

The Role of the Operational Artist: General MacArthur in the Korean War from June 1950 to April 1951

A Monograph

by

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Abstract

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This study applies the theory of the operational artist to evaluate General Douglas MacArthur's command in the Korean War to illuminate considerations in regards to a senior military commander's authority to discuss policy and negotiate military strategy with policymakers and their responsibility to operate within the constraints imposed by policy to achieve the political aim, through the military aim. Victory emerged through the restoration of the 38th Parallel, where discourse and negotiation between policymakers and the operational artist resolved the tension between policy and military strategy, while tragedy and failure emerged in the remainder of General MacArthur's command, when the discourse failed and the operational artist disregarded policy constraints in pursuit of his own aims. The analysis implicates considerations for senior military commanders in their role as operational artists in the context of large-scale combat operations within wars of limited aims, constrained by competing interests.

Contents

Abstract	iii
Acknowledgements	v
Acronyms	vi
Illustrations	vii
Introduction	1
Restore the 38th Parallel.....	8
Unify Korea.....	27
Seek Victory Where Possible	46
Conclusion.....	54
Bibliography	59

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Acronyms

ADRP	Army Doctrine Reference Publication
CCF	Chinese Communist Forces
CINCFE	Commander-in-Chief Far East
CJCS	Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
FM	Field Manual
FRUS	Foreign Relations of the United States
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
KMAG	Korean Military Advisory Group
LSCO	Large-scale Combat Operations
LTG	Lieutenant General
NCA	National Command Authority
NSC	National Security Council
ROK	Republic of Korea
UN	United Nations

Illustrations

Figure 1. Halting the North Korean Advance	20
Figure 2. UN Offensive	26
Figure 3. Chinese Initial Offensive	36
Figure 4. CCF Second Offensive.....	42
Figure 5. UN Counteroffensive.....	48

Introduction

Publishing Field Manual (FM) 3-0 *Operations* in October 2017, the US Army shifted the priority from focusing on counterinsurgency to large-scale combat operations (LSCO), making LSCO against a peer threat represent the most significant readiness requirement. This realignment responds to a perceived threat from the military advancement and recent aggressive activity by competitor nations such as Russia, China, North Korea, and Iran. Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and China's activity in the South China Sea serve as examples of the intent to contest the world order. In addition, the overlapping interests between the nations heighten concern. Within this context, the potential exists for miscalculation, leading to escalation, as well as simultaneous conflict in multiple regions. This strategic environment challenges the National Command Authority (NCA), supported by military professionals, in establishing political aims and allocation of resources across competing global interests. Thus, arises the question, with consideration to the dynamics of the political environment and potential for LSCO with limited aims, what is the role of senior military commanders with relation to the NCA in the development and implementation of policy and military strategy to further US interests?¹

Carl von Clausewitz's theory *On War* explains the nature of war, which remains relevant in understanding warfare in the twenty-first century. He derived the nature of real, or limited, war as a political endeavor in pursuit of limited aims, establishing the necessity for the civil-military relationship. Clausewitz deduced that war is an instrument of policy, emerging from the realm of politics consisting of the interrelationship between the enmity of the people, the chance of military victory deduced by commanders, and the purpose or reason, narrative and legitimacy given by the government for the use of force.² Because of political origins, the degree of force

¹ US Department of the Army, *Field Manual (FM) 3-0, Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2017), ix.

² Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 88-9.

employed depends on the political aim with consideration to the conditions and capacities of the belligerents. Thus, war does not reach the logical extremes of uncontrolled violence because political interests moderate the effort. The greater the political motivation for war, the greater the belligerent contributes to the war effort. Since in most cases a policy of maximum exertion for war would fail due to domestic costs, the belligerent must “adopt a middle course.”³ Therefore, the political aim is naturally limited. However, the natural aim of the military is the destruction of the enemy armed forces. This creates a natural tension between politics and the military. Clausewitz emphasized that since, “Policy is the guiding intelligence and war only the instrument,” then the military point of view must subordinate to the political, with the assumption that, “policy knows the instrument it means to use.”⁴ Finally, war does not suspend political discourse, and as reason, chance, and enmity change, so might the political aim. Using Clausewitz’s theory describing wars of limited aim sets the political environment for the interaction between the policymaker and operational artist.⁵

Clausewitz theory of war still applies in the twenty-first century, with increased emphasis on real war being limited due to factors such as the proliferation and expansion of nuclear capabilities since the Second World War. Militaries of the twenty-first century, equipped with modern nuclear weapons, are capable of an unprecedented level of destruction. If uncontrolled, a single military could devastate the world. In addition to nuclear capabilities, the ability for militaries to project such destructive power globally in a short amount of time incurs even greater risk to policy and survival. Nations competing globally, like the United States, must prioritize effort regionally while accounting for the interdependencies across regions, while each independently influences the domestic interests of the homeland.

³ Clausewitz, *On War*, 585.

⁴ Ibid., 607.

⁵ Ibid., 80-1, 88, 577, 585, 605.

Edward Luttwak's theory of "The Levels of Strategy," found in his book *Strategy: The Logic of War and Peace*, elaborates on the importance of harmony between the political and military dimensions of strategy.⁶ He describes a vertical dimension as an interplay of the operational and the grand strategic levels, where proper alignment of purposes unifies effort. In addition, he describes a horizontal dimension, which considers the ability to achieve success over adversaries within each level. Since the purposes link vertically, success or failure in the horizontal dimension of one level directly influences the success or failure of the other. So how does a senior military commander support the NCA in formulation and implementation of policy to achieve harmonization across both levels and dimensions?⁷

In his article "Blue Whales and Tiger Sharks: Politics, Policy, and the Military Operational Artist," Dr. G. Stephen Lauer theorizes the relationship dynamics between the civilian policymaker and the operational artist, defined as the "designated commander of forces intended to secure a US policy objective."⁸ To achieve harmony, Lauer advocates for "politically aware military advice," where the operational artist "has an understanding of the *politics* of the environment under which a policy determination occurs, without the requirement, or fear, of being *political*."⁹ Lauer describes an unofficial emergent process of discourse and negotiations, which is "complex, continuous, and dynamic."¹⁰ Within the process, operational artists hold the authority to discuss policy and negotiate for the military aims, means, and ways for conduct of military operations in conflict. A failure to negotiate and resolve tension between the directed aims, means, and ways, manifests disharmony in the conduct of military operations and increases

⁶ Edward N. Luttwak, *Strategy: The Logic of War and Peace* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 2001), 234.

⁷ Ibid., xii.

⁸ G. Stephen Lauer, "Blue Whales and Tiger Sharks: Politics, Policy, and the Military Operational Artist," *The Strategy Bridge*, February 20, 2018, accessed March 13, 2019, <https://thestrategybridge.org/the-bridge/2018/2/20/blue-whales-and-tiger-sharks-politics-policy-and-the-military-operational-artist>.

⁹ Lauer, "Blue Whales and Tiger Sharks."

¹⁰ Ibid.

risk of defeat. In addition to the authority, operational artists possess the responsibility for the employment of forces within the constraints imposed by policy to achieve the political aim. The tactical outcome of military operations provides feedback into the negotiation process, triggering changes throughout the entirety of the process. Dr. Lauer's theory of the operational artist provides a lens to analyze the role of senior commanders in the operational environment of the twenty-first century.¹¹

Since the process involves negotiations, it is important to understand how an operational artist creates campaign plans and policymakers make policy decisions. Operational artists apply operational art to design campaign plans to pursue the political aim. Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 3-0 *Operations* states, "For Army forces, operational art is the pursuit of strategic objectives, in whole or in part, through the arrangement of tactical actions in time, space, and purpose," integrating the ends, ways, and means while accounting for risk.¹²

In contrast, political scientist Alan Lamborn provides a lens for understanding the formulation of policy in his article, "Theory and Politics in World Politics."¹³ Policy emerges from the balance of calculated policy and political risk. Policy risk depends on the expected value calculated by aggregating the probabilities, benefits, and costs of potential outcomes of a policy in terms of interests. Political risk depends on the adverse effects on the political power position, which is the ability to make and sustain preferred policy choices, of policymaking factions. Policies that negatively affect policymaking factions or counter prevailing norms of legitimate behavior damage the political position of the policymaker. In addition, policymakers consider the impact within the various international and domestic arenas. Thus, policymakers implement policies aiming to maximize the perceived expected value and political influence, and if

¹¹ Lauer, "Blue Whales and Tiger Sharks."

¹² US Department of the Army, *Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 3-0, Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2016), 4-1.

¹³ Alan C. Lamborn, "Theory and the Politics in World Politics," *International Studies Quarterly* 41, no. 2 (June 1997): 187, accessed October 31, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3013931>.

necessary, minimize losses, across the range of political arenas. Application of Dr. Lauer's theory of the operational artist to history, with considerations to the contexts of Clausewitz's theory of wars of limited aim, the doctrinal concept of operational art, and Lamborn's theory of politics, helps to inform future commanders of their role within the complex operating environment of the twenty-first century.¹⁴

This monograph uses a historic, chronological methodology to evaluate General Douglas MacArthur's role as the operational artist during the Korean War between June 1950 and April 1951. Evaluation of General MacArthur's performance provides a unique opportunity for insights in support of the current operational environment. First, the Korean War is arguably the only LSCO involving the United States since the Second World War in which the United States experienced significant periods of defeat in battle. Second, the dynamic nature of the Korean War's political aims within a relatively short time highlights the importance of the continuation of discourse between the political leadership and the operational artist and flexibility within a campaign. Third, President Truman's decisions involving the Korean War required a balance of competing global interests, which resonate with policymakers today, constraining General MacArthur's means available. President Truman limited priority for Korea due to European commitments and restricted the range of military options to avoid escalation with the Soviet Union and China.¹⁵ Thus, analysis of the Korean War through the lens of General MacArthur as the operational artists informs future operational artists in their role in the development of policy and military strategy to achieve victory in the conduct of LSCO with dynamic political aims.

The criteria selected to evaluate General MacArthur's role as the operational artists focuses on two characteristics derived from Lauer's "Theory of Policy, Politics, and the

¹⁴ Lamborn, "Theory and the Politics in World Politics," 191-7.

¹⁵ Morton H. Halperin, "The Limiting Process in the Korean War," In *Korea and the Theory of Limited War*, ed. Allen Guttman (Lexington, MA: D. C. Heath and Company, 1967), 91-5.

Operational Artist.”¹⁶ First, operational artists hold the authority to discuss policy and negotiate the military aim, means, and ways with the National Command Authority (NCA) and policymaker. Second, operational artists possess the responsibility for the accomplishment of the military aim, in support of the political aim, through the implementation of an emergent strategy in the form of a campaign plan, within constraints of policy. Thus, success depends on the execution of these two criteria, the authority to negotiate and the responsibility to accomplish the aims.

In addition to the theory and doctrine already mentioned, this analysis leveraged various sources to provide a historical study of the Korean War. For primary sources, first, the *Foreign Relations of the United States* (FRUS) series provided historical documentation of national policy, National Security Council (NSC) meetings and papers, Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) directives, and General MacArthur’s reports and responses to the JCS. Second, the Truman Library supplemented the FRUS with minutes of cabinet meetings, conversations between President Truman and staff prior to and following major events, and Truman’s personal notes in regards to General MacArthur. Third, review of United Nations (UN) Security Council Resolutions revealed the political consensus of the UN aims for the war as it progressed. For secondary sources, first, Rovere and Schlesinger Jr.’s *General MacArthur and President Truman: The Struggle for Control of American Foreign Policy* characterized the personalities and dynamics of the relationship between General MacArthur and President Truman, specifically illustrating General MacArthur’s influence on American foreign policy.¹⁷ Second, Allan Millett’s *The War For Korea, 1950-1951: They Came from the North* provided detailed descriptions of the

¹⁶ Lauer, “Blue Whales and Tiger Sharks.”

¹⁷ Richard Rovere and Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., *General MacArthur and President Truman: The Struggle for Control of American Foreign Policy* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1992), ix – xvii.

operational plans and results of tactical actions on the battlefield throughout the war.¹⁸ Third, David Halberstam's *The Coldest Winter: America and the Korean War* delivered a critical analysis of General MacArthur's command in conflict with the strategic context and American policy.¹⁹ The synthesis of the historical documentation provided evidence to illustrate General MacArthur's role as the operational artist during the Korean War.

The story of General MacArthur as the operational artist in the Korean War divides well into three sections. The first section, reviewing the historical context of the war up to September 1950, illustrates MacArthur transforming defeat into victory through the negotiation to balance the aim with the allocated means and ways, achieving the initial policy aim of defending South Korea by restoring the 38th Parallel.²⁰ The second section demonstrates how the unresolved tension between MacArthur and the National Command Authority (NCA), originating from the divergence between the natural military aim to destroy Chinese forces versus political aim to avoid general war, created the conditions for defeat. The section ends with the Chinese seizure of Seoul on January 4, 1951, resulting in the NCA's acceptance of the failure to achieve the second policy aim to unify Korea.²¹ The third section reveals how MacArthur's public resistance and breach of authority against the third policy aim, which pursued negotiations for a peace settlement with Communist China, resulted in his relief from command on April 11, 1951.²² Concluding remarks follow the historical review, connecting the analysis to its relevance of the US operational environment in the early twenty-first century.

¹⁸ Allan R. Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951: They Came From the North* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2005), 12-3.

¹⁹ David Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter: America and the Korean War* (New York, NY: Hyperion, 2007), 12.

²⁰ United Nations Security Council, 1950, Resolution 82, June 25, 4, accessed March 13, 2019, [http://undocs.org/S/RES/82\(1950\)](http://undocs.org/S/RES/82(1950)).

²¹ Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 384.

²² Rovere and Schlesinger, *General MacArthur and President Truman*, 172-3.

Restore the 38th Parallel

Strategic Context

The Korean Peninsula serves as an epicenter of immense strategic relevance. Korea's geographic central position between eastern Russia, China, and Japan manifests Korean vulnerability to the interests of the three historic regional powers. Branching out from the Asian mainland, the peninsula provides strategic military value either as a "dagger" aimed at the heart of Japan or as a foothold for offensive action into Asia against either China or Russia.²³ In addition, the Yellow Sea to the west of the peninsula gives direct access into the Bohai Sea with close proximity to Beijing. Possession of both Formosa (Taiwan) and the Korean Peninsula create a dual threat for Chinese regimes.²⁴ The past wars in the late 19th century and early 20th century illustrate the historic strategic significance of the Korean Peninsula. In 1894, Korea served as the root cause of the First Sino-Japanese War, with Japan seeking to overthrow the Korean tributary status under the Chinese "mandate of heaven" amidst concerns of Russian intentions in the Far East, demonstrated by the construction of the Trans-Siberian railroad.²⁵ The Japanese success in the First Sino-Japanese War combined with the continued Russian expansion into the Korean sphere of influence led to the Russo-Japanese War in 1904.²⁶ Thus, due to the Korean Peninsula's geostrategic value in a region with competing regional powers, the status of the Korean Peninsula entails strategic implications.²⁷

²³ Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter*, 64.

