

Lesson 2

Student Handout 2.2—Origins of the Korean War

Source 1

Dean Rusk, Department of State, Office of United Nations Affairs employee in 1945

Rusk was US Secretary of State, 1961-1969.

During a meeting on August 14, 1945, Colonel Charles Bonesteel and I retired to an adjacent room late at night and studied intently a map of the Korean peninsula. Working in haste and under great pressure, we had a formidable task: to pick a zone for the American occupation. ... Using a National Geographic map, we looked just north of Seoul for a convenient dividing line but could not find a natural geographic line. We saw instead the 38th parallel and decided to recommend that. ... [The State and War Departments] accepted it without too much haggling, and surprisingly, so did the Soviets. ... [The] choice of the thirty-eighth parallel, recommended by two tired colonels working late at night, proved fateful.

Source: "The Korean War." *Harry S. Truman Museum and Library*, 2006, http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/korea/large/world.htm

Source 2

Resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly regarding the problem of the independence of Korea, November 14, 1947

Inasmuch as the Korean question which is before the General Assembly is primarily a matter before the Korean people itself and concerns its freedom and independence, and

Recognizing that this question cannot be correctly and fairly resolved without the participation of representatives of the indigenous population,

The General Assembly

1. *Resolves* that elected representatives of the Korean people be invited to take part in the consideration of the question;

2. *Further resolves* that in order to facilitate and expedite such participation and to observe that the Korean representatives are in fact duly elected by the Korean people and not mere appointees by military authorities in Korea, there be forthwith established a United Nations Temporary Commission on Korea, to be present in Korea, with right to travel, observe, and consult throughout Korea. ...

Hundred-and-twelfth plenary meeting, 14 November 1947.

Source: "Resolutions of the General Assembly Regarding the Problem of the Independence of Korea, November 14, 1947," *International Organization* 2, 1 (Feb. 1948): 196-8.

Source 3**General Douglas MacArthur. Congressional testimony, May 3, 1951**

My mission was to clear out all North Korea, to unify it and to liberalize it.

Source: "The Korean War." *Harry S. Truman Museum and Library*, 2006,
http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/korea/large/world.htm

Source 4**Secretary of State Dean Acheson. Congressional testimony, June 1, 1951**

At the end of September, there were reports which were sent out through the Government of India that statements that had been made to their representatives by Chinese officials that if we crossed the thirty-eighth parallel, they would intervene.

Those were important matters to be considered, and they were considered; and on the 3rd of October, for instance, the Chinese Communist Foreign Minister [Chou En-lai] informed the Indian Ambassador [K. M. Pannikar], at Peiping [Beijing], that if the United States forces, or UN forces crossed the thirty-eighth parallel, China would send troops to the Korean frontier to defend North Korea.

That was a cryptic statement made by him. He said that this action would not be taken if only South Korean troops crossed the parallel.

That was a matter which had to be given very considerable attention, and information to that effect was given to General MacArthur.

At the time this statement was made, the United Nations was preparing to vote on its resolution, finally adopted by the General Assembly on October 7. It was acted on by Committee One, on October 4, so that you also have to keep in mind that perhaps this statement was put out to have some effect on that vote.

Source: "The Korean War." *Harry S. Truman Museum and Library*, 2006,
http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/korea/large/world.htm

Source 5**Excerpt from *U.S. Policy in the Korean Conflict, July 1950-February 1951*, US Department of State Publication No. 4263 (Washington: U.S.G.P.O., 1951), 14-16**

This report covers the period from December 15, 1949 to September 4, 1950.

Analysis and Conclusions

A. Responsibility for the aggression. The invasion of the territory of the Republic of Korea by the armed forces of the North Korean authorities, which began on June 25, 1950, was an act of aggression initiated without warning and without provocation, in execution of a carefully prepared plan.

This plan of aggression, it is now clear, was an essential part of the policy of the North Korean authorities, the object of which was to secure control over the whole of Korea. If control could not be gained by peaceful means, it would be achieved by overthrowing the Republic of Korea, either by undermining it from within or, should that prove ineffective, by resorting to direct aggression. As the methods used for undermining the Republic from within proved unsuccessful, the North Korean authorities launched an invasion of the territory of the Republic of Korea.

B. Origin and nature of the conflict. The origin of the conflict is to be found in the artificial division of Korea and in the failure, in 1945, of the occupying Powers to reach agreement on the method to be used for giving independence to Korea. This failure was not due to anything inherent in the attitude of the people of Korea themselves, but was a reflection of those wider and more fundamental differences of outlook and policy, which have become so marked a feature of the international scene.

This artificial division was consolidated by the exclusion from North Korea of the United Nations Temporary Commission, which had been charged by the General Assembly to observe the holding of elections on a democratic basis in the whole of Korea. In the circumstances, it was decided to hold such elections in South Korea alone.

