

The Origins and the Escalation of the Korean War in 1950

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Abstract: The competence between the USSR and the US had caused the world to become divisive after the Second World War. The Marshall Plan, the Sovietization of Eastern Europe, and the establishment of NATO had split Europe into its Western and Eastern halves. These two Great Powers started to use the opportunity to enlarge their spheres of influence in Asia. Korean Peninsula partition, the Chinese Civil War, and American occupation of Japan. The Korean War was a subject that came up a lot since it was one of the causes of the Cold War. The key elements are how it started, progressed, and ended. The purpose of this essay is to explore who started the Korean War and who escalated the conflict. Based on original materials from the United States, the Soviet Union, and the United Nations, the author made the assumption that Kim started the worst disaster since the Second World War and that the US made matters worse by escalating the local civil war into a regional conflict.

Keywords: Korean War, the origins and the escalation, the Cold War

1. Introduction

The Korean Peninsula had descended into tragedy, with Koreans and Chinese, Americans and other foreigners all there as Kim Il-sung began the military offensive against the Republic of Korea. According to a statement, Mao escalated the Korean War, which Stalin started. According to the author, it was not true. It is believed that Kim, not Stalin, was the man behind the conflict's inception, and that Mao did not expand the war in 1950, but rather, America did. This study, which is broken into four sections, is devoted to examining who started the Korean War and who escalated the conflict. The historiography will come first. The Korean War's causes and whether China contributed to its escalation in 1950 will be covered in the second and third sections, respectively. The conclusion came in the last section.

2. The Historiography of the Korean War

Two points were discussed in this remark. The start of the Korean War was one of them. The US source claimed that the conventional wisdom held that the Soviet Union was the primary instigator of the unbalanced Korean War. This notion was backed by David Rees, David Dallin, and Robert Slusser, but it was opposed by revisionist Bruce Cumings, who preferred to portray the conflict as a civil war. And some academics, like William Stueck, asserted that it can only be comprehended by fusing the internal and external aspects of the causes of the Korean War [1]. The Sino-Soviet Treaty, in Niu Jun's opinion, gave Stalin the impetus to alter his approach [2]. The Korean issue, in Chen Jian's opinion, posed a number of challenges to Beijing's core interests. However, the CCP may use

the intense external pressure to propel the Chinese people's revolution while bolstering its legitimacy as China's new ruling party [3].

3. The Initiator of the War: Kim

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) launched a military campaign against the Republic of Korea (ROK) as a consequence of Stalin's influence. If the DPRK intended to start the war, the Soviet Union's assistance and Stalin's approval were essential. Kim Il Sung's economy was dependent on trade with the USSR since, with the founding of the DPRK and Manchuria during the Chinese Civil War, the nation lost its economic relationship with the West. From the beginning of the Korean War until its conclusion, North Korea, according to K Weathersby, was completely dependent on the Soviet Union for economic reasons [4]. Stalin's approval was therefore a must for Kim; otherwise, he would risk economic sanctions and denunciation from the USSR when he moved ahead without Stalin's approval, just as he had repudiated Czechoslovakia's decision to join the Preparatory meeting in Paris. The argument that Kim could not have started the war without Stalin's military backing in the form of munitions and soldiers acquiring military and technical experience was further backed by the DPRK's lack of military elites. Whatever the patriotic emotion of the DPRK administration, as Weathersby stated, the North Korea was essentially not able to make any significant movements without Soviet endorsement because of the Japanese colonial policy which only allowed a few Koreans to gain high education and the migration of the amount of the northerners with such skills to the South Korea [5]. We may claim that the deciding element was Stalin's endorsement of Kim's declaration of war. So, to a certain extent, the criticism of the Korean War's beginnings is legitimate. Due to the dearth of Soviet data and reliance only on US sources, the idea that Stalin instigated the war is a sort of traditional narrative of how the Korean War began. In my opinion, Stalin was not the one who started the war because of his major motivation for founding the DPRK, his encounters with Kim and Mao, and his response to learning of American involvement in the War.

