively against the Communism. Inaction would have been damaging internationally as well as domestically.³⁷ General MacArthur successfully executed a risky amphibious landing on 15 September 1950, and by 17 September 1950, Inchon was captured. Surprised landing, successful air interdiction of logistics of the North Korean forces by US air arm caused heavy attrition on the North Korean Forces.³⁸ By 22 September 1950, the 8th US Army alongside UN forces commenced the pursuit of withdrawing North Korean forces. Meanwhile, US marines began their assault on Seoul, which fell by 28 September 1950, and by 29 September 1950, the 38th Parallel had been restored.

War North of the 38th Parallel

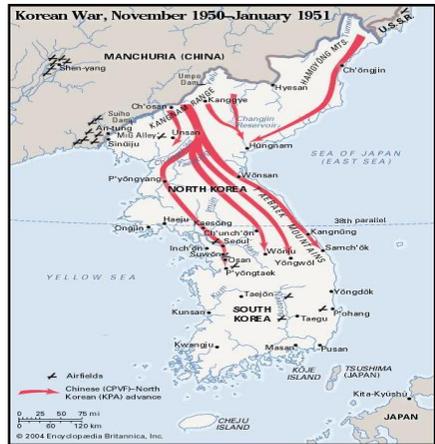
Capitalizing on quick military success in the restoration of 38th Parallel, the US also expanded its war aims to end the Korean crisis, while maximizing gained military advantage. MacArthur had envisioned crossing the 38th Parallel to destroy the North Korean forces, if required. NSC 81/1, issued after NSC 81, allowed conduct of operations North of the 38th Parallel, however, put caution on ground-commanders from getting involved in a war with China or the Soviet Union.³⁹ On 2 October 1950, the UN/US forces pushed North of the 38th Parallel. On



19 October 1950, Pyongyang fell and by 31 October 1950, the advancing forces had reached the Yalu River.

Chinese Intervention

The US ambitious pursuit of military victory and continued advance till the Yalu River (getting in a position to directly threatening Chinese Manchuria), despite repeated Chinese warnings, triggered Chinese entry into the Korean War as a strategic compulsion⁴⁰ In a deceptive and concealed move, the Chinese forces closed in and started probing attacks from 25 October to 7 November 1950, to ascertain enemy weaknesses and strengths.⁴¹ Chinese attacks were crippling, as they were executed in the cover of darkness with overwhelming numbers. Chinese successfully re-captured Pyongyang in first week of December and subsequently, pushed the US/UN forces South of the 38th Parallel. Under growing pressure from allies, Americans



approached the UN for a ceasefire, which was rejected by the Chinese, since it did not call for a withdrawal of all foreign troops from Korea. On New Year's Eve, the Chinese People's Volunteers (CPV) commenced offensive and captured the area up to 37th Parallel by first week of January 1951. Extended line of logistic, massive counter attacks by the UN/US forces, and mounting casualties of the Chinese forces compelled China to abandon plan to unify Korea by force. By March 1951, the situation stabilized and hostilities were ceased. Despite Chinese resource constraints and military weakness vis-à-vis US-led coalition, negation of ceasefire offers prolonged the war for over 2 years; adding to the number of casualties and finally, ending it into a stalemate with contested notion of victory (nevertheless, even achievement of stalemate has universally been acknowledged a victory for the weaker side and Chinese in this case) with final signing of Armistice, generally, at pre-war position on 27 July, 1953.⁴²



Appraisal of Mao's China Foreign Policy Perspective

A comprehensive foreign policy analysis with a diverse geo-economic, civilizational and ideological linkages emanating out of the Cold War legacy may require a voluminous study by itself; thus, not being endeavoured. Instead, only some of the Chinese Foreign Policy objectives and their contextual understanding bearing direct relevance to the Korean War (as perceived from available material and scholarly understanding of the subject), are the focus of deliberations in ensuing paragraphs.

Fundamental Considerations/Factors for Framing Post-1949 Chinese Foreign Policy

Foreign policy of any state is the ultimate reflection of national ideals and aspirations, hence; pursuit of revolutionary ideals was a strategic priority for the CCP leadership. After military victory and consolidation of Communist-hold through establishment of formal governmental structures or state institutions, classic manifestation of socialist system was envisaged. Needless to say, that all this was in utter defiance of Western ideals of the Capitalist world.

The unprecedented exuberance of geo-economic integration, being pursued by today's China without discrimination of West or East, was simply unthinkable and beyond the realms of possibility for the CCP leadership of pre-Korean war years. Instead, a deep-rooted sense of mistrust and insecurity thriving on Chinese exploitation by the Western Imperialists, and Japanese was the currency of the day. The Chinese foreign policy decision-making was predicated on disdainful West led by the US, breeding perennial insecurity for the Communist revolutionary regimes all over the globe.

The Chinese Revolution was considered as great victory against the Imperialist world, and a source of inspiration for others; hence, it was considered an obligation for China to support all such struggles across the globe. By supporting revolutionaries, in fact, Mao and the CCP leadership envisaged emergence of a more balanced world order in the long run. Henceforth, Mao's strategic alignment with the Soviet Union was the only rationale choice from Communist perspective (experience of national humiliation stood at the centre of Chinese political culture and became a major factor for attracting Chinese youth towards Communism in the early 20th century).

Deeply influenced by dialectic Chinese strategic culture, defining crisis as a combination of danger and opportunity, Mao treated the Korean crisis as an opportunity as well as a challenge (test case), from the very beginning. Mao simply viewed handling of the Korean crisis with CCP's ability to rule China, while safeguarding its prestige and national interests.⁴³

On the eve of Communist victory, Mao personally formulated the three main components of foreign policy of new regime. Although, five-men CCP-secretariat, which was equivalent to the present-day Standing Committee of Politburo, held discussions over new policy orientation; however, its true role was lend legitimacy to major policy decisions made by Mao. After experiencing difficulties in handling foreign affairs, Mao appointed Zhou Enlai as his manager. Zhou Enlai helped bridge gap between Mao (who never travelled abroad before this trip to Moscow) and Stalin, and negotiated the Treaty of Sino-Soviet Alliance.⁴⁴ In nutshell, Mao, being a revolutionary leader, strongly believed that he needed to maintain the momentum of his revolution by mobilizing masses; hence, adoption of a revolutionary foreign policy, had a great relevance.⁴⁵

