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A Tale of Two Containments: The United States, Canada, and National Security during the Korean War, 1945-1951

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**A Tale of Two Containments: The United States, Canada, and
National Security during the Korean War, 1945-1951**

by

Tyler John Turek

Thesis submitted to the
Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
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Abstract

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Dr. Galen Perras

University of Ottawa, 2010

In the first comparative study of Canadian and American foreign policy during the Korean War, this thesis argues that, while Canada and the U.S. shared some similar foreign policy goals and interpretations of the Soviet Union between 1945 and 1951, their national security policies were fundamentally distinct. In turn, these differing interpretations had a significant influence on each country's understanding of the Korean War. The United States believed that it had to uphold its international prestige by defending freedom everywhere in order to remain secure. Consequently, the Harry S. Truman administration pursued an aggressive campaign in Korea against the Soviet Union in order to safeguard its position as the leader of the free world. Conversely, Canada, which was preoccupied with its own sovereignty and content with a limited view of containment, had little interest in American objectives. Instead, Louis St. Laurent's government, influenced by past experiences with Great Power politics, sought to limit the excesses of the Truman administration in order to defend its autonomy. The consequence of this divergence forced officials in Ottawa and Washington to reconsider not only their national security strategies but also their relations with one another.

List of Acronyms

CDC - Cabinet Defence Committee
CIA – Central Intelligence Agency
DEA – Department of External Affairs
DPRK - Democratic People’s Republic of Korea
JCS – United States Joint Chiefs of Staff
JIC - Canadian Joint Intelligence Committee
NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NKPA - North Korean Peoples’ Army
PJBD – Permanent Joint Board on Defence
PRC – People’s Republic of China
ROK – Republic of Korea
UN – United Nations
UNC – United Nations Command
UNTCOK – United Nations Temporary Commission on Korea
USSR – Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

Introduction

On 10 April 1951, Lester B. Pearson, Canada's Secretary of State for External Affairs, told the Empire and Canadian Clubs in Toronto that "the days of relatively easy and automatic political relations with our neighbour are, I think, over."¹ Pearson, of course, was referring to Canada's relations with the United States which had come to play a much larger part of Canadian foreign policy since World War II. Ottawa and Washington had cooperated extensively on defence and other international issues since the August 1940 Ogdensburg Agreement had effectively placed Canada under the umbrella of the U.S. military.² But closer collaboration on national security did not always produce a consensus as the outbreak of the Korean War on 25 June 1950 exposed several fundamental cracks in the politics and priorities of President Harry S. Truman's Democratic administration (1945-1953) and the Liberal government of Louis St. Laurent (1948-1957). While applauding U.S. determination to resist aggression, St. Laurent's Cabinet balked at Truman's attempts to link Formosa's defence to the Korean conflict. Canadians complained that such actions did not fall within the United Nations (UN) mandate and were likely to provoke the Soviet Union's ally, the newly-formed People's Republic of China (PRC), which desired to bring Formosa under its control. Pearson was not ready to forsake U.S. leadership in the Cold War in 1951 and this episode now appears as little more than a historical footnote. Nevertheless, Pearson's remarks revealed that his support for Truman's foreign policy had become more reserved and that Canadians had become more cautious in offering support to American initiatives.

Why did Pearson publically distance Canada from its closest ally? The Cold War,

¹ Department of External Affairs, *Statements and Speeches*, "Canadian Foreign Policy in a Two-Power World," 10 April 1951, 51/14.

² J.L. Granatstein, *Canada's War: The Politics of the Mackenzie King Government*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975), pp. 114-132 .

which began in 1945--1946, had produced two superpower blocs based on two ostensibly incompatible government systems. The liberal democratic coalition, centered on the United States, was a loose association of sovereign states in North America and Western Europe that considered its Communist bloc adversary, the Soviet Union and its Eastern European satellites, to constitute a direct military and political threat to its existence. The United States, Great Britain, Canada and the Soviet Union, of course, had been allies during World War II. But Joseph Stalin, the paranoid and totalitarian leader of the United Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), was unwilling to work with Washington establishing of an independent Polish state and other international post-war issues. Latent suspicions of Stalin's dubious commitment to post-war collective security were affirmed by crises in Iran, Berlin, Greece and elsewhere during 1946 and 1947, thus convincing the Western alliance that international communism, directed from the Kremlin in Moscow, was inherently aggressive and expansionist.³ Mutual suspicion on both sides of the "Iron Curtain" – as Winston Churchill famously remarked – hardened the determination of both the U.S. and USSR to make no compromises in international affairs. The result, noted Eric Foner, was the Western construction of a "world-wide battle between freedom and slavery."⁴

In the few years preceding the Korean War, it was clear to Canadian and American officials that while they shared an abstract enemy – Soviet communism – they did not always agree on the best strategy to deal with the ominous foe. Heavily influenced by the writings of George F. Kennan, a State Department Sovietologist who had spent time in Moscow and possessed a unique view of Soviet politics, the U.S. government embarked on a rigid strategy of "containment" to deter and limit communism's expansion worldwide.

³ John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 15, 30-53

⁴ Eric Foner, *The Story of American Freedom*, (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1998), p. 253

While Kennan's philosophies were often ambiguously explained and misunderstood by his contemporaries,⁵ the Truman administration believed that any Soviet political or territorial gain created a correlating loss for the United States. Therefore, Truman and his strongly anti-communist Secretary of State, Dean Acheson, resolved to contain Stalinism within its existing borders at nearly any cost. These assumptions helped to transform the U.S. into a "national security state," with an accompanying lexicon which framed the USSR as an evil unparalleled in human history while the U.S. was the sole defender of freedom worldwide.⁶

For Truman's administration, upholding U.S. prestige domestically and internationally was inseparable from the defence of universal freedoms. Here, prestige is defined not only as the "shadow cast by power" which had a "great deterrent importance," as Dean Acheson suggested.⁷ Also, U.S. prestige included public confidence in the administration's ability to lead the Western alliance and to defend independent states from communist aggression. America's military and geostrategic position, material wealth, political leverage and superpower status – in sum, the mechanisms of formal and informal power – functioned as the building blocks of this prestige. Without these characteristics, America's deterrent and symbolic value would diminish and subsequently empower the Soviet Union. After the Soviet testing of a nuclear device and the PRC's establishment in 1949, Truman's domestic critics charged the administration with being weak on communism and the "loss of China" to totalitarian forces. Understandably, policymakers became increasingly concerned with maintaining America's credibility.⁸ But this consequence was largely the administration's

⁵ George F. Kennan, *Memoirs: 1925-1950*, (Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1967), pp. 354-367

⁶ Michael J. Hogan, *A Cross of Iron: Harry S. Truman and the Origins of the National Security State, 1945-1954*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 1-21

⁷ Dean Acheson, *The Korean War*, (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1971), p. 20.

⁸ See also Gaddis, *We Now Know*, pp. 75-76 for a similar argument for the U.S. commitment to Korea in June 1950.

doing; the White House and State Department had been trapped by their own rhetoric to uphold liberty worldwide since the Truman Doctrine's declaration in 1947. Consequently, defending prestige through the maintenance of a strong Western alliance led by the U.S. and based on the principles of American liberalism worldwide became the primary national security objective of Truman's administration after 1949.

Canada had a much more limited understanding of its national security needs and the requirements necessary to contain the Soviet Union. Ottawa's believed its primary goal during the Korean War was to preserve its national sovereignty. For this study, I will use the Westphalian model, as outlined by Stephen Krasner, which describes the "exclusion of external sources of authority both *de jure* and *de facto*. Within its own boundaries the state has a monopoly over authoritative decision-making."⁹ More often than not, the DEA sought to secure *de facto* sovereignty by relinquishing aspects of its *de jure* authority to multilateral institutions such as the UN and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). In these formal institutions, Canadian policymakers found safety in numbers and supported the "functional" principle which afforded smaller states decision-making authority based on its contribution to specific agreements.¹⁰ Even Cold Warriors such as Lester Pearson believed that these types of institutions – legally-binding, formally structured and regulated – were ideal for smaller states that feared their sovereignty would be informally but painfully usurped by great powers in times of crisis. Thus, Canada's Department of External Affairs (DEA) hoped to use the democratization of global politics to its advantage. Nearly two centuries of British colonial rule and the recent memories of the strong U.S. *informal*

⁹ Definitions of sovereignty are inherently fluid and constantly evolve to react to the changing norms of international politics. Krasner alone describes four definitions of sovereignty, all of which are dependent on context and usage. The Westphalian model was established by the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 and is that which most historians recognize as the prevailing definition of sovereignty. See Stephen Krasner, "Abiding Sovereignty," *International Political Science Review*, vol. 22, no. 2 (2001), p. 232

¹⁰ See Chapter II, pp. 52-54

influence during World War II had embittered many Canadians to 'Great Power politics' and bilateralism that consistently cast Canada as the junior partner. Such sentiments, which burdened not only William Lyon Mackenzie King's government (1921-1930 and 1935-1948) but also its successors, made Canadian leaders averse to committing to major projects without formal protections for their sovereignty. Historian Galen Perras have professed that the U.S. government had come to take Canadian acquiescence for granted during the Second World War. Or, in the words of Lester Pearson, the United States had often "consider[ed] us not a foreign nation at all, but one of themselves."¹¹ This sentiment was not limited to the pre-1945 era, but carried on into the Korean War.

The USSR was Ottawa's major concern, but often the Department conceptualized national security in different manners than its American counterpart. Instead of obsessing over the ideological divide or the international balance of power which was incrementally turning in the Soviet Union's favour in the late 1940s, the DEA adopted a more flexible and consistent approach to containment which focused on the need for international stability. An unstable international system, not communism, posed the greatest threat. According to DEA policymakers, communism thrived on civil unrest, poverty and turmoil. In their view, ideology generally exacerbated political tensions and heightened the risk of an East-West confrontation. Therefore, St. Laurent's 'Grey Lecture' in 1947 and Pearson's subsequent "Peace with Freedom" address in 1950 helped to define Canada as a middle power which sought to maintain the mechanisms of peace, such as the UN, while never relinquishing the goals of attaining a *modus vivendi* with the communist bloc or sacrificing the sacred values of "Christian civilization." This policy entailed maintaining allied unity, accepting a bipolar

¹¹ Pearson's remark cited in Galen Roger Perras, *Franklin Roosevelt and the Origins of the Canadian-American Security Alliance, 1933-1945: Necessary, but Not Necessary Enough*, (Westport: Praeger, 1998), p. 117

world as the *status quo*, cooperating with the U.S. and Western European states in Europe's defence, establishing official political relations with the PRC and recognizing a hierarchy of strategic interests. Canada knew that, regardless of the U.S. military's formidable power, the West could safeguard every independent state. Thus, the DEA requested a limited containment strategy that prioritized Europe at the expense of other regions. Any attempt to defend freedom everywhere, Ottawa surmised, would only allow Moscow to choose the time and place to make the Cold War all too hot. For both Canada and the U.S., however, policy was couched in vague and indefinite terms. The specific strategic and tactical details as to how the West would counter a communist attack in Asia were never discussed by the two nations. Canada, with a limited interest in the Far East aside from maintaining stability, believed it had little reason to prepare for any such contingencies. The consequence of this oversight meant the DEA had to scramble to simultaneously defend Canadian sovereignty, punish aggression, deter communist expansion and confine hostilities to the Korean peninsula. After June 1950, such lofty objectives proved impossible even for Canada's ablest diplomats.

It is difficult to discern just how legitimate the DEA's fears of U.S. hegemony. There is no evidence to suggest the U.S. had territorial or political designs on Canada. In fact, State Department records indicate the Truman administration was relatively disinterested in Canada and content to take smooth relations for "granted."¹² My contention is that the experience of several high-ranking diplomats during the decade before the Korean War – Lester Pearson, Escott Reid, Norman Robertson, and others – had cultivated some subtle and sub-conscious anti-American views in the DEA which led them to negatively interpret U.S.

¹² George Perkins to James Webb, "U.S. Relations with Canada," 8 March 1950, RG 59, Central Decimal File, 1950-1954, 611.42/3-850, National Archives Records Administration (NARA)

foreign policy. Notably, Pearson and other Canadian officials regularly considered the Truman administration's approach to containment as belligerent, ill-considered, militaristic and overly ideological. Such fears were exacerbated by Canada's real or perceived dependence on Washington and reinforced the DEA's need for powerful institutions for collective security.¹³ We must remember that states are social actors, with norms and identities that they exhibit through domestic and international policies.¹⁴ I argue that Canada's anti-Americanism, however slight, was a cultural phenomenon that developed as a result of certain diplomats' personal and shared experiences before the Korean War and were subsequently reinforced by events during the conflict.

This thesis compares the influence of national security objectives of the American and Canadian governments from the end of the Second World War until the commencement of ceasefire negotiations for the Korean War in spring 1951 in order to answer the following question: *why was Korea worth fighting?* My contention is that each fought in order to preserve their individual *national* security concerns. I emphasize the word 'national' since both states intervened in Korea for purposes not fully shared by any other country. The Truman administration, empowered by America's sudden rise as a global superpower and committed to the maintenance of freedom worldwide, had invested enormous amounts of political prestige to defend non-communist states. When the North Korean Peoples' Army (NKPA) invaded the Republic of Korea (ROK), U.S. officials interpreted the act as a direct affront to America's prestige and as a test of American resolve orchestrated by the

¹³ Pearson to Wrong, 16 April 1951, "Korea: Canadian Policy - 1950 - 1951" file, LBPP, vol. 35, LAC

¹⁴ The literature on culture and national security is rapidly expanding and gaining adherence in the history of foreign relations. See Peter Katzenstein, "Introduction: Alternative Perspectives on National Security," in *The Culture of National Security*, ed. Peter Katzenstein, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), pp.1-32; Barry Buzan, Ole Waever and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: a New Framework for Analysis*, (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1998); William Walker III, *National Security and Core Values in American History*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

malevolent Soviet Union. President Truman fought the Korean War not to punish aggression or defend the rights of small nations, as he claimed in 1950, but to protect the United States' image as the embodiment of liberal democracy and 'the West.' Conversely, the DEA demonstrated little concern for U.S. prestige or repelling communism everywhere. Canadian officials wished to return to the *status quo ante bellum* and restrain America precisely because they believed Washington's national security objectives would likely lead an unwilling Canada into World War III. NATO countries, Pearson argued, were not ready for a general conflict with the USSR and its satellites.

Several excellent studies on American national security policy and the Korean War have been published in the last twenty years by authors such as Melvyn Leffler, John Lewis Gaddis and Michael Hogan that have discussed many of the issues to follow.¹⁵ However, I feel that this thesis contributes to the ongoing post-revisionist dialogue which stresses ideology and ideas as central components to Cold War diplomacy.¹⁶ Specialized studies on U.S.-China relations and the Truman-MacArthur controversy have also added significantly to the historiography of the Korean War era.¹⁷ These authors have explored their subjects with a greater depth than was possible here and their works have been instrumental in the completion of this thesis. What readers will derive from the following study is a clearer

¹⁵ Gaddis, *We Now Know*, cited above; John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of American National Security Policy During the Cold War*, Second Edition, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Hogan, *A Cross of Iron*, cited above; Melvyn Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992); Melvyn Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind: the United States, the Soviet Union and the Cold War*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007)

¹⁶ Gaddis, *We Now Know*, pp. 282-283; Mark Kramer, "Ideology and the Cold War," *Review of International Studies*, vol. 25, no. 4, (October 1999), pp. 539-576

¹⁷ David Mayers, *Cracking the Monolith: U.S. Policy Against the Sino-Soviet Alliance, 1949-1955*, (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1986); Gordon H. Chang, *Friends and Enemies: The United States, China, and the Soviet Union, 1948-1972*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990); Semei Qing, *From Allies to Enemies: Visions of Modernity, Identity, and U.S.-China Diplomacy, 1945-1960*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), pp.96-99; Dennis Wainstock, *Truman, MacArthur and the Korean War*, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1999); Michael D. Pearlman, *Truman and MacArthur: Policy, Politics, and the Hunger for Honor and Renown*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008); Michael Schaller, *Douglas MacArthur: Far Eastern General*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989)

understanding of the Truman administration's national security priorities and its relations with its closest allies. Historians of American foreign relations rarely, if ever, have analyzed Canada-U.S. relations in the context of the Korean War. Even William Stueck's seminal study, *The Korean War: An International History*, echoed the views of Denis Stairs twenty years earlier.¹⁸ Understandably, these studies do not discuss either the serious strains the Korean War placed on Canada-U.S. relations or the impact Truman's foreign policies had on Canada.

