

1950: The Korean War

Context

There is “extensive evidence of U.S. crimes against peace and crimes against humanity” committed after they occupied south Korea in September 1945. The U.S. was guilty of creating “a police state...using many former collaborators with Japanese rule, provok[ing] tension... between southern and northern Korea, opposing and disrupting any plans for peaceful reunification. The U.S. trained, directed and supported ROK [South Korea] in systematic murder, imprisonment, torture, surveillance, harassment and violations of human rights of hundreds of thousands..., especially... nationalists, leftists, peasants seeking land reform, union organizers and/or those sympathetic to the north.”⁴⁹

University of Hawaii professor, Oliver Lee, notes a “long pattern of South Korean incursions” into the north.

In 1949, there were more than 400 border engagements. A U.S. Army document states: “Some of the bloodiest engagements were caused by South Korean units securing and preparing defensive positions that were either astride or north of the 38th parallel [the border between the two Koreas]. This provoked violent North Korean actions.”⁵⁰

Pretext Incident

On June 25, 1950, the North Korean military were said to have moved three miles into South Korea territory.

Dr. Channing Liem, the former South Korean ambassador to the UN (1960-1961) wrote that for the U.S., “the question, ‘who fired the first shot?’ carried special significance.... Assistant

Secretary of State for UN Affairs... [revealed] before the Senate Appropriations Committee, 1950, the U.S. devised a plan prior to the start of the war to gain approval from the UN to send its troops to Korea under the

UN flag in the event that South Korea was attacked. It was imperative, therefore, that the ‘first shot’ be fired by the North, or at least that such an argument could be made.”⁵¹

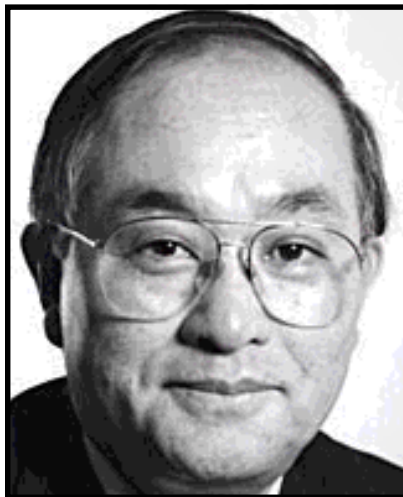
South Korean President Syngman Rhee triggered the war “with behind the scene support of John Foster Dulles,” the former-U.S. Secretary of State who met Rhee (June 18, 1950) just days before the pretext incident. Dulles told Rhee that “if he was ready to attack the communist North, the

U.S. would lend help, through the UN.... He advised Rhee...to persuade the world that the ROK [South Korea] was attacked first, and to plan his actions accordingly.”⁵²

In 1955, Albert Einstein told Liem that “the U.S. was manipulating the UN.... [which] was being exploited by the great powers at the expense of the small nations.... [Einstein] went on to say [that] great powers do not act on the basis of facts only but manufacture the facts to serve their purposes and force their will on smaller nations.”⁵³

I.F.Stone exposed how a U.S. diplomat deceived the UN Secretary General into believing there had been an unprovoked attack by North Korean.⁵⁴

North Korea claimed that the attack began two days earlier when Southern divisions launched a six-hour artillery attack and then pushed 1-2 kilometers north across the border. The North then responded to “halt the enemy’s advance and go over to a decisive counterattack.”⁵⁵



**South Korean President
Syngman Rhee**

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maintain his faltering grip on power, he desperately required more U.S. backing. By going to war with North Korea, Rhee not only garnered much-needed U.S. military and diplomatic assistance, he diverted public attention away from growing scandals that plagued his repressive regime.

The war was also used to triple the Pentagon budget, boost NATO’s military build-up and create a new military role for the UN that could be manipulated by the U.S.

Follow Up

Secretary of State, Dean Acheson was “quick to seize the opportunity to blame the war on North Korea regardless of the evidence.” North Korea was accused of “brutal, unprovoked aggression.”⁵⁶

The public was told that this ‘invasion’ was the first step in Soviet plans for world domination. Anyone opposing the war was labeled a communist. The paranoia of McCarthyism was booming.

On June 27, 1950, Truman orders U.S. troops to support South Korea, Congress agrees and the UN Security Council approves the plan.⁵⁷

About 3 million civilians were killed in the war, two-thirds in North Korea.⁵⁸

Real Reasons

A month before the pretext, Rhee suffered a terrible electoral defeat. To

Footnotes:

49. “Final Judgement of the Korea International War Crimes Tribunal,” June 23, 2001.
50. Oliver Lee, “South Korea Likely Provoked War with North,” *Star-Bulletin*, June 24, 1994.
51. Channing Liem, *The Korean War - An*

- Unanswered Question*, 1993.
52. Liem
53. Albert Einstein cited by Channing Liem.
54. I.F.Stone, *Hidden History of the Korean War*, 1952, cited by Channing Liem.
55. Liem

56. Lee
57. Jim Caldwell, “Korea - 50 years ago this week, June 25-28, 1950,” *ArmyLINK News*, June 20, 2000.
58. Jon Halliday and Bruce Cumings, *Korea: The Unknown War*, 1988, p.200, cited by Robin Miller, “Washington’s Own Love Affair with Terror.”

