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Diminished Hopes:

The United States and the United Nations

During the Truman Years

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy  
in History

by

Melvin Stanton Lebe

2012

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Diminished Hopes:  
The United States and the United Nations  
During the Truman Years

By

Melvin Stanton Lebe  
Doctor of Philosophy in History  
University of California, Los Angeles, 2012  
Professor Geoffrey Robinson, Co-Chair  
Professor Jessica Wang, Co-Chair

This dissertation explores the relationship between the United States and the newly founded United Nations during the presidency of Harry S. Truman. Research for this dissertation consisted primarily of the examination of official documents collected and published by the U.S. Government Printing Office in the series entitled *Foreign Relations of the United States*, as well as the examination of documents found at the United Nations Archive, New York, New York, the Truman Library, Independence, Missouri, and the U.S. National Archive, College Park, Maryland, as well as on various websites. Additional research consisted of the examination of news articles and opinion pieces published in selected newspapers during the relevant period.

This study found that throughout the Truman presidency the United States maintained an internationalist posture of engagement vis-à-vis the United Nations, but that, under the pressure of the Cold War, the kind of internationalism embodied in U.S. policy at the UN changed from a cooperative, optimistic, Wilsonian internationalism as written into the UN Charter to a much more hard-headed, nationalistic, combative internationalism. In the process, the U.S. government backed various policies which undercut certain underlying UN principles, such as universality of membership and unanimity of “Great Power” permanent members in the Security Council, and as a result weakened the United Nations. Throughout the period the United States enjoyed substantial majority support in the UN Security Council and General Assembly, but in order to maintain that support American policy had to take into consideration, and at various times was modified by, the attitudes of allies and other governments of various middle-level and neutralist powers. American attitudes, both within government and among the public, changed

over the course of Truman's presidency, from initial optimism to considerable disappointment, but at no time during Truman's presidency did the U.S. government or the American public desire to give up on the United Nations.

The dissertation of Melvin Stanton Lebe is approved.

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2012

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## TABLE OF ABBREVIATIONS

CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
EAM	National Liberation Front
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NSC	National Security Council
PPS	Policy Planning Staff
PRC	People's Republic of China
ROK	Republic of Korea
UN	United Nations
UNCFI	United Nations Commission for Indonesia
UNCOK	United Nations Commission on Korea
UNTCOK	United Nations Temporary Commission on Korea
USI	United States of Indonesia
POW	Prisoner of War

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DIMINISHED HOPES: THE UNITED STATES AND THE UNITED NATIONS  
DURING THE TRUMAN YEARS

INTRODUCTION

In the waning days of the Second World War the Allies met in San Francisco to draft a charter for a new United Nations Organization. The war was almost won, and the United Nations embodied hopes for world peace. U.S. Government officials shared that hope and enthusiastically supported the creation of the UN.<sup>1</sup> Thirteen days before the planned opening of the San Francisco conference in April 1945 Franklin Roosevelt died and was replaced as president by Harry S. Truman. On the very day Truman took his oath of office, he responded without hesitation to press enquiries by stating that the conference would go forward as scheduled—his first decision as president. He later wrote that “it was of supreme importance that we build an organization to help keep the future peace of the world.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> That enthusiasm, however, was not shared by all observers. See, for example, Mark Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace: the End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009), 6-10; George Kennan, an important foreign policy expert of the era, certainly was not enthusiastic—see George F. Kennan, *Memoir, 1925-1950* (Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1967), 219-220; notwithstanding Truman’s enthusiasm he was aware, even before the San Francisco conference, of serious problems with the Soviet Union. Secretary of State Stettinius reported to Truman that he proposed to advise the Soviet government that the United States was “determined to proceed with the plans for the world organization, no matter what difficulties or differences may arise in regard to other matters,” but that the dispute over the formation of a Polish government “will cast a serious doubt upon our unity of purpose in regard to post-war collaboration.” Truman authorized Stettinius to so advise the Soviet government. “Memorandum for the President,” April 23, 1945; PSF: Subject File, 1940-1953; PSF: Subject File, Foreign Affairs, Russia: General: 1945-1948 [1 of 4]; Truman Papers, Truman Library.

<sup>2</sup> Harry S. Truman, *Memoirs of Harry S. Truman: Years of Decisions* (New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1955; Da Capo Press paperback edition, 1955), 9.

The creation of the United Nations, which was soon to follow, marked a critical juncture in American history. Having refused to join the League of Nations after the First World War and chosen instead a path of relative isolationism, the United States was now proudly and enthusiastically about to become a founding member of the United Nations. The relationship between the United States and the United Nations during its crucial formative years poses important questions for the historian: How in fact would the U.S. government interact with the UN and its member states? How would different elements of the U.S. government—the State Department and its various bureaus and officers, the military establishment, the diplomatic mission at the UN, and the President himself, compete for authority and control of U.S. policy at the UN? What effect would U.S. policy have on the new organization and, conversely, what effect would the United Nations and its various member states have on U.S. policy? How long would the new American commitment to internationalism last and what sort of internationalism would it turn out to be? Finally, would the new international organization prove capable of limiting international violence? This work explores those questions. It is an account of the relationship between the United States and the United Nations during the Truman presidency—the first seven years of the United Nation’s existence – a subject on which the historical literature has been oddly silent.

I focus here on what I take to be the main purpose of the United Nations, as the historical actors viewed it at the time: the preservation of international peace. This is not to say that other purposes of the UN were and are not of great importance; but I do argue that the U.S. policy-makers involved in helping to create the UN, in “managing” U.S. entry into that body, and in shaping U.S. policy towards the new United Nations all viewed avoidance of a third world war as the chief *raison d’être* for the new organization. With that in mind, I examine five case

studies that were critically important to the success or failure of the United Nations' mission to preserve international peace: Chapter 1 considers the issues of UN membership and voting rights, beginning in January 1946 when the Soviet Union nominated a client state, Albania, for membership. Membership issues as well as disputes about Soviet reliance on the veto continued throughout Truman's presidency. Chapter 2 looks at trouble-spots in Iran and Greece. In January 1946 Iran brought to the Security Council the refusal of the Soviet Union to remove its military forces from Iran, which removal was finally accomplished through UN diplomacy by the end of May 1946. In February 1946 the Soviet Union brought to the Security Council the presence of the British army in Greece fighting on the side of the rightist government against leftist insurgents. The United Nations continued its involvement with the civil war in Greece until December 1951. Chapter 3 examines the war of independence in Indonesia, beginning with a Ukrainian request for Security Council action regarding British troops fighting against nationalist forces in Indonesia. UN involvement with the fighting there continued until Indonesian independence in December 1949. Chapter 4 addresses "nation-building" efforts in Korea. After the breakdown of U.S.-Soviet efforts to impose a UN trusteeship on Korea, the U.S. government turned to nation-building in South Korea, and in September 1947 the United States brought to the General Assembly the issue of independence for Korea. Finally, Chapter 5 deals with war on the Korean peninsula, when the Security Council met on June 25, 1950 at U.S. request after an all-out invasion from North Korea into South Korea. The issue of the Korean War continued in the United Nations throughout (and after) the remainder of the Truman presidency.

Each of these crises posed critical challenges for the newly established United Nations. Events in Iran tested the ability of the UN to prevent, by peaceful diplomacy, a superpower's

aggressive moves against a weak neighboring country. Greece presented a challenge to the UN's power to prevent a civil war from spilling over into three neighboring countries—all satellites of the Soviet Union—and becoming a regional war. The conflict in Indonesia represented an early example of decolonization, and tested the UN's willingness and capacity to stop a bloody war and to assist a former colony in its efforts to achieve independence. Korea first tested the UN's capacity for nation-building in a region directly contested by the United States and the Soviet Union and then, from 1950 onward, its ability to prevent a war between armed forces directly tied to those two great powers from escalating into a Third World War.

All of these events intimately involved the preservation of international peace. And in each case, in spite of the paralyzing effects of the Cold War, the United Nations did act, although sometimes very slowly and haltingly, to limit international violence and aggression. In the case of Indonesia, the UN effort ultimately put an end to the fighting and helped Indonesia attain its independence. In the cases of Iran, Greece, and Korea the UN did contain communist expansion and prevent wider wars, by diplomatic effort in the cases of Iran, by military effort in the case of Korea, and in Greece by observation and investigation, as an adjunct to military and economic aid provided by Britain and the United States without benefit of UN sanction.

The years covered in this work were also formative ones in the history of U.S. relations with the UN. By the end of Truman's presidency the initial American enthusiasm for the UN had changed to a merely ritualistic approval. Officially, and for public consumption, Truman (as well as his successor, Dwight Eisenhower) still supported and respected the UN.<sup>3</sup> However, at a

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<sup>3</sup> In his First Inaugural Address on January 20, 1953 President Dwight Eisenhower announced that "respecting the United Nations as the living sign of all people's hope for peace, we shall strive to make it not merely an eloquent symbol but an effective force." Dwight Eisenhower, First Inaugural Address, January 20, 1953, [Database online] available at [http://presidentialrhetoric.com/historicspeeches/eisenhower/first\\_inaugural.html](http://presidentialrhetoric.com/historicspeeches/eisenhower/first_inaugural.html); internet; accessed April 13, 2011.

pragmatic level the United Nations had become to a degree beside the point—sometimes a cover for actions which the United States would have taken with or without UN support, and at other times a forum for seemingly interminable and hostile debate with the Soviets.<sup>4</sup>

The dual strategy of seeking UN approval where possible, and acting independently of the UN where formal approval was not possible, became the established U.S. foreign policy methodology during the Truman presidency. That dual strategy mirrored U.S. public opinion. By the time Truman left office, American attitudes toward the United Nations had become somewhat bifurcated—still supporting continued membership but somewhat doubtful as to its practical value.<sup>5</sup> That dichotomy has continued up to this day.

At the same time, as this work demonstrates, diplomacy at the United Nations did matter. The positions that the United States promoted at the UN were often modified in the course of that diplomacy—in response to the voices of various friendly powers, including Britain, Canada and Australia, as well as neutral powers such as India. Thus, the institutions, processes, and norms of the UN made a difference. For the United States, the UN had become a forum for advancing American positions and for reaching consensus with its allies. Victory in UN voting was considered important, even if the Administration sometimes resolved bedrock issues of U.S.

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<sup>4</sup> By 1951 a bill “to rescind and revoke membership of the United States in the United Nations” had been introduced in the House of Representatives, and sent to the Department of State for comment. The State Department response expressed “the emphatic hope that it [the bill] will receive no favorable consideration by the Congress . . . . The enactment of such a measure would upset completely the basic foreign policy of the United States. That policy is designed to protect the security of the United States through support for the United Nations and for regional and collective defense arrangements envisaged in the United Nations Charter. See “Letter to the Honorable James P. Richards, Chairman, Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, August 15, 1951, General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, Decimal File 1950-1954, Folder 310.3/7150, National Archive, College Park, Maryland (“National Archive” herein).

<sup>5</sup> By May 1951 the Americans who thought that the UN was doing a poor job outnumbered those who thought it was doing a good job by a ratio of 36 percent to 24 percent, whereas 30 percent thought it was doing a fair job. Forty percent of Americans thought that the UN was decreasing in importance, whereas only 25 percent thought it was increasing in importance, and 18 percent thought it was about the same in *importance*. *George H. Gallup, The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1935-1971, Vol. One, 1935-1948 (New York: Random House, 1972), 992.*

security outside of the United Nations' purview.<sup>6</sup> Late in Truman's presidency, U.S. public opinion—despite its ambivalence—still strongly supported trying to make the United Nations a success.<sup>7</sup> For all its limitations, then, the UN remained the most important instrument for non-violent resolution of the problems of the world.

### *Wider Debates*

The United Nations, as a subject, has been somewhat ignored by historians. Many books on the United Nations have been written by UN staff, by public policy experts, or by political scientists—with the result that the emphasis has been on analysis and prescription, not on history. However, a few historians have contributed to an understanding of the creation and work of the Organization, and their insights provide an essential starting point for this thesis.

Robert C. Hilderbrand's *Dumbarton Oaks: The Origins of the United Nations and the Search for Postwar Security* tells the story of the planning for the UN.<sup>8</sup> Hilderbrand begins with the proposition that the United Nations has not fulfilled the larger purpose set for it at the end of the Second World War and seeks to explain why. He argues that the causes of that failure did not lie in postwar developments, but rather in the way the UN was organized. Specifically, Hilderbrand argues that the UN's weaknesses were built into the United Nations structure—

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<sup>6</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 56-57.

<sup>7</sup> In October 1952, eighty-seven percent of those interviewed thought that it was either very important (77%) or fairly important (10%) for the United States to try to make the United Nations a success. George H. Gallup, *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1935-1971*, Vol. Two, 1949-1958 (New York: Random House, 1972), 1104.

<sup>8</sup> Robert C. Hilderbrand, *Dumbarton Oaks: The Origins of the United Nations and the Search for Postwar Security* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1990).



especially the absence of the power of the “Four Policemen backed by an international air force”—because the Big Three decided that their own self-interests were too important to entrust to the UN, which might interfere with their own hegemonic ambitions.<sup>9</sup> Thus, in Hilderbrand’s view, the history of the Dumbarton Oaks planning is a history of the decisions taken that led, if not to failure, at least to serious disappointment.

Stephen C. Schlesinger’s *Act of Creation: The Founding of the United Nations* provides a history of the San Francisco conference at which the UN was founded.<sup>10</sup> Schlesinger writes from an American point of view and his tone is largely celebratory—FDR, he says, was “the most extraordinary visionary of them all,” and Truman was “his equally heroic vice president.”<sup>11</sup> But Schlesinger also points to a reason for UN failure. Even as the conference proceeded, the U.S. government was spying on delegates, including delegates of friendly powers. With this lack of trust even at the UN’s founding moment, it is quite understandable that the continuing Great Power cooperation required for effective UN collective security never materialized. The idealism of concept was never matched by reality, even in the heady days of San Francisco when the allies were flush with victory.

Thomas M. Campbell’s *Masquerade Peace: America’s UN Policy, 1944-1945* argues that “Truman’s accession speeded the process of eroding the UN policy [of Roosevelt] because Truman was inherently more suspicious of communism than was Roosevelt.”<sup>12</sup> Thus, according

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 245-246.

<sup>10</sup> Stephen C. Schlesinger, *Act of Creation: The Founding of the United Nations* (Cambridge, MA: Westview Press, 2003).

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., xvii.

<sup>12</sup> Thomas M. Campbell, *Masquerade Peace: America’s UN Policy, 1944-1945* (Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1973), 147.

to Campbell, Truman lacked confidence in the UN's ability to secure the peace, and America's UN policy became a mask behind which the United States sought alternative means of security against the Soviet Union.

Caroline Pruden's *Conditional Partners: Eisenhower, the United Nations, and the Search for a Permanent Peace* describes U.S.-UN relations during the Eisenhower administration.<sup>13</sup> Her announced purpose is to study American interaction with the UN to gain insight into U.S. foreign policy goals, and how that policy was formulated and implemented. She argues that American support for the UN was shallow—often more rhetorical than real—and that such support rarely interfered with American *realpolitik* objectives. Like Campbell, Pruden raises the question whether the U.S. government merely “maintain[ed] an appearance of cooperation with and support for the UN.” She concludes that “the rhetoric of support for the UN was ever-present,” but actual reliance on the United Nations was less clear.<sup>14</sup> In the final analysis, Pruden sees these years in terms of missed opportunity, concluding that: “Eisenhower failed to use the United Nations to its fullest possible potential.”<sup>15</sup>

Two more recent works on the UN are also helpful. Paul Kennedy's *The Parliament of Man: The Past, Present, and Future of the United Nations*, as its title indicates, offers a brief history leading up to the creation of the UN and its operation, and an analysis of issues facing the organization presently and in the future.<sup>16</sup> Mark Mazower's *No Enchanted Palace: The End of*

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<sup>13</sup> Caroline Pruden, *Conditional Partners: Eisenhower, the United Nations, and the Search for a Permanent Peace* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998).

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, xiii.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 314.

<sup>16</sup> Paul Kennedy, *The Parliament of Man: The Past, Present, and Future of the United Nations* (New York: Random House, Inc., 2006).

*Empire and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations* argues for a close historical connection between the United Nations and the earlier League of Nations, and suggests an understanding of the primary instigation for the creation of the UN not in the American desire to rectify its mistake of refusing to join the League of Nations, but rather in the British imperial desire specifically to create a world organization that would protect its empire, and more generally to continue the white civilizing mission in the postwar era.<sup>17</sup>

The historical literature on Truman and his administration is also central to the story told here, because Truman's presidency was formative for the development of the relationship between the United States and the new UN. While much of the Truman literature is biographical, with only limited analysis of American conduct at the United Nations,<sup>18</sup> some works have offered useful analytical insights on the subject. Michael J. Hogan's *A Cross of Iron: Harry S. Truman and the Origins of the National Security State, 1945-1954* deals with the effect of the Cold War on the structure and working of the American state.<sup>19</sup> He argues that Truman and his advisers saw the need to build up a large peacetime military power, but at the same time control military spending in order to protect the economy and to preserve American domestic values. Typically, he says, the domestic battle between enhancing peacetime military power and

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<sup>17</sup> Mark Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace: The End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

<sup>18</sup> See Robert J. Donovan, *Conflict and Crisis: The Presidency of Harry S Truman, 1945-1948* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1977); Robert J. Donovan, *Tumultuous Years: The Presidency of Harry S Truman, 1949-1953* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1982); Bert Cochran, *Harry Truman and the Crisis Presidency* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1973); Cabell Phillips, *The Truman Presidency: The History of a Triumphant Succession* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1966); Robert H. Ferrell, *Harry S. Truman: A Life* (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1994); Harold F. Gosnell, *Truman's Crises: A Political Biography of Harry S. Truman* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1980); David McCullough, *Truman* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992).

<sup>19</sup> Michael J. Hogan, *A Cross of Iron: Harry S. Truman and the Origins of the National Security State, 1945-1954* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

preserving traditional American values as well as a strong economy was waged between internationalist Democrats on one side and Republicans and their conservative, often Southern, Democrat allies on the other. Both sides understood that a major change was occurring in the United States—a peacetime national security state was being born, where none had previously existed. Donald R. McCoy's *The Presidency of Harry S. Truman* likewise takes the position that, in contrast to the American experience after the First World War, there was no retreat to small government after Second World War, and that Truman was instrumental in the establishment of the American state system of permanent large government and worldwide international involvement.<sup>20</sup>

More broadly, the historical literature on Truman serves as a reminder that the accident of his presidency was critically important in the evolution of U.S. policy and in the relationship that developed between the U.S and the UN under his leadership. Truman's experience, political skills, self-confidence, leadership style, and above all stature in the international community differed significantly from those of President Roosevelt. As a result, it can be argued Truman's imprint on U.S.-Soviet and U.S.-UN relations was substantial and significant. I am not arguing here that Roosevelt would not have faced the same problems Truman did. But I am suggesting that neither U.S. nor Soviet postwar conduct was pre-determined—each had room to maneuver, and each reacted to its perceptions of the intentions and conduct of the other. As a result, differences between Roosevelt's and Truman's abilities and approach did make a difference in the result. The suddenness of change of American presidents resulted in a sharp change in leadership style. That change affected the level of U.S.-Soviet trust, which in turn resulted in a

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<sup>20</sup> Donald R. McCoy, *The Presidency of Harry S. Truman* (Lawrence, Kansas: The University of Kansas Press, 1984).

much more adversarial relationship in the UN, and eventually to a marked decline in U.S. enthusiasm about the UN as an institution.

Finally, the story of U.S. relations with the UN during the Truman administration cannot be fully understood without some appreciation of the longer historical trends, and broader currents, of U.S. foreign relations in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The historical shifts and tensions between U.S. isolationism and internationalism are especially germane to this work. The tension between internationalism<sup>21</sup> and fear of involvement in Europe's alliances and intrigues has been a part of the American experience since the nation's founding. American isolationism had been pragmatic in its understanding that the United States should and would always have trade and other connections with the world, but should avoid treaty commitments with other countries that might lead to foreign wars and thus endanger national security. In George Washington's Farewell Address to the Nation he famously favored "harmony [and] liberal intercourse with all nations" and "extending our commercial relations," but cautioned that the United States should have "as little political connection as possible" with foreign nations.<sup>22</sup>

The isolationist ethos also embodied an idealistic dimension, expressed as setting an example of democracy for the world to follow. As president, Thomas Jefferson had argued for a connection between the "interests" and the "moral duties" of the United States towards other countries, but he also continued to emphasize a separation from Europe's problems—arguing that this country was "kindly separated by nature and a wide ocean from the exterminating havoc

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<sup>21</sup> I use the term "internationalism" to describe an approach to foreign affairs characterized by a belief in collective action with the other nations of the world, which would necessarily require the abandonment of some of the freedom to act unilaterally. In the twentieth century it came to emphasize committing U.S. governmental actions vis-à-vis other countries to international rules and norms, imposed either by international law as decided by an international court, or by the vote of member nations in some form of international organization.

<sup>22</sup> George Washington, Farewell Address to the Nation, September 19, 1796, [Database on-line]; Available from <http://www.presidentialrhetoric.com/historicspeeches/washingotn/farewell.print.html>, p.6-7.

of one quarter of the globe.”<sup>23</sup> John Quincy Adams had asserted that America’s “heart” was with freedom and independence everywhere, but America “goes not abroad, in search of monsters to destroy. She is the well-wisher to the freedom and independence of all. She is the champion and vindicator only of her own.”<sup>24</sup>

The idea that the United States was “separated” from the Old World (and for that matter, from the rest of the world) was of course always part fiction. The United States had been bound up with the rest of the world from its beginnings, in immigration, trade, diplomacy, culture, intellectual advances, and, for that matter, war. But that reality was always cloaked in notions of American exceptionalism and separation from the military alliances, frequent wars and other problems of the Old World. As the United States reached a position of acknowledged world leadership at a time when great technological change was “shrinking” the earth, the possibility of continuing the separation became increasingly remote.

The presidency of Woodrow Wilson marked a great, albeit temporary, transition from isolationism to internationalism in U.S. foreign policy, together with an emphasis on moral purpose affecting all people and all nations.<sup>25</sup> In his wartime message of April 2, 1917 Wilson stated that America’s motive for going to war was the “vindication of right, of human right,” and “for the rights of nations great and small and the privilege of men everywhere to choose their

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<sup>23</sup> Thomas Jefferson, Second Inaugural Address, March 4, 1805, [Database on-line]; Available from [http://www.presidentialrhetoric.com/historicspeeches/jefferson/second\\_inaugural.html](http://www.presidentialrhetoric.com/historicspeeches/jefferson/second_inaugural.html); internet; accessed January 21, 2012.

Thomas Jefferson, First Inaugural Address, March 4, 1801, [Database on-line]; Available from [http://www.presidentialrhetoric.com/historicspeeches/jefferson/first\\_inaugural.print.html](http://www.presidentialrhetoric.com/historicspeeches/jefferson/first_inaugural.print.html); internet; accessed January 21, 2012.

<sup>24</sup> John Quincy Adams, Address on U.S. Foreign Policy, July 4, 1821, [Database on-line]; Available from [http://www.presidentialrhetoric.com/historicspeeches/adams\\_jq/foreignpolicy.html](http://www.presidentialrhetoric.com/historicspeeches/adams_jq/foreignpolicy.html); internet; accessed January 21, 2012.

<sup>25</sup> Thomas J. Knock, *To End All Wars*, 50.

way of life . . . . The world must be made safe for democracy . . . .”<sup>26</sup> After the war, Wilson attempted to realize his vision of a League of Nations, a world organization of countries that would collectively enforce international peace. However, the peace finally constructed at Versailles bore little resemblance to Wilson’s vision, and although Wilson did salvage his prized League of Nations, ultimately he failed to secure U.S. Senate ratification, so that the United States never joined the League. Moreover, the League that emerged was limited in power, and too weak to take any meaningful action against the totalitarian aggression in Europe and Asia that resulted in the Second World War.

### *UN Origins*

By the middle of the twentieth century, American decision-makers vividly sensed how the United States had been drawn into the First World War, despite its announced intention to stay out. They had also witnessed the unsuccessful efforts to insulate the nation from foreign dangers and foreign problems by an inter-war policy of isolationism vis-à-vis Europe and Asia. They saw the Second World War, at least in part, as resulting from American isolationism and other mistakes made after the First World War, and they were determined not to repeat those mistakes.<sup>27</sup> Certainly by the start of the Second World War most American leaders believed that global power and global reach imposed global responsibilities. The new super-power status of

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<sup>26</sup> Woodrow Wilson, War Message, April 2, 1917 [Database on-line]; Available from [http://www.presidentialrhetoric.com/historic\\_speeches/Wilson/warmessage.html](http://www.presidentialrhetoric.com/historic_speeches/Wilson/warmessage.html); internet; accessed January 21, 2012.

<sup>27</sup> For example, by June, 1945 former isolationist Republican U.S. Senator from New Hampshire, Charles W. Tobey stated that “the battle for the future of our whole generation is being fought in the Senate of the United States—the battle against both political and economic isolation . . . . war is an international affair, and the effort to prevent it must be equally international.” See “Senator Tobey Calls Isolation A Lost Cause,” New York Herald Tribune, June 22, 1945, p. 8.

the United States required a new active involvement throughout the world. This was the background to the historic shift toward internationalism that culminated in strong U.S support for the idea of a United Nations.

In August 1941, even before the United States had entered the war, Franklin Roosevelt met with Churchill in Newfoundland and agreed upon an “Atlantic Charter” setting forth eight highly idealistic principles that enunciated American and British purposes for fighting the war.<sup>28</sup> Those included seeking “no aggrandizement, territorial or otherwise,” “no territorial changes not based on the freely expressed wishes of the peoples concerned,” and respect for the “right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live.” The eighth statement of principle in the Atlantic Charter set forth the belief “that all of the nations of the world, for realistic as well as spiritual reasons must come to the abandonment of the use of force.”<sup>29</sup> These ideas could be traced back to Wilson’s announced vision of a postwar world.

Although the Atlantic Charter contained no explicit provision for a world organization, it did provide for the disarmament of aggressor nations “pending the establishment of a wider and permanent system of general security.” At the time, Franklin Roosevelt had been sufficiently fearful that domestic public opinion might demand a return to the isolationism of the 1930s that he resisted a stronger, more explicit proposal for a postwar international organization.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> The peace made at Versailles after the First World War was widely seen in the United States as a selfish peace made by the victors at the expense of the vanquished. Thomas J. Knock, *To End All Wars: Woodrow Wilson and the Quest for a New World Order* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992), 248-257; Tony Smith, *America’s Mission: The United States and the Worldwide Struggle for Democracy in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994), 96. I use the term “idealistic” to describe the efforts during and after the Second World War, to organize a peace, not based on selfish gains for the victors, but rather based on broad principles of justice and fairness to all peoples and states of the world.

<sup>29</sup> Atlantic Charter, August 14, 1947, [Database on-line]; Available from <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/wwii/atlantic.asp>; internet; accessed April 11, 2011.

<sup>30</sup> Robert A. Divine, *Second Chance*, 283-284.



Despite these reservations, on January 1, 1942 at Roosevelt and Churchill's Washington, D.C. Arcadia Conference a Declaration by United Nations was promulgated, and ultimately signed by twenty-six governments opposing the Axis Powers. Those signatory governments subscribed to the principles of the Atlantic Charter and pledged themselves to "defend life, liberty, independence and religious freedom, and to preserve human rights and justice." In his "Four Freedoms" speech, Franklin Roosevelt expanded on Wilson's internationalism and on his theme of making the world safe for democracy. Roosevelt asserted that the United States "looked forward to a world founded upon four essential human freedoms"—of speech and expression, of religion, from want, and from fear—which would exist "everywhere in the world."<sup>31</sup>

The fact that this most destructive of all wars had come less than a generation after the end of the horrifically devastating First World War added to the impetus for the creation of the United Nations. It was generally believed that some world organization would be necessary to prevent a third world war, that the League of Nations had been too weak to prevent the outbreak of the Second World War, and that the American failure to join the League had been a key cause of that weakness.<sup>32</sup> And so, as the end of the war neared, American public opinion and government policy were firmly in favor of correcting the mistakes of the interwar period, of providing a "second chance" by creating a strong UN, with the ability to enforce world order by military force if necessary, and with American membership and leadership in the organization.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Franklin D. Roosevelt, Four Freedoms, January 6, 1941 [Database on-line]; Available from <http://www.presidentialrhetoric.com/historicspeeches/roosevelt/franklin/fourfreedom.html>; internet; accessed January 21, 2012.

<sup>32</sup> Robert A. Divine, *Second Chance*, 2.

<sup>33</sup> Robert A. Divine, *Second Chance*, 4, 182-183.

Against that background, in the summer of 1944 the United States hosted the Dumbarton Oaks Conference in the Georgetown suburb of Washington, D.C., at which representatives of the United States, the Soviet Union, and Great Britain (with China attending later, after the Soviet representatives left) sought to plan for a postwar international organization. And in February at the Yalta Conference of U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, and Soviet Premier Josef Stalin, Roosevelt offered to host another conference in the United States, set for April 25, 1945, to create the new organization. When it was finally promulgated in June 1945, the UN Charter called for “effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace”; “friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples”; and “international co-operation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character, [and] in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms.”<sup>34</sup>

These idealistic principles notwithstanding, neither the United States nor the Soviet Union was willing to allow important security decisions, such as the use of military force, to be made against its will. As a result they both insisted on a provision, set forth in the UN Charter, requiring unanimity among the five permanent members for enforcement action by the Security Council. This unanimity quickly proved impossible to maintain, and the “no” vote of any permanent member (soon to become known as a “veto”) meant that one such member could block any substantive Security Council action. The Soviet reliance on this veto—resulting from the failure of the United States and the Soviet Union to remain on good terms—contributed

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<sup>34</sup> Charter of the United Nations; June 26, 1945, [Database on-line]; Available from <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/Avalon/un/unchart.htm>; internet; accessed January 21, 2012.

substantially to American loss of confidence in the UN during the Truman years. But the Soviet Union was not solely responsible for the souring of U.S.-Soviet relations at this time; the Truman administration also played a critical role.

### *Truman's Presidency*

Addressing a joint session of Congress ten days before the opening of the UN conference in San Francisco, Harry Truman, having just succeeded to the presidency, appealed “to every American, regardless of party, race, creed, or color, to support our efforts to build a strong and lasting United Nations Organization.”<sup>35</sup> On June 25, 1945, after the national delegations attending the conference had drafted and unanimously approved the UN Charter, Truman arrived in San Francisco for the signing. His optimism and positive feelings about the new international organization were on display in his address to the assembled delegates: “The Charter of the United Nations which you have just signed,” he said, “is a solid structure upon which we can build a better world. History will honor you for it.” And he concluded: “this new structure of peace is rising upon strong foundations. Let us not fail to grasp this supreme chance to establish a world-wide rule of reason—to create an enduring peace under the guidance of God.”<sup>36</sup> In

December Truman wrote to Clark M. Eichelberger, director of the American Association for the

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<sup>35</sup> Harry S. Truman, “Address Before a Joint Session of Congress” (speech delivered before a joint session of Congress on April 16, 1945, Washington, D.C.), *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Harry S. Truman, Containing the Public Messages, Speeches, and Statements of the President, April 12 to December 31, 1945* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1961), 5.

<sup>36</sup> Harry S. Truman, “Address in San Francisco at the Closing of the United Nations Conference” (speech delivered before the closing session of the United Nations on June 26, 1945, San Francisco, California), *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Harry S. Truman, Containing the Public Messages, Speeches, and Statements of the President, April 12 to December 31, 1945* (Washington: United States Government Printing Offices, 1961), 138-144.

United Nations, that “we shall have permanent peace in the world. We are, I believe, on the threshold of the greatest age in the history of mankind.”<sup>37</sup>

Within less than eight years, however, U.S. policy-makers had grown markedly more ambivalent towards the United Nations. The enthusiasm that animated Truman’s (as well as other American leaders’) pronouncements about the nascent United Nations at its birth contrasted markedly with the more cautious attitude towards the UN at the end of Truman’s presidency. The spirit of hopeful international cooperation that (at least in public pronouncements) had marked the beginning of the United Nations was gone. In its place was a hard-headed competition against the Soviet Union and other communist countries, sometimes (as in the case of Korea) carried out in the name of the United Nations, and other times (as with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization) pursued outside of the UN but justified as conforming to its Charter.<sup>38</sup>

U. S. public opinion experienced a similar trend from initial enthusiasm to a more ambivalent attitude during these years. In late June and early July 1945, sixty-six per cent of Americans surveyed thought that the United States Senate should approve the UN Charter, whereas only three per cent disagreed.<sup>39</sup> However, as early as June 1946 only twenty-six per cent of those interviewed were satisfied with the progress made by the United Nations, whereas

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<sup>37</sup> Letter from Harry S. Truman to Clark M. Eichelberger, Director, American Association for the United Nations, December 7, 1945, Official File, 85-A 1945 [2 of 2], Truman Papers, Truman Library.

<sup>38</sup> Harry S. Truman, “Address on the Occasion of the Signing of the North Atlantic Treaty” (speech delivered in the Departmental Auditorium on April 4, 1949, Washington, D.C.). John T. Wooley and Gerhard Peters, *The American Presidency Project* [Database online], Santa Barbara, CA. Available from World Wide Web: <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pId=13421>; internet; accessed January 23, 2012.

<sup>39</sup> George H. Gallup, *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1935-1971*, Vol. One, 1935-1948 (New York: Random House, 1972), 516.

forty-nine per cent were dissatisfied.<sup>40</sup> And by August 1953, only thirty per cent felt the UN was doing a good job, whereas thirty-six per cent thought it was doing a fair job and twenty-two per cent thought it was doing a poor job.<sup>41</sup>

Some part of the explanation for this change in attitude lies in the person and the policies of the new President. When Roosevelt died, Truman inherited the office of presidency that had been occupied by Roosevelt for more than twelve years—through the Great Depression, the outbreak of world war, and the conduct of the war almost to the point of absolute victory. The disparity between the great power and authority of Roosevelt at the time of his death and the comparatively modest experience and accomplishments of Truman was striking.<sup>42</sup> Truman's life experience also differed markedly from Roosevelt's. Roosevelt came from an elite, cosmopolitan and sophisticated stratum of society, whereas Truman, whose formal education did not extend past high-school and some night-school law classes, had a small-town background. Unlike Roosevelt's supple and sometimes deceptive presidential style, Truman operated in a direct and blunt manner. His early political career involved local Missouri matters, and as senator he had little experience in foreign affairs. Moreover, while Roosevelt lived, he never confided in his vice-president, so that Truman came to the presidency with completely inadequate knowledge of international matters.<sup>43</sup> As a result when Roosevelt died a month before the German surrender, there was a marked shift in the presidency—as to knowledge,

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<sup>40</sup> George H. Gallup, *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1935-1971*, Vol. One, 1935-1948 (New York: Random House, 1972), 589.

<sup>41</sup> George H. Gallup, *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1935-1971*, Vol. Two, 1949-1958 (New York: Random House, 1972), 1168.

<sup>42</sup> Melvyn P. Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, The Truman Administration, and the Cold War* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1992), 26-27.

<sup>43</sup> Melvyn P. Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power*, 27.

experience and style of leadership. This shift led to a quickening of confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union, with resulting problems at the UN.

When Truman took office, he immediately needed the advice and support of experienced men whose judgment he could trust.<sup>44</sup> He turned to James F. Byrnes, who became first his unofficial, and then his official, secretary of state. Although self-educated past the age of fourteen, Byrnes had been a senior senator when Truman entered the Senate and became a mentor to Truman. Byrnes also had sat as a justice on the United States Supreme Court. During the war, Roosevelt had appointed him to the powerful post of Director of War Mobilization. Although having no particular foreign policy credentials, Byrnes had accompanied Roosevelt to the Yalta conference, and Roosevelt had delegated to him the highly important task of explaining and justifying to the American public the deal that Roosevelt had struck with Stalin at Yalta.<sup>45</sup> Truman, of course, knew of the high esteem in which Roosevelt apparently held Byrnes, and he also knew that Byrnes had expected to be picked as Roosevelt's running mate in 1944, in which case he (rather than Truman) would have become president. For all these reasons Truman, having plunged into the immense responsibility of the presidency with very little education, background or experience to guide him, looked to Byrnes for help. However, Byrnes proved a disappointment to Truman. Accustomed to acting quite independently, and no doubt thinking of himself as the equal of (if not superior to) the president, Byrnes often acted without clearing

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<sup>44</sup> On his first full day as president Truman met with Byrnes for one hour, after which the New York Times reported that Byrnes would become Truman's "Presidential confidant" and could have "almost any post he desired." See Lewis Wood, "Turn to the Right Seen, New President's Friends Say Legislative Branch Will Have Large Role, Byrnes As Adviser, Hopkins, Perkins, Biddle and Morgenthau May Go in Federal Shifts," *New York Times*, 14 April 1945, p. 3.

<sup>45</sup> Robert L. Messer, *The End of an Alliance: James F. Byrnes, Roosevelt, Truman, and the Origins of the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 4-10, 55-64.

specific decisions with Truman or even later reporting to him, although it is unclear whether Truman had intended a different relationship.<sup>46</sup>

Byrnes' style of negotiating with the Soviets proved especially unproductive. He assumed that the implicit threat of the U.S. atomic monopoly could be used to influence Soviet conduct to achieve American objectives, but Molotov appeared unconcerned about the bomb.<sup>47</sup> He adopted a tough stance with the Soviets at the London foreign ministers meeting, and failed to get meaningful results. At the Moscow foreign ministers meeting he tried a more accommodating style, which did achieve some progress with the Soviets. But in doing so he antagonized much of his domestic audience, who viewed Byrnes' compromises as appeasement.<sup>48</sup> When the foreign ministers met in New York Byrnes finally was able to reach agreement with the Soviet Union on peace treaties for Germany's European allies, Italy, Rumania, Bulgaria, Hungary and Finland. Nevertheless, his personal style, especially his secrecy and unwillingness to cooperate with others, offended many in the administration.<sup>49</sup> Most importantly, he had antagonized Truman.<sup>50</sup> As a result, in January 1947 Truman replaced Byrnes with a man of immense integrity and reputation, the former Army chief of staff, General George C. Marshall. Nevertheless, in the first twenty months of his presidency Truman lacked a strong relationship with an able secretary of state. As a result, Truman had to rely on his own

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<sup>46</sup> Robert L. Messer, *The End of an Alliance*, 126-127, 160-161, 178.

<sup>47</sup> Robert L. Messer, *The End of an Alliance*, 128-130.

<sup>48</sup> Daniel Yergin, *Shattered Peace*, 151-153.

<sup>49</sup> Melvyn P. Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power*, 38-40.

<sup>50</sup> Daniel Yergin, *Shattered Peace*, 158-159.

somewhat combative instincts, abetted by his more conservative advisers, in dealing with the Soviet Union.

To make matters worse, at Truman's accession to the presidency the State Department was in a weakened condition. Roosevelt had placed little reliance on State Department officials, instead using a variety of individuals to perform diplomatic tasks, leaving the State Department somewhat marginalized.<sup>51</sup> Roosevelt's secretary of state, Cordell Hull, had retired in November 1944. Roosevelt had replaced him with a man of limited foreign policy experience: the young Edward Stettinius, Jr., a former United States Steel executive who joined Roosevelt's administration as director of the Office of Production Management and later headed wartime Lend Lease aid to Allied governments. Truman decided early to replace Stettinius with Byrnes, but waited until July 1945, after the United Nations Conference in San Francisco, to do so.

Given the weak condition of the Department of State, Truman also sought and relied upon advice from various non-State Department officials whose viewpoints ranged from outright hostility to friendliness towards the Soviet Union. The former camp included Chief of Staff Admiral William Leahy,<sup>52</sup> ambassador to the Soviet Union W. Averill Harriman,<sup>53</sup> and Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal, the most anti-Soviet member of the Cabinet.<sup>54</sup> The latter camp included Joseph E. Davies, former ambassador to the Soviet Union and special adviser to the president, who argued for a policy of trusting and getting along with the Soviets, and former vice

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<sup>51</sup> Daniel Yergin, *Shattered Peace: The Origins of the Cold War and the National Security State* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1977), 56-57.

<sup>52</sup> Robert J. Donovan, *Tumultuous Years: The Presidency of Harry S Truman, 1949-1953* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1982), 68.

<sup>53</sup> Stephen C. Schlesinger, *Act of Creation: The founding of the United Nations* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Westview Press, 2003), 147.

<sup>54</sup> Alonzo L. Hamby, *Man of the People: A Life of Harry S. Truman* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 327.



president Henry Wallace, who was most willing to extend the benefit of the doubt to the Soviet Union.<sup>55</sup>

Truman—without much experience of his own—had to choose among these differing viewpoints, and his choices affected the way events soon played out in U.S.-Soviet relations and therefore at the United Nations. Significantly, Truman often took the advice of those who held more conservative, combative, anti-Soviet viewpoints, and disregarded more accommodating advice.<sup>56</sup> As a result, he adopted a generally confrontational attitude toward the Soviet Union, whereas Roosevelt had chosen a more conciliatory path. When Roosevelt met with the Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov at the end of 1942, for example, he encouraged Molotov to defer frontier decisions, and gave assurances that Soviet security needs would be satisfied without redrawing borders. Roosevelt emphasized his concept of providing world security enforced by the “Four Policemen.”<sup>57</sup> In marked contrast, when Truman met Molotov on April 23, 1945, he took a decidedly more confrontational approach.<sup>58</sup> Truman castigated Molotov for what he perceived to be the Soviets’ failure to live up to their obligations undertaken at the Yalta

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<sup>55</sup> Alonzo L. Hamby, *Man of the People*, 355-359.

<sup>56</sup> For example, in April 1945 Truman chose to disregard the advice of his experienced Secretary of War, Henry Stimson, as well as that of George C. Marshall, U.S. Army Chief of Staff, with regard to the crucial question of how to handle foreign policy toward the Soviet Union. Stimson counseled restraint and understanding with respect to Soviet intentions to create a subservient puppet-communist government in Poland. He argued that “without fully understanding how seriously the Russians took this Polish question we might be heading into very dangerous water,” and remarked that “25 years ago virtually all of Poland had been Russian.” He further stated that “he thought that the Russians perhaps were being more realistic than we were in regard to their own security,” and that “outside the United States with the exception of Great Britain there was no country that understood free elections.” General Marshall told Truman that “he was inclined to agree with Mr. Stimson that the possibility of a break with Russia was very serious.” “Memorandum of Meeting at the White House, 2:00 p.m., April 23,” April 23, 1945, PSF: Subject File, 1940-1953, Foreign Affairs File, Reports: General to Russia: Molotov, Russia: General: 1945-1948 [1 of 4] folder; Truman Papers, Truman Library.

<sup>57</sup> Robert Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy*, 342; John Lewis Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1947* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1972), 24-31.

<sup>58</sup> Alonzo L. Hamby, *Man of the People*, 315-318.

Conference relating to Poland. Molotov responded that he had “never been talked to like that in my life,” to which Truman famously replied, “Carry out your agreements and you won’t get talked to like that.”<sup>59</sup>

### *Cold War*

By the end of the war, many U.S. policy-makers had internalized Woodrow Wilson’s aversion to a “balance of power” and “sphere of influence” strategies.<sup>60</sup> The new United Nations seemed to embody the hope of abandoning spheres of influence and balance of power politics. However, Wilsonian-style internationalism offered no practical solution to the perceived need—on both sides of the Iron Curtain—for such arrangements. Roosevelt had in effect acquiesced in the Soviet Union’s moves to establish its sphere of influence over Poland and other countries in Eastern Europe, although he couched his acquiescence in Wilsonian terms of self-determination, hopefully to be achieved by free elections in Liberated Europe.<sup>61</sup> Likewise, Stalin had acquiesced in British and later American efforts to suppress a left wing insurgency in Greece and to re-establish a right wing government in that country. By helping to rebuild Western Europe and creating the NATO alliance, Truman embraced the “balance of power” philosophy that

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<sup>59</sup> Alonzo L. Hamby, *Man of the People*, 317-318.

<sup>60</sup> Tony Smith, *America’s Mission: The United States and the Worldwide Struggle for Democracy in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994; Second printing and first paperback printing, 1995), 108, 124; In November 1947, Secretary of State James Byrnes publicly warned against “spheres of influence.” Byrnes said that “we have freely accepted the Charter of the United Nations . . . We cannot have the kind of cooperation necessary for peace in a world divided into spheres of exclusive influence and special privilege.” See “Byrnes Issues Warning Against Spheres of Influence,” *New York Times*, 1 November 1945, p. 4.

<sup>61</sup> Robert Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 436-441; The Yalta Conference, February, 1945, [Database on-line]; Available from <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/wwii/yalta.asp>; internet; accessed February 4, 2006.

Wilson had found so troubling.<sup>62</sup> By the March 1947 announcement of the Truman Doctrine, which committed U.S. policy to “support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures,” the U.S. government announced its intention to hold a line—presumably world-wide—against further Soviet expansion, and thus to preserve permanently a U.S. sphere of influence.<sup>63</sup>

The tensions of the Cold War marked most international relations during Truman’s presidency—and questions brought to the United Nations were no exception. Under pressure from perceived Soviet expansionism, U.S. leaders viewed matters at the UN, whether brought to that body by the United States or by others, through the lens of Cold War hostility towards the Soviet Union. Sometimes differences arose—within the State Department, between the State Department and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, between the State Department and the U.S. diplomatic mission at the UN, and sometimes involving President Truman himself—as to how to respond to Soviet challenges. But however U.S. policy was decided, the United Nations became an arena for legitimizing the foreign policy objectives of the Truman administration, and delegitimizing Soviet objectives. The ability of the United States to command large majorities in the Security Council and General Assembly became oft-cited evidence that the nations of the world were on the side of the United States, and that the Soviet Union represented only an obstructionist minority.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Michael J. Lacey, ed., *The Truman Presidency* (Cambridge: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars and Cambridge University Press, 1989), 13-14, 224, 258, 267.

<sup>63</sup> By May 1948 James Reston in the *New York Times* opined that as a result of bipartisan support for Truman’s containment policy against the Soviet Union and his European Recovery Program the United States had “restore[d] some semblance of a balance of power in Europe.” James Reston, “Hope for U.S.-Soviet Peace Rises in Washington,” *New York Times*, 23 May 1948, p. E3.

<sup>64</sup> Harry S. Truman to Clark M. Eichelberger, Director, American Association for the United Nations, December 7, 1945, Official File, 85-A 1945 [2 of 2], Truman Papers, Truman Library.

Throughout this period the U.S. government never publicly challenged the basic value of the United Nations or the United States' continuing commitment to the organization. It was easier for Truman to blame the Soviets for the UN's shortcomings, rather than to blame the UN. In a campaign speech on October 6, 1952 at Brigham Young University, for example, Truman observed that "the United Nations has not yet become all we hoped it would be—and you can blame the Soviet Union for that—but it has done a tremendous amount of good in a few years' time."<sup>65</sup> Nonetheless, since the organizing premise of the United Nations stipulated the necessity for Great Power unity, blaming the Soviet Union was just another way of challenging the UN principle of collective security through Great Power cooperation, and thus implicitly criticizing the UN itself.

Despite Truman's early enthusiasm for the UN, then, events during his presidency—most conspicuously the dynamics of the Cold War—transformed American hopes for the UN into a kind of disillusionment. U.S. leaders still publicly paid lip service to their commitment to the United Nations—indeed proud membership in the United Nations became an article of faith within the Truman administration—but U.S. leaders soon looked to other arrangements for American security.<sup>66</sup> At the UN the U.S. delegation still fought to prevail in the voting, but American policy-makers had little confidence that the United Nations could protect the United States against the perceived threat from the Soviet Union. Rather they looked to building up a

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<sup>65</sup> Harry S. Truman, "Address at Brigham Young University on October 6, 1952, Provo, Utah). John T. Wooley and Gerhard Peters, *The American Presidency Project* [Data-base online], Santa Barbara, CA. Available from World Wide Web: <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pId=14285>; internet; accessed January 21, 2012.

<sup>66</sup> Robert G. Wesson, "The United Nations in the World Outlook of the Soviet Union and of the United States," in *Soviet and American Policies in the United Nations: A Twenty-Five Year Perspective*, eds. Alvin Z. Rubinstein and George Ginsburgs, (New York: New York University Press, 1971), 9-10.

nuclear stockpile and to the military alliance embodied in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

By one account, U.S. enthusiasm for the United Nations waned during Truman's presidency because the idealistic expectations for the UN proved unrealistic and in fact unattainable when balanced against the pragmatic requirements of perceived American security. In this view, initial U.S. support for the United Nations, although enthusiastic, in fact represented only a partial and very limited abandonment of the unilateralist, national self-reliance that had undergirded previous U.S. foreign policy. Most importantly, the UN Charter had assumed as a fundamental premise that the American-Soviet-British wartime alliance would continue postwar; but the strikingly different ideological, economic and geopolitical interests of the two Western states as compared to the Soviet Union, as well as their prewar record of mutual antagonism, made that assumption doubtful. As constituted, the United Nations had no means to prevent a war between two sovereign superpowers. The United States and the Soviet Union would have to look to their own leadership to find sufficient common ground or, at least, sufficient mutual fear and prudence to prevent nuclear Armageddon.

At the same time, it is worth stressing that the United States—which enjoyed very substantial majority support at the UN—itself bore considerable responsibility for weakening the United Nations during the Truman years. Inside the UN, the United States sought to obviate the veto by various means, including moving matters away from the Security Council to the General Assembly, where there was no veto. U.S. policy-makers also acted to dilute the concept of universality of membership and made various efforts to tinker with aspects of the UN Charter, especially involving unanimity of permanent member votes in cases of Security Council enforcement actions. The Truman administration took these steps in order to make the UN more

effective in reaching American goals and in obstructing Soviet objectives. As noted above, the U.S. government also sought to provide for American security outside the purview United Nations, including the creation of NATO and a build-up of a massive peacetime military establishment<sup>67</sup> with great emphasis on nuclear weapons. These actions marginalized and isolated the Soviet Union, thereby exacerbating the East-West conflict, and setting an early standard of conflict at the UN.

In some instances, these American efforts also undermined the long-term interests and viability of the UN itself, especially by circumventing and thus weakening the Security Council, by denying UN membership to various countries because some were friendly to the Soviet Union, and by reaching outside of the United Nations to form a military alliance against the Soviet Union. However, American leaders of the time held responsibility for safeguarding their own country, and they took a narrow view of U.S. self interest at the expense of a more long-range approach which might have sought to strengthen UN institutions as a means of providing enduring security for the United States. In that narrow, geopolitical view, U. S. security could not be assured by a cooperative UN-centered security system, but depended upon “containment,” i.e., preventing Soviet expansion and thereby denying additional landmass, population or industrial power to the Soviets.<sup>68</sup>

Just as U.S. interaction with the UN affected the international organization, such interaction also to some degree shaped U.S. foreign policy during the Truman years. Its large Security Council and General Assembly majority support gave the United States great power

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<sup>67</sup> Michael J.Hogan, *A Cross of Iron: Harry S. Truman and the Origins of the National Security State, 1945-1954* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, 1-22.

<sup>68</sup> Michael H. Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New Haven: Yale University Press,1987), 152-155.

within the organization, but ironically in order to maintain those majorities the United States often had to modify its positions so as to create policies with sufficiently broad support among UN member states to ensure passage. The process of lining up such support did, at various times, affect U.S. policy.

Underlying all U.S. action at the UN were internal tensions between the goals previously announced as U.S. war aims as contrasted with pragmatic postwar interests. The U.S. government had justified the war to the American public on the basis of the idealistic values which Roosevelt had championed and which had motivated the American public to make the sacrifices necessary to win the war. The new UN Charter drew upon those values. Nevertheless, postwar U.S. goals often did not square with those idealistic principles. As a result, American policy-makers were torn between the need to respond to the American public's (as well as many other nations') expectations of a principled U.S. foreign policy and the pragmatic requirements of *realpolitik*.<sup>69</sup> The potential threat from the Soviet Union and the apparent inadequacy of the international community, as embodied in the UN, to provide for U.S. security, led the United States to subordinate the idealistic, cooperative aspects of the UN Charter to achieve pragmatic goals, to seek to change or evade certain Charter provisions which seemed to stand in the way of such goals, and in some instances to sidestep the United Nations entirely.

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<sup>69</sup> The postwar U.S. policy rather quickly shifted from reliance on international order through the United Nations to an old-fashioned balance of power politics. By late 1947 Secretary of State George C. Marshall advised Truman that American policy "should be directed toward restoring a balance of power in Europe and Asia." See Memorandum for President, November 7, 1947, folder "World Situation [Secy of State George C. Marshall's Nov.6, 1947 Cabinet Presentation," PSF: Subject File, 1940-53, Truman Library; Thomas J. Knock, *To End All Wars*, 272-273.

Throughout the Truman presidency, then, the formal U.S. commitment to internationalism in general, and to the United Nations in particular, never faltered. But the kind of internationalism practiced by the United States change significantly. The U.S. government saw Soviet expansionism as an existential threat, and American interaction at the UN reflected that fact. By the end of Truman's time in office the optimistic, idealistic, cooperative internationalism that had marked the U.S. entrance into the United Nations was largely gone, and had been replaced by a tough-minded, unilateralist variant that owed more to balance of power politics than to the idealism of Woodrow Wilson.



## CHAPTER 1

### MEMBERSHIP AND VOTING ISSUES

#### *Introduction*

The twin issues—membership and voting—determined the nature and operation of the new United Nations Organization. Membership questions clarified the degree to which the fledgling organization would in fact be universal in nature, and voting questions established the extent to which the UN would fulfill the original premise of Great Power unanimity. In fact Cold War hostility infected both issues during the Truman presidency. This chapter argues that because of Cold War pressures and because of the need to protect its perceived interests, the United States opted for promoting less rather than more universality, and for exercising its majority advantage at the UN, at the expense of any hope for unanimity among the Big Five Security Council permanent members, thus setting a pattern of a weakened United Nations divided into two power blocs.

#### *Idealistic and Pragmatic Strands of Internationalism*

The United Nations embodied, at one and the same time, the idealistic American hopes for world peace through international cooperation and lingering fears of loss of independence in foreign affairs implied in UN membership.<sup>1</sup> Never far below the surface, fear of a possible threat

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<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of the tension between American pragmatism and idealism as related to international law, see Edward McWhinney, “The Rule of Law and the Peaceful Settlement of Disputes,” in *Soviet and American*

to European and U.S. security from a newly powerful and potentially hostile Soviet Union colored all American action at the UN. Nowhere was this tension more evident than in conflicts that arose regarding disputes over which countries would be admitted to UN membership and over voting issues. The rules of voting and the choice of countries to be admitted to membership attracted much interest because they would determine the extent that the United States could expect to prevail in contested issues at the new Organization. Especially in matters of international peace and security U.S. decision-makers needed the United States to be backed by solid majorities in the Security Council and the General Assembly.

The end of the Second World War became a watershed moment in the history of American multilateralism. The death and destruction caused by the second “Great War” of the century convinced most Americans of the need for an international organization capable of keeping the peace among nations and encouraged the idealistic hope that such an organization could succeed at the task. Even such a strong isolationist as the ranking Republican Senator on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Arthur H. Vandenberg, had by war’s end converted to internationalism.<sup>2</sup> The failure of the League of Nations experiment—with the rise of aggression in Europe and Asia, culminating in the most deadly war in history—argued for the creation of a

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*Policies in the United Nations: A Twenty-Five Year Perspective*, eds. Alvin Z. Rubinstein and George Ginsburgs (New York: New York University Press, 1971), 174-175.

<sup>2</sup> In a January 10, 1945 speech Vandenberg said “I do not believe that any nation hereafter can immunize itself by its own exclusive action. Since Pearl Harbor, World War II has put the gory science of mass murder into new and sinister perspective. Our oceans have ceased to be moats which automatically protect our ramparts.” See Arthur H. Vandenberg, Jr., with the collaboration of Joe Alex Morris, eds., *The Private Papers of Senator Vandenberg* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1952), 135.

new international organization to maintain the peace, but this time with U.S. participation and strong enforcement powers.<sup>3</sup>

But the internationalist idealism which marked the UN's founding had to be leavened by a healthy dose of pragmatism. Pragmatic calculations that the new organization could not be permitted to threaten U.S. independence of action (or that of other Great Powers such as the Soviet Union) argued for practical limits to be placed on UN power. President Franklin Roosevelt had originally thought in terms of the "Four Policemen" (United States, Britain, Soviet Union and China) which collectively would have the power and responsibility to "police" the world and maintain the peace. This "Great Power" concept found its way into the new United Nations in the form of the Security Council with permanent memberships for the United States, Britain, the Soviet Union, China and France, together with rotating membership for six lesser states.

The Security Council, the most powerful UN body, had the "primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security," and in carrying out that responsibility had the power to take military action "by air, sea, or land forces."<sup>4</sup> The residual isolationist fears of outside control of U.S. policy still influenced American planners, insuring that the no vote, or "veto," of the United States (or of any other permanent member) would prevent any substantive Security Council action.<sup>5</sup> This veto became the symbol and the actual manifestation at the UN of

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<sup>3</sup> Robert C. Hilderbrand, *Dumbarton Oaks: The Origins of the United Nations and the Search for Postwar Security* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 2; Charter of the United Nations; June 26, 1945. [Database on-line]; Available from <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/un/unchart/htm>; internet; accessed January 21, 2012.

<sup>4</sup> Charter of the United Nations; June 26, 1945, [Database on-line]; Available from <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/un/unchart.htm>; internet; accessed January 21, 2012.

<sup>5</sup> Robert C. Hilderbrand, *Dumbarton Oaks*, 183-187; Stephen C. Schlesinger, *Act of Creation*, 193-221.

the Cold War split between East and West. On one level, it became the single most important impediment to a powerful, activist United Nations; however, at a deeper level the real impediment was Cold War hostility between the Soviet Union and the United States which resulted in Soviet repetitive reliance on the veto to block action by a U.S. dominated-majority.

The UN Charter embodied a universalistic<sup>6</sup> philosophy in its preamble (“We the peoples of the United Nations” and “equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small”); and in Article 1 (“equal rights and self-determination of peoples,” and “international co-operation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion”).<sup>7</sup> The Charter explicitly addressed the rights of individual persons.<sup>8</sup> The universalistic mood operating at the founding of the United Nations resulted in opening the door to UN membership to countries that had by March 1, 1945 declared war against the Axis.<sup>9</sup> In addition, membership was available to all other “peace-loving states” which accepted the obligations of membership and were, in the judgment of the organization, “able and willing to carry out these obligations.”<sup>10</sup> Admission

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<sup>6</sup> My use of the term “universalistic” overlaps my previously noted definition of “Wilsonian”; I use the term to describe the philosophy underlying the new United Nations Organization which contemplated creating conditions of peace, self-determination, human rights and equality for all the peoples of the world. The new organization was conceived not as a consortium of the powerful states, but as an organization in some sense representing all people and, eventually, including all states as members.

<sup>7</sup> Charter of the United Nations; June 26, 1945, [Database on-line]; Available from <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/un/unchart/htm>; internet; accessed 20 December 2007.

<sup>8</sup> Elizabeth Borgwardt, *A New Deal for the World: America's Vision for Human Rights* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005), 29.

<sup>9</sup> In addition, membership was offered to Argentina (which had sympathized with Nazi Germany, but did declare war against Germany after the March 1 deadline), and to Ukraine and Belarus, two constituent republics of the Soviet Union.

<sup>10</sup> Charter of the United Nations; June 26, 1945, [Database on-line]; Available from <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/un/unchart.htm>; internet; accessed 20 December 2007.

would be granted by a vote of the General Assembly “upon the recommendation of the Security Council.”<sup>11</sup> Thus, notwithstanding the potential universality of membership in the new organization, the requirement of Security Council recommendation meant that no country would be admitted against the will of any “Big Five” permanent member.

The growing Cold War divide between the United States and the Soviet Union came to play a decisive role in the decisions regarding admission of new member states and in the use of the veto. Initially, the U.S. delegation supported an inclusive approach to admission of various countries applying for UN membership. But in the developing Cold War atmosphere the United States almost immediately reversed its approach, and for the balance of Truman’s presidency the U.S. delegation opposed admission to all applicants which appeared likely to align themselves with the Soviet Union. Notwithstanding that reversal, the U.S. delegation continued to justify its votes idealistically, and to reject Soviet charges that its actions were based on political considerations.

Pragmatic considerations were built into the UN structure from its inception. The Charter of the United Nations proclaimed an egalitarian and universalistic idealism.<sup>12</sup> But the reality was otherwise. The term “United Nations” originated as a term for those nations allied in the Second World War against the Axis powers.<sup>13</sup> Thus, the term “United Nations” itself made competing and contradictory claims: at one and the same time it meant an alliance of allies against a

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<sup>11</sup> Charter of the United Nations, June 26, 1945, [Database on-line]; Available from <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/un/unchart.htm>; internet; accessed 20 December 2007.

<sup>12</sup> Preamble, United Nations Charter; June 26, 1945. [Database on-line]; Available from <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/un/unchart/htm>; internet; accessed 20 December 2007.

<sup>13</sup> Declaration by the United Nations, January 1, 1942, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/decade03.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/decade03.asp); internet; accessed September 3, 2011.

common enemy, and a universalistic institution for peace and security of all nations. In early arguments over membership great weight attached to having fought against the Axis powers; likewise, having fought for or even sympathized with Nazi Germany weakened or eliminated such a country's chance of membership.

Although the founders may have hoped that eventually all the nations on earth would belong to the UN, this was certainly not true at its inception. The organizers of course did not invite the conquered Axis powers to join. Nor, for example, did they invite Sweden and Switzerland, which had been neutral, or Spain, which had technically been neutral but whose fascist government had openly admired and cooperated with Nazi Germany.<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, over Soviet objections they did invite pro-fascist Argentina to San Francisco, mainly because the other Latin American nations demanded its inclusion. Moreover, at the request of Stalin Roosevelt had agreed at Yalta to back membership for two Soviet constituent republics, Belarus and Ukraine, at the organizing conference.<sup>15</sup> Truman reluctantly agreed to support the initial membership of all three nations, Ukraine, Belarus and Argentina.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> In May and June 1946 the Security Council, through a sub-committee, investigated the Spanish issue. The sub-committee found that the "Franco regime is a fascist regime patterned on, and established largely as a result of aid received from Hitler's Nazi Germany and Mussolini's Fascist Italy." It concluded that Franco's "continued control of Spain is making impossible the participation of the Spanish people with the peoples of the United Nations in international affairs," and recommended that the Franco Government be "debarred" from membership or participation in UN agencies, conferences or other activities "until a new and acceptable government is formed in Spain." United Nations Interoffice Memorandum, December 6, 1946, in GAA USGGA – 1<sup>st</sup> Session Part 2 Summaries- 1<sup>st</sup> Committee 28 Oct 1946-13 Dec 1946, Records of the Secretary-General Trygve Lie – General , Secretary-General Trygve Lie, S-0922, United Nations Archives. By 1949 the U.S. position on Spain had changed: Now the "suggested" U.S. position favored "early normalization of US-Spanish relations." American airbases in Spain had become strategically important so that the National Military Establishment was "anxious to develop and maintain a friendly atmosphere in Spain in the event of international conflict." See Suggested United States Position on Spain at April Session of United States General Assembly, March 1, 1949, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1949, Vol. IV, Western Europe (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1975), 731.

<sup>15</sup> Dallek, *Franklin Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy*, 511.

<sup>16</sup> Schlesinger, *Act of Creation*, 136-138.

### *Early Membership and Voting Disputes*

The composition of UN membership crucially determined which side (in the emerging East-West split) would prevail in the UN General Assembly. Allied leaders understood this issue and saw its importance, even before the United Nations existed. At Dumbarton Oaks representatives of the “Big Three Powers,” i.e., the United States, the Soviet Union and Britain (China was invited to come after the Soviets had left) made plans for the United Nations. The Soviets soon demanded that all sixteen Soviet republics be included as separate members of the new organization. Stalin no doubt believed that the United States would hold great sway over the numerous Latin American votes, and probably assumed that Britain would have considerable influence over British Commonwealth votes.<sup>17</sup> Thus, his demand for sixteen votes attempted to level the playing field, which ultimately led to the agreement noted above to admit two Soviet constituent republics, Belarus and Ukraine. The membership issues which plagued the San Francisco Conference foreshadowed the numerous later struggles over membership at the United Nations during the Truman administration. These struggles centered on U.S.-Soviet antagonisms, which prevented most applicant nations from being admitted to the UN until a later period.

On June 25, 1945 the UN Charter was signed on behalf of the fifty nations represented at San Francisco. Poland signed the Charter later and became the fifty-first founding member. The United States had not invited Poland to San Francisco because of disagreement as to which government represented Poland—the “Lublin government,” dominated by communists and put in place by the Soviets, or the “London Poles,” the right-wing Polish government in exile that

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<sup>17</sup> Robert C. Hilderbrand, *Dumbarton Oaks*, 95.

had fled to London at the outbreak of the war, which the United States and Britain recognized. Polish voters in the United States wanted a “free” Poland, not ruled by a communist government imposed by the Soviet Union, but, as Roosevelt had foreseen, there was no practical way to prevent Soviet control of Poland.<sup>18</sup> Thus, at the very inception of the United Nations idealistic goals and pragmatic considerations stood at cross-purposes. Likewise domestic public opinion in the United States (especially among Catholic Polish-Americans) conflicted with the practical conclusion that the Soviet Army had occupied Poland and there was very little the U.S. government could do about it—certainly the United States would not go to war to oust Soviet control from Poland.

### *Voting Rights*

The General Assembly and the Security Council constituted the two main deliberative bodies of the United Nations. The General Assembly, composed of representatives of all member states, had general authority to discuss and make recommendations regarding all matters within the scope of the Charter, except disputes presently before the Security Council. The Security Council, composed of representatives of the five permanent members, the United States, the Soviet Union, Britain, France and China, and six other states chosen by the General Assembly for two year rotating terms, had the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Voting rights bore a close connection to membership because, as noted above, both issues directly affected what measures would, or would not, be adopted in the Security Council and

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<sup>18</sup> Robert Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy*, 436.



General Assembly. Two important principles determined voting rights: first, the sovereign equality of all member states; second, the reality of power, i.e., whether the “Big Five” permanent members would have any special voting power in the Security Council. At the Dumbarton Oaks Conference the Americans, British and Soviets had all agreed, without controversy, that all nations would enjoy voting equality in the proposed General Assembly, with a simple majority sufficient for routine matters and a two-thirds majority for important matters—thus embodying the principle of sovereign equality.<sup>19</sup> However, the Dumbarton Oaks conferees could not reach agreement regarding voting in the Security Council.

The two principles of member equality and Great Power dominance worked at cross-purposes to each other. Although the UN Charter might proclaim the sovereign equality of all nations, the real power inequalities among the different countries undercut the idealism of national equality. The Great Powers—the United States, Soviet Union and Britain—had the resources and power to ensure peace and security; conversely, if the United Nations were to seek to act against the interests of any Great Power, that nation would have the military and economic strength to frustrate such action.<sup>20</sup> As a result, international peace and security required that the Great Powers act together; otherwise there would be no security.

At Dumbarton Oaks the British had argued that no nation that was a party to a dispute could vote in that matter. The Soviets disagreed, holding to the right of absolute veto. The Americans soon took the side of the British. As the conference ended in October 1944, the parties remained deadlocked on the veto issue, which was left for resolution at the Yalta

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<sup>19</sup> Robert C. Hilderbrand, *Dumbarton Oaks*, 113-114.

<sup>20</sup> I am including Britain as a Great Power in 1945, although it had been very considerably weakened by its efforts in the Second World War and soon after the war it lost a great proportion of its empire. As the Cold War developed it became clear that there were only two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union. Britain became relegated to a lesser status.

conference in February 1945. At Yalta the Americans proposed a plan for breaking the impasse over Security Council voting: unanimity among the five permanent members would be required for substantive matters including all enforcement action, but not for procedural matters. Any seven members could resolve procedural matters and any UN member could bring a matter to the Security Council; in other words, there would be no veto regarding which matters could be discussed in the Council or for votes on non-substantive matters. Nor could a permanent member bar a conciliation effort regarding a dispute to which it was a party.<sup>21</sup> The next day the Soviets agreed to this formula. Notwithstanding the apparent agreement at Yalta, the veto issue would not die.

At the UN organizing conference in San Francisco the American delegation tried to hold firm to the Yalta formula. But the Yalta language was not entirely clear.<sup>22</sup> A sub-committee which included representatives of many of the smaller states, including several Latin American countries, eventually composed a list of twenty-three questions specifically addressed to the veto issue—seeking to clarify such questions as whether placing an item on the Council agenda was procedural, and exempting from veto such items as amendments, investigations, regional actions, recommendations for settlements, the right of nations contributing armed forces to participate in Council decisions on troop deployment using such troops, and peaceful resolutions of disputes.<sup>23</sup> Truman attempted to hold to Roosevelt's Yalta agreement regarding the veto<sup>24</sup>, but disputes

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<sup>21</sup> The Yalta Conference, February, 1945, [Database on-line]; Available from <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/wwii/yalta.asp>; internet; accessed January 21, 2012.

<sup>22</sup> Schlesinger, *Act of Creation*, 194.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 194.

<sup>24</sup> However, soon after the United Nations conference in San Francisco Truman apparently had suggested limiting the veto. In January 1946 Byrnes advised Truman that Britain and the Soviet Union would oppose any change and that he had talked to Senators Connolly and Vandenberg who both reported that “the almost unanimous

arose, not only with the Soviets, but also within the U.S. delegation and among the permanent members.<sup>25</sup>

A basic point of dispute between the Americans and British, on one side, and the Soviets, on the other side, involved the Soviet interpretation of the Yalta agreement, according to which the veto would apply even to block discussion in the Security Council. Ultimately, the deadlock was broken by a face-to-face meeting with Stalin. Truman had sent Harry Hopkins, one of Roosevelt's closest and most trusted advisers, to Moscow to deal personally with Stalin regarding some of the rifts that were appearing in U.S.-Soviet relations, especially over Poland. Since Hopkins was conferring with Stalin, he was asked to intervene with Stalin to reach an agreement on the veto. Stalin treated the matter as insignificant, and agreed to the American position regarding free discussion: no permanent member could prevent free discussion in the Council. However regarding other matters the Western Powers accepted the Soviet position that decisions as to which matters were procedural and which were substantive were still subject to the veto of any permanent member, i.e. the so-called "double veto."

The Soviet Union also sought to impose limitations on discussion in the General Assembly. At San Francisco, the Soviet representative, Andrei Gromyko, initially demanded that discussion in the Assembly be limited to matters involving "maintenance of peace and security." But Gromyko finally agreed to the broad language of the Charter that allowed

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vote in the Senate for ratification could not have been secured without the veto clause. . . . it would be a great mistake six months after the Charter was submitted to [the] Senate and even before the Organization starts operating , to agree to a change . . . . Connolly led [the] fight for veto at San Francisco and would be embarrassed changing position before Organization begins operating." Truman responded "The suggestion was merely for your consideration. From what you say I think it would be best to let it rest." "Conference between the President in the White House and Secretary Byrnes in London, England at 1214102," 12 January 1945(sic); PSF: Subject File, 1940-1953, Agencies File, Reconstruction Finance Corporation, Administrator W. Stuart Symington to United Nations: Preparatory Commission; Truman Papers, Truman Library.

<sup>25</sup> Schlesinger, *Act of Creation*, 199-203.

discussion in the Assembly of “any questions or any matters within the scope of the present Charter or relating to the powers and functions of any organs provided for in the present Charter.”<sup>26</sup> Thus the rules on membership and voting were set.

As the UN went into operation, agreement on the Charter “rules” did not translate into broad agreement on problems presented at the United Nations. On the contrary, East-West disputes arose very early and those disputes dominated the UN landscape. Despite noble sentiments voiced in praise of the new world body, deep divisions quickly became the reality. The Security Council met for the first time on January 17, 1946 at Church House, Westminster, London. The newly-appointed American ambassador to the UN, former Secretary of State Edward R. Stettinius, Jr., addressed the Council. He reminded those present of the Security Council’s “grave responsibility” to “see that the peace is kept,” and he said that whether the Security Council would succeed or not

depends upon the manner in which the members ... discharge the special obligation which they have assumed. This is the obligation to agree so that the Council may be able to act, and act effectively.<sup>27</sup>

Stettinius said that the success of the Security Council depended on how its members discharged their obligation under the Charter—that

To meet this obligation will often be difficult. It will require the highest kind of statesmanship from all the member nations, large and small. But it is an obligation that arises from the necessities of mankind’s survival on this planet.

Soviet representative and ambassador to the United States, Andrei Gromyko, responded:

This moment is truly historical. This is the first meeting of the organ whose task is to ensure lasting peace among nations. I wish, in the name of the Soviet delegation, to

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<sup>26</sup> Schlesinger, *Act of Creation*, 217-220, 227-232.

<sup>27</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, First Year: First Series, no. 1, February 17, 1946, p.

express the hope that [the Security Council] will fulfil the great historic task which has been given to it by the Charter. . . .<sup>28</sup>

So, the opening meeting of the Council had begun with lofty rhetoric and high hopes. Given the level of distrust already apparent between the United States and the Soviet Union, mutual American and Soviet hopes for cooperative statesmanship at the UN and lasting peace were somewhat unrealistic, but both Stettinius and Gromyko no doubt wanted to start on a note of cooperation.

### *Membership Votes—By Individual Applicants or by Groups of Applicants?*

Cooperation did not last long. It broke down over the issue of universality of membership eight days later when the first membership question arose in the Security Council. Soviet representative, Andrei Vyshinsky (who had served as Chief Prosecutor in Stalin's show trials in the 1930s, and was presently Soviet Deputy Commissar for Foreign Affairs), raised the application of Albania—a Soviet satellite believed to be rendering aid to communist-led guerrillas fighting a civil war in neighboring Greece—for UN membership and indicated that his country supported the application.<sup>29</sup> The U.S. delegation faced the dilemma of either admitting another communist state which would no doubt support the Soviet Union, or in some sense abandoning its idealistic backing for universal UN membership. Stettinius, trying to postpone discussion by a motion to exclude the question from the agenda, argued that it was better to defer

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p.9.

<sup>29</sup>United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, First Year, Second Meeting, no. 1, January 25, 1946, p, 20.

Albania's application until a number of applications of different countries could be considered together.<sup>30</sup> Vyshinsky disagreed, arguing that there was "no necessity to link the question of admitting any one country to membership" with the question of admitting any other country. On the contrary, he suggested that the various applications should be considered when they were submitted, and the Council placed Albania's application on the agenda.<sup>31</sup> As we shall see, the United States and the Soviet Union, for their own purposes, later reversed their positions—the United States later demanding that each applicant nation be considered separately on its own merits, and the Soviet Union later offering "package deals," involving compromise settlements admitting several nations simultaneously. The pattern of U.S.-USSR conflict had already begun.

The American stated preference for considering several applications together was about to be tested. In August the Council received a committee report regarding the membership applications of Afghanistan, Albania, Iceland, Ireland, the Mongolian People's Republic, Portugal, Sweden and Transjordan. Herschel V. Johnson, a career foreign service officer and diplomat representing the United States, claimed that the goal of the UN was universal membership and that "in order to accelerate the achievement of universality of membership" the U.S. government would vote to admit all the present applicants, notwithstanding American misgivings about Albania and the Mongolian People's republic.<sup>32</sup> Johnson then offered a resolution to admit all eight applicants. At this stage the U.S. position emphasized the ideal of UN universality. The Soviet Union (and Britain) opposed Johnson's proposal. Gromyko spoke against "wholesale admission," and argued that the Council was bound to discuss each

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<sup>30</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, First Year, Third Meeting, no. 1, 21.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>32</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, First Year: Second Series, no. 4, August 16, 1946, 41-42.

application separately. Sir Alexander Cadogan, an upper-class career British civil servant and Permanent Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, expressed doubts about two of the candidates, concluding that the American proposal would not receive enough favorable votes and would be defeated. In a gesture of apparent cordiality (which would soon be lost in the developing Cold War hostility) Gromyko wondered if the U.S. representative considered it “expedient to withdraw his resolution,” and Johnson agreed to accept Gromyko’s suggestion.<sup>33</sup>

Then came a huge reversal of the American position. Johnson expressed “deep regret” over the rejection of “the fair and wise way to apply the Charter provisions as to membership.”<sup>34</sup> He distinguished Albania and the Mongolian People’s Republic (whose admission, he claimed, was problematic) from Ireland and Portugal (whose qualifications, he argued, raised no substantial questions—just the Soviet refusal to support them). Arguing that it would be a “manifest injustice” if Portugal and Ireland were rejected, Johnson moved to take no action on Albania and the Mongolian People’s Republic at that time, i.e., to defer consideration of those two countries. Gromyko responded, protesting against the American presumption to act as arbiter of the qualifications of applicants or of the Soviet representative’s views. Pointing out the obvious American about-face, he reminded the Council that in the morning meeting Johnson argued that all eight countries deserved to be admitted and now “with perfect sang-froid” he objected to Albania and the Mongolian People’s Republic. Johnson back-pedaled, claiming that in the morning he had suggested only that the Council

consider recommending all the eight applicants for membership. I did not say that we were making the recommendation because we thought that they deserved . . . to be

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<sup>33</sup>United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, First Year: Second Series, no. 4, August 16, 1946, 51-53.

