

"By God, I'm going to let them have it!": A Theoretical Examination of the Korean Crisis, June 24-30, 1950

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本稿は1950年6月25日から30日に至る朝鮮危機の間の意思決定の過程を検討するものである。その際1962年のキューバミサイル危機の分析にアリソンが開発した分析を用いる。アリソンはキューバ危機の展開に次の三つのモデルを用いた。1) 合理的ファクター 2) 組織の決定過程 3) 政府内の利害関係の三つのモデルである。次にこれが朝鮮戦争の場合にも当て嵌まることを例証するため、相矛盾する理論的「断面」を提供する歴史上の事実を三例挙げて、ここで用いた方法が朝鮮危機の事例を考察する場合にどのように有効に働くかを示した。この危機の期間中の意思決定においては政府内の利害関係の尺度で見た時に現れる政治的要素がもっとも有力で、米国介入は多く見てもほんの少数人を中心として決定されたものである、と本稿は結論する。H.S. トルーマン大統領、D. アチソン國務長官は強硬な行動に動かされやすく、彼らの意思決定過程では強硬策以外のオプションはほとんど除外されたのである。

This paper looks at the decision making process involved in the Korean crisis, June 25 to 30, 1950, using the analytical framework developed by Allison for the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962. Allison applies three models to the development of the Cuban crisis: 1) the rational actor, 2) organizational process, and 3) governmental politics. It then employs three historical narratives to present opposed theoretical "cuts," in order to illustrate the ways that these approaches can be applied to the Korean case. The study concludes that political factors embodied in the governmental politics model predominated in decision making during the crisis, and the U.S. decision to intervene centered on a few people, at most. President Harry S Truman and Secretary of State Dean Acheson were predisposed to strong action, and the decision making process nearly precluded any but a strong response to the crisis

Introduction

The early postwar period brought a succession of major disputes and crises between the U.S. and the Soviet Union.¹ In 1949, these culminated in two events believed at the time by the administration of President Harry S Truman to have been calamities: Soviet development of an atomic bomb, and the triumph of the Communist revolution in China. The American right wing reacted in horror to these events, declaring Communists and their dupes within the American government responsible.² A siege mentality settled upon the Administration.

The next year brought what was to be the supreme crisis of the Truman years, the North Korean attack on South Korea. Truman and his advisors reacted to this crisis in an unsurprisingly tough manner, given their calm handling of previous crises of the early Cold War. The resulting war, which lasted until July, 1953, successfully halted the North Korean attempt to defeat South Korea, but only at great cost to the U.S. and Truman: a three-year, stalemated war, 54,246 Americans killed, not to mention between three and four million Koreans and one million Chinese, diversion of resources from the defense of Europe and U.S. domestic programs, a huge military buildup, and a divisive political atmosphere that cost Truman's Democratic Party control of the Presidency and Congress in 1952.³ Moreover, by directly intervening in a nationalist conflict and fighting a limited war against Communist forces on the Asian mainland, American action on the Korean

peninsula foreshadowed the greater U.S. intervention in Vietnam from 1965 to 1973.⁴

Because America achieved its minimum objectives in halting North Korean and then Chinese advances, it did not seriously consider aspects of the Korean conflict that could have saved it from the Vietnamese debacle a little over a decade later. As in Vietnam, U.S. public patience with the war grew thin in a remarkably short period, even though the North Korean attack on the South seemed to be a clear-cut case of aggression.⁵ The Korean War is notable for other dubious distinctions. Among postwar crises, perhaps only the Cuban Missile Crisis held a greater danger of nuclear confrontation. Korea is the only truly conventional war fought by the U.S. in the postwar era, and stands equal to other conventional wars in terms of epic battles: the Pusan Perimeter, Inchon, the drive to the Yalu, the Chosin Reservoir, the Imjin River, Heartbreak Ridge, and Porkchop Hill.⁶

The Korean War was the major test of early U.S. postwar containment policy. Study of how and why the Truman Administration reacted as it did to the Korean situation in June 1950, accordingly, can shed light on not only the decision for military intervention in Korea—what Truman called the most important decision of his tenure⁷ but also the major assumptions and decision making processes of American foreign policy. This paper looks at the decision making process of the Korean crisis, June 25 to 30, 1950, using the analytical framework developed by Allison for the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962. Like the Cuban crisis, the Korean crisis was a genuine crisis, held a high risk of confrontation with the Soviet Union, and seemed on the surface an excellent case of rational decision making. Also like the Cuban case, the Korean instance generated a large amount of information (at least on the American side), and was a clear case of the application of U.S. power in pursuit of U.S. interests.

Allison applies three models to the development of the Cuban crisis: 1) the rational actor, 2) organizational process, and 3) governmental politics.⁸ The rational actor approaches policy as a rational choice, and involves a national actor who functions as a rational unitary decision maker. He/she attempts to maximize values and uses the optimal means to achieve national ends. Action is justified by success. Organizational process looks at policy as an organizational output. Organizations are collections of loosely aligned groups dealing with factored problems in a parochial manner. Actions are organizational outputs, seen through established routines. Study attempts to find the routines that produce a particular output. Governmental politics analyzes policy as a political outcome, determined by players occupying positions with parochial interests and concerns about the problem at hand. Study of governmental politics focuses on the bargaining (or "pulling and hauling") among the players.

This paper begins with a brief review of literature that is relevant to the Korean crisis, and a look at Korean situational factors in June, 1950. Like Allison's classic study of the Cuban Missile Crisis, it then employs three historical narratives to present opposed theoretical "cuts," in order to illustrate the ways that Allison's theoretical approaches can be applied to the Korean Crisis. It employs three parallel historical narratives to illustrate how an author employing Allison's three theoretical models would describe the crisis. While some of the details reiterate information presented in the other cuts, they are presented in a slightly different form, to give a full picture in terms of each approach. This then allows for

comparison of and conclusions about the usefulness of the three Models in the Korean case.

This study concludes that, regardless of which approach one uses, political factors predominated in decision making during the crisis. The U.S. decision to intervene centered on a few people, at most. Truman and Secretary of State Dean Acheson, the premier actor besides the President, were predisposed to strong action, and the decision making process nearly precluded any but a strong response to the crisis as it developed. The two men came to the crisis with hardened views of both international crises and the nature of the Communist "threat." They relied heavily on biased advice from such sources as General Douglas MacArthur, the Supreme Commander Allied forces in the Pacific (SCAP), in Tokyo. They valued toughness and collegiality over diplomacy and conciliation. Moreover, they responded exclusively to the immediate military situation, ignoring the internal dynamics of Korean politics and discounting the opinions of U.S. allies.

Korean Crisis literature and Allison

The larger part of literature on the Korean crisis takes up the last week of June, 1950 from the standpoint of the American response to the North Korean invasion, or as an episode in postwar U.S. foreign policy. Most of these works approach the crisis from one of two perspectives. The first might be called the conventional approach, which paints the events of the crisis week as a clear case of naked North Korean aggression against a weak South Korea. One of the better recent military histories of the war, Blair's *The Forgotten War*, is typical. Describing the early hours of the attack from the point of view of Captain Joseph R. Darrigo, a military advisor with the U.S. Korean Military Assistance Group (K MAG), he notes the utter shock felt as KPA armored columns rolled over ROK Army units. Stationed near the 38th Parallel, Darrigo was "jarred awake" by North Korean artillery fire. He grabbed his clothes, and drove his jeep into central Kaesong, where he encountered a train load of KPA soldiers who had rumbled across the border:

The train—and the large numbers of NKPA soldiers—was proof to Darrigo that this was no "rice raid" or minor border incident. It was obviously a meticulously planned highly professional military attack, the real thing. And like Pearl Harbor, he thought, it had come on a Sunday morning without warning.⁹

In Washington, Blair relates, Truman and Acheson gathered members of the Administration to meet the perceived challenge of Communist aggression. They acted swiftly and decisively to bring the full weight of American might to save South Korea:

