The U.S. Decision Making Process and Lessons Learned from the Korean Armistice[1]

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Abstract

This paper examines U.S. efforts during the Korean Armistice negotiations focusing on decision-making processes and the interplay between military operations and negotiations. The U.S. government transitioned to a different phase of the Korean War following the Communist Chinese Forces' second offensive at the end of 1950. The Truman Administration decided to end the war with negotiations. The members of the State-Joint Chiefs of Staff Meeting (SJM), which was created to discuss politico-military affairs after the Chinese intervention in 1950, had worked hard to prepare for negotiations. They devised terms and conditions and handled the Commander of the UN Forces to facilitate reaching agreement on each agenda item. Besides the negotiation efforts, the UN Forces' Command employed its military power to apply pressure to the armistice talks. Yet the use of military power revealed limits to the promotion of the armistice talks. Before agreeing on a definition for the demarcation line, UN forces secured victories that forced the Communists back to the negotiating table after a long adjournment. However, military pressure by UN forces could not prevent prolonged discussions over the Prisoners of War (POW) issue. It was Stalin's death that ultimately brought the Communists back to finalize the Armistice.

Keywords: Korean War, Korean Armistice, State-JCS Meeting, Cold War, Truman, demarcation line, exchange of prisoners of war

Introduction

This year marks the 71st anniversary of the Korean Armistice. Despite the passage of many years, military tensions between South and North Korea remain high. The North Korean nuclear program further complicates any anticipation of a peace treaty between the two Koreas that

[1] This paper presents a perspective of the author on the subject matter. This paper was supported by the Council on Korea-U.S. Security Studies.

could end the armistice. Repeated failures in nuclear talks with North Korea have been observed since their inception. Rather than advancing negotiations, North Korea appears more focused on its own gains. These discussions often become prolonged and delayed, ultimately leading to a frustrating impasse.

Dealing with North Korea is a challenging endeavor, and negotiation will always be among the available options. In this context, analyzing the experience of the Korean Armistice negotiations could hold significance. Over a span of more than two years, talks occurred between the United Nations Command (UNC) delegation and Communist representatives from the Korean People's Army (KPA) and Communist Chinese Force (CCF). Negotiations persisted as hostilities continued on the front lines. Just as in contemporary nuclear talks, the negotiations were punctuated by interruptions, provocations, and false accusations, sometimes leading to indefinite recess. The major contrast lies in the notable emphasis on applying maximal military pressure, a distinguishing aspect when compared to recent nuclear negotiations with North Korea.

The Korean Armistice negotiations have been a subject of study in the academic realm of Korean War studies. Admiral C. Turner Joy, the initial representative of the UNC delegation, documented his firsthand encounters with the Communists in his renowned memoir.[1] Three years later, William H. Vatcher Jr. recounted his experiences as Psychological Warfare Adviser to the Senior UN delegate at the Korean Armistice negotiations.[2] In 1966, Walter G. Hermes compared the progression of negotiations and battle fronts in his work *Truce Tent and Fighting Front*. He drew upon U.S. Army history records and diplomatic telegrams for his analysis.[3]

Rosemary Foot illuminated the essence of the Korean Armistice as an outcome of limited warfare, where significant damage was inflicted for marginal gains, as depicted in her book *A Substitute for Victory*.[4] However, she encountered challenges in accessing documents from Soviet archives for her research. Similar to her approach, Yang Daehyun scrutinized negotiation transcripts to analyze the proceedings.[5] Subsequently, the release of documents from the Soviet Union offered a deeper understanding of the motivations behind the Communist leaders. Scholars like Pinchao Zhu[6] and Kim Boyoung[7] gained access to Soviet materials despite the language barriers. Recently, Kim Donggil delved into the authentic motivations of Mao Zedong and Stalin for the negotiations, drawing insights from Chinese and Russian documents.[8] Furthermore,

Kyengho Son examined the U.S. interagency approach to engage in security policy discussions at the outset of the negotiations.[9]

This paper aims to elucidate the U.S. endeavors during the Korean Armistice conferences, with a specific focus on the decision-making processes that drove the negotiations. Additionally, this study seeks to illuminate the intricate relationship between military operations and negotiations, unraveling the essence of the Korean Armistice talks. While Hermes previously addressed this topic, this paper intends to enhance the discussion with newly revealed Communist sources. Kim Donggil effectively dissected the true intentions of Communist leaders during that period, yet his analysis lacked attention to military operations. In reality, the Communists leveraged military might for political gains. With this perspective in mind, the paper confines its exploration to pivotal moments of contention throughout the negotiations in 1951 and 1952.

Settling Down for the Negotiations

The U.S. government transitioned to a different phase of the Korean War following the CCF's second offensive. Contrary to General Douglas MacArthur's expectations, the UN forces' Christmas Offensive, which began on November 24, 1950, proved disastrous. The CCF skillfully lured and overwhelmed UN forces in the mountainous regions of northern Korea. This period marked significant victories for the Communists: along the western front, General Walker was compelled to pull his forces back to the Kaesong area from the Chongchon River, while in the east, the U.S. 10th Corps found itself isolated near Hungnam city following a devastating defeat at Chosin.

