

Korean War and International Relations

(Focusing on the origins of the war as related to U.S. and Soviet Union's Foreign Policy)

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I. Introduction

I believe the most important patriotic duty of Korean is to continue lasting peace in Korea and reunify the Korean peninsula while promoting growth and prosperity. Although it has been almost fifty years since the outbreak of the Korean War, we have yet to accurately examined the origins of the war. With the recent death of Kim, Il-Sung, who might have had an intimate knowledge of the facts, the effort to uncover truth of the origins of the Korean War seem even more distant. With the truth behind veils, some Korean college students still have believed the North Korean view that the Korean War was a war of national liberation and the unification of the fatherland. These students even proclaim that the South initiated the war.¹⁾

Fortunately, the former Soviet Union's policy of openness (Glastnost), and the subsequent fall of Soviet regime has created an environment to release the previously classified documents to the public. Furthermore, with the establishment of diplomatic relationship between Korea and Russia, and between Korea and China, many scholars and journalists are making an effort to search and reveal classified documents and testimonies of those who took a major part in the Korean War.

The purpose of this study is three-fold: first, to review the existing assertions, especially comparing the traditionalist view with the revisionist view; second, to investigate the foreign policies of the U.S. and U.S.S.R. as related to Korea and the

international incidents between 1945-1950; third, to reveal the origins of the Korean War by examining the series of international events between the U.S. and U.S.S.R.

II. Perspectives on the Origin of the Korean War

There are two groups of scholars with opposing views of the beginning of the Cold War. The traditionalists claim that the Cold War was the result of Soviet Union's ambition. On the other hand, the revisionists claim that the expansion of American Imperialism brought about the Cold War, and the Soviet Union simply met the challenge. Based on their own views, the scholars of the two groups simply applied their hypotheses to explain the origins of the Korean War. The traditionalists criticized the Soviet Union, and the revisionists school blamed the U.S. The traditionalist scholars, such as Kennan and Dallin put forward the Stalin Initiative Assertion, Stalin-Mao Complicity Assertion and Stalin-Mao-Kim Complicity Assertion, whereas the revisionist scholars, such as Fleming, Kolko, and Cumings have argued for the Rhee, Syngman-led Northward Invasion Assertion, U.S.-Korea Provocation Assertion, and the National Liberation Assertion.

1. The View of the Traditionalist

Traditionalists view the origin of the Korean War in the context of the aggressive expansion strategy of Communism led by Stalin. They have argued that "the Korean War was planned, prepared and led by Stalin"²⁾ and "the Korean War was essentially instigated by the Soviet Union."³⁾ In order to support the Stalin Initiative Assertion, nine different views are summarized as follows:⁴⁾

(a) Diversion of U.S. Pressure Assertion: Stalin initiated the war in hopes to divert U.S. focus to Northeast Asia from Europe, where the U.S. was exerting pressure through the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, and the foundation of NATO.

(b) Deterrence against the U.S.-Japan Peace Treaty: After occupying Japan, the U.S. initiated steps toward the U.S.-Japan Peace Treaty to use Japan as a floating fortress against communist expansion which became more likely with the communization of the Chinese mainland. Perceiving this new American policy as an attempt to create an anti-communist bloc in Asia, Stalin signed the Sino-Soviet Alliance in February 1950, and decided to communize the whole Korean peninsula as a base for further expansion of communism in Asia while weakening the U. S. position in Japan.

(c) Weakness Exploitation Assertion: Stalin perceived a weakness in Korea when the U.S. withdrew their armed forces from the Korean peninsula in the Summer of

1949 and subsequently, the Secretary of State Dean Acheson excluded Korea from the Far-East defensive perimeter of the U.S. on January 12, 1950. The electoral defeat of Rhee, Syngman and Kim, Sung-soo, the two main South Korean political leaders of the conservative right, further supported this view. Especially when the Communists successfully established the People's Republic of China, the U.S. proclaimed a non-involvement policy that led Stalin to believe that the U.S. might likewise not interfere in a war in Korea. In summary, this assertion emphasizes Stalin and Kim Il-Sung's miscalculation of U.S. intentions.⁵⁾

(d) Test of American Will Assertion: Stalin wanted to test the will of U.S. and its Western allies before embarking on his worldwide expansion strategy.