Historians concerned with Canada's political role in the Korean War have been in short supply. Political scientist Denis Stairs has been the only scholar to analyze historically Canada-U.S. relations during this era in any substance. In his definitive work published in 1974, *Diplomacy of Constraint: Canada, the Korean War, and the United States*, Stairs argued that Canada hoped to use the United Nations to "moderate and constrain" U.S. adventurism in Asia. He averred that Canadian officials were concerned that a prolonged war with communists in the Far East would detract from the Cold War containment efforts in Europe, and therefore resorted to multilateralism to "moderate" and "constrain" the hawkish foreign policy groups in Washington, such as the Republican-dominated Congress.¹⁹ The "constraint thesis" has been accepted by scholars as the best explanation of Canadian diplomacy during the Korean War. However, while Stairs' work addressed in detail *how* Canada's DEA actively sought to restrain the U.S., it did not adequately explore *why* constraint was a major pre-occupation. Further, this book was published before the relevant primary materials in Canada and the U.S. were declassified. This thesis aims to at

¹⁸ For Stueck's summary of Pearson's efforts to moderate U.S. policy, see William Stueck, *The Korean War: An International History*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 4, 165-66, 171-172

¹⁹ Denis Stairs, *The Diplomacy of Constraint: Canada, the Korean War, and the United States*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), xi

least partially fill this gap by exploring recently declassified materials in Canada and the United States as well as the rich historiography on U.S. national security which has emerged in the preceding decades.

Most scholars of Canadian foreign policy have since elaborated on the themes discussed by Stairs. Robert Prince, for instance, proposed that Canada's desire to constraint the U.S. was less strong than Stairs suggested. According to Prince, the DEA shared most of the Americans' Cold War views and did not want to damage the unity of the Western alliance. As well, Canadian officials simply did not have the political or military strength to contest Truman's decision making.²⁰ Although a DEA desire to maintain good relations with Washington did influence Canadian diplomacy, Prince overlooked fundamental differences in Canadian and American perceptions during the Korean War, particularly the Formosan issue and the West's relationship with the PRC, which separated the Truman administration's views from those of its allies. Others, such as Robert Bothwell, David Bercuson and J.L. Granatstein, agreed with Prince that Canada and the U.S. had a similar geopolitical outlook and participated in the Korean mission because they recognized the mutual threat posed by international communism.²¹ Bothwell concluded that differences between Canada and the U.S. were "tactical, not strategic."²² The perceived brutish nature of American tactics certainly upset the DEA, especially during the tensest periods of the Korean War. But Canada's concerns with American foreign policy were more profound than these historians have suggested. While Canadian-U.S. differences did not produce a substantial rift, the evidence confirming that these two countries supported incongruent

²⁰ Robert Prince, "The Limits of Constraint: Canadian-American Relations and the Korean War, 1950-1951," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, vol. 27, no. 4, (Winter 1992-1993), pp. 129-150

²¹ Robert Bothwell, *Alliance and Illusion: Canada and the World, 1945-1984*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003), p. 84; J.L. Granatstein and David Bercuson, *War and Peacekeeping: From South Africa to the Gulf—Canada's Small Wars*, (Toronto: Key Porter, 1991), p. 100

²² Bothwell, *Alliance and Illusion*, p. 84

strategies of containment and that these differences impacted bilateral relations is conclusive.

Others have examined the theoretical underpinnings of Canadian diplomacy during the Korean War. George Egerton's excellent article on Lester Pearson and the concept of collective security rightly emphasized how the DEA's idealistic aims led to support for the UN mission in Korea.²³ Collective security, Egerton argued, came under review in External Affairs after the PRC's entry into the war in November 1950 and Canada's "diplomacy of constraint" was weakest. At this time, John Holmes, Canada's UN envoy, remarked that Korea was an American "crusade which we might better have avoided."²⁴ Moreover, the UN's failure to function as the legitimate avenue for peace or war in 1950 forced Canadian policymakers to deconstruct their understanding of collective security. According to Egerton, while many officials, notably Escott Reid and Hume Wrong, became skeptical of its effectiveness, others such as Lester Pearson pushed even harder for stronger UN authority in peacekeeping matters. This thesis aims to buttress Egerton's argument by assessing the distinct national security aims possessed by the Canadian government by examining why Ottawa supported the concept of collective security so strongly before the Korean conflict.

Melvyn Leffler's methodological approach to the historical study of national security will be used as the basis for this thesis. In his 2004 essay titled "National Security," Leffler argued that historians must explore two amorphous and abstract concepts to better understand the many dimensions of national security decision-making: core values and external threats. Core values are those social and cultural factors such as freedom, liberal

²³ George Egerton, "Lester B. Pearson and the Korean War: Dilemmas of Collective Security and International Enforcement in Canadian Foreign Policy, 1950-1953," *International Peacekeeping*, vol. 4, no. 1, (Spring 1997), pp. 51-74

²⁴ Holmes cited in *ibid*, p. 57

democracy or a “way of life” that allow policymakers to define and select national security investments. According to this paradigm, states rarely go to war solely for material gain or to defend their borders. Rather, unique factors relating to national identity often have a profound influence on bureaucrats, politicians and the public they claim to represent. In sum, Leffler noted:

core values are the goals that emerge as priorities after the trade-offs are made; core values are the objectives that merge ideological precepts with cultural symbols like democracy, self-determination, and race consciousness with concrete interests like access to markets and raw materials; core values are the interests that are pursued notwithstanding the costs incurred; *core values are the goals worth fighting for*.²⁵

It is this last statement with which I am particularly interested. These values have commonalities with our notions of ideology or moral values, but there are also significant differences. Ideology suggests a comprehensive world view, a larger set of beliefs that explain political realities and explore utopias. Core values do not necessarily adhere to any thought system nor are they necessarily actively acknowledged; policymakers often manifest their biases unconsciously in their work. But core values are also inherently political and deal – broadly speaking – with the distribution of power, which separates them from other social and moral values. That is, there is no Platonic image of “The Good” in national security. Core values are interconnected with tangible national security *interests*, which are material in nature. European export markets and strategic outposts such as Japan were interests, but these assets were infused with concepts of Western liberalism and American soft power which solidified the U.S.’s position as an international superpower. Therefore, I argue that Korea became a U.S. national security interest when America’s core value –

²⁵ Melvyn Leffler, “National Security” in *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations*, second edition, edited by Michael J. Hogan and Thomas G. Paterson, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 126-127. Emphasis added by author.

prestige – was considered to be at jeopardy.

Conversely, external threats become national security risks when they are seen to threaten core values and national interests. But these too can come in many forms. Leffler elucidated that governments often appraise threats in relation to “the impact of technological change, the appeal of one’s own organizing ideology, the lessons of the past, and the structural patterns of the international system itself.”²⁶ Threats are not defined as bombs and guns, but from domestic and international political and economic factors, the “configuration of power” and cultural understandings about self and other. Or, as argued by Robert Bothwell, national security fears do not “suddenly appear” but often have long and complex histories which are unique to time and place.²⁷ Security, then, is a social phenomenon that is openly discussed and debated in the public and private spheres. Threats are a reflection of cultural values and ideals and expressed using a political lexicon particular to that culture. We know that the Soviet Union was the common threat to Canada and the U.S., but why? Here, I argue that each state interpreted the external threat differently as a result of diverging core values.

This study will thus focus primarily on the relationship between threats and values, how these elements helped define the national security policies of Canada and the United States and shaped the relations between these countries. In exploring these ideas, I will also deconstruct the political lexicon of security in both countries and explore how important ideas about nationhood, liberalism, communism and security were understood and implemented by the policymakers. This is, as Mark Kramer described, an effort to analyze

²⁶ Leffler, “National Security,” p. 125

²⁷ Robert Bothwell, *The Big Chill: Canada and the Cold War*, (Toronto: Irwin, 1998), p. 2

the “broad and often unspoken assumptions” that guided Cold War foreign policy.²⁸ Chapters I and II will analyze the emerging culture of national security in the U.S. and Canada respectively, with an emphasis on those factors which directly influenced each country’s response to the Korean crisis. Chapters III and IV will address the unique impressions and strategies employed by the Truman administration and the St. Laurent Cabinet to achieve their particular goals.

²⁸ Kramer, “Ideology and the Cold War,” p. 539

Chapter I: The Follies of Freedom:
The U.S. and National Security before the Korean War

To a joint session of Congress on 12 March 1947, President Harry S. Truman spoke gravely of American national security in a bipolar world: “The free peoples of the world look to us for support in maintaining their freedom. If we falter in our leadership, we may endanger the peace of the world – and we shall surely endanger the welfare of our own nation.” The President hoped to convince sceptical legislators that U.S. economic aid to Greece and Turkey was essential for the nation’s security. Without US money, resolve and leadership, vulnerable states could fall victim to Kremlin-directed communist imperialism.²⁹ While the words were powerful, the statement was not merely rhetoric designed to manipulate public opinion.³⁰ Policy documents and correspondence from the Truman administration and State Department from 1946 until June 1950 demonstrated a strong desire to promote freedom by supporting non-communist governments along the USSR’s perimeter and to uphold U.S. prestige at all costs. These values helped exaggerate the Soviet threat in the State Department as well as influenced the U.S. anti-communist policies at home and abroad.

American success in this regard is debateable. Truman and Secretary of State Dean Acheson attempted to implement a system of “containment” premised on the thinking of State Department advisor George Kennan. But Kennan took into account only American national security *interests*, not cultural values. What is more, Kennan suggested the United States should invest only in regions of strategic importance and avoid the ambitious and

²⁹ Harry S. Truman, *Years of Hope and Trial: Memoirs by Harry S. Truman*, vol. 2, (Garden City: Doubleday), p. 106

³⁰ Dennis Merrill, “The Truman Doctrine: Containing Communism and Modernity,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, vol. 36, no. 1 (March 2006), p. 34

idealistic urge to over-extend. As national security thinking in the Truman administration was predicated on a Soviet threat to Europe, U.S. foreign policy was dedicated largely to safeguarding allies such as Britain, France and the states surrounding the Mediterranean Sea. The development of a foreign policy in Asia based on values and not strategic interests produced a weak national security strategy at a time and in a place that required pragmatic and reasoned consideration. By June 1950, this oversight became evident to U.S. decision-makers as they failed to craft a coherent strategy that accommodated the conflicting core values of the United States.

In the early post-war years, the most basic element of U.S. prestige was the preservation of a particular brand of freedom and morality – an ostensibly unique set of beliefs in democracy, liberalism and the capitalist market branded as the ‘American way of life’ – at home and abroad. In this lofty quest, most influential policymakers and commentators observed the U.S. had become the leader of the free world and could not shirk its responsibilities. President Truman no doubt agreed with Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.’s 1949 assertion that “History has thrust a world destiny on the United States,” the nation must accept this challenge as it would not surrender to any threat from within or without its borders.³¹ However, U.S. global leadership and the prestige that sprang from this role would become values in themselves for which Americans would fight to uphold in 1950. From 1947 onwards it was clear that Soviet encroachment on non-communist regions in Europe and Asia was interpreted as undermining American power in these regions and thus detrimental to America’s position as a whole relative to the Soviet Union. In sum, by investing so much of its credibility to defend ‘freedom’, the Truman administration felt

³¹ Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., *The Vital Center: The Politics of Freedom*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1949), ix-x, 219, 255

compelled to expand its commitments indefinitely or face sacrificing its prestige and, hence, its uncontested leadership role in the Western alliance. The consequence was the American defence of the ROK.

Images of Self: Conceptualizing Values in U.S. National Security, 1946-1950

The United States was the dominant economic power after 1945, a situation which thrust upon it a responsibility to support its less affluent allies in times of financial crisis. By virtue of this dominant position, it commanded the acquiescence of its capitalist allies, especially those in Western Europe which, ravaged by World War II, desired US dollars and feared communist subversion. Britain's admission in February 1947 that it could no longer underwrite anti-Soviet forces in Greece and Turkey made clear to Secretary Acheson and other officials the absolute indispensability of American economic backing.³² The advent and implementation of the European Recovery Program – the Marshall Plan – in June 1947 not only reaffirmed the dependency of capitalist states on U.S. loans and aid programs, it allowed policymakers to reshape Western Europe in America's image.³³ Billions of dollars were dispatched to make the continent economically resistant to communism, an issue that was viewed by some in Foggy Bottom as “one of the gravest problems of national security ever to confront” the United States.³⁴ By virtue of America's material wealth, the Truman administration had not only the power but also the necessity to adopt a leadership role in international security and economic recovery. As one historian has summarized, “other

³² Dean Acheson, *Present at the Creation: My Year In the State Department*, (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1969), pp. 217-218; Howard Jones, *“A New Kind of War”: America's Global Strategy and the Truman Doctrine in Greece*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 36-37

³³ Michael Hogan, *The Marshall Plan: America, Britain, and the Reconstruction of Western Europe, 1947-1952*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 22

³⁴ Arnold Offner, *Another Such Victory: President Truman and the Cold War, 1945-1953*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 242; “Suggestions for the President's message to Congress in regard to the Greek Situation”, March 3, 1947, *Documentary History of the Truman Administration (DHТА)*, vol. 8, pg. 25

states had interests, the United States had responsibilities,” and such responsibilities, while mostly self-imposed, were compounded by unparalleled wealth at home combined with critical impoverishment abroad.³⁵

It is arguable also the US government believed it had a unique and ‘chosen’ role for this position. Unlike any other nation, the U.S. charged itself with the unrivalled task of leading the Western powers against communist expansion. Writing in the influential periodical *Foreign Affairs* in 1947, Henry L. Stimson, the former Secretary of War in President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s wartime government, certainly believed in the mission’s sanctity: “We Americans today face a challenging opportunity, perhaps the greatest ever offered to a single nation. It is nothing less than a chance to use our full strength for the peace and freedom of the world.”³⁶ Truman’s religiosity was shared openly with friends and colleagues in his personal correspondence, the President noting in his diary in March 1946 that God had offered America leadership of the free world and it was the destiny of his generation to fulfil this role.³⁷ William Inboden has effectively demonstrated that the Truman administration’s containment strategy was saturated with religious overtones that envisioned America at the centre of a network of states with a mission to “unite all people threatened by Communism in a great moral and spiritual offensive.”³⁸ This was not necessarily a crusade against atheistic forces threatening Western Christianity. As Truman proclaimed to Congress in his attempt to secure funding for Greece and Turkey in 1947, the struggle with communism involved protecting Western “civilization” and the “American way of life” against the perils of totalitarianism and oppression. But these words also

³⁵ Geir Lundestad, *The American “Empire” and Other Studies of US Foreign Policy in a Comparative Perspective*, (Oslo/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 11

³⁶ Henry L. Stimson, “The Challenge to Americans,” *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 26, no. 1, 1947, p. 5

³⁷ Truman cited in Offner, *Another Such Victory*, p. 154

³⁸ William Inboden, *Religion and American Foreign Policy, 1945-1960: The Soul of Containment*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 105-119

represented a set of beliefs that he held tenaciously and revealed privately to family and friends. The boundaries of this imagery were pushed to the extent that it forced allies such as Great Britain to adopt an increasingly religious lexicon in 1947 and 1948 in their dealings with the US government and public in order to garner support for their anti-communist initiatives. To Truman and his advisors, the U.S. was at the very centre of a great moral struggle for which it had to fight.³⁹

As the free world's divinely sanctioned ruler, the Truman administration took responsibility for those states threatened by communist expansion. Therefore, any states or peoples whose freedom was jeopardized were viewed by many as an attack on American ideals and thus America itself. "[O]ur security and welfare," argued one National Security Council (NSC) report from autumn 1949, "are inextricably related to the general security and welfare [of the non-communist world]...and we must seek world conditions under which we can preserve and continue to develop our way of life."⁴⁰ Similarly, any Soviet gain was a perceived American loss, and vice versa. Some of Truman's advisors, notably Kennan and Lovett, pointed out the futility of such overarching goals. Indeed, budgetary constraints on U.S. defence spending before June 1950 confirm the U.S. did not intend to defend every nation unconditionally.⁴¹ Yet the President and the State Department had vowed to universally uphold America's leadership.