The Truman Administration underwent a profound reassessment of its objectives in the Korean War. Initially, the U.S. entered the conflict with limited ambitions and resources, primarily aiming to restore the status quo as of June 24, 1950. However, after the success of the Inchon Landing and subsequent UN authorization, the U.S. stance shifted toward unifying the Korean Peninsula. Yet, the unexpected intervention of the Chinese and their subsequent military successes posed a challenge, compelling the U.S. to revisit its strategic objectives. Faced with these complexities, U.S. decision-makers contemplated reverting to their original strategy of pursuing a limited war. Any revised objectives would require consensus with allies who had also committed troops to the Korean conflict.

Representatives from the United Kingdom and the U.S. met in Washington D.C. from December 4-8, 1950. This conference aimed to

establish a shared understanding of the situation and explore strategies to address the military crisis from a global perspective. Initially, both parties concurred on pursuing negotiations to end the war. They emphasized the need to strengthen the forces of North Atlantic Treaty nations and boost arms production in their respective countries. President Truman and Prime Minister Attlee ardently advocated for unity, emphasizing the significance of safeguarding the flow of essential raw materials. Ultimately, both leaders unanimously agreed against the use of nuclear weapons.[10]

After the British delegation's departure, President Truman called a National Security Council (NSC) meeting on December 11 to delineate U.S. war objectives in alignment with the communiqué. He emphasized that any proposed cease-fire should neither position UN forces at a disadvantage nor demand political concessions from the allies. Under these guidelines, the specifics of a cease-fire were to be negotiated to safeguard the security of UN troops. Truman tasked the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) with urgently drafting the cease-fire details.[11] The attendees concurred with the president's perspective, arriving at a unanimous agreement. Furthermore, they decided to declare a National Emergency.

Acting on directives from the NSC, the JCS developed a guideline for a cease-fire the following day.[12] This detailed the terms, conditions, and arrangements for a cease-fire. It stipulated that UN forces could accept a cease-fire provided it was limited to Korea but included all relevant parties. To halt hostilities, a demilitarized zone needed to be set up across the peninsula. Additionally, a cease-fire commission was needed to grant unrestricted access to the entirety of Korea. Once the cease-fire was in place, the introduction of additional war equipment, materials, or reinforcements — be it units or personnel — would be prohibited.[13]

In response to rising tensions, Asiatic countries within the UN initiated a draft resolution urging a cease-fire. This initiative offered the U.S. an advantageous position to form a small committee that could outline agreeable terms for the cease-fire.[14] Such a committee would be strategically positioned to negotiate a cease-fire between Communist China and the UN forces discreetly. For this purpose, the Committee of Three was established, consisting of Nasrollah Entezam (Iran), Lester B. Pearson (Canada), and Benegal Rau (India). Their task was to engage the Communist Chinese delegation, which had approached the UN to address the Security Council about US aggression in the Taiwan Strait. Despite their best efforts, the committee's advances were rebuffed. On December 23, the Communist Chinese government dismissed the cease-fire proposal.

They denounced the committee as illegitimate and accused the U.S. of perpetuating the conflict through its expansionist policies in Korea.[15]

At that juncture, U.S. officials were divided on the future course of military actions in Korea. The JCS, deeply rattled by the CCF's offensives, contemplated pulling UN troops out to avert another catastrophe. However, this viewpoint was not shared by Secretary of State Dean Acheson and several other State Department members. In a Defense and State meeting on December 19, Dean Rusk, the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, stressed the potential repercussions of yielding to CCF pressures. He believed that such a retreat could erode international trust in the U.S. and foment defeatism domestically. Rusk contended that persisting in resistance up to the eventual withdrawal from Korea was the most viable strategy.[16] President Truman, in a meeting on December 26, expressed his alignment with the State Department, emphasizing the need to continue military endeavors and protect South Koreans.[17] Ultimately, senior officials from both the Defense and State departments concurred on issuing a directive to MacArthur, advocating for a measured approach over an immediate withdrawal from Korea.[18]

Under the leadership of its newly appointed commander, Lt. General Matthew B. Ridgway, the Eighth U.S. Army began to shift the tide of the military situation. From the end of January 1951 onward, the UN forces managed to regain both morale and territory. After successfully repelling the fourth CCF offensive in February, the Eighth Army recaptured Seoul for the second time on March 18 and continued their push northward. Their momentum carried them to the Kansas Line, just north of the 38th Parallel, having successfully fended off the CCF's fifth offensive. The forward progress of the UN ground forces played a significant role in determining the potential military demarcation line—a point of contention among U.S. officials in the event of a cease-fire. While the U.S. government initially favored the 38th Parallel as the cease-fire line, the evolving military situation organically established a more advantageous demarcation line.