(e) Show of Force Assertion: The communization of the Korean peninsula following that of the Chinese mainland would degrade the prestige of U.S. and would be an opportunity to demonstrate Soviet military might, thereby stirring up the communists movements in other areas of Asia.

(f) U.S.-China Conflict-Inducement Assertion: Stalin initiated the Korean War to induce both the U.S. and China into war when he perceived the U.S. government's apparent move toward normalization of relations with Mao's regime.

(g) Re-establishment of East-Asian Policy Assertion by Chaffee⁶⁾: The former Soviet Union started the war to protect its national interest and to secure Korea as a military base in Asia after failing to lease the port of Dairen from China.

(h) Pursuit of Ice-Free Port Assertion: One of the consistent desire of the Soviet Union since the days of Imperial Russia was to secure an ice-free port in the Korean peninsula and expand its influence in the region.

(i) Stalin-Mao Complicity Assertion: Dallin and Barnett have claimed that with the communists takeover of China in October 1949, the Soviet Union ceded to Red China the initiative of the Communist Revolutionary Strategy in Asia.⁷⁾ Therefore, they argued that China, under the auspices of the Soviet Union, took part in the war after signing a secret military agreement. Scholars who support this view suggest Stalin-Mao summit meetings between December 1949 and February 1950, Kim, Il-Sung's visit to Moscow in March 1949, and the secret Defense Agreement between North Korea and China in March 1949 as concrete and undeniable evidence.

My view stands on the side of the Stalin Initiative assertion: Stalin was not only the greatest leader in all of Russian history successfully achieving in obtaining the largest territorial boundary ever, but was also the most influential figure in the shaping of post-World War II Eastern Europe. Accordingly his authority was absolute in the affairs of Eastern Europe and thus fulfilled his goal of communizing Eastern Europe. However, the international crisis escalated to a new high; the communists were losing influence to the nationalists in Iran (Azerbaijan) as well as in Greece and Turkey. Furthermore, Yugoslavia proclaimed independence from

Soviet Union's influence. Gradually, Stalin was losing its grip even in the Eastern European satellite states. Stalin's world communization policies, challenged and held back by the Truman Doctrine, was further disrupted when the U.S. proposed the Marshall Plan up against the Soviet Union's COMINFORM. These series of confrontations culminated to the Berlin Blockade. In all of these events, Stalin came up at the short end of the stick.

This argument claims that he was looking forward to escaping this predicament in Europe by shifting the World's attention to East Asia. In addition, it asserts that Stalin started the war in Korea as a show of force to maintain his authority and grip within the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. This argument also supports earlier assertions such as the Diversion of U.S. Pressure Assertion, the Weakness Exploitation assertion, and the Show of Force Assertion. The Chapter IV describes how the international crisis after World War II escalated into a real war in the Korean peninsula.

2. The View of the Revisionist

Against the arguments stipulated by the traditionalist, the North Korean scholars and among others have presented their views centered on attributing American Imperialism as the cause of the war. Their views are that (a) the U.S. intended to use Taiwan and Korea as bases to contain communist China; (b) the U.S. supported Rhee Syng-man who had faced with serious political challenges; (c) the U. S. possessed 98% of the nuclear weapons in the World and wanted to successfully complete the Korean War before the Soviet Union's nuclear armament; and (d) since western Europe was benefiting from the Marshall Plan, they were in no position to criticize U.S.involvement in Korea.⁸⁾

Stone, in his book "The Hidden History of the Korean War", blamed on Rhee and the U.S. for initiating the war. He argued that the U.S., along with Rhee—who was in serious political difficulties at the time—conspired to use the war as a possible solution to Rhee's troubles. He further argued that MacArthur, Chiang Kai-Shek, and Dulles conspired to shift the focus of Truman's foreign policy from Europe to Asia through the Korean War and the subsequent U.S. involvement.⁹⁾ Although his arguments lack any concrete evidence, his views influenced the formation and development of revisionism—Flemming's ideas have Stone's arguments as its basic foundation.

