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# The Korean War Truce Talks: A Study in Conflict Termination

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In the summer of 1951, after a year of war in which neither side proved capable of achieving military victory, the US-led United Nations Command (UNC) and the Chinese-North Korean coalition began truce talks in an attempt to end the fighting through negotiations. These talks provide a significant example of limited war conflict termination, illustrating the interplay of force and diplomacy and the role of third parties and coalition partners in negotiations.

The two sides turned to negotiations only after failing to reunify Korea through military force. The initial North Korean offensive was stopped by United Nations Command intervention. The UNC itself came close to military success with a counterattack into the North in October 1950. The Chinese then sent an army into Korea, forcing the UNC to withdraw from the North. This force pushed deep into South Korea before being repulsed by a United Nations Command counteroffensive. The UNC was briefly checked by new Chinese and North Korean offensives in April and May 1951, but by mid-June its forces had advanced generally north of the 38th Parallel, the pre-war boundary between North and South Korea.

In May 1951, after a major strategy review, the US leadership, concluding that any further advances would require the introduction of substantial additional forces, decided to pursue truce negotiations.[1] The rising cost of the war, the success of the UNC counteroffensive, and the failure of their own spring offensives also led the Chinese and North Korean leadership, with Soviet agreement, to seek a negotiated end to the war with the objective of restoring the pre-war boundary.[2]

Some have since argued that a continued offensive might have led to an armistice more favorable to the United States and South Korea, but the costs would have mounted had the UNC pressed north into the mountains against increasingly well-entrenched Chinese and North Korean forces with shorter lines of communication. Furthermore, it is not at all clear that the Chinese would have been willing to agree to truce negotiations if the UNC had advanced deep into North Korea. Negotiations to restore the status quo were clearly acceptable to the Chinese, but faced with the loss of substantial North Korean territory, they may well have been motivated to pour additional men and resources into Korea, accepting even greater sacrifices to avoid defeat.[3]

The nations providing combat troops to the UNC were quite willing to see the war end. Although Republic of Korea (ROK) President Syngman Rhee (Yi Sung-man) opposed any settlement that would leave Korea divided and the Communists in control of the North, the ROK forces could not fight on alone and so he reluctantly acquiesced to the initiation of truce talks. Throughout the subsequent talks, the United States would control the UNC negotiations, but both the major UN allies and the Republic of Korea would exert pressure and sometimes influence policy, the allies pushing for compromise and Rhee's government pressing for tougher UNC positions.[4]

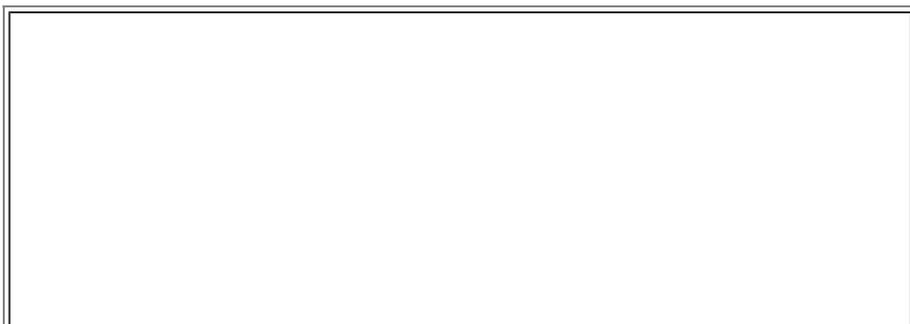




Figure 1. Korea.

After preliminary discussions between US and Soviet officials, the Soviet deputy foreign minister suggested in a 23 June 1951 radio speech that the two sides seek a cease-fire.[5] On 30 June General Matthew B. Ridgway, Commander in Chief of the United Nations Command (CINCUNC), proposed that truce talks begin aboard a Danish hospital ship moored in Wonsan Harbor. Kim Il-sung, Supreme Commander of the Korean People's Army (KPA), and Peng Dehuai, Commander of the Chinese People's Volunteers (CPV), counter-proposed that the talks take place in Kaesong, the old Korean capital. Kaesong was then located between the lines and unoccupied by either side. The US leadership, anticipating that the talks would bring a speedy end to the war and seeing no disadvantage in the proposed location, accepted. By the time the talks began, however, KPA/CPV forces had moved into the town, giving them control of the conference site. And as the talks dragged on, subsequent UNC commanders found their operations hindered by having the conference site astride the main military avenue of approach between the two Koreas.[6]

Each side was represented at the truce talks by a military negotiating team of five principal delegates assisted by staff officers who worked out the details of agreements and maintained contact during the long recesses. The Chinese and North Korean negotiators operated from a location near Kaesong while the UNC team maintained a base camp at Munsan, about 15 miles southeast of the conference site.

