

# NORTHEAST ASIA

and the LEGACY of  
HARRY S. TRUMAN

JAPAN, CHINA, and the TWO KOREAS



Edited by  
James I. Matray

The Legacy of Harry S. Truman in Northeast Asia  
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Based on the Eighth Truman Legacy Symposium  
The Legacy of Harry S. Truman in East Asia:  
Japan, China, and the Two Koreas  
May 2010  
Key West, Florida

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Volume 8

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To Amanda Jane Matray  
A Master Teacher

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## PREFACE

In 2003, the Harry S. Truman Library and Museum sponsored its first annual Truman Legacy Symposium at the Little White House in Key West, Florida. The broad purpose of this series is to provide scholars with a venue to deliver and discuss papers on selected topics that will provide a better understanding of Truman, his presidency, and his era, as well as the ongoing impact of his time as chief executive. It was a pleasure and a privilege for me to accept Director Michael J. Divine's invitation to serve as chair for the symposium on May 15, 2010: *The Legacy of Harry S. Truman in East Asia*. This event was one of several programs that the Truman Library sponsored during that year to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the start of the Korean War. On June 16 and 17, I was cochair for a second conference at the Truman Library in Independence, Missouri: *New Documents and New Histories: Twenty-First Century Perspectives on the Korean War*. This anthology presents revisions of the papers the authors presented at these two conferences, with those in the first four sections from Key West and those in the last two sections from the gathering in Independence.

Truman's presidency remains highly controversial not least because of the decisions he made in East Asia. Historians continue to investigate the events of those years throughout the region, but this anthology does not address developments in Southeast Asia. Nevertheless, the impact of Truman's policies on Japan, China, and Korea remains for scholars fiercely contested terrain. The authors of the essays in this anthology are leading authorities on relations between the United States and East Asia after World War II. I want to take this opportunity to express to them my sincere thanks for their participation in the Truman Legacy Project. In particular, I am grateful to William Stueck for presenting at both conferences, as well as Kim Hakjoon for making the long trip from Seoul to Independence. Also, Steven Casey traveled to Key West from London and Sayuri Guthrie-Shimizu from Japan, where she was working as a visiting scholar. It was gratifying to receive prompt acceptances to my invitations to participate with little delay or difficulty.

In addition to thanking the contributors, I also want to acknowledge

several individuals, institutions, and organizations whose support was vital to the completion of this volume. I drew inspiration from meeting Clifton Truman Daniel, the president's grandson, at Key West, where he delivered both welcoming and concluding remarks. Michael Divine provided sensible oversight and unfailing support. At Key West, Robert J. Wolz, foundation director of the Harry S. Truman Little White House, and Paul Hilson, who is in charge of arranging special events and group visits, ensured that the food, accommodations, and facilities were excellent, while staff members provided participants with entertaining tours of the museum. Thanks also to those who work at the Harry S. Truman Library and Museum, Harry S. Truman Little White House Foundation, Marriot Key West Beachside Hotel, Key West Comfort Inn, Historic Tours of America, Monroe Council for the Arts, and Monroe County Tourist Development Council, who devoted time and energy to ensure the success of the Truman Legacy conferences.

Completion of this anthology would not have been possible without the expertise and hard work of one special person more than anyone else. Ray Geselbracht, special assistant to the director of the Truman Library and Museum, was tireless and skilled in performing an enormous number of tasks ranging from scheduling to covering expenses, not to mention chairing a panel at Key West. Moreover, he has used his deep knowledge of the Truman Library's collection of images to insert into the anthology documents and photographs that deepen our understanding of Truman's policies in Northeast Asia. His advice was priceless and I greatly value our friendship. At Truman State University Press, director Nancy Rediger and editor Barbara Smith-Mandell skillfully transformed a manuscript into the published volume. They accomplished this task with dispatch, tolerating my failure to submit the revised essays before the scheduled deadline.

Finally, I could not have completed this project or, for that matter, anything else of importance in my professional life without the constant and unfailing love and support of my dear wife, Karin. Among all the gifts that she has given to me, the most important are our children, Benjamin Robert and Amanda Jane. Amanda teaches history and social studies at Grant Middle School in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Both inside and outside of the classroom, she is competent, passionate, committed, and inspiring. I am dedicating this book to Amanda as a thank-you for reminding her parents that, as teachers ourselves, we have room for improvement.

James I. Matray

June 2011

## GENERAL EDITOR'S PREFACE

This volume addressing the legacy of the Truman administration in East Asia is the eighth in a series exploring various aspects of the thirty-third president's impact on American history during his nearly eight years in the Oval Office and in the half century since he left the White House to return to his hometown of Independence, Missouri. Earlier volumes in the Truman Legacy Series have dealt with national security, civil rights, the recognition of Israel, Native Americans, the environment, immigration, and congressional relations. Each volume has its origins in papers presented at the annual symposium held at the Truman Little White House in Key West, Florida.

In selecting topics for the symposium, planners seek to identify areas where original and exciting scholarship is underway on issues that have been neglected or where revisionist work based on new documentation is leading to a better understanding of past events. The sixtieth anniversary of the outbreak of the Korean War provided an appropriate historical milestone to re-examine Truman's legacy in Northeast Asia, and the greatly increased internationalism of the scholarship on his administration's policies is clearly demonstrated in the proceedings of the 2010 symposium.

Perhaps no field of Truman-era scholarship is as rich and diverse as that focusing on the United States relations with the nations of Northeast Asia (China, Japan and two Koreas) from 1945 to 1953, and in recent years studies have proliferated as academics from the United States, Europe, and Northeast Asia have re-examined the historical record. The increased availability of now-declassified documents from United States archives over the past two decades has been complemented by the opening (although sporadic) of vast sources from the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China. This has allowed for an extraordinary international approach to the interpretation of the policies pursued by the Truman administration.

In addition to the papers provided by the participants in Key West, several of the entries in this volume were presented at a conference entitled *New Documents and New Histories: Twenty-first Century Perspectives on the Korean War*. This program took place at the Truman Library on June 16–17, 2010, and included a press conference at which announcements

were made regarding significant additional materials, recently declassified, that are now available to scholars at the Truman Library and partnering organizations. Partnering with the Truman Library on the conference were the Historical Collections Division and the Center for the Study of Intelligence of the Central Intelligence Agency, and the Department of Military History at the US Army Combine and General Staff College at Leavenworth, Kansas, and the Cold War International History Project housed at the Woodrow Wilson Center and George Washington University. The Dwight David Eisenhower Presidential Library in Abilene, Kansas, also supported the program at the Truman Library.

This publication and the conference that gave rise to it required the dedicated effort of many people. Dr. James Matray served as program chair for the conference and edited the papers in this volume; without him, neither would have been possible. Nancy Rediger and Barbara Smith-Mandell at Truman State University Press have supported this series since the beginning and once again skillfully transformed a manuscript into an attractive book. Many people and organizations in Key West provided essential assistance, financial and otherwise. These include Ed Swift, president of the Harry S. Truman Little White House Foundation and Historical Tours of America; Chris Belland, Piper Smith-Belland, and Monica Munoz of Historical Tours of America; and the Spottswood Companies, Inc., which provided an excellent venue for conference sessions. The Comfort Inn of Key West made complementary rooms available for conference presenters. Sheila Jaskot and Delia Rios of C-SPAN enabled the conference presenters to make their arguments to an audience of viewers throughout the country, as well as worldwide. As in past years, the Monroe County Tourist Development Council supported the conference in South Florida. I have saved their recognition until last, because they are so essential to the organization and implementation of the Truman Legacy conferences: Bob Wolz and Paul Hilson of the Truman Little White House and Ray Geselbracht of the Truman Library.

Michael J. Devine  
General Editor

# INTRODUCTION

## Mild About Harry—President Harry S. Truman’s Legacy in Northeast Asia

**James I. Matray**

Harry S. Truman never expected to be president of the United States. Franklin D. Roosevelt’s death on 12 April 1945, however, made the Missouri politician, who had come to Washington just ten years earlier as a US senator, the world’s most powerful leader. He would leave office in January 1953 as one of the most controversial and unpopular chief executives in American history. At first, Truman appeared overwhelmed; upon emerging from his first cabinet meeting, he advised newsmen, “Boys, if you ever pray, pray for me now!” Although he displayed firm leadership in guiding the nation to achieving the final defeat of the Axis in World War II, his management of the transition to peacetime generated sharp criticism. Indeed, fourteen months after V-J Day, dissatisfied Americans elected the first Republican-controlled Congress since 1930. “To err is Truman” was a popular phrase at the time that reflected how this outcome was a direct repudiation of what many voters considered an accidental president. Two years later, however, Truman secured election as president in his own right in November 1948. His implementation of the containment strategy in confronting the perceived threat of Soviet expansion undoubtedly played a critical role in his triumph. Too often, foreign affairs escape emphasis in explaining the most stunning electoral upset in US presidential history.

Truman’s own term as president proved to be a disaster, especially with respect to domestic politics. His approval rating at the time he left office still ranks among the lowest in American history. Certainly, events in Northeast Asia were leading factors discrediting his presidency, Truman receiving blame for the Communist victory in China and the stalemated war in Korea. Yet, American historians and political scientists since 1962 have consistently ranked Truman as a “near great” president. Moreover, in the wake of the

Watergate scandal and the Vietnam debacle, Truman resurfaced as a folk hero in American popular culture. In 1975, the rock band Chicago sang a tribute to the president with these almost reverential lyrics.

America needs you  
 Harry Truman  
 Harry could you please come home  
 Things are looking bad  
 I know you would be mad  
 To see what kind of men  
 Prevail upon the land you love  
 America's wondering  
 How we got here  
 Harry all we get is lies  
 We're gettin' safer cars  
 Rocket ships to Mars  
 From men who'd sell us out  
 To get themselves a piece of power  
 We'd love to hear you speak your mind  
 In plain and simple ways  
 Call a spade a spade  
 Like you did back in the day  
 You would play piano  
 Each morning walk a mile  
 Speak of what was going down  
 With honesty and style  
 America's calling  
 Harry Truman  
 Harry you know what to do  
 The world is turnin' round and losin' lots of ground  
 Oh Harry is there something we can do to save the land we love  
 Oh woah woah woah  
 America's calling  
 Harry Truman  
 Harry you know what to do  
 The world is turnin' round  
 And losin' lots of ground  
 So Harry is there something we can do to save the land we love  
 Oh Harry is there something we can do to save the land we love  
 Harry  
 Harry is there something we can do to save the land we love?

Chicago's plea would seem to have contemporary relevance, except when one examines Truman's record in attempting to guide the people living in Northeast Asia to peace and stability in the years after World War II.

To be sure, when he became president in April 1945, Truman had limited knowledge about East Asia and even less experience with the region. His biographical history is well known but worth summarizing. Born in rural Missouri, Truman achieved little in his life before he served as a National Guard artillery officer in World War I. His clothing business in Kansas City after the war ended in bankruptcy, but he then won election as a county judge because of his ties with the unsavory Pendergast machine. Truman was elected to the US Senate in 1934 and, despite Roosevelt's support for a substitute candidate, reelected in 1940. He achieved national acclaim during World War II by chairing a committee that investigated the US defense industry. In November 1944, he was the surprise choice as the Democratic Party's vice-presidential candidate. As was true of almost all of his predecessors, when Truman became president, he had never visited East Asia and knew little about a region that seemed distant from US interests notwithstanding the nation's celebrated devotion to the Open Door policy. Unlike Roosevelt, who was of course the exception in this regard, Truman would depend on advisors to determine US policy in East Asia throughout his presidency.

