

Sanctuary in the Korean War

A Manifestation of Political Restraint

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Technological advancements in airpower since World War II provide the United States with the theoretical ability to target enemies in any geographic area on earth. However, during numerous conflicts over the last 60 years, enemies of the U.S. have still enjoyed sanctuary due to political restraints placed on friendly military operations. The Korean War provides an excellent example of political restraints creating an enemy sanctuary. The U.S. military had the physical capability to target Chinese forces, particularly via airstrikes, yet it was politically restrained from doing so. The political restraints placed on U.S. military commanders restricted their ability to target the Manchurian sanctuary available to North Korean and Chinese forces. An examination of the events that shaped the strategic and operational environment prior to the Korean War reveals the problem facing the United States in 1950. The U.S. must find a way to counter the communist invasion of South Korea while avoiding a confrontation with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in Europe. During the Korean War, U.S. political leaders restrained tactical operations in Korea to advance attainment of their grand strategic objectives in Europe. U.S. military commanders in Korea were politically restrained from conducting operations north of the Yalu River, which limited their ability to achieve their tactical objectives against North Korean and Chinese forces. The political restraints on U.S. military operations in Korea were designed to mitigate the risk of escalating conflict in Korea and thereby avoiding war with the Soviet Union in Western Europe.

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Abstract

SANCTUARY IN THE KOREAN WAR: A MANIFESTATION OF POLITICAL RESTRAINT
by Major Ronald Bryan Bellamy, USAF, 42 pages.

Sanctuary has been a factor in war throughout history. The availability of sanctuary to an enemy can often limit the ability of friendly forces to achieve tactical success in military operations. Prior to the advent of airpower, combatants could often attain sanctuary, or safe haven, simply because one enemy could not physically employ significant military force into an area used by the other. Technological advancements in airpower since World War II provide the United States with the theoretical ability to target enemies in any geographic area on earth. However, during numerous conflicts over the last 60 years, enemies of the U.S. have still enjoyed sanctuary due to political restraints placed on friendly military operations.

The Korean War provides an excellent example of political restraints creating an enemy sanctuary. Joint Publication 5-0 cites the restrictions placed on General MacArthur's authority to strike Chinese targets north of the Yalu River during the Korean War as an example of an operational limitation. The U.S. military had the physical capability to target Chinese forces, particularly via airstrikes, yet it was politically restrained from doing so. The political restraints placed on U.S. military commanders restricted their ability to target the Manchurian sanctuary available to North Korean and Chinese forces. This research questions why U.S. military commanders were politically restrained from conducting tactical operations north of the Yalu River during the Korean War.

An examination of the events that shaped the strategic and operational environment prior to the Korean War reveals the problem facing the United States in 1950. The U.S. must find a way to counter the communist invasion of South Korea while avoiding a confrontation with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in Europe. An examination of the initial U.S. operational approach highlights the initial tactical, operational, theater strategic, and grand strategic objectives in the opening months of the war. When applied to the problem, the research found that the initial U.S. operational approach and associated tactical, operational, and theater strategic objectives were congruent with the U.S. grand strategic objective. The initial operational approach taken by the U.S. could both confront communism in Korea and avoid conflict escalation with the USSR in Europe. However, following the U.S. decision to cross the 38th Parallel and the subsequent Chinese intervention into the conflict, the revised U.S. tactical, operational, and theater strategic objectives were no longer congruent with the U.S. grand strategic objective. That is, when the U.S. political leaders altered their theater strategic objectives in Korea, the U.S. could no longer achieve its theater strategic objectives in Korea without endangering their grand strategic objectives in Europe.

During the Korean War, U.S. political leaders restrained tactical operations in Korea to advance attainment of their grand strategic objectives in Europe. U.S. military commanders in Korea were politically restrained from conducting operations north of the Yalu River, which limited their ability to achieve their tactical objectives against North Korean and Chinese forces. The political restraints on U.S. military operations in Korea were designed to mitigate the risk of escalating conflict in Korea and thereby avoiding war with the Soviet Union in Western Europe.

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Introduction

Sanctuary has been a factor in war throughout history. In traditional military operations, sanctuaries are a physical safe haven, located either within an ungoverned or uncontrolled portion of the targeted state, or an area of an external state. Sanctuaries in neighboring countries provide enemy forces a place to rebuild and reorganize without fear of enemy interference. The availability of sanctuary to an enemy can often limit the ability of friendly forces to achieve tactical success. It is imperative that military planners work to eliminate all sanctuaries.¹ To plan for the elimination of sanctuaries, military planners must understand why those sanctuaries exist. A thorough understanding of the conditions that permit a particular sanctuary to exist provides military planners a better opportunity to design strategies and campaigns to mitigate the impact of that sanctuary on current and future operations.

Prior to the advent of airpower, combatants could often attain sanctuary, or safe haven, simply because one enemy could not physically employ significant military force into an area used by the other. History is replete with examples of physical sanctuary. Napoleon's generals lost the Peninsular War in Spain (1808-14) because the French were unable to pursue the Spanish guerrilla's into the rugged mountains of the Iberian Peninsula. During World War I, the Ottoman military was unable to deny T.E. Lawrence and his Arab forces sanctuary in the deserts of the Arabian Peninsula. In China in 1935, the Kuomintang army was unable to pursue Mao and his Chinese Communist army during its 'Long March' into the sanctuary of the northwestern province of Shanxi.² In each of these cases, sanctuary was a product of geographic isolation and the opposition's physical inability to control safe haven areas with sufficient military force.

¹Field Manual 3-24, *Counterinsurgency* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, December 2006), 1-16.

²Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World* (New York, New York: Vintage Books, 2005), 159-172.

The advent of airpower began to offer a way for combatants to deny sanctuary to their enemy. Technological advancements in airpower since World War II provide the United States (U.S.) with the theoretical ability to target enemies in any geographic area on earth. However, during numerous conflicts over the last 60 years, enemies of the U.S. have still enjoyed sanctuary due to political restraints placed on friendly military operations. Simply put, political restraints, not physical restraints, have provided sanctuary to enemies of the United States. The Korean War was the first (and perhaps best) example of political restraints creating an enemy sanctuary.

Joint Publication 5-0, defines a restraint as “a requirement placed on the command by a higher command that prohibits an action, thus restricting freedom of action.”³ A restraint is an operational limitation that may be a product of diplomatic agreements, political and economic conditions in affected countries, and host-nation issues. JP 5-0 cites the restrictions placed on General Douglas MacArthur’s authority to strike Chinese targets north of the Yalu River during the Korean War as an example of an operational limitation.⁴ The U.S. military had the physical capability to target Chinese forces, particularly via airstrikes, yet it was politically restrained from doing so. The operational limitations placed on U.S. military commanders restricted their ability to target the Manchurian sanctuary available to North Korean and Chinese forces. This research questions why U.S. military commanders were politically restrained from conducting tactical operations north of the Yalu River during the Korean War.

To determine why U.S. military commanders were politically restrained during the Korean War requires an examination of three related questions. First, what events shaped the strategic and operational environments found at the beginning of the Korean War? Second, what was the initial U.S. operational approach for the war in Korea? Lastly, based on changes in the operational environment, how did the U.S. operational approach evolve throughout the war?

³Joint Publication 5-0, *Joint Operation Planning* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, August 2011), GL-14.

⁴*Ibid.*, IV-8.

An examination of the strategic and operational environment prior to the war reveals the problem facing the United States in 1950. The U.S. must find a way to counter the Communist invasion of South Korea while avoiding a confrontation with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in Europe. To understand the strategic and operational environments at the beginning of the Korean War, this research examined the geostrategic environment at the end of WWII, the evolution of U.S. civil-military relations from 1941-1950, U.S.-Soviet relations from 1945-1950, the evolution of U.S. policy from 1945-1950, and Sino-Soviet-North Korean and U.S.-South Korean relations prior to the conflict in Korea. A mixture of political science texts, historical literature, and government documents provide details on the events that shaped the global environment by June 1950.

The review of the strategic environment between the end of World War II and the North Korean invasion of South Korea sets the strategic context for operational decisions in Korea at the onset of hostilities. The second area of research was the initial operational approach taken by the United States upon entry into the Korean War. This research highlighted the initial tactical, operational, theater strategic, and grand strategic objectives in the opening months of the war. When applied to the problem, the research found that the initial U.S. operational approach and associated tactical, operational, and theater strategic objectives were congruent with the U.S. grand strategic objective. That is, the initial operational approach taken by the U.S. could both confront communism in Korea and avoid conflict escalation with the USSR in Europe. Subsequently, the research shows that the initial political restraints emplaced in Korea did not prohibit military commanders from achieving their initial tactical, operational, and theater strategic objectives.

The third area of research was the evolution of the U.S. operational approach. Specifically, the research examined how the U.S. tactical, operational and theater strategic objectives evolved throughout the war based on both success and failure on the battlefield. The research shows that following the U.S. decision to cross the 38th Parallel and the subsequent

Chinese intervention into the conflict, the U.S. tactical, operational, and theater strategic objectives were no longer congruent with the U.S. grand strategic objective. That is, when the U.S. political leaders altered their theater strategic objectives in Korea, the U.S. could no longer solve its problem. The U.S. could not achieve its theater strategic objectives in Korea without endangering their grand strategic objectives in Europe.

The evidence shows that, during the Korean War, U.S. political leaders restrained tactical operations in Korea to advance attainment of their grand strategic objectives in Europe. U.S. military commanders in Korea were politically restrained from conducting operations north of the Yalu River, which limited their ability to achieve their tactical objectives against North Korean and Chinese forces. The political restraints on U.S. military operations in Korea were designed to mitigate the risk of escalating conflict in Korea and thereby avoiding war with the Soviet Union in Western Europe.