The security bureaucracy was not far behind the President's employment of morality

³⁹ Dianne Kirby, "Divinely Sanctioned: The Anglo-American Cold War Alliance and the Defence of Western Civilization and Christianity, 1945-1948," *Journal of Contemporary History* vol. 35, no. 3 (2000), pp. 385-412; *Public Papers of the President: Harry S Truman* (hereafter referred to as *PPP: HST*), 1947, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1965), pp. 516-517

⁴⁰ "Governmental Programs in National Security and International Affairs for the Fiscal Year 1951," September 29, 1949, *FRUS*, 1949, I, p. 386

⁴¹ For more on U.S. Department of Defence budget cuts during the Truman years, see Keith D. MacFarland and David L. Roll, *Louis Johnson and the Arming of America: The Roosevelt and Truman Years*, (Bloomington and Indianapolis, 2005), pp. 188-233, and Hogan, *A Cross of Iron*, pp. 159-208

as a basis for U.S. foreign policy. At Truman's behest, and guided by Paul Nitze who had replaced George Kennan as the influential head of the State Department's Policy Planning Staff (PPS) in 1950, an interdepartmental working group set out in January 1950 to completely re-evaluate US policy against the Soviet threat. The conclusions of this study, National Security Council Report 68 (NSC-68), were foreboding: American interests and values were in serious jeopardy and if the United States did not quickly marshal the entirety of its military, political and economic might, the Soviet Union could irreversibly tip the balance of power in its favour.⁴²

Members of the NSC-68 committee, or State-Defence Policy Review Group, included officials from the State and Defence Departments, the National Security Council and select outside consultants. Some -- notably James Conant, President of Harvard University and a member of the General Advisory Committee of the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission, and Chester Bernard, President of the Rockefeller Foundation -- acknowledged that the threats facing the U.S. were overblown, that American economic strength and industrial capabilities were understated and the goals set by Nitze -- the restoration of freedom to all nations dominated by Moscow -- were "too high." Thus, the situation appeared more critical than was the case.⁴³ Acheson, however, sought to convince both the public and the President that more drastic steps were needed to meet a burgeoning challenge. Truman was hesitant -- NSC-68 necessitated tripling the defence budget -- but Acheson believed it was important to exaggerate the threat as "the American people have a false sense of security, and do not realize that the world situation, which is called the cold war, is in fact a real war and that the

⁴² NSC-68, 7 April 1950, *FRUS*, I, 1950, pp. 235-292

⁴³ Record of the meeting of the State-Defence Policy Review Group, 2 March 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, (*FRUS*), 1950, I, p. 177; Record of the meeting of the State-Defence Policy Review Group, 10 March 1950, *FRUS*, 1950, I, p. 191

Soviet Union has one purpose in mind and this is world domination.”⁴⁴ Such concerns were not only crafted to frighten the public. Some conservative State Department officials such as Conant observed that even if the U.S. won a war against the USSR, it might still lose its freedom as a nation and its “national destiny” would be destroyed.⁴⁵

The rhetorical devices used in NSC-68 closely reflect those used in previous years to define the nature of the ideological conflict. As Nitze noted in the document, “it is always useful to remind ourselves that during the course of the war [World War II], the Kremlin concluded that the US would emerge as the citadel of the non-Soviet world and therefore the primary enemy against which the USSR would of necessity have to wage a life-and-death struggle.”⁴⁶ What was at stake was “the fulfillment or destruction not only of this Republic but of civilization itself.” Subsequently, the report claimed the American people must “assure the integrity and vitality of our free society...to fight if necessary to defend our way of life, for which as in the Declaration of Independence, “with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.”” The section outlining the fundamental purpose of the United States twice stated the nation’s chief goals were to uphold the “essential elements of individual liberty” as established by the U.S. Constitution. The use of the terms “free” and “freedom” were so pervasive as to be employed seventeen times on one page when discussing the nature of the East-West divide.⁴⁷ These allusions were not uncommon. As Michael Hogan has noted in his study on the national security discourse during the Truman years, both Republicans and Democrats in Congress, as well as leading intellectuals from across the

⁴⁴ Memorandum of Conversation, 24 March 1950, *FRUS*, 1950, I, p. 207

⁴⁵ Record of the meeting of the State-Defence Policy Review Group, 2 March 1950, *FRUS*, I, 1950, p. 177

⁴⁶ “Recent Soviet Moves,” 8 February 1950, *FRUS*, 1950, I, p. 145

⁴⁷ NSC-68, 7 April 1950, cited above

ideological spectrum, regularly framed the discussion of security around themes encapsulated in the U.S. Constitution and the myth of the Founding Fathers.⁴⁸ The singular objective of U.S. foreign policy thus was to preserve the idealized version of what they believed already existed.

To preserve the *status quo*, U.S. leadership had to ensure the security of those regions linked to the American 'way of life'. One of the main problems with this approach, as some would discover during the Korean War, was the great difficulty in differentiating vital from non-vital interests. Although Europe took precedence in American security policy during the Truman administration, interests had theoretically expanded so far as to be near indefinite. Even prior to the startling detonation of the USSR's first atomic weapon and the establishment of the PRC in 1949 – events which pushed the State Department to increase its containment efforts – bureaucrats at the PPS maintained that:

1. U.S. security and welfare are closely bound up with the peace and security of the world community. Aggression, anywhere, may jeopardize the security of the U.S. Such aggression may be direct, i.e. through armed force, or indirect, i.e. through measures short of armed force by one nation to deprive another of its independence.
2. Another world war would probably be a crippling blow to civilization.
3. Even with sincere and determined efforts to settle international differences by peaceful means, aggression, direct or indirect, may occur which would present such a critical threat to the security of the United States as to require the use of armed force.⁴⁹

Evidently, America's ability to underwrite the security of all non-communist states imperative to preserving liberalism at home. The administration publically clarified that it was impossible to politically or economically support all free (read: non-communist) nations at all times. As noted by Undersecretary of State Robert Lovett in 1948, "the line must be

⁴⁸ Hogan, *A Cross of Iron*, pp. 7-8, 420-421

⁴⁹ "Premises and Conclusions Relating to Peace and U.S. Security", 22 March 1949, *FRUS*, I, 1949, p. 270

drawn somewhere or the United States will find itself in the position of underwriting the security of the whole world.”⁵⁰ This same argument would be made many times before the Korean War by critics concerned by the alarmist nature of U.S. foreign policy as advocated by State Department Sovietologists George Kennan and Charles Bohlen, yet this did not affect the presentation of these ideas or the claim that the U.S. would defend free peoples everywhere.⁵¹ In practice, the U.S. was not compelled to act at the onset of all threats. Instead, there remained a fundamental tension between the stated objectives of American foreign policy goals and the recognition by some that the US would not always be able to fulfill them. As a result, it became increasingly apparent that ‘freedom’ itself was not what was at stake, but America’s reputation as the defender of freedom.

Secretary of State Acheson applied this line of reasoning to his policy in the Far East. In two speeches delivered in January and March 1950 respectively, Acheson reaffirmed the U.S. commitment to preserve a world system based on the premises of American liberalism and oppose oppression.⁵² Interestingly, his 12 January speech to the National Press Club has received popular attention from scholars of the Korean War for his claim that the peninsula lay outside America’s “defensive perimeter” – which did include Japan, the Aleutians and the Philippines. However, the corollary to this statement which ostensibly excluded Korea from U.S. protection was as follows:

So far as the military security of other areas in the Pacific can be concerned, it must be clear that no person can guarantee these areas against

⁵⁰ Lovett cited in Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, p. 46

⁵¹ Kennan tried to warn Acheson in a memorandum on January 5, 1950, that the loss of certain Asian states along the periphery: “it would not necessarily be fatal or irreparable, from our standpoint, and no cause either for despair or lack of self-confidence... World realities have greater tolerances than we commonly suppose against ambitious schemes of world domination.” See *FRUS*, 1950, I, pp. 131-132; Charles Bohlen, *Witness to History, 1929-1969*, (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1973), p. 307

⁵² Hume Wrong to Lester Pearson, 24 March 1950, “U.S. China Policy” file, Department of External Affairs Records (RG 25), vol. 6031, file 50293-40 pt. 1, Library and Archives Canada (LAC)

military attack. But it must also be clear that such a guarantee is hardly sensible or necessary within the realm of practical relationship. Should such an attack occur – one hesitates to say where such an armed attack could come from – the initial reliance must be on the people attacked to resist it and *then upon the commitments of the entire civilized world under the Charter of the United Nations...to protect their independence against from outside aggression.*⁵³

Italics have been added to emphasize that Korea's protection was still to be maintained by the collective security of the West. Acheson had good reason to modify his approach to containment for American resources, as Lovett noted, were limited. But Acheson's conservative critics demanded that freedom be protected everywhere without bankrupting the United States. One such critic, Senator William Knowland (R – California), made clear in early January 1950 that "Communism is destructive of human liberty everywhere in the world. It is no less destructive in China or Korea than it is in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Hungary, Rumania or Bulgaria."⁵⁴ Two weeks later, however, Senator Adolph Sabath (D – Illinois) complained about the already huge costs of defending Korea and expressed doubt that additional funding would be worthwhile. Other Congressmen upheld the view that pouring more money into "rat holes" such as Korea would only sink the U.S. further into debt and undermine the liberty of American taxpayers.⁵⁵ Thus, in January 1950, Acheson had to negotiate a compromise between defending liberties abroad while convincing conservatives that he was not undermining the freedom of the American electorate through heavy taxation.⁵⁶

If the United States viewed the Soviet Union with some suspicion in 1945, suspicion

⁵³ Acheson Press Club Speech, 12 January 1950, "U.S. China Policy" file, RG 25, vol. 6031, file 50293-40 pt. 1, LAC

⁵⁴ *Congressional Record : Proceedings and Debates of the 81st Congress, Second Session*, vol. 96, pt. 1, (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1950), p. 79

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 19 January 1950, pp. 631-633

⁵⁶ Stueck, *The Korean War*, pp. 35-36; Robert Beisner, *Dean Acheson: A Life in the Cold War*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 266-276

became an obsession by the summer of 1950. Mao Zedong's victory in China had empowered Stalin with a new sense of "authoritarian romanticism" – a fact that was not lost on the Washington defense establishment. As well, the Berlin Blockade and the communist takeover of Czechoslovakia demonstrated to policymakers that the Soviet threat was increasing, not receding.⁵⁷ The administration was convinced that USSR was concerned primarily with "weakening the world power position of the U.S." in relation to Stalin's empire.⁵⁸ Increasingly, the conflict slipped into two ideologically-opposed systems that sought to expand their international influence for the sake of security.⁵⁹ The ideological element of the Cold War during Truman's years is reflective, not only the nature of the Soviet system and the hardening of the balance of power, but also to the increasing importance of U.S. prestige in the administration's containment strategy. However, the failure of these officials to see nuances in the international communist movement led Truman to adopt a policy that was more confrontational than US allies would have liked. In particular, the conclusion that the USSR was intent on destroying the political and moral foundations of the United States, combined with the paranoia that all forms of communism were firmly directed by Moscow, compelled President Truman and his most influential aides to see a direct challenge to American values in every Soviet move.

Images of the Other: Threats to U.S. Values, 1946-1950

By early 1946, as U.S. faith in Soviet assurances diminished, the theoretical foundation for a new hard-line policy against the Soviet Union was received in Washington. George

⁵⁷ Gaddis, *We Now Know*, pp. 47-48, 289-290

⁵⁸ "Study Prepared by the Director of the Policy Planning Staff (Nitze)", 8 February 1950, *FRUS*, 1950, I, p. 145

⁵⁹ Marc Selverstone, *Constructing the Monolith: The United States, Great Britain, and International Communism, 1945-1950*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009); Melvyn Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind: the United States, the Soviet Union and the Cold War*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007), pp. 82-83

Kennan, a State Department envoy in Moscow, offered policymakers a perceptive interpretation of Soviet intransigence that defined East-West relations for decades in his infamous “Long Telegram.” Although he did not mention American values, Kennan had much to say about the communist system and how it should be countered. In his telegram, the author explained that conciliation and negotiation with the Kremlin was a fruitless pursuit as what the United States said or did mattered little to the communist ruling elite. Instead, its behaviour was dictated by “inner-Russian necessities” that long pre-dated the Second World War. The Soviet Union would suspect the political and economic motives of Western capitalist states for an indefinite period of time and these insecurities were bolstered by the communist party in order to legitimize its domestic authority. Most importantly, Kennan advised the State Department to “contain” the Soviet Union, to deny it any further expansion, and to allow for communism to destroy itself from within.⁶⁰

Kennan’s message was appropriately timed. The Long Telegram, received just as the US and the USSR were moving from “erstwhile allies to major rivals,” was viewed favourably by Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal who had the telegram copied and distributed to hundreds of key administration figures.⁶¹ Nevertheless, the execution of containment as it was envisioned by Kennan relied on many assumptions integral to its implementation that many of its supporters, including Dean Acheson, did not fully appreciate. Although Acheson noted that Kennan’s “recommendations...were of no help,” he acknowledged that the Sovietologist’s appraisal of the Soviet threat “could not have been better.”⁶² This selective adoption was made worse by the very nature of Kennan’s arguments

⁶⁰ Kennan to the State Department, 22 February 1946, *FRUS*, 1946, II, pp. 699-709

⁶¹ Quotation from David Mayers, *George Kennan and the Dilemmas of US Foreign Policy*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 105. See also Kennan, *Memoirs: 1925-1950*, p. 295

⁶² Acheson, *Present at the Creation*, p. 151

which some have classified as giving the “illusions of coherence.” The ideas set forth not only by Kennan but later the PPS and NSC were often ill-defined and unaccommodating to subtlety.⁶³ In the end, the State Department borrowed those elements of the original and incomplete containment strategy that it found useful and discarded the less desirable portions.

One of Kennan’s basic observations was that Soviet foreign policy was not governed by Marxist ideology. The ruling class certainly used Marxism as a “fig leaf” to control the Russian population and to justify its actions, but traditional neuroses about external threats and security dating back to Tsarist times were the true source of Soviet conduct. Second, the United States should set limits to its security program by securing only those vital economic centres – such as the North Atlantic powers, Germany, Japan, North Africa and regions of the Middle East abundant in raw materials – from communist subversion. Any attempt to safeguard all interests along the USSR’s vast periphery, he argued, would be fruitless and perhaps even dangerous as it would allow the Soviets to define US interests and to determine the time and location of any future conflict.⁶⁴ Third, he observed that communism was a virus similar to a “malignant parasite which feeds only on diseased tissue.” American society – and those societies deemed vital to U.S. security interests – must remain healthy and robust. That is, the foreign and domestic policy goals of the Truman administration should promote prosperity in confidence at home and abroad, as was the goal of the Marshall Plan. Kennan also argued for the need for a total war against the Red Menace – diplomatic, economic and psychological pressure in tandem with military power -- in order

⁶³ Scott Lucas and Kaetan Mistry, “Illusions of Coherence: George F. Kennan, U.S. Strategy and Political Warfare in the Early Cold War, 1946-1950,” *Diplomatic History*, vol. 33, no. 1 (January 2009), pp. 39-66. For a similar interpretation, see Wilson Miscramble, *George F. Kennan and the Making of American Foreign Policy, 1947-1950*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992) , pp. xiii-xiv

⁶⁴ Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, pp. 28-30; Mayers, *George F. Kennan and the Dilemmas of U.S. Foreign Policy*, pp. 119-122

to divide the communist bloc. In October 1947, he explained that “it is not Russian military power which is threatening us. It is Russian political power.... If it is not entirely a military threat, I doubt that it can be effectively met entirely by military means.”⁶⁵ Kennan believed that victory over the Soviet Union could not be won on the battlefield. In later years, he commented that the ambiguity of his thoughts left many believing that he supported the use of military resistance against Russia when in fact he had advocated “the political containment of a political threat.”⁶⁶

In the United States, more so than in any other Western democracy, the evils of communist imperialism were presented dichotomously to the virtues of American liberalism and each view reinforced the other throughout the late 1940s. Public frustration over the failure to reach agreement over post-war Germany at the Council of Foreign Ministers meeting in Moscow in late 1945 and Winston Churchill’s “Iron Curtain” speech in Missouri in March 1946 significantly shifted the debate from one of political interests to ideological conflict, leaving the U.S. to adopt a more belligerent attitude.⁶⁷ The Soviet Union and communism – and the two nouns were often used synonymously – were vilified in the press. Senator Tom Connally (D – Texas), Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, stated in 1949 that, “Totalitarian and communistic powers have publically announced their policy to be a conquest of the entire globe and its subjection to their economic and political theory.” His associate, Arthur Vandenberg (R – Michigan), echoed similar sentiments when he charged that the “civilization founded on democracy, individual liberty, and the rule of

⁶⁵ National War College Lecture, “Soviet Diplomacy,” October 6, 1947, in *Measures Short of War: The George F. Kennan Lectures at the National War College, 1946-1947*, eds. Giles D. Harlow and George C. Maerz, (Washington: National Defence University Press, 1990), p. 260

⁶⁶ Kennan, *Memoirs: 1925-1950*, pp. 358-359

⁶⁷ Selverstone, *Constructing the Monolith*, pp. 38-40

law,” must stop “greedy communism, at home and abroad.”⁶⁸ Anti-communism in the U.S. before the Korean War reached its apex when Acheson was accused of supporting Soviet spies in the State Department and attacked personally by Senator Joseph McCarthy (R – Wisconsin) in early 1950. Acheson defended his friend Alger Hiss from allegations of perjury, thus inciting the “attack of the primitives” who demanded his impeachment.⁶⁹ The event forced Acheson to prove his anti-communist beliefs time and again afterwards.

