

Dean Acheson's Role in the Sino-U.S. Clash over Korea Revisited: Mistaken Beliefs and Sinister Purpose

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Abstract

Clash with the Chinese “volunteers” during the Korean War culminated in “one of the most terrific disasters” for the Truman administration, observed Secretary of State Dean Acheson. This article argues that this debilitating clash could have been averted if Acheson, who played a dominant role during the entire decision-making process up to the moment of the military fiasco, wanted to foil it. Instead, he wanted the clash and even the setback to serve his “sinister purpose”: breaking Truman’s resistance to increasing military expenditures to a level commensurate with the NSC68 that would enable the U.S. to wage the Cold War from a “position of strength” against the Soviet Union. He egged MacArthur to launch the fatal “offensive,” obstructed efforts to head off the clash, had no illusion that MacArthur would deliver a major victory, and anticipated a protracted war and the danger of the entrapment of the U.S. forces in Korea. Writings on Acheson’s failure to avert the clash attribute it to his “default” rather than design, while this article argues the opposite.

Keywords: Korean War, Truman Administration, Dean Acheson, misperception, General MacArthur, NSC68, Cold War, decision-making, US-Chinese Relations, US-Soviet Relations.

The scenario of Chinese military intervention to rescue North Korea had been contemplated even before the UN forces crossed the 38th parallel. Although MacArthur was authorized to continue with his military plan as long as there was, in his judgment, “a reasonable chance of successful resistance,” a war with China must be avoided under any circumstances because Chinese intervention in North Korea would be “a probable signal” of the readiness of the Soviet Union for a global war. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) Omar Bradley had told his British counterpart unequivocally that the JCS “all agree that if the

Chinese come into [North] Korea, we get out.”¹

Ambushing the UN forces by the Chinese “volunteers” on October 25, 1950 and their disappearance into mountains on November 7 provided clear evidence of Chinese military intervention in North Korea, albeit not of its precise magnitude. MacArthur pushed ahead with his counteroffensive on November 24 that he believed would clear out both North Korean and Chinese forces “in ten days.” Yet unrelenting attacks by the Chinese troops dealt MacArthur a debilitating defeat, threatening to entrap all the UN forces and forcing him to “pass from the offensive to the defensive.”²

Acheson characterized the military setback as “one of the most terrific disasters that has occurred to American foreign policy, and certainly...the greatest disaster which occurred to the Truman administration.” Moreover, “it did more to destroy and undermine American foreign policy than anything that I know about—the whole communists in Government business, the whole corruption outcry, was really just window-dressing put upon this great disaster.”³

During the lull between November 7 and 24, Chinese military intervention weighed heavily on the minds of all the key decision makers, including the JCS and Acheson. Yet although intelligence reports of Chinese military intervention abounded, no brake was put on MacArthur before his headlong rush into a military debacle. Summing up the failure of Truman’s key advisors—including himself—to advise him to halt the advance of the UN troops and to avert the military clash, Acheson stated that “We had the clearest idea among ourselves of the utter madness and folly of what MacArthur was doing up north...Yet we sat around like paralyzed rabbits while MacArthur carried out this nightmare.”⁴ According to him, MacArthur could have been reigned in and the military disaster foiled if the JCS had advised Truman to order him to withdraw troops to the Pyongyang –Wonsan line. He concluded that the “disaster would probably have been averted although that would also mean a fight with MacArthur.”⁵

What accounts for the absence of efforts to avert a major military clash with China and to foil a humiliating defeat remains an intriguing question. Much blame has been heaped upon MacArthur and the JCS. Acheson attributed it to “one man’s desire to do what he felt was the right thing to do” and the “almost complete impotence of the Government of the United States” to reign in MacArthur in time.⁶ He acquitted himself by arguing that as an amateur he could not recommend

a military action to Truman that the JCS would not.⁷

What role did Acheson play during the decision-making process that culminated in “one of the most terrific disasters,” and what responsibility should he bear? The dominant role that Acheson played and his influence over the decision-making process are well recognized by scholars⁸ and officials in the administration. Truman’s unreserved trust in Acheson’s judgment and advices gave the latter “the certainty that he could go on his course and follow what he thought to be right.”⁹ As a result, any disputes Acheson had with other cabinet officials were “invariably” resolved in his favor. Moreover, he believed that his status as the secretary of state entitled him to be the “principal, unifying, and final source of recommendation” to the President.¹⁰ Special Counsel to the President Clark Clifford noted that Acheson was not just “present at the creation” but was “the most important of an imposing collection of creators.” He also made the following observation about Acheson: “If he could have structured Washington to his own specifications, I think Acheson might have half-seriously considered eliminating from any serious involvement in policy everyone except himself and the President, and perhaps Marshall.”¹¹ Secretary of Air Force Stuart Symington quipped that Marshall had Truman’s heart and Acheson his mind.¹² Charles E. Bohlen, the Soviet expert and the State Department Counselor, noticed that even Truman’s close advisors relied upon Acheson for advice and concluded that “The Secretary of State came up with many of the ideas; the President, and the President alone, made the decisions.”¹³

Confident of his ability to win the bureaucratic battle in the formulation of national security policies, Acheson held the presidential staff, the Defense Department, and the JCS in contempt. Acheson expressed his worry about the “poor caliber” of presidential staff.¹⁴ In his view, the Defense Department was unable to present to President Truman well-thought-out policy options because of the inability of civilians to control the military, the insubordination of armed services encouraged by Congress, and insufficient staff whose loyalty was still wedded to the services from which they were drawn. Consequently, Truman “always” solved any disputes he had with the Defense Secretary in his favor simply because “the other view was so silly.” The JCS “do not know what they think until they hear what they say,” scoffed Acheson.¹⁵ Just as Clark Clifford stated, Acheson believed that a more coherent and judicious national security policy could be developed from his frequent private meetings with Truman rather than from “the

multiplication of staff and what is called ‘coordination.’” During the meetings, they could “see events and choice each from the other’s point of view.”¹⁶

Given the dominant role he played during the Korean War decision-making process up to the moment of the military setback, his failure to advise Truman to order MacArthur to halt the advance of the UN troops remains a puzzle. Studies of Acheson’s failure to avert the clash with the Chinese troops point to his psychological propensities, his mistaken beliefs about China’s subservience to the Soviet Union, his inability to empathize with China’s national security concerns, his relations particularly with George Marshall, his vulnerability to scathing criticism by Congress and political pressures, his observation of bureaucratic norms that prohibited him as a civilian from meddling in military affairs, and his underestimation of MacArthur’s willfulness in flouting military order as the causes.

For instance, he was “on the horn of dilemma,” having to make a difficult choice between two unpleasant alternatives: military clash with China and domestic political backlash. Already criticized for his Far Eastern policy, Acheson would face more serious accusations of appeasing China if he attempted to stop MacArthur. His response to such a dilemma was “defensive avoidance,” which triggered a tendency to “retreat into wishful thinking.” Consequently, he “failed to express any misgivings about the military situation.”¹⁷ Another author notes his agreement with “the prevailing confidence” that MacArthur could still accomplish his mission and “deliver...a huge Cold War conquest” and that the proposed buffer zone would foil China’s military intervention. Acheson’s optimistic view is therefore attributed to “a general disposition in individuals to exaggerate features of one’s environment and to overrate the probability of desirable events.”¹⁸

Besides wishful thinking, “cognitive dissonance” was reflected in his seemingly contradictory images of a China that was imbued with nationalistic fervor yet subservient to the Soviet Union. Chinese nationalism made him unable to understand why the Chinese were less worried about the Soviets than American imperialism and to empathize with China’s security concern about the advance of the UN troops to the border. China’s role as the Soviet puppet led him to dismiss Chinese intervention as impossible because “He pored over intelligence reports for signs that Moscow would push China into the war and found none.”¹⁹

His inability to empathize with China’s security concern is also

attributed to “his inability to transcend that Sino-American gulf,” “his almost total incomprehension of Communist China’s frame of reference,” “the pervasive American tendency, shared by Acheson and his critics alike, to believe that somehow the canons of international politics are suspended when it comes to China,” his arrogance and ethnocentrism,²⁰ and his fixation with Europe and German rearmament.²¹ Consequently, the clash with China resulted from his “negligence bordering on criminal folly rather than hostility.”²²

Acheson is also faulted for his belief in Truman’s ability to control MacArthur and prevent his insubordination, a belief that is tantamount to “an act of unbelievable innocence.” But the cause of his naïveté was rooted in his being “rational.” “Being rational men,” both Truman and Acheson could not possibly conceive that MacArthur would “...imperiously transgress the canons of ordinary military prudence.” Moreover, “They were in no state of mind to examine critically the mentality or the personality of the general whom they were entrusting the final delicate military phase of the operation.”²³

Mutual respect between Acheson and Defense Secretary George Marshall and Acheson’s admiration of Marshall also contributed to the default of actions to foil the clash with the Chinese. The “sainted Marshall” and the “architect of victory” in World War II held Acheson in awe, not a situation “...conducive to challenging the assumptions and decisions of the military.”²⁴ “So taken was Acheson with [George] Marshall, so transfixed by his essential goodness and honor, that Acheson could not see that his former mentor was not up to the challenge of taming MacArthur.” Acheson himself wondered about Marshall’s “curious quiescence,” and his “hands-off approach” toward MacArthur, which “never seemed very sensible to me, especially when MacArthur was violating military discipline and bullying his superiors.” Marshall, however, adopted a “civilian attitude” and followed the tradition established by Lincoln not to interfere with a commander of forces. A counterfactual point is also made that Acheson might have been more assertive if Louis Johnson still were defense secretary.²⁵ A dissenting view argues that it was Marshall’s deference to his civilian successor Acheson that prompted him to remain silent because military policy must be subordinate to political considerations that fell under the jurisdiction of the State Department.²⁶ Whether Marshall was in deference to Acheson or Acheson in awe of Marshall, no action was undertaken as a result of the “failure of government among friends.”²⁷