Chinese Perceived Foreign Policy Framework

The Chinese foreign policy preceding, during the Korean War, is to be essentially understood with Mao's three-pronged diplomatic strategy. His strategic orientation, publicly expressed in his famous speech at the 2nd Plenum Party Congress on 30 June, 1949, reads as: "Externally unite in a common struggle with those nations of the world, which treat us as an equal and unite with peoples of all countries. That is ally ourselves with the Soviet Union, with the people's democracies, and with the proletariat and the broad masses of the people in all other countries, and form an International United Front ... We must lean to one side."⁴⁶ Other two principles, not made public, were: Starting a new kitchen (Ling qi luzao); and cleaning up the house before inviting guests (Dasao ganjing fangzi zai qingke).⁴⁷ The perceived Chinese foreign policy objectives are:

- Creation of favourable regional environment for fulfilment of domestic agenda of the CCP, envisioned in the immediate aftermath of successful revolutionary struggle was as under:
 - Further strengthen Communist's position in China; consolidation of Chinese revolutionary success by elimination of reactionaries, remnants of US sponsored/inspired sympathizers of nationalists, countering anti-Communist elements, and landlords with large land holdings.
 - Unification of China including Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau.
 - Establishment of Communist political infrastructure and institutions for efficient governmental functioning and undertaking socialist reforms at mass scale.
 - Economic reconstruction of China.
- Exporting revolution to neighbouring regions and extending assistance to communist revolutionaries, especially in Taiwan, neighbouring Indo-China,

and subsequently, to Laos, Philippines, Myanmar, Malaya, Nepal and even India. Mao strongly believed that spread of Communism beyond China's frontiers would contribute towards enhanced security of China.⁴⁸

- Emergence as a beacon of revolutionary struggles against Western values under the overall auspices of the Soviet Union, challenging Western democratic ideals and capitalistic imperialism. Mao, in fact, repeatedly and unambiguously termed Western Capitalist World led by the US as imperialists and the Soviet Union as an undisputed leader of anti-imperialist forces of the free world.⁴⁹
- Claiming the rightful place of China internationally, dispelling impressions about a weak and stagnant society.
- Deterring and avoiding military confrontation with any of its neighbours, regional or extra regional power, unless vital national interests are threatened and use of force becomes unavoidable.⁵⁰
- Reflecting aspirations of domestic populace, dominated by CCP's domestic agenda and Communist's world view.
- The Chinese foreign policy was, primarily, anti-imperialist with no respect for the US or Western democratic and capitalistic ideals, thus, the ideological conflict with the West was inevitably ingrained in the very nature of the Chinese Foreign Policy, right from the start considering the US⁵¹ as epicentre of threats, emanating from Western hemisphere.

In nutshell, Chinese foreign policy orientation towards Korea was anchored in safety of Sino-Korean border, promoting CCP's authority and credibility at home and enhancing China's prestige at international scene.⁵²

Evaluation of Chinese Foreign Policy During Korean War

From 1949 to 1976, Mao, as the Chairman of CPC and CMC and till 1958, as State President, dominated China's foreign policy formulation and decisions. Mao's role in key decisions that determined the fundamental orientation of the Chinese Foreign Policy, that propelled China into wars or military confrontations with foreign power, are clearly illustrative of the centralized and personalized nature of these decisions.⁵³

As a result of the Chinese Civil War, the Communist Party of China came into power without any outside support, and sought unification of China.⁵⁴ With the baggage of humiliation (exploitation of Chinese by Western imperialists) in hindsight, the US continued support to Nationalists was seen by Mao as interference in China's internal affairs. Despite brewing complexity of ideological, geo-political and socio-economic challenges, Mao's China exercised great autonomy in foreign policy decision-making. This initially autonomous foundation was to become the

bedrock of independent foreign policy endeavours of Chinese leadership earning them universal respect.

Despite, Stalin's betrayal,⁵⁵ the Chinese leadership displayed a lot of maturity in keeping Soviets engaged for provision of military hardware and advice being the only source. Any discernible friction in Sino-Soviet relations during the Korean crisis could have greatly embolden the US and curtailed Chinese freedom of action at geopolitical and strategic-cum-operation levels. Despite some ripples in Sino-Soviet alliance, China maintained a constructive relationship with the USSR even in the aftermath, nevertheless, suboptimal Soviet support in the Korean War did sow the seeds of discord (which was to materialize a few years later with both getting further distanced from each other).

After outbreak of hostilities, the CCP leadership quickly decided to postpone the PLA's Taiwan campaign plan to focus on Korea.⁵⁶ On 2 October 1950, Mao called an emergency meeting to conclude decision of intervention into the war. Mao in a telegraph informed Stalin about CCP decision of sending troops to fight the US in Korea and to aid Chinese Korean comrades. Mao rightfully identified it as a necessary step and a compulsion⁵⁷ as he believed that in case of US victory, Americans would adopt unfavourable policy to the whole East.

Notwithstanding Mao's revolutionary character traits, Chinese top decision-making in the Korean crisis fits well into rational actor model. Realizing the inevitability of military confrontation with the US, Chinese leadership astutely opted for the Korean Peninsula to fight the superior enemy at the venue of own choice (out of available choices – Korea, Taiwan and Vietnam). By giving repeated ultimatums to US-led coalition for stopping at the 38th Parallel, Chinese successfully garnered much desired domestic support (including consensus in middle and lower tiers of communist elite). Chinese military intervention was legitimately projected as a purely defensive action from moral high ground for a just cause, serving vital national security interests albeit with a limited international appeal.⁵⁸ In the absence of assured Soviet support, Chinese military intervention into Taiwan or Vietnam at that point of time could have been branded as continuation of Soviet inspired row of Communist conquest and an unprovoked aggression by China with the greater possibility of the US declaring war on China in the absence of assured Soviet support. Hence, Mao's strategic choices for military engagement in Taiwan, Vietnam and South Korea, based on deeper understanding of volatile regional developments, were very clearly and convincingly defined at policy tier.⁵⁹

Being fully cognizant of US naval and air superiority vis-à-vis Chinese logistics and operational limitations, military intervention coloured into a just defensive response with North Koreans fighting in first ranks and Chinese volunteers

supporting them with pledged Soviet support. Fighting in Korea was much facilitated as compared to anywhere else, because of terrain familiarization, geographical contiguity, socio-cultural similarities, racial affinities and logistic ease. Subsequent developments vindicated pragmatism of this rational choice.⁶⁰

MacArthur or the US government decision to cross the 38th Parallel and occupying spaces South of the Yalu River, with American military presence right on Chinese border, created an extreme vulnerability for China. Hence, remaining aloof from such a consequential development on its Eastern border was not an option for China anymore. As it was pre-determined by US administration that Sino-Soviet alliance is behind Kim's aggression on ROK and US fleet was already moved to participate in the Korean War as well as interpose in Taiwan Strait.⁶¹ Hence, the argument that China lost chance for unification of Taiwan due to unwarranted military intervention in Korean conflict does not stand ground.