Strategic and Operational Environments

The rationale behind U.S. political restraint in the Korean War has its origin well prior to June 1950. Several events during the preceding decade shaped the strategic and operational environment at the start of the conflict. According to U.S. Army Field Manual 5-0, the operational environment is “a composite of the conditions, circumstances, and influences that affect the employment of capabilities and bear on the decisions of the commander.”⁵ To understand the operational environment in 1950 requires an examination of global and U.S. domestic events in the aftermath of World War II up to the start of the Korean War. These global and domestic events shaped the overall problem facing the U.S. in June 1950.

The origin of political restraint in the Korean War can be found in the last years of World War II. The political objective of the Western Allies during World War II was the unconditional

⁵Field Manual 5-0, *The Operations Process* (Washington DC: Government Printing Press, March 2010, C1, 18 March 2011), Glossary-7.

surrender of Germany and Japan. All theater commanders sought to destroy the enemy's armed forces. The U.S. entered the war wholeheartedly, turning the direction of the conflict over to the military professionals, with the national aim of total victory. Early in the war, President Roosevelt made it clear that all American military planning would be based upon the assumption that the political aim was military victory. The only important goal of the war was victory, and the only proper test of wartime action was whether it helped the Allies win.⁶ The overwhelming desire for unconditional surrender and decisive military victory in WWII left a lasting impression on the U.S. military leadership charged with conducting a limited war in Korea. General Douglas MacArthur, the Commander in Chief Far East (CINCFE) wrote, "The American tradition had always been that once our troops are committed to battle, the full power and means of the nation would be mobilized and dedicated to fight for victory, not for stalemate or compromise."⁷ In Korea, the American tradition of decisive victory would be broken.

World War II also left the U.S. military leadership with a jaded impression of the military's role in influencing policy and strategy and the utility of civilian political institutions. Military participation in the formation and conduct of foreign policy had increased enormously during World War II. This forced the State Department to question its own constitutional and traditional prerogatives to conduct foreign policy in the years between WWII and Korea.⁸ The limited political objectives in Korea induced greater strain on military commanders than did the unconditional surrender objective of World War II. The frequency and intensity of dispute between U.S. civilian leaders and the military field commanders appeared to be higher in Korea

⁶Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1957), 317-337.

⁷Douglas MacArthur, *Reminiscences* (New York, New York: McGraw-Hill), 316.

⁸Steven L. Rearden, History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Volume I: *The Formative Years 1947-1950* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office), 123-129.

than in WW II.⁹ World War II gave U.S. military leaders a sense that when called upon to fight the next war, the political aim would be unconditional surrender and the military would be unhampered in dictating the ends, ways and means to achieve decisive victory.

The prestige and influence of U.S. military leaders during World War II carried over into peacetime. Following the war, President Truman named several military officers to what were normally considered civilian positions. Most notably, George Marshall became Secretary of State and later Secretary of Defense. Walter Bedell Smith became the ambassador to the Soviet Union and later head of the CIA. MacArthur became the military governor of Japan.¹⁰ Although the military initially enjoyed a positive relationship with Truman, the relationship quickly soured. While Roosevelt had consulted directly with the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) on most military matters, Truman generally referred military matters to the civilian political leadership and the service secretaries. Although primarily connected in day-to-day activities with the Executive Branch, members of the JCS were increasingly required to brief and report to Congress on military affairs. This led to the perception that the JCS was using bureaucratic politics to enhance their positions with Congress.¹¹ Understandably, Truman did not want the military and Congress to overstep the Executive Branch. Truman took two separate approaches toward reasserting civilian control over the military. Both approaches helped shaped the operational environment by 1950 and influenced the conduct of the Korean War.

The first approach taken by Truman to reassert civilian control was the establishment in 1947 of the National Military Establishment, renamed the Department of Defense in 1949, and the National Security Council (NSC). The creation of the DOD and the NSC brought civilians

⁹Doris M. Condit, *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense: The Test of War 1950-1953* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1988), 517.

¹⁰Dale R. Herspring, *The Pentagon and the Presidency* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2005), 54.

¹¹Rearden, *The Formative Years 1947-1950*, 132-141.

increasingly into matters that during World War II had been largely the domain of the military. With the creation of a civilian Secretary of Defense, the Joint Chiefs no longer enjoyed independent access to the president to discuss strategy and military policy.¹² As a result, unlike during WWII, the military's ability to dictate strategic objectives free from civilian interference was severely reduced during the Korean War. Effective civil-military coordination had become an essential requirement by June 1950. The subsequent lack of coordination between military and political objectives in Korea ultimately prohibited an opportunity for tactical military victory.

Truman's second approach toward reasserting civilian control of the military involved use of the defense budget. Truman and Congress slashed military spending following the war, instead focusing on economic priorities at home and abroad. By the end of Truman's first term as president in December 1948, America's standing armed forces had shrunk from to 1.5 million members, down from 12 million at the end of World War II. The 1947 defense budget was cut to \$10.3 billion from wartime high of almost \$91 billion.¹³ Many Congressional and military critics believed that the demobilization and budget cuts following WW II left the U.S. unprepared for war. Just prior to the Korean War, in the spring of 1950, Secretary of Defense Johnson became the subject of congressional attacks over the shrinking size of the defense budget. General Eisenhower argued that the fiscal year 1951 defense budget was insufficient for the nation's security requirements and that the defense economy program had already reduced the armed forces below the level considered a desirable safety point.¹⁴ As a result, by 1950, the reduced size of the U.S. military influenced both the theater strategic objectives in Korea and the grand strategic objectives in Europe. The U.S. limited its objectives in Korea early in the Korean War

¹²Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, 317-335.

¹³Leif A. Gruenberg, *Defining Moments: The Korean War* (Detroit, Michigan: Omnigraphics Inc., 2004), 39-40.

¹⁴Glenn D. Paige, *The Korean Decision* (New York, New York: The Free Press, 1968), 41.

because it lacked the conventional military capability to simultaneously confront the Soviet Union in Europe.

Immediately following WW II, a 'Cold War' began between the U.S. and USSR. U.S.-Soviet relations overwhelmingly influenced the operational environment in which the Korean War was fought. As early as 1945, President Truman learned that the Soviets would not be the cooperative postwar allies that FDR had hoped. At Potsdam, Stalin declared that politics should not be based on 'feelings' but rather on 'calculation of forces. Thus, the language of military power was established as the terms of postwar Soviet-American discourse.¹⁵ The Soviet Union occupied many of the nations in Eastern Europe that it had liberated from the Nazis. The USSR subsequently cut off all contact between these nations and the West and installed Communist governments. Collectively known as the Eastern Block, these countries became satellites of, and formed a protective ring around, the Soviet Union. Regardless, the Soviet Union wanted more.

Three crucial confrontations set the stage for U.S.-Soviet relations in the years prior to the Korean War. Following WWII, the Soviet Union initially refused to withdraw from Iran. Faced with increasing U.S. political pressure and a UN Resolution, the Soviets eventually withdrew in March of 1946. Between 1947 and 1948, the Soviet Union supported the Greek Communist Party during the Greek Civil War. Following the signing of NSC 5 and the deployment of the American military, led by Lt. Gen. James Van Fleet, the communist guerillas in Greece declared a unilateral cease-fire, bringing an end to the fighting in Greece.¹⁶ Lastly, in June 1948, the Soviet Union decided to blockade West Berlin, with the hope that the West would leave the city rather than risk a war. Instead, the West commenced the Berlin Airlift and supplied West Berlin for over a year.¹⁷ American policy makers, both civilian and military, considered all

¹⁵Paige, *The Korean Decision*, 54-55.

¹⁶Fred Charles Ikle, *Every War Must End* (New York, New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), 87-88, 95.

¹⁷Rearden, *The Formative Years, 1947-1950*, 148-162, 275-304.

three confrontations as successful contests of strength and will. Paige argues, “In each case, American policy makers seem to have agreed eventually that some degree of war risk had to be accepted in order to discourage further Soviet aggression.” Paige bases his argument on three conditions: the extension of Communist power did not take place by violence, a direct Soviet-American military clash did not occur, and each case seemed to indicate that the Soviet Union did not intend to engage the U.S. in a major war.¹⁸ However, Smith counters with the argument that the USSR possibly “did not want to risk a war before they were absolutely ready.”¹⁹ Any elation felt by the U.S. over success in Europe and the Middle East quickly evaporated in 1949.

In the three confrontations listed above the U.S. enjoyed an atomic monopoly. However, U.S.-Soviet relations, and subsequently the global strategic environment, irrevocably changed in 1949. In August, the Soviet Union conducted its first atomic test, signaling an end to the U.S. nuclear monopoly. In October, Mao’s Chinese Communists drove Chiang Kai-shek’s Nationalists off mainland China, thus concluding communist victory in China. In light of these two events, the world’s geographically largest (USSR) and most populous (PRC) nations were now communist allies, supported by nuclear weapons.²⁰ By the spring of 1950, these two unsettling international events had created an increased sense of anxiety about the general trend of international politics between the U.S. and USSR. These events also served to stimulate American policy makers to undertake a fresh reassessment of the situation and its requirements. Gruenberg asserts, “Taken together, these events (Berlin airlift, Soviet atomic detonation, and Chinese Communist victory) created a climate of tension and fear in the United States. Americans increasingly worried that Communists from the Soviet Union and China were intent on destroying American democracy

¹⁸Paige, *The Korean Decision*, 54-55.

¹⁹Smith, *The Utility of Force*, 190-191.