Unsurprisingly, this heated political climate led to an exaggeration of Soviet intentions and strength. The NSC, convinced the U.S. was facing an existential struggle, remarked in September 1949 that Moscow “seeks only the maintenance and extension of Soviet power through all means at its disposal, including a resort to armed force if necessary... [it] ruthlessly exploits every weakness of those who oppose its domination, but adjusts its tactics when it encounters effective strength.”⁷⁰ Weakness had to be avoided as it would only encourage the Soviets to expand aggressively. But strength came not only in the form of military might, but moral power as well. The NSC also claimed the Soviets sought to destroy America’s role as the leader of the free world using “political, economic and psychological warfare.” Additionally, the United States should be careful not to lose “prestige and influence through vacillation or appeasement or lack of skill and imagination in the conduct of its foreign policy of by shirking world responsibilities.”⁷¹ NSC reports were not always specific about the nature of the Soviet threat. Although scholars have

⁶⁸ Senators cited in “United States Policy and the U.S.S.R.” July 1949, Office of Public Affairs, Historical Research Division, “Russia: Moscow” file, President’s Secretary Files (PSF): Foreign Affairs File, Box 164, Harry S Truman Library (HSTL)

⁶⁹ Beisner, *Dean Acheson*, 305-313; Acheson, *Present at the Creation*, pp. 359-361

⁷⁰ “Governmental Programs in National Security and International Affairs for the Fiscal Year 1951,” September 29, 1949, *FRUS*, 1949, I, p. 386

⁷¹ NSC 20/4, “U.S. Objectives with Respect to the Soviet Union to Counter Threat to U.S. Security,” November 23, 1948, *FRUS*, 1948, I, p. 662. These views were reiterated as U.S. policy the following year, Memorandum from George Butler “Notes on the JCS Paper”, 31 May 1949, *FRUS*, 1949, I, p. 323

progressed in demonstrating Soviet culpability for many of the Cold War's earlier crises, the inaccessibility of ample primary Soviet documentation makes it difficult for historians to investigate the true nature of Stalin's foreign policy objectives.⁷² What is important is that officials in key positions – Truman, Acheson, Nitze and other members of the security bureaucracy – were *convinced* the Soviet Union sought to destroy the United States, that it thrived on weakness and that to thwart communist designs of world domination, American must maintain the greatest strength possible.⁷³

NSC-68 and the increasingly apocalyptic nature of American perceptions of Soviet communism were spurred chiefly by pressures emanating from the Far East and from domestic politics. Arguably, these events also corresponded with a shift in US priorities from the defence of freedom to prestige. In September 1949, a US weather reconnaissance plane detected substantial radioactivity over the north-eastern Pacific Ocean near the Russian coast. U.S. scientists later confirmed that the radiation had come from an atomic weapon that had been tested the previous month.⁷⁴ Prior to this, the best intelligence estimates did not believe the USSR would not be able to develop nuclear weapons systems until at least 1953, and scientists asserted that American security could be maintained with U.S. technological superiority.⁷⁵ Even though the Red Army possessed unprecedented power on land, the United States had the atomic monopoly and a superior air force capable of delivering these weapons worldwide. Thus, Washington had assumed, drastic measures to increase its defences were unnecessary. However, both US security and prestige were threatened by an enemy assumed to have been scientifically less-advanced. An article in

⁷² See in particular Gaddis, *We Now Know*, chapters one and two.

⁷³ "United States Policy and the U.S.S.R." January 1950, Office of Public Affairs, Historical Research Division, "Russia: Moscow" file, Foreign Affairs File, PSF, Box 164, HSTL

⁷⁴ McFarland and Boll, *Louis Johnson and the Arming of America*, pp. 214-215

⁷⁵ "Basic U.S. Security Resources Assumption," 1 June 1949, *FRUS*, 1949, I, pp. 339-340; "Record of the State-Department Policy Group," 20 March 1950, *FRUS*, 1950, I, p. 201

Time, published in October 1949, captured perfectly the mood of public and policymakers alike:

the news hit the nation with the jarring impact of a fear suddenly become fact. The comfortable feeling of U.S. monopoly was gone forever. The fact was too big and too brutally simple for quick digestion. What had been a threat for some time in the future, hard to visualize, easy to forget, had become a threat for today, to be lived with.⁷⁶

As the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), Truman's closest military advisors, now thought the Soviets could launch a "major attack" at anytime, and President instructed the PPS to completely review the country's entire strategic position in light of this new crucial factor. The final result of this review was NSC-68.⁷⁷

The "loss of China" to Mao Zedong's communist forces in the autumn of 1949 also had grave implications for the reconsideration of U.S. national security policy and subsequent military action in Korea. The PRC's creation added significantly to the resources of international socialism in a region suffering from political and economic instability. More importantly, the psychological effects of this event in the United States were remarkable. China had long been an emotional issue for many Americans. As such the perceived failure of the Truman administration to defend its ally in the Chinese civil war, Nationalist leader Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, opened it up to scathing attacks from the press and Republicans in Congress.⁷⁸ Senator McCarthy stated that the "Communists and queers" who ran American foreign policy had "sold China into atheistic slavery."⁷⁹ McCarthy's colleague, Senator Knowland, remarked that "despite the Secretary of State and the

⁷⁶ "The Thunderclap," *Time*, 3 October 1949

⁷⁷ Truman to Acheson, 31 January 1950, *FRUS*, 1950, I, pp. 141-142; "Record of the Eighth Meeting (1950) of the Policy Planning Staff of the Department of State," 2 February 1950, *FRUS*, 1950, I, p. 143

⁷⁸ Acheson, *Present at the Creation*, pp. 335-358

⁷⁹ McCarthy cited in Beisner, *Dean Acheson*, p. 305

President, the Republic of China continues to have the good will and prayers of the American people in the struggle against communism.”⁸⁰ Truman and Acheson hoped that the release of the *China White Paper* in August 1949 would demonstrate the United States had done all it could since 1945 to improve the Chinese situation and had not wavered in its support for Chiang. But the criticism did not abate, and the administration was left vulnerable to charges that it had failed to defend an anti-communist ally.⁸¹

Although Asia was regarded as extremely vulnerable to communist subversion due to its poor economic and political development, US Far Eastern containment strategy was less popular and funded more modestly than that for Western Europe. Two reasons explain this discrepancy. The first is cultural: the East did not possess social and political characteristics similar to those of the United States. Commitments to Europe were justified. As General Dwight D. Eisenhower reminded President Truman in January 1951 during a private discussion concerning NATO’s future, “Western Europe is the seat of our culture and our civilization. Our literature, our art, our religions, our system of government and our ideas of justice and democracy all come from Europe.”⁸² Naturally, these states made precious allies in the Cold War and there was little serious opposition to maintaining them as such.

However, relations with the West were strongly cultivated for another more practical reason: many influential U.S. officials were convinced that any Soviet offensive would occur in Europe, not Asia. There was some opposition to a “Europe-first” strategy by State Department officials such as Dean Rusk, Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs in 1950 and one of Canada’s most trusted State Department contacts during the Korean War.

⁸⁰ *Congressional Record*, vol. 96, pt. 1, pg. 81

⁸¹ Acheson, *Present at the Creation*, pp. 302-307; *The China White Paper: August 1949*, 2 vols., reprint, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1967)

⁸² “Meeting of General Eisenhower with the President and the Cabinet Wednesday, January 31, 1951,” *DHTP*, vol. 17, p. 306

Rusk believed that Acheson was too much of an “Atlantic man... [who] overlooked the brown, black, and yellow peoples of the world.”⁸³ Atlanticism, as the outlook came to be known, influenced many high-ranking diplomats and advisors that shaped national security thinking, including also Kennan and Nitze.⁸⁴ This appreciation of global strategy (shared by most Canadian officials) was followed by a selective application of U.S. core values in the Far East. The rhetoric that surrounded American commitments to Europe did not translate to the Asian theatre. Instead, the State Department displayed a hesitancy to fully support free peoples, while confusion over how to handle the Chinese communists and unreliable allies on Formosa and Korea plagued national security thinking. Should the U.S. support “freedom” by backing ineffective nationalist governments or cut its losses in these peripheral regions? What consequences would cooperating with communists have on American prestige? As would become clear in June 1950, the lack of precise understanding of U.S. core values and threats guaranteed that Truman’s national security program did not properly incorporate Asia into its considerations.

In 1947-1948, the Truman Doctrine, which offered \$400 million in economic aid to Greece and Turkey on the assumption that American economic power could stabilize shaky anti-communist regimes in vulnerable states, and the Marshall Plan, worth \$13 billion to Europe and based on a similar philosophy, were America’s first major acts of containment. This aid to Europe was based on the assumption that the Soviets sought to expand opportunistically – that is, in the weakest regions. These expensive efforts, however, were not acts of charity but of security. Influential Republican Senators Arthur Vandenberg (R –

⁸³ Dean Rusk cited in Thomas J. Schoenbaum, *Waging War and Peace: Dean Rusk in the Truman, Kennedy, and Johnson Years*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988), p. 193

⁸⁴ William Walker III, *National Security and Core Values in American History*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 2009), pp. 104-105

Michigan) and Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr. (R – Massachusetts) supported these efforts. Vandenberg, whom the Truman administration relied upon for bipartisan support for its foreign policy in Congress, stated in regards to the Truman Doctrine that, “if we desert the President of the United States at [this] moment we cease to have any influence in the world forever.”⁸⁵ Britain made clear to Washington that it was broke: industrial output, food production and standards of living were all on the decline in 1947.⁸⁶ Electoral successes of communist parties in France and Italy further encouraged substantive intervention by the U.S. authorities. As President Truman observed as the Marshall Plan was being developed: “If communism is allowed to absorb free nations, then we would be isolated from our sources of supply and detached from our friends.” Conversely, the Soviet Union would have a strategic advantage with these resources.⁸⁷

The Soviet coup in Czechoslovakia in February 1948 brought the British government to the American doorstep again. Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin petitioned Truman’s administration for a U.S. military guarantee, citing that while the Marshall Plan was a step in the right direction, Europe required nothing less than “the spiritual consolidation of western civilization” to meet the Soviet challenge.⁸⁸ By this, of course, he meant a collective security pact. Some State Department officials were sceptical. Kennan wrote to Acheson in January 1948 arguing that, “[m]ilitary union should not be the starting point. It should flow from the political, economic and spiritual union – not vice versa.” Ostensibly, he felt the links between the U.S. and Europe in these areas was not yet strong enough.⁸⁹ In addition, argued Kennan, such actions would only confirm U.S. aggressiveness to Stalin, which could only

⁸⁵ Vandenberg cited in Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power*, p. 146

⁸⁶ Offner, *Another Such Victory*, p. 214; Jones, “*A New Kind of War*”, pp. 31-35

⁸⁷ Truman cited in Michael Lind, *The American Way of Strategy: U.S. Foreign Policy and the American Way of Life*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 112

⁸⁸ Gallman to Marshall, 22 December 1948, *FRUS*, 1948, III, p. 2

⁸⁹ Memorandum from Kennan to Acheson, 20 January 1948, *FRUS*, 1948, III, p. 7

serve to increase tensions between the powers.⁹⁰ A PPS report from March 1948 concluded that the US should not get involved in any defence alliances but should offer the Western Union only “assurance of armed support” – an evasive promise.⁹¹ Such reservations were warranted, perhaps, since the United States had traditionally avoided entangling alliances. However, according to Truman’s military advisors, issues of national security quickly took precedence over history.⁹²

Top-secret negotiations between American, British and Canadian officials took place in the Pentagon during March and April 1948. Contrary to Bevin’s pronouncements, U.S. officials never contemplated anything more than a military alliance to “stiffen [the] morale” of dejected states such as Italy and to deter Soviet aggression.⁹³ The Vandenberg Resolution, passed in Congress in June 1948 with the crucial support of the Senator for whom it was named, sanctioned the Truman administration to integrate the U.S. in regional defence agreements if it was considered essential for the preservation of national security and “fundamental freedoms.”⁹⁴ Article 5 of the resulting North Atlantic Treaty, which stated that “an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all,” was the most controversial as some believed that it overruled Congressional authority to declare war.⁹⁵ The American negotiators – Acheson with State Department officials John Hickerson, Theodore Achilles, George Kennan and Charles Bohlen – fiddled with wording to appease key Congressional figures such as Vandenberg. “What was armed attack? Who would determine what was done?” – these sorts

⁹⁰ Walter Isaacson and Evan Thomas, *The Wise Men: Six Friends and the World They Made*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986), pp. 447-448

⁹¹ PPS 27, 23 March 1948, *FRUS*, 1948, III, pp. 61-63

⁹² Memorandum from the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) to Secretary of Defence James Forrestal, 5 January 1949, *FRUS*, 1949, III, pp. 10-11

⁹³ Memorandum from Acheson to Truman, 12 March 1948, *FRUS*, 1948, III, p. 49

⁹⁴ Senate Resolution 239 (Vandenberg Resolution), 11 June 1948, *FRUS*, 1948, III, pp. 135-136

⁹⁵ Memorandum of Conversation, 8 February 1949, *FRUS*, 1949, III, pp. 69-78

of issues dominated treaty negotiations on the American side.⁹⁶ Others, including isolationist Senator Forrest C. Donnell (R – Missouri), spoke vehemently against “giving carte blanche assurances” which would limit America’s freedom of action in the event of conflict.⁹⁷ Such assurances as the North Atlantic Treaty, he argued, could destroy America’s democratic liberality and the values it was designed to protect.⁹⁸ Despite the reluctance of some legislators to commit American force to defend Europe, NATO was formed on 4 April 1949.

NSC-68 did more to shape the administration’s methods to containing communism in Korea than any other policy document. Essentially, Nitze’s report called for infinitely more money, men and armaments. Unless the United States ended the decline of western alliance, the balance of power could shift irreversibly in favour of the USSR. The administration should exponentially increase its military might and urged its allies to do the same. No dollar figure was attached to the plan, yet its recommendations went contrary to the fiscal conservatism of Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson and even President Truman. Johnson, who regularly fought with Acheson over the control of national security policy, was allegedly furious with the Secretary of State for undermining his authority and reversing the budget cuts he had been spearheading for over a year.⁹⁹ Since spending amounts were not made explicit, NSC-68 received support from key State Department administrators such as Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs George Perkins.¹⁰⁰ The plan was signed without debate once the invasion of the ROK confirmed to Truman that drastic new programs were needed to maintain the American preponderance of power.

