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P-522 ✓ (1)

May 17, 1954 Copy No. ___

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1700 MAIN ST • SANTA MONICA • CALIFORNIA

~~This paper~~ attempts to reconstruct from contemporary newspaper accounts and the MacArthur hearings the way in which U.S. policy-makers perceived and interpreted the North Korean aggression. An attempt is also made to show that the U.S. reaction to the aggression was influenced by uncertainty as to broader Soviet intentions.

The author plans to submit this paper for publication in World Politics.

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The problem of meeting local communist aggression has long perplexed and divided U.S. policy-makers and public opinion. In the "new look" at military strategy and foreign policy the question of deterring peripheral communist aggression remains of pressing importance. It is difficult to foresee the impact of recent weapons developments and the passing of the U.S. thermonuclear monopoly upon the redefinition of U.S. strategy for discouraging and meeting local aggression in various parts of the world. Nonetheless, it may be reasonably assumed that in the future even more than in the past U.S. policy-makers will have to calculate risks of the most serious kind in determining how the United States should respond to the threat or actuality of communist moves in peripheral areas.

In considering the risks of alternative policies with respect to local communist aggression, U.S. policy-makers will inevitably make assumptions about general Soviet political strategy and the "characteristic" ways in which Soviet leaders behave in different international situations. For present purposes it is convenient to distinguish two types of policy assumptions: intelligence estimates and general principles of behavior attributed to the opponent. Intelligence estimates covering the familiar problems of enemy capabilities and intentions are usually explicit; their role in policy-making is usually more or less formalized, and, as a result, they lend themselves readily to historical analysis.

But policy is also frequently based upon assumptions about the characteristic ways in which an opponent behaves. A well-known and influential example of such an analysis is George Kennan's "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," which appeared initially in the July, 1947, issue of Foreign Affairs under the pseudonym "Mr. X." Assumptions of this sort are not always fully articulated in any given policy decision; nor does the total group of assumptions made by policy-makers about any opponent at various times always comprise a self-consistent and integrated set of propositions about his behavior patterns. Furthermore, many of these assumptions may be stated in such general terms that their application in concrete situations is often ambiguous. For these reasons, retrospective appraisals of their adequacy are the more difficult and perhaps the more necessary.

The present case study attempts to illustrate the importance of these two types of policy assumptions in the U.S. decision to meet local communist aggression in Korea. Accordingly, first, an attempt is made to reconstruct the general picture of Soviet strategic intentions held by U.S. policy-makers prior to the North Korean attack. Second, we try to show that these pre-existing expectations regarding Soviet intentions influenced the way in which the North Korean attack was perceived and assessed by U.S. policy-makers. We note, particularly, that U.S. policy-makers found it difficult to arrive immediately at a consistent, unambiguous interpretation of the broader strategic significance of the local aggression in Korea. The resulting uncertainty as to world-wide Soviet intentions complicated for U.S. policy-makers the task of responding quickly and effectively to the local aggression itself.

Third, we note that the U.S. reaction to the North Korean attack involved an abrupt reversal of the basic U.S. strategic plan for the Far East. Prior to the North Korean attack, U.S. planning had ruled out for strategic and military reasons any commitment of U.S. forces to defend South Korea; evidently it had not been foreseen that other considerations might dictate direct involvement of U.S. forces in the defense of South Korea. Fourth, we consider what impact, if any, uncertainty as to Soviet intentions had upon the manner in which U.S. forces were committed to the defense of South Korea. Finally, certain aspects of initial U.S. policy moves in response to the North Korean aggression are analyzed in terms of the familiar policy problem of effectively coordinating means and objectives. We focus particularly on the question whether means chosen to implement certain objectives (deterrence of Soviet aggression elsewhere and avoidance of Soviet intervention in Korea) had unforeseen and unfortunate consequences for the realization of another U.S. policy objective, namely the "voluntary" withdrawal of the North Korean forces to the 38th Parallel.

The present study covers only the initial U.S. policy reactions to the outbreak of war in Korea, in the first week or ten days following the North Korean invasion. When this study was undertaken, in late autumn 1950, only newspaper materials were available for research purposes. Accordingly, the study was regarded as a pilot study which, while it could not yield definitive findings, might

at least formulate specific hypotheses for testing in the event more authoritative data became available.*

Some months after the original version of this study was completed, hearings were held by the Senate on the dismissal of General MacArthur.** These hearings went into certain aspects of U.S. policy in the Far East exhaustively, if also repetitively, and included the detailed testimony of some of the principal participants in the formation of the U.S. policy reaction to the North Korean attack.*** Disclosures made in the course of the MacArthur hearings, therefore, provide an opportunity to validate some of the findings of the original study of the U.S. policy reaction. Because the problem of validating an analysis of U.S. policy based on newspaper accounts is of some interest in itself, an effort is made in this article to reproduce the essential points of the original study and to comment separately on the extent to which disclosures at the MacArthur hearings confirm or disconfirm impressions derived earlier from newspaper accounts.

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* As originally carried out, the study was based entirely upon the accounts of U.S. policy appearing in two newspapers: The New York Times and The Washington Post. (Only those dispatches and commentaries which claimed to present or reflect the views of U.S. policy-makers were included. Private estimates, such as those of Walter Lippmann, have been labelled as such.)

** Military Situation in the Far East, Hearings before the Committee on Armed Services and the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 82nd Congress, 1st Session, To Conduct an Inquiry into the Military Situation in the Far East and the Facts Surrounding the Relief of General of the Army Douglas MacArthur from his Assignment to that Area. Washington, 1951. (Hereafter cited as Hearings, Part and Page

*** Secretaries of State and Defense (Acheson and Johnson) and the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Bradley, Collins, Sherman, and Vandenbe

U.S. Estimate of Soviet Strategic Intentions Prior to North Korean Attack

Judging by newspaper accounts, the U.S. estimate of Soviet strategic intentions immediately and for some time prior to June 25, 1950, included two important expectations:

(1) It was thought that there was no immediate danger of an armed attack upon South Korea, though some form of communist action elsewhere in the world in the coming months was expected;

(2) it was also thought that the Politburo would not engage in overt forms of aggression which accepted the risk of general war for the present and for several years hence.

Both of these expectations were rudely challenged by the North Korean attack. Most of the newspaper accounts examined for the period immediately following the North Korean attack indicated that U.S. intelligence had not succeeded in alerting top policy-makers to the forthcoming attack.*

If an overt military attack upon Korea itself was not clearly foreseen, top level U.S. intelligence would seem to have called attention to communist plans for action in many other places throughout the world during the coming summer months.** The prior expectation of communist moves in areas other than Korea influenced

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* See, for example, Reston in N.Y.T., July 2, 1950; Childs in W.P., July 8, 1950. Tactical rather than strategic surprise was reported by Lindesay Parrott from Tokyo, N.Y.T., June 26, 1950. CIA's awareness of North Korean capabilities for such an attack was indicated by Admiral Hillenkoeter (N.Y.T., June 26, 1950). On the other hand, several accounts suggested that the timing of the attack was not entirely unforeseen. (Whitney, N.Y.T., June 26, 1950; Drew Pearson, W.P., June 29,1950.)