Nevertheless, Truman's actions—or inaction—had a decisive impact on postwar developments in East Asia, beginning with his approval for use of the atomic bomb against Japan. In late July 1945, the Allies, through the Potsdam Declaration, had called on Japan to surrender immediately, but Tokyo rejected the ultimatum. In response, Truman, without hesitation, ordered the atomic attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, abruptly ending World War II. Few decisions in human history have generated more scholarly debate, with sharp and unresolved disagreement focusing on issues of motivation, necessity, and wisdom. Conventional opinion holds that common sense, rather than malevolence, dictated using every weapon available to defeat Japan. Stated simply, Truman approved use of the atomic bomb to end the war quickly and save lives. But revisionist historians condemn Truman for needlessly killing Japanese civilians to intimidate the Soviet Union into accepting US terms for restructuring the postwar world. It seems highly unlikely that Truman was unaware of the political implications of securing a prompt end to the Pacific war. Since the Soviet Union had not declared war against Japan, surely he must have realized that he had the chance to prevent an East Asian repetition of the unhappy consequences of the Red Army's liberation of territories under Axis control in Eastern Europe.

# TRUMAN, UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER, AND A NEW DEAL FOR JAPAN

**Marc Gallicchio**

An assessment of Harry Truman's legacy in East Asia must begin with the president's approval of the use of atomic weapons to end the war with Japan. The atomic explosions above Hiroshima and Nagasaki ushered in a new era in warfare, cast a shadow over American defense strategy in Asia for the next three decades, and provoked moral debates that persist today.<sup>1</sup> Given the moral, political, and psychological shock waves that followed the atomic blasts, we can easily understand why historians regularly return to study this subject. Frequently those historians find themselves grappling with the question of necessity: Were the atomic bombs needed to end the war against an enemy who was on the verge of defeat? Was there another way to force Japan's surrender and spare the lives of tens of thousands of civilians in Hiroshima and Nagasaki? The most frequently offered alternative at the time, and the one cited most often by historians, was to promise the Japanese they could preserve the monarchy and spare Emperor Hirohito if they surrendered. Unfortunately, we will never know if a promise to safeguard the throne would have ended the war because Truman resolutely refused to make any promises on the fate of the emperor. Although there is much evidence to suggest that more inducements would have been necessary to secure Japan's surrender, we still have to ask why the president did not at least make the effort.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, Truman's unwillingness to compromise during the summer of 1945 seems even more bewildering given that after Japan's surrender he ultimately decided to protect Hirohito from war crimes trials and permit the continuation of the imperial household.

Alonzo Hamby, a sympathetic Truman biographer, has wondered if Truman had "thought his position through. It amounted to an implicit

belief that it would not be possible to allow an utterly defeated Japan to retain the emperor under terms that still could be called 'unconditional surrender,' and that the American people would prefer another devastating year of war."<sup>3</sup> Hamby speculates that Truman did not think it through and that he was unhelpfully influenced by James F. Byrnes, a close advisor who "worried intensely about the domestic political repercussions of the emperor issue."<sup>4</sup> More recently, Tsuyoshi Hasegawa has ventured that Truman rejected negotiation with Japan because he sought to avenge the humiliating attack on Pearl Harbor.<sup>5</sup>

In these and other interpretations, there is little agreement as to Truman's motives or his role in the debate over unconditional surrender. In some interpretations, the president is slavishly obeying the dictates of public opinion. In others, we see a president scheming to use the bomb to intimidate the Russians or forestall a Soviet advance into Northeast Asia. Absent from all of these analyses is an explanation of Truman's war aims. Indeed, at times, as we shall see, the president almost vanishes in the midst of debates conducted in his office. At best, he is presented as an onlooker buffeted by competing opinions and with no ideas of his own about the long-term objectives of war.

Such was not the case. Truman sought more tangible objectives than the rhetorical victory of claiming that he had forced Japan's unconditional surrender, although that was important politically. The president sought to prevent Japan from ever again threatening the peace. To do that, he believed that he could make no concessions on the emperor and that Japan would need to be militarily occupied and socially transformed. Those who suggest that something called unconditional surrender could have been achieved even while promising to protect the emperor overlook important differences between Truman and those who advised him to compromise on the fate of the monarchy. The strongest advocates for modifying unconditional surrender, while still calling it unconditional surrender, were the president's most conservative advisors. They were supported in public by conservative politicians, primarily Republicans, and members of the press who were most often supportive of conservative policies.

It could not have been lost on Truman that most of those advocating revising unconditional surrender were members of the opposition Republican Party.<sup>6</sup> These calls for altering FDR's foreign policy were made at the same time Republicans sought to weaken or eliminate wartime regulations on the economy and roll back New Deal programs. In this partisan atmosphere, unconditional surrender was filtered through domestic politics. It mattered that the supporters of unconditional surrender were mostly liberal Democrats and the opponents were not. During the summer

of 1945, American debate over unconditional surrender was part of a larger partisan contest about the meaning of victory that extended the ideological battleground of the New Deal into the realm of international affairs.<sup>7</sup> Ultimately, Truman's commitment to unconditional surrender led to the use of the atomic bombs, which has formed such an indelible part of his legacy. But by doggedly insisting on unconditional surrender, the president also put his imprint upon the occupation of Japan. And that too would be a part of Truman's legacy in East Asia.

In his first speech to a joint session of Congress on 16 April 1945, President Harry S. Truman pledged his fealty to his predecessor's policies and recommitted the nation to the goal of unconditional surrender in the war against its enemies. His use of the phrase "unconditional surrender" drew the most enthusiastic applause and was followed by the assurance that "We will not traffic with the breakers of the peace on the terms of the peace."<sup>8</sup> Following Germany's surrender less than a month later, Truman repeated his commitment to unconditional surrender, but he refined that pledge by declaring that "Our blows will not cease until the Japanese *military and naval forces* lay down their arms in unconditional surrender" (emphasis added). Truman explained further that unconditional surrender did not mean the "extermination or enslavement" of the Japanese people. By seeming to confine unconditional surrender to Japanese armed forces, Truman's statement appeared to leave the way open for negotiations on other issues, most notably the future of the imperial institution.<sup>9</sup> Some observers in the United States concluded that the president was signaling his willingness to spare the emperor if Japan surrendered without an invasion.<sup>10</sup> Is that what Truman intended?

By continuing to prosecute the war, the Japanese would almost certainly seal the fate of the emperor and the imperial institution. But what if the emperor cooperated in bringing about Japan's surrender? Would the president be willing to publicly guarantee the safety of the emperor and the continuation of the imperial institution in some form? Would he make such a guarantee in order to elicit cooperation from Hirohito and the peace advocates in Japan? What factors would he consider in making that decision? To begin with, he would need to consider the American public's desire for revenge against the perpetrators of Pearl Harbor and the Bataan Death March. This is the factor most often cited by historians. In one poll, reported on 29 June, 70 percent of respondents insisted on unconditional surrender and complete victory over Japan. When asked about how to treat Hirohito, only 3 percent of those answering thought the United States should keep the emperor in place and govern Japan through him.<sup>11</sup> The message from the voters seemed loud and clear, but upon closer examination it appears that

# TRUMAN'S GIFT

## The Japanese Peace Settlement

**Roger Dingman**

The Japanese peace settlement of 1951 ranks as one of the greatest achievements of twentieth-century American diplomacy. It is of enduring importance for three reasons. First, it broke the cycle in which victory in one war begets antagonisms that prompt its loser to seek revenge in another. Unlike the French after 1870, the Germans after 1919, and the Arabs after 1967, the Japanese never contemplated using force to try to reverse the results of the war. Second, the Japanese peace settlement established a broad framework for peace in the Pacific that fostered rapprochement and eventually friendship between Japan and its erstwhile foes. Third, the peace of 1951 formalized the creation of one of the longest-lived and most effective alliances in history. The United States–Japan Security Treaty has allowed the United States to maintain a forward military and naval presence in the western Pacific that has deterred enemies and facilitated America's conduct of wars from Korea and Vietnam at midcentury to Iraq and Afghanistan in our own time. Thus, the 1951 Japanese peace settlement must rank among the most important elements of President Harry S. Truman's foreign policy legacy.

Given its importance, one would think that the Japanese peace settlement would be the subject of many historical works. While that most certainly is the case in Japan, it is not true in the United States. Books about American foreign policy in the early Cold War years devote relatively little attention to it. Peace in the Pacific comes as an afterthought to containment of the Soviet Union in Europe, the formation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and the creation of a national security state at home.<sup>1</sup>

The Japanese peace settlement occupies a small space in the biographical literature of the Truman administration. Little about it is to be found in biographies of foreign and national security policy advisors. Even in the case of those who shaped the terms of the peace settlement—John Foster

Dulles, its principal negotiator; Dean Rusk, Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs; and Secretary of State Dean Acheson—the treatment of peacemaking with Japan is far less extensive than that for European or Southeast Asian matters. President Truman's biographers have followed the example he set in his *Memoirs*, giving peacemaking with Japan very little attention indeed.<sup>2</sup>

This essay attempts to remedy this situation by focusing on the Japanese peace settlement as an element of the Truman foreign policy legacy. It first identifies the constituent elements of the settlement. It then offers a broad overview of how they came about, paying particular attention to the interplay between preexisting premises about peace and new postwar circumstances. It then focuses on the president's role in the peacemaking process. The essay concludes with an assessment of the broader significance of the Japanese peace settlement as a part of the Truman foreign policy legacy.

On the evening of Tuesday, 4 September 1951, President Harry S. Truman stepped behind the lectern on stage at the San Francisco War Memorial Opera House. He sweated under the hot lights needed for television broadcast of his speech—the very first event to be seen simultaneously across the United States. The president had spoken there once before, in June 1945, when he voiced hopes for peace at the conference that wrote the United Nations Charter. Now he returned to endorse another international agreement: the Treaty of Peace with Japan. He himself, the representatives of fifty-two nations seated before him, ordinary Americans watching him on television, and indeed people all over the world sensed that this was an historic moment. The terrible war that had begun nearly a decade earlier with the attack on Pearl Harbor and had ended with the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was about to come to its formal conclusion.<sup>3</sup>

Over the next five days, delegates from the nations that had gone to war against Japan discussed and debated the proposed treaty. Then the treaty was signed by diplomats from all but three of those nations and representatives of Japan. The treaty, together with three other agreements—the United States–Japan Security Treaty, the Australia–New Zealand–United States Security Treaty (later dubbed the ANZUS Pact), and the Philippine–United States Security Treaty—constituted the formal substance of the Japanese peace settlement.<sup>4</sup> The latter two would endure for more than thirty years; the second continues, with revisions, to this day. The peace treaty itself stands unchanged sixty years later as the cornerstone of peace, prosperity, and security in the Pacific.

The Japanese peace settlement was, however, much more than a cluster of international agreements. It was also a process of change, from

antagonism in war to cooperation in peace. Its creators were diplomats who crafted agreements among nations and political leaders who shaped consensus for its acceptance within their respective countries. In the United States, that consensus had to be strong enough to guarantee public acceptance and Senate approval of any treaty. The American people—not just their leaders—had to acknowledge that Japan, once a hated foe, had become a vital partner in peace preservation. President Truman's San Francisco speech was meant to bring his countrymen to recognition and acceptance of that change.