<sup>34</sup>United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, First Year, Second Series, no. 4, August 16, 1946, 54-55.

admitted . . . . I advocated their admission on the broad principle of the desirability of having all qualified States in the world . . . within this Organization . . . . my Government was willing to waive its doubts. . . .<sup>35</sup>

Thus ended the Truman administration's willingness to accept blanket, compromise admission of groups of new members to the United Nations.

The Council then individually considered the applications of the eight prospective member states. In the discussion that followed (as was true throughout the early years of the United Nations), the historical connection between the UN and the original meaning of the term "United Nations" (i.e., those nations which had united to wage war against the Axis Powers) was ever-present. Thus, in these membership disputes it was a positive argument that Mongolia had fought against the Japanese, and it was a negative argument that Albania had fought on the side of the fascist Italians against a small Allied nation, Greece. Johnson urged delay regarding both Albania and the Mongolian People's Republic, and stated that if the vote were now forced, he would veto the recommendation.<sup>36</sup> The Greek representative, Vassili C. Dendramis, no doubt having in mind Albanian interference in the Greek civil war, also argued for postponement of the vote. He said that Greece was still technically at war with Albania and that twenty thousand Albanians had fought fanatically on the side of the Italians. Gromyko argued that "the Mongolian People's Republic and its army were engaged in combat with the Japanese militarists long before Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor."<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, First Year: Second Series, August, 28, 1946, 59.

<sup>36</sup> Often during the Truman presidency the U.S representatives at the UN prided themselves on the fact that the United States never used its veto, whereas the Soviets abused theirs; however, Herschel Johnson was not above threatening the use of the U.S. veto.

<sup>37</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, First Year: Second Series, Fifty-Sixth Meeting, no. 5, August 29, 1946, 88.



After each of the eight applicants had been discussed, the vote on Johnson's proposal for postponement garnered ten favorable votes, with only the Soviet Union voting against. To determine if the Soviet vote would constitute a veto, the Council now voted on whether the vote to postpone was substantive or procedural, the president of the Council having ruled that all five permanent members must concur in determination that the vote was procedural. In the vote that followed, the United States and four other countries including Poland—which interestingly at this early stage in the Cold War voted against the Soviet Union—voted that it was procedural; four countries voted that it was substantive (the Soviet Union, China, France and Britain, being four of the five permanent members), and Egypt and Mexico abstained. Since the permanent members had not agreed that the vote was procedural, it was deemed substantive, so that the Soviet vote resulted in a veto of Johnson's motion for postponement. The president then called for a vote on Johnson's motion to defer the vote only on Albania—which also failed, having garnered five votes in favor, with China, France, the Soviet Union and Britain voting against, and Mexico and Australia abstaining. Interestingly, at this early stage of the UN before Cold War antagonisms had become entirely fixed, close U.S. allies such as Britain, France and China sided with the Soviet Union to defeat Johnson's resolution for postponement—their concern to preserve a strong right of veto outweighing their desire to support the United States.

### ***Sovereignty— an Issue for Countries Emerging from Colonial Rule***

With Johnson's motions for deferral defeated, individual votes on each applicant laboriously followed. All UN member states agreed that membership was limited to sovereign states. Article 2, Section 1 of the Charter expressly provided that the Organization was "based

on the principle of the sovereign equality of all its Members.” Because several applicants were new states with no previous history of international recognition—and were often in a “client” status, dependent upon a more powerful state—the sovereignty of such applicants was sometimes challenged. Often European colonial powers, seeking to hold on to their colonies and opposed to any recognition of independent, sovereign status for such colonies, mounted such challenges.<sup>38</sup> As a result the United States confronted a dilemma—support its key Western European allies in their efforts to hold on to their colonies, or support independence for colonial peoples, which conformed to the American (and UN) ideal of the right of self-determination. As a result of that tension U.S. policy at the UN was often cautious, neither whole-heartedly supporting colonial peoples nor openly supporting the repressive practices of colonial powers.

When the applications of Afghanistan, Iceland and Sweden came before the Council, there were no objections to their admission. But Gromyko opposed membership for Transjordan on the ground that Transjordan did not have normal diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. Johnson challenged this argument, claiming that the UN Charter was the sole source of conditions for admission to UN membership, and that having diplomatic relations with a member state was not one of those conditions. Brazil and Australia supported the American view, but Eelco Van Kleffens, the Netherlands representative at the Security Council, argued for delay, asserting that the legal procedures relating to ending the League of Nations mandate over Transjordan and its becoming an independent state had not been observed—thus there was a lack of sovereignty. Here, the Netherlands, as the colonial power that prior to the war had exercised

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<sup>38</sup> Historian Mark Mazower has argued that, at least from the standpoint of the colonial powers, the United Nations was a vehicle for retaining and modernizing (rather than overturning) colonial domination by hegemonic metropolises over their colonies. See Mark Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace: The End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009), 17.

sovereignty over the Dutch East Indies, was obviously arguing from self-interest—it was not in the Netherlands’ interest to permit non-sovereign entities to apply for UN membership. Later in this work we will see the part played by the United Nations in the transformation of the Old Dutch East Indies colony to independent nationhood, as Indonesia. Since the Netherlands fought, militarily and diplomatically, to keep some hold over its former colony, it was in its interest to provide no example of easy transition for Transjordan from its former British mandate status to independent nationhood. This phenomenon was by no means limited to the Netherlands. Other colonial powers—France, Belgium and Britain—often supported each other in an effort to slow the pace of independence for former colonial dependents.

Gromyko opposed Ireland’s membership on the same ground as stated for Transjordan, i.e., that Ireland had no regular diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. Interestingly, in 1946 the Polish representative was still willing to speak in opposition to the Soviet position. He supported the Irish application, saying that Poles “were in deep sympathy with the struggles of the Irish people for their national independence which so much reminded us of our own struggle for independence.”<sup>39</sup> Regarding Portugal’s admission, Gromyko took the same position: opposition based on the lack of regular diplomatic relations between the two countries. Johnson took the opposite tack: he supported Portugal’s admission, arguing that at the Potsdam conference, Stalin, Churchill and Truman had agreed to support the UN membership of nations that had been neutral in the Second World War, but were peace-loving and otherwise qualified for membership under the UN Charter.

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<sup>39</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, First Year: Second Series, Fifty-Seventh Meeting, no. 5, August 29, 1946, 103.

When the voting began, Cold War divisions dominated—with the United States and its allies opposing those applicants supported by the Soviet Union and its allies, and vice versa. The Mexican representative offered a resolution supporting the admission of all eight applicants. Only three countries—Afghanistan, Iceland and Sweden—received the support of both blocs and thus went to the General Assembly, which voted to admit all three to membership. Although the General Assembly also recommended that the Council re-examine the applications of Transjordan, Ireland, Mongolian People’s Republic, Albania and Portugal, the Council decided to defer reconsideration of those applications. In fact, throughout the remainder of the Truman presidency, none of these five countries was admitted.

With Europe dividing along Cold War lines, the protagonists pursued their separate agendas towards applications for membership. The Soviet Union, isolated at the UN with very few other communist states as members, opted for a strategy of inclusion—willing to accept some countries which would side with the United States in exchange for other countries with communist governments. The United States opted for a contrary policy—opposing all new communist-led applicants—which resulted in keeping the Soviets isolated with very few friends at the United Nations. These opposing strategies (resulting in the U. S. delegation insisting on individual debates on the qualifications of each applicant, and the Soviet Union offering the shortcut of blanket admission of groups of states—some favored by one superpower, and others favored by the other superpower) ended in stalemate for most applicants. Only a very few countries, acceptable to both the United States and the Soviet Union, achieved membership.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> The Council did approve Siam, which became a member in December 1946.

### *Occupied Enemy States*

As previously noted, all members agreed that sovereignty was a necessary requirement for membership. Former enemy states, having been defeated and occupied by Allied armies, were not deemed sufficiently sovereign until peace treaties had been signed. This was true for Bulgaria, Hungary Italy, Rumania, Austria and Finland.<sup>41</sup> The Cold War split created a tug-of-war between the United States and the Soviet Union over membership for such states. The U.S. delegation pushed for membership for Italy, in the belief that it would align with the West. The Soviet Union argued for membership for its satellite states with communist governments—Albania, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Rumania. Based upon the principle of universality, UN Secretary-General Trygve Lie recommended the immediate admission of Albania, Ireland, Mongolian People’s Republic, Pakistan, Portugal, Transjordan and Yemen; and the admission of Austria, Bulgaria, Hungary, Italy and Rumania as soon as peace treaties with those countries came into force. But the Council members ignored the Secretary-General’s recommendation. Instead, the United States and its friends on the Council refused to vote for the satellite countries sponsored by the Soviet Union, and the Soviets—not having the votes—vetoed the applicants supported by the United States.

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<sup>41</sup> The U.S. delegation took a different position on Austria, arguing that the Allies had agreed to treat Austria as a victim of aggression, not as an ex-enemy state. Austria was caught in the middle; the Soviet Union, wanting to assure Austria’s neutrality and to keep it out of the Western bloc, tried to slow down Austria’s application, whereas the United States, seeking to draw Austria closer to the Western powers, supported Austria’s application. Because the East-West division prevented any agreement, the Council sent Austria’s application to committee.

### *Politics Masquerading as Legality*

The U.S. position on membership became increasingly dominated by a legalistic approach based on Charter language. But behind this legalistic approach was simple political expediency. With peace treaties in force for Italy, Hungary, Bulgaria, Rumania and Finland by 1947, those countries had regained their full sovereignty and the Security Council again considered their applications for membership. The original American idealism represented by a universalistic position on membership had already shifted to a case-by-case analysis of each applicant's credentials for membership. By default, and because it was willing to accept new members which would no doubt be unfriendly in exchange for satellite members which would obviously be friendly, the Soviet Union continued to take the universalist position.

The U.S. argument, as a result of its case-by-case approach, inevitably became increasingly formulaic. There was no way the U.S. delegation could argue each applicant's credential's for membership without parsing the Charter, which provided that new members must be "peace-loving," and "able and willing to carry out" the obligations contained in the Charter. This parsing created the illusion of legal analysis, but was in fact simply political. In rejecting applications it opposed, the United States frequently relied on the Charter language that such applicants must be peace-loving. By characterizing a state as not "peace-loving," the United States could refuse membership to such state. However, whether a state was or was not sufficiently peace-loving was fundamentally a political question. For example, were Albania and Bulgaria not peace-loving because they provided sanctuary and aid to leftist Greek insurgents fighting against the rightist Greek government seeking to re-establish its rule in Greece? By the same argument was Britain also not peace-loving because it had sent its army into Greece to put

down those same insurgents and prop up the rightist Greek government? Were Albania and Bulgaria any less peace-loving than the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, which were of course already UN member states? Which government was or was not peace-loving was a subjective issue and depended ultimately on which side of the Iron Curtain the judgment was made. So Cold War politics masqueraded as legality, which itself had become a substitute for universality. In effect, under the guise of strict legalism the U.S. delegation was simply excluding countries which were friendly with the Soviet Union. In so doing, the United States contributed to an erosion of the UN principle of membership universality while at the same time insisting that it supported that principle.<sup>42</sup>

The Soviets' position had also shifted. Having previously vetoed Italy's application, the Soviet Union now was ready to admit Italy but only on the condition that the Council also accept the four other similarly situated former enemy states—Hungary, Bulgaria, Rumania and Finland. Having originally argued for individual votes, the Soviets now favored a blanket vote. The United States rejected the blanket vote on the legalistic ground that the Charter made no provision for such a trade-off in voting. Cadogan, the British representative, dismissed the Soviet suggestion as a “horse-trade.”<sup>43</sup>

In offering to vote in favor of Italy if the United States would vote for a package deal for all five countries, Gromyko stated the previously unacknowledged, but obvious, point: “This

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<sup>42</sup> At the Council meeting of August 16, 1946 when Herschel Johnson first supported a blanket admission of eight applicants he said that “from the inception of plans for the creation of the United Nations, it has been clearly recognized that the Organization should move toward universality of membership . . . . If the United Nations is to be successful, no State can be left out of it any longer than is absolutely necessary.” See United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, First Year: Second Series, No. 4, Fifty-Third Meeting, August 16, 1946, p. 41; even after the United States had reversed its stand on blanket admissions, it still denied ever having excluded an applicant from UN membership, and it urged support for universal membership, but only of “qualified states.” See Telegram, The Secretary of State to the U.S. Representative at the United Nations (Austin), June 22, 1949, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1949, Vol. II (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1975), 294.

<sup>43</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, Second Year, no. 90, September 24, 1947, 2418.

question is a political question; everyone realizes that.”<sup>44</sup> Membership issues had to be political, since they determined future voting successes or failures for the Great Powers. To think that these decisions could be based on idealistic or legalistic principles in the abstract was extremely naïve. Yet the U.S. delegation was less open about the issue—it never framed the question as political. The Soviets were using *realpolitik*—if the United States wanted Western-leaning countries admitted, it would also have to accept some Soviet-leaning countries. The Americans also used *realpolitik* (in that, whatever its arguments, the U.S. delegation was simply excluding states aligned with the Soviet Union, and thus isolating the Soviets at the UN), but either failed to see, or more likely refused to admit, the obvious point that their actions were of course political. As a result the United States continued to frame the issue in legalistic terms of technical compliance with the Charter. Moreover, the U.S. delegation assumed the mantle of a certain moral superiority in advocating strict, technical Charter compliance, as contrasted with the Soviet proposals for trading votes.

### *Growing Dissatisfaction with the Veto*

The U.S. government became increasingly frustrated by the Soviet use of the veto to block the will of the U.S.-led majority at the Security Council. In August 1947 Johnson had stated that it was never intended that one nation could block the membership of any applicant, no matter how qualified, for reasons not provided in the Charter—and that such a practice was an abuse of the veto.<sup>45</sup> He proposed as a solution that no permanent member should exercise its

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<sup>44</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, Second Year, no. 91, September 29, 1947, 2441.

<sup>45</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, Second Year, no. 80, August 20, 1947, p. 2133.



veto to prevent membership for any nation which had the approval of two-thirds of the UN members; but such a voluntary fix had no chance of acceptance by the (clearly out-numbered) Soviet Union. As a result, dissatisfaction with the veto continued.

Other delegations also voiced opposition to the Soviet's excessive use of the veto. The next month H.V. Evatt, the Australian Minister for External Affairs and Deputy Prime Minister, reminded the General Assembly that three membership recommendations had been vetoed last year by the Soviet Union, and he accused the Security Council of usurping the role of the General Assembly in the admission of new members.<sup>46</sup> Louis S. St. Laurent, the Canadian Secretary of State for External Affairs and Chairman of his delegation, stated that the abuse of the veto privilege "may well destroy the United Nations, because it will destroy confidence in the ability of the Security Council to act internationally, to act effectively, and to act in time."<sup>47</sup> These and other voices in the General Assembly joined Johnson's condemnation of the Soviet Union's abuse of its veto power. In December 1947 the State Department issued a paper on the veto, asserting that the United States did "not feel that the desirability of unanimity . . . precludes liberalization of the voting procedure."<sup>48</sup> Secretary of State Marshall advised Austin that

the basic US position on veto in SC . . . [is that] abuse of [the] unanimity rule had prevented [the] SC from fulfilling its true functions, particularly under Chap VI [Pacific Settlement of Disputes] and in admission of new members . . . . The US had . . . [concluded] that [the] only practical method for improving [the] situation was a liberalization of voting procedure in [the] Council . . . . The US is committed to seek a

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<sup>46</sup> United Nations General Assembly, *Official Records*, Second Session, September 18, 1947, p. 48-49.

<sup>47</sup> United Nations General Assembly, *Official Records*, Second Session, September 18, 1947, 64.

<sup>48</sup> Information Paper Prepared in the Office of Public Affairs, Department of State, December 17, 1947, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1948, Vol. I, (Part 1), General: The United Nations (Part 1), 206.

liberalization of voting procedures of [the] Council and . . . is willing to accept by any appropriate means elimination of [the] veto in Chap VI and in membership questions.<sup>49</sup>

In addition to a direct attack on the use of the veto, the United States also attempted, to the extent possible, to circumvent the Security Council and thus avoid the veto. General Assembly resolution 111(II), adopted in November 1947 over strong Soviet opposition, exemplified this approach. That resolution created an Interim Committee, which had the authority to meet while the Assembly was not in session to appoint commissions of enquiry, conduct investigations, consider and report on disputes and other referred matters, and to advise on the calling of special sessions of the General Assembly. Here, of course, the United States sought to obviate key provisions of the Charter, which had granted to the Security Council, not to the Assembly or any committee of the Assembly, jurisdiction over matters affecting international peace and security. By doing so, the majority could circumvent the veto since the Soviet Union would have no veto on the Interim Committee or in the General Assembly. Jakov Malik<sup>50</sup>, the Soviet ambassador to the UN, called the Interim Committee “a flagrant violation of the Charter.”<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>The Secretary of State to the United States Representative at the United Nations (Austin), January 16, 1948, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1948, Vol. I, (Part 1), General: The United Nations (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1975), 215-216.

<sup>50</sup> Gladwyn Jebb, the British delegate viewed Malik as a “formidable opponent.” See *The Memoirs of Lord Gladwyn* (New York: Weybright and Talley, 1972), 232.

<sup>51</sup> United Nations General Assembly, *Official Records*, Second Session, Volume II, November 27, 1948, p.668. In the First Committee the U.S. had called for liberalization of the veto and the creation of a standing (interim) committee consisting of all members of the Assembly, which could “make reports to the Security Council or the General Assembly without infringing upon the jurisdiction of the Security Council.” The Polish representative objected on legal and political grounds. He argued that the Interim Committee was “intended to be a replica of the General Assembly,” and as such its “functions were too broad,” and “contradictory to the Charter.” Legally, he argued, that there was no way under the Charter to “dispense with the basic necessity” for unity among the permanent members. “Report to the Secretary General”, October 16, 1947, in Folder GA – second Session Confidential Survey of Meetings for the SG ½ 16 Sept 1947 23 Oct 1947, S-0922-0002-04, United Nations Archives. The Soviet representative warned the majority “not to abuse its position,” and argued that the “principle of unanimity was vital since it prevented certain powers from converting the Security Council to an instrument of

Throughout 1948 the same stalemate persisted as to the same old applications for membership. U.S. ambassador Austin restated the American position on Italy: it was wrong to class it with other ex-enemy states that were unqualified for membership, because Italy had switched sides near the end of the war and fought on the Allied side. Gromyko claimed that the reason why the United States and its allies had returned to Italy's application at that time was that the Italian elections were soon to be held and the Americans were indulging in a "tactical maneuver . . . likely to attract some of the Italian electorate to vote for the rightist parties." Gromyko continued: "The [United States] thus has seen fit to force the USSR once again to apply the 'veto' against Italy."<sup>52</sup> Gromyko was right. Marshall had advised Austin:

Please discuss urgently on confidential basis with . . . [Britain, France, Belgium, Canada, China] . . . [the] question of [the] Ital[ian] application [for] UN membership. . . . [a] frank statement of [the] importance[of the] forthcoming Ital[ian] elections . . .and [the] vital importance that Communists do not win or indeed substantially increase their strength in these elections . . .[suggests that] no stone must be left unturned to block [the] Communists. It will be most embarrassing for [the] Soviets again to veto [the] Ital[ian] application. Thus [the] present . . . [is the] most likely time [in the] foreseeable future [to] obtain [a] favorable SC recommendation for [the] Ital[ian] application. If [the] application [is] approved [the] West would gain the credit in Italy. If Soviets should again veto [the] effect thereof . . . [will] injure seriously [the] Communists in [the] coming elections.<sup>53</sup>

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their bloc policies." Report to the Secretary-General, First Committee- Ninety-Fourth Meeting-11 a.m., GA – Second Session, Confidential Survey of Meetings for the SG 2/2 24 Oct 1947 24 Nov. 1947, S-0922-0002-04, United Nations Archives.

<sup>52</sup> Security Council Official Records, Third Year, No. 54, 10 April 1948, 11.

<sup>53</sup> Telegram, The Secretary of State to the United States Representative at the United Nations (Austin), March 12, 1948, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1948*, Volume I, General; The United Nations, Part 1 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1975), 173.

At the Security Council, Gromyko again voted against Italy's admission, thus vetoing her application for the third time.<sup>54</sup> In the Italian election that followed the conservative Christian Democrats, backed by the U.S. government, did win.

### *Israel as an Exception*

Despite the continuing deadlock there were the rare exceptions in which the United States and the Soviet Union could agree. But these anomalous exceptions failed to create any momentum for greater East-West agreement generally. The 1948 application of the new state of Israel was such an exception. The vote on membership replicated the 1947 U.S.-Soviet concurrence in the General Assembly vote on partition of Palestine into Jewish and Arab territories. U.S. motives regarding the major decisions regarding Israel—the 1947 General Assembly partition vote, the May 1948 decision to recognize the fledgling state of Israel, and the UN vote on Israel's application for membership—were all mixed, with strategic, humanitarian and domestic political goals operating simultaneously on Truman.<sup>55</sup> Probably the Soviet Union backed Israel in order to curtail Britain's former hegemony in the Middle East.<sup>56</sup> Predictably, Israel's Middle Eastern neighbors opposed her application, and Britain, siding with its Arab friends, refused to support Israel's application. Britain and France had several client states in the

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<sup>54</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, Third Year, no. 54, April 10, 1948, 15.

<sup>55</sup> Secretary of State George C. Marshall and other key State Department officials had argued against partition, fearing alienation of the Arab governments which controlled huge oil reserves in the region, as well as possible Soviet expansion into the Middle East. In 1948 Marshall and others urged Truman to reconsider his support for partition, but ultimately Truman held to his support for partition and immediately recognized the State of Israel when it was proclaimed in May 1948. Not the least of Truman's considerations was the presidential election set for November 1948 and the importance of this issue to Jewish voters.

<sup>56</sup> Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2005), 182.

Middle East, and it behooved them—if possible—to avoid antagonizing their Arab friends in the region. The Council acted by referring the Israeli application to Committee. In December Israel's application came to a vote in the Security Council and was defeated, with the United States and the Soviet Union voting in favor, but with Syria opposed, and Belgium, Canada, China, France and Britain abstaining. When the Council met again in March 1949 Israel had signed a general armistice agreement with Egypt, and France now was willing to support Israel's application. Again the United States and the Soviet Union agreed to support Israel's membership, and with Egypt casting the only "no" vote and Britain abstaining, the Council recommended Israel for membership.<sup>57</sup>

### *The International Court of Justice Weighs In on Membership*

In its efforts to channel Security Council decisions on membership applications along legalistic lines, the United States supported a request that the International Court of Justice (the principal judicial organ of the United Nations) give an advisory opinion on two questions: In voting to admit a country to membership, could Council members rely on conditions not expressly provided in the Charter; and could a member make its affirmative vote subject to the condition that other states be admitted to membership at the same time. If the United States prevailed at the Court, it could argue that its legalistic approach had the backing of the world's highest international court.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> The General Assembly voted to grant membership to Israel on May 11, 1949.

<sup>58</sup> Both Ukraine and the Soviet Union argued that the International Court had no jurisdiction to interpret the Charter since the Charter did not provide for such power. But the Court disagreed. See Telegram from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic to the Registrar of the Court, February 8<sup>th</sup>, 1948, Letter from the Ambassador of the U.S.S.R. in the Netherlands to the President of the Court, February 8<sup>th</sup>, 1948,

In May 1948 the Court answered both of those questions in the negative—a victory for the United States. Obviously, those questions were pointed at the Soviet Union—was it permissible to demand a trade in order to allow in countries which the United States and other countries felt were qualified only if the United States and other countries accepted as members other states sponsored by the Soviet Union? Moreover, was it permissible to reject an applicant for grounds not set forth in the Charter, for example because it did not have normal diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union or had been friendly towards Nazi Germany? In another victory for the United States, the General Assembly recommended that each member of the Security Council act in accordance with the Court’s opinion and asked the Council to reconsider all the applications which it had failed to recommend, especially those that had received seven affirmative votes but had been vetoed.

The United States continued its drive to marginalize the veto. But Vishinsky responded forcefully to justify the veto.<sup>59</sup> In April 1949 the Assembly received an American-sponsored report from its Ad Hoc Political Committee, concluding that, although the veto could not be abolished, various measures should be recommended to prevent the abuse of the veto, such as consultation to seek agreement among permanent members of the Council, avoidance of

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and International Court of Justice, Reports of Judgments, Advisory Opinions and Orders—Conditions of Admission of a State to Membership in the United Nations (Article 4 of the Charter), Advisory Opinion of May 28<sup>th</sup>, 1948, [Data-base online] available at <http://www.icj.org/homepage/index.php>; internet. Article 96 expressly provides that “the General Assembly or the Security Council may request the International Court of Justice to give an advisory opinion on any legal question.” In light of that language, it is hard to imagine how the International Court could comply without interpreting the Charter.

<sup>59</sup> In November 1948 in the Ad Hoc Political Committee Vyshinsky stated that “the struggle against the veto had become a real crusade.” He argued that “the rule of unanimity had been conceived as a means of achieving agreement among the permanent members, and if properly used it could still be that.” “Confidential Note Tuesday, 30 November 1948. Ad Hoc Political Committee: Twentieth Meeting”, undated, in file GA – Third Session Part I (Paris) Summaries – Ad Hoc Political Committee 23 Nov. 1948 30 Nov. 1948. Series Secretary-General Trygve Lie, S-922-0003-03, United Nations Archives; Also in November 1948 Vyshinsky bluntly said that “the veto is a powerful political tool. There are no such simpletons here as would let it drop.” A. M. Rosenthal, “Vishinsky Scorns Discard of Veto,” *New York Times*, November 25, 1948, p. 9.

excessive use of the veto, and the expansion of items deemed “procedural,” to which the veto would not apply. In the Assembly the U.S. delegation of course backed the report as “a step in the right direction.”<sup>60</sup> Predictably, the Soviet Union opposed the report. Gromyko reminded the Assembly that the principle of unanimity “was one of the basic provisions of the Charter and the very cornerstone of the structure of the United Nations.”<sup>61</sup> He argued that it was common knowledge that the attack on the unanimity principle was directed against the Soviet Union. There was truth to the Soviet charge—as previously noted, the UN founders had contemplated substantive Security Council action only on the agreement of the Great Powers. After extensive debate the resolution embodying the Political Committee’s recommendations was approved by a vote of forty-three to six, with two abstentions. Although the Assembly vote was not enforceable—it merely recommended certain actions, nevertheless the intent of the resolution was to put pressure on the Soviet Union to limit its use of the veto.

The U.S. government sought to capitalize on the momentum against excess use of the veto through the appearance of taking the moral high ground. In June 1949 at the Security Council Austin announced U.S. policy: the United States would not block the admission of any applicant receiving seven affirmative votes. This seemed more idealistic than it was. The United States could count on enough friendly states among Council members, so that it could, in lieu of a veto, prevail upon other states to abstain or vote “No,” so that there would not be seven affirmative votes.<sup>62</sup> Austin argued that the American government continued its support for

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<sup>60</sup> United Nations General Assembly, *Official Records*, Third Session, Part II, Hundred and Ninety-Second Plenary Meeting, April 13, 1949, 51.

<sup>61</sup> United Nations General Assembly, *Official Records*, Third Session, Part II, Hundred and Ninety-Second Plenary Meeting, April 13, 1949, 55.

<sup>62</sup> John G. Stoessinger, *The United Nations & the Superpowers: United States-Soviet Interaction at the United Nations*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Random House, 1965); Telegram, The United States Representative at the

Austria, Ceylon, Finland, Ireland, Italy, Portugal and Transjordan, and continued to oppose membership for Albania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and the Mongolian People's Republic, some because of human rights abuses and peace treaty violations and others because of aid to Greek rebel fighters.

### *U.S. Resolve Weakens*

The tide of U.S. domination of the membership votes began to wane. In July 1949 Austin wrote to Acheson, suggesting reconsideration of U.S. policy of voting "No" on the applications of Soviet satellites. Austin predicted that the Soviets would

probably attack [the] US for allegedly obstructing a solution we originally proposed in 1946 . . . . We therefore feel it might be wiser for us to abstain on the [votes regarding] Russian satellites. This will have the additional advantage of leaving the US less exposed to the above-mentioned charge that it is [the] US who is primarily responsible for preventing the admission of the 12 states.<sup>63</sup>

Based on Austin's analysis, Acheson granted authorization to abstain rather than vote against the five satellites.<sup>64</sup> Thus American policy at the UN shifted slightly in response to the perceived propaganda advantage enjoyed by the Soviet Union over the membership issue—on which it backed a universalistic approach which the United States seemed to oppose. The State

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United Nations (Austin) to the Secretary of State, July 6, 1949, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1949, Vol. II, The United Nations; The Western Hemisphere* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1975), 296.

<sup>63</sup> Telegram, The United States Representative at the United Nations (Austin) to the Secretary of State, July 6, 1949, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1949, Vol. II, The United Nations; The Western Hemisphere* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1975), 296.

<sup>64</sup> Telegram, The Secretary of State to the United States Representative at the United Nations (Austin), July 8, 1949, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1949, Vol. II, The United Nations; The Western Hemisphere* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1975), 296.



Department sought to counter possible Soviet propaganda by stressing that the United States did believe in universality of membership, but only of qualified states.<sup>65</sup> But the principle of universality could not easily be compromised: either the UN would embody all sovereign nations of the world or not. So long as the United States sought to exclude nations which it considered not peace-loving, or not sufficiently supportive of human rights, there would be no universality. Moreover, so long as the United States favored seating the Chinese Nationalist delegation, which in late 1949 controlled only the island of Taiwan, and opposed seating the delegation from the People's Republic of China (PRC), which actually controlled the most populous country on earth, there could be no universality.

The U.S. position reflected the narrow political goal of excluding countries whose policies the United States found deficient. Semyon Tsarapkin, the Soviet deputy representative, addressed the *realpolitik* nature of the American position, saying that the United States was

carrying out a policy of discrimination against some countries and favoritism towards others . . . . It is perfectly clear that the [United States] wants to admit . . . only the countries which it favors, to increase the number of its supporters in the [UN], and to prevent the admission . . . of all States whose policies it does not entirely approve.<sup>66</sup>

In fact the United States had rejected the idealistic principle of universality, in favor of a policy of judging each candidate individually in light of an American interpretation of the requirements of Article 4. What the U.S. delegation refused to admit was that this was a political act—there was no ideologically neutral method of making such judgment.

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<sup>65</sup>Telegram, The Secretary of State to the United States Representative at the United Nations (Austin), June 22, 1949, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1949*, Vol. II, The United Nations; The Western Hemisphere (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1975), 294.

<sup>66</sup>United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, Fourth Year, No. 31, June 21, 1949, 8-10.

Tsarapkin then submitted a resolution for the simultaneous admission of all twelve countries whose applications had been repeatedly held up. Seeing through the rhetoric, The Ukrainian delegate suggested that the American pledge not to use its veto in membership questions was not as idealistic as it sounded:

[U.S. and other] delegations can apply a hidden 'veto' by abstaining from voting . . . . Abstention . . . is in fact tantamount to a 'veto', as it can block any favourable recommendation . . . . Consequently, all statements to the effect that the [United States] and other permanent members . . . . do not make use of their right of 'veto' are empty, hypocritical and false.<sup>67</sup>

The U. S. delegation had no effective answer to this charge. Austin's response was mild indeed—instead of answering the charge of a hidden veto, he merely made a procedural motion that the vote on the twelve countries would be taken separately, not all together as one vote. He concluded that the debate showed that no member had changed its attitude, and therefore another vote would produce the same deadlock—all twelve candidates would again be rejected.

In effect, American idealism often amounted to the conviction that other nations should conform to American standards and practices. Austin said there was an obligation to accept every eligible candidate (meaning every candidate that, in the view of the U.S. government, met the requirements of the UN Charter). He predicted that if that were done, the UN would eventually reach "substantial universality." Thus he acknowledged the tension between idealistic universality and the *realpolitik* of quarreling over membership, but he sought to resolve that tension by asserting that, in the long run, the U.S. policy of accepting those countries which the United States viewed as qualified under the Charter, and rejecting countries which the United States viewed as unqualified, would somehow lead to "substantial universality." How that

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<sup>67</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, Fourth Year, No. 31, June 21, 1949, 15-16.

would happen he did not say. But he implied that it would happen when Soviet satellites changed their policies to be more like those favored by the United States.<sup>68</sup>

Tsarapkin responded that the United States was illegally refusing to admit new members whose political systems did not meet the approval of the United States and that this was “open political blackmail.”<sup>69</sup> Certainly the decision to admit a country to membership had political ramifications. The United States benefited by picking and choosing which nations would be admitted, and thus limiting new memberships to nations likely to support the United States. But the American self-image rejected the view that these were blatant political acts; it was necessary to shroud them in legalistic terms, e.g., it was the UN Charter, not American geopolitical interests, which controlled the choice. Tsarapkin’s attack went to the heart of whether U.S. idealism or *realpolitik* was at work: he returned to the reality that the Soviets were not the only ones using a veto; the Western bloc used a “hidden” veto—

They do not openly have to resort to the negative vote, as it is sufficient for any five members . . . to abstain from voting to block a decision on any given question. It is known that the [United States and Britain] have employed those tactics . . . .<sup>70</sup>

He also put the entire debate in the context of the Cold War, arguing that American “aggressive” policy, including NATO and the Marshall Plan, determined the U.S. position on the admission of new members. In fact the Cold War antagonism between the two superpowers clearly informed the entire UN debate, about membership as well as almost every other issue.

Other nations not within the Soviet bloc tended to follow the lead of the United States regarding these membership issues: Jean Chauvel of France strongly supported the principle of

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<sup>68</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, Fourth Year, No. 32, June 24, 1949, 16-17.

<sup>69</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, Fourth Year, No. 33, July 11, 1949, 5.

<sup>70</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, Fourth Year, No. 33, July 11, 1949, 8.

universality, but argued that universality was not a sufficient basis for membership, i.e., an applicant also had to fulfill the conditions imposed by the Charter. Jose Arce of Argentina opposed the concept of trade-offs and argued for individual decisions on the merits for each applicant. George Ignatieff of Canada also argued for individual consideration of each applicant based on the provisions of the Charter, and cited the International Court of Justice ruling which prohibited trade-offs.<sup>71</sup> Likewise, Cadogan of Britain challenged Tarasenko's notion of universality if it meant ignoring the Charter requirements, and repeated British opposition to "horse-trading." Fawzi Bey of Egypt also opposed admitting members based on "bargaining," and argued that each applicant must be separately considered; but he did note "a certain exaggeration in the objection to some of the applicants."<sup>72</sup> Regarding the question of seating the representatives of the PRC or continuing to seat the Chinese Nationalist representatives, Benegal Rau of India argued that the UN rules relating to representation and credentials were defective and that the Council should adjourn while a possible amendment of the rules was studied.<sup>73</sup> By September 1950 Rau submitted a draft resolution to the General Assembly arguing that the PRC was the only functioning government in China and "should be entitled to represent" China in the Assembly. Rau asserted that China, as a permanent member of the Security Council, "had a number of obligations laid upon it by the Charter." He asked "Who is to fulfil them? A State cannot fulfil obligations except through some government, and obviously only a government

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<sup>71</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, Fourth Year, No. 30, June 16, 1949, 12-15.

<sup>72</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, Fourth Year, No. 32, June 24, 1949, 2-15.

<sup>73</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Record*, Fifth Year, No. 1, January 10, 1950, 8.

exercising effective control over the territory and the people” of China could fulfil the obligations laid upon China.<sup>74</sup>

### *The Security Council Receives New Applications*

In September 1949 Council debate returned to new memberships, with the application of Nepal. As had become usual, the Council split along East-West lines, with Ukraine and the Soviet Union opposing the recommendation. Tsarapkin reminded the Council that the Soviet Union was willing to vote for all the pending applicants, but the United States and Britain were not, the U.S. position being that it would vote in favor of the countries sponsored by the Soviet Union only when these countries changed their politics. He concluded that the Soviet Union did not oppose the admission of Nepal, but it could not vote for Nepal while other nations were being systematically refused admission. Cadogan pointed out the Soviet inconsistency in refusing to vote for Nepal until the five Soviet-sponsored nations were admitted, yet the Soviet Union had voted to recommend admitting Israel. Tsarapkin concluded that everyone knew the outcome of a vote, and there was no purpose in having a vote other than an attempt to put the Soviet Union in a bad light by forcing another veto; he said that the Soviet delegation had compromised by accepting certain states in order to break the deadlock, but there had been no compromise by the Anglo-American bloc. In the vote that followed, Nepal received nine favorable votes but was vetoed by the Soviet Union.

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<sup>74</sup> United Nations General Assembly, *Official Record*, Fifth Session, 277<sup>th</sup> Plenary Meeting, September 19, 1950, 2, 9.

Both the Soviet Union and the United States saw the futility of forcing a vote on the pending applications, but nevertheless—with mind-numbing repetition—the vote went forward in chronological order of the submissions of the applications. The results were predictable: Portugal, Transjordan, Italy, Finland, Ireland, Austria and Ceylon were all rejected by Soviet veto. Then the Soviet delegation proposed simultaneous membership for thirteen applicants as a group—the twelve long-standing applicants plus Nepal. The United States forced a separate vote on each applicant in order to avoid the possibility of a group admission. In the vote Albania, Mongolian People’s Republic, Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary received only two or three favorable votes, and the Soviet Union vetoed all of the others; in the end all were rejected. Tsarapkin concluded that, regarding admission of new members, the Council had reached a dead end and that the fault lay with the Americans and the British. However there was another exception to the stalemate: the Council did approve the admission of newly independent Indonesia.<sup>75</sup>

### *The Impact of Domestic Politics on Universality*

Since the U.S. government had “sold” its entire Second World War effort to the American people on an idealistic basis, it was difficult and politically dangerous for the Truman administration to reverse course and now abandon idealistic justifications in favor of more

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<sup>75</sup> The Soviet Union had been a strong critic of the British and Dutch effort to restore Dutch colonial rule in Indonesia. As will be explicated in Chapter 3, the U.S. government had been torn between its perceived interest in supporting the Dutch effort to hold on to Indonesia versus its interest in supporting Indonesian self-determination. However, the Truman administration gradually increased its pressure against the Netherlands, and when Indonesia finally achieved its sovereignty by a political settlement with the Dutch, both Moscow and Washington were pleased to support Indonesia’s UN membership. On September 28, 1950 the General Assembly voted to admit the Republic of Indonesia to membership.

pragmatic policies. U.S. acceptance of new Soviet-bloc members, which would have the effect of accepting—and even sanctioning—the loss of independence of the Eastern European countries under Soviet domination, posed serious domestic political risks for Truman. Thus, the U.S. government found it difficult to change its position without the risk of incurring the displeasure of the American public.<sup>76</sup> Notwithstanding continued U.S. refusal to admit the Soviet-bloc applicants, the administration did favor the continued UN membership for the Soviet Union itself.<sup>77</sup> Logically, since the United States supported continued membership for the Soviet Union—with its record of aggression and human rights violations—it was difficult to formulate a coherent argument for excluding Soviet satellites.

In November 1949 the General Assembly received a report from its Ad Hoc Political Committee regarding the admission of new members. In dealing with the thirteen applicant nations which the Security Council had been unable to recommend for membership, the Committee advised that the Assembly should reexamine ten of those applications. The Polish, Czech and Soviet delegations argued strenuously that the only material difference in qualifications between the eight nations that were acceptable to the majority and the five nations that were not, was that the United States did not like the form of government of the five. In effect, they argued that the issue was wholly political. The United States and its allies denied that claim, insisting on legalistic arguments, i.e., that the five nations were not qualified under Article

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<sup>76</sup> Briefing Memorandum for Talks by the Secretary of State with the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (Eden), at Paris, November 3, 1951, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1951, Vol. II, The United Nations; The Western Hemisphere (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1979), 92.

<sup>77</sup> Ex-President Herbert Hoover suggested that the United Nations be reorganized without the “Communist nations in it.” But Truman was advised to state that Hoover’s views “do not represent the official United States position . . . [rather, that the need was] “to support and give life to the United Nations Charter and to draw the Soviet Union into cooperation.” See Draft Statement for Possible Use by President Truman, May 3, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. II, The United Nations (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 8.

4 of the Charter, and that the International Court of Justice had ruled that it was impermissible to make acceptance on any bases not specified in Article 4, including a “trade-off” whereby some nations would be accepted by the Soviet Union conditioned on the acceptance by Western countries of other nations. John Sherman Cooper (a liberal Republican and former Senator from Kentucky), representing the United States, stated the American argument: the idealistic goal was that someday the UN would embrace all the nations of the world; but that each nation, to be entitled to join, must satisfy the requirements of Article 4, and there was no right to ignore Article 4 and simply trade one nation’s admission for another.

Notwithstanding the American argument, U.S. policy-makers felt increasing pressure to change American policy (or at least tactics) regarding membership issues. For example, the Italian Prime Minister, Alcide de Gaspari, lobbied Dean Acheson (now Secretary of State) to back Italy’s bid at the UN. The U.S. government was sensitive to this issue because of its fear of a “domino effect” of increasing communist influence across Europe—especially in countries like Italy and France which had large communist parties. Acheson hoped that U.S. support for Italy at the UN would help to bolster de Gaspari’s center-conservative party. Although the United States was strongly supportive of Italy’s application for UN membership, the Soviets had vetoed Italy’s application four times and there was no good way around the veto problem. However when the Soviets proposed admitting thirteen new members, including Italy, the Italians asked the Americans to abstain in the Security Council, based on the calculation that none of the Soviet-sponsored applicants would obtain the necessary two-thirds approval in the Assembly. But Acheson refused “to give benevolent abstention to the Sov[iet] res[olution],” arguing that to do so would create domestic problems because “we w[ou]ld not adequately explain to [the]



Amer[ican] public why we gave tacit approval ... [for the] admission [of] Sov[iet] satellites.”<sup>78</sup>

What appeared to be a stubborn American commitment to legal principle was, in Acheson’s view, the pragmatic need to maintain domestic public support for U.S. policy.

### *The Question of China*

The momentous communist victory in China did not pose a membership issue—since China was already a member—but rather the question of which government was entitled to represent China at the UN. This same issue had of course previously come to the fore regarding Poland at the San Francisco Conference, i.e. should the Western-backed Polish government in exile in London, or the Soviet-backed Polish government at Lublin, represent Poland at the UN Conference. China had been a founding member of the United Nations, being represented at the UN by its Nationalist government delegation. The long civil war between the Chinese Nationalist government forces and the Chinese communists that had broken out anew at the end of the Second World War finally ended in 1949 with the flight of the defeated Nationalists to the island of Taiwan and the total victory of the communists in mainland China. Now the question arose: should the Nationalist delegation, whose government no longer had any power over the Chinese mainland or the Chinese people, represent China at the UN, or should the Communist government, which did in fact control mainland China, have the right to send its own delegation to the UN? China was, of course, the most populous country on earth, and the exclusion of its effective government from the UN, while at the same time granting a Security Council

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<sup>78</sup> Telegram, The Secretary of State to the United States representative at the United Nations (Austin), January 18, 1952, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1951, Vol. II, The United Nations; The Western Hemisphere (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1979), 431.

permanent membership to the Nationalist government that now ruled over only the relatively insignificant island of Taiwan, raised a serious problem—and made a mockery of the principle of universality.

Since all members agreed that sovereignty was a requirement of membership, it made no sense for the United States to insist that the Nationalists, who were now sovereign over only the island of Taiwan, should continue to represent the entire Chinese state. However, that was the position U.S. policy-makers took. By conflating the issue of U.S. recognition of the new government with the issue of which delegation—Nationalist or communist—should be seated at the UN—the United States continued to support its ally, the Nationalists. Secretary-General Trygve Lie received formal notice that the new communist government of the PRC formally came into being on October 1, 1949. In August Acheson had notified American diplomatic offices that “no purpose w[ou]ld be served or benefit derived from hasty individual acts [of] recognition” [of the PRC], and that although there were already indications that “some countries [e.g., Australia] . . . may promptly accord recognition, this gov[ernmen]t has no such intention.”<sup>79</sup> Although the Soviet Union and its satellites, as well as India, Britain and France all promptly recognized the new communist government in China, the United States did not. In fact, Acheson favored withholding recognition as long as possible—he frankly admitted to British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Ernest Bevin that “we do not want to recognize them and thus acknowledge that they have won the war.”<sup>80</sup> The failure of the U.S. and new

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<sup>79</sup> Telegram, The Secretary of State to Certain Diplomatic and Consular Officers, August 19, 1949, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1949, Vol. IX, The Far East: China (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1974), 62.

<sup>80</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, by the Secretary of State, September 17, 1949, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1949, Vol. IX, The Far East: China (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1947), 90.

Chinese governments to come to terms on recognition manifested a deep cultural and ideological divide.<sup>81</sup> American policy-makers' concerns lay, in part, with traditional notions of international law and the requirement that the new Chinese leaders abide by agreements made by the previous Chinese government; whereas the Chinese revolutionary leaders gave great weight to full acceptance by other countries of the immense changes wrought by the communist victory in China and the demand for abandonment of all vestiges of Western domination. At the time, the two nations could not bridge that divide.<sup>82</sup> Perhaps more important than ideological differences was the force of U.S. domestic politics. Truman was under great pressure from the right over the so-called "loss of China" to communism. The American public opposed recognition by a margin of more than two to one.<sup>83</sup> Therefore, recognition of the communist government or admission of the communist government as the representative of China at the UN would have been very damaging politically for the Truman administration. When the British Prime Minister, Clement Attlee, suggested seating the Chinese communist government at the United Nations, Truman responded that doing so "was political dynamite in the United States."<sup>84</sup>

In December 1949 Malik raised the issue of China's representation in the Security Council. He spoke in favor of denying China's UN seat to the existing Nationalist delegation and awarding it to the new communist government in Beijing. Not surprisingly, the Soviet delegation supported that position on the ground that the former Kuomintang [Nationalist]

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<sup>81</sup> Chen Jian, *China's Road to the Korean War: The Making of the Sino-American Confrontation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 62.

<sup>82</sup> Chen, *China's Road*, 62-63.

<sup>83</sup> George W. Gallup, *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1935-1971*, Vol. One, 1935-1948 (New York: Random House, 1972), 868.

<sup>84</sup> United States Delegation Minutes of the Fifth Meeting of President Truman and Prime Minister Attlee, December 7, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 1451.

Government was no longer the government of China and thus had no right to represent China or to speak for the Chinese people.<sup>85</sup> Tsiang Tingfu, the sitting representative of the Nationalist government, responded that the new communist government of China was just a “puppet regime” owing its existence to the Soviet Union.<sup>86</sup> Since the matter was not on the Council agenda, no further action was taken.

But the issue of China’s rightful representative at the UN would not die. In January 1950 Malik again raised the issue of the illegality of the Nationalists representing China in the UN, and informed the Council that if it failed

to take appropriate measures for the exclusion from its membership of the representative of the Kuomintang group, the delegation of the USSR will not participate in the work of the Security Council as long as the representative of the Kuomintang is not excluded from that body.<sup>87</sup>

Malik then introduced a resolution to exclude the Nationalist representative from the Council. It so happened that at that time Tsiang presided over the Council. As president, Tsiang ruled that the Soviet proposal would be distributed to the Council members and a special meeting would be called for its consideration. Malik refused to accept the legality of Tsiang’s acting as president of the Council and challenged Tsiang’s ruling. When the Council vote upheld Tsiang’s ruling, Malik walked out.

At its next meeting the Council considered the Soviet motion to exclude the sitting Chinese representatives. Malik was present, despite his previous walkout. The Yugoslav representative noted that of the eleven Council members, if China itself were excluded, five

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<sup>85</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, Fourth Year, no. 54, December 29, 1949, 1-2.

<sup>86</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, Fourth Year, no. 54, December 29, 1949, 1.

<sup>87</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, Fifth Year, no. 1, January 10, 1950, 2.

members recognized the new communist government of China, and five members recognized the Nationalist government. He argued that “the increasing number of recognitions is precisely due to the fact that it has become obvious that the sovereign will of the Chinese people has been expressed . . . in the establishment of the Mao . . . Government.”<sup>88</sup> Conflating recognition with UN representation, Deputy U.S. Representative (and State Department legal adviser) Ernest Gross argued that just as the Soviet government no longer recognized the Nationalist government, the U.S. government still did. Therefore the American delegation would vote against the Soviet resolution. But Gross conceded that the resolution presented a procedural, rather than substantive, question and that therefore the American negative vote would not constitute a veto. In other words, the U.S. government would accept the decision of seven Council members. Presumably the U.S. government had already “counted heads” and knew that the Soviet resolution would not get seven affirmative votes, in which case this was not much of a concession. But it made the Americans look idealistic.

Malik responded that because of the importance of this issue, and also the importance of the Security Council as the organ for “maintaining international peace and security,” the Soviet Union could not work in the Council while China was represented by “a private individual having no responsibility and representing no one, an agent of the shattered, reactionary, Kuomintang clique.”<sup>89</sup> Further, he argued, it was not a question of which countries recognized which Chinese government; it was a question of which government represented China and the people of China. Thus, Malik explicitly noted and rejected the American conflation of

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<sup>88</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, Fifth Year, no. 2, January 12, 1950, 3.

<sup>89</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, Fifth Year, no. 2, January 12, 1950, 11.

recognition and UN representation. Nevertheless, the Council proceeded to defeat the Soviet motion, which garnered the votes of only the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and India.<sup>90</sup>

Upon the motion's defeat, Malik repeated the Soviet assertion that its delegation would not sit on the Council while the Nationalist representative did, and Malik again walked out. During the last exchange the U.S. delegation had not spoken. Now Gross spoke. He said that he would greatly prefer the Soviet representative's presence on all occasions, but he argued that the Soviet absence should not prevent the Council from conducting its business. Fatefully, the Soviet delegation—intentionally or otherwise—was not present that June when North Korean forces invaded South Korea. Thus the Soviets were not able to veto Security Council resolutions to come to the aid of South Korea. Once the PRC had entered the Korean War, the United States had a new reason to oppose seating China's communist government. Acheson advised the embassy in France: "... we would consider it most unwise to debate [the] Chi[nese] rep[resentation] question at this crucial moment in [the] UN operation against aggression."<sup>91</sup> As a result of U.S. efforts the PRC was not seated at the UN during Truman's presidency.<sup>92</sup>

By 1950 the U.S. delegation at the United Nations began to disagree with the State Department regarding seating the communist Chinese delegation. The U.S. position had become problematic—potentially causing a loss of credibility at the UN. In January 1950 Austin advised Acheson that

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<sup>90</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, Fifth Year, no. 3, January 13, 1950, 9.

<sup>91</sup> Acheson to Embassy in France, July 29, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Volume II, The United Nations; The Western Hemisphere (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), p. 250.

<sup>92</sup> The United Nations finally granted China's seat at the UN to the People's Republic of China in October 1971.

we believe it is in interest of the US to accept change over in the UN from recognition of Nationalist China to recognition of communist China as gracefully as possible and without unnecessary delay. We feel we should follow this policy regardless of timing of US recognition of communist China.<sup>93</sup>

Further, there was disagreement regarding tactics. Ernest Gross had advised Acheson that the United States should “cease activity designed to discourage other members UN either . . . from recognizing Chinese Communist government or . . . from voting against seating Chinese Communist Govt.”<sup>94</sup> On March 11, Acheson and Deputy Under Secretary of State Dean Rusk had received a telegram from the UN delegation in New York carefully reviewing the potential votes on the issue of seating the Chinese communist representatives. The telegram outlined lengthy conversations with the Egyptian, Ecuadorean, Cuban and French delegations about their votes. Gross had counseled the Ecuadorean delegate to make his own decision on breaking off relations with the Chinese Nationalists, but the U.S. Embassy had counseled deferring that decision. The upshot was that the Ecuadorean delegate called the U.S. messages “double-talk.”<sup>95</sup> This reaction to U.S. efforts to influence votes on seating the PRC and the defection of key allies regarding recognition of the new government in China pointed to a weakening of American influence at the UN.

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<sup>93</sup> Telegram, The United States Representative at the United Nations (Austin) to the Secretary of State, January 24, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Volume II, The United Nations; The Western Hemisphere (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 208.

<sup>94</sup> Telegram, The Deputy United States Representative at the United Nations (Gross) to the Secretary of State, January 31, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Volume II, The United Nations; The Western Hemisphere (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 218.

<sup>95</sup> Telegram, U.S. UN Delegation to Acheson and Rusk, March 11, 1950, Folder From 310.311/3 – 2454 To 310.4/8-1254, Decimal File 1950-1954, General Records of the Department of State, National Archive.

### *The Stalemate Continues—and U.S. Influence Wanes*

In February 1952 the Soviet Union proposed General Assembly support for the simultaneous admission of all fourteen pending applicants. Notwithstanding strong American opposition, for the first time the Soviet position obtained a bare majority, twenty-two votes to twenty-one, with sixteen abstentions.<sup>96</sup> Among the majority opposing the U.S. position were Israel, Norway, Saudi Arabia, Sweden, Argentina, Denmark and Egypt. Among those abstaining were Britain, France, Belgium, Australia, Mexico, Canada, Uruguay, Chile, Dominican Republic, Ecuador and Guatemala. These were all countries that normally supported U.S. positions. The resolution was defeated only because it failed to receive a two-thirds majority. The vote showed support for the American position weakening. The State Department concluded that its key allies, Britain and France (both of which had, as previously noted, already recognized the communist government in Beijing), “seemed to be preparing for acceptance of such a compromise.”<sup>97</sup>

As a result the State Department began to reexamine its position.<sup>98</sup> In June 1952 Acheson notified the American mission at the UN that the department was “reviewing our overall position on membership,” but had not reached a decision. Acheson advised postponement—neither closing the door to an “omnibus settlement [of the] membership

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<sup>96</sup> United Nations General Assembly, *Official Record*, Sixth Session, 370<sup>th</sup> Plenary Meeting, February 1, 1952, p. 469.

<sup>97</sup> Briefing Paper for Under Secretary of State, March 24, 1952, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954, Volume III, United Nations Affairs* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1979), 802-803; Acheson to Mission at United Nations, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954, Volume III, United Nations Affairs* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1979), 812-814.

<sup>98</sup> Briefing Paper for Under Secretary of State (Bruce), March 24, 1952, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-54, Volume III, United Nations Affairs* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1979), 803.



question,” nor committing to any such deal.<sup>99</sup> However, as events moved toward the U.S. presidential elections in November 1952, it became more important to avoid any commitments and to push the membership question forward so that it would become the responsibility of the next American president.<sup>100</sup> During the balance of 1952 the pointless and repetitious stalemate continued at the Security Council. On October 1 the Council advised the Assembly that the permanent members had not changed their positions and therefore no progress had been made.

Although the United States had successfully blocked the admission of Soviet client states, it had done so at the expense of the UN’s principle of universality and of its own inability to gain admission for its favored applicants. Throughout the Truman presidency the United States remained unwilling to sacrifice its legalistic vision of which nations qualified for membership (and which did not). Likewise, the United States, once having abandoned its early emphasis on universality, remained committed to its disdain for a compromise “package” deal. But American abandonment of universality bore a cost—American diplomats felt an increasing push from U.S. allies to change their position. A March 24, 1952 State Department briefing paper stated that “there will probably be increased pressure for a solution to the membership problem. For this reason, and because of our own concerns over the continued impasse, the Dept is now

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<sup>99</sup>The Secretary of State to the Mission at United Nations, June 17, 1952, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-54, Volume III, United Nations Affairs* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1979), 813.

<sup>100</sup> An August 8, 1952 State Department memorandum regarding “Membership Position” dealt with the possibility of U.S. acquiescence to a “package deal.” It assumed that it was wise not to acquiesce “for the time being,” and that the “essential point now is to avoid commitments, domestic and international, on our future positions and to minimize the difficulties of our position public opinion-wise as much as we can.” This item bears a footnote in *Foreign Relations of the United States*, reading “An apparent reference to impending U.S. Presidential campaign and November election.” Memorandum by the Officer in Charge of General Assembly Affairs (Taylor) to the Assistant Secretary of State for United Nations Affairs (Hickerson), August 8, 1952, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954, Vol. III, United Nations Affairs* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1979), 838.

reexamining its position.”<sup>101</sup> In July Assistant Secretary of State John Hickerson submitted a memorandum stating that

I am convinced this stalemate cannot be broken unless we are prepared to acquiesce in a basket arrangement for admission of a large number of States. As you know, we are under terrific pressure from Italy and FE [the Far Eastern desk at the State Department] and UNA [the UN Affairs desk at the State Department] attach great importance to early admission of Japan. Hickerson concluded that “On balance . . . the advantages of obtaining membership for Italy, Japan and others might make it worthwhile for the United States to acquiesce in such a settlement. We could not vote for an omnibus settlement ourselves . . . but will abstain.”<sup>102</sup>

On December 21, 1952, in the closing days of the Truman presidency, the General Assembly (by substantial margins with only the Soviet Union and its satellites voting against) recommended that Japan, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, and Libya should be admitted to membership and requested the Security Council to take note of that determination. But no further action was taken during Truman’s presidency.

### *Conclusion*

So, with the United States slowly losing the ability to count on reliably consistent support from friendly nations and with key U.S. allies having recognized the communist regime in Beijing, the United States began to lose its assured dominant position. But for the time being, the United States still was able to avoid using its veto power, for example by persuading friendly countries to switch their votes from abstentions to negative votes, and thus was able to block

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<sup>101</sup> )Briefing Paper for Under Secretary of State (Bruce), March 24, 1952, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1952-54, Vol. III, United Nations Affairs (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1979, 803.

<sup>102</sup> Memorandum by the Assistant Secretary of State for United Nations Affairs (Hickerson) to the Deputy Under Secretary of State (Matthews), July 2, 1952, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1952-54, Vol. III, United Nations Affairs (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1979), 817-821.

Soviet initiatives.<sup>103</sup> During the Truman presidency nine countries—whose membership did not harm the interests of either the United States or the Soviet Union—had been added to the United Nations membership. But further applications—which had Cold War implications—remained stalled. Of course the issue did not die; it continued during the succeeding presidency of Dwight Eisenhower, during which all of the countries whose admission had been blocked (except Viet Nam)<sup>104</sup> were admitted.<sup>105</sup> In the long run the United Nations maintained its important principle of universality; but instead of promoting that principle, U.S. policy during the Truman administration had frustrated and delayed its realization. And American efforts to circumvent the veto had weakened the principle of unanimity, which had been the vision of Franklin Roosevelt and was the foundation of Great Power support for the United Nations.

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<sup>103</sup> Telegram, The Acting Chairman of the United States Delegation to the General Assembly (Roosevelt), January 28, 1952, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1951, Volume II, The United Nations; The Western Hemisphere (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1979), p. 448.

<sup>104</sup> Viet Nam was finally admitted to membership in 1977.

<sup>105</sup> “Member States of the United Nations”; Available from <http://www.un.org/en/members/index.shtml>; internet; accessed January 30, 2012.

## CHAPTER 2

### IRAN AND GREECE: THE BEGINNING OF CONTAINMENT IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND EUROPE

#### *Introduction*

Conflicts in Iran and Greece at the end of the Second World War tested the untried United Nations' ability to settle international disputes. In both Iran and Greece U.S. power began to replace the waning influence of Britain, and the United States used the United Nations as an instrument in that process and as a tool in implementing a policy of containment in Europe and the Middle East. The UN's response to the confrontations in Iran and Greece helped shape the new organization, but with somewhat different results in each case. The case of Iran strengthened the United Nations by Security Council action—strongly supported by the United States—which prevented Soviet encroachment on Iranian territory, and thus provided an early victory for the protection of the rights of a weak nation and against a Great Power. The case of Greece provided mixed results—UN efforts helped maintain in power the Greek government, but unilateral U.S. intervention, pursuant to the Truman Doctrine, in what was essentially a civil war, marginalized the United Nations, and American success in transferring the matter from the Security Council to the General Assembly circumvented the plain language of the Charter. Nevertheless, UN investigation and monitoring at the border between Greece and its northern neighbors was useful in minimizing cross-border violence, and perhaps prevented the civil war in Greece from expanding into a regional war.

### *Background to the Iranian and Greek Questions*

In the immediate post-war period Iran was locked in dispute with its powerful neighbor, the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union's failure to remove its army from northern Iran after the war ended raised the specter of Soviet power extending into the Middle East.<sup>1</sup> In Southeastern Europe another small, weak nation, Greece, quarreled with three bordering nations on its north, Albania, Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria—all satellites of the Soviet Union—which were giving aid to leftist insurgents engaged in a civil war with the rightist Greek government. Towards the end of the Second World War, as the German army retreated out of Greece, the British army entered to restore a Rightist, monarchic government and to prevent a communist-led leftist guerrilla force from taking power. Although Stalin had agreed with Churchill that Britain would be dominant in postwar Greece—and Stalin in fact was not helping the leftist forces—U.S. policy-makers nevertheless believed that a leftist victory would provide the Soviet Union with a friendly base for expansion into the Eastern Mediterranean.<sup>2</sup> From the American perspective, these two problems—Iran and Greece—seemed to provide evidence of a Soviet threat to U.S. interests.

Both the Iranian and Greek questions went to the Security Council in 1946, just as the United Nations began operating and as the Truman administration sought to adjust to postwar international power dynamics. At the UN both Iran and Greece presented a challenge: if the United Nations could protect the security of these two weak nations, and at the same time prevent their disputes from spreading and thus threatening the general peace in the regions, the UN would pass a major test. On the contrary, if the United Nations failed in these early efforts,

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<sup>1</sup>Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power*, 79-80.

<sup>2</sup>Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power*, 73-75.

the UN would be severely diminished at the outset. Since the national interests of United States and Britain in both questions were opposed to the national interest of the Soviet Union, Iran and Greece presented challenges to the so-called rule of unanimity, i.e., the Charter requirement that the Security Council could take substantive action only when all five permanent members agreed. In the cases of Iran and Greece, no such agreement existed.

The timing of these disputes was important—they occurred just as the wartime cooperation between the United States and the Soviet Union was breaking down. As previously noted, in April 1945 Truman met with the powerful Soviet People’s Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Vyacheslav Molotov, and famously castigated him for perceived Soviet violations of the Yalta accord. The ill-fated September 1945 Foreign Ministers meeting in London accomplished very little and revealed serious East-West differences. George Kennan’s highly influential “Long Telegram” of February 1946 posited a deep conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union, and argued for a long-term U.S. policy of containment of the Soviet menace. In his March 1946 famous “Iron Curtain” speech in Fulton, Missouri, Winston Churchill—in the presence, and with the ostensible approval, of Truman—called for a U.S.-British “special relationship” to counter the threat of Soviet communism. All of these events served to propel the two super-powers into a confrontational trajectory in which, from the American perspective, Soviet actions seemed a part of premeditated expansionism that threatened American interests.

### *Iran*

During the war Iran had served as a major route for lend-lease military supplies from the United States to the Soviet Union. In order to ensure the safety of that supply route, Britain and

the Soviet Union sent armed forces into Iran, the British in the South and the Soviets in the north, with U.S. armed forces entering later. All three countries agreed to withdraw their forces within six months after the war ended. At Yalta Stalin, Churchill and Roosevelt had agreed to maintain Iran's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity.<sup>3</sup> After the fighting ended in Europe the Red Army failed to leave Iran by the agreed date. Moreover, the Soviet Union fostered unrest (with the ostensible goal of local autonomy) in Azerbaijan, a northern province of Iran that bordered the Soviet Union, presumably with the twin motives to obtain an oil concession or joint-venture oil deal, and to increase Soviet influence in the region. As local groups in Azerbaijan began to take power, the Iranian central government in Tehran tried to send in military units to restore order, but Soviet armed forces blocked such efforts. These Soviet actions had a destabilizing effect on the Iranian government.

Faced with this threat to its sovereignty, the Iranian government cast about for a solution and focused on an appeal to the United Nations Security Council. In January 1946 the head of the Iranian delegation to the UN, Hasan Taqizadeh (a highly experienced Iranian politician and diplomat), approached U.S. Secretary of State James Byrnes in London shortly before the opening session of the Security Council. Taqizadeh asked for advice about whether Iran should file a complaint with the Security Council regarding the Soviet Union's failure to remove its troops from Iran and Soviet interference in Iran's internal affairs. The Iranian ambassador had informed the State Department that the Iranian government was "considering whether to bring Iran's case before the General Assembly" but Byrnes responded that "the United States has

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<sup>3</sup> Declaration of the Three Powers Regarding Iran, Hiss Notes at Yalta Folder, Minutes, Notes, and Conference Documents, Jan.—Feb. 1945, World War II Conferences, Yalta (Crimea) Conferences, Background and Reference Materials, Jan. 1944-Feb. 1945 File, Record Group 43, Records of International Conferences, Commissions and Expositions, National Archive.

friendly relations with both the Soviet Union and with Iran,” and therefore the United States would not give an advance commitment to either side.<sup>4</sup> Byrnes later reported that he offered no immediate advice but expressed a willingness to hear the facts, and that without waiting Taqizadeh proceeded to file the Iranian complaint.<sup>5</sup> But U.S. policy on the issue was hardening, in part because of Congressional pressure: on March 2 Senator Tom Connally, the powerful Democratic chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, announced his demand for “Russia’s getting out of Iran with her army today.”<sup>6</sup> On March 5 Byrnes instructed George Kennan, then Charge at the U.S. embassy in Moscow, to advise Molotov that since the U.S. government learned that the Soviet government had decided to keep Soviet troops in Iran past the agreed March 2 deadline, the Soviet decision had “created a situation with regard to which” the U.S. government “can not remain indifferent.”<sup>7</sup> By March 15 Byrnes directed the U.S. ambassador in Iran to advise Ahmad Qavam, Iran’s prime minister, to appeal to the Security Council immediately, and to “remind him that we have already given him assurances of our full support to such an appeal.”<sup>8</sup> The *New York Times* reported that members of Congress and their constituents supported the strong stand taken by Byrnes generally against the Soviet Union and

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<sup>4</sup> Telegram, The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in Iran (Murray), January 2, 1946, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1946, Vol. VII, The Near East and Africa (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1969), 292.

<sup>5</sup> Richard W. Van Wagenen and T. Cuyler Young, *The Iranian Case, 1946* (New York: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1952), 30.

<sup>6</sup> *New York Times*, 3 March 1946, p. 24.

<sup>7</sup> Telegram, The Secretary of State to the Charge in the Soviet Union (Kennan), March 5, 1946, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1946, Vol. VII, The Near East and Africa (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1969), 340.

<sup>8</sup> Telegram, The Secretary of State to the United States Ambassador in Iran (Murray), March 15, 1946, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1946, Vol. VII, The Near East and Africa, 360.



specifically vis-à-vis Iran.<sup>9</sup> And on March 21 Truman “flatly refused to go along with” the Soviet request for a sixteen day postponement of the scheduled Security Council meeting on the Iran issue.<sup>10</sup>

In the first several months after the war ended relations between the United States and the Soviet Union were in flux. Although problems had surfaced, Cold War hostility between the two great powers did not yet dominate the international diplomatic scene. During the war the United States had cooperated with the Soviet Union in Iran, and now Byrnes wanted to wait for a clearer picture of what the Soviets were doing, and most probably wanted Iran, rather than the United States, to bear the onus of pushing the confrontation with the Soviet Union onto the public stage of the UN Security Council.<sup>11</sup> This ground-breaking first instance of an attempt to use the UN to resolve an international dispute involved high stakes for the very reason that the Soviet Union—the target of the complaint—was a super-power and a permanent member of the Council.

The matter had wider implications—the United States had a definite interest both in resisting Soviet expansion and in encouraging UN effectiveness, at least so long as it served U.S. goals.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, although initially the U.S. State Department adopted a somewhat neutral

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<sup>9</sup> James B. Reston, “Backing Appears for Strong Foreign Policy,” *New York Times*, 17 March 1946, p. E3.

<sup>10</sup> Felix Belair, Jr., “President is Firm,” *New York Times*, 22 March 1946, p. 1.

<sup>11</sup> As early as April 1944 then Secretary of State Cordell Hull had cautioned that the United States should avoid “creating an atmosphere of recrimination” and that it “essential to avoid . . . the impression of a British-American front” against the Soviet Union with regard to Iran. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1944, Vol. V, The Near East, South Asia, and Africa; the Far East*, Telegram The Secretary of State to the Charge in Iran (Ford), April 30, 1944 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1965), 332; In November 1945 Byrnes advised the U.S. ambassador in Iran that notwithstanding a complaint by Iranian authorities about Soviet actions in Iran, the United States had taken no action and the State Department had “no definite information from our representative as to the facts . . . . Until we do receive further information from our own representative as to the facts, no decision will be made by us.” Telegram, The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in Iran (Murray), November 22, 1945, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1945, Vol. VIII, The Near East and Africa*, (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1969), 441-442.

<sup>12</sup> In 1943 Secretary of State Cordell Hull advised President Roosevelt that if “events [were] allowed to run their course unchecked . . . either Russia or Britain, or both [would] . . . take action which [would] seriously abridge,

stance in the conflict,<sup>13</sup> soon Byrnes decided to support Iran's case against the Soviet Union. On January 25, 1946 at its second meeting, the Security Council placed the Iranian complaint on its agenda. The president of the Council, N. J. O. Makin of Australia, stated that this was the first occasion on which the Security Council had been called upon to act under Chapter VI of the Charter (peaceful settlement of disputes) and that the proceedings would likely serve as a precedent for the Council's future action.<sup>14</sup> In a move that was soon replicated by other countries on other issues, the Soviet Union tried to block Security Council discussion on the grounds that the UN lacked authority to act. Vyshinsky sought to prevent the Council from dealing with the substance of the Iranian question on the grounds that the matter could be settled by bilateral negotiations and therefore there was no dispute before the Council. Nevertheless, Makin invited Taqizadeh to take his seat at the Council and to make a statement. Here was the first instance of a victory for open discussion at the United Nations. At the time the Charter was being drafted, if the Soviet Union had prevailed in its argument that each permanent member should have veto rights over what matters the Security Council would entertain, Vyshinsky no

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if not destroy, effective Iranian independence." Hull continued that because of the U.S. "vital interest" in the principles of the Atlantic Charter and in lasting peace, it was to U.S. advantage that Iran's "integrity and independence [were] maintained." Likewise, Hull argued, "from a more directly selfish point of view, it is to our own interest that no great power can be established on the Persian Gulf opposite the important American Petroleum development in Saudi Arabia." Thus Hull neatly joined American idealism and self-interest. Hull went on to advise "timely diplomatic support to Iran, to prevent the development of a situation in which an open threat to Iranian integrity might be presented." See American Policy in Iran, [Enclosure to] Correspondence, The Secretary of State to President Roosevelt, August 16, 1943, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1943, Vol. IV, The Near East and Africa, Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1964), 377-379.

<sup>13</sup> Telegram, The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in Iran (Murray), January 2, 1946, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1946, Volume VII, The Near East and Africa (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1969, 292-293).

<sup>14</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, First Year: First Series, Third Meeting, no. 1, January 28, 1946, 31.

doubt would have succeeded in keeping Iran's complaint off the Council agenda. But Stalin's agreement to allow open discussion on the Council now permitted Iran to make its case.

Although Iran had filed its complaint, it certainly had no desire to antagonize its powerful northern neighbor. At the Council meeting Taqizadeh proceeded to describe the dispute, but he did so gingerly: "The Iranian Government sincerely deplors that it finds itself in a dispute with a country with which it not only has a long-standing friendship, but which is also its ally under the Tri-Partite Treaty of Alliance of 29 January 1942."<sup>15</sup> The Iranian Government was walking a fine line—between fear of the Soviet "Goliath" and need to protect its own territory and sovereignty.<sup>16</sup> Taqizadeh advised the Council that his government had sent a number of notes to the Soviet government, complaining of interference with Iranian governmental authority by refusing to withdraw Soviet troops from Iran, by keeping Iranian armed forces out of the Soviet-controlled zone in Iran and thus preventing the Iranian government from suppressing disorders, and by disrupting the Iranian economy by setting up internal economic barriers. He explained that Tehran had "to a certain extent tolerated these breaches of territory and international law during the war" but now that the war was over, "this interference with Iran's independence and sovereignty should certainly be ended."<sup>17</sup> He concluded by urging the Council to recommend that the Soviet government evacuate its troops, that no Soviet action interfere with the authority

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>16</sup> Stettinius reported to Byrnes that [British UN representative] Cadogan "expected the Russians to put heavy pressure" on [Iranian Prime Minister] Qavam to disavow Iran's ambassador to the UN for taking a strong line against the Soviet position at the Security Council. Byrnes also believed that the Iranian representative at the Security Council was "under Soviet pressure." See Telegram, The United States Representative at the United Nations (Stettinius) to the Secretary of State, May 24, 1946, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1946, Vol. VII, The Near East and Africa (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1964), 479-480; Ibid., Telegram, The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in Iran (Murray), May 22, 1946, p. 478.

<sup>17</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, First Year: First Series, Third Meeting, no. 1, January 28, 1946, 34.

of Iran's central government, and that the Soviet Union withdraw all moral and material support for the rebels in Azerbaijan or other dissidents elsewhere.

Vyshinsky refused to deal with the substance of the Iranian complaint, arguing a technicality—that there had been negotiations between his country and Iran which apparently had satisfied the Iranian government, and that therefore there was no dispute and no Council jurisdiction under Article 35. According to Vyshinsky's reasoning, since Article 35 dealt with pacific settlements of disputes, if no dispute existed Article 35 did not apply. Somewhat inconsistently, however, he also argued that “the Soviet Union and Iran should be given opportunity to settle this matter.”<sup>18</sup> Taqizadeh responded that Iran had attempted to send security forces to Azerbaijan, which the Soviet military authorities had stopped eighteen miles outside of Tehran. He reported that the Iranian government had sent notes to the Soviet government demanding a reversal of instructions to the Soviet military in Iran, but the Soviets had rejected the Iranian notes.

In responding to the Soviet argument Taqizadeh disputed that negotiating was taking place—Iran had sought direct negotiations but the Soviet Union had spurned those efforts. Vyshinsky then defended the Soviet refusal to permit Iranian troops to advance into Azerbaijan by arguing that bloodshed would have occurred if Iranian troops tried to put down the Azerbaijan insurgency, and “soviet troops could not of course permit a massacre to take place before their eyes as a result of the provocative actions of its [i.e., Iran's] authorities.”<sup>19</sup> This assertion, of course, constituted a blatant denial of the Iranian central government's sovereign right to use force to put down an insurgency within its territorial borders.

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 52.

British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Ernest Bevin noted the important role that the UN played in this case. He argued that Vyshinsky had admitted that the Soviet Union had infringed on Iranian sovereignty. Nevertheless, Bevin indicated willingness to permit negotiations between the Soviets and Iranians, but he also indicated that meanwhile the matter should remain on the Council agenda. He noted:

There are armies in Iran. They are there by the kindness of Iran . . . . For Iran to have to negotiate alone without . . . the watchfulness, the sense of justice and the holding of the balance of this new United Nations at its disposal, would be most unfortunate and would be misunderstood.<sup>20</sup>

Bevin had identified two major values of the new United Nations: first, the power of an international “spotlight,” which illuminated an international conflict and maintained world attention on the problem, and second, the moral authority embodied in the collective judgment of the new organization, which no individual state or alliance of states could claim. These factors were especially important in conflicts such as this—between weak and strong states, in which, without the United Nations, the strong could simply overpower or intimidate the weak. The UN Charter had raised the world’s expectations that nations would respect the “sovereign equality” of all member states, and would refrain from “the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity and political independence” of any state. Iran had become the first test of the reality of those expectations.