** See, for example, Pearson, W.P., July 7 and 10; Baldwin, N.Y.T., July 2; Alsops, W.P., July 3.

the manner in which U.S. policy-makers perceived and reacted to the unexpected North Korean attack. First, having been alerted to the possibility of communist actions elsewhere, some U.S. policy makers seriously considered whether the North Korean attack itself was not simply an initial diversionary move to be followed by other important communist aggressions. Second, and less important, U.S. policy-makers were interested to some extent in accounting for the timing of the North Korean attack.*

The fact that the attack upon South Korea took the form of naked military aggression doubtless made a deep impression upon the minds of U.S. policy-makers. It seems to have contradicted an important assumption held at the time by U.S. officials that,

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* Two interpretations which rested upon an analysis of the timing of the North Korean attack may be briefly noted here. One, which saw the North Korean attack as a Politburo response to developing U.S. policy in the Far East, is discussed below, p. 13. The other held that the North Korean attack was timed to beat the arrival of U.S. arms aid to South Korea, which was on the high seas when the attack was launched (cf. Pearson, W.P., June 29; Walz, N.Y.T., June 26). This second interpretation is not discussed further in this report.

According to Drew Pearson, the U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Korea, Muccio, had warned of the coming attack during his visit to Washington in May. As a result, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had authorized shipment of heavy artillery, capable of stopping Soviet tanks. This artillery was actually on the high seas when the attack began (W.P., June 29). It has not been possible to substantiate this point on the basis of disclosures in the MacArthur hearings. The military equipment referred to by Acheson as being in transit at the time of the attack would not appear to warrant the significance attached to it in these newspaper accounts. (Hearings, Part 3, p. 1993

> ...while the Russians would continue trying to gain their ends by indirect aggression through the Communist parties, they would hesitate to use force, at least until they were at the top of their military strength, some time between 1952 and 1954.
>
> ...The Korean Communists' attack has forced reconsideration of this theory...best guess here is that a speed-up in all military programs will now be ordered. (Reston, N.Y.T., June 27, 1950.)

Similarly, the Alsops reported:

> /Korea/ has knocked the basic assumption underlying American policy into a cocked hat. This assumption was that the Kremlin was not now ready, and would not be ready for some years, to risk a world war. Yet the Kremlin has clearly and consciously risked a world war. This in turn means that Washington has been mistaken about Soviet capabilities and intentions. (W.P., July 5, 1950.)

The preceding impressions, derived from contemporary newspaper accounts, were confirmed to a considerable extent by disclosures at the MacArthur hearings. However, points made rather clearly in the press were merely alluded to or implied in testimony at the hearings. That U.S. intelligence did not alert policy-makers to the North Korean attack was confirmed amply and in some detail by Acheson and Johnson.* Despite deletions from his testimony, General Bradley conveyed the idea that policy-makers had been concerned over the possibility of communist moves in other areas, and that they thought that the North Korean attack meant that the Soviets were in a position to be willing to risk war (i.e., World War III).**

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* According to Acheson, the possibility of a North Korean attack had been recognized for some time but was not regarded as imminent. Rather, the general view was that the communists would continue past efforts to take over South Korea by means short of war. (Hearings, Part 3, pp. 1990-1992.) Johnson stressed that intelligence had cried "wolf" so many times that indicators of an attack were not taken seriously. (Ibid., Part 4, pp. 2572, 2583-2584, 2589, 2611.) On CIA warnings, see also ibid., Part 1, pp. 239, 436, 545.

** Ibid., Part 2, pp. 942, 954, 971. See also testimony of Johnson, Part 4, pp. 2585, 2630.

U.S. Interpretations of the North Korean Attack

What were the motivations and calculations underlying the North Korean attack? How were broader Soviet strategic intentions to be interpreted? In the hours and days immediately following the attack, when decisions of crucial policy importance had to be made, these questions were particularly urgent. But they remained questions for analysis and speculation for months after the invasion of South Korea was launched.

In considering these questions, U.S. policy-makers had to draw not only on whatever "indicators" the situation itself offered. They could take their bearings as well by reference to available assumptions about Soviet behavior, the characteristic approach of Soviet leaders to international problems. In addition to "lessons of experience" gained in dealing with earlier aggressive Soviet moves, there had been available to policy-makers the analysis of "The Sources of Soviet Conduct" by George Kennan, at that time Director of the Policy Planning Staff of the State Department.* But, as the newspaper accounts examined suggest, Kennan's thesis was neither uniformly accepted nor uniformly interpreted by all U.S. officials influential in formulating a policy reaction to Korea. And while interpretations of the North Korean attack based on the Kennan thesis were influential in shaping the U.S. policy reaction, this reaction appears from contemporary newspaper accounts to have been the result of competing views and calculations.

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* It was reported that among the papers upon which President Truman based his decision to aid South Korea were the final contributions of Kennan before he left for his new assignment at Princeton University. (Alsops, W.P., July 2, 1950.)

At this point we will briefly reconstruct from contemporary newspaper accounts different interpretations of the North Korean attack made within U.S. policy-making circles.* Then we will check our impression of the official interpretations of the North Korean attack, derived from newspaper accounts, against the MacArthur hearings, in order to note whether we have correctly characterized the climate of opinion in this respect within policy-making circles at the time.

A. The "Diversionary Move" Interpretation

The fact that U.S. policy-makers had been alerted to the possibility of a series of communist actions at various points throughout the world, but not to the attack against South Korea, may have encouraged some of them to suspect that the North Korean attack was a diversionary move. Thus, Hanson Baldwin wrote:

> The background of our intelligence reports at the time of the Korean invasion showed that the Communists in many parts of the world were preparing a pattern of conquest for this summer, and Korea was only the first step.... (N.Y.T., July 2.)

This interpretation may have been held by some important military men--for example, General Omar Bradley. According to Drew Pearson's "inside" account of Truman's meeting of policy advisers on June 25th, Bradley raised the question whether the North Korean attack was merely a diversion for the major Soviet blow, possibly against Iran. (W.P., June 30, July 3.)

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* A number of other interpretations of the North Korean attack were noted in newspaper accounts examined. These are not discussed in the report since evidence was lacking that they were shared by U.S. policy-makers or influenced the development of policy.

If U.S. policy-makers accepted the "diversion" interpretation of the North Korean attack, it would logically follow that they would be reluctant to commit important U.S. military forces to Korea because of the possibility that they might soon be needed elsewhere. Reston reported in this vein:

> Some of the soldiers naturally hesitated to disperse United States forces too much. General Bradley, in particular, has been warning that we must keep our eye on the central target, which, in his judgment, still lies in Europe. (N.Y.T., June 28, 1950.)

Later, Reston noted more explicitly:

> Some men high in this Government really believe that the Russians have moved out of what is called the defensive phase of their policy, and are now planning a big war, of which Korea is the first diversionary phase.... (N.Y.T., July 23, 1950)

b. The "Soft-Spot Probing" Interpretation

Probably derived from Kennan's analysis of Soviet behavior was the interpretation of the North Korean attack as a "probing" of a "soft-spot."

The first indication that this thesis was being entertained and would influence policy came in a report on Truman's attitude as he was leaving Kansas City for Washington on June 25.

> It was understood that the President...planned to be as decisive as possible, within the framework of United States foreign policy. This policy is based on meeting the Soviet Union's moves everywhere possible by creating situations of strength. (Leviero, N.Y.T., June 26.)

And, it was reported (Friendly, W.P., June 28), "the State Departmer consensus is that the Korean attack is another bit of 'feeling out,' of probing for soft spots."

After a month's time in which to consider the question of Soviet intentions behind the North Korean attack, some officials in the U.S. government, said to be experienced in dealing with the Russians, were reported to hold the following views:

> They concede the Russians have, by resorting to armed aggression, consciously adopted a much more risky and defiant policy.... But they are still of the opinion that the Russians were trying for a quick and easy victory in Korea and that they were not trying to get us off balance in order to start a major all-out war. (Reston, N.Y.T., July 23.)

C. The "Testing" Interpretation

Many newspaper accounts attributed to U.S. policy-makers the view that the North Korean move was intended to "test" the will of anti-communist countries to resist open armed aggression by communist forces. In this connection, the naked military character of the North Korean aggression and the fact that it involved a sudden, massive employment of official armed forces across a clear-cut territorial boundary appears to have been responsible for calling to mind a historical parallel with Hitler's early aggressions.