²⁴ Neal H. Peterson, William Z Slany, Charles S. Sampson, John P. Glennon, and David W. Mabon, eds. 1976, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1950, East Asia and the Pacific, Volume VI* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office), Document 266, 452, accessed March 13, 2019, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1950v06/d266>.

²⁵ S.C.M. Paine, *The Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895: Perceptions, Power, and Primacy* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 6.

²⁶ Paine, *The Sino-Japanese War*, 6.

²⁷ Jakub Grygiel, *Great Powers and Geopolitical Change* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 22.

The arbitrary division of Korea following the Second World War set the context for the regional conflict in 1950.²⁸ To target the Japanese homeland nearing the end of the war, the US attacked into the Korean peninsula to provide additional airbase options, supplementing air operations from the Pacific island chain.²⁹ Interest in the peninsula increased when the US State Department in June identified the strategic concern that the Soviet Union might seek expansion into Korea following the defeat of Japan.³⁰ Therefore, the department set the aim to help Korea with the “establishment of a strong, democratic, independent nation.”³¹ President Truman and Stalin compromised in the short term by agreeing to share the task of disarming and repatriating the Japanese in Korea.³² Previous coordination during the war involved the use of geographic latitude and longitude lines, in lieu of geographic features, to set the jurisdiction for processing prisoners and caretaking civilians between victors.³³ US State planners identified the convenience of the 38th Parallel as the divisor, because it served as the first latitude line north of Seoul, the Han River, and included three major ports to facilitate US evacuation of Japanese.³⁴ The Soviets agreed to the division on August 16.³⁵ This division remained through failed negotiations between Korean political parties, resulting in the “theoretical sovereignty” of the Republic of Korea (ROK), led by US supported Syngman Rhee, and the socialist Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), led by Soviet supported Kim Il-Sung in August and September 1948

²⁸ David Rees, *Korea: The Limited War* (Baltimore, MD: Penguin Books, 1970), 10.

²⁹ Allan R. Millet, *The War For Korea, 1945-1950: A House Burning* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2005), 53.

³⁰ Millet, *The War For Korea, 1945-1950*, 55; Max Hastings, *The Korean War* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1987), 26-27.

³¹ Millet, *The War For Korea, 1945-1950*, 53; Rees, *Korea: The Limited War*, 12.

³² Millet, *The War For Korea, 1945-1950*, 45.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Millet, *The War For Korea, 1945-1950*, 45; Rees, *Korea: The Limited War*, 9.

³⁵ Hastings, *The Korean War*, 27.

respectively.³⁶ Thus, two ideologically competing governments of one culture occupied the geostrategic fault line between the US and Soviet spheres of influence, setting the stage for potential war.³⁷

US Policies

The world became “infinitely more dangerous” in the eyes of the American people by 1949 with comparison to the expectation of peace following the Second World War in four ways.³⁸ First, the Soviet Union transitioned as a wartime ally to the primary adversary. Second, the United States’ monopoly on atomic weapons ended with the Soviet’s test of an atomic bomb on August 29, 1949.³⁹ Third, the Chinese government under Chiang Kai-Shek fled to Formosa (Taiwan), failing to defeat the rise of Communist China under Mao Zedong.⁴⁰ The addition of the vast landmass and population of China to the communist effort increased fear in the American people.⁴¹ Fourth, instability due to both the Cold War and decolonization led to a global wave of wars of national liberation, some of which required America’s direct involvement.⁴² The expansion of the Soviet Union’s military power and global, communist influence threatened peace for the United States.

The Truman administration responded to the competition with a number of policies in the post Second World War era. In a speech to congress on March 12, 1947, Truman established the “Truman Doctrine” to counter Soviet influence by providing foreign economic and military aid to

³⁶ Rovere and Schlesinger, *General MacArthur and President Truman*, 109; Hastings, *The Korean War*, 42.

³⁷ Rees, *Korea: The Limited War*, 12.

³⁸ Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter*, 223.

³⁹ Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter*, 186; Duane R. Worley, *Orchestrating the Instruments of Power: A Critical Examination of the U.S. National Security System* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 115.

⁴⁰ Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter*, 238; I. F. Stone, *The Hidden History of the Korean War* (New York, NY: Monthly Review Press, 1952), 51; Worley, *Orchestrating the Instruments of Power*, 120.

⁴¹ Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter*, 223.

⁴² Worley, *Orchestrating the Instruments of Power*, 109-20.

destabilized, “free” nations such as Greece.⁴³ This included the use of Military Advisory Groups across the world to include Korea.⁴⁴ In addition, the administration invested in a “Europe First” strategy under Secretaries Marshall and Acheson, which included policies such as the “Marshall Plan,” or European Recovery Program, focused on reconstruction of Europe through US financial aid. The Berlin Airlift illustrated the US strategy. When the Soviet Union blockaded access to West Berlin, the administration demonstrated commitment of limited military force, in the form of US cargo aircraft, to achieve a limited objective while avoiding escalation to general war.⁴⁵ These policies highlighted the overall intent of the administration to rebuild Europe and counter the threat of a communist Soviet Union with diplomatic, economic, and military power while intending to avoid general war.

US policy leading up to the Korean War did not emphasize the importance of Korea in Asia, nor Asia over Europe. Although the US supported the UN aims to unify Korea under the ROK, that effort subordinated to other demands.⁴⁶ As far back as September 1947, Secretary of Defense Forrestal provided the assessment that, there was “little [military] strategic interest in maintaining” troop presence in Korea.⁴⁷ He explained that through the reliance on naval and air forces, the US could defend its interests in the Pacific and highlighted that ground forces in Korea would be a liability.⁴⁸ As the political stalemate continued into 1949, President Truman ordered

⁴³ Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter*, 247; Harry S. Truman, “Special Message to the Congress on Greece and Turkey: The Truman Doctrine,” March 12, 1947, *Public Papers of the Presidents*, accessed March 13, 2019, <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/p/ppotpus/4728447.1947.001/216?rgn=full+text;view=image;q1=march+12>.

⁴⁴ Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 5.

⁴⁵ Worley, *Orchestrating the Instruments of Power*, 115, 118.

⁴⁶ United Nations General Assembly, 1947, Resolution 112 (II), November 14, 16-8, accessed March 13, 2019, [undocs.org/A/RES/112\(II\)](https://undocs.org/A/RES/112(II)); United Nations General Assembly, 1948, Resolution 195 (III), December 12, 25-7, accessed March 13, 2019, [undocs.org/A/RES/195\(III\)](https://undocs.org/A/RES/195(III)); Millet, *The War For Korea, 1945-1950*, 55.

⁴⁷ John G. Reid, ed. 1972, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1947, The Far East, Volume VI* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office), Document 624, 817-8, accessed March 13, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1947v06/d624>.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 817-8.

the final withdrawal of Korean occupation forces, leaving only the Korean Military Advisory Group (K MAG) consisting of roughly 400 soldiers.⁴⁹

On January 12, 1950, Secretary of State Acheson publically identified the US line of defense in the Pacific linking Japan to Okinawa to the Philippines, deliberate in the omission of both Korea and Formosa.⁵⁰ This reiterated that the defensive line relied on air and sea power, showing caution in the commitment of ground forces in mainland Asia. Finally, National Security Council (NSC) paper 68, reviewed by the President in April 1950, emphasized the Soviet Union as the primary threat to national security, focused on the defense of Europe, and intent on avoiding conditions that may result in global war, two months prior to the invasion of South Korea.⁵¹ All of this indicated little priority for Korea. However, while the administration's strategic interests did not reside in Korea, the narrative of the "loss of China" manifested the political perception of the administration's weak stance against communism.⁵² Thus, the administration lacked pragmatic interests in Korea, yet political pressure forced an aggressive response to the North Korean invasion.

North Korea Invades

North Korea invaded South Korea on June 25, 1950, assaulting with seven divisions across the broad front of the 38th Parallel, with the aim to unify the Korean people through the *liberation* of the South Koreans.⁵³ North Korea's military, double the size of the South Korean army, proved far superior. Trained and equipped by Soviets, the mechanized North Korean army

⁴⁹ Rovere and Schlesinger, *General MacArthur and President Truman*, 111; Rees, *Korea: The Limited War*, 15.

⁵⁰ Rovere and Schlesinger, *General MacArthur and President Truman*, 110.

⁵¹ Neal H. Peterson, John P. Glennon, David W. Mabon, Ralph R. Goodwin, and William Z. Slany, eds. 1977, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1950, National Security Affairs; Foreign Economic Policy, Volume I* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office), Document 85, 236-92, accessed March 13, 2019. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1950v01>.

⁵² Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter*, 192, 238; Hastings, *The Korean War*, 48-9.

⁵³ Rovere and Schlesinger, *General MacArthur and President Truman*, 97-8, 113; Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter*, 80; Hastings, *The Korean War*, 52.

avoided all-out frontal assaults, maximized use of camouflage, and maintained discipline. They leveraged guerilla warfare, disguising some soldiers as peasants to conduct reconnaissance and call for artillery fire.⁵⁴ On the other hand, the South Koreans were overconfident and unprepared for the attack.⁵⁵ Although advised by the US military, they lacked the tanks, airplanes, and anti-tank weapon systems necessary to fight the North Koreans.⁵⁶ In addition, due to the unrest prior to war, the KMAC trained the South Korean army in stability operations rather than LSCO.⁵⁷ This induced a proclivity for premature withdrawal in battle due to fear of enemy seizure of rear areas.⁵⁸ This disparity resulted in North Korea shattering the South Korean defense.

The invasion required an immediate response from the UN and the Truman administration. On the day of invasion, the UN published a resolution setting the initial international aim, calling upon the North Koreans to withdraw to the 38th Parallel.⁵⁹ In the evening, Truman held a cabinet meeting to develop an immediate response to the invasion. The dialogue focused concern on attaining an accurate assessment of the situation and the potential for general war with the Soviets. In the meeting, Truman ordered the provision of supplies to the Koreans, MacArthur to send a survey group to Korea, and the Air Force to prepare for bombing Soviet bases in Asia. In addition, he authorized the use of military forces in a limited role to cover the evacuation of US citizens. However, he had not yet decided to go to war, explicitly stating he was not ready to name MacArthur as commander in chief in Korea.⁶⁰

⁵⁴ Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter*, 144; Hastings, *The Korean War*, 52; Rees, *Korea: The Limited War*, 3, 17.

⁵⁵ Rees, *Korea: The Limited War*, 16.

⁵⁶ Rovere and Schlesinger, *General MacArthur and President Truman*, 111; Rees, *Korea: The Limited War*, 3.

⁵⁷ Rovere and Schlesinger, *General MacArthur and President Truman*, 111.

⁵⁸ Rovere and Schlesinger, *General MacArthur and President Truman*, 112; Hastings, *The Korean War*, 53.

⁵⁹ UN Security Council, Resolution 82, 4.

⁶⁰ US Department of State, June 25, 1950, Memorandum of Conversation: Korean Situation, Acheson Papers, Secretary of State File, Harry S. Truman Library, 1-6.

The following day on June 26, Truman held a second cabinet meeting where he made the decision to embark the US on a war of limited aims. Due to the severity of the situation and consensus on avoiding appeasement, Truman authorized the use of naval and air forces to compel the North Koreans to withdraw to the 38th Parallel, in support of the UN resolution. In addition, he ordered preparations for general war across the Pacific, in the event the war expanded outside of Korea. However, the decision constrained the use of military force, prohibiting use of ground forces aligning with the previously discussed US regional strategy. Thus, the original intent for the war consisted of the limited aim to restore the 38th Parallel using exclusive air and naval power.⁶¹

President Truman announced US intervention on June 27, simultaneously in alignment with the UN. The North Korean army had already entered Seoul, intensifying the severity of the invasion.⁶² In the morning, Truman met with congressional officials to discuss the situation. He explained the logic behind the decision, blaming the Soviets for influencing the attack against South Korea. He was against appeasement, claiming, “If we were to let Asia go, the Near East would collapse and no telling what would happen in Europe.”⁶³ Following the meeting, Truman issued a public statement announcing military intervention to defend South Korea. Truman expressed the initial narrative for the war stating, “Communism has passed beyond the use of subversion to conquer independent nations and will now use armed invasion and war,” and that the United States would support the UN resolutions.⁶⁴ Later that day, the UN ratified the second

⁶¹ US Department of State, June 26, 1950, Memorandum of Conversation: Korean Situation, Acheson Papers, Secretary of State File, Harry S. Truman Library, 1-8.

⁶² Rovere and Schlesinger, *General MacArthur and President Truman*, 105.

⁶³ Cabinet of the United States, June 27, 1950, Notes Regarding Meeting With Congressional Leaders, George Elsey, Elsey Papers, Harry S. Truman Administration File, Harry S. Truman Library, 4, accessed March 13, 2019. https://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/koreanwar/documents/index.php?documentdate=1950-06-27&documentid=ki-2-40&pagenumber=1.

⁶⁴ John P. Glennon, ed. 1976, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1950, Korea, Volume VII* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office), Document 119, 202-3, accessed March 13, 2019, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1950v07>.

resolution, recommending members to assist the ROK, “to repel the armed attack and to restore international peace and security in the area.”⁶⁵

On June 29, in implementation of the President’s guidance, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Omar Bradley, issued a directive to General MacArthur, the Commander in Chief of the Far East (CINCFE), designating him as the theater commander in Korea to achieve the political aim. The directive authorized the use of naval and air forces to achieve the military aim “to clear South Korea of North Korean forces.”⁶⁶ In addition, it authorized extension of air operations into North Korea, with the exception of the frontier areas near Manchuria or the Soviet Union. However, it constrained the use of ground forces to securing essential lines of communication and insuring retention of a port and air base in the general Pusan area. In addition to the means already allocated to CINCFE, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) allocated operational control of Seventh Fleet. The directive closed with cautioning that the commitment to support South Korea does not constitute the decision to war with the Soviet Union. With these instructions, MacArthur became the operational artist for US forces in Korea.⁶⁷

Use of Ground Forces

On June 30, armed with the authority to negotiate for forces and the ways to achieve victory, MacArthur sent a tactical update to the Secretary of State illustrating the severity of the defeat of the South Korean Army, the risk associated in not using ground forces, and a request for additional combat power. MacArthur had finished his survey of the Korean battlefield and identified imbalance between the current means available and the aim to eject North Korea.⁶⁸ MacArthur explained that the South Korean army failed to fight back, lacked leadership, and

⁶⁵ United Nations Security Council, 1950, Resolution 83, June 27, 5, accessed March 13, 2019, [undocs.org/S/RES/83\(1950\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/83(1950)).