Had internationally supervised elections been allowed to take place in the whole of Korea, and had a unified and independent Korea thereby come into existence, the present conflict could never have arisen. ...

E. Korean needs and aspirations. Serious problems of reconstruction and rehabilitation, particularly the grave refugee problem, already confront the country. To these problems will be added problems of yet greater magnitude when the military conflict comes to an end. It will be quite beyond the capacity of the country to provide from its own resources means for rehabilitation. A healthy and viable democracy in Korea cannot come into being unless very considerable aid and assistance are provided from outside Korea.

Finally, as the division of the country and the resulting antagonisms were artificial, the Commission believes that, when the conditions under which they arose disappear, it will be possible for the Korean people of both North and South to come again together, to live in peace and to build the strong foundations of a free, democratic Korea. . . .

Source: *Modern History Sourcebook*, 1998. Modern History Sourcebook Project, Paul Hasall, ed., <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1950-korea-un1.html>

Source 6

Andrei A. Gromyko: On American intervention in Korea. July 4, 1950

The events now taking place in Korea broke out on June 25 as the result of a provocative attack by the troops of the South Korean authorities on the frontier areas of the Korean People's Democratic Republic. This attack was the outcome of a premeditated plan.

From time to time Syngman Rhee himself and other representatives of the South Korean authorities had blurted out the fact that the South Korean Syngman Rhee clique had such a plan.

As long ago as October 7, 1949, Syngman Rhee, boasting of success in training his army, stated outright, in an interview given to an American *United Press* correspondent, that the South Korean Army could capture Pyongyang in the course of three days.

On October 31, 1949, Sin Sen Mo, Defense Minister of the Syngman Rhee Government, also told newspaper correspondents that the South Korean troops were strong enough to act and take Pyongyang within a few days. Only one week before the provocative attack of the South Korean troops on the frontier areas of the Korean People's Democratic Republic, Syngman Rhee said, in a speech on June 19 in the so-called "National Assembly" where Mr. Dulles, adviser to the US State Department, was present: "If we cannot protect democracy in the cold war, we shall win in a hot war."

It is not difficult to understand that representatives of the South Korean authorities could only make such statements because they felt that they had American support behind them. One month before the present developments in Korea, on May 19, 1950, Mr. Johnson, chief American administrator of aid to Korea, told the American Congress House of Representatives' Appropriations Committee that 100,000 officers and men of the South Korean Army, equipped with American weapons and trained by the American Military Mission, had completed their preparations and could begin war at any time.

It is known that only a few days before the Korean events, the United States Defense Secretary, Mr. Johnson, the Chief of the General Staff of the United States Armed Forces, General Bradley, and the State Department adviser, Mr. Dulles, arrived in Japan and had special conferences with General MacArthur, and that afterwards Mr. Dulles visited South Korea and went to frontier areas on the 38th Parallel.

Only one week before the events—on June 19—Mr. Dulles, adviser to the State Department, declared in the above-mentioned “National Assembly” of South Korea that the United States was ready to give all necessary moral and material support to South Korea, which was fighting against Communism.

These facts speak for themselves and need no comment. ...

The United States Government tries to justify armed intervention against Korea by alleging that it was undertaken on the authorization of the Security Council. The falsity of such an allegation strikes the eye.

What really happened? It is known that the United States Government had started armed intervention in Korea before the Security Council was summoned to meet on June 27, without taking into consideration what decision the Security Council might take. Thus the United States Government confronted the United Nations Organization with a *fait accompli*, with a violation of peace.

The Security Council merely rubber-stamped and back-dated the resolution proposed by the United States Government, approving the aggressive actions which this Government had undertaken. ...

The illegal resolution of June 27, adopted by the Security Council under pressure from the United States Government, shows that the Security Council is acting, not as a body which is charged with the main responsibility for the maintenance of peace, but as a tool utilized by the ruling circles of the United States for unleashing war. This resolution of the Security Council constitutes a hostile act against peace.

If the Security Council valued the cause of peace, it should have attempted to reconcile the fighting sides in Korea before it adopted such a scandalous resolution. Only the Security Council and the United Nations Secretary-General could have done this. However, they did not make such an attempt, evidently knowing that such peaceful action contradicts the aggressors' plans.

Source: *Modern History Sourcebook*, Internet History Sourcebook Project, Paul Halsall, ed., <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1950-gromyko-korea.html>

Source 7**CIA Report on the likelihood of Soviet or Chinese intervention in the event of an invasion of North Korea. September 27, 1950**

Despite statements by Chou En Lai and troop movements in Manchuria ... there are no convincing indications of an actual Chinese Communist intention to resort to full-scale intervention in Korea. ... From a military standpoint the most favorable time for intervention in Korea has passed. ...