Thus, the N.Y.T. correspondent Jay Walz reported (June 26) that sources close to top U.S. policy-makers

> ...were certain that the North Korean attack was being viewed as a test of the countries, including the United States, that are standing up against Communist expansion. In such a light, the march across the North-South Korean border would appear similar to the attacks that Hitler used to make to feel out the opposition.

The Alsops (W.P., June 28) quoted one of the men who took part in the crucial policy deliberations at Blair House as saying: "'This attack on South Korea is an event like Hitler's re-occupation of the Rhineland.'"

Arthur Krock reviewed Truman's top policy meetings of June 25 and 26 in a similar vein:

> The global effect of the President's decision [to oppose the North Korean aggression] can be summed up in this way: Soviet agents for a long time have been asking diplomats, and urging their secret agents to furnish, the answer to the question--"How much further can we expand Cominform activities without military countermeasures from the United States?" The President has now given the answer--"No further." (N.Y.T., June 28; cf. also Albert Friendly, W.P., June 28.)

An authoritative version of the "testing" interpretation was given by John Foster Dulles in an address on July 1:

> It seems that the immediate risk [for the Soviets] is not general war, but rather that of an experimental effort to find out whether, under present world conditions, armed aggression pays. (N.Y.T., July 2.)

D. The "Demonstration" Interpretation

An important addition to some versions of t' "testing" and "soft-spot" interpretations was the hypothesis that the Soviets hoped to make of Korea a "demonstration" of their own strength and of Allied weakness which would have world-wide repercussions. Thus the Alsops held that the Soviets hoped by such a "demonstration" to soften up other areas and weaken the position of anti-communist leaders in the Far East and Western Europe. (W.P., June 28.) (Later the Alsops added that Korea was only the first in a series of Soviet "demonstrations" of Russian strength and U.S. weakness designed to lead to the crumbling of the Western will to resist. [W.P., July 3.])*

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* Several days later (June 30), as evidence for this hypothesis, Washington Post editorial reported that the communist press in Eastern Germany had attempted to capitalize upon the Korean si ation for German consumption: "...the Germans were invited to draw the inference that with the United States' 'desertion' of Korea, there would be need to look to Moscow for 'protection.'

E. "Soviet Far East Strategy" Interpretations

Some U.S. policy-makers examined the motivation of the North Korean attack within the strategic context of clashing Far East policies and interests. In these accounts the question of Soviet intentions assumed a more complex character. Such interpretations imputed to the Soviet-inspired North Korean action certain defensive calculations. This stood in marked contrast with interpretations which made the simple assumption of Soviet aggressive expansionist tendencies and which regarded the North Korean attack as a sign of the Soviet "initiative" in Far East affairs.

A leading interpretation along these lines was offered by John Foster Dulles, reported to be in charge of the State Department's preparations for a Japanese peace treaty. His thesis was that the North Korean attack was motivated in part by a desire to block U.S. efforts to make Japan a full member of the free world. The attack was a strategic move to place Japan "between the upper [i.e., Sakhalin] and lower jaws of the Russian bear." And, more broadly, the communists hoped that the Korean invasion would dislocate plans being developed by the U.S. for positive and constructive policies to check the rising tide of communism in Asia and in the Pacific. Thus, the attack had been ordered, also, because the communists could not tolerate the "hopeful, attractive Asiatic experiment in democracy" that was under way in South Korea and which they had been unable to destroy by indirect aggression. (Speech of July 1; reported in N.Y.T., July 2.)

A similar interpretation of the North Korean move "as an answer to United States policy" regarding a separate peace treaty with Japan was reported from Tokyo. (Parrott, N.Y.T., June 26, 195[illegible] Later, some (unidentified) U.S. policy-makers "experienced in Russia affairs" were reported to be reasoning along similar lines. (Reston N.Y.T., July 23.)

In sum, according to this interpretation, the North Korean attack had a limited objective, that of securing an improvement of the Soviet strategic position vis-à-vis Japan, which the United States was not expected to oppose.

The MacArthur hearings contained very little on the interpretations given the North Korean attack at the time. The "diversion" interpretation was clearly implied in Bradley's remarks, thus confirming the attribution of such views to him by newspapermen at the time. (See above, pp. 9-10.) Bradley was also able to recall, though with some difficulty, that the historical parallel with Hitler's early aggressions was also in "the back of our minds." (Cf. Hearings, Part 2, pp. 954, 971.) Johnson's statement of the reasons for entering the Korean conflict possibly implies the "testing" and "demonstration" interpretations. (Hearings, Part 4, p. 2585.)

In important respects these several interpretations of the significance of the North Korean attack did not constitute a clear-cut, unambiguous view of broader Soviet strategic intentions. The

conflicting elements in these interpretations, it may be noted, centered precisely on the questions of major relevance for developing a U.S. policy reaction to the North Korean attack: Did the North Korean attack signify Soviet general war intentions or, at least, a greater readiness to risk such a war? Was it part of a plan for a series of communist aggressions; if so, how rigidly determined was this plan? How important was Korea to the Politburo? What conditions and means would be required to force a Soviet "withdrawal" from the Korean venture?

The "diversion" and "soft-spot probing" interpretations assumed different answers to the question whether the Politburo wanted or was ready to risk a general war. The expectation of a series of Soviet moves, in the "diversion" interpretation, implied a Soviet willingness to take greater risks. In contrast, the "soft-spot probing" thesis, stemming no doubt from Kennan's general analysis of Soviet conduct, minimized the possibility that the Politburo was bent on general war or that it was consciously taking serious risks of general war.

Both the "diversion" and the "testing" interpretations held that Moscow had plans for a whole series of aggressive actions in the coming months. But, in contrast to the "diversion" hypothesis, the "testing" theory did not regard the schedule of communist actions to be rigidly determined. Rather, the "testing" theory held that the U.S.S.R. would hold back from other moves it had planned if the free nations reacted firmly to the North Korean aggression. (Note the similarity of the "testing" interpretation in this respect to the "soft-spot probing" thesis.)

The "testing" interpretation, though it resembled the "soft-spot probing" thesis in positing a Soviet withdrawal in the face of determined resistance, differed significantly from it in implying that, if the free world did not oppose the North Korean aggression, like Hitler, would be led into further, more dangerous adventures. (The historical parallel with Hitler was an important element of the "testing" interpretation.) In contrast, as we shall note at greater length below, Kennan's "soft-spot probing" thesis holds that Soviet leaders are not carried away by local successes into risky "adventures."

Most versions of the "testing," "soft-spot probing," and "demonstration" interpretations rested on <u>generalized</u> estimates of Soviet intentions and lacked a specific evaluation of Soviet strategy in the Far East. This omission was serious insofar as it might have led to oversimplification and underestimation of the Soviet conception of its interest in regard to Korea. Was the underlying Soviet intention in this instance no different from that present in any other Soviet "probing" action? Strategic analyses which placed the North Korean attack in the larger context of Far Eastern developments (see above) implied otherwise. They portrayed the communist move in Korea as a <u>response</u> (contrast with "soft-spot probing") to certain U.S. policies and as an anticipation of a forthcoming U.S. initiative, namely some sort of arrangement with Japan which would increase her independence and strength.* An

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* A parallel might have been drawn with the Soviet blockade of Berlin, intended also to forestall, if possible, an Allied initiative--the unification of Western Germany.

important implication of such strategic analyses, it would seem, was that the general objective aimed at by the Politburo in the Far East was important enough to rule out a "retreat" except under considerable pressure.