In early May 1951, the Soviet Union hinted at the possibility of a cease-fire by proposing US-Soviet diplomatic dialogue.[19] With assistance from George Kennan, a former diplomat, the US initiated negotiations with the Communists regarding an armistice. During a meeting with Kennan at his Long Island residence in late May, the Soviet Ambassador to the UN, Jacob Malik, proposed that UN authorities recognize representatives from Communist China and North Korea to advance negotiations. Malik emphasized that the initial dialogue should focus on a

cease-fire and the mutual withdrawal of forces from the 38th Parallel to facilitate an armistice. Seizing this opportunity, officials from both the State and Defense Departments worked together to outline terms, conditions, and procedures for negotiations with the Communists, culminating their efforts by late July.[20] Throughout this period, members of the State-JCS Meeting (hereafter referred to as SJM) played pivotal roles.[21]

Leaders from China and North Korea consented to armistice negotiations. Unaware of Stalin's intentions regarding the talks, Mao Zedong and his advisors decided to alter their approach to the Korean War, especially after the significant setbacks experienced during the fourth and fifth offensives. Recognizing their limitations dealing with U.S. mechanized forces, the CCF leadership deliberated at length. By May 30, they resolved to employ a dual strategy of negotiating while continuing to fight.[22] Following this decision, Mao Zedong convinced Kim Il Sung to shift focus from military campaigns to peace talks. Eventually, Stalin endorsed Mao's plan, specifying the aim for an armistice that could be easily reverted to a state of war. Concurrently, the Communist leaders maintained a contingency plan to initiate the sixth offensive in August if negotiations faltered.[23] Solidifying these decisions, Malik broadcasted his "The Price of Peace" speech on June 23, formally extending the offer for negotiations.[24]

U.S. officials meticulously examined every facet of the armistice negotiations. Spearheaded by Rusk, members of the State Department and JCS anticipated potential challenges, seeking proactive solutions. In a meeting on June 28, 1951, Rusk underscored that negotiations should be conducted at a military level. He proposed the hospital ship *Jutlandia* or Kaesong as potential negotiation sites, favoring *Jutlandia*. He also recommended that the delegation be represented by an officer at the Major or Lieutenant General rank. Rusk contended that Commander of the UNC should refrain from consulting Japanese or Korean officials regarding the talks. Above all, the negotiation's foundational principles should align with NSC 48/5 and the JCS Memorandum dated March 27. Concurrently, General Ridgway, the UN Forces Commander after MacArthur's dismissal, was granted considerable discretion in directing military operations until cease-fire terms were solidified.[25] Following the meeting's consensus, a directive was formulated and, with President Truman's approval, dispatched to Tokyo on June 28.[26]

After receiving the telegram about the negotiations, General Ridgway requested a teleconference with officials in Washington to discuss the content of the message. Ridgway argued that he should specify the location for the negotiations in his initial communication to the Communist forces' commander. He also recommended adding that the discussions would commence based on the Communist forces' suggestion. Following the conference call, Rusk, Omar Bradley (the Chairman of the JCS), and other SJM members concurred on suggesting *Jutlandia* as the negotiation site and omitting any superfluous questions that might imperil the talks.[27]

In fact, before Malik's radio speech on June 23, Paul Nitze from the State Department and Admiral Forrest P. Sherman, the Chief of Naval Operations, had already arrived in Tokyo. Notably, Nitze participated in the teleconference on June 28 while in Tokyo. Both Nitze and Sherman were members of the SJM. At this juncture, key SJM members met with the Commander of the UNC to consult with Ridgway. Following Malik's address, Admiral Sherman departed for home, but Nitze extended his stay to aid in the negotiation preparations. Together, Nitze and Ridgway chose Vice Admiral C. Turner Joy to represent the UN delegation in the negotiations, with Captain Arleigh Burke serving as his assistant.[28]

In anticipation of negotiations taking place far from Washington, U.S. government officials set up a rigorous control system. The nature of these talks posed inherent challenges, given that decisions would be made by military officers on the ground, absent the final authority typically reserved for the politico-military leadership in Washington. To address this, broad foundational principles, complemented by Ridgway's counsel, would be relayed to the delegation in Korea. To adapt to the swiftly evolving circumstances, open and explicit communication channels would be essential at all times. Concurrently, staff research would formulate long-term strategies and policies for the negotiations. Throughout, the State and Defense departments maintained a collaborative stance, both tactically and strategically.[29]