Some historians acquit Acheson's acquiescence in MacArthur's march into the Chinese trap on the ground that the decision to halt the advance of the UN forces was "military" in nature and must be issued by the military, not by a civilian like Acheson.²⁸ For that reason, he followed the military in their decisions ranging from the expansion of the war beyond the 38th parallel to the march toward the border river Yalu.²⁹ Further hamstringing Acheson were the Democrats' loss of an off-year election for which he was held responsible and Republicans' intensifying criticism of him that created "such circumstances" that "not even a man with Acheson's backbone could relish an open confrontation with the "the sorcerer of Inchon."³⁰

Hypothesis

The brief review of literature on Acheson's failure to advise Truman to avert the clash with the Chinese points to default rather than design as its cause. This article argues that driven by a mistaken belief about the imminent and grave Soviet security threat, a world view based on the conviction of the unpredictability of world affairs that enhanced the likelihood of misjudgment and that rendered its consequences dire, and a profound fear of the jeopardy of the security and even the survival of not only the U.S. but also the West unless the U.S. rearmed substantially and swiftly, Acheson pushed for a localized clash with China after U.S. military intervention since the outbreak of the war had failed to break Truman's resistance to full-scale rearmament. For him, the military clash and the subsequent setback, however costly and humiliating, were the last opportunity and only means to fulfill his hidden purpose: galvanizing Truman to abandon his efforts to limit increase in military spending in spite of growing Soviet threat and to accept the NSC68's recommendation to restore the U.S. 'position of strength'³¹ vis-à-vis the Soviet Union through rearmament at full speed. The little influence he wielded over the defense budget as a result of Truman's tight control over the budgetary process, in spite of their cordial relationship and Truman's trust in his judgment about national security, and the little support he could gain even from the military left him no choice but to accept the risky course. Finally, Acheson did so without the illusion, as some historians claim, that MacArthur would deliver a smashing victory in the Cold War for the administration.

In his book, the *Korean War*, Acheson provided a hint at his hidden purpose. Explaining the cause of the clash with the Chinese, Acheson lamented that “the omens were read to call not for restraint but its opposite, and war [with China] resulted.” After quoting former Secretary of State Elihu Root’s attribution of wars between autocracies and oligarchies to “sinister purpose” and wars between democracies to mistaken beliefs, he asked, “Would his formula lead us to conclude, however, that the danger of war between the Soviet oligarchy and the American democracy lies in both sinister purpose and mistaken beliefs?” He answered, “There is a good deal of evidence to support that view.”³² That Acheson made the observation in the context of the Korean War reflects his realization of his “mistaken beliefs” about the Soviet Union’s role in the war and its goals. Was the “sinister purpose” that would lead to war between the Soviet Union and the U.S. simply the Soviet plan for world conquest or the massive military buildup of the U.S. that would appear “sinister” to the Soviet Union?

In addition, his note to the State Department on August 30 that expressed his “informal view” of the Soviet role in the Korean War reveals not only his deep concern about the growing Soviet threat and inadequate defense spending to meet it but also a nexus between the unfolding of the war and Acheson’s “plot” to increase military budget to a level that in his view would be “adequate.” As he wrote in the note, “The profound lesson of Korea” was that “the USSR took a step which risked—however remotely—general war,” even if it understood that the U.S. might respond. The Korean War was menacing and ominous because as he said, “No other action has done this—not even the Berlin Blockade,” and “There was no suggestion of an overt act anywhere.” He asked, “How the Administration has responded to this all important *new fact*?” Referring to Churchill’s speech delivered on July 27 that compared the military weakness of the West to the Soviet military strength, he wrote in elliptical and incomplete sentences, “The basic relationships of military power...,” “no need for panic, but many steps needed...,” “Among these a vast step up of ...”³³ He ended the last sentence without spelling out what “vast step-up” would be needed to cope with the “new fact.”

Successful amphibious landing in Inchon and the headlong retreat of the fleeing North Korean troops rendered Truman optimistic about the prospect of the imminent end of the war and encouraged him to limit the increase in military spending. Acheson then pushed for the expansion of

war beyond the 38th parallel, a move that, in his view, entailed “great peril” and “deadly dangers.” On the day when the UN forces were crossing the parallel, he warned in a speech to the Freedom House, “Here, in all somber truth, is a situation where the consequences of error may be death.” He saw the advance beyond the 38th parallel as creating a situation so dangerous that even a war with the Soviet Union might become imminent, leaving free nations with not enough time to build up military capability.³⁴ Arguably the repulsion of the North Korean troops from South Korea and the restoration of the status quo already accomplished the UN mandate and the initial war aim of the U.S. Why did he want to run such a grave risk and what useful purpose did it serve?

This article concurs with the “conspiracy” thesis that the U.S. fought the Korean War mainly for the purpose of mobilizing domestic support for rearmament as was envisioned in the NSC68. Bruce Cumings focuses on Acheson as the moving force behind the conspiracy to maneuver the Soviet-backed North Korea into firing the first shot and therefore falling into his trap and argues that the military intervention paved the ground for rearmament in order to “roll back” the Soviet influence.³⁵ Benjamin O. Fordham concludes that Truman was committed to the rearmament programs in agreement with the NSC68 even before the outbreak of the Korean War, jettisoned prior policy proposals not to intervene, and committed the U.S. troops for the purpose of overcoming opposition especially in Congress to such a buildup necessary to cope with the Soviet threat. He also recognizes the crucial role Acheson played in nudging a wavering Truman to firm up his decision to intervene.³⁶ Richard C. Thornton asserts that Truman wanted a stalemate or a protracted conflict with China because it would “provide the lengthy political stimulus for the rearmament,” which in turn would enable the U.S. to regain “the position of hegemony.”³⁷

Both Cumings and Fordham assume that military intervention itself provided clear evidence that Truman had embraced the budgetary ramifications of the NSC68. They fail to note his efforts to limit the increase of military spending before successful landing in Inchon and the loss of momentum for military buildup after that point. Truman limited the first supplemental budgetary request to \$12 billion because he still did not want to “put more money than necessary at this time in the hands of the Military.”³⁸ He turned optimistic about the war after the amphibious landing, exclaiming that “I think we are over the hump, as far as Korea is concerned, and if the Russians do not decide to come in

and make it a total effort that situation ought to be cleaned up before many months.”³⁹ Acheson was apprehensive that the euphoric mood would soon motivate Truman to limit military spending again.⁴⁰ Truman’s plan to propose disarmament and the control of atomic energy in his UN speech after meeting with MacArthur in Wake Island confirmed Acheson’s suspicion, prompting him to reject it on the ground that the proposal would “confuse everybody in connection with necessary steps which had to be taken to increase our military forces.”⁴¹ Truman nevertheless stalled on submitting the second supplementary request until mid-November even though the three secretaries of Army, Navy, and Air Force urged him to do so in August. Moreover, the development of “the most important consensus” over the need to implement “the long-pending recommendations of the April NSC paper” and to rearm “on a fairly grand scale” occurred after the humiliating military setback occurred. Bradley pointed out that it was “from this day forward, the momentum for general rearmament gathered steam” and that the JCS actively pushed for “ever greater force levels.”⁴² So it was the military setback in late November, not the military intervention in June, which finally broke Truman’s resistance to a full-scale rearmament that Acheson had pushed for.

Although my article concurs with Thornton’s view that the clash with the Chinese was used to mobilize support for massive rearmament, it argues that the push for the clash came from Acheson, not Truman. Truman actually expected an imminent end of the war after meeting with MacArthur in Wake Island. He waxed euphoric, proclaiming the advent of world peace in his speech delivered in San Francisco on October 15. “The power of the Korean communists to resist effectively will soon come to an end,” declared Truman. He went on to state, “...I want to see world peace from Wake Island west all the way around and back again. I want to see world peace from Wake Island all the way east and back again—and we are going to get it.” His expectation of an imminent victory in Korea led him to instruct MacArthur to release one division of troops for redeployment to Western Europe.⁴³ His optimism also prompted a premature decision to reduce the production of ammunition by one fourth and to divert six shiploads of artillery shells to Hawaii.⁴⁴ The view that Truman wanted a localized yet protracted military conflict with China is, therefore, not tenable.

To prove the hypothesis, this article will explain the underlying cause of Acheson’s profound fear of inadequate defense spending,

demonstrate sharp difference between Acheson and Truman over defense spending and the former's frustration with his failed efforts to influence defense budget. It will establish the nexus between the military setback and Acheson's "sinister purpose" by debunking his nonchalance toward the Chinese warning of military intervention, highlighting his efforts to block proposals to foil a military clash with the Chinese and his role in egging MacArthur on to launch the fatal offensive, even though he was pessimistic about its outcome, and finally illustrating his aggressive exploitation of the debacle to push for rapid and full rearmament.