Peacemaking began nearly a decade before he spoke, in the darkest days of the Pacific War, when Japanese forces drove the Americans, British, French, and Dutch out of their Southeast Asian colonies. Long before victory was in sight, the basic principles for a peace settlement crystallized in the United States. They reflected the fact that the nation was fighting a second world war barely twenty years after ending the first. The most basic idea was that a second peace must not repeat errors of the first. "This is the second great chance we have had [to shape a lasting peace]," George F. Kennan, who headed the State Department unit that produced the key early draft of a Japanese peace treaty, put it in 1943. "We muffed the first. If we muff this, too, can we be sure that we will be given a third [chance]?" Peace could come only after the complete defeat of the enemy, but it should not be vindictive or impose reparations obligations that would leave the former foe economically crippled. The United States and its allies must not, in short, do to Japan after World War II what their misguided predecessors had done to Germany after World War I. A peace treaty must also be consistent with American membership in a new and more effective international organization, the United Nations. Finally, peace must be crafted so as to command broad popular, and certain Senate, support.<sup>5</sup>

These concepts were not simply abstract principles meant to guide presidents and diplomats. They became expectations widely held by the American people. Men as different as defeated Republican presidential candidate Wendell Willkie, sometime Undersecretary of State Sumner Welles, and press magnate Henry Luce promoted them. Stanford historian Thomas A. Bailey penned two popular volumes that lauded President Woodrow Wilson's goals, criticized his peacemaking efforts, and identified specific mistakes, not to be repeated, that he had made in crafting the 1919 Treaty of Versailles. Hollywood even got into the act. In July 1944, movie mogul Darryl F. Zanuck released *Wilson*, with an all-star cast. It grossed two million dollars—an extraordinary sum for that time. The film presented the president as a tragic hero whose dream of creating an international organization to keep the peace was wrecked by narrow-minded

# TRUMAN'S UNINTENDED GIFT

## Japanese Reactions to the Dismissal of MacArthur

Sayuri Guthrie-Shimizu

On 11 April 1951, Press Secretary Joseph H. Short announced that President Harry S. Truman had relieved General Douglas MacArthur as commander of the US Army Forces, Far East, Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers in Japan (SCAP), and commander of United Nations forces in the military conflict in Korea. An accompanying statement referred to some of the reasons behind President Truman's decision to remove this hugely popular general from his posts in the midst of a deadly military conflict against Communist forces in East Asia. MacArthur was "unable to give his wholehearted support to the policies of the United States Government and of the United Nations." While a "full and vigorous debate" over national policy was essential to democracy, the president acknowledged, "military commanders must be governed by the policies and directives issued to them in the manner provided by our laws and Constitution." In a midday radio address, Truman explained his decision to the American people and, ultimately, to the global community this way: The United States could not speak to the world with two contradictory voices, one civilian, one military. MacArthur had challenged the administration's political and military policy; indeed, the general had appealed over the heads of his civilian and military superiors to the opposition party in Congress and to the American people themselves in an attempt to change that policy. For Truman, this was "an intolerable deviation" from MacArthur's proper role, and he had no choice except to resolve the inconsistency it created.<sup>1</sup>

Like any presidential choice, Truman's decision to recall MacArthur was shaped by a multiplicity of interlocking factors that cannot be reduced to one simple explanation. At the most visceral level, there certainly was long-brewing personal animosity between two willful men who held very

different ideas about the nature of the military conflict in Korea, its place in US global strategy, and how it must be fought. The personal tension and battle of wills had not been ameliorated when they met face-to-face on Wake Island in October 1950. The difference between the president and the field commander became even more pronounced after the People's Republic of China's massive intervention in the conflict. On 6 December 1950, Truman, in response to MacArthur's public complaints about the limitations on his ability to conduct the war, instructed, through the Joint Chiefs of Staff, that all military and civilian officials overseas must "exercise extreme caution in public statements" and "clear all but routine statements" with the Defense or State Department, respectively. Truman's ire about the fiercely independent and grandstanding general blazed when Republican Congressman Joseph Martin released MacArthur's correspondence with the House Minority Leader. In the letter dated 19 March 1951, the general took issue with the administration's policy of strictly limiting the war to Korea, adding his oft-quoted statement that "there is no substitute for victory." For Truman, this was a direct defiance of his 6 December directive.<sup>2</sup>

Domestic partisan politics also played an important part in Truman's recall of MacArthur. Since the two crushing "losses" of nuclear monopoly and China to communism in the fall of 1949, congressional Republicans had been stepping up their criticism of the Democratic administration's allegedly weak-kneed foreign policies. Red-baiting senators like Joseph McCarthy, flanked by pro-Jiang Jieshi firebrands within Congress such as William Knowland, had been vociferously attacking the administration's policies in Asia and its execution of the UN "police action" in Korea. The entry of the People's Republic of China into the peninsular conflict provided more fodder for already combustible electoral politics, with a presidential election only a year away. As the leader of the free world, President Truman also bore the burden of holding together a multinational coalition while ensuring that the still-infant United Nations rode out its first major crisis involving the massive deployment of military force against non-member nations. US partners in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization were confused and extremely apprehensive about the direction in which MacArthur appeared to be taking the conflict. The European allies also worried about how the Soviet Union might respond to what they perceived to be the American commander's reckless prosecution of war.<sup>3</sup>

John W. Spanier explained more than fifty years ago in his classic study of the Truman-MacArthur controversy, however, that what was ultimately at stake for President Truman in April 1951 was his constitutional authority as president of the United States and the principle of civilian control of the military. Under the US system of government, it is the president and

his chosen advisors who, both formally and effectively, formulate the country's overarching national security strategy. A commanding general has the duty to be a nonpartisan career officer tasked to implement state policy formulated by elected officials. If the general cannot accept his orders, he can, as an act of conscience, resign his command; if he does not resign but instead elects to question the president's policy openly, he must be dismissed. Civilian control of the military, a bedrock normative standard of a democracy, demands nothing less.<sup>4</sup> Despite these justifications for his decision, President Truman's firm stand on civilian control of the military came at a heavy personal cost. The American public initially reacted angrily to the popular general's dismissal. The president was even burned in effigy in some cities. Republican politicians demanded a formal investigative hearing and some even talked about impeachment. Although Truman's action and policies were ultimately vindicated as a result of congressional hearings held in May and June, his reputation and political fortunes never would recover completely during the remainder of his tenure as president.<sup>5</sup>

Truman's dismissal of MacArthur was a major signpost not just in the history of civil-military relations in the United States and the Korean War. The sudden expulsion of the supreme commander of occupation forces in Japan, who had exercised unparalleled authority over the former US enemy during the prior five and a half years, also had far-reaching impacts on Japan. MacArthur's departure in disgrace adumbrated, at least metaphorically, the approaching end of the postwar occupation. It also provided a powerful enactment of civilian control of the military as a principle of an armed democracy. This essay examines Japanese reactions to this stunning event in April 1951 to elucidate the dynamics of the relationship between the two countries approaching formal national reconciliation as refracted through official and popular responses to President Truman's dismissal of MacArthur. How did the Japanese people, who had famously formed an affective bond with the US proconsul, react, in both the short and the long term, to Truman's decision to relieve this revered general from his commands? What significance did the Japanese press and those in official circles ascribe to Truman's handling of MacArthur's insubordination? Finally, the essay will consider the long-term legacies of Truman's defense of civilian control of the military in postwar Japan by examining a development taking place simultaneously within the officialdom in Tokyo—the initial move towards the nation's rearmament in spite of the postwar pacifist constitution.

In Japan, initial reactions to MacArthur's dismissal were just as passionate as the hero's welcome the general received upon his return to the United States. The Japanese public expressed disbelief as the breaking news

# THE US-CHINA CONFRONTATION IN KOREA Assessment of Intentions in Time of Crisis

Simei Qing

Before the outbreak of the Korean War, neither Washington nor Beijing intended to engage in a war with the other. By the end of 1950, China and the United States were at war in Korea. In a time of crisis, how did both sides assess each other's intentions? What historical lessons can we draw from the US-China military confrontation in the Korean crisis? In an attempt to answer these questions, this essay will examine the shift in the Truman administration's military strategy from the adoption of the "defensive perimeter" to the decision to cross the 38th parallel in Korea. Doing so will provide important insights on the legacy of President Harry S. Truman in Northeast Asia.

By the end of 1949, the Truman administration had formulated a grand China strategy, which included two major parts. First, Washington would establish a limited economic relationship with Beijing to drive a wedge between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Soviet Union. Second, the Truman administration would not engage in Beijing's anticipated military campaign to occupy Taiwan, which, according to an intelligence report of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) of that time, was expected to happen in the summer of 1950. Moreover, the two parts of this grand China strategy—the economic part and the Taiwan part—were interconnected in internal deliberations within the State Department. As Secretary of State Dean G. Acheson argued, only after deflecting the Chinese people's "anger, wrath and hatred" from the United States to the Soviet Union on issues of territorial integrity and national independence could the United States ever have a chance of using trade as a weapon to split the Sino-Soviet alliance in the long run.<sup>1</sup>

Accordingly, on 5 January 1950, President Truman issued a public

statement on Taiwan's legal status, recognizing it as part of China, and implied that in Beijing's upcoming Taiwan military campaign, his administration would not send troops to rescue the Guomindang government on the island.<sup>2</sup> A week later, on 12 January, in his public speech at the National Press Club, Secretary of State Acheson further articulated the new Taiwan policy and introduced the new military strategy of "defensive perimeter" in the western Pacific.

Acheson claimed that the Soviet Union had "imperialist ambitions over China's Mongolia, Manchuria, and Xinjiang," and was trying to separate them from China:

This process is complete in outer Mongolia. It is nearly complete in Manchuria and I am sure that in Inner Mongolia and in Sinkiang [Xinjiang], there are very happy reports coming from Soviet agents to Moscow. . . . What does that mean for us? It means something very, very significant. It means that nothing that we do and nothing that we say must be allowed to obscure the reality of this fact. All the efforts of propaganda will not be able to obscure it. The only thing that can obscure it is the folly of ill-conceived adventures on our part which could easily do so.

Acheson stressed "the folly of ill-conceived adventure on our part"; in his mind, this would be to use American military power to detach Taiwan from China. He then directly admonished those listeners who were skeptical:

I urge all who are thinking about these foolish adventures to remember that we must not seize the unenviable position which the Russians have carved out for themselves. We must not undertake to deflect from the Russians to ourselves the righteous anger and the wrath and the hatred of the Chinese people which must develop. It would be folly to deflect it to ourselves. We must take the position we have always taken that anyone who violates the integrity of China is the enemy of China and is acting contrary to our own interest.<sup>3</sup>

Furthermore, Acheson placed the new Taiwan policy in the broad framework of a new military strategy in the western Pacific. "This defensive perimeter" for the United States, he announced, "runs along the Aleutians to Japan and then goes to the Ryukyus, . . . and runs from the Ryukyus to the Philippine Islands." Defending this line would be sufficient to safeguard American "vital military security interests" in the western Pacific and East Asia, Acheson explained, and the United States would do everything, including the use of military power, to protect the safety of this "defensive perimeter."<sup>4</sup>

Significantly, Acheson did not include Taiwan, Southeast Asia, and

the Korean peninsula in this “defensive perimeter.” With regard to South Korea, however, Acheson put special emphasis on its strategic importance, due to its territorial proximity to Japan in the defensive perimeter. “We have given that nation great help in getting itself established,” he proclaimed. He then added:

We are asking the Congress to continue that help until it is firmly established. . . . The idea that we should scrap all of that, that we should stop half way through the achievement of the establishment of this country, seems to me to be the most utter defeatism and utter madness in our interests in Asia.

With regard to Southeast Asia, Acheson emphasized the significance of US economic aid and support, rather than direct military involvements, for the protection of American interests and moral ideals.<sup>5</sup>

Less than one month after Acheson’s National Press Club speech, on 9 February 1950, at his meeting with the Republican Women’s Club of Wheeling, West Virginia, Senator Joseph McCarthy (R-Wisconsin) took out a piece of paper, which he claimed contained a list of known Communists working for the State Department. McCarthy declared that “I have here in my hand a list of 205—a list of names that were made known to the Secretary of State as being members of the Communist Party and who nevertheless are still working and shaping policy in the State Department.” He accused Acheson of turning his back on Jiang Jieshi, the head of the Guomindang government on Taiwan, while embracing Communist spies in Washington. It did not seem to matter that McCarthy could not provide any credible evidence to substantiate his accusations. Instead, the McCarthy inquisition and witch-hunting formally began.