Thus, the various interpretations noted above not only attributed different intentions to the Soviet move in North Korea, but they contained, as well, different implications for U.S. policy efforts to induce a Soviet "withdrawal" from the Korean venture. There was no indication during the MacArthur hearings that policy-makers had been conscious of an important divergence in their interpretations of the North Korean attack. The impact of these conflicting estimates of the broader strategic significance of the North Korean attack upon the U.S. policy reaction is considered later in this article.

Reversal of U.S. Strategic Plan for the Far East

Both contemporary journalistic accounts and the MacArthur hearings amply confirm the extent of American unpreparedness for the contingency which arose on June 25th. More serious than the intelligence failure and the resulting tactical surprise was the fact that strategic and foreign policy planning had not foreseen the course of action which the United States took in response to the North Korean aggression. This was most dramatically indicated by the abrupt reversal, after June 25th, of the basic U.S. strategic plan for the Far East. At the time of the attack, U.S. strategic planning did not call for employment of U.S. forces for the defense of either Korea or Formosa.* Nor, evidently, had the strategic plan foreseen any contingencies which might have to be met by an extension of U.S. military commitments in the Far East. Not only was the decision to commit U.S. forces to aid South Korea taken entirely ad hoc, but the major policy decision of June 27 neutralizing Formosa and giving the impression of "drawing the line" was also an improvisation in strategic planning.**

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* This came out most clearly and in considerable detail during the MacArthur hearings. Op.cit., Part 1, p. 242; Part 2, pp. 753, 930, 932, 966; Part 3, pp. 1671ff, 1681, 1740, 1763, 1818, 182[illegible] 2054; Part 4, pp. 2574, 2575, 2593, 2579ff, 2697.) But the essential facts, particularly the reversal on Korea, were reported at the time as well. (See, for example, Kuhn, W.P., June 27, 1950; Alsops, June 30, 1950.)

** At the hearings, Johnson recalled that at the initial policy meeting of June 25th at Blair House he had called upon each member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and each of the Secretaries of the defense establishment to present their views individually. "Since the Joint Chiefs had no recommendations to make....A major portion of the evening was taken in individual, unrehearsed, and unprepared and uncoordinated statements of the several Chiefs and the Secretaries." Just before the meeting adjourned, Johnson recalled, he said to the President: "'There are two things I haven't discussed with the Secretaries and the Chiefs; I should like to do so and will do unless you order me not to....'" The first was a proposal that the Seventh Fleet be (cont'd. on p.)

That U.S. strategic planning for this area prior to the North Korean attack had contained important gaps was clearer in some respects in disclosures at the MacArthur hearings than in contemporary press accounts. The full significance of former Defense Secretary Louis Johnson's statement that there had been no war plan for Korea,* however, emerges only when the U.S. policy reaction to the Korean attack is seen in the context of such strategic planning for the Far East as had taken place.

The importance to U.S. security of various areas in the Far East had been carefully and continuously considered by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the civilian policy-makers in the twelve to eighteen months before the attack. Planning decisions as to the use or non-use of U.S. military forces to ensure the defense of these areas had been made from the standpoint of the strategic importance of these areas to the security of the United States. Thus, from this standpoint, Korea was clearly not of strategic importance to the United States.** If South Korea came under military attack, therefore, the United States would not act directly with military force in South Korea's defense, but, rather, the matter would be considered under the United Nations.

(cont'd. from p. 18) ordered to move from the Philippines towards the area of conflict. The second was a proposal to transfer U.S. jets to a base closer to Formosa. Both suggestions were approved. The decision to deneutralize Formosa was not made, however, until the following day. (Hearings, Part 4, pp. 2580-2581, 2621.) Acheson and Johnson differed in some respects in recalling how the decision to deneutralize Formosa was made. (See, for example, Hearings, Part 3, p. 2055; Part 4, pp. 2614-2615.)

* Hearings, Part 4, p. 2671.

** As for Formosa, its strategic importance to the United States was rated appreciably greater than that of Korea. The official position was that it was not in the interest of the United States to allow Formosa to fall into the hands of a hostile power. However, because of the limited military capability available to the United States during this period, strategic planning ruled out the use of U.S. military forces in order to achieve this objective. Reasons for the reversal of this policy on Formosa will not be discussed in this article.

Was it foreseen, during the period of strategic planning preceding the North Korean aggression, that it might become desirable or necessary to commit U.S. military forces to the defense of South Korea under the aegis of the United Nations? There is no indication of this either in contemporary newspaper accounts or in the MacArthur hearings. Employment of U.S. forces in the defense of South Korea had been ruled out on the grounds of its low strategic importance to U.S. military security. Evidently no thought was given to the possibility that other considerations might require a commitment of U.S. forces if South Korea were attacked. And yet this is precisely what took place in the days following June 25th. It is not without significance that the initial decision of June 26 (announced the following day) to use U.S. air and naval forces to help the South Koreans was taken on the initiative of the State Department. As Johnson recalled, "the military neither recommended it nor opposed it," though they did emphasize the "difficulties and limitations" of such an action. (Hearings, Part 4, pp. 2581, 2584f.)

It is true that Acheson, as he recalled at the MacArthur hearings had intimated in a major policy speech of January 15, 1950, that any attack upon South Korea would be dealt with through the United Nations. But if the "obligations" of the U.S. by virtue of its membership in the U.N. were really seen as including the possible use of U.S. military forces as part of U.N. action on behalf of South Korea, there is no indication that the military implications of such an "obligation" or "commitment" were taken into account in U.S. strategic planning.

During the MacArthur hearings some of the leading participants in the decision to commit U.S. forces to the defense of Korea occasionally implied, in attempting to explain this step, that Korea was of political, if not strategic, importance. The clearest intimation that the relationship of the United States to peripheral areas rests upon factors other than their strategic importance to U.S. security was given by Acheson.* But the fact that strategic and military planning for Korea had not been based upon this broader conception was not explicitly brought out in the course of the lengthy hearings.

What were the unforeseen considerations which led U.S. policy-makers to reverse strategic plans and commit military forces to the defense of Korea? Clearly, this reversal was not motivated by a sudden discovery of the strategic importance of Korea to U.S. military security.** The progressive commitment of U.S. forces in the defense of South Korea was made not in terms of this area's military and strategic importance to the United States. Rather, the decision to oppose the North Koreans was motivated by a fear of the

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* According to Acheson, although Korea was not of "strategic importance" to the United States, the U.S. action in Korea was "motivated by the security of the United States, because the whole question of collective security is one of the bases of our own security...." (Hearings, Part 3, p. 1818.)

** This was explicitly acknowledged at the hearings by General Bradley (Hearings, Part 2, p. 1110) and implied also by Acheson, (Ibid., Part 3, p. 1818).

consequences of inaction and was influenced by considerations which stemmed from uncertain interpretations of broader Soviet strategic intentions behind the North Korean attack. In the first place, by acting in Korea U.S. leaders hoped to deter the Soviets from launch other local aggressions and, thereby, to make a general war less likely.* (Both the "diversion" and the "testing" interpretations o the North Korean attack appear to have been influential in this respect.) Second, U.S. leaders feared that, if the North Korean aggression were unopposed, it would markedly weaken (a) the prestig and position of the United States in the cold war; (b) the United Nations and the principle of collective security; and, therefore, also (c) the forces of opposition to communist expansion throughout the world.** (The "demonstration" interpretation was particularly relevant in this respect.)

In evaluating the policy decision to employ U.S. forces in the defense of South Korea, three questions can be raised:

(a) Did a tendency to view the North Korean aggression in terms of historical parallel with Hitler's early aggressions lead U.S. policy-makers to exaggera some of the negative consequences of not opposing the aggression against South Korea?

