Intelligence Failure? An Analysis of the Chinese Intervention in the Korean War

A Monograph

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2020

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188

1. REPORT DATE *(DD-MM-YYYY)*	2. REPORT TYPE	3. DATES COVERED *(From - To)*
21-05-2020	Master's Thesis	JUN 2019 – MAY 2020

4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE
Intelligence Failure? An Analysis of the Chinese Intervention in the Korean War

5a. CONTRACT NUMBER

5b. GRANT NUMBER

5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER

6. AUTHOR(S)
MAJ James Paul Papagni

5d. PROJECT NUMBER

5e. TASK NUMBER

5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER

7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)

Command and General Staff College
ATTN: ATZL-SWD-GD
Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-2301

8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER

9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)

Advanced Military Studies Program

10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)

11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)

12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Approved for Public Release; Distribution is Unlimited

13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

14. ABSTRACT

In the modern era, it is far too common to cite a lack of intelligence as the most proximate cause for an operational or strategic failure. Commanders often reap the benefits of military successes in the pages of histories, while their intelligence officers bear the brunt of criticism when operations fail. The American experience in the Korean War continues this overly simplified trend. Historians praise GEN Douglas MacArthur as a military hero for his successes at defending the Pusan Perimeter and planning the landings at Inchon which enabled the subsequent breakout. MG Charles Willoughby, GEN MacArthur's intelligence officer receives little credit for his contributions to these military successes but shoulders almost sole responsibility for his inability to accurately assess the likelihood of a Chinese intervention into the war. By re-examining the historical record through the lenses of contemporary US Army doctrine, modern leadership and systems theorists, this monograph identifies the role of the commander in not only evaluating intelligence, but creating organizations that are capable of divergent thinking.

15. SUBJECT TERMS
Korean War, Intelligence, LSCO, Leadership

16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT	b. ABSTRACT	c. THIS PAGE			19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER *(include area code)*
(U)	(U)	(U)		45	

Standard Form 298 (Rev. 8-98)
Prescribed by ANSI Std. Z39.18

Monograph Approval Page

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Abstract

Intelligence Failure? An Analysis of the Chinese Intervention in the Korean War, by MAJ James P Papagni, US Army, 35 pages.

In the modern era, it is far too common to cite a lack of intelligence as the most proximate cause for an operational or strategic failure. Commanders often reap the benefits of military successes in the pages of histories, while their intelligence officers bear the brunt of criticism when operations fail. The American experience in the Korean War continues this overly simplified trend. Historians praise GEN Douglas MacArthur as a military hero for his successes at defending the Pusan Perimeter and planning the landings at Inchon which enabled the subsequent breakout. MG Charles Willoughby, GEN MacArthur's intelligence officer receives little credit for his contributions to these military successes but shoulders almost sole responsibility for his inability to accurately assess the likelihood of a Chinese intervention into the war. By re-examining the historical record through the lenses of contemporary US Army doctrine, modern leadership and systems theorists, this monograph identifies the role of the commander in not only evaluating intelligence, but creating organizations that are capable of divergent thinking.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my ever-supportive wife, Bri and my wonderful sons Jimmy and Luke for their constant support. Bri and the boys endured countless nights and weekends without me as I worked tirelessly in the library on this project. Next, I am indebted to Dr. Matthew Muehlbauer for his expert advice and limitless patience with me throughout this whole process. Finally, I would like to thank COL Shane Murphy and my peers in Seminar 6 for their valuable academic insight and constant comic relief throughout the year. Thank you all.

Abbreviations

ADP	Army Doctrine Publication
CCF	Chinese Communist Forces
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
COP	Combat Outpost
FEC	Far Eastern Command
FM	Field Manual
G-2	Intelligence Officer
GEN	General
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
LTC	Lieutenant Colonel
LTG	Lieutenant General
MG	Major General
NSC	National Security Council
NKPA	North Korean People's Army
POW	Prisoners of War
SIGINT	Signals Intelligence
UN	United Nations
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
WYSIATI	What You See is All There is

Introduction

The historical record of modern military operations typically delineates the difference between success and failure as an operational success or an intelligence failure. When a military operation fails to achieve its intended purpose, the accuracy and completeness of the intelligence information comes under the most immediate and deliberate scrutiny. The intelligence officer is a member of the staff whose primary role is to provide advice to the commander on probable enemy courses of action in a military operation. Ultimately it is the commander who must make decisions based on the advice of his staff, yet the commander rarely shares the blame of acting upon faulty intelligence. A careful examination of a commander's ability to not only create an organization that is equipped and empowered to challenge strongly held biases, but also adapt to changes in the complexity of war, is necessary to truly dispel the myth of intelligence failures versus operational successes.

An example of a contemporary intelligence failure is the attack on the remote US Combat Outpost (COP) Keating, in northeastern Afghanistan. On 3 October 2009, over 300 enemy fighters attacked the COP, resulting in eight US Soldiers killed and over 25 wounded.[1] The official investigation cited, "intelligence assessments had become desensitized to reports of massing enemy formations by previous reports that had proved false."[2] What the official report did not include was the actions taken by commanders at all echelons in light of the intelligence reports. The report's conclusion that commanders 'became desensitized,' absolves commanders of their responsibility to evaluate the changing operational environment. Although the predicted time of the enemy attack on the COP proved inaccurate, the intelligence indicating the enemy was

[1] Rod Nordland, "U.S. Military Faults Leaders in Attack on Base," *New York Times,* February 6, 2010, accessed October 28, 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/06/world/asia/06afghan.html.

[2] Bill Roggio, "Army Releases Report on Battle at Combat Outpost Keating." *The Long War Journal*, February 6, 2010, accessed October 28, 2019, https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2010/02/army_releases_report_on _combat.php.

preparing a massive assault on the COP was correct. The investigation into the attack on COP Keating did not focus on what the intelligence reports correctly indicated, instead the investigation focused solely on the failures of intelligence as the most proximate cause for the event.

In the late summer and early fall of 1950, General (GEN) Douglas MacArthur and his intelligence officer (G-2), Major General (MG) Charles Willoughby experienced both intelligence and operational failures when the Chinese Communist Forces (CCF) crossed the Yalu River and entered the Korean War. Current historical perspectives discussed later in this monograph are confident in placing blame on MG Willoughby for his inability to not only recognize the potential for Chinese intervention in the Korean War, but to convince his commander of this distinct possibility. CCF crossing the Yalu River represents an instance in which a commander stifled the analysis of his intelligence section to conform to his previously held biases.

Following a brief historical recount of the Korean War, this study will analyze the current historiography as it pertains to our understanding of the CCF crossing the Yalu River in October 1950, and GEN MacArthur and MG Willoughby's roles in the United Nations (UN) forces' strategic and operational intelligence failure. To truly understand GEN MacArthur's leadership style, his cult of personality, and his interactions with his staff, this monograph evaluates GEN MacArthur's early life through his successes in World War II. Following the historiography is a section on leadership theories posited by Mary Jo Hatch, cognitive theories of Dietrich Dörner, and decision-making theories of Daniel Kahneman. The authors provide a framework to evaluate the decisions made and information ignored by GEN MacArthur and MG Willoughby. The next section offers a brief evaluation of the contemporary doctrine of the US Army during the Korean War to appropriately frame the theoretical and historical context.

The monograph continues with an historical analysis of GEN MacArthur's hubris immediately following his successful landings at Inchon as it relates to his ability to receive information. It then focuses on the central issue of the inadequate intelligence picture and MG Willoughby's role in contributing to it. Aside from the glaring inadequacies of both GEN MacArthur and MG Willoughby, the analysis will examine additional complicating factors such as bureaucratic inefficiencies and the competency of the CCF in conducting deception operations. The study will conclude by assessing the commander's role in eliminating intelligence failures through organizational design in potential future large scale combat operations (LSCO). The inability of the US to accurately evaluate the probability of a Chinese intervention in the Korean War was not an intelligence failure, it was an organizational and leadership failure that stemmed from GEN MacArthur's inability to create a command that could adequately evaluate intelligence and reframe the operational environment to understand operational risk.