⁶⁶ Glennon, *FRUS, 1950*, Document 161, 240.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 240-1.

⁶⁸ Luttwak, *Strategy*, xii.

were unprepared as a light force to counter the North Korean mechanized and air force. He reported the South Korean strength as only 25,000 versus the superior North Korean military also supported by Russian planes. He emphasized that if the enemy advantage threatened the fall of the ROK. With that risk to policy in mind, MacArthur reasoned that lifting the constraint on US ground forces would enable the stabilization of a line of defense on the peninsula and the ability for a counteroffensive. He finished with stating that if authorized, he would immediately reinforce vital areas with a regimental combat team while building combat power on the peninsula with two of the four US divisions currently occupying Japan.⁶⁹

MacArthur's argument for the military option of using ground forces proved successful. Secretary of the Army Frank Pace Jr. received the message and forwarded it to Truman at five o'clock in the morning, where Truman immediately authorized the use of a regimental combat team.⁷⁰ However, he delayed the authorization for the use of the two divisions until a further meeting of the "wise men."⁷¹ Thus, without consulting the cabinet, Truman authorized the use of ground forces in the Korean War, with MacArthur's input being the driving force, overturning the previous caution discussed by the administration since 1947.⁷² Within twenty-four hours of MacArthur's request, the JCS lifted the restrictions as well as authorized MacArthur's employment of ground forces as he saw fit, contingent on the safety of Japan.⁷³ Consequently, within two days of declaring war, Truman's commitment to the war of limited aim expanded. MacArthur's use of authority to persuade the use of ground forces secured the inflection point,

⁶⁹ Glennon, *FRUS, 1950*, Document 167, 248-51.

⁷⁰ Truman, Harry S, June 30, 1950, Handwritten note, Truman Papers, President's Secretary's Files, Harry S. Truman Library, accessed March 13, 2019, https://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/koreanwar/documents/index.php?documentdate=1950-06-30&documentid=ma-2-2&pagenumber=1.

⁷¹ Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 127.

⁷² Rovere and Schlesinger, *General MacArthur and President Truman*, 107.

⁷³ Glennon, *FRUS, 1950*, Document 179, 263.

which diverged the US path from the previous regional military strategy onto an alternate course, assuring the survival of the ROK.

Halting the North Korean Advance

MacArthur's role as the operational artist expanded following a UN Resolution on July 7, which authorized "a unified command" led by a US designated commander, under the UN flag, to pursue victory in Korea.⁷⁴ Three days later, Truman designated MacArthur as the commander in chief of UN forces, while maintaining his post as the CINCFE.⁷⁵ At that point, MacArthur became the commander of a multi-service, multi-national unified command, with the responsibility to fulfill both the US and UN war aims.

The desperation of the defense and the approval of ground forces triggered a cycle of negotiations between MacArthur and the administration during the first two weeks of July. The North Koreans continued to advance, while Eighth Army, led by General Walton Walker subordinate to MacArthur, employed US battalions in piecemeal to support the South Koreans in a delaying action high cost.⁷⁶ The tragedy of Task Force Smith occurred on July 5 in the Battle of Osan resulting in 40 percent of the 400-man task force killed, wounded, or captured. Similar experiences repeated on three more occasions in the coming days.⁷⁷ The tactical losses informed MacArthur he needed more forces to achieve victory. By July 8, MacArthur gained approval for the deployment of 1st Cavalry and 2nd Infantry Divisions and the 1st Marine Brigade, adding to the 24th and 25th Divisions deployed from Japan, but those forces would take at least a month to arrive.⁷⁸ MacArthur still sensed an imbalance between the means and aim.

⁷⁴ United Nations Security Council, 1950, Resolution 84, July 7, 6, accessed March 13, 2019, [undocs.org/S/RES/84\(1950\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/84(1950)).

⁷⁵ Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 143.

⁷⁶ Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 138; Hastings, *The Korean War*, 16, 76-7.

⁷⁷ Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 138, 153; Hastings, *The Korean War*, 15, 22; Rees, *Korea: The Limited War*, 37.

⁷⁸ Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 153; Hastings, *The Korean War*, 83.

On July 9, he sent a desperate message to the JCS, describing the Korean situation as “critical.”⁷⁹ He elaborated on the high degree of effectiveness of the North Korean mechanized force and employment of artillery. He claimed the effectiveness stemmed from the combination of Soviet and Chinese influence, stating, “[I]t can no longer be considered an indigenous North Korean [military] effort.”⁸⁰ MacArthur finished, assessing that the odds for victory were ten to one, urging rapid additional deployment of at least four divisions. The JCS responded, warning MacArthur the request could not be met, but would allocate two battalions, two regiments, and alert an airborne regiment for deployment.⁸¹ The administration’s policies that focused on global competition and a strategic emphasis on Europe imposed constraints on the war effort in Korea. The JCS explained to the State Department that, “It would be militarily unsound for United States to commit large forces against the USSR in an area of slight strategic importance.”⁸² Sustaining the previous strategy, the plan to defend against adversaries in Asia relied on the use of air and naval power along the Pacific defensive line, while the defense of Europe required a much greater size army enabling European allies rebuild. MacArthur’s plans needed to achieve victory with the amount of forces already allocated.

Although MacArthur did not receive the amount of forces requested, his campaign plan involving the application of air power and the delaying action of the 24th Division with the South Koreans provided the necessary time to deploy two divisions of Eighth Army onto the peninsula.⁸³ MacArthur reported a tactical update on July 19 directly to President Truman, which served two purposes.⁸⁴ First, it managed the expectations of the policymaker with anticipation of

⁷⁹ Glennon, *FRUS, 1950*, Document 245, 335-6.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 335-6.

⁸¹ Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 133.

⁸² Glennon, *FRUS, 1950*, Document 257, 346-7.

⁸³ Rovere and Schlesinger, *General MacArthur and President Truman*, 117.

future success. Second, it offered a plausible narrative for use by the administration to manage political perceptions. The message began explaining that the first phase of the campaign ended and with it, the chance for victory for the North Koreans. He defended the necessity of the piecemeal application of 24th Division, crediting their valor, to delay the North Koreans. He then commended the Eighth Army, the Far East Air Force, and the Seventh Fleet for the rapid deployment of forces, exceeding “historical records.”⁸⁵ MacArthur reported that the effort resulted in blunting the North Korean offensive while enabling the massing of Eighth Army onto the southern end of the peninsula, what would later become the Pusan Perimeter (See Figure 1). He closed, declaring that the North Koreans failed to exploit their chance and that eventual victory was forthcoming.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Lauer, “Blue Whales and Tiger Sharks”; MacArthur, Douglas, July 19, 1950, Current Estimate of the Korean Situation, Truman Papers, Naval Aide Files, Harry S. Truman Library, 2, accessed March 13, 2019. https://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/koreanwar/documents/index.php?documentdate=1950-07-19&documentid=ki-21-9&pagenumber=1.

⁸⁵ MacArthur, Current Estimate of the Korean Situation, 2.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 1-3.

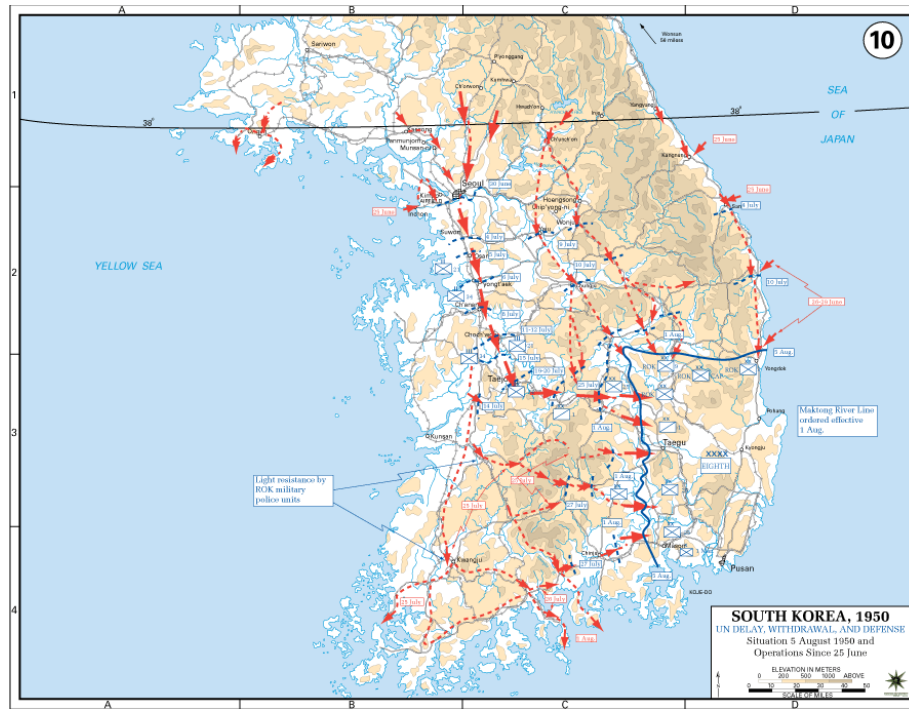


Figure 1. Halting the North Korean Advance. Map courtesy of the Department of Military History, US Military Academy, “South Korea, 1950: UN Delay, Withdrawal, and Defense,” United States Military Academy Atlases, accessed April 4, 2019, https://westpoint.edu/sites/default/files/inline-images/academics/academic_departments/history/Korean%20War/Korea10.pdf.

Transition to the Offense

The anticipation of success and the stabilization of the Pusan Perimeter in early August begged the question of whether UN forces should attempt a counteroffensive to liberate Seoul and restore the 38th Parallel. MacArthur had held forces in reserve at the cost of Eighth Army on the peninsula in late July in preparation for a future amphibious assault. However, MacArthur still needed more forces to execute that plan. The JCS sent Lieutenant General (LTG) Matthew Ridgway, the army deputy chief of staff for operations and administration, and LTG Norstad, an air force equivalent representative, to assess the status of operations. In addition, Truman attached Averell Harriman from the State Department to advise MacArthur on sensitive policy issues. At the conference, MacArthur delivered “one of his classic strategic soliloquies.”⁸⁷ From Ridgway’s

⁸⁷ Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 201-2.

perspective, MacArthur provided a “brilliant 2 ½ hour presentation,” stating the compelling need for additional ground forces to achieve decisive success. Specifically, he requested the 3rd Infantry Division by September 15, the remainder of 1st Marine Division, and 2nd Marine Division by October 15.⁸⁸ MacArthur highlighted the risk that, since North Korea exhausted their reserve forces, threat of Chinese or Soviet intervention loomed if they do not transition to the offense in a timely manner. He expanded on the benefits that winning the war would cement the new relationship with Japan and serve as a “global triumph for American-led collective security.”⁸⁹ All three representatives in attendance concurred with MacArthur’s assessment. Harriman reported the results of the conference to the President on August 9, and within twenty-four hours, the JCS approved MacArthur’s plan for offensive operations in Korea.⁹⁰

MacArthur’s vision for success to eject North Korean forces using an amphibious envelopment required the administration’s support for the operation, due to the magnitude of risk associated with that type of operation. The service chiefs had great doubts about the operation.⁹¹ Some acknowledged the value of Inchon with consideration to the port, airfield, proximity to Seoul, and vulnerability of North Korean army’s rear area, but this value increased the threat of a robust enemy defense. The natural environment of Inchon included risks due to a lack of real beaches, mudflats restricting movement dependent on tides, and vulnerability due to weather with the force projected far from its basing. Naval planners anticipated mines in the harbor, which threatened entry to the port. In addition, the combination of Wolmi-do Island off the immediate coast of the port and three hills surrounding the city could serve as strongpoints challenging any assault. Various key players identified alternate locations, which ranged from beaches within the

⁸⁸ Glennon, *FRUS, 1950*, Document 402, 540-1.

⁸⁹ Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 202.

⁹⁰ Glennon, *FRUS, 1950*, Document 402, 540-1.

⁹¹ Rovere and Schlesinger, *General MacArthur and President Truman*, 118; Rees, *Korea: The Limited War*, 80-5.

immediate vicinity of Inchon to areas closer to Pusan. The other locations offered less likelihood of enemy resistance, but MacArthur insisted on a deep attack to exploit the technological advantages to its fullest.⁹²

In a conference on August 23, MacArthur persuaded General J. Lawton Collins, and by extension the JCS and President, into authorizing the execution of Operation Chromite, the amphibious operation to seize Inchon and liberate Seoul.⁹³ Representing the JCS, General Collins, the Chief of Staff of the Army, met with MacArthur and his planning staff to discuss Operation Chromite.⁹⁴ Admiral Sherman, chief of naval operations, attended with Collins. The meeting began with Admiral Doyle, Inchon's lead planner, briefing General Collins in painstaking detail, including every negative aspect to the operation.⁹⁵ Doyle admitted that Russian air and naval intervention was a "worst case," but unlikely threat.⁹⁶ Collins suggested consideration to other landing sites closer to Walker's force on Pusan to induce less risk. In response to Collins' dissent, MacArthur once again leveraged his theatrical style to garner support for his plans. MacArthur expressed intense passion against "timidity and defeatism," spoke of strategic surprise that the enemy would be "completely unprepared," and played to the egos of the navy by stating, "The amphibious tool is the most powerful we have."⁹⁷ He countered the idea of shorter landing sites, declaring them as no great benefit and that amphibious operations need to "strike hard and deep!"⁹⁸ The performance succeeded in convincing Sherman and to a lesser extent Collins. The rest of the JCS and the President in Washington lacked the will to resist

⁹² Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter*, 295; Rees, *Korea: The Limited War*, 77-9.

⁹³ Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 209; Hastings, *The Korean War*, 101; Rees, *Korea: The Limited War*, 81.

⁹⁴ Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 210; Hastings, *The Korean War*, 101; Rees, *Korea: The Limited War*, 81.

⁹⁵ Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 210; Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter*, 297.

⁹⁶ Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 210; Hastings, *The Korean War*, 101.

⁹⁷ Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter*, 299; Hastings, *The Korean War*, 102.

⁹⁸ Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter*, 299.

MacArthur with Collins tacit support, and MacArthur gained approval from the JCS five days later on August 29, with the planned execution date of September 15.⁹⁹ The operational artist had successfully negotiated for the way to seize victory from the North Koreans.