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<sup>20</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, First Year: First Series, Fifth Meeting, no. 1, January 30, 1946, 58.

### *The United States Backs Iran's Efforts in the Security Council*

Initially, as noted above, the U.S. government had assumed the posture that both Iran and the Soviet Union were friendly states, and therefore did not publicly prejudge the issue. But the U.S. government was not truly neutral—it had its own interest in Iran. As early as 1943 the State Department actively aided an American oil company in its negotiation for an Iranian oil concession.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, the Joint Chiefs of Staff advised that they

Consider[ed] that as a source of supply (oil) Iran is an area of major strategic interest to the United States. From the standpoint of defensive purposes the area offers opportunities to conduct delaying operations and /or operations to protect United States-controlled oil resources in Saudi Arabia.<sup>22</sup>

Stettinius agreed with Bevin to permit voluntary negotiation between Iran and the Soviet Union, but with the Council's oversight until the matter was resolved. To satisfy Vyshinsky the resolution was softened, so that it did not expressly keep the matter on the agenda, but instead it called for the parties to keep the Council informed and provided that the Council could request information on the progress of the negotiations at any time. As amended, the resolution garnered unanimous support. At this early stage in UN history, unanimity was still possible.

The Iranian question returned to the Council on March 26 at Iran's request. Again, the Soviets argued that the matter should be kept off the agenda, since the parties had already agreed on a Soviet withdrawal of troops which had begun on March 2. Qavam reported a much more nuanced Soviet response: first, that the Soviets would evacuate within five or six weeks "if

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<sup>21</sup> James A. Bill, *The Eagle and the Lion: The Tragedy of American-Iranian Relations* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988), 28.

<sup>22</sup>Memorandum by the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee to Major General John H. Hilldring, October 12, 1946, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1946, Vol. VII, The Near East and Africa (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1969), 530.

nothing further happened”; second, the Soviet government proposed forming an Irano-Soviet company, owned fifty-one percent by the Soviet Union, to develop oil in Northern Iran; and third, the Soviet government offered to intercede to “adjust [the] Azerbaijan situation.”<sup>23</sup> Clearly, the Soviet Union was using the pressure of its military presence in Iran to achieve material benefit, both in terms of Iranian oil and also in terms of some sort of influence in northern Iran.

The question before the Security Council raised a key issue: the right of a small nation to be heard, and to be protected against aggression by a great power. In addition to that idealistic purpose, the Truman administration had decided to take a hard line to block Soviet expansion into Iran for a variety of pragmatic reasons: according to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Iran itself was a major source of oil; Iran was important defensively to protect U.S. oil resources in Saudi Arabia; Iran represented a “maximum cushion of distance and difficult terrain” in the event of a Soviet military advance into the Middle East; and finally, the Soviet Union’s oil resources “within her borders” were insufficient “to support a major war.”<sup>24</sup> In what seems a veiled reference to British and American motives in Iran, Gromyko asserted that “the decision of the USSR Government . . . constitutes a convincing reply to all who, in an endeavor to hide their own aggressive plans, misuse freedom of speech to the detriment of peace and international

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<sup>23</sup> Telegram, The Ambassador in Iran (Murray) to the Secretary of State, 1946, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1946, Vol. VII, The Near East and Africa (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1969), 379-380.

<sup>24</sup>Memorandum by the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee to Major General John H. Hildring, October 12, 1946, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1946, Volume VII, The Near East and Africa (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1969) , 529-530; Yergin, *Shattered Peace*, 179; Marc Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace: The Making of the European Settlement* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 38; Louise L’Estrange Fawcett, *Iran and the Cold War: The Azerbaijan Crisis of 1946* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 125.

security.”<sup>25</sup> The Soviets moved to delete the Iranian question from the agenda, but were defeated by a vote of nine to two. Gromyko then proposed to postpone the Iranian question until after April 10. But Byrnes insisted that the Iranians had to be heard.<sup>26</sup> Gromyko rejoined that if the Iranian representative was to be heard, he (Gromyko) could not take part in the discussion of the question. By an Egyptian motion (eight votes in favor), the Iranian complaint was received and the Iranian representative was invited to the Council to express his viewpoint. At this point Gromyko, good to his word, walked out. This was the first Soviet walkout at the UN, but not the last. The Soviet Union, usually outvoted in the Council by a margin of nine to two, had few choices: it could veto measures subject to veto; it could use the Council as a propaganda forum and then accept an inevitable voting defeat; or it could walk out, thus showing its disrespect for the majority, which it viewed as a product of American-British manipulation.

Iran took a very different view than had been advanced by Gromyko. Hussein Ala, Iranian ambassador to the United States and a future prime minister of Iran, reported to the Security Council that the Soviet authorities would not agree to withdraw their troops or refrain from interfering in Iran’s internal affairs; that instead the Soviet Union proposed that Soviet troops would remain in some parts of Iran for an indefinite period, that Iran would recognize the internal autonomy of Azerbaijan, that the Soviet Union would abandon its demand for an oil concession, but instead an Iranian-Soviet joint stock company would be formed to exploit oil in

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<sup>25</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, First Year: First Series, Twenty-Fifth Meeting, no. 2, March 26, 1946, p.10.

<sup>26</sup> James Byrnes to Department of State, March 25, 1946, Incoming Telegram, Daily Secret Summary, SMOF: Naval Aide to the President Files, 1945-53, United Nations Organization—Daily Secret Summaries, March—April, 1946 Folder, Truman Library. In an interview with U.S. ambassador in the Soviet Union, Walter Bedell Smith, Stalin commented “somewhat bitterly” regarding the unwillingness of the United States to agree to a short delay requested by the Soviet Union at the Security Council, that if “such a request had been made by the US . . . [the] Soviet Union would willingly and gladly have conceded it.” Telegram, The Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Smith) to the Secretary of State, April 5, 1946, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1946, Vol. VI, Eastern Europe; The Soviet Union (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1969), 734.



northern Iran. Ala declared his opposition to postponement because “demands have been made upon Iran which are inconsistent with its sovereignty and territorial integrity. Such a state of affairs is . . . explosive.”<sup>27</sup>

Byrnes sought a practical solution: he noted that the Soviets had given assurances that they would complete their troop withdrawal within five or six weeks, and that no matter what action the Council took the Soviet troops could not be withdrawn in a substantially shorter time. He also said that care should be taken to prevent any possibility that the presence of Soviet troops could be used to “influence or coerce” Iran in negotiations with the Soviet Union.<sup>28</sup> In other words, the presence of Soviet troops should not be permitted to exert pressure to give the Soviet Union the oil deal it wanted. Byrnes suggested that the Council ask the Soviets for a report on the existing status of negotiations and a statement as to whether the withdrawal of troops was or was not “conditional upon the conclusion of agreements between the two Governments on other subjects” [e.g., the oil deal].<sup>29</sup> Byrnes’s suggestion was unanimously adopted.

The dispute was not yet resolved. On April 3 the president of the Council announced that Gromyko had responded to the request for a status report—stating that Iran and the Soviet Union had reached an understanding that Soviet troops would be withdrawn, that such withdrawal would be completed within one and one-half months, and that the withdrawal was unconnected with negotiations for an oil concession or mixed joint stock oil company. Ala had a different

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<sup>27</sup>United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, First Year: First Series, Twenty-Seventh Meeting, no. 2, March 27, 1946, 68.

<sup>28</sup>United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, First Year: First Series, Twenty-Eighth Meeting, no. 2, March 29, 1946, 74-75.

<sup>29</sup>United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, First Year: First Series, Twenty-Eighth Meeting, no. 2, March 29, 1946, 74-82.

story: his letter said that negotiations had “achieved no positive results, and USSR agents, officials and armed forces are continuing to interfere in the internal affairs of Iran.”<sup>30</sup> Ala wrote that the Soviet ambassador orally confirmed the promise to evacuate Iran, *but on the condition that no unforeseen circumstances should occur*. Thus, the possibility remained of Soviet troops continuing their occupation if the Tehran government ignored the other Soviet demands. Three days later that possibility was reinforced when the Soviet ambassador said that if agreement could be reached on the oil deal and autonomy for Azerbaijan, “there would be no further cause for anxiety and no unforeseen circumstances would take place.”<sup>31</sup>

This moment reflected the importance of the new UN—as an open, public forum in which a small nation could mobilize world opinion to curtail the brute power of a large nation. As a result, very early in the United Nation’s existence all states in the world were put on notice that policies based on force or threat of force would be debated publicly with the entire world as an audience—and that in contests of unequal strength, the weaker party could hope at least for moral support, and perhaps more, from the new world body.

The Iran-Soviet conflict was reaching its denouement. The next day the Council adopted Byrnes’ resolution which noted the Soviet assurances that the withdrawal of troops had already begun and would be complete in five or six weeks and that the Soviet Union would not use the presence of Soviet troops to influence negotiations, and concluded that the Council should defer further proceedings until May 6.<sup>32</sup> On April 15 the matter returned to the Council by virtue of an

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<sup>30</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, First Year: First Series, Twenty-Ninth Meeting, no. 2, April 3, 1946, 85.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, First Year: First Series, Thirtieth Meeting, no. 2, 4 April 4, 1946, 88.

Iranian letter responding to a Soviet request to remove the Iranian question from the agenda. The letter stated that as a result of a signed agreement between Iran and the Soviet Union that the Red Army would complete its evacuation by May 6, that the Iranian government had “complete confidence in the word and pledge of the Soviet Union . . . and for this reason withdraws its complaint from the [Council].”<sup>33</sup> Gromyko again urged removal of the item from the agenda, noting his prior request for such removal and Iran’s present agreement with the Soviet position.

But the U.S. delegation disagreed. Stettinius said that nothing had really changed—the U.S. government hoped that the Soviet withdrawal would be completed by May 6, but it was not willing to remove the Iranian question from the agenda until that withdrawal had in fact happened. On April 23 the Council voted down a French resolution which the Soviet Union supported, calling for the removal of the Iranian question from the Council agenda based on the request of both the Soviet Union and Iran. The United States and Britain opposed the resolution, which was ultimately defeated by a vote of eight to three. This vote clarified the power of the Council to make its own determination of potential threats to international peace, independent even of the views of the parties to the dispute, thus allowing the Security Council to trump the expressed will of the disputing parties. The contrary result would have allowed the possibility of a great power pressuring a weak nation to withdraw its complaint, and thus to immobilize the Security Council from acting. As a result, Security Council oversight was maintained on the Soviet Union until all its troops were in fact withdrawn from Iran.

Of course, U.S. support for the Iranian cause played a crucial role in the result. American strength, combined with the publicity of the Security Council public forum, had changed the

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<sup>33</sup>United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, First Year: First Series, Thirty-Second Meeting, no. 2, April 15, 1946, 122-123.

power dynamics operating on a weak nation in conflict with the Soviet Union. On May 8 the Iranian representative advised the Council that Soviet troops had been completely evacuated from certain provinces and that the entire evacuation was supposed to have been completed by May 7, but that the total evacuation had not been verified. The American delegation remained unsatisfied. Stettinius argued that both the Soviet and Iranian governments were to report to the Council on May 6 as to compliance, but that the Soviet government had not so reported. He offered a resolution to defer further proceedings until the Iranian government could verify that Soviet troops had withdrawn from all of Iran. The resolution was adopted without objection. On May 22 the Council discussed a telegram from the Iranian government reporting that “no trace whatever of USSR troops . . . was found and . . . USSR troops evacuated Azerbaijan on 6 May.”<sup>34</sup> Again Stettinius urged the Council to defer action, because the evidence referred only to some communities in western Azerbaijan and was not conclusive. Ala, the Iranian representative, agreed. But the Polish representative pressed Ala—by asking whether the Iranian government had lost confidence in the Soviet pledge to withdraw its troops, whether the withdrawal of troops disposed of Iran’s complaints, and if the Iranian government believed that the Soviet Union interfered in its internal affairs, did the Iranian government believe that the Soviet Union was the “only great Power which interferes in the affairs of Iran”<sup>35</sup> (presumably a reference to the British and the Americans).

Ala certainly did not want publicly to show a lack of faith in the Soviets. His weak country was engaged in a high-stakes game of international power politics, playing one Great

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<sup>34</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, First Year: First Series, Forty-Third Meeting, no. 2, May 22, 1946, 287.

<sup>35</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, First Year: First Series, Forty-Third Meeting, no. 2, May 22, 1946, 294.

Power off against another. He answered diplomatically, that his government “persists in having confidence in the Government of the USSR” and expressed the hope that their differences “will be settled in a friendly manner.” As to evacuation, he stuck to his position that the evidence was inconclusive. He said that under the protection of Soviet troops insurgents in Azerbaijan had resorted “to all kinds of violence.” And he claimed lack of knowledge of any interference from any other Power at that time.<sup>36</sup> The question of whether to leave the Iranian complaint on the agenda remained. Stettinius argued that Ala’s remarks proved that it would be a mistake to drop the issue. The Mexican representative suggested that the matter should be left on the agenda for eight to ten days and if at that time the Council had received no conflicting evidence, the question would be dropped from the agenda automatically. As a compromise it was decided to adjourn the Iranian discussion until a date in the near future, at the request of any member.

Thus ended the first complaint to be received by the Security Council. Within a matter of days, all Soviet troops were proved to be out of Iran. Iran had agreed to a joint-venture oil deal, but subject to the approval of the Iranian Majlis [parliament]. Ultimately the Majlis rejected the deal. So Iran had, with American support, stood up to the Soviet Union. Without American support it seems likely that Iran’s government would have submitted to Soviet demands for an oil deal in northern Iran and, at least informally, for some form of Soviet-backed autonomy for Azerbaijan.<sup>37</sup> More generally, the Security Council had made a difference: the publicity of debate and the collective judgment of other countries had curbed Soviet aggression. However,

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<sup>36</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, First Year: First Series, Forty-Third Meeting, no. 2, May 22, 1946, 295.

<sup>37</sup> Stalin disliked the present border with Iranian Azerbaijan, and intended to strengthen the Soviet position in that area. But Stalin did not seek “premature confrontation with the British and the Americans” in 1946. See Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin’s Cold War: From Stalin to Krushchev* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1996), 17, 45.

without American leadership other Security Council members might not have unified to support Iran's complaint. Nevertheless, Iran's experience had taught the world a valuable lesson about the fledgling United Nations—that steady pressure, even if not backed by force, could be effective. The new United Nations had made a difference. Certainly it is highly doubtful that in 1946 the United States would have taken meaningful action unilaterally to block the Soviet Union in Iran, any more than it had in the case of Poland.

### *Background to the Greek Question*

Greece was another nation facing a communist threat—albeit a threat of a different kind. A bitter civil war between the EAM (National Liberation Front) leftist guerrillas commanded by communists versus a rightist government (propped up by Britain) raised the possibility of a communist victory in Greece. Before the war Britain's sphere of influence in the Eastern Mediterranean had included Greece. In 1944 Stalin and Churchill had reached their famous “percentages agreement” as to their respective spheres of influence after the war in various countries of Eastern Europe, in which they agreed that Britain would predominate (with ninety percent influence, compared to ten percent influence for the Soviet Union) in Greece.<sup>38</sup> In early 1944 the State Department and the U.S. ambassador to the Greek government in exile both expressed fears about Soviet expansion into Greece.<sup>39</sup> Notwithstanding those concerns, based

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<sup>38</sup> Amikam Nachmani, *International Intervention in the Greek Civil War: The United Nations Special Committee on the Balkans, 1947-1952* (New York: Praeger, 1990), 3.

<sup>39</sup> In February 1944 the State Department was already concerned that “the position of dominance gained by the communist-controlled resistance movement in Greece, indicate that in Eastern Europe and the Balkans at least, some Soviet leaders may hope to establish more or less complete Soviet hegemony.” Foreign Relations of the United States, 1944, Vol. IV, Europe (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1966), Memorandum by Mr. Elbridge Durbrow of the Division of Eastern European Affairs, February 3, 1944, p. 815; Also Lincoln

on counsel from Secretary of State Cordell Hull opposing what was quite blatantly a division into spheres of influence, President Roosevelt had originally opposed Churchill's proposal to allocate predominant influence between Britain and the Soviet Union in Greece, Romania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia and Hungary.<sup>40</sup> However, under prodding from Churchill, Roosevelt ultimately went along with Churchill's scheme, at least on a trial basis.<sup>41</sup> Stalin abided by his agreement with Churchill and did not directly aid, and in fact sought to restrain, the insurgents.<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, the Soviet leader may have decided on a policy of fostering a gradual expansion of Soviet influence in Greece to take advantage of the decline of British power in the region.<sup>43</sup>

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McVeagh, the U.S. ambassador to the Greek government in exile in Cairo, reported "Russian interest . . . to swing the government of Greece to the left" and he discussed speculation "whether Russia now aspires to supplant Britain as the dominating power in connection with Greek affairs." Telegram, The Ambassador to the Greek Government in Exile (MacVeagh) to the Secretary of State, April 14, 1944, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1944, Vol. V, The Near East, South Asia, and Africa, The Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1965), 95-96.

<sup>40</sup> The British ambassador, Lord Halifax, originally asked for the American view of such a deal in May 1944. Memorandum of Conversation, by the Secretary of State, May 30, 1944, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1944, Vol. V, The Near East, South Asia, and Africa, The Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1965), 112. The next day Churchill followed up with a telegram to Roosevelt, recommending that "the Soviet Government would take the lead in Roumanian affairs, while we would take the lead in Greek affairs." Ibid., The British Prime Minister (Churchill) to President Roosevelt, May 31, 1944, 114. Initially Roosevelt objected that "this would certainly result in the persistence of differences between you and the Soviets and the division of the Balkan region into spheres of influence." Ibid., Telegram, June 11, 1944, 117-118. Churchill responded that British dominance in Greece would prevent the control of the communist-led EAM [National Liberation Front] and would avoid a ruinous civil war. Ibid., 118, Telegram, The British Prime Minister (Churchill) to President Roosevelt, June 11, 1944.

<sup>41</sup> Notwithstanding Hull's continuing objections, Roosevelt ultimately went along with the plan, and the State Department notified the Soviet Government that the U.S. government gave its assent to the plan for a three month trial period. Ibid., Memorandum, The Department of State to the Soviet Embassy, July 1, 1944, 130.

<sup>42</sup> Nachmani, *International Intervention*, 3; Zubok and Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War*, 45.

<sup>43</sup> See Peter J. Stavrakis, "Soviet Policy in Areas of Limited Control: The Case of Greece, 1944-1949," *Greece at the Crossroads: The Civil War and its Legacy*, John O. Iatrides and Linda Wrigley, eds., (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), 230-231. Stavrakis argues that Stalin preferred a gradualist approach, leaving the Rightist government in power at least temporarily, while building up the Greek Communist Party as a political force; at a later time Stalin may have pushed the Party to exercise a military option, but events in Greece proved difficult to control: the Party drifted into civil war, which Stalin could not prevent.

When the German army retreated out of Greece in 1944 fierce fighting had erupted between communist-led guerrilla forces (who had fought the Axis armies during the invasion and occupation of Greece) and conservative and right-wing government forces (including some monarchists and others who had collaborated with the German occupiers or who had sat out the war with the Greek government in exile in Egypt). British troops entered with the intention of restoring order, reinstating the king, and ensuring that a leftist government would not come to power.<sup>44</sup> At that time the U.S. government intended to leave Greek concerns to the British.<sup>45</sup>

American policy towards Greece then underwent a change in attitude. The State Department initially found no credible evidence that the Soviet Union was aiding the Greek insurgents.<sup>46</sup> But as the breakdown in Soviet-U.S. relations emerged, Washington's perceptions regarding Soviet support for the Greek insurgents changed. Without any particular new evidence, American policy-makers at home and Lincoln MacVeagh, the U.S. ambassador in Greece, began to assume direct Soviet involvement in the Greek insurgency.<sup>47</sup> By 1947 U.S. government officials came to believe that a leftist victory in Greece would threaten American security and would create a "domino effect" on other countries of Europe.<sup>48</sup> Acheson (then Under Secretary of State) asserted that the Soviets "have partially achieved their purpose through

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; See David H. Close, ed., *The Greek Civil War, 1943-1950: Studies in Polarization* (London: Routledge, 1993), 192-193.

<sup>45</sup> Close, *The Greek Civil War*, 202.

<sup>46</sup> Lars Baerentzen, John O.Iatrides, and Ole L. Smith, eds., *Studies in the History of the Greek Civil War, 1945-1949* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 1987), 226-229.

<sup>47</sup> Baerentzen, Iatrides, and Smith, *Greek Civil War*, 229-237.

<sup>48</sup> Memorandum by the Secretary of State to President Truman, February 26, 1947, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1947, Vol. V, The Near East and Africa (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1971), 58; Memorandum by the Secretary of State to President Truman, February 27, 1947; [Annex] Statement by the Secretary of State, undated, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1947, Vol. V, The Near East and Africa*, (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1971), 61.



EAM and the border raids.”<sup>49</sup> In Acheson’s view, “if Greece fell within the Russian orbit, not only Turkey would be affected, but also Italy, France and the whole of western Europe.”<sup>50</sup> MacVeagh advised that “if Greece falls to communism the whole Near East and part of North Africa as well are certain to pass under Soviet influence.”<sup>51</sup> George Marshall, who replaced Byrnes as secretary of State on January 21, 1947, advised Truman that “a crisis of the utmost importance and urgency has arisen in Greece . . . . If Greece should dissolve into civil war . . . [it] would emerge as a communist state under Soviet control . . . . [this crisis] might extend Soviet domination to Europe, the Middle East and Asia.”<sup>52</sup> By September 1947 the U.S. public strongly opposed letting Greece fall to Soviet control, with 28 per cent of those interviewed willing, in cooperation with the United Nations, to send United States troops to patrol the Greek border to “stop armed men from coming into the country to make trouble,” and 40 per cent of those interviewed agreeable, in cooperation with the United Nations, to “tell Russia that any further move into Greece will be considered a declaration of war against the rest of the world.”<sup>53</sup> The CIA reported that in October 1948 “the Kremlin has given no indication of abandoning its

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<sup>49</sup>Report of the Meeting of the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee Subcommittee on Foreign Policy Information, February 28, 1947 *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1947, Vol. V, The Near East and Africa, 66.

<sup>50</sup> Memorandum by the Secretary of War (Patterson) on the Meeting of the Cabinet on March 7, 1947, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1947, Vol. V, The Near East and Africa, , 97.

<sup>51</sup>Telegram, The Ambassador in Greece (MacVeagh) to the Secretary of State, February 11, 1947, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, Vol. V, The Near East and Africa (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1971), 17.

<sup>52</sup> Memorandum by the Secretary of State to President Truman, February 26, 1947, [Annex] Memorandum by the Secretaries of State, War, and the Navy, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, Vol. V, The Near East and Africa (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1971), 58-60.

<sup>53</sup> George C. Gallup, *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1935-1971*, Vol. One, 1935-1948 (New York: Random House, 1972), 675.

ultimate objective of bringing Greece under communist control.”<sup>54</sup> The American perspective on the Greek civil war, even if simplistic and lacking in understanding of the dynamics involved in the conflict, was probably correct in assuming that a victory for EAM would result in strong Soviet influence in Greece.

### *The Soviet Union Brings the Greek Question to the UN*

When faced with the support by the United States and Britain for Iran’s complaint about Soviet troops in Iran, the Soviet Union retaliated by filing two complaints in the Security Council against Britain, one involving British troops in Indonesia, and the other involving British troops in Greece.<sup>55</sup> On February 1, 1946, based on a letter from the Soviet delegation, the Security Council included in its agenda the question of the continued presence of the British army in Greece. Thus immediately after the emergence of the Iranian problem the “Greek question” entered United Nations deliberations, and would remain a UN issue until December 1951.<sup>56</sup> The Soviet letter stated that since the war had ended, the presence of British troops was no longer needed, and that such presence “had been turned into a means of bringing pressure to bear upon the political situation inside the country . . . used by reactionary elements against the democratic

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<sup>54</sup> “Current Situation in Greece (October 1948)”; SMOF: National Security Council Files; Central Intelligence Agency File, Memoranda for the Director – 1948; Truman Papers; Truman Library.

<sup>55</sup> Alvin Z. Rubinstein and George Ginsburgs, eds., *Soviet and American Policies in the United Nations: A Twenty-Five Year Perspective* (New York: New York University Press, 1971), 7.

<sup>56</sup> United Nations General Assembly, *Official Records*, Sixth Session, 351<sup>st</sup> Meeting, 7 December 1951, 218.

forces.”<sup>57</sup> The letter highlighted the argument that Greece was undergoing a genuine civil war. If it was a civil war the question arose whether there was any more justification for the British army to prop up the Rightist side in that civil war than for Greece’s communist neighbors to support the Leftist side.<sup>58</sup> Also, the Soviet complaint implicitly involved the UN Charter, which forbade UN intervention “in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state.” Of course, the Charter did not contemplate UN intervention in a civil war.

Vyshinsky argued the Soviet case— that there was no justification for keeping British troops in Greece and in fact those troops were supporting right-wing Monarchist and fascist terror squads directed against leftist organizations and workers groups. Bevin, answering for Britain, accused the leftists of starting a civil war to seize power, and he justified British military action as having been invited by the Greek government. After hearing from the Soviet, British and Greek representatives, Stettinius concluded that there was “no reasonable ground for a belief that the presence of British troops . . . [constituted] a situation which is likely to endanger international peace and security.”<sup>59</sup> In other words, the American position was that the UN had no jurisdiction under the Charter and therefore should take no action. Stettinius was making a legalistic, jurisdictional argument, just as the Soviets had done in the case of Iran. Vyshinsky proposed that British troops be withdrawn as soon as possible. The Polish delegation submitted a resolution to that effect. On February 6 the Soviet Union proposed a compromise resolution,

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<sup>57</sup> Letter from Mr. A. Gromyko, Acting Chief of the USSR Delegation, to Mr. N. J. O. Makin, President of the Security Council, January 21, 1946, Annex 3, United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, First Year: First Series, Supplement No. 1, Annex 3, 73-74.

<sup>58</sup> When the Declaration on Liberated Europe which had been agreed to at Yalta was analyzed in London, British voices raised concerns that if the Declaration was binding on the Soviets in Poland, it would equally bind the British in Greece. Gladwyn Jebb, *The Memoirs of Lord Gladwyn* (New York: Weybright and Talley, 1972), 155-156.

<sup>59</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, First Year: First Series, Seventh Meeting, no. 1, February 4, 1946, 111-112.

neither requiring British troops to leave Greece nor absolving Britain for having British troops in Greece as leading to a possible breach of international peace and security. Both the United States and Britain accepted this innocuous resolution. As a result the British army stayed in Greece, and the UN essentially did nothing.

As events in Greece unfolded, the Americans would reverse their position and soon advocate extensive UN involvement in the Greek situation—first through an investigatory commission established by the Security Council, and later, when the Council was unable to take meaningful action, through a transfer of responsibility to the General Assembly. Initially, while Britain and its army were carrying the financial and military load of combating the Greek leftist insurgency, the United States opposed UN interference which might force the British to withdraw. But when it appeared that support from Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Albania was significantly helping the insurgents, the U.S. government then turned to the United Nations—to ensure victory for the government forces. UN action became, in American policy formulation, a convenient way to restrict aid to the insurgents and thus support the Greek government without using American troops.<sup>60</sup>

On August 30, 1946, at the instigation of the Ukrainian delegation, the Greek question returned to the Security Council. D. Manuilsky, the Ukrainian Minister for Foreign Affairs, attacked the British policy in Greece as one of collaborating with savage, terrorist, extremist actions by the Greek government. Gromyko accused Britain and the United States of simply ignoring the evidence that Greece had acted as an aggressor against its northern

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<sup>60</sup> Within the State Department the possibility of sending U.S. troops into Greece under certain circumstances was contemplated, but justified as conforming to Article 51 (individual or collective self-defense) of the Charter. Draft Memorandum by the Director of the Office of Near Eastern and African Affairs (Henderson), December 22, 1947, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1947*, Vol. V, The Near East and Africa, (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1971), 459-460.

neighbors and called the British army a decisive factor in permitting such aggression as well as a “reign of terror” within Greece.<sup>61</sup> Gromyko offered a resolution in two parts: the first found as fact that “aggressive Greek monarchist elements” were provoking frontier incidents on the border between Greece and Albania and that the Greek government was persecuting national minorities in Greece; the second called upon the Greek government to stop its provocations at the border and its persecution of minorities.<sup>62</sup> Herschel Johnson, a career U.S. Foreign Service officer and acting U.S. ambassador to the UN, called for further investigation (perhaps by sending an impartial commission to the area) with respect to frontier incidents and national minorities in the border area adjacent to Albania, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria. Two days later Johnson followed up with a formal resolution calling for a Commission of Investigation (composed of three impartial individuals appointed by the Secretary-General) with authority to investigate on the spot along the northern Greek border. Gromyko opposed the creation of the commission, arguing that no grounds existed for the American proposal to expand the Greek question beyond Albania to also include Yugoslavia and Bulgaria. Moreover, he argued, any investigation had to include the basic causes of the Greek problems, including “foreign intervention [i.e., the British army] in the internal affairs of Greece.”<sup>63</sup>

Finally the Council voted on the three resolutions which had been submitted. First, the Soviet resolution (which fixed responsibility on the Greek government and called for an end to border violations and persecution of minorities) failed to pass, having received favorable votes

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<sup>61</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, First Year: Second Series, No. 12, Sixty-Sixth Meeting, September 11, 1946, 300.

<sup>62</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, First Year: Second Series, Sixty-Seventh Meeting, no. 13, September 16, 1946, 334-335.

<sup>63</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, First Year: Second Series, Seventieth Meeting, no. 16, September 20, 1946, 397-398.

from only the Soviet Union and Poland. Next a Netherlands resolution, merely expressing the earnest hope, without making any determination of fault, that Greece and its neighbors would stop the regrettable frontier incidents, came up for a vote. It received only six favorable votes, less than the seven votes required for adoption. The next vote was on the American proposal. Gromyko then held the post of president of the Council. Even though the American proposal merely created an investigative commission, Gromyko nevertheless ruled it to be substantive rather than procedural, and thus subject to a veto by any permanent member. The American proposal received eight favorable votes, with two (including the Soviet Union) opposed, resulting in defeat by virtue of the Soviet veto. At this point Lange of Poland suggested as a compromise resolution that the Council merely keep the Greek question on its agenda and under observation. Even that simple resolution failed to pass, having received favorable votes only from Poland and the Soviet Union. Cold War hostility now so infected Council deliberations that after long and acrimonious debate the parties could agree on no action whatsoever.

### ***Greece's Northern Neighbors Continue Aid and Comfort to Greek Rebels***

With the civil war ongoing, Greece itself now looked to the United Nations for protection. On December 10, 1946 the Greek question came before the Council for the third time in eleven months, this time by a complaint from the Greek government concerning the situation on its northern border. Two days later the Council again began discussing the substance of the conflict. The president of the Council invited representatives of Greece, Albania, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria to the Council table. Long-standing border disputes between Greece and its northern neighbors complicated the question of rendering aid to the Greek

insurgents.<sup>64</sup> Constantin Tsaldaris, the Greek prime minister, reminded the Council of Greece's gallant struggle against the Axis powers. He implicitly admitted that Greece did harbor territorial demands against her northern neighbors, arguing that after all the struggle that Greece had endured and all the promises that had been made to her by the Great Powers, "she did not think it exorbitant to claim a few mountain peaks to enable the inhabitants of her northern provinces, three times decimated under the yoke of the invader, to feel that no longer were they directly threatened by enemy raids."<sup>65</sup> He then charged Yugoslavia and Bulgaria with aggression, seeking to incorporate a part of Greek Macedonia into Yugoslavia and he accused Albania, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria of assisting the Greek insurgents along the border.<sup>66</sup> The Yugoslav ambassador to the United States responded that all parties, even Tsaldaris, agreed that Greece was engulfed in a civil war, and that the causes of that civil war had nothing to do with Yugoslavia or Greece's other northern neighbors.<sup>67</sup> Rather, the present Greek regime did not enjoy the support of the Greek people, and was being maintained in power by foreign (i.e., British) intervention.

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<sup>64</sup> As early as 1942 the Greek government in exile was lobbying the U.S. government for support in extending its borders to the northeast and the northwest. See Confidential Memorandum Handed by the Prime Minister of Greece, Tsouderos, to the Secretary of State on June 12, Concerning Post-War Greece, July 22, 1942, General Records of the Department of State, Records of the Office of United Nations Affairs, Records Compiled by the Official Views Section of the Division of International Organization Affairs and its Predecessor, Official Commitments Numerical File, 1940-1945, 300: Greece: Great Britain to 400: Restoration of States: Unites [sic] States: Baltic States, 300: Greece Great Britain Folder, National Archive.

<sup>65</sup>United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, First Year: Second Series, no. 25, December 12, 1946, 564.

<sup>66</sup>United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, First Year: Second Series, no. 25, December 12, 1946, 566.

<sup>67</sup> See John O. Iatrides, *Revolt in Athens: The Greek Communist "Second Round," 1944-1945* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1972), for the opinion that while the civil war appeared "to represent the spearhead of Soviet domination," in fact it was "the product of domestic factors."

Johnson repeated the American call for a factual on-site investigation, and stated that he was submitting a resolution for the establishment of a commission of investigation to ascertain the facts relating to the alleged border violations, with authority to conduct investigations in each of the affected four countries. Gromyko argued that a commission of investigation was not necessary to conclude that the Greek government did not enjoy the support of most of the Greek people, and that the events in Greece were caused by “the savage terror that is raging in Greece against all democratic parties and organizations.”<sup>68</sup> Gromyko closed by offering amendments to the American proposal that would limit the commission’s area of investigation to Greece and the frontier districts of the other three countries, and limit the support staff of the commission. On December 19 a vote was taken and the American proposal as amended was adopted almost unanimously, pursuant to which the Security Council established a Commission of Investigation (consisting of representatives of all eleven Security Council members as constituted in 1947) as a fact-finding body to “ascertain the facts relating to the alleged border violations along the frontier between Greece on the one hand and Albania, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia on the other.”<sup>69</sup>

### *The United States Announces the Truman Doctrine*

Events now drew the United States into a much more active role as a principal player in the evolving conflict. The Second World War had impoverished Britain and left it no longer

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<sup>68</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, First Year: Second Series, no. 28, December 19, 1946, p.641.

<sup>69</sup> Appendix “A” Resolution Adopted by the Security Council December 19, 1946, Establishing A Commission of Investigation in Northern Greece, to Memorandum entitled “Security Council Consideration of Various Phases of the Problem of International Security as relating to Greece and the U.S. Policy with Respect Thereto, Record Group 59, Lot File 71D440, Department of State Documents Relating to United Nations Affairs, 1945-1964, SD/S970; National Archive.



financially able to maintain its hegemonic position in Greece. As a result, the British government formally notified the U.S. government on February 24, 1947 that its financial support of the Greek army would terminate on March 31, 1947 but expressed the hope that the United States would subsequently bear the financial burden.<sup>70</sup> As a result, Truman faced a decision—to let events play out in Greece after Britain withdrew its troops, with the possibility of a takeover of Greece by Greek communists, or to provide massive economic and military aid which would support the British effort as well as a buildup of the Greek national army.<sup>71</sup>

On March 12, 1947 Truman responded to the British call for help by announcing what came to be called the Truman Doctrine—a willingness to defend Greece and Turkey and, more generally, to respond anywhere in the world where so-called “free peoples” were threatened by “armed minorities or outside pressures.”<sup>72</sup> Truman faced a divided Congress, with influential senators Robert A. Taft (Ohio Republican) and Harry F. Byrd (Virginia Democrat) both initially opposed to granting military loans and sending military advisers to Greece.<sup>73</sup> However, with the support of Arthur H. Vandenberg (Michigan Republican), the powerful chairman of the Senate

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<sup>70</sup> Aide-Memoire, The British Embassy to the Department of State, February 21, 1947, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1947*, Volume 5 (hereafter cited as FR 1947 V) (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1971), 32-35.

<sup>71</sup> The British announcement that it could no longer support its effort in Greece did not say that British troops would be withdrawn. But Truman assumed that such withdrawal would take place. See Robert Frazier, “The Bevin –Marshall Dispute of August-November 1947 Concerning the Withdrawal of British Troops from Greece,” in *Studies in the History of the Greek Civil War 1945-1949*, Lars Baerentzen, John O. Iatrides, and Ole L. Smith, eds. (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 1987), 249.

<sup>72</sup> Address of the President of the United States delivered Before a Joint Session of the Senate and the House of Representatives, Recommending Assistance to Greece and Turkey, March 12, 1947, available at [http://www.Trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/doctrine/large/documents/pdfs/5-9.pdf#zoom=100](http://www.Trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/doctrine/large/documents/pdfs/5-9.pdf#zoom=100); internet; accessed on March 23, 2011.

<sup>73</sup> James Reston, “Bewildered Congress Faces World Leadership Decision,” *New York Times*, 14 March 1947, p. 2.

Foreign Relations Committee—and a strong convert to internationalism—Congress eventually supported funding for Greece and Turkey, by an approximate margin of three to one.<sup>74</sup>

Soon after the initial British call for help, when the British announced their intention to remove British army units from Greece, a serious argument between Marshall and Bevin erupted. If Bevin had removed British combat forces from Greece, great disarray and loss of morale would have resulted in the Greek government and military, and without the introduction of American troops the Greek government may well have fallen to the insurgents. Eventually, Bevin backed down, Marshall prevailed, and the British troops stayed.<sup>75</sup>

After pronouncement of the Truman Doctrine, an internal argument unfolded within the U.S. government as to the comparative value of unilateral use of force versus collective security through the United Nations. In 1947 the State Department contemplated the possibility of sending American combat troops into Greece under certain circumstances, and justified such action as conforming to Article 51 of the Charter (individual or collective self-defense), but by 1948 a split of opinion on the subject had developed within the government. A State Department memorandum co-authored by Marshall listed as a possible option the use of military force “under Article 51 of United Nations Charter pending the taking of effective action by the Security Council.”<sup>76</sup> Loy Henderson, Director of the Office of Near Eastern and African Affairs, agreed that “if it becomes clear that Greece will . . . succumb, [the United States should] be prepared . . .

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<sup>74</sup> Hamby, *Man of the People*, 389-394.

<sup>75</sup> Robert Frazier, “The Bevin-Marshall Dispute of August-November 1947 Concerning the Withdrawal of British Troops from Greece,” in *Studies in the History of the Greek Civil War 1945-1949*, Lars Baerentzen, John O. Iatrides, and Ole L. Smith, eds.(Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 1987), 249-261.

<sup>76</sup> Memorandum Prepared in the Department of State, July 17, 1947, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1947, Vol. V, The Near East and Africa (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1971), 241.

to send forces [to Greece] in accordance with the procedures . . . in the Charter of the United Nations.”<sup>77</sup> A 1948 National Security Council (NSC) report asserted that

the security of the Eastern Mediterranean and of the Middle East is vital to the security of the United States . . . it should be the policy of the United States in accordance with the principles, and in the spirit of the Charter of the United Nations to support the security of the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East. In carrying out this policy the United States should be prepared to make full use of its political, economic and, if necessary, military power . . . .<sup>78</sup>

Henderson contended that the UN was useless to protect Greece because the General Assembly had no enforcement power and the Soviet veto would block the Security Council. He continued to argue that if the United States were to support additional UN resolutions, it should be prepared “to join with other nations in accordance with the spirit of the Charter to use force if necessary.”<sup>79</sup>

However, the State Department’s Policy Planning Staff (PPS), now under the leadership of George Kennan, felt that Henderson was pushing too fast for military intervention. The PPS noted a “divergence of views” between itself and Henderson, and it questioned whether “the dispatch of US armed forces would necessarily be the most efficacious means of achieving the final objective.”<sup>80</sup> Kennan argued that the NSC report was too “abstract . . . [regarding] the

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<sup>77</sup> Draft Memorandum by the Director of the Office of Near Eastern and African Affairs (Henderson), December 22, 1947, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1947, Vol. V, The Near East and Africa (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1971), 459.

<sup>78</sup> Report to the National Security Council by the Executive Secretary of the Council (Souers), January 6, 1948, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1948, Vol. IV, Eastern Europe; The Soviet Union (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1974), 2.

<sup>79</sup> Memorandum by the Director of the Office of Near Eastern and African Affairs (Henderson) to the Secretary of State, January 9, 1948, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1948, Vol. IV, Eastern Europe; The Soviet Union (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1974), 11.

<sup>80</sup> Report Prepared by the Policy Planning Staff, January 10, 1948, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1948, Vol. IV, Eastern Europe; The Soviet Union (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1974), 22.

dispatch of troops . . . that it contained no adequate appraisal of the likely consequences of the action envisioned.”<sup>81</sup> As a result the NSC report was “reworked,” and when finally delivered to Truman its conclusions were softened and less specific. Instead of stating that the security of the Eastern Mediterranean was “vital” to U.S. security, it merely asserted that the national interests and survival of Greece and Turkey were “of importance” to the security of the United States. Rather than argue for the use of military power if necessary, it now gave Truman a range of options, from one extreme of ending “all aid or all military aid to Greece,” to a middle course of increasing U.S. assistance “short of the application of US military power,” to the other extreme of continuing present aid together with the “uses of military power.” The report emphasized the importance of the UN, concluding that the United States “should also take the lead in urging consideration of the matter by appropriate organs of the United Nations . . . possibly by a special session of the General Assembly.”<sup>82</sup>

The Truman Doctrine relied on independent American power, not on collective security as envisioned by the UN Charter. The State Department had conducted an internal analysis regarding the question of approaching the United Nations concerning the proposed U.S. action in Greece and Turkey. The Department reviewed arguments pro and con, and drafted a proposed letter to be sent to the United Nations. But Acheson reported to Secretary of War Robert Patterson and Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal that a decision was made not to send it because it would “only confuse the issue at the UN, and . . . might be regarded by the Russians

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<sup>81</sup> Memorandum by the Director of the Policy Planning Staff (Kennan), January 13, 1948, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1948, Vol. V, Eastern Europe; The Soviet Union (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1974), 27.

<sup>82</sup> Report by the National Security Council to President Truman, February 12, 1948, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1948, Vol. IV, Eastern Europe; The Soviet Union (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1974), 47-49.

as a challenge . . . .” Acheson further said that “we might as well face the fact that [the] UN will not settle problems of this type and that it is impossible for the UN to intervene in cases involving subversive movements.”<sup>83</sup> As was obvious by this time, a Soviet veto would prevent Security Council action of the type which the United State contemplated. Moreover, Senator Vandenberg opined that

the United Nations did not have the military resources available and . . . it did not have funds of its own for relief. As to the former, the delay was due largely to stalling tactics of the Russians. On the latter, funds, if provided as a result of United Nations action, would have to come largely from the United States, and the position of the United States has been that it wants to control funds supplied by it.<sup>84</sup>

Truman saw American action in Greece not as circumventing, but rather as supporting, the UN. In his “Truman Doctrine” speech, Truman had referred to the United Nations: he stated that the government had considered “how the United Nations might assist in this crisis,” but he concluded that the situation was “urgent” and required “immediate action” and that the UN was “not in a position to extend help of the kind that is required.”<sup>85</sup> In a cabinet meeting held on March 7, 1947 Truman asserted his belief that the U.S. government had to explain the facts about the Greek situation to the American public, for fear of a resurgence of isolationism: “We can’t afford to revive the isolationists and wreck the United Nations.”<sup>86</sup> A majority of Americans

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<sup>83</sup> Memorandum by the Director of the Office of Special Political Affairs (Rusk) to the Under Secretary of State (Acheson), March 18, 1947 and Editorial Notes, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1947*, Vol. V, The Near East and Africa (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1971), 124-127.

<sup>84</sup> Memorandum by the Acting Legislative Counsel (Sandifer), March 13, 1947, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1947*, Vol. V, The Near East and Africa (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1971), 114-115.

<sup>85</sup> Harry Truman, The Truman Doctrine, March 12, 1947 [available online] <http://www.presidentialrhetoric.com/historicspeeches/truman/trumandoctrine.print.html>; internet; accessed January 24, 2012.

<sup>86</sup> Cabinet Meeting, March 7, 1947; Notes on Cabinet Meetings II, 1946-1953, March 1947 folder; Matthew J. Connelly Papers, Truman Library.

supported Truman's plan to aid Greece and Turkey, but the "single largest objection was that the proposal was a unilateral action, that aid should go through the UN . . . ." <sup>87</sup> In secret sessions held by Under Secretary Dean Acheson with the Senate and House foreign relations committees, Acheson found that questions raised in those committees about bringing the matter to the United Nations were cast in terms of avoiding the burden of acting alone, and of uncertainty whether action on Greece and Turkey might lead to other foreign adventures. Acheson described the sense of the committees as follows:

They did not disclose opposition to the President's proposal. They did disclose the inevitable pain and anguish of the Congress in facing a difficult decision. This was manifested in a series of questions . . . . Why can't the United Nations do something about this or do it all? Why do we have to provide military assistance . . . .? Where is the trouble going to break out next? Are we going to give relief to Poland while we are combating communism in Greece . . . .? <sup>88</sup>

Although Truman had referred to those Greeks who opposed the insurgents as "free peoples," in fact U.S. policymakers faced a problem in justifying the rightist, dictatorial nature of the Greek regime which they were supporting. Lincoln MacVeagh advised Marshall that

Greatest care should be taken to avoid giving [the] impression that [the] US aim [is] at financing [a] Greek 'civil war' or maintaining in power an essentially reactionary Gov[ernmen]t incapable of developing sound economic program on democratic principles. Perhaps [the] aim might be stated to ensure opportunity for broader democratic gov[ernmen]t . . . . In this connection it might help if Congressional leaders were told privately that present gov[ernmen]t is not representative of nation under normal conditions, having been elected under fear of Communism both external and internal and

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<sup>87</sup> Papers of Harry S. Truman, WHCF: Confidential File, State Dept., Correspondence, 1946-47 to State Dept., Correspondence, 1946-47 [5 of 5], State Department Correspondence Folder, 1946-47 [3 of 5], Elmo Roper Memorandum, [undated], p. 1-2, Truman Papers, Truman Library.

<sup>88</sup> The Acting Secretary of State to the Secretary of State, at Moscow, March 15, 1947, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1947, Vol. V, The Near East and Africa (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1971), 120.

that our policy will be directed towards liberal changes here at opportune time when this fear removed.<sup>89</sup>

Acheson responded to MacVeagh by somewhat distancing U.S. policy from the repressive Greek government. He stated that American aid was for the purpose of allowing Greece

to become a tranquil self-supporting country and is not for the benefit of the particular Greek gov[ernment] which happens to be in power. Shortcomings of present and past Greek gov[ernment]s will neither be emphasized nor glossed over. . . .<sup>90</sup>

In April MacVeagh complained to the Greek prime minister that

while every effort is being made here to secure implementation of President's program for aid to Greece, public opinion is being constantly disturbed by reports of official toleration of rightist excesses. . . . [the impression created by these reports is that the] President's program aims to assist a reactionary regime with all the earmarks of a police state, which is an idea unacceptable to the American people.<sup>91</sup>

The U.S. government was forced to maneuver its way through the twin perils of avoiding support for an extremist right wing government, on the one hand, and meddling in the internal affairs of a sovereign state, on the other. In August Dwight P. Griswold, the head of the American Mission for Aid to Greece (the agency disbursing the very substantial American economic assistance to Greece) reported to Truman that Griswold had sought to prevent the formation of a narrow "extreme rightist cabinet" by using his economic leverage: Griswold had threatened that if a "narrow government were established the Mission would have to go slow and

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<sup>89</sup> Telegram, The Ambassador in Greece (MacVeagh) to the Secretary of State, March 4, 1947, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1947, Vol. V, The Near East and Africa (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1971), 90.

<sup>90</sup> Telegram, The Acting Secretary of State to the Embassy in Greece, March 11, 1947, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1947, Vol. V, The Near East and Africa (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1971), 108.

<sup>91</sup> Telegram, The Ambassador to Greece (MacVeagh) to the Greek Prime Minister (Maximos), April 11, 1947, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1947, Vol. V, The Near East and Africa (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1971), 142.

watch developments and this would undoubtedly slow up the rehabilitation program and industrial development.” MacVeagh asked Griswold to write a clarifying letter stating that he had not meant that a narrow cabinet was “inadmissible,” but only that it was “inadvisable.”<sup>92</sup>

In these and other ways the Truman administration sought to insert American economic and military aid into Greece to prevent a leftist takeover, but at the same time to distance U.S. policy from rightist excesses and to pressure the Greek government to broaden the base of its government to include more democratic representation and to curtail its policies of excessive repression. In order to maintain U.S. domestic backing for their continuing support of the Greek government, American policy-makers required at least the illusion of democratic processes in Greece.<sup>93</sup> As late as September 1949 Truman himself felt that his administration must “restrain” the Greek government, which he felt had been “unnecessarily brutal,” to “prevent the wholesale slaughter of prisoners.”<sup>94</sup>

### *The Greek Question Goes to the General Assembly*

The UN Commission of Investigation held inquiries in the four affected countries and reported back to the Security Council. Members of the Commission could not agree, and thus submitted a majority report reflecting the U.S. view, and a minority report, reflecting the Soviet

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<sup>92</sup> Dwight P. Griswold to Harry Truman, 20 September 1947; PSF: Subject File; Foreign Affairs, Greece folder; Truman Papers, Truman Library.

<sup>93</sup> Telegram, September 7, 1949, The United States Representative at the United Nations (Austin) to the Secretary of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1949*, Vol. VI, The Near East, South Asia, and Africa (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1977), 399-400.

<sup>94</sup> Memorandum of Meeting with the President, Monday, September 26, by the Acting Secretary of State (Webb), October 1, 1949, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1949*, Vol. VI, The Near East, South Asia, and Africa (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1977), 427.



view. The majority found that Albania, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria had aided the Greek insurgents and that all four countries should take steps to establish normal diplomatic relations and frontier conventions for the peaceful settlement of disputes.<sup>95</sup> The Soviet and Polish members submitted their own contrary conclusions. Ultimately, the Security Council could not reach any decision because of the Soviet veto. The United States responded by taking the matter to the General Assembly, to obviate the veto. Over Soviet objections, Johnson successfully argued that it was merely a procedural vote (and thus not subject to a Soviet veto) to remove the Greek question from the Council agenda and to transfer the records to the General Assembly.<sup>96</sup>

The transition from Security Council to General Assembly marked a major step in the history of U.S.-UN relations, beginning a pattern of circumventing the Soviet veto whenever possible by removing matters originally thought to belong within the Security Council's jurisdiction, and moving those matters to the General Assembly, where the Soviets enjoyed no veto. American policy-makers rationalized the abandonment of the principle of permanent member unanimity that this entailed by the pragmatic argument that this move was necessary to allow the UN to take action. This of course turned on its head the original premise of the United Nations—that there would be no action on matters of international security unless the permanent members agreed. This pragmatic shift ultimately meant de-emphasis in U.S. policy-making on UN action by consensus, and a new emphasis on using the UN as a tool for effecting unilateral American goals.

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<sup>95</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, Second Year, no. 51, June 27, 1947, p. 1119-1125.

<sup>96</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, Second Year, no. 89, September 15, 1947, p. 2401-2405.

The move from Security Council to General Assembly resulted in a dilution and weakening of the original Charter language, because it ignored specific wording which granted to the Council, and not to the Assembly, responsibility for maintenance of international peace and security. That wording was intended to have a crucial purpose, i.e., the prevention of use of the UN's enforcement power (with the possibility of military force) against the will of a major power. For this reason the United States itself had originally required a Security Council veto in order to assure public and Senate approval.<sup>97</sup> If military force could be used against the will of a major power, World War III would become a distinct possibility. With the coming of the Cold War, U.S. policy-makers chose to use the UN in whichever way necessary to effect U.S. policy goals, and to abandon any effort to reach accommodation with the Soviet Union.

Clearly, the Greek question involved a dispute between Greece and its northern neighbors, which ultimately might endanger international peace and security. The American effort to move the matter from the Council to the Assembly violated both the spirit and the explicit language of the Charter. Although the United States accomplished its purpose of evading a Soviet veto, it did so at the cost of weakening the Charter. U.S. allies and other friendly states which supported the United States in this move bear a joint responsibility with the United States for the effect of their actions on the UN. By virtue of this U.S. strategy (and as a result of the majorities enjoyed by the United States in the Security Council as well as in the General Assembly) the United Nations became less an embodiment of the consensus of the world's nations, and more an extension of U.S. policy and power.

Now the Greek question went to the General Assembly, and on September 17, 1947 Marshall presented the American view. In recounting the history of the matter in the Security

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<sup>97</sup> Hilderbrand, *Dumbarton Oaks*, 32.

Council, he made several points: the majority findings of the Commission of Investigation had concluded that Yugoslavia, Albania and Bulgaria were giving support to the Greek insurgent forces; the existence of a “universally accepted principle of international law that for one nation to arm or otherwise assist rebellious forces against another Government is a hostile and aggressive act”; and finally that “one permanent member . . . has three times vetoed the efforts of the Council to deal with the situation.”<sup>98</sup> He concluded that if the UN “should fail to protect the integrity of one small State, the security of all small States would be placed in jeopardy.”<sup>99</sup> Marshall’s argument emphasized the support supplied by Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Albania. But Marshall had cast the argument as a question of these three nations assisting forces in rebellion against a legally constituted government. His argument ignored facts on the ground: Greece had been an occupied country. Its previous government had fled the country and had been in exile in Egypt and thus was not in control of the country. Leftist forces had stayed and fought the Germans, and in 1944 were probably the strongest force in the country until the British army intervened. In fact Greece was faced, not with a rebellion against a legally constituted government, but rather with a civil war—in which one side was attempting to regain power with the support of the British army, and the other side was aided by three northern neighboring countries, all of which were communist satellites of the Soviet Union. Whatever the merits of Marshall’s argument, the fear of a left-wing victory in the Greek civil war, with the presumed

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<sup>98</sup> United Nations General Assembly, *Official Records*, Second Session, Vol. 1, Eighty-Second Plenary Meeting, September 17, 1947, p. 20.

<sup>99</sup> United Nations General Assembly, *Official Records*, Second Session, Vol. 1, Eighty-Second Plenary Meeting, September 17, 1947, p. 20.

result of a communist-dominated Greece allied with the Soviet Union, was clearly driving American policy.<sup>100</sup>

### *The General Assembly Creates UNSCOB*

On October 20, 1947 the Greek question returned to the Assembly for discussion. The Americans had proposed a resolution in the First Committee (which dealt with political and security issues) similar to the resolution supported by the majority in the Security Council, finding that Albania, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia had given assistance to the Greek insurgents. It called on the three countries to stop such assistance, and on the three countries and Greece to settle their disputes by peaceful means and to establish normal diplomatic and good-neighborly relations. In opposition, Vyshinsky explained that his country had argued for withdrawal of British military forces because it saw those forces as having been “exploited by Greek reactionary elements against the democratic forces of the country.”<sup>101</sup> He said that Britain had opposed the withdrawal of its troops with the argument that British military forces were necessary in Greece to restore order. But, he argued, “the British have been restoring order in

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<sup>100</sup> Telegram, The Ambassador in Greece (McVeagh) to the Secretary of State, February 11, 1947, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, Volume V, The Near East and Africa (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1971), 17; Memorandum by the Secretary of State to President Truman, February 26, 1947, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, Volume V, The Near East and Africa (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1971), 58.

<sup>101</sup> United Nations General Assembly, *Official Records*, Second Session, Volume 1, Ninety-Sixth Plenary Meeting, October 20, 1947, p. 361; In the First Committee the Soviet representative had described the U.S. policy in Greece as “a flagrant interference in Greek internal affairs and a violation of Greek sovereignty.” Implicitly characterizing the Greek conflict as a civil war, he argued that “it involved open political support of one party in the Greek struggle.” “Survey of Meeting Saturday, 27 September 1947, First Committee Sixty-First Meeting, 3 p.m.”, undated, in file GA – Second Session Confidential Survey of Meetings for the SG ½ 16 Sept 1947 23 Oct 1947, S-0922-0002-04, United Nations Archives.

Greece for two years past and yet there is still no order,”<sup>102</sup> and he contended that the “Greek Government itself [was] responsible for [the] internal political situation and the foreign political situation.”<sup>103</sup> Although the Soviet Union was not in fact directly aiding the leftist insurgents in Greece, the Soviets obviously sympathized with them and enjoyed the spectacle of Anglo-American difficulties in Greece. The next day the General Assembly approved the U.S.-backed majority report of the First Committee, requesting Albania, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria to stop furnishing aid to the Greek guerrillas, and the four governments concerned to establish diplomatic and good neighborly relations. Finally, it established the United Nations Special Committee on the Balkans (UNSCOB), to observe compliance and to assist in implementing the Assembly recommendations. As a result the UN stationed observers on the ground along the Greek frontiers with Albania, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria for the next four years. This placing of UN observers on the ground in an area of international friction marked an important development in UN practice. In Greece, in Palestine, and in the disputed area between India and Pakistan UN observers became the forerunners of United Nations peace-keeping efforts.

On November 26, 1948 the Greek question again came before the Assembly. The Yugoslav representative attacked the Anglo-American action in Greece. He accused the British of having inserted their army to defeat the insurgents, and the Americans of having taken complete control of the Greek economy, and in so doing having become the “actual ruler of Athens.”<sup>104</sup> The next day Vyshinsky argued that from the beginning the Soviet Union had been

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<sup>102</sup> United Nations General Assembly, *Official Records*, Second Session, Volume 1, Ninety-Sixth Plenary Meeting, October 20, 1947, 361.

<sup>103</sup> United Nations General Assembly, *Official Records*, Second Session, Volume 1, Ninety-Seventh Plenary Meeting, October 20, 1947, 385.

<sup>104</sup> United Nations General Assembly, *Official Records*, Second Session, Volume II, One Hundred Sixty-Fifth Plenary Meeting, November 26, 1948, p. 611-613; Marshall conceded that the United States was “involved in

opposed to creating UNSCOB, because UNSCOB had been asked to exercise “supervision over certain Balkan States which could not be accepted by any nation that valued its independence and sovereignty,” and the UN Charter forbade such intervention in the internal affairs of states.<sup>105</sup> He accused UNSCOB of turning its observers “into investigating officers” instructed to put the blame on Albania, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia for the Greek problem.<sup>106</sup> John Foster Dulles<sup>107</sup> (an important Republican foreign policy expert and future Secretary of State in the Eisenhower administration, whose presence exemplified the Truman administration’s effort at bipartisanship) responded for the United States, recounting the history of the Greek conflict and its continuation notwithstanding UNSCOB’s efforts. But, he argued, UNSCOB was not a “total failure”; UNSCOB had thrown light on the subject and thereby had limited the aid which was flowing to the insurgents from Greece’s northern neighbors.

Since the matter was now in the General Assembly, the United States did not have to contend with the Soviet veto. When the matter came to a vote, there were four resolutions, three of which were recommended by the First Committee and supported by the United States. These three provided that Greece’s northern neighbors stop supporting the Greek insurgents, for UNSCOB to continue its observation efforts, and for resumption of diplomatic relations between

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certain aspects [of] Greek internal affairs,” but he instructed that “American influence be exercised as discreetly as possible.” He also insisted that the United States rely “heavily on UN action for help in protecting Greece and [was] anxious [to] avoid anything which weakens our support from nations outside [the] Soviet orbit.” Telegram, The Secretary of State to the American Mission For Aid to Greece, November 4, 1947, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1947, Vol. V, The Near East and Africa (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1971), 398.

<sup>105</sup>United Nations General Assembly, *Official Records*, Second Session, Volume II, One Hundred Sixty-Sixth Plenary Meeting, November 27, 1948, 631.

<sup>106</sup> United Nations General Assembly, *Official Records*, Third Session, Part 1, 167<sup>th</sup> Plenary Meeting, November 27, 1948, 641-642.

<sup>107</sup> For purposes of bipartisanship, the Truman administration appointed some Republicans to its UN delegation, such as Dulles and the U.S. ambassador to the UN, Warren Austin.

Greece and its northern neighbors and repatriation of displaced Greek children. The remaining resolution, offered by the Soviet Union, called for a withdrawal of all foreign troops from Greece. The Soviet government surely believed that without British troops in Greece and without American military aid, the Greek national army would have been vulnerable to defeat by leftist guerrilla forces. The Assembly adopted the three resolutions supported by the United States, and rejected the Soviet resolution.<sup>108</sup> But the UN was powerless to intervene on the ground in Greece, and notwithstanding Assembly adoption of these U.S.-backed resolutions, fighting in Greece continued.

By 1949, after the insurgency had dragged on for five years, a solution to the Greek question had not yet been found. However, U.S. military aid had reached a point of substantially strengthening the Greek National Army in its efforts to defeat the insurgents. Henry F. Grady, the U.S. ambassador in Greece (having replaced MacVeagh), believed that “we are well along [the] way to winning [the] battle of Greece.”<sup>109</sup> Nevertheless, some Security Council members—even key U.S. allies such as Britain and France—were wavering in their support for continued warfare and desired some form of conciliation. H.V. Evatt, Australian Minister for External Affairs and Chairman of the Australian delegation to the UN, with the assistance of UN Secretary-General Trygve Lie, held conciliation talks with Greek, Albanian, Bulgarian and Yugoslav representatives. However, the Greek government’s territorial claims against its northern neighbors and its continued executions of substantial numbers of prisoners, despite

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<sup>108</sup> United Nations General Assembly, *Official Records*, Third Session, Part 1, 167<sup>th</sup> Plenary Meeting, November 27, 1948, 661-662.

<sup>109</sup> Telegram, The Ambassador in Greece (Grady) to the Acting Secretary of State, May 28, 1949, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1949, Vol. VI, The Near East, South Asia, and Africa (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1977), 348.

international demands for a policy of amnesty, raised questions about the possibility of reaching a settlement.<sup>110</sup>

Acheson believed the talks held little chance of success and might make the situation worse. He requested Warren Austin to approach Evatt and advise him of American reservations and suggest that Evatt first investigate whether there was an “adequate basis on which conciliation efforts c[ou]ld proceed,” before resuming talks.<sup>111</sup> Nevertheless, the talks continued. Meanwhile, Dean Rusk and Hector McNeil, the chairman of the British delegation to the General Assembly, met with Gromyko, to try private diplomacy. Rusk “wondered . . . whether the three of us could in any way use our influence to normalize the Greek situation.”<sup>112</sup> In a later meeting Gromyko made clear Moscow’s demand in return for its cooperation in policing the borders and in supervising a new election in Greece: “all foreign military assistance, including material and personnel, should be withdrawn from Greece.”<sup>113</sup> Of course, removal of all British troops and all American advisers and military assistance, would leave the Greek government vulnerable to defeat. When Acheson reported this development to the president, Truman concluded that “no

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<sup>110</sup> Telegram, The Secretary of State to the Acting Secretary of State May, 31, 1949, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1949, Vol. VI, The Near East, South Asia, and Africa (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1977), 350.

<sup>111</sup> Telegram, The Secretary of State to the United States Representative at the United Nations (Austin), April 12, 1949, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1949, Vol. VI, The Near East, South Asia, and Africa (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1977), 294.

<sup>112</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, by the Assistant Secretary of State for United Nations Affairs (Rusk), April 27, 1949, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1949, Vol. VI, The Near East, South Asia, and Africa (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1977), 302.

<sup>113</sup> Editorial Note, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1949, Vol. VI, The Near East, South Asia, and Africa (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1977), 320-321.



special negotiations or discussions are required and that Russians can prove in Greece their desire to make [a] contribution to peace.”<sup>114</sup>

In the latter part of 1949 the war was winding down. The State Department noted that the “Greek army is making outstanding progress in destroying the guerrilla forces.”<sup>115</sup> With most of the insurgents now captured or having fled across the border into Albania and Bulgaria, the problem had become preventing their return into Greece. Finally, in October the insurgency announced a cease-fire, marking the end of the war.

On November 17, 1949, with the civil war now over, the Assembly again took up the Greek question. The Soviet Union submitted two resolutions, the first calling for a general amnesty, free elections, withdrawal of foreign troops and the dissolution of UNSCOB, and the second calling for a suspension of certain death sentences of “eight prominent public figures” ordered by Greek military courts.<sup>116</sup> Responding for the United States, Benjamin Cohen, a distinguished State Department counselor and member of the U.S. delegation, delivered the U.S. rebuttal. Recounting the history of the Greek civil war, which he conceded “had led to many excesses and much bitterness,” he stated that events had proved that the Greek communists were “more concerned to seize power on behalf of the Soviet-dominated world communist movement than to restore it to the Greek people.”<sup>117</sup> In so arguing, Cohen was simply giving voice to the

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<sup>114</sup> Telegram, The Ambassador in Greece (Grady) to the Acting Secretary of State, May 28, 1949, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1949, Vol. VI, The Near East, South Asia, and Africa (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1977), 348.

<sup>115</sup> Position Paper Prepared in the Department of State for the United States Delegation to the United Nations, September 9, 1949, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1949, Vol. VI, The Near East, South Asia, and Africa (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1977), 405-409.

<sup>116</sup> United Nations General Assembly, *Official Records*, Fourth Session, Annex to the Summary Records of Meetings 1949, Agenda Item 21, 65-68.

<sup>117</sup> United Nations General Assembly, *Official Records*, Fourth Session, 244<sup>th</sup> Plenary Meeting, November 17, 1949, 227.

American mindset, which conflated an assumed Soviet involvement in the Greek insurgency with the probable influence in Greece which the Soviet Union would gain if the insurgents were to win. Actually, Stalin had not provided substantial support for the Greek uprising,<sup>118</sup> and Greek communists had sought power for themselves, not as proxies for the Soviet Union. In fact, Stalin had advised the Yugoslav leadership that the “uprising in Greece has to fold up,” because it invited further intervention by the United States and the West.<sup>119</sup> Although Cohen admitted that not “all those working with EAM had such motives” and that “there were patriotic Greeks who had cooperated with the EAM,”<sup>120</sup> he noted that the Greek communists and other parties had boycotted the 1946 elections in Greece. Conceding that those elections “might not have been a perfect reflection of the popular will,” Cohen reminded the Assembly that the Allied Mission had concluded that they “had on the whole been free and fair.”<sup>121</sup> Observing that the communists had been unwilling to accept the election results and that guerrilla warfare had increased, aided and abetted by Greece’s northern neighbors, he argued that the Security Council investigation had confirmed that Greece’s northern neighbors had supported the Greek

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<sup>118</sup> There is no substantial evidence that Moscow was providing military support for the insurgents until 1947. Apparently, in May 1947 Stalin did agree to provide some military support, but such aid, starting in August 1947 was “not only late but woefully inadequate.” See Peter J. Stavrakis, “Soviet Policy in Areas of Limited Control: The Case of Greece, 1944-1949,” *Greece at the Crossroads: The Civil War and its Legacy*, John O. Iatrides and Linda Wrigley, eds. (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), 249-251.

<sup>119</sup> Quoted in Nicholas Pappas, “The Soviet-Yugoslav Conflict and the Greek Civil War,” in *War and Society in East Central Europe, Vol. X: At the Brink of War and Peace: The Tito-Stalin Split in a Historic Perspective*, Wayne S. Vucinich, ed. (New York: Social Science Monographs, Brooklyn College Press, Distributed by Columbia University Press, 1982), 223.

<sup>120</sup> United Nations General Assembly, *Official Records*, Fourth Session, 244<sup>th</sup> Plenary Meeting, November 17, 1949, 227.

<sup>121</sup> United Nations General Assembly, *Official Records*, Fourth Session, 244<sup>th</sup> Plenary Meeting, November 17, 1949, 227.

insurgents, and that when the Council was unable to act because of the Soviet veto, the United States had brought the matter to the Assembly.

For these reasons, Cohen concluded, the United States would support the First Committee resolution (calling upon Albania, Bulgaria and other states to stop aiding the insurgents and to cooperate with UNSCOB, and urging all member states harboring Greek children to cooperate with the International Red Cross in the return of those children), and would vote against the Soviet resolutions.<sup>122</sup> Vyshinsky responded by claiming that the elections had been fraudulent and a “parody of a plebiscite.” Further, he argued, although the foreign army in Greece was British, not American, its high command was American, and the entire Greek economy and governmental machinery was “entirely in the hands of the Americans.”<sup>123</sup> The cordiality and diplomatic nicety that had sometimes characterized the early UN exchanges was now entirely gone. Manuilsky, the Ukrainian delegate, spoke of the executions of leftists carried out by the Greek government: “the world would know henceforth that . . . each execution of Greek patriots left blood on the hands of Mr. Cohen and Mr. McNeil [the British representative].”<sup>124</sup>

On November 18, in the voting that followed, the Assembly adopted the First Committee’s recommended resolutions which assessed blame especially on Albania but also on Bulgaria, and called for those states to stop any direct or indirect aid to the remaining insurgents. In sum, the resolution which the United States pushed through the Assembly continued to put the

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<sup>122</sup> It was no big surprise that the United States would support the First Committee’s resolutions, since during the Truman Administration the United States enjoyed the same usual majority in that committee as it did in the General Assembly and the Security Council. Thus during that period the First Committee’s resolutions, more or less, embodied the wishes of the United States government.

<sup>123</sup> United Nations General Assembly, *Official Records*, Fourth Session, 244<sup>th</sup> Plenary Meeting, November 17, 1949, 233-235.

<sup>124</sup> United Nations General Assembly, *Official Records*, Fourth Session, 245<sup>th</sup> Plenary Meeting, November 18, 1949, 249.

entire onus for the fighting on the Soviet satellite neighbors to the north.<sup>125</sup> However, on December 5 the Assembly took a small step toward reining in the political executions being conducted by the Greek government: the Assembly requested its president to “ascertain the views” of the Greek government “concerning the suspension of death sentences passed by military courts for political reasons, as long as the Conciliation Committee is in existence.”<sup>126</sup>

### *Problems with the Greek Government*

After Greek elections in early 1950 the U.S. government faced new problems in its effort to shape the Greek government to be formed so that it would be somewhat broadly-based and not entirely rightist, while at the same time denying that effort. In March, when it appeared that the proposed (somewhat broadly based) Greek government in formation would be replaced, with the king’s approval, by an entirely right-wing government, the U.S. charge in Greece voiced American concerns that the “unfortunate impression would inevitably be gained that this is an imposed solution to frustrate [the] freely expressed will of [the] people.”<sup>127</sup> The Greek ambassador in Washington advised Acheson that the king was “very annoyed” [with U.S. meddling], and that the government to be replaced included “very advanced leftist elements.” The State Department responded publicly to the press that the United States had “not sought to

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<sup>125</sup> United Nations General Assembly, *Official Records*, Fourth Session, 246<sup>th</sup> Plenary Meeting, November 18, 1949, 263-265.

<sup>126</sup> United Nations General Assembly, *Official Records*, Fourth Session, 268<sup>th</sup> Plenary Meeting, December 5, 1949, 522.

<sup>127</sup> Telegram, The Charge in Greece (Minor) to the Secretary of State, March 23, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. V, The Near East, South Asia and Africa (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1978), 352.

influence formation [of the] gov[ernmen]t fol[lowing the] recent free Gr[ee]k elections,” and that this was an “internal Gr[ee]k matter to be worked out in accordance [with the] usual Gr[ee]k constitutional procedures.”<sup>128</sup> But privately, the U.S. ambassador in Greece made American policy clear to the new prime minister: “Our policy is neither *laissez faire* on the one hand nor direct interference on the other but we must consider [the] probable stability and effectiveness of any Greek cabinet.”<sup>129</sup>

### *The Dissolution of UNSCOB*

Since the fighting had remained stopped since late 1949, the State Department took the position by May 1950 that UNSCOB should be ended, either by outright discontinuance, or by keeping a “skeletal machinery” which could be reinstated if needed, or with a “method of taking required emergency action in [the] future with or without [a] special GA session.”<sup>130</sup> If fighting broke out again, the State Department preferred the “greater psychological and propaganda impact” of convening a special General Assembly session and “dispatching a new commission to Greece,” rather than merely resuming activity of a “dormant UNSCOB.” On the assumption that

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<sup>128</sup>Telegram, The Secretary of State to the Embassy in Greece, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. V, The Near East, South Asia and Africa (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1978), 353.

<sup>129</sup> Telegram, The Ambassador in Greece (Grady) to the Secretary of State, March 27, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. V, The Near East, South Asia and Africa (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1978), 354.

<sup>130</sup> Telegram, The Acting Secretary of State to the United States Representative on the United Nations Special Committee on the Balkans (Patterson), May 13, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. V, The Near East, South Asia and Africa (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1978), 374.

fighting would not start up again, the State Department believed that many delegates would agree and some would be persuaded by the cost savings of terminating UNSCOB.<sup>131</sup>

However, the outbreak of the Korean War the following month brought a reversal of thinking: four days after the invasion by the North Koreans, Acheson notified the U.S. representative on UNSCOB that “in light of international uncertainties resulting from Korean developments” it would be “unrealistic and premature” for UNSCOB to be abolished, “particularly since such action might unduly alarm Gr[ee]ks.”<sup>132</sup> UNSCOB reported that the threat to Greece had “altered in character.” There were still “scattered bands” within Greece, and “thousands of guerrillas” had fled over the borders to the north.<sup>133</sup> In the First Committee Benjamin Cohen called for continuance of UNSCOB for another year. On December 1 the General Assembly vote followed the recommendations of the UNSCOB report: it extended UNSCOB for the next year and called for the repatriation of captured Greek national army prisoners and Greek children.

By 1951 the situation in Greece had further stabilized, and the State Department, returning to its plan of the previous year, decided (against the inclinations of Britain and France) to close down UNSCOB, and replace it with a subcommittee which would employ a small

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<sup>131</sup> Telegram, The Acting Secretary of State to the United States Representative on the United Nations Special Committee on the Balkans (Patterson), May 13, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1950*, Vol. V, The Near East, South Asia and Africa (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1978), 375.

<sup>132</sup> Telegram, The Secretary of State to the United States Representative on the United Nations Special Committee on the Balkans (Patterson), at Geneva, June 29, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1950*, Vol. V, The Near East, South Asia and Africa (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1978), 379.

<sup>133</sup> Report of the United Nations Special Committee on the Balkans, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1950*, Vol. V, The Near East, South Asia and Africa (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1978), 391-391.

observer group of ten to fifteen persons on the Greek border.<sup>134</sup> On December 7, 1951 the Greek question briefly returned to the General Assembly by virtue of a report from UNSCOB. The Soviet, Polish and Ukrainian representatives, as usual, voiced strong denials of UNSCOB's objectivity and *raison d'être*. In the voting that followed, the Assembly rejected a Soviet-sponsored resolution calling for the end of American interference in Greece, a general amnesty, reestablishment of diplomatic relations between Greece and its northern neighbors and dissolution of UNSCOB. However, at U.S. urging, the First Committee itself had decided to discontinue UNSCOB's operations. On the First Committee's recommendation, the General Assembly adopted resolutions calling for discontinuance of UNSCOB within sixty days; the establishment of a Balkan sub-commission to dispatch observers to any area of international tension in the Balkans; and for continuance of the Standing Committee on the Repatriation of Greek Children.

### *Conclusion*

Initially Britain, and later the United States, had unilaterally responded to the perceived communist threat in Greece—neither seeking nor obtaining any UN authorization for their actions. Britain had inserted its army and the U.S. government had provided massive American military and economic aid. When the Soviet Union brought the Greek question to the Security

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<sup>134</sup> Foreign Relations of the United States, 1951, Vol. V, The Near East and Africa (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1982), Memorandum by the Director of the Office of Greek, Turkish, and Iranian Affairs (Rountree) to the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs (McGhee), October 19, 1951, 515-516; However, in June 1951 Albania was still complaining to the United Nations Secretariat regarding the Greek "monarcho-fascist government" committing "further acts of aggression and banditry flagrantly violating the territorial integrity and sovereignty" of Albania. "Mihal Prifti, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of Albania to United Nations Secretariat", 12 August 1951, in file [Albania – Correspondence], S-0500-0001-05, United Nations Archive.