Historical Context

American involvement in Korea dates to 1882 when Commodore Robert W. Shufeldt negotiated a treaty with China, the protector of Korea that "would bind the United States and Korea."[3] The eastern powers of China, Japan, and Russia fought for control of the Korean Peninsula since the late 19th century. The Sino-Japanese War of 1894 resulted in Japanese control of the Peninsula, which Japan then defended a decade later in the Russo-Japanese War.[4] Following the defeat of Japan in World War II, the United States and Soviet Union divided Korea into two occupation zones along the 38th Parallel, with the United States taking the South and the Soviet Union the North. With the division of Korea, the Soviet Union installed a Communist government lead by Kim Il Sung, and the United States supported the democratic government of

[3] Stanley Sandler, *The Korean War: No Victors, No Vanquished* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1999), 19.

[4] Ibid.

Syngman Rhee in the South.[5] Meanwhile, the Chinese Civil War came to an end in 1949 with the Soviet-backed Chinese Communist Party (CCP) defeating the American-supported Nationalist Forces, which set the conditions for a strong anti-Western sentiment within Mao Zedong's China.[6]

With communist governments firmly entrenched in the Soviet Union, China, and North Korea, the United States feared a Communist takeover of democratic East Asian governments that could erode its hegemonic legitimacy in both the Middle East and Europe.[7] Despite the expansion of Communism in Asia, Western governments remained focused on a potential clash with Soviet forces in Europe. The American government's focus in Asia remained on occupation and reconstruction of post-war Japan. The precarious situation in Korea remained largely in the periphery of American policy makers' interests until the North Koreans seized the strategic initiative and attacked south to unify the Peninsula under a singular Communist rule.

The Korean War began on 25 June 1950 when the North Korean People's Army (NKPA) attacked south of the 38th Parallel with seven divisions totaling approximately 90,000 men.[8] At the time of the invasion, GEN MacArthur focused his attention almost exclusively on Japan, where he was "trying to shape a defeated country into a more egalitarian, democratic society."[9] The South Korean forces that opposed the North Korean onslaught were poorly trained, unprepared, and carried "leftover, worn-out, World War II weapons."[10] Within two days of

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[5] Sandler, *The Korean War,* 23.

[6] Chen Jian, *China's Road to the Korean War: The Making of the Sino-American Confrontation* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1997), 12.

[7] Burton Ira Kaufman, *The Korean Conflict*, *Greenwood Press Guides to Historic Events of the Twentieth Century* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999), 8.

[8] James F. Schnabel and Robert J. Watson, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and National Policy.* vol. 3 (Washington, DC: Office of Joint History, 1986), 1.

[9] David Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter: America and the Korean War*, 1st ed (New York, NY: Hyperion, 2007), 23.

[10] Ibid., 82.

initiating the attack, the NKPA controlled the South Korean capital of Seoul, forcing the South Korean Army to withdraw over the Han River, destroying the bridges to cover their movement.[11] In response to the North Korean attack, President Truman authorized GEN MacArthur to employ US Army forces to maintain communications, ensure retention of the airfields and seaports in the vicinity of Pusan, attack military targets in North Korea, and protect Formosa against a Chinese invasion.[12] The United States was now officially involved in the Korean War.

US combat troops under the command of LTC Charles Smith first encountered the NPKA on 5 July 1950 in vicinity of Osan, South Korea. The infamous Task Force Smith, undermanned and underequipped, attempted to block the NPKA armored attack. Aside from the military objective of blocking the NPKA, the deployment of Task Force Smith represented a larger American military and political support to South Korea.[13] The resulting military action delayed the NKPA a mere seven hours and destroyed Task Force Smith.[14] Two days later, the United Nations authorized military intervention in Korea and delegated command of all UN forces to the United States. Through July and August of 1950 UN forces, under command of GEN MacArthur, could only conduct delaying actions as the NKPA attack continued with ferocious momentum.[15] By 4 August 1950, UN forces established a secure perimeter around the strategically vital port city of Pusan, the remaining lifeline between UN forces in Korea and Japan.[16]

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[11] Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter*, 85.

[12] Roy E. Appleman, *United States Army in the Korean War: South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1992), 46-47.

[13] T. R Fehrenbach, *This Kind of War: The Classic Korean War History* (New York, NY: The Macmillan Company, 1994), 98.

[14] Ibid., 107.

[15] Fehrenbach, *This Kind of War*, 142-143.

[16] Sandler, *The Korean War,* 76.

While the fighting raged along the Pusan Perimeter, GEN MacArthur planned an amphibious landing just west of the South Korean capital at Inchon. The bold maneuver, executed on 15 September 1950, not only enabled the fixed UN Forces to break out from the Pusan Perimeter, but severed the NPKA's lines of communication and supply routes.[17] The landings were not only an unquestionable military success, it further reinforced GEN MacArthur's reputation as a military genius. With the shift of momentum in favor of the UN forces following the Inchon landings, the objective of the war changed from defending South Korea to a unifying all of Korea under one democratic government. The US Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) informed GEN MacArthur that "his first objective was the destruction of all North Korean forces in South Korea. He was also to unite all of Korea, if possible, under the Rhee regime."[18] At the time he received the order, GEN MacArthur was already planning a pursuit of the NPKA to ensure its complete destruction.[19]

The landings at Inchon had reverberations within the CCP. From Mao's perspective, the United Nations intervention in Korea turned a civil war between the North and South into "an international conflict played out on China's doorstep."[20] As the fighting continued along the Pusan Perimeter, Mao moved multiple field armies to the border, undetected by American intelligence.[21] As UN forces continued north from Inchon, Mao perceived the threat to Chinese sovereignty as imminent. Upon the UN advance across the 38th Parallel into North Korean territory, Mao decided to intervene.[22] By early October 1950, the Chinese crossed the Yalu River and officially entered the Korean War.

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[17] Fehrenbach, *This Kind of War*, 244-245.

[18] Sandler, *The Korean War,* 99.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Shu Guang Zhang, *Mao's Military Romanticism: China and the Korean War, 1950-1953* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1995), 55.

[21] Ibid.*,* 61.

[22] Jian, *China's Road to the Korean War,* 161.

Historiography

As with most military defeats, or at least stalemates, historians often attempt to distill the complex reasons for failure into a singular monocausal event. In the tomes of histories written on the Korean War, there are typically two reasons that the United States failed to identify the possibility of the Chinese forces crossing the Yalu River and intervening on behalf of the North Koreans: GEN MacArthur's hubris, and MG Willoughby's oversight of indications and warning of a Chinese intervention. While both officers certainly contributed to the calamity that ensued in the early autumn of 1950, neither explanation adequately explains the complexity of the operational environment. GEN MacArthur's hubris, up until the infamous defeat at the Chosin Reservoir, remained unchecked by United Nations Security Council (UNSC), the JCS, or the President of the United States.

Historians such as Joseph Goulden acknowledge the failure of the CIA to accurately describe the strategic environment and provide an accurate evaluation of the probability of Chinese intervention to the President. Yet Goulden dismisses the CIA's inadequacies as bureaucratic in nature and places blame on MG Willoughby for tactical incompetence. Goulden aptly stated "two intelligence organizations shared responsibility for forecasting what might happen in Asia in spring and early summer of 1950: the G-2 section of General MacArthur's Far East command, headquartered in Tokyo and the Central Intelligence Agency, half a globe away."[23] Goulden further defended the CIA by citing the inability of its first three directors to establish legitimacy within defense and intelligence circles.[24] In addition to its bureaucratic inefficiencies within the National Security Council (NSC), CIA analysts failed to predict the North Korean invasion of South Korea, citing that North Korea had only the "capability for

[23] Joseph C. Goulden, *Korea, the Untold Story of the War* (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 1983), 38.

[24] Ibid.

attaining limited objectives in short term military operations against Southern Korea, including the capture of Seoul."[25] The CIA therefore dismissed the possibility of a North Korean attack with such limited objectives. Goulden's apologetic approach to the CIA's inability to perform its intelligence function places the majority of the blame, by default, on MG Willoughby and his G-2 staff.