The die was cast; there was no turning back... America was intervening..., not because its strategic interests in the Far East were threatened but because Washington had to show Moscow that "raw aggression" was unacceptable, that a line had to be drawn.¹⁰

The conventional approach, under strong attack by left-leaning works in the 1980s, has been bolstered by post-Cold War revelations from Soviet archives, which show Kim Il Sung eagerly planning his attack on the South, with Stalin reluctantly and Mao warily going along.¹¹

At the other end of the spectrum are leftist revisionist works purporting to show that the Korean conflict was a civil war—not an invasion from the North, that it had been going on since the end of World War II, and that Rhee was just as responsible as Kim for the outbreak of war. One of the most vocal proponents of this view is Cumings, who has written several books and articles on the subject, including *Korea: the Unknown War* (with Halliday). Cumings asserts that the Korean War actually began in 1945 as a series of leftist revolts against the American-supported rightist government in the South. The U.S. helped the provisional government in the southern occupation zone brutally put down these revolts by the time the ROK came into being in 1948. The focus then shifted to a series of border incidents during 1949-1950.¹²

Between the conventional and revisionist approaches are those works that accept much of the conventional reading of the war, yet criticize America's Korea policy. Examples include works by Alexander and Pierpaoli. Both emphasize the bloody, indecisive nature of the conflict, the mistakes that led to American involvement in the war, and the importance of the Korean intervention in hardening the Cold War.¹³ Stueck's massive, nuanced history breaks new ground by placing the conflict in its international perspective, and carefully assessing recently released Communist documents, yet generally presents the "masterful deceit" of Kim's lightning summer attack on the South.¹⁴

Both the conventional and revisionist approaches, as valuable as they may be in laying out the varying ideological perspectives on the origins of the Korean War, are generally biased and therefore limited. Accordingly, a more scholarly approach to the crisis—and to crises generally—is needed. Paige first brought scholarly attention to the Korean crisis in his pathfinding 1968 study, *The Korean Decision*, which provides both a new framework for the events of 1950 and fresh theoretical insights about the nature of crisis decision making.

Paige considers the Korean crisis perfect for his needs—a quick, clear-cut decision taken by a limited number of important governmental actors in a time of crisis. It is thus a useful source of theoretical propositions and provide a base upon which subsequent studies of crisis could be built. To this end, Paige attempts four tasks: 1) to put together a chronology of the events of the crisis from the point of view of the principal actors, 2) to suggest the pattern of variables involved in the crisis, 3) to focus on the learning process regarding Korea and domestic politics, as they affected decision makers' attitudes toward the crisis, and 4) to formulate empirical propositions, normative conclusions, and recommendations for studying crises.¹⁵

Based on his walk through each day of the crisis, Paige sets forth theoretical propositions on crisis in six different areas.¹⁶ The principal difficulty with *The Korean Decision* is that it derives universal theoretical conclusions from just one case. The obviously singular characteristics of the Korean decision lurk behind most of the book's theoretical propositions. Further, by restricting his focus to a few actors, he ignores such crucial factors as the Korean political situation (as addressed by Cumings), America's role in fostering the Cold War, and the fact that the major actors differed only on details, not the desirability, of intervention.¹⁷

Allison provides a much more structured, systematic approach. Rather than deriving a set of ostensibly empirical conclusions from one case, he first sets up

three hypothetical models, or "conceptual lenses," through which any crisis can be viewed. Unlike Paige, he has a clear theoretical agenda, i.e., Model III, governmental politics, as the most appropriate lens for examination of crises. Model I, the rational actor, is the traditional approach used in international relations study, and assumes that most important IR decisions are made as the result of "purposive acts of unified national governments." Nations act according to the strategic situation they face, and to conform to overall goals and interests that nation pursues. To Model I scholars, the Cuban Crisis is easily explicable as a series of "reasonable" actions and reactions by, respectively, the Soviet and American governments. Model II, or organizational process, postulates that key decisions result from the "distinctive logic, capabilities, culture, and procedures" of the large bureaucratic organizations that make up the government. The model sees bureaucrats, operating through "standard operating procedures," or routinized methods for handling given situations, as responsible for key developments at every stage of the crisis.¹⁸

Allison spends a good deal of his book knocking down Model I, and presenting Model II as only a weak alternative. Having disposed of two inadequate approaches, he promotes Model III as far superior to organizational process in explanatory power because it combines individual political actors with organizational perspectives. Politicians, the model asserts, are in control of decision making, yet are tethered to their respective organizations and must constantly jockey for position through "regularized channels" of communications ("pulling and hauling," Allison calls it) as the decision making process unfolds. The Cuban Crisis became Kennedy's finest moment, largely due to decisions that emerged in the Ex-Comm meetings held throughout the crisis. Allison suggests that Model III can be readily manipulated and studied through examination of regularized communications, and iterated through game theory.¹⁹ For Allison, process is more important than actual events, and his chosen crisis is but a set piece in which his models can play out on the theoretical stage.

One can easily see the applicability of Allison's method to other crises. The Korean Crisis of June 1950 is useful as a test case because of intriguing similarities to the Cuban Crisis, as well as slight differences. Like the Cuban case, the duration of the Korean crisis was short and intense, and discussion centered on possibilities for military action. Cold War and Soviet-American bilateral issues were paramount, and decisions on both sides were made by a chief executive with a few advisors. Key differences are that: 1) the Cuban Missile Crisis was a bilateral superpower confrontation that teetered on the brink of nuclear war, and 2) the Korean conflict ostensibly concerned only the U.S. versus North Korea, though both the Soviets and Chinese entered as supporting players.

Allison's is an original approach, a sort of *Roshomon* of political science, three witnesses called to the scholarly bar to relate three entirely different, yet interlocking tales. Nonetheless, there are numerous difficulties inherent in his schema. For example, Models II and III are not clearly differentiated. Also, Allison does not explain why Model I must be completely overthrown. Perhaps elements of it are appropriate to certain aspects of decision making. Further, the "pulling and hauling" inherent in Model III may be irrelevant if major actors such as John F. Kennedy (or Harry S Truman) have already set their basic course from the beginning and are just holding meetings to work out the details. Keeping these difficulties in mind, here follows an attempt to examine the U.S. response to the

Korean crisis from these three perspectives, *a la* Allison. To begin with, it is useful to examine the situation in Korea on the eve of the Korean War.

June 1950: The Korean Situation on the Eve of War

Three theoretical approaches. In the inchoate climate of early postwar Korea, American policy remained untested, and in fact largely unformed. As seen from the standpoint of Model I, Korea was a strategic land bridge between Japan and China that naturally attracted the attention of the emerging Cold War superpowers. Given the hardening regional ideological divide and the advent of rival regimes on the peninsula, conflict between the Koreans became probable after the failure of early unification initiatives. A quick American response could be expected, once the strategic implications of a unified Korea under Communist control became apparent.

Model II observers would see the developing Korean standoff as an unnecessary conflict in an obscure land, blundered into by a U.S. administration that focused on an imaginary Soviet threat in Europe. That the U.S. was unable to prevent such an eminently preventable war can be blamed on its short-sighted foreign policy planners. By contrast, Model III provides two easy, inter-linked answers for the late 1940s American confusion over Korea: domestic politics and foreign policy decision making. Simply put, Korea was a very small fish compared to the much larger fish dominating U.S. politics/foreign policymaking of the early postwar period. Trying to put World War II behind them, Americans had little time for petty conflicts in unknown lands. The growing anti-Communist paranoia was directed at the socialist giants, the Soviet Union and China, and was fueled by the Republican search for any means to attain electoral success after the party's long stretch in the wilderness.