General Ridgway was tasked with the logistical arrangements and support for the UNC delegation. For guidance on various topics, he directed his Joint Strategic Plans and Operations Groups (JSPOG) to conduct studies. He visited the UNC base camp at Munsan and maintained consistent communication with Admiral Joy from Tokyo. At Munsan, Brigadier General Edwin K. Wright, Ridgway's Deputy Chief of Staff from JSPOG, oversaw the UNC staff. His role was to prepare plans for the

negotiation team and to assess strategies and tactics for responding to potential moves by the enemy. Every statement underwent editing by all delegates and required Admiral Joy's approval. Coordination and validation from both the State and Defense departments were paramount. Detailed records and analyses of every negotiation session were promptly sent to Washington, accompanied by Ridgway's commentary.[30]

The First Round: Setting a Demarcation Line

After establishing the agenda, delegates from both sides initiated discussions on July 27 to determine a military demarcation line. The Communist representatives strongly advocated for the 38th Parallel as the demarcation line, while the UNC delegation believed the current battle situation should dictate its placement. Joy proposed that the UN forces' superiority in both air and maritime capacities be factored into the demarcation decision. [31] Settling on the demarcation line proved challenging. For the Communists, the 38th Parallel was deemed the ideal boundary for entering the armistice — a consensus reached among Kim Il Sung, Mao Zedong, and Stalin before negotiations began. Their primary objective was to restore the territory to its previous status through these talks.[32] An additional goal was to ensure the eventual withdrawal of all foreign troops from the peninsula.[33]

In fact, to advance the negotiations, the Communist side restructured the agenda items. Given the Communist objectives for the armistice, both establishing the 38th Parallel as the demarcation line and ensuring the withdrawal of all foreign troops from the Korean Peninsula were non-negotiable goals. However, the UN delegation was unlikely to accept these terms. To circumvent a potential stalemate, Mao Zedong took the initiative, even in the face of strong opposition from the UN delegation. He convinced Stalin to rename the agenda item from "Demarcation Line at the 38th Parallel" to simply "Demarcation Line," to which Stalin agreed.[34] Additionally, Mao proposed postponing the "Withdrawal of Foreign Forces" agenda item to a later stage, a suggestion Stalin also approved.[35]

Both patience at the negotiation table and military success on the frontlines played pivotal roles in finalizing the demarcation line agenda item. As anticipated, neither side showed any intention of compromising on their positions. Notably, on August 11, the two delegations sat for over two hours without exchanging a single word. By August 22, the Communist side, after economic and military assessments of the situation, leaned towards accepting the UN side's stance on the demarcation line.[36]

However, they did not communicate this decision to the UN. Instead, they declared an indefinite recess, citing a violation of neutrality at the negotiation site due to a UN aircraft's attack.[37] Before talks resumed in late October, clashes erupted on the frontlines between Communist and UN forces.

The CCF, under the proposal of Deng Hua, Vice Commander of the CCF and a member of the negotiation delegation, initiated a tactical counter-offensive. The aim was to create a favorable environment for the talks and to gauge the military stance of the UN forces.[38] On September 5, the CCF's 19th Army initiated small-scale offensives in the Cholwon area. Subsequently, the XLVII, XLII, and XXVI Corps joined the assault, primarily targeting US divisions and inflicting significant damage.[39] Concurrently, General Van Fleet who had taken command of the Eighth Army from Ridgway, instructed his corps to conduct minor raids to counterbalance the enemy forces and launch limited offensives to fortify his defense line. The battles at Punchbowl and Heartbreak Ridge were the central engagements for the Eighth Army in the mid-eastern region, concluding with a victory. Furthermore, Van Fleet launched Operation Commando, which commenced on October 3 and continued until October 19 on the western front.[40] Simultaneously, the UNC intensified air interdiction operations in North Korea, targeting enemy logistics, which included raids on Pyongyang.[41]

After seeing no progress from the negotiations that resumed on October 25, Mao Zedong directed the delegation in Korea to accept the UN's proposal for the demarcation line on October 29.[42] By October 31, he informed Stalin that the current contact line would serve as the demarcation line.[43] Moreover, Mao was prepared to propose a cessation of hostilities to the UN forces. Although Stalin had not responded to Mao's suggestions to concede to the UN regarding the demarcation issue from October 18 to November 1, Mao firmly believed that if the enemy would not compromise on the demarcation line, it would be in China's and North Korea's best interest to finalize an armistice based on the current contact line.[44]

In Washington D.C., members of the SJM exerted pressure on General Ridgway to persist with the negotiations. Ridgway was uneasy about holding the talks in Kaesong, given its significance to his military positioning. The Communists had exploited the negotiations to use the city for their military purpose. He also found it challenging to handle baseless accusations from the Communist side regarding neutrality violations at the

negotiation site. Nonetheless, politico-military leaders in Washington believed that the UN forces should steer clear of appearing as the ones derailing the negotiations. Consequently, the SJM advised Ridgway to be more receptive to the Communist side's propositions. Ultimately, when the Communist representatives proposed adopting the current contact line as the demarcation line, SJM members endorsed the idea and convinced Ridgway to agree, provided an armistice was concluded within 30 days.[45] Thus, agenda item 2 was established on November 27, 1951.