²⁰Walter A. McDougal, *Promised Land, Crusader State: The American Encounter with the World Since 1776* (New York, New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1997), 165.

and the American way of life.”²¹ A nuclear-armed, aggressive Soviet Union heavily influenced both the strategic and operational environments facing the U.S. in the Korean War. By 1950, the political and military leadership of the U.S. were pursuing policies intended to check Soviet expansion and aggression.

Several U.S. policies created between 1945 and 1950 influenced the strategic and operational environments and the conduct of the Korean War. These included the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, the creation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and National Security Council (NSC) Memorandum – 68. Between 1945 and 1947, the American political leadership began a transition from collaboration to containment as the basic concept underlying Soviet-American relations. In response to the emergence of the ‘Iron Curtain’ in Europe, President Truman argued for a policy that could help any free nation resist communist aggression. Heavily influenced by George Kennan’s ‘Long Telegram,’ the Truman Doctrine called for a strategy of containment for dealing with the Soviet leadership. The Truman Doctrine called for U.S. global leadership in the post-World War II world and an end to the country’s policy of isolationism. The Marshall Plan for economic aid and reconstruction in war ravaged Western Europe further drove America towards a policy of collaboration with like-minded; i.e., democratic countries in the face of Communist aggression. In addition, Congress ratified the North Atlantic Treaty in July 1949 and put an end to the historic U.S. policy of avoiding entangling military alliances in Europe. Thus, by 1950, American political leaders had determined that the basic strategic, military, industrial, and economic counterweight to Soviet power was Western Europe. U.S. leadership considered the use of Asian allies as a counterweight to Soviet power of lesser importance.²² America’s commitment to NATO and Western Europe

²¹Gruenberg, *Defining Moments: The Korean War*, 27.

²²Paige, *The Korean Decision*, 56-72.

provides another key factor when analyzing the operational environment at the start of the Korean War.

On 31 January 1950, faced with the growing threat of an atomic-armed Soviet Union, President Truman authorized the development of the hydrogen bomb and ordered the NSC to prepare a joint review of the policies and requirements for overall national security strategy.²³ Truman and his principal advisers had already concluded that overt Soviet military aggression, or aggression by a proxy, would not be tolerated. NSC-68, primarily written by Paul Nitze of the U.S. State Department, was issued in April 1950. NSC-68 called for the immediate buildup of nuclear and conventional forces in order to bring U.S. military power in line with its new commitments around the globe, most notably in Western Europe. The requirement to rearm was in sharp contrast to the declining defense budgets authorized by Truman in the years following WW II. NSC-68 remarked that should a major war occur in 1950, the USSR could overrun Western Europe, occupy the Middle East, increase their holdings in the Far East, and attack both Britain and North America through airpower. The NSC-68 policy recommendations were also based on an estimate that by 1954, the Soviet Union would have an operational stockpile of atomic weapons that could effectively challenge the American nuclear monopoly. Therefore it was predicted that atomic stalemate would probably make limited conventional wars more likely.²⁴ If the U.S. could no longer rely on a nuclear monopoly to deter Soviet expansion, the U.S. must increase the size and capabilities of its conventional forces to counter Soviet aggression. The first half of the problem facing the U.S. in 1950 was that it did not have the conventional military capability to prevent Soviet expansion into Western Europe. Any military confrontation between the U.S. and USSR would force an escalation towards the use of nuclear

²³McDougal, *Promised Land, Crusader State*, 165.

²⁴U.S. Department of State, NSC-68 "Report to the President Pursuant to the President's Directive of 31 January 1950," 7 April 1950, http://trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/coldwar/documents/pdf/10-1.pdf (accessed 22 April 2012).

weapons. Therefore, in the strategic and operational environments in 1950, a confrontation with the USSR had to be avoided at all costs.

Although NSC-68 primarily focused on Europe, the NSC did consider Korea a potential source of trouble. Intelligence studies on Korea had been part of the policy review conducted during the preparation of NSC-68. A series of events on the Korean peninsula between 1945 and 1950 shaped the operational environment and the initial conduct of the Korean War. At the Yalta Conference in February 1945, Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin agreed that following the expected defeat of the Japanese in the Pacific, Korea would become an Allied trusteeship whose gradual independence would be overseen by the United States, Great Britain, the USSR, and China.²⁵ However, following the Japanese surrender, the two main occupying powers, the U.S. and USSR, held different goals in Korea, both linked to their postwar ambitions in Asia. The U.S. had one mission, repatriate Japanese soldiers and civilians to the Home Islands and take control of Japanese property for future redistribution. Conversely, the Soviet goal in their zone was to strip northern Korea of any people and property that would help the Soviet Union's postwar recovery. In October 1945, the Soviets began to shift their policy in order to create a communist buffer state and mount a communist insurgent campaign to unify all of Korea when the Americans departed.²⁶ The Korean Communists, north and south of the Thirty-eighth Parallel, patiently awaited their day of victory.

On 10 May 1948, UN-sponsored elections in South Korea marked the formal beginning of the Republic of Korea (ROK). Syngman Rhee became the ROK's first democratically elected president and the national assembly was created in the capital, Seoul. On 9 September 1948, the Soviet Union countered in the north by installing a communist regime and establishing the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). Kim il Sung became the DPRK's first premier

²⁵Paige, *The Korean Decision*, 65-76.

²⁶Allen R. Millett, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951: They Came From the North* (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 2010), 10-13.

with Pyongyang as its capital.²⁷ By the summer of 1949, both the U.S. and USSR had completed military withdrawals. However, after the two powers departed, a huge disparity existed between the condition, quality, and quantity of military equipment in North and South Korea.²⁸ Thus, when hostilities commenced in June 1950, the ROK faced severe disadvantages on the ground. The only significant advantage possessed by the U.S. Commander in Chief Far East (CINCFE), General Douglas MacArthur was the airpower capabilities of the Far East Air Force (FEAF), under the command of Lt. Gen. George Stratemeyer.²⁹ Therefore, the operational environment in June 1950 required the U.S. to depend on airpower to achieve tactical success on the battlefield in Korea. Airpower would allow the U.S. and UN to build sufficient ground forces to counter the DPRK's numerical advantage should the U.S. choose to intervene in Korea.

In 1948, President Truman received NSC-8 recommending that the U.S. should not become so irrevocably involved in Korea that an action taken by any faction in Korea or by any other power in Korea could be considered a *casus belli* for the United States. NSC-8 highlighted that both MacArthur and the JCS believed that any war with the DPRK Communists would develop into World War III. In that situation, and owing to U.S. commitments to NATO, the preponderance of American forces would be needed in Europe. As a result, in 1948, the U.S. Department of Defense handed responsibility of Korea over to the U.S. Department of State.³⁰ Korea's strategic importance was further diminished on 12 January 1950 when Secretary of State

²⁷Gruenberg, *Defining Moments: The Korean War*, 21.

²⁸U.S. Department of State, NSC-8/2 "Report to the President on The Position of the United States with Respect to Korea," 22 March 1949, http://www.trualibrary.org/whstlestop/study_collections/korea/large/documents/pdfs/kr-7-8.pdf (accessed 22 April 2012).

²⁹Conrad C. Crane, *American Airpower Strategy in Korea, 1950-1953* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2000), 24.

³⁰U.S. Department of State, NSC-8/1 "Report to the President on The Position of the United States with Respect to Korea," 16 March 1949, http://www.trualibrary.org/whstlestop/study_collections/korea/large/documents/pdfs/hr-7-7.pdf (accessed 22 April 2012).

Dean Acheson declared in a public speech that Washington's defensive perimeter ran along the Aleutians to Japan, the Ryukus, and finally the Philippine Islands. Acheson's speech deliberately excluded Korea from America's defensive perimeter and further stated that no one could guarantee the military security of other areas in the Pacific against attack.³¹ Again, the operational importance of Korea took a backseat to the strategic importance of Europe. Acheson's statement potentially led Stalin to believe that America would not resist North Korean aggression. Thus, the Soviet leader potentially felt compelled to honor his commitments to his Korean comrades in their fight for communist expansion.

On 16 October 1949, Chiang Kai-shek's Chinese Nationalist forces were decisively defeated by the Chinese Communist forces led by Mao Tse-tung. The defeat of the Chinese Nationalists shifted the world balance of power in favor of the communists. The Chinese Communist victory threatened America's already weak military strategy in the Far East. The JCS and Department of State had decided that if the USSR launched World War III, the priority for U.S. military forces would be the defense of America's allies in Western Europe. Military operations in the Far East would be a lesser priority.³² Mao's victory in China, combined with an escalating communist insurgency in South Korea, helped shape the operational environment and forced the U.S. to reconsider its stance on Korea.

Following Mao's victory, the USSR and Chinese Communists increased their collaboration. They produced the Soviet-Chinese Treaty of Friendship, Alliance, and Mutual Assistance on 14 February 1950. While this agreement did not deal directly with the future of Korea, the strategic implications were clear. The Soviets would not intervene in the final stages of the Chinese civil war; but they would move air-interceptor and anti-aircraft artillery regiments into China, Manchuria and the Liaoning peninsula off Korea's western coast. Of utmost

³¹ Condit, *The Test of War*, 45.

³² Clay Blair, *The Forgotten War: America in Korea 1950-1953* (New York, New York: Doubleday Publishing, 1987), 25-26.

importance, the basic treaty included a provision that if Japan or any state allied with Japan attacked either China or the Soviet Union, the other communist nation would immediately render military assistance by all means at its disposal.³³ In the strategic and operational environment at the start of the Korean War, the U.S. had to assume that a direct attack on China would induce retaliation from the Soviet Union.