Acheson's Operational Code

Central to an understanding of Acheson's profound anxiety over insufficient defense spending and his motive for running the risk of a military conflict with China is his "operational code,"⁴⁵ which is derived from his understanding of the essence of world affairs and human ability to shape events. According to him, the grasp of world affairs with precision is beyond human capacity because of the limits of human intelligence, the subjectivity of "facts" whose meanings depend upon interpretations, "molecular changes" in the "vast external world" that brought about profound changes that often went undetected⁴⁶ and the unpredictability of the future. He defined truth as "the system of my limitations" and professed not to be "sure of most of it [what I know]."⁴⁷ His experience as the secretary of state led him to characterize foreign policy as "an art and not a science" because his own interpretations of "facts" changed in tandem with the availability of data and because "Almost every report was contradicted or modified by another report."⁴⁸ The outbreak of World War II that caught "men as highly placed in Austria, in Czecho-Slovakia, in Scandinavia, in Belgium and Holland, in England and France" unprepared for it confirmed for him the unpredictability of world affairs. Consequently he concluded, "Only one thing. . . . can reasonably be anticipated"—the unexpected.⁴⁹

For him, misjudgment of world affairs was a distinct possibility and, more importantly, could have fatal consequences, a conviction instilled in him by his mentor Supreme Court Justice Oliver Holmes, who warned that "The judgment of nature upon error is death."⁵⁰ Compounding his fear of the dire consequences of misjudgment was the intractability of world affairs as he questioned the assumption about the controllability of events, from which "a right policy or a right action" could be derived.⁵¹ To hedge against misjudgment about the intractable and unpredictable

world, Acheson proposed to make the U.S. “so strong that we shall not be caught defenseless or dangerously exposed in *any even possible eventuality*.”⁵² Therefore, the survival of the U.S. required not merely a balance of power but military superiority over the Soviet Union. To achieve this goal, he followed Holmes’s advice:

If you want to hit a bird on the wing, you must have all your will in a focus. You must not be thinking about yourself, and, equally, you must not be thinking about your neighbor; you must be living in your eye on that bird. Every achievement is a bird in the wing.⁵³

Truman’s decision to drastically reduce military spending before the outbreak of the Korean War even as the Soviet threat was growing⁵⁴ left Acheson, already deeply worried about the dire consequences of any misjudgment of the Soviet Union, so apprehensive and despondent that he feared the opportunity for redressing the shift in the military balance of power already in its favor would soon be irrevocably lost. He quoted Sir Oliver Franks, British Ambassador to the United States, as saying:

I believe that this has given us a period within which to work out our problems. The period began with the end of the Second World War and may last as long as the working lifetime of my generation. It will not be longer; it may well be shorter. Within the period no one year or the decisions made in it are likely to be in the strict sense crucial, neither this year, nor next year, nor the year after. Within the period there is always still time. But the whole period, whatever its duration may turn out to be, is crucial; what we do or fail to do in it will be decisive. After it there will be no second chance.⁵⁵

The outbreak of the Korean War undermined the original assumption that the Soviet threat would peak in 1952. Acheson lamented that “Time is shorter than we thought.”⁵⁶ Thus defense spending must be increased substantially and soon enough not just to restore the military balance of power with, but to gain military superiority over the Soviet Union. Given his view of the dire consequences of misjudgment, he would not take any chances on U.S. national security.

Controversy over Defense Budget

Acheson and Truman had profound differences over the level of defense spending. NSC68 envisioned an annual defense budget of \$50 billion for several years in a row but did not incorporate the figure in the document because as Acheson explained, “this order of magnitude of the effort required,” once made explicit, would jeopardize “concurrences” with it.⁵⁷ In May 1950, Truman told his Budget Director Frederick J. Lawton to “raise any questions that we had on this program.” Moreover, he asserted that the level of rearmament was “definitely not as large in scope as some of the people seem to think.”⁵⁸ Truman was committed to slashing defense spending before the outbreak of the Korean War. As a result, defense spending dropped to \$14.2 billion for 1950, and a ceiling of \$13 billion was imposed for fiscal 1951 when the JCS requested \$20 billion.

When pushing for a dramatic increase in defense spending, Acheson faced several insurmountable obstacles in addition to a Truman “enamored” of a balanced budget: a meek military establishment beholden to his fiscal policy, the Bureau of Budget (BOB), and Congress as determined as he was to hold down military expenditures in order to reduce budgetary deficits.⁵⁹ BOB was vehemently opposed to an increase in military spending to the level as envisioned by the NSC-68, given its dire budgetary ramifications, the need to increase taxes and economic control.⁶⁰ He scornfully characterized its staff as “a host of zealous, able, and, uninformed young men” and its budgetary rules as “tyranny tempered by assassination.” Worse than the BOB was the House Committee on Appropriations whose tyranny was, according to him, “entirely untempered.”⁶¹ Further curtailing Acheson’s influence was Truman’s tight control over the budgetary process that literally excluded him.

After the outbreak of the war, Truman requested a supplemental budget of \$12 billion in July, bringing the total defense budget for fiscal 1951 to \$25 billion. Indeed, before the Inchon landing, war strategy and industrial mobilization program were “often unrelated and uncoordinated.” The successful amphibious landing in Inchon eroded the momentum for full mobilization, as he ruled out Chinese military intervention and expected the conclusion of the war soon.⁶² Consequently his support for NSC 68 waned, and he ordered the review of the programs and budgetary estimates as contained in NSC68/1.⁶³

In early October, as a large part of the supplementary defense budget was already absorbed by the war and Truman still had not mobilized enough funding for aid to Europe and U.S. military buildup, Acheson's apprehension was aggravated by the waning support of both public and Congress for increasing defense spending.⁶⁴ He then learned from Deputy Secretary of Defense Robert Lovett that military procurement was lagging although the latter assured him that "energetic steps must be and are being taken to activate it."⁶⁵

Skirmishes with the Chinese troops in late October dampened Truman's optimism. After MacArthur was authorized to proceed with his offensive, he convened a National Security Council (NSC) meeting to discuss "things" he was "worried" about but discussions of "any figures or details" of defense spending were off limits.

Ignoring Truman's injunction, Acheson seized the opportunity to confront him over defense budget for the 1951 fiscal year. Much to his chagrin, Acheson learned that levels of forces for the army would be reduced from 18 to 16 divisions and carriers from 17 to 15 by 1952. The air force would gain only 6 wings to reach 84 wings. By July 1952, the Army, Navy, and Air Force would respectively have 93, 91 and 70 percent of personnel planned for 1954. The force levels were projected on the assumption of the termination of the war by July 1951. Consequently "...therefore few forces will be needed after that date." Bradley insisted that the program of 1951 and 1952 as proposed did provide for a "solid basis" for expansion in the future. Acheson lashed out at the inadequate level of forces, charging that he "frankly did not see how we could carry out our obligation with these forces," and refuted the assumption that the Korean War would end soon and that "nothing similar will take its place," possibly in Western Europe. Moreover, he anticipated that the Soviet Union would "probably continue" a war of attrition for which the planned levels of forces were inadequate. He emphatically pointed out that "our responsibilities are so great that we must be prepared to do several things at the same time." He stressed that the proposed programs would delay the buildup of armed forces from 1954 to 1956. Yet the "greatest danger," he intoned, would be in 1952. He even envisioned the possibility of atomic attack by the Soviet Union, which would result in the loss of production capability. Truman interrupted and predicted difficulty in persuading Congress to provide necessary funding if Acheson was "confused" over the proposals under discussion. Insisting that the budget would be decided by the Department

of Defense, the Bureau of Budget, and himself, he ended the meeting but promised to further discuss the issue later because the matter concerned “our survival and destruction,” as Acheson warned.⁶⁶ Their profound differences over defense budget persisted until the humiliating military setback forced Truman to accept the need to accelerate military buildup.

Assessment of Chinese Threat

Acheson played a dominant role in expanding the war aim from the restoration of the status quo to the unification of the peninsula. Truman’s military advisors were cautious about crossing the parallel for fear of the Soviet exploitation of the entrapment of the U.S. forces in Korea to launch aggression in West Europe or a global war with the U.S.—and a war with China. The Joint Chiefs of Staff pointed to the danger of involving the U.S. “in the wrong war, at the wrong place, at the wrong time, and with the wrong enemy.” Such a concern about a war with China also underpinned the opposition of leading Soviet specialists George Kennan and Charles Bohlen and the Policy Planning Staff Director Paul Nitze. They advised to limit military operations south of the parallel and warned in a State Department position paper that “the danger of conflict with Chinese communists or Soviet forces would be greatly increased.” Such conflicts, in their view, outweighed political advantages. Yet Acheson took “a hawkish stance” on the issue⁶⁷ and insisted on the expansion of the war aim in spite of the anticipated risk of military conflicts with China.

His dismissal of the Chinese warning of military intervention as “sheer madness”⁶⁸ on the ground of the Chinese “Titoism” and resentment against the Soviet attempt to dominate its northern border⁶⁹ was not an error in judgment about the Chinese intention but an attempt to foil any changes of the military plan. He himself had dismissed Titoism as a potent shaping force of China’s relations with the Soviet Union until certain “circumstances” helped China realize the incompatibility between it and Soviet interests⁷⁰ and concluded that it would remain a Soviet “stooge” until then. Consequently, he had told British Foreign Minister Bevin that “There can be little doubt but that Communism, with Chi[na] as one spearhead, has now embarked upon an assault against Asia with immediate objectives in Korea, Indo-China, Burma, the Philippines and Malaysia with medium-range objectives in Hong Kong, Indonesia, Siam, India and Japan.”⁷¹ Upon receiving assurance from Soviet Ambassador Andrei Gromyko that the Soviet

Union would not involve itself in the war, Acheson stated at the 59th NSC meeting held on June 30, 1950 that "...it was State's view that while the Chinese might intervene, the Russians would not."⁷² So when Ambassador of Norway Wilhelm Munte de Morgenstjerne warned him that the Russians might send Manchurian and Chinese troops into Korea, Acheson agreed and said that "we might have to face such a situation."⁷³

In addition, several events belie Acheson's seeming nonchalance toward China's military intervention. After the landing in Inchon succeeded, the State Department felt that "The situation in Korea had become critical for the aggressors and the possibility of Chinese Communist intervention more immediate," and, therefore, he instructed Ambassador Loy Henderson to approach the Indian government to persuade China not to intervene. The U.S. wanted India to convey three messages to China: (1) It was important that Chinese communists would not intervene; (2) The United Nations might restore peace quickly; and (3) the United Nations would regard the Chinese military intervention with "grave concern."⁷⁴

William Sebald, the highest ranking State Department official serving as political advisor to MacArthur, received an "urgent telegram" in the evening of October 4, the day after Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai issued his threat of military intervention. It relayed the conversation between Indian Ambassador K. M. Pannikar and Chou Enlai. Sebald interpreted the message as a warning about Chinese military intervention in response to the crossing of the parallel by the UN forces. He also noted that the message was "originated in the State Department" but was sent not through him as it normally would but through army channels to Tokyo. The message was "disseminated in the General Headquarters."⁷⁵

Lastly his reference of the dire consequences of misjudgment—death—in his Freedom House speech, delivered two days before China issued the warning, alerting his audience to the "great peril" and "deadly dangers" ahead, suggests he took Chinese military intervention seriously. As a prudent, risk-averse man, Acheson would not subject the U.S. to any security risks; yet he pushed for the expansion of the war in spite of the enhanced prospect of military conflicts with China.