Preparing New Policy with Anticipation of Victory

The anticipation of Operation Chromite invigorated debate within the administration over whether the war should continue with the aim to unify Korea if the operation proved successful.¹⁰⁰ Success would seize the initiative, affording a military advantage with emergent opportunities, which policymakers could exploit. Policymakers needed to evaluate the balance of interests based on costs, benefits, and risk.¹⁰¹ Questions such as the following arose. Is restoration of the border through capitulation of North Korean armies south of the border sufficient? Should UN forces unify Korea by force? Is there international support for that action? If attempted, would the Soviets or Communist China intervene?¹⁰² On August 29, the NSC began production of a recommended course of action should Operation Chromite Succeed.¹⁰³

The NSC produced the first draft of NSC 81, “United States Courses of Action with Respect to Korea,” on September 1, and the approved version, NSC 81/1, on September 9. The policy expressed the US historic support of past UN resolutions, which declared the political objective “to bring about the complete independence and unity of Korea” under the ROK.¹⁰⁴ The policy defined that objective as the new political aim of the war, with a balance of interests dependent on the potential for military success based on the dynamic strategic environment. It

⁹⁹ Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 213-40; Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter*, 297-301; Hastings, *The Korean War*, 102; Rees, *Korea: The Limited War*, 83.

¹⁰⁰ Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 237.

¹⁰¹ Ramesh Thakur, “A Balance of Interests,” In *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Diplomacy*, eds. Andrew F. Cooper and Jorge Heine, 70-1.

¹⁰² Glennon, *FRUS, 1950*, Document 486, 685-93.

¹⁰³ Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 237.

¹⁰⁴ Glennon, *FRUS, 1950*, Document 486, 685-93.

stated, “If the present UN action in Korea can accomplish this political objective without substantially increasing the risk of general war with the Soviet Union or Communist China, it would be in our interest to advocate the pressing of the United Nations action to this conclusion.”¹⁰⁵ However, “It would not be in our national interests... to take action in Korea which would involve substantial risk of general war.”¹⁰⁶ To meet that end, the paper described a range of courses of action the United States should execute upon meeting different circumstances, while avoiding declarative statements on what will happen. It encouraged action north of the 38th Parallel to unify the peninsula if the UN reached consensus on that aim and the likelihood of Chinese or Soviet intervention remained low. At the time, it advised that military actions to unify Korea through force “are not clearly authorized by the existing Security Council resolutions.”¹⁰⁷ The NSC anticipated the potential for the Soviet Union to persuade Communist China to enter the war in support of North Korea. In addition, it directed that at no time should UN forces north of the 38th Parallel engage Soviet or Chinese Communist forces. In the event of Soviet or Chinese Communist presence north of the 38th parallel, “Action north of the 38th parallel should not be initiated or continued, and if any UN forces are already north of the 38th Parallel they should prepare to withdraw pending further directives from Washington.”¹⁰⁸ To mitigate risk of direct confrontation with Soviet or Chinese forces, NSC 81/1 prohibited the use of non-Korean forces within North Korea’s northern border provinces and denied the use of air forces from crossing the Manchurian or Soviet Union border. In a national radio address on the same day as the first draft, President Truman expressed his support for the principle that all the Koreans had a right to be

¹⁰⁵ Glennon, *FRUS, 1950*, Document 505, 713.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 713.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 715.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 716.

free, independent, and united.¹⁰⁹ This did not yet constitute expansion of the war aims, but it expanded the narrative to support the future change to policy. Thus, the administration prepared policy and managed the narrative with anticipation of success on the battlefield.¹¹⁰

Restoration of the 38th Parallel

Operation Chromite set the path for victory to reestablish the 38th Parallel and clear the North Korean army from South Korea, achieving the initial political aim (See Figure 2). MacArthur balanced the forces required to maintain the defense of the Pusan Perimeter with Eighth Army, while preparing the amphibious operation into Inchon with X Corps.¹¹¹ The operation began on September 15 with 13,000 marines assaulting the beachhead.¹¹² MacArthur reported that following heavy naval and air bombardment, the marines landed on Inchon, meeting only light resistance.¹¹³ Disagreement between the JCS and Walker versus MacArthur emerged following the successful seizure of Inchon. The opposition supported bypassing Seoul and emphasized destruction of the retrograding North Korean army, while MacArthur pursued his own aim to liberate Seoul within three months of the North Korean invasion, September 25.¹¹⁴ Ultimately, MacArthur ordered X Corps to seize Seoul, while lessening the focus on destroying the North Korean army. The successful battle inside Seoul occurred between September 25 and 28.¹¹⁵ On September 27, due to the success of Chromite, the JCS published a directive modifying

¹⁰⁹ Harry S. Truman, "Radio and Television Report to the American People on the Situation in Korea," September 1, 1950, Harry S. Truman Library, accessed March 13, 2019, <https://trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/index.php?pid=861&st=&st1=>.

¹¹⁰ Glennon, *FRUS, 1950*, Document 505, 712-21.

¹¹¹ Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 280.

¹¹² Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter*, 306.

¹¹³ Douglas MacArthur, September 15, 1950, Report in regards to Operation Chromite, Truman Papers, Naval Aide Files, Harry S. Truman Library, accessed March 13, 2019, https://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/koreanwar/documents/index.php?documentdate=1950-09-15&documentid=ki-22-15&pagenumber=1.

¹¹⁴ Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter*, 309.

¹¹⁵ Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter*, 311.

the military aim for the war, in accordance with NSC 81/1, which laid the path for the tragedy during the next phase of the war.¹¹⁶

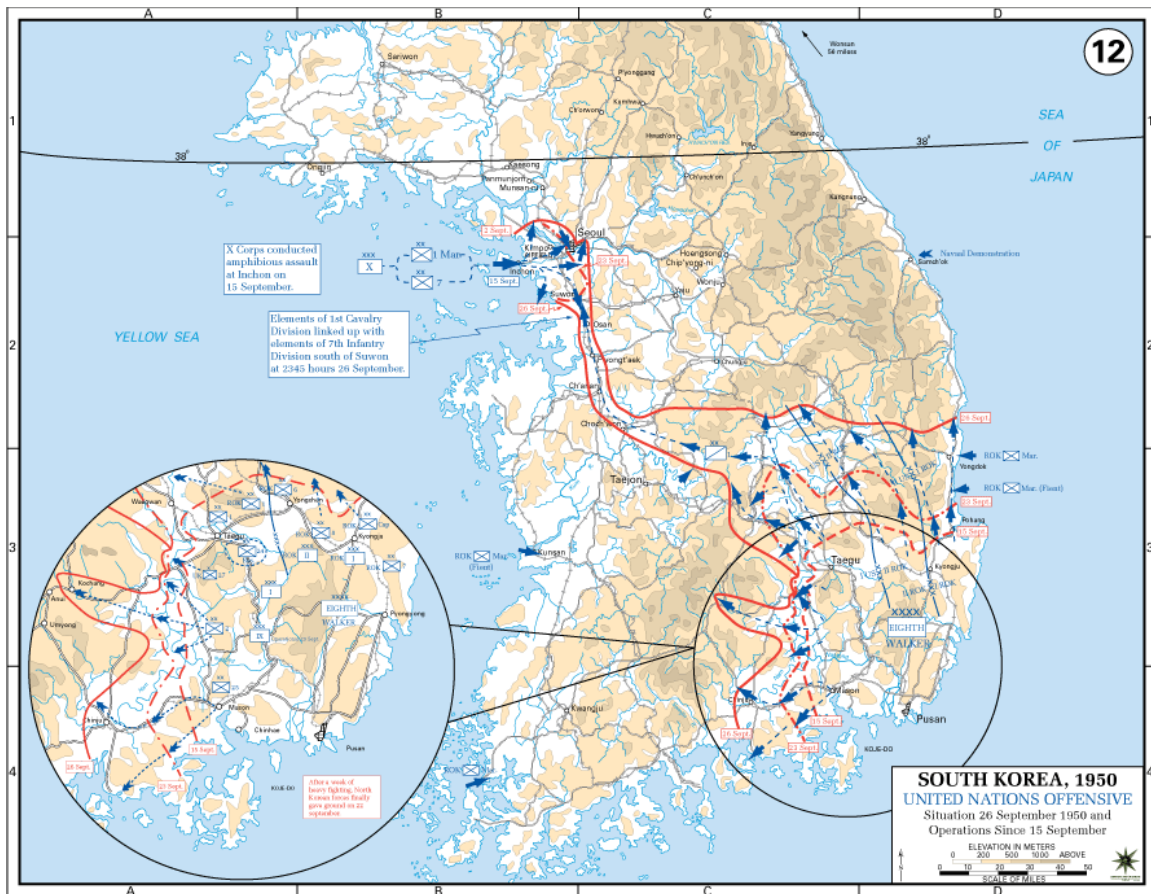


Figure 2. UN Offensive. Map courtesy of the Department of Military History, US Military Academy, “South Korea, 1950: United Nations Offensive,” United States Military Academy Atlases, accessed April 4, 2019, https://westpoint.edu/sites/default/files/inline-images/academics/academic_departments/history/Korean%20War/Korea12.pdf.

Conclusion

General MacArthur, serving as the operational artist, transformed defeat into victory in the achievement of the initial political aim to restore the 38th Parallel, through the alignment of the political aim with a feasible, emergent military strategy. President Truman, balancing interests

¹¹⁶ George C. Marshall, September 27, 1950, George C Marshall to Harry S. Truman with attached directive to Commander of United Nations Forces in Korea, Truman Papers, President’s Secretary’s Files, Harry S. Truman Library, 1-4, accessed March 13, 2019, https://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/koreanwar/documents/index.php?documentdate=1950-09-27&documentid=ki-18-3&pagenumber=1.

with consideration to the risk to Europe versus the expansion of communism in Asia, decided to embark on a war of limited aims in response to the invasion.¹¹⁷ The designation of MacArthur as the theater commander for the Korean War effort established MacArthur's role as the operational artist, with the authority to negotiate for the military aims, means, and ways, and the responsibility to achieve the political aim.¹¹⁸ Within twenty-four hours, he successfully negotiated for lifting the constraints on the use of ground forces by expressing the risk to policy and US interests. That altered the US regional military strategy that had been in place for years. As the army experienced defeat on the battlefield, he negotiated for additional forces to defend the peninsula, in essence, balancing the aims and means. The achieved success in stabilizing the defensive line of the Pusan perimeter provided the opportunity to transition to the offense. In order to do so, MacArthur negotiated in two separate conferences, first for additional forces and second for the ways in the form of Operation Chromite, both of which required an inspirational narrative to support the course of action. As MacArthur neared the fulfillment of the initial aim, he received a directive ordering a new military objective.

Unify Korea

Dynamic Political Aims

On September 27, the JCS issued a new directive to MacArthur, explicitly implementing NSC 81/1 and echoing its essential points, in support of the expanded political aim to unify Korea.¹¹⁹ It established, "Your military objective is the destruction of the North Korean armed forces," and authorized military operations north of the 38th Parallel, "provided... no entry... [or] intended entry, nor a threat" by Soviet or Chinese Communist forces (CCF)."¹²⁰ The directive sustained sensitivity toward Chinese and Soviet intervention stating, "You will continue to make

¹¹⁷ Clausewitz, *On War*, 603; Thakur, "A Balance of Interests," 70-1.

¹¹⁸ Lauer, "Blue Whales and Tiger Sharks."

¹¹⁹ Marshall, September 27 directive, 2; Glennon, *FRUS, 1950*, Document 505, 712-21.

¹²⁰ Marshall, September 27 directive, 2.

special efforts to determine whether there is a Chinese Communist or Soviet threat to the attainment of your objective, which will be reported to the Joint Chiefs of Staff as a matter of urgency.”¹²¹ The directive restricted the use of non-Korean forces in the border regions and use of air or naval forces against targets in Manchuria or Soviet territory. It also articulated the conditions and responses to the disposition of Soviet and Chinese forces north and south of the 38th Parallel, again highlighting “you will assume the defense” with the presence of Soviet forces in Korea. The directive only authorized direct engagement with CCF south of the 38th parallel, not north.¹²² On September 28, MacArthur provided “full concurrence” with the JCS “suggestion,” without any attempt to negotiate for additional means nor address the risk associated with the imposed constraints in conjunction with the potential of Soviet or Chinese intervention.¹²³

On the same day, MacArthur submitted his operational plan for destroying the enemy forces in North Korea. The plan divided Eighth Army and X Corps into attacks on two divergent lines of operation, separated by the central spine of the Taebaek Mountain Range.¹²⁴ Eighth Army, with the ROK II Corps, would advance along the simple and direct line from Seoul to Pyongyang on the western half of the peninsula. X Corps, upon relief from Eighth Army, would reset and conduct a second amphibious assault onto the eastern side of the peninsula into Wonsan, North Korea. Simultaneously ROK I Corps would advance overland to link-up with X Corps in the northeastern portion of North Korea. From Wonsan, X Corps would assault westward to juncture with Eighth Army. Following the seizure of Pyongyang, both elements would advance to the Chongju-Hungnam line, which served as the limit of advance across the narrowest part of the

¹²¹ Marshall, September 27 directive, 2.

¹²² Glennon, *FRUS, 1950*, Document 505, 712-21.

¹²³ Glennon, *FRUS, 1950*, Document 556, 796-7.

¹²⁴ Hastings, *The Korean War*, 147; D. Clayton James, *The Years of MacArthur, Volume III, Triumph and Disaster, 1945-1964* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1985), 495.

peninsula in North Korea. From there, only South Korean forces were to continue to the border to complete the destruction of remaining North Korean forces, in accordance with the constraint imposed by the JCS directive.¹²⁵

General MacArthur received two additional messages on 29 September, which contributed to his perceived autonomy from Washington. One message from the JCS credited MacArthur for the success in Korea due to his “brilliant and audacious leadership” and “magnificently planned, timed and executed” operations.¹²⁶ Although the JCS originally challenged the prudence of Operation Chromite, now it praised MacArthur for its success. The second message came from General Marshall, as the new Secretary of Defense. The NCA perceived that the pending UN resolution to authorize the crossing of the 38th Parallel induced Walker to slow the Eighth Army’s advance as it neared the 38th Parallel. That was not the intent of the administration. The NCA interpreted previous UN resolutions to authorize military action north of the border in order to secure South Korea.¹²⁷ Therefore, Marshall told MacArthur, “We want you to feel unhampered tactically and strategically to proceed north of [the] 38th parallel.”¹²⁸ In context, Marshall intended MacArthur to be “unhampered” in regards to the 38th parallel, not in all operations north of the 38th Parallel. In reality, logistical issues caused the delay for Eighth Army, not misunderstanding of constraints. Later, when tensions between the JCS and MacArthur elevated, MacArthur would exploit the prestige he gained for Chromite combined with the “unhampered” message to free him from the constraints of policy.¹²⁹ If there were any additional confusion regarding the intent for UN forces, the UN resolution on October 7

¹²⁵ James, *The Years of MacArthur*, 488-93; Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 275-90.

¹²⁶ Joint Chiefs of Staff, September 29, 1950, Joint Chiefs of Staff to Douglas MacArthur, Truman Papers, Naval Aide Files, Harry S. Truman Library, 1, accessed March 13, 2019, https://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/koreanwar/documents/index.php?documentdate=1950-09-29&documentid=ki-22-20&pagenumber=1.