Above, notwithstanding, some Western scholars identify multiple reasons for Chinese entry (with a grand strategic agenda)⁶² into the Korean War. Michael Hunt is certainly right, when he argues that "any effort to pin down the exact motive behind Mao's decision to intervene must enter a mind as complicated as the crisis it wrestled with."⁶³ However, the CCP core, with its own world's view, and Mao in command could not rightly grasp the American resolve, strategic interests and compulsions. The CCP leadership underestimated US commitment in Far East, primarily overplaying some assumptions as under:⁶⁴

- The US has committed itself to Europe, Asia and everywhere in the world; it could not hold all fronts.
- The US being located halfway across the earth from East in Western hemisphere would find it extremely difficult to logistically and operationally sustain military campaign in the Korean Peninsula.
- The US had limited human resource to fight in such remote foreign land of Korea. Chinese estimated that out of 1.45 million US serving soldiers, around 2/3rd are either inexperienced or non-combatants.
- The US had no support of allies, since Japan and Germany had not been rearmed and Britain, France and Italy were no longer great military powers.

Swayed by preconceived US flawed constraints the CCP leadership embarked on an endeavour to administer a comprehensive defeat to the US,⁶⁵ and further overlooked three crucial factors⁶⁶ and highly consequential realities relating to the US East-Asian policy: Intimate US ties with Syngman Rhee government warranted saving an ally as well as salvaging US credibility; Truman's administration was already being criticized for its failure to maintain non-Communist China and further

appeasement to North Korea would have been political suicide; and the US East-Asian policy underwent a major change after CCP's victory in China and Soviet passion for atomic bomb.

Chinese leadership was convinced that the diplomatic relations are to be established on the basis of mutual respect, sovereignty and territorial integrity, hence, new regime would not be in a rush to establish diplomatic relations with imperialist countries before its power was well consolidated.⁶⁷ Though, a morally upright standpoint, but pushed China towards further isolation from the US and the West. Chinese embryonic state already disdainful of the US got into a perennial conflict with the superpower, hence, access to Western markets, trade and commerce and hi-tech remained limited (and China remained unrecognized) for decades. During this period, Chinese dependence on the USSR became inescapable despite Soviet betrayals/riddles, thus, Mao's dream of economic reconstruction and socio-economic uplift suffered setbacks.

It is perceptible that the CCP leadership persuaded by Mao (for military intervention in Korea) initially entered the war for ensuring physical security of Chinese borders and reclaiming some buffer zone in North Korea at best. But, subsequently, the CCP leadership started pursuing a glorious military victory against UN coalition with complete elimination of Western footprint from the Korean Peninsula.⁶⁸ Being on a winning trajectory, Chinese envisioned a new international order in East Asia with balance of power out rightly tilting in Communist's favour (in the immediate aftermath of the Korean War); however, this dream remains seriously challenged by the US till to date.⁶⁹

Efficacy of Chinese Military Strategy in Serving Ends of Policy

Despite serious constraints in military hardware, access to hi-tech, domestic challenges, absence of air force and tangible air defence capability (with serious mismatch between ends and means) served the ends of policy in multiple ways. Consequently, PLA military commander, Marshal Peng Dehuai was elevated to the post of Defence Minister and entrusted with the sacred responsibility of revamping of PLA war machine on modern footings based on the experiences of the Korean War. Some of the vital policy objectives achieved through successful application of military instrument are being highlighted here.

The principle definition of war by Clausewitz clearly describes war as a continuation of policy by other means. With un-shattered determination, PLA pushed back, the UN forces South of the 38th Parallel in a rout, inflicting heavy casualties and taking a significant number of prisoners. Chinese military was successful in breaking the myth of US invincibility and unassailability (even in the

absence of Soviet support).⁷⁰ With successful culmination of the Korean War, the CCP leadership claimed universal respect and became self-assured in consolidating its position to power by deeply penetrating and mobilizing Chinese society in pursuit of communist ideals. In net cost-benefit equation, post-war strategic environment yielded a greater stability and security for the mainland China domestically as well as regionally in the near absence of directly conceivable military threats (introducing deterrence with conventional military means) with a road for pursuing vital national security objectives and nuclear deterrence wide open (materialized a decade later in 1964) under a favourable and enabling domestic and regional environment.

Through a crafty application of military instrument, North Korea was liberated. Chinese military instrument successfully and permanently secured their Eastern frontier and Manchurian industrial zone by reclaiming geographical buffer between Chinese and the UN/US forces post Armistice (1953). US intervention in North Korea and installing hostile government was simply not acceptable to China as this would warrant guarding of a 1000-mile-long boundary⁷¹ with constant threat of invasion.⁷² Moreover, possibility of re-emergence of Japanese influence in Korean Peninsula compounded the threat to the Chinese. In accordance with Mao's long-term philosophy of "striving for the best, while preparing for the worst", the CCP leadership wargamed all possible outcomes:⁷³

- North Korean victory ending in favourable outcome for China.
- Stalemate with complex implications for China.
- US victory and North Korean defeat with UN forces advancing towards Yalu was considered as the most dangerous possibility requiring immediate action by China.

Chinese leadership successfully demonstrated their ability to use military instrument for political ends, mastered during revolutionary struggle. Despite being inferior to UN coalition in many ways, superior Troop to Space Ratio (TSR) with desired concentration at the point of decision was achieved. Limitations of Chinese system of forces were compensated with tactical and operational skills and innovations. Finally, an adroit balancing of ends, ways and means paradigm with superior articulation of defensive and offensive operation cycles, carried the day for Chinese (barring a few odd overambitious endeavours). Chinese successfully articulated synergetic application of all elements of national power for addressing perceptible incompatibility between policy objectives vis-à-vis available means. Unprecedented resolve in pursuing vital national security interests despite suffering massive casualties was universally acclaimed.⁷⁴ The Korean War greatly elevated the Chinese stature (obliterating the baggage of humiliation and opium wars) as a challenger to US uncontested hegemony in the East (established after nuking

Japan), only to be humbled down further during the Vietnam War, subsequently. China with increased geo-political clout, emerged stronger, self-assured and stable. On balance, synchronized application of military instrument in harmony with the policy objectives resulted in creation of desired effects.