Council, the United States was able to blunt the Soviet complaint and ultimately mount a successful effort to use the UN to inhibit Greece's communist neighbors from helping the insurgents and thus to prevent a possible widening of the war to include those neighbors. With massive American aid the Greek government forces finally defeated the insurgency sufficiently so that UN involvement was no longer necessary to maintain the government in power. Despite the unilateral nature of U.S. action, the United Nations did fulfill a role in Greece—UN observers were able to investigate on the ground and report back to the General Assembly with some objectivity, and United Nations involvement provided an international forum to publicize the UN findings. Counter-factual analysis is always problematic, but it is fair to conclude that without British troops and American economic and military aid, Greece would have succumbed to a takeover by the communist-led insurgency. The United Nations, alone, never had the power to prevent such result, but the United Nations effort (coupled with American aid and British troops) was highly useful for American purposes. Both the publicity afforded by Security Council and General Assembly meetings and the on-the-scene fact-finding by UN observer teams no doubt constrained the support given the insurgents by the Soviet satellite neighbors, thus helping to avoid a widening of the conflict beyond Greece's borders. Also, as noted above, the use of United Nations observers became a useful precedent for future UN peace-keeping actions.<sup>135</sup>

Similarly, as we have seen, UN diplomacy (with U.S. support) had forced the Soviet Union to withdraw its army from Iran. In both cases a new U.S. policy of containment had held the line against expansion of communist control and influence, and in both cases the United

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<sup>135</sup> For a thoughtful analysis of UNSCOB's place in the development of UN peacekeeping, see Nachmani, *International Intervention*, 153-161.



States had found a new institution, the United Nations, to be a useful tool in implementing its containment policy. American UN policy in both cases was a blend of idealistic support for the concept of collective security and self-serving, unilateral actions to bolster regimes friendly to the United States while at the same time blocking perceived Soviet expansion. However, the mutual suspicions of both the United States and the Soviet Union, and the moralistic tone adopted by both of them, greatly narrowed the possibility of achieving a more activist, robust United Nations. American fear that a Soviet takeover of Greece would cause a “domino effect” in much of Western Europe was certainly overblown, and Soviet denunciation of a U.S. capitalist empire in Europe was similarly exaggerated. The mutual fears of the two superpowers contributed to an immobilized Security Council, and the U.S. effort to transfer the Greek question to the General Assembly furthered the process of weakening the United Nations. In a report to Truman, Marshall wrote that

our use of the United Nations as an instrument for opposing Soviet expansion . . . has strained that institution severely. It has an increasing tendency to alarm smaller nations and to paralyze, rather than stimulate, their will to play an active part in the organization.  
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. . .

In a sense, UN involvement had provided a convenient “cover” to accomplish U.S. foreign policy goals for which direct unilateral action was inconvenient—where the United States had insufficient strength, or insufficient will to fully employ its strength, to act unilaterally in Iran

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<sup>136</sup> Memorandum for the President, From G.C.M., November 7, 1947, Papers of Harry S. Truman, WHCF: confidential File, United Nations to War Assets Administration [1946-48], Truman Library.

and in Greece. But U.S. action in declaring and implementing the Truman Doctrine had ignored the concept of collective security and as a result tended to marginalize the United Nations.

CHAPTER 3  
THE UNITED NATIONS AND ANTI-COLONIALISM:  
THE CASE OF INDONESIA

*Introduction*

The struggle by Indonesian nationalists to rid themselves of centuries of Dutch rule pitted the American idealistic belief in self-determination for all peoples against the pragmatic U.S. advantage to be gained from supporting the Netherlands—a country whose economic well-being and willingness to join in the defense of Western Europe were important to the United States—in its efforts to reassert its colonial rule over Indonesia. As the war in the Pacific ended, the conflict over reestablishing colonial authority soon broke out into open warfare between Dutch and Indonesian forces. Initially, although the United States publicly professed neutrality, it privately tilted in favor the Netherlands: its supply of war materiel and its economic aid to the Netherlands both provided very significant support for the effort to re-impose colonial rule, and its votes at the United Nations permitted the vastly superior Dutch military to continue its use of force against the lightly armed Indonesians, without any meaningful effort to compel a cease-fire. This chapter argues that although the UN Charter made no provision for a colony such as Indonesia to gain independence, and although the United States initially failed to support Indonesian independence, ultimately the combination of the fierce determination of Indonesian nationalists, together with the international spotlight provided by the United Nations and a shift in U.S. policy led to the creation of the Republic of Indonesia. So long as the United States voted to block any meaningful UN action to stop the war, the United Nations proved powerless

to effect any change. But U.S. policy eventually shifted—based on a new emphasis on supporting non-communist nationalist forces in Asia—to support for Indonesia. Moreover, *debate in the Security Council had helped push the United States to reexamine its policy. Most* important, the United Nations offered a public forum to which Indonesian nationalists could look for international support for their struggle against their colonial masters, and ultimately, when U.S. policy shifted, that support led to an independent Indonesia.

### ***Background***

The end of the Second World War found various colonial powers, having been forcibly ejected by the Japanese from certain of their colonies, now desiring to return. Indonesia was such a colony. In early 1942 Japanese invaders easily conquered the local military forces of the Netherlands, which had ruled the Dutch East Indies as a colony for over three hundred years. Japanese forces occupied Indonesia during the war, and upon Japan's defeat Indonesian nationalists proclaimed independence and sought to establish their own government. The Dutch opposed independence, but at the moment lacked the power to suppress the independence movement. The war had wreaked vast destruction on the peoples and material wealth of Western Europe, which resulted in significant weakening of the European colonial powers, including the Netherlands. As a result of its weakness the Netherlands depended on British, Indian and even Japanese troops to maintain order in a "liberated" Indonesia, and in the longer term it depended on American financial assistance to feed its people at home and to pay for a colonial war to re-impose Dutch rule.

These events set the stage for a test between Indonesian nationalists' desire for immediate independence versus the Netherlands authorities' wish to re-impose their rule over the former colony, with all the economic advantage and national prestige that accompanied their colonial empire. These events also created a test of the ability of the newly-formed United Nations to resolve such a conflict. The UN Charter called for "equal rights and self-determination of peoples," and certainly the continued colonial domination of the Indonesian people by the Dutch violated that Charter principle. However, Western powers had dominated the drafting of the Charter, and they saw to it that the UN Charter imposed its trusteeship rules only on former Axis colonies, former League of Nations mandates, and territories voluntarily placed under UN trusteeship, but not other colonies. Moreover, the UN was not authorized to "intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state."

Also, the Dutch-Indonesian conflict was a test of American ability to deal with postwar attempts of colonial peoples to free themselves from domination by their colonial masters. The Atlantic Charter, emblematic of U.S. war aims, called for "respect for the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live." The right of self-determination occupied a central place in American ideology. But self-determination is not the same as independence, and U.S. policy-makers believed in a gradual transfer of political power, with an appropriate period of tutelage and preparation for self-government leading toward eventual independence.

Moreover, in the postwar era the emerging Cold War conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union dominated all U.S. foreign policy. As a result, important U.S. policy considerations—both economic and security-related—required maintenance of friendly, close relations with the countries of Western Europe. At the end of the war, the Soviet Army was the

strongest military force on the European continent and the perceived threat of its possible invasion across Europe required U.S. efforts to bolster the strength of the Western European nations. Since countries like Britain, France and the Netherlands all had colonies over which they wished to maintain some form of political and economic domination, the United States was forced to choose between support of the colonial aspirations of friendly European powers and American ideological support for self-determination for colonial subjects. The case of Indonesia became an early example of how the United States would make that choice. Ultimately U.S. policy-makers opted to protect the security interests of the United States. When those security interests appeared to require a tilt toward re-imposition of Dutch rule, that became U.S. policy; but later, when those security interests seemed to require support for independent and strongly anti-communist Asian nations, that became U.S. policy. To the extent the newly-created United Nations could be used to support U.S. policy, so much the better. But U.S. policy-makers had no independent goal of strengthening the UN, and when American goals required efforts to delay meaningful UN involvement or to compromise the authority of the Security Council by various moves to solve the Indonesian problem by behind-the-scenes efforts, the U.S. government was quite willing to indulge in those efforts.

### *Charter Compromises: Self-Determination versus Colonial Interests*

In planning for the United Nations, President Franklin Roosevelt had envisioned a UN international trusteeship program to bring colonial peoples to independence; but his effort met with great opposition from Britain.<sup>1</sup> At the Yalta summit meeting of Roosevelt, Churchill and

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<sup>1</sup> Hilderbrand, *Dumbarton Oaks*, 36-37.

Stalin, the British had strongly opposed any UN interference with their colonies. The French expressed similar concerns to the Americans and to the Soviets.<sup>2</sup> In planning for the Dumbarton Oaks Conference, where the major Allies created the basic design for the United Nations, this issue proved so difficult that it was simply by-passed.<sup>3</sup> Although State Department planners had wanted to deal with the issue at Dumbarton Oaks, they were dissuaded both by strong British resistance and also by arguments by U.S. military planners who wanted to be sure that they would retain conquered Japanese-held Pacific islands to use as American military bases in the postwar period, without supervision or other interference from the United Nations.<sup>4</sup>

At the UN's founding conference in San Francisco, despite the contrary wishes of the Soviet Union, China, and many smaller nations, the U.S. delegation initially supported the British view that the goal of dependent peoples under UN trusteeship would be self-government, not independence. Ultimately Secretary of State Stettinius reached a compromise with the British whereby Article 76 of the Charter (dealing with the basic objectives of the trusteeship system) was modified to add "independence" as an alternative to "self-government."<sup>5</sup> But the basic British concern that the UN would have no jurisdiction over the colonial empires except for those of conquered Axis powers (or Former League of Nations mandates, or where the colonial power voluntarily agreed to transfer a territory to UN trusteeship) finally prevailed.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Schlesinger, *Act of Creation*, 98.

<sup>3</sup> Hilderbrand, *Dumbarton Oaks*, 175-176.

<sup>4</sup> Hilderbrand, *Dumbarton Oaks*, 170-174; Foreign Relations of the United States, 1946, Vol. I, General: The UN, US Briefing Book Paper: US Participation in Trusteeship Administration, 544-547.

<sup>5</sup> Schlesinger, *Act of Creation*, 235.

<sup>6</sup> Schlesinger, *Act of Creation*, 234.

Three Chapters of the Charter dealt with dependent peoples. Chapter XI, “Declaration Regarding Non-Self-Governing Territories,” set forth the “sacred trust” of any member state toward the people of any such territory. The chapter stated that “the interests of the inhabitants of these territories are paramount,” and called for the development of “self-government” and the “due account of the political aspirations of the peoples.”

Chapter XII, “International Trusteeship System,” set forth the authority of the UN to set up an international trusteeship system, but the system applied only to League of Nations mandates, former Axis territories, and territories “voluntarily placed under the system by states responsible for their administration.” Because of objections from such Allied colonial powers as Britain and France, the UN failed to take a strong stand against colonialism, and really dealt in a meaningful way only with the colonies of Axis powers and former League of Nations mandates. Thus, the Allies possessing colonial empires would be exempt from the UN trusteeship system unless they subsequently agreed to be so bound. The basic objectives of the system included the promotion of the advancement of the dependent peoples “and their progressive development towards self-government or independence as may be appropriate.” As a result both goals—self-government and independence—co-existed within the Charter, without any clear statement that the ultimate goal would be independence. To satisfy the U.S. military, the Charter contained an exception for territories designated as strategic areas (read: captured Pacific islands). Unlike other trusteeship matters which were supervised by the UN General Assembly, strategic areas were to be supervised by the Security Council, allowing the possibility of a U.S. veto if UN supervision proved overly intrusive.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Schlesinger, *Act of Creation*, 232-234.



Finally, Chapter XIII dealt with the Trusteeship Council set up under the Charter, granting it only very limited, weak powers, such as providing for periodic visits to the trust territories, administering questionnaires, considering reports, and accepting petitions. In sum, notwithstanding much high-flown language about the “sacred trust” to promote the well-being of dependent peoples, the UN Charter was quite conservative. For example, it provided no particular rules or mechanisms to deal with nationalist aspirations for independence from colonial powers. In fact, the Charter formalized the major colonial powers’ strong demand (to which the United States acquiesced) that the UN would not interfere with their colonial empires.<sup>8</sup> Article 2, which provided that “nothing contained in the present Charter shall authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state,” arguably could apply to any colonial possession.

Since the Netherlands East Indies were not a former Axis colony, they were not included in the UN system (unless the Dutch voluntarily agreed to so include them). Because the Charter offered no particular method to deal with nationalist uprisings among dependent peoples, the United Nations could deal with such problems only in *ad hoc*, improvised ways. Essentially, both the absence of any specific Charter authority for UN action in a colonial uprising and the express prohibition against UN action interfering with a state’s “domestic jurisdiction” combined to impede any effective role for the United Nations in Indonesia. Of course, the Charter was open to interpretation. The United States, as the Organization’s most powerful member, played a key role in that interpretation, and as we will see that role was quite conservative—leading to a four-year conflict.

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<sup>8</sup> Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace*, 64-65.

### *Colonial Peoples Push for Independence*

The Second World War greatly changed the relationships between colonial powers and their Asian and African colonies. The ties that had bound the European colonial powers to their various colonies grew weaker and ultimately broke for at least two reasons: first, nationalist movements in various colonies had become strong and self-confident—they now possessed the will and the ability to oppose their former colonial masters; and second, the war had greatly weakened the former colonial powers, and having been driven out of many of their colonies during the war, they now lacked the material means to fight long wars to reinstate their colonial hegemony. These factors both were at play in postwar Indonesia.

In the six weeks after the end of the war Indonesian nationalists had—and took—the opportunity to proclaim an independent Indonesia. On August 17, 1945, two days after the Japanese surrender, the most prominent Indonesian nationalist leader, Sukarno, declared the independence of a new Indonesian republic. The next day a committee of Indonesian nationalist leaders elected Sukarno president of the republic, and within a week an Indonesian constitution was announced.<sup>9</sup> Previously, a U.S.-British decision had assigned to Britain responsibility for taking the surrender of Japanese forces in Indonesia, with the assumption that the Netherlands government would resume its sovereign authority over its former colony. The British were

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<sup>9</sup> McMahon, *Colonialism and Cold War: The United States and the Struggle for Indonesian Independence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), 84.

undermanned and under-equipped, and did not land in Indonesia for approximately six weeks after the war's end. When British forces arrived, an existing Indonesian government was in place. Although the British mandate originally involved taking the surrender of the Japanese forces (and freeing prisoners of war and internees), British troops soon came into conflict with Indonesian nationalists. In October 1945 serious fighting broke out between Indonesians and British (and Indian) troops, resulting in heavy loss of life on both sides. Because the British were short-handed, they armed Japanese troops to support British efforts to maintain order.

These developments posed a classic dilemma for U.S. policy-makers—pitting American desire to support, and reputation for subscribing to, self-determination and liberty against very pragmatic concerns not to weaken or antagonize American allies (in this case, the Netherlands). U.S. policy-makers, hoping to salvage both policies, sought to set a course mid-way between those two goals: supporting some degree of self-determination for Indonesians, yet not challenging the Netherlands' sovereignty over its former colony.<sup>10</sup> Sukarno hoped that the United States would mediate the newly-created Republic's dispute with the Netherlands, but Secretary of State James F. Byrnes refused to get involved.<sup>11</sup> From the beginning, the U.S. government did not question the Netherlands' sovereignty over Indonesia. In December 1944 U.S. General Douglas MacArthur, as Commander in Chief, Southwest Pacific Area, and H. J. van Mook, Lieutenant-Governor-General of the Netherlands Indies, signed an agreement between their two countries, setting forth the principles upon which the Dutch East Indies would be

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<sup>10</sup> The post-World War II era brought a change in international law, involving the blurring of the line between international conflicts and internal anti-colonial conflicts, with a resulting expansion of the rights of insurgent colonized peoples to self-determination. See, regarding the case of Algeria, Matthew Connelly, *A Diplomatic Revolution: Algeria's Fight for Independence and the Origins of the Post-Cold War Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 279.

<sup>11</sup> McMahan, *Colonialism and Cold War*, 101-102.

liberated, and specifying that such liberation would in no way affect the sovereignty of the Netherlands government.<sup>12</sup> In June 1945 Joseph C. Grew, as Acting Secretary of State, forwarded to Secretary of War Stimson a State Department policy paper for the Far East, setting forth U.S. objectives and policies for Indonesia:

The United States policy is one of non-intervention in the Indies but favors, in principle, the granting to colonial peoples of an opportunity to prepare themselves for progressively greater participation in their own government, with eventual self-government as the goal.<sup>13</sup>

The State Department had concluded (quite incorrectly) that at the war's end "there will probably be a generally quiescent period in the relations between the Dutch and the native population" and that "the great mass of the natives will welcome the expulsion of the Japanese and the return of the Dutch to control."<sup>14</sup> By October 1945 the State Department had publicly stated that the United States did not intend to "assist or participate in forceful measures" to impose Dutch control, but the Department remained committed to a policy of not questioning "Dutch sovereignty in the Netherlands Indies."<sup>15</sup> However, the U.S. government was embarrassed when it became public knowledge that U.S. military supplies were being used by British and Dutch troops in action against the Republican (i.e., Indonesian nationalist) forces. To cover up, Byrnes

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<sup>12</sup> Agreement between the United States and the Netherlands Indies, December 10, 1944, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1944, Vol. V, The Near East, South Asia, and Africa; The Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1965), 1286-1289.

<sup>13</sup> The Acting Secretary of State to the Secretary of War (Stimson), June 28, 1945; Policy Paper Prepared in the Department of State, June 22, 1945, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1945, Vol. VI, The British Commonwealth; the Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1969), 574.

<sup>14</sup> The Acting Secretary of State (Joseph C. Grew) to the Secretary of War (Stimson), 28 June 1945; Policy Paper Prepared in the Department of State, June 22, 1945, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1945, Vol. VI, The British Commonwealth; the Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1969), 573.

<sup>15</sup> Memorandum by the Director of the Office of Far Eastern Affairs (Vincent), October 22, 1945, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1945, Vol. VI, The British Commonwealth; the Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1969), 1167-1168.

gave instructions to advise the British of the importance of “eliminating to the greatest extent possible all markings which might indicate U.S. origin of vehicles and other such equipment used by British forces in Netherlands Indies.”<sup>16</sup>

The United States wanted the Netherlands as a strong, self-reliant ally and it desired a peaceful transition to greater self-rule in Indonesia. U.S. policy generally supported the peaceful re-establishment of Dutch rule in the Indies, which would help the Netherlands regain its economic strength. But when Dutch military forces finally arrived in the Indies, they used harsh military means to put down the Republican forces. These harsh methods frustrated U.S. goals for peace in the Pacific and for gradual progress towards democratic self-government in the region. As a result, U.S. policy began to shift slightly. Although the State Department continued a public stance of benign neutrality, privately it began to consider the need to apply pressure against the Netherlands. In November Secretary of State Byrnes contacted the American ambassador in Britain, noting that the “further deterioration of situation in Indies cannot fail to have an unfortunate effect on general situation in East Asia.”<sup>17</sup> Byrnes suggested that the ambassador feel out the British as to the advisability of U.S. diplomatic pressure on the Dutch to end the conflict in the Indies by a “broad-minded and positive approach” to negotiating a settlement with “all Indonesian factions.”<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Telegram, The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in the United Kingdom (Winant), October 13, 1945, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1945, Vol. VI, The British Commonwealth; the Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1969), 1164.

<sup>17</sup> Telegram, The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in the United Kingdom (Winant), November 30, 1945, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1945, Vol. VI, The British Commonwealth; the Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1969), 1173.

<sup>18</sup> Telegram, The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in the United Kingdom (Winant), November 30, 1945, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1945, Vol. VI, The British Commonwealth; the Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1969), 1173.

Although U.S. policy-makers viewed the continued fighting with great concern, they nevertheless still sought a middle-of-the-road approach—torn between their support for a European ally and their desire for a stable Pacific region. By December 1945 the State Department went public, stating that “the United States Government has viewed with increasing concern recent developments,” and had hoped for “a peaceful settlement recognizing alike the natural aspirations of the Indonesian peoples and the legitimate rights and interests of the Netherlands.”<sup>19</sup> The statement went on to express the American hope for a negotiated, peaceful settlement “in harmony with the principles and ideals of the Charter of the United Nations Organization and of the United Nations Declaration.” On Christmas Day Soetan Sjahrir, prime minister of the Republic of Indonesia responded directly to President Truman, by stating that the State Department announcement had given Indonesians “great comfort in the struggle we are waging to establish freedom, justice and democracy in Indonesia.” Sjahrir added that he looked to Truman “as the head of a country that has always been in the forefront of the fight for liberty, justice and self-determination” to use his “influence to stop the present bloodshed in Indonesia,” and he concluded by asking for U.S. help to allow the Republic to argue its case before the United Nations.<sup>20</sup> But the U.S. government did not want to get involved directly in the matter. A State Department memorandum prepared for the U.S. delegation to the UN General Assembly advised that if the Indonesian question arose, the U.S. position should be that the parties should settle their dispute by direct negotiation, and that if the Netherlands were to argue that the UN

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<sup>19</sup> Telegram, The Acting Secretary of State to the Consul General at Batavia (Foote), December 19, 1945, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1945, Vol. VI, The British Commonwealth; the Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1969), 1182-1183.

<sup>20</sup> Mr Soetan Sjahrir (Prime Minister of the Republic of Indonesia) to President Truman, Christmas Day, 1945, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1945, Vol. VI, The British Commonwealth; the Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1969), 1186-1187.

had no authority to intervene because the matter was within the domestic jurisdiction of the Netherlands, the U.S. position should be that although primary responsibility for reaching agreement lay with the Dutch, “any problem relating to the maintenance of international peace and security would clearly be within the competence of the United Nations.”<sup>21</sup> In other words, the United States—still torn between loyalty to its European ally and desire for greater self-determination and stability in Asia—chose to avoid directly confronting the Netherlands at the UN, but reserved its freedom to move for United Nations action in the event of a threat to international peace and security in the Pacific.

### *The Indonesian Question goes to the Security Council*

Even though both the Netherlands and Indonesia were relatively weak powers unable to resist if the Great Powers had acted in a unified manner to enforce peace, the UN proved powerless to intervene. In this early test of its power the Security Council produced much debate and little action. U.S. policy significantly contributed to that impotence because accomplishing its policy goals was more important to the United States than enhancing UN power or establishing any particular UN precedent. The State Department certainly had no desire further to publicize events in Indonesia by bringing this matter to the United Nations. But the Soviet Union and its satellites had exactly that motivation.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Memorandum Prepared in the Department of State, December 26, 1945, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1946, Vol. VIII, The Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1971), 787-788.

<sup>22</sup> As early as 1945 Vyacheslav Molotov, the Soviet Commissar for Foreign Affairs, argued—both in and out of the United Nations—that British troops in Indonesia and elsewhere evidenced continuing British imperialism. See James F. Byrnes, *Speaking Frankly* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1947), 129.

In February 1946 the Ukrainian delegation's complaint about the British military action in Indonesia came before the Security Council.<sup>23</sup> The Ukrainian delegate argued that "the use of British troops for the suppression of the national movement of the Indonesian people is inadmissible." He asserted that British intervention violated the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, as called for by Article 1 of the UN Charter, as well as the obligation to develop self-government in non-self-governing territories, as called for by Article 73 of the Charter.<sup>24</sup> The Ukrainian delegate proposed that the Security Council set up a commission (composed of representatives of the United States, Soviet Union, China, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands) to carry out an enquiry on the spot and report back to the Council. Eelco Van Kleffens, the Netherlands representative at the UN, argued that "according to the Charter, the internal affairs of any given State are not for . . . [the UN] to deal with."<sup>25</sup> Thus he claimed sovereignty over Indonesia and, arguing that this was an internal matter, denied UN jurisdiction. U.S. policy-makers had no desire to support the Ukrainian resolution for at least two reasons: first, since the State Department favored a continuing Dutch presence in Indonesia, it hoped that the Dutch could resolve their dispute with Indonesian nationalists without outside intervention; and second, the State Department had no intention of supporting any expansion of Soviet influence in Indonesia.<sup>26</sup> For these reasons American policy-makers saw no advantage in

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<sup>23</sup> It was generally thought that the Ukrainian action represented Soviet retaliation for U.S. and British support for Iran's appeal to the Security Council to remove the Soviet army from Northern Iran. See Philip C. Jessup, *The Birth of Nations* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1974), 43.

<sup>24</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, First Year, Series No. 1, Twelfth Meeting, no. 1, February 7, 1946, 177.

<sup>25</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, Second Year, Thirteenth Meeting, no. 1, February 9, 1946, 196.

<sup>26</sup> McMahon, *Colonialism and Cold War*, 157-159.



forming any UN commission that included the Soviet Union to deal with the Indonesian problem.

The U.S. delegation at the UN followed the policy that the State Department had laid out, which tried to straddle both sides of the issue, combining a refusal to challenge the Netherlands' sovereignty with a refusal to take any action to enforce restoration of Dutch rule. The State Department pushed for a cease-fire and a negotiated settlement. Former Secretary of State Edward R. Stettinius, Jr., now ambassador to the United Nations, presented the U.S. position: he refused to debate the question of the Council's jurisdiction. Moreover, he denied that it was clear that investigation would serve a constructive purpose. Finally, he noted that negotiations between the parties had begun and he implied that UN investigation might prejudice those negotiations. Thus Stettinius opposed UN involvement and opted to support the status quo, that is, British, Indian, Dutch and Japanese troops fighting and killing Indonesian nationalists. In the vote that followed, the Ukrainian resolution was defeated, and the president of the Council declared the matter closed. Thus, in this first effort to enlist the UN to stop the fighting in Indonesia, the Council failed to do anything. The United States had sought to assume a posture of bland, enlightened neutrality, but its vote against UN action necessarily benefitted the Netherlands' side.

With no UN action forthcoming, the representatives of the two belligerents met with a British mediator in an attempt to negotiate a settlement. There was a great gap between the Republic's demand for sovereignty over all of Indonesia and the Netherlands' plan for a United States of Indonesia (USI) which would be part of a Netherlands-USI Union under the Dutch crown, with the Republic (mainly strong in the islands of Java, Sumatra and Madura) becoming just one of several states in the USI. Finally, on November 15, 1946 in the mountain town of

Linggadjati the parties reached a settlement, recognizing *de facto* authority of the Republic over the territory it controlled, and agreeing to a federated United States of Indonesia which would be an equal partner in a Netherlands-USI Union.

This agreement generally satisfied the State Department. *De facto* Republican authority over the most important areas of Indonesia substantially achieved the U.S. goal of self-determination for the Indonesian people; the concept of a United States of Indonesia bore an appealing resemblance to the United States' own form of government; and the union between the Indonesian federation and the Netherlands permitted a continuing role in Indonesia—including economic benefit—for the Netherlands. The Linggadjati agreement contemplated an interim government until a federal government could be created and formally installed. Genuine cooperation would be required to make this agreement effective.

### ***The Agreement Breaks Down and the Dutch Begin the First “Police Action”***

Disputes soon developed involving interpretation of the Linggadjati agreement, and distrust on both sides prevented real cooperation.<sup>27</sup> The Republicans accused the Dutch of setting up puppet states in East Indonesia, Borneo and other areas in order to diminish the power and authority of the Republic. The Dutch accused the Republic of violating Linggadjati by opening a diplomatic office in Cairo, thus attempting to operate a separate foreign policy. Meanwhile the Netherlands suffered from the double burden of paying for its growing military presence in Indonesia and its loss of foreign exchange because of low Indonesian exports.

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<sup>27</sup> Dirk U. Stikker, *Men of Responsibility: A Memoir* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1965), 92-93.

Finally, in May 1947 the Netherlands issued an ultimatum—demanding an interim government under Netherlands control until January 1, 1949.

The U.S. State Department sympathized with the general objectives of the Dutch proposals, but—fearing the renewal of hostilities—found fault with the “suggestion of ultimatum” and threat of “sanctions” in those proposals.<sup>28</sup> Secretary of State George C. Marshall (who had replaced Byrnes in January 1947) pressured both the Dutch and the Republic. He told the Dutch that “the use of military force would not be regarded favorably by this Gov[ernment], would arouse serious adverse reaction [from] US public opinion, and would be self-defeating.” He told Republican leaders that the “Dutch proposals [of] May 27 impress [the State] Dep[artment] as presenting [a] timely and valuable opportunity [to] achieve [an] essential step forward towards obtaining [the] objectives [of the] Linggadjati [agreement]”.<sup>29</sup> Marshall continued to pressure both sides, and on June 28 the State Department notified the Dutch of its “grave concern” regarding “[the] possibility [of] Dutch military action and retaliatory scorched earth policy” by Indonesians, “endangering American lives and threatening [the] destruction [of] American property, in particular [the] sabotage [of] Standard-Vacuum Oil.”<sup>30</sup> Finally, the Republic accepted most of the Dutch demands, but the Netherlands government still was not satisfied and at midnight July 20, 1947 the Dutch began an all-out war, euphemistically calling it a “police action.”

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<sup>28</sup> Telegram, The Acting Secretary of State to the Consulate General at Batavia, June 5, 1947, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1947, Vol. VI, The Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), 941.

<sup>29</sup> The Secretary of State to the Consulate General at Batavia, June 17, 1947, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1947, Vol. VI, The Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), 950; *Ibid.*, Telegram, The Secretary of State to the Embassy in the Netherlands, June 17, 1947, 950.

<sup>30</sup> The Secretary of State to the Embassy in the Netherlands, June 28, 1947, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1947, Vol. VI, The Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), 962.

When fighting resumed, the Indonesian question returned to the Security Council. The U.S. government tried to avoid a full-scale Security Council debate in which the United States would be forced to take sides. John Carter Vincent, director of the State Department Office of Far Eastern Affairs, had advised Under Secretary of State Robert A. Lovett (in preparation for his meeting with the Netherlands ambassador) that in the event the matter reached the Security Council

it would be difficult for the United States Government to take a completely neutral and disinterested position. American public opinion as reflected in the press has been strongly adverse to the military action taken by the Netherlands . . . . if there is no indication that . . . the Netherlands and Indonesia are in the process of settlement . . . it would probably be difficult for the United States to oppose the establishment of a United Nations commission for investigation or settlement.<sup>31</sup>

A UN commission would entail the risk of condemning and even sanctioning the Netherlands, which would run directly counter to U.S. policy. To avoid such a UN commission, Vincent suggested that the Netherlands should request mediation by the British, the United States or both. Two days later Marshall received advice from his counselor, Charles Bohlen, that

If the matter is to be kept out of extensive propaganda debate in the Security Council with widening repercussions throughout Southeast Asia and the Moslem world, it would be desirable for the U.S. to join the British in an offer of mediation to the Dutch. . . . [if accepted this would] forestall Security Council discussion.<sup>32</sup>

The State Department placed a high priority on avoiding UN action on Indonesia. In order to propose joint mediation to the Netherlands ambassador, Marshall needed to, and did, obtain Truman's consent to reverse the former policy of refusing to join a joint mediation with

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<sup>31</sup> Memorandum by the Director of the Office of Far Eastern Affairs (Vincent) to the Under Secretary of State (Lovett), July 29, 1947, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1947, Vol. VI, The Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), 993.

<sup>32</sup> Memorandum by the Counselor (Bohlen) to the Secretary of State, July 29, 1947, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1947, Vol. VI, The Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), 996.

Britain.<sup>33</sup> Immediately on receiving Truman's approval, the State Department "pulled [the Dutch Ambassador] off his plane at National Airport" and offered U.S. good offices "in the hopes that it might remove from or compose the difficulties in the Security Council."<sup>34</sup> U.S. "good offices" was a very weak version of mediation, amounting to behind-the-scenes negotiations which were voluntary in nature and without any enforcement mechanism. Despite its lack of compulsion the Dutch deftly refused the offer by suggesting instead that several countries be invited to send observers, and indicating that the Netherlands might accept the U.S. offer later—thus hoping to preserve complete freedom of action for the Netherlands.

Now the Security Council debate sharpened, which raised the question of whether the UN would push through its own solution to the conflict or merely encourage the parties to reach their own settlement. The Australian delegate, Colonel Hodgson, introduced a resolution calling on both parties to cease hostilities forthwith and to settle their disputes by arbitration, which would have imposed a UN-arbitrated solution on the parties. U.S. policy was to encourage peaceful resolution, but not to compel any particular solution to the problem. The State Department promoted this policy by minimizing the role of the Security Council and substituting American "good offices." This approach had the (intended) effect of subtly benefiting the Dutch, since they were the attackers, whereas the Republic was being attacked and hoped for some UN protection. At this point, U.S. policy still concentrated on rebuilding an economically strong Netherlands not dependent on U.S. aid. Thus U.S. policy-makers were concerned not to antagonize the Dutch and favored a result under which the Netherlands continued to exercise

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<sup>33</sup> Memorandum by the Secretary of State to President Truman, July 30, 1947, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1947, Vol. VI, The Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), 997.

<sup>34</sup> Memorandum of Telephone Conversation, by the Under Secretary of State (Lovett), July 31, 1947, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1947, Vol. VI, The Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), 1002.

some control over, and gain economic benefit from, Indonesia. Later, the United States shifted its policy to one more favorable to the Republic and correspondingly it then exerted more pressure on the Dutch to force a settlement.

After various delegates had weighed in, U.S. delegate Herschel Johnson offered an amendment which expanded the concept of arbitration to include settlement by arbitration or “by other peaceful means.”<sup>35</sup> Although this amendment seemed innocuous on its face, it furthered the U.S. policy goal of avoiding arbitration, thereby preserving Dutch freedom of action. Instead of a public arbitration resulting in an imposed solution, the United States was offering its “good offices,” whereby it could act behind the scenes to persuade—but not force—the Dutch and the Indonesians to act reasonably. This U.S. policy had the effect of circumventing, and thereby marginalizing, the Security Council; but because U.S. “good offices” were to be authorized by the Council, and delivered through a committee of the Council, the appearance of UN action remained. Officially the Good Offices Committee was an arm of the Security Council, but at the same time the use of such a committee minimized the adverse propaganda effect resulting from public debate in the Security Council and formalized a method for the United States to exert private pressure against both parties to achieve a result consistent with U.S. goals. In so doing, the United States followed the precedent it had earlier established—of circumventing the Security Council when it served American interests.

Throughout the Security Council debates, the United States maintained an attitude of high-minded disinterestedness. However, in reality the American position favored the Netherlands. The U.S. delegation refused to countenance any effort to rein in the Dutch

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<sup>35</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, Second Year, 172<sup>nd</sup> Meeting, no. 68, August 1, 1947, 1658.

aggression. Since the Netherlands forces were on the attack with a well-equipped modern army, the U.S. impartial “hands-off” approach inevitably resulted in tilting towards the Dutch. Gromyko offered an amendment requiring “that troops of both sides, the Netherlands and the Indonesian Republic, should be immediately withdrawn to the previous positions which they occupied before the beginning of military operations.”<sup>36</sup> Johnson opposed the Soviet proposal on the ground that it was “not necessary to create the chaos and disorder which would result.”<sup>37</sup> However, the Soviet, Indian, and Australian representatives all disagreed, arguing, respectively, that it was unfair to reward the Dutch by letting them keep the territory gained by their attack, that doing so would give the Dutch an “undue advantage” in the coming negotiations, and if the two opposing armies were left in contact, there would be “constant friction and fighting” between them. Because the U.S. position seemed to support re-imposition of colonial rule by force, Johnson felt the need to defend the U.S. position, especially American liberal *bona fides*. He responded:

The position of my country and my delegation has so consistently been on the side of liberalism and liberal political progress that I feel it essential to make one brief statement . . . . The United States opposes this resolution on purely practical grounds. . . . We merely want to allow enough time for physical developments to produce gradual results . . . . Police control and administration cannot be immediately removed . . . . Gradually, these military forces will melt away. . . .<sup>38</sup>

Thus, despite no particular evidence that the Dutch armed forces would “melt away,” Johnson opted to let the Netherlands keep the territory it had gained by its attack and preferred to let the

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<sup>36</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, Second Year, 172<sup>nd</sup> Meeting, no. 68, August 1, 1947, 1665.

<sup>37</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, Second Year, 173<sup>rd</sup> Meeting, no. 68, August 1, 1947, 1703.

<sup>38</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, Second Year, 173<sup>rd</sup> Meeting, no. 68, August 1, 1947, 1709-1710.

Dutch maintain control of that area rather than risk returning control to the Republican authorities. Although he defended U.S. policy on “purely practical grounds,” Johnson needed at the same time to stress the liberal idealism of the United States. In the vote that followed, the U.S. amendment was approved, and the Soviet amendment was defeated. The upshot was that on August 1 the Council produced a very weak resolution calling for the parties “to cease hostilities forthwith,” with no enforcement provisions, and no pullback requirement—leaving the Dutch and Republican military forces in place and allowing the Netherlands to keep its gains. The cease-fire was to take effect on August 4.

U.S. policy had contributed to less, rather than more, Security Council involvement. The United States preferred an informal, voluntary approach by offering its “good offices” to settle the dispute, which were finally accepted by both the Netherlands and the Republic. However, in accepting U.S. good offices the Republic requested that the U.S. government would use its influence with the Netherlands government and with the Security Council for “an international arbitration commission to be dispatched without delay to Indonesia.”<sup>39</sup> In fact the Netherlands rejected arbitration, and notwithstanding Truman’s authorization previously cited, U.S. State Department officials preferred to act unilaterally and opposed mediation “jointly with any other power or powers,” and (so long as full-scale hostilities were not resumed) preferred letting the Dutch and the Indonesians resolve their differences by direct negotiations.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> The Consul General at Batavia (Foote) to the Secretary of State, August 8, 1947, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1947, Vol. VI, The Far East, Telegram (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), 1017.

<sup>40</sup> Telegram, The Ambassador in the Netherlands (Baruch) to the Secretary of State, August 12, 1947, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1947, Vol. VI, The Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), 1023; Memorandum of Conversation by the Under Secretary of State (Lovett), August 5, 1947, *Ibid.*, 1013-1015.



The “impartial” U.S. approach to solving the Indonesian problem was essentially passive; and, because it refused to challenge the Dutch denial of UN jurisdiction, it was also legalistic. This approach inevitably eroded the authority of the United Nations because it led to empty orders to stop fighting, with no means of enforcing those orders.<sup>41</sup> However, the same approach correspondingly enhanced the importance of U.S. private, back-channel efforts to persuade and finally pressure the parties to reach a resolution acceptable to the United States. The result was a failure for collective security, and a return to old-fashioned behind-the-scenes diplomacy. Even when hostilities were resumed, the U.S. position remained ambivalent. The State Department held that the UN had the power to order a cease-fire (as a threat to international peace), but that the UN’s authority to compel, or even pressure (e.g., by sanctions) a solution to the dispute was in doubt since the International Court of Justice might rule that the dispute was “within the domestic jurisdiction” of the Netherlands.

The United States sought to maintain its ostensible impartiality over the question of whether to invite representatives of the Republic of Indonesia to take part in the Council deliberations, and thus opted for simple fairness. The Belgian delegate had requested that a representative of the Netherlands be invited to participate in the debate. Gromyko then requested that the Council also invite the Republic of Indonesia to send a representative. The Dutch ambassador opposed such invitation, arguing that the Republic was not a sovereign nation, but

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<sup>41</sup> By December 18, 1947 the Republican government had notified the Good Offices Committee of numerous alleged truce violations committed by the Dutch. In its report of such violations the Republican government stated that the Netherlands forces had occupied many towns and controlled the highways but were “too thin on the ground” to “stray far from their main lines of communication.” The Republic argued that the Dutch had interpreted the cease-fire to connect their most forward salients so as to allow continued “mopping up” of Republican troops caught within the salients, and further expressed no confidence that the Dutch would honor any agreement unless it was “supervised or guaranteed by a third party.” Report on the Military Situation in Java-Sumatra-Madura (August 4 – September 4, 1947) Issued by the Government of the Republic of Indonesia Ministry of Foreign Affairs Jogjakarta, undated, in file Subject Files Organization and Administration – Incidents and Investigations ca. 08/1947 – 12/11/1949, S-0681-0017-02, United Nations Archives.

only a constituent state of Indonesia and without sovereignty the Republic had no standing to appear before the Council. The U.S. delegation took no position on the Dutch argument that the Republic had no standing to appear before the Council. Instead Johnson argued that regardless of standing, the intent of the Charter was that both parties to a dispute should have a chance to present their views. This argument was based on fairness, and the U.S. view prevailed.

However, having opted for allowing the Republic to be heard, the United States did not welcome the Republic's message. When Sjahrir, now former prime minister of the Republic, appeared before the Council, he made two proposals—first, that the Security Council form a commission to observe the implementation of the Council's cease-fire order; and second, that the Council set up an arbitration commission to resolve the dispute. The American preference for behind-the-scenes diplomacy ran counter to the straightforward Indonesian request for active United Nations participation, and the U.S. delegation sought to dilute the Republic's proposals. Cold War antagonism between the United States and the Soviet Union influenced U.S. policy-makers to avoid direct UN involvement, because such involvement may well have included Soviet participation. The Australian delegation submitted a resolution calling for creation of both commissions. Rather than having a UN commission as observers, the Dutch preferred to use the consular representatives presently in Indonesia. Pursuant to Dutch wishes, Johnson backed a Chinese amendment diluting the Australian resolution by calling for "career consuls" stationed at Batavia (the capital of the Dutch East Indies) to report on the situation, instead of a formal UN observation commission. Since it was mainly Western Powers which maintained consulates in the Indies, this amendment excluded the Soviet Union and its satellites, and thus tilted the composition of the observation team towards a U.S.-Western perspective.

As the Security Council debate persisted, fighting between Dutch troops and Republican fighters continued—the Council’s cease-fire resolution was not working. The Australian-Chinese resolution was still pending, and Gromyko offered to amend it to establish a commission composed of representatives of all members of the Council. Such a commission would have provided input from the Soviet Union and Poland, whose delegations favored strong UN action to protect the Indonesians from the Dutch and to force the Dutch to return to their positions occupied before the most recent fighting began. In the vote that followed, the Soviet amendment garnered seven votes (including that of the United States), but was vetoed by France.<sup>42</sup> Ultimately, the Australian resolution, as weakened by the Chinese amendment, was adopted. It merely requested the members which had career consuls at Batavia to instruct their consuls to report to the Council on the situation following the August 1 cease-fire order.

More important to U.S. policy than the appointment of career consuls, was the opportunity to influence the parties by private advice and pressure outside the purview of public debate in the Security Council and without the possibility of a UN-mandated outcome through binding UN arbitration. On the same day that the career consuls were enlisted as observers for the Security Council, the Council also resolved to tender its “good offices’ to the contesting parties to assist them in settling the controversy through a committee consisting of three members of the Council, each party selecting one and the third to be designated by the two so selected. The “good offices” committee was intended merely to provide a useful vehicle conducive to private, voluntary negotiation. A UN-sponsored Good Offices Committee suited U.S. goals, because the parties expected that the United States would play a pivotal role on that

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<sup>42</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, Second Year, 194<sup>th</sup> Meeting, no. 83, August 25, 1947, 2199-2200.

committee. In effect, the United States could exert its influence under the “cover” of a UN instrumentality. Johnson stated that the U.S. purpose was to bring the parties “together in as friendly an atmosphere as possible . . . . There was no question of arbitration.”<sup>43</sup> Upon adoption of the resolution, the Netherlands designated Belgium, the Republic designated Australia, and the two designees chose the United States as the third member. This choice put the United States in a key position to shape the outcome of the dispute. The desire to circumvent the Security Council had not gone unnoticed. The Indian delegate said that “the impression has already been created that there is a desire in some quarters to delay action and, if possible, to by-pass the Council . . . and generally to ensure that questions bearing on policies of imperialism are not raised before this Council.”<sup>44</sup> He continued:

the tension in Asia is already getting very difficult to control. To us it is intolerable that after the world has fought two wars for democracy and national self-determination, a colonial war of this kind should be permitted to continue. India’s position is, generally, that no European country, whatever it may be, has any business to use its army in Asia. The fact that foreign armies are functioning on Asian soil is itself an outrage against Asian sentiment.<sup>45</sup>

Notwithstanding the ongoing fighting, the United States continued to support only the mildest of UN measures: on October 22 Austin presented another resolution, noting that the cease-fire “has not been fully effective,” calling upon the parties to “give effect to the cease-fire,” and requesting the Committee of Good Offices to “assist the parties in reaching

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<sup>43</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, Second Year, 187<sup>th</sup> Meeting, no. 79, August 19, 1947, 2068-2069.

<sup>44</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, Second Year, 192<sup>nd</sup> Meeting, no. 82, August 22, 1947, 2153.

<sup>45</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, Second Year, 192<sup>nd</sup> Meeting, no. 82, August 22, 1947, 2153-2154.

agreement.”<sup>46</sup> Moreover, the United States remained amenable to a legalistic solution to the Indonesian problem even if it would tie the hands of the UN and prevent it from compelling an end to the fighting. When the Council proceeded to a Belgian resolution (backed by the Netherlands) providing for a referral to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) for a legal opinion regarding the competence of the Security Council even to deal with the Indonesian question, the U.S. and Soviet delegations took widely divergent positions.

U.S. policy-makers saw no problem in transferring the problem to the International Court. On the other hand, Gromyko noted that an adverse Court decision would cast doubt on the Council’s cease fire order and “would be yet another blow struck at the Security Council and the United Nations.”<sup>47</sup> The State Department advised Johnson at the UN that if the Netherlands were to request ICJ consideration of the problem of jurisdiction, he should support a request for the Council to seek such an advisory opinion, subject to the proviso that the Council would remain free, while the Court deliberated, to take necessary further action to maintain international peace.<sup>48</sup> Pursuant to instructions, Johnson did just that. He advised the Council that the United States would vote in favor of the Belgian resolution, but explained that the U.S. government had “no doubts whatever concerning the Security Council’s competence and authority to issue an order to cease hostilities . . . . What concerns us is the question as to whether

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<sup>46</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, Second Year, 213<sup>th</sup> Meeting, no. 99, October 22, 1947, 2604.

<sup>47</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, Second Year, 194<sup>th</sup> Meeting, no. 83, August 25, 1947, 2210.

<sup>48</sup> Telegram, The Acting Secretary of State to the Acting United States Representative at the United Nations (Johnson), August 16, 1947, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1947, Vol. VI, The Far East, (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1972),1032.

the Security Council has competence to impose a particular method of peaceful settlement.”<sup>49</sup>

The U.S. position, if adopted, would have led to a weakened Security Council—with its power to act subject to legal proceedings and potentially limited by ICJ orders. Notwithstanding U.S. support, the Belgian resolution was rejected by a vote of only four in favor, Poland against, and six abstentions.<sup>50</sup>

Thus by August 1947 the United Nations had accomplished nothing of substance regarding the Indonesian problem. Notwithstanding the Council’s cease-fire order, fighting continued, which revealed the weakness of the UN in the matter—all the Security Council could offer were protracted debate and weak, unenforceable orders. The next Council vote was on an Australian proposal to convene the Good Offices Committee and for the Committee to proceed to act, i.e., engage with the Dutch and the Indonesians in offering the good offices of the Committee to settle the dispute. The proposal was adopted with nine favorable votes, with the Soviet Union and Poland abstaining.

The United States still hoped for a negotiated settlement. The State Department pressured the Dutch, with the threat of possible Security Council sanctions, not to resume military action, and likewise pressured the Indonesians.<sup>51</sup> When van Kleffens met with Lovett at the State Department on August 18, 1947 he advised Lovett that the Council’s cease-fire order “had created a situation in which the forces of disorder were able to terrorize the peaceful

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<sup>49</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, Second Year, 195<sup>th</sup> Meeting, no. 84, August 26, 1947, 2221-2222.

<sup>50</sup> The four votes in favor were cast by Belgium, France, Britain and the United States. Thus, the United States cast its lot with the three European colonial powers on the Council.

<sup>51</sup> Telegram, The Acting Secretary of State to the Embassy in the Netherlands, August 21, 1947, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1947, Vol. VI, The Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), 1039.

inhabitants,” and that asking the Dutch to continue the cease-fire was “asking the impossible.”<sup>52</sup> Lovett responded with the hope that the Dutch would not resume military action, which “might, in view of the feelings in the Security Council, entail serious consequences, perhaps even sanctions.” The State Department could try to dissuade the Dutch from resuming their attack, but so long as the Truman administration tied U.S. policy to a principle of mere persuasion without enforcement, it could do little else. As a result the United Nations was powerless to prevent continued fighting in Indonesia.

U.S. policy-makers faced the problem of irreconcilability of Dutch and Republican demands, and likewise the ultimate irreconcilability of trying, at the same time, to support Indonesian nationalism and Dutch sovereignty over Indonesia. The difficulty was compounded by the attitude of the Indonesian leadership. When Sutan Sjahrir and Haji Agus Salim, respectively the former prime minister and present foreign minister of the Republic, called on officials of the State Department, they advised that they had signed the Linggadjadi agreement to “save the face of the Netherlands Government and provide an easy way to end the *de jure* sovereignty of the Netherlands Government over Indonesia.”<sup>53</sup> They proceeded to say that they intended to achieve their sovereignty immediately; that they believed that the Dutch intended to hold them within the old framework of empire; and that Dutch and Indonesian aims were “fundamentally irreconcilable” so that they did not want to make use of the good offices of the United States which would merely bring about a resumption of negotiation. State Department

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<sup>52</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, by the Acting Secretary of State, August 18, 1947, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1947, Vol. VI, The Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), 1035.

<sup>53</sup> Memorandum of Conversation by the Acting Chief of the Division of Southeast Asian Affairs (Landon), August 20, 1947, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1947, Vol. VI, The Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), 1038-1039.

officials responded that the U.S. government aimed for a negotiated settlement leading—as the Lingadjati agreement contemplated—to a sovereign United States of Indonesia, in which the Republic would be only one of several constituent states. Moreover, State Department officials advised that the Republic should not “count too heavily” on U.S. support in the Security Council for a greater objective.<sup>54</sup>

Although the U. S. government cultivated an image of neutrality, true neutrality would not achieve the U.S. goal of continuing Dutch influence in Indonesia coupled with some form of limited self-government. In October 1947 the Council again took up the Indonesian question. It was difficult for the United States to balance its subtle bias in favor of the Netherlands with its proclaimed neutrality. The Consular Commission had reported on the cause of the conflict, namely that in the fighting between July 20 and the effective cease-fire date of August 4 the Dutch had advanced in “spearheads” which left substantial numbers of Indonesian fighters between those spearheads. The report noted that Netherlands officials took the position that the “line” dividing the opposing forces stretched along the furthest tips of their spearheads and that the Dutch had announced their intention to “complete restoration of law and order and complete disarmament and winding up of all armed organizations” opposing Dutch authority.<sup>55</sup> This would lead to so-called “mopping up” of all Republican fighters caught between the Dutch spearheads.

Privately, State Department officials were upset by the report because they did not like its conclusions of Dutch responsibility for continued fighting between the spearheads. The State

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<sup>54</sup> Memorandum of Conversation by the Acting Chief of the Division of Southeast Asian Affairs (Landon), August 20, 1947, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1947, Vol. VI, The Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), 1039.

<sup>55</sup> Telegram, The Consul General at Batavia (Foote) to the Secretary of State, September 22, 1947, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1947, Vol. VI, The Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), 1051.



Department viewed the Commission's functions as limited to "technical fact-finding and informational," and not to making judgments or policy. It castigated the U.S. representatives on the Commission because the "interim report's clear implication [was that the] cease-fire order will be impossible [to] implement so long as opposing forces remain [in their] present positions seems [to] constitute [a] judgment outside [the] competence" of the Commission.<sup>56</sup> This was a sensitive issue for the State Department, which had already resolved not to support efforts to force the Netherlands troops to return to their pre-attack positions. Yet Dutch efforts to "mop up" the Indonesian fighters caught between the spearheads resulted in continued fighting in violation of the Council's cease-fire order. Also, the interim report highlighted the problem with use of UN committees and commissions: the presence of other countries' representatives and the somewhat public nature of their activities made them less amenable to close State Department control, as compared with private "good offices" discussions with each of the contesting parties.

The Soviet position was directly opposite to that of the United States. Cold War considerations prompted Soviet officials to put the British (a colonial power) and the Americans (whose support for the Netherlands was obvious) in a difficult position. By championing the rights of colonial peoples in general and Indonesians in particular, Soviet policy-makers sought to turn the countries of Asia away from the United States and Britain and towards the Soviet Union. Gromyko offered a resolution that would require both sides to withdraw to the positions they occupied before the beginning of military operations, which would deny the Netherlands the fruits of its attack. U.S. Ambassador Austin responded with a narrow, legalistic argument: the cease-fire order was a provisional order under the Charter, and, presuming that the Soviet

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<sup>56</sup> Telegram, The Acting Secretary of State to the Consulate General at Batavia, September 27, 1947, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1947, Vol. VI, The Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), 1052.

proposal would also be a provisional order based on the failure to comply with the cease-fire, the Charter required that such order ‘shall be without prejudice to the rights, claims, or position of the parties.’<sup>57</sup> Austin argued that no evidence had been established to show that lack of prejudice, so that no decision could be made on the question of withdrawal. Of course, the result of this legalistic approach was to benefit the Netherlands by leaving the Dutch in possession of all the territory they had taken including the spearheads, and by permitting Dutch ‘mopping up’ to continue unabated. Austin’s legalistic approach was quickly noted by Colonel Hodgson, the Australian delegate, who took a more practical approach: “We as a Council, if we thought fit and proper, could have, on 1 August, included some provision for a withdrawal. If we could have done that then, constitutionally, surely we can do it now.”<sup>58</sup>

Notwithstanding U.S. discomfort, the Consular Commission report forced the State Department’s hand. The public debate within the Council somewhat constrained U.S. policy—Austin had to face the other delegates in hotly contested argument, and it was important that he maintain his credibility. On October 25 Austin disagreed with, and argued against, the instructions from the State Department he received the day before, which had advised against seeking a clarification of the original cease-fire order.<sup>59</sup> Austin advised the State Department that (since the Consular Commission had made clear that a substantial reason for the continued fighting was the Dutch position that the cease-fire line extended from the furthest tips of their

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<sup>57</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, Second Year, 209<sup>th</sup> Meeting, no. 95, October 9, 1947, 2526.

<sup>58</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, Second Year, 210<sup>th</sup> Meeting, no. 96, October 11, 1947, 2548.

<sup>59</sup> Telegram, The United States Representative at the United Nations (Austin) to the Acting Secretary of State, October 25, 1947, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1947, Vol. VI, The Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), 1060.

advance spearheads, in effecting allowing them to continue “mopping up” all the Republican troops caught between the spearheads) it would be wiser for him frankly to admit that fact and seek to redress that situation at the Security Council, rather than let other parties push for a stronger solution, more adverse to U.S. goals. Austin’s view prevailed, and he submitted a revision of his resolution, advising the parties that the Council’s cease-fire resolution “should be interpreted as not permitting the use of armed forces of either party to alter substantially the territory under its control on 4 August 1947.”<sup>60</sup> Austin made very clear his intent: “in using the term ‘territory under its control’ we preclude the use of military force to obtain control of those gores between spearheads which were not in any way occupied by armed forces on 4 August.”<sup>61</sup> So, public debate at the Security Council seemed to have had its effect: contrary to previous U.S. indifference, Austin seemed now publicly to condemn Dutch “mopping up” operations between their spearhead salients.

However, Austin did not easily abandon his tilt in favor of the Netherlands. In the voting that followed, the Soviet resolution calling for withdrawal of troops to their previous positions was defeated; the Australian resolution calling for a pullback of each side five kilometers behind the previous positions (so as to create a buffer zone) was also defeated; and the U.S. resolution, because it was subject to various amendments, was modified merely to call for a subcommittee to rationalize the resolution and various amendments before the Council. The Australians noted the unreality of the U.S. position because there had been substantial Dutch advances (up to one hundred kilometers), and they sought an amendment clarifying that any acquisition of territory

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<sup>60</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, Second Year, 214<sup>th</sup> Meeting, no. 100, October 27, 1947, 2644.

<sup>61</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, Second Year, 214<sup>th</sup> Meeting, no. 100, October 27, 1947, 2645.

not occupied on August 4 was “not in conformity with” the cease-fire order. Although Austin’s clarification had been almost identical to the Australian position, he opposed this amendment (which might have led to a Council order for withdrawal), by arguing that the situation was just a “misunderstanding between the two sides. The cease-fire order was not understood alike by both sides.”<sup>62</sup> In other words, the killing of numerous Indonesian soldiers caught between Netherlands spearheads was just an innocent misunderstanding. Austin’s argument became more ridiculous: he continued that the August 1 resolution called upon the parties “to cease hostilities forthwith . . . . It does not say anything more. It does not say to cease firing, it does not say to stand fast . . . .”<sup>63</sup> The United States was so caught up in its need to appear neutral but in fact side with the Netherlands that the final result was that the head of the U.S. delegation to the United Nations now argued that a UN order to cease hostilities did not encompass stopping shooting. The next day the Council adopted a weak compromise version of the U.S. resolution, noting that the cease fire had “not been fully effective,” and calling on the Committee of Good Offices and the Consular Commission to assist the parties to reach a settlement.<sup>64</sup> As with the prior resolutions, this one contained no enforcement mechanism, no call for the Dutch forces to withdraw to their previous positions, and no condemnation of the Netherlands for its use of force.

By the end of 1947 the UN had revealed itself as quite powerless to prevent war between two weak powers. This was true because the strongest power, the United States, had no over-

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<sup>62</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, Second Year, 217<sup>th</sup> Meeting, no. 102, October 31, 1947, 2707.

<sup>63</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, Second Year, 217<sup>th</sup> Meeting, no. 102, October 31, 1947, 2709.

<sup>64</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, Second Year, 218<sup>th</sup> and 219<sup>th</sup> Meetings, no. 103, November 1, 1947, 2723-2750.

riding interest in stopping the fighting. In fact, although the United States was embarrassed to support colonialism and wanted increased self-government for Indonesia, it still saw its predominant interest as promoting a strong Netherlands with some continuing Dutch presence in Indonesia.<sup>65</sup>

However, notwithstanding the weakness evidenced in the Security Council, real progress was made outside the Council. The United States privately exerted pressure for settlement within the Good Offices Committee and offered a neutral forum for settlement talks aboard the U.S. naval vessel, the USS Renville. The first Renville talks began on December 8, and a settlement was reached on January 17, 1948. Although the settlement provided for a truce, the Dutch had not foresworn the military option. On the same day that Renville was signed, the Chief of the Netherlands Military Mission to the United States requested an appointment to see General Omar Bradley, the U.S. Army Chief of Staff, following up on a Netherlands request for vehicles, spare parts, and armored cars for the Netherlands East Indies Army.<sup>66</sup>

By February problems with the truce had appeared. On February 26 the Republican representative advised the Security Council that the Netherlands government was undermining the settlement, particularly in attempting to set up a separate “state” in West Java. Especially troubling was the allegation that the delegates to the conference to set up a West Java government were not popularly elected, but were appointed by the Dutch or selected by village

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<sup>65</sup> Member of U.S. Delegation to the UN General Assembly (and future Secretary of State) John Foster Dulles “called attention to the difficulty of deciding . . . to what extent [the United States] should work along with the Western European colonial powers and the extent to which it should come out for dependent peoples. See Minutes of the Seventh Meeting of the United States Delegation, New York, September 15, 1947, 3 p.m., September 15, 1947, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1947, Vol. I, General; The United Nations (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1973), 289.

<sup>66</sup>Memorandum for the Record, 17 February 1948, Netherlands East Indies—Dutch Government: Request for Arms Folder, Subject Files, 1941-54, Records Relating to Indonesia, Netherlands East Indies and Netherlands New Guinea, 1948-1951, Records of the Office of Western European Affairs, 1941-1954, General Records of the Department of State, National Archive.

headmen controlled by the Dutch.<sup>67</sup> These actions undermined the very self-determination that U.S. policy-makers said they desired. The Chinese representative offered a resolution requesting the Committee of Good Offices to pay particular attention to events in West Java and Madura—two areas where the Dutch were attempting to form new states in territory formerly part of the Republic. At the UN Austin asserted that the Renville agreement incorporated three principles: no stifling of popular movements; freedom of assembly, speech and the press; and the holding of a plebiscite to determine if the people wish to be part of the Republic or of a separate state. Based on these principles Austin supported the Chinese resolution, which was then adopted. Since the resolution merely sought to focus the attention of the Committee of Good Offices, it called for no specific action to block the Dutch efforts to weaken the Republic by creating breakaway states in Republican territory. Although the long-term solution to the Indonesian question remained elusive, the Council took no further action in the matter until June 1948.

Meanwhile, behind the scenes the State Department put increasing pressure on the Dutch to moderate their actions. In response to Dutch moves to proceed with a United States of Indonesia to be formed of Indonesian “states” that had been organized by the Dutch but which excluded the Republic, Secretary of State Marshall notified the U.S. Consulate in Indonesia that the U.S. government would find it impossible to extend economic and financial aid to any government in Indonesia that did not include the Republic.<sup>68</sup> In Indonesia U.S. representatives on the Good Offices Committee emphasized the strength and importance of the Republic and advised the Dutch that if they did not understand that the Republic would “completely dominate

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<sup>67</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, Third Year, 256<sup>th</sup> Meeting, no. 16-35, February 26, 1948, p. 303-309.

<sup>68</sup> Telegram, The Secretary of State to the Consulate General at Batavia, March 2, 1948, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1948, Vol. VI, The Far East and Australia (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1974), 111.

an independent Indonesia,” they were “living in [a] dream [world].”<sup>69</sup> Nevertheless, Marshall still hoped to avoid further proceedings in the Security Council and preferred private negotiations.<sup>70</sup>

Now a difference of opinion appeared between the U.S. representatives “on the ground,” and the Secretary of State. The State Department replaced the U.S. representative on the Good Offices Committee with Coert DuBois, a career Foreign Service officer thought to be more sympathetic to the Dutch position than was the former U.S. representative, and on March 18 the parties resumed negotiations under mediation of the Committee. The negotiations revealed major disagreements. The Republic wanted to keep *de facto* sovereignty over its territory, including keeping its army and maintaining some foreign relations until transfer of sovereignty to the USI. The Netherlands insisted on the disbanding of the Republican army during the interim period before the new USI was formed and assumed full sovereignty. DuBois’s viewpoint gradually moved toward the Republic’s position—concluding that the Dutch, failing to appreciate the power of Indonesian nationalism, could never win a war against the Republic; at best they could hope for a stalemate. The U.S. position now subtly shifted toward the Republic as State Department officials began to conclude that the Netherlands was incapable of achieving a decisive victory, and that Dutch efforts to force unacceptable terms on the Republic

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<sup>69</sup> Telegram, The Consul General at Batavia (Livengood) to the Secretary of State, May 10, 1948, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1948, Vol. VI, The Far East and Australia (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1974), 166.

<sup>70</sup> Telegram, The Secretary of State to the Consulate General at Batavia, May 7, 1948, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1948, Vol. VI, The Far East and Australia (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1974), 162.

were doomed to failure—with adverse long-term effects on U.S. interests in Indonesia.<sup>71</sup> Also worrisome was the continued drain on Netherlands resources if warfare began again—especially, as will be seen, because the United States was indirectly funding this colonial war by economic and military aid to the Netherlands.<sup>72</sup> By June the U.S. Consul on the ground in Indonesia had completely turned against the Netherlands’s negotiating position, which required the Netherlands government to hold full authority throughout Indonesia during the interim period and the use of Dutch troops to “suppress all dissident elements,” thus giving the “Netherlands [the] opportunity [to] control [the] USI politically.” The Consul’s report expressed the conviction that “Netherlands plan [was] based [on a] dangerous misconception [regarding the] true state [of] Indonesian feeling and that [the Dutch] arguments advanced are in part consciously misleading and in part [the] result [of] autointoxication.”<sup>73</sup>

Notwithstanding the dim view of the Netherlands’ position taken by the U.S. consul in the field, Secretary of State Marshall still anticipated an important role for the Netherlands in Indonesia. Specifically, he favored control of external defense by the Netherlands; sufficient control within Indonesia by the Netherlands, as sovereign, during the interim period to permit the rehabilitation of Dutch properties and to provide stability for the resumption of normal trade; and an opportunity during the interim period for Indonesians (Republican and non-Republican) to

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<sup>71</sup> Telegram, The Consul at Batavia (Livengood) to the Secretary of State, May 21, 1948, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1948, Vol. VI, The Far East and Australia (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1974), 183.

<sup>72</sup> Telegram, The Consul General at Batavia (Livengood) to the Secretary of State, January 3, 1949, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1949, Vol. VII, The Far East and Australia (in two parts), Part 1 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1975), 121.

<sup>73</sup> Telegram, The Consul General at Batavia (Livengood) to the Secretary of State, June 7, 1948, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1948, Vol. VI, The Far East and Australia (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1974), 226-227.



gain sufficient experience in governing.<sup>74</sup> Marshall's approach to the Indonesian problem was quite conservative, but was in keeping with U.S. goals for stability in the Pacific region and for a continuing role for the Netherlands in Indonesia with gradual steps toward self-government. He drew a "sharp distinction" between the UN's interest in stopping the fighting, and its "possible interest in the ultimate political settlement in Indonesia" (emphasis added).<sup>75</sup> Marshall was undecided even as to the UN's jurisdiction to resolve the political issues in Indonesia.<sup>76</sup> Despite the negative view of State Department personnel in the field, Marshall viewed the Dutch as more capable than the Republic of providing stability, and he still saw the need for continuing Dutch sovereignty in Indonesia during the interim period.

At this point, while talks continued between the Republic and the Netherlands, Marshall hoped to minimize or avoid Security Council debate on the Indonesia question.<sup>77</sup> But on June 10 when the Council took up reports from the Good Offices Committee, the Republic's delegate raised serious objections to Dutch actions, including the unilateral establishment by the Netherlands of a Provisional federal government (which excluded the Republic) for Indonesia; the sponsoring of a conference at Bandung to create separate "states"; the banning of a counter-conference planned by Republican sympathizers; the unilateral amendment of the Netherlands

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<sup>74</sup> Telegram, The Secretary of State to the Consul General at Batavia, June 8, 1948, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1948, Vol. VI, The Far East and Australia (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1974), 229-230.

<sup>75</sup> Telegram, The Secretary of State to the Acting United States Representative at the United Nations (Johnson), August 12, 1947, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1947, Vol. VI, The Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), 1024.

<sup>76</sup> Telegram, The Secretary of State to the Acting United States Representative at the United Nations (Johnson), August 12, 1947, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1947, Vol. VI, The Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), 1025.

<sup>77</sup> Telegram, The Secretary of State to the Consulate General at Batavia, June 25, 1948, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1948, Vol. VI, The Far East and Australia (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1974), 269-270.

Constitution regarding Indonesia; and various actions in Madura and West Java seeking to create break-away “states” out of former Republican territory. All those unilateral actions created the appearance that the Republic was being by-passed. In place of real Republican authority, the Republic argued, the Netherlands sought to create, by highly undemocratic methods, easily manipulated puppet regimes. The Netherlands delegate responded that Dutch efforts to support separate states in West Java and Madura reflected the popular will in those areas to be free from Republican rule, and he stated—with considerable truth—that, whereas the Renville agreement had called for a federal form of government for Indonesia and a union between Indonesia and the Netherlands, in fact the Republic wanted neither. They wanted a unitary Republic for all of Indonesia, and they had no genuine desire for union with the Netherlands. Philip Jessup, a member of the U.S. delegation and an expert in international law, argued for the status quo, claiming that the negotiations were not dead—the Council should not engage in a “post-mortem,” and the Good Offices Committee should continue to do its work and should provide information to the Council only at the discretion of the Committee.<sup>78</sup>

### *The U.S.-Australian Settlement Proposal*

Despite U.S. hopes for a voluntary settlement, negotiations on the Good Offices Committee had broken down—with the Dutch and the Indonesians at an impasse. The Americans (with Australian cooperation) now came up with their own plan—the duBois-Critchley Plan—which they believed represented a fair settlement. This marked a very

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<sup>78</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, Third Year, 323<sup>rd</sup> Meeting, no. 86, June 17, 1948, p. 38-39.

significant shift in U.S. policy. Previously the United States had adopted the “neutral” pose that no settlement should be thrust upon the parties, and only an entirely voluntary settlement achieved by the parties themselves would work. Now for the first time the United States had developed its own settlement plan, which it now tried to “sell” to the parties. The Republic accepted the plan as a basis for settlement talks, but the Netherlands government pushed back—they attached conditions to the plan that amounted to a rejection, and they hoped to prevent its public disclosure. The Security Council now split on the issue of whether the proposed plan should be revealed to the Council.<sup>79</sup> Such a move would violate the previous practice of allowing the Committee to mediate in private, with no publicity given to the positions taken by the two parties.

Just as the Council was split on this issue, a similar division of opinion now opened up between the U.S. delegation to the Good Offices Committee and Marshall. The U.S. delegation now saw the Committee as “bankrupt” and suggested so advising the Security Council, whereas Marshall still hoped for renewed negotiations and opposed discussion at the UN, which he felt would hamper such negotiations.<sup>80</sup> At the UN, the Soviet delegation submitted a resolution calling for the Council formally to request a copy of the U.S.-Australian plan from the Good Offices Committee. Jessup initially opposed disclosing the plan at the Security Council; but ultimately, to head off a vote, Jessup relented and now took the position that although he still

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<sup>79</sup> Lieutenant Governor General Van Mook took the position that he had no hope that the plan “might prove useful” in the negotiations, and he argued that the plan should not be revealed to the Security Council. “Dr. H.J. Van Mook, lieutenant Governor General of the Netherlands Indies to Mr. T.K. Critchley, Australian Delegation to the Committee of Good Offices, Batavia”, 14 June 1948, in file Subject Files – Organization and Administration – Incoming Correspondence – 29/04/1948 – 30/11/1948, S-0681-0017-05, United Nations Archives.

<sup>80</sup> Telegram, The Consul General at Batavia (Livengood) to the Secretary of State, July 21, 1948, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1948, Vol. VI, The Far East and Australia (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1974), 287; *Ibid.*, Telegram, The Secretary of State to the Consulate General at Batavia, July 23, 1948, 288.

wanted to avoid any Council action that would intrude upon the negotiations, he was willing to provide copies of the plan to Council delegations on a confidential basis. Jessup advised Marshall that, in the Security Council debate, he would continue to support the Good Offices Committee and at the same time try to prevent any Council action that would condemn the Netherlands.<sup>81</sup>

Throughout these proceedings the U.S. delegation at the UN continued to minimize Security Council involvement and to defer to the Good Offices Committee, which for practical purposes meant choosing private, voluntary negotiations rather than a public, full-dress debate which might have crystallized in strong action by the Council. In doing so U.S. policy-makers continued their efforts for an “appropriate” realization of Indonesian nationalism and at the same time for an “appropriate” continuing role for the Netherlands in a self-governed Indonesia. But as it became clearer that these two goals were mutually exclusive and that Dutch intransigence was causing the impasse, this balancing act became increasingly difficult for the United States.

At this point U.S. policy underwent a shift in direction—now abandoning its emphasis on private, two-party negotiations in favor of creating and pushing its own settlement plan. In July 1948 the State Department replaced Du Bois with H. Merle Cochran, a career Foreign Service officer with known sympathies to the Dutch.<sup>82</sup> Cochran received instructions to look for new ways to break the impasse, and in response Cochran developed his own plan. The Cochran Plan was similar to the duBois-Critchley Plan, but it made some concessions to the Dutch by expanding the power of the Netherlands and diminishing that of the Republic in the new federal

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<sup>81</sup> Telegram, The Acting United States Representative at the United Nations (Jessup) to the Secretary of State, July 28, 1948, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1948, Vol. VI, The Far East and Australia (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1974), 293.

<sup>82</sup> McMahon, *Colonialism and Cold War*, 233-234.

structure.<sup>83</sup> By early September Cochran sent the plan to Washington and urged that the Netherlands be persuaded not to disclose their proposals publicly. He feared that such disclosure would sabotage chances for acceptance of the U.S. plan, since the Dutch proposals (some of which were incorporated into the U.S. plan) would be so unacceptable to both the Indonesians and the Australians.<sup>84</sup> Washington quickly approved the plan and authorized its presentation to both parties. Marshall, personally meeting with the Dutch foreign minister and ambassador, lent his support to the plan and subtly pressured the Dutch by mentioning the problems the administration was having with Congress regarding Marshall Plan aid.<sup>85</sup>

Meanwhile, very significant events had transpired in Indonesia that would profoundly influence U.S. policy. In August the leading Indonesian communist, Musso, returned from the Soviet Union and assumed leadership of the Indonesian communist party and a leftist coalition. The State Department, now fearing that a tough stand taken by the Dutch would encourage popular support for Musso and lead to the downfall of the Republican government, began pressing for the quick resumption of negotiations and for the informal presentation of the Cochran plan simultaneously to both parties, in the hope that it would lead to a quick settlement.<sup>86</sup> These events took place against the backdrop of major changes in the world. As

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<sup>83</sup> McMahan, *Colonialism and Cold War*, 240.

<sup>84</sup> Telegram, The Consul General at Batavia (Livengood) to the Secretary of State, September 7, 1948, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1948, Vol. VI, The Far East and Australia (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1974), 322.

<sup>85</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, by the Secretary of State, September 17, 1948, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1948, Vol. VI, The Far East and Australia (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1974), 344.

<sup>86</sup> Telegram, The Secretary of State to the Consulate General at Batavia, August 31, 1948, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, Vol. VI, The Far East and Australia (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1974), 312; *Ibid.*, Telegram, The Secretary of State to the Consulate General at Batavia, September 8, 1948, 325.

the Cold War hostility between the United States and the Soviet Union deepened, communism appeared to be spreading in Asia. Communist forces in China were gaining in their effort to overthrow the U.S.-backed Nationalist Chinese regime of Chiang-Kai-Shek. The French were proving unable to defeat the communist forces led by Ho Chi Minh in Viet Nam. In the face of these events, preventing the spread of communism in Indonesia achieved new importance.

Musso's communists now played a significant part in shifting U.S. policy. In September 1948 the Indonesian communists revolted in Madiun, East Java. Mohammad Hatta, the Republican prime minister, crushed the revolt by quick and forceful military action.<sup>87</sup> Hatta's strong response was extremely significant for the entire denouement of the Dutch-Indonesian conflict, because it proved to the U.S. government that the Republic could be a strong bulwark against communism in Indonesia, and by extension that moderate nationalists could be such a bulwark in all of Southeast Asia. Conversely, if Dutch intransigence forced the downfall of the Hatta government, a more extreme, leftist government might take its place. This event ultimately reinforced a shift to a new U.S. policy, with less emphasis on placating the Dutch in order to secure a strong Western Europe, and more emphasis on nurturing moderate pro-Western and anti-communist nationalism in Asia.

Marshall now changed course. Having previously believed that the Dutch would resume good faith negotiations, he now saw more clearly the effect of Dutch intransigence. He learned that the Dutch were proceeding to form an interim government for Indonesia which excluded the Republic, and he now said that the State Department

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<sup>87</sup> The Republic accused the Netherlands of promulgating false propaganda to the effect that Indonesian military units loyal to the Republic were, on the contrary, controlled by the communists. "Representative of the Republican Delegation on the Security Committee, Dr. J. Leimena", 12 October 1948, in correspondence to the Chairman, Security Committee, Committee of Good Offices on the Indonesian Question, Jakarta, in file Subject Files Organization and Administration – Incoming Correspondence 29/04/1948 – 30/11/1948, S-0681-0017-05, United Nations Archives.

agrees [that the] Neth[erlands] attitude, intentional or unintentional, appears to hasten [the] fall [of the] Hatta Gov[ernment] and [the] Dep[artment] fears [that the] successor [of] that Gov[ernment] will be strongly left wing if not communist controlled. Dep[artment] naturally desires [that you] take all practicable steps [to] hasten [the] resumption [of] political negotiations with [the] Rep[ublic].<sup>88</sup>

Further, stating that the Department “is deeply concerned [about the] communist threat to [the] present moderate Repub[lican] regime,” he authorized the consulate to advise Hatta that “US Gov[ernment] will in every practical way assist democratic non-Communist gov[ernment] of Indonesia successfully to resist communist tyranny,” and that “Dep[artment] will support extension [of] financial help in which all states of peaceful federation [in] Indonesia would share according to their needs. . . .”<sup>89</sup> The fear of a communist take-over of Indonesia now outweighed the fear of Soviet expansion into Western Europe and the resulting need to bolster the Netherlands. Likewise, the communist insurrection and the prompt Republican response convinced Marshall that the Cochran proposal including prompt elections was correct. Marshall advised Bevin that

previously there had been differences between the Department and the representatives on the spot and that now there was complete unanimity on the necessity of proceeding without undue delay . . . . the open Communist outbreak against the Republican Government had clarified the situation as to elections and that we felt that elections held now that the Communists had shown their hand might avoid some of the worries of Communist penetration through elections which had previously existed.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Telegram, The Secretary of State to the Consulate General at Batavia, August 31, 1948, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1948, Vol. VI, The Far East and Australasia (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1974), 312.