The senior KPA/CPV delegate was the KPA chief of staff and North Korean vice-foreign minister, Lieutenant General Nam Il, who was assisted at the negotiating table by two North Korean and two Chinese generals or admirals. The UNC negotiators soon concluded that although General Nam publicly represented the Chinese and North Korean side,

it was the Chinese who were actually in charge. Subsequent evidence from Chinese and Russian sources supports the notion that the Chinese government established policy for the KPA/CPV delegation, coordinating the most important decisions with North Korean and Soviet leaders. Beijing transmitted its instructions through a team headed by Li Kenong, Chinese vice-foreign minister and deputy chief of staff of the Chinese army, who directed negotiations from behind the scenes.[7]

The Chinese strategic goals were to increase China's influence and reshape the international order in East Asia. They sought an end to US support for the Nationalist regime on Taiwan and the seating of the People's Republic of China in the United Nations. The Chinese aims with regard to Taiwan and the United Nations were set forth in a 17 January 1951 communication to the UN. When they decided to negotiate, the Chinese dropped these demands as preconditions for engaging in truce talks, but did not abandon them as long-range goals. Their immediate truce objectives thus focused on restoration of the status quo ante with a truce line at the 38th Parallel. A final settlement of the Korean question was to come at a postwar international conference.[8]

On the UNC side, the US government took sole responsibility for the negotiations. Abraham Feller, legal advisor to UN Secretary General Trygve Lie, concluded that the provisions of the UN Security Council resolutions under which the UNC was established entitled the United States to conduct the negotiations.[9] The Americans isolated the military negotiators from direct influence by the UN allies by insisting that all intergovernment negotiations take place in Washington. Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs Dean Rusk justified this by arguing, "It would be too great a burden for Ridgway to conduct such negotiations in Tokyo in addition to all his other pressing duties." [10]

The Americans also wanted to ensure that the talks remained limited to military matters. General Ridgway had wanted to keep his political advisor, William J. Sebald, and US Ambassador to Korea John J. Muccio at the UNC base camp at Munsan to provide political guidance to the negotiating team. But fearing that the presence of these diplomats might indicate that the UNC would be willing to address nonmilitary matters, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, acting on the advice of the US State Department, rejected the idea.[11]

The US leadership transmitted its guidance to the UNC delegation in Korea through directives sent by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Tokyo-based UNC Commander-in-Chief. The UNC chief negotiator was Vice Admiral C. Turner Joy, Commander of US Naval Forces Far East, who served until May 1952, when he was replaced by Lieutenant General William K. Harrison. In addition to the senior delegate, the UNC was represented by three American generals or admirals and one Republic of Korea army general.[12]

US long-range national security objectives in Asia were to reduce or eliminate Soviet influence and establish cooperative relationships among friendly, noncommunist governments. The US leadership hoped this would diminish any threat to the United States from Asia and assure US access to the resources of the region. In support of those goals, the United States sought a "united, independent and democratic Korea," but that objective was to be achieved by "political, as distinguished from military, means." [13] Overall US objectives for Korea were to terminate hostilities under "appropriate armistice arrangements," provide for the eventual withdrawal of non-Korean armed forces, and assure that the Republic of Korea border was drawn no farther south than the 38th Parallel while permitting the ROK to build sufficient forces to deter or repel renewed North Korean aggression.[14]

The United States also had very specific objectives for the Armistice Agreement: that it be confined to military matters in Korea; that it require the cessation of all acts of armed force; that it be supervised by a Military Armistice Commission with powers of observation and inspection; and that the number and types of military personnel and equipment in Korea not be qualitatively or quantitatively increased.[15] The US leadership initially desired prisoners of war (POW) be exchanged on a one-for-one basis, but this position changed once negotiations began.[16]

### **The Talks Begin: Atmospherics, Agenda, and Substance**

While both sides sought an armistice, neither trusted the intentions of the other. Both believed that any concession would be taken as a sign of weakness, and each side was convinced that military pressure was essential to force the other side to compromise. Ideological differences, cultural misperceptions, and the bitter nature of the war intensified the mutual suspicion and hostility that marked the talks. During the first meeting, both sides acted in a businesslike manner, but the underlying antagonism was evident. The UNC delegates refused food and other amenities offered by

the KPA/CPV, while the Chinese and North Koreans took advantage of their control of Kaesong to portray themselves as victorious hosts. They also restricted access to the conference site, denying entry to journalists accompanying the UNC negotiators. After several days of sparring on this issue, the KPA/CPV agreed on 15 July 1951 to establish a Kaesong Neutral Zone to which both sides would have equal access.[17]

During the next two weeks the negotiators worked out an agenda and began substantive talks.[18] The first issue was the location and nature of the truce line and demilitarized zone. The KPA/CPV side insisted on a truce line along the 38th Parallel. The UNC, whose forces had pushed north of the parallel except for an area near Kaesong, sought a line well north of the existing line of ground contact, arguing that UNC air and naval power should be factored into the location of the truce line. The 38th Parallel was significant to both sides. KPA/CPV ejection of the UNC from North Korea and restoration of the status quo could be portrayed as a victory by them, while if the UNC achieved a truce line north of the 38th Parallel it would have more than met its initial objectives. ROK President Rhee, to whom the 38th Parallel was a hated symbol of Korea's division, also demanded that the UNC not accept a truce along that line. In spite of these differences, the two sides had by 22 August come close to agreement on a Military Demarcation Line (MDL) based on the ground contact line. But at that point the KPA/CPV unilaterally declared a recess.