Above, notwithstanding, similar to world wars (primarily fought in pursuit of Clausewitzian maxims akin to Napoleonic manoeuvre warfare), pursuit of total victory as espoused by Clausewitz⁷⁵ did result in policy placing demands (albeit selectively) on military strategy, which at times were ambitious and unrealistic.⁷⁶ The pursuit of total military victory by defeating US political commitment and resolve for the containment of Communism through application of relatively far weaker Sino-Korean military instrument, was unrealistic and in conflict with (tantamount to challenging) the post-World War-II regional and global strategic construct.

Furthermore, asking Chinese volunteers to continue their offensive further South of the 37th Parallel, hastened the culmination point of offensive (violation of Carl Von Clausewitz's famous dictum).⁷⁷ Defying requests by the Military Commander, Marshal Peng Dehuai, for logistic pause (consolidation) and repeatedly forcing military to resume offensive against hardened enemy defensive positions under adverse air environment and highly unfavourable artillery firepower ratios, were a few odd ambitiously modified policy objectives, which were not militarily achievable. Moreover, repeated international requests for ceasefire were turned down by Chinese leadership (due to deep rooted suspicion and mistrust against the US) despite being on moral high ground and winning trajectory, believing it to be an ignominious peace.⁷⁸

In a great complexity and a set of strategic constraints including US nuclear pre-eminence, Mao and his comrades aptly manifested their appreciable understanding of using military means for political ends (military strategy successfully served foreign policy) throughout the Korean conflict, barring a few exceptions, where ambition (pursuit of military victory) prevailed over objective ground realities.⁷⁹

Policy Analysis (Individual Level)

The individual level of analysis focuses on leaders and decision makers in an effort to explain foreign policy. According to this model, the individual, not the state or the system, is the principal decision makers. It assumes that individuals shape the course of history, because it is their choice and decision that drive the course of events. The analysis of individuals might focus on either their personalities or on their perceptions; how they make sense of their world and the events occurring within it. Following three elements tell us how leaders generally respond to foreign

policy crisis: There is a high threat to something that is valued and important; leaders perceive that they have a short time to make decisions; and occurrence of the threatening situation takes the decision makers by surprise.

Mao Zedong

Based on available open sources of information, published material and some declassified Soviet documents explaining Chinese decision-making processes, it can be safely concluded that in early years of China, Mao allowed only very limited participation⁸⁰ in foreign policy decision-making and major decisions such as 'Lean on One Side' and military intervention in Korea, were purely taken by Mao himself only to be endorsed by Politburo as a *fate accompli*.⁸¹ Due to highly centralized character of state functioning, the Chinese Foreign Policy, in general, was the reflection of Mao's thought process and resolve against established world order. Mao, being a revolutionary leader, had his own world's view predicated on baggage of century of humiliation and Western imperialism. Being a revolutionary ideologue, he always believed that China, due to its size and industrial potential, could survive at its own without recognition or integration with the Imperialist World. Instead, he was also obsessed with dream of Sino-Centric world order and revival of 'Middle Kingdom'.⁸²

Some scholars follow neorealism approach and describe Mao's reluctance in going into the Korean War as matter of choice. Even, US intelligence estimated the same that China would rather prefer building economy rather than a military conflict. Some scholars belittle Mao by projecting that China was sucked into the Korean War as choreographed by Stalin and Kim Il-sung for a direct confrontation between Beijing and the US as *fait accompli*.⁸³ Nevertheless, this argument does not stand ground once seen with the personality of Mao as a revolutionary leader.⁸⁴ Seemingly, Mao's aggressive interventionist policy in Korea (despite opposition from some senior CPC leaders), flew out of his utter aspiration as revolutionary leader of "all oppressed peoples of the East."⁸⁵ Mao always believed in the inevitability of war with the US and proactively intervened in Korea. Mao consented Kim's proposal of attacking South and stood by his commitment adding to his stature and credibility. After collapse of Kim Il-Sung's army and US landing at Inchon, Mao took considerable pause in decision-making in sending Chinese troops into Korea, thinking through even the possibilities of stalemate, defeat or the US going nuclear. Here, Mao was also seen as an ultra-nationalist, who was looking through prism of China's national interests. Tentative decision-making of Mao and delaying in military intervention is primarily attributable to Stalin's reluctance in providing air support to North Korean and the Chinese forces. Here, some scholars do argue that Chinese timely entry might have deterred the US crossing of the 38th Parallel,

because US decision to advance North was based on perception that the Chinese would not enter the war in Korea.⁸⁶

Mao switched from defensive strategy to aggressive offensive strategy pursuing total victory in the battlefield. He refused to accept any negotiated settlement with the US, thus, rejecting the UNSC cease-fire proposal in January 1951. Mao also refused his Generals' request for operational pause⁸⁷ to recuperate and resupply before they crossed the 38th Parallel. Acceptance of the UN ceasefire proposal would have granted much needed breathing space to the Chinese People's Volunteers (CPV). Wavering between limited war aims with re-establishing Kim's regime North of the 38th Parallel to suddenly aiming for total victory requiring eviction of forces South of the 38th Parallel for unifying Korea, had negative impact on outcome of conflict. His insistence to continue advance Southward, while negating ground realities (low tech and primitive military hardware versus US high technology) proved fatal for Chinese troops⁸⁸ and led to reverses. In June 1951, Mao opted for settlement of conflict through negotiation, but by then, the position of strength was lost. Nonetheless, at the end of war, even Mao's comrades of Politburo got convinced that Mao had a much greater vision than them.⁸⁹

Mao was able to achieve most of the foreign policy objectives through successful application of military instrument in Korea. North Korea completely occupied by the US with her Western allies was reclaimed with its Communist regime fully dependent on China in the aftermath of Korean War. Manchuria especially Liaoning, an industrial zone, was successfully guarded from the South Koreans and the US, Mao was able to successfully establishing strategic buffer zone, thus, avoiding huge military spending for guarding Sino-Korean border futuristically. It can be unanimously concluded that without Mao at the helm of affairs, Chinese response to the Korean crisis could have been dramatically different.⁹⁰