The alliance between Communist China and the DPRK also played a significant role in defining the operational environment in June 1950. In the months leading up to the conflict, Kim il-Sung repeatedly requested military assistance and permission to attack South Korea from both Mao and Stalin. United in their desire for the spread of communism, both China and North Korea were willing to bare significant civilian costs and risk to achieve their international communist goals. For the DPRK, the Korean War was the culmination of a civil war between various indigenous political groups seeking control of the Korean peninsula after the Japanese departure. For the Chinese, Mao feared that the U.S. would use Korea as a beachhead to reverse the communist revolution and return Chiang Kai-shek and his Nationalists on Taiwan to power.³⁴ Although Mao, Kim, and Stalin contemplated military aggression for slightly different reasons, the thread that held them together, communism, would eventually drive them all to war. That same thread of communism, or rather the threat of its expansion, would also lead the United States into battle.

By June 1950, multiple events during the preceding decade had defined the strategic and operational environments facing the United States. Unlike WWII, senior military leaders were no longer solely responsible for policy and strategy decisions. Coordination between the military and civilian leadership was a requirement for global operations. The conventional capabilities of the U.S. military had significantly declined. U.S. political leaders wanted to contain the spread of

³³Millett, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 45-52.

³⁴Robert A. Pape, *Bombing to Win: Air Power and Coercion in War* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1996), 151-152.

communism but were increasingly worried about a nuclear-armed Soviet Union. The U.S. was committed to NATO and the security of Western Europe and saw Korea as a liability. Finally, a Soviet-Chinese-DPRK alliance increased the likelihood that unrestrained military action in Korea could lead to the fall of Europe. It is in this environment that the Cold War turned hot.

U.S. Initial Operational Approach

Emboldened by Mao's victory in China and encouraged by Stalin in Moscow, North Korean forces launched a series of attacks into the South on 25 June 1950.³⁵ The threat posed by this invasion forced a rapid decision in Washington on whether to intervene. That decision was followed by three years of fighting which ultimately brought about the deaths of 33,629 Americans in what became the fourth largest war in American history.³⁶ To understand the rationale behind the political restraints placed on the conduct of the war, it is necessary to examine the decisions that led to U.S. intervention and the initial operational approach taken during the opening months of the Korean War. Research of the initial U.S. operational approach enables a comparison of the initial tactical, operational, and theater strategic objectives in Korea with the grand strategic objective in Europe.

The initial U.S. theater strategic objective was to maintain the independence of South Korea. However, the strategic aim was driven more by a need to support the newly published containment policy than strategic military concerns in Northeast Asia. While the State Department eschewed the importance of Korea to U.S. security, military planners did not. State placed a high value on Korea's importance as a symbol of America's desire to contain communism. If Korea were lost, U.S. prestige throughout the world would be seriously

³⁵Alan Stephens, "The Air War in Korea, 1950-1953," in *A History of Air Warfare*, ed. John Andreas Olsen (Washington D.C.: Potomac Books, 2010), 85.

³⁶Paige, *The Korean Decision*, 3.

damaged.³⁷ Political leaders in Washington saw communism as a monolithic entity controlled by Stalin and were concerned less about Korea and more about the spread of communism around the globe. Therefore, the U.S. political leadership's rationale for entering the Korean War arose more from their perceived need to oppose communism generally than from a particular imperative to defend South Korea. This interpretation of geopolitics would later restrain the application of force during the war. On 27 June 1950, Truman made this policy view official by stating publicly that U.S. intervention into the Korean conflict was not simply about a civil war in a small, distant country; it was a battle between communism and the free world.³⁸ The grand strategic objective for the United States remained the avoidance of direct conflict with the Soviet Union, particularly in Europe. At the highest levels in Washington, the Korean War was not solely about Korea.

Political and military leaders in Washington questioned whether the invasion of South Korea was the beginning of a showdown between communism and democracy that might degenerate into a nuclear World War III. If North Korea with Russian and Chinese support was acting as an aggressor, much like Germany prior to WW II, then perhaps the invasion was the first step in a wider war. If so, it was imperative to stop DPRK aggression at the earliest opportunity.³⁹ America would not sit back and let aggression go unchecked again.

Once the political decision to intervene in the Korean War was made, U.S. political and military leaders began to devise the operational approach for the conduct of the war. U.S. Army Field Manual 5-0 defines operational approach as "A broad conceptualization of the general actions that will produce the conditions that define the desired end state."⁴⁰ The operational approach is the set of broad actions military forces must take to achieve the desired military end

³⁷U.S. Department of State, NSC-8/2.

³⁸Gruenberg, *Defining Moments: The Korean War*, 34, 181-182.

³⁹U.S. Department of State, "State Department Overview of the Korean Situation," 28 June 1950, http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/korea/large/documents/pdfs/ki-3-1 (accessed 22 April 2012).

⁴⁰FM 5-0 *The Operations Process*, Glossary-7.

state. It is how military operations should transform current conditions into the desired conditions, the end state—the way the commander wants the operational environment to look at the conclusion of operations.⁴¹ Understanding the initial operational approach provides insight into the initial tactical and operational objectives.

On 25 June 1950, the UN Security Council accepted the recommendations made by the Truman administration and issued a resolution to intervene in Korea. UN Security Council Resolution 82 called for the immediate cessation of hostilities, withdrawal of DPRK forces north of the thirty-eighth parallel, and for all UN members to render every assistance to the ROK.⁴² The initial theater strategic objective for the United States was to reestablish the sovereignty of an independent, democratic, South Korea. Although America was going to war with limited aims, the tactical and operational objectives had yet to be decided.

In Washington, the NSC began to meet daily to discuss the strategy and operational approach that would guide U.S. military operations in Korea. On 28 June 1950, the civilian participants on the NSC, primarily Truman, Acheson and Johnson, questioned the risk of a deeper military crisis elsewhere, specifically a Soviet reaction to U.S. intervention. The largest point of contention was the question of whether the U.S. Air Force should attack North Korean airbases north of the 38th Parallel. General Eisenhower argued that there should be no geographic barriers to operations throughout Korea. Truman initially said no to the question of airstrikes north of the parallel. However, one day later, on 29 June, bolstered by additional UN resolutions condemning North Korean aggression, Truman approved MacArthur's request for airstrikes north of the 38th

⁴¹JP 5-0 *Joint Operation Planning*, III-5.

⁴²United Nations, "United Nations Security Council Resolution 82," 25 June 1950, http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlesop/study_collections/korea/large/documents/pdfs/ki-17-4.pdf (accessed 22 April 2012).

Parallel to provide the fullest support to the South Korean forces.⁴³ From the very beginning of the war in Korea, the civilian leadership in Washington took a cautious approach in regards to the escalation of military force.

The first tactical objective for the U.S. was to build sufficient ground combat power to counter the qualitative and quantitative advantage held by the DPRK. The FEAF became MacArthur's most effective weapon as the U.S. began to send men and equipment to the theater. During the first months of the war, the FEAF had considerable freedom over much of North Korea. However, the NSC, to include the JCS, established political restraints on airstrikes against targets along the Yalu River, particularly: airfields, bridges, power plants, and logistical centers. A more general restriction, intended to limit the war, was the prohibition of attacks against China. 'Hot pursuit' under some conditions was authorized, but attacks against aircraft taking off from bases north of the Yalu were not.⁴⁴ The initial political restraint on air operations north of the Yalu serves to highlight one of the initial U.S. operational objectives; prevent Chinese Communist Forces (CCF) from intervening in Korea.

Regardless, the initial restraints on airpower did not significantly hamper the military's initial operational approach. The initial U.S. air campaign was a success. The FEAF had quickly established complete air superiority over Korea and the level of destruction for strategic military targets was significant: in Pyongyang (70 percent), Knonan (85 percent), and Wonsan (95 percent). The air interdiction campaign was also effective enough to force the DPRK to move only at night.⁴⁵ Although DPRK ground forces were initially successful at pushing the allies into the Pusan perimeter, they could not eject United Nations Command (UNC) forces completely

⁴³For accounts of the various NSC meetings on 28-29 June 1950 see Paige, *The Korean Decision*, 209-252; Condit, *The Test of War*, 50-54; Millett, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 122-123. Crane, *American Airpower Strategy in Korea, 1950-1953*, 24.

⁴⁴William M. Momyer, *Air Power in Three Wars* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1978), 56.

⁴⁵Crane, *American Airpower Strategy in Korea, 1950-1953*, 40-41.

from the peninsula. By September 1950, the conditions were set for a UN offensive that would meet another U.S. initial tactical objective: seize the initiative.

Despite doubt that the U.S. Eighth Army could even hold the Pusan Perimeter, MacArthur was busy conceiving an operational maneuver to seize and exploit the initiative. Faced with an enemy whose lines of communication were clearly overextended, MacArthur planned Operation CHROMITE, designed to outflank the North Koreans by way of an amphibious assault on the city of Inchon. Following approval by Truman, MacArthur's troops landed on 17 September and won an overwhelming victory.⁴⁶ Operation CHROMITE, combined with Eighth Army's breakout from the Pusan Perimeter, allowed the U.S. to achieve another initial operational objective: eject the communist forces of the DPRK out of South Korea.

In summary, the U.S. went to war in Korea partially to prove to its allies in NATO and Japan that the U.S. would oppose the expansion of communism. The U.S. considered Korea the battleground against the USSR more than the DPRK. The U.S. initial grand strategic objective was to avoid a direct conflict with the Soviet Union in Europe. As such, the initial operational approach was based on a limited theater strategic objective: reestablish the sovereignty of an independent, democratic Republic of Korea and a return to the *status quo*. The U.S. achieved its initial tactical objective by building sufficient ground combat power and using airpower to delay DPRK ground forces. The initial political restraints on airpower did not hinder the U.S. from achieving that tactical objective. The initial political restraints also enabled the U.S. to meet its initial operational objective; avoid provoking the Chinese into intervention. With the Chinese threat out of the picture and DPRK forces delayed under constant air pressure, the U.S. was able to build sufficient ground combat forces to meet its second tactical objective; regain the initiative. The successful combination of Operation CHROMITE and the Pusan breakout enabled the U.S.