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* See Bradley, Hearings, Part 2, p. 890.
As Hanson Baldwin noted (N.Y.T., June 28): "A Communist progr of conquest during the summer months, in which Korea was to have been the first step, may have been blocked by the United States decision to aid South Korea with armed force. This is the hopeful opinion and belief of leaders of the United States government.... It was felt that if South Korea were allowed to succumb, without actual United States armed aid, to Communist aggression, other acts of conquest or provocation would soon follow."

** There is considerable material in the Hearings on reasons for employing U.S. forces in Korea. See especially Part 2, pp. 95 1110, 1490, 1504; Part 3, p. 1818; Part 4, p. 2585.

Our evidence suggests that in the crisis engendered by the North Korean attack certain leading U.S. policy-makers (Truman and perhaps Acheson as well) took their bearings to some extent via the "testing" interpretation, which made use of the historical parallel with Hitler. Contemporary newspaper accounts are not sufficiently detailed to enable one to judge precisely in what sense the historical parallel with Hitler's aggressions was perceived. The possibility cannot be excluded, however, that Soviet aggression in Korea was incorrectly viewed by some policy-makers in the image of Hitler.* To the extent that this was the case, the "testing" interpretation of the North Korean attack may have blurred in the minds of policy-makers an important general principle of behavior attributed to the Politburo in Kennan's "The Sources of Soviet Conduct."

The "testing" hypothesis, as has been noted, implied that non-opposition to the North Korean attack would embolden the Kremlin to proceed with further aggressions, already scheduled, which would surely plunge the world into war. For, just as Hitler's early unopposed successes whetted his appetite and led him later into an imprudent underestimation of his opponent's will to resist, so the Politburo's overt aggression in Korea might set off a similar cycle.

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* At least one commentator, Walter Lippmann, explicitly warned against acting on the simple stereotype that Stalin is another version of Hitler. He noted that "as yet there is nothing to indicate that in the Korean affair the USSR has departed from its policy, which has been to expand the Communist sphere by the use of satellites without committing and engaging its own armed forces.... It has been a policy quite different from Hitler's--a policy of very shrewdly calculated risks...by which the profits can be very big though the losses are limited." (W.P., July 3; cf. also his column, July 4.) In this respect, Lippmann was apparently stating his private views; official U.S. circles, in contrast, regarded the North Korean attack as an indication that the Politburo was ready to take greater risks of war. (See above, p. 7.)

This reasoning, however, would be difficult to reconcile with Kenna thesis, which emphasizes the principle of caution in Soviet behavio Rather, according to Kennan (and other specialists on Soviet behavi Soviet leaders would feel themselves under a compulsion in such a contingency--unopposed and easy success in the Korean adventure--to adopt an attitude exactly opposite to that anticipated by the "testing-parallel-with-Hitler" hypothesis. They would, in other words, tend to estimate their new advantages soberly and restrain any tendency to be carried away by success into risky adventures.

The "testing" hypothesis could have validity (assuming the Kennan-Leites thesis to be correct) only insofar as it forecast, in the event of successful communist aggression in Korea, a weakening of the democracies' will to resist and the emergence thereby of "power vacuums" elsewhere in the world. That such consequences we feared by U.S. policy-makers seems clear enough, but it is difficul to disentangle this legitimate concern from the further, more quest able anxiety that Soviet leaders would become afflicted with the sa Grössenwahn and imprudence which led Hitler to blunder into war.

To the extent that this dubious assumption about Soviet behavi influenced the U.S. policy reaction, it served to strengthen motiv tion for meeting force with force in Korea. To the extent that the "testing" interpretation took precedence over the "soft-spot probin thesis (based on Kennan), it led to an exaggeration of the negative consequences of an unopposed communist success in Korea. The resul may have been to leave U.S. policy-makers with a feeling that they less freedom of action in reacting to the North Korean aggression.

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* See, for example, Nathan Leites, A Study of Bolshevism, The Free Press, Glencoe, Illinois, 1953, pp. 47-53.

The decision to employ U.S. forces to aid South Korea raises a further question:

(b) Could the demoralizing impact upon the Free World of unopposed and successful communist aggression in South Korea have been minimized or prevented by means other than a large-scale U.S. military commitment in Korea?

Available materials in contemporary journalistic accounts examined and in the MacArthur hearings do not indicate whether this question was considered. Most likely it was not, in large part because the U.S. military commitment was of a piecemeal character. It was not known, when initially small forces were committed, that increasingly larger commitments would become necessary. If the substantial scale of military effort required later in Korea had been foreseen during the first week when key policy decisions were being made,* it is more likely that U.S. leaders would have searched for alternative ways of avoiding the demoralizing consequences of an unopposed, successful military aggression against South Korea.

Also, the tendency for an initial commitment of U.S. ground forces to take on the character of an irreversible commitment was perhaps not fully appreciated. Despite the traditional military view that sizable U.S. forces should not become involved in war on the Asian continent and a concern lest U.S. troops be needed elsewhere, U.S. policy-makers were to find themselves committing increasingly larger forces to the Korean theater.**

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* Disclosures at the MacArthur hearings amply confirm that, when taking the initial decisions to employ U.S. forces to halt the North Korean aggressor, U.S. policy-makers did not attempt to calculate and did not foresee the size of the force that would eventually be required for this purpose. See Hearings, Part 1, pp. 393f., 601, 607; Part 2, pp. 948, 1650f.; Part 4, pp. 2610, 2632.

** On this point see particularly Admiral Sherman's testimony; Part 2, pp. 1650f.

Finally, it may be asked:

(c) To what extent were alternative policies considered for purposes of deterring further communist aggressions?

As has been noted, the desire to discourage communist moves elsewhere in the world was evidently an important motive for employing military force in direct opposition to the North Korean invader. Another important move to the same end was the June 27th decision to employ the Seventh Fleet to protect Formosa from invasi and to give increased military aid to Indochina and the Philippines. In time, the Korean attack was to strengthen other U.S. cold war policies as well--such as increased rearmament and mobilization at home and the decision to rearm Germany--but there is no evidence th such steps were considered as <u>alternative</u> means of deterring the Soviets in the first few days following the North Korean attack, when the basic policy decision of military intervention was being made. Available materials simply do not indicate whether in these days consideration was given to the possibility of not intervening in Korea and of seeking to deter further communist aggressions elsewhere by any other policy means.

Impact of Uncertainty Regarding Soviet Intervention on Decisions for Military Assistance to South Korea

Both contemporary newspaper accounts and disclosures at the MacArthur hearings reveal that U.S. policy reactions to the North Korean aggression were undertaken without a clear picture of underlying Soviet intentions. What influence did such uncertainty have upon the development of the policy of employing U.S. forces in Korea? This question is not easily answered.

It is necessary to distinguish two elements of uncertainty as to Soviet intentions: first, the possibility of Soviet (or Chinese) intervention in Korea and, second, the significance of the North Korean attack in terms of the world-wide strategic intentions of the U.S.S.R. That U.S. policy-makers were uncertain in the former as well as the latter respect is suggested by contemporary newspaper accounts. During the MacArthur hearings, on the other hand, general agreement was expressed among top policy-makers who testified that they had not regarded it likely during the crucial days following the North Korean attack that either the Russians or the Chinese would intervene.* However, some allowance probably should be made for the difficulty of recalling estimates which, as several of the witnesses noted, had been discussed freely without being committed formally to paper. It would be only natural a year later, when uncertainty as to Soviet intentions had long been dispelled, for policy-makers to blur in their minds the extent of their uncertainty and its impact on their behavior at the time.