Encouraging MacArthur's Wayward Tendency

Acheson was aware of MacArthur's wayward tendency because after the amphibious landing in Inchon succeeded, he confided in Averell Harriman that "There is no stopping MacArthur now."⁷⁶ Yet he

encouraged MacArthur to interpret the goal of his military operations north of the parallel through his input into the NSC81 and the UN resolution of October 7 that he drafted. Military and civilian directives for MacArthur were based on the two documents respectively. The JCS raised objection to the last paragraph of the NSC 81 that reads that "...U.N. forces be retained in Korea until and only until a unified and independent state has been firmly established and should be prepared to make available United States forces as a contingent of the U.S. forces for the purpose of deterring renewed aggression or internal strife..."⁷⁷ The JCS insisted upon limiting the role of the U.S. forces to the occupation of major cities in the south and their expeditious withdrawal as soon as practicable. The paragraph was retained in the finalized draft of NSC81/1, however.

Acheson's assistant Lucius Battle, who was "on the receiving end" of General MacArthur's telegrams during the Pacific War and regarded him as a "head strong, highly egoistic man," viewed the military directive as a "very dangerous document" that would allow MacArthur to decide "where he wants to go and how far he wants to go." Acheson not only rejected his advice to give MacArthur a "very precise order" but also became furious, warning him not to question the order of the JCS. For that reason, they had "a vigorous discussion."⁷⁸

Totally ignoring Battle's arguments and advice, Acheson did not alert Truman about the potential of MacArthur's elastic interpretation of the directive during their meeting on September 29. Moreover, he told Truman that only South Korean troops would conduct military operations above the line that ran from Chongju through Yongwon to Hungnam. As he said, "what the Korean troops could accomplish they could accomplish, and what they couldn't accomplish wouldn't be accomplished." Acheson assured him that "this was the right thing to do."⁷⁹

Clearly MacArthur's civilian directive influenced his interpretation of his mission. The resolution, according to Bradley, made explicit the goal of the UN that had remained dormant until then: the creation of "a unified, independent, and democratic Government of the sovereign State of Korea." Moreover, it authorized MacArthur to take "all appropriate steps...to ensure conditions of stability throughout Korea and to take "all constituent acts..., including the holding of elections, under the auspices of the United Nations..." This language gave "wide latitude to MacArthur—far more so than did NSC81," asserted Bradley, who also

viewed the expansion of the war aim to include the destruction of the North Korean Army and the unification of the entire peninsula as “an extremely dangerous step” in light of the looming Soviet or Chinese military intervention.⁸⁰ Having lamented about “diplomatic inertia” that failed to “transmute our victory at Inchon into a political peace,” MacArthur asserted that the resolution presented him with “problems of the gravest import” and the specter of Chinese intervention, which would mean “a totally new war” that he had to fight without adequate troops. Acting on the basis of the resolution, MacArthur then called upon North Korea to surrender and launched his comprehensive offensive.⁸¹

Acheson blamed MacArthur for “stripping from the resolution of October 7 its husk of ambivalence and giving it an interpretation that the enacting majority in the General Assembly would not have accepted” since “Nowhere did the resolution declare the Eighth Army would impose a unified and democratic government on all Korea.” He conceded, however, that he must “bear a measure of responsibility” because he drafted the resolution that increased the “hazards”⁸² and partially acquitted himself by admitting that the resolution was drafted in ways to avoid “too much discussion” about the crossing of the parallel and consequently “not thought through.”⁸³

The language of the resolution about the war aim was succinct and unambiguous. After all, both MacArthur and Bradley interpreted the resolution in the same way. Furthermore, Acheson was fully aware that the resolution would be “misinterpreted” even by the U.S. mission to the UN; therefore, he clarified the matter for it by explaining that seeking the unification of Korea by force was not the U.S. objective. That was “explicitly stated to us by instructions from the State Department,” said Deputy UN Ambassador Ernest Gross.⁸⁴ Why was not MacArthur informed of the esoteric difference between the semantic meaning of the resolution and the meaning that Acheson imparted on it until three days before MacArthur launched the fatal military offensive?

Acheson was mindful that MacArthur would give the UN resolution a literal interpretation and plan his military operations accordingly. This is evidenced by his apprehension expressed at a State Department meeting on November 21 that the civil affair directive based on the resolution might mislead him. He said, “...the civil affairs directive does confuse...” and admitted that it “may have affected General MacArthur’s interpretation of the military directive” especially about the occupation of North Korea as the goal of his mission. He would, therefore, clear up

“the misunderstanding” with the JCS,⁸⁵ a belated move that did not change MacArthur’s view of his mission, which, as he reiterated later, was “to clear out all North Korea, to unify it, and to liberalize it.”⁸⁶

Blocking efforts to head off conflicts

Acheson viewed the period between October 26 and November 17 as the crucial days during which decisions made influenced the subsequent development of the war.⁸⁷ He left out the most crucial meeting on November 21, which several historians and Bradley view as the last opportunity to avert conflicts with China.⁸⁸ During the interim, he blocked efforts to halt the advance of the UN forces to the border, sabotaged the French and the British plans to foil the clash with the Chinese forces, and egged MacArthur to launch the fatal offensive in spite of the JCS assessment of the Chinese intervention and goals, an assessment that Acheson solicited.

According to the JCS, the Chinese included three objectives: (1) Protecting the Yalu River and the power complex and possibly establishing a cordon sanitaire; (2) continuing undeclared war with the view of draining the U.S. military and economic resources and diverting the U.S. military forces away from strategically important areas while the Soviet Union completed its preparation for global conquest and for delivering a surprise blow; and (3) driving the UN forces from Korea. In the event that the Chinese pursued the second objective, the JCS sketched for him serious security ramifications for the U.S.: a heavy drain on the U.S. economic and military resources; the transfer of troops in the U.S. to a “strategically unimportant area,” leaving the U.S. unable to cope with a surprise Soviet attack elsewhere; and sapping U.S. strength, which would then jeopardize U.S. national security. They concluded that the U.S. might “win a skirmish in Korea but lose the war against the Soviet Union” should a global war materialize. Should the third be the Chinese objective and China receive the Soviet assistance to accomplish the goal, they believed that the global war would be imminent and that the UN forces should be withdrawn “as expeditiously as possible.” In fact, “all the agencies” had by then developed a consensual view that the risk of war with the Soviet Union had increased dramatically. Bradley noted that the lack of military capability to defend Western Europe, much less to fight a global war against the Soviet Union, dictated that the U.S. should avoid such a war. So the JCS were in favor of “getting out” as soon as possible because, as he wrote later, “Moscow

was the real enemy. Korea was a diversion; a war with China would be the ultimate diversion.”⁸⁹

Moreover, given the strength and organized manner of the Chinese forces, they could only be defeated, the JCS noted, by “a determined military operation.” But doing so would also mean the deployment of forces that could otherwise be deployed in strategically more important areas. They proposed not to change the order to MacArthur and rather keep it under constant review and urged that “every effort should be expended as a matter of urgency to settle the problem of Chinese Communist intervention in Korea by political means.” In addition, the U.S. should make preparations on the basis of an increased likelihood for global war.⁹⁰

Before reading the JCS’s analysis, Acheson had contemplated the entrapment of U.S. forces in a strategically unimportant Korea as one of China’s primary objectives. Believing that the Chinese intervention was “substantial” and would only increase, he concurred with the JCS’s assessment and concluded that China wanted to “keep us involved.”⁹¹

In spite of the danger of the entrapment of the U.S. forces, Acheson blocked efforts to halt the advance of the U.S. forces. Years later he denied ever rejecting Marshall’s and Bradley’s invitation to meet with and advise Truman to order MacArthur to halt the advance.⁹² But when Assistant for Foreign Military Affairs and Military Assistance James Burns warned Marshall that “...we are running a serious risk of becoming involved in the world war we are trying to avoid,” he proposed to dispatch a joint Defense-State delegation to meet with MacArthur in Tokyo. Marshall suggested he discussed the issue with Acheson, and again he flatly rejected the proposal.⁹³

Moreover, he sabotaged the French and the British plans to foil Chinese intervention. France planned to sponsor a resolution that would “affirm” that “it is the policy of the UN to hold the Chinese frontier with Korea inviolate and to fully protect Chinese legitimate interests in the frontier zone.” Acheson proposed to co-sponsor the resolution, but added to it a paragraph that “affirms that if the Chi(nese) withdraw and refrain from intervention against UN forces, the Chi(nese) frontier with Kor(ea) will be held inviolate by UN forces and Chi’s legitimate interests in the frontier will be fully protected by the UN.” Acheson explained to Marshall the paragraph was intended to assure China of the peaceful intention of the U.S. France refused to cosponsor the resolution because that paragraph sounded “like something of a threat.” Acheson denied that

was his intention and hoped that “legislative history” would clarify doubt regarding the real intention behind the paragraph.⁹⁴

When learning about the British proposal to establish a demilitarized zone, he intimidated Great Britain into abandoning it. He warned Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin that such a proposal would be “most harmful” because it would be “most confusing” to MacArthur and his forces and would pose military danger. He justified his move on the ground that “until results of the forthcoming offensive are known, it is impossible to ascertain what course can be and should safely be adopted.”⁹⁵ Upon learning that Great Britain had informally sounded China out on the proposal, Acheson bluntly warned that “...it is an understatement to say that the reaction to it in this country at the moment that our troops are making a great effort would be most violent.”⁹⁶ Any agreements with China, Acheson insisted, must be “useful instead of harmful to General MacArthur.”⁹⁷ The language he used to maximize the credibility of the threat to a loyal ally is harsh to a fault by any standards!

