

COLD WAR POLICY OF UNITED STATES IN ASIA : *ƒ*
CASE STUDIES OF TAIWAN AND KOREA,
1950-1960

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PREFACE

An attempt is made in this study to analyse the foreign policy of the United States during the decade of 1950 in the context of Cold War. The tensions that grew in Asia between the United States and the Soviet Union on the one hand, and the US, and the People's Republic of China on the other over particularly, Taiwan and Korean questions are highlighted.

Cold War in Europe began shortly after the end of the Second World War as a result of the basic incompatibility between Soviet Union and Western Europe, both in terms of ideology and security interests. After the Second World War, the United States and the Soviet Union emerged as the two most powerful nations. An undercurrent of mutual suspicion between the two, in time, led to hostile moves by the two vis-a-vis each other. Although, initially the US appeared to be somewhat restrained and circumspect in its initiatives and moves in Europe, it began adopting a hardened posture once when the Soviet Union established its hegemonic hold over Eastern Europe. The enunciation of the Truman Doctrine, the implementation of Marshall Plan, and the establishment of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) were some of the US policy initiatives intended essentially to contain the spread of communism in Europe spearheaded by the Soviet Union. Asia, however, remained outside the scope of US Cold War strategy atleast until 1949.

Major focus of this dissertation is to trace the shifting of Cold War into Asia especially in the context of the two major questions of Taiwan and Korea that led the American policy planners to apply the Cold War framework to Asia in the 1950s.

The dissertation consists of four chapters. Chapter I deals with post-War Asia with emphasis on the US response to the Chinese civil war which assumed critical dimensions in the aftermath of this War. Despite its success in thwarting somewhat Soviet expansion in Western Europe, the United States failed to stem the rising tide of communism in China. The chapter also shows how the declared War-time China policy of the US differed from the one actually pursued, and how following the establishment of the People's Republic of China in October 1949, the Nationalist regime in Taiwan was considered politically insignificant. A brief historical sketch of US Involvement in Korea in the post-War years is also given.

It was the Korean question that led the US to pursue its Cold War policy in Asia. The outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950, reversed US policy of not defending Taiwan and Korea. The policy of containment was extended to the People's Republic of China following its entry in the Korean War. These aspects are dealt at some length in the II Chapter.

Chapter III seeks to evaluate US policy of containment towards China against the backdrop of the Taiwan Straits crises of 1954-58. Taiwan which broke away from the mainland in October 1949 became the mainstay of American intervention in China during the decade following the proclamation of the People's Republic of China. Even at the United Nations, the Taiwan question remained a sore point in Sino-American relations. Thereafter, for nearly two decades the United States relations with China were marked by mutual suspicion and hostility.

The last chapter provides an overall picture of American policy in Asia during the 1950s and how the Korean and Taiwan questions led to deeper yet cautious US involvement in the region.

I record sincere thanks to my supervisor, Dr. R.P. Kaushik for the invaluable help rendered during the course of this dissertation. I also express my gratitude to Prof. M.S. Venkataramani, who has remained a constant source of encouragement. My thanks are due to Prof. B.K. Shrivastava for his valuable comments. I am also indebted to Prof. K.P. Saxena for his helpful advice and comments. My thanks to my colleagues Chintamani Mahapatra, Badrul Alam and Mahamaya Bhattacharya for their kind help. I also thank the Librarians and Staff members of the Jawaharlal Nehru University Library, Indian Council of World Affairs Library

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CHAPTER I

POST-WAR ASIA AND US FOREIGN POLICY

The Second World War came to an end in Europe on 8 May 1945. The War in the Far East, however, remained unabated. Japan showed no disposition to surrender. Bringing a speedy end to the hostilities in the Far Eastern theatre obviously became the main concern of the United States. It was during this anxious and critical moment that the US persuaded the Soviet Union to intervene actively in the War against Japan. To this the Soviet response was somewhat ambivalent. At the Potsdam Conference of 17 July 1945 and ever since, the United States showed little inclination to seek Russian help in the Far East, largely on account of the fact that by then it had known about its successful explosion of the atom bomb.

Then, in August, came the fateful decision. In its desperation to end the war in the Far East, the US dropped two atom bombs, one on Hiroshima and another on Nagasaki, on 6 and 9 August of 1945. And Japan surrendered finally.

It is against this backdrop of Japanese capitulation, an attempt is made in this chapter to relate the developments that brought about the intense Cold War between the US and the USSR. The happy partnership of these two powers, based on their common objective to defeat Nazi Germany in Europe and Japan in the Far East, which had been the major phenomenon of the Second World War began showing signs of discord.

Simultaneously, serious differences arose between the two powers over the future course of action and policies to be adopted with regard to post-War Europe. The allies of yester years became potential enemies in later years. The conflict began initially over the question of carving spheres of influence between them in Europe. The countries of this continent not only abounded in vast resources, but had held colonial possessions in Asia and Africa. Mutual suspicion over each others' moves in Europe also led to an intense feeling of animosity in other post-War arrangements. In turn, this led to moves that were hostile to each other, and in the process the world got engulfed in what came to be known as the "Cold War".

George F. Kennan, a distinguished American diplomat, in his assessment of the Soviet position saw the impending danger of a gradual spread of the communist ideology in Europe. He related such an aggressive thrust of the Soviet ideology to Russia's long-cherished desire for expansion in Europe.¹

Kennan's ideas, in a sense, constituted the basis for United States Cold War policy. It was along these lines that

1. For Kennan's assessment of the Soviet attitude see his article, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct", Foreign Affairs (New York), Vol.25, July 1947, pp.566-82.

American policy planners formulated the policy of containment, the major objective of which was to prevent other European countries from falling into Soviet orbit. Truman Doctrine of aid to Greece and Turkey, the Marshall Plan and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) were some of the significant measures, that America adopted in quick succession to meet the challenge of Soviet communism in Europe.

In all these initial policy overtures, Asia did not figure in US calculations at least till the outbreak of the Korean War of 25 June 1950. However, the significant political developments during the post-War years in Asia escalated the rivalry between US and USSR in this region too.

The Asian continent witnessed far-reaching political and social changes in the decade of 1940. The resurgence of nationalism aimed at altering the colonial status of the Asian states was at its peak. A long-drawn organized national struggle against British rule ended in the establishment of India, Pakistan, Burma and Ceylon as independent nation states. Although, Great Britain held Malaya and Hongkong, its pre-War position in the Far East was considerably reduced. The French were partially successful in regaining their authority in Indo-China. The Dutch lost their hold over the East Indies.

The American response during the Second World War, though sympathetic to the aspirations of these states, was greatly influenced by its alliance with Great Britain. Since the overriding objective of the Roosevelt Administration was to win the War, it avoided taking any action with regard to these states that would be unacceptable to its British ally.²

These apart, even revolutionary changes were taking place, most notably in China. The long historical links with China coupled with the Open Door policy formulated towards the close of the nineteenth century, however, increasingly involved the United States in Chinese affairs.³

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2. For an analysis of US attitude towards the independence of the Indian sub-continent see M.S. Venkataramni, Under-currents in American Foreign Relations: Four Studies (New Delhi, 1965), pp.3-39. Also see M.S. Venkataramni and B.K. Shrivastava, Quit India: The American Response to the 1942 Struggle (New Delhi, 1979).
 3. For further details on this subject see William L. Neumann, America Encounters Japan: From Perry to MacArthur (Baltimore, 1963), Chapters 9 and 10; James H. Herzog, Closing the Open Door: American-Japanese Diplomatic Negotiations, 1936-1941 (Annapolis, Maryland, 1973), Chapter 2; Also see John K. Fairbank, The United States and China (Cambridge Massachusetts, 1971), pp.295-300. Akira Iriye, The Cold War in Asia: A Historical Background (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1974), pp.32-40. Tang Tsou, America's Failure in China, 1941-50 (Chicago, 1963), Chapter-1 and Richard to Van Alstyne, "Myth Versus Reality in the Far Eastern Policies of the United States", International Affairs (London), Vol.32, July 1956, pp.287-97.

Wartime Objectives of the US Toward China

One of the declared wartime objectives of the US was to work for a strong, unified and democratic China favourably disposed to the US.⁴ A policy based on these objectives gained more credence in the American policy making circles largely on account of China's importance. China, with its long northern border admittedly became one of the meeting grounds of American and Soviet policies in Asia. It is for these reasons China was given a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council as one of the five great powers. But the civil war in China and the consequent breakdown of its economy made it impossible for China to act as a major stabilizing force in Asia. Attempts at pursuing the wartime objective of uniting China on democratic lines involved the United States directly in the civil war. In the process, United States China policy was largely dictated by the internal situation of China during these years.

China presented a poor spectacle in all respects at the end of the Second World War. With a high inflation trade and commerce came to a standstill. With a disrupted communications system its rural economy was totally neglected.⁵

4. The Department of State Bulletin (Washington, D.C.), Vol.13, 16 December 1945, p.945.

5. The China White Paper, August 1949, Vol.2 (Stanford, 1967), pp.817-22.

Because of the War, there were over a million Japanese soldiers in China and just as many in Manchuria. Russian participation in the Far Eastern front brought about the deployment of many Soviet divisions there. Added to these, there were rebellions in some Chinese provinces. Above all, communist insurrections obstructed the efforts of the Nationalist Government in recovering areas formerly held by the Japanese, for a section of the Chinese Communist army had established itself in important segments of China during the Sino-Japanese war.⁶

The American appraisal of China through American Foreign Service Officers, considered to be specialists in the Far East and stationed there, was hardly encouraging. While suspecting Soviet intentions in China, they warned that the communist hold over the country was slowly but steadily increasing. They further reported:

The Communists would inevitably win such a war because the foreign powers including the US, which would support the Government could not feasibly supply enough aid to compensate for the organic weaknesses of the Government.⁷

As part of their recommendations they said that the US should encourage reform of the Kuomintang so that it may

6. For a detailed study of the Chinese civil war see Gilbert Chan (ed.), China at the Crossroads: Nationalists and Communists, 1927-1949 (Boulder, Colorado, 1980).

7. The China White Paper, Vol.1, p.64. For a detailed analysis of the situation existing then in China see Memorandum by Foreign Service Officers in China, 1943-1945, *ibid.*, Vol.2, pp.564-76.

survive as a significant force in the coalition government, especially in view of the considerable strength that the Chinese Communist movement had gained over the years.⁸

Notwithstanding these recommendations, US policy towards China remained unchanged during the tenure of President Harry S. Truman. He appointed General George C. Marshall as his Special Representative in China with the personal rank of Ambassador. He was instructed to bring about the unification of China by setting up a coalition government.⁹ President Truman further declared that military aid to China would be stopped and resumed only when the fighting between the Nationalists and Communists came to an end.¹⁰ General Marshall began his mission around the time when the Moscow Conference was convened in December 1945.

He did achieve initial success in bringing the Kuomintang and Chinese Communist leaders to sign an armistice on 10 June 1946.¹¹ He, however, failed to prevent the scramble for power that began in Manchuria between the Nationalists and Communists in the wake of Russian withdrawal.

8. Ibid., Vol.1, p.64.

9. Ibid., p.132.

10. Department of State Bulletin, Vol.13, 16 December 1954, p.945.

11. The China White Paper, Vol.2, Annex 63, pp.609-10. For details see Ernest R. May, The Truman Administration and China, 1945-1949 (Philadelphia, 1975), pp.28-40.

Presumably to bring pressure on both, an embargo was placed on the shipment of arms and ammunition to China in May 1946 for a period of ten months. Later, the critics of the Administration blamed General Marshall for they alleged that it was the arms embargo that brought about the collapse of the Nationalist Government.¹² However, President Truman was opposed to committing the country to a policy of containment in Asia. Instead, he followed a policy of watchful waiting which involved limited financial and military assistance.