Although they charged that UNC air attacks had made the conference site unsafe, their actual motivation for the recess seems to have been to gain time while they reassessed their strategy and considered a possible new offensive.[19] During the long recess, the UNC, which had been dissatisfied with the Kaesong site from the beginning, sought to relocate the talks to a more neutral location. The KPA/CPV, after completing their strategy review and deciding against a major offensive, concurred, and on 22 October the two sides agreed to relocate the talks to a new site at Panmunjom, several miles to the east.[20]

When negotiations resumed on 25 October both sides had accepted the principle of an MDL based on the line of ground contact, but the location of the line and the timing of when it would go into effect were still disputed. KPA/CPV forces had remained on the defensive during the Kaesong phase of the truce talks, but the UNC continued its air and naval attacks and conducted limited ground offensives that by 23 October had pushed the line of contact north by about ten miles. Ridgway believed that these attacks had brought the other side back to the negotiating table, and there is some evidence that he was correct.[21] Concerned the negotiations might drag on and fearing that immediate agreement on the truce line would make further offensives impossible, Ridgway insisted that the truce line should be based on the line of ground contact at the time the armistice was signed. The UNC also proposed adjusting the current line of contact, giving up ground near the east coast in return for placing Kaesong in the UNC zone. The KPA/CPV insisted on immediate agreement on the location of the MDL and refused to give up Kaesong.

Ridgway's efforts to regain Kaesong were prompted by recognition of the military importance of the area as the main avenue of approach into the south and by strong pressures from Syngman Rhee, to whom the old Korean capital had symbolic significance. Neither of these arguments was persuasive to the US leadership, which faced important diplomatic battles in the fall UN General Assembly session and was in the final stages of negotiating a multinational peace treaty with Japan. US leaders believed the armistice would soon go into effect and did not want to be seen as delaying agreement over what might be viewed as trivial issues. Bowing to orders and under strong protest, Ridgway on 13 November directed his negotiators to propose a four-kilometer-wide Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) centered on an MDL running along the current battle line if all other issues were settled within 30 days. With this concession, specifics were soon worked out and on 27 November 1951 the two sides agreed to an MDL running approximately along the line of ground contact. Although subsequent fighting required some minor adjustments, the line remained substantially unchanged until the Armistice was signed.[22]

The two sides then addressed concrete measures to implement the Armistice. They quickly agreed on a Military Armistice Commission with equal representation from both sides, but differed as to the nature and scope of its activities. The UNC wanted a supervisory mechanism with the power of inspection throughout Korea and, fearing a challenge to UNC air superiority, also called for a ban on the repair or construction of airfields. The KPA/CPV accepted the idea of supervision inside the DMZ but rejected the airfield repair ban and inspections outside the DMZ.[23]

On 3 December 1951 the KPA/CPV proposed a compromise, suggesting Armistice supervision outside the

Demilitarized Zone by nations "neutral in the Korean War." The UNC accepted and by March 1952 the two sides had agreed to Czechoslovakia, Poland, Sweden, and Switzerland as members of a Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission (NNSC) as well as on procedures for the rotation of military personnel and equipment. This resolved the Armistice implementation issue except for airfield repair and a new KPA/CPV demand that the Soviet Union be included in the neutral commission.[24] Resolution of these matters soon became embroiled in the far more difficult issue of repatriation of prisoners of war.

### **The Prisoner of War Obstacle**

Both sides had initially assumed that all POWs would be exchanged at the conclusion of an armistice. However, among the prisoners held by the UNC were many former residents of South Korea who had been inducted into the KPA and subsequently captured. The United States agreed with the South Korean government that they should be allowed to return to their homes in the south. Many of the Chinese soldiers in the CPV had originally been in the Nationalist Chinese army, and some of these were likely to prefer to go to Taiwan rather than being forced to return to Communist China.

By the time negotiations began on the POW issue, US President Harry Truman had become convinced that prisoners should not be repatriated against their will. He was heavily influenced in this by memories of the tragic post-World War II fate of millions of Soviet prisoners who had been forcibly repatriated, many subsequently suffering long imprisonment or death. General Ridgway argued against this policy, fearing it would delay an armistice and jeopardize UNC prisoners held by the KPA/CPV. Nonetheless, Truman held firm to his convictions. His concern was humanitarian, but other US officials also foresaw a moral and propaganda victory if large numbers of Chinese and North Korean soldiers rejected communism.[25] In January 1952, when the UNC proposed voluntary repatriation of prisoners of war, the KPA/CPV immediately rejected the concept. While all the other POW-related issues were quickly resolved, voluntary repatriation became a seemingly insurmountable obstacle.[26]

Negotiations on both armistice implementation and the POW issue were now stalled, but the two sides managed to agree on a set of "Recommendations to the Governments Concerned." On 6 February 1952, General Nam Il proposed a post-Armistice political conference to discuss withdrawal of foreign forces from Korea, specific recommendations for peaceful settlement of the Korean question, and other problems relating to peace in Korea. The two sides agreed to these provisions, with a few minor changes, after less than two weeks of discussion.[27]