Ambassador-at-large Philip Jessup favored the British proposal and made several cogent points to support it. He did not believe that it was worthwhile risking a general war with the Soviet Union because the UN mission’s objective was largely achieved with the elimination of North Korea “as a defined territory north of the 38th parallel under an organized government” and with the control of 90 percent of the Korean population. Moreover, China and the Soviet Union were maneuvering to present the U.S. as bent on aggression and to bog down the U.S. forces in an “indecisive and prolonged warfare” while leaving the Soviet Union uncommitted.⁹⁸ Acheson did not waver in his determination to strong-arm Britain to drop the proposal.

Pushing for Clash

The harsh warning to Great Britain was delivered right after he read the State Department’s report entitled “Estimate of the Most Probable Course of Soviet-Chinese Action with Regard to Korea.” The report pointed to the coincidence of Chinese military activity in Korea, the “acceleration and intensification” of Soviet military and political preparations for war with the U.S., and the “advanced state of readiness” of the Soviet armed forces for it. The report drew the alarming conclusion that “offensive operations could be initiated on all appropriate fronts in Europe and Asia without additional warning.” It regarded continuing “holding operations” in Korea until China completed its

overall preparation and pressuring the U.S. to withdraw its troops through intimidation and diplomatic maneuvers as the “most likely courses” of Chinese and Soviet actions. But failure to push the U.S. to withdraw would prompt China to intervene to “the point of large scale military operations” with the encouragement of the Soviet Union believed to be ready to run “grave risks of general war.”⁹⁹ The speech he delivered on the same day to the World Organization for Brotherhood of the National Conference of Christians and Jews reflected his extreme alarm because he warned that “our survival as a civilization” was at stake.

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In addition to his apprehension about the grave risk and consequences of MacArthur’s offensive, he was not sanguine about the prospect of its success. According to him, defeating or inflicting heavy casualties on the Chinese forces would allow “the situation” to “ease” or “reduce the chance of general war.” Yet he also observed that “However, the Chinese communist forces cannot be destroyed in Korea.” So “...in our judgment the maintenance of stability and peace required that we be in the Far East longer with more forces than we had expected.” The deployment of the U.S. troops in Korea, he further clarified, would not be “forever” but would be “probably for a rather long time.” So “We cannot base our military plan on a Christmas withdrawal as we are under far too much pressure.”¹⁰¹

At the last NSC meeting before the military offensive was launched, he enquired about a more defensible line and dismissed the likelihood of either the expulsion of the UN forces from Korea or defeat of the Chinese forces in Korea. When Marshall suggested the establishment of a demilitarized zone after MacArthur succeeded in his mission, Acheson poured cold water on him, predicting “partial success without either complete success or failure.” He then repeated verbatim his pessimistic view expressed at a State Department meeting about the longer-than-expected deployment of troops in Korea. Yet he urged to instruct MacArthur to focus his offensive on the communist forces and not on the occupation of territory, as he said that “...we are not interested in “real estate but in an army.”¹⁰² Marshall then uttered his “satisfaction” with Acheson’s “belief” that MacArthur should proceed with his plan to march north.¹⁰³ The last opportunity to head off the clash was lost!

Responding to the Fiasco

Acheson's wife observed that she had never seen him "so depressed, so fearful for the world" when he was informed of MacArthur's setback.¹⁰⁴ Immediately, Acheson began pushing for the withdrawal of forces from Korea. The speedy manner with which he reached the decision together with his "eyes only" telegram to Ambassador Warren Austin on November 13 clearly proves that the military debacle and his response to it were premeditated. He urged Austin not to "overplay the new factor of Chinese intervention" and advised that "We must be careful that our political posture not runs substantially ahead of situation on the ground in such a way as to commit us to heavy involvements in Asia." Indeed, he stressed that the U.S. should "try to avoid" such involvement. Such a cautious approach, as Acheson explained, was due to a substantial increase in the risk of general war in recent weeks. He then noted that "our political and military decisions must be related to fundamental and overriding considerations of a worldwide sort and not merely to the precise issues of this specific case." More interesting was his following comment: "Maximum firmness and energetic action are required but the main effort must be directed toward the principal challenge and not to diversive [diversionary?] secondary threats."¹⁰⁵

Lending further support to the view that Acheson had premeditated the military setback and responses to it is his immediate accommodation to the loss and his consistent push for the withdrawal of troops from Korea. Both Truman and the JCS responded to the setback as prospect theory predicts: Loss that comes after a streak of gains induces risk-taking behavior aimed to regain it, due to endowment effect.¹⁰⁶ They decided to fight on in spite of grave risks while Acheson wasted no time to push for the withdrawal of troops!

Upon receiving the message from MacArthur, Truman met with Acheson right away. Acheson proposed to stop fighting in Korea, reach a cease-fire agreement, and evacuate forces, especially the X Corps, from the northeastern Korea. "So far as he was concerned," Acheson said that "no political gains could be obtained from making a stand in that area" and that "The only problem," was "simply to do what you could to get them out." In Congress, too, Acheson intoned, "From the point of view of military strategy, the free nations would not want to undertake to fight this thing out in the Pacific... This is not the theatre in which you want to operate."¹⁰⁷ But Truman was determined to fight on and closed his mind to persuasion. During the cabinet meeting held four hours after receiving

the debilitating message from MacArthur, Truman, appearing as if “he would sob,” declared that “This is the worst situation we have had yet... we’ll meet it.”¹⁰⁸

At the NSC meeting held in the afternoon on the same day, Acheson tried again to change Truman’s mind, arguing that “When it is realized that the Soviets are behind this, the seriousness of the situation can be seen” and insisting that “we should not think in terms of Korea alone, but in world-wide terms, principally in Europe.”¹⁰⁹ Much to his surprise, the JCS jettisoned all prior concerns about the entrapment of the U.S. forces in Korea and the “Offtackle” contingency plan that required their speedy withdrawal from Korea; not even the looming outbreak of a global war with the Soviet Union could alter their decision to fight on in Korea. An order was issued to all theater commanders to “take such action as is feasible to increase readiness without causing atmosphere of alarm” on the ground that the U.S. was facing “one of the greatest dangers in its history.”¹¹⁰ Bradley argued that failure to respond to Chinese attacks would discredit the U.S. claim that attacks on a platoon of United States troops would mean war. He asked, “Would anyone believe it now...?”¹¹¹ In an unusual move, Truman switched his support from Acheson to the JCS.

Sensing that Truman was “not prepared, at this point at least, to negotiate with anyone, or to ask for a cease fire,” Acheson proposed to postpone a decision until the meeting with Prime Minister Clement Attlee, hoping that he could help Truman develop a sense of the “general temper” of the allies and persuade him to accept a cease fire and to abandon retaliation against China in the event that the withdrawal of forces became militarily necessary.¹¹² He also incorporated in the key issues that Truman would discuss with Attlee the following language: “The absence of available forces and the acknowledgement that the major threat posed to the free world comes from the Soviet Union would not permit an effort to impose a military defeat upon Peiping on the mainland of China.”¹¹³ The language was deleted when the JCS raised objection to it. The JCS agreed to the withdrawal of troops only as a result of military necessity and insisted on retaining the option to undertake military and subversive measures to “harass” China should the UN troops be forced out.¹¹⁴ A compromise was reached when Acheson accepted Dean Rusk’s proposal to put up a dogged fight, make China pay a dear price and then withdraw forces if that became militarily necessary. Chief of Staff of the Army Lawton Collin’s more optimistic report based

on his visit to the front that the UN troops were “not in a critical condition today” and that once the X Corps and the 8th Army met in Pusan, they could hold the Pusan bridgehead “indefinitely”¹¹⁵ furnished additional support for the compromise solution and ruled out the need to evacuate from Korea prematurely.

Acheson’s Sinister Design

Pessimistic about the prospect of victory of MacArthur’s offensive and fully mindful of the grave consequences of its failure for U.S. national security, Acheson’s push for a military conflict with China was clearly purposive: running the risk served a certain goal. At the State Department meeting held only several hours before Acheson met with the JCS in the afternoon for the last time before the offensive was launched, he derisively dismissed Sir Oliver Franks’ warning that both Russia and China viewed Korea as the main highway for the invasion of Manchuria and that even Great Britain shared that view. He also stated that the U.S. “sensitivity” to their concerns “had some bearing on the immediate situation but more on the long-range situation.” Whatever the outcome of MacArthur’s “probe,” he emphasized the “need to get more men under arms faster than had been anticipated.”¹¹⁶

Indeed, on several occasions before and after the offensive, he reiterated the need and urgency of military buildup. For instance, his rejection of the British proposal of establishing a buffer zone was justified on the following ground:

By taking present military requirement as a starting point, we may be able to stabilize the political situation by proposals which originate from **a position of strength** and which will help to end the fighting and achieve the results of the UN on a more permanent basis.¹¹⁷

A “position of strength” was a code name for rapid rearmament in compliance with the NSC68.