The division of Korea. Korea emerged as a potential source of superpower tension at the end of World War II. The Allies had promised Korean independence at the Cairo Conference in 1943,²⁰ and at Yalta, U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt and Soviet leader Josef Stalin tentatively agreed on both a Soviet role in postwar Korea and a trusteeship arrangement for the country but deferred details to subsequent negotiation.²¹ American State Department officials proposed partition of the Korean peninsula in August, 1945, as a way to prevent the Soviets from taking over the whole country and to put the capital, Seoul, in American hands. Stalin accepted the division at the 38th Parallel in order to maintain a working relationship with the U.S. and possibly receive a quid pro quo on Allied occupation of Japan.²²

Negotiations to set up a trusteeship in Korea proved fruitless. The Soviets embraced the trust idea as a possible means of unifying Korea under the leadership of Kim Il Sung, whom the Soviets installed as interim head of state in the northern occupation zone in October, 1945. As head of an ostensibly pro-Soviet faction in the Korean Workers' Party, Kim consolidated his hold on power by purging pro-Chinese and local Communists. The Soviets suggested excluding any groups that opposed the idea of trusteeship from proposed unification elections. Since this would effectively disenfranchise most of the non-Communist southern parties, the U.S. opposed the idea. Talks broke down in mid-1946.²³

Abandoning the trusteeship idea, the U.S. turned to the United Nations, where it proposed a U.N. commission to oversee unification elections. The General

Assembly passed a resolution dispatching such a commission to Korea, but the Soviets and their northern Korean charges refused to participate in unification elections set for May, 1948, believing them an attempt to unite the peninsula under southern leadership. Therefore, the commission was able to hold elections only in the southern occupation zone, which led to establishment of the Republic of Korea (ROK) under President Syngman Rhee, a former Korean exile and Princeton University student, on August 15, 1948.²⁴ The Soviets and northern Koreans held counter elections for people's committees, the local governing bodies that served as the basis for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), the government of the North launched in September, 1948.²⁵

From this point until the outbreak of war, inter-Korean dialogue and superpower consultation over Korean matters essentially ceased. Soviet military forces withdrew from the North in January, 1949, while American forces stayed until June of the same year.²⁶ In the year before war broke out, there were numerous border incidents between the two Koreas, as well as a number of invasion threats, most notably several from Rhee.²⁷

The North Korean attack. Few scholars dispute the general flow of events during the week of June 24-30, 1950. The (North) Korean People's Army (KPA) attacked the ROK across the 38th Parallel at 3:00 a.m., Sunday, June 25 (Korean time), with 110,000 troops, about 1,400 artillery pieces, and 126 tanks. Two KPA divisions kept ROK forces occupied on the strategically worthless Ongjin peninsula and in the Kaesong area, while a three division "main attack force" made a "blitzkrieg-type advance" on Seoul. Meanwhile, smaller units and local guerrillas moved down the eastern coast, assisted by amphibious landings.²⁸ The U.S. began aiding the South, first using U.S. airpower to attack KPA forces. By Tuesday the 27th, Seoul had fallen. On Friday the 30th, acting upon a recommendation by MacArthur, Truman decided to intervene with American ground troops.²⁹

The Korean Crisis: A First Cut (The Rational Actor)

To anyone employing a Rational Actor approach, the overriding importance of Korea is immediately obvious. The Korean peninsula is the strategic focal point of northeastern Asia, since it forms a natural bridge between Japan on the Pacific side and Manchuria and the Russian/Soviet Maritime Province on the Asian side.³⁰ As such, Korea can be an invasion route or base for attacks on any of the three neighboring powers, and so it is in the interest of all three to see that none of the others controls the peninsula. Consequently, Korea has been deemed an area of vital strategic interest to Japan since the sixteenth century and to Russia/Soviet Union since the early nineteenth century.³¹ China has had an interest in at least influencing Korea since the Han Dynasty 2,000 years ago, and controlled the small nation during parts of the Tang, Yuan, and Ming Dynasties.³²

During World War II, the Soviets showed a keen interest in Korea, as indicated by their demands at Yalta for control of the peninsula as part of the price for their participation in the Pacific War.³³ Short of complete domination, the Soviets' maximum objective was the control of at least the northern part of the country as a border buffer. Minimally, they would settle for ongoing influence and maintenance of a strong Korean Communist Party in the postwar period. In

defensive terms, they hoped to prevent the area becoming a base for attacks on the Soviet Far East.³⁴

America was a latecomer to interest politics in Korea. The country was deemed so unimportant to U.S. interests in the early part of this century that President Theodore Roosevelt conceded control of it to Japan, which effectively ruled the benighted country from 1895 until 1945.³⁵ In the pre-Korean War period, the U.S. had seen Korea as peripheral to major Asian interests in China and especially Japan. The U.S. sought trusteeship and later U.N.-sponsored elections as a way to secure the country as a democratic bastion and then go home, since the occupation of the southern zone was viewed as burdensome.³⁶ As late as a few months before the conflict, the American government had not yet recognized the strategic importance of the country. Acheson, in what was later widely perceived as a major blunder, declared in a January, 1950 speech to the National Press Club that Korea was not part of the U.S. "defense perimeter" in Asia.³⁷

To the Soviets, the absence of a public American commitment to South Korea may have seemed a golden opportunity to achieve several objectives. First, invasion would "permit a relatively inexpensive North Korean unification" that would not be resisted by the U.S.³⁸ Secondly, by approving the attack, it would help reassert Soviet leadership in the Communist world, then under challenge from the newly assertive Yugoslavia and freshly incarnated People's Republic of China. The Soviet image as the champion of revolutionary forces would also be enhanced throughout Asia.³⁹ Thirdly, the Soviet Union could significantly alter the balance of power in East Asia and counter American movement toward a unilateral alliance with Japan. By aggressively expanding on the Asian mainland, the Communists might force Japan at least to resist American pressure to join an Asian NATO, and at most to become neutral.⁴⁰ Under pressure from Japanese pacifists, the U.S. might agree to a demilitarized Japan. If the U.S. instead boosted its defense of Japan, it might do so by reducing its commitment to NATO.⁴¹ Finally, a friendly, unified Korea might offer military benefits. South Korea has several excellent warm water ports, and these could have been useful since the Soviets were about to lose their naval bases at Dalian (Darien) and Port Arthur under the recently negotiated Friendship Treaty with the PRC.⁴²

Similarly for North Korea, June 1950 may have seemed the most opportune moment to attack. The DPRK leadership may have felt it necessary to strike before Rhee was strong enough to carry out one of his many invasion threats,⁴³ or to crush the ROK before Rhee could consolidate his shaky regime—his supporters had just been soundly defeated in National Assembly elections.⁴⁴ An incidental political motive for the attack may have been to destroy the political base of Pak Hon-yong, the leader of the southern branch of the Workers' Party and an enemy of Kim.⁴⁵ By attacking without warning, North Korea may have hoped to not only force a quick reunification of the country and present the U.S. with a *fait accompli*, but bind the Soviets to support the move before they could reconsider.⁴⁶

American reaction to the invasion was a demonstration of how an ascendant superpower belatedly recognizes a challenge to a major interest and rushes to defend it. The nature of the challenge, an "open military attack across an accepted international boundary upon an American-sponsored government," was clearly unacceptable.⁴⁷ American officials, upon hearing of the invasion, instantly assumed

the Soviets were either "testing the will" of the U.S. to deter aggression or "undertaking a diversionary action" that would be followed up with a main attack elsewhere. Failure to respond might "embolden" the Soviets to attack somewhere else. This could diminish U.S. prestige and credibility, and hurt the U.N., which had been trying to arrange a unification of Korea along the lines suggested by the U.S. By intervening and subsequently expanding the war into North Korea, the U.S. "transform[ed] Korea from major to vital interest."⁴⁸

For Acheson, says Paterson, Korea was the "supreme test, a symbol...a link in a Cold War chain of events. To falter was to forfeit world leadership," to lessen America's reputation, to cripple containment. Intervention in the war, though, would allow the U.S. to implement and force consensus in favor of its recently adopted policy of global containment set down in NSC-68, the Administration's basic statement of Containment.⁴⁹