In March 1952 the KPA/CPV side began to show some flexibility on POWs; if the majority of Chinese and North Korean prisoners had been willing to return, the KPA/CPV negotiators might have accepted some voluntary repatriation formula. But on 19 April, after a controversial and sometimes violent process of screening prisoners to determine their repatriation desires, the UNC advised that out of over 170,000 North Korean and Chinese prisoners, only 70,000 desired repatriation. The KPA/CPV negotiators stated flatly that such a low figure could not possibly be the basis for further discussion. In an attempt to recast the issues and thus find some common ground, the UNC negotiators presented what they referred to as a "package proposal" on 28 April. Dropping the ban on airfield repair, they asked the KPA/CPV to concede on USSR participation in the NNSC and voluntary repatriation. The KPA/CPV accepted the first two proposals, effectively resolving the Armistice implementation issue, but firmly rejected voluntary repatriation except for former residents of South Korea who had been impressed into the North Korean army.[28]

With neither side prepared to compromise on this issue, the tone at Panmunjom became increasingly hostile. The Chinese and North Koreans began an intense propaganda offensive, accusing the United States of conducting germ warfare. At the same time, bloody uprisings in the UNC-controlled POW camps embarrassed the UNC and cast doubt on its administration of the camps and the legitimacy and impartiality of the screening. On 8 October 1952, with no progress in sight, the UNC unilaterally declared a recess.[29] Neither side was prepared to initiate a major offensive, but both now increased their military activity to put pressure on their opponents.

The UNC resumed limited-objective ground attacks, and General Mark W. Clark, who had replaced Ridgway as CINCUNC in May, gained approval to conduct the largest air attacks of the war against the North Korean capital of Pyongyang and to destroy hydroelectric dams on the Yalu River.[30] The Chinese leadership, now convinced that the war would continue for some time, concluded that the best way to sustain a protracted war was to remain on the overall

defensive, build up their forces, improve their positional defenses, and conduct violent but limited attacks at the tactical level. The Chinese also began rotating units to give them combat experience and substantially reinforced the CPV. By early 1953, Chinese troop strength in Korea reached 1.53 million, the highest of the war.[31]

The UNC ground attacks were not sufficiently damaging to persuade the Chinese to compromise. The UNC air attacks caused great devastation but failed to disrupt the Communist lines of communication and, since the greatest impact was on North Korean civilians, the attacks had no effect on the will of the Chinese leadership. None of the Chinese ground attacks were threatening or costly enough to cause the United States to back away from voluntary repatriation. But their troop reinforcement, strengthening of fortifications, and hardening of their logistical system greatly increased the costs and diminished the likelihood of success of any future UNC ground offensive.[32] Thus, although the level of violence in Korea increased substantially in 1952, with neither side prepared to bear the costs of a major ground offensive, these actions had no discernible effect on the negotiations.

### **Breaking the Stalemate**

With the talks deadlocked, other parties now began to search for a formula that would lead to a truce. During the Autumn 1952 UN General Assembly session, the Indian delegation, strongly supported by the British and other Commonwealth countries, suggested the establishment of a Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission (NNRC) to deal with the prisoners refusing repatriation. The United States, under pressure from its allies, agreed to support the Indian proposal, which was endorsed by the General Assembly on 3 December. The Indian resolution would eventually provide the basis for solving the POW repatriation issue.[33]

The political equation also began to change on both sides. In January 1953 Dwight Eisenhower came to office committed to ending the war. The new President was keenly aware that neither the American people nor the UN allies were likely to accept major new sacrifices and rejected the idea of an offensive to reunify Korea. He was willing to accept the Armistice as negotiated so far, so long as there was no major compromise on the voluntary repatriation issue. At the same time, however, he was willing to consider stepped up military measures, including the use of nuclear weapons against China, if there was no progress in the truce talks.[34] North Korea, by now economically devastated, was willing to see the war end. The Chinese leadership, their nation strained by the war effort and eager to begin economic reconstruction, was prepared to return to the truce talks but preferred that the United States make the first move.[35]

That move came on 22 February 1953 when Clark, following up a Red Cross proposal, called for an exchange of sick and wounded prisoners. Soon thereafter, on 5 March, Soviet Leader Joseph Stalin died. His successors, facing unrest in the European satellites and seeking a relaxation of Cold War tensions, were predisposed to a settlement in Korea and encouraged the Chinese and North Koreans to conclude an armistice.[36] On 28 March the KPA/CPV accepted Clark's proposal. Two days later Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai made a speech in which he proposed that those prisoners not desiring repatriation be transferred to a neutral state. Kim Il-sung publicly endorsed this policy the next day, as did the Soviet foreign minister on 1 April.[37]

The Chinese and North Koreans had now accepted the principle of voluntary repatriation, and events began to move quickly. The exchange of sick and wounded prisoners began on 20 April, and the truce talks resumed on 26 April. On that date the KPA/CPV put the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission concept on the table, suggesting the NNRC be composed of the same members as the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission, plus India.[38] The two sides were now close to agreement, but the UNC still found some aspects of the KPA/CPV proposal unacceptable, and introduced two new demands: that the NNRC work on the basis of consensus, rather than majority vote, and that South Korean non-repatriates not be turned over to the NNRC. Both positions were contrary to the Indian UN resolution, which the US government had previously supported, and so, in spite of vociferous South Korean objections, the Eisenhower Administration ultimately decided not to jeopardize the Armistice over these issues.[39]