South Korea Likely Provoked War with North

By Oliver Lee, associate professor,
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When war broke out in Korea, the U.S. government accused North Korea of having committed “brutal, unprovoked aggression.” The Truman Administration spread the word that it was convinced this action had the prior approval of Moscow, and that it appeared to be Stalin’s first post-World War II move in his plan for world conquest.

On the basis of these allegations the U.S. engaged North Korea and then Communist China in a terrible three-year war, which the Truman administration used to accomplish major objectives having little to do with Korea, foremost being the long-term boost to the U.S. military budget and NATO’s military build-up.

As for the charge about North Korean aggression, it was based on no credible evidence, keeping in mind that the presence of North Korean troops in the South did not necessarily mean North Korean aggression. They may have entered in reaction to a prior South Korean incursion into North Korea. The South may have done this to provoke a North Korean counterattack to draw the U.S. military into Korea and guarantee the South Korean regime’s political survival. There is, in fact, much circumstantial evidence for precisely such provocation, as I will show presently.

First, let me refute Secretary of State Dean Acheson’s assertion, made three days after the outbreak of war, that “all reliable witnesses on the scene at the time, including the UN Commission, established that the North Korean forces were the aggressors.”

The fact is that the U.N. Commission was not on the scene at the time. A two men observer team from the Commission was at the 38th parallel (border), June 9 - 23, 1950, leaving two days before the war broke out.

Although there were 500 U.S. military advisers attached to South Korean units, some stationed near the parallel, most U.S. advisers were

spending the weekend in Seoul. In fact, the only American near the front line that fateful morning was an Army captain, who woke up too late to witness any of the initial action, jumped into his jeep and drove southward to Kaesong, which the North Koreans had already reached.

Others “on the scene at the time” were certain South Korean units, but they obviously were under strict orders to parrot the official line, and therefore were not “reliable witnesses.”

Now some circumstantial evidence that South Korea started the war:

(1) Syngman Rhee’s government in Seoul was extremely unpopular and insecure, able to rule only by imposing upon South Korea “a cloud of ter-

“Some of the bloodiest engagements [in 1949] were caused by South Korean units securing and preparing defensive positions that were either astride or north of the 38th parallel. This provoked violent North Korean actions.” U.S. Military Advisory Group, Korea

ror that is probably unparalleled in the world,” (*New York Times*, March 6, 1950). Despite the terror, Rhee’s party was dealt a disastrous defeat in the parliamentary election held four weeks before the war broke out. Rhee thus had a plausible motivation to start the war so as to create a totally new ball game.

(2) Rhee had several times stated his ambition to “regain” North Korea, boasting in January 1950, that “in the new year we shall strive as one man to regain the lost territory.”

(3) Rhee received encouragement from U.S. high officials, like John Foster Dulles, who said in Seoul six days before the war: “You are not alone. You will never be alone so long as you continue to play worthily your part in the great design of human freedom.”

(4) There was a long pattern of South Korean incursion into North Korea. The official U.S. Army history of the American Military Advisory Group in Korea, referring to more than 400 engagements along the 38th parallel in the second half of 1949, reports that “some of the bloodiest engagements were caused by South Korean

units securing and preparing defensive positions that were either astride or north of the 38th parallel. This provoked violent North Korean actions.”

(5) South Korean troops were reported by the Seoul government as having captured Haeju, one mile north of the parallel, on June 26. While we can accept this as an acknowledgement of their troop incursion north of the 38th parallel, such acceptance does not require us to believe their report as to the timing. They may well have made the capture one day earlier, touching off the counterattack.

(6) The two captured North Korean documents that allegedly prove the North started the war exist only in English, supposedly translated from the Korean original. Ostensibly titled “Reconnaissance Order No. 1” and “Operation Order No. 1,” the originals were never made public.

(7) Rhee made a self-incriminating statement when he told *U.S. News & World Report* (Aug. 1954), “We started this fight in the first place in the hope that Communism would be destroyed.” Although the context of this statement was not explicitly military, certain U.S. leaders knew enough about Rhee to understand what he meant, and were worried about his possible provocation of yet another war.

In October 1953, Dulles told the National Security Council (NSC) that “all our efforts” must be to forestall a resumption of war by Rhee. In 1957 Dulles said to the NSC, “If war were to start in Korea... it was going to be very hard indeed to determine which side began the war.”

Although Acheson did not directly encourage Rhee to provoke the war, he was quick to seize the opportunity to blame the war on North Korea regardless of the evidence. He thus convinced President Truman not only to fight in Korea but to ask Congress to triple the military budget. Acheson and his men thus had ulterior motives.

Source: *Star-Bulletin*, June 24, 1994.
<www.korea-np.co.jp/pk/054th_issue/koreanwar/98080501.htm>