<sup>89</sup> Telegram, The Secretary of State to the Consulate General at Batavia, September 9, 1948, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1948, Vol. VI, The Far East and Australasia (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1974), 327.

<sup>90</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, October 4, 1948, Record Group 59, General Records of the Department of State, Records of Ambassador Charles E. Bohlen, 1942-71, Folder Memos (CEB) – December 1948, National Archive.

In the next few months the impasse continued with mounting tension. U.S. officials became concerned about the increasing likelihood that the Netherlands government would resume hostilities.<sup>91</sup> Acting Secretary of State Lovett advised the Dutch ambassador that renewed military action would involve the Netherlands in “endless and indecisive guerilla warfare which, failing to restore real peace and order, would exhaust [the Netherlands].”<sup>92</sup> Lovett warned the Netherlands government that Dutch intransigence could well lead to the fall of the Hatta government and allow extremists and communists to come to power. In that event, Lovett made clear, Marshall Plan aid to Netherlands might be adversely affected.<sup>93</sup> Moreover, Lovett advised that in the Security Council the United States would argue that the U.S. plan was “fair and practical,” and without any progress towards a settlement, the United States would

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<sup>91</sup>Telegram, The Consul General at Batavia (Livengood) to the Secretary of State, November 6, 1948, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1948, Vol. VI, The Far East and Australia (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1974), 466; Ibid., Telegram, The Secretary of State to the Acting Secretary of State, November 10, 1948, 480-481.

<sup>92</sup>Telegram, Acting Secretary of State to Consulate General, October 28, 1948, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1948, Vol. VI, The Far East and Australia (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1974), 439.

<sup>93</sup>However, in a later communication on December 4, 1948 to Cochran, Lovett made clear that any reference to the ECA (i.e., Marshall Plan aid) had been deleted from the *aide-memoire* sent to the Netherlands government because it might imply a threat of punitive action against an ‘important member’ of the Western alliance in “this critical phase” of European developments, and also because the Department did not want to make threats which in the last analysis it might not “find itself free to implement.” The Acting Secretary of State to The Consulate General at Batavia, December 4, 1948, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1948, Vol. VI, The Far East and Australasia (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1974), 517. Also, U.S. planners believed that prospects for repayment of further Economic Recovery Program loans to the Netherlands “depend almost entirely upon the preservation of pre-war relationships between the Netherlands and the Netherlands East Indies . . . if the Netherlands were compelled to depend on the dollar earnings of the home area, they would encounter the greatest difficulty in servicing any further loans.” Memorandum by the Financial Policy Subcommittee to the Correlation Committee on the European Recovery Program, December 7, 1948, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1948, Vol. III (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1974), 496.



consider resigning from the Good Offices Committee and thus recover complete freedom of action regarding the dispute.<sup>94</sup>

In early December, with rumors and hints that the Dutch might resume their military offensive, the State Department delivered a strong *aide-memoire* to the Netherlands government, hoping to head off another “police action” and push the Dutch back into negotiations.<sup>95</sup> The final sticking point that prevented any agreement was the issue of physical power during the interim period before sovereignty would be passed to the new United States of Indonesia: the Dutch required formal sovereignty and actual military and police power during that time, whereas the Republic was willing to cede “formal” power to the Dutch, but with a “gentleman’s agreement” that such power would not be used against the Republic arbitrarily.<sup>96</sup> The Dutch

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<sup>94</sup> Telegram, The Acting Secretary of State to the Consulate General at Batavia, November 5, 1948, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1948, Vol. VI, The Far East and Australia (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1974), 465.

<sup>95</sup> The *aide-memoire* stated that: the United States was “deeply disappointed” in the suspension of talks and viewed their resumption as “imperative”; the Hatta regime had acted with “skill and fortitude” in putting down the Musso communist revolt; that to proceed with an interim Indonesian government without the Republic would discredit the moderate policies of the Hatta government; that Indonesian nationalism and desire for self-rule was mainly represented by the Republic; that the long-run influence and economic stake to be retained by the Dutch in Indonesia primarily depended on the confidence and goodwill which would be felt by Indonesians for the Dutch; that if fighting resumed the Dutch could very quickly capture all the Republican cities and towns, but resumed fighting would be a “profound shock” to the American people, and later guerilla warfare and sabotage would cancel out any benefits which might accrue from such a victory; that if the U.S. draft settlement was ignored by the Dutch, the United States would publicly state at the Security Council that the U.S. plan was fair and practical, and the United States would consider withdrawing from the Good Offices Committee, in which event it would consider itself “free to take such measures as the changed circumstances might require.” See The Department of State to the Netherlands Embassy, December 7, 1948, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1948, Vol. VI, The Far East and Australia (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1974), 531-535.

<sup>96</sup> Telegram, The Consul General at Batavia (Livengood) to the Secretary of State, December 14, 1948, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1948, Vol. VI, The Far East and Australia (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1974), 555-556; On December 12, 1948 the Dutch advised the Chairman of the Good Offices Committee that the Republic’s refusal to recognize Netherlands sovereignty during the interim period made it “absolutely impossible” to reach agreement and it was “meaningless” to continue discussion so long as the Republican government “does not radically change its attitude.” Incoming cablegram, December 12, 1948, in file Indonesia – General, S-0500-0005-07, United Nations Archives.

refused to support such a “gentleman’s agreement” and expressly rejected the U.S. *aide-memoire*.

### ***The Dutch Begin the Second “Police Action”***

On December 19, 1948 Netherlands forces renewed the war by a surprise full-scale attack against the Republic, capturing the Republican capital city, Jogjakarta, the same day. Within a week Dutch forces, hoping to finish off the Republic, captured all the major cities in Java and Sumatra. Dutch forces took Sukarno and Hatta prisoner, together with other cabinet members. Republican troops, which could not match the Dutch in conventional warfare, offered little resistance; instead they fled into the countryside to prepare for a long guerilla war.<sup>97</sup> Reaction against the Dutch action mounted in the United States, where public opinion was shifting against the Dutch, and Senate opposition threatened to cut off European recovery funds to the Netherlands.<sup>98</sup>

At this time the U.S. delegation now took the initiative in requesting an emergency session of the Security Council. But even now, when Lovett briefed the President, Truman took a cautious line: he wanted to “properly label the Dutch action,” after a full report from the Good Offices Committee, and he wanted the U.S. delegation to avoid taking any action in the Security Council “which would involve us subsequently, in consequence, in adopting positions which we

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<sup>97</sup> Although Dutch forces could easily seize towns and villages, the Republican government argued that the Netherlands was in control of such towns and villages only so long as the Dutch remained. As soon as the Dutch left, the Republican military and civilian government personnel returned and resumed control. Thus Netherlands military progress was ephemeral. See Statement Issued by the Delegation of the Republic of Indonesia to the Local Joint Committee for Central Sumatra Bukittinggi, 10 September 1949, in Subject Files Central Joint Board – Incoming Correspondence 25/08/1949 – 14/09/1949, S-0681-0001-01, United Nations Archive.

<sup>98</sup> Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution*, 404-405; 415-416.

would be unable to maintain, either through the defection of our allies or because of the inadequacy of our own facilities.”<sup>99</sup> In other words, Truman would not take a leadership role. He was willing to assess Dutch wrongdoing, but not without the support of American allies and not if it might require unilateral U.S. action. The Economic Cooperation Administration did suspend Marshall Plan funds for Indonesia, but of the \$68 million earmarked for Indonesia, only \$14 million was directly affected.<sup>100</sup> Also, \$298 million allocated for the Netherlands in Europe was unaffected.

The Council took up the matter on December 22. The Netherlands delegate again denied UN jurisdiction; he also invoked the fear of communism by claiming that the Republic was supported by communist leaders and was “strongly influenced by communism.”<sup>101</sup> This argument ran directly counter to the U.S. view—that the Republican government had proved its moderate credentials by its suppression of Musso’s communist uprising, and that the Republic in fact constituted a defense against communism in Indonesia and an example of a pro-Western government in Asia. When Jessup spoke for the United States, he called for immediate cessation of hostilities, but this time he also called for withdrawal—requiring “the armed forces of both parties immediately to withdraw to their own sides of the demilitarized zones.”<sup>102</sup> Jessup’s call for withdrawal represented a much more assertive position for the United States, i.e., to deprive the Dutch of their recently-won gains. But Jessup still had the need to appear neutral—he called

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<sup>99</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, by the Acting Secretary of State, December 20, 1948, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1948, Vol. VI, The Far East and Australia (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1974), 587-588.

<sup>100</sup> McMahon, *Colonialism and Cold War*, 255.

<sup>101</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, Third Year, 388<sup>th</sup> Meeting, no. 132, December 22, 1948, 16.

<sup>102</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, Third Year, 389<sup>th</sup> Meeting, no. 132, December 22, 1948, 48.

for “both parties” to withdraw, even though the Dutch had attacked and the Indonesians had retreated.

Although U.S. policy-makers now saw the usefulness of a pro-Western, independent Indonesia as a bulwark against the spread of communism in Asia, they remained unwilling to sacrifice U.S. interest in a strong Netherlands as a part of a pro-American Western Europe. Riven by this conflict, the U.S. government failed to play a true leadership role. The day after Jessup spoke at the Security Council, Dean Rusk (then at the UN Affairs desk of the State Department) advised Jessup of the official attitude regarding Indonesia, emphasizing the “sharp conflict” between, on the one hand, U.S. interest in “political and economic stability” in Europe and “solidarity” with Western Europe and, on the other hand, rapid development toward self-government and independence “in so-called colonial areas.”<sup>103</sup> Rusk added that Dutch action posed a “direct encouragement to spread communism in Southern Asia,” but he opined, in line with Truman’s expressed view, that the United States should not assume responsibilities at the UN if other countries would not act in concert. He concluded that the Soviet Union would not so act, that China was powerless to do so, and that Britain and France were unwilling to do so. In other words, State Department policy opposed the United States taking a genuine leadership role at the United Nations, and favored action only if the other major powers would join with the United States. In any event, Rusk advised that the United States had no intention of bringing about a “general break with [the] Dutch over [the] Indonesian question.”<sup>104</sup> Rusk clearly saw the

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<sup>103</sup> Telegram, The Acting Secretary of State to the Acting United States Representative at the United Nations (Jessup) at Paris, December 23, 1948, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1948, Vol. VI, The Far East and Australia (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1974), 597.

<sup>104</sup> Telegram, the Acting Secretary of State to the Acting United States Representative at the United Nations (Jessup) at Paris, December 23, 1948, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1948, Vol. VI, The Far East and Australia (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1974), 598.

dangers to U.S. interests if Dutch action led to the spread of communism in Asia, but he was still unwilling to risk a rupture of relations with the Netherlands.

There was another aspect to the unwillingness to take action without the support of other major powers—the constant effect of the ongoing Cold War. The United States prided itself on having the majority at the UN (whether in the Security Council or General Assembly) on its side. Likewise, it enjoyed seeing the Soviet Union perpetually in the minority, and therefore (arguably) acting as an obstructionist. For the United States to have taken a leadership role in directing a United Nations-imposed resolution in Indonesia would have possibly risked losing the support of some members of its reliable UN majority, which U.S. policy-makers were unwilling to do.

Because of the cautious, limited role imposed by the State Department, the U.S. delegation could not bring itself to blame the Dutch or call for any forceful measures to stop the fighting. The Soviet Union submitted a resolution which clearly placed the blame on the Netherlands for its “aggression” and called on the Dutch (not both parties) to withdraw. On December 24 the Council adopted only a weakened U.S.-supported resolution, calling on both parties to cease hostilities, to release the political prisoners, and for observation and reporting back to the Council.<sup>105</sup> That part of the resolution requiring the withdrawal of troops to the lines held on December 18 prior to the attack failed to garner sufficient votes. As 1948 came to a close, the United Nations again proved itself incapable of stopping a war that had persisted for three years.

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<sup>105</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, Third Year, 392<sup>nd</sup> Meeting, no. 134, December 24, 1948, 37.

As 1949—the year that Chinese communists would complete their conquest of the Chinese mainland—began, the U.S. government hoped to stem the tide of communist advances in Asia. As a result it saw its interests more and more as aligned with the non-communist nations of Asia, and as a result was more willing to risk antagonizing the Netherlands government. With the Dutch continuing their military operations and refusing to withdraw, Cochran claimed that “no appropriate role” remained for him as a member of the Good Offices Committee.<sup>106</sup> In order to continue in his role as a mediator, he advised that the United States adopt a much tougher posture, including branding the Netherlands as an aggressor, suspending all economic aid both to Indonesia and to the Netherlands, and demanding that the Dutch end hostilities, free all Republican leaders, and dismiss the hard-line Crown representative in Indonesia.<sup>107</sup> The Director of the Office of Far Eastern Affairs, W. Walton Butterworth, agreed with Cochran. Butterworth saw U.S. objectives as two-fold: helping to solve the Indonesian problem, and placing the United States in “the best possible light with the Asiatic and Islamic countries whose sympathy with the Indonesian Republic is great,” and he advised that Jessup should “place the blame for the rupture of negotiations squarely on the Netherlands.”<sup>108</sup> Lovett did send instructions to Jessup at the United Nations calling for somewhat more forceful—but still quite mild—language. Lovett found “no adequate justification for the military action taken by the Netherlands,” and viewed such action as a “defiance” by the Netherlands of the December

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<sup>106</sup>Telegram, The Consul General at Batavia (Livengood) to the Secretary of State, January 3, 1949, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1949, Vol. VII, (in 2 parts), Part 1, The Far East and Australasia (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1975), 119-120.

<sup>107</sup>Telegram, The Consul General at Batavia (Livengood) to the Secretary of State, January 3, 1949, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1949, Vol. VII, (in 2 parts), Part 1, The Far East and Australasia (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1975), 119-120.

<sup>108</sup>Memorandum by the Director of the Office of Far Eastern Affairs (Butterworth) to the Counselor of the Department (Bohlen), January 7, 1949, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1949, Vol. VII, (in 2 parts), Part 1, The Far East and Australasia (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1975), 136-137.

24 Council resolution. He blamed the Dutch for the tensions that led to breakdown of the truce, and concluded that the United States would view no settlement as valid unless based on “free and democratic procedures,” with “all elements of coercion and duress” removed.<sup>109</sup>

At the Security Council Jessup did speak with greater assertiveness against the Netherlands position—he expressed certainty that the Council had “no intention of approving [Dutch] action consolidating military victories which themselves were gained as a result of defiance” of the Security Council, and he asserted that the Republic was both a “political entity,” as well as “the heart of Indonesian nationalism,” and thus was the “largest single political factor in the projected federation.”<sup>110</sup> Jessup also made explicit the issue at the root of the division within the Security Council: the Cold War antipathy between the United States and the Soviet Union. He accused the Soviet Union of “obstructionist tactics,” and he asserted that the “Communist Party” in Indonesia was the “mouthpiece” of the Soviet Union and “like the communists throughout the world . . . [was] responsive to and act[ed] in accordance with instructions from Moscow.”<sup>111</sup>

Yakov Malik, Soviet representative at the Security Council, responded in kind. He accused the United States, in effect, of funding the colonial war against the Indonesian people, stating that the Netherlands spent \$365 million per year on its military, whereas the United States provided the Netherlands for the first year of Marshall Plan operation with \$270 million in

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<sup>109</sup> Telegram, The Acting Secretary of State to the United States Representative at the United Nations (Austin), *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1949, Vol. VII, (in 2 parts), Part 1, The Far East and Australasia (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1975), 131-132.

<sup>110</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, Fourth Year, 398<sup>th</sup> Meeting, no. 2, January 11, 1949, 5-7.

<sup>111</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, Fourth Year, 398<sup>th</sup> Meeting, no. 2, January 11, 1949, 9.

Marshall Plan credits and \$84 million for Netherlands property owners in Indonesia, totaling \$354 million. Also he noted that the Netherlands was a “member of the military alliance of the Western Union (forerunner of NATO), and that it was “perfectly obvious” that if the Netherlands had not “been able to count on . . . [the United States and Britain] to cover up and support its acts of aggression, it would hardly have dared to attack the Indonesian Republic.”<sup>112</sup> This exchange exemplified the antagonistic positions of the two superpowers: the Americans viewed Soviet communism as instigating unrest and instability leading to communist takeovers throughout the world; the Soviets viewed the United States as supporting renewed militarism in Europe and revived colonialism in Asia.

By January 1949 the U.S. delegation at the Security Council began pushing for a stronger U.S. policy. Jessup sent to the State Department for approval a new, more forceful draft resolution that provided for four major provisions: immediate Dutch cease-fire and immediate Republican cooperation in the cease-fire; immediate release of all Republican political prisoners and their return to their capital, Jogjakarta, to resume their governmental functions; return to negotiations to elect a constituent assembly to organize a federal republic and transfer sovereignty to that federal republic by a definite, stated date; and, finally, conversion of the Good Offices Committee to a UN Commission for Indonesia to observe the elections and otherwise supervise progress in the settlement.

The Netherlands formally approached the State Department with a request that the U.S. resolution not be presented to the Security Council. But U.S. policy-makers were no longer listening to the Dutch. The U.S. delegation convinced China, Cuba and Norway to join it in co-

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<sup>112</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, Fourth Year, 398<sup>th</sup> Meeting, no. 2, January 11, 1949, 23-24.



sponsoring the resolution, and with minor changes the resolution was adopted on January 28. As adopted, the resolution called for establishment of an interim federal government in Indonesia by March 15, elections for a constituent assembly by October 1, and transfer of sovereignty not later than July 1, 1950. The Netherlands government was not happy, and within days the State Department learned that the Dutch were going to request that Cochran not be returned to Indonesia as the U.S. representative on the new UN Commission for Indonesia.<sup>113</sup> But Cochran had the confidence of the new secretary of state, Dean Acheson, who immediately directed the U.S. Embassy in the Netherlands to notify the Dutch Foreign Minister that the United States “does not desire to receive any such request.”<sup>114</sup> Acheson advised not pressing the Dutch too hard, but rather letting them adjust to the implications of the January 28 resolution.<sup>115</sup> But Jessup reported that he expected strong pressure from the Security Council if the Dutch did not have a cooperative attitude. He emphasized that the U.S. position on Indonesia had “secured important advantage in terms of relations with Asiatic and Near Eastern states” and that “any weakening” of the U.S. position would be “highly injurious” to U.S. relations with other delegations.<sup>116</sup>

The shift in U.S. policy clearly affected decision-making within the Netherlands government. Within a few weeks Dutch Foreign Minister Dirk Stikker notified the State

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<sup>113</sup>Telegram, The Secretary of State to the Embassy in the Netherlands, January 31, 1949, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1949, Vol. VII, (in 2 parts), Part 1, The Far East and Australasia (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1975), 197.

<sup>114</sup> Telegram, The Secretary of State to the Embassy in the Netherlands, January 31, 1949, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1949, Vol. VII, (in 2 parts), Part 1, The Far East and Australasia (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1975), 197.

<sup>115</sup> Telegram, The Secretary of State to the Consulate General at Batavia, January 31, 1949, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1949, Vol. VII, (in 2 parts), Part 1, The Far East and Australasia (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1975), 198.

<sup>116</sup> Telegram, The United States Representative at the United Nations (Austin) to the Secretary of State, February 4, 1949, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1949, Vol. VII, (in 2 parts), Part 1, The Far East and Australasia (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1975), 206-207.

Department that the Netherlands hoped to hold a Round Table Conference at The Hague finally to resolve the Indonesian dispute and would invite representatives of the Republic to attend. On March 1 the new United Nations Commission for Indonesia (UNCFI) reported to the Security Council and concluded that the Dutch Government's refusal to abide by the January 28 resolution was the cause of failure to institute an interim federal government in Indonesia.<sup>117</sup> In the debate that followed, the Netherlands delegate continued to maintain Dutch unwillingness to abide fully by all the provisions of the January 28 resolution, but he offered instead the Round Table Conference and an accelerated timetable for transferring sovereignty.<sup>118</sup> Austin responded by restating American support for the resolution of January 28. He noted the failure of the Netherlands to comply—active warfare was continuing, and the Republican leaders still were not unconditionally free, nor were they restored to govern in their capital city.<sup>119</sup> Ultimately the Council approved a telegram to UNCFI that called for the Dutch to free the Republican political prisoners and hold a preliminary conference allowing the Republic to re-establish its government at Jogjakarta. Only after that would the Round Table Conference at The Hague proceed.<sup>120</sup> The Republic accepted the invitation to the Round Table Conference, but only on the two conditions: that it be restored in power at Jogjakarta and that UNCFI participate in the conference.

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<sup>117</sup> Telegram, The Consul General at Batavia (Livengood) to the Secretary of State, March 1, 1949, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1949, Vol. VII, (in 2 parts), Part 1, The Far East and Australasia (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1975), 281-282.

<sup>118</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, Fourth Year, 416<sup>th</sup> Meeting, no. 19, March 10, 1949, 3-9.

<sup>119</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, Fourth Year, 416<sup>th</sup> Meeting, no. 19, March 10, 1949, 30-32.

<sup>120</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, Fourth Year, 421<sup>st</sup> Meeting, no. 24, March 23, 1949, 2-25; Telegram, The United States Representative at the United Nations (Austin) to the Secretary of State, March 24, 1949, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1949, Vol. VII, The Far East and Australasia (in two parts) Part 1 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1975), 341-342.

The State Department increased pressure on the Netherlands, but the Dutch were most unwilling to allow the Republican leaders to re-establish their government even in the city of Jogjakarta. While denying any intention to use “direct leverage,” the State Department did in fact threaten the Netherlands that U.S. obligations under the UN Charter might foreclose furnishing military assistance to the Netherlands until settlement of the Indonesian problem.<sup>121</sup> Acheson met with the van Kleffens and Stikker, and “made it plain” that “in the absence of a settlement in Indonesia, there was no chance whatever of the Congress authorizing funds for military supplies to the Netherlands.”<sup>122</sup> Acheson also made clear to Stikker that restoring the Republican government to Jogjakarta was “the heart of the matter,” and that Dutch troops must be withdrawn from the city and its environs.<sup>123</sup> Finally on May 5, after intensive meetings between Cochran and the Dutch and Indonesian negotiating teams, both sides announced a breakthrough.<sup>124</sup> Sukarno and Hatta gave their personal assurances that as soon as they were restored at Jogjakarta and permitted to govern the Republic, they would adopt as policies the immediate cessation of guerrilla warfare, cooperation to establish peace and law and order, and participation in the Round Table Conference. Simultaneously, The Netherlands government agreed to restore the Republican government to Jogjakarta, to stop all military operations, to

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<sup>121</sup>Telegram, The Secretary of State to the Consulate General at Batavia, March 9, 1949, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1949, Vol. VII, The Far East and Australasia (in two parts) Part 1 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1975), 309.

<sup>122</sup> “Department of State Memorandum of Conversation, Subject: Relation of the Netherlands’ Position in Indonesia to the European Recovery Program, the Military Assistance Program, and the North Atlantic Pact,” March 31, 1949, Secretary of State File, 1945-1972, March 1949 Folder, Dean G. Acheson Papers, Truman Library.

<sup>123</sup> Telegram, The Secretary of State to the Consulate General at Batavia, April 17, 1949, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1949, Vol. VII, The Far East and Australasia (in two parts) Part 1 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1975), 362-363.

<sup>124</sup> Telegram, the Consul General at Batavia (Livengood) to the Secretary of State, May 5, 1949, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1949, Vol. VII, The Far East and Australasia (in two parts) Part 1 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1975), 401.

release all political prisoners, to refrain from creating any more “states,” to support the Republic’s status as a state in USI, and promptly to commence the Round Table Conference.<sup>125</sup> The cease-fire went into effect on August 11, 1949 in Java and four days later in Sumatra, and the Round Table Conference opened at The Hague on August 23.

U.S. goals in Indonesia had changed from their earlier emphasis on limited self-government and a strong continuing Dutch role. Although the State Department still anticipated a Netherlands-Indonesia Union, the emphasis had shifted towards supporting Indonesian nationalism as a bulwark against communism and fostering an open Indonesian economy in which the United States could trade on equal terms. Acheson instructed Cochran that the major American interests in the conference centered on “the stability of Southeast Asia and the development of friendly, peace-loving and economically sound governments in that area”; “room for the peaceful adjustment of nationalist aspirations” to avoid the danger of communist expansion; the creation of a genuinely independent, sovereign Indonesia; fair treatment to Dutch nationals and civil rights for all citizens as well as foreigners in Indonesia; equal commercial rights to all nations; and no confiscation of property without fair compensation.<sup>126</sup>

As negotiations began at The Hague an impasse developed over three issues: political—the nature of the Netherlands-Indonesia Union, economic—the Dutch demand that Indonesia assume a very large debt in favor of the Netherlands (including the cost of fighting the war against the Republic) , and West New Guinea—over which the Netherlands intended to retain

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<sup>125</sup> Telegram, The Consul General at Batavia (Livengood) to the Secretary of State, May 5, 1949, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1949, Vol. VII, The Far East and Australasia (in two parts) Part 1 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1975), 402-403.

<sup>126</sup> Airgram, The Secretary of State to the Embassy in the Netherlands, August 23, 1949, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1949, Vol. VII, The Far East and Australasia (in two parts) Part 1 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1975), 474-478.

control. Cochran successfully brokered a compromise on all three issues: the Union would consist of only voluntary cooperation symbolized and personified by the queen; Indonesia would be saddled with more than two-thirds of the large debt of the Netherlands East Indies, and the Netherlands would bear the balance; and West New Guinea would remain under temporary Dutch control, with its future status to be determined within a year by negotiations between the two parties.<sup>127</sup> With these three issues resolved, the Round Table Conference closed successfully on November 2. In joint ceremonies at The Hague and the Indonesian capital, Djakarta (formerly the Dutch-named Batavia) the formal transfer of sovereignty took place on December 27, 1949.

### *Conclusion*

The pervasive influence of Cold War divisions at the United Nations governed the successful transition of Indonesia from colony to sovereign statehood. The UN had not been able to stop the war that lasted intermittently for more than four years because U.S. fears of a Soviet threat to Western Europe had influenced an early U.S. policy tilt in favor of the Netherlands. But later U.S. fears of communist gains in Asia together with the publicity of Security Council debates forced a reassessment, shifting the emphasis in favor of a non-communist, Western-oriented independent Indonesia, even at the expense of Dutch interests.<sup>128</sup> The United States

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<sup>127</sup>McMahon, *Colonialism and Cold War*, 298-303.

<sup>128</sup> The progressive collapse of the U.S.-backed Nationalist regime in China and the final victory of the People's Republic of China in 1949 contributed to the shift in emphasis in U.S. policy towards anti-communism in Asia. See Robert J. McMahon, *The Limits of Empire: The United States and Southeast Asia since World War II* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 37; Telegram, The Acting Secretary of State to the Consulate General at Batavia, November 10, 1948, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1948, Vol. VI, The Far East and Australia (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1974), 479.

shifted its policy in the expectation of a Western-oriented Indonesia operating as a bulwark against communism in Asia. Ironically, by 1951 the CIA reported that Indonesia was “rigidly” following a foreign policy “of strict neutrality” in the Cold War, which resulted in “a course less friendly to the US than had been anticipated when Indonesia received its independence in December 1949.”<sup>129</sup>

Throughout the entire process the U.S. government sought means of accomplishing American goals outside of the formal Security Council setting, and thus avoiding Soviet opposition. Essentially, the State Department achieved that goal by fostering the creation of subsidiary UN bodies (such as the Consular Commission and Good Offices Committee) which could operate without Soviet involvement. By doing so, and by allowing the Security Council to remain passive and impotent during the years of fighting, the U.S. government undoubtedly contributed to a weakened United Nations. But at the same time the UN showed a certain degree of strength and resilience. The Security Council became a public forum to which a colonial people—having been ruled for over three centuries by a European state—could come to argue their case before the world community. It was to the United Nations that Indonesian nationalists could look for some hope in their struggle. The publicity of debate eventually helped force a reassessment of U.S. policy. In the final Round Table negotiations the Republic insisted that the UN negotiators be present and participate, in effect as guardians of a fair outcome. And the

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<sup>129</sup> “Daily Digest of Significant Traffic”, March 16, 1951; Central Intelligence Agency folder, Daily Digest – March 1951, SMOF: National Security Council Files; Truman Papers; Truman Library.

United Nations Security Council finally had mobilized the votes reflecting the voices of various nations—both Asian and non-Asian—evidencing a world-wide consensus rejecting a return to prewar colonialism.

## CHAPTER 4

### KOREA: AN EXPERIMENT IN NATION-BUILDING

#### *Introduction*

As the Second World War ended, American and Soviet armies met in Korea, turning that peninsula into one of the very few places where the two postwar rivals directly confronted each other. In the years that followed the United States took Korean matters to the United Nations, first with regard to U.S. efforts at “nation-building” in the south, and later regarding UN military action to repel the North Korean invasion of South Korea. This chapter explores the history of the efforts at nation-building from the perspective of the interaction between the United States and the UN, and hopefully will add to the already rich history of postwar U.S. action in Korea.<sup>1</sup> The following chapter addresses the UN military action that followed.

The principal arguments of the chapter are that the United States used the United Nations as a cover for implementing U.S. policy towards Korea, that from the beginning U.S. policy was confused and ill-thought out, and that because of actions resulting from that confusion the United States bore a considerable responsibility for using the UN to lay the groundwork from which the

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<sup>1</sup> I have found particularly helpful Bruce Cumings' *The Origins of the Korean War: Liberation and the Emergence of Separate Regimes, 1945-1947* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981) and Bruce Cumings, ed., *Child of Conflict: The Korean-American Relationship, 1943-1953* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1983), as well as William Stueck's *The Korean War: An International History* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995), and *The Road to Confrontation: American Policy toward China and Korea, 1947-1950* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1981). For the U.S.-UN relationship I have found useful Leon Gordenker, *The United Nations and the Peaceful Unification of Korea: The Politics of Field Operations, 1947-1950* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1959), and Leland M. Goodrich, *Korea: A Study of U.S. Policy in the United Nations* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1956). With regard to the involvement of the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China I have studied Sergei N. Goncharov, John W. Lewis and Xue Litai, *Uncertain Partners: Stalin, Mao and the Korean War* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993) and Chen Jian, *China's Road to the Korean War: The Making of the Sino-American Confrontation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).



Korean War sprang. Other member states which had their doubts, but ultimately supported misguided American initiatives at the UN, also bore their share of responsibility for sanctioning the political division of the peninsula and for the war that followed. And finally, of course, the Soviet Union and China, which assented to and supported invasion from the north, bore a very direct responsibility for the war which ensued. The United Nations, itself without capacity to organize and direct a UN army, delegated those powers to the United States, and in the subsequent war the United States acted quite unilaterally—with almost no oversight from the UN.

More specifically, this chapter argues that the American suggestion to treat Korea as a former colony and as a result to impose a UN trusteeship over that country (to which Stalin acquiesced) ignored the long history of Korean independence and was doomed to failure.<sup>2</sup> When that effort failed, the use of UN resolutions to divide the country by creating a separate state in the southern portion of the peninsula ignored the fierce desire of all Koreans for unification. Finally, having created a separate state in the south, which led to a Soviet-organized separate state in the north, the United States, aware of a substantial military buildup in the north, knowingly removed all of its troops—leaving South Korea at the mercy of invasion from the north. The American confusion about the strategic importance of Korea—first concluding that it was not worth the price of continued U.S. military effort, but then reversing that conclusion when the invasion came—resulted in a bloody all-out war.

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<sup>2</sup> By January 1, 1946 thousands of Koreans were parading in the streets of the capitol city, Seoul, as a result of the “Big Three” decision to place Korea under a five-year trusteeship. See *New York Herald Tribune*, “Koreans Cancel Protests Over Trustee Plan,” January 2, 1946, p. 7.

## *Background to the Problem*

In 1945 Korea was a colony of Japan, having been formally annexed in 1910, five years after the end of the Russo-Japanese War. Japan's victory in that war had effectively ousted Russia from contention for hegemony over Korea. Nevertheless, the fact that Korea bordered on China and Russia (the Soviet Union in 1945) made it of significant importance for each countries' national security.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, the end of the Second World War pushed the colonial question front and center. Certainly, Britain—the United States' closest ally—opposed any steps which might threaten its own colonial empire. On the other hand, the United States favored self government and eventual independence for colonial dependencies, at least in theory. It had ruled the Philippines as a colony since its capture from Spain in the War of 1898, but the United States granted independence to the Philippines on July 4, 1946. Nevertheless, the United States favored gradual preparation for self-rule, rather than precipitous granting of independence. Moreover, U.S. support for self-determination was constrained by the views of its European friends, themselves colonial powers, such as Britain, France, Belgium and the Netherlands. These factors colored American efforts in dealing with the status of colonies at the end of the war.

Like Indonesia, Korea posed for the United States the problem of how to handle postwar Asian nationalism. Franklin Roosevelt had taken the position that multilateral trusteeship should be imposed on the colonies held by the soon-to-be defeated Axis powers for the purpose, in the words of historian Bruce Cumings, of “channeling and containing revolutionary nationalism

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<sup>3</sup> In November 1945 Averill Harriman, the U.S. ambassador in the Soviet Union, advised Secretary of State Byrnes that the “USSR has made it clear that historically it regards Korea in much the same light as Finland, Poland and Rumania—a springboard for attack on USSR. Therefore USSR may be expected to seek predominant influence in Korea.” Telegram, The Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Harriman) to the Secretary of State, November 12, 1945, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1945, Vol. VI, The British Commonwealth the Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1969), 1122.

rather than opposing it frontally.”<sup>4</sup> Under Secretary of State Sumner Wells captured Roosevelt’s thinking: “the thought of the Chinese, the British, and the United States Governments was moving along similar lines in envisaging the setting up after the war of Korea as an independent country under a temporary international trusteeship.”<sup>5</sup> In addition to the attitudes of U.S. allies, American strategic interests played a very significant role in the choice of multilateral trusteeship, as a means of preventing Soviet domination of the entire Korean peninsula.<sup>6</sup> During the war, in November 1943 Roosevelt, Churchill, and the Chinese leader, Chiang Kai-shek, met at Cairo to discuss Allied policy after the defeat of Japan. The Conference communiqué, released December 1, 1943, proclaimed that

Japan shall be stripped of all the islands in the Pacific which she has seized or occupied . . . that all the territories Japan has stolen from the Chinese . . . shall be restored to the Republic of China . . . the aforesaid three great powers, mindful of the enslavement of the people of Korea, are determined that *in due course* Korea shall become free and independent. (emphasis added).<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Bruce Cumings, “Introduction: The Course of Korean-American Relations, 1943-1953,” in *Child of Conflict: The Korean-American Relationship, 1943-1953* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1983), 11.

<sup>5</sup> Memorandum by the Chief of the Division of Far Eastern Affairs (Hamilton) to the Secretary of State, April 22, 1943, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1943*, Vol. III, The British Commonwealth Eastern Europe the Far East, (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1963), 1090.

<sup>6</sup> William Whitney Stueck, Jr., *The Road to Confrontation: American Policy toward China and Korea, 1947-1950* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981), 20; the threat of Soviet military control over Korea was certainly known to the U.S. government by 1944. In March of that year a memorandum prepared by the Inter-divisional Area Committee on the Far East noted that “the most significant group of Korean troops is doubtless that trained by the Soviet Far Eastern Army. . . . this group has been thoroughly indoctrinated with Soviet ideology and methods of government, and is well trained and equipped, and may total 35,000, of whom 20,000 are believed to be in actual military service. These Koreans may participate in the operations in Korea as soon as the military situation warrants it . . . .” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1944*, Vol. V, the Near East, South Asia, and Africa The Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1965), Memorandum Prepared by the Inter-Divisional Area Committee on the Far East, March 29, 1944, 1226.

<sup>7</sup> Cairo Conference 1943, The Avalon Project (Yale Law School, Lillian Goldman Law Library; available from <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/wwii/cairo.asp>; internet; accessed January 3, 2011.

For a people who had been subjugated by Japan for a mere thirty-five years, but had had a history of independent statehood for a millennium before that, the restriction on their independence suggested by the phrase “in due course” proved deeply disappointing and would lead to later trouble. Koreans wanted immediate independence, and harbored great resentment towards any proposal to delay that result.

The Soviet Union supported Roosevelt’s notion of trusteeship—it had nothing much to lose. At the end of the war Stalin certainly had no desire for a break with the United States, and Korean trusteeship would not necessarily prevent an increased Soviet influence over the Korean peninsula at a later time. When Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin met at the Tehran Conference immediately following the Cairo Conference, Stalin, agreeing with Roosevelt, declared that Korea would “need some period of apprenticeship before full independence . . . perhaps forty years.”<sup>8</sup> At Yalta in February 1945, Roosevelt, Stalin and Churchill arranged for a conference to be held to form a “proposed world organization”—the United Nations—and agreed that their three governments plus the governments of China and France would consult prior to the conference “on the question of territorial trusteeship” which would apply, *inter alia*, to “territories detached from the enemy as a result of the present war.”<sup>9</sup> In conformity with the Yalta understanding, the United Nations Charter adopted at the April-June San Francisco Conference created an international trusteeship system which called for placing under UN trusteeship “territories which may be detached from enemy states as a result of the Second World War.” Korea, notwithstanding its thousand years as an independent country, fell within that

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<sup>8</sup> Quoted in William Whitney Stueck, Jr., *The Road to Confrontation*, 20.

<sup>9</sup> “Protocol of the Proceedings of Crimea Conference,” (Modern History Sourcebook: The Yalta Conference, Feb. 1945); available from <http://fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1945YALTA.html>; internet; accessed January 3, 2011.

provision. At the December 1945 Moscow Interim Meeting of Foreign Ministers, the United States, the Soviet Union and Britain agreed that to

assist the formation of a provisional Korean government . . . there shall be established a Joint Commission consisting of representatives of the United States command in southern Korea and the Soviet command in northern Korea. . . . [to] consult with the Korean democratic parties and social organizations. . . . [and to] work out measures also for helping and assisting (trusteeship) the political, economic and social progress of the Korean people, the development of democratic selfgovernment (*sic*) and the establishment of the national independence of Korea.<sup>10</sup>

Prior to independence, the agreement called for a “four-power [i.e., the United States, the Soviet Union, Britain and China] trusteeship of Korea for a period of up to five years.” The Foreign Ministers left it to the Soviet and American military commands in Korea to determine with which “democratic parties and social organizations” to confer, and it turned out that the Soviets and the Americans had very different ideas about who was, or was not, “democratic.” As will be seen below, when the American occupation force arrived, various Korean groups reacted to the occupation and sought to bend it to their own goals.

As the war in the Pacific suddenly ended in the immediate aftermath of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Allies confronted the problem of taking the surrender of Japanese troops within Japan and throughout Asia, including Korea. By prior agreement with the United States and Britain, the Soviet Union had declared war on Japan on August 8, and Soviet troops entered Korea on August 16. American military forces—stretched thin—did not reach Korea until September 8, when Lieutenant General John R. Hodge finally arrived with his troops from Okinawa. The presence of both Soviet and American troops occupying Korea required a decision as to the specific part of the country each of the two powers would occupy.

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<sup>10</sup> “Interim Meeting of Foreign Ministers of the United States, the United Kingdom and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Moscow, December 16-26, 1945” The Avalon Project (Yale Law School, Lillian Goldman Law Library); available from [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/decade19.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/decade19.asp); internet; accessed January 4, 2011.

On August 10 and 11 in a late-night, hasty *ad hoc* meeting of the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee a young Major Dean Rusk and a Colonel Charles H. Bonesteel proposed a dividing line at the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, which would mean that U.S. forces south of the line would control two-thirds of Korea's people plus Seoul, the Korean capital, whereas the Soviet forces north of the line would control one-third of the population.<sup>11</sup> Rusk and Bonesteel wanted to keep Seoul in the American zone and, knowing that the U.S. Army did not want too great an area of occupation, the two men picked the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel—just north of Seoul---as a convenient dividing line.<sup>12</sup> Stalin promptly agreed to that division.<sup>13</sup>

### ***U.S. Occupation of Southern Korea Begins***

In occupying southern Korea, the U.S. government had no particular plan and exercised no particular judgment about how to create the trusteeship that American policy envisioned. Hodge and his forces were sent to Korea mainly because his were the nearest available troops.

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<sup>11</sup> Draft Memorandum to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, undated, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1945, Vol. VI, The British Commonwealth The Far East* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1969), 1039; Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War: Liberation and the Emergence of Separate Regimes, 1945-1947* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981), 120-121.

<sup>12</sup> Dean Rusk, as told to Richard Rusk, Daniel S. Papp, ed., *As I Saw It* (New York: Penguin Books, 1990), 124.

<sup>13</sup> Stueck, *The Road to Confrontation*, 22; Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs Dean Rusk was in the meeting “which lasted throughout most of the night” at the Pentagon. The State Department wanted the dividing line as far north as possible, but the military, “faced with the scarcity of U.S. forces immediately available,” were more conservative. Asked to “harmonize the political desire to have U.S. forces receive the surrender as far north as possible and the obvious limitations on the ability of the U.S. forces to reach the area,” Rusk and a small group “recommended the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel even though it was further north than could be realistically reached by U.S. forces in the event of Soviet disagreement . . . because we felt it important to include the capital of Korea in the area of responsibility of American troops.” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1945, Vol. VI, The British Commonwealth The Far East* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1969), Draft Memorandum to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, undated, 1039. Rusk's account makes clear that there was an *ad hoc* aspect to the American proposal, but it did reflect the U.S. determination to exercise a considerable degree of control over Korea's fate.

Hodge lacked knowledge of Korea and he had no special experience in running a military government.<sup>14</sup> The Moscow Interim Meeting of Foreign Ministers required Hodge to work with the Soviets in the north in a Joint Commission which would, presumably, lead to Korean unification and independence. But Hodge had other immediate and pressing problems on his hands—he had to establish a stable, working military government in southern Korea, the population of which was torn between Left and Right as well as deeply unhappy with the occupation and division of Korea. Hodge was an honest and highly effective military commander, but his political outlook was deeply conservative, and he quickly took harsh measures against “leftists, anticolonial resisters, populists and advocates of land reform,” all of whom he conflated with communists.<sup>15</sup> On September 15 the State Department political adviser in Korea wired Secretary of State Byrnes that “Southern Korea can best be described as a powder keg ready to explode at the application of a spark.”<sup>16</sup>

In the three week interval between Japan’s surrender on August 15 and Hodge’s arrival in Korea on September 8, various groups took steps to organize Korean society and to position themselves for their own advantage. The Japanese military approached influential Koreans to form an interim administration to maintain law and order to allow the Japanese to depart unharmed. In response, certain Koreans formed a Committee for the Preparation of Korean Independence (CPKI), which demanded no interference from the Japanese and the freeing of all

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<sup>14</sup> Stueck, *The Road to Confrontation*, 22-23; William Stueck, *The Korean War: An International History* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995), 20.

<sup>15</sup> Bruce Cumings, *The Korean War: A History* (New York: The Modern Library, an imprint of Random House, Inc., 2010), 110.

<sup>16</sup>The Political Adviser in Korea (Benninghoff) to the Secretary of State, September 15, 1945 [Received September 28], *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1945, Vol. VI, The British Commonwealth the Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1969), 1049.

political prisoners.<sup>17</sup> Freeing the political prisoners moved the CPKI's political orientation to the left, since many political prisoners were communists, who had actively fought against Japanese colonial domination. On September 6 some CPKI activists formed the Korean People's Republic (KPR), in an effort to create a Korean government before the Americans arrived.<sup>18</sup> The KPR had a fiercely anti-Japanese approach ("We are determined to demolish Japanese imperialism"), together with a leftist agenda, including land reform by confiscating land held by Japanese and "national traitors" who had collaborated with the Japanese, and nationalization of major industries, as well as rapid industrialization, labor reform, compulsory elementary education, freedom of speech, assembly and faith, and voting for all men and women over eighteen years of age.<sup>19</sup> These movements naturally threatened the status and privileges of the landowners and other Korean elites, many of whom had actively aided, or at least acquiesced in, the Japanese colonial regime. Those identified with the Japanese rule could expect very harsh reprisals. They began to organize opposition groups and on September 16 many such conservatives formed the Korean Democratic Party (KDP), which became the "strongest single rightist party throughout the American Occupation."<sup>20</sup> The KDP, being a relatively narrow and elite party, was at a great disadvantage as compared with the KPR, which had much broader support, especially in the countryside. But the KDP saw the arriving Americans as the source of their power.

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<sup>17</sup> Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War*, 70-72.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 84-88.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 92-93.



When U.S. forces landed, Hodge immediately gravitated toward the KDP and the Japanese military and bureaucratic occupiers. Because of his conservative outlook, Hodge was predisposed to ally his military government with right-wing groups and to suppress left-wing groups.<sup>21</sup> In doing so he made use of the very Japanese officials and collaborationist Koreans who were hated by the Korean public.<sup>22</sup> Hodge took steps to eliminate all domestic communist and other leftist groups in the south. Exiled right-wing Korean nationalists who had not lived in Korea for many years, such as Kim Ku and Syngman Rhee, came back, the latter having been returned to southern Korea with the help of the U.S. Office of Strategic Services.<sup>23</sup> They aggressively opposed trusteeship and preached (forcible) unification with the north.<sup>24</sup> Hodge's decision to back this right-wing sentiment, and to use force against leftist and left-moderate

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<sup>21</sup> Cumings, *Child of Conflict*, 14-15.

<sup>22</sup> In September 1945, learning that Hodge had retained the Japanese Governor-General, the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee approved a message to Douglas MacArthur, the supreme U.S. commander in the Pacific, noting the "unfavorable publicity," and advising MacArthur that "for political reasons it is advisable that you should remove from office immediately" the Governor-General as well as chiefs of all bureaus of the Government-General, provincial governors, provincial police chiefs and other Japanese and collaborationist Korean administrators. Appendix to Memorandum by the Acting Chairman of the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee, September 10, 1945. *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1945, Vol. VI, The British Commonwealth the Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1969), 1044-1045; also, Acheson notified Truman that "there has been a very unfavorable reaction both in Korea and in the United States" to the announcement that Japanese officials would be temporarily retained at their posts; Acheson advised Truman to issue a public statement to calm the situation, emphasizing that "the cruel subjugation under the warlords of Japan," and explaining that "such Japanese as may be temporarily retained are being utilized as servants of the Korean people and of our occupying forces only because they are deemed essential by reason of their technical qualifications." "Memorandum by the Acting Secretary of State to President Truman," September 14, 1945, and "Draft Statement Prepared for President Truman," undated. *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1945, Vol. VI, The British Commonwealth the Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1969), 1047-1048.

<sup>23</sup> Cumings, Bruce, *The Korean War*, 58.

<sup>24</sup> Cumings, *Child of Conflict*, 27; by September 1945 Hodge reported to MacArthur that "there is a growing deep-seated distrust of Allied intentions concerning, and real dissatisfaction with the division of Korea along the 38 [degree] line into two occupation zones occupied by forces with such widely divergent policies. Many intelligent Koreans have already reached the conclusion that the Allied Powers have no intention of building up a Korean nation. . . . Based upon policies to date there is little to encourage them in the belief that the Allied promise of Korean independence is sincere." Memorandum by Lieutenant General John R. Hodge to General of the Army Douglas MacArthur at Tokyo, September 24, 1945, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1945, Vol. VI, The British Commonwealth the Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1969), 1054-1055.

groups which might have reached a compromise with Koreans in the north prevented any possible success in achieving a four-power UN-backed trusteeship for Korea.

Notwithstanding formal agreement between Washington and Moscow regarding trusteeship for Korea, Hodge's on-the-ground perception of conflict between Soviet and American ideologies and strategic goals prevented U.S.-Soviet cooperation in unifying Korea. In January 1946, pursuant to the Moscow foreign ministers' agreement, representatives of the U.S. and Soviet occupation forces held a preliminary conference to deal with governance of the peninsula. They established the Joint Commission, but could agree on little else. By early February 1946 Hodge had decided to bypass further efforts to reach accommodation with the Soviets in the Joint Commission and to go forward independently with a "Representative Democratic Council" he supported in the south.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, the Joint Commission met again on March 20 and soon foundered on the issue of which Korean groups the Commission should consult. The Soviets demanded that the Commission consult only groups which supported the Moscow foreign ministers' agreement, including trusteeship. Since Rhee and Ku and most other conservative Korean groups were opposed to trusteeship, the Soviet formula would have greatly favored Korean communists, who were willing to accept the Soviet position on trusteeship. As a result, Hodge rejected the Soviet position and the Commission stalled and adjourned *sine die* in May 1946. Because of the profound differences between the Soviet and American approaches, and also because the Soviet Union had essentially closed off northern Korea, there was never

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<sup>25</sup> Hodge notified MacArthur and (through MacArthur) Byrnes that the Soviet Union was setting up a government in the north consisting of "violent communists," unknown persons from the Soviet Union or Manchuria, or "communist stooges." Hodge advised that "for the present I plan to keep up the prestige of the Korean Representative Democratic Council . . . and discredit the communists. This will probably get liberal and pink press of US on my neck, but [I] feel any other local action now would be fatal." Telegram, General of the Army Douglas MacArthur to the Secretary of State, undated, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1946, Vol. VIII, The Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1971), 640-641.

much chance of the Commission achieving success.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, the Soviet-sponsored communists in the north had such different goals from those of the rightist groups in the south that unification—under trusteeship or otherwise—quickly became highly problematic. Finally, although both occupying Powers publicly supported unification, U.S. interests would be ill served if unification were to lead to communist control and thus to Soviet domination.<sup>27</sup>

Hodge's views prevailed over State Department policy and over prior U.S.-Soviet agreements. Hodge gained a strong ally in his opposition to the State Department: Assistant Secretary of War John J. McCloy reported to then Under Secretary of State Dean Acheson that Hodge's "concern is that the communists will seize by direct means the government in our area."<sup>28</sup> Also, State Department adviser William Langdon reported to Secretary of State Byrnes that the U.S. military in Korea were "glad to note that we might be willing to abandon international trusteeship for Korea if adequate specific guarantees for unification and independence of the country can be obtained from USSR."<sup>29</sup> Langdon concluded after one month's observation in Seoul that he was "unable to fit trusteeship to actual conditions here or to

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<sup>26</sup> Hodge reported that he "consider[ed] the current division of Korea into two occupational zones under widely divergent policies to pose an insurmountable obstacle to uniting Korea into a nation." Memorandum by Lieutenant General John R. Hodge to General of the Army Douglas MacArthur at Tokyo, September 24, 1945, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1945, Vol. VI, The British Commonwealth the Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1969), 1055.

<sup>27</sup> W. Bedell Smith, the American ambassador in the Soviet Union, believed that "any provisional govt set up in a united Korea according to [the State Department's] plan would eventually inevitably be Communist-dominated." Telegram, The Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Smith) to the Secretary of State, August 28, 1947, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1947, Vol. VI, The Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), 775.

<sup>28</sup> The Assistant Secretary of War (McCloy) to the Under Secretary of State (Acheson), November 13, 1945, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1945, Vol. VI, The British Commonwealth The Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1969), 1123.

<sup>29</sup> Telegram, The Acting Political Adviser in Korea (Langdon) to the Secretary of State, December 11, 1945, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1945, Vol. VI, The British Commonwealth The Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1969), 1140.

be persuaded of its suitability from moral and practical standpoints, and, therefore, believe we should drop it.”<sup>30</sup> No less a personage than U.S. Ambassador to the Soviet Union W. Averell Harriman supported Hodge, and by January 1946 State Department Director of the Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs John Carter Vincent described trusteeship on the NBC radio network as “a possible interim measure,” and “only a *procedure*, which may or may not be necessary.” (emphasis in the original).<sup>31</sup>

As world-wide tensions mounted between the United States and the Soviet Union, Korea became a focus of the conflict between the two superpowers. Truman’s representative on the Allied Reparations Committee, Edwin W. Pauley, advised Truman that although Korea was a small country, it was an

Ideological battleground upon which our entire success in Asia may depend. It is here where a test will be made of whether a democratic competitive system can be adapted to meet the challenge of defeated feudalism, or whether some other system, i.e., Communism, will become stronger.<sup>32</sup>

Truman responded that he agreed that Korea was an ideological battlefield upon which our entire success in Asia may depend.<sup>33</sup> By July Truman had resolved that the United States should try to comply with the spirit and terms of the Moscow agreement [for trusteeship] . . . [but] the most effective way to meet the situation in Korea is to intensify and persevere in our present efforts to

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<sup>30</sup> Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War*, 184.

<sup>31</sup> Quoted in Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War*, 525 (footnote 53).

<sup>32</sup> Ambassador Edwin W. Pauley to President Truman, June 22, 1946, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1946, Vol. VIII, The Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1971), 706.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 713.

build up a self-governing and democratic Korea, neither subservient to nor menacing any power.<sup>34</sup> Perseverance with Hodge's "present efforts" meant that trusteeship was dead.

Although the president still paid lip service to the U.S. commitment to trusteeship, his emphasis now lay with creating a separate, self-governing South Korea.<sup>35</sup> Under State Department instructions to create a provisional Korean government in the south which would avoid extremists of both Left and Right and give proportional representation based on political strength and popular support, Hodge nevertheless gave overwhelming preference to rightist parties, because he recognized that following State Department guidelines would have resulted in leftist control of any political organization that was created.<sup>36</sup> Hodge essentially retained the Japanese national police and judicial systems, and put in place right-wing Korean personnel within those bodies.<sup>37</sup> These organizations, controlled by rightists, used their power—often violently—to put down the Left. More and more, Hodge found himself allied with Rhee, who was becoming the most dynamic alternative to the suppressed leftists. During the balance of 1946 adverse positions in Korea hardened—both between the north and the south and between the Right and Left within the south. Rightist forces in the south aggressively attacked the trusteeship concept and caused widespread popular unrest. In October Hodge held elections in the south for an interim legislative assembly, which produced a rightist victory. In effect, the U.S. policy had moved to nation-building, i.e., creating a separate country in the south.

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<sup>34</sup> President Truman to Ambassador Edwin W. Pauley, at Paris, July 16, 1946, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1946, Vol. VIII, The Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1971), 713.

<sup>35</sup> As early as January 1946, in an unsent letter to Secretary of State Byrnes, Truman asserted that "we should rehabilitate China and create a strong central government there. We should do the same for Korea." Robert H. Ferrell, ed., *Off the Record: The Private Papers of Harry S. Truman* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980), 80.

<sup>36</sup> Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War*, 234.

<sup>37</sup> Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War*, 158-169.

## *Contradictions in U.S. Policy toward Korea*

From the beginning, the United States had conflicting, and even contradictory, goals in Korea. U.S. policy-makers wanted to prevent Soviet domination of the Korean peninsula by sharing (with Britain, the Soviet Union, and China) hegemony over Korea, but were unwilling to pay the price of perpetuating a lasting U.S. military occupation to prevent such domination. American policy foundered on that contradiction, and with no clear solution at hand the Truman administration looked to the UN. U.S. policy-makers focused on a UN trusteeship as a means of sharing control over Korea and, as previously discussed, this concept was formalized at the Moscow Interim Meeting of Foreign Ministers into an agreement for a United Nations trusteeship of up to five years. This became official U.S. policy, and was so formulated by the State Department.<sup>38</sup>

Even though Hodge obviously knew the policy, his actions undercut that policy.<sup>39</sup> Virtually all Koreans wanted immediate independence and unification. Trusteeship, for most Koreans, invoked the old rationalizations the Japanese had used to justify their rule over Korea.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> The Director of the Office of Far Eastern Affairs, John Carter Vincent, advised Under Secretary of State Acheson that “we wanted to be sure that General Hodge was officially informed that a trusteeship for Korea is the official policy of this Government.” Memorandum by the Director of the Office of Far Eastern Affairs (Vincent) to the Under Secretary of State (Acheson), November 16, 1945, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1945, Vol. VI, The British Commonwealth the Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1969), 1127; In October 1945 Chief of Staff George C. Marshall advised MacArthur that the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee was considering a proposal to set up an international trusteeship for Korea “at the earliest practicable date.” Telegram, The Chief of Staff (Marshall) to General of the Army Douglas MacArthur, at Tokyo, October 1, 1945, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1945, Vol. VI, The British Commonwealth the Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1969), 1067.

<sup>39</sup> Hodge was opposed to trusteeship. When Hodge heard of the Moscow agreement he told Korean leaders that if the population supported his military government, it might be possible to avoid trusteeship. William Whitney Stueck, Jr., *The Road to Confrontation*, 24.

<sup>40</sup> Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War*, 150.

Hodge told Koreans that trusteeship was an isolated view in the State Department and that communist sympathizers were the only Americans who favored trusteeship.<sup>41</sup> Rhee and his political party strongly opposed trusteeship. Leftist groups had also originally opposed trusteeship, but in January 1946 they reversed their position, now backing the full text of the agreement reached at the Moscow Interim Meeting of Foreign Ministers, which included the arrangement for trusteeship for up to five years. Therefore, because of his own views and because of his need to placate right-wing Koreans in order to maintain law and order, Hodge had become an opponent of trusteeship, and he directly contradicted official State Department policy. Although he offered his resignation, his offer was rejected and, notwithstanding his opposition to official U.S. policy on trusteeship, he maintained his command of the Military Government in Korea.<sup>42</sup> By not replacing Hodge, the Truman administration had in effect sanctioned his opposition to State Department authority and to the whole concept of cooperation with Moscow over trusteeship. The deference granted by Truman's administration to MacArthur and his subordinate, Hodge, may have been excessive, and Truman certainly tolerated military insubordination, allowing a commander in Korea to override official Washington policy.

Hodge further ignored State Department policy by taking steps to harden the division between north and south. As noted above, he moved to organize national defense forces and a separate Korean administration in the south, whereas the State Department feared that moving in this direction without agreement with the Soviet Union would prevent unification and result in the creation of two separate Koreas.<sup>43</sup> As a result, there was a virtual split between formal U.S.

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<sup>41</sup> Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War*, 218-220.

<sup>42</sup> Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War*, 227-229.

<sup>43</sup> Bruce Cumings, ed., *Child of Conflict*, 15; Secretary of State Byrnes advised Hodge's acting political adviser that "the Department feels that the formation and support of a 'provisional government' or even a 'governing

policy at the State Department and actual, on-the-ground policy as enacted by the military in Korea. State Department officials, such as John Carter Vincent, were dissatisfied with Hodge, but the opposition was mild and resulted in no action. At this time the State Department was “Europe-centered,” with less interest in the Asian mainland.<sup>44</sup> As a result, the voices of Asia specialists in the Department were often given insufficient weight. Over time, Hodge prevailed over the State Department, both because he was on the ground and was given wide latitude by MacArthur, and because other powerful policy-makers—including John J. McCloy, Dean Rusk, George Kennan, Averell Harriman, and perhaps Truman—shared his point of view.<sup>45</sup> Most importantly, Hodge prevailed over State Department directives because those directives seemed incompatible with preservation of a pro-U.S. and anti-communist regime in the south.<sup>46</sup> The

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commission’ may carry with it implications that such a body has, or might at least claim in the near future, jurisdiction over all of Korea.” In this prediction Byrnes was, of course, prescient. Telegram, The Secretary of State to the Acting Political Adviser in Korea (Langdon), November 29, 1945, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1945, Vol. VI, The British Commonwealth the Far East (Washington: The United States Government Printing Office, 1969), 1137.

<sup>44</sup> Alonzo L. Hamby, *Man of the People*, 398.

<sup>45</sup> Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War*, 229-230; In November 1945 Assistant Secretary of War John J. McCloy wrote to Under Secretary of State Acheson: “Let us consider too and plan what we shall do if the Soviets continue to refuse to cooperate . . . we may find out to our chagrin what Stalin meant when he agreed to the idea of a trusteeship for Korea with the delicate proviso ‘if necessary’.” The Assistant Secretary of War (McCloy) to the Under Secretary of State (Acheson), November 13, 1945, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1945, Vol. VI, The British Commonwealth the Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1969), 1124; and also, as noted previously, in November the State Department Acting Political Adviser in Korea, William R. Langdon, advised Secretary of State Byrnes that “after one month’s observation in liberated Korea and with background of earlier service in Korea, I am unable to fit trusteeship to actual conditions here or to be persuaded of its suitability from moral and practical standpoints, and, therefore, believe we should drop it.” Telegram, The Acting Political Adviser in Korea (Langdon) to the Secretary of State, November 20, 1945, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1945, Vol. VI, The British Commonwealth the Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1969), 1130-1131; Byrnes responded to Langdon that the State Department was “giving careful consideration . . . [to Langdon’s suggestion] concerning possible abandonment of an international trusteeship for Korea . . . adoption of this principle may still be necessary to secure the elimination of the barrier of the 38 parallel . . . It has been our thought that such an arrangement would serve best to train Koreans adequately to assume the responsibilities of full independence and at the same time to assure the emergence of a united, independent Korea with a minimum of continued foreign interference in Korean affairs.” Telegram, The Secretary of State to the Acting Political Adviser in Korea (Langdon), November 29, 1945, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1945, Vol. VI, The British Commonwealth the Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1969), 1137.

<sup>46</sup> Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War*, 230.



formal U.S. trusteeship policy backed by the State Department risked the possibility of communist control of the south—a risk that U.S. leaders were ultimately unwilling to accept.

Another contradiction (or disagreement) in American policy arose later between staying in Korea and getting out. Official U.S. policy favored a U.S. presence in Korea (first by military government and later by four-power trusteeship) until Korea could establish itself as an independent nation, capable of resisting Soviet hegemony.<sup>47</sup> As previously noted, the concept of a four-power trusteeship had been formally agreed to at the December 1945 Moscow Foreign Ministers meeting. Even after the commitment to trusteeship had been effectively abandoned and replaced with the concept of nation-building, i.e., creating a separate, democratic, free market government in South Korea, Truman still saw the need to “stay in Korea long enough to see the job through.”<sup>48</sup> Initially military leaders and State Department officials agreed with Truman although the risks of continued military presence were known, but later American military leaders and some in the State Department saw the advantages of continued occupation as outweighed by the disadvantages, and wanted to get out. As early as October 1946 Hodge was warning of a “Russian trained Korean army” planning to “‘liberate’ South Korea.”<sup>49</sup>

Although no progress was made throughout the balance of 1946 in unifying Korea under trusteeship, the concept was not yet officially dead. In April 1947 George C. Marshall, the new Secretary of State, and Molotov agreed to reconvene the Joint Commission. Nevertheless, the

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<sup>47</sup> William Whitney Stueck, Jr., *The Road to Confrontation*, 29.

<sup>48</sup> President Truman to Ambassador Edwin W. Pauley, at Paris, July 16, 1946, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1946, Vol. VIII, The Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1971), 713.

<sup>49</sup> Hodge warned that “reliable informants now returning from North Korea insist that 3 to 400,000 Korean youths are being trained by Russians for invasion purposes.” Telegram, General of the Army Douglas MacArthur to the Chief of Staff (Eisenhower), October 28, 1946, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1946, Vol. VIII, The Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1971), 750.

underlying conflict over whether a unified Korea would be dominated by Soviet-backed Korean communists or the U.S.-backed Korean right-wing—which resulted in continued jockeying over which Korean parties would be recognized for purposes of consulting on unification and which would not—eventually stalled the proceedings. Marshall reported to Acheson that he proposed advising the Soviets that the Joint Commission had become “stalemated” because of “failure to agree on the definition of the word ‘democratic.’”<sup>50</sup> Meanwhile, Syngman Rhee did everything he could to sabotage the Joint Commission.<sup>51</sup> Finally on August 26 Acting Secretary of State Robert A. Lovett proposed to Molotov that each zone hold separate elections for provisional legislatures which in turn would select representatives in proportion to the populations in the two zones, and these representatives would, themselves, comprise a provisional national government. Since two-thirds of the Korean population was in the south, the American plan would result in the rightists—dominant in the South—having control over the new government. The Soviets understandably rejected the American proposal.

By 1947 questions began to appear regarding the value to the United States of continuing the occupation of Southern Korea. In September State Department political adviser Joseph E. Jacobs raised the question whether Korea was “of sufficiently vital importance [to] the United

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<sup>50</sup> Telegram, The Secretary of State to the Acting Secretary of State, April 2, 1947, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1947, Vol. VI, The Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), 625.

<sup>51</sup> According to Hodge, the “reopening of the Joint Commission was [the] greatest disappointment to date for Syngman Rhee and his close followers of the extreme right. . . . His activities have ranged all the way from promises of a separate government of South Korea . . . to a planned revolt to seize governmental power from United States occupation forces. . . .” Telegram, Lieutenant General John R. Hodge to General of the Army Douglas MacArthur, at Tokyo, June 2, 1947, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1947, Vol. VI, The Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), 661; MacArthur advised Marshall that “the reconvening of the Joint Commission was the signal for intensely renewed political activity, chicanery and scramble for power . . . . The Syngman Rhee propaganda against trusteeship makes the word synonymous with communism and Russian control and greatly confuses a politically infantile people.” Telegram, General of the Army Douglas MacArthur to the Secretary of State, July 2, 1947, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1947, Vol. VI, The Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), 683.

States in its relations with the Soviet Union . . . for the United States to undertake the risk and expense of holding South Korea?”<sup>52</sup> On the other hand, Walter Bedell Smith, now U.S. ambassador to the Soviet Union, advised Marshall that “any provisional gov[ernmen]t set up in a united Korea according to Dep[artmen]t’s plan would inevitably be Communist-dominated. . . . In such case US will face Soviet control of a vital strategic area of Far East.”<sup>53</sup>

In July 1947 Truman sent Lieutenant-General Albert Wedemeyer on an investigation trip to China and Korea. Wedemeyer reported to Truman that withdrawal of all American assistance would result in the occupation of South Korea by Soviet or North Korean military units and “would cost the United States an immense loss in moral prestige among the peoples of Asia.”<sup>54</sup> Nevertheless, American military leaders questioned the value of the continuing military presence and began to advocate pulling out of Korea, both because they saw little strategic reason to stay and because they saw the Korean occupation as a relatively poor use of limited U.S. military resources. The large expenditures required to implement the Truman Doctrine in Greece and Turkey and the military and economic assistance to other countries considered more important than Korea (such as China and Japan) undoubtedly played a role in this reversal of opinion.<sup>55</sup> On April 4, 1947 Secretary of War Robert Patterson voiced the new approach: the

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<sup>52</sup> Telegram, The Political Adviser in Korea (Jacobs) to the Secretary of State, September 19, 1947, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1947, Vol. VI, The Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), 805.

<sup>53</sup> Telegram, The Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Smith) to the Secretary of State, August 28, 1947, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1947, Vol. VI, The Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), 775.

<sup>54</sup> Report to the President on China-Korea, September 1947, Submitted by Lieutenant General A.C. Wedemeyer, September 19, 1947, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1947, Vol. VI, The Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), 803.

<sup>55</sup> Bruce Cumings, ed., *Child of Conflict*, 18-21.

United States should “get out of Korea at an early date.”<sup>56</sup> James Forrestal, now Secretary of the new Department of Defense, reported that the Joint Chiefs of Staff had concluded that “from the standpoint of military security, the United States has little strategic interest in maintaining the present troops and bases in Korea.”<sup>57</sup> The Joint Chiefs reported that any American offensive in Asia “most probably would by-pass the Korean peninsula,” and if any enemy power were to occupy Korea, “neutralization by [U.S.] air action would be more feasible and less costly than large scale ground operations.” The report noted that “the occupation of Korea is requiring very large expenditures . . . with little, if any, lasting benefit to the security of the United States.”

Finally, the Joint Chiefs concluded that

continued lack of progress toward a free and independent Korea . . . will result in such conditions, including violent disorder, as to make the position of United States occupation forces untenable. A precipitate withdrawal of our forces under such circumstances would lower the military prestige of the United States, quite possibly to the extent of adversely affecting cooperation in other areas more vital to the security of the United States.<sup>58</sup>

Thus, by 1947 efforts to achieve U.S. - Soviet agreement on Korea had completely failed, trusteeship had been effectively abandoned, and the American military wanted to get out before it might appear that they left under pressure. Moreover, the Korean right-wing, more and more under Rhee’s leadership, seemed uncontrollable. Hodge advised Secretary of State Marshall that “Rhee and his gang are engaged in all-out opposition to Russians, the Joint Commission, General

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<sup>56</sup>The Secretary of War (Patterson) to the Acting Secretary of State, April 4, 1947, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1947, Vol. VI, The Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), 626.

<sup>57</sup> Memorandum for the Secretary of State, September 26, 1947, PSF: Subject File, 1940-1953 Foreign Affairs File Italy: General to Korea: NSRB Memo: July 6, 1950; folder PSF: Subject File Foreign Affairs Korea: General, Truman Papers, Truman Library.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

Hodge and military government . . . he [Rhee] is so far out on a limb that he will not listen to reason.”<sup>59</sup> With U.S. – Korean policy in such disarray, it was time for another option.

### *The United States Goes to the United Nations*

The United States now chose to use the UN as an instrument to effectuate a change in U.S.-Korean policy. Unable to deal with the Soviets and unwilling to perpetuate a costly, possibly unending military occupation of Korea, the Truman administration needed some way to extricate American troops without forfeiting control of the entire Korean peninsula to the Soviet Union. The solution to the dilemma lay in the United Nations.

In June 1947 Secretary of State Marshall had already broached the subject of possible supervision of all elections in Korea by a UN commission “in order that no charge can later be made of undue pressure.”<sup>60</sup> In August the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee received a report from its Ad Hoc Committee on Korea which concluded that the United States could not withdraw from Korea under circumstances leading to communist domination of the entire country because “the resulting repercussions would seriously damage U.S. prestige in the Far East and throughout the world.” But the report also said that “every effort should be made,

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<sup>59</sup> Telegram, Lieutenant General John R. Hodge to the Secretary of State, July 16, 1947, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1947, Vol. VI, The Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), 704; Lieutenant General Albert C. Wedemeyer reported to Truman that “extreme rightist groups under Dr. Syngman Rhee . . . have done much to block American efforts . . . by adopting . . . an obstructive attitude. These groups . . . employing terroristic tactics, have used methods of intimidation to restrict the political activity of middle-of-the-road and non-Communist leftist groups.” Report to the President on China-Korea, September 1947, Submitted by Lieutenant General A. C. Wedemeyer, September 19, 1947, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1947, Vol. VI, The Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), 801-802.

<sup>60</sup> Telegram, The Secretary of State to the Political Adviser in Korea (Jacobs), June 19, 1947, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1947, Vol. VI, The Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), 676.

however, to liquidate or reduce the U.S. commitment of men and money in Korea as soon as possible without abandoning Korea to Soviet domination.” Finally, it concluded that if no breakthrough occurred in negotiations with the Soviets, the U.S. government “must submit the matter to the next session of the General Assembly of the United Nations.”<sup>61</sup> The proposal had already gained the support of the War and Navy Departments as well as the Northeast Asia, Far Eastern, Eastern Europe, Special Political Affairs, and Occupied Areas desks of the State Department.<sup>62</sup> Thus, the plan had wide support within the Truman administration. Five days later Marshall wrote to Molotov: without specifically mentioning an approach to the UN, he suggested that each government “immediately consider what further steps may usefully be taken to achieve . . . the establishment of an independent, united Korea.”— “in justice to the Korean people . . . there cannot be further delay.”<sup>63</sup>

Moving the Korean problem to the UN resulted in passing off some of the responsibility for solving the problem, providing a path for removing the U.S. occupation forces before a possible armed conflict broke out, and garnering the added legitimacy that the United Nations would bring to whatever solution was reached.<sup>64</sup> In this and other cases the U.S. government saw the UN as a useful tool for accomplishing its purposes, even though in this instance such use overrode the interests of its powerful adversary, the Soviet Union, in a very sensitive area, i.e., a country on its border. The American move to the General Assembly has been described as

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<sup>61</sup> Report by the Ad Hoc Committee on Korea, August 4, 1947, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1947, Vol. VI, The Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), 738-739.

<sup>62</sup> Memorandum by the Assistant Secretary of State (Hilldring) to the Secretary of State, August 6, 1947, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1947, Vol. VI, The Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), 742-743.

<sup>63</sup> Telegram, The Secretary of State to the Embassy in the Soviet Union, August 11, 1947, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1947, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1947, The Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), 749.

<sup>64</sup> William Whitney Stueck, Jr., *The Road to Confrontation*, 88-90.

“giving the United Nations a hot potato.” On August 26 Assistant Secretary of State Lovett notified Molotov of the U.S. plan to invite the UN to have observers present during all stages of elections in the north and the south.<sup>65</sup>

On September 17, 1947 Marshall appeared before the second session of the General Assembly and requested inclusion on the Assembly agenda of the problem of the independence of Korea.<sup>66</sup> Marshall proposed holding Korean elections by the two occupying powers in their respective zones on basically the same terms as Lovett had previously submitted to Molotov. The elections, to be held by March 31, 1948, would be supervised by a commission of the United Nations, and “all occupying forces should be withdrawn from Korea at the earliest practicable date.”<sup>67</sup>

Gromyko opposed the American plan on the grounds of illegality, i.e., that it violated the Moscow agreement, and that it called for elections “in the presence of foreign troops” and thus did “not permit the Korean people to express their will freely.”<sup>68</sup> John Foster Dulles, speaking for the U.S. delegation, said that the proposed resolutions meant that the United Nations was “going to try to break the deadlock which has developed in Korea and which, for two years now,

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<sup>65</sup> Telegram, The Acting Secretary of State to the Embassy in the Soviet Union, August 26, 1947, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1947, Vol. VI, The Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), 773-774.

<sup>66</sup> For American purposes the General Assembly was far superior to the Security Council, since in the Security Council a Soviet veto could have derailed U.S. efforts to obtain a UN vote to legitimize a new civilian government to be formed in South Korea.

<sup>67</sup> Leland M. Goodrich, *Korea: A Study of U.S. Policy in the United Nations* (New York: The Council on Foreign Relations, 1956; reprint, Westport, Ct.: Greenwood Press, Inc., 1979), 20.

<sup>68</sup> United Nations General Assembly, *Official Records*, Second Session, Volume 1, Eighty-Second Plenary Meeting, September 17, 1947, 828.

has prevented the achievement of independence for Korea.”<sup>69</sup> The Soviets submitted two resolutions, one extending an invitation to the “elected representatives of the Korean people from Northern and Southern Korea to take part in the discussion of the question,” in the Assembly debate, and another resolution providing for the simultaneous withdrawal of all occupation troops “thereby leaving to the Korean people itself the establishment of a national government of Korea.”<sup>70</sup> The United States sought to gut the Soviet plan to invite Korean representatives to the Assembly by offering an amendment to it, establishing the United Nations Temporary Commission on Korea [UNTCOK], “to facilitate and expedite” the participation of elected representatives of the Korean people and to insure that the Korean representatives would be “elected by the Korean people and not mere appointees from military authorities in Korea.” This version of the resolution, as modified by the U.S. amendment, totally changed the original Soviet proposal because it failed to allow any input from Koreans in the General Assembly proceedings and because it called for UN supervision of the proposed elections in both North and South Korea. The Czech, Yugoslav, Byelorussian and Ukrainian representatives opposed the resolution as amended, but the Soviets were silent—Gromyko having previously advised the First Committee that “without the participation of representatives of the Korean people in [the Assembly’s] discussion, the U.S.S.R. would not be able to take part in the work of the commission.”<sup>71</sup> On November 14 the General Assembly, ignoring the refusal of the Soviets to

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<sup>69</sup> United Nations General Assembly, *Official Records*, Second Session, Volume II, Hundred and Eleventh Plenary Meeting, November 13, 1947, 832.

<sup>70</sup> United Nations General Assembly, *Official Records*, Second Session, Volume II, Hundred and Eleventh Plenary Meeting, November 13, 1947, 826.