⁴⁶Stanlis David Milkowski, "After Inchon: MacArthur's 1950 Campaign in North Korea," in *Historical Perspectives of the Operational Art*, ed. Michael Krause and Cody Phillips (Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing Press, 2007), 418.

to achieve another operational objective; eject DPRK forces from South Korea. This in turn, enabled the U.S. to meet its initial theater strategic objective.

By the end of September 1950, the initial U.S. operational approach had accomplished all of the initial American objectives. The spread of communism had been checked, North Korean forces had been removed from South Korea and the U.S. had avoided an escalation of conflict with the USSR in Europe. The initial operational environment, initial operational approach, and initial political restraints allowed the U.S. to achieve its initial tactical, operational, theater strategic, and grand strategic objectives. Theoretically, the Korean War could have ended in September 1950. However, the political leadership in Washington had other ideas for Korea.

Evolution of the Operational Approach

According to JP 5-0, the commander and staff should continually review, update, and modify the operational approach as the operational environment, end states, or the problem change.⁴⁷ Initial American success in Korea forced an evolution in the operational environment, which in turn drove a change in the U.S. theater strategic objectives in Korea. The new theater strategic objective subsequently forced a change in the U.S. operational approach. Success at Inchon created a debate in Washington. The issue was whether the Allied armies should cross into North Korea and continue on to the Yalu River, thereby ousting the Communists from the peninsula by force.⁴⁸ The other option would have been to remain south of the 38th Parallel and fulfill the initial theater strategic objective of an independent, democratic South Korea. The Truman administration had been hard at work trying to decide upon the new Allied theater strategic objectives. As early as 29 July 1950, the NSC had produced a draft of NSC 73 questioning whether Korea should be unified by force and, if so, whether the USSR and People's Republic of China (PRC) would use military force to save the DPRK. On 1 September 1950,

⁴⁷JP 5-0, *Joint Operation Planning*, III-5.

⁴⁸Herspring, *The Pentagon and the Presidency*, 76.

Truman promised the American people that the U.S. would fight on until South Korea was free and that he would build up America's military to deter future aggression by the USSR and its proxies. However, Truman reassured his listeners, both foreign and domestic, that the U.S. did not seek a war with either China or the USSR. As revisions to NSC 73 continued, the likelihood of Soviet military response could not be ignored, although Chinese intervention appeared more likely. Nevertheless, the service secretaries recommended that the U.S. and UN should continue operations to unify Korea, even if that meant fighting Chinese forces on the ground in Korea and attacking the Chinese mainland with air and naval forces.⁴⁹ Therefore, in September 1950, the civilian leaders in Washington were willing to risk conflict with China over Korea. The stage was set for an evolution of the Korean theater strategic objectives.

The U.S. State Department labored throughout August 1950 to draft definitive NSC guidance for operations in Korea. On 1 September 1950, the State Department issued Draft NSC 81 for full review.⁵⁰ According to Milkowski, "The political object shaping military operations in Korea had been simply to prevent both the destruction of the ROK and the ejection of UN forces from the peninsula. Expecting success at Inchon, it was necessary for the first time to consider in concrete terms the basis for terminating hostilities and to decide upon whether to invade North Korea."⁵¹ Even before the Allies crossed the 38th Parallel, neither the U.S. nor UN security council members believed that Stalin and Mao would remain passive. Planners at the U.S. Department of State mistakenly interpreted communist inaction prior to Inchon as a possible sign that the Soviets had written off North Korea and the opportunity might exist to unify Korea.

⁴⁹U.S. Department of State, NSC-73/2 "Report on The Position and Actions of the United States with Respect to Possible Further Soviet Moves in the Light of the Korean Situation," 8 August 1950, http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/korea/large/documents/pdfs/ki-16-7.pdf (accessed 22 April 2012).

⁵⁰U.S. Department of State, NSC-81 "Report on United States Courses of Action with Respect to Korea," 1 September 1950, http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/korea/large/documents/pdfs/ki-17-1.pdf (accessed on 22 April 2012).

⁵¹Milkowski, "After Inchon: MacArthur's 1950 Campaign in North Korea", 419.

Regardless, the diplomats at both the Department of State and the UN agreed that in no case should UN or U.S. troops be sent to North Korea's borders with China and the USSR. NSC-81 also clearly stated that any allied offensive should be halted if either Chinese or Soviet ground troops intervened.⁵² These restrictions foreshadowed the limited objectives revealed later in the war.

On 7 September 1950, General Bradley and the JCS disagreed with parts of NSC 81 and forced a review, completed on 9 September. Of note, the JCS demanded that MacArthur be free to act within the geographic limitations already in place, even with the threat of Chinese or Soviet intervention. Secretary of State Acheson and his planners conceded that, should the UN approve an advance beyond the 38th Parallel, MacArthur should not feel bound by new geographic limitations in destroying the North Korean armed forces. However, Acheson held firm that only ROK units should operate near the borders of Manchuria and the USSR.⁵³ Discussions surrounding NSC-81 reveal the origins of conflict between the military tactical objectives and limited theater strategic objectives that defined the rest of the Korean War.

Following the success of Operation CHROMITE, on 27 September 1950, Truman and the JCS gave MacArthur the mission to destroy the North Korean armed forces and the authority to conduct military operations north of the 38th Parallel. The directive listed the political and military restraints on UNC operations, specifically the order to cease ground operations if either the Soviet or Chinese entered the fray.⁵⁴ On 29 September, new Secretary of Defense George Marshall sent MacArthur a cable that stated, "We want you to feel unhampered strategically and tactically to proceed north of the 38th Parallel." However, MacArthur was also told that if the

⁵²U.S. Department of State, NSC-81.

⁵³Millett, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 236-239.

⁵⁴U.S. Department of Defense, "Directive to the Commander of the United Nations Forces in Korea," 27 September 1950, http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/stud_collections/korea/large/documents/pdfs/ki-18-3.pdf (accessed 22 April 2012).

Chinese or Russians intervened, he should be prepared to follow new instructions.⁵⁵ Finally, on 7 October 1950, the UN released a new resolution, 376V, stating the General Assembly's commitment to establishing a unified, independent, and democratic government in the sovereign State of Korea.⁵⁶ In October 1950, the U.S. theater strategic objective became the unification of Korea as an independent, democratic country. The new operational objectives were to eject communist forces from North Korea while deterring the Chinese from intervention. The new tactical objectives became the pursuit and destruction of communist forces in order to secure the entire peninsula. The grand strategic objective remained an avoidance of conflict escalation with the Soviet Union.

On 9 October 1950, UNC forces crossed the 38th Parallel into North Korea. MacArthur's operational approach was intended to pursue and destroy the North Korean armed forces and liberate the entire peninsula. However, he faced three major restraints. Under no circumstances were ground forces under MacArthur's command, including the ROK, permitted to enter Manchuria or the USSR. Additionally, no air or naval operations were to be conducted against those same areas. Finally, MacArthur was required to submit his plans for future operations north of the 38th Parallel to the JCS for approval.⁵⁷ MacArthur based his operational approach into North Korea on the assumption that there would be no Soviet or Chinese interference with UNC operations. Unfortunately, MacArthur's assumptions were quickly proven false.

Mao perceived America's intervention in the Korean War to be a major threat to his Chinese Communists forces. As early as July, Mao and his closest advisors began taking steps to

⁵⁵U.S. Department of Defense, "Message from George C. Marshall to Douglas MacArthur," 29 September 1950, http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/korea/large/documents/pdfs/ki-22-19.pdf (accessed on 22 April 2012).

⁵⁶United Nations, "Resolution 376V: The Problem of the Independence of Korea, 7 October 1950," under "Resolutions Adopted by the General Assembly During its Fifth Session," <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/5/ares5.htm> (accessed 3 May 2012).

⁵⁷MacArthur, *Reminiscences*, 357-367.

prepare China for war with the U.S. Mao feared that American intervention might be a prelude to a regional offensive, in collaboration with Japan and the Chinese Nationalists on Formosa and aimed at the containment or destruction of the Chinese Communist Revolution. Therefore, Mao ordered nine divisions of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) to the Manchurian-Korean border to be used against UNC forces if, and when they crossed the 38th Parallel.⁵⁸ In Moscow, Stalin began to worry that the DPRK would not win Kim's war of national liberation and unification. Stalin promised Mao that Soviet airpower would provide cover for the Chinese units in Manchuria but he prohibited those Soviet air divisions in Manchuria from entering the war above Korea. With his forces in place, Mao issued an ominous warning that the Chinese would not "tolerate seeing their neighbors being savagely invaded by imperialists."⁵⁹ U.S. leaders in both Korea and Washington dismissed Mao's threat believing that if the Chinese intended to join the fight, they would have done so immediately after the Inchon invasion. Both the JCS and U.S. civilian political leaders were near unanimous in their belief that the Soviet Union was the real threat when it came to intervention in Korea and possible escalation to total war. The writers of NSC-81 specifically regarded China as a much less likely source of trouble.⁶⁰ Unfortunately, this unlikely source of trouble would soon alter the operational environment and exponentially increase the complexity of the problem for the U.S. in Korea.

Between 13 October and 20 October 1950, an estimated 180,000 highly trained and highly motivated troops crossed into Korea. On 25 October, the U.S. Eighth Army encountered Chinese Communist Forces for the first time. By the time the initial Chinese attacks ceased on 6 November, Eighth Army's advance had been checked and UNC forces were left unsure as to the

⁵⁸Millett, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 232-236.