On 25 May the UNC presented what it called its final position. Dropping both of the new conditions, it called for the repatriation of all prisoners within 60 days after the signing of the Armistice. Those refusing repatriation were to be transferred to the NNRC for a 90-day period during which representatives of their home country would have access to them under NNRC supervision. After 90 days the postwar political conference would deal with any remaining

nonrepatriates, but after an additional 30 days the nonrepatriates would either be released or their fate decided by the United Nations General Assembly.[40]

The UNC concessions made the proposal palatable to the Chinese and North Koreans, who were under some pressure to accept. Not only was the Soviet leadership urging them to bring the war to an end, but the United States had begun exhibiting a willingness to step up its military action. In May 1953 US aircraft attacked irrigation dams near Pyongyang, flooding and disrupting rail and road lines. Although the North Koreans were eventually able to neutralize the effects of further attacks by draining the reservoirs, these raids further strained the North Korean infrastructure.[41] On 20 May President Eisenhower and his advisors had decided that if the KPA/CPV rejected the final offer, the UNC would initiate a military offensive that might include attacks on China and the use of nuclear weapons.[42] To signal this resolve, General Clark publicly warned that if the Chinese and North Koreans did not accept the 25 May proposal, the UNC would widen its war effort. US officials also attempted to transmit veiled nuclear threats through India and other countries.[43]

It is unclear what combination of UNC concessions, Soviet pressure, stepped-up air attacks, and nuclear threats persuaded the Chinese and North Koreans to accept the UNC position, but in combination, they achieved the desired effect. On 4 June General Nam Il declared, "We basically agree to the new proposal which your side put forward on 25 May." [44] On 8 June the two sides concluded an agreement on voluntary repatriation, and staff officers began a review of the Armistice language preparatory to its signature.[45]

Feeling betrayed by the 25 May UNC concessions, ROK President Syngman Rhee now made a final effort to derail the Armistice. He made strong overtures to President Eisenhower, ordered public demonstrations, threatened to remove the ROK military forces from the UNC, said he would attack any Indian troops that set foot on South Korean soil, and on 17 June unilaterally released Korean prisoners from the UNC POW camps. Rhee's actions brought the negotiations to a halt. The Chinese and North Koreans refused to accept an armistice without assurance that the South Koreans would comply with its terms. Rhee finally agreed to abide by the Armistice only after receiving a promise of future US support, a mutual security treaty with the United States, and a major aid package--and after a series of heavy Chinese attacks aimed specifically at South Korean units nearly destroyed two ROK divisions.[46] Rhee's acceptance removed the final obstacle to a truce.

General Nam Il and General Harrison signed the Armistice Agreement at 10 o'clock in the morning of 27 July 1953 in a hastily constructed pavilion at Panmunjom. Kim Il Sung, Peng Dehuai, and Mark Clark later countersigned the document in separate ceremonies at Kaesong and Munsan. At 10 o'clock that night the Armistice went into effect and the guns fell silent across Korea.

## **Conclusion**

Although no future war will ever repeat the combination of circumstances involved in the Korean War truce talks, the talks are still worth examination by those who may be involved in future limited war conflict termination. The nature and outcome of the talks were affected by the interplay of many factors. American negotiating policy and strategy were shaped by US interests, objectives, and activities elsewhere in the world, especially the confrontation with the Soviet Union and preoccupation with the post-World War II reconstruction of Europe and Japan. Domestic politics, although played out in very different ways in the United States and China, also affected the leadership of both countries. Cultural differences and preconceptions colored the attitudes and decisionmaking of both sides, influencing the character and pace of the talks.

Lack of diplomatic contact or other reliable means of private communication between the United States and China made the negotiations particularly cumbersome. This effect was made worse by the physical isolation and austere nature of the conference site, which deprived the delegates of any opportunities for the kinds of informal contacts that might have facilitated dialogue. The key factors, however, were the intensity of the national interests engaged on each side, the value each country's leadership placed on its objectives, and the price they were willing to pay to achieve those objectives.

During the early months of the talks, with the battle lines still somewhat fluid, the UNC was able to use limited ground attacks to enhance its bargaining position, but this possibility faded as the battle lines hardened and the costs of such

attacks increased. In 1952, neither side was willing or able to exert sufficient military leverage to break the stalemate, but during the last months of the talks, both China and the United States successfully used limited military force to support their negotiations. US air attacks had by then devastated the North Korean infrastructure and provided plausible evidence that the Americans were willing to escalate the level of violence. The Chinese, in turn, used ground attacks to demonstrate the South Korean inability to fight alone and to pressure Rhee into accepting the Armistice. But both sides also made concessions based on calculations weighing the value of their objectives against the potential costs of continued fighting and the questionable prospects for the success of any major new offensive. The long, tedious negotiations at Panmunjom and elsewhere eventually provided formulas for implementing these concessions, thus resolving otherwise intractable issues.

The talks also illustrate the role of coalition partners and third parties in conflict termination. The efforts of the Indian and other Commonwealth countries to find a mutually acceptable POW arrangement and the pressures exerted by the UN allies helped shape the final compromise. The Soviet Union, while not an acknowledged participant in the talks, played a key role in the Chinese and North Korean decision to negotiate, reinforced Chinese tenacity during the long stalemate, and contributed to the final decision to accept voluntary repatriation. Syngman Rhee's resistance to the talks and his efforts to reshape the Armistice at the very end of the negotiations also affected the policies of his superpower ally.