General Marshall's efforts to unify China through a coalition government failed. If the plan to set up a coalition government in China had succeeded, it would have proved advantageous to the Chinese Communists. The provision for election which the programme entailed would certainly have given them great control over many important segments of China on account of their popularity.¹³

It is argued by one school of thought that the chief feature of America's China policy in the period 1945-1950 was its anti-Soviet character. According to this line of thinking the main preoccupation, ever since the administration of Franklin

12. Freda Utley, The China Story (Chicago, 1951), Chapter 2. Also see Richard G. Thornton, China: A Political History, 1917-1980 (Boulder, Colorado, 1982), pp.188-205.

13. Celeste Budd Horne, "Can China Unite?", Current History (Philadelphia), Vol.10, April 1946, pp.335-41.

D. Roosevelt, in making China a strong power was essentially to eliminate Soviet influence in the Far Eastern region. When it became evident that the regime of Chiang Kai-shek was too weak to check the spread of communism in China, US opted to bring about a political settlement between the Nationalists and the Communists. The logic behind the policy option was to make it impossible for the Soviet Union to penetrate China through other communist sources. Along these lines, it is further argued that the post-War events in China were largely responsible for the formulation of the containment policy. US policy, however, failed in China because of lack of popular support to the Nationalist Government and Chiang's own resistance to reforms.¹⁴

A more careful analysis of available data does not, however, indicate that a containment programme was chalked out for China in the immediate post-War years. For, Europe undoubtedly was considered a far more important theatre of Cold War than Asia. This is evident from Congressional debates that ensued over the US Administration's China policy.

14. Warren J. Cohen, "Acheson: His Advisers and China, 1949-1950" in Dorothy Borg and Waldo Heinrichs (eds.), Uncertain Years: Chinese-American Relations, 1947-1950 (New York, 1980), p.32.

The Republicans in the Congress urged stronger support for the Nationalist regime. They took the view that if the US pursued a policy of containing communism in one continent it should follow it up in the other as well. Leading and prominent spokesmen of this view were Senator Arthur H. Vandenberg, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Senator Styles Bridges of New Hampshire, Senator William F. Knowland of California, Representative Walter H. Judd of Minnesota, thanks to whom the Administration's policy came under heavy attack.

Republican pressure forced President Truman to send General Albert C. Wedemeyer on a fact-finding mission to China and to make recommendations for the future course of China policy. Returning to Washington in September 1947, Wedemeyer submitted a lengthy report, (not published until 1949), on the weak position of the Nationalist Government. The report stated that Chiang's regime could be saved from collapse if substantial economic and military aid was given to it.¹⁵ These recommendations were ignored and Washington's policy remained one of watchful waiting and circumspection.

15. Albert C. Wedemeyer, Wedemeyer Reports! (New York, 1958), p.395. For details of the report see China White Paper, Vol.2, Annex 135, pp.764-814.

According to one hypothesis, the passive attitude of the US towards Chiang's appeal for additional aid was due to the dissension within the Kuomintang.¹⁶ In the absence of any concerted backing, the China lobby was unable to pressurize the China bloc within the Congress to obtain large scale aid for the Nationalist Government of China. A careful study of certain passages in the China White Paper shows that some of the American specialists dealt too harshly with the Generalissimo. It may be true that inefficiency and disunity within the Kuomintang failed to involve the United States deeply into the Chinese civil war. Yet, it cannot be denied that Chiang remained in power for a very long period and was able to set up an independent government in Taiwan.

Despite increasing pressure from the China bloc in the Congress very little aid was forthcoming to the National Government. Presenting the China Aid Bill to the Congress on 30 March 1948, Senator Vandenberg described the situation in China as critical and urged the Administration to "help sustain" the Chinese Government.¹⁷ In the course of the

16. Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, "Nationalist China Decline and its Impact on Sino-American Relations, 1949-1950" in Dorothy Borg and Waldo Heinrichs (eds.), Uncertain Years: Chinese-American Relations, 1947-1950 n.14, pp.151-57.

17. Congressional Record (Washington, D.C.), Vol.94, 30 March 1948, p.3667.

Congressional debate, Representative Judd pointed out that without a free China, America's interests in Europe may also be insecure. To quote him:

How much more will it cost us, in money and resources to keep Western Europe free--or even ourselves--if China and Asia go down and Russia is able to concentrate all her attention and strength on the west?

I doubt that ERP can succeed in Europe if Russia gets control of China--which means of Asia--and Russia will if we do not help effectively and at once. To contemplate spending \$ 17,000,000,000 on one flank during a period of 4 years and nothing on the other is hardly good sense. 18

General Douglas MacArthur also felt that the problem in China should not be viewed in isolation and should be included in the general framework of Washington's policy at the time. He said:

For if we embark upon a general policy to bulwark the frontiers of freedom against the assaults of political despotism, one major frontier is no less important than another, and a decisive break of any will inevitably threaten to engulf all. 19

The China Aid Act of 12 April 1948, however, was passed mainly in order to ensure appropriation of funds for the Marshall Plan intended for Europe. By the time renewed assistance reached Chiang Kai-shek, it was too late to do

18. Ibid., Vol.94, 31 March 1948, pp.3872. Also see pp.3862-66.

19. Ibid., Vol.95, 26 September 1949, p.13525.

him any good.²⁰ For by the end of 1948, the Chinese Communists had overrun Manchuria and also a major part of North China. For all its wartime declarations of making China strong, the United States, in effect, avoided commitments which would have involved it deeply in the Chinese civil war.

By 1949, the fall of Nationalist China was anticipated. Chiang retired to the island of Formosa on 21 January 1949 turning over his weak government to Vice-President Li Tsung-jen.

On 1 October 1949, Mao Tse-tung proclaimed the establishment of the People's Republic of China. Earlier that year, he had declared that his party would support the Soviet Union, disavowing any "third road".²¹ The Soviet Union was also the first major power to extend recognition to the new Chinese Communist Government, followed by its East European satellites.

20. See Freda Utley, n.12, pp.44-47.

It was pointed out by Senator Malone of Nevada that the shipments of gasoline and other war supplies were held up by the Department of Commerce in 1948. When these finally reached Chiang, it was too late to use them effectively. See Congressional Record, Vol.96, 19 July 1950, p.10762.

21. Mao Tse-tung, On People's Democratic Dictatorship (Peking, 1950), p.11.

On the other hand, the United States decided to withhold recognition of Mao's China until such time the "dust" had "settled down" and the Chinese Communist Government had consolidated its rule and was prepared to meet its international obligations.²² It felt that the new Chinese government would not pose a serious threat to the US.²³ However, possible move towards recognition may have further been held by events such as the arrest of American diplomats in Mukden at the end of 1949, seizure of American property in Peking in early 1950 and the outbreak of the Korean War. Added to these, the demand made by Communist China and the Soviet Union for the expulsion of Dr. T.F. Tsiang, the Nationalist Chinese Representative in the UN Security Council created grave doubts about the advisability of recognizing the new Chinese government.²⁴ When this was not done, the Soviet Union boycotted the United Nations till the outbreak of the Korean War.

22. New York Times, 4 October 1949, p.1.

23. The risks involved in such a stand discussed in article by Nathan Leites and David Nelson Rowe, "Choice in China" World Politics (Yale University), Vol.1, April 1949, pp.277-307.

24. See John Foster Dulles, War or Peace (New York, 1955), p.190. He felt that 'defacto' policy of recognition should be followed and recognition 'dejure' be extended when the new regime had shown its ability to maintain effective control over China.

The most pressing problem facing the US at the time was the defence of Taiwan. The Republicans in the Congress demanded stronger defence of Taiwan including naval assistance to keep the communists away. Senator H. Alexander Smith of New Jersey suggested a trusteeship for Taiwan under the supervision of US. He stated further that such a move could be justified on legal grounds. The island was technically part of Japan which in turn, was under US occupation.²⁵ Similarly, Senator Knowland called for the dispatch of a military mission to Taiwan.²⁶ These proposals were rejected by President Truman. On 5 January 1950, he stated:

The US has no desire to obtain special rights and privileges to establish military bases on Formosa at this time. Nor does it have any intention of utilizing its armed forces to interfere in the present situation. The US will not pursue a course which will lead to involvement in the civil conflict in China. 27

Following Truman's rather categorical declaration both Taiwan and South Korea were excluded from the American defence perimeter in the Pacific, by Secretary of State Dean Acheson. It is, however, significant to note how this policy was reversed with the outbreak of the war in Korea. With all

25. New York Times, 2 December 1949, p.15.

26. Ibid., 31 December 1949, p.1.

27. Department of State Bulletin, Vol.22, 16 January 1950, p.79.

China lost, Japan became the focus of American policy in Asia.

Speaking in defence of the Administration's China policy Secretary Acheson said that the failure of the Nationalist Government of China did not stem from any inadequacy of American aid. He further said:

"The unfortunate, but inescapable fact is that the ominous result of the civil war in China was beyond the control of the government of the US. Nothing that this country did or could have done within the reasonable limits of its capabilities would have changed that result; nothing that was left undone in this country would have contributed to it. It was the product of internal Chinese forces, forces which this country tried to influence, but could not".²⁸

Other contemporary appraisals of China policy which support this line of thinking have also attributed the fall of the Kuomintang to its inefficient and corrupt administration. As such it lost the confidence of the masses. Furthermore, it was unable to control inflation and prices. In contrast, the communists had a close-knit organization which gradually became popular with the Chinese population. This enabled them to take over the control of the country rapidly.²⁹

28. The China White Paper, Vol.1, pp.XIV, XVI.

29. Kenneth S. Latourette, The American Record in the Far East, 1945-1951 (New York, 1953), pp:119-23. Also see Theodore H. White and Annalee Jacoby, Thunder Out of China (New York, 1946), pp.309-16.

For an account of Mao Tse-tung's revolutionary movement and the advance made by the Red Army during the period prior to 1945 see Edgar Snow, Red Star Over China (New York, 1944).

On the other hand, others are of the view that despite the inherent weakness of Chiang's regime, it would have survived with timely and substantial American economic and military assistance. The Nationalist Government, whatever its defects stood for China's independence and friendship with the US. It was also fighting a battle against communism, which was not limited to Europe. Thus, effective American assistance would have enabled Chiang to check the Communist expansion in China. Washington understood that the failure to supply arms and ammunition would lead to the defeat of the Nationalists. In effect, it declined to extend substantial support to the Nationalist Government of China because it did not want to involve itself in the Chinese civil war. It took the view that a strong China even under communist leadership would be governed by national interests rather than ideological commitments.

Others have opined that a Nationalist defeat could have been prevented if the US had provided ample aid to Chiang's regime in time. They also show the inconsistency between the end and means of America's China policy.³⁰ On

30. See Tang Tsou, n.3, pp.546-47. The same author has also attributed America's failure in China to the "multiple balance of power in the bipolar system". For under such a system, he states, a crisis can only be controlled by the use of military power. This was more or less absent in the case of China. For similar view also see Akira Iriye, Across the Pacific: An Inner History of American-East Asian Relations (New York, 1967), pp.254-56.

the one hand, it wanted to make China a strong Asian power, yet on the other, it pursued a policy of limited involvement in its fight against communism.

Korea: A Factor in Cold War

With the outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950, pressure to defend Taiwan increased. A shift in the Cold War balance could be seen especially with the interposition of the Seventh Fleet. The rim of containment was stretched to Asia, and Taiwan and South Korea were included in that arc. The basis for this shift in policy was provided by the inconsistent policy that led to the establishment of Communist China and the developments in Korea.

Korea was one area in Asia where American and Soviet interests came into open conflict. For many centuries Korea had been under Chinese domination. China's suzerainty over Korea terminated following her defeat in the Sino-Japanese War in 1894-1895. As a result of the Russo-Japanese War of 1904, Japan was given a free hand in this peninsula. Finally, in 1910, it annexed Korea. Ever since, its domination over the peninsula remained unchallenged until the end of the Second World War. Thus, Korea was a pawn in an international conflict right from the close of the nineteenth century and its fate was shaped largely by outside powers rather than by indigenous forces.