Having warned against the survival of civilization in his speech for the World Organization for Brotherhood of the National Conference of Christians and Jews, he advised to “put your faith in God and keep your powder dry,” and coupled his advice with an admonition that the “shield of faith” without “dry powder and the will to pass it”¹¹⁸ would not be enough to ensure national survival—again a call for increasing defense spending.

Right after the military setback, Acheson also exploited it to mobilize popular and Congressional support for a rapid military buildup

with several speeches. Before delivering them, Acheson gave Truman their gist and promised not “give any forecast of NSC 68.”¹¹⁹ In spite of his busy schedules including appearances in Congress and the NSC meetings, the speech delivered to the National Council of Churches was 31-pages long and drafted in two days after the debacle! It sketched an excessively alarming national security danger this event posed for the U.S. He stressed that the acts of aggression must be viewed “as part of a world picture” and part of the “world-wide operations of the international Communist movement.” Its boldness, willingness to use overt aggression, and acceptance of “deliberate risk of war” made it “increasingly urgent for all American citizens to face squarely the danger that confronts us.” Those who controlled the Soviet Union and the international Communist movement,” said Acheson, laid bare a “fundamental design”: “It is to hold and solidify their power over the people and territories within their reach, however ruthless the means required.” The danger of this “fundamental design” to the rest of the world was that it required the “complete subversion or forcible destruction of the countries now free of their control.” This intention on the part of the Soviet rulers when combined with military power at their command then “creates very grave danger to the survival of free nations and free institutions,” which “must not be underestimated.” All governments must face, “with a sense of urgency,” the capabilities for conquest and destruction in the hands of the rulers of the Soviet Union, he warned. Without literally breaching his promise not “forecast NSC 68,” he nevertheless pushed hard in the speeches for rapid military buildup as part of “the strategy of freedom,” warning that “the period of greatest danger is directly before us.” He emphasized, “Our defense must not only be strong enough, it must come soon enough.”¹²⁰ In Congress, he warned, “We have got to face the possibility now that anything can happen everywhere at any time. We have got to be prepared to meet that resolutely and as powerfully as we can.” He beseeched the Congress to “...act as though war might occur at any time.” Moreover, should the Soviet Union initiate aggression, it would attack Western Europe, in which event “There is nothing to meet it at all.”¹²¹ During a meeting between Congressional leaders and Truman, Acheson presented the outbreak of the Korean War as an evidence of “all-out attack upon the power position of the United States” and of the Soviet decision to run the risk of a general war with the U.S. The only option available to the U.S. was “the greatest possible buildup of our military strength and the military strength of our allies,” because

he warned that “Nothing else could stop the drive of the Soviet Union for world domination.”¹²²

During an enlarged NSC meeting that Truman convened to mull over the fiasco as it continued to unfold, Acheson reminded the participants of the enhanced danger of a general war, warning that “the events of the last few hours had moved us very much closer to a general war.” He urged Truman to “...press faster to build our strength”—“outside of Korea,” on the ground that “The present situation has clearly cut down the time that we previously thought we had available for such a build-up.” Pressing his point further, he used the fiasco to highlight the original schedule for military buildup until 1952 as a grave mistake. As he explained, “We used to think we could take time up to 1952, but if we were right in that, the Russians wouldn’t be taking such terrible risks as they are now. What they are doing now means that we do not have as much time as we thought.”¹²³ Finally “the most important consensus” for full and rapid rearmament was developed at the meeting with Truman’s support.

Conclusion

To sum up, Acheson was shaped by an operational code that viewed world affairs as essentially unpredictable and stressed the dire consequences of misjudgment were prudent and risk averse, especially when dealing with national security matters. Yet he embraced the risk of a military clash with China even though he foresaw an outcome that ruled out a victory and, worse still, could be disastrous should the Soviet Union exploit it to initiate aggression in Western Europe and consequently a global war—a specter that loomed ever larger on the eve of the fatal clash. Moreover, he viewed Chinese military intervention as “secondary” as compared to Soviet aggression elsewhere and “diversionary” with the aim to bog down the U.S. troops in Korea. Fully aware of the strategic trap that China and the Soviet Union set up for the U.S. troops and the danger of their entrapment, he nevertheless blocked all the efforts to foil the conflict and egged MacArthur on to launch his offensive.

Truman’s tight control over the defense budgetary process and its increase rendered him deeply worried about inadequate defense spending and level of troops to cope with the looming Soviet aggression. With little influence over Truman’s decision concerning defense budget, he therefore plotted and pushed for a brush with the disaster to be followed

by a rapid withdrawal of the U.S. forces from Korea. The disaster would galvanize Truman to accelerate rearmament to restore the “position of strength” vis-à-vis the Soviet Union in accordance with NSC68, and the troops withdrawn from Korea could be deployed to strategically vital areas to meet the Soviet aggression. Little did he expect that his influence over Truman waned after the disaster occurred and that the military debacle prompted him to accept rapid rearmament—but also to fight on in Korea.

Suspicion of Acheson’s “sinister purpose” in Congress surfaced—after it was accomplished. Republican Senator Taft, for instance, wondered why most of the military buildup was for Europe and not for Korea, and emphatically pointed out that the American people “simply could not understand” what the administration had in mind.¹²⁴ Senator Long suspected that Acheson engineered the clash in order to mobilize Congressional support for increasing defense spending. During the MacArthur hearing held in 1951, he made an interesting observation:

There was a point made to me some time back that, much as we Americans might hate to admit, we never are really stirred to make the sort of effort that we must make to defend ourselves until someone actually deals us a harmful and damaging blow, such as occurred to us at Pearl Harbor or the sort of slap in the face that occurred prior to World War I when Germany was sinking our ship with her submarines.

He then asked Acheson, “If the Chinese had not intervened, there would have been some difficulty in getting the American people to make the tremendous efforts they have been making as a Nation now; would it not?” Acheson responded, “Well, I don’t know about that...I think it brought home to people very strongly the extent of the danger to which the whole world was subjected...” Long concluded, “The probability is that because of this Chinese intervention Congress has been much more willing to provide the funds and put on the taxes that are necessary to carry on a defense effort.” Without rejecting it, Acheson offered an evasive answer: “You are in a much better position than I am to know the answer to that.” Long tersely responded, “My judgment is that Congress is.”¹²⁵

In public, Acheson heaped blame on MacArthur for the military debacle; in private, he offered MacArthur “felicitations” on his birthday in January 1951 and wrote that “We are all sincerely appreciative of your

cooperation and outstanding efforts in defending the cause of freedom,”¹²⁶ an unnecessary gesture in the midst of a military fiasco and in light of the acrimonious relationship between the two, with Acheson suspecting MacArthur’s role in obtaining the Senate’s approval of his appointment as Under Secretary in 1945 and MacArthur resenting Acheson’s plan to replace him as the occupation commander.¹²⁷ The “greatest disaster” that MacArthur inflicted on the Truman administration helped defend “the cause of freedom” by galvanizing Truman to accelerate military rearmament that put the U.S. in an advantageous position to cope with potential Soviet aggression.

Historiography that attributes the U.S.-Chinese clash to Acheson’s default rather than design is based on a “rational” assumption: should Acheson foresee the disaster in the making, he would have wanted to head it off as all “rational” decision makers facing the same situation would. Although Acheson did anticipate a disaster, he accepted it as the price to be paid for a higher national purpose, whether sinister or not: regaining “the position of strength” to cope with security challenges posed by the Soviet Union and ensuring the security of not just the U.S. but also the West. Although he erred in the belief that the Soviet Union was on the verge of launching a global war, his conviction of the dire consequences of misjudgment as a result of the unpredictability of world affairs precipitated him to overreact to rather than run the risk of the growing Soviet threat.

Notes:

¹ Omar N. Bradley, *A General’s Life: An Autobiography: An Autobiography*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), p. 564.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 595-598.

³ Dean Acheson Papers, Folder: Princeton Seminars, 13 February 1954, Box 90.

⁴ Walter Isaacson and Evan Thomas, *The Wise Men: Six Friends and the World They Made*, (New York: Touchstone, 1986), p. 537.

⁵ Acheson, *Present at the Creation: My Years in the State Department*, (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1987), p. 468.

⁶ Papers of Dean Acheson, Princeton Seminars, 13 February 1954. Box 90.

⁷ Acheson, *Present at the Creation: My Years in the State Department*, p. 468.

⁸ D. Clayton James, *Refighting the Last War: Command and Crisis in Korea, 1950-1953*, (New York and Toronto: The Free Press, 1983), p. 230. Clayton calls Acheson the “principal architect of the administration’s chief position on the direction of the war...” Bruce Cumings also called him the “architect of Korea policy from the important transition point in early 1947 to the momentous American intervention.” *Origins of the Korean War, vol. II, The Roaring of the Cataract, 1947-1950*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 44. David Halberstam calls Acheson “the most important player on Korea except for the President.” *The Coldest Winter: America and the Korean War*, (New York: Hyperion, 2007), p. 96.

⁹ *Oral History with Lucius D. Battle*. <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/oralhist/battle.htm>.

¹⁰ Glenn Paige, *The Korean Decision*. (New York: Free Press, 1968), p. 26.

¹¹ Clark Clifford and Richard Holbrooke, *Council to the President: A Memoir* (New York: Random House, 1991), p. 142.

¹² *Ibid*, p. 140.