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* The possibility of Russian intervention seemed more logical at the time and received closer attention than the possibility of Chinese communist intervention. (Hearings, Part 2, pp. 949, 1434, 1490, 1504; Part 4, pp. 2585, 2586, 2610, 2630). It may be noted that, in his testimony, MacArthur implied greater concern at the time regarding possible Soviet intervention. (Part 1, pp. 250f.)

Some correction probably needs to be made, therefore, for the impression derived from the MacArthur hearings that the gradual expansion of the U.S. military commitment on behalf of South Korea was due solely to a gradual realization of the strength of the aggressor forces and the predicament of the South Korean army.* It is likely, rather, that two factors operated. The gradual perception of the difficult military situation in Korea probably accounted for the piecemeal increase in U.S. forces. Concern over the possibility of Soviet intervention, on the other hand, was probably among the factors which influenced the decision at first to limit the operation of U.S. forces to South Korea and then, as anxiety as to Soviet intervention lifted, to extend the theater of operations to North Korea as well.**

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* While few newspaper accounts asserted directly that the piecemeal commitment of U.S. forces also reflected official caution induced by uncertainty as to Soviet intentions, such a relationship at least suggested itself more clearly at the time than in the disclosures at the MacArthur hearings. See, for example, Pearson, W.P., June 30, 1950.

** Some support for this interpretation is found in Marshall's observation that the initial limitation of Air and Navy action to the area south of the 38th Parallel was probably motivated in part by a desire to avoid further involvements. (Hearings, Part 1, p. 535.) While Marshall was not a participant in the policy decisions of late June 1950, upon returning to office later that year he familiarized himself with the record. Marshall also disclosed, reading from the June 29 directive to MacArthur, that the decision to commit Air, Navy, and limited Army forces did not constitute a decision to engage in war with the Soviet Union, should Soviet forces intervene in Korea: "'If Soviet forces actively oppose our operations in Korea, your forces should defend themselves but should take no action to aggravate the situation, and you should report the situation to Washington.'" (Ibid., p. 536).

As newspaper accounts suggest, not only were the events of these first days probably closely scanned for indicators of Soviet intentions,* but a direct attempt was promptly made by U.S. leaders to clarify this question. Through diplomatic channels, the U.S. on June 27th requested the Soviet government to use its influence with the North Korean authorities to have the invading forces withdrawn. The Soviets declined promptly, on June 29th, contending that events in Korea had been provoked by an attack by South Korean troops and reaffirming the "traditional" Soviet "principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other states." According to the press, this reply was carefully scanned by U.S. officials for clues as to Soviet intentions and found reassuring in this respect.** An earlier (June 28) Pravda comment on the U.S. diplomatic note had been similarly interpreted by the State Department.***

The important decision committing U.S. ground troops in support of South Korea was made on June 30, following by one day the Soviet reply to the U.S. note. In the MacArthur hearings this decision is represented as having been made, and its timing determined, solely in response to the necessities of the rapidly deteriorating military

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* See, for example, Stevens, N.Y.T., June 26, 1950; General Stratemeyer's denial of reports that Russian pilots were in action, N.Y.T., June 30, 1950; Baldwin, N.Y.T., July 17, 1950; special dispatch of June 30 from Frankfurt, Germany, N.Y.T., July 1, 1950.

** For example, Kuhn, in W.P., July 1, 1950: "Further study of the Soviet note of Thursday...produced some confidence here that the Russians did not want to commit themselves to an open clash with the West at this time." See also A.P. dispatch in W.P., June 30, 1950; Waggoner and Reston in the N.Y.T., June 30 and July 2, 1950, respectively.

*** Kuhn, W.P., June 29, 1950.

situation in Korea. Following a personal reconnaissance of the battlefield, probably on June 29, MacArthur transmitted to the Pentagon a sober report on the military situation and recommended the employment of U.S. ground forces. To what extent the reassuring picture of the Soviets' intentions, gleaned from their reply of June 29, made it easier to take the fateful decision of the following day to commit ground combat troops cannot be conclusively established on the basis of available materials. One newspaper account hinted at such a connection,* but the impact of the Soviet note in this respect was probably a subtle one and, therefore, difficult to recall or to document.

The exact sequence of events which resulted in a commitment to use U.S. ground forces to stem and throw back the North Koreans has been deferred to this point because of the difficulty of reconstructing the picture from the MacArthur hearings. Initially, MacArthur was authorized use of ground troops in South Korea only to ensure evacuation of U.S. nationals. Such an authorization of non-Army ground troops may have been made, or implied, as early as June 25th, when he was allowed to "take action by Air and Navy to prevent the Inchon-Kimpo-Seoul area from falling into unfriendly hands," thus interfering with evacuation efforts. (Hearings, Part 5, Appendix K, p. 3192; also Bradley, Part 2, p. 1011.) But an explicit authorization to use Army combat and service forces was apparently made only on June 29th,

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* Hinton, N.Y.T., July 1, 1950.

"to insure the retention of a port and air base in the general area of Pusan." (Hearings, Part 1, p. 536; and Part 5, Appendix K, p. 3192). It would seem that this authorization of June 29th was also for the purpose of ensuring evacuation. (Bradley, Hearings, Part 2, pp. 1011, 1112, 1121 f.; MacArthur's testimony is less clear-cut on this point: See Part 1, pp. 231, 235 f.) MacArthur conducted a personal reconnaissance of the battlefield, apparently after receiving the June 29 directive. He reported immediately to the J.C.S. (early morning of June 30, Washington time) that the condition of the South Korean army was such that "the only assurance of holding the Han River line and to regain lost ground would be through the commitment of United States ground combat forces into the Korean battle area. Accordingly, he stated, if authorized, it was his intention to move immediately a United States regimental combat team to the combat area in Korea as the nucleus of a possible buildup of two divisions from Japan for early offensive action in accordance with his mission of clearing South Korea of North Korean forces." (Quoted by Bradley from a compilation of documentary materials in Hearings, Part 2, p. 1012.) MacArthur's recollection of his report to the J.C.S. appears faulty in holding that he recommended use of U.S. ground troops for the purpose of holding a bridgehead at Pusan. (See Hearings, Part 1, pp. 235 f.) Bradley's testimony that MacArthur at this early date initiated the idea of using U.S. ground troops in an offensive action against the North Koreans (Part 2, pp. 1011, 1121 f.) was supported by Johnson (Hearings, Part 4, pp. 2609 f.)

However, Admiral Sherman implied that the policy-makers in Washington, in quickly accepting MacArthur's recommendation for use of U.S. combat ground troops, did not go so far as to approve of a build-up for offensive action. (Part 2, pp. 1650 f.) On the other hand, such parts of the directive of June 30th to MacArthur as were reproduced in the hearings merely state that "the limitation on the employment of Army forces imposed on June 29, 1950 was rescinded." (Hearings, Part 5, Appendix K, p. 3192.) Moreover, Johnson in his testimony stated quite positively that the Defense Department's interpretation of the administration's decision of June 30th was that it was, along the lines of MacArthur's recommendation, a policy commitment for eventual offensive action to clear South Korea. (Hearings, Part 4, p. 2610; see also Bradley, Hearings, Part 2, p. 1112.) The official public statement at the time by President Truman, it was recalled to Johnson, announced merely that General MacArthur had been authorized "to use certain supporting troops." Johnson's reply intimated that for security reasons it had been considered unwise to advertise the plan for a build-up for eventual offensive action. (Hearings, Part 4, p. 2610.)