Prior to 1945, American involvement in Korea was minimal and limited to trade and commerce only.³¹ It did not perceive the same advantage in Korea as it did in the opening of China and Japan. Its interest in Korea revived towards the latter half of the Second World War. With the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour, it became clear that the question of Korea's independence would be reconsidered by the Allies.³²

The wartime conferences also played an important part in shaping American policy toward South Korea. After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour in December 1941, Washington gave a more concrete shape to its East Asian policy. The Korean people also foresaw the possibility of independence should Japan be defeated. At the Cairo Conference of November 1943, the US along with Great Britain and China agreed that Korea should become independent after a certain period of transition. This had received Stalin's endorsement.³³

31. For early American-Korean relations, see U.S. Department of State, A Historical Summary of United States-Korean Relations (Washington, D.C., 1962), pp.3-9.

32. Robin Winkler, "The Significance of Korea in U.S. Policy", Korean Survey (Washington, D.C.), Vol.1, December 1952, p.9.

33. Department of State Bulletin, Vol.9, 4 December 1943, p.393. President Franklin D. Roosevelt had earlier spoken of an international trusteeship for Korea. See Anthony Eden, The Eden Memoirs: The Reckoning (London, 1965), p.378; Cordell Hull, The Memoirs of Cordell Hull, Vol.2, (London, 1948), p.1596.

That Korea would not attain immediate independence was also evident during the Teheran Conference of November 1943. Here, President Roosevelt referred to Stalin the need for educating the peoples of the Far East in self-government. He cited the case of Philippines where independence was granted after a certain period of American apprenticeship.³⁴

At the Yalta Conference of February 1945 a Korean trusteeship was informally considered by Roosevelt, Stalin and Churchill. It seems that Stalin was in favour of allowing the Koreans to set up their own government. However, both leaders agreed that foreign troops should not be stationed in Korea.³⁵ This shows that President Roosevelt did not adopt a clear policy with regard to certain problems of the Korean question. Though this ambiguity helped the US in maintaining its troops in Korea till the middle of 1950, it could do little to fight against the Soviet propoganda which this move had triggered.

Following the division of Korea along the 38th parallel, the Korean problem assumed critical political dimensions. The demarcation line originally intended as a military convenience soon became a permanent one.³⁶ After the

34. Robert E. Sherwood, Roosevelt and Hopkins: An Intimate History (New York, 1948), p.777.

35. Ibid., pp.868, 905.

36. General Order No.1, Raymond Benett and Robert K. Turner (eds). Documents on American Foreign Relations in 1945-46. (Norwood, Massachusetts, 1948), Vol.8, p.854. Also see Shannon McCune, "The Thirty-Eighth Parallel in Korea", World Politics (Yale University), Vol.1, January 1949, pp.223-32. The article discusses how the military division of Korea had gradually become a political one.

Soviet entry into the war against Japan, it was decided that the Russians would receive the Japanese surrender north of the parallel and the Americans south of it. The occupation was intended to last until such time the Japanese surrender was complete. However, this division, like that of Germany became a political one. Soon Korea became the scene of even greater super power rivalry than it had witnessed half-a-century earlier.³⁷

To a small extent, the disunity within the various political parties in Korea is to blame for this division. Several political parties demanded the right to form a government. The Korean People's Republic was one such organization. But the major responsibility for dividing Korea goes to the United States and the Soviet Union.³⁸ Taking their own interests into consideration, the two super powers ignored the long-cherished aspirations of the Koreans

37. President Truman was advised to occupy as much of Korea and Manchuria irrespective of the Soviet plans. However, the President differed. He felt that it would not be easy for the US to occupy a major part of Korea owing to distance and the inadequacy of manpower. See Harry S. Truman, Memoirs: Year of Decisions, 1945, Vol.1, (New York, 1955), p.365.

38. Samuel S. Kim, "Korea: The Last Frontline Domino" in James C. Hsiung and Winberg Chai (ed.), Asia and U.S. Foreign Policy (New York, 1981), p.48.



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for unity and independence.³⁹

The division of Korea affected the economy of the country. While the southern part was predominantly agricultural, the north had much of the industrial raw materials. The hardening division of the country resulted in the rupture of north-south economic ties. This increased the demand for unification on the part of Koreans. The cry for unity led to the Foreign Ministers Conference in Moscow in December 1945 which in turn, created problems of a different nature in the years that followed.

39. For a historical sketch of the developments in this period see Hak-Joon Kim, The Unification Policy of South and North Korea: A Comparative Study (Seoul, 1977), p.43.

It is believed that Korean communists from China and Soviet Union were infiltrated to strengthen these committees. See Claude A. Buss, The Far East: A History of Recent and Contemporary International Relations in East Asia (New York, 1955), p.653.

Yet another work argues that the Russians did not have a planned political programme for Korea. It is more likely that like the Americans, they came to Korea with such basic principles as the importance of seeing a "friendly regime established there". See Robert A. Scalapino and Chong-Sik Lee, Communism in Korea: The Movement, Vol.1, (Berkeley, 1972), pp.337-38.

For further study of Russian control of North and South Korea see J.W. Washburn, "Russia Looks at Northern Korea", Pacific Affairs (New York), Vol.20, June 1947, pp.152-60; and W.B. Dubin, "The Political Evolution of the Pyongyang Government", Ibid., Vol.23, December 1950, pp.339-55.

The Moscow Agreement provided for the establishment of a provisional Korean government and a Joint-Commission consisting of the representatives of the American and Soviet military commands. In preparing its proposals the Commission was required to consult the Korean democratic parties and social organizations. It was to work out measures for developing the industry, transport and agriculture of Korea along with the provisional Korean government. These proposals were to be submitted to the four powers for working out a trusteeship for Korea for the next five years. Finally, a joint-conference of the two military commands was to be held within two weeks to consider the urgent administrative and economic problems resulting from the division of Korea.⁴⁰

The Korean people launched a nation-wide movement against the trusteeship arrangement.⁴¹ It appears that the main reason for American occupation of South Korea was to prevent it from falling under Communist control. As such the American policy from 1946 till the outbreak of the Korean War

40. Department of State Bulletin, Vol.113, 30 December 1945, p.1030.

41. It is believed that the Korean communists, who were initially opposed to the trusteeship, soon changed their stance, probably under instructions from Moscow. They argued that if cooperation with the Allies would get them unification they would help implement the Moscow Agreement. See Kim Chun-kon, The Korean War: 1950-53 (Seoul, 1973), p.17.

focussed largely on legitimizing the anti-communist government in the South. It would not be incorrect to say that a somewhat similar suspicion of American objectives in Korea characterized Soviet policy, making the Korean problem more intricate.

Differences between the two sides were apparent in the first meeting of the Joint-Commission. The Soviet delegate refused to consult those political parties and social organizations that opposed the Moscow Agreement.⁴² This would have excluded the majority of Koreans from consultations and given the communists a much superior position. As a result, the Commission reached agreement only on minor issues like the exchange of correspondence and coordination.⁴³

When the Soviet-American talks reached a deadlock on the question of uniting Korea, the US placed the Korean problem before United Nations.⁴⁴ In spite of heavy opposition from the Soviet Union and other members of the communist bloc,

42. Carl Berger, The Korea Knot: A Military and Political History (Philadelphia, 1957), pp.66-67.

43. Department of State, Korea's Independence (Washington, D.C., 1947), pp.3-5.

44. Department of State Bulletin, Vol.17, 28 September 1947, p.620. Also see U.S. Department of State, Korea 1945-1948 (Washington, D.C., 1948), p.6.

the General Assembly, on 14 November 1947 adopted the American proposal which laid down the procedures for Korean independence. ⁴⁵

The resolution set up a Temporary Commission on Korea (UNTCOK) to observe elections throughout the peninsula and advise elected Korean representatives on the establishment of a national government. Elections were to be held before 31 March 1948. The elected representatives would constitute a national assembly with the authority to set up a government and security forces. The government thus established was to take over the function from the military commands both in the North and South and facilitate the withdrawal of the occupation forces within ninety days.⁴⁶

When the UNTCOK began work in January 1948, the Soviet Union refused it entry into North Korea. On 28 February 1948, the Interim Committee of the General Assembly adopted a resolution calling "for the observance of elections in all Korea and if that is impossible in as much of Korea as is accessible to it".⁴⁷ The delegates of the communist bloc in the United Nations boycotted the meeting for having brought the Korean question to the United Nations.

45. United Nations, General Assembly Official Records (GAOR), Second Session, Resolution 112, 14 November 1947, Supplement 9, pp.16-18.

46. Ibid.

47. UN GAOR, Third Session, Resolution A/575, 28 February 1948, Supplement 9, p.26.

It may be asked how the UN anticipated that the United Nations would help solve the Korean problem in view of unfavourable Soviet attitude? Perhaps, Washington thought that under pressure from the "free world", Moscow would come to terms in order to safeguard its interests in North Korea.⁴⁸

Elections were held in South Korea on 10 May 1948. The National Assembly elected the veteran nationalist, Syngnan Rhee as president of the Republic of Korea (ROK) inaugurated on 15 August 1948. One-third of the seats were left for representatives from the North.⁴⁹ The US formally recognized it in January 1949.

In September 1948, the Soviet Military Command after conducting elections set up the Democratic People's Republic

48. See LeLland M. Goodrich, Korea: A Study of the U.S. Policy in the United Nations (New York, 1956), pp.38-41.

49. Korea, 1945-1948, p.16.

Some authors have raised doubts regarding the fairness of elections held in South Korea. It is argued that those parts where elections were conducted were too few, as is evident from the small strength of the Commission. As such the government that emerged did not represent entire Korea. Furthermore, a vast majority of Korean leaders were opposed to holding elections because they felt that a free atmosphere did not exist at the time. See Denna F. Fleming, The Cold War and Its Origins, 1950-1960, Vol.2. (London, 1961), p.592 and Frank Baldwin (ed.), Without Parallel: The American-Korean Relationship Since 1945 (New York, 1973), p.11; LeLland M. Goodrich, n.46, p.44.

of Korea (DPROK). Preparations for this had been under way since November 1947. The Indian delegate at the United Nations, did not accept the Seoul government as the national one. His stand was based on the absence of anti-Rhee parties in the elections and the fact that the UN had not conducted elections in North Korea. Furthermore, the Rhee government had made no attempt at reconciliation with other political parties in the South.⁵⁰

The US supported the Rhee government in spite of its drawbacks because it seemed as though that it was the only feasible alternative to communist control of Korea. However, there were no plans for helping the South Korean leaders to re-annex North Korea by force.⁵¹ As mentioned earlier, President Truman had already declared that the US would no longer fight for Chiang Kai-shek. There was also a strong tendency in the State Department to write off Korea as a strategic liability.⁵² This was evident in the statement made by Secretary Acheson at the National Press Club in Washington

50. GAOR, Third Session, Part One, First Committee, 232nd Meeting (1948), p.973.

51. Report of the United Nations Commission on Korea, GAOR, Fifth Session, Supplement 16, 1950, p.10.

52. Walter Millis (ed.), The Forrestal Diaries (New York, 1951), p.273.

on Far Eastern policies of the United States on 12 January 1950. The Secretary spoke of an American defence perimeter running from the Ryukus to the Philippine Islands.⁵³ Taiwan and South Korea were not included. Later, critics charged that Acheson's failure to include South Korea might have encouraged the communists to launch an attack on South Korea in June 1950.

Dealing more specifically with Korea, the Secretary explained that the United States would continue giving aid to South Korea to help establish it firmly.⁵⁴ However, this plea was aimed at winning support for a \$ 60 million economic aid bill to South Korea which at that time was pending before the House of Representatives. The measure was defeated as a reaction to the Administration's failure to aid the Nationalist Government of China.