¹³ Charles E. Bohlen, *Witness to History, 1929-1969*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1973), p. 302.

¹⁴ George McKee Elsey, *An Unplanned Life*, (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 2005), p. 178.

¹⁵ Papers of Dean Acheson, Princeton Seminar, Box 90.

¹⁶ Dean Acheson, *This Vast External Realm*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1954), p. 267.

¹⁷ Richard Ned Lebow, *Between Peace and War: the Nature of International Crisis*, (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), pp. 182-183.

¹⁸ Beisner attributes the failure of Acheson and other key decision makers to avert the conflict to their belief in MacArthur’s ability to complete his mission. Robert L. Beisner, *Dean Acheson: A Life in the Cold War*, (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 414-415. David S. McLellan, “Dean Acheson and the Korean War,” *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. lxxxiii (March 1968): pp. 21-22 and pp. 30-33.

¹⁹ Robert L. Beisner, p. 415. See also David S. McLellan, *Dean Acheson: The State Department Years*, (New York: Dodd, Mead, & Company, 1976), p. 294.

²⁰ Chen Jian, *China’s Road to the Korean War*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 171. Chen was not alone in suggesting arrogance as a

factor that led the U.S. to underestimate China's capabilities. William Stueck Jr., points to American "ethnocentrism" as the cause of American misperception of China's objectives and underestimation of its military capabilities. See his *The Road to Confrontation: United States Policy toward China and Korea, 1947-1950*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981), p. 254.

²¹ Gaddis Smith, *Dean Acheson*, (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, Inc., 1972), pp. 232-234.

²² Robert H. Ferrell and David McLellan, "Dean Acheson: Architect of a Manageable World Order," in *Makers of American Diplomacy: from Benjamin Franklin to Henry Kissinger*, eds. Frank J. Marli and Theodore A. Wilson. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974), p. 543.

²³ David S. McLellan, "Dean Acheson and the Korean War," *Political Science Quarterly*... p. 23.

²⁴ For relations between Marshall and Acheson as a key variable in explaining the failure to avert the conflict with China, see Gaddis Smith, *Dean Acheson*, pp. 232-234; Robert L. Beisner, *Dean Acheson: A Life in the Cold War*, pp. 414-415; and Walter Isaacson, *The Wise Men: Six Friends and the World They Made...* pp. 537-539.

²⁵ William Stueck, *Road to Confrontation...* p. 250. Callum MacDonald also attributes Acheson's reluctance to challenge the military's view to his "excessive deference" to Marshall. See *Korea: the War before Vietnam*, (New York: The Free Press, 1986), p. 65.

²⁶ David Rees, *Korea: The Limited War*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1964), pp. 150-151.

²⁷ Walter Isaacson and Evan Thomas, *The Wise Men: Six Friends and the World They Made*, p. 538. See also Beisner, pp. 414-415.

²⁸ Joseph C. Goulden, *Korea: the Untold Story of the War*, (New York: Times Books, 1982), p. 316. The author dismisses Richard Neustadt's view that the decision was a purely military matter and that the order to halt the march must come from the Joint Chiefs of Staff as "intellectual nonsense."

²⁹ Cecil V. Crabb, Jr and Kevin V. Mulcahy, *Presidents and Foreign Policy Making*, (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University, 1986), pp. 147-148.

³⁰ William Stueck, *The Road to Confrontation...* p. 246.

³¹ "Summary of the Remarks of Secretary of State Dean Acheson at A Meeting of the Advertising Council at the White House, February 16, 1950," Papers of

George M. Elsey, Subject File: Foreign Affairs-Russia-Truman-Shvernik Exchange, Box. 64. Acheson explained to the council that negotiation would only mean “dangerous concessions on our part”, and consequently he would not initiate any negotiations with the Soviet Union.

³² Dean Acheson, *The Korean War*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1971), pp. 3-4.

³³ “Notes of the Secretary of State for Congressional Hearings on the Mutual Defense Assistance Program,” in FRUS, 1950, vol.1, *National Security Affairs and Foreign Economic Affairs*, pp. 393-395.

³⁴ Richard E. Parke, “Acheson Premises Peace with Russia on Equal Strength,” *New York Times*, 9 October 1950, p. 1.

³⁵ Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korea War: The Roaring of the Cataract, 1947-1950...* pp. 432-435.

³⁶ Benjamin O. Fordham, *Building the Cold War Consensus: The Political Economy of U.S. National Security Policy, 1949-1951*, (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1998), pp. 70-71 and pp. 115-116.

³⁷ Richard C. Thornton, *Odd Man Out: Truman, Stalin, Mao, and the Origins of the Korean War*, (Washington, D.C.: Brassey’s Inc., 2000), pp. 352-353.

³⁸ Doris M. Condit, *The Test of War, 1950-1953*, (Historical Office, Office of the Secretary of Defense, Washington, D.C., 1988), p. 226.

³⁹ Robert J. Donovan, *Tumultuous Years: The Presidency of Harry S. Truman, 1949-1953*, New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1982, p. 271.

⁴⁰ Harry S. Truman, *Years of Trial and Hope, 1946-1952*, (New York: The Time Inc., 1956), p. 420. In the speech, Truman stated that “I want to see world peace from Wake Island all the way west around and back again...we are going to get it.” When meeting with the British Prime Minister Clement Attlee, Truman noted, “We are on the verge of succeeding when a “viciously hostile country” intervened.” Ibid, p. 464. The military debacle, according to Truman, was the result of “the campaign of lies” by journalists and his critiques. Otherwise, he asserted, “I don’t think the Communists would ever have dared to do this thing in Korea...” See John Hersey, John Hersey, *Aspects of the Presidency*, (New Haven and New York: Ticknor & Fields, 1980), p. 30.

⁴¹ “Meeting with the President, subject: proposed speeches of President, Acheson Papers, Memorandum of conversations file, October 1950, box. 67]

⁴² Omar Bradley, *A General’s Life: An Autobiography*, pp. 598-599.

⁴³ Harry S. Truman, *1946-1952...*, p. 416 and pp. 419-420.

⁴⁴ Frank Pace, "Truman and National Security," in *Portraits of American Presidents*, vol. II, edited by Kenneth W. Thompson, (Lanham, New York, and London: University Press of America, Inc., 1984). p. 151. See also Oral History interview with Frank Pace, Jr., conducted by Jerry N. Hess in New York on February 1972. <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/oralhist/pacefj3.htm>.

⁴⁵ Alexander L. George, "The 'Operational Code': A Neglected Approach to the Study of Political Leaders and Decision-Making," *International Studies Quarterly*, 13 (June 1969): 190-222. Stephan G. Walker, "The Interface between Beliefs and Behavior: Henry Kissinger's Operational Code and the Vietnam War," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 21(March 1977): 129-159. For an analysis of Dean Acheson's operational code, see David S. McLellan, "The 'Operational Code' Approach to the Study of Political Leaders: Dean Acheson's Philosophical and Instrumental Beliefs," *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 4(March 1971), pp. 51-75.

⁴⁶ Dean Acheson, *This Vast External Realm*, p. 249.

⁴⁷ David S. McLellan, "The 'Operational Code' Approach, p. 63.

⁴⁸ "Remarks by Dean Acheson at the New York Herald-Tribune Book and Author Luncheon," 17 February 1958, Papers of Philip C. Jessup, General Correspondence, Dean Acheson, Box 3.

⁴⁹ Dean Acheson, *Morning and Noon*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1962), p. 219 and pp. 270-275.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, p. 219.

⁵¹ Dean Acheson's speech was quoted in David S. McLellan, "The 'Operational Code.'" p. 64.

⁵² Dean Acheson, *Morning and Noon*, p. 270.

⁵³ *Ibid*, p. 268. See also his *Sketches from Life of Men I Have Known*, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961), pp. 147-148.

⁵⁴ Acheson sarcastically called Truman's decision to cut defense spending in 1950 as "a clinic for any who wishes to spell out this thesis," the thesis that government policy must be "an integer" that harmonized diplomatic, military, economic, and fiscal policy into a coherent "one." Acheson, *This Vast External Realm*, p. 203.

⁵⁵ Dean Acheson, *A Democrat Looks at His Party*, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1955), p. 86.

⁵⁶ "A Special Meeting of the National Security Council in the Cabinet Room at the White House," President's Secretary File.

⁵⁷ Papers of Dean Acheson, folder:Princeton Seminar, Box 90.

⁵⁸ Steven L. Rearden, *The Evolution of American Strategic Doctrine: Paul H. Nitze and the Soviet Challenge*, (Boulder and London: Westview Press, 1984), p. 29.

⁵⁹ Paul G. Pierpaoli, Jr., *Truman and Korea*,. pp. 17-18.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, p. 27.

⁶¹ Acheson, *The Vast External Realm*, p. 265.

⁶² Paul G. Pierpaoli, Jr., pp. 16-17. Acheson also stated that Truman ruled out Chinese military intervention on October 9 before meeting with MacArthur, Meeting with the President, subject: President's proposed trip to Hawaii, Dean Acheson papers, Memorandum of conversations file, Box 67.

⁶³ Doris M. Condit, *The Test of War, 1950-1953, History of the Secretary of Defense, Vol. II*, (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Secretary of Defense, 1988), pp. 230-233.

⁶⁴ Thomas J. Christensen, *Useful Adversaries: Grand Strategy, Domestic Mobilization, and Sino-American Conflict, 1947-1958*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996), p. 180. Callum A. MacDonald, pp. 59-60.

⁶⁵ Memorandum of Conversation by the Secretary of State," *FRUS, 1950, vol. I*, p. 401.

⁶⁶ "Memorandum for the President," November 24, 1950, President Secretary File/NSC.