<sup>71</sup> Quoted in Goodrich, *Korea*, 32.



participate, adopted the U.S.-amended resolution by a vote of forty-three to none, with six abstentions.

Thus, most UN member states supported this U.S. initiative, which was bound to split the Korean peninsula. Soviet and satellite representatives made clear their objections to UNTCOK.<sup>72</sup> Since the U.S. policy-makers and the Assembly members had reason to know beforehand that the Soviet Union would oppose the proposed U.S. plan for elections, it was quite obvious that no UN-observed vote would occur north of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel.<sup>73</sup> In following the American lead by approving this resolution, the Assembly majority, including the United States, simply failed to confront the crucial question: what would happen to Korea if the vote proceeded in the U.S. occupation zone, but not in the Soviet zone. In the place of a realistic analysis, there was only the vague hope that the newly elected South Korean leadership would work out some compromise with their deadly enemies in the North. Therefore, the U.S.-backed plan (which now had the approval of the General Assembly) was fundamentally flawed from its inception.

The members of UNTCOK soon fell into disagreement over the unresolved problem of the propriety of UN-sanctioned voting in the south, but not in the north. On Dulles' suggestion, the resolution had named as UNTKOC's members Australia, Canada, China, El Salvador, France, India, the Philippines, Syria and one Soviet satellite, the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist

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<sup>72</sup> United Nations General Assembly, *Official Records*, Second Session, Volume II, One Hundred and Eleventh Plenary Meeting, November 13, 1947, p. 831-832.

<sup>73</sup> Gromyko expressly stated that "the American plan [of elections] . . . and the establishment of a Korean national government would be carried out in the presence of foreign troops . . . this cannot be evaluated otherwise than as an attempt to organize the elections concurrently with foreign interference in the internal affairs of Korea, with a view to ensuring the election . . . of persons upon whom the American military authorities have long been relying in Korea, that is to say, arrant reactionaries, who are concerned no so much with the fate of their own people as with the advantages to be gained for their foreign protectors and for themselves." United Nations General Assembly, *Official Records*, Second Session, Volume 2, Hundred and Eleventh Plenary Meeting, November 13, 1947, p. 828.

Republic.<sup>74</sup> The Ukrainian representative, clearly being in the minority and whose country had previously announced the decision not to cooperate with the Commission, refused to serve.<sup>75</sup> Representatives of the remaining eight members met in Seoul on January 12, 1948. They promptly made contact with the U.S. Military Government in South Korea, but had no luck whatsoever with the Soviet authorities in North Korea.

Strong differences of opinion quickly appeared within the Commission. The delegates were split between those who wanted to resolve the U.S.-Soviet differences by mediation (i.e., Australia, Canada, India and Syria), versus others (i.e., China, the Philippines, El Salvador and, to some extent, France) who lacked confidence that mediation might succeed, and who therefore favored setting up an independent state in South Korea. Canada and Australia became the two most outspoken critics of the U.S. nation-building project in South Korea. The Canadian government promptly expressed its reluctance to participate and desire to withdraw from UNTCOK because the opposition of the Soviet Union would make the project “futile.”<sup>76</sup> In order to keep Canada on board Truman personally intervened with the Canadian prime minister, Mackenzie King, arguing that the United States and Canada could better deal with world problems “if we can in some way avoid the public speculation and irritation which must inevitably follow from Canada’s absence from the Korean Commission to which she was elected

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<sup>74</sup> Leon Gordenker, *The United Nations and the Peaceful Unification of Korea: The Politics of Field Operations, 1947-1950* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1959), 18.

<sup>75</sup> Leon Gordenker, *The Politics of Field Operations*, 50.

<sup>76</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, by the Acting Secretary of State, January 3, 1948, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1948, Vol. VI, The Far East and Australia (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1974), 1079.

at the recent General Assembly session.”<sup>77</sup> After “a very heated session with his Secretary for External Affairs,” King agreed that Canada would continue to serve on UNTCOK, but that if the Soviet Union refused to permit UNTCOK to operate in the North, the Canadian representative would ask for instructions from the Interim General Assembly.<sup>78</sup> Political advisor Joseph Jacobs reported to Marshall that the Australian, Canadian and Indian representatives on UNTCOK “have all along, constituted what might be called a ‘British bloc’ or ‘anti-American bloc’ . . . . Our big problem among the delegates is Jackson, the Australian. He is definitely anti-American . . . .”<sup>79</sup>

UNTCOK began its work in early 1948. Its Sub-Committee 1 held hearings in Korea on the issue of “free atmosphere” for the elections, including, *inter alia*, the testimony of U.S. Brigadier General John Weckerling, U.S. Major General William F. Dean, and U.S. Lieutenant General John R. Hodge, the Commanding General in Korea. These military witnesses tried to be extremely cooperative, but the sum of their testimony raised doubts about just how fair the elections would be. Hodge forthrightly testified that

the problem of law and order in this area has been a great one . . . . I can guarantee, and will guarantee, that the United States Command will do everything it can to carry out free elections, and to foster and build it up, but for me blandly to guarantee a free election is impossible. I cannot even guarantee to have an election . . . .<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> President Truman to the Canadian Prime Minister (Mackenzie King), January 5, 1948, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1948, Vol. VI, The Far East and Australia (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1974), 1082.

<sup>78</sup> Memorandum by the Chief of the Division of British Commonwealth Affairs (Wailes) to the Under Secretary of State (Lovett), January 8, 1948, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1948, Vol. VI, The Far East and Australia (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1974), 1084.

<sup>79</sup> Telegram, The Political Adviser in Korea (Jacobs) to the Secretary of State, February 12, 1948, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1948, Vol. VI, The Far East and Australia (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1974), 1106-1107.

<sup>80</sup> United Nations General Assembly, Official Records: Third Session, Supplement No.9 (A/575) Volume III, Annex IX, Sub-Committee 1, March 3, 1948 (Lake Success, New York: United Nations, 1948), 34.

When UNTCOK delegates pressed Weckerling on the issues of human rights and police conduct, he responded that:

If all these ideals were insisted upon, both administratively and in matters of education and other factors, you might never have an election, so some compromise might have to be worked out.<sup>81</sup>

Hodge, interestingly, referred to the “United States Command,” rather than the United Nations Command, reflecting his mindset as an American, rather than a UN, commanding general in Korea. Likewise, Weckerling unconsciously revealed the confusion in his own mind between the United States and the UN—and the extent to which he viewed the UN as an instrument of U.S. policy—when he misspoke and said that he thought “General Hodge would very sympathetically receive any request for assignment of *United States* observers,” and the French delegate, Jean Paul-Boncour, corrected him: “You mean *United Nations* observers.” (emphasis added)<sup>82</sup> Dean opined that “any election we have here in South Korea should be an election for an interim government for South Korea alone.”<sup>83</sup> But Dean’s view would not prevail. On the contrary, the election which followed would be used to promote the government elected as having authority over all of Korea.

Sub-Committee 2 of UNTCOK took oral statements of various important “Korean personalities,” including Syngman Rhee and Kim Ku, both right-wing politicians in the South.

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<sup>81</sup> United Nations General Assembly, Official Records: Third Session, Supplement No.9 (A/575) Volume III, Annex IX, Sub-Committee 1, February 19, 1948 (Lake Success, New York: United Nations, 1948), 9.

<sup>82</sup> United Nations General Assembly, Official Records: Third Session, Supplement No. 9 (A/575) Volume III, Annex IX, Sub-Committee 1, February 19, 1948 (Lake Success, New York: United Nations, 1948), 6.

<sup>83</sup> United Nations General Assembly, Official Records: Third Session, Supplement No. 9 (A/575) Volume III, Annex IX, Sub-Committee 1, February 24, 1948 (Lake Success, New York: United Nations, 1948), 17.

A clue to the state of democratic freedoms in South Korea was revealed when the identity of a witness representing a “Moderate Left Organization” could not be disclosed, for “reasons of personal security.”<sup>84</sup> No interviews occurred in the North, since North Korean authorities denied UNTCOK access to the North.

The interviews in the South revealed substantial reasons to doubt the wisdom of proceeding with elections in the South alone, both because of lack of a “free atmosphere” in the South, and because of the likelihood that such an election would further split the country. When the Australian delegate, S.H. Jackson, pressed Rhee whether in “democratic elections” all parties “without discrimination, should have equal freedom of speech, of meeting, and of publishing their views now and during the elections,” Rhee answered that

Under democratic forms of government, free speech and free assembly and all that, under certain circumstances, have to be guided and controlled . . . . unless the communists are kept under control, they may damage and destroy almost any institution in existence . . . .<sup>85</sup>

Kim Ku, Rhee’s conservative rival, testified that he did not think that

There will be any free or fair elections in South Korea, because, as far as I know, there is a certain political party in South Korea which manipulates almost everything in the political field in order to control all the votes in the coming election. As far as I understand, almost everything is prepared for the control of the entire election.<sup>86</sup>

Koo then told the Sub-Committee that

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<sup>84</sup> United Nations General Assembly, Official Records: Third Session, Supplement No.9 (A/575) Volume III, Annex X, Sub-Committee 2, January 26, 1948 (Lake Success, New York: United Nations, 1948), 70.

<sup>85</sup> United Nations General Assembly, Official Records: Third Session, Supplement No. 9 (A/575) Volume III, Annex X, Sub-Committee 2, January 26, 1948 (Lake Success, New York: United Nations, 1948), 58.

<sup>86</sup> United Nations General Assembly, Official Records: Third Session, Supplement No. 9 (A/575) Volume III, Annex X, Sub-Committee 2, January 26, 1948 (Lake Success, New York: United Nations, 1948), 66.

Unless the occupation forces are withdrawn from Korea and all military and semi-military organizations disarmed or disbanded altogether, the Korean people will not have freedom of elections. . . . In case of withdrawal of the occupation forces from either North or South Korea, the maintenance of order in Korea after the withdrawal must be taken over by the Commission; in other words, by the United Nations.<sup>87</sup>

Koo's prescription for a free election—involving the withdrawal of all American troops from South Korea and all Soviet troops from North Korea, and their replacement by UN personnel capable of maintaining order and running an election, not to mention protecting the South from the North and the North from the South—would have required the insertion of a very large and well-armed UN force.

When the Sub-Committee questioned the representative of a “Moderate Left Organization,” they heard quite a different perspective than Rhee had revealed. The witness testified that “many newspapers have been closed and their editors imprisoned” because of criticizing local authorities; that “in the past two or three years terrorism has reigned in Korea because there are no guarantees for the life and the property of the people, and there is constant fear among the people”; and that with regard to the right of assembly “sometimes even two persons grouped together and having a private conversation have been said to form an assembly, and have been imprisoned.”<sup>88</sup>

The majority of UNTCOK delegates shrank from the prospect of nation-building in the south, which they feared would inevitably lead to two Korean states. They believed that creating “a separate sovereign government” in South Korea would not lead to the “establishment of a National Government” or to the re-establishment of “the national independence of Korea.” Also,

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<sup>87</sup> United Nations General Assembly, Official Records: Third Session, Supplement No. 9 (A/575) Volume III, Annex X, Sub-Committee 2, January 26, 1948 (Lake Success, New York: United Nations, 1948), 66.

<sup>88</sup> United Nations General Assembly, Official Records: Third Session, Supplement No.9 (A/575) Volume III, Annex X, Sub-Committee 2, January 26, 1948 (Lake Success, New York: United Nations, 1948), 70-71.

the majority did not believe that the elections could “be held in a free atmosphere.”<sup>89</sup>

Nevertheless, the Commission did support observing the election in South Korea, but intended the elected representatives to be limited to the role of consulting with the General Assembly.

With the Commission deeply divided, its Chairman decided to consult the Interim Committee of the General Assembly.

The pressure the United States brought to bear in the Interim Committee overrode strong doubts of other members. The U.S. delegation pushed for the election, even if only in the south. Philip Jessup presented the American case: that even if the Soviets blocked any UN-sanctioned election in the north, nevertheless “it was incumbent upon the Commission” to observe the election wherever possible [i.e, the South] which would elect a Korean National Assembly, which would be “in a position to consult with the Commission on the establishment of a National Government in Korea, as envisaged in the General Assembly resolution, [and which] might be able to negotiate with Koreans in the North regarding their participation in the National Government.”<sup>90</sup> Thus, Jessup was arguing that a purely South Korean election would produce a “national” result, even though the November 14 Assembly resolution made no provision for any election in less than all of Korea, both north and south. The Indian representative, K.P.S. Menon, argued in opposition—that any election should be only for a consultative body, and not for the purpose of creating a national government.

The American viewpoint prevailed. Although a majority in the Interim Committee supported the U.S. position, important countries had their doubts as did the Committee itself. Both the Canadian and Australian representatives challenged the legality of the American

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<sup>89</sup> Goodrich, *Korea*, 44.

<sup>90</sup> Quoted in Gordenker, *The Politics of Field Operations*, 71.

proposal.<sup>91</sup> Without identifying Canada and Australia, the Interim Committee noted that “several views were expressed” which differed from the Interim Committee majority, including the view that legally the functions of UNTCOK were based on the General Assembly resolution of November 14, 1947; that paragraph 4 of that resolution made clear that UNTCOK “could not confine its activities to southern Korea,” and that UNTCOK “could not violate its terms of reference and the Interim Committee . . . was not competent to change them.”<sup>92</sup> Lester Pearson, Canada’s Deputy Minister of External Affairs, argued the Canadian position, as stated above, that UNTCOK could not legally confine its operations to South Korea alone, and that the Interim Committee was powerless to change UNTCOK’s terms of reference. He further argued that the Interim Committee should not take any formal action would divide its members, nor should it try to instruct UNTCOK.<sup>93</sup> The Norwegian and Swedish delegates wanted to call a special session of the General Assembly, and believed that only a U.S.-Soviet agreement could resolve the issue. Finally, on February 26 the United States pushed through its proposal, with Australia and Canada voting no and with eleven abstentions.<sup>94</sup> Although the vote was favorable, significant doubts remained—both as to whether elections in the south would be free and fair, and whether an election just in the south could create a government with any legitimacy. The Interim Committee voiced the following concerns:

1. The elections . . . should be held in a free atmosphere wherein the democratic rights of freedom of speech, press, and assembly would be recognized and respected . . . .

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<sup>91</sup> Gordenker, *The Politics of Field Operations*, 73-74.

<sup>92</sup> Consultation by the Temporary Commission on Korea with the Interim Committee, July 22, 1948, Reports of the Interim Committee of the General Assembly (5 January – 5 August, 1948), Official Records: Third Session, Supplement No. 10 (A/578, A/573, A/605, A/606) (Paris: United Nations, 1948) , 20.

<sup>93</sup> Gordenker, *The Politics of Field Operations*, 73-74.

<sup>94</sup> Goodrich, *Korea*, 46-48.



2. The National Assembly . . . would be a stage in the formation of a Korean Government . . . [and] the representatives constituting the National Assembly would be entirely free . . . [to] carry on such negotiations as they wished with any other Korean groups which might not have participated in the elections . . . . The Interim Committee . . . [hoped that] in these . . . negotiations, the Korean representatives in the National Assembly would be able to secure through their efforts the full cooperation in the government of all Koreans.<sup>95</sup>

The decision of the Interim Committee was crucially important. Without it the majority of UNTCOK members opposed creation of a National Assembly, which would have stalled the entire U.S. plan for exiting Korea. But with that decision UNTCOK decided to observe elections—to be held not later than May 10, 1948— wherever in Korea UNTCOK was able to go. Two days later Hodge announced elections in the U.S. zone, but the Soviets failed to permit any UN observation of elections in the north.

After the Interim Committee’s decision UNTCOK debated the matter over a period of three days. The Australian delegation continued its opposition to elections in the South alone, and cited new evidence that it appeared that the elections “will be boycotted by all parties in Korea except the extreme right group.”<sup>96</sup> The Canadian representative felt the Interim Committee’s advice was both “unwise and unconstitutional.” Although the Canadian government “strongly supported” a “free, united and democratic Korea,” it did not believe that observing the proposed elections “can be brought within the terms” of the Assembly’s resolution “which are binding on the Commission.”<sup>97</sup> China and El Salvador favored proceeding with a vote limited to the South; the Chinese delegation viewed such a vote as a “concrete step forward

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>96</sup> United Nations General Assembly, Official Records: Third Session, Supplement No. 9 (A/575) Volume I, Chapter IV, March 12, 1948 (Lake Success, New York: United Nations, 1948), 28.

<sup>97</sup> United Nations General Assembly, Official Records: Third Session, Supplement No.9 (A/575) Volume I, Chapter IV, March 12, 1948 (Lake Success, New York: United Nations, 1948), 28.

in the direction of real Korean independence and unity,” and the Salvadoran delegation viewed the Interim Committee’s recommendations as “effective steps towards the attainment of liberty and independence for the Korean people.”<sup>98</sup> Thus, neither China nor El Salvador conceived of a vote limited to South Korea as solving the problem of Korea’s unification and independence, but both saw such a vote as a move in the right direction. The French delegation concluded that since the Commission had asked the Interim Committee for advice, the Commission should follow that advice. The Indian delegate agreed, and felt that the Commission had the discretion to “discharge its duties wherever and to the extent circumstances permit.”<sup>99</sup> The Philippine delegation announced its support “for the immediate unification of Korea and the speedy realization of her independence.” Its view was that the “holding of elections in parts of Korea accessible to the Commission . . . would be a stage in the formation of a Korean Government,” which would have the power “to carry on such negotiations as they wish with any other Korean groups which might not have participated in the elections.”<sup>100</sup> Thus, the Philippine delegation expressed what amounted to wishful thinking that a Rightist government in the South would or could have meaningful negotiations with a communist government in the North. Finally, Syria had sought to avoid either endorsing or rejecting the Assembly’s resolution, but without any third alternative now felt constrained to proceed with the election “on the condition that

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<sup>98</sup> United Nations General Assembly, Official Records: Third Session, Supplement No.9 (A/575) Volume I, Chapter IV, March 12, 1948 (Lake Success, New York: United Nations, 1948), 28.

<sup>99</sup> United Nations General Assembly, Official Records: Third Session, Supplement No. 9 (A/575) Volume I, Chapter IV, March 12, 1948 (Lake Success, New York: United Nations, 1948), 28.

<sup>100</sup> United Nations General Assembly, Official Records: Third Session, Supplement No. 9 (A/575) Volume I, Chapter IV, March 12, 1948 (Lake Success, New York: United Nations, 1948), 29.

conditions in the South will be corrected so as to guarantee a free election.”<sup>101</sup> So the Syrian delegation did not believe that the election would be free and fair without the correction of conditions presently standing in the way of such elections. Altogether, UNTCOK continued to harbor serious reservations even after the vote in the Interim Committee.

Nevertheless, UNTCOK finally voted and decided to observe the elections Hodge had announced, provided “the Commission had ascertained that the elections will be held in a free atmosphere wherein the democratic rights of freedom of speech, press, and assembly would be recognized and respected.”<sup>102</sup> But the Commission remained deeply divided: only four delegations (China, El Salvador, India and the Philippines) were in favor of the decision to observe, whereas Australia and Canada (two normally strong supporters of the United States) opposed, and France and Syria abstained. If any of the four countries supporting observation had decided to oppose or to abstain, the entire American plan to obtain UN legitimization for the election would have fallen apart. However, as it happened, UNTCOK decided to proceed with the UN-sanctioned vote, but with no majority support and no real consensus.

Meanwhile, U.S. leaders saw the vote as leading to the creation of a new nation and could hardly wait to get out. Having pushed their desired proposals through the Assembly, Interim Committee, and Commission despite serious reservations of various members, U.S. policy-makers foresaw the goal for which they had striven: an independent South Korea established under United Nations supervision, which would permit the withdrawal of the U.S. occupation forces. Even before the vote Marshall notified Truman that a decision had to be made about the

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<sup>101</sup> United Nations General Assembly, Official Records: Third Session, Supplement No. 9 (A/575) Volume I, Chapter IV, March 12, 1948 (Lake Success, New York: United Nations, 1948), 29.

<sup>102</sup> United Nations General Assembly, Official Records: Third Session, Supplement No. 9 (A/575) Volume I, Chapter IV, March 12, 1948 (Lake Success, New York: United Nations, 1948), 29.

appointment of the first U.S. ambassador to Korea.<sup>103</sup> Under Secretary of the Army William H. Draper, Jr. complained to Under Secretary of State Lovett about the “marked inclination of the UNTCOK to misjudge the realities of the situation in Korea in considering an idealistic application of the UN resolutions.” In other words, UNTCOK did not understand “Soviet motives” or “the difficulties faced by American occupation authorities.”<sup>104</sup> But it was important to seize the opportunity to withdraw the U.S. occupation forces from Korea, and Draper was quick to insist that

despite these complications, the maximum benefit to US interests is being achieved by UN participation in the Korean problem, both through the UN resolution on Korea, and through the proposed observance of the forthcoming elections. It is believed that this participation has materially assisted in furthering US policy . . . *that every effort should be made to create conditions for the withdrawal of US occupation forces . . . . It would therefore be contrary to US interests if the US were to maneuver itself into such a position in the UN that our government would have difficulty in refusing to accede to a request to prolong the occupation . . . .* (emphasis added).<sup>105</sup>

Draper saw the UN as providing important validation, through its resolutions and its observation of the election, which helped provide “cover” for U.S. efforts to withdraw from Korea.

However, the fairness of the election was subject to very considerable doubt.

UNTCOK’s role was limited to that of observer. Hodge’s military government had the responsibility of conducting the election. The tiny number of UNTCOK’s non-Korean personnel made its job of observation of an election in an area of forty thousand square miles with a

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<sup>103</sup> Memorandum by the Secretary of State to President Truman, April 27, 1948, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1948, Vol. VI, The Far East and Australasia (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1974), 1183.

<sup>104</sup> Under Secretary of the Army (Draper) to the Under Secretary of State (Lovett), May 3, 1948, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1948, Vol. VI, The Far East and Australasia (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1974), 1186.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

population of twenty million very difficult. Conditions on the ground raised obvious questions about the whether the “free atmosphere” desired by the Interim Committee would in fact prevail. Especially troublesome were Korean paramilitary “youth groups,” at least one of which enjoyed support from the military government.<sup>106</sup> State Department political adviser Joseph Jacobs certainly had his doubts that a free election could take place. He advised Marshall that Rhee’s “minions through intimidation and terrorism will control all votes . . . . [constituting an example of] Rhee’s concept of ‘democracy’ which so readily lends itself to Soviet charges that Rhee is reactionary, pro-Japanese and Fascist.”<sup>107</sup> S.H. Jackson, the Australian delegate to UNTCOK, opposed the elections on the grounds that many moderates had dropped out of the election, that only extreme Rightists under Rhee still supported the election, that Hodge’s military government had announced an election committee of whose fifteen members twelve were from Rhee’s party, and that Korean police were putting heavy pressure on opposition figures.<sup>108</sup> Clearly American leaders and others realized that the election would, in reality, be very problematic. But the Truman administration’s strong desire to extricate itself from its Korean obligations over-rode any scruples about “intimidation and terrorism” in the election.

More than seven million Koreans went to the polls in apparent enthusiasm, yet in the ten days before the election 322 people were killed in raids and riots.<sup>109</sup> Jacobs viewed the probable

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<sup>106</sup> Gordenker, *The Politics of Field Operations*, 92-93.

<sup>107</sup> Telegram, The Political Adviser in Korea (Jacobs) to the Secretary of State, November 19, 1947, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1947, Vol. VI, The Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), 864.

<sup>108</sup> Gordenker, *The Politics of Field Operations*, 80-81.

<sup>109</sup> Gordenker, *The Politics of Field Operations*, 105-106.

total casualties on election day as “comparatively light.”<sup>110</sup> The voting on May 10 yielded mixed results. The vote resulted in a victory for the major conservative parties, but they garnered less than a majority of the representatives. The election was boycotted by leftist groups, and the new Assembly contained no acknowledged representatives of such moderates as Kim Ku, the main conservative opposition figure to Rhee. The election led to further disagreement on UNTCOK as to whether or not the election was free and fair, and whether or not the newly elected assembly was “national,” i.e., did it represent all of Korea, or just the south. As to the election itself, the Commission lacked unanimity. The Syrian representative, then chairman of UNTCOK, doubted that the election atmosphere was free, and he so advised the press. Although the other Commission members supported the fairness of the election, various unofficial reports indicated fraud and terrorism.<sup>111</sup>

Notwithstanding any questions about the election, the establishment of a separate government in the south proceeded. The newly elected Korean National Assembly chose Rhee as its chairman, and Rhee notified UNTCOK that the Korean National Assembly viewed itself as having been instituted and having the authority to form a national government, in compliance with the Assembly resolution of November 14, 1947. This claim created disagreement on the Commission between those who argued for recognition of the newly organized Assembly for all purposes set forth in the November 14 resolution, as opposed to others who argued for a limited recognition. As previously noted, the November 14 resolution contemplated a national vote throughout north and south Korea, and was silent regarding the effect of an election held only in

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<sup>110</sup> Telegram, The Political Adviser in Korea (Jacobs) to the Secretary of State, May 10, 1948, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1948, Vol. VI, The Far East and Australasia (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1974), 1192.

<sup>111</sup> Gordenker, *The Politics of Field Operations*, 106-107.

part of the country. The Canadian, Australian, Indian, and Syrian representatives all, to some extent, opposed recognition of the new government as representing all of Korea. The El Salvadoran, Philippine and Chinese representatives generally supported the legitimacy of the new government.

The Commission refused to acknowledge that the National Assembly was in fact “national,” i.e., that it had any jurisdiction over North Korea, and continued to express the forlorn hope of unification with the North. In an effort not to reveal its internal dissension, UNTCOK’s pronouncements were ambiguous. It used the term “National Assembly,” but it never explicitly recognized the Assembly as the National Assembly referred to in the resolution of November 14, 1947. On June 24 the Commission replied to Rhee noting that the “National Assembly was constituted on May 31, 1948 by the elected representatives of the Korean people,” but asserting the hope that the National Assembly would take steps to achieve the unification of Korea.<sup>112</sup> On June 25 the Commission expressed its view that “the results of the ballot of 10 May 1948 were a valid expression of the free will of the electorate in those parts of Korea which were accessible to the Commission and in which the inhabitants constituted approximately two-thirds of the people of Korea.”<sup>113</sup>

Thus UNTCOK walked a tight-rope, acceding to the wishes of the United States as much as possible, but not entirely surrendering to the obvious fiction that a government formed only in the south, after an election marred by violence and intimidation which had excluded a substantial portion of the electorate, could reasonably claim to speak for the entire country. Although some of its member states had put up a strong fight against the U.S. position, ultimately UNTCOK had

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<sup>112</sup> Goodrich, *Korea*, 60.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

allowed itself to be used by the United States. The weakness of UNTCOK, in part because it had no substantial authority or power in Korea, and in part because of disagreement among its members, became obvious in its difficulty in reaching any clear conclusions about the Korean election. Nevertheless, its involvement in observing and then (somewhat) approving the South Korean vote substantially bolstered U.S. goals in Korea. From the American perspective it was important that the new Korean government receive approval and acceptance from the world community and especially from the United Nations. This speaks to the importance of the relatively new United Nations. In order for the United States to withdraw its occupation forces without losing prestige and “face,” it was essential that a legitimate government be formed in South Korea. The United States could not unilaterally confer that legitimacy on a new government in South Korea, but the UN could. Marshall expressed that concern by advising U.S. Foreign Service personnel that the

very considerable progress which [the] UN has so far made toward restoring freedom and independence to the Korean people would be seriously jeopardized by any act on [the] part of UNTCOK or its member states or of [the] US which could be construed as [a] disavowal of [the] new gov[ernmen]t. . . . [the]Dept [is] contemplating issuance of [a] statement . . . that US [the] Gov[ernmen]t regards [the]new gov[ernmen]t as [the] Nat[iona]l Gov[ernmen]t of Korea . . . envisaged by [the] GA resolutions. . . .<sup>114</sup>

Marshall, who embodied U.S. policy on Korea, intended to make the most of the UN-sanctioned vote as a stepping-stone to removal of U.S. troops. Therefore, as Marshall’s statement cited above indicates, the U.S. government contemplated treating the partial approval of UNTCOK as if it were total approval. However, the British government held a different view. Britain feared the overall risk of East-West conflict that might result from further tension

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<sup>114</sup> Telegram, The Secretary of State to Certain Diplomats and Counselor Officers Abroad, July 10, 1948, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1948, Vol. VI, The Far East and Australasia (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1974), 1235-1237.



on the Korean peninsula. The U.S. ambassador to the United Kingdom reported that the British Foreign Office was “very dubious of advisability of . . . recognition of new government as ‘national government’ of Korea,” in part because “recognition [was] unrealistic as [the] government in fact would not exercise control over half of [the] territory over which it claimed sovereignty.”<sup>115</sup> Moreover, the British government viewed recognition as possibly “by-passing [the] G[eneral] A[ssembly],” and feared that separate governments in North and South Korea “would only serve to increase tension and enlarge areas of controversy between US and USSR.”<sup>116</sup>

Other governments also voiced their objections. Marshall learned that the Australian government “will not recognize [the] new government in South Korea as national government of Korea.”<sup>117</sup> And India notified the U.S. government that it could not accept a U.S. policy recognizing the new government in South Korea as a “national government of Korea envisaged by GA resolution.”<sup>118</sup> Bowing to the reality that key allies and an important neutralist country would not accept the U.S. view, and fearing a negative vote, the State Department modified the text of the resolution it planned to submit to the General Assembly, eliminating any reference to

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<sup>115</sup>Telegram, The Ambassador in the United Kingdom (Douglas) to the Secretary of State, July 13, 1948, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1948, Vol. VI, The Far East and Australasia (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1974), 1239-1940.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Telegram, The Charge in Australia (Nielsen) to the Secretary of State, July 14, 1948, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1948, Vol. VI, The Far East and Australasia (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1974), 1241.

<sup>118</sup> Telegram, The Charge in India (Donovan) to the Secretary of State, July 19, 1948, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1948, Vol. VI, The Far East and Australia (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1947), 1246.

a national government of Korea.<sup>119</sup> Thus, a version of consensus politics was at work at the UN. The objections of key U.S. allies constrained the American effort to gain UN approval of a separate government in South Korea. But the United States took whatever UN legitimization of its Korea policy it could get. U.S. allies slowed, but did not prevent, the American objective of creating a separate state in South Korea and of removing all U.S. military from the peninsula. Overall, despite the doubts of important member states, the United States did achieve supervision by UNTCOK of the Korean election, and that supervision became a useful tool in the U.S. effort to legitimize the new South Korean regime and then to extricate the American military from Korea.

After the election, events in South Korea had moved quickly. At the end of May the National Assembly met and, as previously noted, elected Rhee as chairman. The Assembly created a special committee which drafted a constitution to establish the Republic of Korea (ROK). The Assembly adopted the constitution on July 12, and eight days later the Assembly chose Rhee as the first president of the Republic of Korea. Formal inauguration ceremonies in the presence of MacArthur were held in Seoul on August 15, thus ending the U.S. military government.<sup>120</sup>

U.S. policy, which had decisively shaped the UN resolutions, created an explosive situation in Korea. Responding to the moves to create a separate government in the south, communist leaders in the north announced elections to be held on August 25 for a Supreme People's Assembly, in which the south was theoretically to be represented. In early September

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<sup>119</sup> Draft Resolution on Korea for the United Nations General Assembly, Undated, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1948*, Vol. VI, The Far East and Australasia (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1974), 1322.

<sup>120</sup> Stueck, *The Road to Confrontation*, 102.

the newly elected Assembly organized the government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, headed by Kim Il-sung. This new government, as was the case with Rhee's government in the south, claimed authority over all of Korea. All Koreans wanted unification, and now two hostile governments, each with ambition to extend its rule over the entire peninsula by force if necessary, faced each other across the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel.<sup>121</sup> Kim had by far the stronger military force, including ethnic Koreans returning to the north from the Soviet Union and China, some having been indoctrinated and trained in the Soviet army in Siberia, and others having served in Mao's army in the civil war against the Nationalists. In a March 1948 Cabinet meeting Marshall had advised Truman that "Russia in the north of Korea has 100,000 men – they are experienced soldiers."<sup>122</sup>

### *The Korean Problem Returns to the General Assembly*

The General Assembly again took up the Korean problem on December 11, 1948. UNTCOK's report described the election in the south and the turnover of government from the U.S. military to the new government formed in South Korea after the election, which UNTCOK thought would be able "adequately to perform the normal functions of government." But the

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<sup>121</sup> The South Korean Foreign Minister announced that "We have no intention of starting anything until the United Nations Commission on Korea makes [a] judicial decision on the question of the unification of Korea. . . . I may add that every Korean citizen living in the north must come within the jurisdiction of this Government and no outside force of (sic) circumstance can dispute the sovereign right of the Republic of Korea." Telegram, The Special Representative in Korea ( Muccio) to the Secretary of State, December 23, 1948, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1948, Vol. VI, The Far East and Australasia (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1974), 1344.

<sup>122</sup> Cabinet Meeting, Friday, March 12, 1948, Notes on Cabinet Meetings I . . . Notes on Cabinet Meetings II . . . to December 1948, Folder Notes on Cabinet Meetings II, 1946-1953 March 1948, Mathew J. Connelly Papers, Truman Library.

Commission warned that “all these developments have been overshadowed by the grim reality of a divided Korea,” and called for

peaceful negotiations . . . *before military evacuation* of the occupying forces abandons Korea to the arbitrary rule of rival political regimes whose military forces might find themselves driven to internecine warfare.<sup>123</sup> (emphasis added).

The Assembly, following U.S. leadership, paid little attention to the Commission’s warning. Having seen its November 1947 resolution converted into a vote only in South Korea, the General Assembly was unwilling to challenge the legitimacy of the election—which would have meant mounting a direct challenge against the United States. At American urging the Assembly took sides in the obviously looming conflict in Korea between North and South. In committee and then in plenary session the U.S. delegation pushed a resolution jointly backed by the United States, Australia and China which (although not as extreme as U.S. leadership had originally contemplated in that it did not declare the new regime the legitimate government of all of Korea ) declared that “there has been established a lawful government (the Government of the Republic of Korea,” having “effective control and jurisdiction” over the part of Korea that UNTCOK had been able to observe and in which “the great majority of the people of all Korea reside.” The resolution further proclaimed the government in the south to be “based on elections which were a valid expression of the free will of the electorate” in the south where the Commission had been able to observe, and that “this is the only such Government in Korea.”<sup>124</sup> In fact, despite the substantial evidence of repression in South Korea, UNTCOK observers

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<sup>123</sup> Quoted in Goodrich, *Korea*, 66.

<sup>124</sup> Resolutions Adopted by the General Assembly at its 3<sup>rd</sup> Session, December 12, 1948; available from <http://www.un.org/depts/dhl/resguide/r3.htm>; internet; accessed January 13, 2011.

themselves had observed some improprieties but little actual repression during the election.<sup>125</sup>

The resolution also recommended that “the occupying Powers should withdraw their occupation forces from Korea as early as practicable,” and that a new Commission on Korea (UNCOK), composed of Australia, China, El Salvador, France, India, the Philippines and Syria, which would replace UNTCOK, would lend its “good offices” to unifying Korea, and would observe “the actual withdrawal of the occupying forces and verify the fact of withdrawal when such has occurred.” By the adoption of this resolution on December 12, 1948 the United Nations gave formal sanction and recognition of lawfulness of the establishment of the Republic of Korea.

Ignoring the above-described warning issued by UNTCOK to the effect that military evacuation might lead to “internecine warfare,” the resolution placed the prestige of the United Nations behind withdrawal of U.S. and Soviet military forces—thus leaving Korea at the mercy of the stronger of its two hostile halves.<sup>126</sup> The move to withdraw foreign military forces from the Korean peninsula was understandable—the world community genuinely favored Korean independence, and such independence required the removal of Soviet and American occupation forces. What is harder to explain is the seeming unwillingness to confront the likelihood of “internecine warfare” once the foreign forces were gone. Nevertheless, the resolution had already prevailed in committee, and the result on the floor of the Assembly was never in doubt.

The Byelorussian representative claimed that under Hodge’s command “all kinds of terrorist

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<sup>125</sup> United Nations General Assembly, *Official Records*: Third Session, Supplement No. 9 (A/575), Third Period of Observation: 7 to 11 May 1948 (Election Day, 10 May 1948), Observation Group I, Summary Record of Observation of Election: 10 May 1948 (Lake Success, New York: United Nations, 1948), 267-301.

<sup>126</sup> In Committee, the American delegate, John Foster Dulles, arguing in favor of the resolution, asserted that “the government of the Republic of Korea should be recognized so that, stamped with the seal of legitimacy, it could maintain its prestige and authority in Korea”; that “the forces of occupation should be withdrawn as soon as possible.” Against the danger of internal division, Dulles could recommend “one basic defense,” which was to “to show, through the United Nations, that other States offered *moral support to those who were the objects* [of violence].” (emphasis added). Quoted in Goodrich, *Korea*, 69.

methods had been used.”<sup>127</sup> Malik asserted that from the beginning of its occupation of southern Korea, the U.S. military administration and command had “set as their goal, not cooperation with democratic elements in that area, but rather a policy of supporting collaborationists and former assistants of the Japanese occupation forces, as (*sic*) also reactionary elements of the extreme right.”<sup>128</sup> After Malik and his allies had spoken, the vote was taken with foreknown results: the resolution was adopted by a vote of forty-eight to six, with one abstention. With no veto in the General Assembly, the Soviet Union had no way to prevent the outcome. By so voting the UN General Assembly, at the behest of the United States, had placed its authority on the line in favor of the military withdrawal which the United States strongly desired, and had ignored the obvious risk of all-out civil war in Korea.

### ***Dispute over Korean Membership in the UN.***

In January 1949 the Republic of Korea applied for membership in the United Nations, and in February the Council took up the application. Naturally the Soviet Union opposed the ROK’s bid for membership. Malik accused the United States of holding a falsified election in South Korea accompanied by “harsh police terrorism ...against the will and desire of the Korean people.”<sup>129</sup> In fact, the harsh and brutal methods used by the South Korean government did concern U.S. military authorities and put into question the U.S. claimed support for democratic

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<sup>127</sup> United Nations General Assembly, *Official Records*, Third Session, Part 1, 186<sup>th</sup> Plenary Meeting, December 12, 1948, 1016.

<sup>128</sup> United Nations General Assembly, *Official Records*, Third Session, Part 1, 186<sup>th</sup> Plenary Meeting, December 11, 1948, p. 1006-1019; United Nations General Assembly, *Official Records*, Third Session, Part 1, 187<sup>th</sup> Plenary Meeting, December 12, 1948, p. 1024-1025.

<sup>129</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, Fourth Year, no. 12, February 15, 1949, p. 3.

methods.<sup>130</sup> But these concerns never shifted U.S. policy. Malik ascribed U.S. policy to an imperial reach for bases—“It is now quite obvious that the aim of that policy is to strengthen the position of [U.S.] monopolies in South Korea and to change that region into a [U.S.] strategic base.”<sup>131</sup> American military leaders—at least at the time—felt otherwise. They wanted to relinquish their Korean bases.<sup>132</sup> However, when U.S. forces were withdrawn, a shift in emphasis took place in the thinking of U.S. military leaders: notwithstanding their perception of Korea’s limited strategic value, now they saw the loss of Korea to communism as detrimental to American prestige, and therefore injurious to American international security.<sup>133</sup>

With American support and over the Soviet delegation’s objection, the ROK’s application was referred to the Committee on the Admission of New Members. Now it became the Soviet Union’s turn in the continuing contest over membership. The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (the Soviet-sponsored communist government in North Korea) also applied for membership. U.S. Representative to the UN Warren Austin challenged the application on the ground, among others, that it contradicted the General Assembly’s determination that the government of South Korea had been organized “based on elections which were a valid expression of the free will of the electorate of that part of Korea and . . . and that this is the *only*

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<sup>130</sup> General Wedemeyer reported to Truman that “the activities of extreme rightist groups in South Korea, under Doctor Syngman Rhee and Kim Koo, who have openly declared their hostility to the trusteeship provisions of the Moscow Agreement, have served further to embarrass the American Authorities. . . . Korean rightist youth corps organizations and the Korean National Police have in some cases employed intimidation and violence to prevent full freedom of expression and of legal political activity.” Report to the President on China-Korea, September 1947, Submitted by Lieutenant General A.C. Wedemeyer, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1947, Vol. VI, The Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), 799-800.

<sup>131</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, Fourth Year, no. 12, February 15, 1949, 3.

<sup>132</sup> Memorandum by the Secretary of Defense (Forrestal) to the Secretary of State, September 26 [29], 1947, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1947, Vol. VI, The Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), 817.

<sup>133</sup> Cumings, *Child of Conflict*, 19.

*such Government in Korea.”*<sup>134</sup> (emphasis added). Despite Malik’s spirited defense of his resolution, the Council voted it down by a vote of eight to two, with Argentina abstaining. Two months later the favorable report of the Committee on the Admission of New Members regarding the admission of the ROK came before the Council. Although it received nine favorable votes, it was defeated by the Soviet veto.

### *American Withdrawal Produces Fear of War*

Previously, in April 1948, Truman had approved NSC-8, the detailed report prepared by the National Security Council regarding Korea. That report had concluded that the United States should “withdraw from Korea as soon as possible with the minimum of bad effects,” and that American withdrawal should be facilitated by “training and equipping, prior to withdrawal, of native armed forces capable of protecting the security of south Korea against any but an overt act of aggression by north Korean or other forces.”<sup>135</sup> That report was deeply flawed because it expressly omitted the only likely external threat to South Korea—i.e., an invasion from the north; in effect, it dealt only with the risk of internal unrest.

When NSC-8 was issued, complacency was possible because the U.S. military occupation forces still protected South Korea. But as Hodge’s forces began to be evacuated and as South Korean fears mounted, a reassessment proved necessary. Previous differences between

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<sup>134</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, Fourth Year, no. 12, February 15, 1949, 12-14.

<sup>135</sup> Report by the National Security Council on the Position of the United States with Respect to Korea, April 2, 1948, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1948, Vol. VI, The Far East and Australasia (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1974), 1168.



the State Department and the military<sup>136</sup> now reasserted themselves. On December 17, 1948 an internal memorandum to the director of the State Department Office of Far Eastern Affairs noted that “should communist domination of the entire Korean peninsula become an accomplished fact, the islands of Japan would be surrounded on three sides by an unbroken arc of communist territories.” The memorandum noted the writer’s previous conclusion that “complete withdrawal of U.S. forces from Korea at this time would seriously jeopardize the security and stability of the Government of the Republic of South Korea, and that such withdrawal should therefore be further postponed, and now asked for a National Security Council review of the situation.”<sup>137</sup>

The Assistant Secretary of State for Occupied Areas wrote to Under Secretary of the Army Draper that although Draper had stated that the Army believed “that a firm decision should be made” to carry out the General Assembly resolution for withdrawal of forces,

other developments have in the meantime served to underline the grave risks which the United States would incur in completing the withdrawal . . . at the present time. . . . conditions of stability and public order in South Korea are still not such as to give assurance that the government of the Republic of Korea . . . could withstand on its own a serious and sustained challenge to its authority through external aggression or externally-inspired insurrection. . . . Such a decision should not be made until after a careful consideration . . . by the National Security Council.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> The Army had put more stress on early withdrawal than had the State Department. For example, the Army wanted to minimize the participation of the UN and specifically of UNTCOK to avoid “complications which could jeopardize the contemplated withdrawal of US forces,” whereas the State Department favored encouraging UNTCOK in fulfilling its role. However State accommodated the military by conceding that “Every effort should be made to create conditions for the withdrawal of occupation forces by 31 December 1948.” The Under Secretary of State (Lovett) to the Under Secretary of the Army (Draper), May 19, 1948, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1948, Vol. VI, The Far East and Australasia (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1974), 1200-1201.

<sup>137</sup> Draft Memorandum Submitted to the Director of the Office of Far Eastern Affairs (Butterworth), Undated, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1948, Vol. VI, The Far East and Australasia (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1974), 1338-1340.

<sup>138</sup> The Assistant Secretary of State for Occupied Areas (Saltzman) to the Under Secretary of the Army (Draper), January 25, 1949, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1949, Vol. VII, Part 2, The Far East, (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 944-945.

The National Security Council did indeed undertake to “re-assess and re-appraise the position of the U.S. with respect to Korea as defined in NSC 8,” and on March 22, 1949 it issued NSC 8/2.<sup>139</sup> The new report continued the previous report’s objective of a “united, self-governing, and sovereign Korea;” it also repeated goals that the new Korean government be “fully representative of the freely expressed will of the Korean people,” and that economic and educational assistance be given to the Korean people. Most importantly, it stressed that “[a] *more immediate objective is the withdrawal of remaining U.S. occupation forces* in Korea as early as practicable consistent with the foregoing objectives.” (emphasis added).<sup>140</sup> The report posited three choices for the U.S. government: (a) “to abandon Korea to Communist domination,” (b) “to go to the other extreme and guarantee unconditionally the political independence and territorial integrity of south Korea,” or (c) a “middle course” of supporting the Republic of Korea “within practicable and feasible limits,” so as to withdraw U.S. forces and financial assistance but at the same time minimizing the chances of “Communist domination.”<sup>141</sup> Because the two extremes were so obviously unacceptable, the report in effect guaranteed the choice of the “middle course.” The NSC acknowledged the United States would incur “grave risks” in completing its withdrawal as originally scheduled—quoting the U.S. Special Representative in Korea that “only [the U.S.] Army presence guarantees minimum Korean external and internal security.”<sup>142</sup> In a confused fashion the report concluded that U.S. support

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<sup>139</sup> Report by the National Security Council to the President, March 22, 1949, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1949, Vol. VII (in two parts), Part 2, The Far East and Australasia (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 969.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 970.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, 975.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 971; the report continued that the “stability and public order in South Korea were still not such [that the Republic of Korea] could withstand . . . a serious and sustained challenge to its authority through external

of the South Korean regime did not require maintaining troops in the country, although withdrawal “might be followed by a major effort . . . [of the] North Korean regime to overthrow the Republic of Korea through direct military aggression or inspired insurrection.”<sup>143</sup>

Even though these risks were foreseen and explicitly reported to Truman, the desire of the U.S. military to get out of Korea overrode any consideration of the potential harm to South Korea. The Joint Chiefs of Staff had concluded that Korea was “of little strategic value to the United States and that any commitment to United States use of military force in Korea would be ill-advised and impracticable in view of the potentialities of the over-all world situation and of our heavy international obligations as compared with our current military strength.”<sup>144</sup> Truman supported the withdrawal of U.S. forces as a cost-saving measure and as a means to use the limited number of American troops to best advantage.<sup>145</sup> The NSC report cited the “National Military Establishment” which rationalized that the risk would be the same in the future so there was no point in postponing withdrawal; in fact postponement would add the additional risk that U.S. troops that remained “might be either destroyed or obliged to abandon Korea in the event of a major hostile attack, with serious damage to U.S. prestige in either case.”<sup>146</sup> Notwithstanding the “grave risks” noted in a premature withdrawal, the report nevertheless concluded that

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aggression or externally-inspired insurrection,” and concluded that abrupt and complete disengagement “would be interpreted as a betrayal by the U.S. of its friends and allies in the Far East and might contribute substantially to a fundamental realignment of forces in favor of the USSR.” *Ibid.*, 972-975.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 976-977.

<sup>144</sup> Annex to Memorandum by the Department of the Army to the Department of State, June 27, 1949, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1949, Vol. VII (in two parts), Part 2, The Far East and Australasia (United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 1056-1057.

<sup>145</sup> Rusk, *As I Saw It*, 165.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 977.

remaining American occupation forces should be withdrawn not later than June 30, 1949.<sup>147</sup> The Army had won its inter-departmental dispute with the State Department.

Conflicting demands imposed great pressure on U.S. Korean policy. Truman faced inter-departmental rivalries and domestic budget battles with Congress<sup>148</sup> and insisted on firm control over military budgets.<sup>149</sup> Meanwhile, as the departure of the last American troops loomed, Rhee became more vocal in his fear that now the United States might abandon Korea, and he asked whether the Republic of Korea could, in the event of attack, “be able to count upon all-out American military aid.”<sup>150</sup> Rhee wrote to Truman of “the very great danger of Communist assault in the immediate future.”<sup>151</sup> The State Department received news of “[c]lamor and fear aroused by troop withdrawal” and a “sense of crisis bordering on panic [which] has enveloped [the]higher circles [of the] Korean Government [and] which has in turn spread to [the] people at large.”<sup>152</sup> As a result, the State Department had second thoughts, and began to consider anew the effects of withdrawal.

Nevertheless, the Army stuck to its decision to withdraw. To avoid any change in plan the Secretary of the Army, Kenneth C. Royall, wrote to newly appointed Secretary of State

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 977.

<sup>148</sup> Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power*, 224.

<sup>149</sup> Donovan, *Tumultuous Years*, 183.

<sup>150</sup> Telegram, The Ambassador in Korea (Muccio) to the Secretary of State, May 7, 1949, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1949, Vol. VII (in two parts), Part 2, The Far East and Australasia (United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 1012.

<sup>151</sup> The President of the Republic of Korea (Rhee) to President Truman, August 20, 1949, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1949, Vol. VII (in two parts), Part 2, The Far East and Australasia (United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 1076.

<sup>152</sup> Telegram, The Ambassador in Korea (Muccio) to the Secretary of State, May 31, 1949, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1949, Vol. VII (in two parts), Part 2, The Far East and Australasia (United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 1035.

Acheson that withdrawal of all military forces be completed by March 31, 1949. After discussion, the State and Army Departments agreed to solicit the opinion of MacArthur. In January 1949 MacArthur responded, recommending the withdrawal be completed by May 10, 1949. MacArthur reasoned that “the longer US forces remain in Korea the greater [the] risk of being placed in a position of effecting withdrawal under conditions amounting to direct pressure rather than a voluntary act. Damage in such event might well be irreparable.”<sup>153</sup> In other words it was a matter of saving face—the Army wanted out, but did not want to appear to be pushed out.

At this point U.S. policy towards Korea was quite confused: the Army wanted to get out; the State Department now saw considerable risk in removing all U.S. military forces from Korea, and Rhee now pushed for more American help to protect his government against attack. In July Rhee sent a special representative to meet with Acheson and to request a “specific assurance that the United States would come to the defense of the Republic of Korea in the event of armed attack against it.” Acheson responded that “such a specific military commitment by the United States was out of the question.”<sup>154</sup> Meanwhile, U.S. leaders were deciding exactly when, and under what circumstances, the remaining American troops would be withdrawn. The Soviet Union had previously announced that all its troops would be out of North Korea by the end of December 1948.

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<sup>153</sup>The Secretary of the Army (Royall) to the Secretary of State, January 25, 1949, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1949, Vol. VII (in two parts), Part 2, The Far East and Australasia (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976, 946.

<sup>154</sup> Department of State Memoranda of Conversation, July 11, 1949, Secretary of State File, 1945-1972, Memoranda of Conversations File, 1949-1953, January – February, 1949 to July, 1949, Folder Acheson Papers, Secretary of State File, Memoranda of Conversations File, July, 1949, Dean G. Acheson Papers, Truman Library. Acheson may have privately intended that the United States would defend the ROK, but refused publicly to so state, in fear that such knowledge might have encouraged Rhee to start a war. Bruce Cumings, *The Korean War: A History* (New York: Random House, Inc., 2010), 72.

John J. Muccio, the U.S. ambassador in the Republic of Korea, advised Acheson that the remaining task force should not be withdrawn from South Korea until the “UN Commission on Korea has had [an] opportunity [to] express [its] views on withdrawal. In this connection [I] suggest situation may be sufficiently clarified by May 1 to determine whether task force may be withdrawn by July 1.”<sup>155</sup> Muccio told Draper that the “best target date” for removal of all U.S. forces was June 30. He also expressed fear that Rhee might start a war by invading the north before all American troops were out of Korea. However, he told Draper that “President Rhee has promised . . . that he would not take any offensive military action against North Korea that might embroil the US forces there.”<sup>156</sup>

In this charged atmosphere the newly created United Nations Commission on Korea (UNCOK) held its first meeting in Seoul on February 2, 1949. The General Assembly’s resolution of December 12, 1948 (expressly noting that the hoped-for objectives for Korea had “not been fully accomplished, and in particular that unification of Korea had not yet been achieved) had established this new Commission as a successor to UNTCOK, to finish the job by lending its “good offices to bring about the unification of Korea” and to “facilitate the removal of barriers to economic, social and other friendly intercourse caused by the division of Korea.” In an effort to use its “good offices” to advance Korean unification the Commission tried, but failed, to make contact with important people in the north. Rhee strongly opposed any effort of the Commission to make direct contact with North Korea or to take any action that might appear

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<sup>155</sup>Telegram , The Special Representative in Korea (Muccio) to the Secretary of State, January 27, 1949, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1949, Vol. VII, Part 2, The Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 951.

<sup>156</sup>Memorandum of Conversation, by the Special Representative in Korea (Muccio) , February 25, 1949, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1949, Vol. VII, Part 2, The Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976, 959.

to be granting recognition to the North Korean regime.<sup>157</sup> Also, the Commission had itself decided not to contact the North Korean government since the General Assembly had declared only the government in South Korea to be “lawful.” In any event the Commission had no real power, and its efforts had no effect on the escalating tension between North and South Korea.

By April 1949 Acheson had received reports of intensification of military preparations in the north. By May the South Korean prime minister requested that the United States include the Republic of Korea within the U.S. “Pacific line of defense.”<sup>158</sup> The approach of the date of final U.S. withdrawal produced alarm in South Korea and some degree of doubt in the American camp. As much as Rhee had wanted independence, he now feared the American departure. He felt the need to “remind” Truman that “the Korean people are deeply concerned over the reported withdrawal of the American troops from Korea.”<sup>159</sup> Notwithstanding Rhee’s worry, withdrawal of U.S. troops commenced without waiting for any further UN approval, and continued until State Department objection resulted in leaving in Korea one 7,500 man regimental combat team.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>157</sup>Telegram, The Charge of the American Mission in Korea (Drumright) to the Secretary of State, February 12, 1949, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1949*, Vol. VII, Part 2, The Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 960.

<sup>158</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, by the Ambassador in Korea (Muccio), May 2, 1949, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1949*, Vol. VII (in two parts), Part 2, The Far East and Australasia (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 1003. In fact, the opposite occurred. On January 12, 1950 Acheson famously spoke before the National Press Club and outlined the U.S. defense perimeter in the Pacific omitting Korea entirely. This public statement of U.S. policy seemed to indicate that the United States would not come to the aid of the Republic of Korea.

<sup>159</sup>Telegram, The Special Representative in Korea (Muccio) to the Secretary of State, November 19, 1948, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1948*, Vol. VI, The Far East and Australasia, (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1974), 1331.

<sup>160</sup> Goodrich, *Korea*, 66-67.

On May 20 the South Korean Defense Minister asked Muccio if the United States would postpone withdrawal of its remaining regimental combat team for six months. On June 1 the Korean representative at the UN approached the U.S. representative to ask that the withdrawal of the remaining U.S. troops be postponed for one year. He stated that the North Koreans had two hundred thousand men under arms, whereas the South Korean military numbered only thirty-eight thousand.<sup>161</sup> However, South Korean leaders' efforts to postpone the U.S. evacuation failed.

Notwithstanding all the warnings and pleas, the last U.S. troops left Korea on June 21 and June 29, 1949. By that time the Department of the Army had considered its options in the event of a North Korean invasion after withdrawal of U.S. forces—ranging from a highly unrealistic extreme, such as encouraging “peaceful unification of Korea by direct negotiations” to the other extreme: the use of force, either initiating a “police action with UN sanction,” or sending in a “US joint task force” at the request of the South Korean National Assembly.<sup>162</sup> But the U.S. military still held a negative view towards involvement with Korea: the Joint Chiefs of Staff had not changed their opinion reached in 1947 that “from the standpoint of military security, the United States has little strategic interest in maintaining the present troops and bases in Korea.”

<sup>163</sup> The U.S. military establishment still viewed Korea as not worth the cost of maintaining the

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<sup>161</sup>Telegram, The Acting United States Representative at the United Nations (Ross) to the Secretary of State, June 1, 1949, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1949, Vol. VI, Part 2, The Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 1036.

<sup>162</sup> Memorandum by the Department of the Army to the Department of State, June 27, 1949, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1949, Vol. VII, Part 2, The Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 1047.

<sup>163</sup> Memorandum by the Secretary of Defense (Forrestal) to the Secretary of State, September 26, 1947, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1947, Vol. VI, The Far East (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), 817.



occupation force, and the Truman administration still accepted military advice that money spent, and troops maintained, in Korea could be better used elsewhere.

To ease the way toward withdrawal the United States had used the United Nations as a kind of “band-aid” to grant a gloss of legitimacy to the regime which the Americans had placed in power, with the hope that no nation would directly challenge by military force a government supported by the UN. State Department adviser Joseph Jacobs had advised UNTCOK that “their mere presence in Korea acts as [a] restraining influence upon subversive activities of Russians and their North Korean stooges.”<sup>164</sup> Also, among the various dangers facing the United States, the Korean risk seemed, to American leaders, “relatively remote.”<sup>165</sup> A kind of collective blindness—an unwillingness to acknowledge and deal with the obvious risk of total civil war—characterized the decisions of the United States and its supporters at the UN. But mere UN resolutions could not protect the new Republic of Korea.

### *The United Nations as Deterrent*

The withdrawal of U.S. military forces severely diminished the American capacity to deter North Korean invasion. Having few options available the United States looked to the United Nations to fill the gap. U.S. officials knew that the North Korean army was expanding, that Korean veterans of service with the Soviet and Chinese communist armies were returning to

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<sup>164</sup> The State Department responded that it was unlikely that Russians would allow serious subversive activities as long as they knew there was United Nations commission in Korea to observe such activities.” Telegram, The Political Adviser in Korea (Jacobs) to the Secretary of State, August 18, 1948, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1948, Vol. VI, The Far East and Australia (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1974), 1280.

<sup>165</sup> Walter Millis, ed., with the collaboration of E.S. Duffield, *The Forrestal Diaries* (New York: The Viking Press, 1951), 370.

Korea, and that the Soviet Union had signed an arms agreement with North Korea.<sup>166</sup> These officials found themselves in a double dilemma: although many had serious doubts about the ability of South Korea to defend against a full-scale invasion, they were reluctant to express those doubts publicly for fear of discouraging Congress from continuing to fund the military and non-military aid still going to South Korea, and they felt the need to express optimistic public statements to avoid impairing South Korean morale.<sup>167</sup> Moreover, because U.S. officials not only feared invasion from the north but also feared that Rhee himself wanted to unify Korea by military force, they were reluctant to provide Rhee with the necessary military equipment to create a powerful army.<sup>168</sup> Unfortunately, the light armaments provided by the United States left the South vulnerable to attack from the North.<sup>169</sup>

U.S. leaders turned again to the United Nations, this time to provide some sort of deterrence. Ambassador Muccio had advised Acheson that he considered it “of prime importance that the United Nations, and specifically the General Assembly, should remain seized with the Korean problem and that either the present Commission, or a new one, should remain in

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<sup>166</sup> Stueck, *The Road to Confrontation*, 157.

<sup>167</sup> Stueck, *The Road to Confrontation*, 165-167.

<sup>168</sup> Stueck, *The Road to Confrontation*, 164; Cumings, *The Korean War*, 72; Hanson W. Baldwin wrote that the U.S. government failed to provide heavy weapons to the Republic of Korea in part out of fear “that the power-loving South Korean Government and its volatile troops, if given heavy equipment, would commence an invasion of Northern Korea.” Hanson W. Baldwin, “U.S. Errors in Korea,” *The New York Times*, 10 July 1950, p. 7.

<sup>169</sup> Brigadier General William L. Roberts, commander of the U.S. Military Advisory Group to the Republic of Korea (KMAAG) advised Philip C. Jessup that “while he would like very much to have a few light tanks, these were low on his priority list.” Memorandum by the Ambassador at Large, Philip C. Jessup, January 14, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 2; Roberts advised Muccio that the military assistance objective for fiscal 1950 was to “strengthen the existing Security Forces without providing means for an increase in numerical strength.” The Chief of the United States Military Advisory Group to the Republic of Korea (Roberts) to the Ambassador in Korea (Muccio), January 7, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 17.

Korea.”<sup>170</sup> Muccio saw the danger of “recently increased military activity in the vicinity of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel,” and looked to the UN as a means of objectively observing and reporting any military conflict in order to obtain the “support of world opinion and friendly governments for U.S. policy in Korea.”<sup>171</sup> Under American leadership, UNCOK reported to the General Assembly in October 1949 of its concern that the situation in Korea “menace[d] the safety and well-being of the Republic of Korea and of the people of Korea and [might] lead to open military conflict in Korea.”<sup>172</sup> On October 21 the United States succeeded in persuading the Assembly to adopt the resolution it had backed in committee, which repeated the concern regarding possible open warfare. But the resolution merely provided that UNCOK would “observe and report any developments which might lead to or otherwise involve military conflict in Korea,” try to remove the “barriers” caused by the division of Korea, and “assist . . . in bringing about the unification of Korea”, “make available its good offices,” appoint observers, “be available for observation and consultation throughout Korea,” and “verify the withdrawal” of Soviet troops, if allowed to do so.<sup>173</sup> In other words, the resolution called only for observation and the use of “good offices” for consultation and mediation. However, it was already quite clear that the North Koreans were not interested in the “good offices” of the UN, and observation could not prevent military conflict; at the most it could hope to identify which side had started the conflict.

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<sup>170</sup> The Ambassador in Korea (Muccio) to the Secretary of State, August 20, 1949, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1949, Vol. VII (in two parts), Part 2 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 1068.

<sup>171</sup> The Ambassador in Korea (Muccio) to the Secretary of State, August 20, 1949, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1949, Vol. VII (in two parts), Part 2 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 1068-1069.

<sup>172</sup> United Nations General Assembly, *Official Records*, Annex to the Summary Records of Meetings, 1949, Document A/1008, Report of the Ad Hoc Political Committee, October 6, 1949, p. 70.

<sup>173</sup> 293 (IV). The Problem of the Independence of Korea, Resolutions Adopted by the General Assembly at its 4<sup>th</sup> Session; available from <http://www.un.org/depts/dhl/resguide/r4.htm>; internet; accessed January 16, 2011.

The United States was no longer committed to unifying Korea.<sup>174</sup> With the breakdown in the Joint Commission talks with the Soviets, U.S. policy in fact had turned to nation-building in the south. NSC 8 and NSC 8/2 still announced the first U.S. objective as establishing a “united, self-governing, and sovereign Korea as soon as possible.”<sup>175</sup> But those had become merely nominal objectives. The United States was unwilling to maintain a military force to protect South Korea indefinitely, and the real objective had become the creation of a separate state in South Korea, so that U.S. occupation forces could be withdrawn.

Despite the known risk of war, the General Assembly essentially had done nothing which had any real hope of avoiding a war. Ambassador Muccio did not believe successful mediation between North and South was possible, and if possible and successful, he thought it “might be very harmful to U.S. interests by preparing the way for communists to enter the Korean

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<sup>174</sup> Senator Tom Connally, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, publicly stated “I am afraid it [i.e., the abandonment of South Korea] is going to be seriously considered because I’m afraid it’s going to happen, whether we want it or not. I’m for Korea. We’re trying to help her—we’re appropriating money now to help her. But South Korea is cut right across this line—north of it are the Communists, with access to the mainland—and Russia is over there on the mainland. So that whenever she takes a notion she can just overrun Korea just like she will overrun Formosa when she gets ready to do it. I hope not, of course.” In response to a question whether Korea was an “essential part of the defense strategy,” Connally answered “no. Of course, any position like that is of some strategic importance. But I don’t think it is very greatly important.” Excerpt from: “U.S. News & World Report” May 5, 1950, Article: World Policy and Bipartisanship: An Interview With Senator Tom Connally, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), p. 65-66; President Rhee responded to Connally’s comments by stating that “he regarded Senator Connally’s remarks as an open invitation to the Communists to come down and take over South Korea,” and implied that Connally’s statement “had done much harm and that it could not be easily disassociated from United States policy in view of Senator Connally’s close relation to the State Department.” Memorandum of Conversation, by the charge in Korea (Drumright), May 9, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Korea, Vol. VII (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 77.

<sup>175</sup> Report by the National Security Council on the Position of the United States With Respect to Korea, April 2, 1948, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1948, Vol. VI, The Far East and Australasia (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1974), 1164; Report by the National Security Council to the President, March 22, 1949, Vol. VII (in two parts), Part 2, The Far East and Australasia (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 970.

Government.”<sup>176</sup> This statement underscored the important point that unification of Korea contradicted Truman’s containment policy, since a unified Korea might well have become a communist Korea. In NSC 8 the National Security Council saw Soviet policy as having the “predominant aim . . . to achieve eventual Soviet domination of the entire country,” which would “enhance the political and strategic position of the Soviet Union with respect to both China and Japan, and adversely affect the position of the U.S. in those areas and throughout the Far East.”<sup>177</sup> As stated above, NSC 8/2 reflected the same U.S. policy objectives as NSC 8, but in NSC 8/2 a “more immediate objective” had become withdrawal of remaining U.S. troops.<sup>178</sup> As in NSC 8, NSC 8/2 concluded that Soviet-backed communist control of all of Korea “would enhance the political and strategic position of the USSR with respect to both China and Japan and adversely affect the position of the U.S. in those areas and throughout the Far East.”<sup>179</sup> Thus, the containment of Soviet influence in Korea was highly significant to the National Security Council in its 1948 NSC 8, and that significance continued in its 1949 NSC 8/2, but by that time the issue of military withdrawal dominated the analysis.<sup>180</sup>

Having resolved to get its troops out of what was potentially harm’s way and thus avoid being trapped into fighting a war in Korea, the Truman administration had placed its reliance on

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<sup>176</sup> The Ambassador in Korea (Muccio) to the Secretary of State, August 20, 1949, enclosed Memorandum, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1949, Vol. VII (in two parts), Part 2, The Far East and Australasia (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 1073.

<sup>177</sup> Report by the National Security Council on the Position of the United States With Respect to Korea, April 2, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1948, Vol. VI, The Far East and Australasia (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1974), 1167.

<sup>178</sup> Report by the National Security Council to the President, March 22, 1949, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1949, Vol. VII (in two parts), Part 2, The Far East and Australasia (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 970.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, 975.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, 976-977.

the moral authority of the United Nations and on the mere presence of a few UN Commission members as observers to protect the Republic of Korea from invasion. Rusk had reported that the December 12 Assembly vote had started “South Korea off with as much political and moral backing as can be mobilized through [the] UN.”<sup>181</sup> Muccio had advised Acheson that

apart from evidencing the moral responsibility of the United Nations to Korea, the primary value of the United Nations Commission is to serve as *a barrier to communist aggression*. The fact that a United Nations Commission is in Korea, and that the General Assembly has given its blessing to the Republic of Korea, has exercised a profound influence on both sides of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. It seems that the Soviets and their Korean puppets would hesitate to commit themselves to overt aggression against the Republic of Korea so long as there is a United Nations body observing and reporting on the situation in Korea. (emphasis added).<sup>182</sup>

State Department adviser Joseph Jacobs advised UNTCOK that “their mere presence in Korea acts as [a] restraining influence upon subversive activities of Russians and their North Korean stooges . . . . that it was unlikely that Russians would allow serious subversive activities as long as they knew that there was [a] United Nations commission in Korea to observe such activities.”<sup>183</sup> So, with the evacuation of all American occupation troops, U.S. officials looked to the moral authority of the UN and to the “tripwire” effect of some UN officials remaining in Korea, to prevent an invasion of South Korea. A monolithic view of communism—based on the assumption that all communist action emanated from and could be controlled by Moscow—made U.S. policy somewhat understandable. Perhaps the Soviet Union itself would not have invaded

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<sup>181</sup> Telegram, The Acting United States Representative at the United Nations (Dulles) to the Secretary of State, December 13, 1948, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1948, Vol. VI, The Far East and Australasia (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1974), 1337.

<sup>182</sup> The Ambassador in Korea (Muccio) to the Secretary of State, August 20, 1949, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1949, Vol. VII, Part 2, The Far East and Australasia (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 1068.

<sup>183</sup> Telegram, The Political Adviser in Korea (Jacobs) to the Secretary of State, August 18, 1948, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1948, Vol. VI, The Far East and Australasia (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1974), 1280.

any territory which enjoyed the “protection” of UN resolutions and the presence of UN commissioners, but the North Korean regime had no such compunctions. Moreover, the monolithic view of Moscow’s control took no account of Kim Il-sung’s ability to manipulate Stalin.<sup>184</sup> Finally, that view was incapable of analyzing the competitive tensions between Moscow and Beijing, and the pressure created by those tensions which persuaded Stalin to support Kim’s invasion.<sup>185</sup> As it turned out, the protection U.S. leaders hoped that UN backing would provide would soon prove woefully inadequate, and the United States would find itself in the very war it had tried to avoid.

### ***Buildup in the North***

As tension mounted in the Korean peninsula, Kim Il-sung prepared for war. He played off Stalin and Mao Zedong against each other<sup>186</sup> to gain support for a war against the regime in Seoul, visiting Moscow twice in early 1949 to seek support for such a war. Stalin eventually agreed to support such plan, contingent on Mao’s approval, and began supplying Kim with planes, heavy artillery and tanks.<sup>187</sup> In May, to satisfy Stalin’s instruction, Kim secretly visited Beijing and advised Mao of the planned invasion. Mao expressed concern about possible U.S. intervention but he did not challenge the invasion plan.<sup>188</sup> As a result, Stalin began sending high

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<sup>184</sup> Goncharov, Lewis, and Xue, *Uncertain Partners*, 132-133.

<sup>185</sup> Zubok and Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin’s Cold War*, 63.

<sup>186</sup> Goncharov, Lewis and Xue, *Uncertain Partners*, 143-147.

<sup>187</sup> Goncharov, Lewis, and Xue, *Uncertain Partners*, 136-154; Stueck, *The Korean War*, 31.

<sup>188</sup> Chen, *China’s Road to the Korean War*, 112-113.

level Soviet military advisers and increased quantities of weapons to North Korea, and Kim stepped up preparations for the attack.

U.S. authorities knew of the North Korean build-up.<sup>189</sup> In June 1949 Muccio advised Acheson that “recent reports from North Korea suggest that North Korean military preparations are being appreciably intensified.”<sup>190</sup> On June 9 for the first time Pyongyang Radio announced its intention to be in Seoul to celebrate “liberation day” by a specific date, August 15.<sup>191</sup>

Acheson advised the embassy in Korea that “North Korean airpower and heavier artillery make North Korean armed forces superior and capable of successful operations against [the] South.”<sup>192</sup>

Truman, however, had refused to arm South Korea with heavy armaments, and had advised Rhee that the United States felt that South Korean security could “best be served by the development of an efficient, compact force rather than by amassing large military forces which would be an insupportable burden on the economy of the country.” He offered only “maintenance of the equipment already at hand in Korea plus a limited amount of replacement items.”<sup>193</sup> As late as

April 1950 the “top level” of the Defense Department advised that “there appears to be no

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<sup>189</sup> In April 1950 the Charge in Korea advised Acheson that “Korea [was] now faced with a condition of materially lessened US military supplies with new flow not coming in significant amounts for 9 months versus enemy force north of parallel which periodic reports put at constantly increasing materiel potential.” Telegram, The Charge in Korea (Drumright) to the Secretary of State, April 20, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 47.

<sup>190</sup> Airgram, The Ambassador in Korea (Muccio) to the Secretary of State, June 11, 1949, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1949, Vol. VII, Part 2, The Far East and Australasia, (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 1042.

<sup>191</sup> Telegram, The Ambassador in Korea (Muccio) to the Secretary of State, June 9, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 98-99.

<sup>192</sup> Telegram, The Secretary of State to the Embassy in Korea, June 13, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Korea, Vol. VII (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 104.

<sup>193</sup> Letter, President Truman to the President of the Republic of Korea (Rhee), September 26, 1949, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1949, Vol. VII, Part 2, The Far East and Australasia (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 1084-1085.



military necessity for an increase in the 1950 [Mutual Defense Act] Program for Korea at this time.”<sup>194</sup> The Truman administration found itself in a bind: it was deeply committed to the success of the Republic of Korea, but at the same time it was unwilling to increase substantially its financial commitment to a buildup of the ROK armed forces. Moreover, it feared that such a buildup might lead Rhee to undertake aggressive war. In February 1949 Rhee requested more military equipment from Secretary of the Army Kenneth Royall, and he advised Royall that “he would like to increase the Army, provide equipment and arms for it, and then in a short time *move north into North Korea . . . the United Nations’ recognition of South Korea made it legal to cover all Korea and . . . nothing could be gained by waiting.*”<sup>195</sup> But South Korea failed in its efforts to obtain a meaningful transfer of heavy armaments from the United States. Finally, North Korea mounted an all-out invasion—using tanks, of which South Korea had none, and Soviet fighter and bomber aircraft, which provided complete air supremacy. American efforts at nation-building had formalized the political boundary between the two Koreas, and ultimately had led to war.

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<sup>194</sup> Memorandum by Mr. Samuel T. Parelman to the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Merchant), April 12, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VI, East Asia and The Pacific (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 77.

<sup>195</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, by the Secretary of the Army (Royall), February 8, 1949, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1949, Vol. VII, The Far East and Australasia (in two parts), Part 2 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 957.

## *Conclusion*

The story of the UN and the United States in Korea is a mixed bag: it is one of confused leadership by the United States and weak responses by the United Nations, leading to conditions which invited all-out war. Motivated by a desire to withdraw its military, the United States (with the help of a compliant United Nations) formalized the division of the peninsula by creating the Republic of Korea in the south. In response, the Soviet Union created the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in the north. These two entities became, for practical purposes, independent states.

To analyze properly the U.S. - UN relationship with Korea we must go back before the end of the Second World War. It was, after all, Roosevelt's vision to maintain an American influence (together with the British, the Soviets, and the Chinese) over Korea, and thus to deny to the Soviets sole hegemony over that country. That vision had led to reliance on the trusteeship provisions contained in the UN Charter to formalize the intended continuing American influence in Korea. As the U.S. occupation forces soon learned, the notion of imposing the dependent status of a "trust territory" on a nation that previously had survived as an independent country for a thousand years was deeply flawed—unpopular with virtually all Koreans and unworkable in light of the Cold War tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union. Moreover, it soon became quite clear that South Korea had a substantial communist and leftist-leaning population, which might become a dominant voice in the south, and thus imperil American influence south of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. Therefore, General Hodge chose to suppress the communists and other leftists, to support right-wing South Koreans, and effectively to abandon any hope of working with the Soviets on a plan for Korean trusteeship.

The United States made significant use of the United Nations in its effort to build a friendly regime in South Korea. The U.S. backing for the November 1947 General Assembly resolution authorizing national elections, to be followed by the formation of a national government and the establishment of national security forces began a chain of events which finally led to all-out war. When the north refused to participate, the UN decision to hold the elections only in the south played a major role in legalizing the division of Korea. The December 1948 General Assembly resolution declaring the government formed after the elections as a “lawful” government,” with the elections having been held in that portion of the country “in which the great majority of the people of all Korea reside,” “based on the free will of the electorate,” and “the only such Government in Korea” certainly furthered the split between the two Koreas. The United States backed those resolutions, and the vast majority of other member states deferred to American leadership. Thus, the groundwork was laid for the division of the Korean people into two hostile states, each hoping to unify the country by military force.

## CHAPTER 5

### ALL-OUT WAR COMES TO THE KOREAN PENINSULA

#### *Introduction*

As we have seen, after five years of military occupation of South Korea, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had grown weary of the effort. Knowing Syngman Rhee's desire to invade the north, the Joint Chiefs had purposely limited the weaponry and other military support that the United States had provided. Aware of a substantial military buildup in the north, U.S. leaders knowingly removed all American troops—leaving South Korea at the mercy of invasion from the north. This chapter argues that when that invasion came, the United Nations proved that it would not sit idly by, and go the way of the League of Nations. Instead, the United Nations, under U.S. leadership, raised an army to repel the invasion and fought a three-year war on the Korean peninsula without letting that war expand into a third world war.