Furthermore, on 5 May 1950, Senator Tom Conally, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, stated that the US would not aid South Korea in the event of an attack from the North.⁵⁵

53. Department of State Bulletin, Vol.22, 23 January 1950, p.116.

54. Ibid., p.117.

55. US News and World Report (Washington, D.C.), Vol.27, 5 May 1950, p.40.

Again, the limited build-up of the South Korean army aided by the American Military Advisory Group was designed to maintain internal order and not to fight a war. The \$ 10.2 million allotted to South Korea under the 1949-50 military aid programme was not meant for rearming. Only a limited amount of deliveries reached the Republic of Korea in June 1950 which was intended to maintain the equipment left by the US forces during their withdrawal.⁵⁶

All this indicates that the US accorded a low strategic importance to Korea. It did not want to commit itself to the defence of South Korea as it would drain American men and resources to the detriment of its European interests.

The outbreak of the Korean War, however, made the US lend stronger support to South Korea. Soviet explosion of an atomic device in August 1949 along with the establishment of a communist regime in China admittedly were instrumental to altering the strategic picture profoundly as far as the US was concerned. Finally, the Sino-Soviet Alliance of February 1950, coupled with Senator Joseph McCarthy's tirade against

56. The nature and extent of American military aid to South Korea is given in Glenn D. Paige, The Korean Decision: June 24-30, 1950 (New York, 1968), pp.70-1.

: 30 :

communists within the State Department reinforced the monolithic image of communism. These developments eventually impelled the US to adopt a firm policy against communism in Asia as well.

CHAPTER II

THE KOREAN CRISIS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE COLD WAR

Soviet moves in Europe in the aftermath of the Second World War created apprehension among American policy makers about its designs in Asia. Communist victory in China was construed by Washington as an event of far reaching significance portending an extension of Soviet influence in that region. US policy of containment, designed initially to check the perceived Soviet expansion in Europe was pursued in Asia too in the 1950s. The physical proximity of the two giant communist powers to Korea, Japan, Taiwan and their off-shore islands, made American policy planners believe that these countries are vulnerable to possible communist attack. As a consequence, with the outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950, the policy of containment was extended to China as well. From then on, American policy became one of preserving a balance of power in East Asia, by supporting an independent Korea, free from the control of either China or Russia.

Prior to the outbreak of hostilities, Korea was considered as a strategic liability by the State Department. In the process, it did not have any plans to help unite the South Korean leaders and pave the way for the unity of Korea. In a policy statement made before the National Press Club on 12 January 1950, Secretary of State Dean Acheson excluded Taiwan

and Korea from the American defence perimeter in the Pacific.¹

Dealing more specifically with Korea, he stated:

We have given that nation great help in getting itself established. We are asking the Congress to continue that help until it is firmly established, and that legislation is now pending before the Congress. 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. 2

As has been said in the previous chapter, the Secretary's statement was a plea to win support for a \$ 60 million economic aid bill for South Korea which was held back by the lower House. The measure, however, was defeated the same month as a reaction to the Administration's failure to aid the Nationalist Government of China.³

Clearly it is an indication of the low strategic importance accorded to Korea, for the US was concerned more in safeguarding its interests in Japan and Europe. The limited build-up of the South Korean army trained by the US Military Advisory Group was designed essentially to maintain

1. Department of State Bulletin (Washington, D.C.), Vol.22, 23 January 1950, p.116.

2. Ibid., p.117.

3. See Glenn D. Paige, The Korean Decision: June 24-30, 1950 (New York, 1968), p.68.

internal order than to fight a war. Again, the \$ 10.2 million committed to Korea for the year 1950 was not intended for rearmament. Rather, it was, as mentioned earlier for the maintenance of the equipment left behind by the US forces following their withdrawal from Korea in mid-1949.

United States Initial Response to Korean Crisis

Within a year of US troops withdrawal, Korea became an area of intense super power rivalry with war breaking out between the North and South. For, on 25 June 1950, the North Korean forces crossed the 38th parallel and advanced to the South, capturing Seoul within a few days.

North Korean action left the US with two alternatives-- either to withdraw its military mission from South Korea or else, intervene, militarily to prevent communist takeover of the peninsula. Under the circumstances, the US opted for the second and decided to intervene. And thus, the Administration reversed its earlier policy decision that accorded low priority to Korea in its defence calculations. Both President Truman and Secretary Acheson have remarked in their memoirs that the North Korean offensive was instigated by the Soviet Union.⁴ According to President Truman the Korean offensive

4. Harry S. Truman, Memoirs: Years of Trial and Hope (New York, 1956), p.335. Dean G. Acheson, Present at the Creation: My Years in the State Department (London, 1969), p.405.

was launched by the Soviet Union to test US capacity to resist communist forces.⁵ Upon that premise, he has argued that if communism was not checked in Korea, then Japan, Okinawa and Formosa could have been the next targets of communist attack.⁶ In order to protect US interest, the defence of South Korea and Taiwan, he says, was imperative.

Among others who have examined at length the Soviet motivations, some claimed that Russia's Premier, Joseph Stalin, started the war in Korea with the object of engaging the US and the People's Republic of China in a long conflict, leaving him free in Europe.⁷ Yet another hypothesis claims that it

5. Some of the scholars who hold this view are Tang Tsou, America's Failure in China, 1941-50 (Chicago, 1963), p.555; Allen S. Whiting, China Crosses the Yalu: The Decision to enter the Korean War (New York, 1960), pp.37-40; Adam B. Ulam, Expansion and Co-existence: The History of Soviet Foreign Policy, 1917-1967 (London, 1968), pp.514, 518; Carl Berger, The Korea Knot: A Military-Political History (Philadelphia, 1957), p.183; Alexander L. George, "American Policy Making and the North Korean Aggression", World Politics (Princeton), Vol.7, January 1955, pp.209-32; Robert T. Oliver, "Why War Came to Korea", Current History (Philadelphia), Vol.19, September 1950, pp.139-43.

6. Truman, n.4, p.335.

7. John Gunther, The Riddle of MacArthur: Japan, Korea and the Far East (New York, 1951), p.172.
For a contrary view see Wilbur H. Hitchcock, "North Korea Jumps the Gun", Current History, Vol.20, March 1951, pp.136-44. The writer is of the view that the invasion of South Korea was planned by Premier Kim Il Sung, not only without instructions from Moscow, but without its knowledge as well. The Korean War has also been characterised as a civil war. See Robert R. Simmons, The Strained Alliance: Peking, P'yongyang, Moscow and the Politics of the Korean Civil War (New York, 1975).

was South Korea that attacked first. Since the establishment of the Republic of Korea, President Syngman Rhee in his eagerness to attain a forcible unification of Korea resorted to an attack on North Korea.⁸ Given that South Korea did not possess the adequate amount of arms and ammunition for such an attack, the argument seems to be somewhat untenable.

According to official reports the outbreak of the war took not only South Korea, but also the US completely by surprise.⁹ It appears that the US, though aware of the possibility of an attack from North Korea, failed to prepare South Korea to face such an eventuality.

In Tokyo, General Douglas MacArthur's Chief of Intelligence, Major General Charles-Wiloughby was convinced that Korean communists were engaged in a massive build-up across the 38th parallel. He was sure that they would be prepared to strike by the beginning of the summer of 1950. His warnings, however, were ignored both by his own headquarters and the authorities in Washington as well.¹⁰ Similarly, Admiral Roscoe H. Hillenkoetter, Director of the Central

8. Karunakar Gupta, "How did the Korean War Begin?", China Quarterly (London), No.52, October-December 1972, p.5.

9. Gunther, n.9, p.166.

10. S.L. Marshall, The Military History of the Korean War (New York, 1963), p.14.

Intelligence Agency, told the press on the eve of the attack that the Agency was aware that "conditions existed in Korea that could have meant an invasion this week or next".¹¹

On 27 June, the Senate Appropriations Committee, called Hillenkoetter to hear his opinion regarding the North Korean attack. Prior to his hearings, he was summoned by President Truman. The statement he gave before the Committee was different from the one given to the press. He said that "the North Korean forces have had the capability of invading the South for a year, but that it had been impossible to predict the time table under which they would march, if at all".¹²

Almost every week prior to the full-scale invasion, North Korean army had crossed and repeatedly violated the South Korean borders. The Administration also refused to accept any responsibility for being unprepared to meet the North Korean attack.¹³

During the period between 1947-50, intelligence sources had informed the Truman Administration on the strength of the North Korean army and its superiority over that of South Korea. Official reports from time to time said that the US should

11. As quoted in I.F. Stone, The Hidden History of the Korean War (New York, 1952), p.1.

12. Ibid., pp.2-3.

13. See R.P. Kaushik, The Crucial Years of Non-Alignment (New Delhi, 1972), p.57.

prepare South Korea to face its Northern counterpart in the event of an attack.

The joint statement of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations and the Committee on Armed Services did not accept the Administration's explanation on the frequency of border clashes. It justifiably, therefore, asserted:

The truth is that the attack took South Koreans completely by surprise. Since the State Department and the United Nations had the sole responsibility in Korea, they must answer for the failure of the intelligence missions. 14

United Nations Response and Action

The breaking of hostilities in Korea was in time brought to the attention of the United Nations. The manner in which this world body reacted to the entire American operation in Korea is indeed extraordinary. The United States successfully used the United Nations to give its policy in Korea the picture of collective action. It has been remarked by some that American support on behalf of South Korea in the United Nations "was a part of a broader conceptualization of US global geopolitics".¹⁵

14. Quoted in *ibid.*, p.59.

15. Samuel S. Kim, "Korea: The Last Frontline Domino", in James C. Hsiung and Winberg Chai, Asia and US Foreign Policy (New York, 1981), p.50.

An attempt is made in this section to give a brief survey of the responses and action of the UN. An emergency meeting of the Security Council convened on the same day of the North Korean offensive, 25 June 1950, passed a resolution which condemned the North Korean attack and called for a cease-fire.¹⁶ On 27 June, President Truman ordered the dispatch of the Seventh Fleet to neutralize the Taiwan Strait.¹⁷ He declared that the Seventh Fleet would repel any attack on Taiwan and also instructed Chiang Kai-shek not to attack the mainland. The future status of Taiwan, he said, would be determined by the "restoration of security in the Pacific, a peace settlement with Japan, or consideration by the United Nations". He also directed the strengthening of American forces in the Philippines and an increase in aid to the French in Indo-China.¹⁸ Thus, the Korean War set-off a series of defence measures by the US on its Far East outposts.

The same day, a second resolution of the Security Council on the Korean crisis, called on all members of the United Nations to help South Korea repel the attack.¹⁹

16. UN Document S/1501, 25 June 1950.

17. Department of State Bulletin, Vol.23, 3 July 1950, p.5.

18. Ibid.

19. UN Document S/1511, 27 June 1950.

Closely following President Truman's orders, commanding US ground, air and naval forces into action in Korea, the Security Council adopted its third resolution on 7 July. It called for a unified military command in Korea under the command of the United States.²⁰ President Truman appointed General Douglas MacArthur, as the Commander-in-Chief of the UN forces.²¹

One authoritative assessment has attributed the policy reversal to Washington's awareness of the political as against the strategic importance of South Korea.²² Earlier, Korea was given low priority because, viewed in terms of a general war, the peninsula was not considered a major liability. The concept of a limited war did not enter the framework of American military and strategic planning. Moreover, Cold War calculations did not figure in the minds of American policy makers with regard to Asia to the extent they did for Europe. Again, the Truman Administration was not criticized so much with regard to the defence of Korea, as much for its rather erratic China policy. Therefore, when news of border skirmishes and the possibility of a full-scale attack on South Korea became imminent no serious consideration was given to the Korean crisis by the US Administration.²³ To act upon warnings

20. UN Document S/1588, 7 July 1950.

21. Department of State Bulletin, Vol.23, 17 July 1950, p.83.

22. Alexander L. George and Richard M. Smoke, Deterrence in American Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice (New York, 1974), pp.146, 148.