Stalin saw Asia as primarily a counterbalance to the US's growing area of influence. He pursued customary Russian policies. Roosevelt's suggestion for a shared trusteeship on the peninsula was approved by him. In the past, Japan was Russia's biggest threat in Asia, and the peninsula frequently served as a buffer zone between the two countries. Additionally, Stalin was unable to restore the pre-war structure due to the divisive international situation in which America had taken control of Japan. As a result, he divided the peninsula to preserve the balance of power in this region. Therefore, if Stalin started the war, why didn't he fully control the peninsula prior to the Potsdam Conference or overturn Roosevelt's recommendations? His major goal was to maintain the balance of power on the peninsula while obtaining a buffer zone, locations for transit, and material supplies, in line with his demand from the meeting with Kim on March 5, 1949. He demanded that North Korea export at least 25,000 tons of lead each year for import [6].

In their initial meeting, Stalin rejected Kim's proposal to launch military actions against the ROK on March 7, 1949. In this conversation, Stalin rejected Kim's suggestion. The agreement between the Soviet Union and America that existed on the 38th parallel would offer the United States justification to act in the event of a DPRK's strike., he claimed. He also noted that the US soldiers were still stationed in the South and that the DPRK army did not have a clear military advantage over the army of the South. He urged Kim to exercise patience and hold off on attacking until the South did so, in mid-August [7]. Despite facing opposition, Kim persisted in his desire to bring the peninsula back together. The Soviet envoy Terentii Shytkov had been informed that South Korea was planning to control the Ongjin Peninsula, so on September 3 he sent his secretary, Mum Il, to go see him and suggest that the peninsula be united by force. We learned through a set of questions the Soviet Union provided to Kim on September 11 that one of the primary criteria in determining whether or not Stalin agreed to Kim's ambition was whether or not the US would become involved in this issue. He asked:

“Are there American military personnel in South Korea? What type of actions, in Kim Il Sung's judgment, may the Americans make in the event that the northerners attack?” [8] The Politburo's rejection of Kim's proposal, which was sent to the Soviet envoy on September 24, would outline the remaining key elements. It showed that “It is inconceivable from a military standpoint to think that the Peoples' Army is ready for such an assault. If the assault is not properly prepared for, it may evolve into a protracted military campaign that, in addition to failing to vanquish the adversary, would also pose serious political and economic challenges for North Korea, which is ultimately not acceptable”, and that “You are also unprepared politically for a military assault in the south. Of course, we concur with you that the people want to see the country united, and in the south, they also want to be freed from the tyranny of the reactionary dictatorship. To far, however, almost little has been done to mobilize the South Korean people as a whole to engage in active resistance, grow the partisan movement across the country, establish liberated areas, and gather forces for a nationwide revolt” [9]. Therefore, Stalin could only endorse Kim when the DPRK's military forces were sufficiently enough to quickly defeat the ROK and when the guerrilla movement and political propaganda had inspired amounts of population to overthrow the ROK government. Additionally, a different conversation between Stalin and Mao revealed that none of them intended to support Kim's patriotic actions. Stalin sent Mao a telegraph on October 26 on the subject of Kim's demand to invade the ROK, and the two agreed on it [10].

The aforementioned details allow one to infer that Stalin did not initially support Kim's military endeavors until the spring of 1950. Stalin's conventional security theory towards post-World War II international relations may be indicated by the fact that every response Kim got included the demand that the ROK attack first. But why, in the spring of 1950, did Stalin agree Kim's request for a military? Stalin backed Kim's proposal to unify the nation militarily and agreed to provide the necessary supplies and weaponry for the operation during his talks with Kim in Moscow in April. His approval was influenced by two things. The first was Dean Acheson's address on January 12, which specified that territories on Asian mainland were not included in America's Pacific military perimeter. According to Acheson, the defensive zone stretched from the Ryukyus Islands to the Philippine Islands [11]. With this declaration, Kim was able to allay Stalin's concerns about American meddling in the peninsula dispute. Kim's persistent rhetoric and persuasion were another element. Kim said that after receiving the Ethnic Korean officers and men from China's 4th Field Army, the DPRK had already strengthened its military during the March–April meetings with Stalin. This increased Kim's certainty that he would win the war and satisfied Stalin's military need. In addition, Kim had lied to Stalin. Stalin maintained that Kim had Mao's prior consent to the strike [12]. At the same time, it is clear that Mao did not accept Kim's military strategy before Kim met with Stalin based on the cyphering of the telegraph from Mao to Stalin on May 13. It states, “Comrade Mao Zedong would like to speak personally with Comrade Filippov about the aforementioned (North Korea can move toward actions) matter. This is because, in accordance with a previous telegram from Comrade Filippov that was forwarded by the [Soviet] Ambassador [to China], Comrade [N.V.] Roshchin, personal clarifications from Comrade Filippov on this matter were expected to come in the following days” [13].