Central to the entire Korean War was the important question of whether the United Nations was commencing a genuine collective security operation, or was the United States simply exercising its own power with a mere “fig leaf” of UN support to validate American action.<sup>1</sup> The answer to that question is a mixture of both aspects: with the United States commanding such substantial majorities in both the General Assembly and the Security Council, U.S. and UN purposes became, to some extent, intertwined; certainly the United States exerted its very considerable influence at the United Nations to accomplish its own ends; but

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<sup>1</sup> Odd Arne Wested, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 136.

independent voices were also present among the delegates at the UN and on its commissions; and considerations of achieving sufficient consensus to maintain its leadership of UN majorities often affected U.S. actions at the United Nations. Moreover, organized efforts by several member states within the UN finally served as the catalyst that led to the settlement talks which ended the war.

Likewise, the question of whether the United Nations really controlled the UN forces—or did the United States exercise actual control—would haunt the entire Korean operation. In the final analysis U.S. officials—both civilian and military—were concerned with American policy goals, and they used the U.S. control of the UN army raised in Korea to accomplish those goals; they paid little or no attention to the long-range effects of their actions on the UN, except to the extent those effects would be useful to further their goals. As a result the inclusive and cooperative aspects of the Charter were often subordinated to U.S. policy considerations.

### *Invasion from the North*

At 4 a.m. on Sunday June 25, 1950 (Korea time) North Korean armed forces attacked in great force at various points along the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel and in two amphibious landings. U.S. leaders were caught by surprise: Truman was home in Independence, Missouri, and Acheson was at his Maryland farm. The reality of the attack quickly forced a change in U.S. policy.<sup>2</sup> When news of the attack reached Washington on the evening of June 24 (Washington

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<sup>2</sup> Alan G. Kirk, Ambassador in the Soviet Union, advised Acheson that “ROK is a creation of US policy and of US-led UN action. Its destruction would have calculably grave unfavorable repercussions for US in Japan, SEA [Southeast Asia] and in other areas as well.” Telegram, The Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Kirk) to the Secretary of State, June 25, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1950*, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 139.

time), Truman and his government quickly went into action. At 3 a.m. on the morning of June 25 Ernest Gross, then Acting Head of the U.S. delegation at the United Nations, requested an emergency Security Council meeting.

The Council met at 3 p.m. that day, and Secretary-General Lie announced that the report he received from UNCOK “[made] it plain that military actions had been undertaken by North Korean forces.” Lie noted that “these actions are a direct violation of the resolution of the General Assembly . . . as well as a violation of the principles of the Charter.” By concluding that the situation was a “threat to international peace,” Lie established the Security Council’s authority to take action under the Charter.<sup>3</sup> By his announcement Lie led the way for UN intervention in the war in Korea.

Gross presented the position of the United States: “that this wholly illegal and unprovoked attack by North Korean forces . . . constitutes a breach of the peace and an act of aggression. This is clearly a threat to international peace and security.”<sup>4</sup> Finally, Gross submitted a proposed resolution for Council action, for which there was broad support. The Soviet Union had absented its delegation from the Council in January 1950 in response to the failure of the Council to give the China seat to the People’s Republic of China. Thus, Jakov Malik was not present to oppose the U.S. initiative.<sup>5</sup> The only voice in opposition was that of the Yugoslav delegate, who argued that the Council did not yet possess all of the facts necessary to

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<sup>3</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, Fifth Year, no. 15, June 25, 1950, 3.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>5</sup> Presumably, in all positions taken at the UN, Malik acted under orders from Moscow. Years later Dean Rusk heard from a high-ranking Soviet official that Malik had not returned to the Security Council to oppose the vote on June 25, 1950 because Stalin had personally phoned him not to return to the Security Council. Rusk, *As I Saw I*, 163.

“pass judgment on the merits.”<sup>6</sup> He noted that the South Korean representative had been heard, and he offered a resolution calling for the immediate cessation of hostilities and inviting the North Korean government to present its case before the Security Council.

The existence of the two *de facto* states, one in the south and the other in the north, gave the attack more the appearance of outright aggression than simply an escalation of a civil war. Resistance to aggression was the bedrock *raison d'être* of the United Nations, and thus it is very understandable that the vast majority of member states condemned the June 25 invasion. In the U.S. view the attack was aggression and its source was the Soviet Union.<sup>7</sup> When the vote was taken the U.S.-sponsored resolution, with only minor language changes, was adopted by a vote of nine to zero, with Yugoslavia abstaining; the Yugoslav resolution was defeated six to one, with Egypt, India and Norway abstaining. The U.S.-sponsored resolution demanded pullback only— as adopted it called for “immediate cessation of hostilities,” and for “the authorities in North Korea to withdraw forthwith their armed forces to the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel.” Further, it called for UNCOK to make recommendations and “to observe the withdrawal of North Korean forces to the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel [and] to keep the Security Council informed.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> On June 28 Marshal Josip Broz-Tito, President of the Council of Ministers of Yugoslavia told George V. Allen, U.S. ambassador in Yugoslavia, that Tito’s “chief aims were to show clearly Yugoslav condemnation of aggression and Yugoslav support for UN, but at [the] same time to convince world opinion of Yugoslav independence from any bloc. In latter regard he said that he must keep constantly in mind that if Cominform suddenly attacked Yugoslavia, Moscow would make every effort to picture Yugoslavia as instrument of western aggression aimed against Cominform and would seek to justify attack as necessary defensive measure.” Telegram, The Ambassador in Yugoslavia (Allen) to the Secretary of State, June 28, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 215-216.

<sup>7</sup> As expressed by Acheson to Ernest Bevin, the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, the aggression was clearly Soviet-inspired: “Neither of us has any doubt but that this aggression was ordered by the Kremlin and is being actively directed by key Sov[iet] personnel in increasingly large numbers in Korea.” Telegram, The Secretary of State to the Embassy in the United Kingdom, July 10, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 348.

<sup>8</sup> 82 (1950) Resolution of 25 June 1950, Security Council Resolutions 1950, Accessed January 18, 2011; available from <http://www.un.org/documents/sc/res1950/scres50.htm>. As originally drafted by the U.S. delegation, the resolution referred to the attack as an “unprovoked aggression,” but that language met with considerable

At an evening meeting on June 25 at Blair House with a large group including his Secretaries of State, Defense, Army, Navy and Air Force, and various other military leaders and State Department personnel, Truman galvanized his government into action. Most of the discussion was of a practical, military nature, but the United Nations was mentioned: Acheson noted the existing Security Council resolution and “suggested that consideration should be given to what further assistance we might render to Korea in pursuance of this or a supplementary Security Council resolution.”<sup>9</sup> And Truman himself summed up the meeting by stressing that “we are working entirely for the United Nations. We would wait for further action until the UN order is flouted. . . . our action at this moment would be confined to the United Nations and to Korea . . . .”<sup>10</sup> Thus, Truman’s initial instincts favored a limited response, but, as will be seen, his response quickly encompassed an extension of the U.S. reaction beyond the UN mandate to include Taiwan and its surrounding waters.

Acheson recommended authorizing MacArthur to supply South Korea with military equipment, using U.S. air cover to evacuate women and children from Seoul, knocking out North Korean tanks and airplanes interfering with such evacuation, and also sending the Seventh Fleet to Formosa (Taiwan) to prevent an attack by mainland China against Formosa (or an attack by

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objections from many delegations. Some argued that they did not have sufficient information to justify such a conclusion, and others argued that the fighting was in the nature of a civil war, and thus was not “aggression.” Memorandum of Conversations, by Mr. Charles P. Noyes, Advisor on Security Council Affairs, United States Mission at the United Nations, June 25, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 144-145. As a result of such opposition the United States amended the proposed resolution by removing the offending language.

<sup>9</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, June 25, 1950, Dean G. Acheson Papers, Secretary of State File, 1945-1972, Memoranda of Conversations File, 1949-1953, File May-June 1950, p. 1, Truman Library.

<sup>10</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, June 25, 1950, Dean G. Acheson Papers, Secretary of State File, 1945-1972, Memoranda of Conversations File, 1949-1953, File May-June 1950, p. 5, Truman Library.



the Nationalists on Formosa against mainland China).<sup>11</sup> Finally, Acheson recommended increased U.S. aid to Indochina.<sup>12</sup> Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Omar Bradley said that “Russia is not yet ready for war.”<sup>13</sup> And he added: “The Korean situation offered as good an occasion for action in drawing the line as anywhere else.”<sup>14</sup> But Bradley questioned the wisdom of “putting in ground units particularly if large numbers were involved.” Both Secretary of the Army Frank Pace, Jr. and Secretary of Defense Louis A. Johnson also voiced concerns about putting ground forces into Korea. Bradley’s reluctance to fight a major land war on the Asian continent reflected U.S. military doctrine—but was soon overcome by events in Korea. Bradley did not explain how the United States could succeed in “drawing the line” in Korea without a

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<sup>11</sup> The U.S. decision to move decisively to protect Taiwan complicated the problem of maintaining a voting coalition in the Security Council. Both Britain and France, on whom the United States relied for support in that coalition, had important interests in Asia—Hong Kong and Malaya for Britain and Indo-China for France. Both Countries had already granted recognition to the communist government of the People’s Republic of China. Since the United States had at the Cairo Conference recognized China’s right to Taiwan, U.S. efforts to prevent the PRC government from invading and taking possession of Taiwan presented serious difficulties for Britain and France. Bevin made the case for Britain and the other Commonwealth members in a memorandum directed to Acheson. Memorandum of Conversation, by the Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs (Perkins), July 15, 1950; The British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (Bevin) to the Secretary of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 395-399.

<sup>12</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, June 25, 1950, Secretary of State File, 1945-1972, Memoranda of Conversations File, 1949-1953, Folder May-June 1950, Dean G. Acheson Papers, Truman Library.

<sup>13</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, June 25, 1950, Secretary of State File, 1945-1972, Memoranda of Conversations File, 1949-1953, Folder May-June 1950, Dean G. Acheson Papers, p. 2, Truman Library; By June 28 Acheson was sufficiently concerned about the possibility of Soviet entry into the war that he sent Louis Johnson, the Secretary of Defense, a policy statement designed to “ensure that major decisions about the extension of the Korean issue into a major war be taken in Washington and not be merely the result of a series of events in Korea.” The policy statement purported to announce that the decision to commit U.S. air and naval forces into Korea does not *in itself* constitute a decision to engage in a major war with the Soviet Union if Soviet forces intervene in Korea. The decision regarding Korea, however, was taken in the full realization of a risk of war with the Soviet Union.” (emphasis in the original). The Secretary of State to the Secretary of Defense (Johnson), June 28, 1950, enclosing Draft Policy Statement Prepared by the Secretary of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 217; The Joint Chiefs of Staff so instructed MacArthur. Telegram, The Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Commander in Chief, Far East (MacArthur), June 29, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 240-241.

<sup>14</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, June 25, 1950, Secretary of State File, 1945-1972, Memoranda of Conversation File, 1949-1953, Folder May-June 1950, Dean G. Acheson Papers, p. 2, Truman Library.

large army on the ground. Interestingly, Bradley recommended that the United States “should act *under the guise of aid to the United Nations*.”<sup>15</sup> (emphasis added).

Bradley’s comment points to an interesting aspect of the discussion: his recommendation raised the specter of a U.S. action only nominally controlled by the United Nations. The other military men present did not even mention the UN; whereas Truman made clear his intention to act “entirely” on behalf of the United Nations, and Acheson spoke of acting pursuant to Security Council resolutions. Truman’s comment certainly contrasted with Bradley’s statement. This early discussion suggests the possibility of some degree of division between the thinking of civilian and military leaders within Truman’s administration—with the civilian leaders appearing more willing to defer to the UN, and the military, at least according to Bradley’s verbalization, seeing the UN as merely a useful device for accomplishing American goals.

Without American leadership and military commitment it remains quite unclear as to what response the United Nations would have made to the invasion into South Korea. But in this case the Republic of Korea was a product of U.S. nation-building, and thus the United States had a vested interest in protecting the Republic of Korea. That vested interest translated into American leadership and willingness to commit armed forces to resist the invasion from the north. Incidentally, Truman’s decision had important domestic ramifications—uniting the country under what was seen as strong leadership.<sup>16</sup>

As the war proceeded, the military command in Korea often acted quite independently of any control by the United Nations. Acheson viewed the attack through the prism of American

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Arthur Krock, “Truman’s Leadership Has United the Nation,” *New York Times*, 2 July 1950, p. E3; James Reston, “Washington’s Firm Stand: ‘No More Munichs,’” *New York Times*, 2 July 1950, p.E3.

prestige and characterized it as “an open, undisguised challenge to our internationally accepted position as the protector of South Korea.”<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, he saw clearly the need for quickly involving the United Nations.<sup>18</sup> On Acheson’s recommendation, Truman’s decision to send the Seventh Fleet to neutralize Formosa exacerbated the issue of whether the United States had acted in its own interest or as part of UN collective security. Arguably, collective security did not require any action with regard to Formosa. That decision did not directly relate to Korea and had never been approved by the Security Council; moreover, it worried many members of the United Nations by raising the uncomfortable possibility of expanding the conflict to include mainland China.<sup>19</sup>

Finally, at the meeting on June 25 Truman made five decisions: MacArthur would send military supplies to the South Koreans; MacArthur would send a survey team to South Korea; the Seventh Fleet would move to Japan (in position for a later move to the Formosa Straits to protect Formosa—and incidentally to prevent Nationalist Chinese aggressive moves against the mainland); the Air Force would prepare plans—but not act on them—to “wipe out all Soviet air bases in the Far East”; and the State and Defense Departments would prepare a survey to contain a “careful calculation . . . of the next probable place in which Soviet action might take place.”<sup>20</sup>

The Security Council met again the next day. The North Korean attack continued unabated, with the South Korean army falling back. UNCOK reported to the Council that North

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<sup>17</sup>Dean Acheson, *Present at the Creation: My Years in the State Department* (New York: W.W. Norton&Company, 1969; paperback reprint, 1987), 405.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 403-404.

<sup>19</sup> Goodrich, *Korea*, 110.

<sup>20</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, June 25, 1950, Secretary of State File, 1945-1972, Memoranda of Conversations File, 1949-1953, Folder May-June 1950, Dean G. Acheson Papers, p. 5, Truman Library.

Korea was ignoring the resolution of June 25 and had spurned the Commission's offer of its "good offices." By June 27 the Commission concluded that they were witnessing a full scale invasion of South Korea. The President of the Council, Benegal N. Rau of India, read three reports from the Commission, and offered the view of his country that

many see in [the events of the past two days] the beginning of a third world war, with all its horrors. A terrible burden therefore rests upon us as a body charged with the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace. The people of the world are weary of war and rumours of war, and we must try our best not to fail them.<sup>21</sup>

The Indian ambassador in the Soviet Union advised U.S. Ambassador Alexander Kirk in Moscow of his government's view that "if [the] US makes [a] firm and successful display [of] its military power in Korea, not only will this have heartening effects in Japan, SEA [Southeast Asia] and India but it will also impress Communist China."<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, India's enthusiasm for taking action to repel the invasion was guarded and ambivalent. On the one hand Nehru supported the UN action to repel the invasion, but on the other hand Nehru was sensitive to Asian problems, including the possible PRC threat to Burma's independence and what he saw as "imperialistic, colonial or reactionary" policies of the United States and its allies in such places as Taiwan and Viet Nam.<sup>23</sup>

In the Security Council both the United States and Yugoslavia offered resolutions. U.S. Ambassador Austin said that "the most important provisions of the Charter are those outlawing

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<sup>21</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, Fifth Year, no. 16, June 27, 1950, 1.

<sup>22</sup> Telegram, The Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Kirk) to the Secretary of State, June 27, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 196.

<sup>23</sup> Telegram, The Ambassador in India (Henderson) to the Secretary of State, June 28, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 218.

aggressive war. It is precisely these provisions which the North Korean authorities have violated.”<sup>24</sup> He was “happy and proud” to report that “as a loyal member of the United Nations” the United States was prepared to furnish assistance to the Republic of Korea.<sup>25</sup> The resolution he presented called for member states to “furnish such assistance to the Republic of Korea as may be necessary to repel the armed attack and to restore international peace and security in the area.” The vagueness of the wording (“in the area”) would later become important, since it was not clear whether action was intended to restore the *status quo ante*, i.e., the pre-attack 38<sup>th</sup> parallel division of Korea, or whether “the area” referred to the entire Korean peninsula.<sup>26</sup>

The resolution, if adopted, would give official UN approval to the United States (as well as any other member states willing to do so) actively to enter the war. The Yugoslav delegate stated that the Korean problem resulted from Cold War tensions and that the division of Korea into two “spheres of influence” had made it “inevitable that an open conflict should break out between two sides, each of which was subjected to opposite influences.”<sup>27</sup> He argued that the Security Council should “assist the Korean people to find its own path towards independence and unity.” His resolution called for the immediate cessation of hostilities, beginning a process of

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<sup>24</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, 474<sup>th</sup> Meeting, Fifth Year, June 27, 1950, 3.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>26</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, 474<sup>th</sup> Meeting, Fifth Year, June 27, 1950, no. 16, p. 4. Austin’s statement at the Security Council on July 27 revealed no intention to invade North Korea. Austin called on for “cessation of hostilities forthwith and the withdrawal by the North Korean authorities of their armed forces to the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel . . . .” United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, Fifth Year, no. 16, June 27, 1950, 3. However, others soon voiced different views: On June 29 the Joint Chiefs of Staff authorized MacArthur to “extend [his] operations into Northern Korea” against military targets if and when in his judgment “this becomes essential in the performance of [his] missions.” Telegram, The Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Commander in Chief, Far East (MacArthur), *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 241.

<sup>27</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, Fifth Year, 474<sup>th</sup> Meeting, June 27, 1950, no. 16, June 27, 1950, 6.

mediation, and inviting a representative of the North Korean government to come to the UN to begin such mediation. The South Korean representative, who was already present at the Council meeting, ignored the call for mediation. Instead, he argued that the Council on June 25 had already passed moral judgment on the attack, and now “that moral judgment must be backed with the power of enforcement.”<sup>28</sup> In the voting that followed the Yugoslav resolution was defeated (garnering only the vote of Yugoslavia) and the U.S.-backed resolution was adopted by a vote of seven to one (Yugoslavia), with Egypt and India abstaining.<sup>29</sup> The resolution, as adopted, specifically determined that the attack “constituted a breach of the peace.”<sup>30</sup> The reference to “breach of the peace” tracked the language of Article 39, Chapter VII, which dealt with “threats to the peace, breaches of the peace, and acts of aggression,” and in such cases Article 42 authorized the Security Council to use force, i.e., “take such action by air, sea, or land forces as may be necessary to maintain or restore international peace and security.”

Meanwhile, the United States began its entry into the war as the ROK defense continued to crumble under the North Korean attack. MacArthur asked for, and got, Truman’s authorization to transfer a small force of American troops into the combat area, in anticipation of a possible buildup of U.S. forces to begin offensive action. Orders were then issued for the transfer of two divisions from Japan. The first U.S. troops, about four hundred infantrymen, arrived on July 1. On July 5 they met North Korean tanks in battle, and the Americans were pushed back in full retreat. This early lesson proved that the mere presence of U.S. forces would have no material effect on the fighting: a buildup of major force was required.

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 16-17.

<sup>30</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, Fifth Year, 474<sup>th</sup> Meeting, no. 16, June 27, 1950, 4.

In response to the June 27 resolution various UN member states began to send military contingents, first air and naval units from countries having forces in the Pacific area and later ground troops from various countries in and out of the area. However, the total of such contributions was relatively small: the United States and South Korea furnished more than ninety percent of the ground forces.<sup>31</sup> On June 30 Austin notified the Security Council that Truman had authorized American air strikes “on specific military targets in North Korea” and had ordered a naval blockade “of the entire Korean coast.”<sup>32</sup>

The Security Council action, noteworthy in its call to resist armed attack, took place in the context of the failed UN Charter provisions which had contemplated the formation of a United Nations armed force. The Charter contemplated the existence of a distinct UN military force, provided by member states, but directed by the Security Council under advice of a UN Military Staff Committee. The Cold War had prevented the creation of a UN Military Staff Committee or the amalgamation of a permanent military force under UN command. In fact, the Military Staff Committee never got off the ground.<sup>33</sup> Without a Military Staff Committee there was no mechanism for UN direction or control of any military action undertaken under its authority. That lack would prove important.

With the influx of American and other foreign troops into Korea, and with no UN Military Staff Committee in existence, the question of command authority arose. On July 7 the Security Council again convened so that British delegate Sir Gladwyn Jebb could offer, in support of the United States, a joint British-French resolution calling for a unified UN command

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<sup>31</sup> Stueck, *The Korean War*, 3.

<sup>32</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, Fifth Year, no. 17, June 30, 1950, 10.

<sup>33</sup> Schlesinger, *Act of Creation*, 240.

in Korea. The United States, the most powerful of the countries opposing the North Korean invasion and with the greatest stake in helping the Republic of Korea to survive, was the obvious choice to hold such command. Acheson had guided the U.S. mission at the UN on the points to be covered, and the language to be used, in the resolution.<sup>34</sup> It called for placing the military forces in Korea of all member states “under a unified command under the United States of America” with the United States to “designate the commander of such forces,” and it authorized the unified command to operate under the United Nations flag.<sup>35</sup> After behind-the-scenes disputes over the breadth and vagueness of the resolution (as to the geographic confines of UN action, and as to potential loss of UN control by placing command in American hands)<sup>36</sup> it was adopted with seven votes in favor, and Egypt, India and Yugoslavia abstaining.<sup>37</sup> Afterwards, Austin spoke effusively about the “gallant members” of the United Nations, and he vowed that the United States would “continue to discharge its obligations as a member of the United Nations to act vigorously in support of the Security Council’s resolutions.”<sup>38</sup> The next day Truman appointed MacArthur as the commanding general of the unified UN forces, and he authorized MacArthur to use the UN flag as well as the flags of the member states involved. One week after

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<sup>34</sup> Telegram, The Secretary of State to the United States Mission at the United Nations, July 4, 1950; and Telegram, The Secretary of State to the United States Mission at the United Nations, July 4, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 299-300.

<sup>35</sup> 84 (1950). Resolution of 7 July 1950, Security Council Resolutions 1950; available at <http://www.un.org/documents/sc/res1950/scres50.htm>; internet; accessed January 18, 2011.

<sup>36</sup> Stueck, *Korean War*, 56.

<sup>37</sup> Although Britain and France had supported the United States in the vote, both countries had misgivings. Telegram, The United States Representative at the United Nations (Austin) to the Secretary of State, July 5, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 306-307.

<sup>38</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Record*, Fifth Year, no. 18, July 7, 1950, 11.



the resolution Rhee placed all South Korean forces under MacArthur's command.

Notwithstanding his unified command, MacArthur considered his relationship with the United Nations as "largely nominal." He was ultimately responsible to Truman and he took his orders from the Joint Chiefs of Staff.<sup>39</sup> This posed the anomaly of a United Nations military force without a UN command structure, whose commander took his orders from the government of one member state. By 1951, with the United States providing (exclusive of ROK forces) 88 per cent of all ground troops, 98.24 per cent of all air forces, and 83.81 per cent of naval forces in Korea, George H. Bender, Republican representative from Ohio, called Truman's efforts to describe these as United Nations forces a "farce."<sup>40</sup>

### *The Korean Problem Returns to the UN*

As the war continued, events in Korea dominated the Security Council agenda.<sup>41</sup> Neither the U.S. nor the Soviet governments desired a widening of the war in Korea<sup>42</sup>, but no party to the conflict appeared willing to take significant action to stop the fighting. Soon after the North Korean attack began, UNCOK had offered its "good offices" to obtain a cease-fire, but with no positive results. Truman showed a desire to localize the war in Korea by an *aide-memoire* sent to Moscow, asking the Soviets to convince the North Koreans to withdraw above the 38<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Goodrich, *Korea*, 121.

<sup>40</sup> Laurence Burd, "Truman's U.N. Label on War Called a Farce," *Chicago Tribune*, December 2, 1951, Part 1, p. 6.

<sup>41</sup> Of the seven 1950 Security Council resolutions adopted after June 25, five dealt with Korea or Formosa.

<sup>42</sup> In early July Gromyko advised the British ambassador that the Soviet government wished for a peaceful settlement of the Korean conflict. Telegram, The Ambassador in the United Kingdom (Douglas) to the Secretary of State, July 10, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 352-353.

parallel, also with negative results.<sup>43</sup> As a major neutralist power, India sought to maintain an independent stance in the Cold War, favoring neither the Soviet Union nor the United States. Its prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, viewed the UN's function as primarily mediation, not collective security.<sup>44</sup> During July the Government of India began a concerted effort to solve the Korean problem by a process of mediation, which contemplated granting the China seat at the Security Council to the PRC. In July Nehru delivered a note to that effect to Acheson, and he also sent an appeal for cooperation to Stalin.<sup>45</sup> On July 31 the Council adopted a resolution recognizing the "hardships and privations" to which the war was subjecting the Korean people, and requesting the Secretary-General and various UN agencies and NGOs to provide assistance "for the relief and support of the civilian population of Korea."<sup>46</sup>

On August 1 Malik, having returned to the Security Council and having assumed the duties of president of the Council for the month of August, made clear the Soviet Union's unwillingness to cooperate to obtain a quick cease-fire. In the face of the war raging in Korea, his first act as president was to rule that the Nationalist Chinese delegation did not represent China and therefore could not participate in the meetings of the Security Council.<sup>47</sup> Austin

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<sup>43</sup> Stueck, *The Korean War*, 50; The Soviets rebuffed Kirk, the U.S. ambassador in the Soviet Union, who tried unsuccessfully to see Gromyko five times to deliver the American request for Soviet help to persuade the North Koreans to withdraw behind the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. Finally Kirk was reduced to sending his First Secretary at the American embassy to read the American request and leave a copy. Telegram, The Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Kirk) to the Secretary of State, June 27, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 204.

<sup>44</sup> Stueck, *The Korean War*, 51.

<sup>45</sup> Memorandum by the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian and African Affairs (McGhee) to the Secretary of State, July 13, 1950; Telegram, The Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Kirk) to the Secretary of State, July 14, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 372-373; 379-380.

<sup>46</sup> Resolution of 31 July 1950, Security Council Resolutions – 1950, available at <http://www.un.org/documents/sc/res/1950/scres50.htm>; internet; accessed April 29, 2011.

<sup>47</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, Fifth Year, 480<sup>th</sup> Meeting, no. 22, August 1, 1950, 1.

quickly challenged Malik's ruling, and in the vote that followed, the Council defeated the ruling, with only India and Yugoslavia supporting Malik. Malik also submitted a resolution to recognize the PRC delegation as the representative of China. That resolution garnered the support of India, Norway, Britain, the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, but failed for lack of seven affirmative votes.<sup>48</sup>

When the Security Council finally turned specifically to the fighting in Korea, there were two resolutions for consideration: first, the pending U.S.-sponsored resolution which called for condemnation of North Korea for its "continued defiance of the United Nations," for efforts to convince North Korean authorities to cease that defiance, and for all states to refrain from assisting or encouraging North Korean authorities and from action that might lead to the spread of the conflict; second, the Soviet Union's resolution which proposed inviting a representative of the PRC as well as representatives of the Korean people (i.e., representatives of both the North and South Korean regimes) to be heard by the Council, and called for an end to hostilities in Korea and the withdrawal of all foreign troops.

Certainly, fairness (and prior Security Council practice) indicated that both sides to the Korean conflict should be permitted to appear and argue their case before the Council. But the United States and its supporters opposed providing a forum for North Korea while it continued its invasion of South Korea. In an effort to break through the East-West conflict, Sir Benegal Rau proposed the establishment of a committee of the six non-permanent members of the

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<sup>48</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, Fifth Year, 482<sup>nd</sup> Meeting, no. 24, August 3, 1950, p. 22; Jawaharlal Nehru, the Prime Minister of India, tried, but failed, to convince Acheson that admitting the PRC to enter the Security Council would help end the Korean war. The Indian Ambassador (Pandit) to the Secretary of State, July 17, 1950, enclosing Text of Message From Prime Minister of India to Hon'ble Dean Acheson, Secretary of State, United States of America, undated, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 407-408; Telegram, The Secretary of State to the Embassy in India, July 17, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 412-413.

Security Council to study all proposals for a peaceful settlement in Korea. For the rest of August, while Malik held the presidency, interminable wrangling engulfed the Council and prevented even the adoption of an agenda.

On September 1, as Britain's Sir Gladwyn Jebb assumed the presidency, the Council moved into action. The agenda was now quickly adopted, and, in contrast to Malik, Jebb promptly invited the representative of South Korea to take his place at the Council table. Nevertheless, no substantive progress was achieved. The Soviet resolution to invite representatives of North and South Korea (in substance, only North Korea was affected, since the South Korean representative was already present) was quickly voted down, having received the votes of only the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. Five days later the U.S.-backed resolution calling on all states to refrain from assisting or encouraging North Korean authorities came to vote, and was vetoed by the Soviet Union notwithstanding having received nine affirmative votes.<sup>49</sup>

On September 7 Jebb then put to a vote a Soviet resolution "concerning the inhuman, barbarous bombing by the United States Air Force of the peaceful population, towns and populated areas in Korea," and calling upon the U.S. government to stop the bombing of "towns and populated areas and also the shooting up from the air of the peaceful population of Korea."<sup>50</sup> Malik cited numerous examples of horrific damage allegedly inflicted by American aircraft on civilian populations. The U.S. representative, Ernest Gross, argued that the air war in Korea was "directed solely at military targets of the invader . . . . enemy troop concentrations, supply

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<sup>49</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, Fifth Year, 496<sup>th</sup> Meeting, no. 38, September 6, 1950, 18.

<sup>50</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, Fifth Year, 484<sup>th</sup> Meeting, no. 26, August 8, 1950, 20.

dumps, war plants and communication lines,” that the “United Nations are urgently endeavoring to restrict destruction to the established military forces of the invader,” and that “the world knows . . . the people of Korea know, who is responsible for the calamities which have befallen their land.”<sup>51</sup> With only the Soviet Union voting in favor and Yugoslavia abstaining, the resolution was decisively defeated.

Throughout the balance of September debate continued regarding the alleged U.S. armed invasion of Taiwan and bombing of mainland China, the U.S. proposal for a UN commission to investigate on the spot the complaints of such bombing, and the Soviet demand for a PRC representative to be present for the discussion of such alleged bombing. In a series of votes the Security Council accomplished nothing, but finally on September 29 the Council adopted a resolution, with the United States, China and Cuba opposed, to invite the PRC to send a representative to attend the Council discussion regarding the PRC complaint regarding armed invasion of Taiwan. Even American prestige and leadership could not prevail against the logic that Mao’s communist regime now in fact ruled China and its complaint of “armed invasion” of Taiwan (which all parties conceded was a part of China) could not be ignored by the United Nations. The vote represented a slight weakening of U.S. control of Security Council voting.

### *The Tide of Battle Turns, Bringing New Problems*

The successful advance of North Korean forces continued unchecked, so that by early August UN forces were pushed back into a very small area around the southern port city of

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<sup>51</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, Fifth Year, 497<sup>th</sup> Meeting, no. 39, September 7, 1950, 11.

Pusan. On September 15 a UN amphibious surprise attack at approximately the middle of the west coast of Korea at Inchon, the major port for the capital city of Seoul, cut off the entire North Korean army in southern Korea. Within a week MacArthur had recaptured Seoul, and was positioned to cross the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel and threaten the total conquest of North Korea.<sup>52</sup>

The prospect of crossing the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel gave rise to disagreement within the Truman administration. During July U.S. policy-makers had addressed the issue of possible invasion of the North, and the State Department soon split on the question. The State Department's Policy Planning Staff (PPS) had concluded that if ground action continued into the North, "the danger of conflict with Chinese communist or Soviet forces would be greatly increased," and that "military action north of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, except to the extent essential for tactical requirements as fighting approaches that line, would require a new Security Council resolution."<sup>53</sup> The PPS recommended that "it be kept constantly before world opinion" that U.S. forces' "immediate purpose is to bring about the cessation of hostilities and the withdrawal of the North Korean forces to the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel" and that other measures "once the aggression has been brought to an end, would be a subject for U.N. consideration." It asked that its analysis and conclusions be sent to MacArthur and to the U.S. delegation at the UN. However, as discussed below, the recommendations of the report were soon rebuffed.

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<sup>52</sup> One day after the Inchon landing the State Department had enlisted the help of India to communicate to China the "grave concern" of the United States that China might intervene in Korea, and to assure that "continued UN interest in Korea w[ou]ld constitute [a] solid guarantee that no threat w[ou]ld come to China from that area in [the] event peace [was] restored along UN lines." Telegram, The Acting Secretary of State to the Embassy in India, September 16, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 733.

<sup>53</sup> Draft Memorandum Prepared by the Policy Planning Staff, July 22, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 453.

John M. Allison, Director of the Office of Northeast Asian Affairs at the State

Department, sharply disagreed with both the “philosophy and conclusions” of the PPS analysis.

Allison argued that if the UN Command stopped at the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel

we would go back to the *status quo ante bellum* and then ask the UN to start all over again doing what has been its attempt at three General Assemblies since 1947. The aggressor would apparently be consulted on equal or nearly equal terms and the real aggressor, the Soviet Union, would presumably go unpunished in any way whatsoever. The aggressor would be informed that all he had to fear from aggression was being compelled to start over again.<sup>54</sup>

Allison’s characterization of the Soviet Union as the “real aggressor” evidenced the mindset of U.S. policymakers, who could not conceive of Kim Il-sung as the driving force behind the war in Korea, but rather attributed the actions of all communist states to control from Moscow. Allison characterized the PPS approach as a “timid, half-hearted policy designed not to provoke the Soviets to war,” and he concluded that the United States should accept no solution in Korea which did not eliminate the North Korean Army “either by force or disarmament under UN auspices.” In mounting his attack against the PPS draft memorandum, Allison used the strongest language available in post-World War II United States: he charged that the PPS was recommending a “policy of appeasement.”<sup>55</sup> To avoid appeasement, Allison was willing to accept “war on a global scale.”<sup>56</sup>

Within a few days the PPS reversed itself. It issued a new draft memorandum which dropped the old conclusion that if UN forces crossed the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel “the danger of conflict with

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<sup>54</sup> Memorandum by the Director of the Office of Northeast Asian Affairs (Allison) to the Director of the Policy Planning Staff (Nitze), July 24, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 459.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 460.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 460-461.

Chinese communist or Soviet forces would be greatly increased.” Instead it concluded that “it is U.S. policy to help bring about the complete independence and unity of Korea,” and “decisions regarding our course of action when the U.N. forces approach the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel should be deferred until military and political developments” provide additional information to base decisions on the situation in Korea and other parts of the world at the time, to consult with other UN members who are supporting the Security Council resolutions, and to “keep our military capabilities and commitments in safe balance.”<sup>57</sup> In other words, PPS now dropped its recommendation that invasion of the north require “U.N. consideration,” and left the issue so flexible that the door was open for invasion across the parallel.<sup>58</sup> The turnabout at PPS can, to some extent, be explained by changes in the new memorandum: whereas the first memorandum had said that “there probably would be reluctance and opposition [at the UN] to multilateral use of force . . . to bring about the complete independence and unity of Korea,” the new memorandum omitted any reference to “reluctance and opposition” and merely stated such use of force “would depend upon majority support in the U.N.”; and whereas the first memorandum had noted that “the risks of bringing on a major conflict with the U.S.S.R. or Communist China . . . appear to outweigh the political advantages that might be gained from such a further military action,” the new

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<sup>57</sup> Draft Memorandum Prepared by the Policy Planning Staff, July 25, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 472-473.

<sup>58</sup> “Mr. Nitze explained that . . . we should wait until the time comes when our troops approach the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel before deciding whether to cross it or not. Mr. Dulles concurred . . .” Memorandum for the Files on a Meeting Held in the Office of the Under Secretary of State (Webb), July 28, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 486.



memorandum blandly asserted that “the Korean problem must be dealt with in the wider framework of the conflict between the communist and non-communist countries.”<sup>59</sup>

The Department of Defense agreed with Allison, but was even more extreme in its conclusions. It argued that from the standpoint of military operations, “the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel has no more significance than any other meridian.” It conceded that “the only opposition to military operations north of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel would be the entry of major Chinese Communist or Soviet forces” and that available intelligence suggested that large numbers of Chinese Communist or Soviet ground forces would not be introduced “as long as the ground fighting is confined to the area south of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel.”<sup>60</sup> In its conclusions it made passing reference to the possibility of “Soviet military countermeasures,” but ignored the possibility (it had earlier alluded to) of Chinese communist intervention. It concluded that unification “square[d] with historical necessity,” and that “the elimination of the North Korean Communist regime . . . would be a step in reversing the dangerous strategic trend in the Far East in the past twelve months.”<sup>61</sup> To accomplish these goals the Department of Defense recommended a policy of indirection:

*At an appropriate time, the President should proclaim that our peace aim is a united, free and independent Korea . . . . Again at an appropriate time, the U.S. should seek to translate this aim into UN objectives . . . . No statement of US general objectives should be made until the unified command has launched offensive military measures [north of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel] . . . . Until such time, great caution should be taken in public discussion of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. . . . In the meantime, the U.S. should use all its diplomatic means to forestall any Soviet effort to mediate the conflict on any terms short of the unification of all Korea*

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<sup>59</sup> Draft Memorandum Prepared by the Policy Planning Staff, July 25, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 452; *Ibid.*, 471-472.

<sup>60</sup> Draft Memorandum Prepared in the Department of Defense, July 31, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 502-503.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 507-508.

on a free and representative basis under UN auspices. (emphasis in the original).<sup>62</sup>

By the end of July pressure had built within the State and Defense Departments for invasion into North Korea. In August U.S. Deputy Representative Ernest Gross asked Britain's Gladwyn Jebb to modify his speech so as to omit reference to a cease-fire, because "it might be that we would want to advance well beyond the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel and not have our hands tied in any way by a commitment made at such an early stage."<sup>63</sup> Jebb agreed to "at once call London and suggest that no mention of a cease-fire be made."<sup>64</sup>

The complexities of running a war under a nominal UN command, but an actual U.S. command, required coherent leadership from the top able to accomplish key U.S. objectives while still accommodating the viewpoints of close allies and a majority of UN member states. Unfortunately, the Truman administration failed to provide such leadership. From the beginning the outsized ego and reputation of MacArthur together with lack of clear direction and control by the Joint Chiefs of Staff resulted in ambiguous orders and excessive deference to MacArthur. Also, Truman's advisers gave inconsistent counsel, which resulted in some confusion in U.S. policy. The disagreement about invading north of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel has already been noted. In addition, the State Department worried about MacArthur permitting aerial bombing near the Soviet or Chinese border. When American B-29s bombed the port city of Rashin, seventeen miles from the border, Under Secretary of State James E. Webb complained to Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson that such action violated the directive which Truman had approved—to

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 508-509.

<sup>63</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, by Mr. James N. Hyde of the United States Mission at the United Nations, August 11, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 556.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 556.

stay “well clear” of the Soviet and Manchurian frontier.<sup>65</sup> Truman’s failure to exercise strong leadership became manifest as the debate between the State and Defense Departments broke out in the Cabinet meeting of August 15. Johnson claimed that the Rashin bombing had been approved in advance by the Joint Chiefs and the President, and that the location of the bombing was irrelevant so long as it did not cross the border; whereas Webb claimed that “those who had the most experience in dealing with the Russians” disagreed, and that the State Department was “very concerned that such an action might precipitate the reoccupation of Korea down to the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel or the introduction of the Chinese Communists into the war.” When Webb discussed the matter with Truman personally, Truman indicated “some concern about it himself,” and did not say that he had approved the bombing.<sup>66</sup> Two days later, when Webb again raised the issue of bombing the port at Rashin close to the Soviet border, Truman first said that “he thought we would have to take whatever risks were necessary to destroy the points from which supplies were flowing,” but then agreed that “departures from agreed instructions should not be made without thorough consultation with the State Department on the political implications.”<sup>67</sup>

Truman’s advisers produced no clear consensus on the issue of invasion north of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, and the debate continued. In August the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) weighed into the debate, concluding that an invasion of North Korea would involve “grave risks,” including “hostilities with Chinese Communist and Soviet troops. Under such circumstances

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<sup>65</sup> The Under Secretary of State (Webb) to the Secretary of Defense (Johnson), August 14, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 576.

<sup>66</sup> Memorandum by the Under Secretary of State (Webb), August 15, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 581-582.

<sup>67</sup> Memorandum by the Under Secretary of State (Webb), August 17, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 593.

there would, moreover, be grave risk of general war.”<sup>68</sup> In plain language, the CIA had raised the specter of World War III. In early September the Joint Chiefs of Staff gave their viewpoint. They had conferred with MacArthur and concluded “operations must take place both north and south of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel,” but that ground operations “should be conducted by South Korean forces.”<sup>69</sup> The following month the National Security Council (NSC) finally submitted to Truman its report on courses of action with respect to Korea. After expressing the opinion that it was possible, but politically unlikely, that Chinese communist forces would occupy North Korea, the NSC concluded that although MacArthur had the right to conduct operations north of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel in order to push the North Korean army behind that line, further military operations to unify Korea would require United Nations authorization. Finally, the NSC concluded that prior to executing such further military operation MacArthur “should . . . obtain the approval of the President.”<sup>70</sup> Unlike Allison, whose responsibility extended only to the Northeast Asian Affairs desk of the State Department, or Johnson, whose authority was limited to the Defense Department, the NSC had overall responsibility for the security of the United States. Understandably it was more circumspect in avoiding unnecessary risk. As a result, it highlighted “the importance of securing support of the majority of U.N. members for any action that might be taken north of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel,” and it advised that “United Nations approval for military

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<sup>68</sup> Memorandum Prepared in the Central Intelligence Agency, August 18, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 600.

<sup>69</sup> Memorandum by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of Defense, September 7, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 707.

<sup>70</sup> Report by the National Security Council to the President, September 9, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 714-716.

actions in furtherance of [the political objective of unifying Korea under the Republic of Korea] is a prerequisite for their initiation.”<sup>71</sup>

In a somewhat haphazard way, the U.S. government was flirting with the concept of conquest of North Korea and risking Soviet or Chinese intervention—but without general agreement within the government and without any specific authorization from the UN. While U.S. authorities struggled with the risks (and rewards) of invasion into the north, Rhee was constantly goading them into aggressive action. At a September 10 press conference Rhee said that a UN advance was imminent and “must not stop until [the] Reds [were] driven entirely out of Kor[ea].”<sup>72</sup>

### ***The Korean Problem Goes Back to the General Assembly***

As MacArthur’s attack at Inchon was cutting off Kim Il-sung’s army from its source of supply and reinforcement, the UN again took up the Korean problem— this time in the General Assembly, where of course the Soviets had no veto. The agenda for the Fifth Session, proposed by the General Committee, and adopted by the Assembly, contained item 24, “The problem of the independence of Korea: report of the United Nations Commission on Korea,” and on October 6 the Assembly took up the matter. Meanwhile, the U.S. government faced continuing problems of military command as well as difficulties in controlling its South Korean ally. Truman and the Joint Chiefs deferred to MacArthur’s decisions, and even when his decisions violated U.S. policy

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 715.

<sup>72</sup> Telegram, The Secretary of State to the Embassy in Korea, September 11, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 723.

no strong action was taken to subordinate MacArthur to the chain of command. Also, U.S. officials to some extent were held hostage by the Rhee government. Washington could not overtly repudiate Rhee without a complete disintegration of U.S. policy in Korea, so that when Rhee pronounced that “any United Nations solution of the Korean problem must make certain that the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel not be perpetuated,”<sup>73</sup> there was very little control over Rhee that the United States could exert. Moreover, as noted above, significant elements in Truman’s administration agreed with Rhee.

Truman’s administration had yet to announce a decision about invading the north. A September 19 State Department position paper advised that “the United States Delegation should avoid discussion of what our policy would be when UN forces reach the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel on the ground that this question must be decided by the Security Council.”<sup>74</sup> The next day Acheson addressed the Assembly, and he praised the United Nations for its effort “to put down the aggression which began on 25 June,” as “exactly the effective collective measure which was required.” Moreover, he expressed his confidence that the “defiance of authority” of the UN “will be crushed as it deserves to be, and that thereafter the future of this small and gallant country may be restored where it belongs—to the custody of its own people under the guidance of the United Nations.”<sup>75</sup> Acheson’s language, although vague, did not sound like the Unified Command intended merely push the North Koreans behind the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel; it sounded more like

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<sup>73</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, by Mr. John M. Allison of the United States Delegation to the United Nations General Assembly, September 18, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 735.

<sup>74</sup> Position Paper Prepared for the United States Delegation to the United Nations General Assembly, September 19, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 737.

<sup>75</sup> United Nations General Assembly, *Official Records*, Fifth Year, 279<sup>th</sup> Plenary Meeting, September 20, 1950, 24.

the intention to unify the peninsula (presumably by force) and to expand the Republic of Korea's authority over the entire country.<sup>76</sup>

The Assembly referred the Korean question to its First Committee, which followed previous practice and U.S. preference by inviting a ROK representative, but rejecting the Soviet proposal to also invite a representative from North Korea. Two resolutions were presented: one, by the Soviet Union and its satellites, called for cessation of hostilities, the immediate withdrawal of all foreign troops, and the holding of all-Korean elections to a National Assembly; the other, principally drafted by the British, but backed by the United States, was presented by eight countries (Australia, Brazil, Cuba, the Netherlands, Norway, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Britain) to exemplify its broad support.<sup>77</sup> The Soviet-sponsored resolution also proposed establishing a joint commission composed of an equal number of representatives from the existing assemblies in North Korea and South Korea to prepare for a national election, as well as a UN program of economic and technical aid and admission of Korea to the United Nations. The British-sponsored resolution called for appropriate steps to ensure conditions of stability throughout Korea; for holding elections (presumably in the North to add representatives to the Assembly already existing in South Korea) to establish a unified, independent and democratic Korea; for economic aid to Korea; for UN forces to remain in Korea only so long as necessary to achieve the objectives of the resolution; and for establishment of a UN Commission for the unification and rehabilitation of Korea. Although not explicitly authorizing the invasion of North Korea, its provisos for "conditions of stability throughout Korea" and for "a unified,

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<sup>76</sup> As early as June 26, 1950 Truman, when asked if U.S. warplanes should fly over North Korea, agreed with Acheson that "no action should be taken north of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel." But he added; "*not yet.*" (emphasis added). Memorandum of Conversation, by the Ambassador at Large (Jessup), June 26, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 179.

<sup>77</sup> Goodrich, *Korea*, 129.

independent and democratic Korea” strongly implied the destruction of the North Korean regime and the extension of the Republic of Korea’s control over the entire peninsula.<sup>78</sup>

Considerable doubts arose regarding the British-backed eight-party proposal because of fears that the war might escalate. The original June 25 Security Council resolution had called only for North Korean authorities “to withdraw forthwith their armed forces to the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel.” The prospect of invasion into North Korea raised the risk of the expansion of the war to include either or both of the countries bordering North Korea—China and the Soviet Union. The Chairman of the Brazilian delegation worried about the General Assembly’s jurisdiction to order a crossing of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel—he believed that the doubts about the legality of the British resolution and the resulting Assembly debate would “impose a strong inhibition against MacArthur moving across the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel.” He recommended that the British delay their resolution and that meanwhile “the United States Government as the Unified Command should give MacArthur whatever orders might be necessary to enable him to cross the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel and take whatever action the military situation required. . . . This . . . would be very helpful to him, to

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<sup>78</sup> On July 10 the South Korean ambassador to the United States told Austin that “the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel was meaningless and that liberation and unification of all of Korea was essential . . . the UN should not stop short of this objective. If they did . . . we would be confronted indefinitely with [the] necessity [of] defending 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, North Korean Reds continuously being aided and abetted by Manchurians.” Telegram, The United States Representative at the United Nations (Austin) to the Secretary of State, July 10, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 354-355; John Foster Dulles, who was then a consultant to Acheson, wrote to Paul Nitze, Director of the Policy Planning Staff, that “the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel was never intended to be, and never ought to be, a political line. . . . it would be folly to allow the North Korean army to retire in good order with its armor and equipment and re-form behind the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel from whence it could attack again the now ravaged and weakened Republic of Kora.” Memorandum by Mr. John Foster Dulles, Consultant to the Secretary of State, to the Director of the Policy Planning Staff (Nitze), July 14, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 386; The Director of the Office of Northeast Asian Affairs, John M. Allison, agreed with Dulles. Memorandum by the Director of the Office of Northeast Asian Affairs (Allison) to the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Rusk), July 15, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 393-395.



many of his Latin American colleagues, and in general to the Asiatics including the Indians.”<sup>79</sup>

As we shall see, this is exactly what was done. The Dutch permanent UN representative also had concerns and on instructions from his government he advised U.S. delegate Ernest Gross that he was considering introducing a resolution directing the UN command “to suspend all air, sea and land operations north of 38 parallel until October 31,” to give the North Koreans “a chance to back down,” and thus avoid the risk of involving the PRC. The State Department reacted quickly: Gross “strongly indicated the danger and difficulty” of the Dutch proposal, and the same day Rusk visited the Netherlands ambassador to the United States who was “requested urgently [to] inform [the] Neth[erlands] Gov[ernment] [of] our objections to [the] course which it apparently has in mind.”<sup>80</sup> The Netherlands quickly abandoned its proposed resolution.

India had attempted to pursue mediation as a means of ending the war in Korea, and now hoped to prevent UN forces from advancing beyond the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel “until all other means of settlement have been explored.”<sup>81</sup> The British themselves worried that “the Chinese might well regard the crossing of the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel by United Nations forces and the prospect of the elimination of the North Korean Communist buffer state as constituting a serious threat to China’s own security.” Although the British felt that “on balance it would still seem unlikely that China would be prepared to take the risk of becoming involved in hostilities with the United

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<sup>79</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, by Mr. John C. Ross of the United States delegation to the United Nations General Assembly, September 28, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 817.

<sup>80</sup> Telegram, The Secretary of State to the Acting Secretary of State, October 5, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 883-884; Telegram, The Acting Secretary of State to the Embassy in the Netherlands, October 5, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 884-885.

<sup>81</sup> Quoted in Stueck, *The Korean War*, 93.

States . . . . the possibility of a Chinese move into North Korea . . . exists as a real danger.”<sup>82</sup>

India continued its opposition, and informed the U.S. ambassador in India that “it had reason to believe there was real danger Peking might intervene if UN Forces should cross [the 38<sup>th</sup>] Parallel and that world war might result.”<sup>83</sup> A position paper prepared for the U.S. delegation to the General Assembly dated September 19 stated that “a particularly difficult aspect of the Korean question is to decide how much of the United Nations aspiration to bring about the unification of Korea should be adopted as a goal which the United Nations is committed to attain through military means.”<sup>84</sup> On September 22, Dulles expressed concern over a possible UN military action to unify Korea. He worried that “any effort which seemed to imply this result might be met by Chinese Communist and Soviet force so strong that, as a practical matter, it could not be matched,” and he recommended that the United States should not take the political initiative at the UN to propose invasion into the north, but should wait to see if other countries suggest such move.<sup>85</sup>

Notwithstanding these concerns, on September 27 Truman approved a directive sent to MacArthur the same day which set forth the military objective as “the destruction of the North Korean armed forces,” and authorized MacArthur to “conduct military operations . . . north of

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<sup>82</sup> The British Embassy to the Department of State, undated, delivered on October 2, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 814-815.

<sup>83</sup> Telegram, The Ambassador in India (Henderson) to the Secretary of State, September 27, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 791.

<sup>84</sup> Position Paper Prepared for the United States Delegation to the United Nations General Assembly, September 19, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 741.

<sup>85</sup> Memorandum by Mr. John Foster Dulles, Consultant to the Secretary of State, to the Secretary of State, September 22, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 751.

the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel . . . provided that . . . there has been no entry into North Korea . . . by major Soviet or Chinese Communist forces.”<sup>86</sup> The original abandonment of UN control of the war by placing UN forces under U.S. command now had come to fruition. Despite serious doubts at the UN, U.S. leaders could, and did, unilaterally opt for invasion into North Korea. UN Secretary-General Trygve Lie opposed unification by force.<sup>87</sup> Even the Americans had their doubts, which they attempted to deal with by qualifying the directive with a proviso that “as a matter of policy, no non-Korean ground forces will be used in the northeast provinces bordering the Soviet Union or in the area along the Manchurian border.”<sup>88</sup> The fact that this qualification was merely a “matter of policy” and not an explicit, direct order would later prove very serious. By jumping the gun and authorizing MacArthur to invade the north without any UN mandate, Truman showed that, although he wanted UN legitimization for his government’s actions, if such legitimization was not available or might prove difficult to obtain, he would act anyway. UN votes could validate U.S. action, but the lack thereof could not prevent such action.

Two days later the United States pre-empted the forthcoming General Assembly vote when Marshall (now Secretary of Defense) instructed MacArthur that

we want you to feel unhampered tactically and strategically to proceed north of [the] 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. Announcement above referred to may precipitate embarrassment in UN where

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<sup>86</sup> Footnotes 1 and 2 to The Secretary of Defense (Marshall) to the President, September 27, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 792-793; Telegram, The Acting Secretary of State to the United States Mission at the United Nations, September 26, 1950, *Ibid.*, 781.

<sup>87</sup> Trygve Lie, *In the Cause of Peace: Seven Years with the United Nations* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1954), 167.

<sup>88</sup> Telegram, The Acting Secretary of State to the United States Mission at the United Nations, September 26, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 781; The Secretary of Defense (Marshall) to the President, September 27, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 792-793.

evident desire is not to be confronted with necessity of a vote on passage of 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, rather to find you to have found it militarily necessary to do so.<sup>89</sup>

Thus, with Truman's knowledge and approval Marshall had taken this crucial question of crossing the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel out of the hands of the United Nations and made the decision to free MacArthur to begin the conquest of North Korea.<sup>90</sup> These orders obviated what promised to be a highly contentious debate in the General Assembly by turning MacArthur's advance into a *fait accompli*; but the U.S. action highlighted the degree to which the United Nations had become the tool of American policy in Korea, and how that policy had shifted over a relatively short time—from repelling aggression to unification of the country by military means. Once the means were at hand it was hard for Truman and his military leaders to resist the temptation to move north and destroy the North Korean army. Marshall and MacArthur—in total control of the UN's military forces on the ground and with North Korean forces in full retreat—now felt free to take unilateral action, with the expectation that the United States would face no meaningful challenge at the UN. Anticlimactically, on October 7 the Assembly adopted, in substance, the eight-party resolution, by a vote of forty-seven to five, with seven abstentions,<sup>91</sup> and the Assembly voted down the Soviet-sponsored resolution, fifty-five to five. Despite doubts that had been voiced, the United Nations by this act gave its official, if belated, blessing to invasion of the north.

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<sup>89</sup> Telegram, The Secretary of Defense (Marshall) to the Commander in Chief, Far East (MacArthur), September 29, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 826.

<sup>90</sup> Telegram, The Acting Secretary of State to the United States Mission at the United Nations, September 26, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 781-782; The Secretary of Defense (Marshall) to the President, September 27, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 792-793; Harry S. Truman, *Memoirs by Harry S. Truman: Volume Two, Years of Trial and Hope* (New York: Signet Books, 1956), 410-413.

<sup>91</sup> Resolution of 7 October 1950, Resolutions Adopted by the General Assembly at its 5<sup>th</sup> Session, available at <http://www.un.org/depts/dhl/resguide/r5.htm>; internet; accessed January 30, 2011.

A clash with China was fast approaching. MacArthur, now with his orders in hand and having no need for more specific UN authorization, quickly prepared to invade North Korea. Despite explicit warnings from the PRC, on October 7 the American First Cavalry crossed the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel<sup>92</sup> and on October 9 U.S. forces moved in strength across the parallel. As UN forces crossed the parallel, the Joint Chiefs of Staff sought to prevent a widening of the war. They directed MacArthur that if he encountered major PRC units, he could continue fighting

as long as . . . action by forces now under your control offers a reasonable chance of success. In any case you will *obtain authorization from Washington prior to taking any military action against objectives in Chinese territory.* (emphasis added).<sup>93</sup>

On October 7 Mao Zedong gave the order for Chinese troops to enter Korea.<sup>94</sup> Three days later the PRC Foreign Ministry issued a statement:

The American war of invasion in Korea has been a serious menace to the security of China from its very start . . . . The Chinese people cannot stand idly by with regard to such a serious situation created by the invasion of Korea by the United States and its accomplices . . . .<sup>95</sup>

Despite these moves, U.S. policy-makers were still quite ignorant of the Chinese threat. On October 12 the CIA issued a report which stated that “there are no convincing indications of an actual Chinese Communist intention to resort to full-scale intervention in Korea,” and concluded that while such intervention was a “continuing possibility . . . barring a Soviet decision for global

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<sup>92</sup> Chen, *China's Road to the Korean War*, 186.

<sup>93</sup> The Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Commander in Chief, Far East (MacArthur), October 9, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 915.

<sup>94</sup> Chen, *China's Road to the Korean War*, 186-189.

<sup>95</sup> Editorial Note, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 914.

war, such action is not probable in 1950.”<sup>96</sup> Three days later when Truman met with MacArthur at Wake Island it was MacArthur, not Truman, who seemed to have all the answers and to control the meeting. When Truman ended the meeting and called for a luncheon, MacArthur left before lunch. With even the White House’s control of the commanding general of UN forces in doubt, a very troubling question arose as to what power, if any, the United Nations had over its commander.

No doubt the great success achieved by MacArthur in his surprise counterattack against the North Koreans had contributed to an atmosphere at the UN of deference to American leadership (on October 11 British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Ernest Bevin sent a message for delivery to the State Department saying, *inter alia*, “we hope and trust that the United Nations Forces are on the point of consolidating their brilliant military victory”).<sup>97</sup> Moreover, the sheer power of the United States made it unlikely that the nations of Western Europe or Latin America would, when it came to voting, side with the Soviet Union and against the United States, regardless of their reservations. As an example of such reservations, after the PRC forces entered Korea the Canadian ambassador to the United States advised Dean Rusk that he felt that “there was danger that the Unified Command might go ahead too rapidly in its reaction to Chinese intervention and thus might endanger some of the support provided by other nations contributing to the United Nations action in Korea.” He further stated that the proposed U.S.-backed resolution calling upon the PRC to cease and refrain from intervention in Korea

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<sup>96</sup> Memorandum by the Central Intelligence Agency, October 12, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 933-934.

<sup>97</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, by the ambassador at Large (Jessup), October 12, 1950, Annex, October 11, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 932.

“appeared to be about all ‘the traffic would bear’ in regard to the state of opinion in the United Nations at this time.”<sup>98</sup> The Canadian government followed up with a memorandum stating that

it is moreover essential that public opinion not only in the Americas but in Western Europe and in the democratic states of Asia, should be convinced that we are doing everything we possibly can to avoid war. . . . The door should therefore be left open until the last possible moment for a settlement with the Chinese Communists by negotiation. Consequently any formal decision by the United Nations at this stage that Communist China is an aggressor would, we think, be unwise.<sup>99</sup>

Notwithstanding Canadian misgivings, when the General Assembly voted on the U.S.-backed resolution to brand the PRC as an aggressor, Canada fell into line and voted with the majority.<sup>100</sup> In the final analysis, the reliance on American military power to protect the countries of Western Europe and elsewhere made those countries reluctant to challenge the United States, no matter how dangerous its Korean policy. In a not-so-veiled threat to the Swedish ambassador who questioned the U.S. policy in Korea, Dean Rusk responded that “the American people might, if they found themselves alone in the Pacific and forced to withdraw, reason that similarly they should withdraw from commitments across the Atlantic.” The ambassador quickly “indicated his understanding of the broad situation.”<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, by the Acting Officer in Charge of Korean Affairs (Emmons), November 6, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 1066.

<sup>99</sup> Canadian Government’s Memorandum on Korea, December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 1340.

<sup>100</sup> United Nations General Assembly, Fifth Session, *Official Records*, First Committee, 438<sup>th</sup> Meeting, January 30, 1951, p. 602; United Nations General Assembly, Fifth Session, *Official Records*, 327<sup>th</sup> Plenary Meeting, February 1, 1951, p. 695-696.

<sup>101</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, by the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Merchant), December 4, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 1360.

Truman and his advisors paid lip service to their obligation to serve the interests of the United Nations, but in fact they did more or less as they pleased, compromising with friendly governments on the exact language of proposals while amassing as good a series of UN resolutions as possible to support their actions. By the same token, American allies, as well as various non-aligned states, did little to stop the United States—for the most part they swallowed their reservations and voted as the United States desired, or when most displeased they abstained. For example, as of December 1, 1950 both France and Britain “appeared to react violently against the introduction of a resolution” containing a finding of aggression [by the PRC] against the UN;<sup>102</sup> yet by February 1, 1951 the governments of both those countries had been persuaded to vote with the U.S. majority to find that the PRC had engaged in aggression in Korea.<sup>103</sup> On January 5 the U.S. ambassador in France talked to French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman, who agreed to instruct the French delegate to the UN, Jean Chauvel, to support the finding of PRC aggression, provided that “the area of American military authority under any resolution proposed will not be extended beyond the frontiers of Korea at this time.”<sup>104</sup> On the same day Acheson assured Bevin that “we here intend to do everything we can to prevent hostilities spreading from Korea to wider areas in the Far East,” but Acheson also revealed the threat behind the diplomatic niceties when he noted that failure to “recognize the present Chinese communist action in Korea as aggression . . . will be the beginning of the end of the UN . . . .

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<sup>102</sup> Minutes of the Forty-seventh Meeting of the United States Delegation to the United Nations General Assembly, December 1, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 1285.

<sup>103</sup> United Nations General Assembly, Fifth Session, *Official Records*, 327<sup>th</sup> Plenary Meeting, February 1, 1951, p. 692; *Ibid.*, 694.

<sup>104</sup> The Ambassador in France (Bruce) to the Secretary of State, January 5, 1951, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1951, Vol. VII, Korea and China (in two parts), Part 1 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1983), 21.



[and] I am deeply apprehensive that a failure of the UN to recognize this aggression would create a wave of isolationism in this country which would jeopardize all that we are trying to do with and for the Atlantic Pact countries.”<sup>105</sup> Three days later British Prime Minister Clement Attlee advised Truman that the British opposed condemning the PRC as an aggressor, and suggested moving for a UN resolution which “would show that all concerned were prepared to go to the utmost limit in giving the Chinese a chance to reach a peaceful settlement.” However, Attlee soon accepted that such a resolution “might include a clause condemning Chinese intervention in Korea.”<sup>106</sup> And, as previously noted, Britain voted with the majority in such condemnation. Although the United States had the power to act alone, it always sought the strongest support it could obtain from UN resolutions, because those resolutions evidenced support from the world community and thus provided moral authority for U.S. actions.

The simple truth was that the military situation in Korea created a quandary: the original Security Council resolution of June 25 called only for the withdrawal of North Korean armed forces *to the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel*, and the resolution of June 27 called for furnishing assistance to South Korea *as may be necessary to repel the armed attack*. Clearly at the time of adoption these United Nations resolutions intended only pushing the North Korean forces out of South Korea, but not further north beyond the parallel. But if the UN Command did nothing more than push the North Korean forces behind the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, the problem would presumably not be solved. The North Korean army, already committed to invasion, could have simply regrouped and

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<sup>105</sup> Telegram, The Secretary of State to the Embassy in the United Kingdom, January 5, 1951, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1951, Vol. VII, Korea and China (in two parts), Part 1 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1983), 27-28.

<sup>106</sup> The Secretary of State to the President, January 8, 1951, Annex, The British Prime Minister (Attlee) to President Truman, undated, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1951, Vol. VII, Korea and China (in two parts), Part 1 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1983), 37-38.

resupplied itself with more troops and additional weapons and equipment in order to invade again. There was no way to protect South Korea from new invasion without crossing the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel and destroying the North Korean capacity to continue the war. Thus, there was a logic to crossing the parallel, and the momentum of MacArthur's sudden and dramatic success propelled that logic into action.

Notwithstanding Chinese warnings, strong Indian misgivings, and the reservations of Britain and other allies, UN troops approached the Chinese border in apparent ignorance of what lay in store. On October 24 MacArthur removed all restrictions on use of UN troops, ordering all troops (not just South Koreans) to the northern frontiers of North Korea. When the Joint Chiefs of Staff challenged this order as contravening the previous order not to use non-Korean troops in the provinces bordering the Soviet Union and China, MacArthur responded that he acted under "military necessity," and that he had latitude to act under Marshall's telegram of September 29, to the effect that MacArthur should "feel unhampered tactically and strategically to proceed" north of the parallel.<sup>107</sup> On the same day Truman addressed the General Assembly on its fifth anniversary. Secretary-General Trygve Lie introduced him "as one of the principal founders of the United Nations," and concluded that "as such, we honour him today and history will honour him always."<sup>108</sup> Truman declared that "the United Nations represents the idea of a universal morality, superior to the interests of individual nations," and then he proudly took

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<sup>107</sup> Editorial Note, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 995-996.

<sup>108</sup> United Nations General Assembly, Fifth Session, *Official Records*, 295<sup>th</sup> Plenary Meeting, October 24, 1950, 245.

credit for MacArthur's invasion, proclaiming that "the people of almost every Member country" had united "to crush the aggressors in Korea . . . and have done it successfully."<sup>109</sup>

Just as a UN conquest of all of North Korea seemed imminent, it became clear that Chinese troops had entered North Korea in some force and were seriously mauling South Korean troops and pushing American troops back to new defensive positions.<sup>110</sup> By November 1 the presence of PRC forces had been confirmed.<sup>111</sup> U.S. policy-makers had little appreciation of PRC motivations. Acheson understood China to be merely a tool of Soviet policy. He argued that "the Chinese are being directed by the Russians. It is not a case of U.S. against China but U.S. and U.N against Russia."<sup>112</sup> In fact, Mao acted based on his view of China's interests. He needed Soviet support to provide military equipment, but his motives were his own.<sup>113</sup> U.S. misperception of Chinese motivations and the singular American penchant for viewing the communist world as a single, monolithic Soviet-run enterprise certainly fostered American misunderstanding of Chinese interests, and created a division between the thinking of U.S.

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<sup>109</sup> United Nations General Assembly, Fifth Session, *Official Records*, 295<sup>th</sup> Plenary Meeting, October 24, 1950, 245.

<sup>110</sup> The Central Intelligence Agency "Daily Korean Summary" for October 26 cited press reports "that 20,000 Chinese communist troops have entered North Korea and engaged ROK troops." And the Daily Korean Summary for November 28 indicated that the Chinese offensive had "caused the collapse of the ROK II Corps in the center of the front and having penetrated other portions of the US 8<sup>th</sup> Army Sector, has now caused the 8<sup>th</sup> Army to begin withdrawals to new defensive positions." Central Intelligence Agency Daily Korean Summary, 26 October 1950, and Central Intelligence Agency Daily Korean Summary, 28 November 1950, Central Intelligence Agency File, Memo. For the Pres. – Korean Situation & . . . (Sept. 1, 1950 – March 30, 1951) to Memo for the President – Daily Korean Bulletin (January – March 1952), Folder Memoranda for the President, Korean Situation & Daily Korean Summary/Bulletin (September 1, 1950 – March 30, 1951 [1 of 2], Papers of Harry S Truman. SMOF: National Security File, Truman Papers, Truman Library.

<sup>111</sup> Memorandum by the Director of the Office of Chinese Affairs (Clubb) to the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Rusk), November 1, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 1023.

<sup>112</sup> Cabinet Meeting, December 8, 1950, Notes on Cabinet Meetings II . . . Notes on Cabinet Meetings – Handwritten, January 1949 to August 8, 1947 (sic), Folder Notes on Cabinet Meetings, II, 1946-1953, Matthew J. Connelly Papers, Truman Library.

<sup>113</sup> Chen, *China's Road to the Korean War*, 217-220.

leaders and that of other UN member states. For example, when Truman and Prime Minister Attlee met in December 1950, Attlee attempted to view the Korean problem from the standpoint of the PRC:

Their attitude seems to include an element of fear, a genuine fear of the United States and of the European nations generally. So long as they are not in the United Nations and while they are feeling flushed with success in China, they feel they are entitled to come in. They want to have the fullest position of any Chinese government in recent times. . . . He doubted if they wanted to throw themselves completely in the hands of the Russians. They would rather feel their own strength and independence.<sup>114</sup>

When Truman asked Acheson to respond, Acheson stressed that “the central enemy is not the Chinese but the Soviet Union. All the inspiration for the present action comes from there.” This made Acheson “far less optimistic” regarding any “arrangements with the Chinese Communists.”<sup>115</sup>

Chinese intervention gave pause to policy-makers in Washington and greatly concerned other friendly UN member states, but did not discourage MacArthur. On November 6 he ordered an air attack on a bridge across the Yalu River, separating Korea and China, which had to be countermanded by Acheson, Lovett and Rusk, with telephonic support from Truman (who would approve such action only if such bombing “is immediately necessary to protect our forces”).<sup>116</sup> European allies expressed increased doubts about MacArthur’s management of the war and demanded more restrictions on his freedom of action. France’s Jean Chauvel and Australia’s

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<sup>114</sup> United States Delegation Minutes of the First Meeting of President Truman and Prime Minister Attlee, December 4, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 1365.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 1366.

<sup>116</sup> Memorandum of Conference Between Secretary Acheson, [Deputy] Under Secretary of Defense Lovett, and Mr. Dean Rusk, November 6, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1950, Vol. VI, Korea* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 1055-1057; Summary of Telephone Conversation With the President at Kansas City, November 6, 1950, *Ibid.*, 1057.

Keith Officer asked for a statement to be issued by MacArthur assuring that hydroelectric facilities on the Yalu River would not be damaged or destroyed.<sup>117</sup> Britain's Gladwyn Jebb reminded Ernest Gross that "no one knew on June 25 whether victorious UN forces would proceed north of [the] 38<sup>th</sup> parallel." He reported that Britain and other Western European countries had "tremendous apprehension that [the] US was committing western Europe to [the] conduct of war in the Far East. . . ." <sup>118</sup> These concerns all emanated from the same issue—the UN had delegated control of the war to the United States government, which had in turn given command to a man whom the Joint Chiefs could barely control. As a result, the United Nations had almost no control over the war being fought in its name.

The Joint Chiefs expressed their concern in a message to MacArthur spelling out to him that the Yalu bridge bombing he proposed carried risks of

increased Chinese Communist effort and even Soviet contribution in response to what they might well construe as an attack on Manchuria. Such a result would not only endanger your forces but would enlarge the area of conflict and U.S. involvement to a most dangerous degree.<sup>119</sup>

Nevertheless, the Joint Chiefs acquiesced in MacArthur's bombing of the Korean side of the Yalu bridges, relying on his argument that such action was "essential to [the] safety of your forces."<sup>120</sup> When the Joint Chiefs argued that the invasion by major PRC forces into Korea was

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<sup>117</sup> Telegram, The United States Representative at the United Nations (Austin) to the Secretary of State, November 6, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 1074.

<sup>118</sup> Telegram, The United States Representative at the United Nations (Austin) to the Secretary of State, November 30, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 1273.

<sup>119</sup> Telegram, The Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Commander in Chief, Far East (MacArthur), November 6, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 1075.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 1076.

a “new situation” requiring a reexamination of MacArthur’s stated objective of “the destruction of the North Korean armed forces,” MacArthur shot back that he disagreed because his existing orders permitted him to continue his offensive so long as in his judgment such action offered “a reasonable chance of success.” MacArthur gave his opinion that “it would be fatal to weaken the fundamental and basic policy of the United Nations to destroy all resisting armed forces in Korea and bring that country into a united and free nation.”<sup>121</sup> Truman and the Joint Chiefs of Staff had given MacArthur so much deference and independence, that it proved very difficult to rein him in.

UNCOK now attempted to assert itself by taking some responsibility for, and attempting to take some control of, military action at the Korean frontier with China and the Soviet Union, although in fact it had virtually no power over the situation. That lack of control resulted in a growing unease among many governments ordinarily supportive of U.S. international policy. On November 6 the Security Council had received MacArthur’s special report, which advised that the UN forces “are meeting a new foe . . . . Chinese Communist military units deployed for action against the forces of the Unified Command.”<sup>122</sup> Three days later UNCOK adopted a resolution taking note of MacArthur’s report and decided that it [UNCOK] “should concern itself with questions relating to the Northern frontier of Korea in order that the frontier may be fully respected,” and decided “in view of the urgent nature of the problem” that its representatives in Korea “will, on behalf of the committee, and subject to its authority, lend all practicable

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<sup>121</sup> Telegram, The Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Commander in Chief, Far East (MacArthur), November 8, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 1098; Telegram, The Commander in Chief, Far East (MacArthur) to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, November 9, 1950, *Ibid.*, 1107-1108.

<sup>122</sup> Telegram, The Secretary of State to the United States Mission at the United Nations, November 5, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 1046.

assistance in respect of questions relating to the North Korean frontier.”<sup>123</sup> This resolution was a feeble effort to take some action, which accomplished nothing because UNCOK obviously had no power to influence the course of the fighting.

Various UN member states, including the United States’ key ally, Britain, now began to declare their growing impatience with U.S. handling of the war in Korea. On November 16, Bevin responded to Acheson’s attempt to convince him that MacArthur needed to be able to allow UN aircraft to “defend themselves” by allowing “hot pursuit of attacking enemy aircraft up to two or three minutes flying time into Manchurian air space.” Bevin refused to endorse Acheson’s proposal on the grounds that it had “potentialities of great danger,” and was likely to result in the spreading of the conflict.<sup>124</sup> Responding to growing discomfort among U.S. allies about MacArthur’s aggressive push towards the North Korean border, General J. Lawton Collins, the Army Chief of Staff, admonished MacArthur that

other members of [the] United Nations indicate growing concern over the possibilities of bringing on a general conflict should a major clash develop with Chinese Communist forces as a result of your forces advancing squarely against the entire boundary between Korea and Manchuria-USSR. This might not only result in loss of support within [the] United Nations and leave US standing alone but would also involve risks of a military nature.<sup>125</sup>

Thus the U.S. military was finally being forced to respond to pressure from UN allies of the United States. The importance of not “standing alone” cannot be over-emphasized. During

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<sup>123</sup> Telegram, The Secretary of State to the Embassy in Korea, November 9, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 1115.

<sup>124</sup> Telegram, The Secretary of State to the Embassy in the United Kingdom, November 13, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 1144-1145; Message From Mr. Bevin to Sir Oliver Franks Dated 16<sup>th</sup> November, *Ibid.*, 1172.

<sup>125</sup> Telegram, The Chief of Staff, United States Army (Collins), to the Commander in Chief, United Nations Command (MacArthur), November 24, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 1222.

Truman's presidency the fact that the United States was in the majority on almost every issue at the UN became the mainstay of the American claim of moral superiority vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. To lose that majority would destroy the argument that the Soviets were acting as obstructionists against the will of the world community. This dynamic provided other member states, and especially key allies like Britain, with a limited degree of power to force changes in, and thus shape, U.S. policy. U.S. policymakers might ignore or circumvent the UN when necessary, as with the creation of NATO or, as noted above, with instructions to MacArthur to cross the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel before the UN vote and thus obviate the need for a vote; but what was never done during Truman's presidency was to allow the United States to be defeated in any significant Security Council or General Assembly vote. By whatever means, including limited compromises with key UN allies, U.S. leaders managed to keep the UN majorities intact and on the side of the United States, and thus against all Soviet initiatives. In this case, Marshall, and his three Service Chiefs, advised Truman of the need to "act through the UN and not individually,"<sup>126</sup> although we have seen how Marshall and Truman, when it suited their purposes, circumvented the United Nations when it was more expedient to act unilaterally than to seek a UN vote. In a curious fashion, U.S. leaders verbalized their commitment to act through and on behalf of the United Nations, but pragmatically they pursued U.S. strategic goals, with or without UN sanction.