Coincident with the beginning of the McCarthy era was a drastically changed evaluation of Soviet military capability and global intentions within the Truman administration, which led to the formulation of National Security Council (NSC) Paper 68. Very soon the Truman administration’s new military strategy of protecting a defensive perimeter in Asia would undergo significant changes prior to the Korean War. In mid-January 1950, a most ominous prospect was raised by a CIA report that the Soviet Union would be able to launch an atomic attack on Western Europe or the United States by 1954. This frightening prediction was based on the CIA’s estimates of the Soviet military capability of producing atomic bombs. It forecast that the Soviets would stockpile 120 to 200 atomic bombs by 1954. “If, after Soviet attainment of such a large atomic stockpile, U.S. defensive capability were to remain so limited,” the CIA warned, “the USSR could make a decisive attack on Western Europe

# TRUMAN AND TAIWAN

## A US Policy Change from Face to Faith

Xiaobing Li

On 27 June 1950, two days after the Korean War broke out, President Harry S. Truman announced that the US Seventh Fleet would be deployed in the Taiwan Strait to “neutralize” the area. Truman’s order was intended not just to keep the Chinese Communist forces from landing on Taiwan, but also to prevent Chinese Nationalist forces from attacking the mainland. Some of the criticism of his decision took the position that Truman’s neutralization strategy was an indecisive, ambiguous, and ineffective policy against an imminent Communist threat in East Asia.<sup>1</sup> This article argues that even if Truman’s order had been a face-saving measure by keeping the Chinese Civil War under control, the new policy was a reflection of the president’s worldview that the “free world,” which included Taiwan, should be able to survive the Cold War through his containment policy. Truman’s order became the turning point in the United States’ Taiwan policy and had a strong impact on the future of Taiwan. The island has endured much since that summer. Most notably, Truman’s order secured the Republic of China (ROC) on Taiwan against a major military showdown with the People’s Republic of China (PRC) on the mainland in the 1950s, it preserved Taiwan’s political unity and social stability through the 1960s, and it provided an opportunity for the island’s economic takeoff in the early 1970s and its favorable economic position in cross-strait trade and investment in China during the 1980s. Thereafter, the cross-strait dialogue and political talks began between Taipei and Beijing in the 1990s.

This article will show that Truman’s deployment of the Seventh Fleet drew a line between the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and Chinese Nationalist Party (Kuomintang [KMT] or Guomindang [GMD]) in the Taiwan Strait. His new policy was disengaging the Chinese from their hot civil war while engaging them in the global Cold War. The Truman legacy was keeping the military struggle “cold” in the Taiwan Strait and creating

the foundation and opportunity for political and international competition in which both Chinese parties could find alternatives, or even a peaceful solution, to their civil struggle. Truman did not intend to postpone the Chinese Civil War or provide Beijing with a different reason to attack Taipei. As Nancy Bernkopf Tucker points out, "Truman had no plans to create two Chinas or to secure independence for Taiwan."<sup>2</sup> This article will present answers to the following questions: What was Truman's policy toward Taiwan before and after the Korean War began? How did his new policy stop the Chinese Communist landing campaign in the summer of 1950? And when did both the CCP and GMD begin to disengage from their civil war in the Taiwan Strait?

This essay offers a Chinese perspective on the impact of Truman's policy change toward Taiwan. It looks into the relatively neglected military strategy of the Chinese Communists from 1949 to 1951, which defined the PRC's diplomacy and changed it in many different ways. The Chinese leaders decided to fight a ground war against US armed forces in Korea rather than a naval war in the Taiwan Strait. PRC leaders eventually accepted a changing nature of the Chinese Civil War from a military struggle to a political one over the Taiwan Strait. Research supporting these conclusions relies on Chinese literature and documents that have become partially available in Beijing. During 2003, for example, China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs began to declassify the 1949-to-1965 PRC diplomatic archives. By 2009, more than 40,000 items of these Chinese sources became available.<sup>3</sup> The CCP Central Archives and Manuscript Division published other valuable documents, which include the twenty-volume *Selection of Important Documents since the Founding of the People's Republic*.<sup>4</sup> All of these declassified sources have provided a solid foundation and a historical conceptual framework of analysis in which China's foreign policy and the changes in the Sino-American relationship can be clearly defined and brought into focus.

While Mao Zedong, CCP chairman, was the undisputed leader in both theory and strategy throughout most of the PRC's early history from 1949 to 1976, other Chinese leaders worked together and made some important decisions within the Politburo of the CCP Central Committee. Their papers include collected and selected military and diplomatic works, manuscripts, instructions, plans, and telegrams by Mao, PRC Premier Zhou Enlai, and PRC Vice President Liu Shaoqi.<sup>5</sup> Among the most important are the thirteen-volume *Mao Zedong's Manuscripts since the Founding of the PRC, 1949–1976* and the four-volume *Liu Shaoqi's Manuscripts since the Founding of the PRC, 1949–1952*.<sup>6</sup> This article also relies on examination of their memoirs and interviews with government officials and retired

generals of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), China's armed forces in Beijing, Shanghai, and Hangzhou.<sup>7</sup> The great detail they present, based on their experiences, has made a remarkable contribution to this essay by adding a new perspective on the subject. No matter how politically indoctrinated they may have been, the diplomats and generals were culturally bound to cherish the memory of the past. More importantly, they had only recently felt comfortable talking about their past experiences and allowing their recollections to be recorded, written, and even published.

Other important sources of information are the ROC Foreign Ministry documents at the Academia Sinica, the papers of Jiang Jieshi, president of the ROC from 1927 to 1975, at Academia Historica, and GMD party documents at the Party History Archives in Taiwan. Additional insights come from interviews with GMD officials and retired generals in recent years.<sup>8</sup> Their personal accounts of the confrontations with Communists are valuable in examining the PRC from the other side. Using sources from both China and Taiwan, the findings in this paper illuminate the significance of Truman's policy toward the Taiwan Strait in the early 1950s. In many ways, his legacy in China was creating a Cold War framework for the Chinese to cope with their differences and survive their civil struggle.

Truman inherited broad outlines of the US policy toward China adopted by Franklin D. Roosevelt during the Pacific War of 1941 to 1945.<sup>9</sup> After the war ended in August 1945, the president announced the "Truman Doctrine" in March 1947 and tied himself to containing communism, but focused the main effort on Europe from 1945 to 1949, not on Asia. In the fall of 1945, the Truman administration attempted to maintain the wartime coalition between the GMD and the CCP. In August, US Ambassador Patrick J. Hurley personally escorted Mao Zedong from Yan'an, the CCP capital, to Chongqing, the GMD capital, to negotiate with Jiang Jieshi. In October, Mao and Jiang signed an agreement for a joint coalition government under Jiang's leadership.

Thus, the United States continued its post-World War II economic aid to China, which in fact went exclusively to Jiang's government. When military conflict erupted in northeastern China, contrary to the early assurances by Jiang of a political resolution, the Nationalist forces needed the US military aid more than ever.<sup>10</sup> Truman appointed General George C. Marshall, former chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, as his envoy, sending him to China in December 1945 for further mediation. Marshall got Truman to stop US military aid to Jiang, and Jiang had to agree to US-GMD-CCP truce terms to prevent fighting in northern China in 1946. Both Mao and Jiang, however, made no political compromises and refused to cooperate with each other. The Chinese Civil War resumed on 26 June

# VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION AND INVOLUNTARY TATTOOING OF KOREAN WAR POWS

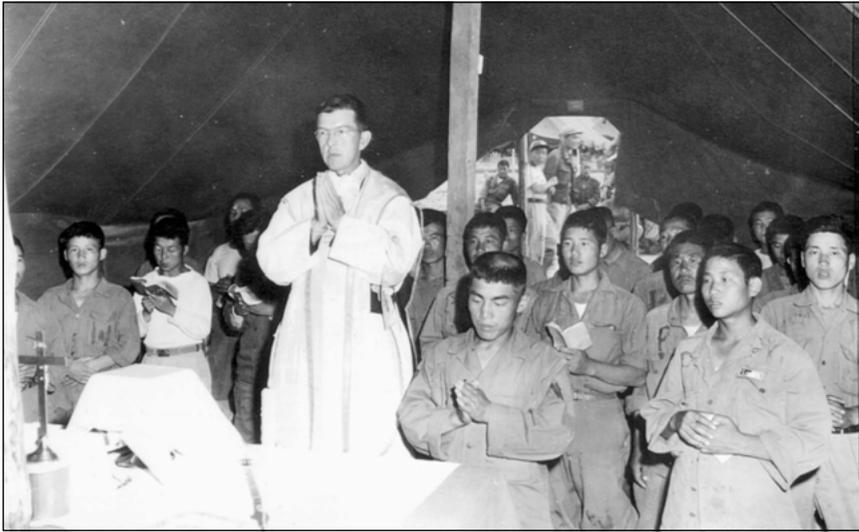
**Charles S. Young**

No one misses family so much as a homesick soldier in a prisoner of war (POW) camp. So why would a prisoner not go home after being released? Specifically, what set of beliefs and circumstances led thousands of Chinese and North Korean prisoners to remain with their captors at the end of the Korean War? It is unusual for *any* POWs not to return home following release, but after Korea, fifty thousand seemingly inexplicably did just that. Something as simple as tattoos can help explain this conundrum, as well as expose a long-hidden and fascinating legacy of the presidency of Harry S. Truman.

In December 1951, an *Associated Press* reporter named O. H. P. King was assigned to cover a visit to Korea by US Cardinal Francis Spellman. Well known for his outspoken anticommunism, Spellman wanted to stop by what seemed to be an advanced outpost in the struggle for freedom—a prison island named Koje-do (the suffix means “island”). Koje-do was where the United Nations Command (UNC) was holding soldiers captured from China and North Korea. The island was the source of some odd reports that tens of thousands of prisoners were turning away from communism and would refuse to go home after the war. They even signed petitions in blood demanding that they be allowed to stay in the Republic of Korea (ROK) or gain asylum in Taiwan.

King and Spellman toured the friendly compounds where the now anticommunist prisoners listened to sermons by Christian missionaries and local preachers, and studied trades and politics. King, who later worked for South Korean president and dictatorial leader Syngman Rhee as a media advisor, felt moved watching the Reverend Earle J. Woodberry preach in

Chinese to a group of ten thousand POWs. King and Spellman also saw numerous anticommunist slogans tattooed on both Chinese and North Korean prisoners. Some of them King could even read, because they were in English: “anti-Communist” or “Jesus my Savior.”<sup>1</sup> King did not find the use of English curious. To him and Spellman, the tattoos showed hope for East Asia through common people’s resistance to totalitarianism. If King and Spellman had known more about the societies of Korea and China, however, they might have wondered why there were any tattoos at all.



*Catholic priest John F. Coffee holds mass on Koje-do. The United Nations Command gave American ministers access to POWs that it held. (Photo courtesy of NARA)*

A few months after visiting Koje-do, Spellman lent his voice to an official UNC announcement that anticommunist prisoners would not be forced home after an armistice.<sup>2</sup> This step put prisoners at the center of a drawn-out dispute at the peace talks. An agreement to exchange POWs is usually an afterthought when a war ends, but in Korea it became an intractable controversy that doubled the length of the conflict. How slogans and full-torso flags and maps got onto the skin of POWs goes a long way to explain how a seemingly minor issue like prisoner exchange could freeze armistice negotiations for eighteen months—half the length of the war.