¹²⁷ Glennon, *FRUS, 1950*, Document 505, 712-21.

¹²⁸ Glennon, *FRUS, 1950*, Document 573, 825-6.

¹²⁹ Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 289; James, *The Years of MacArthur*, 499.

officially redefined the UN political aim for the war, seeking a “unified, independent, and democratic government” of Korea.¹³⁰

Mystery of the Wake Island Conference

On October 7, Truman decided to arrange a conference with MacArthur, later named the Wake Island Conference. The conference occurred on October 15 with both parties joining at Wake Island. Bradley, Pace, and other administration officials attended, while Marshall and Acheson elected not to come. The first part of the conference consisted of a private conversation between MacArthur and Truman as they travelled to the physical location of the conference, lasting forty-five minutes. The second part consisted of the meeting with the entire group, lasting roughly ninety minutes.¹³¹ On October 18, following the conference, Truman, managing the political narrative for the war, gave a speech in San Francisco emphasizing the importance of the conference with MacArthur, the historic nature of the UN intervention to defeat aggression, the aim for unification, and the planned post-war reconstruction efforts.¹³²

Mystery shrouds the true intent for the conference due to the brevity and private nature of the conference. For the private meeting, no official transcript exists. Even for the second part of the conference, the only official transcript consisted of notes compiled by Bradley, without contribution, revision, or approval by MacArthur.¹³³ One speculation argues that the conference was politically motivated, inspired by a Truman administrative assistant and speechwriter, to capitalize on the success of in Korea prior to mid-term elections.¹³⁴ Another speculation argues that the conference intended to leverage the private meeting to reprimand MacArthur for a cross-

¹³⁰ United Nations General Assembly, 1950, Resolution 376 (V), October 7, 9, accessed March 13, 2019, [undocs.org/A/RES/376\(V\)](https://undocs.org/A/RES/376(V)).

¹³¹ James, *The Years of MacArthur*, 500-10.

¹³² Harry S. Truman, “Address in San Francisco at the War Memorial Opera House,” October 17, 1950, Harry S. Truman Library, accessed March 13, 2019, <https://trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/index.php?pid=899&st=&st1=>.

¹³³ James, *The Years of MacArthur*, 507.

¹³⁴ Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter*, 364-9; James, *The Years of MacArthur*, 515.

border fires incident where a US airplane violated the border constraints and bombed a Soviet air dome sixty miles north of North Korea, not far from Vladivostok, on October 8.¹³⁵ Regardless, the meeting illustrates a missed opportunity for the NCA and MacArthur to discuss the constraints, risks, and contingencies associated with the potential of Chinese intervention.

Guided by leading questions from President Truman, the meeting began with a question on post-war rehabilitation efforts. MacArthur interrupted, explaining they should first talk about the operations required to defeat the North Korean army prior to discussing rehabilitation. MacArthur anticipated formal North Korean resistance to end by Thanksgiving. He projected Pyongyang to fall within “one week.”¹³⁶ He hoped to withdraw Eighth Army to Japan by Christmas, but insisted on leaving X Corps, of two divisions, as a “tremendous deterrent” against the Chinese Communists, a threat that “cannot be laughed off.”¹³⁷ The group finished discussing rehabilitation following the operational assessment.

The conversation later returned to the war effort with President Truman asking, “What are the chances for Chinese or Soviet interference?”¹³⁸ MacArthur answered, “Very little.”¹³⁹ He explained that if either had interfered in the first or second months, it would have been decisive, but they had missed their opportunity. MacArthur discounted the threat of the 300,000 Chinese in Manchuria as only being able to cross the Yalu with 50 to 60 thousand. He added that they had no air force, and UN acquired air bases in Korea enabled the “greatest slaughter” if they tried to maneuver to Pyongyang.¹⁴⁰ He continued elaborating that the Soviets lacked ground forces

¹³⁵ Stone, *The Hidden History of the Korean War*, 150; James, *The Years of MacArthur*, 502.

¹³⁶ Omar Bradley, October 15, 1950, Substance of statements made at Wake Island Conference, Elsey Papers, Harry S. Truman Administration File, Harry S. Truman Library, 2, accessed March 13, 2019, https://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/koreanwar/documents/index.php?documentdate=1950-10-15&documentid=ki-9-4&pagenumber=1.

¹³⁷ Bradley, Substance of Wake Island Conference, 2.

¹³⁸ Bradley, Substance of Wake Island Conference, 10.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

available, but emphasized they maintained a flexible air force. However, without a ground force to work with, the effects would be limited. MacArthur finished with considering the combination of Soviet air with Chinese ground forces, but discredited the threat due to the challenge of multinational, air-ground operations.¹⁴¹

Following that last statement, the conversation sidetracked to a discussion on North Korean war criminals. According to the notes, no one challenged MacArthur or asked for clarifications on his estimate. There was no conversation on contingencies in the event of intervention. MacArthur himself did not challenge the methods or restrictions imposed by policy. The administration failed to address the more detailed talking points they had developed prior to the meeting. As an example, they considered asking, “How feasible is it to consider the use of only Korean forces in the extreme north of Korea... in [the] general area of the 39-40 parallel?”¹⁴² For whatever reason, no one asked this question in the meeting. Collectively, the group failed to discuss significant future friction points such as the use of UN forces along the border, cross-border fires into Manchuria, or the intended response to Chinese intervention, nor did they discuss strategic disagreements such as Europe versus Asia priorities, containment versus rollback, or NCS 81/1. The conference did not enable discourse between the NCA and the operational artist to enhance the strategic direction or ongoing operations. Thus, both parties left with tensions unresolved and continued along the path of high risk with increasing indicators of Chinese intervention and a commander who disregards constraints.

¹⁴¹ Bradley, Substance of Wake Island Conference, 1-12.

¹⁴² US Department of State, October 13, 1950, Notes on the Wake Conference, William A. Harriman, Dean Rusk, and Philip Jessup, Elsey Papers, Harry S. Truman Administration File, Harry S. Truman Library, 2, accessed March 13, 2019, https://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/koreanwar/documents/index.php?documentdate=1950-10-13&documentid=ki-9-9&pagenumber=1.

Race to the Yalu and the Chinese First Offensive

Following Wake Island, a trend of constraint violations developed as indicators of Chinese intervention increased. On October 17, without informing the JCS, MacArthur shifted the limit of advance for non-Korean forces closer to the border, placing the defensive line within the border territories and doubling its length. According to Collins, that would be, “the first, but not the last, stretching of MacArthur’s orders beyond JCS instructions.”¹⁴³ On October 19, Pyongyang fell to UN forces. Simultaneously, MacArthur ordered subordinate commanders to rapidly advance to the new defensive line. MacArthur began paying increasing concern to Soviet positioning of aircraft and increased presence of Chinese forces in Manchuria.¹⁴⁴ Charles Willoughby, MacArthur’s intelligence officer, had received intelligence indicating the CCF had decided to begin infiltration across the Yalu with over 400,000 Chinese starting on October 18.¹⁴⁵ However, the command downplayed the report to the JCS, estimating that although the Chinese could enter at any time, they would not.¹⁴⁶ On October 24, MacArthur breached his authority when he lifted the constraint of non-Korean forces along the border, setting the Yalu as the new defensive line. He ordered, “[D]rive with all speed and full utilization,” authorizing use of, “any and all ground forces.”¹⁴⁷ This order triggered immediate response from the JCS, telling him the order violated the constraints. MacArthur replied stating it was, “a matter of military necessity,” due to the weakness of ROK forces.¹⁴⁸ MacArthur defended himself, using Marshall’s “unhampered” message out of context, giving him tactical and strategic flexibility. The JCS chose to allow MacArthur’s judgment to stand, following the principle of authority for theater

¹⁴³ James, *The Years of MacArthur*, 493.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 498.

¹⁴⁵ Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 298.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ James, *The Years of MacArthur*, 499.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

commanders. However, this judgment directly countered the logic of the NSC 81/1, the JCS directive of September 27, and needed oversight. Without resolving this tension, the JCS shared some responsibility for the tragedy to follow.¹⁴⁹

On the same day MacArthur replied to the JCS, CCF launched the first large scale offensive in the Korean War, lasting from October 25 to November 5 (See Figure 3). The CCF primarily targeted the ROK II Corps.¹⁵⁰ In the opening days, the CCF nearly annihilated a regiment of the ROK 6th Division. The CCF ambushed and routed the remainder of the 6th Division in vicinity the Yalu. In addition, the CCF continued the assault against the other two Korean divisions, resulting in Walker's words a, "[C]omplete collapse and disintegration of ROK II Corps."¹⁵¹ American and British units maneuvered to protect the now exposed right flank of the Eighth Army. The most severe fighting for American forces occurred at Unsan from November 1. CCF encircled the US 8th Cavalry Regiment, decimating the unit in three days of fighting.¹⁵² However, by November 5, the CCF ended their offensive and withdrew north.¹⁵³

Several indicators made clear the high risk of Chinese intervention. Throughout the war, intelligence indicated several thousand Chinese soldiers massing in Manchuria, but the estimates grew to hundreds of thousands by October.¹⁵⁴ Still disgruntled over Formosa, the Chinese warned of their intervention in early October, but the NCA disregarded their statement as a bluff.¹⁵⁵ Interrogations of captured Chinese fighters in late October indicated that there were troops from several different Chinese armies.¹⁵⁶ Claims suggest that Willoughby willingly falsified documents

¹⁴⁹ James, *The Years of MacArthur*, 499.

¹⁵⁰ Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 300.

¹⁵¹ James, *The Years of MacArthur*, 519.

¹⁵² Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter*, 25.

¹⁵³ James, *The Years of MacArthur*, 519.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 490.

¹⁵⁵ Rovere and Schlesinger, *General MacArthur and President Truman*, 148.

¹⁵⁶ Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter*, 382.

to conceal the scale of the Chinese intervention to continue MacArthur's offensive.¹⁵⁷ The strength reported by Willoughby slowly grew, but remained far lower than reality as operations continued into November. For example, he estimated only 34,000 CCF in Korea on November 3. In reality, over a hundred thousand Chinese participated in the first offensive.¹⁵⁸ MacArthur accepted severely high risk, continuing the offensive in breach of strategic considerations, operational constraints, while openly acknowledging the mass of 500,000 Chinese in Manchuria postured on the Yalu.

MacArthur's refusal to negotiate and violation of his responsibility to operate within constraints exacerbated the tension and crystallized the path to tragedy. On November 6, the JCS challenged MacArthur in ordering the bombing of bridges on the Yalu, which were restricted targets.¹⁵⁹ MacArthur replied, stating that it was "unquestionabl[e] that organized units of [CCF] forces... are being utilized against our forces," sufficient to have seized the initiative in the west and slowed the offensive in the east.¹⁶⁰ He claimed it "essential" to authorize the bombing of the Chinese in Manchuria to avoid further build-up.¹⁶¹ The JCS replied stating that the introduction of Chinese forces constitutes the, "entry into North Korea by major... [CCF]," in reference to the contingency in the September 27 JCS directive.¹⁶² The JCS recommended establishing a defensive line on the narrow neck of the peninsula while reassessing the current strategy.¹⁶³ MacArthur disagreed, insisting that a defensive line would result in indefinite stalemate and follow the path of appeasement that the British took against Germany in the annexation of Austria

¹⁵⁷ Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter*, 378.

¹⁵⁸ James, *The Years of MacArthur*, 519.

¹⁵⁹ Glennon, *FRUS, 1950*, Document 758, 1057-8.

¹⁶⁰ Glennon, *FRUS, 1950*, Document 775, 1076-7.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² Glennon, *FRUS, 1950*, Document 786, 1097-8.

¹⁶³ Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter*, 386.

in 1938.¹⁶⁴ The negotiation ended, unresolved. Again, the NCA acquiesced to MacArthur's judgment, as described by Acheson in his memoirs despairing, "We sat around like paralyzed rabbits while MacArthur carried out this nightmare."¹⁶⁵ MacArthur gambled in his race to the Yalu, by disregarding the increased Chinese presence in Manchuria and neglected consideration to the strategic guidance.¹⁶⁶ MacArthur held at risk in the coming days not only his soldiers but also the potential for world war.

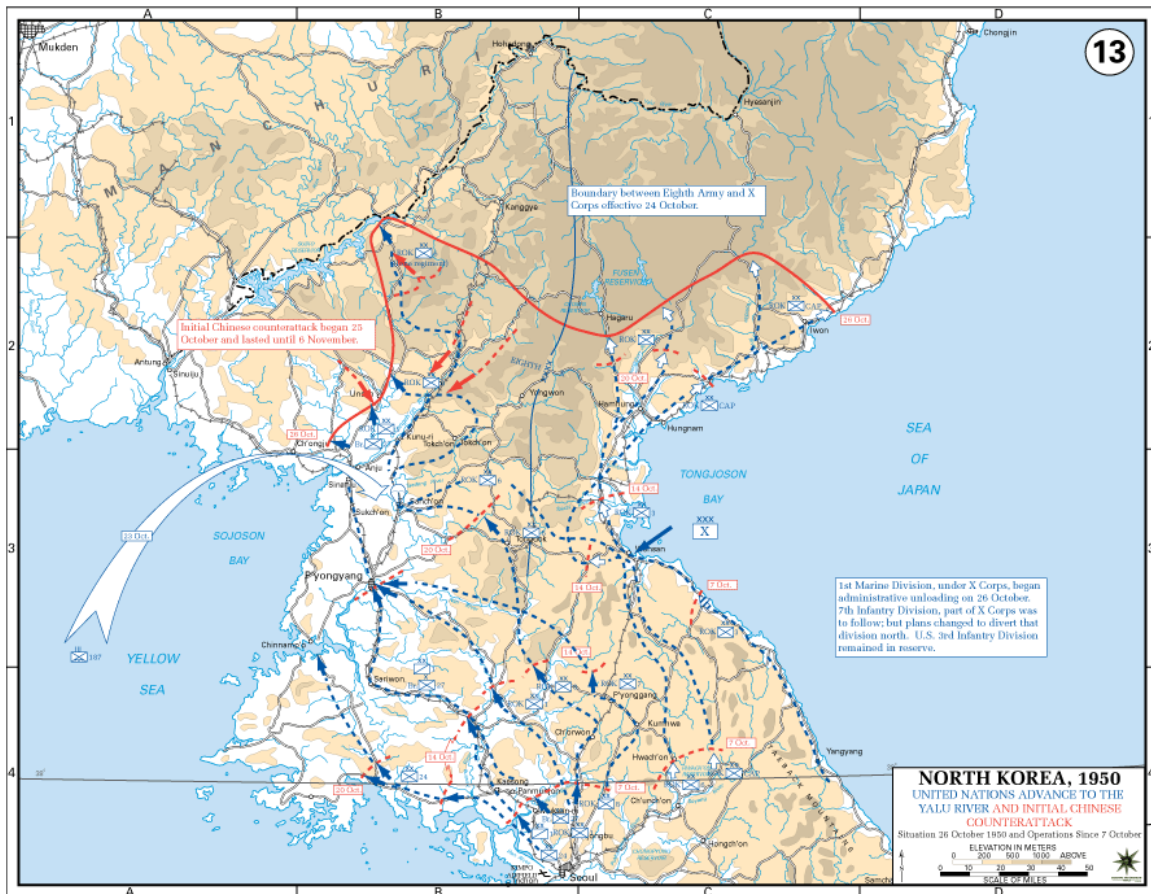


Figure 3. Chinese Initial Offensive. Map courtesy of the Department of Military History, US Military Academy, "North Korea, 1950: United Nations Advance to the Yalu River and Initial Chinese Counterattack," United States Military Academy Atlases, accessed April 4, 2019, https://westpoint.edu/sites/default/files/inline-images/academics/academic_departments/history/Korean%20War/Korea13.pdf.