Joseph Stalin

Amongst all his counterparts and players involved in the Korean conflict, Stalin appeared craftier as without entering into direct military conflict with the US, he was able to achieve two of his espoused strategic objectives right in the initial years of Cold War. Firstly, he was able to keep his buffer zone in the East effectively secured. Secondly, by approving Kim's Southward offensive, Stalin almost robbed off Mao with any of the options for militarily integrating Taiwan with mainland, and instead, sowed the seeds for a perennial Sino-US/Sino-West confrontation, pushing China towards further isolation, hence, increased dependence on the Soviet Union for economic, industrial and defence assistance.⁹¹

Notwithstanding, the personality differences between Stalin and Mao, Stalin was correctly able to identify the requirement of strategic interdependency. Mao was in love and hate relationship, obsessed with revolutionary zeal with Soviets, whereas, Stalin was more apt in realpolitik with greater understanding of grand strategy and wholesome view of global dynamics. Stalin placed Soviet strategic aim and national interests above everything else and after permitting Kim offensive against South Korea, successfully avoided direct confrontation with the US. It is with this in mind that in April 1950, Stalin asked Kim for getting his plan endorsed by Mao, thereby, engineering a guaranteed Chinese support.⁹²

Harry S. Truman

Truman was the 33rd President of the US, who came in office in April 1945. Most of the scholar grant Truman the credit of ending the World War-II by opting nuclear strikes against Japan, thus, saving lives of about 2,00,000 US troops, which could have been lost in conventional invasion of Japan.⁹³ Truman always hoped for amicable relations with the Soviet Union, but once, Polish Communist-dominated government was established in Poland in spring 1945, threat of Soviet expansionism in entire Europe grew. The Cold War began under Truman's watch, as the President came to believe that he must take a hard stance to contain the expansionistic tendencies of the Soviet Union. The 'Truman Doctrine', committed the US to a policy of supporting foes of Communism everywhere in the world, argued that the US had a duty to support free peoples against attempted subjugation.

Truman remained less successful in shaping China's political landscape and installing a coalition government in the aftermath of the Chinese civil war (with a compromise between Jiang Jieshi supporters and forces of Mao Zedong). Losing any prospects for saving Jiang, he focused on Europe. On October 1, 1949, Mao declared the founding of the People's Republic of China and in early 1950, Mao and Stalin signed a mutual defence treaty. Truman was adversely criticized by Republicans in the Congress, for losing China.⁹⁴

North Korean Invasion of South Korea surprised US administration. Truman authorized military intervention and stalemated restoration of the 38th Parallel was achieved, albeit after bloody and useless fighting for over 2 years, triggered by MacArthur's disregard for Chinese warnings and ultimatums. Truman found the prospect to defend a non-Communist government from invasion by the forces of Communism. Truman was determined neither to "lose" another state to Communism and nor damaging his anti-Communist credentials for failure to act against spread of Sino-Soviet proxies throughout Asia. He declared that the invasion was "very obviously inspired by the Soviet Union" and gave the US a convincing reason to commit large scale forces in a secondary 'theatre of war' vis-à-vis Europe.

Policy Analysis (State Level)

The state level of analysis focuses on factors internal to the state as those compel states to engage in specific foreign policy behaviours. This level of analysis explains the way in which leaders are embedded in the institution of government. This model also helps in understanding US arrogance⁹⁵ in denying rightful place to Mao's China and also Mao's revolutionary mind-set not taking into consideration the realpolitik.

Groupthink Model

Suboptimal foreign policy practice of key players during the Korean War can be aptly studied by applying the 'Groupthink theory' at state level, as more specifically, Groupthink theory addresses defective decision-making on the part of a cohesive decision-making group in which loyalty to real or perceived group norms takes precedence over independent and critical judgment.

In Chinese decision-making, senior members, sometimes, may be able to persuade a dissenting member depending upon their respective relationship with him; junior members generally would refrain from voicing a different opinion once the opinion of the most authoritative person is known. During the Mao era, all decision-making bodies were reduced to rubber stamps.⁹⁶ Instead respecting judgement by senior military leadership dealing with the live situation on ground pleading for logistic pause (highlighting inadequacies and lack of capacity to continue offensive any further), Chinese top leadership insisted on fateful decision for continued offensive beyond the 37th Parallel, which ultimately reached its culmination point and fizzled out with heavy losses to Chinese side.

US inept perception about Chinese intervention into the war, despite several indicators suggests defective decision-making. The presence of several antecedent conditions and groupthink symptoms vindicate actualization of groupthink. While, making critical decision about the Korean Peninsula, planners in the US could not factor in the objective reality and impact of history and cultural amenities of Chinese and Korean people. Chinese influence on North Koreans was immense, while the Japanese rule was scorned. The North was more inclined to China and Russia due to their proximity to Manchuria and Siberia, thus, the 38th Parallel quickly became the dividing line between two ideologies. In 1949-50, the US was more concerned about a possible Chinese attack on Taiwan. A physical involvement in Korea was neither expected nor factored into operational plans. Moreover, after withdrawal of US forces, South Korea was even excluded from US national security parameters, which encouraged Kim II Sung to proceed further for aggression.⁹⁷ Soviet and Chinese warnings and probes in the month of October were not taken seriously as the Truman Administration assessed that the Communists did not want to risk war.

While, assessments linked seriousness of the Chinese threat of intervention to ideological linkages with Russia, they failed to see that the Chinese could have nationalist reasons for choosing to go to war as well.

Although, strategically the US wanted to avoid any direct confrontation with Sino-Soviet alliance in Far East at this stage (in the immediate aftermath of the World War-II), however, analogically Korean War got lumped with Munich (Hitler's invasion of Europe and Berlin Blockade by the USSR) and US planners wanted to avoid being branded as the biggest appeaser of all time. This deep driven groupthink mentality of policy-making circles was successfully encashed by arrogant US military commanders. Relentless pursuits of hawkish policy un-calibrated exploitation of Inchon success, though, militarily brilliant, brought Chinese into the Korean conflict for next 2 years, costing dearly in terms of life and finances.⁹⁸ Final Armistice was signed, virtually on pre-June 1950 disposition of forces around the 38th Parallel.

Bureaucratic Model

This is yet another helpful model to understand the bureaucratic politics approach, whereby, organizations choose strategies and policy goals based on different ideas of what outcomes will best serve their organizational interests. From this perspective, the Chinese foreign policy decision-making was driven by singleness of purpose to consolidate CCP hold over China in a post-1949 political environment. As foreign policy of any state is also the direct reflection of internal dynamics (including internal security concerns), all the decisions of Mao's cabinet during the Korean crisis do seem to serve CCP's political objectives. Needless to say, that the Chinese foreign policy objectives were finely calibrated and synchronized to become synonymous with CCP's world's view.