Objectives and Means in U.S. Policy Calculations

Korea well illustrates some of the policy dilemmas which may arise when U.S. leaders are forced to deal with communist aggression in peripheral areas. Particularly evident was the problem of relating objectives and means in formulating a policy reaction to the North Korean attack. The problem of relating means and objectives in this case was a complex one for several reasons. First, U.S. policy-makers did not share a firm and clear-cut view of Soviet strategic intentions behind the North Korean attack. As we have already noted, several interpretations of the significance of the local aggression were held in policy-making circles which had divergent policy implications. U.S. leaders were forced to act while remaining uncertain as to some of the possible dangers of the situation. Specifically, this meant they were being guided by several objectives, the implementation of which was not smoothly integrated. They wished to force or encourage a more or less immediate retreat or withdrawal on the part of the Communists from the Korean adventure. They wished to contain communist aggression in Korea. They wished, also, to deter the Soviet Union from launching other local aggressions elsewhere. One might add that, in acting in Korea ("containment" objective), they hoped to avoid provoking Soviet intervention. There is some reason to believe that the means chosen to implement certain of these objectives (deterrence and avoidance of Soviet intervention) prejudiced to some extent the achievement of a communist "retreat" or withdrawal from the Korean adventure.

U.S. policy-makers appear to have hoped, initially, that limited force commitments on behalf of South Korea might succeed in bringing about an immediate, voluntary withdrawal of the North Korean forces back to the 38th Parallel. As spelled out in the first resolution of the United Nations Security Council on June 25, the objective was to secure a cease-fire and a withdrawal of North Korean troops to the border. Similarly, the U.S. note of June 27th to the Soviet Union contained a request that it "use its influence" with the North Koreans to this end.

What was the basis for the expectation or hope that the initial U.S. policy moves of the first few days might succeed in inducing a withdrawal? Contemporary newspaper accounts give a more detailed picture on this score than do disclosures at the MacArthur hearings. This hopeful expectation was evidently derived from the "testing" interpretation of the North Korean attack, especially that aspect of it which regarded the communist move into South Korea as an "asking-of-a question" type of action. (See above, p.11 .) The major U.S. decision of June 27, announcing U.S. air and naval support for the South Koreans and "drawing the line" with respect to Formosa, was regarded as giving the answer to such a question:

> If this estimate of the situation is correct, the Russians will let the North Koreans fall back to their border, the Thirty-eighth Parallel, and, in their own propaganda, dismiss the affair as something initiated by the North Koreans, independently and without Russian responsibility. (Friendly, N.P., June 28, 1950.)

Similarly, the Alsop brothers reported the U.S. policy-makers' hopeful expectation:

> The purpose of President Truman's decision [of June 27]... is simply to persuade the Kremlin that the United States means what it says. It is hoped that the Kremlin, convinced that the United States means business, will soon call off its puppets. (W.P., June 30, 1950.)

The Soviets declined to "intervene" in the Korean situation (Soviet reply of June 29 to U.S. note), and the advancing North Korean forces did not respond to the suggestion that they return to the 38th Parallel. The initial effort to secure a withdrawal or retreat, therefore, was quite unsuccessful.

Accordingly, within a few days, U.S. leaders evidently accepted the fact that the initial "withdrawal" objective was no longer within the realm of immediate or easy accomplishment. With the commitment of U.S. ground troops to Korea on June 30, policy calculations began to emphasize direct military pressure as a means of inducing withdrawal.* With this development, measures aimed at securing "withdrawal" began to resemble the more familiar containment strategy. The expectation of a withdrawal now appeared to wait upon the creation of a position of military strength in Korea itself. This more realistic conception of the policy prerequisites for realizing the "withdrawal" objective was reflected in some newspaper accounts:

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* There is some reason to believe that the earlier optimistic expectation of a quick, "voluntary" withdrawal may have also attended the initial commitment of small U.S. ground forces to the battle-front. Some U.S. leaders may have believed that the North Korean forces would be withdrawn from South Korea upon their first contact with U.S. forces because Soviet leaders did not want a direct clash with U.S. forces. (The writer remembers having seen newspaper reports to this effect at the time but has been unable to locate them for citation here.)

> ...The hope persisted [in official quarters] that the Kremlin would keep the conflict localized and would call it off in the end.*

What conclusion can be drawn from the failure to induce an immediate withdrawal of North Korean forces to the 38th Parallel? According to the Kennan thesis, and similar formulations by other specialists on Soviet affairs, the Politburo withdraws or "retreats" only in the face of strong, determined resistance, not in response merely to a polite diplomatic request. But this statement of the prerequisites for inducing a Soviet "retreat" is a general hypothesis. As such it does not furnish a blueprint for policy calculation and action in any specific situation. The degree of strength that will deter the Soviet Union from probing a "soft-spot" and the degree and manner of resistance which will induce it to withdraw its tentacles are questions which require contextual analysis. The policy utilization of the "retreat" hypothesis requires estimates of a more specific character, which this thesis itself does not provide.

It is obvious, of course, that the "pressure" brought to bear by the United States and the United Nations in the first days after the North Korean invasion was insufficient to induce a withdrawal to the 38th Parallel. The simplest explanation for this failure is that the amount of "pressure" exerted was insufficient. The U.N. "cease-fire" resolution of June 25, the announcement of U.S. air and naval support on June 27, the announcement that "certain" U.S. ground forces were being sent to the South Korean battle-front--all these

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* Kuhn, N.P., July 1, 1950; underlining supplied. See also Kuhn, N.P., July 8, 1950, and the account of Acheson's press conference, N.P., July 13, 1950.

measures evidently constituted insufficient "pressure" to induce withdrawal from the Korean venture. The U.S. diplomatic request to the Soviet Union on June 27th, it may be remarked, contained no threat of further "pressure" and must have been quite ineffectual from this standpoint.*

It may be useful to consider in some detail the impact of the deneutralization of Formosa, a step taken to "localize" the conflict (the deterrence objective), upon the simultaneous policy objective of inducing an early withdrawal to the 38th Parallel. One may speculate whether the deneutralization of Formosa at this early stage of the Korean war did not drastically alter the Politburo's estimate of the strategic significance of the Korean conflict and place "withdrawal" of the North Koreans into an entirely different tactical perspective. If we assume that the Soviets moved into South Korea under the impression that the U.S. had given up this area and, further, that the Soviets were surprised by the American decision to intervene, then the U.S. policy reversal on Formosa might well have seemed to the Politburo evidence of a calculated plan to "invite" the North Korean attack in order to use it as a justification for putting into effect a far more vigorous Far Eastern policy. Such a Politburo image of devious U.S. policy calculations,

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* According to Albert Warner, whose account was said to be based on interviews with "top participants" in the Blair House meetings, "nothing was expected of this gesture.... It was an indirect assurance of the limited American military objective. It would also give Russia an opportunity to retire gracefully from the chessboard in case it was sufficiently moved by the show of American determination."
("How the Korea Decision Was Made," Harper's Magazine, June 1951, p. 104.)

moreover one possibly accompanied by expectations of further "aggressive" steps by the U.S. in the Far East, would have led Soviet leaders to view their interests in the Korean war in a much broader framework than they had when they ordered the North Koreans to attack. The stakes must have been seen now to be much larger than merely the question of control of South Korea. Faced overnight by what seemed to them an increasingly "aggressive," and potentially dangerous, U.S. Far Eastern policy, the Soviets might well have regarded their main objective in the area now as that of deterring this development. The initial policy of "advance" into a peripheral power vacuum may have been speedily transformed into a major "defensive" effort to oppose what were regarded as U.S. plans for expansion in the Far East.

If this analysis of the Soviet interpretation of the U.S. policy reaction is correct, then the U.S. objective of inducing a withdrawal to the 38th Parallel was considerably complicated by the simultaneous pursuit of the "deterrence" objective. The deneutralization of Formosa by the U.S. Seventh Fleet, while undoubtedly a manifestation of strength and determination, and however necessary, probably had little value as "pressure" to induce a withdrawal from the Korean venture and may actually have made more difficult the realization of this objective.