The U.S. government continued to try to hold MacArthur in check. Collins went on to suggest a possible course of action for UN forces: after advancing to or near the Yalu River border, he suggested "securing a position" on defensible terrain "dominating the approaches" to

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<sup>126</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, by the Ambassador at Large (Jessup), November 28, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 1243.



the Yalu to be held by South Korean forces, with US and other foreign forces in the rear and further from the border “in positions of readiness to insure the holding of the established line.” But this was not an order—the Joint Chiefs still deferred to MacArthur, and meekly asked for his comments regarding the suggestion.<sup>127</sup> MacArthur quickly rejected the suggestion, insisting that any failure to destroy all enemy forces in North Korea and to unify the country “would be regarded by the Korean people as a betrayal . . . of the solemn undertaking of the United Nations . . . and by the Chinese and all the other peoples of Asia as weakness.”<sup>128</sup> MacArthur also downplayed the possibility of Chinese or Soviet hostile reaction, indicating that his forces had already reached the Yalu River border in some areas, “with no noticeable political or military Soviet or Chinese reaction.”<sup>129</sup> But that was about to change.

UN forces now received the brunt of a massive Chinese offensive. On November 27 PRC forces initiated a large-scale attack on UN troops, and the next day MacArthur said “we face an entirely new war.”<sup>130</sup> That same day Truman met with Acheson, Marshall and various military leaders and State Department officials. The consensus of military advice for meeting the new PRC threat was to continue to “act through the UN and not individually,” and to avoid steps which might increase the danger of a “general war in China with the Chinese

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 1223-1224.

<sup>128</sup> Telegram, The Commander in Chief, United Nations Command (MacArthur) to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, November 25, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 1232.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 1233.

<sup>130</sup> Telegram, The Commander in Chief, Far East (MacArthur) to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, November 28, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 1237.

Communists.”<sup>131</sup> The thrust of their thinking was to keep the war a “UN war,” and to avoid turning it into an American war.

MacArthur then asked for authority to move large numbers of Chinese Nationalist troops from Taiwan to bolster the UN forces.<sup>132</sup> This move, of course, would greatly inflame the conflict with the Chinese communists, to whom the Nationalist remnant on Taiwan were mortal enemies. Instead of flatly rejecting the idea, the Joint Chiefs took the matter under advisement. But they were now very concerned about the risk of fractures in the UN coalition, and they notified MacArthur that his proposal “involves world-wide consequences,” and possibly “would disrupt the united position of the nations associated with us in the United Nations, and have us isolated.”<sup>133</sup> The Truman administration now faced opposition from a variety of its UN allies (including Britain, France, Australia, and Canada) to the way it was managing the war— to one degree or another, all feared that MacArthur’s leadership would lead to a widening of the war to include mainland China and perhaps the Soviet Union.<sup>134</sup> Moreover, Truman also faced domestic criticism, not only from Republicans but also from voters in this election year.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, November 28, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 1243.

<sup>132</sup> Footnote 1 to Telegram, The Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Commander in Chief, Far East (MacArthur), November 29, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 1253.

<sup>133</sup> Telegram, The Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Commander in Chief, Far East (MacArthur), November 29, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 1253-1254.

<sup>134</sup> The Australian ambassador to the United States visited the State Department to express his government’s fear that “General MacArthur might involve the Australian Government by his actions.” Memorandum of Conversation, by the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Merchant), November 29, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 1257.

<sup>135</sup> Steven Casey, *Selling The Korean War: Propaganda, Politics, and Public Opinion in the United States, 1950-1953* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 118-119.

Just as U.S. leaders had been lured by the prospect of unifying the entire Korean peninsula by force, now the PRC was attracted to the same goal. After initially surprising MacArthur with their presence in force, during the depth of the winter months between November 1950 and January 1951 massive Chinese forces smashed through MacArthur's lines. American troops desperately retreated to save themselves. As Chinese units approached the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, they faced the same decision as had the UN forces—whether to stop at the parallel or continue their advance southward. They made the same decision as MacArthur had: they continued their advance, captured Seoul, and continued to attack, so that when UN forces finally halted their retreat and held a defensive line, Chinese and North Korean forces occupied approximately one-third of South Korea. Eventually however UN forces began to reverse the course of combat and re-conquer territory so that by the beginning of February they were approaching Seoul.

Just as Chinese intervention drastically altered events on the ground in Korea, the United States now faced changes at the United Nations regarding the possibility of a PRC delegation appearing at the Security Council. Under the adverse effects of the PRC's intervention and the resulting battlefield reversals, the commanding position of the United States at the UN had somewhat eroded. The PRC had previously sent complaints to the UN regarding alleged attacks by American aircraft on mainland Chinese targets and the so-called "armed invasion" of Taiwan (involving U.S. military and naval units sent to Taiwan). Previously, the U.S. delegation had beaten back every Soviet effort to invite PRC representatives to the United Nations. However, on August 29, 1950 the Security Council had adopted an agenda (with both Soviet and U.S. approval) which included both the complaint of North Korean aggression against South Korea, and the PRC claim of armed invasion of Taiwan. On August 31 the agenda was expanded to

include the PRC complaint of “air bombing of the territory of China.” As previously noted, on September 29 the Council disregarded the wishes (and the negative votes) of the United States, (Nationalist) China and Cuba, and by a vote of seven to three (with Egypt abstaining) invited the PRC to be present at Council deliberations for the first time—but for the limited purpose of discussing the PRC’s claim of “armed invasion” of Taiwan.<sup>136</sup> This vote reflected the gradual shift away from total U.S. dominance of the Korea question at the Security Council.

Now the PRC presence at the UN would highlight the ongoing controversy as to which government represented China, and thus was entitled to membership in the United Nations and a permanent seat in the Security Council—the PRC, which since October 1949 governed mainland China, or the Nationalist Government, which Mao had driven out of China and now controlled only the island of Taiwan. On November 8 (this time with American acquiescence) the Council extended the invitation for the PRC to be present for discussion of MacArthur’s “special report of the United Nations Command in Korea.”<sup>137</sup> After much wrangling over precisely what the PRC would be entitled to discuss, the Council finally decided to “bracket” two items on the agenda so that both the “complaint of aggression upon the Republic of Korea” and the “complaint of armed invasion of Taiwan” would be open for debate.

By its presence at the Security Council the PRC would have a platform to attack the entire U.S. rationale for its buildup of the Republic of Korea and for creating a UN alliance to wage war in Korea. On November 27—just as the major Chinese military intervention in Korea became known—the PRC representative, Wu Xiuquan, finally took his seat at the Security

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<sup>136</sup> Resolution of 29 September 1950, Security Council Resolutions 1950, available at <http://www.un.org/documents/sc/res1950/scres50.htm>; internet; accessed January 18, 2011.

<sup>137</sup> Resolution of 8 November 1950, Security Council Resolutions 1950, available at <http://www.un.org/documents/sc/res1950/scres50.htm>; internet; accessed January 18, 2011.

Council table for discussion of “the complaint of aggression upon the Republic of Korea.” On the following day he laid out his government’s principal arguments. Wu attacked the “Kuomintang [Nationalist] reactionary remnant clique . . . [which] has long since ceased to exist on the mainland of China;”<sup>138</sup> he protested the “manipulation and obstruction” of the United States in not seating the PRC delegation; he accused the United States of “instigating the puppet regime” of Syngman Rhee “to start the civil war in Korea”; and finally he charged the United States “on the order of President Truman” with beginning a “full-scale, open invasion of Taiwan . . . preventing by force the liberation of Taiwan by the Chinese People’s Liberation Army.”<sup>139</sup> He asserted that the “American imperialists have never been friends of the Chinese people . . . . [because of the large-scale U.S. aid to the Kuomintang government] the hands of the American imperialists are stained with the blood of the Chinese people.”<sup>140</sup> When he turned to Korea his argument revealed the PRC perspective:

Korea is about 5,000 miles away from the boundaries of the United States. To say that the civil war in Korea would affect the security of the United States is a flagrant, deceitful absurdity. But there is only a narrow river between Korea and China. The United States armed aggression in Korea inevitably threatens China’s security.<sup>141</sup>

With regard to U.S. efforts to “neutralize” Taiwan by action of the U.S. Seventh Fleet and Thirteenth Air Force, Wu reminded the Council of the American agreement at the 1943 Cairo Conference that “all of the territories Japan has stolen from the Chinese . . . [including Formosa (i.e., Taiwan)] shall be returned to the Republic of China,” and of Truman’s January

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<sup>138</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, Fifth Year, no. 69, November 28, 1950, 2.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 4-5.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 16-17.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

1950 acceptance of Chinese authority over Taiwan. In closing, Wu called for open condemnation and “extreme sanctions” against the United States, the “complete withdrawal” of U.S. forces from Taiwan, and the withdrawal of all U.S. and other foreign armed forces from Korea in order to “leave it to the people of North and South Korea to settle the domestic affairs of Korea themselves.”<sup>142</sup>

Responding for the United States, Austin denied that U.S. actions since the establishment of the PRC had been aggressive towards China or Korea, and he asserted that it was only after the attack by North Korea that the United States and the United Nations “took up arms.”<sup>143</sup> In response to Wu’s questioning any American security interest in Korea, being five thousand miles away from the United States, Austin said: “This is a most illuminating question, because it is being asked by some-one asserting himself the right to a seat in the Security Council.”<sup>144</sup>

Austin’s response reflects the extent to which by 1950 the forces in the United States which had favored an isolationist retreat from world affairs were dead, and the forces of internationalist multilateralism held sway—it had become an unquestioned principle of U.S. foreign policy that American security required the United States to send its army to fight five thousand miles from its shores. But it was not the idealistic, cooperative internationalism of the UN Charter. It was the hard-headed nationalistic internationalism of the Truman Doctrine and American Cold War leadership at the United Nations. Within the U.S. government, and in the country at large, it was no longer arguable that the United States should stay out of distant lands; on the contrary, it was now an article of faith that American security depended on a projection of U.S. power

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<sup>142</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, Fifth Year, no. 69, November 28, 1950, 25.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

(sometimes through the United Nations and sometimes not) on a world-wide basis. By challenging the role of the United States in Korea—five thousand miles from the U.S. mainland, Wu had denied the validity of the kind of internationalism practiced by the United States, and thus, in Austin’s eyes, disqualified the PRC from UN membership.

On November 30 the various pending resolutions were put to the vote. First, the Soviet-sponsored resolution, condemning U.S. actions regarding Taiwan as aggression and proposing that the United States immediately withdraw its air, sea and land forces from Taiwan, was defeated nine to one (the Soviet Union), with India not voting. Next, the PRC-proposed resolution, which demanded the withdrawal from Korea of the armed forces of the United States and all other foreign countries, was defeated by the same vote. Finally, the Council voted on the U.S.-backed Six-Party resolution which noted that Chinese communist military units were deployed against the UN forces; affirmed that UN forces should not remain in any part of Korea after the establishment of a “unified independent and democratic government in the sovereign State of Korea as set forth in the resolution of . . . 7 October 1950”; called upon all states to “prevent their nationals or individuals or units of their armed forces from giving assistance to North Korean forces and to cause the immediate withdrawal of any such [forces] which may presently be in Korea”; announced the UN policy of holding “the Chinese frontier with Korea inviolate” and of fully protecting “legitimate Chinese and Korean interests in the frontier zone”; and called attention to “the grave danger” of continued Chinese intervention in Korea.<sup>145</sup> This resolution captured eight favorable votes but was vetoed by the Soviet Union.

A representative of the PRC had finally appeared at the Security Council, but after all the speeches and all the voting, the Security Council could accomplish nothing.

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<sup>145</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, Fifth Year, no. 72, November 30, 1950, 21-25.

By citing the Assembly resolution of October 7 and expressly repeating its call for a “unified, independent and democratic government in the sovereign State of Korea,” and by calling for the withdrawal from Korea of all nationals or units of armed forces of any states “giving assistance to North Korean forces” (i.e. the PRC) the Six-Party resolution in effect had called for the PRC to remove its troops and for the UN to continue the war until the North Korean government—now without any help from the PRC or the Soviet Union—was destroyed and its military defeated. Within the framework of the resolution there was no other way to achieve a unified and democratic Korea. Understandably, the North Koreans, Soviets and Chinese did not desire that result, and thus the Soviet veto.

During this same period the Truman administration sought to solve, or at least ameliorate, the problem of the veto. At the urging of the United States, the Assembly confronted the dilemma resulting from the possible use of the veto to prevent UN member states from mobilizing to repel aggression. Recognizing that if the Soviet Union had been present at the Security Council on June 25 it could have vetoed any UN response to the North Korean invasion, the United States and like-minded countries sought to prevent the possibility of that result in the future by, to the extent possible, transferring authority for maintenance of international peace from the Council to the Assembly. On November 1, 1950 debate opened on the so-called “United for Peace” resolution, which recognized that the Security Council had the “primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security,” but resolved that in the event of any breach of the peace or aggression, if the Security Council failed to act because of



“lack of unanimity of the permanent members,” the Assembly should recommend to member states “collective measures” including the use of “armed force when necessary.”<sup>146</sup>

This move appeared to contradict the plain meaning of Article 27 of the Charter, which granted responsibility for maintenance of international peace and security to the Security Council. The Polish representative argued that the proposal was “illegal as well as harmful and dangerous for the future of our Organization.”<sup>147</sup> His point highlighted the importance of the veto—neither the United States nor the Soviet Union would have joined the United Nations without the veto’s protection against involvement in unwanted wars. By blurring the responsibilities of the Council and the Assembly, the United States and its allies risked the possibility that the Soviet Union and its satellites might opt out of the UN.<sup>148</sup> The Czech representative asserted that the United States wished to “change the present character of the United Nations . . . into an obedient instrument of its [the United States’] policy.”<sup>149</sup> Vyshinsky then weighed in, arguing that the

whole draft resolution . . . is intended to enable the General Assembly to use armed forces independently of the Military Staff Committee and of the Security Council . . . . we are told that we cannot permit the Council to be paralysed. But you say it is paralysed only when you fail to push your decisions through the Security Council. But if it accepts your decisions, then it is not paralysed. Thus you wish to turn the Security Council into a tool, to make it an instrument, of your policy.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Resolution of 3 November 1950, Resolutions Adopted by the General Assembly at its 5<sup>th</sup> Session, available at <http://www.un.org/depts/dhl/resguide/r5.htm>; internet; accessed February 19, 2011.

<sup>147</sup> United Nations General Assembly, *Official Records*, 299<sup>th</sup> Plenary Meeting, November 1, 1950, 304.

<sup>148</sup> In January 1950 UN Secretary-General Trygve Lie expressed deep concern over the Soviet walkout at the Security Council, but said that “if the USSR did leave the United Nations . . . the Organization should go right ahead without her.” Memorandum of Meeting in the Office of the Secretary of State, Washington, January 21, 1950, 11:30 a.m., *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. II, The United Nations; The Western Hemisphere (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976, 205-206).

<sup>149</sup> United Nations General Assembly, *Official Records*, 300<sup>th</sup> Plenary Meeting, November 2, 1950, 312.

<sup>150</sup> United Nations General Assembly, *Official Records*, 301<sup>st</sup> Plenary Meeting, November 2, 1950, 334.

The Czech and Soviet representatives had a point: at the time the UN was formed, neither the United States nor the Soviet Union contemplated that a UN army would ever go to war against the wishes of any Big Five Power. To permit such an eventuality was to court world war, and to avoid such a possibility the original premise of the United Nations had required military action only with the consent of the major Powers. In Roosevelt's conception, these major Powers were to police the world, but never fight among themselves. Nevertheless, Soviet arguments and those of its allies could not alter the vote. Under the pressure of the Cold War, the Truman administration wanted practical results and cared little about jurisdictional niceties at the UN. All the Soviet amendments were defeated, and, with the backing of Secretary-General Trygve Lie,<sup>151</sup> the Assembly adopted the U.S.-backed United for Peace resolution by a vote of fifty-two to five, with two abstentions.<sup>152</sup>

With two new Assembly resolutions—the first authorizing MacArthur to take “all appropriate steps . . . to ensure conditions of stability throughout Korea” and thus complete his conquest of North Korea, and the second authorizing UN member states to use armed force whether or not the Soviet Union agreed and irrespective of a Soviet veto in the Security Council—the U.S.-led anti-communist majority of member states had moved to take substantial control over the police power of the United Nations. Since the majority could now ignore the dissent of any Soviet-led minority, the United Nations could reasonably be argued to be, in Vyshinsky's phrase, “an instrument” of U.S. policy. In reality, international affairs had come to resemble the alliance diplomacy of pre-UN times (with the mantle of UN respectability thrown

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<sup>151</sup> Lie, *In the Cause of Peace*, 347.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, 346.

over a the U.S.-led majority) , and had little to do with the hoped-for era of peace guaranteed by the Great Power consortium envisioned in the UN Charter. However, American control of UN policy required continued success in holding together the U.S-led coalition of allies and others who more or less routinely voted according to the wishes of the United States.

Notwithstanding the UN majority in favor of continuing the war, the international community, including close allies of the United States, had serious misgivings, having become increasingly fearful that the conflict might expand into a wider war, even perhaps a world war, and that MacArthur's style of command might precipitate such results. Even the British, the United States' closest ally, were losing confidence in American leadership. In December, British Prime Minister Clement Attlee came to Washington for several days of talks with Truman. Attlee embodied the worry in Europe and elsewhere regarding the conduct of the war in general, and U.S. attitudes vis-à-vis the PRC, especially the fear that the United States might escalate the war in Korea, resulting from hints of possible use of atomic bombs.<sup>153</sup> At their first meeting on December 4 the parties discussed the possibility of a cease-fire to stabilize the situation. Acheson stated that "the central enemy is not the Chinese but the Soviet Union. All the inspiration for the present action comes from there."<sup>154</sup> Truman also failed to appreciate the situation, believing that the Chinese communists were "complete satellites" of the Soviet

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<sup>153</sup> Jebb, *The Memoirs of Lord Gladwyn*, 243; Bruce Cumings writes that the Truman administration had plans to drop atomic bomb(s) on North Korea, and made "simulated atomic bombing runs," using dummy atomic bombs. Cumings, *The Korean War*, 157.

<sup>154</sup> United States Delegation Minutes of the First Meeting of President Truman and Prime Minister Attlee, December 4, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 1366.

Union.<sup>155</sup> Since the U.S. government had sole control over the UN war in Korea, American misperceptions about PRC motivations had very important ramifications. For example, because U.S. leaders viewed their communist adversaries as “complete satellites” of the Soviets, they failed to concentrate any real effort in understanding the viewpoint or strategic needs of the PRC and they ignored British caution about the risk of PRC entry into the war. And because the United States held such a dominant position at the UN, its failure to understand PRC motivations resulted in embroiling the United Nations in a much wider and more costly war in Korea than was originally envisioned.

At the meeting on the next day Attlee stated that “we do not wish to be bogged down in an all-out war with China,” and Truman agreed. Attlee then argued that “we therefore do not want to bomb the industries in Manchuria.” Attlee hoped to “drive a wedge between China and Russia,” and to that end he recommended a friendlier attitude towards the PRC, including recognition of its rightful seat in the United Nations. Acheson, speaking for the U.S. government, disagreed. He suggested that “whether there was a cease-fire or not . . . frankly . . . our attitude is one of hostility.”<sup>156</sup>

The two heads of state met again on December 7, at which time Attlee tried to make sure that the United States would not seek to carry on some kind of limited war against China, which he argued “did not appeal to the British people or to the bulk of those in the United Nations.”

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<sup>155</sup> United States Delegation Minutes of the First Meeting of President Truman and Prime Minister Attlee, December 4, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 1368.

<sup>156</sup> United States Delegation Minutes of the Second Meeting of President Truman and Prime Minister Attlee, December 5, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 1394-1403.

Attlee feared that limited war “might become full war.”<sup>157</sup> Attlee repeated his desire to seat the PRC in the United Nations, and when Truman objected that if admitted the PRC would cause trouble, Attlee asked “whether it was any worse having two vetoes than having one.”<sup>158</sup> Both sides agreed that a settlement of the conflict in Korea was highly desirable in order to avoid becoming involved in a major war.

The meeting with Attlee marked a definite watershed in Truman’s willingness to negotiate a settlement with the PRC to end the war. In their joint communiqué at the end of the conference Truman and Attlee publicly stated that with regard to Korea, they were ready “as we always have been, to seek an end to the hostilities by means of negotiation.”<sup>159</sup> The two governments agreed to disagree on the issue of the PRC’s right to the China seat at the UN. On the PRC versus Nationalist conflicting claims to Taiwan, Attlee and Truman agreed that the dispute should be settled peacefully. The underlying message delivered by the communiqué was that the United States and its closest ally wished to negotiate an end to the fighting in Korea, but, at U.S. insistence, such a settlement would not be made at the price of admitting the PRC into the United Nations or recognizing its claim to Taiwan. The mere fact that the meeting had been necessary underscored the lack of any UN mechanism operating to control the direction of the war being fought in its name and under its flag. In effect, the United States and Britain were engaging in alliance politics, in which the United Nations was more or less a bystander.

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<sup>157</sup> United States Delegation Minutes of the Fifth Meeting of President Truman and Prime Minister Attlee, December 7, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 1451.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 1453.

<sup>159</sup> Communiqué Issued at the Conclusion of the Truman-Attlee Discussions, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 1477.

Notwithstanding the U.S.-British announcement of readiness to negotiate a settlement in Korea, the United States persisted in seeking a UN resolution calling on the PRC to get out of Korea. In the General Assembly the U.S.-backed coalition of Cuba, Ecuador, France, Norway, The United Kingdom and the United States jointly proposed their “Six-Power” resolution noting that PRC armed forces were fighting against the UN forces in Korea, and calling for all states (meaning the PRC) to prevent their nationals or units of their armed forces “from giving assistance to the North Korean forces and to cause their immediate withdrawal of such nationals or units,” which the Assembly included in its agenda and referred to the First Committee. At the same time India was seeking to mediate the conflict in order to arrive at a negotiated cease-fire. The Indians had formal diplomatic relations with the PRC, and India as leader of the non-aligned nations was a crucial player in the maneuvering to organize a cease-fire. On December 1 Sir Benegal Rau, who spearheaded the Indian effort, advised that PRC representative Wu had “expressed desire for ‘peaceful settlement.’”<sup>160</sup> Acting U.S. Representative Ernest Gross told a member of the Indian delegation that the United States was “prepared to consider a cease-fire proposal on its merits but we are not taking the initiative in proposing one nor encouraging anyone else to do so.”<sup>161</sup>

Notwithstanding the cool attitude of the United States, the United Nations did provide a vehicle for neutral states to try to bring the belligerent parties to the conference table. On behalf of thirteen Asian and Middle Eastern countries—Afghanistan, Burma, Egypt, India, Indonesia,

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<sup>160</sup> Telegram, The United States Representative at the United Nations (Austin) to the Secretary of State, December 1, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 1299.

<sup>161</sup> Telegram, The United States Representative at the United Nations (Austin) to the Secretary of State, December 9, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 1492.

Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Pakistan, Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Yemen—Rau proposed the formation of a committee to explore the basis for a possible cease-fire, and on December 14 the General Assembly adopted Rau’s resolution for the President of the General Assembly to form a group of three persons, including the President, “to determine the basis on which a satisfactory cease-fire can be arranged; and it deferred the much tougher U.S.-backed Six-Power resolution, which called for all states (meaning the PRC) to prevent their armed forces from assisting North Korea.”<sup>162</sup> This represented the beginning of a serious effort, organized within the UN structure, to stop the fighting in Korea, and evidenced the resilience of lesser powers to exert a measure of leadership and direction of UN affairs.

Thus, a large group of independent and moderate countries prevailed, at least temporarily, in its effort to concentrate on finding a negotiated basis for a cease-fire. For the time being, the Assembly had refused to comply with the U.S. effort to single out and (in effect) blame the PRC. Instead, Assembly President Nasrollah Entezam formed the three person cease-fire committee, consisting of himself, Lester Pearson of Canada, and Sir Benegal Rau of India, to seek a negotiated settlement to the war. But the cease-fire committee accomplished next to nothing—the PRC representative refused even to meet with the committee, although he did meet one-on-one with Entezam and with Rau . Since the PRC government considered itself the rightful holder of China’s UN seat and since it had not been consulted regarding the formation of the cease-fire committee, it refused “to make any contact with the . . . illegal ‘three-man committee.’”<sup>163</sup> Despite this setback, the origins of the Korean War armistice lay, in the first

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<sup>162</sup> Resolution of 14 December 1950, Resolutions Adopted by the General Assembly at its 5<sup>th</sup> Session, available at <http://www.un.org/depts/dhl/resguide/r5.htm>; internet; accessed February 19, 2011.

<sup>163</sup> Telegram, The United States Representative at the United Nations (Austin) to the Secretary of State, December 24, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 1595.

instance, in the frank talk that Attlee brought to the meeting with Truman, with the follow-up efforts at the UN of Rau, the thirteen sponsoring nations, and the efforts of the three member UN cease-fire committee.

But the attitude of U.S. policymakers regarding settlement would still be determinative of any effort to stop the fighting. The Group of Three had approached the Unified Command to determine its view on the issue. In response, the Joint Chiefs of Staff advised Secretary of Defense Marshall of their requirements for a cease-fire agreement—including the establishment of a demilitarized zone supervised by a competent UN cease-fire commission, with a prohibition against reinforcement or replacement of troops and equipment. The Joint Chiefs further specified that the zone should be twenty miles wide with the southerly border generally following the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, and that prisoners of war would be exchanged on a one-for-one basis. Finally, they pointed out that “execution of any United Nations cease-fire resolution will, in all probability, prevent the attainment of the United Nations objective of a free and united Korea.”<sup>164</sup> This last comment evidenced the degree of politicization of U.S. military policy on this issue, as well as the difficulties created by a UN military force commanded by a single nation, with virtually no UN oversight. Marshall distanced himself from that comment, stating his belief that it should not have been included, and he tried to relieve the Joint Chiefs of meddling in the political decision of whether to continue the war: “Rather,” he argued, “it was included merely to bring to the attention of higher authorities the certain possibility resulting

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<sup>164</sup> Memorandum by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of Defense (Marshall), December 12, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 1529-1531.



from a cease-fire negotiation.”<sup>165</sup> Marshall had sought to protect the Joint Chiefs from any charge of exceeding their authority, even though in this instance they had inserted their opinion regarding what was clearly a political issue—the unification of Korea. Moreover, U.S. military leaders definitely had involved themselves in the political aspects of the Korean problem—for example, planning for the postwar occupation of North Korea.<sup>166</sup>

When the three-person cease-fire committee had approached the PRC, Foreign Minister Zhou Enlai rejected a simple cease-fire, demanding that all foreign troops leave Korea, that U.S. forces withdraw from Taiwan, and that the PRC be recognized as the legal claimant to China’s seat in the UN. U.S. leadership opposed any widening of negotiations, and insisted that the only topic for discussion would be a Korean cease-fire. Acheson took a hard line, advising U.S. diplomatic missions to object to any form of settlement with the PRC which would accommodate the PRC demands. He stated the U.S. position that “aggression in one area cannot be recompensed by rewards in another,” and that “[the] end [of] Chi[nese] aggression and settlement [in] Korea on [a] basis satisfactory to [the] UN must not be connected with negotiation [on] other issues such as UN rep[resentation] and Formosa.” He opined that those issues were before the United Nations, “and while UN may have shortcomings, it is [the] only agency we have for collective expression [of the] judgment of mankind.”<sup>167</sup> In other words, U.S. policy dictated that negotiations would include only an end to the fighting—not the rightful

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<sup>165</sup> The Secretary of Defense (Marshall) to the Secretary of State, December 12, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 1528-1529.

<sup>166</sup> Draft Paper Prepared in the Department of the Army, October 3, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 854-857.

<sup>167</sup> Circular Telegram, The Secretary of State to Certain Diplomatic Missions, December 12, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 1533-1534.

occupant of the China seat at the UN or the fate of Taiwan. In relegating the latter two issues to the United Nations Acheson spoke in idealistic terms about the UN's moral authority, but obliquely he was indicating that these issues should not be entrusted to negotiation with the PRC, and were better left to the UN where the United States had sufficient power to see to it that no adverse decisions on those issues would result.

On December 11 Acheson advised Austin on an "eyes only" basis that "we will consider a cease-fire in Korea but must insist upon [a] cease-fire which does not place UN forces at military disadvantage and which does not involve political consideration."<sup>168</sup> On the same day the Indian ambassador to the PRC met with Zhou, who had "insisted the Chinese wished [a] peaceful settlement [of the] problems of Korea and of 'Far East in general,'" but that before talks could begin the United States must announce that talks regarding Taiwan "should be based upon [the] Cairo and Potsdam declarations and would be accompanied by [the] withdrawal of US fleet from between Formosa and [the] mainland."<sup>169</sup> Repeated discussions about possible cease-fire talks, including those between Rau and Wu, UN Secretary-General Trygve Lie and Wu, and Rau and Lie with U.S. representatives, failed to reach any agreement.

Thus, the three person cease-fire committee made no real breakthrough at the time, but they had—most importantly—started a process that eventually led to the end of the war. On behalf of the Group Pearson submitted "Five Principles," to be sent to the PRC, calling for an immediate cease-fire; consideration of further steps for the restoration of peace during the cease-

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<sup>168</sup> Telegram, The Secretary of State to the United States Mission at the United Nations, December 11, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 1522.

<sup>169</sup> Telegram, The Ambassador in India (Henderson) to the Secretary of State, December 13, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. VII, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 1538-1539.

fire; all non-Korean military to be withdrawn in stages from Korea, free popular elections to be held to create a unified, independent, democratic, sovereign Korea; interim arrangements to be made for administration and maintenance of peace in Korea; and, as soon as the parties agreed to a cease-fire, the General Assembly to set up a body (including representatives of the Soviet Union, the PRC, Britain and the United States) to achieve an overall settlement of Far Eastern problems [meaning, implicitly, Taiwan and representation of China in the UN]. These points were confidentially given to the U.S. delegation at the UN.<sup>170</sup>

Pearson's action exemplified the ability of the UN (and especially middle powers within the UN) sometimes to influence U.S. policy. In order to hold together its majority of allied and friendly states, the U.S. government reluctantly accepted the Five Principles despite the linkage of cease-fire with political issues. Initially, Deputy U.S. Representative at the Security Council John Ross strongly objected to the third provision, calling for the withdrawal in stages of all non-Korean [i.e., including U.S.] military forces, on the basis that "no distinction was made between the moral and legal basis for the presence of UN forces in Korea, as opposed to Chinese forces." He claimed that this was "unacceptable to [the] US."<sup>171</sup> However at the UN Austin faced the reluctance of "a good many members of the UN," who wanted "some intermediate step" towards a cease-fire, before taking any harsher action against the PRC.<sup>172</sup> Acheson advised the U.S. delegation at the UN that "US believes [the] UN sh[ou]ld face [the] facts of [the]Kor[ean]

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<sup>170</sup> The United States Representative at the United Nations (Austin) to the Secretary of State, January 4, 1951, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1951, Vol. VII, Korea and China (in two parts), Part 1 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1983), 18-19.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, 19-20.

<sup>172</sup> Telegram, The United States Representative at the United Nations (Austin) to the Secretary of State, January 5, 1951, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1951, Vol. VII, Korea and China (in two parts), Part 1 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1983), 23.

situation squarely at this time but will not stand in [the] way of any further effort that [the] Entezam group or other del[egate]s think desirable to make with [the] Peiping regime.” He quickly added that

we do think it is important, however, that [the] UN live up to its responsibilities under [the] Charter and that it must act promptly. If this intermediate step is to be made before UN takes whatever action is necessary to stand firm against intervention of Chi[nese] Commies, this step sh[ou]ld be gotten underway at once so that [the] UN can find out whether or not this approach will succeed or be as fruitless as the previous efforts of [the] Entezam group. . . . By adopting this attitude of acquiescing in every effort that [the] Asian or other del[egate]s may wish [to] make in order [to] satisfy themselves that all possibilities for settlement have been exhausted, [the] Dep[artmen]t hopes to be able to carry along those del[egate]s at later stage.<sup>173</sup>

Clearly Acheson’s heart was not in this effort to negotiate with the PRC at this time, but the collective effort within the UN of the thirteen nations which had proposed the Entezam group had forced the U.S. government, at the least, to go through the motions of being open to negotiations. The same day Acheson revealed his true feelings when he stated in a personal message to Bevin that

we are deeply concerned that failure of the UN to recognize the present Chinese communist action as aggression and to name it as such will be the beginning of the end of the UN just as the end of the League of Nations started with their failure to take any action against Japan and Italy in similar circumstances.<sup>174</sup>

These exchanges, it must be remembered, took place against the background of sweeping PRC advances against UN troops. The U.S. military intelligence units and the Joint Chiefs found it necessary to weigh the advantages of either falling back to a limited beachhead or getting out of Korea entirely, and Acheson advised Marshall that “whatever happens, General MacArthur will

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<sup>173</sup> Telegram, The Secretary of State to the United States Mission at the United Nations, January 5, 1951, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1951, Vol. VII, Korea and China (in two parts), Part 1 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1983), 25-26.

<sup>174</sup> Telegram, The Secretary of State to the Embassy in the United Kingdom, January 5, 1951, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1951, Vol. VII, Korea and China (in two parts), Part 1 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1983), 27.

be doing the same thing for the next two or three weeks—that is, falling back to a position which can either be held or held long enough to evacuate.”<sup>175</sup> In the face of this military threat, Acheson preferred strong UN action branding the PRC as an aggressor. However in addition to placating the Entezam group and the thirteen nations which had pressed for negotiations, the United States had to deal with its closest ally, Britain. Attlee wrote to Truman that “the kind of action against China for which the United States Government appear[s] to be pressing at the United Nations will, in our view, almost certainly provoke China to extend hostilities.”<sup>176</sup>

Acheson responded to Attlee:

By all means let us keep all doors open for peaceful settlement. That is our duty under the Charter of the United Nations. But, if the truth is that aggression has occurred, let us not shrink from stating that truth, because of the fact that the power which launches it is formidable.<sup>177</sup>

On January 11, 1951 Acheson obtained Truman’s approval of the Five Principles for submission to the PRC.<sup>178</sup> Austin indicated the willingness of the United States to support the approach, but the Soviet Union opposed, on the grounds that the PRC had not been represented in the discussions, that the proposal did not assure the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Korea, and that the proposals were in the nature of an ultimatum.<sup>179</sup> On January 13, 1951 the First

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<sup>175</sup> National Intelligence Special Estimate, January 11, 1951, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1951, Vol. VII, Korea and China (in two parts), Part 1 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1983), 61-63; Memorandum of Conversation, by Lucius D. Battle, Special Assistant to the Secretary of State, January 11, 1951, *Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>176</sup> The British Prime Minister (Attlee) to President Truman, [undated], *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1951, Vol. VII, Korea and China (in two parts), Part 1 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1983), 38.

<sup>177</sup> Telegram, The Secretary of State to the Embassy in the United Kingdom, January 9, 1951, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1951, Vol. VII, Korea and China (in two parts), Part 1 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1983), 40.

<sup>178</sup> Editorial Note, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1951, Vol. VII, Korea and China (in two parts), Part 1 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1983), 64.

<sup>179</sup> Goodrich, *Korea*, 160-161.

Committee of the General Assembly approved the Five Principles and transmitted them to the PRC. Four days later the PRC leadership rejected the Five Principles and responded with its counter-proposals, which did not call for an immediate cease-fire.<sup>180</sup> Since its troops were making great advances on the ground (having pushed below the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel and re-captured Seoul), the PRC had little motivation to agree to a cease-fire. Its counter-proposal called for negotiations (which would include seven countries, the PRC, the Soviet Union, Britain, the United States, France, India and Egypt) to take place in China, for withdrawal of all foreign troops in order to end the fighting at an early date; withdrawal of U.S. forces from Taiwan and the Taiwan Straits; and the establishment of the PRC's rightful place in the United Nations.<sup>181</sup>

The PRC's rejection freed the United States to proceed with its preference for a much stronger resolution, finding that the PRC by aiding the North Koreans and by "engaging in hostilities against United Nations forces . . . has itself engaged in aggression in Korea."<sup>182</sup> Domestically, pressure had been building for a UN resolution branding the PRC as an aggressor.<sup>183</sup> A wide range of American news outlets, including the *Washington Post*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, *New York Herald Tribune*, Scripps-Howard and Knight newspaper chains, *Baltimore Sun*, *Chicago News*, *Cincinnati Times-Star* and *New York Times*, all opposed the UN's failure to label the PRC as an aggressor.<sup>184</sup> On January 19 the House of

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<sup>180</sup> Editorial Note, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1951, Vol. VII, Korea and China (in two parts), Part 1 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1983), 91-92.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>182</sup> Intervention of the Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China in Korea, Resolutions Adopted by the General Assembly at its Fifth Session, February 1, 1951, available at <http://www.un.org/depts/dhl/resguide/r5.htm>; internet; accessed February 28, 2011.

<sup>183</sup> Casey, *Selling The Korean War*, 211-212.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, 211.

Representatives passed a resolution calling on the United Nations to identify the PCR as the aggressor.<sup>185</sup> On January 28 in the *New York Times* James Reston raised the questions: “Was Secretary of State Dean Acheson worried about the criticism on Capitol Hill? Did he feel that, since he had been criticized for accepting the United Nation’s cease-fire proposal he had to demonstrate that he was being tough with Peiping?”<sup>186</sup> In order to hold together its hoped-for broad majority in the Assembly, no call for sanctions appeared in the resolution, and the U.S. government agreed to hold off on any request for sanctions so long as there remained any possibility of a diplomatic resolution. Acheson saw the need for moderation to insure British support for the resolution. At a Cabinet meeting he described the resolution as “a moderate one,” and said that “the British are still dragging their feet and in fact are creating a dangerous situation by their delaying tactics. If the British should vote against this resolution it would put the U.S. in a bad spot.”<sup>187</sup> On February 1, 1951 the U.S.-sponsored resolution came to a vote in the General Assembly and was adopted by a vote of forty-four to seven, with nine abstentions. Rau asserted four reasons for India’s no vote: the resolution would prolong the war, possibly extending the war and even becoming a world war; it made no sense to propose negotiations and at the same time condemn, and thus antagonize, the PRC—giving the appearance that the Assembly was not serious about either decision; the condemnation of the PRC was not fair; and “the issue of aggression is not so simple as it looks.”<sup>188</sup> Rau’s explanation pointed to the subjectivity involved

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<sup>185</sup> Ibid., 211.

<sup>186</sup> James Reston, “Our Policy on China as Seen From the U.N.,” *New York Times*, 28 January 1951, Section E, p. 3.

<sup>187</sup> Cabinet Meeting, Friday, January 19, 1951, Folder Matthew J. Connelly Papers, Notes on Cabinet Meetings, II, 1946-1953, Matthew J. Connelly Papers, Truman Library.

<sup>188</sup> United Nations General Assembly, *Official Records*, Fifth Session, 327<sup>th</sup> Plenary Meeting, February 1, 1951, p. 694.

in a judgment about aggression—when the UN Command appeared to have the military strength to push past the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel all the way to the border of China, it chose to do so, notwithstanding the fact that the original mission set by the Security Council called only for repelling the invaders and restoring peace in the area. From the PRC’s perspective MacArthur’s northward invasion no doubt appeared aggressive and threatening. In the final analysis aggression was in the eye of the beholder.

With no settlement in sight, the war continued into 1951. In February PRC forces pushed through UN lines, forcing MacArthur’s troops back, but eventually the UN held the line. Meanwhile, the ongoing war put pressure on the United States and its allies—for more troops to replace battle-weary units, and for some way to end the fighting. The possibility that the United States might seek (as urged by MacArthur and his domestic supporters) to win by escalating—bombing and blockading mainland China, using Chinese Nationalist troops as reinforcements in Korea or permitting them to invade mainland China, or by otherwise imposing sanctions against the PRC—created renewed worries among U.S. allies who feared a widened war—resulting in a more critical need for a settlement.<sup>189</sup>

MacArthur, himself, was a major stumbling-block to a negotiated settlement. He had repeatedly called for a wider war. By his aggressive and imperious style of leadership he had alienated the closest of U.S. allies as well as many non-aligned nations. In March MacArthur preempted Truman’s proposed statement of policy (which held out the possibility of settlement without military victory) by issuing his own statement, the tone of which was insulting to the

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<sup>189</sup> Stueck, *Korean War*, 172-174.



PRC, thus upsetting any chance for Truman's statement to lead to peace feelers.<sup>190</sup> Finally, MacArthur went too far, by interjecting himself into domestic U.S. politics. He responded to a Republican Congressman's request for reaction to the Congressman's attack on U.S. policy in Asia and his call for support for a Chinese Nationalist invasion against mainland China.<sup>191</sup> On April 5 MacArthur's responding letter, in which he agreed with the Congressman, was read on the House floor. Within a few days, after conferring with the Joint Chiefs and his top State Department advisers and obtaining their support for his decision, Truman fired MacArthur.

### *A Change in Command in Korea*

The entire period of MacArthur's command raised important questions about collective security through the United Nations. Korea was the first occasion of UN collective action to repel by force an armed attack. Since leadership was necessary for any military effort, the Security Council had, as previously described, authorized all UN member states fighting in Korea to make their forces subject to a "unified command under the United States of America," and had requested that the United States designate the commander of such forces. Thus the anomaly of a UN military force fighting a war, with essentially no control by the United Nations, effectively blurred the distinction between a true UN collective action versus an American war masked as collective security. Compounding the problem, MacArthur's high rank and long,

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<sup>190</sup> At a Cabinet meeting on March 20, 1951, Truman said that he "had a sad experience with McArthur (sic) who beat the gun on a statement which was to be used as a statement by the President. McArthur (sic) picked up the statement and went beyond it with views of his own with threats of mass destruction if necessary if Commies did not go along with proposed peace suggestion. It was a disloyal act to the Commander in Chief." Cabinet Meeting, March 20, 1951 11:00AM, Folder Matthew J. Connelly Papers, Notes on Cabinet Meetings, II, 1946-1953, Matthew J. Connelly Papers, Truman Library.

<sup>191</sup> Stueck, *Korean War*, 178-179.

distinguished career partially immobilized Truman and the Joint Chiefs from effectively controlling his actions and his public comments. Certainly MacArthur's firing gave considerable assurance to other UN member states that the war would not be widened without UN authorization and that possible settlement opportunities would not be discouraged.

As previously noted, in a bid for broad support for their February 1 resolution branding the PRC as aggressors, the Americans postponed any request for sanctions while a chance for a cease-fire remained. But when the parties failed to find common ground for a cease-fire agreement, the United States pressed for sanctions. On May 18 the U.S.-backed proposal for sanctions came before the Assembly. The Polish representative reminded the Assembly that Chapter VII of the UN Charter clearly placed the power to take action in the event of a breach of the peace or aggression in the hands of the Security Council, not the General Assembly. He charged the United States with "forcing it [i.e., the resolution] upon the United Nations" even though the United States and the U.S.-led majority in the Assembly "are fully aware that in so doing they are acting contrary to the Charter."<sup>192</sup> Chapter VII of the Charter provided various tools to the Security Council including "complete or partial interruption of economic relations," e.g., an embargo, as the United States was requesting. The problem remained that the United States was seeking authority for those measures from the Assembly which had no such jurisdiction under the Charter, in order to avoid a Soviet veto in the Security Council. Responding for the United States, Ernest Gross argued that the Security Council had removed Korea from its agenda, and that therefore the Assembly could act. Malik, however, was quick to point out that although Article 11 allowed the Assembly to *make recommendations* on any matter the Security Council was not dealing with, Article 11 specifically provided that any such

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<sup>192</sup> United Nations General Assembly, *Official Records*, 330<sup>th</sup> Plenary Meeting, May 18, 1951, p. 733.

*question on which action is necessary shall be referred to the Security Council by the General Assembly.* The Soviet bloc may have had the better of the argument, but the United States had the votes. By a vote of forty-seven to zero, with eight abstentions and five delegations not participating, the Assembly adopted the resolution recommending that every state should apply an embargo on the shipment to mainland China and North Korea of armaments, atomic energy materials, petroleum, strategic transportation materials, and equipment used to produce armaments.

By July 1951 the battle-line stabilized near the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, and now both warring parties wanted to end the war and cut their losses of men and materiel. The PRC offensive had stalled, and the opposing armies settled into a stalemate which neither side appeared willing or able to rupture. After Soviet peace feelers in the previous May and June, a break-through finally came in July 1951. The efforts of UN member states to broker a settlement had helped nudge the parties to the bargaining table, but the United Nations itself had no mechanism to stop the fighting. After much bickering about details involving the negotiation site both sides agreed to negotiate five issues: adoption of an agenda; fixing a military demarcation line in order to establish a demilitarized zone (the Communists wanted to use the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel as the line, whereas the UN Command favored the more defensible existing line, much of which was north of the parallel); arrangements for a cease-fire and armistice in Korea; arrangements for dealing with prisoners of war; and recommendations to the governments of the countries concerned on both sides (this catch-all would permit negotiations on a hoped-for phased withdrawal of all foreign troops from Korea).

During the balance of Truman's presidency tough, slow negotiations continued, in which the United States found the UN of little value for the simple reason that U.S. leaders wanted to

control the outcome to the extent possible and therefore they had to control the negotiations. In a meeting with the British and French delegates, Gladwyn Jebb and Francis LaCoste, Ernest Gross advised them that if an armistice were arranged, the Unified Command would simply report the armistice to the General Assembly and ask the Assembly to approve. Gross noted the “intolerable military situation that would arise if [the] armistice agreement had to be signed in [the] field *ad referendum* to [the] UN body.”<sup>193</sup> To have permitted active involvement of the UN in the negotiations would have diluted U.S. control. Therefore the United Nations—the titular combatant—had little say in the settlement talks, which were carried on for the UN Command by Americans.

Acheson preferred to put pressure on the PRC outside, rather than through, the United Nations. Since the cease-fire was merely an agenda item, on which no agreement had yet been reached, fighting persisted simultaneously with the talks. Acheson, intending delicately to threaten the possibility of a wider war, desired the issuance of a public statement that a breach of any armistice “would make it impossible to localize the conflict.” He contemplated a U.S.-British joint statement or a unilateral U.S. statement supported by the British, rather than a UN resolution. He could see “no satisfactory avenue through the UN.”<sup>194</sup> He explained that he “could not now see how the UN could possibly issue any statement, the Security Council being

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<sup>193</sup> Telegram, The United States Representative at the United Nations (Austin) to the Secretary of State, July 10, 1951, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1951, Vol. VII, Korea and China (in two parts), Part 1 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1983), 644.

<sup>194</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, by the Deputy Director of the Executive Secretariat of the Department of State (Barnes), November 28, 1951, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1951, Vol. VII, Korea and China (in two parts), Part 1 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1983), 1189; Memorandum of Conversation, by the Secretary of State, November 29, 1951, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1951, Vol. VII, Korea and China (in two parts), Part 1 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1983), 1200.

inhibited by the veto and the General Assembly by the impossibility of its procedures.”<sup>195</sup> In February 1952 in an effort to facilitate settlement, the State Department (fearing that discussion at the UN of substantive agenda items involving the future of Korea would “confuse and hinder the armistice talk”) pushed for and obtained a majority vote in the Assembly postponing consideration of these substantive issues until after the conclusion of an armistice, or until other developments in Korea made consideration of the these items desirable.<sup>196</sup>

When the belligerent parties finally accepted a draft armistice agreement, the question of what to do with prisoners of war (POWs) emerged as the last issue to be resolved. The Third Geneva Convention, whose principles the belligerents had agreed to respect, seemed straightforward. Its Article 118 provided that “Prisoners of war shall be released and repatriated without delay after the cessation of active hostilities.”<sup>197</sup> The Chinese and North Koreans took the position that the wording of Article 118 was categorical, whereas the American negotiators insisted that POWs should not be repatriated to their country of origin against their will. On its face Article 118 did not allow for consideration of the wishes of the prisoners. Thus the Chinese and North Korean position was consistent with Article 118, whereas the U.S. position was not. Moreover, the 1949 Diplomatic Conference held at Geneva had expressly rejected an

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<sup>195</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, by the Secretary of State, November 29, 1951, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1951, Vol. VII, Korea and China (in two parts), Part 1 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1983), 1200.

<sup>196</sup> Footnote 2 to Telegram, The United States Representative at the United Nations General Assembly (Roosevelt) to the Department of State, January 11, 1952, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1952-54, Vol. XV, (in two parts), Part 1, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1984), 15; Resolution Adopted on the Report of the First Committee and the Joint Second and Third Committee, Meeting Jointly, Resolutions adopted by the General Assembly at its 7<sup>th</sup> Session, available at <http://www.un.org/depts/dhl/resguide/r7.htm>; internet; accessed March 2, 2011.

<sup>197</sup> Article 118, Convention (III) relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War. Geneva, 12 August 1949, Accessed March 2, 2011, available at <http://www.icrc.org/inl.nsf/FULL.375?OpenDocument>.

amendment proposed by Austria which would have permitted POWs the option of going to a country other than their country of origin.<sup>198</sup>

Since the UN Command held more than one hundred thirty thousand prisoners of war whereas the PRC held only about eleven to twelve thousand American and other UN prisoners of war, the Joint Chiefs favored a one-for-one exchange, rather than the Third Geneva Convention requirement of an all-for-all exchange, so as not to allow the PRC and North Korea to rebuild their forces disproportionately with repatriated prisoners. Partly from these practical considerations, partly resulting from reports of Communist atrocities committed on UN prisoners of war, and partly due to Truman's reservations<sup>199</sup> about repatriation of prisoners against their will, the United States adopted a negotiating stance of a one-for-one exchange until all prisoners of war held by the Communists had been released, and then prisoners would be repatriated on a voluntary, non-forced basis. Truman's own professed repugnance<sup>200</sup> of any forced repatriation was shared by the *New York Times* and certain influential journalists, and the administration sought to encourage support for this position in the mass media.<sup>201</sup> The issue carried great significance because it allowed the Truman administration to cast the war as a "moral crusade for human rights."<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> Commentary, Part IV: Termination of Captivity #Section II: Release and repatriation of prisoners of war at the close of hostilities, available at <http://www.icrc.org/ihl.nsf/COM/375-590141?OpenDocument>; internet; accessed November 3, 2011.

<sup>199</sup> Truman stated that "He does not wish to send back those prisoners who have surrendered and have cooperated with us, because he believes they will be immediately done away with." Quoted in Casey, *Selling the Korean War*, 284.

<sup>200</sup> Stueck, *The Korean War*, 245, 260.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*, 285-287.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*, 286.

Nevertheless, Acheson counseled Truman that although the use of force to turn over POWs who might face death if returned was “repugnant to our most fundamental moral and humanitarian principles . . . and would seriously jeopardize the psychological warfare position of the United States in its opposition to tyranny,” the PRC might not agree to “the principle of no forcible repatriation.” Acheson warned that the continued maintenance of the principle “will inevitably present risks to prisoners held by the Communists and to the achievement of an armistice.”<sup>203</sup> Therefore, Acheson proposed finessing the problem by continuing the maintenance publicly of the U.S. opposition to “the use of force” but at the same time seeking to implement the policy so as successfully to conclude an armistice without requiring the PRC to “accept the principle of voluntary repatriation”<sup>204</sup> PRC negotiators demanded a “reasonably accurate estimate of how many POWs” the UN Command would return, and UN Commander in Chief Matthew Ridgeway (who had replaced MacArthur) proposed screening POWs in order to develop the estimate.<sup>205</sup>

During 1952 pressure built for some resolution of the prisoner of war issue—as a result of the actions of various UN member states whose collective action operated as a counterweight to the U.S. domination of the UN Command side of the negotiating process. The United States gathered twenty co-sponsors for a resolution affirming that prisoners would be able to choose not to return to their country of origin, but soon found that even among its allies support for its

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<sup>203</sup> Memorandum by the Secretary of State to the President, February 8, 1952, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-54, Vol. XV* (in two parts), Part 1 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1984), 44.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>205</sup> Telegram, The Commander in Chief, United Nations Command (Ridgeway) to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, April 4, 1952, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952, Vol. XV* (in two parts), Part 1, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1984), 136.

position was waning. Traditional allies of the United States together with non-aligned Asian, Middle Eastern and Latin American states all looked for some compromise solution, creating momentum for the United States to reach agreement with the PRC. India, as the leader of the non-aligned group, played the main role in these efforts. Indian Delegate V.K. Krishna Menon, whose special responsibility at the General Assembly was for Korea, became the key player in efforts to craft a prisoner of war position that bridged the gap between the U.S. position of voluntary repatriation and the PRC demand for return of prisoners consistent with the language of the Third Geneva Convention. Acheson noted that the British and Canadians were actively encouraging Menon.<sup>206</sup>

1952 was a presidential election year in the United States, and Truman's failure to end the war played a significant role in the campaign. The long, drawn-out war, plus charges of corruption in his administration, so minimized his chances that Truman decided not to run.<sup>207</sup> He then backed Adlai Stevenson, governor of Illinois. Stevenson chose not to make Korea a principal campaign issue.<sup>208</sup> The Republican candidate, Dwight Eisenhower, expressed no clear plan to end the war, but his party's platform decried the U.S. unwillingness to escalate the war in order to achieve a real victory. Early in the campaign Eisenhower was quite moderate about Korea, but less than two weeks before the election he made the speech that insured his victory: he announced that new leadership was needed to end the war, and that he would make a

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<sup>206</sup> Telegram, The Secretary of State to the Department of State, November 6, 1952, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-54*, Vol. XV (in two parts) Part 1, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1984), 583.

<sup>207</sup> Casey, *Selling The Korean War*, 326-327.

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*, 327.



“personal trip” to Korea for that purpose.<sup>209</sup> In November Eisenhower’s election to the presidency introduced a new element of uncertainty into the efforts to win over the General Assembly to the U.S. position during the last few months of Truman’s presidency.<sup>210</sup>

At the United Nations matters were coming to a head. In November 1952 Acheson advised Truman that “there are some jitters here about what may happen if there is no armistice.”<sup>211</sup> Acheson concluded that the U.S.-backed 21-country resolution could not pass in the General Assembly, and that the only available course involved compromise with Menon’s settlement terms. The long, drawn-out war had sufficiently undermined confidence in U.S. leadership that less powerful, and more neutral, countries such as India held the power to push through a settlement. Finally, in the waning days of the Truman presidency the U.S. and British delegations reached agreement with Menon on acceptable language<sup>212</sup>, and on December 3, 1952 the Assembly adopted their compromise resolution, by a vote of fifty-four to five, with one abstention.

The resolution affirmed that the repatriation of prisoners of war would be effected in accordance with the Third Geneva Convention (thus acceding to the Chinese and North Korean

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<sup>209</sup> Ibid., 335.

<sup>210</sup> Acheson told Truman that he had the “gravest doubt” that he could succeed in getting the General Assembly to support a resolution to the liking of the State Department, “in view of Gen [era]l Eisenhower [‘s] imminent trip [to Korea] and their doubt as to whether [the] US delegation in [the] UN really represented [the] view of [the] United States.” Memorandum of Conversation, by the Secretary of State, November 5, 1952, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1952-54, Vol. XV (in two parts), Part 1, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1984), 578.

<sup>211</sup> Telegram, The Secretary of State to the President, November 15, 1952, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1952-54, Vol. XV (in two parts), Part 1, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1983), 633.

<sup>212</sup> Telegram, The Secretary of State to the President, November 26, 1952, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1952-54, Vol. XV, Korea (in two parts), Part 1 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1984), 685.

demand), and it expressly incorporated the U.S. position that force would not be used against POWs “to prevent or effect their return to their homelands.” It created a Repatriation Commission consisting of representatives of Czechoslovakia, Poland, Sweden and Switzerland to supervise the return of POWs under complex rules designed to prevent the use of force in the repatriation process.<sup>213</sup> The resolution, which the Soviet Union and its satellites had rejected, sought to bridge the gap between the Third Geneva Convention’s requirements of release and repatriation “without delay after the cessation of active hostilities,” and the American demand for no repatriation against the will of a prisoner. The two positions were logically irreconcilable, but Menon’s resolution honored both positions and sought to reconcile them by the details of the proposal. Those details included control of all POWs and supervision of the repatriation process by the new UN Repatriation Commission composed of representatives of the four countries noted above (two of which were Soviet satellites), the assistance of Red Cross teams, freedom of each belligerent party to talk to POWs about repatriation, as well as freedom of POWs to discuss with the Repatriation Commission their desires for or against return to their homeland, with the disposition of those POWs who refused repatriation to be determined by a political conference to be called, and ultimate disposition of any remaining POWs into the custody of the United Nations. When agreement was reached on these repatriation issues, the provisions of the draft armistice agreement (previously agreed to) would come into effect. Within two weeks both the PRC and North Korea had rejected the resolution.

Peace, therefore, did not yet come to Korea, and would not come during Truman’s presidency. Chances for peace were further marred by news of POW rioting and mistreatment in

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<sup>213</sup> Korea: Reports of the United Nations Commission for the Unification and Rehabilitation of Korea, Resolutions Adopted on the Reports of the First Committee, available at <http://www.un.org/depts/dhl/resguide/r7.htm>; internet; accessed March 2, 2011.

American prisoner of war camps.<sup>214</sup> Previously, when the December 3 resolution was under discussion Vyshinsky had accused the United States of “gross violation of generally accepted principles of international law and the most important provisions of the 1949 Geneva Convention.”<sup>215</sup> He asserted that “so-called ‘screening’ or ‘interrogations’ . . . carried out by the United States Command . . . was accompanied by brutal pressure, the use of physical force and the mass shootings of Korean and Chinese prisoners.”<sup>216</sup> Certainly there were serious problems at U.S.-run prisoner of war camps. Ambassador Muccio reported to the State Department that at a major site of such camps, Koje-do island, the U.S. military had, instead of actively taking charge of captured prisoners, delegated control of inmates to “POW trustees on basis of self-styled anti-communism in many compounds,” and that a political “‘civil war’ existed between pro- and anti-communist POWs, “replete with kangaroo courts, polit[ical] murders, beatings, [and] torture.”<sup>217</sup> Muccio further reported that the procedure for polling prisoners as to their wishes about repatriation was “superimposed on [a] background of extreme coercion and intimidation over [a] long period of both pro-and anti-Commie leaders.”<sup>218</sup>

On December 14 a new eruption of “major violence” occurred in U.S.-run prisoner of war camps on the island of Pongam. In response to prisoners engaging in military drilling in

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<sup>214</sup> For a moving description of conditions inside U.S.-operated prisoner of war camps, see Ha Jin’s novel, *War Trash* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2004).

<sup>215</sup> United Nations General Assembly, *Official Records*, Seventh Session, 399<sup>th</sup> Plenary Meeting, December 3, 1952, p. 295.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*, 91-115.

<sup>217</sup> Telegram, The Ambassador in Korea (Muccio) to the Department of State, July 2, 1952, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-54, Vol. XV* (in two parts), Part 1, Korea (Washington: *United States Government Printing Office*, 1983), 369-370.

<sup>218</sup> Telegram, The Ambassador in Korea (Muccio) to the Department of State, July 5, 1952, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-54, Vol. XV* (in two parts), Part 1 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1984), 379; see also, Ha Jin, *War Trash*.

defiance of orders to stop, South Korean guards were sent in, who opened fire—killing eighty-five and seriously wounding one hundred thirteen prisoners.<sup>219</sup> Six days later the Soviet Union successfully placed on the General Assembly agenda a new item, complaining of “Mass Murder” of Korean and Chinese POWs by U.S. military authorities on the island of Pongam.<sup>220</sup> Gromyko accused the United States of perpetrating “new and unheard-of brutalities against Korean and Chinese prisoners-of-war . . . . This bloody and brutal deed was perpetrated against prisoners who were demanding repatriation. It is an act of butchery and savagery. . . .”<sup>221</sup> Gromyko then introduced a new resolution, “noting new evidence of inhuman brutalities,” condemning “these criminal acts by the United States military authorities,” and insisting that the United States “take immediate steps to end the brutalities . . . and shall call those guilty of committing these crimes to account.”<sup>222</sup>

The American response, delivered by Ernest Gross, was weak. First he reported that these prisoners were “communist guerrillas operating in South Korea and other Communists rounded up for revolutionary activity behind the lines. They were not prisoners captured from enemy armies. There were no Chinese among them.”<sup>223</sup> Gross seemingly was arguing that these facts were somehow exculpatory. Then Gross recounted the facts: prisoners were rioting; the camp commander sent in one hundred ten guards, of which twenty were armed with shotguns;

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<sup>219</sup> Editorial Note, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-54*, Vol. XV (in two parts), Part 1, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1984), 712.

<sup>220</sup> United Nations General Assembly, *Official Records*, Seventh Session, 411<sup>th</sup> Plenary Meeting, December 21, 1952, p. 503.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*, 504.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, 508.

<sup>223</sup> United Nations General Assembly, *Official Records*, Seventh Session, 411<sup>th</sup> Plenary Meeting, December 21, 1952, p. 509.

hundreds of prisoners were “threatening, screaming and throwing rocks” at the guards; when the camp commander ordered the rioters to quiet down and disperse, he was ignored; “a frontal approach by the few guards upon the many massed men was out of the question. . . . it was necessary to fire volleys to quell the rioters . . . . A burst of fire was necessary in two [other] compounds in order to prevent further outbreaks . . . . The dead and wounded were at once evacuated.”<sup>224</sup>

Menon, who had been trying to work with the Americans to find a mutually acceptable basis to end the hostilities, responded with seriousness and sadness:

Irrespective of all the arguments pro and con, we cannot forget the fact that there has been a grievous incident, and we have to deal with this in terms of the Geneva Convention. . . . It is a sad state of affairs when, in prisoner-of-war camps or anywhere else, the nationals of other countries who, as a result of hostilities, have come under the responsibility . . . of the detaining Powers, should become subject to action which ends in killing.<sup>225</sup>

In the vote that followed, the General Assembly rejected the Soviet resolution by a vote of forty-five to five, with ten abstentions. Even facing this tragedy, the Assembly backed the United States. But a great proportion of non-aligned nations, including Egypt, India, Indonesia, Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Yemen, Afghanistan and Burma, could not vote with the United States on this massacre. Certainly the terrible events on Pongam had influenced the views of the governments of these abstaining countries.<sup>226</sup>

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<sup>224</sup> Ibid., 509.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid., 519.

<sup>226</sup> Memorandum by the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Johnson) to the Deputy Under Secretary of State (Matthews), December 29, 1952, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-54*, Vol. XV (in two parts), Part 1, Korea (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1984), 718.

On this sad note in Korea the Truman presidency came to an end. The fighting continued, and it took a new president and a new administration to persuade the communists that a failure of the settlement talks would lead the United States to take stronger military measures and possibly widen the war.<sup>227</sup> After more than three years of warfare, on July 27, 1953 the belligerents finally signed an armistice agreement ending the fighting in Korea.

### *Conclusion*

By 1950 the separate regimes in the north and south were for practical purposes, and were seen as, *de facto* states, and thus the June 25 invasion appeared as outright aggression. In the view of most UN member states the U.S.-led forceful UN response to repel the attack realized the UN Charter's prohibition against international aggression. And when the United States and the PRC had both tired of the war but seemed incapable of sufficient compromise to reach an armistice, the United Nations became an important mechanism for ending the war. Within the UN it was not the leaders of the superpowers who reached agreement, but rather it was a group of thirteen Asian and Middle-Eastern member states which assisted the belligerents to come to the negotiating table and finally to achieve a settlement. So lesser powers, not so constricted by Cold War antagonisms, furnished the necessary impetus, and the United Nations provided the mechanism, finally to end the fighting.

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<sup>227</sup> Stueck, *Korean War*, 328-329.

The UN had no army of its own, nor did it have a Military Staff Committee to create a military command structure or to set military strategy. Therefore, by itself, the United Nations was powerless to enforce its call for cessation of hostilities and withdrawal of forces. American troops, together with those of South Korea and a limited amount of military support from other member states, provided the force required. This raises the question: was the United States taking action to support a decision of the world community, or was the United States, by putting pressure on those member states amenable to such pressure, merely using the UN as a tool of American foreign policy?

The answer is both. The United States, motivated by Cold War concerns, acted to contain communism in Asia. Certainly the United States wanted, and used, the UN to legitimate actions which the United States and its key allies would have taken with or without UN approval. Nevertheless, the broader world community genuinely believed in, and wanted, a world order which would not tolerate aggression. Of course the Korean conflict, as the Soviets and their satellites so often pointed out, was also a civil war; but by 1950 the two halves of Korea were sufficiently close to being separate states that the June 25 North Korean attack looked like aggression. In that sense, the June 25 and June 27 Security Council votes—and the U.S. effort which made them happen—must be viewed as key validations of the first enumerated purpose and principle of the Charter of the United Nations: “To maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression and other breaches of the peace.”

In a profound sense, the United Nations lost an opportunity. By overtly taking sides in what had become a Cold War pressure point, the majority allowed the prestige of the United Nations to be lent to a partisan cause—the legitimatization of the right-wing regime in the new

Republic of Korea, and, by implication, the de-legitimatization of the communist regime in North Korea. Considering the tension thus created between the two Koreas, the United States and other member states that approved the resolution calling for the withdrawal of Soviet and American occupation forces “as early as practicable” could reasonably have foreseen that a military contest would ensue after the two superpowers withdrew their forces. Certainly there was a lack of focus on what had become obvious—that the enmity between the Rhee and Kim regimes could not be bridged in a peaceful way. If Hodge’s occupation forces had not favored right-wing elements in the South, unification might have been possible but the peninsula would in all likelihood have been unified under a left-wing government—with the probable result at least in the short term of domination by the Soviet Union.

Unquestionably, the Assembly resolution of October 1949 reflected the fear that the Korean situation might “lead to open military conflict.” But the UN had no real power at its disposal to quell the threatening storm clouds of war. All it could do was to maintain its Commission on Korea in being, to authorize the Commission to “observe and report any developments which might lead to or otherwise involve military conflict in Korea,” and to make its “good offices” available to help in the unification of Korea, should a “favorable opportunity” arise. Eight months later when the invasion finally came, the United Nations mobilized to stop the war—a war for which UN actions, under leadership from the United States, had laid the groundwork. Nonetheless, the United Nations’ willingness to go to war proved that the world body would not tolerate international aggression.

From the beginning the United States had faced the dilemma of desiring to maintain some degree of influence on the Korean peninsula, but lacking the willingness to pay for such influence by maintaining indefinitely a substantial military occupation below the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel.



Coupled with this unwillingness was considerable confusion regarding the importance of Korea to the United States. The Joint Chiefs of Staff initially saw little strategic value to Korea and wanted to get out. But when the North Korean attack came, the Joint Chiefs now saw a North Korean victory as threatening American interests in the Pacific. They now clearly recognized what had previously been obscure: that irrespective of the *practical* strategic benefit from occupying South Korea, the conquest of the American client state in the South by the communist regime in the North would cause great *psychological* damage to U.S. prestige in the region and, for that matter, worldwide. The United States, and the United Nations, paid a high price for that important insight. The Korean people, of course, paid the highest price for what, at bottom, amounted to confused leadership by the United States to which America's allies and other UN member states gave excessive deference.

## CONCLUSION

The United Nations was born in the outpouring of hope and confidence that accompanied the Allied victory over fascism. Because the United Nations began its life just as the Second World War was coming to an end, an inevitable conflation occurred between hopeful, positive feelings for the triumph over the Axis powers and for the new organization. Having faced two cataclysmic world wars in less than thirty years, American and other allied leaders hoped to prevent a third world war and vowed not to repeat the mistakes of the interwar years. Signs of East-West conflict had already appeared, but despite some misgivings they looked to the UN to serve as a mechanism for cooperative and peaceful resolution of future disagreements and conflicts. They armed the new organization with the power to use military force to prevent future aggression, and this time the United States committed itself to membership—and in fact leadership—so that the UN would have the power to enforce its decisions.

But the leap from the discredited League of Nations to the new United Nations was not as great as was assumed. The old ideas of rivalry among nation states and strong commitment to individual national sovereignty did not suddenly disappear. The idealism that motivated the creation of this new organization was tempered by the mutual fears of the Great Powers that they would lose control over their own foreign policies. The United States, having recently renounced its interwar isolationism and committed itself to an internationalist future, and the Soviet Union, which could expect to be more or less continually outvoted at the UN, each needed to control any use of force by the new organization. This was done by granting to the Security Council the power of enforcement, and granting to each of the five permanent members of the Council the power of veto, so that unanimity would be required for any use of force. The

underlying logic of that decision contemplated that the five permanent members of the Council would be able to cooperate and reach consensus on a more or less permanent basis, in order for the Security Council to act; otherwise the new organization would quickly face impotence. But that logic failed to consider the geopolitical reality. In fact, except for the duration of the war, Britain and the United States did not have much of a record of cooperation with the Soviet Union, and soon after victory the wartime collaboration between the Western Powers and the Soviet Union quickly unraveled. The untimely death of Franklin Roosevelt, who had labored during the war to build trust and cooperation between the United States and the Soviet Union, resulted in the devolution of U.S. executive power from an immensely powerful and experienced chief of state to the relatively ill-prepared Harry Truman. Truman followed Roosevelt's lead in supporting the new United Nations, but Truman's world-view was much more apprehensive of, and thus less friendly towards, the Soviet Union, and his no-nonsense, blunt style of leadership replaced the charm with which Roosevelt had attempted to deal with the Soviets. As a result, Truman's approach to dealing with the Soviet state quickly turned confrontational.

By the time of the creation of the United Nations, a new commitment to international engagement had replaced the interwar isolationism as the reigning American principle of foreign affairs. The Truman administration strongly backed the United Nations, but when American policy required action not possible within the UN, such as the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the United States readily acted outside the United Nations. However, U.S. officials always insisted that such action conformed to the UN Charter. Understandably, American priorities focused on achieving current U.S. foreign policy objectives rather than any particular interest in building up the strength and influence of the United Nations as an institution.

This work—dealing with five case studies— has chronicled the path that the new commitment to internationalism took in the first postwar years. The emergence of the Cold War became a key factor in the evolution of the United Nations during that time, and Cold War pressures inevitably affected postwar American engagement at the UN—resulting in subordination of the collaborative and cooperative aspects of Wilsonian internationalism, and emphasis instead on a hard-headed, nationalistic, adversarial kind of American internationalism. As a consequence, U.S. policy gave lip service but not genuine support for the principle of universality at the United Nations, and once the effects of Soviet vetoes became clear, the U.S. government did what it could to circumvent the principle of permanent member unanimity upon which the UN was founded.

Because of the East-West rivalry the United States came to see the UN in terms of gaining advantage over its opponent, and the Soviet Union did likewise. As a result U.S. leaders used the substantial U.S.-controlled majorities in the Security Council and General Assembly to serve American interests—often at the expense of the Soviet Union. Time and again the Soviet leadership—permanently in the minority—felt compelled to rely on the veto. This veto, frequently preventing any action at the United Nations, became the symbol of UN impotence. As a result, U.S. policy initiatives were frequently frustrated, and the United States came to resent greatly the very veto power that had been required to achieve U.S. Senate approval of the UN Charter. Cooperation at the UN quickly evaporated, to be replaced by a more or less permanent divisiveness which split the United Nations into two camps, the U.S.-led majority against the Soviet Union and its few allies. In American eyes, the minority status, itself, of the Soviet Union became strong evidence of the obstructionist nature of the Soviet regime.

As we saw in Chapter 1, the American delegation at the UN claimed to support the principle of universality, but voted otherwise. New memberships became so highly politicized that the ideal of universal UN membership was subordinated to political goals, and relatively few applicants were admitted. The Truman administration preferred to exclude a substantial block of applicants in order to prevent admission of any new countries friendly to the Soviet Union. Similarly, the American delegation always declared its support for the UN Charter, but acted to evade the Charter principle of permanent member unanimity. U.S. leaders saw the veto as such an obstacle to UN action that they sought to employ various devices to circumvent the veto, such as transferring matters from the Security Council to the General Assembly as well as seeking new authority for the General Assembly, notwithstanding Charter language to the contrary. In addition, the United States substituted “good offices” committees in place of full Council action, as a means of limiting, or eliminating, any input from the Soviet Union. Finally, U.S. and Soviet antipathy to any proposals from the other party locked the UN in a perpetual stalemate, often allowing very little to be accomplished. These moves inevitably weakened the philosophic underpinnings of the international organization, but facilitated its service in fostering the foreign policy goals of the United States. With little chance to solve various problems, the UN became a forum for East-West propaganda, with the United States and the Soviet Union each vying for victories in the international “court of public opinion.”

Notwithstanding all of the problems besetting the fledgling United Nations, real accomplishments emerged. The cases of Iran and Greece represent considerable successes in the UN’s early history. Iran’s appeal to the new organization—backed by the United States—ultimately resulted in protecting a weak country against aggression by its powerful neighbor. The Soviets finally withdrew their army from Iran peacefully and did not achieve either a

military and political presence or an oil concession in Northern Iran. Thus, the new organization gave life to the principle of sovereign equality of large and small nations.

The situation in Greece was considerably more complex, and the result represented more of a mixed bag. Unlike the simple case of aggression in Iran, Greece found itself at war's end locked in a civil war. First Britain, and then the United States, intervened on behalf of the Rightist government, and actively involved themselves in that civil war. They acted outside of the United Nations—Britain by military invasion and the United States by extensive economic and military aid. For more than five years the United Nations was too weak and too divided to stop the brutal civil war in Greece, which finally came to an end only by victory for the Rightist government. UN activity did monitor borders and restrict aid rendered by Greece's northern neighbors to the Greek insurgents, and ultimately a combination of UN activity plus British-U.S. military engagement and aid ended the fighting. UN action did succeed in preventing a civil war in Greece from expanding into a regional war involving its three neighboring countries.

In Indonesia, also, for more than four years a divided United Nations proved unable to stop the bloody fighting—in this case between Dutch forces and Indonesian nationalists. The United States bore considerable responsibility for permitting the war to continue, because American policy-makers initially saw U.S. interests aligned with the Netherlands, and only later switched support to the anti-communist Indonesian nationalists at the expense of Dutch interests. However, notwithstanding the long, painful period of Dutch-Nationalist warfare that the United States was unwilling, and the UN proved unable, to stop, ultimately—after U.S. leaders came to see the Indonesian nationalist government as a bulwark against communism—the United Nations became midwife to the birth of Indonesian independence. Throughout, the UN provided a forum and publicity for Indonesian nationalists to make their case against colonialism. And finally—

with belated U.S. pressure exerted on the Netherlands—the United Nations helped a relatively weak people rid themselves of their colonial rulers and achieve independence.

Chapter 4 described the considerable confusion of U.S. leadership regarding Korea and the doomed effort to impose a UN trusteeship on the liberated country. When that effort failed, U.S. efforts at nation-building in southern Korea resulted in hardening the artificial split between the North and South. At American behest, the United Nations accommodated U.S. initiatives to legitimize the Republic of Korea (which effectively delegitimized the regime in the North) and to give at least a partial sanction to Rhee's claim of sovereignty over all of Korea. These moves resulted in an explosive situation—a full-scale war waiting to happen. Finally, U.S. leadership insisted on a total removal of American military forces from the peninsula, which furnished the spark to detonate the explosion.

Chapter 5 told the story of UN and U.S. resolve to use military force to stop what appeared to be an aggressive war in Korea. When the June 25 invasion finally came, the United States and the UN stood up to the threat to world peace, and went to war to deny success to that invasion and at the same time prevented the fighting in Korea from expanding into a world war. In the last analysis, U.S. leadership and UN action proved that the unchallenged threats to world peace that had led to the demise of the League of Nations would not be permitted under the United Nations.

Since the United States was by far the most powerful member of the UN it was inevitable that U.S. purposes and UN actions became intertwined, so that the United Nations to some extent came to serve as an instrument of American policy. But at the same time, diplomacy at the UN had an effect on U.S. policy. The United States always needed to maintain its majority position

at the UN, which granted to U.S. allies and other states whose votes were needed a degree of power to shape American-sponsored resolutions and thus to modify American policy.

In its first seven years of existence, the United Nations saw the opinions of U.S. leaders as well as those of the American public change from hopefulness to a degree of disappointment. But despite all its flaws, support for the organization and the dream of a better UN was never lost. Membership in the United Nations remained an important aspect of foreign policy of the United States—to validate desired results when possible, and to marshal its friends and allies against its Cold War opponents. In the international system, The United Nations, imperfect as it was, provided a mechanism dedicated to the prevention of a third world war. Moreover, it served as a forum for the protection of small countries from large, and began to emerge as a vehicle for colonial peoples to seek their independence. Although it could not solve all problems, it remained the institutionalized voice of the nations of the world. No country, no group of countries, and no other organization carried the same authority. The realities of power had diminished its reputation in many respects, but the vast majority of Americans still preferred to live in a world with the UN than in one without it.



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