In 1953, the UNC held 132,000 prisoners, about a sixth of whom were Chinese, the rest Korean. The Chinese and North Koreans who became defectors did so under the US policy of “voluntary repatriation.” Washington argued in peace talks that many of the prisoners were actually



*“Attack mainland China!” reads this tattoo on a prisoner held by the United Nations in Korea. (Photo courtesy of NARA)*

vocal anticommunists who did not want to return to Stalinism. The United States (which dominated the UNC) insisted that forcing them to return to communism would violate individual rights. Washington refused an armistice until Beijing and Pyongyang accepted that they would get back only voluntary repatriates. Unsurprisingly, the countries to the north—China, North Korea, and the Soviet Union—denounced this idea vituperatively, insisting that the defections were fake and that prisoners had been terrorized by barracks bosses from Taiwan and Seoul whom the United States had sponsored. The defection figures for Chinese POWs were especially vexing. Out of twenty-one thousand POWs, fourteen thousand were not going home. No self-respecting government would accept what they considered to be the kidnapping of its soldiers, especially in such a publicly humiliating manner, and especially not a millennialist power like China who aspired to lead the Third World. So the northerners continued to fight. Peace talks that began in July 1951 foundered in early 1952 over item four on the agenda.

Finally, after Soviet Premier Josef Stalin died in March 1953, the northern alliance softened and by summer, the armistice was ready to be signed. Besides abandoning demands for full repatriation, the northerners also lost the history battle in the West. Historians, both scholarly and popular, overwhelmingly judged the US policy a humanitarian triumph; that is, when they discussed it at all. Many accounts do not give any details of the POW issue, attributing the armistice delay to some murky Oriental/Red obstinance. The ones that do cover the delay in peace say, with few

# THE UNITED STATES, PRESIDENT HARRY S. TRUMAN, AND THE DIVISION OF KOREA An Assessment of Responsibility

**William Stueck**

The division of Korea, first through the establishment of Soviet and US occupation zones in August 1945 and then through the creation of rival governments in South and North Korea during August and September 1948, ranks among the most significant events on the international scene during a key period of modern world history. That division was not accepted as permanent by either the Korean people or the occupying powers; it was a prerequisite for a major war on the peninsula that produced some three million deaths and directly embroiled the combat forces of North and South Korea, the United States, China, and, to a lesser extent, the Soviet Union and fifteen other members of the United Nations. The division played a major role in shaping the Cold War that spawned it and it remains with us to this day as a potential source of nuclear proliferation and regional conflict.

Why did the division of Korea occur from 1945 to 1948? What responsibility does the United States bear for it? More specifically, as the president in office when the key events occurred, what responsibility does Harry S. Truman bear for the division? How important was the division in producing the outbreak of war on the peninsula in June 1950? These are the questions this essay will address in examining an important aspect of Truman's legacy.

The American role in Korea's division may be broken down into six basic decisions ranging in time from August 1945 to the winter of 1948. The first, and probably the most important, was the decision to propose to the Soviet Union, on 14 August 1945, a division of Korea at the 38th

parallel into occupation zones for the purpose of accepting the Japanese surrender at the end of World War II. The United States did not do this with the intention of dividing the peninsula on a permanent basis, but the decision came at a time when Soviet troops had already entered Korea in the northeast and the closest American units were 600 miles away on Okinawa and focused on the impending occupation of Japan. President Truman and his advisors did not want the Soviet Union to occupy all of Korea, as they assumed that this would result in the establishment of a Communist regime there, most likely made up of exiles returning from the Soviet Union, and would provide a greatly enhanced Soviet strategic position in northeast Asia. Thus there can be no doubt that the Americans proposed the 38th parallel dividing line as a means of containing Soviet influence on the peninsula.<sup>1</sup>

Just as important as the decision itself was the fact that it was made and agreed to by the Soviets without specific accords on what would happen once the occupation forces were in place. At Yalta the previous February, Truman's predecessor, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, had reiterated his earlier proposal for a multipower trusteeship over Korea to his counterparts from the Soviet Union and Great Britain, Josef Stalin and Winston Churchill respectively. Although the three agreed in principle on the approach, with the three alliance partners plus China serving as trustees, nothing was concluded on the duration or structure of a trusteeship. The Yalta Conference had occurred at a time when the Allies projected that the war against Japan would continue for at least another year, so they felt no urgency in making detailed arrangements regarding Korea. Clearly, the United States took the initiative in proposing a trusteeship and it did so under the assumption that Koreans were incapable of governing themselves without a period of occupation and outside tutelage following the removal of the Japanese. Even at the Potsdam Conference in mid-July, it was unclear how much longer the Pacific War would continue, as the Japanese leadership seemed determined to fight on and the impact of anticipated Soviet entry and US atomic weapons remained matters of conjecture.<sup>2</sup> With the Koreans possessing little in the way of organized forces of their own, the Allies believed that outside armies would have to enter the peninsula to ensure that the Japanese left in an orderly, expeditious fashion.

Truman's replacement of Roosevelt as president in April 1945 bore little relationship to the above developments in Korea. All of the perceptions that went into the US proposal of the 38th parallel in August—that Koreans were not capable of governing themselves, that Soviet domination of the peninsula was a danger that, if possible, should be prevented,

that multipower involvement was a method of preparing Koreans for independence and preventing the country from becoming a source of regional instability as it had been at the turn of the century—were prevalent in Washington planning circles before Roosevelt's death. Furthermore, Roosevelt was a master procrastinator in addressing issues that promised to be difficult to resolve and seemed less than urgent. With the bulk of US attention fixed on Europe, the key area in American strategy and where the war was drawing quickly to a close, it is unlikely that Roosevelt would have mounted a sustained effort, any more than did Truman, for detailed agreements on Korea prior to Japan's surrender.<sup>3</sup>

The absence of specific agreements beyond a joint occupation divided at the 38th parallel left the future unity of Korea, to a considerable extent, in the hands of the United States and the Soviet Union. Once common enemies Germany and Japan were out of the picture, the two powers, now unrivalled internationally except by each other and adhering to conflicting conceptions of political and economic organization, were bound to have difficulty reaching agreement on a process leading to a unified, independent government. Thus, by the time of Japan's surrender, a key structural foundation for long-term division was in place.

The United States must take responsibility for failing to initiate efforts for detailed agreements with the Allies regarding postwar Korea, as it was the primary opponent of Japan and the Soviet Union did not enter the Pacific War until 8 August 1945. To say this, however, is not to suggest that the United States behaved differently than any other great power would have in its position, that different behavior short of simply conceding the peninsula to the Soviets would have produced a different result, or even that it should have behaved differently. For one thing, Washington sought to win the war against Japan at the lowest possible cost in American life and treasure, and this meant seeking Soviet assistance. Naturally, US leaders tended to avoid potentially acrimonious issues that did not require immediate attention. The concessions made to the Soviet Union in exchange for entering the Pacific War were ones that the Soviets could have achieved without American consent, and they did not include Korea. Since the peninsula possessed a common border with the Soviet Union and the disposition of US forces at the end of the war was clouded in uncertainty, Moscow was in an excellent position before August 1945 to resist postwar agreements regarding Korea so as to take advantage of circumstances once the fighting stopped.<sup>4</sup>

Another factor was that there existed no Korean government in exile that was representative of the Korean people. It was unrealistic, therefore, to propose that a specific group of people and existing structure simply

# HARRY TRUMAN, THE KOREAN WAR, AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF US POLICY IN EAST ASIA, JUNE 1950–JUNE 1951

**Steven Casey**

Historians frequently claim that the Korean War transformed American Cold War policy—that it ushered in a new era of big defense budgets, gave a vital boost to the budding North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) alliance, and encouraged the Truman administration to extend commitments to other perceived threatened areas.<sup>1</sup> In East Asia, which the Korean conflict suddenly made the Cold War's focal point, policy change was particularly pronounced, with Washington ratcheting up its hostility toward the People's Republic of China (PRC), concluding a peace treaty with Japan, and extending security commitments to the Republic of China (ROC) on Taiwan (Formosa) and the Republic of Korea (ROK) in South Korea.

Of course, it is important not to exaggerate the change. Before Korea, no one in the US government seriously doubted that the Communist menace had to be contained. Nor did anyone want areas like Taiwan or South Korea to fall to communism, not least because their loss would leave Japan—the most vital US strategic asset in the region—dangerously exposed. In early 1950, in the wake of Mao Zedong's victory in the Chinese Civil War and the conclusion of the Sino-Soviet alliance, Washington had already become deeply pessimistic about the possibility of forging any sort of link with the Chinese Communists. It had even decided to extend military aid to France so that it could fight the Vietminh in French Indochina.<sup>2</sup>

Nonetheless, before June 1950, US policy toward East Asia remained unclear, especially when it came to dealing with allies and clients in the region. What, for instance, should be the American relationship with Japan

almost five years after the end of World War II? Was it time for a peace treaty to end the state of war or should the United States continue with the occupation, which at least provided it with important military bases? And what about problematic independent states that had already received substantial American aid? At a time of tight defense budgets, should scarce American military hardware be sent to leaders like Jiang Jieshi on Taiwan or Syngman Rhee in South Korea? Both men not only headed regimes that some senior officials considered corrupt and deeply distasteful, they were also likely to use US largesse either for personal gain or in excessively risky attacks on their Communist adversaries. Small wonder, then, that American policy appeared murky, even confused, on the twin questions of whom to support and how.

The Korean War was significant not least because it swept away this ambiguity. It dragged in eight US divisions to fight on the Korean peninsula, as well as the US Seventh Fleet to “neutralize” Taiwan. It cemented the US relationship as patron and protector not only with Rhee’s regime in South Korea, but also Jiang Jieshi’s government on Taiwan, which by the spring of 1951 was receiving more than 40 percent of the entire Mutual Defense Assistance budget for East Asia. And it both paved the way for the Treaty of Peace with Japan of September 1951 and played a pivotal role in sparking Japan’s economic revival. “Thus,” as Aaron Forsberg explains, “the Korean War’s significance extends beyond its role in defining the Cold War confrontation in Asia. It shaped both the Japanese peace settlement and the contours of economic relations across the Pacific for the remainder of the twentieth century.”<sup>3</sup>

So far, so familiar: the Korean War’s transformative impact is widely accepted as conventional wisdom. But how, precisely, did this war act as an agent of change? This essay starts by looking at the vitally important military context between June 1950 and June 1951, which cast a long shadow over American policy debates. It then explores two interacting levels of analysis—the domestic debate and bureaucratic decision making—to pinpoint President Harry S. Truman’s role in this decisive moment in shaping Asia’s future. Doing so will add depth to existing understanding of his legacy in Northeast Asia.

The eye-catching, seesawing military situation during the Korean War’s first year formed the crucial backdrop to US decisions about East Asia’s future.<sup>4</sup> The way the war erupted was especially important. Unlike so many twentieth-century international crises, this one began with a clear-cut case of brazen military aggression. At 4 a.m. (local time) on the morning of 25 June 1950, elements from seven well-armed North Korean divisions plunged across the 38th parallel. Within days they had captured

Seoul and seemed poised to win a convincing victory that would unite the entire Korean peninsula under Communist rule.

Although the hastily assembled, American-led intervention under the flag of the United Nations slowed the pace of the advance of the Korean People's Army (KPA) during July and August, establishing a fairly solid defensive position at the Pusan Perimeter, the military situation remained bleak until the middle of September. Only with the stunningly successful Inchon counterattack, which outflanked the North Korean army and opened the way to Seoul and North Korea, were the fortunes of war reversed. But the temptation to exploit the new military advantage—to march across the undefended 38th parallel to fulfill the American goal of a united Korea—proved too much, even in the wake of warnings from the PRC that it would intervene militarily if the United States headed north of the prewar dividing line.