⁹⁶ Minutes of meeting between Acheson and Senators Connolly and Vandenberg, 8 February 1949, *FRUS*, 1949, III, p. 73

⁹⁷ Donnell cited in Don Cook, *Forging the Alliance: NATO, 1945-1950*, (New York: Arbour House), pp. 210-211. For more on Article 5, see *ibid*, pp. 201-215

⁹⁸ Hogan, *A Cross of Iron*, p. 325

⁹⁹ McFarland and Roll, *Louis Johnson and the Arming of America*, pp. 229-233

¹⁰⁰ Perkins to Acheson, 3 April 1950, *FRUS*, 1950, I, pp. 213-214; Thompson to Acheson, *ibid*, pp. 212-213; Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power*, pp. 356-358

The rhetoric-laden policy documents beg the question: was freedom truly universal? The administration stated yes, but its actions reveal different priorities. China was the greatest problem spot for the State Department in Asia and the ascension of the PRC put pressure on the U.S. to act decisively against the communists but without alienating the possibility of a Sino-Soviet split. “Titoism” – or the promotion of anti-Soviet nationalist communism inspired by Yugoslavia – was a priority for Acheson but was not actually implemented in Asia during the Truman administration.¹⁰¹ But aspirations did not produce results and a division about how to handle the Far East precluded progress. Some in Congress recognized the failure of the Truman administration to develop a coherent policy in the region. Congressman Charles B. Deane (D – North Carolina) had recently returned from Asia as an envoy from the Special Subcommittee of the House Committee on Expenditures on a fact-finding mission throughout the region unimpressed with progress in U.S. policy. In the forwarding letter to his extensive report on the state of US programs in that region, he chided the government for being ill-prepared to react to a “serious emergency.” The letter, dated 19 October 1949, argued that dealing with communism was paramount, and “if we are to remain true to our heritage of freedom, however, and with missionary zeal dedicate our policies...to the principles of the advancement of human freedom,” then it was not enough to “check communism” militarily but to use the whole of American moral and economic power to roll it back.¹⁰²

Questions relating to the communist victory in China meant that U.S. security interests were muddled and a lack of coherence and direction resulted as matters unfolded faster than bureaucrats could process them. Some State Department experts believed the

¹⁰¹ Qing, *From Allies to Enemies*, pp. 96-99

¹⁰² Charles Deane to Truman, 19 October 1949, “Far East” file, PSF: Foreign Affairs File, Box 154, HSTL

U.S. could wean the new regime away from Moscow and thus maximize American influence in Asia. Others, such as Harold Strassen, the former Governor of Minnesota, completely rejected recognition as it would entail the “abandonment of a Government which has provided a greater measure of democracy and individual freedom than has any Communist government.” Early recognition, he continued, could be understood by America’s enemies and allies alike as “capitulation.” Only a small minority took a “wait and see” approach to the situation. Further, this document acknowledged that public opinion was similarly divided.¹⁰³ No one, least of all Secretary Acheson, was sure just how closely associated Mao was with Moscow, and whether it would be advantageous to recognize this new revolutionary government or to oppose it on ideological grounds.¹⁰⁴

The thorny issue of recognition was complicated by the continued presence of Chiang’s Nationalists on the island of Formosa. If the US could not mount an offensive to roll back the PRC’s boundaries, it could protect its ally on a small territory just one hundred miles off China’s coast. To many U.S. officials, including Acheson, Chiang was a lost cause, a poor investment, and an incompetent leader that had lost popular support in China. Further, his own government and armed forces were divided.¹⁰⁵ To others, however, notably Senator Vandenberg, Chiang was a great American ally and the State Department was appeasing communism by discontinuing support for the Nationalists. Henry Luce, the influential media mogul and Editor of *Time* magazine, a staunch supporter of the Chinese Nationalist regime, used his publications to shape public opinion against Truman and

¹⁰³ Memorandum by Gerald Stryker of the Office of Chinese Affairs, 2 November 1949, *FRUS*, 1949, IX, pp. 154-159

¹⁰⁴ Memorandum of Conversation, by the Secretary of State, 8 December 1949, *FRUS*, 1949, IX, pp. 219-220; From Beam to Secretary of State, 20 December 1949, *FRUS*, 1949, IX, pp. 229-230

¹⁰⁵ Strong to Acheson, 15 November 1949, *FRUS*, 1949, VIII, p. 593; Mayers, *Cracking the Monolith*, pp. 29-34

Acheson on the loss of China.¹⁰⁶ Kennan found the tactics of Vandenberg and Luce appalling, citing that “lofty pronouncements of communist tyranny, peace and democracy” were far removed from the “everyday pragmatic problems and anxiety” of dealing with these complex issues. Acheson, more practical with communism in Asia than in Europe, sympathized with Kennan in this matter.¹⁰⁷

But official opinion on Formosa was mostly divided. The JCS argued as early as February 1949 that losing the island to communists would be a severe blow to U.S. security interests. But they also warned that American forces should not be committed to its defence and declined to specify what the government should do in if the PRC attacked the island.¹⁰⁸ As Livingston Merchant, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, commented after PRC took over the mainland, if Formosa was successfully invaded, the U.S. should save face by providing a “calm and reasoned response” and taking the issue to the United Nations.¹⁰⁹ General Douglas MacArthur, who would lead UN forces during the early stages of the Korean War and played a critical role in shaping U.S. policy, disagreed. He noted only days before the North Korean attack that Formosa was a strategic necessity for the US that in the hands of communists it would provide an “unsinkable aircraft carrier and submarine tender ideally located to accomplish Soviet offensive strategy” and neutralize U.S. power on Okinawa.¹¹⁰ Truman had made it clear on 5 January 1950 that the U.S. would take a hands-off policy towards the island, claiming that Formosa could defend itself.¹¹¹ But

¹⁰⁶ Robert E. Herzstein, *Henry R. Luce, Time, and the American Crusade in Asia*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 97-111

¹⁰⁷ Kennan cited in Mayers, *Cracking the Monolith*, p. 34

¹⁰⁸ Memorandum by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of Defence, 10 February 1949, *FRUS*, 1949, IX, pp. 284-285

¹⁰⁹ Memorandum Merchant to Butterworth, 11 December 1949, *FRUS*, 1949, IX, pp. 431-432

¹¹⁰ Memorandum from MacArthur on Formosa, 14 June 1950, *FRUS*, 1950, VII, pp. 161-165

¹¹¹ Statement by the President, 5 January 1950, “China: 1950-1952” file, PSF: Foreign Affairs File, Box 151, HSTL

as the outbreak of hostilities in the region later that year demonstrated, Truman was not prepared to let the communists attack Formosa and vice versa. Until that point, the status of the island was still uncertain.

The Korean situation shared some similarities with that of China. The peninsula had been divided along the 38th Parallel after Japan's defeat in 1945, which left a power vacuum that was quickly filled by the victors. Soviet forces occupied the North and installed a communist, Kim Il-Sung, as leader. To the south, Syngman Rhee, an American-educated Korean nationalist and fervent anti-communist, gained control of the ROK with the aid of U.S. dollars and weapons. Initially, the U.S. did not want any responsibility for the region, but as Charles Deane noted in his summary of the Far Eastern situation, Korea's division and the continued Soviet presence made an American commitment necessary.¹¹² Truman hoped from 1947 until 1950 to continue economic aid to the fledgling Republic, claiming the ROK was "[the] democracies' forgotten front." In the *New York Times*, Truman stated that the southern half of Korea was in a "miserable state" comparable to that in Greece and Turkey while the presence of communist forces nearby made it essential to raise the standard of living in Korea.¹¹³ Moderate aid and political support was given to Seoul, but as William Stueck, the foremost international historian on the Korean War, American diplomacy in Korea had been "ambiguous" at best in 1949 and 1950. "Rhetoric was cheap, military involvement was not," noted Stueck. The U.S. Congress, unconvinced that sending American dollars to the ROK aided the national interest, vetoed \$10 million in additional military aid in January 1950 that would have strengthened the ROK's ability to defend itself

¹¹² Charles Deane to Truman, October 19, 1949, "Far East," PSF: Foreign Affairs File, Box 154, HSTL

¹¹³ Truman cited in William Stueck, *Rethinking the Korean War: A New Diplomatic and Strategic History*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), p. 42

against armed aggression.¹¹⁴ According to Senator John Vorys (R – Ohio), “we should not vote money down the Korean rat hole that will not save them militarily, [and] that will not add to our military security.”¹¹⁵ Acheson complained bitterly to Truman that without this financing, Korea could “collapse under totalitarian pressure.” Yet it is evident from the Secretary’s observations in this letter that he was more concerned about the damage that this veto would do to the morale of other more important allies in the Cold War.¹¹⁶ Contrary to Truman’s claims, Korea at this time was not as significant as Greece, Turkey or Germany in the grand scheme of US national security.

China, however, was a nation of great significance to many Americans and a particular pressure point used by Republicans in Congress to weaken the Truman administration. Korea was not. The consequence of this second-class standing was to put the political and strategic value of the peninsula in doubt. Military officials responsible for Korea’s occupation warned that it was inevitable that the USSR would eventually take over the entire country. “The Korean people,” argued Howard Peterson, assistant to the Secretary of the Army, suffered from “political immaturity” and the United States should extricate itself from the situation before it suffered “too great a loss of prestige.”¹¹⁷ The inadequacy of the Republic’s ruling elite was shared by many on the peninsula, according to Congressman Deane.¹¹⁸ Truman hoped to take the issue of Korean independence to the UN and pushed for the establishment of the United Nations Temporary Commission on Korea (UNTCOK) in 1947, a group in which Canada was to reluctantly take part. Few State Department officials believed UNTCOK would accomplish much. But some hoped that if the commission could

¹¹⁴ Stueck, *The Korean War*, p. 42

¹¹⁵ *Congressional Record*, vol. 96, pt. 1, p. 636

¹¹⁶ Acheson to Truman, 20 January 1950, “Korea [1948 – 1952]” File, Naval Aide to the President, 1945-1953, Subject File, Box 13, HSTL

¹¹⁷ Peterson cited in Stueck, *Rethinking the Korean War*, p. 49

¹¹⁸ Charles Deane to Truman, October 19, 1949, “Far East” file, PSF: Foreign Affairs File, Box 154, HSTL

bring democratic elections to the entire peninsula, the United States could quietly remove itself from the position as the ROK's patron and guarantor. However, if UNTCOK foundered, the U.S. could blame Soviet non-cooperation.¹¹⁹ Truman warned that if Canada failed to participate in this venture, the Soviet Union could exploit divisions and damage the prestige of Western unity.¹²⁰ Canada agreed to join the Korean commission, but its results were predictably inconsequential and the ROK remained under the trusteeship of an unenthusiastic patron.

Korea was not mentioned by name in NSC-68 or any other major national policy document before the invasion. Yet according to Nitze, this was unimportant. If the ROK was attacked by communist forces, the United States must intervene. Also, given the Republican assaults on Truman's Asian policy and the challenges to Acheson's anti-communist credentials, any hesitation in the face of aggression would damage the unity of American politics and U.S. credibility: a nation divided over its most basic national security aims could not be viewed externally by friends and foes alike as reliable. Within this framework, Truman's response to the transgression of the 38th Parallel is perfectly understood. Couched in White House rhetoric was the necessity to resist tyranny and for the U.S. to lead such resistance. Abstract notions of 'freedom' gave way to concrete greater concerns about America's ability to resist tyranny everywhere. As we will see, U.S. support for the ROK following the invasion of the DPRK on 25 June 1950 was intended to demonstrate that America's fundamental security concern – prestige – was non-negotiable. The challenge for the Truman administration, of course, was how to convince the UN, its allies and its communist opponents that these values were peaceful, democratic and universal.

¹¹⁹ Pearson to King, 4 January 1948, *Documents in Canadian Foreign Relations (DCER)*, vol. 14, ed. Hector Mackenzie, (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1994), pp. 141-144

¹²⁰ Truman to King, 5 January 1948, *ibid*, pp. 145-146

Chapter II: “Peace with Freedom”:

Canada and National Security before the Korean War

Canada did not share the burdens of leadership faced by the United States. Nor could its government come close to offering the sheer amount economic or military assistance to its allies as Truman’s administration had done. Although Ottawa and Washington enjoyed good relations after World War II, each possessed very different historical backgrounds, objectives and positions in the international arena which influenced their respective values, interests and threat assessments. As one DEA official noted in 1948 regarding NATO negotiations, while Canada also had a “way of life” that was threatened by communist expansion, it more resembled Western Europe than the US model.¹²¹ The Liberal governments of Prime Ministers William Lyon Mackenzie King and Louis St. Laurent thus advocated a cautious, moderate approach in world affairs while hoping to restrain the more ostentatious elements of U.S. foreign policy using the “functional principle.” Here, functionalism is defined as political influence in multilateral institutions should be “contingent upon the state’s interests, its prior contribution and its capacity for further involvement.”¹²² In short, the more resources a state put into an institution, the more leverage it had. Beginning from World War II and into the Korean War, the DEA used this principle to increase its influence in international affairs and restrain U.S. containment policy using multilateral organizations such as the UN or NATO. However, this strategy had limited success as Canada lacked the political and military power to compete with the U.S.

Like the U.S., Canada also made broad appeals to “freedom” and the virtues of

¹²¹ Canadian Papers for Meeting of Prime Ministers, October 1948, “‘Western Union’ and an Atlantic Pact: A Survey of Recent Developments,” 11 September 1948, RG 2, B 2 (Privy Council Office Papers), vol. 107, U-10-11, LAC

¹²² Adam Chapnick, “Principle for Profit: The Functional Principle and the Development of Canadian Foreign Policy, 1943-1947,” *Journal of Canadian Studies*, vol. 37, no. 2 (2002), p. 68

“Christian Civilization.” But Ottawa’s interest was in the process of freedom, not merely its realization. In other words, the international system’s structure was as important -- if not more important -- than the state autonomy that modern politics allowed. DEA officials emphasized Canadian sovereignty as their irreducible value. As such, they aimed to create an integrated multilateral system through which Canadian national sovereignty could be protected in a large coalition of like-minded powers.¹²³ Admittedly, how Canadians expressed these values was more subtle than those of their American counterparts. Still, a clear pattern quickly emerged in official correspondence that denoted above all else a clear pre-occupation with safeguarding Canadian *de facto* sovereignty in the arena of great power politics. The DEA’s efforts to maintain Canada’s *de facto* freedom through institutions were much stronger than its desire for freedom elsewhere. Thus, for St. Laurent, Pearson, Deputy Under Secretary of State Escott Reid, and others, guarding Canadian sovereignty was the DEA’s core value.

It was not that Canada did not fear the Soviet Union. The revelation of a Russian spy ring in Ottawa in September 1945, the Igor Gouzenko affair, prompted burgeoning anxiety in Canada and America about communist penetration and international socialism generally.¹²⁴ At the same time, frustration with the Soviets and their allies at the United Nations, plus the anti-democratic nature of Soviet control over its satellite states in Eastern Europe, convinced the DEA that Stalin had no interest in being part of a new peaceful world

¹²³ Lester Pearson Radio Broadcast, “A Policy for Peace,” 20 January 1949, MG 26 N 1, Lester B Pearson Papers (LBPP), vol. 2, LAC

¹²⁴ Igor Gouzenko was a Soviet cipher clerk working at the embassy in Ottawa. In September, 1945 he came to the Canadian government with documents about an active Soviet spy network in the Western powers. Initially, Prime Minister King not wanting to disturb relations with the Soviet Union, did not act on the matter. However, Gouzenko was taken into protective custody by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and offered sanctuary in Canada. See Leon Mayrand to Louis St. Laurent, 16 April 1945, *DCER*, vol. 11, edited by Hector Mackenzie, pp. 1962-1967; Reg Whitaker and Gary Marcuse, *Cold War Canada: the Making of a National Insecurity State*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), pp. 56-80; James Eayrs, *The Defence of Canada: Growing Up Allied*, vol. 4, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), pp. 5-7

order and would likely disrupt international stability when it appeared most opportune. But the words and actions of DEA officials were more subdued than those of the State Department. Canada's moderate approach was a result of several factors. Unlike the position taken by the Truman administration as exemplified by NSC-68, Canada's sovereignty was never bound to maintaining freedom everywhere. In fact, only North America and select European countries were essential to Canada's security. Policymakers narrowly defined national interests and were hesitant to adopt an overtly aggressive position in the Cold War for fear that they might destabilize a fragile environment. As a result, Canada was more accommodating to the Soviet Union and independent communist governments such as the PRC than the United States. Pearson and his cohorts calculated that aggression could be best contained from within the system, not outside of it.

The evidence also suggests that the DEA was surprisingly critical of President Truman's diplomacy. As the rhetoric emanating from the White House and Congress became more alarmist and belligerent, Canadian bureaucrats grew more apprehensive. These concerns brought several high-ranking officials to attempt to moderate American behaviour through multilateral mechanisms. That is not to say that the U.S. was viewed as a military threat, only that Canada's government perceived many Truman administration policies to be ill-advised and counter-intuitive. Thus, the "constraint thesis," applied by Denis Stairs to Canada-U.S. relations between during the Korean War, can also be applied to the pre-war period.