The Second Round: Exchanging Prisoners of War

After reaching consensus on agenda item 2, the Communist forces fervently fortified their trenches. Anticipating an armistice within 30 days from November 27, the Commander of the Eighth Army primarily focused on defensive operations. The Communists capitalized on this by bolstering their defensive stance. For instance, between November 29 and 30, a substantial convoy of troops and trucks was spotted, a sight previously rare due to raids by the UN air force.[46] While Chinese and North Korean forces had initiated fortifications in mid-1951, the reduced UN offensives in December 1951 provided an opportune moment to accelerate construction. Their elaborate defense system included tunnels, bunkers, mines, and fire positions.[47] Additionally, the Chinese established various facilities such as auditoriums, offices, medical clinics, ammunition depots, and even recreation clubs.[48]

Meanwhile, the focus of the negotiations shifted to agenda item 3, which addressed supervisory measures for the armistice. Both items 3 and 4 were complex issues that were not easily agreed upon. The UN forces were particularly wary of allowing the reconstruction of airfields in North Korea. If the Communists were able to deploy Mig-15s to these airfields, it could compromise UN air operations and even pose threats to the Japanese home islands. On the other hand, the Communist side was keen on restoring these airfields to counter the UN air forces and safeguard their troops. To advance the negotiations, the UN side, overriding General Ridgway's objections, consented to the reconstruction of the Communist airfields. While President Truman was initially opposed to this concession, members of the JCS managed to persuade him to progress with the negotiations arguing that there was no way to prohibit Communists from reconstructing airfields. Despite making concessions on key issues, the UN failed to finalize an armistice within the 30 days following the agreement on agenda item 2.

Agenda item 4, concerning Prisoners of War (POWs), proved to be the most challenging topic of the negotiations. The UN side was initially disheartened when they learned of the small number of UN POWs the Communists claimed to have. While the UN forces held 132,474 POWs, the Communists reported having only 11,599 on December 18, 1951.[49] In light of this disparity, Washington leaders opted for a voluntary repatriation system based on the POWs' ideological beliefs. This approach was proposed by Brig. General Robert A. McClure, a psychological warfare specialist. He argued that POWs wishing not to return to China could be sent to Taiwan to ensure their safety.[50] This strategy would not only address the imbalance in repatriation but also symbolize a democratic triumph over Communist autocracy. Based on POW screenings, roughly 70,000 wished to be repatriated, including 6,400 of the 20,000 Chinese POWs. Unsurprisingly, the Communists vehemently resisted this approach, using it as a primary reason to postpone an armistice.

The SJM took an active role in addressing the POW issue. Meetings on this topic, sometimes including the President, were frequent between December 1951 and February 1952.[51] Some SJM members even visited General Ridgway during this period. Responding to an urgent request from the UNC Commander, both President Truman and SJM members firmly opposed the principle of forcible repatriation on February 27.[52] In March, there was debate among SJM members about whether the President's stance was final. While diplomats in the State Department contended that the President was resolute, military leaders disagreed.[53] Ultimately, Washington's leaders directed General Ridgway to present a "package proposal"—covering agenda items 3 and 4—to the Communist side on April 28. US leadership decided to make concessions regarding the airfield issue, aimed to gain flexibility on the list of neutral countries that would oversee the armistice, and proposed a full exchange for POWs who wished to be repatriated.[54]

Contrary to the UN side's efforts, China and the Soviet Union conspired to prolong the war, ensuring the U.S. remained embroiled in the Korean conflict. On April 22, 1952, Mao Zedong sent telegrams to Lee Kenung, the power behind the scenes at Panmunjom, and to Kim Il Sung, urging a rigid stance on the POW issue and a deliberate delay in the negotiations for several months. According to Kim Donggil, Mao sought Soviet backing for China's First Five-Year Development Plan. Recognizing Stalin's reluctance to conclude the war swiftly, as evident from his stance on the demarcation line agreement the previous year, Mao

deduced that sustaining the conflict was essential to secure support from the USSR.[55]

Furthermore, Beijing and Moscow's leaders aimed to extend the war for at least another year. During his visit to Moscow, Zhou Enlai communicated Mao's perspective: continuing the war would benefit the Communists by hindering U.S. preparations for a potential World War III. Zhou asserted that if the U.S. was not seeking peace, China was prepared to continue the conflict for an additional year. Stalin believed the U.S. was not positioned for another global war and argued that if the U.S. remained mired in Korea for 15 to 20 years, they would not initiate World War III. Concluding their discussions, Zhou Enlai stressed that prolonging the negotiations aligned with China's interests and expressed China's readiness to conduct combat for another two or three years. Additionally, Zhou and Stalin strategized on how to assist North Korea, which had faced bombings from UN air forces.[56]

The differences in the objectives of the UN and the Communists laid bare the true nature of the armistice negotiations. While U.S. leaders aimed to end the war through an armistice, the Communists sought to prolong it, anchoring the U.S. to the Korean Peninsula for their strategic advantage. With these varying intentions, both sides strategized to exert military pressure on each other. The UN delegation's representative at Panmunjom declared an indefinite recess after the Communists turned down the UN's final offer on October 8, 1952. This move had been intricately orchestrated by top politico-military officials, including the President, aiming to compel the Communists toward an armistice.[57] Simultaneously, the UNC Commander initiated Operation Showdown. The Communists, on the other hand, had autumn offensives in the pipeline for 1952. Acting on Zhou's recommendation, Peng Dehuai, Kim Il Sung, and Pak Hon-yong covertly traveled to Moscow in early September to formulate plans for these offensives.