23. Truman, n.4, p.331.

that came from the US intelligence would have entailed an effort at making a new commitment to the defence of Korea and Taiwan and to the re-examination of policy decisions which had been reached earlier. Also, any change in policy towards this region would have affected the Administration's European Recovery Programme. Under these imperatives, Washington let the matter remain in the background until such time the large-scale North Korean attack actually took place.

Once confronted directly with the crisis, the Truman Administration was forced to reassess its policy towards Korea. The damage to American interests in allowing communists to overrun South Korea were too great. For, the attack was perceived by Washington as having a greater Cold War implications than anticipated earlier. As in every crisis of the Cold War, the theory of falling dominoes influenced all policy decisions with regard to Korean crisis and other events in Asia.

Congressional Debate and the Course of War

The policies of the Truman Administration with regard to Korea came under heavy criticism from the Republican quarters. The criticism centred round two points. That by agreeing to the division of Korea, the Administration had set the stage for a fullscale war and that it had failed to prepare

the American forces to face the challenge in Korea. Attacking the Administration for dividing Korea, Representative Walter H. Judd of Minnesota stated on 18 July 1950:

The line chosen was just about the worst possible line that could have been picked. Korea as a whole has a reasonably balanced economy. But division along the thirty-eighth parallel made it impossible for either side to survive without a lot of assistance from the outside.

Just off-hand, without preparation, without fore-thought or planning by our political experts our military decided to divide Korea. 24

Similarly, pinning the blame of military unpreparedness in Korea, Representative Gordon L. McDonough of California remarked on 9 August.

For the blunders of the State Department and the executive branch of the Government, American boys are dying in far-off Korea.

Danger signals were flashing in Korea but the administration declined to heed their warning. In July of 1949, Congress voted \$ 10,230,000 for military aid to the Republic of Korea. Under the administration only \$ 200 worth of supplies were actually sent.

At the same time the administration made serious errors in the maintenance of our own Armed Forces, errors which have resulted in our defeats on the Korean battlefield. 25

24. Congressional Record (Washington, D.C.), Vol.96, 3 August 1950, pp.A5919, A5920.

25. Ibid., Vol.96, 9 August 1950, p.A6049. Details of limited military aid have been further given by Representative William S. Hill of Colorado in his speech before the House, "Truth About Korea", ibid., Vol.96, 1 September 1950, p.A6658.

Soon the war in Korea was made an election issue for the mid-term Congressional polls scheduled for November 1950. The Democrats attributed the war to the "false economy" blocs led mainly by the Republicans, while the Republicans laid the blame on the "tragic policy" pursued by the Democratic Administration.²⁶

Considerable debate also ensued within the American policy making circles over the question of crossing the 38th parallel. There were two alternatives. Either to repel the communist attack from South of the dividing line to attain the limited objective of safeguarding South Korea, Or else, to cross the line to the North to attain total victory over the North Korean forces. The latter would enable the US to effect the unification of all Korea and of setting up an anti-communist regime with the help of the UN.

Initially, General MacArthur was directed to carry out military operations from South of the parallel. A contrary decision, it was feared, would expand the conflict.²⁷ As such, partial approval to the plan to cross the 38th parallel and of occupying North Korea was given only "if there was no indication or threat of entry of Soviet or Chinese Communist elements in force".²⁸

26. Ibid., 15 August 1950, pp.12690-92.

27. Truman, n.6, pp.334, 337, 341.

28. Ibid., p.359.

This policy decision led to the landing of General MacArthur's troops at Inchon on 15 September 1950 and the subsequent pushing back of the North Korean forces.²⁹ This successful move required a further policy directive. Up to that ~~time~~, Washington had pursued a defensive policy with regard to the war. However, the success at Inchon goaded Washington to couple the termination of the war with the unification of Korea under an anti-communist regime.

President Truman ordered, therefore, General MacArthur to proceed north of the thirty-eighth parallel.³⁰ On 1 October the South Korean forces crossed the parallel. In the meantime, Chou En-lai issued his strongest warnings of the intentions of the People's Republic to enter the war if the UN forces, other than South Korean troops crossed into North Korea.³¹ These were apparently not taken seriously.

On 7 October, the General Assembly adopted a resolution endorsing President Truman's proposal to cross the 38th parallel to achieve the unification of Korea.³² It also set up

29. For an interesting account of this operation see Mathew B. Ridgway, The Korean War (New York, 1967), Chapter 3.

30. Truman, n.4, p.363.

31. Ibid., pp.363-64. Also see K.M. Panikkar, In Two Chinas: Memoirs of a Diplomat (London, 1955).

32. UN GAOR, Fifth Session, Resolution 376, 7 October 1950, Supplement 20, pp.9-10.

a new Commission for the Unification and Rehabilitation of Korea (UNCURK) to carry out relief and reconstruction work in Korea.³³

On 9 October, General MacArthur in a radio broadcast called upon the North Korean troops to surrender and cooperate with the United Nations in setting up a unified and democratic government in Korea. Receiving no response, the UN forces crossed the thirty-eighth parallel into North Korea. Thus, with the help of the United Nations, the United States mobilized world opinion in support of its "police action" in Korea.³⁴ It is significant to note that the UN resolutions became possible only because the Soviet delegate was boycotting all the meetings of the Security Council.³⁵

On 15 October, President Truman conferred with General MacArthur on Wake Island in the Pacific. When asked about the possibility of Chinese or Soviet intervention in the war, MacArthur replied that there was very little chance of the two intervening at that stage.³⁶ He may have been right about the

33. Ibid.

34. Also see article by Arnold Wolfers, "Collective Security and the War in Korea" in Young Hum Kim, Twenty Years of Crisis: The Cold War Era (New Jersey, 1968), pp.78-81. The author has explained how American intervention in Korea through the United Nation served Washington's security interests.

35. For a detailed study of the Korean problem in the United Nations see Leland M. Goodrich, Korea: A Study of US Policy in the United Nations (New York, 1956).

36. Truman, n.4, pp.365-66.

Soviets but very wrong about the Chinese who struck with full force against the Eighth Army of the US on 25 November.

According to the intelligence reports of the Central Intelligence Agency, the Chinese Communist troops, popularly known as 'Volunteers', had moved covertly into North Korea in mid-October. Towards the end of October the presence of Chinese Communist troops on a large scale was reported among the North Koreans.³⁷

There were strong reasons for the entry of the Chinese Communists in the Korean War. A possible American victory in North Korea was viewed as a great security threat in Peking. In thinking so, Peking not only took the geopolitical importance of Korea into consideration, but also the image of the United States as an "imperialist" power. Keeping in mind the Japanese attack on China in 1931, it had reason to suspect that a similar performance on the part of America would prove threatening to Chinese security. American aid to China under the China Aid Act of 1948, the neutralization of the Taiwan Strait, General MacArthur's visit to Chiang Kai-shek on Taiwan soon after the outbreak of the Korean War, the crossing of the 38th parallel by American forces in October and their successful advance to the Yalu River, the public statement of President

37. Ibid., p.372.

Truman about the strategic interests of the US in the Pacific -- all these factors influenced Peking in its decision to enter the Korean War.³⁸

The intervention of the Chinese Communists shows the failure of the United States to gauge Peking's capability to strike. Though Washington was aware of such an eventuality, it was of the view that the Chinese Communists would perhaps pursue a limited objective in Korea and avoid a confrontation with the US.

With the entry of the People's Republic of China, the Korean War assumed the shape of a Sino-American conflict. Earlier General MacArthur had suggested an all out war with China, which included bombing Chinese bases on Yalu and elsewhere.³⁹ However, President Truman and the Joint Chiefs of Staff favoured the settlement of the question of the Chinese intervention in Korea through political means.⁴⁰ Washington, apparently, had no wish to re-enter the Chinese civil war from which it had extricated itself after much difficulty. It favoured a limited war without appeasement and was opposed to carrying the war to the Chinese territory.

38. For the text of this statement see Department of State Bulletin, Vol.23, October 1950, pp.643-44. Also see Allen S. Whiting, China Crosses the Yalu: The Decision to Enter The Korean War (New York, 1960), pp.151-62.

39. Truman, n.4, pp.375, 377.

40. Ibid., pp.378-79.

Some of these policy decisions gave the Republicans in the Congress an opportunity to criticize the Truman Administration. They urged the President to adopt a tougher attitude towards Peking and give more aid to Taiwan. The war also aided and abetted Senator Joseph McCarthy's attack on communist sympathizers within the Government. Many important officials in the State Department were dismissed from their jobs as bad security risks.⁴¹ Over and above, the Congressional elections of November 1950 showed a marked decline in the number of Democrats in the Congress.

The European allies of the US also expressed their grave concern over the developments in Korea. Great Britain was alarmed over President Truman's press comments of 30 November on the possible use of the atomic bomb.⁴² By that time the communists had recovered major parts of North Korea. It appears that this threat was used more to deter further Chinese Communist attack.

The United States would not have used such a device without obtaining prior concurrence from its European allies. Their support was of considerable importance because of their help and effort in containing communism on a global level.

41. Richard Rovere, Senator Joe McCarthy (New York, 1959).

42. Department of State Bulletin, Vol.23, 18 December 1950, pp.959-61.

Priority was given to Great Britain and France because they held the second and third position in the NATO on account of their military and political status in Europe. They also controlled all the American bases from which attacks could be launched at the Soviet Union and other places. As such it was decided that the war in Korea be localised and ended by means of a negotiated settlement.

US decision to abandon its objective of uniting Korea by force was largely influenced by the course of the war itself. In a meeting of the National Security Council, it was pointed out that an extension of the war to Manchuria, as proposed by MacArthur, might prompt the Soviet Union to intervene either in Korea or Europe and that would certainly be detrimental to American interests.⁴³ Moreover, public opinion at home was sufficiently alarmed over the extent of American involvement in the Korean War and the heavy loss it caused on American lives. Again, there was a general desire among the members of the United Nations to resolve the crisis peacefully. Thus, in view of these factors, American policy shifted from a confrontation with the Chinese Communists and North Koreans to that of stabilizing its line of military confrontation and from there negotiating for the cessation of hostilities.

43, Truman, n.4, pp.385-88.

Following the adoption of a resolution by the General Assembly on 14 December 1950, a peace proposal was drafted.⁴⁴ However, Peking turned it down and on 17 January 1951, put forth its own terms and conditions for a cease-fire. Important among these were the expulsion of Nationalist China from the United Nations and the admission of People's Republic, as well as evacuation of all American personnel from Taiwan.⁴⁵ When initial attempts at armistice failed, the US urged the United Nations to condemn the People's Republic as an aggressor on the plea that it refused to come to terms with the UN and continued its attack on South Korea.⁴⁶

On 1 February 1951, the General Assembly passed a resolution branding the People's Republic as an aggressor.⁴⁷ This precipitated a large-scale attack of Chinese Communist forces on the UN troops. They not only crossed the 38th parallel, but also recaptured Seoul. Though the UN forces recovered the capital of South Korea and pushed back the Chinese forces, the prospects of an armistice seemed rather bleak

44. For details see Department of State Bulletin, Vol.24, 15 January 1951, p.113.

45. Ibid., Vol.24, 29 January 1951, p.167.

46. Ibid., pp.166-69.

47. UN GAOR, Fifth Session, Resolution 498, 1 February 1951, Supplement 20A.

The dramatic dismissal of General MacArthur on 15 April 1951 was a pointer to the fact that the US favoured a cautious approach to the settlement of the Korean question and wanted to localize the war.⁴⁸ Truce negotiations began again on 10 July 1951, first at Kaesong and later at Panmunjon. The UN Command delegation was headed by Vice Admiral C. Turner Joy, while the North Korean side was led by Nam Il. Agreement was reached on the agenda on 26 July 1951.⁴⁹

Negotiations soon got stalled over issues like the determination of the demarcation line and the exchange of prisoners of war. The latter seemed to be the most difficult issue. The UN Command took the position that prisoners should not be forced to return to the communist side. While the communist side took the stand that all Chinese and North Korean soldiers in UN custody be repatriated.