Moreover, the major American actors in the crisis were nearly unanimous in seeing the crisis as a replay of the events of the 1930's. The desire to learn the "lesson of Munich" and avoid the "appeasement" route taken by the Western powers in the inter-war years was the "lodestar" of the Truman Administration.⁵⁰ American leaders saw the North Korean invasion as the beginning of a chain of events that, like the German occupation of the Rhineland in 1936, could lead to further aggression and possibly another World War. Truman later wrote, "Communism was acting in Korea just as Hitler, Mussolini, and the Japanese had acted ten, fifteen, and twenty years earlier."⁵¹

Neustadt and May note Truman's use of historical analogies in the Korean case as useful to understanding the crisis. They suggest that the war got out of hand later not because of its beginning, but because America went beyond simply halting aggression to trying to "liberate" North Korea. At that point, American interests directly clashed with those of both the USSR and the PRC.⁵² China did not want hostile forces on its Yalu River border and so later intervened in the war to reestablish a friendly regime on its Manchurian border. (The Soviet Union, on the other hand, apparently never had any intention to intervene in the war, even under the cover of "volunteer" units, because it feared a great power confrontation with the U.S. that could lead to a general war.⁵³)

In addition to the Munich analogy, the Administration's experience since the end of World War II had been formed by an endless series of crises and disputes with the Soviet Union in which American officials viewed the latter as the aggressor.⁵⁴ Since the Soviets had set up the North Korean regime in 1945 and exercised stern control over Communist regimes it had established in Eastern Europe, it seemed reasonable to them to assume that the Soviets were behind the North Korean attack on the South.

In light of belated recognition of Korea's strategic value, the Munich analogy, and the Cold War atmosphere of the early postwar period, the decision to intervene came easily. Although the decisions leading up to intervention with ground troops were not taken at once, the intention to take strong action formed early. Acheson set the machinery in motion to take the matter up in the U.N. on Saturday night (the 24th), only hours after the State Department received word of the attack from Seoul. The State Department immediately concluded that the attack was probably a Soviet probe. Truman returned from his home in Independence, Missouri, on Sunday,

thinking of 1930's aggression and determined to meet the North Korean attack as forcefully as possible. At the first meeting at Blair House (across from the White House, which was then under repair) between the President and his advisors on the 25th, everyone was in seeming agreement on the need to respond to a clear case of aggression. So, within twenty-four hours of the attack, the American government had already decided on to aid the ROK by 1) providing arms, airdrops, and U.S. naval and air support; 2) using U.S. forces to ensure the evacuation of Americans from the battle area; 3) giving aid under U.N. sponsorship; and 4) moving contingents of the Seventh Fleet to the Taiwan Strait, ostensibly to prevent the fugitive Nationalist Chinese regime and the PRC from attacking each other.⁵⁵

By Friday, June 30, the situation in South Korea was rapidly deteriorating, and the KPA looked unstoppable without direct U.S. intervention on the ground. Having visited the ROK to see the situation for himself, MacArthur recommended the commitment of two divisions of the U.S. Eighth Army stationed in Japan. Truman convened another Blair House meeting early that morning, at which he suggested going beyond two divisions to deploy "any and all ground forces under [MacArthur's] command" in order to get South Korea as soon as possible. No one spoke against the idea, and instructions to that effect were soon cabled to MacArthur in Tokyo. Representatives from the Pentagon then briefed members of Congress about the decision taken, and only one member disapproved. The Congressional leadership unanimously backed Truman's decisions.⁵⁶

The Korean Crisis: A Second Cut (Organizational Process)

Throughout the Korean Crisis, Model II scholars might argue, organizational elements are vital in determining the direction of events. In fact, without the peculiar clash of bureaucratic interests that occurred in the late 1940s, the crisis could have been avoided. As the members of Congress were being briefed, they had no idea of how great a leap in the dark America had taken on June 30, 1950. If there had been any inkling that what Truman disingenuously referred to in a press release later that day as a "police action" involving "certain supporting ground units"⁵⁷ would balloon into a three-year war, a commitment of 500,000 personnel to war, a doubling of the armed forces, and a tripling of the military budget,⁵⁸ they probably would have asked a few questions. In fact, Korea was but a prelude to the greater disaster of Vietnam. Gibson suggests a seamless web between the two wars. Korea, he notes, "consolidated the notion" among Washington officialdom that expansion of Communism is caused by outside foreign aggression, and the Korean War was the first U.S. commitment made to stopping Communism in Indochina.⁵⁹ Korea was the forerunning case of an attempt to contain a local Communist movement by fighting a limited war that ended in high cost and frustration—and it may have been preventable.

How did the Washington bureaucracy get America into its first no-win, stalemate war? First, Washington had little understanding or concern about Korean affairs and so delegated authority to MacArthur to control Korea. The general, in turn, was so preoccupied with the task of reforming Japan that he ignored Korea.⁶⁰ The result was a "clumsy, ill-conceived" policy designed to stabilize South Korea as a non-Communist bastion. Local occupation administrators, generally

contemptuous of Korean culture and conditions and desiring to go home, promoted the autocratic Rhee and spurned popular democratic forces they believed were too far to the left. Washington provided limited military aid, but refused to give Rhee's army the tanks and heavy artillery it requested, and sorely needed in June, 1950.⁶¹

At the same time, as America demobilized its World War II legions and tried to adjust to a bipolar world, numerous bureaucratic fights were erupting in the government. None was more internecine than that between the State and Defense (before 1948, War) Departments. The global strategists at State, especially the Policy Staff under George Kennan, were eager for America to assume its place as a superpower. State policy toward Korea in the early postwar years was then being shaped by the Far Eastern desk and Foreign Service officers on duty in Seoul. They believed that American credibility and the strategic importance of the Korean peninsula demanded a continuing U.S. military presence in the ROK.⁶² The War/Defense Department, though, wanted to withdraw from Korea. The Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) concluded by 1947 that Korea had "little strategic interest" and that the small (45,000 man) U.S. force would be a liability that could not be adequately provisioned in the event of a general war.⁶³

At first, the Administration did not want to withdraw from Korea, but due to the economic strain of maintaining occupation forces in both Japan and Korea, Truman decided in March 1948, to withdraw the remaining 30,000 U.S. troops and hand the "Korean problem" to the U.N.⁶⁴ State Department officials tried to block implementation of NSC-8, which called for the withdrawal to be completed by the end of 1948, noting that until Soviet intentions toward the South became clearer and the U.N. took further action, any withdrawal might not be wise. They also called attention to the strategic threat a Communist Korea might pose to Japan, and how difficult it would be to get a treaty of alliance with Japan if the latter were faced with another Communist neighbor.⁶⁵

Despite this courageous rear guard effort, State bureaucrats lost this round because Acheson (a political appointee) did not want to question the military's judgment on this issue. Also, Acheson did not like the Rhee government in Seoul because of its repressive techniques. So the military establishment remained the dominant force shaping Korean policy for about two years, until the start of the war. Accordingly, when Acheson excluded Korea from the U.S. defense perimeter in his notorious National Press Club speech in early 1950, he was merely siding with the military brass.⁶⁶ Even so, the Pentagon kept a 500-man advisor force in the South until the war.⁶⁷

As the State and Defense (DOD) Departments wrangled over Korea, a serious breach opened between the White House and the Pentagon. To begin with, due to his experiences in World War I and as a U.S. Senator, Truman was often contemptuous of the military, and intended to cut back both its budget and authority. He proposed to do the former by placing severe budget ceilings on the Pentagon, slashing the latter's already austere budget of \$15 billion back to \$10 billion. This entailed personnel and equipment cutbacks in all branches of the service. He proposed to weaken military authority by unifying the armed forces within DOD and instituting a system of universal military training (UMT). The former idea, as watered down by the Republican Eightieth Congress, was adopted in 1947, but the latter proposal was repeatedly rejected.⁶⁸