Contrary to U.S. leaders' expectations, Operation Showdown did not achieve its intended outcomes. The CCF successfully defended their positions in Sanggamryong.[58] Starting on September 18, 1952, and based on the "Counter-Offensive," the Communist forces launched a series of offensives. These were led by the CCF's XXXIX, XII, and LXVIII Corps and lasted until October 5. These attacks were not only well-coordinated but also involved various military branches and included tanks. Although the CCF admitted that battles at White Horse and Betti were not as successful, they claimed victories in other operations. With the onset of

Operation Showdown on October 14, the CCF shifted to a defensive stance, holding onto Mount Oseong.[59] Significantly, the Communist forces chose not to return to Panmunjom to prevent further military losses. This change in behavior marked a notable difference in the Communist response to UN military pressure between 1951 and 1952.

Conclusion

The conclusion of the Korean Armistice was precipitated by the sudden death of Stalin on March 5, 1953. This unexpected event paved the way for a cessation of hostilities on the Korean Peninsula. Without this pivotal moment, it is likely that the conflict would have persisted for years, as Communist leaders aimed to embroil the U.S. deeper in the Korean conflict. The Communists arguably achieved their objectives before Stalin's passing. Meanwhile, the UN side struggled to find definitive means to negotiate an end to the war. Regrettably, as the negotiations progressed, the once pronounced military superiority of the UN forces diminished, particularly against well-entrenched Communist forces.

However, the objectives of the Communist side significantly differed from those of the UN. The Communists aimed to secure gains through negotiations that they could not achieve on the battlefield. They even undertook military operations to inflict maximum damage on UN forces when larger-scale attacks were unfeasible. Moreover, the Communists were intent on undermining U.S. power and prestige by prolonging the war on the Korean Peninsula. The USSR sought to counterbalance U.S. influence by drawing it into a conflict with China, while China sought Soviet support for its economic development.

It is worth noting that the UN side made progress in negotiations when they demonstrated superior military capabilities. The success of the Eighth Army in the field allowed the UN side to establish the demarcation line at an earlier date. In 1952, after overcoming the UN's Operation Showdown, the Communist forces continued their offensives unabated. They did not return to the negotiation table until after Stalin's death. The U.S. administration's decision-making process appeared to have little influence on the negotiations. It was military might, rather than astute decision-making, that truly impacted the progression of the talks.

Notes:

[1] C. Turner Joy, *How Communists Negotiate* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1955)

[2] William H. Vatcher Jr, *Panmunjom* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, INC., 1958)

[3] Walter G. Hermes, *Truce Tent and Fighting Front* (Washington D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1963)

[4] Rosemary Foot, *A Substitute for Victory* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990)

[5] Yang Daehyun, *Yeoksaui Jeungon* [The Witness of History] (Seoul: Hyungseolchulpansa, 1993)

[6] Pingchao Zhu, Americans and Chinese at the Korean War Cease-Fire Negotiations, 1950-1953 (Lewiston·Queenston·Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2001)

[7] Kim Boyoung, *Jeonjaenggwa Hujeon* [War and Armistice] (Seoul: Hanyang University Press, 2016)

[8] Kim Donggil, "Hyujeonhyubsangeso Buk, Jung, So Samgukui Taedo Byunhwa Mit Gyulgwa [The Change of Attitudes and Its Results of China, North Korea, and the Soviet Union during the Armistice Negotiations]," *Hangukgwa Gukjejongchi*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (Autumn 2019), 27-66

[9] Kyengho Son, "The Establishment and the Role of the State-JCS Meeting during the Korean War," *War in History*, Vol. 27, Issue 2 (April 2020), 307-323

[10] Communiqué Issued at the Conclusion of Truman Attlee Discussions, *Foreign Relations of the United States (Hereafter FRUS) 1950, Korea*, Volume VII (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1976), 1476-1479

[11] Minutes of the 74th Meeting of the National Security Council, President's Secretary File, Box 182, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, MO

[12] A Report to the National Security Council on U. S. Position Regarding a Cease-Fire in Korea

[13] Secretary of Defense, "A report to the National Security Council on U. S. Position Regarding a Cease-Fire in Korea," December 13, 1950, National Security Council Report #95, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, MO, accessed August 4, 2023, https://www.trumanlibrary.gov/node/315879.