¹⁶⁴ Glennon, *FRUS, 1950*, Document 792, 1107-10.

¹⁶⁵ Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter*, 44.

¹⁶⁶ Stone, *The Hidden History*, 191.

“Entirely New War”

Tragedy struck in late November, when MacArthur, unaware of Chinese offensive preparations, launched the “Home by Christmas” offensive to finish the race.¹⁶⁷ The offensive began on November 24, with the plan to isolate any Chinese elements south of the Yalu with airpower, while Eighth Army and ROK II Corps advanced to the north and X Corps and ROK I Corps attacked from the east in order to achieve a “massive compression envelopment.”¹⁶⁸ The latest intelligence estimate from Willoughby suggested 71,000 CCF operated in Korea at the beginning of the offensive. In reality, there had been over 300,000 Chinese waiting in ambush in vicinity of the Yalu.¹⁶⁹ UN forces fell into the Chinese trap.

On November 25, the Chinese launched their second, much larger offensive committing thirty-six divisions.¹⁷⁰ The CCF caught UN forces in a severely vulnerable position. MacArthur’s imprudent order to race to the Yalu in mid-October precluded any concerted effort to establishing contact between X Corps and Eighth Army as previously planned.¹⁷¹ Thus, their operations continued in isolation due to the Taebaek Mountain Range separating the forces by up to fifty miles with terrain, which challenged the lateral lines of communication. That fact, in conjunction with the severely damaged ROK II Corps positioned as the center most element, created a significant opportunity for the CCF. The Chinese assault shattered the UN forces by exploiting the weakness of the ROK army and defeating the Eighth Army and X Corps in isolation.¹⁷² UN forces experienced catastrophic defeat across the front in late November. The Chinese Second Offensive continued progress through early December as MacArthur and the administration

¹⁶⁷ Stone, *The Hidden History*, 185.

¹⁶⁸ Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 335.

¹⁶⁹ Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter*, 382.

¹⁷⁰ Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 317.

¹⁷¹ James, *The Years of MacArthur*, 495.

¹⁷² Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 317-39.

sought to reframe their understanding of the environment and reevaluate both policy and strategy, facilitated by dialogue.¹⁷³

The initiation of the Chinese Second Offensive altered the character of the war. On November 28, MacArthur reported to the JCS stating, “We face an entirely new war.”¹⁷⁴ He explained that his command no longer faced an enemy composed of North Koreans with small Chinese elements. Instead, he faced a Chinese military force committed to North Korea with increasing strength. He alerted the JCS to his assessment that “our present strength of force is not sufficient” to defeat the Chinese and achieve the political aim.¹⁷⁵ He finished stating, “[M]y strategic plan for the immediate future is to pass from the offensive to the defensive.”¹⁷⁶ In addition, in a separate message the following day, MacArthur informed the JCS that Chinese Nationalist armies on Formosa represented the only reinforcements readily available. He requested authorization for direct communication with Chinese Nationalists to coordinate for inclusion into the UN command to reinforce the Korean War effort.

Although shocked by the intensity of the Chinese offensive, the administration reacted conservatively to the news from MacArthur in an NSC meeting the same day. The Chinese intervention did not usurp the strategic direction of the macro-level policies. The council sustained European priority over Asia, unity of effort with the United Nations even at a cost, and the Soviet Union as the enemy behind every move. Secretary Acheson provided a summary of the political interests in the situation. He emphasized that every decision in Korea should be with consideration of the worldwide competition with the Soviet Union. He illuminated the administration’s underlying objective on terminating the conflict in Korea due to risk of general war with China. The council maintained consensus on avoiding further general war and the intent

¹⁷³ Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 334-9.

¹⁷⁴ Glennon, *FRUS, 1950*, Document 888, 1237.

¹⁷⁵ Glennon, *FRUS, 1950*, Document 888, 1238.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

on finding a “political solution” with a “face-saving” way for exit. However, the President warned, “We might have to hold that line a long, long time, and that we can’t lose face by drawing out in a hurry.”¹⁷⁷

The JCS sought to delay issuing any new directive to MacArthur until the military situation clarified. Marshall pointed out vulnerabilities in MacArthur’s disposition, but emphasized, “We have no business, here in Washington, 8,000 miles away, asking the local Commander what his tactical plans are.”¹⁷⁸ The group speculated a number of opinions regarding MacArthur’s failure to anticipate the Chinese offensive, all alluding to a degradation of MacArthur’s credibility. Ironical, President Truman explained to the group, “[W]e could not afford to damage MacArthur’s prestige at this point.”¹⁷⁹ The JCS shared that there were no additional means available to reinforce MacArthur. Although at a cost, the group consensus believed UN forces maintained the capacity to hold a defensive line against the Chinese. However, there was significant concern with regard to the threat of Chinese Manchurian bombers, because Chinese air raids might be catastrophic, yet bombing in Manchuria might provoke Soviet intervention. At the time, the group decided to maintain the boundary restrictions, unless necessary due to threat of mass casualties. Overall, the President made no new decisions at the meeting. The political aim did not change, yet.

On November 29, the JCS responded to MacArthur, disapproving the request to coordinate with Formosa. The JCS approved MacArthur’s modified strategy and emphasized the need to reconsider the “strategic and tactical” environment.¹⁸⁰ However, the JCS indicated that

¹⁷⁷ US National Security Council, November 28, 1950, Minutes of the National Security Council Meeting with Harry S. Truman, Truman Papers, President’s Secretary’s Files, Harry S. Truman Library, 19, accessed March 13, 2019, https://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/koreanwar/documents/index.php?documentdate=1950-11-28&documentid=ci-2-11&pagenumber=1.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 7.

¹⁷⁹ US NSC, Minutes of meeting on November 28, 9.

¹⁸⁰ Glennon, *FRUS, 1950*, Document 898, 1253.

MacArthur's request was being "considered."¹⁸¹ The JCS explained the "world-wide" political complications with his request, which risked isolating the United States.¹⁸² First, the JCS informed that the Commonwealth countries might view employment with Chinese Nationalists unacceptable. Second, he warned that the inclusion might extend hostilities to Formosa and other areas. Third, he alerted that "our position of leadership in the Far East is being most seriously compromised in the United Nations."¹⁸³ The political risk precluded approval of MacArthur's request. Violating the political preferences of the Commonwealth and broadening the war incurred political risk in threatening the coalition, the US power position in the UN, and the legitimacy of the alliance structure. In addition, expanding the war effort incurred policy risk ignoring the caution expressed in NSC 81/1 intending to avoid general war with China and the Soviet Union. Thus, the administration intended for further development of the strategic and tactical situation with no modification to the aims or means.

On November 30, MacArthur sent two tactical updates "for information only" to the JCS continuing to illuminate the increasing threat of the Chinese forces.¹⁸⁴ First, MacArthur highlighted a balance of opportunities and threats posed to X Corps based on their disposition in relation to the enemy. Second, he explained the inability to consolidate his force or establish a front across the "narrow neck of Korea" due to the length, numerical weakness, and logistical problems.¹⁸⁵ Third, he explained that the Chinese continued to exploit the neutral international border to build-up and reinforce their effort, and that Eighth Army must continue displacing to the rear. MacArthur ended with the assessment, "Chinese forces have as their objective the

¹⁸¹ Glennon, *FRUS, 1950*, Document 898, 1253.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁸³ Glennon, *FRUS, 1950*, Document 899, 1254.

¹⁸⁴ Glennon, *FRUS, 1950*, Document 906, 1259.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

complete destruction of United Nations forces and the securing of all of Korea.”¹⁸⁶ The JCS did not respond.

In hindsight, MacArthur initiated a media campaign to influence policy following the JCS response on November 29. The *New York Post* observed on December 3 that over the course of four days, “MacArthur has found time” to participate in a series of “exclusive” media engagements with a radio commentator, a Washington correspondent, a media executive, and a major news agency.¹⁸⁷ The essence of each of the messages blamed the burden of the present defeat on the policy limiting the war to Korean boundaries. He characterized the limitations as an “enormous handicap, without precedent in military history,” explaining that the enemy enjoyed sanctuary of neutrality immediately behind the battle area.¹⁸⁸ Coincidentally following the media engagements, MacArthur sent another report to the JCS on December 3 pressuring a change to policy.¹⁸⁹

MacArthur’s message to the JCS provided a tactical update reporting further retrograde, reiterated the lack of means for success, and requested a policy change. First, he estimated that the Chinese offensive would force the Eighth Army to the Seoul area and X Corps to the coastal port of Hamhung, with no feasibility in joining the two forces. Second, he reiterated that the Chinese continued reinforcement in the operational area, significantly outnumbering UN ground forces, while the boundary constraints limited his airpower. Third, he believed he faced the “entire Chinese nation in an undeclared war” and that without positive action, “final destruction can reasonably be contemplated.”¹⁹⁰ He estimated that the new war, with the new enemy, and with new conditions required new political decisions and strategic plans. Instead of receiving the

¹⁸⁶ Glennon, *FRUS, 1950*, Document 907, 1260.

¹⁸⁷ Rovere and Schlesinger, *General MacArthur and President Truman*, 154.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 155.

¹⁸⁹ Glennon, *FRUS, 1950*, Document 947, 1320-2.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

guidance he pleaded for, he received two separate directives restricting any public statement he wished to make on foreign policy unless he cleared it through the Department of State.¹⁹¹

By mid-December, the perception of defeat solidified in regards to the aim for unification. The Second Chinese Offensive culminated with the Battle of Chongchon, resulting in the retreat of Eighth Army to the 38th Parallel, and the Chosin Reservoir campaign, resulting in the evacuation of X Corps in a Dunkirk-like fashion to return to Pusan (See Figure 4).¹⁹²

According to pollsters, fifty percent of Americans thought the Third World War was imminent.¹⁹³

In addition, 66 percent of Americans believed that the US should abandon the peninsula.¹⁹⁴ On

December 11, Truman approved policy to consider the conditions favorable for a cease-fire

agreement.¹⁹⁵ Following that on December 16, Truman declared a state of national emergency.¹⁹⁶

Although not yet explicit, the defeat changed Truman's political aim for the war.

¹⁹¹ Rovere and Schlesinger, *General MacArthur and President Truman*, 156-7.

¹⁹² Rees, *Korea: The Limited War*, 155, 161, 165, 173.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 172.

¹⁹⁴ Hastings, *The Korean War*, 184.

¹⁹⁵ US National Security Council, December 11, 1950, Minutes of National Security Council Meeting, Truman Papers, President's Secretary's Files, Harry S. Truman Library, 1, accessed March 13, 2019, https://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/koreanwar/documents/index.php?documentdate=1950-12-11&documentid=ci-4-4&pagenumber=1.

¹⁹⁶ Hastings, *The Korean War*, 185.

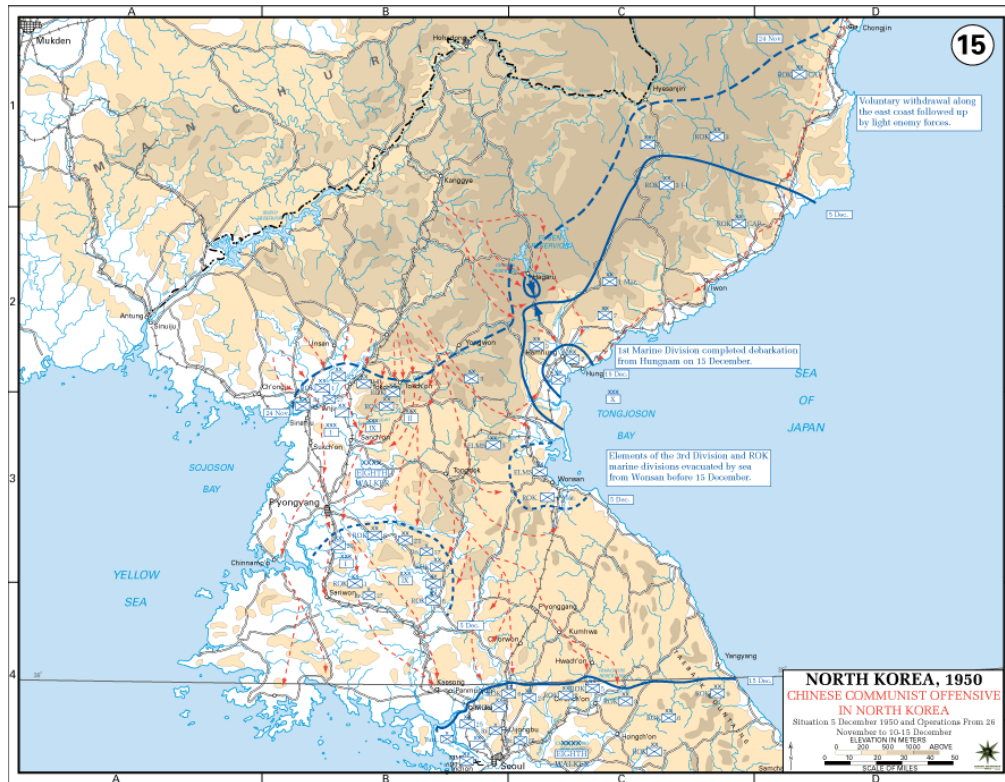


Figure 4. CCF Second Offensive. Map courtesy of the Department of Military History, US Military Academy, “North Korea, 1950: Chinese Communist Offensive in North Korea,” United States Military Academy Atlases, accessed April 4, 2019, https://westpoint.edu/sites/default/files/inline-images/academics/academic_departments/history/Korean%20War/Korea15.pdf.