The President was unsatisfied with DOD as established, and used his triumphant upset victory in the 1948 election to launch another assault on DOD. He wanted to further streamline the Pentagon, coordinate American and European defense through erection of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and bring World War II hero General Dwight Eisenhower back to active service as "presiding officer" of JCS (ostensibly as Army Chief of Staff), with wide discretion over budgetary matters. Further, he appointed Louis Johnson, whom he considered a decisive, take-charge manager, as Secretary of Defense.⁶⁹

These two White House appointments proved disastrous. Eisenhower became seriously ill after only six weeks of "tedious, tense negotiations" over the budget, and had to leave JCS for an extended vacation. Johnson proved a take-charge manager, to be sure, but seemed to rub everyone, especially the military brass, the wrong way. First, casting aside all JCS recommendations, he announced a draconian \$12.3 billion budget for 1950, which soon-to-be JCS chairman Omar Bradley greeted with "profound shock." Next, he cancelled the *United States*, the only modern aircraft carrier the Administration had allowed the Navy to construct since World War II. Then he appropriated the Secretary of the Army's office space for himself and had appointed as Army Secretary Gordon Gray, a man who did not want the office and had not even been informed of his appointment. Noting these developments, especially the stringent budget, Eisenhower refused to return to his Pentagon job.⁷⁰

In August, 1949, the Pentagon learned that the Soviets had exploded their first atomic bomb. The President, fearing the Pentagon would use the occasion to push for increases in their budget, refused to make any changes in U.S. nuclear policy for two months, when he allowed an increase in the stockpile of fission bombs. A decision to go ahead with development of hydrogen bombs was delayed until March, 1950.⁷¹

Meanwhile, a "mutiny" took place among the Navy brass, perhaps the most serious bureaucratic revolt in U.S. military history. The admirals were upset at the DOD unification process, as well as perceived civilian favoritism toward the Air Force and discrimination by Johnson. Testifying before the House Armed Services Committee, several Admirals and Marine Generals complained that Johnson was gearing American strategy toward an "atomic blitz" that was unworkable and immoral. They added that the Air Force's new B-36 bomber was an inadequate vehicle for delivering such a blitz because of its many technical failures. Bradley, speaking for the other services, answered with a public tongue lashing of the Navy for damaging the armed forces with hypocritical and crybaby arguments. Bradley and Johnson ended the mutiny by carrying out a full scale housecleaning of the Navy leadership. However, the President may have deserved part of the blame for the spectacle by not exercising tighter control of the Pentagon as commander-in-chief, by not paying closer attention to the demands of the Navy, and by appointing the tactless political hack Johnson.⁷²

Until early 1950, Johnson was successful in affirming the President's policy of cutting back the military. The explosion of the Soviet bomb and the advent of the PRC, though, caused Acheson to approve NSC-68, which called for substantial increases in U.S. military strength around the world. Johnson became enraged at what he thought was an end-run around him, but his military chiefs naturally supported the document. During a meeting at the State Department to discuss

whether to recommend NSC-68 to the President, Johnson exploded at Acheson, and then stalked out of the room, taking the military representatives with him. After Acheson told Truman about the incident, the President called Johnson on the carpet and the defense chief quietly signed NSC-68.⁷³ Johnson's star had nearly set by June, 1950, and partly as a result the Pentagon played a secondary role in the initial reaction to the crisis and the Blair House meetings. Acheson and State took the lead from the beginning.

Viewing all this intramural wrangling from Moscow, the Soviets may well have concluded that the Americans were not likely to respond vigorously to an attack on South Korea, and the operation may have seemed "an easy tidying up operation".⁷⁴ When America did respond in a vigorous manner, Soviet leadership was shocked. To avoid a confrontation with the U.S., the USSR distanced itself from North Korea, and refused to send either advisors or significant military assistance to the North.⁷⁵

Something the Soviets had not anticipated had occurred. The crisis atmosphere surrounding the U.S. government forced a quick reevaluation of Korean policy. The previously dominant Pentagon position not to commit U.S. forces in Korea had been overtaken by the State Department stance, as exemplified in NSC-68, in favor of strong response to any Communist challenges throughout the world.⁷⁶

Finally, there were a few bureaucratic wild cards at work in June 1950. Based on circumstantial evidence, liberal journalist I.F. Stone in 1952 painted SCAP in Tokyo as the villain that did the most to create America's first Asian quagmire. He insisted that Rhee provoked the war himself, with the support of Chinese Nationalist leader Chiang Kai-shek and secret assistance of MacArthur, as a way to elicit American aid and solidify his Tokyo regime. South Korean intelligence and SCAP knew of the impending KPA attack but did nothing to stop it. John Foster Dulles, Republican advisor to Acheson, Stone added, connived with MacArthur to plan a Korean crusade against Communism.⁷⁷

The Korean Crisis: A Third Cut (Governmental Politics)

For those using Model III, the politics of the early Cold War clearly determined American intervention in the Korean War. The bureaucratic infighting was incidental to the "great debate" going on within the U.S. polity and the government over the Cold War, especially concerning the establishment of the PRC and the Soviet acquisition of nuclear weaponry. Coming within weeks of each other, the two events created a firestorm of criticism of the Truman Administration's policies. Henry Luce of *Time* magazine charged Truman had "lost" China. The "China lobby" excoriated Truman's containment policy for calling for global containment of Communism while not helping Chiang, either on the Mainland or on Taiwan.⁷⁸ Many Congressional Republicans, upset at their loss of control of Congress in 1948, found Truman's hands-off policy toward Chiang and Taiwan a useful issue. Furthermore, Republican Senator Joseph R. McCarthy of Wisconsin had begun a series of attacks on the State Department in February, claiming it was filled with Communists. He later added personal attacks on Acheson and Truman.⁷⁹ By spring 1950, nearly midway through his second term, Truman was a

"beleaguered President, under immense domestic pressures for his alleged weaknesses in confronting the Communist threat at home and abroad."⁸⁰

Truman and his advisors gave only piecemeal answers to all of these charges. Concerning China, they suggested that the Middle Kingdom was too large for the U.S. to control, that a land war in Asia was not a good idea, that Chiang was unmanageable, and that there was little evidence of foreign influence in the Chinese revolution.⁸¹ Truman defended Acheson, insisted that McCarthy's attacks had done much damage to personal reputations, and suggested McCarthy had not uncovered any new information. He also refused to give files on loyalty cases to Congressional investigative committees. Acheson went before an informal joint session of Congress to answer policy questions and was impressed that no one asked about China.⁸²

The "fall" of China and the Soviet bomb also stimulated Truman to endorse an Acheson proposal for a policy reappraisal. The President directed that a joint Defense-State committee be set up for that purpose, but in picking NSC policy staff coordinator Paul Nitze to head it, internationalist views in accord with Acheson's held sway. The result of the committee deliberations was NSC-68, which called for a general commitment of U.S. strength to defend Europe and Japan.⁸³

Battered by the events of mid-1949 through early 1950, Truman and Acheson drew closer together. Combative by nature, "the Man from Missouri" as President was nevertheless

a decent, straightforward, friendly, intrepid man, not given to ruses or sleight of hand. Generally speaking, his character was simple and invigorating, a reflection of nineteenth-century ideals and, of course, prejudices.... Truman was not obsessed with ambition either for political power, money, or luxury. His ego would have fit into a corner of [Lyndon] Johnson's. Truman kept his troubles in perspective.... As best he could, Truman played the hand that had been dealt him in life.⁸⁴

Truman's concept of the Presidency involved strong leadership and championing of the common man. He believed in making decisive decisions, taking responsibility for his acts, and putting the office in perspective. He also felt history useful as a guide to action.⁸⁵

Acheson, by contrast, was a patrician lawyer from Connecticut dedicated to public service who had served in various government positions throughout his adult life. He succeeded the near demigod, George C. Marshall, as Secretary of State at the beginning of Truman's second term. What brought Truman and Acheson together were their complementary ideas of decision making. Acheson saw himself as the President's "first minister," the "pivotal point" of foreign policy, but nonetheless subordinate to the Chief Executive. Like Truman, Acheson thought meetings should be conducted in an open manner in which everyone had an opportunity to speak, then tried to reconcile opinions and slowly come to a decision.⁸⁶