⁵⁹Condit, *The Test of War*, 71-73.

⁶⁰U.S. Department of State, NSC 81.

actual scope of Chinese intervention.⁶¹ Over the next two months, the Chinese would change the conflict's strategic and operational environments and force major revisions to the Allies' theater strategic objectives.

MacArthur watched as an unlimited number of Chinese reinforcing units deployed directly from Manchurian bases and assembly areas north of the Yalu. MacArthur's new operational objective became the defeat of the CCF. It quickly appeared that U.S. airpower would have to be employed more effectively in order to reduce the numerical superiority of the Chinese ground forces. MacArthur proposed a sustained air attack against the bridges and Chinese lines of communication across the Yalu into North Korea. MacArthur felt it imperative to deny the Chinese forces the sanctuary they enjoyed in Manchuria. On 5 November, MacArthur ordered Stratemeyer to bomb seventeen bridges over the Yalu linking North Korea to China. MacArthur's tactical objective was to destroy the Chinese line of communication into Korea. When Washington became aware of MacArthur's proposed new bombing campaign, Truman immediately sent a 'stop' order, declaring all targets within five miles of the Yalu off limits.⁶² Truman and Marshall asked MacArthur for his assessment of a threat so great that he would risk bombing Manchuria and potentially escalating the war. A furious MacArthur shot back an impassioned communiqué, saying the only way to stop Chinese forces from 'pouring' into Korea was to destroy the bridges on the Yalu, "Every hour this is postponed will be paid for dearly in American and other UN blood."⁶³ MacArthur further argued that failure to bomb the bridges would be a calamity and that inaction would threaten the destruction of the forces under his

⁶¹Milkowski, "After Inchon: MacArthur's 1950 Campaign in North Korea", 425-426.

⁶²MacArthur, *Reminiscences*, 365-370.

⁶³United States Army, "Message from General MacArthur to the Department of the Army," 6 November 1950, http://trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/korea/large/documents/pdfs/ki-22-23.pdf (accessed 3 May 2012).

command.⁶⁴ MacArthur's response shocked the JCS who were unaware that the situation was so serious. After consulting with Truman, the leadership in Washington authorized the attack on the bridges but demanded that Manchurian airspace not be violated and that the attacks should be limited to the Korean side of the spans only, a near impossibility. The subsequent attacks were unsuccessful and led a disgusted MacArthur to call the restraints "the most indefensible and ill conceived decision ever forced on a field commander in our nation's history."⁶⁵ These restraints were designed by the political leadership in Washington to prevent an escalation of the war. However, the restraints also served to limit MacArthur's ability to achieve his tactical objective of interdicting the CCF and limiting their ability to conduct operations in Korea.

The threat posed by the CCF was not limited to ground forces. On 1 November 1950, Soviet pilots, flying MiG-15 interceptors, appeared over the skies of Korea and reshaped the air war. Soviet Mig-15s, operating from airfields in Manchurian sanctuaries, increasingly challenged UN air superiority over North Korea. In response, MacArthur requested authority to chase the MiGs back to their airfields and permission to strike the enemy air bases in Manchuria.⁶⁶ The USAF Chief of Staff, Hoyt Vandenberg was initially sympathetic to MacArthur's and Stratemeyer's request. However, Secretary Marshall and the Secretary of the Air Force Thomas Finletter convinced Vandenberg that adopting a policy of 'hot pursuit' over the Yalu was an unacceptable widening of the war.⁶⁷ The research suggests that the political and military leadership in Washington did not fully understand the changes in the operational environment and the tactical challenges brought about by CCF intervention in Korea.

⁶⁴U.S. Army, "Message from General MacArthur to the Department of the Army," 6 November 1950.

⁶⁵Crane, *American Airpower Strategy in Korea*, 48-50.

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷Phillip S. Meilinger, *Hoyt S. Vandenberg: The Life of a General* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1989), 292-299.

The presence of an enemy sanctuary in Manchuria had tactical, operational, and strategic repercussions on the Korean War. At the strategic level, the threat of Soviet airpower was considered the gravest initial problem for Far East Command in case of a general war.⁶⁸ Momyer writes, “For airmen in Korea, the recognition of an enemy sanctuary across the Yalu posed a terrific problem. How were they to contain a numerically superior enemy fighter force when all of their forward bases and lines of communication were open to attack?”⁶⁹ Assistant Secretary of State Dean Rusk stated, “If the Chinese concentrate air power in Manchurian air fields and use it in Korea, it will be necessary for us to bomb the bases in Manchuria.”⁷⁰ The JCS disagreed due to fears that such action might bring in the Russians, which would give the UNC no alternative but to use the A-bomb. Thus, bombing Chinese enemy airfields in Manchuria would prohibit the U.S. from attaining its grand strategic objective of avoiding confrontation with the USSR.

At the operational level, the Mig-15s posed a serious threat to UN daylight bombing and reconnaissance flights over Korea. The MiG threat denied FEAF effective aerial reconnaissance near the border at a critical time in the ground campaign, thus depriving both political and military decision makers’ information as to the exact nature of communist reinforcements swarming into North Korea. At the tactical level, sanctuary nullified the limitations of the short range MiGs that could carry only enough fuel for one hour of flying time. Sanctuary allowed the MiGs to wait for approaching American aircraft, take off from fields in Manchuria, gain altitude north of the river, dive down through the bomber formations, and rapidly escape to safety. At any time, if an enemy pilot felt he was losing an engagement, he could break contact and head for sanctuary, rarely more than fifteen minutes away.⁷¹ MacArthur argued that the Yalu barrier imposed by the democracies desire to prevent expansion of the arena of conflict worked to nullify

⁶⁸Crane, *American Airpower Strategy in Korea*, 73.

⁶⁹Momyer, *Air Power in Three Wars*, 5.

⁷⁰Crane, *American Airpower Strategy in Korea*, 56-57.

⁷¹Stephens, “The Air War in Korea, 1950-1953”, 97-101.

the superiority of his flyers.⁷² The entry of Communist Chinese Forces, and the subsequent impact of political restraints imposed by Washington, forced a change in the U.S. theater strategic objective.

When the first-echelon division of the CCF broke contact on 6 November 1950, the political and military leadership of the U.S. and UN began an assessment of the scope and level of Chinese intervention. MacArthur wanted to immediately return to the offensive in the hopes of driving through the Chinese to the Yalu and unifying Korea by force, the established theater strategic objective. MacArthur asserted that American airpower would provide the advantage required for victory, if and only if, there were no restrictions on its use. Marshall told MacArthur that a wider war with China would create an “extremely grave international problem which could so easily lead to a world disaster.”⁷³ Neither the JCS nor the State Department rejected MacArthur’s planned offensive, but they did examine other alternatives based on China’s perceived strategic goals. Both the JCS and State Department felt that China’s goals were limited and that China could not drive UNC forces out of Korea without Soviet air and naval support, which would lead to World War III. State also believed that any movement towards Manchuria was likely to bring a full Chinese response. On the other hand, MacArthur believed the Soviets would stay out. The Chinese were already in, and he could regain the initiative, crush the residual communist forces, and end the war.⁷⁴ The U.S. political and military leaders charged with conducting the Korean War had different views of the tactical, operational, and strategic environments following Chinese intervention. These views were separated by 8,000 miles and conflicting objectives.

⁷²MacArthur, *Reminiscences*, 365-385.

⁷³Millett, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 311-314.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*

Between 7 and 24 November 1950, the political and military leadership in Washington continued to review their plans for Korea. The JCS felt that State was pushing for ill-timed negotiations within the UN, much to the advantage of China and the Soviet Union. The JCS argued that the Chinese must be beaten on the battlefield first, so that the U.S. could negotiate from a position of advantage. The JCS supported MacArthur's plan for an offensive and the destruction of enemy forces in North Korea. Much to the surprise of the Pentagon, Secretary of State Acheson decided to support an offensive and to delay negotiations.⁷⁵ However, Washington was adamant that the political restraints on operations in Manchuria remain.

UNC launched its 'Home-by-Christmas' Offensive on 24 November 1950, and the immediate results were disastrous, leading to the longest retreat in U.S. military history. MacArthur reluctantly admitted that the UNC faced a new enemy that he could not defeat unless he given the flexibility to take action against both Manchuria and China itself. The FEAF could not stop the flood of Chinese troops crossing the Yalu due to the inherent advantages that accrue to the communists. MacArthur felt that if the all-out Chinese attack continued, UNC forces would have to withdraw from North Korea if restrictions on air and naval action against China were not lifted and significant ground reinforcements were not received.⁷⁶ MacArthur felt that the political restraints designed to prevent escalation with both the Chinese and Soviets were hindering his ability to achieve his tactical and operational objectives. MacArthur requested new strategic guidance from Washington.

On 28 November 1950, Bradley briefed the full NSC, including Truman, on the JCS' assessment of the threat posed by the recently launched Chinese Second Offensive. While it appeared the Chinese ground campaign was designed to force the UNC out of North Korea, the most worrisome threat was actually the enemy air forces in Manchuria, whose potential for air

⁷⁵Condit, *The Test of War*, 77-87.

⁷⁶MacArthur, *Reminiscences*, 374-376.

strikes on FEAF airbases in Korea could not be ignored. In reply to Truman's questioning, CSAF Vandenberg informed the NSC that although difficult, if the FEAF were forced to relocate to Japan, it could still attack the Manchurian airbases if required. Therefore, both the JCS and NSC remained hesitant to expand the war unless the enemy did so first. Truman did order contingency plans for FEAF attacks into Manchuria should the communists mount a major air offensive from their sanctuary. However, the U.S. leadership in Washington, not MacArthur, the operational military commander in the field, retained the final authority to execute those plans. As a result, the NSC rejected MacArthur's request to lift the restraints and expand the air war.⁷⁷ As a result, the Chinese retained their sanctuary in Manchuria as they prepared to exploit the initiative.