The interpretation of the War shifted further into the revisionist camp after the end of the Vietnam War in the 1970s. Friedman and Seldon refuted the traditionalist camp's two arguments by providing two concrete examples; that North Korea and China were not in cordial terms at the time of the war due to disagreements over the control of Yalu river dam, and the Labor Conference held in Beijing was

simply a working conference where labor issues were discussed. Their arguments diluted the Sino-Soviet Complicity Assertion and raised doubts about the Stalin Initiative Assertion.¹⁰⁾ Karunakar Gupta later raised his own assertion: the South's Invasion Assertion also called the South-Induced, North's Invasion Assertion.¹¹⁾ But Lee, Chong-Shik and Skillend refuted those arguments.¹²⁾ Joyce and Gabriel Kolko denied the Stalin Initiative Assertion and put forward that the Soviet Union was not alerted beforehand. According to their view, MacArthur had the ambition to become the De Gaulle of America and thus co-conspired with Rhee, Syngman in a northward campaign.

Both the traditionalist and the revisionist scholars have been criticized for overlooking the internal context of the Korean peninsula where the U.S.-Soviet Union conflict was in progress. For his part, Simmons claimed the Soviet's Non-Involvement Assertion with the argument that Kim, Il-Sung initiated the war to destroy Park, Hon-Yong, leader of the South Labor Party and his main political rival, and make himself as the ultimate national liberation leader.¹³⁾ However, when revisionist arguments were severely questioned, they had no choice but to recognize that North Korea had invaded the South by firing their guns first—this was a departure from their original view. Afterwards, they explained the Korean War as substantially a war of national liberation where the debate on who fired the first shot is of no significance.¹⁴⁾ In this context, the recent statement of General Volkogonov—the author of Stalin's memoirs—is an invaluable source of information.¹⁵⁾

III. U.S. and Soviet Union's Policy toward the Korean Peninsula

Since the Korean War is a product of the Cold War era between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, it is necessary to examine their foreign policy toward the Korean peninsula to investigate the exact origins of the Korean War.

1. U.S. Foreign Policy toward the Korean Peninsula (1940-1950)

Since 1905 when the Taft-Katsura memo was signed between the U.S. and Japan, the U.S. did not exert direct influence over the Korean peninsula. The U.S. started to express interest in Korea during the Second World War.

The Roosevelt administration's view that Korea needed a period of trusteeship under the allied forces took form through the meetings held on March 24, 1943, between Eden and Roosevelt, and in Cairo on December 1st, 1943 between Roosevelt, Churchill, and Chiang. Although concrete agreements were not reached in Cairo, the consensus was that the Korean peninsula needed trusteeship after the Second World War. Their suggestion for trusteeship materialized at the Yalta

Conference in February 1945. At the conference, the four allied nations agreed to put the peninsula under the joint trusteeship of the U.S., Soviet Union, China, and the U.K. Later in the Potsdam Conference, the allied decided that talks to install trusteeship in Korea were necessary in due course. Soon afterward, Roosevelt's trusteeship idea had obtained Stalin's informal recognition and remained as the U. S.'s policy toward the Korean peninsula until the summer of 1947.

On June 18, 1945, Truman, who assumed the Presidency after Roosevelt's death in April of 1945, approved a plan to land on Japan by the 1st of November and then on to Korea afterwards. With the use of the atomic bombs on August the 6th and 9th against Japan, the war came to an end. The U.S. along with the Soviet Union which entered into the Pacific theater by declaring War against Japan on August the 8th, divided the Korean peninsula in half along the 38th parallel. The decision to use the 38th parallel as the division line was drawn up during a late night meeting of the SWNCC.

Fearing the Soviet Union's occupation of the whole peninsula, the U.S. decided division along the 38th parallel since it would include Seoul. It meant to keep the Soviet Union from expanding their political influence in the area. Although the Soviet occupational forces arrived in Korea one whole month before the American forces, they relatively upheld the agreement by occupying only the northern half of the peninsula. This was a Stalin tactic devised to make a gesture of cooperation with other allied and put himself in an advantageous position to sort out the matters caused by the Second World War.

Stalin maintained cordial relations with Truman to obtain equal say in the Japanese affair. Through this shrewd tactic, he was able to control the northern portion of the Korean peninsula. On September 7, 1945, MacArthur proclaimed the formal establishment of the U.S. occupational military government in the southern half of the peninsula. On the next day General Hodge's 24th Division landed in Korea. From then on, the two occupational forces started to disagree on many issues, such as how to rebuild the future of Korea. The differences occurred when both sides argued about issues that did not consider the other side's interests. Due to these series of differences, the Korean peninsula became another battleground for these two nations. After the Moscow Agreement in December of 1945 for the preparation of the Korean provisional democratic government, the fifteen meetings that followed between the two nations in January of 1946 only continued to show the growing diversion between them. As the meetings progressed, their differences and disagreements continued to widen. The Soviets searched for policy coordination and exchange of material among the two sides, while the Americans wanted complete administrative and economic integration of the whole peninsula.