Obviously, Mao was not informed of the meeting between Stalin and Kim above, and he disapproved of Kim's behavior. Kim's meeting deception is the only explanation that makes sense. In addition to this, Kim also misled Stalin over the guerrilla issue. At the meeting, Kim promised Stalin that the conflict would be over in three days thanks to a significant guerrilla uprising in the south that would support North Korea's conventional invasion [14]. However, the majority of guerrillas and troops dispatched to South Korea to undermine ROK government were dispersed. The Secretary of State was informed on April 25 by The Chargé in Korea (Drumright). they were restrained by the ROK, “Over 600 North Korean insurgents remained when they entered the Odae Mountain area of

Kangwon Province on or around March 25. Last weekend, Korean Army soldiers dispersed their organized resistance” [15].

While Kim and Stalin were meeting, this problem occurred. It was improbable that Kim was unable to learn more from the South Korean military. The only possible explanation was that Kim chose to overlook this to convince Stalin that the political situation in the ROK was dire and that the DRRK would overwhelm the ROK when they marched across the parallel. Therefore, we may claim that Kim, not Stalin, was the one who started the conflict.

4. The Escalator of the Big Calamity: The US

The statement that Mao intensified the Korean War in 1950 is not wholly supported by the research. China, on the other hand, has worked diplomatically to stay out of the conflict. On October 3, Zhou Enlai met with K.M. Panikkar, the Indian envoy to China, and he made it plain why China was joining the war: “The US military is aiming to expand the conflict by crossing the 38th parallel. We must take charge if the US army does; we cannot watch without an action”. What situation did Zhou use to make the statement? On September 28, America had already made up its mind to march across the 38th parallel. On September 29, Marshall, the secretary of defense, issued a cable to MacArthur, the commander in chief, requesting that UN soldiers move north of 38th Street [15]. Additionally, the Indian president warned China that the United Nations Army would not breach the 38th parallel without UN approval [2]. Zhou wanted to send this loud message to America by taking advantage of the opportunity to reply to India. And the debate over whether China should send soldiers to Korea was already over on October 3 at the Meeting of the Secretaries of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China. We deduced that Zhou, speaking on behalf of China's leadership, was there to enlighten Americans of China's position [2].

However, despite China's warnings, America disregarded them. On October 19, MacArthur secured authorization from Washington before using force against targets on Chinese soil, according to a telegraph from The Joint Chiefs of Staff to MacArthur [15]. Truman further believed that China's threats were really a bluff. Panikkar's propensity to support the CCP, in Acheson's opinion, may lead him to overstate the assertion. Therefore, it may be said that America crossed the 38th parallel first, which led to Chinese engagement in the conflict from the standpoint that China had tried to prevent it and that the US leadership had neglected to consider the significance of Chinese diplomatic action. As a result, the troops of the United Nations crossed the parallel, escalating the Korean War.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, neither Stalin nor Mao initiated the Korean War, nor did they intensify it. Kim was the one who originally had the idea for reunification by using force, who convinced Stalin repeatedly through rhetoric, and who eventually started the "civil war" without the involvement of outside forces. It was America that gave the order for the troops to cross the 38th parallel without listening to earlier Chinese warnings. It altered the conflict's course and intensified it as well. Security was Stalin's main concern. A conflict with the US was not in the Soviet Union's best interests since it needed time to rebuild and its primary emphasis was on Europe. It may be supported by the Soviet Union's refusal to accept Soviet nationals of Korean descent's demands for assistance in defending their homeland from US invasion once America joined the conflict. Mao initially had no desire to take part in the conflict. He originally did not want to deploy soldiers to the peninsula since it was not in accordance with his primary objective—defeat Chiang Kai-shek in Taiwan completely to end the Chinese Civil War—but was compelled to support Kim's war plan in order to preserve the brotherhood between the USSR, the People Republic of China, and the DPRK. He had established the ground rules for America, but they disregarded them, therefore we may infer that it was America that broadened the calamity.

6. References

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