In stark contrast to the inadequacies of the CIA, Goulden claimed that MG Willoughby's G-2 section had the collection and analysis capability necessary to prevent intelligence failures such as the intervention of the Chinese. Whereas Goulden excused the ineptitude of the first three CIA directors, he sharply criticized MG Willoughby, stating "much of the fault lay in a lack of competent leadership. FEC's chief intelligence officer was Major General Charles Willoughby, a member of the MacArthur palace guard since 1941."[26] Comparing the director of a discrete government agency subordinate only to the President to a staff officer presents a false dichotomy. Goulden made additional ad hominem remarks by referring to MG Willoughby as "the bastard son of a ropemaker," who "knew exactly what MacArthur wanted to hear and he told him exactly that, and no more."[27] In regards to MG Willoughby's intelligence production, Goulden described it as "akin to listening to the babble of old women in a marketplace: a potpourri of rumor, speculation, isolated items that are impossible to evaluate."[28] Aside from the clear ad hominem attacks, his characterization of the MG Willoughby's competence as an intelligence officer is in direct contrast to at least half of MG Willoughby's contemporaries (discussed below). Goulden characterized MG Willoughby as an incompetent officer from an unfortunate background seeking to appease his superiors. Goulden's harsh characterization of the role of MG Willoughby in contributing to the intelligence failure regarding the Chinese intervention is overly simplistic and

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[25] Goulden, *Korea, the Untold Story of the War,* 38.

[26] Ibid., 39.

[27] Ibid., 40.

[28] Ibid., 39.

does not provide any concrete examples where MG Willoughby did not meet his doctrinal obligations to GEN MacArthur given the information available to him.

In his seminal work on the Korean War, Roy Appleman asserted that MG Willoughby was the person most directly responsible for the intelligence failure regarding the CCF intervention. Appleman took a similar stance as Goulden in claiming that "of all the intelligence levels of the UN command and the American government, perhaps the most decisive in evaluating the intention and capability of Chinese intervention in the Korean War was that of the Far East Command."[29] Appleman's view is not as condemning as Goulden's, as he acknowledged that while the CIA was incapable of providing the intelligence needed to predict Chinese intervention in Korea, it was still their responsibility. Appleman outlined the roles of the different headquarters: "the intelligence responsibility of the Eighth Army and X Corps was tactical; strategic intelligence responsibility rested with the Central Intelligence Agency."[30] Appleman's conclusions are consistent with the doctrine of the time as Field Manual 101-5, *Staff Officer's Field Manual*, which identifies the primary function of the G-2 is "to keep the commander and other concerned, informed regarding the enemy's situation and capabilities."[31] Where Appleman and Goulden differ is in Appleman's conclusion that the NSC should have specifically tasked GEN MacArthur's staff with collecting strategic intelligence since the CIA demonstrated it could not. Both authors benefit from hindsight because it is unlikely that anyone within the US defense or intelligence apparatus were aware of intelligence blind spot growing along the Yalu River.

The historical record is clear in evaluating the role of GEN MacArthur's hubris in contributing to his downfall on the Korean Peninsula. Historians traced the genesis of MacArthur's hubris to his time in World War I through his early exploits in the Philippines

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[29] Appleman, *South to the Naktong*, 757.

[30] Ibid.

[31] US War Department, Field Manual (FM) 101-5, *Staff Officers' Field Manual: Staff Organization and Procedure* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1950), 10.

during World War II. Mitchell Yockelson refers to GEN MacArthur as "the most popular man in America" who enjoyed the admiration of the American public and Soldiers who "proudly served under his command on the battlefields of the Western Front, the Pacific Theater and Korea."[32] GEN MacArthur's military education began long before he reported to West Point on 13 June 1899.[33] Lieutenant General (LTG) Arthur MacArthur, GEN Douglas MacArthur's father, "was fearless in combat" and "was one of America's greatest Soldiers."[34] LTG MacArthur earned the Medal of Honor for leading the 24th Wisconsin at the Battle of Missionary Ridge in the American Civil War.[35] His son developed a love and appreciation for military service and constantly tried to live up to his father's legacy.[36] GEN MacArthur, constantly attempting to live up to the MacArthur family name, walked around the battlefields of World War I with no helmet, no weapon, but brandishing only a riding crop to motivate the Soldiers of the 42nd Infantry Division, wherein he served as the Chief of Staff.[37] From the trenches of World War I to the beaches of the Philippine Islands, GEN MacArthur had a keen sense of bravado and flare.

While this work does not dispute that GEN MacArthur was a war hero or that he served his nation honorably, one must take a more critical look at GEN MacArthur's actions than provided by Yockelson's work. His *MacArthur: Defiant Soldier,* lacks any criticism of GEN MacArthur and inaccurately portrays the unprofessional nature of his public disagreements with President Truman or his command failures in Korea. Yockelson provided only one chapter on GEN MacArthur's Korean War experiences, in comparison he provided two chapters on World War I and four chapters to World War II. In the sole chapter on the Korean War, Yockelson

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[32] Mitchell A. Yockelson, *MacArthur: Defiant Soldier* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2011) *ix.*

[33] Ibid., 19.

[34] Ibid., 1.

[35] Ibid., 15.

[36] Ibid., 1.

[37] Ibid., 73.

insinuates that the firing of GEN MacArthur by President Truman on 11 April 1951 was the direct result of his now famous "there is no substitute for victory" speech.[38] The reality is that GEN MacArthur gave several public addresses directly opposing the President's stated foreign policy goals, including a speech given in the summer of 1950 at a conference at the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) in Chicago, Illinois. In addition to publicly opposing the President's opinions, GEN MacArthur also failed to anticipate the Chinese intervention in the Korean War, which resulted in his greatest military defeat. While GEN MacArthur is undoubtedly an American hero, identifying his flaws and shortcomings does not make him any less heroic; *Defiant Soldier* portrays GEN MacArthur more as a deity rather than a flawed human.

The biographical information of MG Willoughby is polar in its description of the intelligence officer. Some of MG Willoughby's colleagues such as BG Marshall referred to him as "one of the greatest students of history that I've ever encountered in my service. He had intellectual capacity, and he was very reserved, dignified and formal."[39] GEN Matthew Ridgeway, who would eventually replace GEN MacArthur as the commander of UN Forces in Korea, referred to MG Willoughby as "a very professional intelligence officer."[40] In stark contrast, Max Hastings claimed "Willoughby, the intelligence officer was nicknamed 'Sir Charles' by the staff for his pomposity."[41] T.R. Fehrenbach calls MG Willoughby "personally unpopular in the American Army."[42] One consistency within the historical record is MG Willoughby's stance on Communism. It is perhaps the shared vision of a world devoid of

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[38] Yockelson, *MacArthur: Defiant Soldier*, 201.

[39] Hiroshi Masuda and Reiko Yamamoto, *MacArthur in Asia: The General and His Staff in the Philippines, Japan, and Korea* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013), 19.

[40] General Matthew Ridgeway, interview by Dr. Maurice Matloff, April 18,1984, Office of the Secretary of Defense Historical Office, Washington, DC, 20, Accessed October 30, 2019, https://history.defense.gov/Portals/70/Documents/oral_history/OH_Trans_RidgwayMatthew4-18-1984.pdf?ver=2014-09-19-081000-687.

[41] Max Hastings, *The Korean War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998), 66.

[42] Fehrenbach, *This Kind of War 282.*

Communism, held by the commander and his intelligence officer, that shaped the preparations for the Korean War and the desire to find a military solution to the Communist "problem."

One cannot understand the role of politics and power within MacArthur's headquarters without understanding the "Bataan Boys." It was during GEN MacArthur's infamous evacuation of Corregidor that he developed a patronage network with a group of fifteen Army officers referred to as the "Bataan Boys." GEN MacArthur carefully selected each of the men because of their anticipated role in the future liberation of the Philippines.[43] It is worth noting that the name "Bataan Boys" is not one of endearment, but of jealousy from those individuals that were not part of GEN MacArthur's inner circle. The "Bataan Boys" included then Colonel Charles A. Willoughby. During World War II, MG Willoughby did not have the same clout as Generals Richard Southerland or Richard Marshall, but when both Southerland and Marshall retired following World War II, MG Willoughby rose to become the de facto leader of the "Bataan Boys."[44] MG Willoughby served as GEN MacArthur's G-2 from July 1941 through April of 1951 and wielded great authority amongst the staff.[45] It is impossible to imagine the fierce loyalty the "Bataan Boys" had for GEN MacArthur, as their selection for evacuation almost assuredly saved their lives and prevented them from enduring the gruesome Bataan Death March. Works such as *MacArthur in Asia* identified the power wielded by the "Bataan Boys," but failed to explain exactly why. In his book, *The Good Years: MacArthur and Sutherland*, Paul Rogers credits the "Bataan Boys" for being "battle tested. All of them had exposed themselves to danger far beyond the demands of their official headquarters assignments. They were the eyes and the ears and the voice of MacArthur."[46] Inclusion into the ranks of the "Bataan Boys" was more than a clique

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[43] Masuda and Yamamoto, *MacArthur in Asia,* 96.