On December 29, the JCS issued a new directive to MacArthur, adjusting the military aim to damage hostile forces in Korea as much as possible. In the directive, Bradley provided the strategic context, acknowledging that China could expel UN forces from Korea, but might not if the cost was too high. He explained that the US could not contribute additional forces to the theater without jeopardizing other commitments including the safety of Japan. Bradley redacted older directives, ordering to defend in successive positions to resist Chinese aggression and deflate their political and military prestige. Bradley included that MacArthur needed to assess the last reasonable opportunity for a complete, orderly evacuation to defend Japan, to be confirmed

by the JCS. The directive carried a sense of increased military control compared to the past directives, hinting at the degraded favor for MacArthur.¹⁹⁷

Instead of accepting the directive, the following day, MacArthur continued to negotiate for a more aggressive military aim. MacArthur disagreed with avoiding general war with China because he believed general war had already begun. He broadened his previous request into four measures to expand the war effort against China to include: 1) blockade the coast of China, 2) destroy China's industry through naval and air bombardment, 3) secure reinforcements from Formosa, and 4) release existing restrictions on Formosa for an attack against vulnerable areas in the Chinese mainland. MacArthur insisted this course of action, even acknowledging the administration already disapproved it in late November, emphasizing the risk to policy that losing Korea threatens Japan. He disregarded the risk of Soviet intervention, arguing that the inability to predict their actions made the consideration unnecessary. MacArthur finished stating, "I understand thoroughly the demand for European security and fully concur in doing everything possible in that sector, but not to the point of accepting defeat anywhere else... to insure later defeat in Europe itself."¹⁹⁸ MacArthur followed the order to defend in successive positions, but sustained his campaign against the current policy.

The Chinese Third Offensive enhanced the catastrophe, launching another offensive on December 31 across the broad front into South Korea.¹⁹⁹ Now under the command of Ridgway, following a vehicle accident resulting in Walker's death, the Eighth Army continued the successive withdrawal south, evacuating Seoul on January 3, ceding the city to the Chinese on January 4.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁷ Glennon, *FRUS, 1950*, Document 1099, 1625-6.

¹⁹⁸ Glennon, *FRUS, 1950*, Document 1101, 1630-3.

¹⁹⁹ Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 383.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 373, 384.

Conclusion

Tragedy emerged from the unresolved tensions between MacArthur and the NCA, manifested from the divergence of the natural military aim versus the political aims of limited war.²⁰¹ Although pursuing expanded aims, the NCA subordinated the political aim to unify Korea under the higher priority of avoiding general war with the Chinese and the Soviets. This contingency imposed constraints to mitigate the risk of expanding the war in the form of border restrictions, which created tension between the natural military aim to destroy all opposing forces versus the balanced political aim.²⁰² Unresolved tension, due to a failure in discourse, manifested vulnerabilities with an imbalance in the military strategy.²⁰³ MacArthur's operational plan deliberately violated border restrictions and disregarded contingencies against potential Chinese intervention. The NCA acquiescence to MacArthur's plan, rather than resolve the tension, enabled the vulnerabilities to remain. The Chinese intervention naturally exploited the situation, leveraging the sanctuary in Manchuria, challenging the UN interests to destroy opposing forces versus avoiding an expanded war. The exploitation led to the tragedy of the defeated UN forces and the loss of Seoul, crystallizing the perception of defeat and loss of unifying Korea.

Thus, MacArthur, as the operational artist, failed in two ways. First, he failed to leverage his authority to negotiate for the aim, means, and ways to resolve tension, illustrated by the avoidance to discuss constraints until experiencing defeat. Second, he failed to satisfy his responsibility to operate within the constraints imposed by policy. He implemented an awkward operational plan, which disregarded the risks inherent in the Chinese intervention. The race to the Yalu violated the border constraints on ground forces while simultaneously ignored the risks associated in the restriction of bombing in Manchuria. This led to UN forces racing to establish a

²⁰¹ Lauer, "Blue Whales and Tiger Sharks."

²⁰² Clausewitz, *On War*, 585.

²⁰³ Lauer, "Blue Whales and Tiger Sharks."

vulnerable defense along the border where the Chinese enjoyed sanctuary. As a final note, rather than subordinate his view to the NCA, MacArthur's use of the media to criticize policy breached the trust with the NCA, which influenced further repercussions in the final months of MacArthur's command.²⁰⁴

Seek Victory Where Possible

New Political Aim

On January 9, days after the second loss of Seoul, the JCS directed MacArthur with a modified aim with the "basic mission of protecting Japan."²⁰⁵ Similar to the previous directive, Bradley began with the strategic considerations; however, this time with a more authoritative tone stating, "[T]he following must be accepted."²⁰⁶ He informed MacArthur of little likelihood of a policy change, expounding upon previous considerations mentioned. He directed MacArthur to continue to defend in successive positions, subject to the "primary consideration of the safety of your troops and basic mission of protecting Japan,"²⁰⁷ authorizing MacArthur to withdraw from Korea to Japan "to avoid severe losses," if necessary.²⁰⁸

The following day, MacArthur challenged the ambiguity of the directive. He accepted the conditions expressed by Bradley, but he sought clarification on the balance of holding the position in Korea versus evacuation to Japan. Explicit, MacArthur stated that the decision to evacuate Korea, "involves a decision of highest national and international importance, far above the competence of a Theater Commander."²⁰⁹ He caveated if the decision to hold remained, "We

²⁰⁴ Clausewitz, *On War*, 607.

²⁰⁵ John P. Glennon, Harriet D. Schwar, and Paul Claussen, eds. 1983, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1951, Korea and China, Volume VII, Part 1* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office), Document 31, 42, accessed March 13, 2019, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1951v07p1>.

²⁰⁶ Glennon, *FRUS, 1951*, Document 31, 42.

²⁰⁷ Glennon, *FRUS, 1951*, Document 31, 42.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Glennon, *FRUS, 1951*, Document 44, 56.

should be prepared to accept whatever casualties result.”²¹⁰ The political context of MacArthur’s statement invoked President Truman to clarify the aim.

Truman, through the JCS to MacArthur, expressed the political aim as a complex set of political factors on January 13. The President opened by reaching out to MacArthur, emphasizing that, “We need your judgment as to the maximum effort which could reasonably be expected from the United Nations Forces.”²¹¹ However, he reiterated the importance of avoiding a war, which might draw Japan or Europe into large-scale hostilities, while acknowledging MacArthur’s limited means. Truman could not simplify the political aim to unification or *status quo ante bellum* because of the complexity of limited war within an environment of global competition. Careful, he avoided directing MacArthur to take any specific action because he needed MacArthur’s initiative, leveraging the position of the theater commander, while operating within the constraints. As a summary, the President aimed to: 1) achieve successful resistance in Korea to inspire resistance against the Soviets, weaken China, and assure allies, 2) buy time in Korea to consolidate a great majority of the United Nations world-wide to bolster collective defense against the Soviets, 3) demonstrate commitment and continued attrition against the Chinese, and 4) give constant thought to the main threat from the Soviet Union and to the need for a rapid expansion of the armed forces to meet that threat.²¹² The following day, MacArthur responded, “We shall do our best,” omitting his hubris that inspired the aggressive response to the initial North Korean invasion, the amphibious assault at Inchon, and the race to the Yalu.²¹³ Communication between the President, the JCS, and MacArthur became sparse following that transmission for the remainder of MacArthur’s command.

²¹⁰ Glennon, *FRUS, 1951*, Document 44, 56.

²¹¹ Glennon, *FRUS, 1951*, Document 61, 77.

²¹² Glennon, *FRUS, 1951*, Document 61, 77-9.

²¹³ Michael D. Pearlman, *Truman and MacArthur: Policy, Politics, and the Hunger for Honor and Renown* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2008), 156.

The President's comments on January 13 placed the onus on MacArthur to take appropriate action as the operational artist. MacArthur's dialogue in November and December failed to influence policy or lift constraints to broaden the war effort nor allocate additional forces against other competing demands. The President clarified the broad political aim. Thus, MacArthur needed to pursue victory by translating the political aim into a feasible military objective within political constraints and allocated forces. The pressure on the defeated MacArthur alleviated days later, thanks to the Eighth Army under the effective command of Ridgway.

Eighth Army's Surprise Success

Eighth Army, led by an autonomous Ridgway, achieved unexpected success beginning in January and continued through March, leading to the liberation of Seoul, all while damaging MacArthur's reputation.²¹⁴ Eighth Army stabilized the front in mid-January.²¹⁵ Ridgway's success contrasted with MacArthur's defeatist attitude further damaged MacArthur's prestige and credibility to the NCA.²¹⁶ Eighth Army sustained slow progress through February toward the 38th Parallel.²¹⁷ On March 7, Ridgway launched Operation Ripper, an offensive operation that included action through Seoul. On the same day, MacArthur held a press conference predicting eventual stalemate in Korea, unless the UN received additional forces.²¹⁸ Once again, MacArthur's public statement caught the attention of the NCA because it diverged from policy, countering the NCA's pursuit for ceasefire negotiations.²¹⁹ However, Eighth Army liberated Seoul unopposed on March 14, triggering a response from the NCA (See Figure 5).²²⁰

²¹⁴ Matthew B. Ridgway, *The Korean War* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1967), 101.

²¹⁵ Stone, *The Hidden History*, 241-5; James, *The Years of MacArthur*, 556-7.

²¹⁶ Glennon, *FRUS, 1951*, Document 163, 232-5; James, *The Years of MacArthur*, 559.

²¹⁷ Rovere and Schlesinger, *General MacArthur and President Truman*, 166-7.

²¹⁸ Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 413-4.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 414.

²²⁰ Rees, *Korea: The Limited War*, 192; Stone, *The Hidden History*, 267.

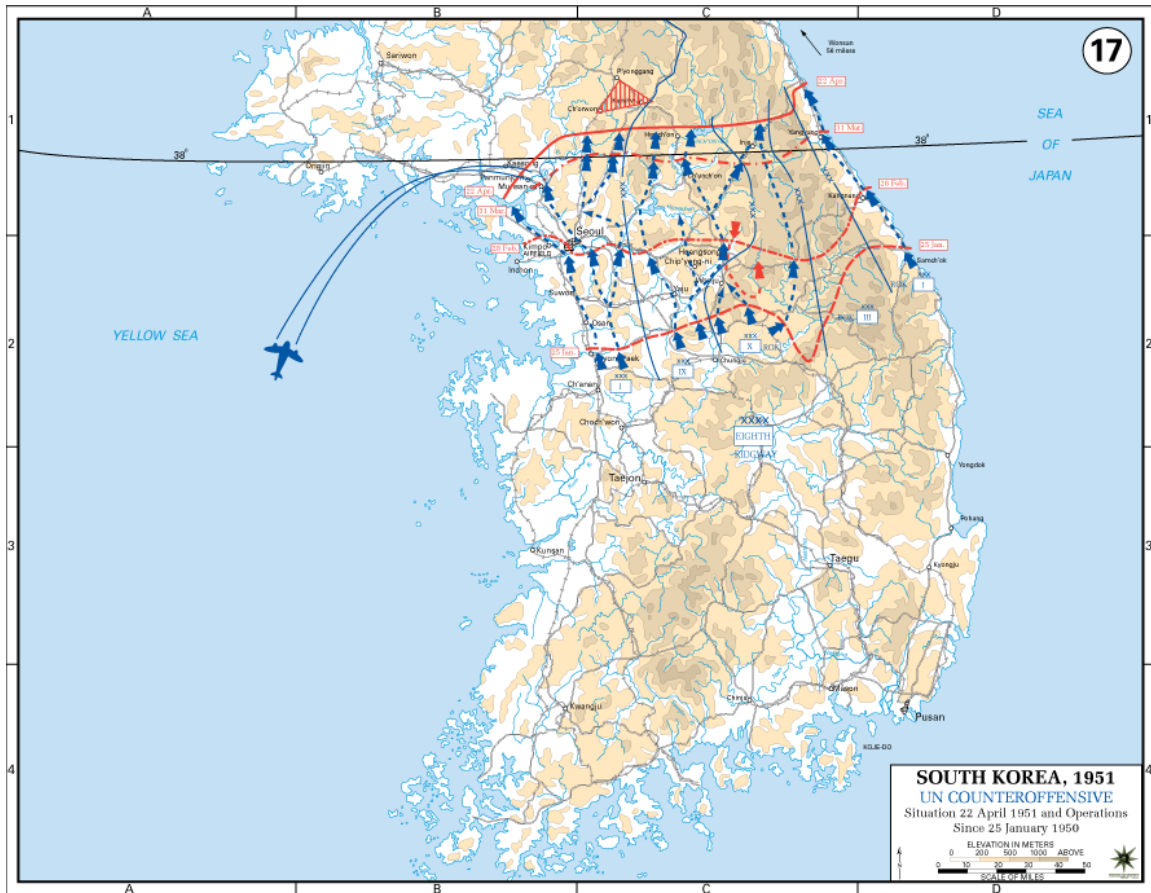


Figure 5. UN Counteroffensive. Map courtesy of the Department of Military History, US Military Academy, “South Korea, 1951: UN Counteroffensive,” United States Military Academy Atlases, accessed April 4, 2019, https://westpoint.edu/sites/default/files/inline-images/academics/academic_departments/history/Korean%20War/Korea17.pdf.

MacArthur’s Defiance and Relief from Command

Events on March 20 set the path ending MacArthur’s command. The JCS informed MacArthur that the Department of State was in the process of preparing a Presidential announcement, “to discuss conditions of settlement in Korea.”²²¹ Aligning with the political situation in the UN, the JCS cautioned advance of major forces north of the 38th Parallel to allow time for diplomacy, unless necessary for the protection of UN forces.²²² MacArthur replied to the JCS, insisting on no additional constraints be imposed on his forces, with no comment in regards

²²¹ Glennon, *FRUS, 1951*, Document 174, 251.

²²² *Ibid.*

to the NCA's intent on preparing for peace settlement.²²³ By March 23, the Department of State finished preparation of the statement for Truman's review. The President sought ceasefire conditions to enable further negotiations for the potential of unifying Korea through diplomatic and democratic methods, not through compelling the Chinese and North Korean surrender.²²⁴ MacArthur interrupted the process with his own public statement the following day.

On March 24, MacArthur preempted the President's public statement with his own unauthorized statement in pursuit of his own political aims.²²⁵ MacArthur's underlying intent was to pursue a preventative war against China, illustrated in his rhetoric with the NCA in his continued attempts to expand the war against China and communism in Asia.²²⁶ MacArthur found anything short of victory appalling and aimed to avoid a perpetual stalemate in Korea.²²⁷ Pursuing his own aim, he constructed a supremely political narrative, which played on American politics and Chinese pride to counteract the intent of the administration. In his statement, he threatened China in two ways. First, he publicized the potential of the UN to expand the war against the Chinese mainland. Second, he highlighted the absolute military dominance of the UN forces over the CCF. He finished his statement by offering the CCF commander to negotiate with MacArthur personally to accept the UN political objective to unify Korea under the ROK. The statement created chaos and precluded any hope of ceasefire in the near term.²²⁸

Against the NCA's intent, the aggregate effect of MacArthur's statement achieved his aim to continue the war. First, the American public received his message with immense

²²³ Glennon, *FRUS, 1951*, Document 178, 255-6.