As for the Armistice itself, the United States and its UN allies achieved most of their negotiation objectives and held firm on voluntary prisoner repatriation. Some 50,000 Chinese and North Korean POWs refused repatriation, but any assessment of the value of this moral and propaganda victory must be tempered by the knowledge that the additional 15 months of fighting cost more than 125,000 UNC and some 250,000 Chinese and North Korean casualties.[47] The Chinese and North Koreans did most of the compromising over the course of the negotiations, but demonstrated the ability to withstand the United States and to bring it to the negotiating table. Syngman Rhee gained major concessions from the United States that would assure the survival of South Korea, but he remained unreconciled to the Armistice for the remainder of his life.

Neither the war nor the Armistice resolved the underlying issues that led to hostilities in Korea. However, memories of the devastation and the high cost of the conflict, combined with the strong military posture of both sides, have so far deterred a new war. Meanwhile, the Armistice provided a mechanism to defuse military incidents, reducing the possibility that such clashes might accidentally escalate. This is still true, even though many of the Armistice provisions have been ignored or abrogated over the years. In 1994, the North Koreans announced that they were withdrawing from the Military Armistice Commission, but they continue to maintain representation at Panmunjom. Nearly half a century after it was signed, the long Armistice remains in effect.

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## NOTES

This article is an expanded version of an article titled "Fighting While Talking: The Korean War Truce Talks," appearing in the Spring 2000 issue of *The Magazine of History*.

1. Dean Acheson, *Present at the Creation* (New York: Norton, 1969), pp. 529-34; James F. Schnabel and Robert J. Watson, *History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff: The Joint Chiefs of Staff and National Policy 1951-1953, The Korean War, Part Two* (Washington: Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1998), pp. 1-10; NSC 48/5, "United States Objectives, Policies and Courses of Action in Asia," 17 May 1951, reprinted in US Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States* [hereinafter, *FRUS*], 1951, Vol. 6, *Asia and the Pacific* (Washington: GPO, 1977), pp. 33-63.

2. Chen Jian, "China's Changing Aims during the Korean War, 1950-1951," *Journal of American-East Asian Relations*, 1 (Spring 1992), 38-39; and "China's Strategies to End the Korean War" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association of Asian Studies, Boston, March 1994; revised [1998] version provided to the writer by Dr. Chen), pp. 11-13; Shu Guang Zhang, *Mao's Military Romanticism: China and the Korean War, 1950-1953* (Lawrence: Univ. of Kansas Press, 1995), pp. 218-19; Kathryn Weathersby, "Stalin, Mao, and the End of the Korean War," in *Brothers in Arms: The Rise and Fall of the Sino-Soviet Alliance, 1945-1963*, ed. Odd Arne Westad (Stanford, Calif.:

Stanford Univ. Press, 1998), pp. 95-100. Weathersby concludes, "Although the Chinese were responsible for the day-to-day management of the war," Stalin "had the final say in decisions regarding military and diplomatic strategy" (p. 91).

3. D. Clayton James, *Refighting the Last War: Command and Crisis in Korea, 1950-1953* (New York: The Free Press, 1993), pp. 218-31, reviews the literature on the US decision to halt the UNC offensive.

4. William Whitney Stueck, *The Korean War: An International History* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1995), pp. 204-15, summarizes the views of the UNC allies and the diplomatic maneuvering that preceded the truce talks. Syngman Rhee's opposition to the truce talks is described by US officials in reports reprinted in *FRUS, 1951*, Vol. 7, *Korea and China* (Washington: GPO, 1983), pp. 575, 595, 601-07, and 611, and is described by the first ROK representative to the talks, General Paik Sun Yup (Paek Son-yop), in *From Pusan to Panmunjom* (Washington: Brassey's [US], 1992), pp. 165, 170-78.

5. Acheson, *Present at the Creation*, pp. 532-33; *FRUS, 1951*, VII, 404-05, 422, 447-54, 460-62, 483-86, 507-11. The pertinent portion of the text of Deputy Foreign Minister Jacob Malik's radio broadcast is reprinted in the same volume, p. 547. President Truman's positive response is in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Harry S. Truman, 1951* (Washington: GPO, 1965), pp. 362-63.

6. US deliberations are described in Stueck, pp. 209-10. Pertinent documents are in *FRUS, 1951*, VII, 566-71, 583-87. For communications among Joseph Stalin, Mao Zedong, and Kim Il Sung, see Kathryn Weathersby, "The Soviet Role in Prolonging the Korean War, 1951-1953" (paper presented at the Georgetown University conference "The Korean War: An Assessment of the Historical Record," Washington, D.C., 24-25 July 1995), pp. 18-21. For additional insights on the Chinese perspective, see Alfred D. Wilhelm, *The Chinese at the Negotiating Table* (Washington: National Defense Univ. Press, 1991), pp. 107-45. Chuck Downs in *Over the Line: North Korea's Negotiating Strategy* (Washington: AEI Press, 1999), pp. 46-51, examines the question of why the United States accepted a location so disadvantageous as Kaesong and tentatively suggests that Soviet intelligence "mole" Kim Philby may have played a role.