Impressions and Integration: Ottawa's Early Experiences with Washington, 1940-1947

The Second World War brought unprecedented cooperation on defence issues between Canadian and American officials. Within the conflict's first year, Great Britain

proved itself too poor and weak to guarantee Canada's security. As a result, Ottawa looked south.¹²⁵ Yet the more Canada and the U.S. two states collaborated on continental defence, the more the differences between the two became apparent. The Ogdensburg Agreement, signed on 17 August 1940 between U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Prime Minister Mackenzie King, created the Permanent Joint Board on Defence (PJBD) – a senior advisory body comprised of Canadian and U.S. military officials – and established a North American continental defence system.¹²⁶ After Germany's invasion of the USSR in June 1941, the PJBD recommended that Canada work with the U.S. to develop transport and military facilities in Alaska. The project had been discussed in the 1930s, but for reasons of sovereignty, Ottawa had resisted pressure from Washington concerning a northern transport route. But new threats tipped the scales in Roosevelt's favour. The North-West Staging Route and the Alaska Highway project brought a significant American military presence to Canada's north. Indeed, the DEA even complained in 1944 that the U.S. Army in Yukon was supposedly calling itself the "United States Army of Occupation."¹²⁷ Worse still, the infrastructure might be used to implement U.S. foreign policy decisions which Canada might not want to partake, notably a pre-emptive war against the Soviet Union. Escott Reid was most livid about the project: "We have not won from London our complete freedom to make our own decisions on every issue – including that of peace and war – in order to become a colony of Washington." Hugh Keenleyside, the Assistant Under-Secretary of State for

¹²⁵ J.L. Granatstein, *How Britain's Weakness Forced Canada into the Arms of the United States*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), p. 2

¹²⁶ Galen Roger Perras, *Franklin Roosevelt and the Origins of the Canadian-American Security Alliance, 1933-1945: Necessary, but Not Necessary Enough*, (Westport: Praeger, 1998), pp. 76-77

¹²⁷ R. M. MacDonnell (First Secretary at the DEA) to Norman Robertson, 29 February 1944, *DCER*, vol. 11, p. 1400; C. P. Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments: The War Policies of Canada, 1939-1945*, (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1970), pp. 379-384

External Affairs from 1941 to 1943, agreed.¹²⁸ Nevertheless, national security was a pressing concern during the war and King agreed to assist the U.S. military in this project.¹²⁹ With British power declining, Canada required a new protector. As noted in Keenleyside's memoirs, Canada could not defend itself and this vulnerability made the Americans nervous. Thus, by 1940, the Ogdensburg Agreement "had now become both inevitable and urgent."¹³⁰

Once the U.S. entered the war in December 1941, however, Canadian interests became less important to Washington as American war planners were pre-occupied with more immediate threats from Japan and Germany in the Asia-Pacific and North Atlantic regions than the sentiments of Canadian politicians.¹³¹ But Canadian diplomats did not think the Axis threat justified a cold shoulder from Roosevelt's administration. By 1942, most of the influential men at the DEA, Lester Pearson, Escott Reid, Hume Wrong, Under Secretary of State for External Affairs Norman Robertson and "rising star" John Holmes, had become dissatisfied with American leadership and urged their government to adopt a functional approach to the United States in order to increase Canada's influence in international affairs.¹³² King, who served as his own Secretary of State for External Affairs until 1946, also supported functionalism as a "strategic tool" to further Canadian interests.¹³³ Simply,

¹²⁸ Escott Reid, *A Radical Mandarin: The Memoirs of Escott Reid*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), p. 159; Shelagh D. Grant, *Sovereignty or Security? Government Policy in the Canadian North, 1936-1950*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1988), p. 191

¹²⁹ Reid, *A Radical Mandarin*, pp. 116-117

¹³⁰ Hugh Keenleyside, *Memoirs of Hugh L. Keenleyside: On the Bridge of Time*, vol. 2, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1982), p. 53

¹³¹ Perras, *Roosevelt and the Origins of the Canadian-American Security Alliance*, p. 119

¹³² J.L. Granatstein, *The Ottawa Men: The Civil Service Mandarins, 1935-1957*, (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 92-133; Adam Chapnick, *Canada's Voice: The Public Life of John Wendell Holmes*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2009), p. 35; John English, *Shadow of Heaven: The Life of Lester Pearson*, vol. 1, (London: Vintage U.K., 1989), p. 280. Generally, King's government objected to not being fully consulted on American projects on Canadian soil. For instance, on 7 October 1942, the Canadian Cabinet War Committee complained of several construction projects in the Yukon which did not even mention Canada's role. As noted by C.P. Stacey, the committee demanded consultation by the U.S. government on such developments, but "it was easier to make such decisions than to enforce them." See Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments*, p. 385

¹³³ King cited in Chapnick, "Principle for Profit," p. 70

the DEA wanted Canada to possess more authority in Washington, since it felt that Canada was not being given a voice commensurate with its contributions to the Allied war effort. The “inescapable interdependence” of war planning, as Pearson described it, necessitated structures and regulations to protect Canada’s sovereignty.¹³⁴ Historians have since demonstrated that the Americans were amenable to Canadian sensitivities and both the Roosevelt and Truman administrations took pains to emphasize Canada’s Northern rights.¹³⁵ What mattered here was the *perception* held by King, Pearson, and others, that the United States subordinated Canadian interests to its own. Functionalism, then, was a process based on experience and the potential threat of American power to Canadian nationhood.

Not all in the DEA thought alike about the functional principle. Reid argued that without functionalism, Canadian influence would be negligible. “Under a collective system a small state like Canada would have an opportunity to exert a reasonable amount of influence in international politics,” he wrote. “But under the conditions of international anarchy which exist today the number of big states is likely to decrease and the few that are left are likely to run the small states which come within their sphere of influence.”¹³⁶ While Reid feared Canadian sovereignty might disappear in the face of American might, Hume Wrong was concerned that Britain and the U.S. were not giving Canada influence in the political issues proportional to its contributions. For Wrong, it was not only an issue of security but also of dignity. Although Canada had joined the war in 1939 and had done more than its share as Britain’s ally, he complained the Dominion remained in what he called a

¹³⁴ Lester Pearson, *Mike: The Memoirs of the Right Honourable Lester B. Pearson*, vol. 1, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), p. 206

¹³⁵ P. Whitney Lackenbauer, “Right and Honourable: Mackenzie King, Canadian-American Bilateral Relations, and Canadian Sovereignty in the Northwest, 1943-1948,” in *Mackenzie King: Citizenship and Community*, ed. John English, Kenneth McLaughlin and P. Whitney Lackenbauer, (Toronto: Robin Brass Studio, 2002), pp. 151-168

¹³⁶ Reid, *A Radical Mandarin*, pp. 158-159

“semi-colonial position.” Specifically, Wrong wanted Canada represented on panels which were dependent on Canadian resources, such as the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration and the Combined Food Board.¹³⁷ He understood that smaller powers cannot have as much influence as larger ones; however, “you can’t expect total effort and heavy sacrifice unless you allow people to feel that they are party to the decisions from which these consequences flow.”¹³⁸ Functionalism, for Wrong, became a form of justice. While Canada never reached the status of Britain or the USSR in Washington’s wartime planning, its progress in securing representation on various planning committees and boards was impressive for a “middle power” and foreshadowed the approach Canadian policymakers would take after 1945.¹³⁹

Functionalism remained the basis of Canadian foreign policy in the post-war period thanks to growing disillusionment with the practices of U.S. diplomacy combined with the international idealism in the new generation of mandarins in the DEA. First, there were genuine concerns about the impact of the power disparity between Canada and the U.S. Pearson argued in 1944 that an “unduly aggressive” American government ignored the interests of smaller nations. After the war was over, he wrote, the DEA should expect further “deterioration” in Canada-U.S. relations. When the Nazi threat was gone, the niceties Canadian diplomats had enjoyed for the past few years would likely disappear. “A common danger is a great incentive to good manners...But that common danger is now receding, and some of the good manners will recede with it.” The U.S. had become so powerful that it did not need to consider the opinions of smaller states. Thus, while Canada’s relations with the

¹³⁷ J.L. Granatstein, “Hume Wrong’s Road to the Functional Principle,” in *Coalition Warfare: An Uneasy Accord*, edited by Keith Neilson and Roy A. Prete, (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier Press, 1983), p. 74

¹³⁸ Ibid, p. 75. That caveat to this statement was also that Canada could not expect to be party to any decision-making unless it offered a “total effort and heavy sacrifice.”

¹³⁹ Granatstein, *The Ottawa Men*, p. 132

U.S. were normally quite friendly, Ottawa should not expect preferential treatment in Washington once Germany capitulated.¹⁴⁰

Strategic issues also played a considerable role in shaping Canadian opinions towards functionalism. King recognized in May 1944 that in the event of conflict between the U.S. and the USSR, the Americans would force Canadian military involvement. Norman Robertson, Under Secretary of State for External Affairs, agreed with King. In a letter to Dana Wilgress, Canada's representative to the USSR, Robertson wrote that Canada's greatest fear was "the pressure that would be placed upon us [by the United States] to co-operate in defensive measures which the Russians would not consider to be friendly or neutral."¹⁴¹ In January 1945, the Advisory Committee on Post-Hostilities Programs – composed of various senior officials from the DEA, the Chief of the General Staff and representatives from the military services, among others – concluded that defence cooperation between Canada and the U.S. was unavoidable. However, the committee was also convinced that "major friction" between Canada and the U.S. was likely to emerge from conflicting views of international affairs, particularly between the U.S. and the USSR. Thanks to its geographical position, Canada was sandwiched between the two superpowers. While they hypothetically favoured an American victory, security experts revealed that Canada's "best hope" in the event of a superpower conflict was the maintenance of an "effective world security organization" designed to mediate international disputes.¹⁴² This view was supported by others, notably Reid and First Secretary R.M. MacDougall, who felt that Canada could not compete bilaterally with the United States since any American

¹⁴⁰ Pearson to MacDougall, *DCER*, vol. 11, pp. 1405-1407

¹⁴¹ Robertson cited in Denis Smith, *Diplomacy of Fear: Canada and the Cold War, 1941-1947*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), pp. 148-149

¹⁴² Final Report of Advisory Committee on Post-Hostilities Problems, January/February 1945, *DCER*, vol. 11, pp. 1567-1573

government would run “rough-shod” over Canadian interests.¹⁴³ Multilateralism and cooperation had been the cornerstones of Canadian security policy since January 1944 when King explained that future peace was dependent on international institutions. The DEA’s general belief was that UN would both safeguard Canadian sovereignty and maintain international security.¹⁴⁴

King’s natural cautiousness and isolationism prevented Canada from becoming completely immersed in UN politics.¹⁴⁵ When dealing with the United States in the PJBD, he consistently used London to counterbalance and diminish the board’s authority. After the war, King scuttled plans to strengthen defence relations between Canada and the U.S.¹⁴⁶ Much of his aversion to interdependence was a result of his perceptions of U.S. foreign policy. In 1948, he claimed “that it was the secret aim of every American leader, including Franklin Roosevelt, to dominate Canada and ultimately to possess the country.”¹⁴⁷ King had a pathological aversion to Canadian involvement in international affairs when national security was not immediately at stake. While often stressing his country would fight alongside Britain or the United States in the unlikely event of direct attack, he could not let Canada become involved in initiatives that might escalate the chance of conflict, such as the Berlin Blockade in 1948. The Gouzenko Affair, for instance, revealed that the Soviet Union could not be trusted. But King, desirous not to exacerbate tensions between East and West, eagerly hoped to avoid any controversy over the matter.

Unfortunately for King, a new generation was slowly beginning to triumph in

¹⁴³ Memorandum from Reid to DEA, *ibid.*, pp. 1547-1549.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*; George Ignatieff (Second Secretary, DEA) to MacDougall, 5 July 1944, *DCER*, vol. 11, pp. 1546-1547; John Hilliker and Donald Barry, *Canada’s Department of External Affairs: Coming of Age, 1946-1968*, vol. 2, (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1995), pp. 29-31

¹⁴⁵ Bothwell, *Alliance and Illusion*, pp. 12-19

¹⁴⁶ Grant, *Sovereignty or Security*, p. 173; Perras, *Roosevelt and the Canadian-American Security Alliance*, p. 123

¹⁴⁷ King cited in Perras, *Roosevelt and the Canadian-American Security Alliance*, p. 123

Canadian politics. The Prime Minister, seventy-three years old in 1947, was losing his ability to keep foreign affairs under his thumb. And, despite his private remarks about the “youth and inexperience” of some DEA officials, diplomats such as Pearson and St. Laurent were experienced, able, well-connected in the world’s major capitals, and eager to play a larger role in international institutions.¹⁴⁸ At the University of Toronto on 13 January 1947, St. Laurent revealed in his ‘Gray Lecture’ a new vision of Canadian foreign affairs which went beyond King’s desires. In what has been considered the “classic statement of postwar Canadian internationalism,”¹⁴⁹ St. Laurent elucidated a series of principles that guided Canada’s foreign policy for the next twenty years. Appealing to “political unity” and liberalism – ideas that would have been consistent with the politics of Prime Minister King,¹⁵⁰ St. Laurent also insisted that Canada must accept “international responsibility” on the world stage through various institutions such as the UN which maintained these principles. These obligations were not merely altruistic or idealistic, he added. The world was now a much smaller place and the “security for this country lies in the development of a firm structure of international organization.” Therefore, the defence of Canada’s Judeo-Christian heritage required active international engagement at a historic level.¹⁵¹

Essentially, St. Laurent established as policy what had already been Canadian practice for three years. The speech’s novelty lay in its discussion of international obligations; Canada, like the U.S., had somehow been thrust into a position of responsibility in world affairs that it could not avoid. St. Laurent revealed that Canada soon would have to do things it did not want to do in order to maintain the international system vital to its

¹⁴⁸ WLMK Diary, 18 December 1948, MG26-J13, LAC

¹⁴⁹ Richard Kim Nossal, *Politics of Canadian Foreign Policy*, p. 145

¹⁵⁰ Stacey, *Canada and the Age of Conflict*, vol. 2, p. 376

¹⁵¹ St. Laurent, “The Foundations of Canadian Policy in World Affairs,” 13 January 1947, *Statements and Speeches*, 47/2, MG26-L (Louis St. Laurent Papers), vol. 253, LAC

national security. This was functionalism but on much a wider scale as institutions were larger, their mandates broader and the national responsibilities less well-defined. Just how much Ottawa would have to contribute and compromise to maintain the multilateral system was a question the DEA never fully explored.

The Limits of Ideology: Analyzing the Soviet Threat, 1947-1950

In 1948, newly-appointed Secretary of State for External Affairs Lester Pearson claimed the world had devolved into a bipolar conflict between “free, expanding progressive democracy against tyrannical and reactionary communism.” Thus, the role of Western states was to protect “free men” from the grasps of “totalitarian tyranny.”¹⁵² Such anti-communist rhetoric, which had become a vital part of the American diplomatic lexicon during the Truman administration, was often replicated at the DEA. Pearson’s simplistic interpretation of East-West relations symbolized Canada’s rhetorical agreement with the State Department. Surely, Canada would cooperate with America to construct new security organizations to protect the continent, but contemporary analysts acknowledged that Canada’s fear of communism had not reached the level of “semi-hysteria” prevalent in the U.S. or Europe.¹⁵³ As well, regardless of Pearson’s professed interest in maintaining the freedom of other nations, it was Canada’s freedom that chiefly concerned DEA policymakers. In fact, the maintaining of the system of collective security – a system of which Canada was a proud and sometimes arrogant member – remained paramount to the DEA prior to and during the Korean conflict.

Likewise, the image of freedom became a major cornerstone of the national security

¹⁵² Lester Pearson, *Words and Occasions*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), pp. 72, 82-83

¹⁵³ A Winnipeg Study Group, “Canada and the North Atlantic Treaty,” *International Journal*, vol. 4, no. 2 (1949), pp. 245

discourse in Canada throughout the period. Often, these images were utilized in speeches and statements in ways that paralleled the American usage of the term. In Canada's defence programme issued in 1949, Brooke Claxton used language that could have been borrowed from NSC-68:

The only kind of war which we would involve Canada would be a war in which Communism was seeking to dominate the free nations, in other words, a war in which we would be fighting for the one thing which we value more than life itself, and that is our freedom as a nation and freedom as people.... Such a war would be a war for survival.¹⁵⁴

This remarkably strong language was not necessarily representative of the attitude adopted by all DEA policymakers as it marked the sole occurrence where hostilities with a communist power were described as a war of annihilation. Freedom was nonetheless a major tenet of Canada's foreign relations. As St. Laurent noted in the Gray Lecture, "political liberty" premised on democratic institutions, individual rights and the rule of law would be defended by Canada. In his address, he recognized "that a threat to the liberty of western Europe, where our political ideas were nurtured, was a threat to our own way of life."¹⁵⁵ On the surface, then, the outlook and ideals of Canadian and American Cold Warriors were remarkably similar.