The period from July 1951 to 1952 was spent in fruitless negotiations over this issue. Proposals and counter-proposals were presented but without any positive agreements. Meanwhile, fighting continued throughout the remaining months of the Truman Presidency.

48. Ridgway, n.29, Chapter 6.

49. For details see Department of State Bulletin, Vol.25, 6 August 1951, pp.231-32.

The deadlock was finally broken with the election of President Dwight D. Eisenhower to the White House. The new President and his Secretary of State John Foster Dulles had committed to bring the Korean War to an end and also to extend the containment policy to the People's Republic. Their policy with regard to Korea did not differ much from that of the previous Administration. To get the truce talks moving again President Eisenhower threatened to use nuclear weapons. This policy later came to be known as the "massive retaliation" strategy.⁵⁰ As a display of its intentions, the US dispatched nuclear weapons to Okinawa. Dulles informed Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru that the war would be extended to China unless a Korean armistice was signed. This information was duly passed on to Peking.

According to President Eisenhower, the threat to use nuclear weapons was largely responsible for the breakthrough in negotiations which finally resulted in the agreement of exchange of sick and wounded prisoners on 11 April 1953.⁵¹

There were other strong reasons, apart from the one given above, for the resumption of truce negotiations. The death of Stalin, the leader of the communist world, in March 1953, coupled with heavy losses incurred by the Chinese Communists eventually led the latter to recommence negotiations.

50. Dwight D. Eisenhower, The White House Years: Mandate for Change, 1953-1956 (New York, 1963), p.181.

51. Ibid.

On 8 June 1953, the final agreement regarding the exchange of prisoners of war was reached.⁵² However, the signing of the armistice was blocked for sometime as a result of President Rhee's action in ordering the release of thousands of anti-communist prisoners on 18 June 1953.⁵³ This was done despite President Eisenhower's assurance to arrange for a bilateral security pact with the Republic of Korea.⁵⁴

The crisis was resolved when President Eisenhower sent Walter Robertson, Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, to meet Rhee. Rhee assured him that he would not wreck the truce talks and would give up his demand for the withdrawal of Chinese troops from North Korea.⁵⁵ The armistice agreement that was finally signed on 27 July 1953, marked the end of the war in Korea.⁵⁶ The truce was to be followed by a peace conference within 3 months to deal with political problems of Korea.

Armistice and Its Aftermath

The United States urged the sixteen UN members who had contributed armed forces to the war in Korea to reaffirm their

52. Department of State Bulletin, Vol.28, 22 June 1953, pp.366-68.

53. See Carl Berger, The Korea Knot, n.5, pp.166-67.

54. Eisenhower, n.50, p.183.

55. Department of State Bulletin, Vol.29, 3 August 1953, p.141.

56. For text of truce see *ibid.*, pp.132-40.

support in the event of a recurrence of communist attack on South Korea.⁵⁷ At the same time, it signed the Mutual Defence Treaty on 1 October 1953, with the Republic of Korea. Unlike other American treaties, such as with Australia, New Zealand and the Philippines, designed primarily to restrain Japan, the one with Korea aimed at containing communist expansion in East Asia. Article 3, which is the heart of the treaty, stated that an armed attack on ROK would be considered by the US as "dangerous to its own peace and safety" and "that it would act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes".⁵⁸

Unlike its treaty with Japan, there was no obligation to take part in the internal security of the Korean Republic or take any military measures in the event of a coup d'etat. A small US military force with supporting air and ground units was stationed in Korea after the treaty. An American Military Advisory Group supervised the training of the South Korean army.

It is often said that the wordings of the treaty were somewhat ambiguous. For instance, the treaty envisaged that if any attempt to unify Korea by force was undertaken without the prior sanction of the United Nations, the US would be under

57. Text in Department of State, American Foreign Policy 1950-1955: Basic Documents, (Washington, D.C., 1957), p.2662.

58. Department of State Bulletin, Vol.29, 17 August 1953, p.204.

no obligation to support such initiative. However, if American interests were threatened in Korea, the US would take appropriate action, whatever the treaty obligation.⁵⁹

The political conference that was to follow the armistice was held in Geneva on 26 April 1954. It failed to produce a final settlement of the problem of Korean unification. President Rhee's request to the US for a forcible unification of Korea was also ignored.⁶⁰

Thus the Korean War gradually led to the globalization of the United States containment policy. The Cold War in Europe beginning ever since the end of the Second World War had kept the US increasingly involved in that area. Moreover, the constraints imposed by the Congress on defence expenditure also prevented Washington from extending military support to countries in Asia. Again, as a result of the "imbalance between ideological commitment and military power" as demonstrated in China upto 1949, America's Asian policy pivoted around Japan. The Korean War in fact served to globalize its Cold War policies. It stimulated immediately an increase in military spending. Signing further defence treaties led the US to deeper commitments in Asia in the 1950s.

59. Claude A. Buss, The United States and the Republic of Korea: Background for Policy (Stanford, 1982), p.57.

60. Peter Calvocoressi, World Politics Since 1945 (London, 1968), p.272.

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The conviction that the expansion of communism in Asia was detrimental to its national security became the keynote of American foreign policy and dominated Washington's Asian policy for years to come.

CHAPTER III

US STRATEGY IN EAST ASIA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO TAIWAN

Republican Administration's New Departures

The Cold War policy of the United States in Asia entered a new phase ever since the cessation of hostilities in Korea. The threat of communist monolith dictated, by and large, the foreign policy decisions of the United States. In January 1953, the American people voted to power a new administration under the presidency of Dwight D. Eisenhower hoping that it would give the US a fresh start and avoid the errors of the past. Responding, in a sense, to the popular mandate the new Administration declared that "a new foreign policy would be devised", which would be a "coherent, global policy".¹ Unlike their predecessors, President Eisenhower and his Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, took no precipitous initiative and avoided deploying American forces to achieve any foreign policy objective. In pursuance of their new strategy they affected some cut-backs on defence expenditure. For instance, in 1953 President Eisenhower announced substantial reduction in spending and assured that military budget would be geared to meet long-term strategic planning. More stress was laid on the use of air force and nuclear weapons. President Eisenhower himself described these elements of the defence strategies as constituting the

1. Department of State Bulletin (Washington, D.C.), Vol.28, 9 February 1953, p.207.

"New Look" of the United States foreign policy.²

Later in 1954, Dulles gave further elaboration of the "new" policy, which eventually came to be known as the policy of massive retaliation. He declared that the United States should maintain great "strategic reserves" in order to counter the communist threat. He added that the only way the United States could counter such a threat was to "act vigorously at places and means of its own choosing".³

Alongside, and to some extent, as part of the overall strategy to prevent further spread of communism in Asia, US entered into a series of regional alliances. On 8 September 1951, a peace treaty with Japan was concluded at San Francisco.⁴ Together with this a Mutual Security Pact was also signed providing for the stationing of American forces in Japan.⁵ Later, on 8 March 1954, the US signed another Mutual Defence Assistance Agreement with Japan, which provided for the latter's rearmament within its economic means. In return

2. Paul Y. Hammond, The Cold War Years: American Foreign Policy Since 1945 (New York, 1969), pp.73-75.

3. U.S. Department of State, American Foreign Policy, 1950-1955: Basic Documents, Vol.1, (Washington, D.C., 1957), pp.81-82.

4. Ibid., pp.426-39.

5. Ibid., pp.885-86. For general aims of US Policy towards Japan see Edwin O. Reischauer, Japan and America Today (Stanford, 1953), pp.33-80.

the US agreed to supply Japan with arms and other war equipment and some financial assistance.⁶

The reasons for rearming Japan are not far to seek. In the Administration's view, China posed a potential threat to the entire continent. Peking's repeated demand pressing for the expulsion of the Nationalist Chinese representative from the United Nations and the return of Taiwan to the mainland were viewed with considerable concern by the US. Added to these, its intermittent attacks on the Nationalist-held off-shore islands almost brought China into direct confrontation with the US. Conditions elsewhere in the Far East continued to be inatable. In the aftermath of the Korean War, the new Administration regarded Far East as an area of immense strategic and political importance. According to the State Department the area was of crucial significance to the Soviet Union too. For, it offered the manpower of China, the industrial capacity of Japan and the natural resources of Southeast Asia.⁷ Hence, any meaningful American policy should be such that it should be geared to thwart any attempt by Russia to gain influence in this region. It is with these objectives in mind, the new Administration began initiating a programme for strengthening South Korea. The programme

6. Department of State Bulletin, Vol.30, 5 April 1954, pp.520-25.

7. Ibid., Vol.29, 2 November 1953, p.592.

included, apart from economic aid, a security treaty signed in October 1953.

Notwithstanding the armistice arrived at after long negotiations, certain outstanding issues of the Korean crisis posed serious challenges to the US. The Geneva Conference which began on 26 April 1954 had failed in its efforts to forge the unification of Korea largely on account of the differences that arose between the two Koreas on issues such as the role of the United Nations, the principle of free elections and the withdrawal of foreign troops.⁸ With the unification of Korea nowhere in sight, the US began bolstering the South Korean regime. In 1955, two American divisions with sophisticated weapons were stationed in South Korea. They not only trained the South Korean forces, but also acted as a deterrent against any further communist incursion. Between 1953-69, it is estimated that the US provided as much as \$ 3 billion worth of weapons and supplementary equipment to South Korea.⁹

8. Hak Joon-Kim, The Unification Policy of South and North Korea: A Comparative Study (Seoul, 1977), pp.153-57.

9. Claude A. Buss, The United States and the Republic of Korea: Background for Policy (Stanford, 1982), p.71.

Dimensions of Taiwan Issue

Despite US efforts to build-up Japan and bolster the Rhee Government of Korea, the unresolved Taiwan issue bedevilled the US Administration. Obviously, therefore, Taiwan assumed a new critical dimension in American policy-making with regard to East Asia. As has been stated earlier, after the Japanese surrender in August 1945, the island of Taiwan was restored to China as agreed to at the Cairo Conference of November 1943. Then in the face of an imminent communist victory during the Chinese civil war, Chiang Kai-shek, in January 1949, retreated to Taiwan with his government and armed forces. At that time, Taiwan was not considered important to American security interests. Earlier, a State Department memorandum, issued to American diplomatic and consular offices in the Far East on 23 December 1949, pointed out that the fall of Taiwan to the Chinese Communists was imminent. It further emphasized that the island had no special military significance and was politically, geographically and strategically a part of China, though its status remained to be determined by the Japanese peace treaty.¹⁰ It was for these considerations no additional aid was authorized to the National Government

10. Congressional Record (Washington, D.C.), Vol.96, 31 August 1950, p.A6619.

when it retreated to Taiwan. Furthermore, on 5 January 1950, President Truman declared that the US had no plans of converting Taiwan into an American military base or of pursuing a policy that would involve his country in the Chinese civil war.

But the outbreak of the Korean War and the subsequent intervention of China on the side of North Korea changed Washington's stand with regard to Taiwan. Protecting the island from a possible attack from the mainland had become imperative. In addition, the Administration resumed active economic and military assistance to Chiang under the Mutual Security Programme of June 1951.¹¹ It further sponsored a resolution in the United Nations branding the People's Republic as an aggressor in Korea, and pursued a policy of non-recognition of Peking and of opposing its membership in the world body. Thus, the war in Korea upgraded the importance of Taiwan. Emphasizing its significance, Secretary of State George C. Marshall said:

Formosa must never be allowed to come under the control of a Communist government or of a government that is under Soviet domination. 12

11. Department of State Bulletin, Vol.24, 4 June 1951, p.888.

12. Ibid., Vol.97, 13 June 1951, p.A3705.

After the Korean War, Peking intensified its claim to "liberate" Taiwan from the "Chiang clique". From the standpoint of Peking, communist victory over China would be incomplete without the occupation of Taiwan and its off-shore islands.