The PRC was not bluffing. At the end of October and then again at the end of November, Mao Zedong launched the first two phases of the Chinese offensive, which threatened to evict the Americans from the entire peninsula. It took the arrival of Lieutenant General Matthew B. Ridgway, the new Eighth Army commander—who in the first months of 1951 was able to instill a revived sense of confidence in UN forces—before the Chinese People's Volunteer Army was stopped and then driven back to a new battle line that was, for the most part, just north of the 38th parallel.

These dramatic events were significant for a number of reasons. Most obviously, they inevitably shifted Washington's focus towards Korea. Whereas the major Cold War initiatives between 1947 and 1949 had generally been in Europe, with the passage through Congress of the Marshall Plan and the Senate ratification of the North Atlantic Treaty, now East Asia was suddenly at the top of the policy agenda, absorbing precious time and resources. In the summer of 1950, with the fighting not going to plan, Washington was soon compelled to send about two-thirds of total US ground forces to Korea, stretching the nation's defenses so thin that officials were also forced to increase the US Army from 630,000 to 834,000 men, while calling up reservists and mobilizing ninety-two National Guard units.<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, during those periods when the fortunes of war swung wildly in favor of one side, key figures in the United States were apt to think radically. Inchon was a case in point, for it created the obvious opportunity for the United States to unite Korea. But it was by no means the only instance of the policy debate closely following changes on the battlefield. Defeat had an equally profound impact. In Washington, an alarming cross section of congressional and establishment opinion reacted

# TRUMAN'S MACARTHUR AND MACARTHUR'S TRUMAN The Roots and Ramifications of the General's Removal

**Ken Hechler and Robert P. Watson**

In 1932, presidential candidate Franklin D. Roosevelt was meeting with his aide, Rexford Tugwell, when they were interrupted by a telephone call. It was Huey P. Long, the controversial governor of Louisiana, calling for Roosevelt. After hanging up with Long, Roosevelt remarked to Tugwell that the governor was “one of the two most dangerous men in the country.” Surprised and intrigued by Roosevelt’s statement, Tugwell tried to guess the identity of the other “dangerous” man alluded to by his boss. Was it Father Charles Coughlin, the venom-spewing “radio priest,” Tugwell wondered aloud? “Oh no,” responded Roosevelt, “the other is Douglas MacArthur.”<sup>1</sup>

Why MacArthur? To Roosevelt’s mind, the dashing general was a potential American caesar, the kind of hero the public might turn to in a time of crisis. And the American public, bitter from the long economic depression and growing disillusionment with capitalism, was desperate.

MacArthur had a military pedigree. He was born on 26 January 1880 in Little Rock, Arkansas, to a popular general—the brilliant Lieutenant General Arthur MacArthur, who was a Civil War colonel and war hero at age nineteen—and a doting mother who was always at his side to remind him that he was superior to anyone else. After graduating at the top of his class at West Point in 1903, Douglas MacArthur went on to be the youngest brigadier general in the US Army and later the youngest US Army Chief of Staff. He also served as the superintendent of the US Military Academy from 1919 to 1922 and then was president of the US Olympic Committee for the 1928 Amsterdam Games.

MacArthur's military exploits and heroism were exaggerated to the point of becoming lore throughout the armed forces. It was said by General Hugh Johnson, for example, that MacArthur was "a general who will not die in bed if there's half a chance to die elsewhere."<sup>2</sup> A tireless self-promoter, the general himself added to his own legend. He remembered in his memoirs that "I learned to ride and shoot before I could walk and talk" and that his earliest recollection was "the sound of Army bugles."<sup>3</sup> So too was MacArthur the winner of the Distinguished Service Cross, thirteen decorations for gallantry under fire, seven citations for extraordinary valor, and twenty-four decorations from foreign governments.

MacArthur wore the awards well. Indeed, MacArthur, with his strong voice, handsomely chiseled features, and adorned with such accessories as a corncob pipe, sunglasses, embroidered cap, and riding crop, looked the part of the "heaven born general."<sup>4</sup> He was lionized by the public, press, and biographers, many of whom produced works of hero-worship rather than scholarly examinations of the general.<sup>5</sup> MacArthur was one of the most outstanding and revered men alive during the middle part of the twentieth century.

Even though MacArthur's shine has dulled in recent years as more and more scholars have revealed the mistakes he made in Korea, the enduring fascination with MacArthur and his revered status during the Korean War figure prominently in the controversy occasioned by President Harry S. Truman's decision to strip him of his command. The two leaders, who famously squared off over the conduct of the Korean War, could not have been more different in their background and temperament. Even though the two men shared some common views about Korea, their differences were both profound and personal, and underscored the strained relationship between the president and general. Ultimately, these differences contributed to the removal of MacArthur as commanding general of United Nations forces in Korea. In contrast to the arrogant, self-centered, and boastful egomaniac MacArthur, Truman was modest, soft-spoken, tolerant, and one of the prime examples of a president with genuine humility.

The firing of the enormously popular MacArthur by the enormously unpopular Truman offers an important lens by which to examine not only the conflict between the two leaders, but also the moral courage demonstrated by Truman in removing his problematic but idolized general. The rift between the two men was personal, but it also reflected the disagreements and confusion about the Korean War at the time, as well as the ongoing contemporary debate about Korea. To that end, Truman's firing of MacArthur highlighted the larger questions of US foreign policy and American nuclear thinking in Asia, as well as the necessity of maintaining the time-honored

principle of civilian control over the military.<sup>6</sup> Just as scholars are reexamining US policy during the Korean War in a way that reveals that “the forgotten war” might also be “the unknown war,” it is worth exploring the tensions between the president and the general over Korea so as to gain further insights into these larger questions and the legacy of Harry Truman.

MacArthur had long and varied connections to Asia that both impacted and reflected American policy in the region. As a young second lieutenant fresh out of West Point, MacArthur was commissioned in the US Army Corps of Engineers and sent to the Philippines. He later served as an aide under his famous general father in Japan in 1905. By 1924, MacArthur rose to the rank of commanding general in the Philippines and was field marshal of the Philippine Army during the important years of 1936 to 1941 leading up to World War II.

When the United States entered the war, MacArthur was recalled to active duty and given command of US forces in the Far East. In 1942, he was named supreme commander in the Southwest Pacific, a position he held through the war. After Japan's surrender in 1945, Truman named MacArthur Supreme Commander for Allied Powers (SCAP) in Japan, where he oversaw the postwar reconstruction efforts. To be sure, it is difficult to name another American who had as much impact on Asia in the prewar and World War II years.

MacArthur's record in postwar Japan as a reformer was remarkable, as he successfully oversaw the development of democratic institutions, put in place necessary land reforms and disarmament, and emphasized the adoption of civil liberties, women's rights, and religious freedoms. President Truman and Secretary of State Dean G. Acheson—who would both become rivals of MacArthur—nonetheless praised the general's pre-1950 accomplishments.

But while MacArthur was living with his family like a conquering emperor in the US embassy in Tokyo, troubling signs of his megalomania and paranoia were evident in his leadership style. For example, he bristled when questioned and reacted poorly to the free press, attempting to control it and, in a larger sense, complaining about any contrary voices both in Japan and at home. This attitude would continue during the Korean War. He was successful in Japan, perhaps because the Japanese people believed in the power of the emperor.

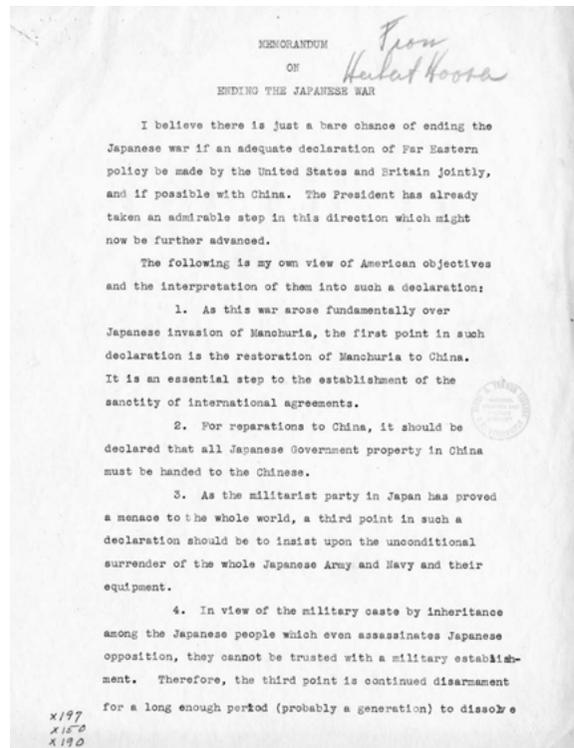
With the outbreak of hostilities on the Korean peninsula, on 27 June 1950 President Truman ordered MacArthur to defend South Korea against the Communist North Korean invaders. As commanding general in Korea, MacArthur led both American and United Nations troops. By September 1950, his United Nations Command (UNC) forces had been

THE LEGACY OF  
HARRY S. TRUMAN  
IN NORTHEAST ASIA

A Graphic Essay  
Based on the  
Holdings of  
the Harry S.  
Truman Library

**Raymond H.  
Geselbracht**

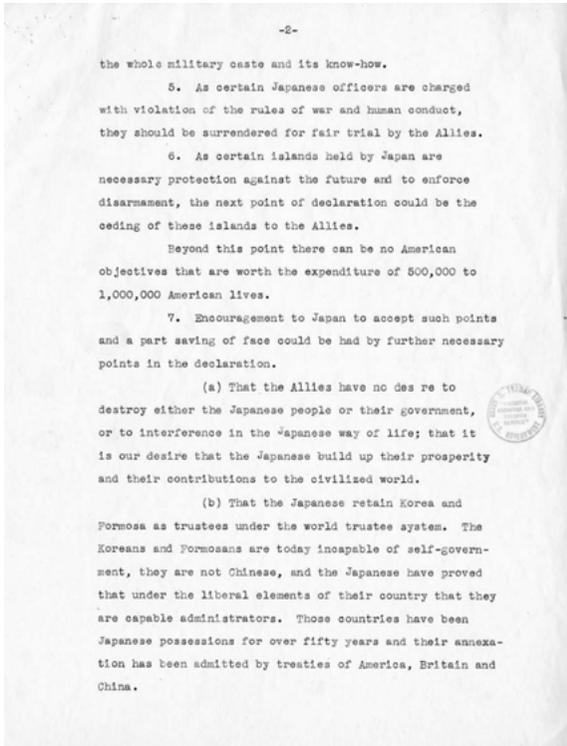




*Herbert Hoover to President Truman, "Memorandum on Ending the Japanese War," n.d. [ca. early June 1945], first two pages. Truman Papers: Confidential File: State Department File, HSTL.*

Shortly after meeting with President Harry S. Truman at the White House on 28 May 1945, former president Herbert Hoover gave Truman a memorandum containing advice on how to end the war against Japan. Most importantly, Hoover advised that Japan be allowed to keep its emperor and a portion of its empire if it surrendered. He also advised that setting up a new government in Japan was an impossible task and should not be attempted. Truman had great respect for Hoover, but he did not take this advice. Truman wanted Japan to surrender unconditionally just as Germany had, and he wanted the United States to establish an occupation regime in postwar Japan that would transform it into a democratic society.<sup>1</sup>

1. See Marc Gallicchio, "Truman, Unconditional Surrender, and a New Deal for Japan," in the present volume.



Truman was, however, apparently moved by Hoover's estimate that between five hundred thousand and one million Americans would die if the war dragged on and the Japanese fought to a bitter end. Not long after receiving Hoover's memorandum, Truman asked his military and defense advisors to give him "an estimate of the time required and an estimate of the losses in killed and wounded that will result from an invasion of Japan proper." He wanted, he said, to economize "to the maximum extent possible in the loss of American lives."<sup>2</sup>

2. Quoted in Frank, *Downfall*, 132-33.

going according to Hoyle or not. Any  
way a start has been made and  
I've gotten what I came for—Stalin  
goes to war ~~type~~ August 15<sup>th</sup> with  
no strings on it. He wanted a

Chinese settlement—and it is  
practically made in a better form  
than I expected. Soong did better  
than I asked him. I'll say that will  
end the war a year sooner now  
and think of the kids who won't be  
killed! That is the important thing.