Normative Theories of Rationality provide a model for rational behaviour and judge actual behaviour in light of that model. The model postulates the process by which decisions should be made; confronted with a situation that entails a decision, leaders define that situation, ascertain their goals, investigate their options, weigh the advantages and disadvantages of their options and decide on the option that achieves the goal best and at the lowest cost.⁹⁹ Empirical Theories of Rationality are less interested in judging the decision than in understanding how leaders arrived at it. It is important to understand how and why policy makers arrived at their decision as a first step to suggesting ways in which decision making can be improved.¹⁰⁰ Instead following the empirical rationality, Chinese revolutionary leadership led by Mao practiced normative reality with their own preconceived world's view and ideological leaning and disregard for the US-led Western Imperialism as by then, post-independence institutionalized decision-making processes had not taken roots in China. Mao's efforts to establish communication with the US were not positively

responded. Thus, Mao had to rely on Stalin, an equation that was not very warm, but by large served the purpose.

Policy Analysis (System Level)

This approach describes that single person or group of actors do not execute the things the way these happen, rather decisions and events as the outcome of the world system. The System-Level Analysis assumes that a balance between various actors of system exists and there also exists an inherent ability of restoration of balance after it has been upset. This phenomenon compels states or individuals into making particular decisions without bringing rationality into account at some instances with willingness of totalitarian regimes for getting into confrontation mode leading to war. Therefore, due to the pressure, the international system places on the actors, the best or most rational decisions are not always made. With no sovereign power existing in the international system, the individual states must take whatever action necessary to maintain the balance of power or attempt to tilt the balance in their favour.

Perennial conflict between two opposing poles was intrinsic in the very nature of bi-polar world, where each and every action by opposing camp was seen with the ideological prism of normative rationality and deep rooted mistrust feeding on Communist hysteria and Western Imperialism.¹⁰¹ Hence, on one side, the aggression of Kim II Sung was interpreted by the West as a deliberately crafted strategy for global conquest by the Communists, led by Stalin with Eastern hemisphere outsourced to Mao as his vicegerent.¹⁰² While, on the other hand, US engineered UN action in South Korea was seen as the US pioneered effort for permanent mustering of military resources in Communist backyard for power projection at opportune time. MacArthur's unnecessary venture North of the 38th Parallel fiddled with the volatile and finely hung balance, forcing Chinese intervention and prolonging hostilities for over 2 years, resulting into colossal loss to life and untold misery.

The Korean War pushed China and the former Soviet Union closer together for immediate tactical and operational convergences, only to be split apart rapidly that otherwise would have been the case.¹⁰³ It accentuated the bipolarity by increasing tensions between the superpowers and making their allies more dependent on them; but also encouraged many third world nations to remain nonaligned and avoid committing to any camp. The UNSC did act promptly¹⁰⁴ and passed a resolution against North Korean invasion of South Korea, yet credibility of the UN as a neutral and effective institution also suffered as Communist bloc viewed US hijacking the UN as an instrument for advancing its national policy (effectively capitalizing on convergence of interests of Western values with the UN charter). China emerged from the war, stronger, and a country to be reckoned with for its reliance and

determination. Internally, it consolidated the rule of CCP through prestige and credibility.

Conclusion

Strategic scan of post-World War-II and pre-Korean War, global and regional dynamics with US outright support to Taiwan (denying recognition to China) with sizable military presence in Japan, suboptimal Soviet politico-military support and Kim II Sung handling of the 'Korean Issue' greatly help understanding the context of Sino-US belligerence materialized, subsequently, on the Korean Peninsula. The Korean War left everlasting imprints on regional dynamics. Learning from highly consequential experiences, Chinese quickly realized that the Soviet foreign policy objectives were divergent from those of China despite ideological similarities; hence, greater self-reliance with mass mobilization of society and political consolidation of the Communist power was required for meaningful pursuit of national security imperatives (instead becoming complacent or over-reliance on the dividends of "lean-to-one-side"). Thereon, with redefined parameters, Chinese successfully embarked upon a new journey for revamping foreign policy and national security strategy.

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²⁴ Harry M Crocker, "Chinese Intervention in North Korea; Thesis submitted to Graduate Faculty of Louisiana State University," (December 2002), 8.

²⁵ Chen Jian, "The Sino-Soviet Alliance and China's Entry into the Korean War," State University of New York at Geneseo, Working Paper No. 1, Cold War International History Project, Woodrow Wilson International Centre for Scholars, (Washington, D.C.), <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/ACFAE7.pdf> (accessed April 9, 2017). June 1992 The Sino-Soviet alliance and China's entry into the Korean War, Cold War International History Project Woodrow Wilson International Centre for Scholars Washington, D.C, June 1992.

²⁶ Ohn Chang-Il, "Korea Military Academy "The Causes of Korean War; 1950-53," International Journal of Korean Studies, Volume XIV, and Number 2, 1998, <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/f6b1/29a6b1dd9790ff3a2161f48f35a70304a250.pdf> (accessed April 9, 2017).

²⁷ Sergei N. Goncharov, John W. Lewis, and Xue Litai, "Uncertain Partners; Stalin, Mao, and the Korean War," Series: Studies in International Security and Arms Control, (Stanford University Press, 1993), 134.

²⁸ Kim prevailed upon Stalin to support forced unification and Stalin agreed to support this venture upon endorsement by Mao.

²⁹ William Stueck, "The United States and the Origins of the Korean War: The Failure of Deterrence," International Journal of Korean Studies, Vol XIV, No 2, 5.

³⁰ Appleman, Roy E (1998) [1961]. South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu. United States Army Centre of Military History. pp. 3, 15, 381, 545, 771, 719. ISBN 0-16-001918-4. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Korean_War#CITEREFAppleman1998 (accessed May 10, 2017).

³¹ US wanted to keep the war confined to Korean peninsula deterring involvement of other regional players or getting benefitted out of Korean crisis; hence as a precaution moved 7th fleet to interpose between Taiwan and mainland China.

³² Robert Flynn, "The Korean War," 5, www.mconway.net/page1/page6/files/The%20Korean%20War.pdf (accessed May 10, 2017).

³³ Max Hastings, "Korean War," (Simon and Schuster, October 15, 1988), 118.