The attitude and posture of Peking was viewed with grave concern by Washington. Since its establishment in 1949, the People's Republic had extended its influence beyond its borders. It had fought a war in Korea, intervened indirectly in the Indo-China crisis by sending military assistance to the Vietminh regime, re-established its control over Tibet by force and threatened military action in Taiwan.

It is against these developments, when on 3 September 1954, Peking started a "pin-prick" war with Taiwan by shelling its off-shore islands of Quemoy and Matsu, Dulles reacted rather sharply and declared that the US would not be intimidated by Chinese action and assured the Nationalists of American support.¹³

Subsequently, in mid-October, the People's Republic again launched an attack on the Tachens and Nanchi islands lying to the northwest of Taiwan. The communist attack of these islands was probably intended to convey their opposition to the

13. The New York Times, 9 September 1954, p.3.

SEATO negotiations that were taking place at that very time. China was clearly opposed to the alliance building activities of the US in Asia. It feared that perhaps, Washington would in time form a northeastern counterpart of SEATO consisting of Japan, South Korea and Taiwan which in turn, would completely encircle mainland China.¹⁴

In response to China's hostile overtures towards Taiwan and in order to safeguard American security interests in the Pacific, the Eisenhower Administration concluded a Mutual Defence Treaty with Taiwan on 2 December 1954.¹⁵ President Eisenhower further reaffirmed his decision to defend Taiwan and declared categorically that "any invasion of Taiwan would have to run over the Seventh Fleet".¹⁶

While being, unequivocal on Taiwan, President Eisenhower was, however, unwilling to make an equally clear statement with regard to the defence of the off-shore islands. Within the Administration there prevailed a feeling that these

14. J.H. Kalicki, The Pattern of Sino-American Crises: Political Military Interaction in the 1950s (London, 1975), pp.127-29.

15. Department of State Bulletin, Vol.31, 13 September 1954, p.899.

16. Dwight D. Eisenhower, The White House Years: Mandate for Change 1953-1956 (New York, 1963), p.463.

islands should be defended, but without the use of American troops.¹⁷ As the fighting continued, Dulles declared that the defence pact with the Republic of China did not apply to, but would "provide for" the other islands too.¹⁸ Dulles' point of view was further clarified by the Congressional resolution of 29 January 1955 authorizing President Eisenhower to employ armed forces to safeguard Taiwan and Pescadores.¹⁹

It was argued that in the process of "unleashing" Chiang and defending Taiwan, the United States was getting itself trapped.²⁰ Equally, it can also be argued that any change in the direction of limited involvement would have resulted in turning the island over to the mainland. Taiwan was vital to the defence of Okinawa and the Philippines. As such it was imperative that the island remained in friendly hands for the security of American interests in the Pacific.

17. New York Times, 14 September 1954, pp.1-4.

18. Ibid., 2 December 1954, p.1.

19. Department of State Bulletin, Vol.32, 7 February 1955, p.213.

20. Neal Stanford, "What is Formosa?", Foreign Policy Bulletin (New York), Vol.34, 15 October 1954, pp.19-20. Also see article by Robert Aura Smith, "Should Our Formosa Policy be Changed?" ibid., Vol.34, 15 November 1954, pp.56, 58.

Thus Washington made it clear that a communist invasion of Taiwan and its off-shore islands would not be viewed lightly. Dulles also hinted a possible American attack on the mainland if the Chinese Communists continued shelling the islands.²¹

By late March, the Chinese Communists ceased bombing these islands. The shift in Peking's policy can be attributed to the defence build-up in the neighbouring countries of China, which increased the risks of a dangerous confrontation with the US. Moreover, by continuous propaganda to "liberate" Taiwan, Peking not only alienated broad sectors of world opinion, but even its own ally, the Soviet Union which showed its unwillingness to back China's drive for fulfilling its goals in Asia. For, after the death of Premier Stalin, the Soviet Union changed its tactics by declaring a policy of "peaceful co-existence" in the Cold War.

Taiwan Straits Crises Since Bandung

The de-escalation of the first Taiwan Straits crisis began with the Bandung Conference of April 1955. Here on 23 April, Premier Chou En-lai offered to negotiate with Washington on relaxing tension in the Taiwan area.²² But the

21. Eisenhower, n.16, p.476. For a further study of the Dullesian concept of deterrence see John R. Beal, John Foster Dulles: A Biography (New York, 1957), pp.219-28.

22. Kenneth T. Young, Negotiating with the Chinese Communists: The United States Experience, 1955-1967 (New York, 1968), pp.44-45.

American pre-conditions towards any such talks were not acceptable to the People's Republic. These included equal representation of Taipei at any Sino-American discussion on Taiwan, prior release of prisoners captured during the Korean War and acceptance of Security Council's invitation to participate in UN discussion to end hostilities in Taiwan.²³ The ambassadorial talks later held in Geneva on 1 August 1955 also failed to bring about any concrete results. Peking on its part refused to accept a "two-China" settlement. It considered the status of Taiwan as a domestic matter and refused to renounce the use of force in that area as proposed by Washington.²⁴

The US could not accept Peking's stand partly due to certain imperatives of American domestic politics. For, not only public opinion, but a powerful China lobby encouraged Congressional opposition to any step in the normalization of Sino-American relations. Furthermore, Dulles was not in favour of accommodation with Peking and stood for a policy of containment against China.

23. New York Times, 24 April 1955.

24. Department of State Bulletin, Vol.32, 20 June 1955, pp.1000-001.

The first Taiwan Straits crisis showed that the Republic of China was to some extent responsible for the change in American policy of containment of Communist China. But such a policy encouraged important elements in the Congress to pursue a stronger policy of commitment for Taiwan to help it regain the mainland. It was also suggested that the US should help widen the rift between Peking and Moscow. Effective aid and protection to Taiwan, without launching bold threats to the mainland, it was assumed, would lessen Peking's fear of American offensive and perhaps make it less dependent on Russian arms.²⁵

The second Taiwan Straits crisis began on 23 August 1958, when the Chinese Communists once again bombarded Quemoy and Matsu islands. The fighting continued till early October during the course of which, Peking declared its intention to expand its territorial waters upto twelve miles thus including all the off-shore islands within that limit.²⁶

25. Edwin O. Reischauer, Wanted: An Asian Policy (New York, 1955), pp.240-42. Also see article by Arthur Dean, "United States Foreign Policy and Formosa", Foreign Affairs (New York), Vol.33, April 1955, pp.360-75. The writer has explained the ways in which the Sino-Soviet differences could be used to America's advantage. He has also suggested possible alternatives to bring about relaxation of tension in the area.

26. Peking Review (Peking), Vol.1, 8 September 1958, p.21.

Under these circumstances, the US policy towards the Nationalist-held off-shore islands came under heavy attack from prominent Congressmen. Although, Senators like William F. Knowland of California and Homer Capehart of Indiana supported President Eisenhower's policy of defending the off-shore islands, many other Republicans urged the President not to escalate the conflict by defending these islands and to persuade Chiang to downgrade the importance of the off-shore islands.²⁷ Dean Acheson blamed the Administration for fighting with the People's Republic over issues that were not worth a "single American life". He feared that Peking in the process, would succeed in forcing the US to get embroiled in a war, which in the ultimate analysis would be detrimental to the United States in so far as it would alienate it from its allies.²⁸ A number of leading Senate Democrats attacked and sharply questioned the Administration's handling of the crisis in Taiwan. Senator Theodore F. Green of Rhode Island, who was also the Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, stated that Quemoy was not vital to the defence of either Taiwan or the US.²⁹ Senator J. William Fulbright of

27. New York Times, 7 September 1958, p.13. Also see *ibid.*, 13 September 1958, p.3.

28. *Ibid.*, 7 September 1958, pp.1, 3.

29. *Ibid.*, p.13.

Arkansas questioned the retention of the off-shore islands so close to the mainland port of Amoy.³⁰ Similarly, the former Governor of Illinois, Adlai Stevenson said that the defence of Quemoy was not the "business" of the US. He felt that Washington should only concentrate on the defence of Taiwan and seek support from its allies and the United Nations to ensure the islands independence and safety.³¹

Despite the by-partisan attack throughout the crisis, US remained committed to the defence of Taiwan and its islands. In a policy statement, President Eisenhower said that the off-shore islands were important to the defence of Taiwan due to the "close interlocking" of the two.³²

As in the case of the 1954 crisis, tensions mounted. Speculation in Washington was that the People's Republic was preparing for an invasion of Taiwan and that the US might resort to massive retaliation. Both the Soviet Union and the US indulged in propaganda campaign. Premier Nikita Khrushchev of the Soviet Union declared his country's solidarity with Peking. On the other hand, President Eisenhower and Dulles

31. Ibid., 19 October 1958, p.42.

32. Department of State Bulletin, Vol.39, 22 September 1958, pp.445-46.

pledged no retreat with proposals of a cease-fire, and in time a cease-fire was called on 6 October. Talks between Peking and Washington were resumed at Warsaw.³³ Gradually, Peking began indicating that the goal to "liberate" Taiwan was a long-term one. But it refused to guarantee the renunciation of the use of force with regard to Taiwan. Mao was reported having said in an interview on 3 March 1959 that the Chinese "territory is spacious and for the time being we can get along without these islands".³⁴

After 1958, the People's Republic paid less attention to the American presence in Taiwan for nearly a decade. Probably, it felt that the US containment system was aimed at maintaining the status quo in Asia and not at promoting aggression against itself. Moreover, other internal developments like the Great Leap Forward of the late 1950s and the cultural revolution of the 1960s, forced it to underplay the Taiwan issue. The growing rift with the Soviet Union troubled the Chinese leadership more to pay any attention to Taiwan.

The Taiwan Straits crisis was clearly a legacy of the Korean War which made Washington reverse its decision of

33. New York Times, 6 October 1958, p.3.

34. Hungdah Chiu (ed.), China and the Taiwan Issue (New York, 1979), p.243.

not defending Taiwan. The situation in both cases contained the threat of a major conflict between the People's Republic and the US. It induced Washington to stress on the defensive character of its treaty with Taiwan. It re-leashed Chiang in order to cease tension in the Taiwan area.

Thus, after 1950, defence commitments and acquisition of military bases became the main components of American policy with regard to Asia. These aimed at deterring the People's Republic from extending its area of influence, and confining it to its territory. For, Washington believed that increased political and economic influence of Peking would encourage communist insurgency in Southeast Asia and weaken the anti-communist coalition led by the US.

The American involvement in Southeast Asia was a corollary to its policy of keeping China under some control. Such a policy was deemed essential because of the power vacuum created by the decline of colonial powers in that region. As such the US stepped in as a stabilizing force by increasing its assistance to the French in Indo-China and, after their fall in 1954, to the South Vietnamese regime. Finally, Thailand was brought within the alliance network, when in 1954, the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) was set up. However, the SEATO was hardly effective as only two of its members, Thailand and the Philippines, were in Southeast Asia.

The other members had little interest in intervening militarily in this region.

With regard to Taiwan the US followed a policy of maintaining the status quo in the area. Despite its declared position of liberating the states that had come under the communist sway, there was little intention of an all-out confrontation with the communists. Whether this approach was due to the fear of further warfare in Asia or a response to the policy of peaceful co-existence followed by the Soviet Union from 1952 onwards, is no doubt debatable.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

From the preceding analysis it appears that the United States policy towards Asia in the years that followed the Second World War was obviously related to the intensity of the Cold War. During this period both the US and its Cold War adversary, Soviet Union, had sought extension of their spheres of influence in Asia too. These years were also marked by a great deal of rivalry between the US and the People's Republic of China which critically manifested itself both in Taiwan and Korea. Among the several steps that US took to contain Soviet influence in Asia, the most important was isolating the People's Republic in the Far East.