⁶⁷ Omar N. Bradley and Clay Blair, *A General's Life: An Autobiography: An Autobiography by General of the Army*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), pp. 558-559.

⁶⁸ Gaddis Smith, *Dean Acheson*, p. 210.

⁶⁹ Rosemary Foot, *The Wrong War*, p. 81 and p. 87.

⁷⁰ "Military Situation in the Far East," Hearing before the Committee on Armed Services and the Committee on Foreign Relations, 82nd Cong, 1st session, part III, p. 1776.

⁷¹ Gordon H. Chang, *Friends and Enemies: The United States, China, and the Soviet Union, 1948-1972*, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1990), p. 76.

⁷² Minutes of the 59th NSC meeting held on June 30, 1950. See also Acheson, *Present at the Creation*. p. 412. James Chace, *The Secretary of State Who Created the American World*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998), p. 287.

⁷³ “Korean Crisis,” Department of State Letter, June 30, 1950.

⁷⁴ “Crossing the 38th Parallel,” Papers of W. Averell Harriman, Special Assistance Subject file, MacArthur, Douglas, Hearing: Mis. Background, Box 304.

⁷⁵ Ambassador William J. Sebald with Russell Brines, *With MacArthur in Japan: A Personal History of the Occupation*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1965), p. 200.

⁷⁶ Walter Issacson and Evan Thomas, *The Wise Men: Six Friends and the World They Made*, p. 532.

⁷⁷ For the text of the NSC81/1, <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study-collections/korea/large/sec4/n>

⁷⁸ “Interview with Ambassador Lucius Battle-16/1/97,” <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/coldwar/interviews/episode-5/battle2.html>. Accessed on 6 December 2005.

⁷⁹ Secretary of State Dean Acheson, “Princeton Seminar” comment, February 13, 1954, Papers of Dean Acheson, <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study-collections/korea/large/koreapt>

⁸⁰ Omar Bradley, *A General’s Life: An Autobiography*... p. 561.

⁸¹ Douglas MacArthur, *Reminiscences: General of the Army*, (New York, Toronto, and London: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1964), pp. 357-360.

⁸² Dean Acheson, *Present at the Creation*, p. 455.

⁸³ Bradley, p. 561.

⁸⁴ Truman Library Institute Conference Comment, May 1975. www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/korea/large/koreapt4-4. Accessed 8/9/2013.

⁸⁵ Notes Regarding State Department Meeting, November 21, 1950. Secretary of State File. Acheson Papers. http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/achesonmemos/view.php?documentid=ki-15-10&documentYear=1950&documentVersion=both, accessed 8/10/2013

⁸⁶ www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study-collections/korea/large/koreapt4_4. Accessed 8/9/2013.

⁸⁷ Acheson, *Present at the Creation*, p. 468.

⁸⁸ David S. McLellan, *Dean Acheson...* p. 294. Robert L. Beisner, *Dean Acheson: A life...*p. 410. Richard C. Thornton, *Odd Man Out: Truman, Stalin, Mao, and the Origins of the Korean War*, (Washington, D.C.: Brassey's Inc., 2000), p. 379. Thornton obtained what Acheson wanted: to quell dissent in the Pentagon in order to ensure that MacArthur would proceed with the planned offensive. He concludes that President Truman wanted such a military conflict with China. I argue in this paper that it was Acheson, not Truman, who wanted the military clash, which would undermine his efforts to keep under control the runaway defense spending as a result of the Korean War. Omar Bradley, *A General's Life: An Autobiography*, p. 596. Bradley characterized the meeting on November 21 as "our last real chance to stop MacArthur's proposed ground offensive."

⁸⁹ Bradley, *A General's Life: An Autobiography*, p. 582.

⁹⁰ "Memorandum by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of Defense," FRUS, 1950, vol. 3, *Korea*, pp. 1119-1121. See also Omar N Bradley and Clay Blair, p. 593.

⁹¹ Callum A. MacDonald, *Korea: the War before Vietnam*, p. 67.

⁹² Martin Lichterman cited a letter dated January 30, 1957 and his interviews with him and Dean Rusk held respectively on March 26 and 27, 1957 as the sources of information. See *To the Yalu and Back*, (Kansas City: University of Alabama University Press, 1963), p. 31. Lawton Collins, who served as the Army Chief of Staff during the Korean War, also disputed Lichterman's point on the ground that Acheson himself denied it and that the move was 'so out-of-character' as to General Marshall and the members of the JCS. He himself did not recall that Marshall or the JCS ever made the request. See Lawton Collins, *War in Peacetime: the History and Lessons of Korea*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1969), p. 202.

⁹³ Richard C. Thornton, *Odd Man Out*, p. 376.

⁹⁴ FRUS, 1950. p. 1093 and p. 1100. For Acheson's remark, see untitled document dated November 8, 1950, Dean Acheson Papers, Memorandum of Conversations files, Box. 68.

⁹⁵ "The Secretary of State to the Embassy in the United Kingdom," FRUS, vol. III, p. 1212.

⁹⁶ "The Secretary of State to Embassy in the United Kingdom," 24 November 1950, FRUS, p. 1229.

⁹⁷ Department of State, Memorandum of Conversation, November 21, 1950, Papers of Dean Acheson, Memorandum of Conversation, August-December 1950. Box 67.

⁹⁸ “Memorandum by the Ambassador at Large (Jessup) to the Secretary of State,” *FRUS*, pp. 1193-1196.

⁹⁹ “Estimate of the Most Probable Course of Soviet-Chinese Action with Regard to Korea,” November 17, 1950, *FRUS*, vol. 3, pp. 1188-1190.

¹⁰⁰ Acheson, *Present at the Creation*, p. 461.

¹⁰¹ Papers of Dean Acheson, Memorandum of Conversation, August-December 1950. Box 67.

¹⁰² Untitled document dated November 21, 1950. Papers of Dean Acheson, Memorandum of Conversation, August-December, 1950, Box 67.

¹⁰³ Department of State, Memorandum of Conversation, dated November 21, 1950, Papers of Dean Acheson, Memorandum of Conversation, August-December 1950, Box. 67.

¹⁰⁴ Walter Isaacson and Evan Thomas, *The Wise Men: Six Friends and the World They Made*, p. 541.

¹⁰⁵ “The Secretary of State to the United Mission at the United Nations,” *FRUS*, vol. 3, 1950, pp. 1143-1144.

¹⁰⁶ Prospect theory points to psychological difficulty to accept the loss of what is already possessed—endowment effect—and tendency to become risk-seeking in an effort to retrieve it.

¹⁰⁷ “Statement by the Secretary of State,” Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, 81st Cong., Executive sess., pp. 374-381.

¹⁰⁸ Robert Donovan, *Tumultuous Years: The Presidency of Harry S. Truman*, (New York: W. W. Norton Company, Inc., 1982), pp. 305-306. John Hersey, *Aspects of the Presidency*, ((New Haven and New York: Ticknor & Fields, 1980), pp. 27-28.

¹⁰⁹ “Memorandum for the President,” The document summarizes the 73rd meeting of the National Security Council but was erroneously dated November 24, 1950, since it took place on November 28. [no documentation]

¹¹⁰ Omar Bradley, p. 608.

¹¹¹ “Memorandum of Conversation by the Ambassador at Large (Jessup), December 3, 1950,” *FRUS*, vol. VII, p. 1330.

¹¹² “Department of State, Memorandum of Conversation,” dated 3 December 1950. Philip C. Jessup submitted a supplement to add to the memorandum.

¹¹³ “The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Bradley) to the Secretary of Defense (Marshall),” *FRUS*, 1950, vol. III, Korea, pp. 1348-1349.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 1371.

¹¹⁵ *Record of the Actions Taken by the Joint Chiefs of Staff Relative to the United Nations Operations in Korea from 25 June 1950 to 11 April 1951 Prepared by Them for the Senate Armed Forces and Foreign Relations Committee, Papers of Harry S. Truman, Korean War File*, p. 69.

¹¹⁶ Notes Regarding State Department Meeting, November 21, 1950. Secretary of State File. Acheson Papers.

¹¹⁷ “The Secretary of State to Embassy in the United Kingdom,” 24 November 1950, *FRUS*, pp. 1228-1229.

¹¹⁸ Acheson, *Present at Creation*, p. 461.

¹¹⁹ Memorandum of Conversations with the President, November 27, 1950, Dean Acheson Papers, Memorandum of conversations file, Box 68.

¹²⁰ Reading copy of speech to National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. 29 November 1950, Dean G. Acheson Papers, Classified Speech File, 1947-1952, Box 74.

¹²¹ “Statement by the Secretary of State,” Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, 81st Cong., executive sess., p. 372 and pp. 374-381.

¹²² “Meeting of the President with Congressional Leaders in the Cabinet Room, 10:00 a.m., Wednesday, December 13, 1950, President’s Secretary’s Files.

¹²³ Department of State, Memorandum of Conversation, November 28, 1950. President’s Secretary’s file. The document is a more detailed record of the conversation that took place at the 73rd NSC meeting held on November 28, 1950.

¹²⁴ Michael Schaller, *Douglas MacArthur: The Far Eastern General*, (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 223.

¹²⁵ “Military Situation in the Far East,” 82nd Cong., 1st sess., Hearings, Committee on Armed Services and the Committee on Foreign Relations, Senate, part 3, June 1951. pp. 2102-2103.

¹²⁶ Douglas MacArthur, *Reminiscences*, p. 382.

¹²⁷ D. Clayton James, *Refighting the Last War: Command and Crisis in Korea, 1950-1953*. (New York, Oxford, and Sidney: The Free Press, 1993), p. 216. See also Omar N. Bradley, *A General's Life: An Autobiography*, p. 526.