In 1946, Truman's administration couldn't stick to their original plan. The U.S.'s relative position in the southern half of the peninsula turned sour. In early 1947, the U.S.'s domestic interest drove the occupational military government to legally fulfill the Moscow Agreement in the southern half of the peninsula—if not the whole—by handing over the Korean problem to the U.N. General Assembly and withdrawing their forces. At this time, General Wedemeyer's analysis regarding the Soviets' intention to conquer Asia was published. The U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff reported that they should avoid military engagement in Korea as much as possible, and that this region had no strategical value if a war indeed was to take place.¹⁶⁾ With this analysis at hand, the State and Defense Department staffs agreed on an honorable withdrawal from Korea. At the same time, the Soviets proposed the withdrawal of all foreign forces from the peninsula, thus facilitating the withdrawal.

Under these circumstances the U.S. National Security Council decided on a policy (N.S.C.-8) to provide the South with the minimal capacity to defend itself against any aggression. Meanwhile the People's Army in North Korea grew in size and quality. They had five times the amount of the south's police force and were being armed with the newest Soviet weapons while the U.S.—planning to withdraw by the end of 1948—did not provide heavy weapons fearing civil war or a confrontation with the Soviet Union.¹⁷⁾ Furthermore, with the establishment of the People's Republic of China on October 1, 1949, the U.S. proclaimed non-involvement in Taiwan (N.S.C.-48/2) and the Secretary of State Acheson addressed the “defensive perimeter” at National Club on 12 January 1950 in which Taiwan and Korea were excluded. This was the green light for the North to continue the preparation for the invasion.

Due to the Berlin Blockade, the U.S. was concentrating on European matter, and with the possibility of communist infiltration in Greece, Turkey, Iran and Indochina, the problem in the Korean peninsula looked relatively small for us. This security environment surrounding the Korean peninsula facilitated Kim Il-Sung and Stalin's adventurism.

2. Soviet Union Foreign Policy toward the Korean Peninsula (1940-1950)

In order to disguise his intentions, Stalin devised tactics with which the Soviet Union could be perceived as an ally of the U.S., and show its commitment to fulfill the duties as an allied nation. For example, just as in Germany, he attempted to separate Japan into two or three parts. To achieve this goal, Stalin ordered General Vasilevski, the Commander of the Far Eastern Forces, to occupy the Sahalin island, the Kuril islands, and the Hokkaido island. With demonstration of U.S. military might via dropping the atomic bombs, they shifted tactics and decid-

ed to give up Hokkaido island and satisfy themselves with the northern half of the 38th parallel of the Korean peninsula. At the Yalta Conference in February of 1945, Roosevelt proposed a 25-year trusteeship plan for Korea to which Stalin agreed that a short trusteeship period would be beneficial for all parties concerned. Stalin also opposed to presence of foreign forces in the Korean peninsula.

Stalin's hidden agenda at the time was to communize the whole peninsula, and the absence of foreign forces—i.e. the Americans—would facilitate the job of several thousand Korean-Soviets already in place. In fact, since 1922 when the Korean Communist Party was recognized, the Soviet Union had sent numerous communist agents to Korea, with Kim, Il-Sung being one of them. Stalin further raised doubts about the trusteeship plan proposed by the U.S. as well as the universal free elections plan proposed by the U.N. Furthermore, he thought it was impossible to peacefully reunify the two Koreas. Accordingly, Stalin in 1948 decided to attack the south once all foreign forces withdrew from the Korean peninsula. But, according to the memoirs of Khrushchev, Kim, Il-Sung masterminded the invasion and Stalin only took on a supportive role.¹⁸⁾ However, Volkogonov, the military advisor to President Yeltsin, citing classified documents, claimed that the main protagonist of the Korean War was Stalin—he masterminded the entire war considering it as just one phase of the World Communization Strategy. Volkogonov added that Kim merely followed Stalin's orders like a puppet.¹⁹⁾ Many scholars assumed there were no discussions beforehand between Stalin and Mao regarding the Korean War during late 1949 to early 1950, but it was recently proven that Mao and Stalin did indeed deeply scrutinize the military and political situation surrounding Northeast Asia at the Buriznaya-dacha near Moscow. The two leaders agreed that the Summer of 1950 was the best time to solve completely the problem of Taiwan and Korea. Regarding the confrontation with the U.S., Mao took harder line than Stalin. Mao thought that Asia in 1950 was the time to repel U.S. imperialism. The two leaders came to the conclusion that their total aggregate power was superior to the total military might of the U.S. and its Western allies. They also agreed to give China the initiative on the Taiwan problem, and the Soviet Union would handle the Korean problem. This Agreement among three nations allowed for the deployment of the Chinese-Korean National Military Unit to North Korea in July 1949, which numbered twenty thousand by the eve of the Korean War.