³⁴ Xiaobing Li, Allan Reed Millet & Bin Yu, "Mao's Generals Remember Korea," First Edition, (nce: University Press of KansasLawre, 2001), 40.

³⁵ Zhou was credited for Chinese intervention in the name of 'volunteers' to avoid openly declaring war against US. Lu Ning, "The Dynamics of Foreign-Policy Decision making in China; Second Edition." (Colorado & Oxford: Westview Press, 1997), 83.

³⁶ Refworld, UNHCR, The Refugees Agency, "Security Council resolution 83 (1950) [Complaint of aggression upon the Republic of Korea]," <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3b00f20a2c.html> (accessed April 9, 2017).

³⁷ Max Hastings, "The Korean War," (New york: Simon and Schuster, 1987), 79.

³⁸ Robert Leckie, "The Korean War," (London: Barrie & Rockliff with Pall Mall Press, 1963), 125.

³⁹ "National Security Council Report, NSC 81/1, "United States Courses of Action with Respect to Korea," September 9, 1950, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Truman Presidential Museum and Library, <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/116194.pdf> (accessed April 9, 2017).

⁴⁰ Xiaobing Li, Allan Reed Millet & Bin Yu, "Mao's Generals Remember Korea," First Edition, (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001).

⁴¹ Ibid, 14.

⁴² For the first time in modern history, China had succeeded in confronting a coalition of Western powers and emerged undefeated. Chen Jian, "China's Road to Korean War; The Making of Sino-American Confrontation," (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 221.

⁴³ Chen Jian, "China's Road to Korean War; The Making of Sino-American Confrontation," (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 128.

⁴⁴ Lu Ning, "The Dynamics of Foreign-Policy Decision making in China; Second Edition." (Colorado & Oxford: Westview Press, 1997), 151.

⁴⁵ Chen Jian, "Mao's China & The Cold War," (Chapel Hill & London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 11.

⁴⁶ Lu Ning, "The Dynamics of Foreign-Policy Decision making in China; Second Edition." (Colorado & Oxford: Westview Press, 1997), 78.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Mearsheimer, J. J. "Anarchy and the Struggle for Power: The Tragedy of Great Power Politics," (New York and London: W W Norton & Company, 2001), 36.

⁴⁹ Pounding of existing western dominated international order including defeating US led coalition in Korea has been identified as one of the Chinese foreign policy objectives by Chen Jian, "Mao's China & The Cold War," (Chapel Hill & London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 116.

⁵⁰ Lu Ning, "The Dynamics of Foreign-Policy Decision making in China; Second Edition." (Colorado & Oxford: Westview Press, 1997), 80.

⁵¹ Chen Jian, "China's Road to Korean War; The Making of Sino-American Confrontation," (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 15.

⁵² Chen Jian, "China's Road to Korean War; The Making of Sino-American Confrontation," (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 141.

⁵³ Lu Ning, "The Dynamics of Foreign-Policy Decision-making in China," Second Edition, (Colorado & Oxford: Westview Press, 1997), 77.

⁵⁴ Hao Yufan and Zhai Zhihai, "China's Decision to Enter the Korean War: History Revisited," *The China Quarterly*, No 121, March, 1990, 95.

⁵⁵ To address Chinese vulnerability, Stalin agreed to assist China militarily; nevertheless, much expected air support from Soviets never materialized except towards terminal stages of war.

⁵⁶ Xiao Jingguang, *Xiao Jingguang huiyilu* (The Memoirs of Xiao Jingguang), II, (Beijing: The Press of the People's Liberation Army, 1990), 26; Zhou Jun, "A Preliminary Exploration of Reasons Why the PLA Failed to Carry Out the Taiwan Campaign Plan after the Formation of the PRC," *Zhonggong*.

dangshi yanjiu (The CCP History Study), No. 1, 1991, 72.

⁵⁷ Existence of Kuomintang remnants along Sino-Korean Border was worrisome as Mao always considered the presence of US or a regime supportive of it, a significant security threat.

⁵⁸ Lu Ning, "The Dynamics of Foreign-Policy Decision-making in China," Second Edition, (Colorado & Oxford: Westview Press, 1997), 174.

⁵⁹ Some scholars in the west widely project that China's policy was aggressive, violent and irrational, nevertheless, this assertion does not stand the dispassionate and unbiased analysis. Chen Jian, "China's Road to Korean War; The Making of Sino-American Confrontation," (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 2.

⁶⁰ Ease of logistic support in Korean peninsula as compared to Taiwan and Vietnam has also been highlighted by Lu Ning, "The Dynamics of Foreign-Policy Decision-making in China," Second Edition, (Colorado & Oxford: Westview Press, 1997), 81.

⁶¹ Chen Jian, "China's Road to Korean War; The Making of Sino-American Confrontation," (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 131.

⁶² Attributing Chinese intervention to Mao's aggression and temptation for using military means for political ends being a revolutionary leader who had a myopic world's view and always believed that the power flows from the barrel of the gun.

⁶³ Chen Jian, "China's Road to Korean War; The Making of Sino-American Confrontation," (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 217.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 192.

⁶⁵ US defeat at the hands of an embryonic communist Chinese state was surely not palatable under the obtaining regional and global environment for a nuclear armed superpower with uncontested leadership of western hemisphere.

⁶⁶ Chen Jian, "China's Road to Korean War; The Making of Sino-American Confrontation," (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 126.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 79.

⁶⁸ Chen Jian, "Mao's China & The Cold War," (Chapel Hill & London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 116.

⁶⁹ Chen Jian, "China's Road to Korean War; The Making of Sino-American Confrontation," (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 130.

⁷⁰ Zhou went to Stalin, not to call off Chinese involvement in Korean war but to secure the best possible deal. Chen Jian, "China's Road to Korean War; The Making of Sino-American Confrontation," (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 199.

⁷¹ Area from 38th Parallel to Yalu River acting as buffer zone for China's eastern border is presently being guarded by North Korean government as one of the most militarized border region (along 38th Parallel) thus saving billions for Chinese generations.

⁷² Xiaobing Li, Allan Reed Millet & Bin Yu, "Mao's Generals Remember Korea," First Edition, (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001), 40.

⁷³ Chen Jian, "China's Road to Korean War; The Making of Sino-American Confrontation," (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 133.