In contrast to Truman and Acheson, Secretary Johnson was a highly ambitious and abrasive politico out of West Virginia. Secretary of War Harry Woodring, under whom Johnson had served as Assistant Secretary in the 1930s, said of him, "Louis is overambitious...with him it's sort of like being oversexed."⁸⁷ Johnson played an important role in Truman's reelection victory in 1948 as Democratic Party finance committee chairman. He was rewarded with the Defense Department post the next year, a post in which he could meld his twin interests in

military and political affairs, succeeding the erratic and tragic James F. Forrestal, the first DOD head. Rumors circulated that he wanted the Democratic Presidential nomination for 1952.⁸⁸

Truman assigned Johnson two primary tasks as Secretary: 1) strengthening the new office of Defense Secretary and overcome inter-service rivalry, and 2) keeping defense spending below a \$15 billion ceiling. In both of these tasks, he was successful, but at a high cost in terms of alienation of Navy admirals and resignations of a Secretary of the Navy, a Secretary of the Air Force, two Secretaries of the Army, the Chief of Naval Operations, and several admirals. An additional political task he pursued with a passion: defending the new DOD from perceived encroachment by the State Department.⁸⁹

Meanwhile, in Pyongyang, North Korea, North Korean leader Kim Il Sung was eager to unify his nation. In late 1949, he felt that the moment was at hand to strike quickly, defeating the still militarily weak South Koreans before their lukewarm U.S. sponsors. However, Kim did not want to act before informing Stalin and gaining at least his blessing and possibly his support. Accordingly, he traveled to Moscow at the end of the year to discuss the matter with the Soviet leader. The Korean leader insisted that a swift attack would ignite a popular revolt in the South and the ROK would soon crumble. Stalin expressed interest in Kim's idea, but asked him to come back with a more detailed plan. When Kim returned, Stalin was most concerned about possible American reaction, but did not ask many questions about the plan or discourage Kim.⁹⁰

Not getting all he wanted from the cautious, noncommittal Soviet leader, Kim was nonetheless sufficiently confident to begin preparations for his attack. When Rhee's supporters sustained heavy losses in National Assembly elections in early June, 1950, Kim thought the moment of destiny had arrived. Back in Moscow, Stalin remained aloof from the situation in Korea, withdrawing Soviet advisors and curtailing supplies to Kim in the weeks before the attack.⁹¹

In the early months of 1950, Rhee was desperate. He had helplessly watched the Americans withdraw from South Korea, and because of a number of threatening statements from Kim, was afraid the North Koreans were planning to invade. Further, Soviet advisors had trained the KPA as a "tough, mobile, fully equipped" army of 135,000 men and women, with 150 Russian T-34 tanks, a "full array" of Russian artillery, and 100 assorted aircraft. Tension mounted along the border, with nightly infiltrations by both sides.⁹² When Acheson and Truman made various statements affirming the U.S. hands-off policy toward Chiang and Taiwan, Rhee felt totally cut off in East Asia.⁹³ In the wake of his National Assembly losses, he welcomed Dulles on his tour of South Korea, telling the American diplomat of his passionate desire to unite the peninsula.⁹⁴

In Tokyo, MacArthur had been largely unconcerned about Korean developments since the end of World War II. The general was by 1950 a "legendary and intensely controversial" figure. "As America's proconsul in Japan MacArthur had assumed the air and power of a head of state."⁹⁵ Due to his preoccupation with Japan, he delegated leadership of the occupation force in Korea to General John Hodge, who hated the country and was more than happy to leave in 1948. The next year, responsibility for American affairs in Korea was handed to John J. Muccio, U.S. Ambassador to Seoul. MacArthur, the man who was become the central figure of

the Korean drama, was not roused to action until he landed in Korea two days into the crisis.⁹⁶

Truman was also not concerned about Korea before June 1950, but the boldness of the North Korean invasion struck Truman as a personal affront.⁹⁷ When he learned of the attack late Saturday night, the 24th, it seemed a political challenge that he could ill afford to let pass. His presidency and Democratic control of Congress in the upcoming election was at stake.⁹⁸ If he responded forcefully to the attack, he could at once steal the thunder from his right wing critics, restore credibility to the containment policy, show European allies that America stood by its commitments, and regain his reputation as a forceful leader. Moreover, since Truman was happiest when he could make decisive decisions, such a clear-cut case of Communist aggression presented him with an easy black-and-white decision.

The President waited a day to return from his home in Independence to Washington, but as noted in the other cuts, was already thinking about forceful action to meet the attack. He told his daughter Margaret, "We are going to fight." As he winged his way across America, he later wrote, he was mentally comparing the Korean attack to events in Europe in the 1930s.⁹⁹ Arriving in Washington, he said to an aide, "By God, I'm going to let [the North Koreans] have it."¹⁰⁰

Acheson's initial reactions indicate he also felt the attack was a serious matter. He immediately telephoned the President to inform him of the attack, and Truman authorized Acheson to take charge of the matter until he returned to Washington. The Secretary then arranged a meeting within State to discuss the implications of the move, the initial assessment of which pointed to a "Soviet probe." Further, he decided to take the matter to the U.N. and contacted Secretary General Trygve Lie, who arranged a meeting of the Security Council for the next day. Acheson wanted to exploit the Soviet boycott of the U.N. to get a unanimous Security Council resolution condemning the attack. When Johnson was informed, by contrast, he expressed surprise and merely referred inquiries to Secretary of the Army Frank Pace.¹⁰¹

The first Blair House meeting, held the next evening, Sunday the 25th, was a typical exercise in the Truman-Acheson decision making style. Acheson presented the facts as he knew them, and asked for suggestions. Truman then asked everyone to give their opinions before he said anything. Johnson briefly discussed the military situation but had no specific recommendations. There was a general feeling in the meeting that the Soviet Union was controlling the situation and that everything necessary should be done to meet a clear case of aggression, but they did not directly consider the possibility of intervention on the ground. The conferees generally thought the ROK could handle the situation, provided the Soviets had not provided extensive help to the DPRK invasion.

A cautious consensus quickly emerged in favor of Acheson's recommendations, which he had drafted in consultation with DOD officials. They agreed MacArthur should send supplies to the ROK Army and dispatch a U.S. military reconnaissance group to observe the invasion as it developed. Truman then summarized the conclusions of the meeting, and announced his decision in favor of the Acheson recommendations. Truman's initial decisions, then, were forceful yet cautious. The meeting broke up, though, in an air of uncertainty about what would

happen next.¹⁰² Bradley later noted that no one at the meeting had any idea the KPA was as strong as it would prove to be.¹⁰³

Subsequent meetings at Blair House conformed to this pattern of decision making. On the 26th, the KPA was on the outskirts of Seoul, and the ROK central front was disintegrating. The Security Council had already passed resolutions calling for "immediate cessation of hostilities" and providing sanctions against North Korea. A second meeting was called, at which Acheson recommended using U.S. air and naval forces to attack the KPA in order for the ROK Army to regroup. Truman strongly endorsed this proposal. He also approved dispatch of the fleet to the Taiwan strait and sending aid to Emperor Bao Dai of Vietnam.¹⁰⁴ There was no better way to answer domestic critics of the Administration's foreign policy than taking care of all the East Asian problem children at once.

As the crisis quickened, the collegial atmosphere of the earlier meetings evaporated. Seoul fell to the KPA on the 28th. MacArthur, visiting Korea, asked for troops to be sent at once to the ROK's defense on the 30th. "Time is of the essence," he implored, "and a clear-cut decision without delay is imperative." Army Chief of Staff Joseph Collins, circumventing the JCS, went directly to Pace with the request. Pace immediately called Truman at about 5:00 a.m. on the 30th. Truman made the historic decision to commit troops to Korea alone, without consulting his cabinet, his advisors, or Congress. The President then summoned a meeting of his advisors to announce his decision.¹⁰⁵

Discussion: Meanings and Interpretations

The war America entered in Korea the last week of June, 1950 was America's first limited anticommunist war and its first totally Presidential foreign war. Presidents had employed troops overseas for specific purposes before, such as in the Caribbean interventions or in the Boxer Rebellion, but never had an entire foreign war been waged out of the White House. For Truman, the war was entirely a governmental matter, to be decided in meetings ostensibly open to wide participation, but in actuality determined by him and Acheson. The public, the press, and the Congress were outside the governmental picture and were to be kept there. Having not been consulted, their support was naturally temporary and thin.