To remove all traces of Soviet involvement in the Korean War, Stalin withdrew all of his military advisors stationed in North Korea by April 15, 1950. The military advisory unit under the command of Major General Smirnov had helped build the North Korean army from scratch.

In its place, Stalin dispatched a new advisory unit under the command of Lieutenant General Vasiliev; its mission was to formulate the invasion strategy that

the North Korean army would follow. These newly dispatched military advisors—under disguise as reporters, broadcasters and their crew—even worked in regions close to the border, such as Jochiwon.²⁰⁾ Furthermore, a few months prior to the invasion, the Soviets had deployed various warplanes in the Manchurian border and Soviet pilots in their MIG-15s were involved in dogfights over Korea against the US.²¹⁾ To hide their identities, they wore Chinese military uniforms and spoke in Chinese. In conclusion, Stalin chose Korea as the battleground for the indirect confrontation against the U.S. Though he was fearful of U.S. involvement, Stalin expected confrontation with the U.S. was unavoidable.

IV. The Origin of the Korean War and the International Relations

What pressured Stalin into starting the War in Korea and risking confrontation with the U.S., the country he was fearing? What forced Stalin into a real war in Korea instead of continuing the cold war between the East and West?

This section focuses on the international relations surrounding

the U.S. and Soviet Union at the time to unravel the puzzles and questions from the end of the Second World War to the eve of the Korean War. After the Second World War, Stalin either annexed the neighboring countries or made them as satellite states of the Soviet Union. His ambitions went further to include Iran, Greece, and Turkey as targets for his territorial security. Consequently, the intensity of conflict between the U.S. and the Soviets escalated to a new high. From the Iran crisis in January of 1948, and the Soviet veto of the Bruch Plan that would have deterred reciprocal military power, to the Greece-Turkey crisis, the Truman Doctrine with Marshall Plan amplified the rift between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union, for its part, showed their hard response through the establishment of the COMINFORM, the Czech crisis (February of 1948), the Berlin Blockade, and the Warsaw Pact alliance against the NATO alliance of the West. Those series of crises created an hostile atmosphere where everyone was concerned about the security in Europe. Taking advantage of this situation, Stalin diverted the focus to an obscure area of the World and started the Korean War. The international crises leading to the Korean War are as follows.

1. Iran Crisis (Azerbaijan Revolt)

Iran was under German influence before the Second World War. After the war, the reassessment of Iran as a strategic foothold to the supply of the Soviet Union brought about a change of policy the U.K. and the Soviet Union immediately occupied Iran in August, 1941 for this purpose. In January 1942, Iran joined the Allied forces against the Germans and thus became a formal participant in the

war. Historically, Iran was the center of attention for both the Soviet Union and the United Kingdom. The divergent view between them regarding the issue of awarding oil well licenses became even wider. These differences of opinions had been set aside for the good of the common effort against the Germans, but with the conclusion of the Second World War, it burst out onto the spotlight.