*Harry S. Truman to Bess Truman, 18 July 1945, excerpt. Truman Papers, Papers Relating to Family, Business, and Personal Affairs; also in Ferrell, Dear Bess, 519.*

On 18 July 1945, probably in the morning, President Truman wrote his wife Bess about his meeting with Josef Stalin the day before. Truman was in Potsdam, Germany, preparing for a long series of meetings with Stalin, Winston Churchill, and Clement Attlee to discuss postwar Europe and the ending of the war against Japan. It was about this latter subject that Truman wrote in his letter: “I’ve gotten what I came for—Stalin goes to war August 15<sup>th</sup> with no strings on it.” The Soviet Union would join with the United States and the United Kingdom in the last phase of the war against Japan. Truman is clearly pleased with this confirmation of Soviet entry into the war, and he feels it’s important: “I’ll say that will end the war a year sooner now, and think of the kids who won’t be killed! That is the important thing.” Truman had written something similar about his meeting with Stalin the day before writing Mrs. Truman, sometime in the afternoon or evening of 17 July: “[The Soviet Union will] be in the Jap War on August 15<sup>th</sup>,” he wrote. “Fini Japs when that comes about.”

# DESCRIBING THE ELEPHANT CIA Reporting on Korea, 1949–1950

Clayton D. Laurie

The historical consensus prevailing for the last sixty years seems clear and unequivocal: the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) missed twice in Korea during 1950. First, it failed to predict the time, size, and location of the North Korean invasion of South Korea in June. Second, the CIA failed to provide political and military leaders with accurate and predictive tactical intelligence or warning regarding the likelihood of Communist Chinese military intervention the following November.<sup>1</sup> Numerous widely distributed and well-received scholarly and popular histories repeat this interpretation without ambiguity.<sup>2</sup> Even essays in *Studies in Intelligence*, the CIA's own in-house journal, have repeated many of these same conclusions based on evidence drawn from the abundant existing publications or the relatively few intelligence documents declassified since the 1950s.<sup>3</sup> The vast majority of scholars, often repeating each other's research and findings and using this limited documentary evidence, treat these failures as manifest. Yet when one examines the inherent complexities of intelligence processes, the existing intelligence infrastructure of the time, especially concerning human and technical collection capabilities, and how political and military leaders used or did not use the intelligence available, an entirely different picture emerges. At present, previous conclusions that the CIA utterly failed during the Korean War are much less clear or convincing.

Analytical records that the CIA's Historical Collections Division has released indicate that this historical consensus of failure needs qualification, if not an extensive revision. A new, more accurate and nuanced portrayal of CIA successes and failures in Korea is now possible. This new evidence shows that while the CIA may not have provided President Harry S. Truman and his civilian and military advisors with clear or predictive tactical intelligence or tactical warning in 1950, it did give ample strategic warning<sup>4</sup> in the months and years prior to the start of the Korean War.

The CIA also provided strategic warning of a possible Chinese intervention in the two months prior to October 1950. Its analytical reporting in this period detailed instability and crisis on the Korean peninsula, broadly warned of the possibility of the outbreak of war given likely military and political events in East Asia, and at an early date raised the possibility and then the probability of Chinese intervention. The “failures” in Korea were not so much reporting lapses on the part of the CIA—information was provided—nor did the agency fail to present likely scenarios, including the possibility of invasion or intervention, as so many have asserted.

Lessons learned about the role intelligence can play in the formulation of US foreign policies constitute an interesting and overlooked legacy of Truman’s presidency. Events in 1950 highlight the inherent challenges always found in the intelligence profession—the difficulty of collecting and thoroughly analyzing enough hard evidence to provide decision makers with “actionable” intelligence from which they may implement prudent policies to protect the nation, its interests, and allies. In addition, it is often difficult just getting the attention of policy makers. So many factors make up what has been concluded to be a simple intelligence failure. As history frequently reveals, the size, depth, position, status, and leadership of any intelligence organization matters, as does its longevity and record, the uniqueness and accuracy of its product in a cluttered marketplace of ideas, and its ability to get its message to astute, aware, and resolute consumers, able and willing to act in a timely and decisive manner.

CIA intelligence reporting on Korea is analogous to the ancient Indian fable of the blind men and the elephant, popularized in the nineteenth century by American poet John Godfrey Saxe. In this fable, several blind men each touch a different part of an elephant to determine its identity, yet each man touches only one part of the elephant and never examines the entire animal. Later, when they compare impressions, they completely disagree about what they felt. The man touching the elephant’s leg claims it is a pillar. The one who felt the tail claims it is a rope. The man who grasped the trunk insists that it must be a tree branch, and so on. All impressions are correct in part, but erroneous as a whole. Perceptions depended on the individual’s position and status within the group, point of view, and limited information at hand. In 1950, the perspective of the United States regarding Korea, including that of the CIA, the military services, intelligence components in the State and Defense Departments, and ultimately the Truman White House share clear similarities with the blind men examining the elephant. The elephant was never in the spotlight; it was shining elsewhere. Moreover, no one ever had the complete picture; all observed only a part of the larger animal. The CIA’s view, while

# FROM GOOD TO MEDIOCRE Intelligence in the Korean War

**Michael Warner**

This essay provides an overview of the US intelligence system in relation to US national security structures and decision-making at the time of Korean War. It also will offer some judgments about the significance of the emerging evidence in this field. Another purpose is to discuss the evolution of US intelligence with the goal of describing its relative effectiveness in comparison with the intelligence efforts of American adversaries. Finally, this article will present some potentially provocative thoughts about the significance of that competition for the overall course of the Cold War.

In 1994, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the Harry S. Truman Library sponsored a conference in Northern Virginia to examine President Harry S. Truman's creation and oversight of the CIA and, more broadly, US intelligence operations. Participants included a handful of veterans from the Truman administration and the early CIA along with a selection of noted scholars on World War II and the Cold War, who not only would compare notes and reminiscences, but examine documentation on the period that had been released over the previous decade or so. As a member of the CIA History Staff, I compiled, edited, and introduced the volume of documents that the CIA published for the occasion.<sup>1</sup> It was my first book, the child of my youth, and I was proud of it. But after a few years, my volume of documents was outdated. A great deal of information has since been declassified on both sides of the former Iron Curtain, much of which was new to me, notwithstanding my privileged access to CIA files. The declassifications allowed fruitful conversation and debate among scholars from several fields, inside and outside the US government. In short, what I thought in 1994 was a good account of the CIA during the Truman administration had become transparently dated and incomplete.

The richness of currently available material is much greater than scholars both inside and outside US intelligence could access fifteen years

ago. We can now talk in public with fair accuracy and insight about the performance of the intelligence community in the Korean War and during the Truman years more broadly. More particularly, we can use with some confidence the original documentation that is now available to assess the relative strengths and weaknesses of both sides before, during, and after the conflict. We can confirm and adjust prior educated guesses about the effects of intelligence on decision-making, and begin to propose deeper insights not only into the decisions of leaders and the reactions of polities, but also into the difference all this made to the course of events. In essence, we can now advance supportable judgments about the effects that intelligence had on the conduct of the war and about the effects the Korean War had on US intelligence-gathering and reporting.

Declassified records of the Truman White House and major government institutional players in the making of US national security policy reveal that American intelligence capabilities moved from good to mediocre during the years preceding the Korean War. In 1994, when my compilation appeared in print, the CIA already had released records on its founding and some of its early operations and analyses. Since then, the agency has opened up more documents in all these categories. The US State Department and the US Army, US Navy, and US Air Force likewise added significant holdings to what was then available.<sup>2</sup> The National Security Agency (NSA) provided the big story for the picture of US intelligence during the Korean War, of course, with its declassification of the broad outlines of cryptologic support to US commanders and counterintelligence efforts at that time.<sup>3</sup> As for the other side of the conflict, the promising trend toward openness Moscow showed in the years just after the Cold War soon ended, but nonetheless some material on Soviet and even Chinese decision-making surfaced. Still more became available through third parties, as now-independent nations once part of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics released documentation left behind after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Western scholars eagerly assembled and analyzed these materials.

Available US government records support the judgment, without fear of contradiction from still-classified files, that US intelligence was no better than mediocre at the outbreak of the Korean War. There were pockets of innovation and excellence, but the overall picture was bleak, especially in light of the rather high standards the Anglo-American intelligence enterprise had attained toward the end of World War II just a few years earlier. The weaknesses in US intelligence would have serious consequences for events in Korea. What had happened? Simply put, the United States was up against some very tough competition in the intelligence realm, and US

decision makers and agencies made their own jobs more difficult through what charitably can be described as several self-inflicted wounds. The latter will receive attention first.

To understand US intelligence in June 1950, it is necessary to visualize the picture that Anglo-American intelligence had of the Axis in the final year of World War II, from roughly the middle of 1944 through the summer of 1945. Choice of that time period is deliberate, because the capabilities and successes of Allied intelligence were not static but dynamic and therein rests an important qualification for the course of intelligence work in the United States during the postwar era. To paint the portrait with as few strokes as possible, it seems safe to say that no modern coalition war effort has ever enjoyed more intelligence advantages over its adversaries than the Anglo-American alliance held over the Germans and Japanese toward the close of World War II. Of course, that edge was not absolute—both Axis regimes were able to keep important secrets until the bitter end and occasionally surprise the Allies on the battlefield. However, the picture that the Allies had of Axis strategic decision-making, operational deployments, intelligence operations, and tactical capabilities was little short of astonishing in its scope and detail. This advantage held across the intelligence disciplines, to include imagery intelligence, scientific intelligence, analysis, and signals intelligence as a consequence of the breakthroughs known today by the shorthand labels *Ultra* and *Magic*. Indeed, this advantage was so pronounced in the counterintelligence arena that it allowed Allied leaders in Europe to deceive Nazi leader Adolf Hitler and the German high command in matters as tactical as missile targeting and as strategic as the Normandy landings in June 1944.<sup>4</sup>

Allied leaders and commanders, unfortunately, not only depended upon this intelligence advantage, they came to take it for granted in too many cases. Ironically, it was already dissolving even before the end of World War II. The Allied success in intelligence had depended on the closeness of the Anglo-American alliance. The British had created the organizations and procedures for modern intelligence work, while the Americans provided much of the technology and resources that made the entire system so effective. As the Axis threat receded and then vanished, however, and these two allies began demobilizing their wartime arsenals, withdrawing the resources devoted to intelligence work, and concentrating again on long-delayed peacetime priorities, Anglo-American intelligence capabilities declined rapidly in efficiency and effectiveness.