7. Chen, "China's Strategies," p. 14; Zhang, *Mao's Military Romanticism*, pp. 218-19; Dae-Sook Suh, *Kim Il Sung: The North Korean Leader* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1988), pp. 137-38. Suh points out that "while the Chinese volunteers refrained from interfering in the internal squabbles of [North Korean] domestic politics, they also demanded that Kim [Il-sung] stay clear of their management of the war."

8. Chen, "China's Strategies," pp. 2-3, 12-15; Wilhelm, *The Chinese at the Negotiating Table*, pp. 110-15; Zhang, *Mao's Military Romanticism*, pp. 9-10, 217-19; Suh, *Kim Il Sung*, p. 138; Weathersby, "Stalin, Mao, and the End of the Korean War," p. 97. The 17 January 1951 communication is reprinted in *Yearbook of the United Nations, 1951* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1952), pp. 212-13.

9. *FRUS, 1951*, VII, 605-06.

10. "Memorandum of Conversation, by John R. Heideman of the Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs," 29 June 1951, *ibid.*, p. 594.

11. Walter G. Hermes, *United States Army in the Korean War, Truce Tent and Fighting Front* (Washington: Center of Military History, 1966), p. 20; JCS 95864, JCS to CINCUNC (Ridgway), 9 July 1951, *FRUS, 1951*, VII, 640; HNC-047, CINCUNC (Ridgway) to JCS, 10 July 1951, *ibid.*, p. 648.

12. The Hermes book is the official US Army history of the negotiations; it is also useful for putting the negotiations into the context of the ongoing combat operations in Korea. Schnabel and Watson, in *History of the Joint Chiefs . . . The Korean War, Part Two*, describe US policymaking during the period of the truce talks. Insights into the thoughts and actions of the first UNC chief negotiator may be found in Allan E. Goodman, ed., *Negotiating While Fighting: The Diary of Admiral C. Turner Joy at the Korean Armistice Conference* (Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institution Press, 1978). William H. Vatcher, an advisor to the UNC negotiators, describes the talks in *Panmunjom: The Story of the Korean Military Armistice Negotiations* (New York: Praeger, 1958). The observations of Herbert Goldhamer, a RAND

Corporation psychologist who spent three months in 1951 as an unofficial advisor to the UNC negotiating team, have been published as *The 1951 Korean Armistice Conference: A Personal Memoir* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 1994). The two most recent studies of the truce talks, both of which contain useful bibliographies and documentation, are Rosemary Foot, *A Substitute for Victory: The Politics of Peacemaking at the Korean Armistice Talks* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1990) and Sydney D. Bailey, *The Korean Armistice* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992). For the KPA/CPV perspective, see Chen, "China's Strategies"; Zhang, *Mao's Military Romanticism*; and Wilhelm, *The Chinese at the Negotiating Table*.

13. NSC 48/5, *FRUS, 1951*, VI, 35-36.

14. "Memorandum Containing the Sections Dealing With Korea From NSC 48/5, Dated May 17, 1951," in *FRUS, 1951*, VII, 439-40; JCS 92831, JCS to CINCFE (Ridgway), 31 May 1951, Part II, "Directive to CINCUNC" in *FRUS, 1951*, VII, 489-90.

15. JCS 95354, JCS to CINCUNC (Ridgway), 30 June 1951 in *FRUS, 1951*, VII, 598-600; CX 66160, CINCUNC (Ridgway) to JCS, 1 July 1951, *ibid.*, pp. 607-09. The overall truce talks objectives set forth in NSC 48/5 were revalidated in policy deliberations carried out later in 1951 and were contained in NSC 118/2 approved by President Truman on 20 December 1951. See *FRUS, 1951*, VII, 1384.

16. Schnabel and Watson, pp. 3-7; JCS 95977, JCS for CINCUNC, 10 July 1951, in *FRUS, 1951*, VII, 647.

17. Hermes, pp. 20-22; Wilhelm, pp. 127-30; J. C. Murray, "The Korean Truce Talks: First Phase," *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, 79 (September 1953), 982; Andrew J. Kinney, "Secrets From the Truce Tent," *This Week Magazine, New York Herald-Tribune*, 31 August 1952, p. 7. Murray and Kinney served as UNC liaison and staff officers during the truce talks. On the Kaesong Neutral Zone issue see Hermes, pp. 26-29, and Goodman, pp. 16-19. A summary of the key provisions of the Kaesong Security Agreement is in HNC-098, CINCUNC (Ridgway) to JCS, 15 July 1951, *FRUS, 1951*, VII, 685.

18. Hermes, pp. 29-32; the English text of the Armistice Agreement is reprinted in Hermes as Appendix C, pp. 516-28. It is also reprinted in Goodman, Bailey, and Foot.

19. Chen, "China's Strategies," pp. 19-20; Stueck, pp. 230-31.

20. Chen, "China's Strategies," p. 20. The text of the Panmunjom Security Agreement is in *FRUS, 1951*, VII, 1059-60. A later agreement on the safe conduct of KPA/CPV vehicles is described in Goodman, 91.