Without outside consultation or approval, Truman took the major decisions of the crisis week. Which of Allison's three models are most applicable to the crisis? All of them have weaknesses in this case. The rational actor describes postwar strategy but fails to consider the siege mentality affecting the Truman Administration. Organizational process considers the intramural fights between State and Defense, and between the White House and the military establishment, but it does not capture the larger political imperatives or personal relations at work in the administration. Governmental politics does not capture the substrata of political decisions.

Nevertheless, given features peculiar to this crisis, the governmental politics model is probably most appropriate to an accurate portrayal of events leading up to and constituting the crisis. As Allison suggests, most of the key decisions involved political interactions along regularized channels of communication. Harry Truman had a proclivity for decisive action and forceful decisions. Nonetheless, he relied on key advisors and trusted cabinet members and held well-organized meetings in

which he solicited advice and opinions. Truman's close working relationship with the like-minded Acheson and their joint control of meetings to foster consensus bolstered the initial decisions he had already made. The weakened, unpopular Johnson was in no position to challenge Acheson by the time of the crisis. Truman's open style of conducting meetings subtly reinforced his position, turning the sessions into ratifications of previous decisions. His decision making pattern had been evident from his assumption of the office in 1945. Given his combativeness, application of historical analogies to Cold War situations, beleaguered political position in mid-1950, misgivings about the "lost" China, and need to counter his Republican critics, Korea presented a golden opportunity for characteristic Truman toughness.

Subjecting the Korean case to Allison's models may thus affirm Allison's Cuban study in that Model III provides perhaps the best picture of what went on in the White House. In a sense, Paige's earlier work on the crisis, in concentrating on meetings, political issues, and personalities, was a pre-Allison use of Model III. However, Paige muddied the waters by also including elements that perhaps should belong to the other models.

This imprecision of where to place Paige in terms of Allison raises certain questions about the usefulness of these models. If a political approach is impoverished by leaving out bureaucratic and strategic elements (Models II and I), does it adequately describe reality? If different models are simply narratives from different perspectives (a political science *Roshomon*, involving three witnesses), isn't there something slightly disingenuous about the whole exercise? One deliberately excludes information relevant to Model III to satisfy Model II, and so on. Things are forced into an artificial mold, not unlike classical drama in its demands for unity of time, place, and action. Yet, from Max Weber onward, that has been the nature of ideal types. The next step could be creation of a Model IV, which somehow synthesizes the three existing Allisonian models into an ideal type approaching reality. This will probably be the subject for a subsequent paper.

The disingenuousness involved in decision making models takes on an extra dimension in crises involving an opposite party, such as in the Cuban, Korean, and other Cold War cases. In the Korean crisis, as in the Cuban, both the Soviets and a junior (perhaps client) Communist regime were involved. In the Korean instance, both the PRC and Taiwan were also players. Until the 1990s, very little was known in the West about the thinking behind the decision to attack South Korea from the vantage points of Pyongyang, Beijing, and Moscow. The only coherent account comes from Khrushchev, a biased source at best. One is left with half a crisis, half a decision. Nevertheless, one has enough general information to infer decision making patterns on the Communist side: eager aggressiveness by Kim Il Sung, cagey cautiousness by Stalin, and resentful wariness by Mao.¹⁰⁶

Nevertheless, the exercise of model building is useful, and Allison's models have several benefits. They provide a useful framework for case studies of crisis. They allow one to fully describe, albeit not predict, the dynamics of decision making. They also amount to a useful shorthand, a parsimonious approach to complex events. Finally, the models also can be tied to other significant political theory.¹⁰⁷

Until a Model IV replaces I, II, and III, Allison's models are useful for examining crises. One may tentatively suggest a possible Model IV for the Korean

crisis that would center on politics as the driving force in crises: Harry Truman did indeed make the tough political decisions to intervene in Korea by himself, bolstered by Acheson and supported by a subtly fostered consensus among his advisors. The *political context* was the key to the crisis. As carried away as they were by Cold War realities, Truman and Acheson did not exclude rational consideration of the strategic value of Korea, and were well aware of the brittle-bureaucratic base upon which the Administration rested. The strategic value of Korea was certainly believed deep within the State Department. Acheson's failure to acknowledge it publicly was due partly to bureaucratic politics, partly to his preoccupation with postwar Europe, and partly to oversight (the much commented on National Press Club reference to a U.S. defense perimeter in East Asia had as much to do with Taiwan as it did South Korea)

Conclusion

The Korean crisis was a seminal event in the history of U.S. foreign policy. Because the period of the initial crisis was so short, and the decisions so clear-cut, the Korean crisis is an excellent case for examination under the lens of decision making theory. Literature on the American response to the crisis has generally divided along the left-right ideological spectrum. Neither conventional nor revisionist approaches have illuminated the nature of the crisis, because both tend to eschew any attempt at theory building. Allison's framework for the Cuban Missile Crisis can break this impasse and provide the basis for theoretical examination of the Korean emergency.

Allison's three models of decision making—rational actor, organizational process, and governmental politics—are as applicable to the Korean crisis as to the Cuban crisis. As with the Cuban case, Allison's governmental politics approach provides a pertinent model for study of the crisis, though elements of Models I and II can illuminate contextual aspects of the case. The political context shaped the American response to the North Korean attack throughout the crisis week. The Korean crisis can also be processed through other decision making and political science theory, but examination of the political dynamics at work in Washington in 1950 provides the most immediate reasons for the Truman Administration's strong reaction to the North Korean attack.

Notes

¹ Thomas G. Paterson, J. Garry Clifford, and Kenneth J. Hagan, *American Foreign Relations: A History Since 1895* (Lexington, MA: D. C. Heath and Co., 1988), pp. 444, 457, 464. Also, see Paterson, et al., 4th ed., D. C. Heath & Co., 1995; and Stephen E. Ambrose and Douglas G. Brinkley, *Rise to Globalism: American Foreign Policy Since 1938* (New York: Penguin Books, 1997), pp. 52-119.

² Adam B. Ulam, *Expansion and Coexistence: Soviet Foreign Policy, 1917-73* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1974), pp. 378-382, 390, 392, 425-428, 432-440, 450, 452-455; Michael Nacht, *The Age of Vulnerability: Threats to the Nuclear Stalemate* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1985), pp. 170-171; Paterson, et al. (1988), pp. 458-463.