The DEA did not fear the Soviet Union solely on the basis that the spread of communism jeopardized basic human freedoms, although policymakers and diplomats such as Pearson made this case in their public discourse.¹⁵⁶ What troubled the Department most was the further destabilization of the international arena. In Ottawa, political extremes were

¹⁵⁴ "Canada's Defence Programme, 1949-1950," 100.013 (D2), DHH

¹⁵⁵ St. Laurent, Gray Lecture, 13 February 1947, cited above

¹⁵⁶ Louis St. Laurent, Address to the United Nations Society in Montreal, 24 February 1947, "NATO speeches drafted by Reid, 1947-1949" file, MG 31 E 46 (Reid Papers), vol. 30, LAC; St. Laurent, Gray Lecture, 13 February 1947, cited above

considered dangerous, interfered with rational decision-making and impeded negotiation and conciliation. Escott Reid noted in a speech to the Canadian Institute of Public Affairs that Canada's role in the UN should increase. This was important, he argued, for if Western powers relaxed in their support for the UN, they would lose the best chance to moderate Soviet behaviour.¹⁵⁷ Reid also expressed a similar view privately to his superior Norman Robertson. This time, Reid, less apprehensive about pointing fingers, iterated that Canada must work against the "hasty action on the part of the United States" to prevent the Soviet Union from being cast out of the United Nations. Further, U.S. anti-communist measures would heighten global bipolarization, a "dangerous and unnecessary." consequence¹⁵⁸ Reid was not the only one to harbour such sentiments. John Holmes, acting as Chargé d'Affaires in the Soviet Union, argued that while Canada must be firm with the USSR, "we must be particularly careful that we have not drawn them [the Soviet Union] on to ground from which they cannot retire without a loss of face." (FIRST MENTION of McNaughton?) McNaughton agreed with Holmes, adding that it was unfortunate that Western analysts relied too often on "accumulated impressions" in diplomacy rather than "logical reasoning" as such habits may lead to irresponsible decision-making.¹⁵⁹ The cool conservatism expressed by Canada's influential envoys demonstrated their disdain for ideological dogmatism.

Neither St. Laurent nor Pearson renounced the possibility of moderating Soviet behaviour or working with the USSR if such an option offered itself. In a June 1948 address, St. Laurent offered a thorough analysis of the international situation and Canada's security

¹⁵⁷ "Canada's Role in the United Nations," 13 August 1947, "NATO documents" file, Reid Papers, vol. 6, LAC

¹⁵⁸ Reid to Norman Robertson, 29 October 1947, *ibid*

¹⁵⁹ John Holmes to Lester Pearson, 9 April 1948, *DCER*, vol. 14, pp. 1786-1792; Andrew McNaughton to Lester Pearson, 4 May 1948, *ibid*, p. 1793

options. “We believe in the maintenance of the United Nations as a possible bridge between the Russian world and the Free World. We have faith in the possibility of a spiritual transformation of the Russian people based on their feelings for justice and human emancipation,” he claimed. Additionally, peace was best assured under the combined leadership of the United States, Britain and France by maintaining an “overwhelming preponderance of force over any adversary or possible combination of adversaries. This force must not be only military; it must be economic; it must be moral.”¹⁶⁰ These two fundamental principles – that the Soviet Union could be reformed and that the path to reformation required the combined leadership and integration of North Atlantic powers – guided Canadian security policy towards the Soviet Union in the late 1940s.

Once St. Laurent became Prime Minister in November 1948, Lester Pearson took over at External Affairs and retained St. Laurent’s thinking with regards to the Soviet threat. In an address on CBC radio on 20 January 1949, Pearson advocated his “peace with freedom” strategy for Canadian foreign policy. Pearson stressed the fact that Canada was an independent state willing to work with other states to effect reforms in the current international situation. This could be done, he argued, through institutions that promoted the freedom and welfare of the individual. Although the Soviets opposed this goal, “sooner or later, if not on any basis of genuine friendship, at least on one of mutual toleration, the issues between the Western world and the USSR may be reduced to the extent where genuine cooperation is possible. On our part, we must do nothing to hinder the arrival of this day.” Additionally, he subtly chided the United States for a diplomatic style that frustrated Canada’s efforts to realize this aim: “Rashness, impulsiveness, arrogance, these are not

¹⁶⁰ Louis St. Laurent, “The Part to be Played by Canada in the Maintenance of World Peace,” 11 June 1948, Reid Papers, vol. 30, LAC

qualities which will be required during these days.”¹⁶¹ As he wrote privately to Hume Wrong, “I do not think that our public will be content for long merely with the achievements of the Kennan policy of containment, on no matter how wide a front that policy may be successfully applied.” What was important was to negotiate from a position of strength and “be prepared to make a renewed effort at settlement” with the Soviet Union. Even if this strategy failed, the Western bloc would be seen as righteous actors in international affairs.¹⁶²

Canadian diplomats quickly contrasted their views of the Soviet Union with those of their American allies. Unfortunately, while most DEA officials considered U.S. leadership and power to be essential in the Cold War, they found many of its basic elements unsavoury. As early as 1946, DEA officials were particularly troubled by the expression of American values and anti-communist rhetoric in the public sphere and their influence upon the American government’s behaviour. Writing from Washington only days after Churchill’s ‘Iron Curtain’ speech in Missouri, Pearson observed “[the] feeling in the United States is hardening towards the Soviet Union” and often “the frankness of comment on Soviet policy that one encounters in official and congressional circles is alarming.” While the DEA agreed with the general purposes of U.S. foreign policy – the promotion of freedom and containing Soviet expansionism – Pearson feared an aggressive implementation of these policies might only exacerbate tensions and compel the Americans to pursue their course using more violent means than before.¹⁶³

Hume Wrong, Pearson’s successor as Ambassador to the United States, agreed with this analysis but noted also that the American leadership had a tendency towards an

¹⁶¹ Lester Pearson Radio Broadcast, “A Policy for Peace,” 20 January 1949, “NATO speeches” file, LBPP, vol. 2, LAC

¹⁶² Pearson to Wrong, 3 March 1950, “HH WRONG, 1948-1953” file, LBPP, vol. 17, LAC

¹⁶³ Pearson to St. Laurent, 11 March 1946, *DCER*, vol. 12, pp. 2043-2044; Pearson to Minister in Switzerland, September 9, 1947, *DCER*, vol. 13, edited by Hector Mackenzie pp. 382-384

“unbalanced fear and hatred of Russian and Communism” which might push Congress towards irresponsible decision-making -- such as limiting civil liberties -- which might harden the international ideological divide. In particular, Wrong chastised former Secretary of War Henry Stimson – singled out for the article he had published in *Foreign Affairs* in 1947 – and other influential Americans for acting as fear-mongers in the popular press. Wilgress, as Canada’s envoy in Moscow, mimicked these sentiments as he feared that the U.S. might use the Marshall Plan to “humiliate” the Soviet Union by exposing its economic weakness to the world. Instead, the U.S. and the United Kingdom needed to harmonize their policies along a “high moral plane” to deter future encroachment in Europe.¹⁶⁴ Although Wilgress had no sympathy for Soviet leaders or communism, he argued in 1945 that, “it is not the Soviet Union alone that has brought about the division of Europe into zones of influence.”¹⁶⁵ For these DEA officials, U.S. policy, as it tended to heighten the chance of war, was not conducive to constructing a balanced international system that contained, but did not aggravate, the USSR.

Policy recommendations were derived from these cautious views and reflected the core values of Canadian diplomacy. The Canadian Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC), an institution left over from World War II and chaired by DEA functionaries in the late 1940s, produced a report in March 1947 that reviewed the possibility of war between the Soviet Union and the United States. While the committee noted the likelihood of conflict over the next generation, it did not expect the USSR to start a war – either consciously or by accident – in the next ten years as it was too weak economically to risk such a venture. Stalin was too concerned with domestic reconstruction to attack North America. Nevertheless, the

¹⁶⁴ Dana Wilgress to Louis St. Laurent, 11 March 1946, *DCER*, vol. 12, pp. 2045-2051; Dana Wilgress, Memorandum, 25 April 1947, RG 25-B-3, vol. 2132, LAC

¹⁶⁵ Wilgress cited in J. L. Granatstein, *The Ottawa Men*, p. 233

document's broad recommendations stated that Canada should "foster the strength and unity of the Western world" and "avoid provocative actions and attitudes likely to strengthen Soviet determination to extend the Soviet area of defence."¹⁶⁶ The JIC, meeting again in June 1948 to review recent changes to the American continental defence plan, concluded that U.S. intelligence on Soviet capabilities was wrong: as the USSR simply was not as strong as the U.S. had assumed, the JIC dubbed the American report invalid.¹⁶⁷ According to some historians, differences in Canadian and American perspectives can be traced partially to methodology. Kurt Jensen argued that the JIC based its conclusions on small amount of available empirical evidence, while its U.S counterparts often relied on unreliable sources of information which made the Soviet Union appear more powerful than it actually was.¹⁶⁸ Additionally, others have averred that British methods of intelligence collection – which focused primarily on enemy intentions – and the desire to attach a "Made in Canada" label to Canadian intelligence reports substantially influenced the JIC.¹⁶⁹ However, as noted above, Canada's reluctance to aggravate the USSR long predated this intelligence report and certainly influenced how the JIC analyzed its data. Like the State Department and NSC, Canada's security planners allowed certain biases to influence their threat perceptions.

Although in accordance with the JIC's views, Escott Reid advocated for a more aggressive approach to containment. Yet Reid was more concerned with U.S. foreign policy than Soviet expansionism, likely a consequence of his own personal biases. In a lengthy

¹⁶⁶ Joint Intelligence Committee, "Strategic Appreciation," 15 March 1947, Department of National Defence (RG 24), vol 8088, file 1274-10-5

¹⁶⁷ "Report on the Acceptability of the American Revisions to the Appreciation of the Requirement of Canada-United States Security dated 23rd May, 1946," 11 March 1948, *DCER*, vol. 14, pp 1583-1584

¹⁶⁸ Kurt Jensen, *Cautious Beginnings Canadian Foreign Intelligence, 1939-1951*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008), pp. 150-151 According to Jensen, a vast majority of the reports drafted by the JIC in the 1940s remain classified and unavailable for consultation.

¹⁶⁹ Lawrence Aronsen, "Preparing for Armageddon JIC 1 (Final) and the Soviet Attack on Canada," *Intelligence and National Security*, vol. 19, no 3, (2004), p 494-509

memorandum distributed to senior DEA officials in Ottawa and abroad in August 1947, the Under Secretary reiterated DEA and JIC views: Soviet leaders would continue to attempt to destabilize the Western powers; Canada should further strengthen the embryonic “Atlantic Community”; and this community could only thrive under U.S. leadership. He was not being original when he declared that Canadian security was to be maintained through stable, integrated Western association. Clearly wanting an American victory in any conflict with the Soviets, Reid qualified his assessment of U.S. leadership in the Cold War. He erringly lambasted Kennan when he stipulated that “firmness need not be accompanied by rudeness.” Ostensibly, he had concerns that the Truman administration would follow Kennan’s advice and attempt to publically embarrass the Soviets without just cause. These concerns were shared by others, but Reid often saw long-term problems that his associates overlooked. For instance, anticipating there would be disagreements between America and its allies, while at peace Canada should feel able to “tell the United States to stop rocking the boat or driving holes in the bottom.” How Canada should conduct itself in times of conflict Reid did not mention, but he did not feel that Ottawa would carry much influence. Washington, he remarked, dominated the bilateral relationship and “we shall have no freedom of action in any matter the United States considers essential.” Pinpointing the cause for this discrepancy in Canadian and American approaches to the Soviets, Reid believed that the instability and variety of American public opinion made it difficult for any administration to pursue a consistent long-term strategy. Thus, it was essential that Canada attempt to moderate U.S. attitudes and actions towards the Soviet Union.¹⁷⁰

Likely, these advisors were idealistic and ill-formed about the true nature of

¹⁷⁰ Escott Reid, “The United States and the Soviet Union: A Study of the Possibility of War and Some of the Implications for Canadian Policy,” 30 August 1947, *DCER*, vol. 13, edited by Hector Mackenzie, pp. 367-382

Stalinism. Historians now contend that Stalin was far less accommodating and more opportunistic than Pearson and others had thought.¹⁷¹ Also, certain DEA officers likely were also influenced by sub-conscious anti-Americanism.¹⁷² Most of the senior officials analyzed U.S. and Soviet foreign policy from the perspective of the junior partner (with many fewer international responsibilities) and continued to view the White House as both an erstwhile but oft arrogant ally. Yet the DEA criticized provocative behaviour and advocated multilateralism because the Department believed it was acting in the nation's security interest, preserving national sovereignty. They did not believe it was in their interest to support U.S. adventurism worldwide or to engage Canada in such activities, so they attempted to create an infrastructure of international agreements whereby unilateralism could be constrained. Rightly or wrongly, DEA analysts interpreted external threats and based foreign policy objectives on domestic impulses.

A Nation for Integration: Canada's Containment Policies, 1947-1950

Soviet transgressions in Berlin and Czechoslovakia in 1948 and an increasing realization the United Nations was ill-suited to guarantee peace and security convinced the Canadians that a regional defence pact was necessary. As Pearson succinctly declared at the signing of the agreement, NATO "was born out of fear and frustration" – the former as a result of communist machinations and the latter generated from the failure of the UN to function as a security apparatus.¹⁷³ John Holmes, Canada's delegate to the United Nations, warning in April 1948 that the USSR could occupy the entire European continent in as little as three weeks and felt Moscow might start a war within two years, urged speedy integration

¹⁷¹ Gaddis, *We Now Know*, pp. 28-36, 7-73

¹⁷² See Ch. 4 for more on anti-Americanism.

¹⁷³ Memorandum for Minister of National Defence, 8 March 1948, *DCER*, vol. 14, pp. 410-411; Department of External Affairs, *Statements and Speeches*, "North Atlantic Treaty – III", 4 April 1949, 49/14

of the “economic, political and military strength of the democratic countries.”¹⁷⁴ The utility of such an agreement was straight-forward to many in the upper echelons of the Canadian security bureaucracy. Brooke Claxton, Canada’s cautious Minister of Defence, offered a powerful historical analogy in 1948 designed to sell the treaty to the public: Had NATO been around in 1935, he remarked, it “would have prevented the Second World War in 1939.”¹⁷⁵ While this assertion can be challenged, the fact that a collective regional security organization was seen to be essential to uphold the core values of its Western Europe cannot be dismissed.

According to the DEA, European defence was important to protect the heritage of Canadian values and institutions, a task which alone justified Canada’s participation in a North Atlantic defence organization. A set of briefing notes prepared for Mackenzie King in October 1947 explained well the necessity of such a commitment. In language similar to that used by Eisenhower in his meeting with Truman in 1951 (noted in Chapter I), the paper declared that Western Europe must be defended from communism since it was from this region that “Canada has received nine-tenths of its people, both its languages, its religion, and most of its laws and political institutions.” Although the United States could have made a similar argument, some Canadian officials believed there was a fundamental difference between Canada and other states in the Western hemisphere:

The Canadian people, unlike the peoples of the other nations of the Americas, have never...turned their backs on Western Europe. Their way of life, as a result, remained closer to the Western European than have the ways of life of all or most of the other American nations and Canadian people have always been quick to respond when their way of life was

¹⁷⁴ Ibid; Wrong to Pearson, 8 May 1948, “NATO Misc. Documents – Vol. I” file, Reid Papers, vol. 9, LAC; John Holmes to Pearson, 9 April 1948, *ibid*

¹⁷⁵ Government of Canada Reference Papers, “Statements made by the Canadian Government on the proposed North Atlantic Treaty,” 29 October 1948, “NATO speeches drafted by Reid, 1947-1949” file, Reid Papers, vol. 6, LAC

menaced in Western Europe. Such was the case in 1914, and once again in 1939, when the danger was from German military aggression. Such is the case today, when the danger is Soviet communism.¹⁷⁶

While it remained unlikely that Canada would ever go to war to save either the English or French languages, it is evident from the above citation that the common democratic culture shared by Canadians and Europeans required military protection. Additionally, the threat posed by communist subversion warranted Ottawa's immediate and focused attention.