21. Chen, "China's Strategies," pp. 17-20.

22. Hermes, pp. 114-19; Schnabel and Watson, pp. 27-31; Messages between CINCUNC (Ridgway) and JCS in *FRUS, 1951*, VII, 1075-76. For the US decision to accept the truce line, see Schnabel and Watson, pp. 27-31.

23. Hermes, pp. 123-25; Schnabel and Watson, pp. 46-55.

24. Hermes, pp. 127-28, 156; Schnabel and Watson, pp. 81-84, 90-94.

25. Schnabel and Watson, pp. 58-68; Barton J. Bernstein, "The Struggle over the Korean Armistice: Prisoners of Repatriation," in *Child of Conflict: The Korean-American Relationship, 1943-1953*, ed. Bruce Cumings (Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 1983), pp. 274-83. General Ridgway's arguments against voluntary repatriation are in CX-55993, CINCFE (Ridgway) to JCS, 27 October 1951, in *FRUS, 1951*, VII, 1068-71.

26. Schnabel and Watson, pp. 68-76; Hermes, pp. 144-49; Chen, "China's Strategies," pp. 222-23.

27. Hermes, pp. 156-59; Schnabel and Watson, pp. 78-81.

28. Bernstein, "Prisoners of Repatriation," pp. 283-88, 300-01; Schnabel and Watson, pp. 85-108, 131-42, 159-80.

29. On the germ warfare charges, see Schnabel and Watson, pp. 127-31, and Chen, "China's Strategies," pp. 24-25. Chen concludes that there is no evidence that the United States actually conducted such a campaign but argues that the Chinese leadership "*truly believed* that the Americans had used biological weapons against the Chinese and North Koreans" (emphasis Chen's). Recently published Soviet documents, however, lend some credibility to the argument that the charges were false accusations issued as part of a propaganda campaign. See Kathryn Weathersby, "Deceiving the Deceivers: Moscow, Beijing, Pyongyang, and the Allegations of Bacteriological Weapons Use in Korea," *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, 11 (Winter 1998), 176-85; Milton Leitenberg, "New Evidence on the Korean War Biological Warfare Allegations: Background and Analysis," *ibid.*, pp. 185-99.
30. Bernstein, "Prisoners of Repatriation," pp. 288-96; Schnabel and Watson, pp. 143-48.
31. Zhang, *Mao's Military Romanticism*, pp. 225-27; Chen, "China's Strategies," pp. 25-26.
32. Stueck, pp. 280-81. Charles R. Shrader, *Communist Logistics in the Korean War* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1995), pp. 192-214, describes the successful Chinese and North Korean efforts to maintain their logistical system in the face of UNC air interdiction.
33. Stueck, pp. 298-306; Foot, *Substitute for Victory*, pp. 152-57; Schnabel and Watson, pp. 182-86; United Nations, *Yearbook of the United Nations, 1952* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1953), pp. 179-201. The text of the resolution (610[vii]) is reprinted in the latter, pp. 201-02.
34. Edward C. Keefer, "President Dwight D. Eisenhower and the End of the Korean War," *Diplomatic History*, 10 (Summer 1986), 267-76; Schnabel and Watson, pp. 100-207; Foot, *Substitute for Victory*, pp. 159-61.
35. Chen, "China's Strategies," pp. 30-31.
36. Weathersby, "Stalin, Mao, and the End of the Korean War," pp. 108-09; Stueck, pp. 308-09.
37. Hermes, pp. 412-43; Stueck, p. 309.
38. Hermes, p. 422.
39. *Ibid.*, pp. 422-28; Schnabel and Watson, pp. 217-18.
40. Hermes, pp. 428-30.
41. Robert F. Futrell, *The United States Air Force in Korea 1950-1953* (rev. ed.; Washington: Office of Air Force History, 1983), pp. 666-72; Stueck, pp. 325-30.
42. "Memorandum of Discussion at the 145th Meeting of the National Security Council, Wednesday, May 20, 1953," in *FRUS, 1952-1954*, Vol. 15, *Korea* (Washington: GPO, 1984), pp. 1064-68. Keefer describes the background to the 20 May 1953 NSC meeting in "President Dwight D. Eisenhower and the End of the Korean War," pp. 267-79.
43. Keefer concludes that the nuclear threats, along with other factors, did influence the Chinese and North Korean decisionmakers (pp. 281-82, 288-89). Roger Dingman puts the May 1953 nuclear threats in the context of previous attempts by the Truman Administration to use US nuclear forces as leverage in the Korean War. He concludes that the US overtures were more in the nature of pleas for cooperation than "nuclear threats" and debunks the notion that "atomic diplomacy" had any major influence over Chinese and North Korean decisionmaking. See his "Atomic Diplomacy During the Korean War," *International Security*, 13 (Winter 1988-89), 50-91. Rosemary Foot, however, makes a persuasive case that "atomic coercion" probably had some influence, though she acknowledges that it was not the dominating factor in ending the war. See her "Nuclear Coercion and the Ending of the Korean Conflict," in the same issue of *International Security*, pp. 92-112.
44. Schnabel and Watson, p. 225.

45. Hermes, pp. 430-35.

46. Schnabel and Watson, pp. 227-48; Barton Bernstein, "The Pawn as Rook, The Struggle to End the Korean War," *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, 10 (No. 1, 1978), 40-45.

47. Hermes, p. 500.

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