In this and other respects, Korea may point to a more general danger inherent in conflicts over peripheral areas. Local wars may "get out of hand" as a result of interaction between rival policies based on incorrect estimates of each other's intentions.

Unless each side correctly estimates the other's intentions and correctly calculates the impact of its actions upon the opponent's image of its intentions, conflicts in peripheral areas may take a course initially undesired by both sides.

The objective of securing an immediate withdrawal from the Korean venture may have been prejudiced to some extent also by an undue concern over the Politburo's interest in its prestige.

Possibly in line with Kennan's thesis on this point,* U.S. policy-makers were most careful to give the Politburo a chance to "withdraw" graciously from the Korean venture. This impression is derived from many contemporary newspaper accounts; there is little on the matter in the MacArthur hearings. Numerous commentators noted the unwillingness of official U.S. spokesmen to charge the Soviet Union with direct responsibility for unleashing the attack. Truman's early decision not to charge Moscow with having supplied material aid for the North Korean invasion, according to Arthur Krock, was designed to permit the Soviets an opportunity to disavow responsibility or active interest in the aggression and, further, to accept the U.S. diplomatic invitation to bring about a withdrawal

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* Kennan has written: "While the Kremlin is basically flexible in its reaction to political realities, it is by no means unamenable to considerations of prestige. Like almost any other government, it can be placed by tactless and threatening gestures in a position where it cannot afford to yield even though this might be dictated by its sense of realism...it is a sine qua non of successful dealing with Russia that the foreign government in question should remain at all times cool and collected and that its demands on Russian policy should be put forward in such a manner as to leave the way open for a compliance not too detrimental to Russian prestige." ("The Sources of Soviet Conduct," Foreign Affairs, Vol. 25, No. 4, July 1947, pp. 575 f.)

of the North Korean forces. (N.Y.T., June 28, 1950.) Similarly, in an article entitled "Soviet Face-Saving Made Still Possible," Kuhn reported that Secretary of State Acheson in his press conference had refused to say a word which would connect Soviet Russia with the North Korean invasion, a caution which President Truman had also observed in his statements of June 26th and 27th, and the U.S. Security Council in its resolutions of June 25th and 27th.*

The question may be raised whether this marked concern for Soviet prestige may not have been interpreted by the Politburo as one indication (among others) that a total withdrawal from the North Korean venture would not be necessary. It is interesting to speculate what the Politburo reaction would have been, had the U.S. and the U.N. held it more directly responsible for the North Korean attack or, at least, for bringing about an immediate North Korean withdrawal to the 38th Parallel. That the Politburo was ready to do so, if need be, was indeed inferred by some observers from the initial Soviet propaganda explanation for the outbreak of Korean hostilities, namely that South Korean forces attacked first and were driven off and pursued by North Korean forces. Only several days later, when it may have become clear to the Politburo that a total withdrawal would not be necessary, was the Korean "civil war" theme introduced by Gromyko. (N.Y.T., July 4, 1950.) This shift in the Soviet line constituted an entirely different legitimization of the North Korean action. The "civil war" thesis was, it may be

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* W.P., June 29, 1950. On Acheson's press conference see also N.Y.T., June 29, 1950.

noted, less conducive to the idea of a Soviet-inspired withdrawal of North Korean forces to the 38th Parallel.

The policy of not implicating the U.S.S.R. directly may have been motivated by more than an estimate of the importance of the prestige factor in Soviet policy. At the time a U.S. policy reaction to the North Korean attack was being formulated, it will be recalled, some U.S. officials seriously feared that the Politburo might be embarking on a series of aggressions. The non-hostile and "correct" U.S. approach to the U.S.S.R. might, indeed, have been motivated in part by a conscious or unconscious desire not to provoke the Politburo into further aggressions.* In other words, these efforts to help the Soviets to save "face" may have been unduly shaped by simultaneous efforts to keep the conflict from spreading. And, consequently, U.S. cooperation in Soviet face-saving may have taken a form which was self-defeating to the policy objective of securing a withdrawal in Korea.

In any event, the Korean case raises anew the question, on which there appears to be some disagreement among specialists on Soviet behavior,** of the importance of the "prestige" factor in Soviet policy calculations.

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* According to Albert Warner (see footnote above, p. 37), one objective of the U.S. note of June 27th to the U.S.S.R. was to reassure it indirectly of the limited American military objective in Korea. One journalist, reporting the State Department's detailed refutation of the charge in the Soviet reply to the effect that the U.N. action in Korea was illegal, noted: "This was a good sample of the official mood yesterday, and of the effort to keep diplomatic dealing with Moscow 'correct' and unprovocative." (Kuhn, N.Y.T., July 1, 1950.)

** The prestige factor appears to be assigned little importance in Nathan Leites' analysis of the conditions under which the Politburo considers "retreat." See his Study of Bolshevism, pp. 497-500, 537, 458-460.

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The present study was undertaken in the belief that there is a need for systematic appraisals of the assumptions and calculations of U.S. policies directed towards meeting the threat of communist aggression, particularly in peripheral areas. The initial U.S. policy reaction to the North Korean attack of June 25, 1950, is distinctive in this respect in several ways. First, owing to the blatant character of the North Korean attack across a well-defined boundary, it constituted a clear-cut case of military aggression. Second, because of the overwhelming strength of North Korean forces as compared to the South Koreans, the United States and the United Nations had to react immediately if they were to prevent the overrunning of South Korea. Third, the communist aggression in this case took place in an area not considered of strategic importance to U.S. security.

Despite these distinctive elements, the Korean case may be instructive in several general respects. First, the fact that the U.S. response to the North Korean aggression involved an abrupt reversal of U.S. strategic planning raises questions regarding the adequacy of such planning and its role in decision-making. These questions require more detailed consideration than has been possible in this paper. Second, Korea revealed that important policy decisions on opposing Soviet initiatives are based not only on estimates of the opponent's intentions and capabilities but also upon more general assumptions regarding the characteristic behavior of the opponent. Third, Korea illustrates a general danger likely to be present in other conflicts over peripheral areas, namely that local wars or conflicts may "get out of hand" as a result of incorrect estimates

of each other's intentions and faulty predictions of the impact of one's policy moves upon the opponent's behavior.

As for the methodological implications of the present study, it would seem that, while the limitations of newspaper accounts as source materials for this purpose are obvious enough, they remain of considerable use for research on certain aspects of U.S. foreign policy calculations. In the United States the number of persons outside the government with an interest and voice in foreign policy is very large. Therefore, unusual opportunities are afforded journalists to familiarize themselves with intelligence on foreign policy problems and with the calculations behind policy decisions. Competent journalists who take the time and make the effort can indeed go far in clarifying for the interested public the rationale behind foreign policy actions. The reliability and fullness of information that can be gleaned from more responsible newspaper accounts can be ultimately ascertained, of course, only by systematically comparing the result with such authentic inside accounts as later become available. For several reasons which need not be elaborated here, the MacArthur hearings did not produce the ideal type of "inside" material by means of which to verify impressions gained from contemporary newspaper accounts. To the extent that validation was possible in this study, however, it strongly indicates that a surprising amount of reliable information about U.S. policy calculations can be obtained directly from, or by reading between the lines of, the better contemporary newspaper accounts. Off-the-record

background information can often be easily identified and distinguished from personal interpretation provided by the reporter. The possibility of being misled by faulty reporting and interpretation can be minimized, moreover, by relying more heavily on correspondents (e.g., Reston, Baldwin, the Alsops) who are known to have good contacts in official circles. With several competent reporters covering the same story, too, there is an opportunity to compare and check information provided.