On 30 December 1950, Chinese forces launched the Third Chinese Offensive and crossed the 38th Parallel, invading South Korea, with the intent to expel UNC forces completely from the Korean peninsula. By 4 January 1951, the new Eighth Army Commander, Lt. Gen. Matthew Ridgeway was forced to abandon Seoul. MacArthur informed Washington that unless they decided to expand the war with China, UNC forces might be required to evacuate the Korean peninsula. MacArthur further alarmed the UNC allies by suggesting that the situation had become so dire, that the U.S. might be required to use nuclear weapons against mainland China. Fears of a massive influx of Chinese ground troops also led both State and Defense to reexamine the employment of atomic weapons. However, both Truman and the JCS concluded that the implicit limits that had been observed from the start of the conflict should not be breached. Regardless, American atomic threats lacked credibility due to America's continued reluctance to risk global war. A similarly armed Soviet Union could extend atomic deterrence to the Chinese and Washington believed that air strikes in Manchuria, either conventional or atomic, would bring

⁷⁷U.S. National Security Council, "Minutes of the National Security Council Meeting with Harry S. Truman," 28 November 1950. http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/korea/large/documents/pdfs/ci-2-11.pdf (accessed 22 April 2012).

American forces directly into a heated battle with the Soviet air forces. Both State and the JCS felt that the U.S. could not run the risk of escalating the regional conflict in Korea into a general war with the USSR.⁷⁸ The inability to achieve both its tactical objectives in Korea and its grand strategic objectives in Europe forced Washington to reevaluate its theater strategic objectives in Asia.

As UNC forces were pushed south during January 1951, Washington reluctantly abandoned all hope of unifying Korea by force. While it was clear that the Soviets had supported Chinese intervention, the U.S. could not press the issue since it was not prepared for a confrontation with the USSR. CIA Director Walter Bedell Smith believed that war with the USSR was at hand and that Moscow's strategy was to bog America down in Asia, leaving the Soviet Union free to dominate Western Europe. America had to avoid a costly, protracted war with Communist China at all costs. However, Acheson and Marshall argued that UNC forces must continue to fight in order to retain at least a portion of South Korea, for not to do so would throw the U.S. policy of forward-based, collective defense and UN international security into question. If the U.S. lost Korea, its standing in the eyes of its new allies in NATO would drastically decline. This could force the countries in NATO to accept Soviet leadership in Europe. With these factors in mind, the Truman administration, led primarily by Acheson, Marshall, Nitze, and Rusk, decided that the U.S. should do as little as possible to escalate the conflict in Korea and the best outcome now was a negotiated settlement. Washington's new theater strategic objective became a willingness to settle on a line on or near the 38th Parallel, restoring the *status quo ante bellum*. The Department of State began to review options for negotiations. The JCS argued that UNC forces be allowed to regain the strategic initiative before any agreements on a

⁷⁸Blair, *The Forgotten War: America in Korea 1950-1953*, 592-603, 623-630.

ceasefire were met in order to negotiate from a position of advantage.⁷⁹ Despite the threat to UNC forces in January 1951, MacArthur vowed to fight on, but on his own terms.

Although Truman now favored a limited war and a negotiated settlement, MacArthur opposed negotiations and still favored an unlimited war against Communist China. MacArthur proposed a renewed ground offensive to regain Seoul, airstrikes to destroy the enemy's sanctuaries either in North Korea or in Manchuria, and employment of Chinese Nationalist forces from Formosa to open a second front in mainland China. His plan would allow UNC forces to continue to hold the best possible position in Korea.⁸⁰ Conversely, Truman's pragmatic decision to negotiate a settlement in lieu of escalating the fighting led the JCS to reject MacArthur's proposal on 9 January 1951. Washington not only feared that MacArthur's suggested operational approach might not defeat the Chinese in Korea, but it might trigger Soviet intervention in Europe and separate the U.S. from its NATO allies. Washington believed that a protracted, limited war in Korea would give NATO time to build up its military strength in Europe.⁸¹ Having been denied his opportunity for victory via total war with China, MacArthur interpreted Washington's decision as a loss of the will to win and that Truman's resolute determination to free and unify Korea had deteriorated almost into defeatism.⁸² MacArthur failed to realize that the military operations required to achieve his tactical objectives in Korea risked America's ability to achieve its grand strategic objectives in Europe.

Despite the dire situation in January 1951, UNC forces were able to withstand Chinese pressure and maintain a foothold in Korea. In mid-February, the Chinese Fourth Offensive was repulsed and UNC forces were able to return to the 38th Parallel. Policy discussions in

⁷⁹Millett, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 352-366, 392-398.

⁸⁰MacArthur, *Reminiscences*, 376-381.

⁸¹David Rees, *Korea and the Theory of Limited War* (Baltimore, Maryland: Penguin Books, 1964), 273.

⁸²MacArthur, *Reminiscences*, 378.

Washington then shifted to focus on whether Eighth Army should again be allowed to cross the 38th and reinvade North Korea. While the JCS advocated a reinvasion and relentless pursuit and punishment of the CCF and DPRK forces, the majority decision among the Pentagon, State Department, and NATO was to halt at the 38th and continue the search for a negotiated settlement.⁸³ Meanwhile, MacArthur relentlessly advocated for extending the air war to the hydroelectric plants on the Yalu and the North Korean port of Rashin.

On 15 February, MacArthur complained that the Chinese were taking advantage of Rashin's immunity from air attack to build up reinforcements and supplies. Marshall initially concurred with MacArthur's plan. However, after discovering that Acheson opposed the attack for fear that the bombers might hit Russian vessels in the harbor, Marshall and Bradley denied MacArthur's request.⁸⁴ The last straw came on 24 March 1951, when MacArthur bypassed Washington and issued an ultimatum directly to Mao's government threatening that if the Chinese Communists did not immediately withdraw their troops from Korea and permit unification, U.S. and UN forces would use atomic strikes to bring China to its knees. On 11 April 1951, Truman formally relieved MacArthur as CINCFE and replaced him with General Ridgeway.⁸⁵ In his subsequent testimony before Congress, MacArthur famously stated, "Nothing is more revolting than war, but once war is forced upon us, there is no other alternative than to apply every available means to bring it to a swift end. War's very object is victory, not prolonged indecision. In war there can be no substitute for victory."⁸⁶ In Korea, Truman subordinated tactical military objectives for attainment of the grand strategic objectives in Europe. As the

⁸³Blair, *The Forgotten War: America in Korea 1950-1953*, 669-683.

⁸⁴Crane, *American Airpower Strategy in Korea, 1950-1953*, 62-65.

⁸⁵Pape, *Bombing to Win: Air Power and Coercion in War*, 144-146

⁸⁶U.S. Congress, "Transcript of General MacArthur's Address to Congress," 19 April 1951, http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/korea/large/documents/pdfs/ma-2-18.pdf (accessed on 22 April 2012).

summer of 1951 approached, political restraints would continue to influence both military operations and negotiations.

Hoping to capitalize on America's political turmoil in the aftermath of MacArthur's relief, the Chinese launched their largest offensive of the war on 22 April 1951; eight days after Lt. Gen. James Van Fleet assumed command of Eighth Army. By 29 April, the first wave of the CCF offensive had been repulsed and the Chinese broke contact to the north. Battered, but not beaten, and reinforced from Manchuria, the CCF launched the second wave of their Spring Offensive on 16 May 1951. Over the next two weeks, UNC forces halted the CCF offensive, regained the initiative, and pushed back to a line just north of the 38th Parallel. Van Fleet was poised to turn an operational success into a strategic military victory and requested permission to pursue and annihilate the remaining communist forces in Korea, thus forcing the Chinese leadership to sue for peace and end the war. However, Van Fleet was ordered to halt his offensive at the Kansas-Wyoming line and await further instructions from Washington.⁸⁷ Once again, achievement of tactical objectives was denied by political restraints.

On 17 May 1951, President Truman made America's new theater strategic objectives for Korea official with the signing of NSC 48/5. In general, the memorandum addressed a multitude of issues concerning U.S. interests in Asia. In particular, the memorandum formally and publicly announced America's desire to seek a negotiated settlement in the Korean War rather than a military victory. NSC 48/5 clearly stated that the United States' goal in Korea was to continue as an ultimate objective to seek by political, as distinguished from military means, a solution of the Korean problem.⁸⁸ The JCS denounced the memorandum as an unsound military approach. They argued that the Department of State was attempting to predetermine military operations based on interim political factors rather than provide new long-term political objectives to which military

⁸⁷Robert B. Bruce, "Tethered Eagle: Lt Gen. James A. Van Fleet and the Quest for Military Victory in the Korean War, April-June 1951," *Army History* 82 (Winter 2012), 7-25.

⁸⁸Blair, *The Forgotten War: America in Korea 1950-1953*, 905-912.

operations could be tailored.⁸⁹ Nevertheless, Truman distinguished between the theater strategic objective, an armistice agreement, and the military tactical and operational objective, repelling communist aggression by force. Washington now faced the problem of timing, as the U.S. did not want its call for a negotiated peace to be interpreted at home or abroad as a signal of surrender.⁹⁰ After a year of hard fighting in Korea, the conditions were set for a political settlement.