America's Asia policy in the post-Second World War years, therefore, has to be viewed in the context of its policy of containment of the People's Republic of China. During these years, the American emphasis to isolate China remained unchanged. One of the principal objectives of US participation in the Chinese civil war was to foster a China that would be strong and united and would act as a stabilizing Asian power in the furtherance of American national interest. However, with the failure of General Marshall's mission in 1947 to settle the conflict between the Nationalists and the Communists, the Administration began limiting and reducing

its involvement in the Chinese civil war. The State Department began realizing that the loss of China to the communists would not pose any immediate threat to American security. As a result, it concentrated its efforts on strengthening Japan. In these changing circumstances, US reliance on Japan as a stabilizing influence in Asia is clearly reflected in George F. Kennan's Memoirs when he says:

Japan, as we saw it, was more - important than China as a potential factor in world-political developments. It was, ...the sole great potential military-industrial arsenal of the Far East...We Americans could feel fairly secure in the presence of a truly friendly Japan and a nominally hostile China--nothing very bad could happen to us from this combination; but the dangers to our security of a nominally friendly China and a truly hostile Japan had already been demonstrated in the Pacific War. 1

Consequently therefore, a dramatic shift came in American policy towards the Far East -- from the enormously costly venture of building a strong and friendly China towards a stable and viable Japan that would emerge at the end of American occupation.

A shift in favour of Japan was not to suggest that China will have to be pushed to the background. The choice became one of limited involvement in China. But the strategy

1. George F. Kennan, Memoirs: 1925-1950 (Boston, Toronto, 1967), pp.374-75.

of limited involvement in China assumed a crucial debating issue in the American Congress. It was argued by prominent Republicans that only a massive involvement of American forces on the mainland could help the Nationalist regime remain in power. To assuage the Republicans, Truman could not withdraw totally from China even if he was convinced about such a strategy. He was compelled to give limited assistance to Chiang Kai-shek's regime if only to prevent the Republicans from obstructing his grandiose security and economic rehabilitation programme as far as Europe. In doing so, the US no doubt incurred the hostility of Chinese Communists. Following the oft-cited 1 July 1949 declaration of Mao Tse-tung of leaning "to one side", Washington in the process provided a new and added focus in developing a policy of containment to prevent the spread of communism in Asia.

By October 1949, relations between the Chinese Communists and the US had deteriorated considerably. It was decided to withhold recognition of the People's Republic of China until such time the new government consolidated its position and was willing to fulfill its international obligations as American conceived. In fact, Washington attempted to dissuade many countries from recognizing the new regime in China.

The failure of American approach in realizing their objective in China has been explained by numerous scholars. Tang Tsou has attributed America's setback in China to the imbalance that existed between the ends and the means of US policy. He argued:

From one point of view, this imbalance takes the form of an unwillingness and, at times, an inability to use military power purposefully to achieve political objectives. From another point of view, it appears as an unwillingness and inability to abandon unattainable goals in order to avoid entanglement in a hopeless cause. 2

He further points out that the first phase of imbalance can be seen in American policy in China upto 1947, while the second aspect is apparent from 1947 upto the outbreak of the war in Korea in June 1950.

On the other hand, the Truman Administration had asserted that the failure of its China policy was not due to any lack of military supplies to Chiang's regime. The major reason for the Nationalist defeat was that the corrupt Kuomintang had completely lost the confidence of the Chinese people.

It cannot be said for certain, however, that a massive American military aid to the Nationalist regime in China would have prevented its defeat. This line of argument has been questioned by the experts as well as men who were involved in the Chinese civil war at that time. Samuel B. Griffith,

2. Tang Tsou, America's Failure in China, 1941-1950
(Chicago, 1963), p.ix.

who was actively associated with the Far East theatre reported in his book The Chinese People's Liberation Army, that the forces of Chiang in mainland China suffered serious setback at the hands of Mao's army. Griffith also reports that most of the American military ammunition, which was in the possession of the Kuomintang was easily taken away by the People's Liberation Army. This argument has been further strengthened by his description of the military situation.³ It would, therefore, appear that America's unlimited military commitment to Chiang Kai-shek, was not a feasible alternative. For, America repeated its commitment in Indo-China several years later, but to their utter dismay, the results were far too dismal. The men and material support to South Vietnam during the fateful years of Indo-China crisis could not bring about significant results favourable to the US and its ally, viz. South Vietnam.

The establishment of the People's Republic of China was a result of so many factors apart from the failure of the United States to apply a positive deterrent policy in order to prevent the victory of the communists in the Chinese civil war. Mao's popularity as a champion of the cause of the peasants and rural masses accounted for his success. It could also be argued that the timely help of the Soviet Union served

3. Samuel B. Griffith, II, The Chinese People's Liberation Army (Delhi, 1968), pp.79, 103.

as a significant impetus to the setting up of a communist regime in China.

The Truman Administration neither could commit itself to the defence of Taiwan nor give greater assistance to the Nationalists and protect Taiwan, from the mainland communist incursion despite the anti-communist hysteria initiated by Senator Joseph McCarthy and the pressures generated by the China lobby in the Congress. Also the intensification of the Cold War in Europe in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War made no full impact on Asia. As such Washington's containment policy in Asia "lacked the urgency and high level of priority displayed in its efforts to establish bulwarks against the Soviet Union in Europe".⁴

Once the war in Korea brokeout in June 1950, it greatly clarified American policy towards Taiwan and resulted in the globalization--including importantly Asia--of containment policy. The dispatch of the Seventh Fleet to Taiwan recommitted the US to Chiang Kai-shek. As a result of the Korean War, Taiwan became a sore issue in Peking's relations

4. Alexander L. George and Richard Smoke, Deterrence in American Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice (New York 1974), p.154.

with Washington, preventing any reconciliation between the two for over two decades.

Though the fear of world communism had begun to dominate the decision of American policy makers, it was nevertheless hoped that the Soviet Union would not risk another general war.⁵ While Korea was considered vulnerable to communist attack it was not singled out for Soviet probing. Moreover, the Truman Administration did not attach much strategic significance to it. In his famous address of 12 January 1950, Acheson had excluded South Korea and Formosa from US defence perimeter. However, he qualified his statement by saying that should South Korea be attacked "the initial reliance must be on the people attacked to resist and then upon the commitments of the entire civilized world under the Charter of the United Nations..."⁶ When accused later of having invited the North Korean invasion, Acheson defended himself by quoting the above passage. But such statements did not show any inclination on the part of the US to defend South Korea. In excluding South Korea from the

5. Ibid., p.156.

6. Department of State Bulletin (Washington, D.C.), Vol.22, 23 January 1950, p.116.

American defence perimeter in the Far East on grounds that it was not important in the context of a general war, Washington failed to gauge the broader Cold War consideration that, in fact, had suddenly increased the significance of this area once it was attacked by a Communist regime.

It may be asked why Washington committed such huge sums of money and men to South Korea in 1950? This was because the political significance of this area loomed larger in the State Department. The defeat of South Korea by North Koreans would have been a great victory for the Soviet Union. Whether or not the Korean War was initiated by South or North Korea, the Soviet motivation was quite clear from the US point of view. A Soviet controlled Korea would lead to communist expansion in northeast Asia and even further southwards to Japan, thereby at least attempt to prevent the latter from signing a peace treaty with the US.

Perhaps the Cold War in Asia might have been limited, had Peking been admitted to the United Nations. Kennan was among the few who supported this move.⁷ However, the US Administration felt that such a step would have been considered by the American public as a US retreat in the face of imminent communist danger.

7. Kennan, n.1, pp.490-93.

With the entry of the Chinese Communists in the Korean War, the United States tried to limit the conflict to Korea. Truman felt that the Soviet Union wanted to engage the US in Asia in order to have a free access in Europe.⁸ Also, the fact that MacArthur was not allowed to proceed with his military operations to unify Korea in the face of Chinese intervention shows that Washington very much wanted to localize the war.

With the new Republican Administration in 1953, Washington brought some significant changes in its Asia policy. For one thing, it threatened to use nuclear weapons against the mainland in order to bring about an armistice.⁹ Though this stopped the war and an armistice was signed in July 1953, the possibility of a resumption of communist attack still remained. Here the US Administration made use of the United Nations. Sixteen members of the UN who had contributed troops to the Korean War affirmed that they would unite to resist any future breach of armistice. This was followed by the Mutual Defence Treaty between the US and the Republic of Korea.

8. Harry S. Truman, Years of Trial and Hope (New York, 1956), p.378.

9. Dwight D. Eisenhower, The White House Years: Mandate for Change, 1953-1956 (New York, 1963), pp.180-81.

Thus the containment policy was partially effective in the case of Korea. The advisability of involving the United Nations in the Korean War, however, has been widely questioned and has earned much disrepute for the United States and the world body. Though the fighting stopped, the question of Korean unification became stalemated. The public opinion which was initially in favour of the war, later became indignant at the failure of the US to bring about an armistice and at the mounting American casualties. Perhaps, it was this aspect that was responsible for Washington's unwillingness to commit sizable ground forces essential for effective intervention and its reliance on atomic threat in deterring communist aggression.

Though this threat prevented a direct Chinese involvement in Indo-China it could not, however, help the French rule from collapsing mainly because Washington attempted to use the French colonialists struggle to further its own policy of containment in Asia. By doing so, containment came to be aligned with colonialism. Moreover, the diversification of French and American objectives in Indo-China led to disagreement over the methods to be employed in the French struggle against the Vietminh. The Pentagon Papers are replete with instances which show that the conflicting policies of the two greatly hampered the efforts to win the sympathies of the local

inhabitants to the French.¹⁰ Containment could not be effective in Indo-China as the US did not wish to act unilaterally and was against committing large forces in the area.

The Korean War was also decisive in evolving an American alliance system in Asia. The first set of alliances formed in 1951 with the Philippines, and the ANZUS pact with Australia and New Zealand, were aimed more at assuring American support in the event of revival of Japanese aggression. The second set of alliances in Asia extended beyond the Pacific defence perimeter. The treaties with the Republics of Korea and China clearly reveal the determination to resist communist aggression. The Southeast Asia Treaty Organization failed to function effectively on account of the absence of a central command, collective military planning and the divergent political interests of its signatories. It was not based on "regional cohesion, political stability, or military potential that underlies NATO".¹¹ In other words, the alliance network evolved in Asia committed the US much less than in the case of NATO.

10. The Pentagon Papers: The Defence Department's History of United States Decisionmaking on Vietnam, Vol. 1, (Boston, 1971), Senator Gravel ed., pp.81-88, 90, 93.

11. Robert E. Osgood, Alliances and American Foreign Policy (Baltimore, 1968), pp.80-81.

The Korean War and its aftermath reversed the US policy of no-commitment to Taiwan. Following the first Taiwan Straits crisis, the US re-entered the Chinese civil war. The American policy makers were in a dilemma when the question of the defence of the off-shore islands of Taiwan came up. Since these were too near the mainland, Washington did not want to risk a general war with the People's Republic. As the crisis intensified in Quemoy and Tachens, Eisenhower was impelled to extend his commitment to these islands.

Though the Chinese Communists expressed their willingness at Bandung in 1955 to negotiate with Washington, the subsequent diplomatic talks at Geneva got stalled on the question of renouncing the use of force in the Taiwan area. Washington did not accept Peking's view that the question of Taiwan was a domestic matter in which no foreign power had the right to intervene. Again, the US did not stage a retreat when the second Taiwan Straits crisis broke out in 1958. The subsequent talks at Warsaw also made no progress towards the stalemated question of Taiwan.

In sum, the record of America's Cold War policy in Asia in the 1950s can be said to have been shaped to meet specific political and security needs that emerged out of the wars in China, Korea and Indo-China. Despite serious communist threats,

the American policy remained no more than one of limited involvement in the Asian states. Limited cooperation from its European allies and its own opposition to massive unilateral action seem to be the two major factors that explain Washington's strategy of limited involvement. And in that sense, there was no departure during the Eisenhower Administration from that of its predecessor. The Eisenhower Administration tackled the Korean and Taiwan problems with some of the basic attitudes of the previous administration. Though campaign promises stressed on "roll-back" and liberation through "massive retaliation", actually moderation and restraint marked the containment policy of the United States in Asia in the 1950s.

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