The allied forces occupying Iran were due to withdraw within six months after the end of the Second World War according to the agreement of all the parties involved. Upon such request by the Iranian government, the British answered favorably, but the Soviets instead instigated a disturbance in Azerbaijan after forming the pro-communist Tudeh party, hoping to secure Iran as a satellite state just as in Eastern Europe. The Soviet Union succeeded in masterminding the proclamation of independence of the Republic of Azerbaijan on December 1st, 1945.²²⁾

On March 26th, 1946, the Soviets withdrew from Iran. It was an unexpected move that seemed peculiar given the Soviets' insistence on remaining, even after the March 2nd deadline. Apparently Stalin—who had plans to annex the northern half of Japan—did not consider the prolonged occupation beneficial to his cause. After the Soviet withdrawal, Azerbaijan was reunified with Iran; the central government subsequently restored total control, and the communists were eliminated from Iran.

2. The Greece Problem

During the Casablanca Conference of 1942, Churchill requested prioritized operations in Greece and the Balkan peninsula. With the approval of his request, Britain immediately assumed the principal role in the liberation and the restoration of order in Greece. However, the communists had the control of most of the local militia scattered throughout the country, and they acted as the puppets of the Soviet forces. Consequently, Greece became the center of the conflict between the Soviet and the Western Powers.²³⁾

Just as in Iran, the British responded firmly and aggressively against the communist revolt. Upon arriving at Athens by 1944, they successfully suppressed the communist movement. Shortly thereafter, the Royal Party of Greece won the general election in March 1946 and returned to power. However, the communist insurgency continued through the aid of Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, and a civil war ensued.

The United Kingdom played a great role in obstructing the communization of Greece, but a burden of such magnitude was impossible for her to sustain. Thereafter, the U.S., the new hegemony state, assumed the responsibility of the United Kingdom as the protector of Greece. The Truman Doctrine, furthermore, quenched Western Europe's anxiety of the domino phenomenon which was

feared once Greece was communized; once again Stalin's expansionist policies were contained.

3. The Turkey Problem

Towards the end of the War in 1945, the Soviet Union undertook a forceful diplomatic offensive against Turkey. Their objectives were twofold: one was the partition of Armenia-Ardahan, and the other was joint control of the Bosphorous strait that linked the Mediterranean sea with the Black sea. Turkey, at the time, was besieged by communist insurgents on both sides of its borders; on the west side by the Greek communists and on the east side by the communists from the Azerbaijan autonomous republic founded by the Tudeh Party of Iran. However, Turkey managed to sustain its independence with the support of the U.S. and U. K.

As stated above, Azerbaijan, Greece, and Turkey located in the Southeastern Europe and the Middle East were the triangular objectives in the Soviet Union's southward policy during 1945 and 1946.

4. Truman Doctrine

In a joint session of Congress on March 12, 1947, the U.S. President Harry S. Truman, presenting himself as the leader of the West, declared that the U.S. would undertake a containment policy against Soviet expansionism. George Kennan, the charge d'affairs of the American embassy in Moscow who greatly influenced the formulation of the Truman Doctrine, reported:

(a) Soviet foreign policy's sole purpose has and will be to strengthen their national power based on communism and nationalism, and weaken the capitalist bloc using all possible means and methods.

(b) Over the years, Soviet Union has been very sensitive to the logic of power; they will retreat once they confront a superior power. Therefore, if the Western World unites against communism, and clearly demonstrates their firm will, we can handle the Soviet challenge.

George Kennan, after being appointed as the Chief of Policy Coordination in the State Department, published his famous paper, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," with its discussion of the much celebrated Containment Policy, in the July 1947 issue of Foreign Affairs. His theory became the cornerstone of the Truman administration's foreign policy. Kennan's Containment Policy was a powerful influence to the Truman administration's attitude by providing the means to respond to the Soviet challenge without resorting to military might.

In other words, its foreign policy assured the security of the U.S. while

suppressing Soviet expansionism at the lowest economic, technical, and military cost. This Doctrine forced the Soviets to refrain from further expansion in Europe. Therefore, Stalin looked at other part of the world for a "fresh" start.

5. Marshall Plan and COMINFORM

The Secretary of State George Marshall was convinced that the Western Europe's recovery was essential to hold the expansion of communism. Therefore, he planned a large scale, long term comprehensive aid plan for Europe. This decisive project, called the "Marshall Plan", had a profound political effect and served as a clear split of the two blocs. In the beginning, the whole European continent was entitled to participate in the plan—the Soviet Union was included as well—but the Soviet Union did not accept the plan due to Truman's strong anti-communism policy. The Soviet Union regarded the plan as a schema of American Imperialism in Europe with radical anti-Soviet prejudice. The Soviet Union's apparent nervousness to the plan made the whole continent further dependent on American protection, and thus the U.S. further tightened its containment policy towards the Soviet Union.