[14] Memorandum of Telephone Conversation, by the Director of the Office of United Nations Political and Security Affairs (Bancroft), *FRUS, 1950, Korea*, Volume VII, p. 1518. Acheson suggested this idea to the US delegation to the UN.

[15] The United States Representative at the United Nations (Austin) to the Secretary of State, *FRUS, 1950, Korea*, Volume VII, 1595-1598

[16] Memorandum by the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, *FRUS, 1950, Korea*, Volume VII, 1574-1575

[17] Memorandum of Conversation, by Mr. Lucius D. Battle, Special Assistance to the Secretary of State, *FRUS, 1950, Korea*, Volume VII, 1601-1604

[18] They worked together to examine the draft of the directive. The directive requested General MacArthur to inflict as much damage to the CCF, then to move his troops to Japan when the CCF crossed the Gum River line, far south of the Han River.

Joint Chiefs of Staff to CINCFE, CCS 381 Far East (11-28-50) Sec 1, RG 218 JCS Geographic Files, Box 14, NARA, College Park, MD; *Military Situation in Far East*, part 3, pp. 2179-2180; U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, "Joint Chiefs of Staff Report for Senate Committee on Korean Operations," (April 30, 1951), p. 80; Secretary's File Box 77, Truman Library

[19] Haruki Wada, "The Korean War, Stalin's policy, and Japan," *Social Science Japan Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (April 1988), 22, accessed March 9, 2023, https://www.jstor.org/stable/30209236

[20] Dean Acheson, *Present at the Creation* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1969), 684-686

[21] It was created at the end of 1950 to find measures to implement NSC 68/3 on the order of President Truman. Since then, the meeting became the main body to devise politico-military affairs including matters on the Korean War. Mainly directors of State and JCS consisted of the meeting, so it was a flexible and powerful non-standing organization. It lasted until 1962. For more information on the SJM, see Kyengho Son, "The Establishment and the Role of the State-JCS Meeting during the Korean War*," War in History*, Vol. 27, Issue 2 (April, 2020), 307-323

[22] Ne Rungjeon, 『*Ne Rungjeon Weiiru* [Memoir of Ne Rungjeon]』 (Beijing: Jiefanggin Chubanshu, 1984), 741-741, cited from Kim Donggil, "Hyujeonhyubsangeso Buk, Jung, So Samgukui Taedo Byunhwa Mit Gyulgwa [The Change of Attitudes And Its Results of China, North Korea, and the Soviet Union during the Armistice Negotiations]," *Hangukgwa Gukjejongchi*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (Autumn 2019), 35

[23] Kim Donggil (2019), p. 37

[24] "Text of Statement Broadcast by Malik on 'the Price of Peace,' *The New York Times*, June 24, 1951

[25] Check List on Action to Meet Present Korean Situation. *FRUS 1951 Korea and China*, Vol. VII, 569-571

[26] Memorandum of Conversation, by the Director of the Office of Northeast Asian Affairs (Johnson), *FRUS 1951 Korea and China*, Vol. VII, 566-569

[27] Memorandum of Conversation, by the Director of the Office of Northeast Asian Affairs (Johnson), *FRUS 1951 Korea and China*, Vol. VII, 586-587

[28] Paul Nitze, Ann M. Smith, and Steven L. Rearden, *From Hiroshima to Glasnost: at the Center of Decisions* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1989), 113-115

[29] James F. Schnabel and Robert J. Watson, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and National policy*, Vol. III 1951-195 The Korean War Part II (Washington D.C.: Office of Joint History, 1998), 14-16

[30] Ibid.

[31] Transcript of Proceedings, Eleventh Session, Conference at Kaesong, Korea, on the Armistice Proposal, 27, 4-10, July 1951, National Institute of Korean History, Korean History Database, accessed August 15, 2023, https://dbhistory.go.kr/item/imageViewer.do?levelld=pn_001_0010

[32] Telegram from Mao Zedong to Gao Gang and Kim Il Sung on June 13, 1951, Record Group 45, File 1, Document 339, 58-60, cited from Anatoly Torkunov, Heo Namsung and Lee Jongpan trans., 『*Hangukjeonjaengui Jinsil* [The Truth of the Korean War]』 (Seoul: RINSA, 2002), 238-240

[33] Telegram from Mao Zedong Stalin on 13 July 1951, Record Group 45, Contents 1, Document 340, pp. 43-45, cited from Anatoly Torkunov (2002), 274-275

[34] Ibid

[35] Telegram from Stalin to Mao on 21 July, 1951, Record Group 45, Contents 1, Document 340, p. 92, cited from Anatoly Torkunov (2002), 296

[36] Kim Donggil (2019), 46

[37] It was one of 15 cases of such claims. During the Kaesong negotiation period both sides admitted couple of cases for violation claims. The UN side did not agree with the Communist accusation