This decline was precipitous in the United States, which had fewer prewar intelligence precedents to follow. Also, US leaders had done an incomplete job of analyzing the conditions for intelligence success during the war

# THE CIA, WILLOUGHBY, AND MILITARY INTELLIGENCE IN EAST ASIA, 1946-1950

**Stanley Sandler**

Probably the most persistent question of the Korean War is how the US intelligence agencies could have twice misread definite signs that North Korea would invade South Korea and that Communist China was making serious plans to intervene in the Korea conflict. The conclusions over the decades since 1950 that these were intelligence failures have stood the test of time. Thus, this paper will not be an exercise in historical revisionism. To be fair, it must be taken into account just how much Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and US military intelligence had been degraded by the deep post-1945 reductions in their budgets, and by a general lack of interest in the subject. The Hoover Commission pointed out that “four of the last seven G-2s [of the US Army] were without any intelligence experience whatsoever.” Moreover, the first four Directors of Central Intelligence (DCI) had among them very little intelligence experience as such, a strong indication of the Truman administration’s lack of interest in the subject.<sup>1</sup> The president himself did not attend National Security Council (NSC) meetings until China intervened in November 1950, four months after the Korean War began.<sup>2</sup> Truman’s subsequent emphasis on maintaining the high quality of US intelligence capabilities established a pattern that his successors continued, constituting an important legacy of his presidency.

Overall, US Eighth Army and later X Corps assembled and forwarded to Far East Command (FEC) in Tokyo tactical intelligence collected by battalions, regiments, and divisions in Korea. The CIA, Department of the US Army, and the theater headquarters were responsible for strategic intelligence. Another source was the Republic of China (ROC) on Taiwan, which provided the FEC with a considerable amount of intelligence from

its many agents on the mainland, reports that were almost universally discounted because the Nationalists were understandably considered to have their own agenda. Yet Guomindang reports were often on the mark. The US Army's meager intelligence assets mostly focused on the Soviet Union and the Communist threat to Western Europe. As for the FEC, it had basically lost its connection with its contacts in Communist-held territories. In addition, the imperious General Douglas MacArthur, according to one authority, "had an intense and long-lasting objection to a CIA presence in Japan, and only one month before the outbreak of war in Korea did he permit a miniscule Agency presence in his domain."<sup>3</sup> The FEC further tended to ignore input from indigenous agents.<sup>4</sup> Nonetheless, if the FEC relied on the US Korean Military Advisory Group for its prewar Korean intelligence, Washington depended on the FEC to inform its assumptions on policies in Northeast Asia.<sup>5</sup>

The invasion North Korea launched on 25 June 1950 came as a surprise only to the United States. "All other Far Eastern developments this week," the CIA's Far East/Pacific Division wrote two days later, "paled in comparison to the unexpected Communist invasion of southern Korea."<sup>6</sup> Within a few weeks of the Communist attack on South Korea, Major General Lyman L. Lemnitzer, director of the US Army's Office of Military Assistance, tried to tease out some lessons learned from the "unexpected" invasion:

I recommend that ... a clear-cut inter-agency standing operating procedure be established now to insure that if (in the opinion of any intelligence agency, particularly CIA) an attack, or other noteworthy event, is impending it is made a matter of special handling. ... This will prevent a repetition of the Korean situation and will insure that if there has been vital intelligence data pointing to an imminent attack, that it will not be buried in a series of routine CIA intelligence reports.<sup>7</sup>

But it was not to be. Indeed, Lemnitzer may have been reflecting the US Army's continuing main focus on Europe when he wrote of "a repetition of the Korean situation"—a sudden Soviet attack on Western Europe. Furthermore, Washington continued to believe that, like the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), the People's Republic of China (PRC) was completely under the control of the Soviet Union.<sup>8</sup>

Intelligence assets increased exponentially after North Korea's invasion. And even in the days of hard fighting in South Korea, Washington was not kept in the dark regarding the possibility of Chinese intervention or of the capabilities of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), although the early reporting from intelligence sources tended to be ambiguous. While the new and super-secret US Armed Forces Security Agency was monitoring and

reporting on North Korean and Chinese Communist communications, the CIA produced several hundred reports from various sources evaluating the possibility of Chinese intervention between July and November 1950. Ten such reports went directly to two succeeding DCIs.<sup>9</sup> The CIA's Office of Special Operations alone disseminated no fewer than 554 reports during the same period, tracing the movements of PLA forces northward into Manchuria and toward the Korean border, and providing other details regarding units, equipment, and order of battle.<sup>10</sup> These estimates, as well as those from the FEC in Tokyo, bear an eerie resemblance to the prewar reports from those agencies dealing with the potential of the North Korean army, discerning the guiding hand of the Soviet Union yet discounting the possibility of an actual large-scale offensive.<sup>11</sup>

On 14 July, even as forces of the United Nations Command (UNC) were hastily throwing up positions to stop the southward push of the Korean People's Army (KPA) and as there was serious talk of the defenders being thrown off the peninsula, the CIA dispensed a bit of sunshine on the possibilities and effects of Chinese intervention. This effort, too clever by half, almost seemed to welcome Chinese involvement, and continued the fable that China, like North Korea, was nearly completely under Soviet control. It deserves quotation at some length:

The USSR will be confronted with a difficult problem if forced to decide whether to permit a North Korean defeat or to use Chinese Communist troops to win or prolong the struggle indefinitely. Although a North Korean defeat would have obvious disadvantages, the commitment of Chinese Communist forces would not necessarily prevent such a defeat, and a defeat under these circumstances would be far more disastrous, not only because it would be a greater blow to Soviet prestige throughout the world, but because it would seriously threaten Soviet control over the Chinese Communist regime. Even a victory of Chinese Communist troops in Korea would complicate if not jeopardize Soviet direction of Korean affairs; Chinese Communist prestige, as opposed to that of the USSR, would be enhanced; and Peiping might be tempted as a result of success in Korea to challenge Soviet leadership in Asia. In addition to these purely internal difficulties, the use of Chinese Communist forces in Korea would increase the risk of global war, not only because of possible UN or US reaction but because the USSR itself would be under greater compulsion to assure a victory in Korea, possibly by committing Soviet troops.<sup>12</sup>

Another CIA warning on 8 September indicated that the Chinese were already covertly aiding the North Koreans with supplies and some replacement troops, but continued the theme that the former would do little with-

# A REVIEW OF KOREAN WAR STUDIES SINCE 1992-1994

**Kim Hakjoon**

No other event during Harry S. Truman's presidency contributed more importantly to his legacy in Northeast Asia than the Korean War. Decisions he made about Korea after World War II led to a major conflict in that nation in June 1950, as well as an ongoing debate among historians regarding how to explain its causes, course, and consequences. This essay will summarize these interpretative battles, describing how Truman's legacy extends to the shaping of political divisions in South Korea early in the twenty-first century. Korean War studies in the West have passed through three general stages, each of which lasted roughly two decades. The first began with the start of the war on 25 June 1950 and ended in the mid-1970s. In this period, the "right wing" or "traditionalist" interpretation prevailed, characterizing the Korean conflict as an "international war" and accusing the Communists of launching unprovoked aggression against South Korea. The second commenced in the mid-1970s, and lasted approximately twenty years, during which time the "left wing" or "revisionist" interpretation prevailed, which stressed the civil origins of the war. During the third period, which began early in the 1990s, there was a "resurrection of traditionalism" and a "decline of revisionism," resulting in the emergence of a synthetic interpretation that some writers refer to as "post-traditionalism" or "post-revisionism." This essay will review Korean War studies appearing in this third stage, when those in South Korea received primary attention.

A brief review of accounts of the Korean War appearing in the first and second stages provides an important interpretive context.<sup>1</sup> At first, writers pointed to Josef Stalin as the initiator of the war, with Mao Zedong, leader of the People's Republic of China (PRC), posited as the Soviet leader's junior partner. They portrayed Kim Il Sung, leader of the Democratic

People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) established on 9 September 1948, as Stalin's proxy on the spot. As a whole, these writers viewed the Korean War as the product of a Sino-Soviet conspiracy to secure global domination, using Stalin's "puppet" Kim Il Sung against the West in general and the Republic of Korea (ROK), established on 15 August 1948, in particular.<sup>2</sup> In this context, Western intervention in the Korean conflict was applauded as a commendable example of collective security to meet and defeat internationally coordinated Communist aggression. Correspondingly, General Douglas MacArthur, who commanded United Nations forces fighting against the Communists, was praised as the "savior" of South Korea for preventing its destruction.

This interpretation reflected prevailing mainstream thoughts in the West during the 1950s, which was engaged in the Cold War against the Communist bloc. Successive South Korean governments during these years developed an orthodox historiography based on the right-wing explanations that then prevailed, especially in American accounts of the war. A summary of the central points of this interpretation would begin first with the premise that the ROK was the only lawful government on the peninsula. A majority of the Korean people had created it through free elections under the auspices of the United Nations, while the so-called DPRK was a Soviet creature headed by Stalin's puppet Kim Il Sung, who had stolen the name of a legendary anti-Japanese guerrilla leader. Second, the Korean War was an unprovoked act of aggression against the legitimate ROK by an illegitimate "northern puppet," which Stalin and Mao instigated in an attempt to demonstrate the strength of communism in East Asia and thereby ignite Communist revolutions elsewhere in the region. Third, the ROK-US military alliance formed immediately after the truce has been the backbone of deterrence against North Korea's starting a second Korean War. In sum, the ROK's orthodox historiography reflected and reinforced anticommunism as the "cardinal principle of the state." The successive ROK governments punished proponents of other interpretations, branding them as "heretics" or "sympathizers with communism" under the draconian National Security Law with its principal aim of silencing dissent.

Serious academic studies revising this traditional, or orthodox, interpretation appeared first in the early 1960s in the United States.<sup>3</sup> They argued that Stalin was not a risk taker, but a cautious leader who wanted to avoid a military confrontation with the United States. Similarly, Mao was not enthusiastic about the idea of a war that might invite any sort of Chinese military clash with the United States. Rather, both Communist leaders relied on words to criticize the United States for its "imperialistic" and "warlike" external policies. Some of these writers conjectured that the

United States incited Syngman Rhee, the then-president of the ROK, to launch the initial military attack on North Korea and the DPRK retaliated. Others speculated that Washington provoked Stalin and Kim Il Sung to initiate the war as part of a grand design to create a *casus belli* for a military offensive northward to destroy the North Korean regime and, if possible, the Chinese Communist government. Another revisionist argument held that the conflict was a “civil war” between the two Koreas that was not the product of external intervention. Central to this argument was the provocative thesis that Kim Il Sung was not Stalin’s puppet, but an independent leader with a credible record as an anti-Japanese guerrilla fighter during the colonial period and World War II, while the ROK was founded by pro-Japanese elements in the same period.<sup>4</sup>

At the risk of oversimplification, one may argue that this revisionist interpretation of the Korean War was a by-product of the movement against US intervention in the civil war between “revolutionary” North Vietnam and the “reactionary” South Vietnam. It meant that revisionist scholars typically assessed Korea from their perspective on the Vietnam War. These “leftist” revisionist works could not be imported into strict anti-Communist South Korea. They made their appearance in the ROK only after the mid-1970s when they were smuggled into South Korea and circulated in academia.<sup>5</sup>

It should be stressed that the revisionist interpretation of the Korean War that developed in the United States was never new in South Korea. A few “leftist” journalists and scholars who had endured imprisonment under the anticommunist National Security Law had promoted it indigenously.<sup>6</sup> More articulated arguments began to emerge based on the US documents contained in the revisionist works published in the United States, and these had the impact of energizing belief in the legitimacy of an indigenous left-wing interpretation that already existed in the ROK. Soon, Sohn Hakkyu wrote in 1988, a South Korean version of revisionism supported by leftist studies in the West spread in the “underground world of anti-dictatorship activists.”<sup>7</sup>

A group of documents identified as “North Korean Records Seized by the U.S. Military Forces in Korea during the Korean War” by researchers in the early 1970s opened a new period of reexamination in Korean War studies in the United States.<sup>8</sup> This trend accelerated after the US National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) completed official declassification of these records in the summer of 1977. Works based on these documents tended to strengthen the revisionist interpretation of the war, which previously had represented a minority opinion opposing the mainstream of the traditionalist school. The starting point of the revisionist

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