The Soviet Union showed their formal response by organizing the COMINFORM in September of 1947 which was the reincarnation—with a few revisions—of the COMINTERN dismantled officially in 1943. The Soviet representative to the conference, Zhdanov proclaimed in the assembly that "the World was divided into blocs; one of imperialism and capitalism headed by the U.S., and the other of anti-imperialism and anti-capitalism led by the Soviet Union." His speech, in essence, entailed the logic which became the cornerstone of the Soviet Union's propaganda. They viewed the World as absolutely divided into two blocs due to the foreign policies of the Truman administration, and that the Marshall Plan was a ploy to subjugate Europe into the hands of the U.S. Also, Zhdanov declared "We shall fight against the American imperialism to our life. The struggle is the only alternative." It was a declaration for an eternal cold war with the Western hemisphere, and indeed the Soviet Union's foreign policy line has swayed to the extreme left ever since. In fact, the Soviet Union pursued an aggressive and belligerent policy to expand their influence and domination around the World.

6. The Czechoslovakia Political Crisis (Prague Revolt)

Czechoslovakia traditionally maintained cordial relations with the Soviet Union, and thus the Soviet Union's policy toward Czechoslovakia was more accommodating, but in the end, Czechoslovakia was not excluded from the Soviet Union's policy of converting Eastern Europe into satellite states. At the May 1496 elections,

the Communist party led by Gottwald obtained 38% of the popular vote and joined the ruling coalition. With Soviet support, the communist party overthrew the government in a coup d'etat and successfully established a communist regime.

As in Czechoslovakia, one by one, all Eastern European nations were transformed into a satellite state through meticulous use of its secret police and the security unit of the Red Army which kidnapped, murdered, tortured, and threatened leaders of each nation while manipulating the domestic affairs. The Western nations could not help but react in horror to this daring and aggressive outward policy, thereby increasing the stakes of the cold war.

7. Yugoslavia's Deviation

The Yugoslavian communists, led by Marshall Tito, had a brutal battle against the Nazi occupying forces during the Second World War, and successfully established a communist independent state without the assistance of the Soviet Union. Tito had cooperated closely with the Soviet Union during the Second World War, but his independent policies—such as the Treaty of friendship between Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, and the deployment of an air division to Albania—opened a crevice that was never mended. When Stalin summoned two Yugoslavian ministers in the spring of 1948, the two sides publicly criticized each other. With the Soviet delegation's open criticism of Yugoslavia's independent actions without prior consultation at the COMINFORM Conference in June, 1948, the possibility of separation between these two nations surfaced for the first time.

Yugoslavia's deviation had major repercussions at that time given the Communist ideals, the absoluteness of the communist platform, and the unconditional deference everyone showed the Kremlin. Moscow fiercely criticized Tito hoping to degrade his authority, but it had no effect. Instead, Tito's national support increased in his homeland, and he was able to resurrect weakened economy with Western economic support. The defection of Yugoslavia was the first serious defiance to Stalin's authority, and, as a result, the Soviet Union's control of the Eastern European countries was tightened further. Anti-Stalin leaders in Bulgaria, Poland, Rumania and Albania were rooted out as accomplices of the West or conspirators of Tito, or with the charge that they reneged the communist ideals. They were in turn replaced with compliant Soviet proxies. Stalin's policy to tighten Eastern Europe increased tensions between the East and West, and meanwhile in Asia, Kim, Il-Sung was put in charge of North Korea.

8. Berlin Blockade

Berlin, after the Second World War, was jointly occupied by the four Allied

Forces. As the tension between the East and West grew the three Western Allied Forces, the U.S., the U.K., and France, agreed that Germany's rapid reconstruction of its economy and its welfare was essential to the security and prosperity of Western Europe. So, they decided to integrate the three partitioned areas under their control.