[44] Ibid., 19.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Paul P. Rogers, *The Good Years: MacArthur and Sutherland* (New York, NY: Praeger, 1990), 244.

centered on the cult of personality GEN MacArthur wielded, but a small group of professional and brave Soldiers with an unyielding loyalty to their commander.

There is little debate within the historical record of the importance of the "Bataan Boys" in shaping GEN MacArthur's understanding of the operational environment. GEN MacArthur trusted his staff implicitly, and his staff remained fiercely loyal to him. Historians differ on their evaluation of the efficacy of GEN MacArthur's staff. Some writers, such as Max Hastings, chose to use personal attacks to cause doubt about the effectiveness of individuals. Hastings continually refers to MG Willoughby by his pejorative nickname of "Sir Charles," calling attention to his arrogance and pompous attitude.[47] While these remarks might be warranted on the individual level, these sort of arguments distract from the larger problem presented by such a close knit and loyal group: group think. Group think is the phenomenon wherein individuals within an organization perceive the world in a similar manner and discourage dissenting opinions and individual creativity. The "Bataan Boys," sharing a socialization process as wartime officers working for the same commander against the same enemy, would share a similar perception of events on the Korean Peninsula. Individual character flaws undoubtedly contributed to the eventual intelligence failure concerning the Chinese intervention in the Korean War, but the organizational culture of embracing group think as a method for problem solving was the more egregious flaw GEN MacArthur's headquarters.

Moreover, the successful landings at Inchon not only provided the United Nations forces with the victory it needed to drive the North Korea Army out of South Korea but acted as a catalyst for GEN MacArthur's growing hubris. A complete discussion of the planning and execution of the landings at Inchon deserves an entirely separate and standalone work, as the operation was the perfect combination of military genius, luck, and tenacity on the part of the Marines that executed the landing. What is significant to this study is the opposition GEN

[47] Hastings, *The Korean War*, 66.

MacArthur faced in getting approval for the operation. As Donald Knox wrote in his oral history of the Korean War, "MacArthur's Inchon proposal met with strong opposition. Naval and Marine specialists alike considered Inchon Harbor an improbably place for an amphibious landing."[48] GEN MacArthur was not only fighting the NPKA he was also fighting within his own chain of command for approval of his audacious plan to land at Inchon.

Two of GEN MacArthur's largest critics of the landings were GEN Lawton Collins, the Army Chief of Staff and ADM Forrest Sherman, the Chief of Naval Operations. Both men favored a landing farther south, as the tides were more predictable and the larger beaches provided better avenues of approach for the Marines as they disembarked their landing craft.[49] The tides at Inchon varied so drastically that the landing forces could maneuver their Landing Ship-Tanks (LSTs) ashore only during the maximum high tide, a mere three to four day window each month. During low tides of only 23 feet, the LSTs could not get to within three miles of their intended landing sites as they drew 29 feet.[50] GEN MacArthur was unwavering in his commitment to landing at Inchon and expertly countered each of their objections with yet another reason why Inchon was the only suitable location for an amphibious operation. Despite the environmental conditions, GEN MacArthur's intelligence indicated the NPKA had neglected its rear area security around Inchon, as most of its forces were fighting against the Pusan Perimeter.[51] Additionally, attacking any further south, as GEN Collins and ADM Sherman advocated, would not allow GEN MacArthur to shatter the lines of communication between North Korea and its forces in the South.[52] Neither GEN Collins nor ADM Sherman could resist GEN MacArthur's

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[48] Donald Knox and Alfred Coppel, *The Korean War: An Oral History* (San Diego, CA: Harcourt, 1985), 197.

[49] Bevin Alexander, *MacArthur's War: The Flawed Genius Who Challenged the American Political System* (New York, NY: Penguin, 2014), 74.

[50] Sandler, *The Korean War,* 88.

[51] Appleman, *South to the Naktong, 493.*

[52] Ibid.

convincing appeals to the President or Chairman of the JCS, as his record in World War II demonstrated his flawless skill with amphibious operations in the Pacific.

Once again, the "Bataan Boys" rallied around their commander while he fought to convince the National Security Council, President, and Naval commanders of the viability of his plan. GEN MacArthur's plan for the Inchon landings relied on the diligent intelligence work of his G-2, MG Willoughby. MG Willoughby directed special reconnaissance operations under a Joint Special Operations staff, one that incorporated Japanese and South Korean intelligence professionals to bolster his limited intelligence collection capabilities for the operation.[53] With limited resources, the G-2 section managed to produce "over thirty separate topographical studies of beaches, approaches, and entry data into Korean port areas."[54] If GEN MacArthur's success at Inchon bolstered his hubris and at least suspended his doubters in Washington DC, it also certainly increased his trust and confidence in the abilities of his G-2.

In another example of fierce loyalty to his staff, GEN MacArthur chose GEN Ned Almond, his chief of staff, to command the landings as commander of X Corps.[55] In deciding that GEN Almond would retain his role as Chief of Staff while simultaneously commanding X Corps, GEN MacArthur once again made a personnel decision based on reciprocal personal loyalties. Although GEN Almond was not a "Bataan Boy," his loyalty was unwavering. While GEN Almond prepared to lead the operation, the rest of the "Bataan Boys" continued planning for the operation. GEN MacArthur's risky operation to land at Inchon provided the United Nations forces with a desperately needed success to break out of the Pusan Perimeter, but more importantly, it demonstrated to GEN MacArthur that his intuition was infallible. GEN MacArthur

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[53] Charles Willoughby and John Chamberlain, *MacArthur:1941-1951* (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 1954), 372.

[54] Ibid., 373.

[55] Appleman, *South to the Naktong,* 490.

proved the Joint Chiefs of Staff wrong; and his team comprised of his loyal "Bataan Boys" demonstrated an ability to solve problems that Washington DC deemed insurmountable.

One area in which the historical record is less consistent is regarding GEN MacArthur's attitudes about Chinese intervention into the Korean War. In the years between the Japanese surrender in World War II and the beginning of the Korean War, the Chinese Civil War continued unfavorably for the American-supported Nationalist forces. GEN MacArthur advocated for additional warships, aircraft, and up to six divisions of advisors for the beleaguered Nationalist Army.[56] William Manchester provided the opinion that GEN MacArthur viewed his situation on Japan in the same light as his experience in the Philippines: failure to counter the Chinese Communists would result in the Chinese invading Japan and force his evacuation.[57] David Halberstam contended GEN MacArthur was sure the Chinese would not enter the war and did not view Chinese political threats to intervene as a serious risk to UN operations in Korea. [58] This deduction draws on GEN MacArthur's comments to President Eisenhower during the Wake Island Conferences in which he assured the President that the conflict would remain isolated to the Korean Peninsula.[59] GEN MacArthur's assurances at the conference came on 13 October 1950, nearly two weeks after the Chinese crossed the Yalu River. Edwin Hoyt provided a more hawkish view of GEN MacArthur's attitude towards the Chinese, highlighting his advocacy for preemptive strikes against targets in mainland China.[60] The greatest complicating factor of the treatment of GEN MacArthur in the historical record is his inconsistent remarks, both in public and private, regarding his intentions towards the Chinese. While on one hand he repeatedly

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[56] William Manchester, *American Caesar: Douglas MacArthur 1880-1964* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1978), 536.

[57] Ibid., 537.

[58] Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter,* 11-12.

[59] Harry S. Truman, "Notes on the Wake Conference, October 13, 1950," accessed on November 1, 2019, https://www.trumanlibrary.gov/library/research-files/notes-wake-island-conference.

[60] Edwin P Hoyt, *The Day the Chinese Attacked: Korea, 1950: The Story of the Failure of America's China Policy* (New York, NY: Paragon House, 1993), 74.

dismissed the likelihood of a Chinese intervention, and the other he advocated for expanding the war to include Communist China.