[38] Mao Zedong, *Mao Zedong Junshi Wenji* [Military Writings of Mao Zedong], Vol. VI (Beijing: Junshi Kexueyuan Chubanshe, 1993), 300-301, cited from Haengeongjachibu Jeongbugirokbozonso [Governmental Records Archives under the Ministry of Administration of Self Governance], *Hangukjeonjanggwa Jungguk* [The Korean War and China] Vol. II (Daejon, 2002), 157

[39] Zhongguo Junshi Kexueyuan [The Institute of Military Science], Gukbangbu Gunsapyonchanyeonguso [Institute for Military History] trans., *Zhongguo Chaoxian Zhanzheng Shi* [The CCF's Korean War History] Vol. III, (Seoul, 2005), 157-158

[40] Walter G. Hermes, *Truce Tent and Fighting F*ront (Washington D.C.: Center of Military History U.S. Army, 1992), 80-102

[41] USAF Historical Division, "United States Air Force Operations in the Korean Conflict: 1 November 1950 – 30 June 1952," https://www.afhra.af.mil/Portals/16/donuments/studies/51-100/AFD-096601-064.pdf. (Accessed 19 August 2023)

[42] Kim Donggil (2019), 48

[43] Ibid

[44] Telegram from Mao to Stalin on 14 November 1951, Record Group 45, Contents 1, Document 342, pp. 16-19, cited from Anatoly Torkunov (2002), 342-346

[45] The idea of a 30 day-limit was devised by Paul Nitze. Memorandum for the Record of State-Joint Chiefs of Staff Meeting Held in Room 2c-923, The Pentagon Building on Friday, 12 November 1951. At 1100 PPS JCS Meeting 1947-53 Box 1, Entry A1-558J, Lot Files, Policy Planning Staff/Council Meetings with DoD and JCS, 1947-1962, RG 59, NARA, MD; Kyengho Son, "6·25 Jeonjaeng Gi Migukjeongbu Nae Jeongchi-Gunsagwangye Baljeongwa Jeongjeonhyusang Bunseok [Analyses on the Development of Politico-Military Relations and Armistice Negotiations of the US in the Korean War]" *Gunsasachongseo* [A Collection of Military History] Vol. VI, (Gukbangbu Gunsapyonchanyeonguso [Institute for Military History], 2017), 74

[46] Yang Daehyun, *Yeoksaui Jeungon* [The Witness of History] (Seoul: Hyungseolchulpansa, 1993), 155-156

[47] Pingchao Zhu, Americans and Chinese at the Korean War Cease-Fire Negotiations, 1950-1953 (Lewiston·Queenston·Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2001), 132

[48] Ibid

[49] James F. Schnabel and Robert J. Watson (1998), 70

[50] James F. Schnabel and Robert J. Watson (1998), 59-60

[51] General Bradley and other SJM members had a meeting over the principles of repatriating POWs on December 5, 1951. They dispatched General John E. Hull, Vice

Chief of Staff US Army, and Mr. U. Alexis Johnson, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State of Far Eastern Affairs to Tokyo and Korea. They departed Washington on 13 February and exchanged views over the issue with staff members of the UNC, and delegation members in Panmunjom and looked around Koje Island, the place of the largest POW camp, finally arriving in Washington on 22 February. Memorandum for the Record, by the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Johnson), 10 March 1952, *FRUS, 1952-1954, Korea*, Vol. XV, Part 1, 76-79

[52] Memorandum of Conversation, by the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Johnson), 27 February 1952, *FRUS, 1952-19954, Korea*, Vol. XV, Part 1, 68

[53] Memorandum of the Substance of Discussion at a Department of State Joint Chiefs Staff Meeting, 19 March 1952, *FRUS, 1952-1954, Korea*, Vol. XV, Part 1, 100-103

[54] The Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Commander in Chief Far East (Ridgway), 27, April 1952, *FRUS, 1952-1954, Korea*, Vol. XV, Part 1, pp. 178-179. The Communist side had insisted to designate the USSR as a neutral state as a member of Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission.

[55] Kim Donggil (2019), 52-54

[56] Minutes of the Conference between Stalin and Zhou Enlai, , Record Group 45, Contents 1, Document 329, pp. 64-72, cited from Anatoly Torkunov (2002), 358-365

[57] A series of discussions, communications, and directives are well-described in the following documents: Memorandum by the Executive Secretary of the National Security Council (Lay) to the President, 24 September 1952, , *FRUS, 1952-1954, Korea*, Vol. XV, Part 1, 532-537; The Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Commander in Chief, Far East (Clark), 25 September, pp. 539-540; and The President to the Commander in Chief, Far East, 26 September, 544.

[58] Pingchao Zhu (2001), 138

[59] *Zhongguo Chaoxian Zhanzheng Shi* [The CCF's Korean War History] Vol. III, 415-421