⁷⁴ Mao was not cowed down even after an unveiled threat by MacArthur for nuking China and strategic bombing of Manchurian industrial zone for swiftly ending the war similar to Japan. Instead, till very end, the aggressive spirit never died down and even days before signing of final armistice, Chinese successfully executed a number of tactical and operational manoeuvres inflicting heavy casualties on enemy availing even the last available window of opportunity for such actions.

⁷⁵ Carl von Clausewitz: Excerpts from *On War* (1832) "The German History in Documents and Images," Volume 3. From Vormärz to Prussian Dominance, 1815-1866, 21.

⁷⁶ Clausewitz says in his book *On War*, “Should policy place demands on strategy which it is unable to address than the policy is at fault and not the strategy”.

⁷⁷ Carl von Clausewitz, “*On War*,” Chapter V, *Culminating Point of the Attack*, (Library of Alexandria, 1832). Translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton University Press, 1976/84).

⁷⁸ J.F.C. Fuller in his famous treatise, “*Conduct of War*” terms ignominious peace as only a temporary suspension of arms against which men of courage ought to rise at the first available opportunity. J.F.C. Fuller, “*The Conduct of War 1789-1961*,” (New York, NY: Da Capo Press, Mar, 1992).

⁷⁹ Chen Jian, “China’s Road to Korean War; The Making of Sino-American Confrontation,” (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 190.

⁸⁰ Lu Ning, “*The Dynamics of Foreign-Policy Decision making in China; Second Edition*.” (Colorado & Oxford: Westview Press, 1997), 8.

⁸¹ Mao with an impeccable record of military successes during the Chinese civil wars, commanded tremendous respect among his CPC colleagues and PLA commanders who despite personal reservations were willing to support him once he made up his mind.

⁸² Mao emphasized importance of ‘human factor’ in modern warfare but also vouched for China’s development of atomic weapon, so that China’s ‘Spiritual Atomic Bomb’ would be reinforced by real bomb. Chen Jian, “China’s Road to Korean War; The Making of Sino-American Confrontation,” (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 223.

⁸³ Michael M. Sheng, “Beijing’s Decision to Enter the Korean War: A Reappraisal and New Document,” *Korea and World Affairs* 19 (Summer 1995), 294–313; “The Psychology of the Korean War,” *The Journal of Conflict Studies* (Spring 2002), 56–72; and “Mao and the Korean War: A Personality Account,” *The New England Journal of History* 60 (Spring 2004), 212–226.

⁸⁴ Mao prevailed all opposing voices in enforcing his decision for military intervention in Korea. Lu Ning, “*The Dynamics of Foreign-Policy Decision-making in China*,” Second Edition, (Colorado & Oxford: Westview Press, 1997), 82.

⁸⁵ One of Peng Dehuai’s statements, with which Mao fully agreed, says “it is necessary to send troops to assist Korea. Even if we were to be defeated in Korea, this would be no worse than that our victory in War of Liberation would come several years later. Chen Jian, “China’s Road to Korean War; The Making of Sino-American Confrontation,” (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 193.

⁸⁶ Chen Jian, “China’s Road to Korean War; The Making of Sino-American Confrontation,” (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 165.

⁸⁷ Chinese generals pleaded Mao for operational pause to consolidate and re-supply as from late October to early December, the Chinese People’s Volunteers had lost 100,000 troops, only 260 of its trucks remained. Supply line had been greatly extended all the way to the 38th Parallel. Over 30,000 soldiers in the 9th Army Group were severely frostbitten due to inadequate resources. The shortage of ammunition and food was also alarming.

⁸⁸ While advancing from 38th Parallel to 37th Parallel CPV suffered 70,000 casualties within 7 days in April 1951 and 90,000 casualties within four days in May 1951. But Mao always believed that an army with higher morale could beat an enemy with superior equipment. Chen Jian, “China’s Road to Korean War; The Making of Sino-American Confrontation,” (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 202.

⁸⁹ Chen Jian, "China's Road to Korean War; The Making of Sino-American Confrontation," (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 222.

⁹⁰ Ibid, 219.

⁹¹ Mao wanted completion of victory against Kuomintang and capture of Taiwan whereas; Stalin sought Eastern Buffer and isolation of China from Western Powers and US. While bond between Chinese communist party and North Korea grew, Stalin saw an opportunity to exploit this bondage to create further distance between Beijing and Washington.

⁹² William Stueck, "The Korean War, An International History," (Princeton University Press, 1995), 36.

⁹³ Harry S. Truman, "Foreign Affairs," Miller Centre, <https://millercenter.org/president/truman/foreign-affairs> (accessed April 9, 2017).

⁹⁴ China becoming an adjunct to USSR was hotly being debated as fundamental failure of US foreign policy.

⁹⁵ Chen Jian, "China's Road to Korean War; The Making of Sino-American Confrontation," (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 170.

⁹⁶ Lu Ning, "The Dynamics of Foreign-Policy Decision making in China; Second Edition." (Colorado & Oxford: Westview Press, 1997), 94.

⁹⁷ The Joint Staff concluded that Soviet Union would not agree to an acceptable plan to end the division of Korea and that the Congress would not allocate adequate funds to maintain US forces in the Peninsula. Militarily, Korea was not of a great significance to US; hence a policy of containment of China and Russia from a chain of Islands in the Pacific with US naval power was contemplated.

⁹⁸ Soviets offered an Olive Branch for cessation of hostilities after liberation of South Korea by UN forces but US turned it down and instead successfully managed a UN resolution for occupation of the entire Korean peninsula to settle this question for good.

⁹⁹ Marijke Breuning, *Foreign Policy Analysis: A Comparative Introduction* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1st Edition, November 2007), 59.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 61.

¹⁰¹ With deep rooted suspicion on both sides, western values of liberty and freedom were viewed as a hoax by Mao's China and instead he vowed to struggle for oppressed people. Both sides did not understand each other politically. Even in October 1950, CIA and US leadership were convinced that it would be sheer madness on the part of Chinese to enter Korean War and the best time for intervention is already over. Chen Jian, "China's Road to Korean War; The Making of Sino-American Confrontation," (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 169.

¹⁰² From the beginning of the war until the conclusion of the armistice agreement, US leaders assumed North Korea-China and USSR as one axis. The aggression was Soviet in nature and origin and its victim was the entire free world. Chen Jian, "China's Road to Korean War; The Making of Sino-American Confrontation," (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 171.

¹⁰³ Chinese would not forget Stalin's 'betrayal' at a crucial juncture. Chen Jian, "China's Road to Korean War; The Making of Sino-American Confrontation," (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 222.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 125.