While full-scale Chinese Communist intervention in Korea must be regarded as a continuing possibility, a consideration of all known factors leads to the conclusion that barring a Soviet decision for global war, such action is not probable in 1950. During this period, intervention will probably be confined to continued covert assistance to the North Koreans. The consensus of the US top military is that the Russians are not ready for global war while China is not militarily capable of unilateral intervention—namely, there will be no Soviet or Chinese communist intervention in Korea.

Source: *TeachingAmericanHistory.Org*, 2006. Ashbrook Center for Public Affairs, <http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/index.asp?documentprint=911>

Source 8**Excerpt from broadcast on Radio Peking. October 10, 1950**

The American War of intervention in Korea has been a serious menace to the security of China from the 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 accomplice countries and to the dangerous trend toward extending the war. The Chinese people firmly advocate a peaceful resolution to the Korean problem and are firmly opposed to the extension of the Korean War by America.

Source: *TeachingAmericanHistory.Org*, 2006. Ashbrook Center for Public Affairs, <http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/index.asp?documentprint=912>

Source 9**Stalin's meeting with Kim Il Sung. March 5, 1949**

Kim Il Sung asks for economical aid over a period of six years, reports on the status of American soldiers in South Korea, and mentions his country's lack of trade with other Southeast Asian countries.

... Kim Il Sung says that after the liberation of Korea by Soviet troops, the Soviet Government and the Soviet Army rendered aid to Korea in the matter of economic development, in the matter of the development of Korea along the democratic path, and that the Korean government understands that without further economic and cultural aid from the Soviet Union it will be difficult for the DPRK [Democratic People's Republic of Korea] to restore and develop its national economy and culture. The assistance of the Soviet Union is required for the further development of the Korean economy and culture.

Stalin asks what kind of aid.

Kim Il Sung answers—economic and cultural.

Stalin asks what precisely is needed.

Kim Il Sung says that they have confirmed a two year plan for the restoration and development of the national economy. They need economic assistance to fulfill this plan and to strengthen the foundation of the economy. They need machines, equipment, and spare parts for industry, communications, transport, and also for other branches of the national economy. They also need technical assistance: sending Soviet specialists to Korea, drafting plans for the construction of new objects (factories and plants), conducting geological exploratory work. ...

... Kim says that in the south of Korea there are still American troops and that intrigues against North Korea by the reactionaries are increasing, that they have infantry troops but sea defense almost does not exist. The help of the Soviet Union is needed in this.

Stalin asks how many American troops are in South Korea.

Kim answers that there are up to 20,000 men.

Shtykov—approximately 15-20 thousand men.

Stalin asks if there is a national Korean army in the south.

Kim answers that there is, the number is around 60,000 men.

Stalin asks if this number includes only regular army or also police.

Kim answers that it includes only regular army.

Stalin (joking) asks, and you are afraid of them?

Kim—No, we are not afraid, but we would like to have naval units.

Stalin asks which army is stronger—north or south.

Pak Hon-Yong answers that the northern army is stronger.

Stalin asks if there are dry docks in Korea left by the Japanese, for example, in Seisin or in other places of Korea.

Kim answers that there are none.

Shtykov reports that there are dry docks, but only small ones.

Stalin says that it is possible to render assistance in this, and that Korea needs to have military planes. ...

Source: *Cold War International History Project*, 2006. The Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=va2.browse&sort=Collection&item=The%20Korean%20War

Source 10**Telegram from Stalin to Roshchin, with Message from Zhou Enlai. July 5, 1950**

In this telegram Stalin agrees with China regarding Indian intermediation on incorporating the People's Republic of China into the United Nations and denies authorizing Soviet planes over Manchurian territory. Stalin also advocates sending nine Chinese divisions to North Korea while providing Soviet air cover for these divisions.

Ciphered Telegram, Filippov (Stalin) to Soviet Ambassador in Beijing (N. V. Roshchin) with message for Zhou Enlai, 5 July 1950

CIPHERED TELEGRAM # 3172

Coded, only by wire

Submitted at 23:45 p.m. on 07/05/50

Distribution List – 3 copies: Stalin – 2, Molotov – 1

To BEIJING, [SOVIET] AMBASSADOR

Re Your ciphered telegrams ## 1112-1126

Tell Zhou Enlai the following:

1. We agree with the opinion of Chinese comrades regarding the Indian intermediation in the matter of admitting the People's [Republic of] China into the UN membership.
2. We consider it correct to concentrate immediately 9 Chinese divisions on the Chinese-Korean border for volunteers' actions in North Korea in the event of the enemy's crossing the 38th parallel. We will do our best to provide the air cover for these units.
3. Your report about the flights of the Soviet aircraft over the Manchurian territory has not been confirmed. But we have issued an order not to permit such overflights.

F I L I P P O V [STALIN]

_373/sh

5.7.50 [5 July 1950]

Typed by Stepanova at 0:55 a.m. on 07/06/50

Source: *Cold War International History Project*, 2006. The Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=va2.browse&sort=Collection&item=The%20Korean%20War