Whether GEN MacArthur viewed fighting the Chinese on the Korean Peninsula as inevitable or unlikely is tangential to the central argument presented in the case study. GEN MacArthur's public remarks toward the Chinese varied from the end of the Chinese Civil War through the Chinese entrance into the Korean War. GEN MacArthur held strong views that Communism was anathema to Democracy and the West as a whole and he needed to defeat it. As the evidence will show, GEN MacArthur held strong biases towards the risk of Chinese intervention in the Korean War and these shaped his assessment of the intelligence presented by MG Willoughby. Before the US became involved in the Korean War, GEN MacArthur shaped intelligence analysis to justify military action against the Chinese, who he viewed as instigating the North Koreans to attack. Once the U.S. entered the War, he shaped intelligence analysis to indicate a lower risk of Chinese involvement in the War to gain support in Washington DC for continuing his advance north towards the Yalu River. GEN MacArthur did not use intelligence to shape his understanding of the environment, he used it to suit his personal objectives for the war.

Theoretical Discussion

In his 1989 work *The Logic of Failure: Recognizing and Avoiding Error in Complex Situations*, Dieterich Dörner explains why humans fail to anticipate uncertainty, specifically how an individual (or organization's) actions could impact a complex system.[61] In the context of warfare, a commander and staff must attempt to identify information gaps and create running estimates or recommendations as to how military operations can change the strategic context of a

[61] Dietrich Dörner, *The Logic of Failure: Recognizing and Avoiding Error in Complex Situations* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2010), 38. A complex system is a system that is composed of may interconnected entities where the relationships between each entity is either unknown or nonlinear. An ecosystem is a classic example of a complex system where impacts to one organism within the ecosystem has reverberations throughout. For example, if a predatory species is removed from a national park, it will likely result in the increase in number of the prey. The prey then overconsumes the flora required for sustenance, thereby placing the viability of the prey species at risk.

given military campaign. A staff cannot merely identify unknowns but must develop information collection plans that fill cognitive voids for the commander. Dörner provided an explanation of how humans, even with the best of intentions and deliberate planning, fall victim to cognitive blind spots in both recognizing the complexity of an operational environment and the subsequent failure to react to changes within the environment.[62]

While conducting a laboratory experiment focused on increasing the quality of life of inhabitants in the fictitious state of Tanaland, Dörner identified five logical pitfalls to which all participants succumbed. In the experiment, participants had dictatorial powers over Tanaland to impose irrigation improvements, hunting regulations, medical improvements and a host of other civil improvements.[63] None of them possessed expertise in city planning or societal development, yet each was confident in their understanding of the central problems surrounding Tanaland's development and were sure of the appropriate remedies.[64] Although each of the participants failed for different reasons, their poor decisions contained a common theme: "more thinking and less action would have been the better choice."[65] Where the Tanaland experiment parallels real world scenarios, particularly military operations, are the five findings that the participants: "acted without prior analysis of the situation, failed to anticipate side effects and long-term repercussions, assumed that the absence of immediately obvious negative effects meant that correct measures had been taken, let overinvolvement in 'projects' blind them to emerging needs and changes in the situation, and were prone to cynical reactions."[66] As the case study of the Korean War shows, a real-world military operation conducted by military professionals fell victim to the same pitfalls as inexperienced participants in a laboratory governing a fictitious city.

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[62] Dörner, *The Logic of Failure*, 7.

[63] Ibid., 12.

[64] Ibid.

[65] Ibid., 17.

[66] Ibid., 18.

Dörner addressed the danger of personal historical experience in assessing the future. He warned that experience provides a leader (commander) with the ability to generate "supersignals" that one can coalesce into a set of assumed conditions.[67] An individual uses "supersignals" to simplify a complex situation at the risk of creating cognitive blind spots by applying past experiences into future conditions.[68] The problem with applying past experiences, particularly successes, to a current military operation is it ignores the ability of the enemy to think and adapt to one's actions. The use of supersignals allows a commander to apply previously successful models to a new situation when there is not adequate time to analyze the totality of a new situation. Structural knowledge allows a decision maker to create a vision of the desired future conditions and how one's actions can either enable or hinder the achievement of that vision.[69] Individuals desire security - not just physical security, but the security that their intuitions are right and will seek information that confirms the biases.[70] A monolithic decision-making style marginalizes the ability of a staff to create a vision that accounts for unforeseen or discounted circumstances such as the possibility of a Chinese intervention in the Korean War.

Dörner provides a simple example of a garden pool to demonstrate the interdependence of critical and indicator variables within a given system. In his model, Dörner describes how an individual tries to fix a seemingly simple problem: that his pool stinks. To fix the problem, or achieve a desired future state, the man empties the water from the pool and scoops out the foul-smelling debris and places new gravel at the bottom of the pool. Several days later, the pool stinks again. What the man did not identify was the true root of the problem; the pool was too deep relative to its width and the water did not circulate oxygen sufficiently, causing a foul-smelling bacterium to flourish at the bottom of the pool. A simple pump to circulate the water

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[67] Dörner, *The Logic of Failure,* 39.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Ibid.

[70] Ibid, 172.

more efficiently throughout the pool presents a more enduring and cost-effective solution than continually dredging the pool.[71]

Dörner's description of the logic of failure provides a method for avoiding failure if one does not truly understand the system at the outset of a military operation. To assume that a commander and staff can appropriately identify all critical and indicator variables and the nature of their interaction is inherently flawed. Even the most deliberate intelligence preparation of the battlefield (IPB) will still have either errors in the validity of assessments, or simply lack all possible variables. As the first step to avoiding failure, Dörner stated "if we want to deal rationally with a complex problem, the first thing we do is define our goals clearly."[72] The case study will demonstrate that sometimes clearly defined goals, if desynchronized with the strategic environment, can result in catastrophic failure.

In her anthology on organizational leadership theory, Mary Jo Hatch dedicated a chapter to the analysis of the role and influence of power in and around organizations. She contended that organizations, "whether families, villages, governments, universities, or corporations form both competitive and cooperative relationships; in the process, power is distributed and used to serve various interests. While some interests align, others will be contradictory, subjecting the use of power to politics."[73] The rational decision-making model, as developed by James March and Herbert Simon, is similar to the intelligence process in military operations. The intelligence process begins with the commander's guidance, then the intelligence staff conducts four steps: plan and direct, collect and process, produce, and disseminate while continually analyzing and assessing the information collected.[74] The purpose of the intelligence process is to "support

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[71] Dörner, *The Logic of Failure*, 72.

[72] Ibid, 173.

[73] Mary Jo Hatch, *Organization Theory: Modern, Symbolic, and Postmodern Perspectives*, 4th ed. (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2018), 284.

[74] US Department of the Army, Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 2-0, *Intelligence* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2019), 3-1.

commanders by providing intelligence needed to support command and control and the commander's situational understanding."[75] The rational decision-making model begins with "problem definition and the collection and analysis of all relevant information, following which decision makers are expected to generate and evaluate all reasonable alternatives."[76] Both the intelligence process and the rational decision-making model are subject to the power dynamics of the decision makers and the staffs.[77] Simon would later demonstrate that the rational decision-making model fails to adequately explain disagreements in organizational goals established by decision makers; to acknowledge the absence of all the information required to make rational choices; and the difficulties in processing and analyzing information in a complex environment.[78] GEN MacArthur's monolithic approach to decision making and planning hindered the ability of his staff to identify and mitigate risk, particularly the risk of Chinese involvement in the Korean War.

In his book on decision-making and cognitive function, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, Daniel Kahneman explores the interplay between rapid and deliberate thinking. Kahneman described System 1 thinking as fast, and automatic, while System 2 thinking is slower and requires a deliberate cognitive effort in which the individual is aware of their thought process.[79] System 1 thinking is the natural state of human cognition; our tendencies towards efficiency lead us to make snap decisions based on precious experiences. GEN MacArthur's System 1 likely contained his experiences from the Pacific theatre during World War II. System 2 requires an awareness of

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[75] US Army, ADP 2-0, 3-0.

[76] Hatch, *Organization Theory,* 290.

[77] Ibid, 235. Power dynamics refers to the way individuals and groups of individuals interact with one another when their relative positions within an organization differ. An example of a power dynamic is the way in which a superior and subordinate might disagree over an issue. While the subordinate might be correct, or have access to more relevant information, the superior is more powerful within the organization rendering the subordinate's dissention [potentially] moot.