On 10 July 1951, the war entered a new phase when armistice negotiations formally began in the village of Kaesong. The critical issues concerned control over territory, the line along which Korea would be divided and the continued presence of foreign forces in Korea following the armistice. On 25 July 1951, the Communist negotiators conceded and agreed to the presence of foreign troops in Korea, but as discussions bogged down in August, they abruptly pulled out of the negotiations. Following a series of stalemated battles, the Communist negotiators returned to the table and agreed to divide Korea at the current line of contact on 26 November 1951. Regardless, the war did not end at this point because the U.S. again altered its theater strategic objective, insisting on the voluntary repatriation of POWs.⁹¹ The Communist territorial concessions in 1951 theoretically achieved the limited theater strategic objective for Korea proposed in NSC 48/5. Instead, during the fighting from November 1951 until the final armistice in July 1953, over twelve thousand more American soldiers died, and twice that number were wounded.⁹² Washington's vacillation on the U.S. theater strategic objectives also continued to drive political restraints on military operations.

⁸⁹Condit, *The Test of War*, 111-113.

⁹⁰Bruce, "Tethered Eagle," 20-21.

⁹¹Pape, *Bombing to Win: Air Power and Coercion in War*, 137-140.

⁹²Ikle, *Every War Must End*, 88-91.

By the fall of 1951, the Korean War had reached the point where there were no more victories and both sides wanted out, but neither seemed to have the political skill to do so.⁹³ Ridgeway, realizing that airpower was his greatest asset for keeping military pressure on the enemy, reopened the issue of bombing the port of Rashin. General Ridgeway wanted to show the Chinese Communists that all of their sanctuaries were not privileged. On 25 August 1951, Ridgeway ordered a strategic attack on Rashin that successfully destroyed the port.⁹⁴ As the negotiations dragged on into 1952 and 1953, Washington finally began to loosen the restraints on military operations, specifically on the use of airpower as a tool for coercion.

Coercion is defined as efforts to change the behavior of a state by manipulating costs and benefits to force the opponent to alter its behavior. Vandenberg and the JCS, supported by civilian leadership in Washington, designed an air campaign to coerce the Communists to seek armistice terms favorable to the UN. Starting in June 1952, the FEAF began attacks on the five North Korean hydroelectric power facilities that had been previously off-limits. As a result, North Korean power production was reduced to less than 10 percent of capacity and 23 percent of Manchuria's power requirements for 1952 went unmet. Following Eisenhower's inauguration as President in January 1953, the U.S. increased the air attacks in order to coerce the Chinese into an armistice. On 20 May 1953, eerily reminiscent to MacArthur's plan two years earlier, the JCS recommended air and naval operations directly against China and Manchuria using atomic weapons. The JCS also recommended a conventional bombing campaign aimed at North Korean dams to ruin that year's rice crop. Eisenhower supported the plan because it would reduce UNC casualties by accelerating an armistice agreement. Eisenhower correctly assumed that, following Stalin's death in March 1953, increased air attacks could pressure the Chinese to be more open to

⁹³David Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter: America and the Korean War* (New York, New York: Hyperion Books, 2007), 625.

⁹⁴Crane, *American Airpower Strategy in Korea, 1950-1953*, 79.

a negotiated settlement.⁹⁵ Washington used a combination of conventional air escalation and nuclear threats to compel China to make the necessary concessions to end the Korean War.

As a result of U.S. air attacks, an armistice was finally signed on 27 July 1953, ending the fighting in Korea. During the three years of conflict, the UN suffered an estimated 140,000 casualties. The Koreans suffered an estimated 843,572 military casualties in the South, 520,000 military casualties in the North and approximately 1.5 million civilian deaths. The Chinese suffered an estimated 1.5 to 2 million casualties.⁹⁶ In the end, Korea was no closer to unification and the dividing line between North and South was almost exactly where it had been in both June 1950 and November 1951.

In summary, Chinese entry into the Korean War altered the operational environment and added significant complexity to the problem facing the United States. The U.S. could not achieve both its grand strategic objective, avoiding war with the USSR, and its new theater strategic objective, the unification of Korea. The tactical operations required to defeat the Chinese, airstrikes against the sanctuary of Manchuria, would have risked a direct U.S. confrontation with the Soviet Union. The U.S. political leadership chose to restrain tactical operations. Washington's decision to revert the theater strategic objective to its original form, an independent South Korea, was the correct course of action based on the operational environment after Chinese intervention. However, Washington again failed to conclude the war when presented the opportunity by further altering its theater strategic objective to insist on POW repatriation. As the operational environment in Europe evolved, Eisenhower was able to obtain an armistice in 1953 by altering the U.S. operational approach and by threatening to alter the U.S. grand strategic objective and remove U.S. political restraints.

⁹⁵Pape, *Bombing to Win: Air Power and Coercion in War*, 4, 38-47, 161-165.

⁹⁶Paige, *The Korean Decision*, 3-4.

Conclusion

During the Korean War, U.S. political leaders restrained tactical operations in Korea in order to advance attainment of their grand strategic objectives in Europe. U.S. military commanders in Korea were politically restrained from conducting operations north of the Yalu River, which limited their ability to achieve their tactical objectives against North Korean and Chinese forces. The political restraints on U.S. military operations in Korea were designed to mitigate the risk of escalating conflict in Korea and thereby avoiding war with the Soviet Union in Western Europe.

American theater strategic objectives vacillated throughout the conflict. Clausewitz postulated that in war, “The original political objects can greatly alter during the course of the war and may finally change entirely since they are influenced by events and their probable consequences.”⁹⁷ His words rang true in the Korean War. In June 1950, the initial theater strategic objective in Washington was to preserve the independent, democratic South Korean government and restore the pre-invasion territorial boundaries. These initial objectives were limited by a fear that the North Korean attack was both a feint designed to test U.S. willingness to confront communist aggression, and a prelude to the main Soviet assault in Europe. Following the success at Inchon, the U.S. theater strategic objectives changed to encompass the destruction of DPRK forces and the reunification of Korea by force under a single democratic government. Chinese intervention eventually drove the American political leadership to return to their initial theater strategic objective. Even after November 1950, many in Washington were still convinced that Korea was a sideshow and the real conflict would occur in Western Europe.

Following Chinese intervention, the Truman administration repeatedly stressed that the real enemy was neither China nor North Korea, but the Soviet Union. If the restraints on military

⁹⁷Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989), 92.

operations north of the Yalu were designed to prevent an escalation with the Chinese, then theoretically, following Chinese intervention, those restraints would have been lifted. The simple fact that those political restraints were not lifted does much to prove that military commanders were forbidden from attacks north of the Yalu River in order to prevent the escalation of a regional conflict in Korea into World War III with the USSR in Western Europe. The United States achieved its grand strategic objective during the Korean War by avoiding a direct confrontation with the Soviet Union

Despite the strategic success, limitations infuriated the on-scene military commanders prosecuting the Korean War. The generals in Korea believed that the only proper way to end a war was through military victory, a lesson learned from WW II. Conversely, civilian capitulation to the military's desire for total victory as the supreme political goal in WW II came back to haunt them in Korea. The generals in Korea refused to accept an indefinite limited war with China. They adhered to Clausewitz's maxim that, "To introduce the principle of moderation into the theory of war itself would always lead to logical absurdity."⁹⁸ However, many of those generals, especially MacArthur, subsequently did not meet Dolman's definition of a master decision maker, one who "acts within the limits placed by context, force structure, policy, and morality so as to efficiently and effectively match available means to externally mandated ends."⁹⁹ The externally mandated ends, the grand strategic objectives of the Truman administration, did not permit the military either to achieve complete military victory or withdraw from the peninsula. However, as distasteful as those limitations might have been at the tactical and operational levels, the Truman administration did succeed in preventing a war with the USSR, the ultimate U.S. grand strategic objective.

⁹⁸Clausewitz, *On War*, 75.

⁹⁹Everett Carl Dolman, *Pure Strategy: Power and Principles in the Space and Information Age* (New York, New York: Routledge, 2005), 76.

When the Korean War began, the newly formed NATO countries were not prepared militarily to fight the Soviets conventionally in Europe. The U.S. had drastically reduced the size and scope of its military capabilities in the years preceding the Korean War and the NATO countries were still recovering from the devastation of WW II. In 1950, the only way to ensure NATO's survival was the use of nuclear weapons, an option that was unacceptable to all, especially after the Soviet Union developed nuclear weapons in 1949. However, by 1953, following an extraordinary buildup of American conventional military power in Europe and Asia, the U.S. became more willing to escalate the war in Korea. By comparison, in June 1950, the U.S. had an atomic arsenal of 292 bombs. By the summer of 1953, the stockpile had increased to over 1,000 weapons.¹⁰⁰ Eisenhower's threat to remove the political restraints on military operations in China and Manchuria and escalate the war, regardless of Soviet interference, coincided with the signing of the armistice and the end of hostilities.

The Korean War was a turning point in history in regards to the nature of sanctuary. Prior to the Korean War, sanctuary was a product of physical limitations. In the wars since, sanctuary has been, and continues to be a manifestation of political restraints. In all cases, the overriding factor behind these political restraints is the desire to prevent conflict escalation. With the advent of strategic airpower, the US can theoretically deny sanctuary to any enemy. The limiting factor is attaining the political will to do so. The operational limitations imposed by political restraints can severely degrade the U.S. military's ability to achieve a decisive victory by providing sanctuary to its enemy. Military commanders must strive to understand the political and strategic context in which military operations will take place. Commanders must work to identify potential sources of sanctuary and design campaigns and strategies to mitigate the impact of sanctuary on military operations. Military commanders must advise their civilian political leadership on the potential impact to friendly forces that politically restrained sanctuary might produce. Most

¹⁰⁰Pape, *Bombing to Win: Air Power and Coercion in War*, 161.

importantly, the military and political leadership must work to ensure that the grand strategic objectives allow for successful achievement of the tactical, operational, and theater strategic objectives. If the desired military end state cannot be reached, the political leadership should reconsider its decision to employ the military instrument of national power.

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