After the U.S. Secretary of State Byrnes' speech at Stuttgart on September 6, 1946, the three partitioned areas of Berlin were integrated between 1947 and 1948, and a single unified currency system—the Deutsche Mark—was introduced except in the area occupied by the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union criticized the policy and Field Marshall Sokolovsky closed the headquarters of the occupational forces in Berlin on July 1st.²⁴⁾ The result was the collapse of the four-nation occupation system. At the same time, the Socialist Unification Party, funded by the Soviets and predecessor to the East German Communist Party, lost the municipal elections of Berlin in the Fall of 1947. Due to this sequence of events, the Soviets ventured to blockade Berlin to check the Western plan of German reunification. The U.S. reacted to the blockade by airlifting 2.11 million tons of material involving 277,728 annual sorties. In essence, the Americans opted for the airlift instead of a military confrontation. Upon realizing that the blockade didn't work, the Soviet Union lifted the blockade on May 12, 1949. The effect of the blockade lingered within the Western governments, showing them the need for a collective security alliance. The result was the establishment of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in April of 1949 with 12 founding members.²⁵⁾

As stated before, the U.S.-Soviet relations transformed itself from cooperative allies against a common threat, to rival with competing ideologies and leaders of each bloc. The Soviet expansionist policy was blocked by the U.S. through the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan. Though the Soviet Union risked brinkmanship with the Berlin Blockade, it failed to reach its end due to American airlift operations. Stalin, therefore, chose the Korean peninsula as the battleground for the next confrontation with the West.

V. Conclusion

“A war involves territorial, economic, cultural expansion with national independence, security, international settlement, law and peace. Therefore, war is an objective relating all the international problems.”²⁶⁾ In attempting to explain the origin of the Korean War, this paper has focused on the competing perspectives suggested by the traditionalist and the revisionist scholars, as well as the cold war tensions between the U.S. and the Soviet Union surrounding the Korean peninsula. This paper also illustrated the major international events after the Second World War through the historical approach. This paper supports funda-

mentally along with the traditionalist scholars and concurs with the view that the Korean War was caused by the joint complicity of Stalin, Mao, and Kim, Il-Sung. This paper also points out Stalin's decisive role through the "International Crisis" assertion.

As the memoirs of Khrushchev and Volkogonov's book on Stalin shows, the North Korean regime was established by the Soviets as a satellite state in Asia, and Kim, Il-Sung was a puppet following Stalin's orders. General Shtykov controlled Kim, Il-Sung on behalf of Stalin. So, why did Stalin initiate a war on the Korean peninsula? With the victory over the Germans at Stalingrad, Stalin gained the confidence he could communize the world. With the logic that the Soviet Union deserved the most compensation due to the greatest losses it incurred during the war, Stalin drafted plans for the occupation of Eastern Europe, Sakhalin island, and the Kuril islands as well as the partitioning of Japan. The U.S. blocked this scheme by ending the war with two atomic blows to Japan and offered the partitioning of Korea instead. Stalin agreed to the provisional U.S. proposal of partitioning the Korean peninsula along the 38th parallel in hopes of obtaining Hokkaido island. But when the U.S. did not budge from its original position, the tension between the U.S. and the Soviet Union grew in Asia. To make the matters worse, Soviet hopes of a satellite state in Manchuria or an ice-free port was gone with the communization of the Chinese mainland. The only recourse left for Stalin was the communization of the Korean peninsula. Therefore, Stalin's apparent disinterest in the trusteeship plan was not due to his "concern" for an independent Korea as some scholars might want us to think, but instead was due to his concern regarding possible unfavorable consequences for his satellite nations plan.

After the Second World War, Stalin secured Eastern Europe—the pathway to the Russian heartland used by Hitler and Napoleon—as satellite nations and buffers against possible invasion by Western powers. With the Czechoslovakia crisis and the deviation of Yugoslavia along with his failures in Greece, Turkey and Iran due to the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan, Stalin risked brinkmanship with the Berlin Blockade—the pinnacle of his aggressive, adventurist policies. With another failure and the U.S.-Soviet relations worsening to all time low, he picked Korea as the outlet of the tensions. Moreover, the revisionist scholars' view—Invasion Induced Assertion, Conspiracy in Silence Assertion, War of National Liberation Assertion—which relied on newspaper articles and the situation at the time along with inferences without primary sources, were disapproved by the disclosure of hitherto unreleased secret documents relating to the Korean War involving Stalin. In conclusion, the Korean War resulted from Stalin's initiative and decisive role, and was surrounded from the beginning to the end by the international power structure of the time.

Note

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