[78] Ibid*,* 290.

[79] Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2013), 22.

one's own biases and uniqueness of the current situation to analyze the variables present within the current environment. Ideally, a military staff operates within System 2 to expedite the decision-making cycle on behalf of the commander. As the case study will demonstrate, GEN MacArthur's staff worked to support GEN MacArthur's biases which did not facilitate a greater understanding, but reinforced his strongly biased System 1.

The intelligence process relies upon the ability of units to collect information, including indicators and warnings of potential enemy courses of action. Once subordinate units collect information and enter it into the information cycle, hypotheses are either confirmed or the intelligence staff generates new hypotheses about what the enemy will do next given the new information. If there is no new information to enter the intelligence process, it is unreasonable to expect the intelligence officer to make new deductions. On describing the condition of not having adequate information, Kahneman says that "jumping to conclusions on the basis of limited evidence is so important to understanding the intuitive thinking and comes up so often that I will use a cumbersome abbreviation for WYSIATI."[80] WYSIATI, or What You See Is All There Is, implies that individuals have confidence in their beliefs based on the "story they can tell about what they see, even if they see little."[81] As this case study illustrates, the lack of information, or the corrupted nature of the information, caused GEN MacArthur and his staff to confirm their previously held theories about Chinese intervention.

Doctrinal Shortfalls

The contemporary intelligence doctrine during the Korean War was a legacy of World War II and was inadequate for the complex situation faced by both commanders and intelligence officers. FM 30-5, published in 1946, separated intelligence into two discrete categories: combat intelligence and War Department intelligence. MG Willoughby's doctrinal responsibility was

[80] Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, 86.

[81] Ibid.

providing combat intelligence to GEN MacArthur. Combat intelligence included the "location, strength, composition, dispositions, movements, armament, equipment, supply, tactics, training, discipline and morale of the enemy forces opposing a combat unit."[82] As the CCF did not enter the War until October 1950, including estimates of CCF capabilities was not the responsibility of MG Willoughby. War Department intelligence, by contrast, required the US Army G-2 in Washington, DC, to provide support to intelligence officers in any theater through the production of maps and reports as required.[83] Army doctrine did not include assessing the political or strategic situation in a combat theater, but on the possible enemy courses of action by those already engaged in the conflict. The doctrine available to MG Willoughby and his intelligence staff was inadequate to accurately articulate operational risk to commanders in the field as it ignored the strategic context of the operational environment.

Army doctrine of the early years of the Korean War were legacy publications from World War II. FM 101-5, *Staff Officers Field Manual for Staff Organization and Procedure* was written in 1940, FM 100-15, *Field Service Regulation for Larger Units* was written in 1942, and FM 30-5, *Combat Intelligence* in 1942.[84] Doctrine writers wrote the publications through the lens of a total war, whereas the Korean War was a limited war.[85] In a post-war interview GEN Matthew Ridgeway, GEN MacArthur's replacement, stated "I don't think that at that time American doctrine contemplated limited war. The concept had always been all-out war, where everything is

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[82] US Department of the Army, Field Manual (FM) 30-5, *Military Intelligence: Combat Intelligence* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1946), 8.

[83] Ibid., 12.

[84] US Army, FM 101-5, II; US Department of the Army, Field Manual (FM) 100-15, *Field Service Regulation for Larger Units* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1942), I; US Army, FM 30-5, I.

[85] MacGregor Knox and Williamson Murray, *The Dynamics of Military Revolution, 1300-2050* (New York, NY, 2015), 49. A total war is also referred to as an unrestricted war in which the entirety of a nation state is leveraged to bring the complete and total destruction of an enemy force whereas a limited war employs more limited means to achieve a much smaller political objective.

used in order to achieve victory."[86] Army doctrine remained focused on fighting total wars against a clearly defined adversary as in both World Wars. As it pertains to the intelligence process, doctrine did not include the activities of an undeclared enemy, as was the case in the Korean War prior to the Chinese officially entering the war. In the summer and fall of 1950, China had not yet entered the war and therefore doctrine did not mandate that operational headquarters account for their actions within their order of battle analysis. Admittedly, a general officer ought to recognize the flawed rigidity of contemporary doctrine and either change it through written standard operating procedures or divert from the doctrine to fit the requirements of the commander.

The doctrinal framework of the US forces in the early stages of the Korean War was inadequate for enabling the intelligence staff to appropriately articulate risk to the commander. The lack of the stratification of responsibilities for collecting and analyzing intelligence at all levels of conflict resulted in the failure to adequately assess the likelihood of CCF intervention. Army doctrine grouped all operational and tactical headquarters together with the role of combat intelligence. For example, the doctrinal responsibilities of a battalion were identical to those of a division headquarters despite their vast differences in manpower and operational scope. The ability of the CCF to conceal their positions from aerial and signal intelligence collection efforts only exacerbated the problem of an inadequate doctrinal framework. An insufficient doctrinal framework does not absolve or excuse MG Willoughby's failure to assess the likelihood of a CCF intervention but does underscore the complexity in articulating risk to the commander.

[86] General Matthew Ridgeway, interview by Dr. Maurice Matloff, 34.

What Intelligence Failure?

The failure of US forces in Korea to accurately assess the probability of a CCF intervention in the Korean War is only a small portion of the larger intelligence procedural malfunction shared by the entirety of the US government. Following the Chinese Civil War, the defeated Nationalists forces (supported by the US) withdrew to the island of Formosa (now Taiwan). US concerns over a Chinese invasion of the island prompted the JCS to order GEN MacArthur's headquarters in Japan to provide naval and air defense of Formosa on 29 June 1950, a mere four days after the North Korean invasion of South Korea. The Joint Staff viewed the North Korean attack as a diversion to support a Chinese main effort of achieving a final defeat against the Nationalist forces.[87] As GEN MacArthur and MG Willoughby began planning the US response to the North Korean attack they had to simultaneously prepare for the repulsion of a potential Chinese invasion, splitting their already limited resources between two separate theaters. MG Willoughby was not alone in failing to understand the rationale and reasoning behind the North Korean attack and the role of the Communist Chinese forces.

It is important to recognize that policy makers and military planners alike did not understand the entirety of the political context of the Korean War, which contributed to the strategic intelligence failure. Following the end of World War II, the US and its Western allies regarded the Soviet Union and its Communist ideology as their greatest threat. The strategic estimate of NSC 73/4 on 8 August 1950 highlighted the mischaracterization of the Korean War. While the North Koreans advanced south of the 38th Parallel, the NSC remained convinced the

[87] US Joint Chiefs of Staff, "Army Department Message, Joint Chiefs of Staff to Douglas MacArthur," accessed October 29, 2019, https://www.trumanlibrary.gov/library/research-files/army-department-message-joint-chiefs-staff-douglas-macarthur?documentid=NA&pagenumber=1.

Soviet Union would use the Korean War as a diversion to launch an attack into Europe.[88] The NSC estimate did allude to the possibility of Chinese intervention noting, "Chinese Communists, in addition to an attack on Formosa, have the military capability to enter directly the Korean War and to initiate military action against Indochina or Burma, or Tibet. A move against Tibet may be expected in the near future."[89] It is evident that the NSC lacked any accurate assessment of Chinese intentions and capabilities. The estimate concluded with the statement that the "USSR has materially increased its capability to wage a global war."[90] The US as a whole overestimated the combined intentions of China and the Soviet Union and treated them as if having a binding military and political alliance, acting in unison to promote a global Communist-motivated conflict.

The prevailing theory of the communist world was that of a monolith, or more accurately, a marionette with the Soviet Union pulling the strings and manipulating each of its satellites. A CIA estimate of 14 July 1950 still assessed Chinese actions through a Soviet lens: "The USSR will be confronted with a difficult problem if forced to decide whether to allow North Korean defeat or use Chinese Communist troops to win or prolong the struggle."[91] In addition to believing the monolithic nature of the communist nations, the CIA still believed the Chinese would attack Formosa "before the monsoon season of August" and "The Peiping [Beijing] regime is already publicly committed to the Taiwan operation."[92] The defeat of Task Force Smith in early July 1950 did not sway the prevailing American opinion that the Communist Chinese, at the

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[88] US National Security Council, *Report by the National Security Council on the Position and Actions of the United States with Respect to Possible Further Soviet Moves in the Light of the Korean Situation,* accessed October 29, 2019, https://www.trumanlibrary.gov/library/research-files/report-national-security-council-732-position-and-actions-united-states.