- ³ Jon Halliday and Bruce Cumings, *Korea: The Unknown War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988), pp. 200-204; Paterson, et. al., pp. 477-480.
- ⁴ Robert J. Donovan, *Nemesis: Truman and Johnson in the Coils of War in Asia* (New York: St. Martin's/Marek, 1984), pp. ix-xi, 184-188; Halliday and Cumings, pp. 204, 211-212.
- ⁵ Max Hastings, *The Korean War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), pp. 10-11.
- ⁶ Hastings, p. 10.
- ⁷ Paterson, et al., p. 475.
- ⁸ Graham T. Allison, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1971), pp. 1-9; also see Allison and Philip Zelikow, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, 2nd ed. (New York: Addison-Wesley Longman, 1999).
- ⁹ Clay Blair, *The Forgotten War: America in Korea, 1950-1953* (New York: Anchor Press Books (Doubleday), 1987), p. 59.
- ¹⁰ Blair, p. 85.
- ¹¹ Works discussing these include Stanley Sandler, *The Korean War: No Victors, No Vanquished* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1999), 26-46; and Burton I. Kaufman, *The Korean War: Challenges in Crisis, Credibility, and Command*, 2nd ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill Co., 1997), pp. 19-25.
- ¹² Halliday and Cumings, pp. 73, 85; Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War: Liberation and the Emergence of Separate Regimes, 1945-1947* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), pp. xix-xxvi; and *The Origins of the Korean War: The Roaring of the Cataract* (Princeton University Press, 1991), *passim*.
- ¹³ Bevin Alexander, *Korea: The First War We Lost* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1997); and Paul G. Pierpaoli, Jr., *Truman and Korea: The Political Culture of the Early Cold War* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1999).
- ¹⁴ William Stueck, *The Korean War: An International History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 10-46.
- ¹⁵ Glenn D. Paige, *The Korean Decision: June 24-30, 1950* (New York: The Free Press, 1968), pp. xi-18.
- ¹⁶ These include the importance of a single decision maker, the sequential nature of crisis decision making, the ad hoc nature of crisis decision making units, and the critical importance of information variables. He concludes with several heuristic propositions for decision makers. Paige, pp. 273-315, 321-323.
- ¹⁷ Blair, p. 86.
- ¹⁸ Allison and Zelikow, pp. 2-7.
- ¹⁹ Allison and Zelikow, pp. 294-311.
- ²⁰ James Irving Matray, *The Reluctant Crusade: American Foreign Policy in Korea, 1941-1950* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1985), p. 5.

- 21 Charles M. Dobbs, *The Unwanted Symbol: American Foreign Policy, the Cold War, and Korea, 1945-1950* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1981), p. 1.
- 22 Halliday and Cumings, p. 16; Matray, pp. 44-46.
- 23 Dobbs, pp. 48-49; Russell D. Buhite, *Soviet-American Relations in Asia, 1945-1954* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1981), pp. 145-159.
- 24 Buhite, pp. 158-162; Halliday and Cumings, pp. 29-30.
- 25 Matray, p. 160.
- 26 Dobbs, p. 153; Halliday and Cumings, p. 30.
- 27 Halliday and Cumings, pp. 50-54, 62-66.
- 28 Paige, p. 81.
- 29 Paterson, et al. (1988), pp. 472-474.
- 30 Matray, p. 5.
- 31 Buhite, pp. 139-140.
- 32 These latter were the 8th to 10th, 13th to 14th, and 14th to 17th centuries, respectively. Wolfram Eberhard. *A History of China* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1977), pp. 173, 269, 275; John King Fairbank, *China: A New History* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1992), pp. 78, 144, 149, 221.
- 33 Dobbs, pp. 17-18.
- 34 Buhite, pp. 139-140.
- 35 Paterson, et al. (1988), pp. 239-240.
- 36 Blair, pp. 36-40, 42-43.
- 37 Buhite, pp. 166-170.
- 38 Buhite, p. 170.
- 39 Paterson, et. al. (1988), pp. 478-479.
- 40 Soon Sung Cho, *Korea in World Politics, 1940-1950* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1967), pp. 271-272.
- 41 Ulam, pp. 519-520.
- 42 Alvin Z. Rubinstein, *Soviet Foreign Policy Since World War II: Imperial and Global* (Cambridge, MA: Winthrop Publishers, Inc., 1981), p. 65.
- 43 Dobbs, pp. 189-190.
- 44 Paterson, et al. (1988) , p. 479; Halliday and Cumings, p. 64.
- 45 Robert R. Simmons. "The Korean Civil War," in Frank Baldwin, ed., *Without Parallel: The American-Korean Relationship Since 1945* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974), p. 148.
- 46 Cho, p. 273.
- 47 Donovan (1984), p. 31.
- 48 Buhite, p. 170-171.
- 49 Paterson, et. al. (1988), pp. 473, 480.

- 50 Donovan (1984), p. 36.
- 51 Donovan (1984), p. 472.
- 52 Richard E. Neustadt, Ernest R. May, *Thinking in Time: The Uses of History for Decision Makers* (New York: The Free Press, 1986), pp. 34-48.
- 53 Hastings, p. 340; Thomas B. Larson, *Soviet-American Rivalry* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1978), p. 244.
- 54 Donovan (1984), pp. 32-36.
- 55 Paige, pp. 92, 97, 115, 125-126, 132, 137-141, 143.
- 56 Blair, pp. 81, 84-85; Paterson, et al. (1988), p. 474.
- 57 Blair, p. 85.
- 58 Halliday and Cumings, p. 204.
- 59 James William Gibson, *The Perfect War: The War We Couldn't Lose and How We Did* (New York: Vintage Books, 1988), pp. 8-9, 12-27. Also, see, Gibson, *The Perfect War: Technowar in Vietnam* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2000).
- 60 Hastings, p. 43; Blair, p. 31-33, 38-39.
- 61 Hastings, pp. 36-45.
- 62 Buhite, p. 165.
- 63 Blair, pp. 40-41.
- 64 Blair, p. 42.
- 65 Buhite, pp. 165-168.
- 66 Buhite, pp. 168-169.
- 67 Halliday and Cumings, p. 62.
- 68 Blair, pp. 4-11.
- 69 Blair, p. 11.
- 70 Blair, pp. 12-17. Gray took the office temporarily to spare Truman the embarrassment of withdrawing his name from Senate confirmation.
- 71 Blair, pp. 20-21.
- 72 Blair, pp. 21-23.
- 73 Blair, p. 26.
- 74 Ulam, p. 519.
- 75 Halliday and Cumings, p. 60; Nikita Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers* (Edward Crankshaw, commentary; Strobe Talbott, translation) (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1970), pp. 367-370.
- 76 Buhite, p. 170.
- 77 I. F. Stone, *The Hidden History of the Korean War* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1952), pp. xi, xvii, 5-21, 26-27, 32-33, 42-52. Also, see Robert C. Cottrell, *Izzy: A Biography of I. F. Stone* (Newark: Rutgers University Press, 1992).
- 78 Paterson, et al. (1988), pp. 461-462.

- 79 Paige, p. 36-37.
- 80 Hastings, p. 49.
- 81 Paterson, et. al. (1988), p. 462.
- 82 Paige, p. 38-40.
- 83 Paige, pp. 57-61.
- 84 Donovan (1984), pp. 10-12. Also see Donovan, *Conflict and Crisis: The Presidency of Harry S. Truman, 1945-1948* (Columbia, MO.: University of Missouri Press, 1996); and David McCullough, *Truman* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992).
- 85 Paige, pp. 21-25.
- 86 Paige, pp. 25-29.
- 87 Paige, p. 31.
- 88 Paige, pp. 30-31. Forrestal was hospitalized for overwork, and later committed suicide.
- 89 Paige, pp. 31-33.
- 90 Khrushchev, pp. 367-368.
- 91 Halliday and Cumings, pp. 60-62.
- 92 Blair, pp. 45, 53, 57.
- 93 Blair, p. 53.
- 94 There is no direct evidence Dulles colluded with Rhee, as has been occasionally suggested. However, he did make various statements in favor of the South Korean leader. Blair., pp. 65-67.
- 95 Blair, pp. 30-31.
- 96 Blair, pp. 36-46, 73-78.
- 97 Blair, p. 67.
- 98 Blair, pp. 43-49.
- 99 Blair, pp. 65-67.
- 100 Donovan (1984), p. 46.
- 101 Paige, pp. 89, 92-93, 97-99.
- 102 Paige, pp. 126-137; Donovan (1984), p. 47-48.
- 103 Donovan (1984), p. 46.
- 104 Donovan (1984), pp. 49-50.
- 105 Donovan (1984), pp. 51-53.
- 106 See Sandler, *passim*.
- 107 One can see echoes of 1950 and 1962 in recent crises, such as the Persian Gulf Crisis of 1990, leading to the Gulf War of 1991, or the Taiwan Strait Crisis of 1996, involving China, Taiwan and the U.S. Both crises involved bilateral standoffs and decision making by presidents with small groups of advisors.

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