²²⁴ Glennon, *FRUS, 1951*, Document 182, 263-4.

²²⁵ Glennon, *FRUS, 1951*, Document 184, 265-6.

²²⁶ Ridgway, *The Korean War*, 143; Glennon, *FRUS, 1950*, Document 888, 1237-8; Glennon, *FRUS, 1950*, Document 1101; Rovere and Schlesinger, *General MacArthur and President Truman*, 270-7.

²²⁷ Ridgway, *The Korean War*, 151.

²²⁸ Glennon, *FRUS, 1951*, Document 184, 265-6.

popularity.²²⁹ His perceived outreach for negotiation gave the public the hope the war could end and Korea unified, all while highlighting the military supremacy of UN forces led by the United States. Second, the threats and insult to the Chinese forced them away from the negotiating table, rather than toward it, to protect their own prestige. They responded, “Warmonger MacArthur made a fanatical but shameless statement with the intention of engineering the Anglo-American aggressors to extend the war of aggression into China.”²³⁰ Thus, as perceived by the NCA, MacArthur cleverly boxed in the administration using a simultaneously heroic and threatening narrative that would be difficult for the Truman administration to counter.²³¹

Bradley, Acheson, and Undersecretary of Defense Robert Lovett discussed repercussions to MacArthur’s actions, but recommended not relieving him. The JCS explained that MacArthur’s statement embarrassed the administration with the thirteen countries they had been working to support Truman’s statement, confused negotiations within the UN on the US position concerning Korea, and breached military discipline, violating the December 5 policy restricting public statements relating to political matters. They agreed that if it were anyone else, they would have been relieved at once. However, relieving him, due to his possession of four major commands, would cause great turbulence across the Far Eastern theater. Therefore, they issued yet another reprimand rather than relieving him from command.²³²

One final public statement sealed MacArthur’s fate. Suspiciously, on the same day MacArthur had received word of intended negotiations for settlement, he sent a letter replying to Congressman Joe Martin, the leader of the Republican Party and political opponent to Truman.

²²⁹ US Department of State, March 24, 1951, Memorandum of Conversation, Acheson Papers, Secretary of State File, Harry S. Truman Library, 2, accessed March 13, 2019, https://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/koreanwar/documents/index.php?documentdate=1951-03-00&documentid=ma-6-26&pagenumber=1.

²³⁰ Rovere and Schlesinger, *General MacArthur and President Truman*, 170.

²³¹ US Department of State, March 24, 1951, Memorandum of Conversation, 1-3.

²³² US Department of State, March 24, 1951, Memorandum of Conversation, 1-2; Rovere and Schlesinger, *General MacArthur and President Truman*, 171.

The letter expressed MacArthur's divergent strategic assessment, criticizing national policy in two ways.²³³

First, it supported Martin's proposal, expressed in February against the administration, for using Chinese Nationalists from Formosa against China in support of the Korean War.²³⁴ The NCA were not ignorant to this option. In addition to past meetings following the initial Chinese intervention, on March 14, the NSC had issued a seventeen-page report, assessing five courses of action for using Chinese Nationalists against the CCF. The report highlighted the limited effectiveness of each, primarily due to poor operational reach toward any significant objective while relying on direct US military support. Therefore, the report recommended the Chinese Nationalists to remain defensive on Formosa to hold that position for the time being. This was the first way MacArthur's letter criticized national policy.²³⁵

Second, it criticized the NCA's inability to connect the influence of communism in Asia to the rest of the world, claiming, "If we lose the war to communism in Asia the fall of Europe is inevitable... There is no substitute for victory."²³⁶ Again, this directly opposed the grand strategy of focusing on containment and rebuilding of allied militaries in Europe, and countered the pursuit of ceasefire in Korea. With the letter lacking any indication of confidential basis, Martin read the letter aloud to Congress on April 5.²³⁷

This final event solidified MacArthur's relief. On April 6, Truman wrote in his diary, "MacArthur shoots another political bomb through Joe Martin.... This look[s] like the last

²³³ Rovere and Schlesinger, *General MacArthur and President Truman*, 171.

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ US National Security Council, March 14, 1951, Courses of Action Relative to Communist China and Korea – Anti-Communist Chinese, Truman Papers, President's Secretary's Files, Harry S. Truman Library, 1-17, accessed March 13, 2019, https://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/koreanwar/documents/index.php?documentdate=1951-03-14&documentid=ci-7-2&pagenumber=1.

²³⁶ Rovere and Schlesinger, *General MacArthur and President Truman*, 172.

²³⁷ Ibid., 171-2.

straw.”²³⁸ Truman made the decision to relieve MacArthur at a cabinet meeting on April 7 with full support.²³⁹ On April 11, Truman issued the statement publicizing the relief explaining, “It is fundamental, however, that military commanders must be governed by the policies and directives issued to them in the manner provided by our laws and Constitution.”²⁴⁰ MacArthur no longer held the position as CINCFE, nor as the operational artist for the Korean War.

Conclusion

According to General Marshall, the basic issue that resulted in MacArthur’s dismissal was simply, “[T]he situation of a local Theater Commander publicly expressing his disagreement with a policy which superior authority had repeatedly communicated to him in the clearest terms.”²⁴¹ The logical difference between the strategic assessments of MacArthur and Truman manifested from the divergence of the natural military aim seeking complete destruction of the enemy versus the holistic, moderated political aim, in this case, destruction of communism versus building collective security and containment.²⁴² In addition, other aspects created barriers between the two perspectives, such as the proper use of atomic weapons, the concept of limited war, and the weakening of sovereignty as a necessary obligation in support of the Charter of the United Nations. Regardless, MacArthur formulated his assessment from a position of less global and domestic awareness than the NCA in conjunction with a poor record of anticipating strategic reactions from adversaries, while he disregarded the prediction of Soviet intervention.²⁴³

²³⁸ Harry S. Truman, April 6, 1951, Diary Entries, Truman Papers, President’s Secretary’s Files, Harry S. Truman Library, 1, accessed March 13, 2019, https://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/koreanwar/documents/index.php?documentid=ma-firem48-1&pagenumber=1.

²³⁹ Ibid, 2.

²⁴⁰ Rovere and Schlesinger, *General MacArthur and President Truman*, 173.

²⁴¹ Ridgway, *The Korean War*, 142.

²⁴² Clausewitz, *On War*, 577.

²⁴³ Ridgway, *The Korean War*, 149-53.

As the operational artist, MacArthur possessed the authority, and duty, to express his opinions in discourse with the NCA in regards the national policy; however, he failed when he refused to subordinate his own view to the NCA and expressed his discontent in a public manner, damaging the interests of the nation from the perspective of the NCA. The insubordination breached his responsibility to support the civilian authority in regards to foreign policy.²⁴⁴ Subordination is necessary due to the wider lens the NCA possesses to conduct domestic and global policy assessments, the nature of war as an extension of politics, and democratic ideals placing the responsibility on elected officials to guide foreign policy.²⁴⁵ In addition, MacArthur breached his authority, attempting to influence national policy using public media, in direct disregard of the December reprimand, which constrained MacArthur's public statements in regards to political relations.²⁴⁶ Exacerbating the situation, MacArthur placed himself in the center of direct political conflict between the opposing political party and Truman, allowing himself to become a political tool. Keeping MacArthur in command would incur too much political risk, leveraged by political opposition, and too much policy risk, hurting efforts seeking a peace settlement in Korea. MacArthur's defiance forced Truman's hand in relieving him from command.

Conclusion

General MacArthur's Role as the Operational Artist

This analysis illustrated MacArthur's role as the operational artist during his command in the Korean War, from his receipt of mission to defend South Korea on June 29, 1950 to his relief on April 11, 1951. The illustration divided into three sections focused on modifications to the political aim. MacArthur successfully served as the operational artist during the first phase of his

²⁴⁴ Clausewitz, *On War*, 607.

²⁴⁵ Clausewitz, *On War*, 86-8; Ridgway, *The Korean War*, 149.

²⁴⁶ Lauer, "Blue Whales and Tiger Sharks."

command with the initial political aim to restore the 38th Parallel. In response to the North Korean invasion on 25 June, the NCA ordered MacArthur to employ military force to defend South Korea, designating him as the commander, and operational artist, on 29 June. MacArthur assessed the need for the use of ground forces in order to halt the North Korean advance. Within twenty-four hours, he used his authority to negotiate for the use of ground forces, approved by President Truman, counteracting years of strategic defense policy for the region. Upon stabilizing the Pusan perimeter, MacArthur continued negotiation, through two separate conferences, for the allocation of additional forces and authorization to execute Operation Chromite. MacArthur leveraged inspirational narratives to build the NCA's support for his plans. Through the series of negotiations, MacArthur and the NCA balanced the military aim, means, and ways, nested with the political aim. Operating within the constraints imposed by policy, MacArthur satisfied his responsibility to achieve the political aim, in the restoration of the 38th Parallel.

During the second phase, with the political aim to unify Korea through the complete destruction of North Korean forces, tragedy emerged from MacArthur's failure as an operational artist. The NCA, perceiving opportunities to exploit military advantage following the liberation of Seoul, expanded the aim of the war to unify Korea. However, pursuit of that political aim was contingent on the likelihood of CCF or Soviet intervention due to the higher priority of avoiding war with those two forces. That contingency imposed constraints on MacArthur's forces in regards to the border to mitigate the risk of expanding the war and create the space to settle peace if it did expand. Both, MacArthur and the NCA, share responsibility for the failure of negotiations to resolve the tension between the limited means, the constraints on the operations, and the aim to defeat all of North Korean forces. However, it is MacArthur's personal failure in his responsibility to operate within the constraints imposed by policy. His violation of constraints, placing a majority of his force within the border territories within close proximity to massed Chinese armies, coupled with the sustained restriction prohibiting bombing across the border, failed to account for the risk of CCF intervention. From this tension, emerged the opportunity for

the Chinese to shatter UN forces, driving them back to the 38th Parallel, and regaining communist control of Seoul.

The third and final phase of MacArthur's command ended with his relief, due to his refusal to subordinate his strategic military opinion to the civilian authority. MacArthur's discourse, from late November through December, failed to convince the NCA to alter policy to allow expansion of the war outside of North Korean boundaries. On January 13, President Truman clarified the national policy that MacArthur must accept. Truman expressed his reliance on the operational artist to seek victory with the allocated means and current constraints of containing the war to Korea. In defiance, MacArthur used public media to criticize the national policy, pressure the NCA, and disrupt the potential for ceasefire negotiations. In those actions, MacArthur breached his responsibility to support the civilian authority to achieve the political aim, and he breached his authority by negotiating outside of the private discourse between the operational artist and the NCA. Therefore, MacArthur failed as the operational artist. Truman acknowledged this and relieved him from command.

Implications for Operational Artists in the Twenty-First Century

This analysis illuminates several implications for the operational artists of the twenty-first century. The operational environment of the Korean War in the 1950s possessed similar characteristics to the potential conflict within the twenty-first century, involving LSCO within wars of limited aims due to the proliferation and expansion of nuclear capabilities and the NCA balancing regional interests globally.

Operational artists of the twenty-first century must leverage their authority to discuss policy and negotiate the military aim to support the political aim, the allocation of means, and the ways to achieve victory, modifying constraints imposed by policy when acceptable. Within the domain of wars of limited aim, formulation of effective policy, which contains linkage of the military under the political strategies, balancing ends, ways, and means at both levels, requires

continual dialogue. Therefore, the idea that operational artists will always have a clear, directed policy for them to operate within disconnects the necessary interaction between the two levels. In addition, the nature of the negotiation process is continuous throughout the entirety of competition, and dynamic, responding to the results on the battlefield, which influences the public and NCA perception of victory or defeat, success or failure.²⁴⁷

Finally, to negotiate effectively, the operational artist should account for the following considerations. First, operational artists should negotiate from a subordinate perspective, clearly acknowledging the unequal dialogue to avoid the perception of manipulating the NCA.²⁴⁸ Second, operational artists should have a mastery of the elements of operational art to assess the likelihood of military victory within a given military aim, allocated forces, and constraints.²⁴⁹ Third, the operational artist should communicate in a politically *aware* and candid manner, which resonates with the NCA.²⁵⁰ MacArthur successfully negotiated when he communicated options in terms of policy risk.²⁵¹ However, he failed when he disregarded the political limitations of the United Nations international willingness to expand the war, nor the national policy to focus on European defense and reconstruction. Fourth, the operational artist must account for the manner in which he describes the estimate of the situation. The estimate must be candid and, to the best of his knowledge, accurate. The greatest tragedy during the Korean War occurred when the reality

²⁴⁷ Lauer, “Blue Whales and Tiger Sharks”; Luttwak, *Strategy*, 234.

²⁴⁸ Clausewitz, *On War*, 607; Eliot A. Cohen, *Supreme Command: Soldiers, Statesmen, and Leadership in Wartime* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 2002), 208-9; Robert Gates, *Duty: Memoirs of a Secretary of War* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014), 364-5. Clausewitz emphasized the importance of subordinating the military point of view to the political. Cohen described the dialogue between the civilian authority and senior military commanders as an “unequal dialogue.” Gates illustrated an example of unanimity of senior military officer support of a recommended course of action reinforced President Obama’s suspicion of a “military bloc” determined to force the President’s hand.

²⁴⁹ US Army, *ADRP 3-0* (2016), 4-3.

²⁵⁰ Lauer, “Blue Whales and Tiger Sharks.”

²⁵¹ Lamborn, “Theory and Politics in World Politics,” 191-7.

of the battlefield, reported by subordinate commanders, disconnected from MacArthur's intelligence estimate, resulting in inaccurate information to the JCS.

In addition to the authority to negotiate, operational artists possess the responsibility to support achievement of the political aim, through the military aim, within the constraints imposed by policy.²⁵² Again, in the spirit of subordinating the regional military perspective to the political, or in the United States, the military subordinate to civilian control, at no time should an operational artist conduct operations deliberately violating the NCA's intent.²⁵³ The operational artist must orchestrate the elements of operational art to implement an emergent campaign plan in order to achieve victory within the policy constraints.

The ability for the military to fight and win our nation's wars relies on operational artists, supported by their staffs, to apply operational art creatively, leveraging their authority to participate in dialogue with the NCA, and satisfying their responsibility to conduct military operations to meet their intent.

²⁵² Lauer, "Blue Whales and Tiger Sharks."

²⁵³ Clausewitz, *On War*, 607; Ridgway, *The Korean War*, 155.

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