[89] US National Security Council, *The Position and Actions of the United States with Respect to Possible Further Soviet Moves in the Light of the Korean Situation*.

[90] Ibid.

[91] US Central Intelligence Agency, "Communist China's Role," (July 14, 1950), accessed October 30, 2019, https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/1950-07-14a.pdf.

[92] Ibid.

behest of the Soviet Union, would invade Formosa to achieve final victory over the Chinese Nationalists. American strategic estimates provided by the CIA and the NSC certainly influenced MG Willoughby's understanding of the strategic context as he echoed that "North Korean government and their Chinese allies are under complete domination of Russia."[93] If the geopolitical environment during the first months of the Korean War were likened to Dörner's garden pool, neither the critical or indicator variables were sufficiently identified or understood. The US recognized the "stink" emanating from the pool but approached the problem with a singular solution; eradicate communism from the region. Complicating the analogy of Dörner's garden pool US policy makers, including GEN MacArthur, engaged Kahneman's System 1 thinking and made snap decisions based on intuition rather than attempting to search for deeper causal relationships. By the logic used at the time, if there was an anti-Western movement, it had to be the work of the Communist Soviets and their proxies. The NSC and CIA created a flawed hypothesis based on a poor understanding of the interconnectedness of oversimplified variables in assessing the importance as of a unified Communist front, as the Soviet Union played a smaller role in the Korean War than originally believed.

Prior to the intervention of the Chinese in the Korean War, national intelligence agencies did not anticipate the North Korean invasion of South Korea, eroding their credibility in predicting any subsequent outbreak in hostilities in any theatre, especially the Pacific. As discussed previously, US Army doctrine of the period placed the onus of strategic intelligence on the Department of the Army G-2 in Washington, DC. The US government created the CIA to advise the NSC on matters concerning national security, which included American interests abroad such as the potential spread of Communism.[94] If the intelligence apparatus functioned properly between strategic and combat intelligence, MG Willoughby and his staff would have had

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[93] Willoughby and Chamberlain, *MacArthur 1941-1951,* 351.

[94] "History of the CIA," US Central Intelligence Agency, November 1, 2018, accessed October 30, 2019, https://www.cia.gov/about-cia/history-of-the-cia.

forewarning of both the North Korean invasion and the subsequent Chinese intervention. Instead, the CIA had determined that a military intervention in North Korea would "wreck" China, both economically and militarily.[95] It was correct in that intervention cost the Chinese dearly, but they did not to test their hypothesis, as Dörner prescribed.[96] The CIA did not comprehend the complexity of the system, much in the same way as a gardener tries to eliminate a smell from his pool.

To accurately assess the conclusions reached by MG Willoughby regarding a Chinese intervention one must first evaluate the information available to him in the late summer and early fall of 1950. One major source of intelligence information was the interrogation of captured prisoners of war (POWs). Within weeks of the Chinese intervention, the US Eighth Army captured 344 prisoners, of which only two were Chinese.[97] On 30 October 1950, the US 1st Cavalry Division reported "there are no indications at this time to confirm the existence of a CCF organization or unit, of any size, on Korean soil."[98] Such reports led to GEN Walt Walker stating in November 1950, "We should not assume that the Chinese Communists are committed in force. After all, a lot of Mexicans live in Texas."[99] American officials fell victim to the phenomena described by Kahneman as WYSIATI. Although the CCF had in fact committed to the Korean War by time each of the three preceding statements, there was not enough evidence to change the widely accepted story that the Chinese would not intervene in Korea.

One cannot completely condemn the intelligence apparatus for failing to identify CCF forces in Korea when the Chinese went to great lengths to disguise their movements. During the Chinese Civil War, the Communist forces grew adept at avoiding detection from aerial

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[95] Hoyt, *The Day the Chinese Attacked*, 84.

[96] Dörner, *The Logic of Failure,* 75.

[97] Appleman, *South to the Naktong,* 752.

[98] Ibid.

[99] Fehrenbach, *This Kind of War,* 284.

surveillance and sophisticated signals intelligence (SIGINT) provided by the Americans to the Chinese Nationalists. Once the CCF crossed the Yalu River into Korea they used codes to misidentify the size and type of unit; Chinese documents referred to battalions that were in fact divisions and vice versa.[100] The deceptive marking system confused analysts sifting through recovered documents. Moreover, captured CCF could not accurately state their unit because they did not know. The interrogation of prisoners did not provide the same quality of information that veterans of World War II experienced with their interrogations of German and Japanese POWs.[101] American SIGINT collection efforts proved fruitless leading up to the CCF intervention for two reasons: the Chinese lacked quality radios and, when units did possess radios, they used brevity codes that concealed the true meaning of the messages from American intelligence analysts.[102] The entirety of the US intelligence enterprise failed to understand the changed circumstances from World War II in the Pacific theatre, when the US enjoyed a robust SIGINT capability against the Japanese. American intelligence officers at all echelons, not just MG Willoughby, fell victim to WYSIATI. Regardless of any signals emanating or not emanating from North of the Yalu River, GEN MacArthur had a clear intent of fighting the Chinese Communists, regardless of the intelligence available or the analysis provided by MG Willoughby, which will be addressed later in this section.

GEN MacArthur trusted MG Willoughby as a staff officer, but often ignored any assessments that contradicted his own conclusions while endorsing those that confirmed his biases. It is worth stating that GEN MacArthur's judgments in evaluating the intelligence provided by MG Willoughby were often, but not always correct. For example, during the New Guinea campaign during World War II, MG Willoughby assessed reports indicating a Japanese

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[100] Appleman, *South to the Naktong,* 721.

[101] US Department of the Army, *The 2d Infantry Division Korean Campaign: 1 September-31 October 1950* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office,1950), 4.

[102] Hastings, *The Korean War,* 244.

advance along the Kokoda Trail (a treacherous path through the Owen Stanley mountains) was a feint designed to fix Australian forces north of Port Moresby.[103] MG Willoughby concluded that the terrain was inadequate to support such a large formation of Japanese soldiers, an assessment GEN MacArthur discarded; he immediately sent Australian forces to meet the Japanese along the Kokoda Trail.[104] Three months later, MG Willoughby again failed to assess the strength of the remaining Japanese forces in New Guinea. In November 1942, based on his analysis of SIGINT, MG Willoughby concluded the Japanese possessed over four thousand soldiers and marines within their defensive perimeter.[105] MG Willoughby was wrong again, the SIGINT intercepts referred to only a portion of the Japanese defenders as there were actually closer to fifteen thousand Japanese in heavily entrenched defensive positions.[106] GEN MacArthur already assumed the Japanese defenses were light and subsequently ordered an attack along the Japanese defenses. During the Los Negros Campaign, from February through March of 1944, GEN MacArthur relied on his biases to evaluate the intelligence presented to him, often reading Japanese SIGINT reports himself because he did not fully trust his staff.[107] In this campaign, GEN MacArthur believed the island of Los Negros was unoccupied by the Japanese, relying on reports from allied aerial reconnaissance.[108] MG Willoughby, however, correctly assessed the island contained Japanese defenders, but GEN MacArthur dismissed his G-2's assessments.[109] GEN MacArthur relied on his intuition more than intelligence reports when planning military

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[103] Mark Perry, *The Most Dangerous Man in America: The Making of Douglas MacArthur* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2014), 197.

[104] Perry, *The Most Dangerous Man in America*, 197.

[105] Ibid, 211.

[106] Paul M. Edwards, *The Korean War*: *American Soldiers' Lives* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006), 220.

[107] Perry, *The Most Dangerous Man in America,* 262.

[108] US Department of the Army, *Reports of General MacArthur: The Campaigns of MacArthur in the Pacific* (Washington, DC: Center for Military History, 1994), 135.

[109] Perry, *The Most Dangerous Man in America,* 262.

operations during his command in the Pacific Theatre during World War II, a habit he continued during the Korean War.

The vilification of MG Willoughby by Korean War historians fails to acknowledge the stark reality that GEN MacArthur was not only unconcerned about Chinese intervention but intended to fight the Chinese whether they crossed the Yalu or not. According to GEN Ridgeway, who commanded the Eighth US Army under GEN MacArthur and eventually replaced him as the commander of UN Forces in Korea, "MacArthur had been pressing to attack China, to bring Chinese troops onto the Korean Peninsula."[110] If GEN Ridgeway's assertion is correct, no amount of intelligence about Chinese intentions or capabilities would sway GEN MacArthur's desire to fight China, especially given his track record for disregarding the assessments of his staff during World War II.

As the UN forces advanced into North Korea, GEN MacArthur remained unconcerned about the possibility of a Chinese intervention in the Korean War. If the Chinese intervened, he remained confident in his ability to deliver a decisive defeat to the Chinese. If the Chinese failed to intervene, it would demonstrate Chinese political weakness and create an opportunity for the US to attack China. GEN MacArthur was exploring the possibility of using Formosa, the island holdout of the defeated Nationalist Chinese, as a staging base for future attacks against mainland China.[111] He viewed these possible attacks as an expansion of his orders to defend Formosa against an attack from the CCP – which would force the Chinese to fight a two-front war.[112] GEN MacArthur's desire to fight the Chinese was thus not restricted to Korea, making the probability of a Chinese intervention in Korea tangential to his central desire to fight and destroy Communism. GEN MacArthur's outlook on the situation in Asia resembled those of the

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[110] General Matthew Ridgeway, interview by Dr. Maurice Matloff, 35.

[111] Manchester, *American Caesar,* 568.

[112] Ibid., 570.

participants in Dörner's Tanaland scenario: He thought he possessed dictatorial powers over the US and UN forces to change the environment as he saw fit and, like the participants in the Tanaland experiment, his proclivity for action over more comprehensive thought about the interconnectedness of the environment would have produced a less favorable outcome. Fortunately for the UN, GEN MacArthur did not have dictatorial powers over the conduct of the war, and he was not allowed to expand the conflict across the Formosa Strait.

Despite GEN MacArthur's clear intention of advancing towards the Yalu River, his superiors, including the Chief of Staff of the Army, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the President, failed to restrain his actions. GEN Lawton Collins, the CSA, did not support GEN MacArthur's advance, but did not voice his disapproval because "I wasn't asked."[113] GEN Collins likely feared interfering with GEN MacArthur's plans because he objected to the Inchon landings, and GEN MacArthur had likely garnered enough power within the Department of Defense to overrule GEN Collins. Once the landings at Inchon proved successful, GEN MacArthur's decision making and ability to calculate risk seemed beyond reproach. GEN MacArthur clearly commanded great power within the Department of Defense, the NSC, and the UN. In the decision to attack towards the Yalu, GEN MacArthur demonstrated that his informal power created through decades of military successes trumped the formal power present within a military chain of command.

The relationship between MG Willoughby and GEN MacArthur during the summer and fall of 1950 represents a classic case of how rational decision-making models fail to account for power-centric means of decision making. As Hatch identified, the rational decision-making model falls apart when disagreements in organizational goals exist between decision makers and

[113] General Lawton Collins, interview by Alfred Goldberg, Roger Trask, Doris Condit, and Steve Rearden, July 2, 1981, Office of the Secretary of Defense Historical Office, Washington, DC, Accessed October 30, 2019 http://cgsc.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/p4013coll11/id/1645/rec/3

their staffs.[114] Leading to the Inchon landings, GEN MacArthur allowed his staff to participate in the decision making cycle, as he required detailed information to accomplish the complex landings at Inchon in the face of growing uncertainty about the probability of success. Following the landings, GEN MacArthur consolidated decision-making power and marginalized the role of his staff. Without an organizational approach to decision making, GEN MacArthur destroyed any possibility of utilizing the staff to analyze information in a complex environment, thereby decreasing his ability to identify and mitigate operational risks.

Hatch's theory continues to provide value in assessing the relationship between informal and formal power within GEN MacArthur's headquarters. In an organization with formal authority such as the military, the chain of command provides a source of power to the leader, but informal power can also increase a leader's ability to wield authority. The "Bataan Boys" provided that informal power structure within GEN MacArthur's command while GEN MacArthur's successes and near legendary status as a war hero in both World Wars fueled his informal power outside of the organization. With GEN MacArthur's "Bataan Boys" providing assessments that supported his clearly stated ambitions, the inability to anticipate the entrance of the Chinese into the Korean War developed into a command failure.

Conclusion

The contemporary narrative surrounding the intelligence failure on behalf of MG Charles Willoughby ignores the role of the commander in understanding the operational environment and leading the organization to achieve a military end state that supports political objectives. GEN MacArthur chose to disregard the political aims of both the United States and the United Nations and instead sought a decisive defeat against communism and an end to the Cold War in Asia. GEN MacArthur's history of making judgements based off his own intuition, rather than a clear

[114] Hatch, *Organization Theory,* 290.

understanding of the complexities and interconnectedness of the operational environment, is the true failure. Using the lenses of theory, doctrine, and the primary source historical record demonstrate that it was GEN MacArthur's, not MG Willoughby's, failure to understand the "stink in the garden pool" that enabled the CCF to surprise the UN forces approaching the Yalu River.

Within the UN forces headquarters power politics dominated the interaction between staff officers and GEN MacArthur. GEN MacArthur's hubris developed from his heroic actions during the First and Second World Wars and reached its apex following the successful landings at Inchon. GEN MacArthur's patronage network within the UN headquarters and his indifference with regards to the opinions of his superiors, including the President of the United States, insulated him from the reality of the rapidly changing environment in which he operated. GEN MacArthur's failure to identify supersignals caused him to assume that he was in complete control of the Korean Peninsula, despite indications that the Chinese were preparing for an intervention in Korea.

The historical example of Chinese intervention in the Korean War presents an example of the complexities faced by intelligence staffs in future large-scale combat operations. A third-party intervention in future conflicts will not necessarily manifest in the form of uniformed soldiers, but rather via the use of irregular forces, financial support, and attacks in the information domain. The evolution of multidomain operations (MDO) brings added complexity to future battlefields beyond what the UN command experienced in Korea. The increase in the complexity of the environment will not necessarily correspond to an increase in the amount of information gathered by collection platforms. The US does not enjoy uncontested domination of space in which to employ spy satellites or unfettered access to the cyber domain to collect on adversaries' electronic communications. Future intelligence officers must be able to construct models of potential future scenarios based on the probability of the events occurring without necessarily having information that can support the conclusions. As the means available for intelligence collection expand, so too does an adversary's ability to deceive it. It is essential for the intelligence staff to depict the

interconnectedness of the environment to the commander in a way in which he can drive the operations process to account for all eventualities.

In order for the US Army to remain flexible and adaptable to conduct successful operations in a complex and uncertain operating environment, commanders must increase their understanding of the intelligence process. Intelligence is collected, analyzed, and disseminated for commanders to make decisions regarding the enemy and terrain, and they must remain involved in the cycle of collection, analysis, processing, and dissemination. As in 1950, future adversaries will attempt to limit the US Army's access to information gathered through traditional intelligence means such as HUMINT, SIGINT, and aerial reconnaissance. Commanders must therefore prepare to maneuver forces to collect information with organic assets, specifically ground reconnaissance patrols. On a division staff, the S-2 is a command selected lieutenant colonel who is typically junior to the operations officer who already completed his or her command select job. The operations officer was likely one of the best battalion commanders within the division and therefore specifically selected for the operations position. The relationship between the operations and intelligence officers is already an unequal dialogue, and the commander must prioritize intelligence operations to have any probability of understanding the operational environment. Intelligence is, and must remain, a commander's priority.

Though the US Army is currently undergoing a review of the talent management program with specific emphasis on the selection of battalion commanders, it is not enough. Commanders at all echelons must undergo a deliberate screening process to ensure its commanders are prepared for the challenges of large scale ground combat operations. GEN MacArthur's leadership in the Korean War provides an example of what happens when leaders for the current fight are selected based off their behaviors of previous conflicts. As the weapons used for our nation's wars evolve, so too must our leaders and their abilities to deal with increasingly complex scenarios in an ever-changing global landscape. US Army commanders at all echelons must be able to create organizations that are capable at adapting to the environment as conditions change.

Moreover, commanders must remain mentally agile enough to empower subordinates to develop create methods to solving bureaucratic and doctrinal deficiencies that inform and enable the force at large.

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