For the DEA, the most important aspect of the proposed agreement was North Atlantic integration, particularly promoting international trade. As noted by the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State George W. Perkins in March 1950, "Canadians want a viable, free-trading world even more than we do."¹⁷⁷ The result was Canada's promotion of economic prosperity as security during NATO discussions. Political stability, St. Laurent had noted in 1947, was dependent on economic development and trade between peace-loving powers. Without the proper organizations to facilitate trade, the "security for all countries" could founder.¹⁷⁸ With this in mind, the DEA campaigned to market a pact as something that would not only support the "common welfare" of the signatory states but would also function as a "dynamic counter-attraction to totalitarian communism – a free, prosperous and progressive society."¹⁷⁹ But here 'freedom' was regional, not universal as declared by Washington. It would apply only to select members of the treaty's organization and Pearson and Reid hoped to limit the number of signatory states to avoid overstressing NATO's commitments. Canadian apprehensions about including Italy, Portugal and French

¹⁷⁶ Canadian Papers for Meeting of Prime Ministers, October 1948, "'Western Union' and an Atlantic Pact: A Survey of Recent Developments," 11 September 1948, RG 2, B 2, vol. 107, U-10-11, LAC

¹⁷⁷ George Perkins to James Webb, "U.S. Relations with Canada," 8 March 1950, RG 59, Central Decimal File, 1950-1954, 611.42/3-850, National Archives Records Administration (NARA)

¹⁷⁸ Interview with St. Laurent, NCB-NBC Joint Broadcast, 1 February 1947, St. Laurent Papers, vol. 253, LAC

¹⁷⁹ Lester Pearson, Draft Speech to the House of Commons, 25 January 1949, Folder 14, Reid Papers, vol. 7, LAC

colonies in North Africa within the pact's purview have been well-documented.¹⁸⁰ Reid's excellent account of the treaty's negotiations rightly highlighted that senior officials felt that including Italy and others would overstretch the existing commitments of the signatory states and make the development of a genuine North Atlantic community more difficult.¹⁸¹

The North Atlantic Treaty can be said to have offered something to all of the signatories. Select European states gained American security assurances in the event of a Soviet attack, while Truman's administration found a cost-effective method of safeguarding its Atlantic allies. Canada, which faced neither an imminent military threat nor the burden of high military costs, was able to force through Article 2, the non-military portion of the agreement that policymakers hoped would integrate the economic, social and moral power of the North Atlantic countries. The clause, which Pearson claimed had a "chequered and disappointing life," aptly summarized the main objectives of Canadian security policy after 1945 and was symbolic of Pearson's aspirations for unity among the Western powers in a functional multilateral institution directed against communist expansion.¹⁸²

Article 2, however, also illustrated a fundamental difference between the official American and Canadian positions on how best to contain Soviet expansion. The United States never considered the treaty as much more than an instrument of deterrence. Secretary of State Dean Acheson, the son of a Canadian mother, for instance, complained in 1949 that Article 2 was worth "next to nothing," and recalled years later that Canadian diplomats had included Article 2 only to avoid the "stigma" that NATO was an "old-fashioned military

¹⁸⁰ Eayrs, *In Defence of Canada : Growing Up Allied*, pp. 114-121

¹⁸¹ Escott Reid, *A Time of Hope and Fear: The Making of the North Atlantic Treaty, 1947-1949*, (Toronto : McClelland and Stewart, 1977), p. 200

¹⁸² Pearson, *Mike: The Memoirs of Lester B. Pearson*, vol. 2, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), p. 46

alliance.”¹⁸³ Some State Department officials and influential Congressmen, most notably Arthur Vandenberg, wished to limit the pact’s non-military elements.¹⁸⁴ Article 2 came to nought. As argued recently by Robert Teigrob, Canadians regularly emphasized liberal international idealism such as those noted in the article. Yet American officials were apt to view the new pact as “a return to realism and power politics in international relations.”¹⁸⁵

Perhaps the Canadians were realistic about the amorphous nature of a western alliance while some in Washington continued to harbour idealistic sentiments about stopping threats using military power alone. Hume Wrong attacked Vandenberg and other “constitutionalists” who wished Article 5 – the automatic involvement clause that fuelled intense opposition to the treaty in the U.S. Congress – to be loose and non-binding. He argued that Canada should not be a part of this weak and selective treaty. Agreeing, Pearson emphatically stated that in February 1949 that if conservative Senators neutered the treaty in this fashion, Canada might leave the negotiating table permanently. “They are not,” Pearson said of Vandenberg and his associates, “thinking in realistic terms” about what was needed to counter the Soviet Union.¹⁸⁶ Pearson argued that without a full North Atlantic Treaty, the U.S. might push Canada around in the event of war. Also, he believed that the “realities of the situation” necessitated including Western Europeans in the process for “Russia’s allies in Western Europe are not so much now the Communists as forces of apathy, despair, doubt and fear.” This treaty should be broad in scope, incorporating military, economic, cultural and political elements. According to Pearson and Reid, Canada’s freedom and security were best kept when they can “pool their risks and their resources with those of the other North

¹⁸³ Wrong to Pearson, 7 February 1949, *DCER*, vol. 15, edited by Hector Mackenzie, (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer, 1994), p. 517

¹⁸⁴ Cited in Escott Reid, *Time of Hope and Fear*, pp. 167-184; Pearson, *Mike*, vol. 2, pp. 46-49

¹⁸⁵ Robert Teigrob, *Warming up to the Cold War: Canada and the United States Coalition of the Willing from Hiroshima and Korea*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), p. 147

¹⁸⁶ Pearson to Wrong, 17 February 1949, Folder 14, Reid Papers, vol. 7, LAC

Atlantic democracies” and to create an organic community that could rival that which Moscow had done within its sphere of influence. No war against the Soviet Union, they argued, could be won without full economic and social collusion among the North Atlantic governments.¹⁸⁷

The quest for Article 2, which linked international security to the political and economic integration of its signatory North Atlantic states, was viewed as vital in strengthening Canada’s authority in an institution dominated by American power. A strong Europe, stated Pearson, could keep America in check in the event of war. While Pearson admitted to Wrong that decision-making would be centered in Washington and the “United States is going to be the dominant partner,” he felt more comfortable working with European governments than with Washington. He continued to explain that “[o]ne reason we need an Atlantic Union is that we must establish in peace time some international constitutional machinery which could be used in war time as the basis for a supreme war council” since this would permit “governments which had wisdom and maturity to have greater influence on the formulation of policy than would be warranted by their mere power alone.” To attempt to deal with the U.S. government during a conflict without this mechanism would not give Canada “this important advantage.”¹⁸⁸ Escott Reid also helped to establish the notion of NATO as a “transatlantic counterweight” which could deter both the U.S. and Soviet Union from impulsive military action.¹⁸⁹ Paradoxically, by joining NATO, Canada lost some of its legal autonomy but gained additional leverage by binding the U.S.

¹⁸⁷ Escott Reid, “Arguments to Support the Inclusion of a Pledge of Economic and Social Collaboration in the North Atlantic Treaty,” 22 February 1949, Folder 14, Reid Papers, vol. 7, LAC; Pearson, Draft Statement to House of Commons, 25 January 1949, *ibid*

¹⁸⁸ Pearson to Wrong, 21 May 1948, *DCER*, vol. 14, pp. 1794-1795

¹⁸⁹ David G. Haglund and Stephane Roussel, “Escott Reid, the North Atlantic Treaty, and Canadian Strategic Culture” in *Escott Reid: Diplomat and Scholar*, edited by David G. Haglund and Stephane Roussel, (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1996), pp. 44-66

government to a constitutional framework for security that limited the each party's capacity for unilateral action.

The North Atlantic connection formed the basis of Defence Minister Claxton's Defence Programme released in 1949. The modest defence priorities listed in this document clarify Canada's desire to avoid embroilment in military engagements that were not directly linked to the maintenance of its sovereignty. They are reprinted in full below as to allow for a proper comparison between Canada's defence priorities and those priorities lined outlined by the U.S. government in NSC-68:

- (1) To provide the force estimated to be necessary to defend Canada against any sudden direct attack that could be or is likely to be directed against it in the near future;
- (2) To provide the operational and administrative staffs, equipment, training personnel and reserve organization which would be capable of expansion as rapidly as necessary to meet any need; and
- (3) To work out with other free nations plans for joint defence based on self-help and mutual aid as part of a combined effort to preserve peace and to restrain aggression.¹⁹⁰

Canada was now part of an integrated world, the document noted, and thus agreements such as NATO were a necessity. Even though a communist attack on Canada was unlikely, as Canadians could not meet that challenge alone, a collective security pact was necessary to resist aggression at home and in Europe. Special efforts were made to demonstrate that NATO was an institution of peace rightfully created along the guidelines established under Article 51 of the UN Charter which formed the legal and moral justification for its creation. "The Iron Curtain has cast its sinister shadow over Lake Success [location of the UN General Assembly] as it has over Europe." Therefore, the report justified, it was essential

¹⁹⁰ "Canada's Defence Programme, 1949-1950," 100.013 (D2), DHH

that Canada support NATO for the sake of peace.¹⁹¹ The message was simple but clear: Canada's defence programme prior to the Korean War reflected the minimum of what was needed to maintain the international stability required to buttress national sovereignty. NATO and the UN constituted the only policy options the government believed were needed to guarantee Canada's security and were thus the only avenues of defence available to the St. Laurent government in June 1950. Canadian participation in adventures in Asia or elsewhere was not discussed.

Canada and the United States, while seeking to stop Soviet encroachment in Europe, joined NATO with quite different understandings of its ultimate purpose. Academics argued in the *International Journal* that the pact's amorphous nature could allow it to be shaped into whatever one desired. This group of liberal scholars, the self-described "Winnipeg Study Group" consisting of H.M. Clokie, R.W. Queen-Hughes and Jacques Bernard among others, articulated that any defence agreement linking Canada, the United States and the nations of Western Europe could be defined as "an outgrowth of anti-communist imperialism" by the world's dominant capitalist powers, as an addition to the United Nations or even as a "substitute" to what the UN in its present form.¹⁹² That is, the language of and circumstances surrounding the treaty allowed signatories to market the agreement in various manners. Canada could and did argue that it sought to strengthen the European continent and further integration of the Western bloc through Article 2, while the Americans – who sought *less* integration – could overlook that portion of the agreement altogether and maintain that the primacy of Congressional approval had been cemented in Article 5. Therefore, both powers signed on for an institution of "collective security", but such a concept had a wealth

¹⁹¹ *ibid*

¹⁹² "Canada and the North Atlantic Treaty," *International Journal*, vol. 4 (1949), pp. 244-249

of definitions that key figures could modify to meet their various needs.

The NATO debate made clear that Canadian officials had a view of containment similar to that originally articulated by George Kennan. Pearson and Reid, despite their stated differences with Kennan, supported his view of regional and selective containment strategy stimulated by confidence and economic vitality in important strategic centres. Neither believed that any attempt to secure freedom worldwide was a practicable or even worthwhile pursuit since it would only stretch the limited Western bloc resources. As well, Kennan and the DEA agreed that the East-West confrontation was primarily a political struggle, not a military one. Thus, each supported an integrated approach that employed military as well as economic and social forces to deter Soviet aggression. Canada's foreign affairs mandarins also backed Kennan's view that as the conflict was not primarily ideological, it should not be treated as such. But DEA officials were far more optimistic than Kennan about the possible moderation of communist behaviour. Yet these fundamental agreements highlight the fact that Canadian officials and Kennan had more in common than they would have admitted. Perhaps even the decline in Kennan's influence in the State Department in 1949 and 1950 is indicative of a larger divergence between Canada and the United States on containment issues during the same period.

A Tangential Concern: Canadian Foreign Policy in Asia, 1947-1950

While Europe was foremost in the minds of Pearson and the DEA, Asia was not part of any larger security program. Canada had opted for a small role in the campaign against Japan during the World War II. Notably, Canadian forces unsuccessfully defended Hong Kong against Japanese attack in 1941 (losing nearly 2,000 men in the process), collaborated with the U.S. military to retake the Aleutian Islands in 1942-43 and had planned to send a

force of 24,000 soldiers to assist in an invasion of Japan slated for 1945-46.¹⁹³ Canada also played a small political part in post-war Asian affairs. DEA officials such as E.H. Norman worked with Britain and the U.S. on the Far East Commission (FEC), the organization charged with occupying and governing Japan from 1945 to 1952.¹⁹⁴ However, Canada's role in the FEC was marginal at best as some officials attempted to wrestle Japan's administration away from the Americans and bring it under a multilateral framework. However, as the Americans resisted any genuine power-sharing in the post-war administration of Japan, the need to maintain good relations with Washington kept Ottawa from pushing its case too hard.¹⁹⁵

Relatively few Canadian officials believed their national security rested anywhere but Europe. As historian W.L. Morton accurately noted in the *International Journal* in 1946, "Canada cannot be said to have a positive Far Eastern Policy." Morton's peer, Dr. Eric Harrison, concurrently argued in the same journal that, "Canadian policy is instinctively Atlantic...and it does not embrace the Pacific."¹⁹⁶ Additionally, unlike its more powerful allies, as Canada had no territorial possessions or important trade agreements to maintain in Asia, it felt no need to become involved in geopolitical disputes so far removed from its interests.

St. Laurent, like King, understood Canada's limitations and sought to distance

¹⁹³ The war with Japan ended in August 1945 before the Canadians could be dispatched. J.L. Granatstein and Desmond Morton, *Canada and the Two World Wars*, (Toronto: Key Porter, 2003), pp. 201-202, 321-323; Galen Roger Perras, *Stepping Stones to Nowhere: The Aleutian Islands, Alaska, and American Military Strategy, 1867-1945*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003), pp. 139-145; 192-193

¹⁹⁴ John Price, "E.H. Norman, Canada and Japan's Postwar Constitution," *Pacific Affairs*, vol. 74, no. 4 (2001), pp. 383-407

¹⁹⁵ Keith Stewart Webster, "Canada and the Far Eastern Commission," M.A. thesis, University of Victoria (2007). available at http://dspace.library.uvic.ca:8080/bitstream/1828/879/1/kwebster_thesis_final.pdf

¹⁹⁶ W.L. Morton, "Canada's Far Eastern Policy," *International Journal*, vol. 1, no. 3, (1946), pp. 241-249; Eric Harrison, "Strategy and Policy in the Defence of Canada," *International Journal*, vol. 4, no. 2 (1949), pp. 212 (212-243)

himself from the problems in the Far East that often plagued the State Department. Although Pearson strongly supported NATO, he opposed a mirror institution in Asia. His views on the matter are quite revealing of the attitudes that some DEA denizens had about the foundations of American national security policy as a whole. In particular, Pearson disdained American support for weak and unpopular governments in countries of little strategic value:

I do not know what in the world we should be letting ourselves in for by attempting a similar experiment [mutual defence treaty] in the Pacific or in South East Asia, and I would need a lot of convincing that we were not simply being asked to repeat in South East Asia, through an international instrument, policies which the United States had followed with such unhappy consequences in China; and which are not working out too well in Korea.¹⁹⁷

However unstable and vulnerable these regions may have been, Pearson made clear that should they fall within the Soviet orbit, the *direct* consequences (with which he was most concerned) would not compromise Canadian national security. The UN's integrity would remain intact so long as the communist states belonged to the international organization. Canada, then, did not see the need to secure the periphery around the Soviet Union as the U.S. was attempting to construct.

The question regarding the PRC's recognition in the fall of 1949 is further revealing of Canadian defence priorities and DEA's attitudes towards communist governments. Stephen Beecroft's assertion that because Canada had few tangible interests in Asia during the late 1940s it thus adopted a pragmatic approach to PRC is essentially correct. DEA impressions of Chiang's Nationalists were unfavourable and, except for one dissident, former Ambassador to China Victor Odlum, no senior DEA officials felt that it was in

¹⁹⁷ Pearson to Wrong, 3 March 1950, "HH WRONG, 1948-1953," File, LBPP, vol. 17, LAC

Canada's interest to seek a *modus vivendi* with Mao Tse-tung.¹⁹⁸ As Pearson declared in the House of Commons in November 1949, "Recognition...does not imply or signify moral approval, it is simply an acknowledgement of a state of affairs that exists."¹⁹⁹ The chief benefit that Canada hoped to procure with immediate and unconditional recognition was the formation of a moderate nationalist-communist government in China that would trade with the West and remain outside Moscow's direct control. Ultimately, Pearson stated, the West may be able to exploit the USSR-PRC divisions. External Affairs supported the view expressed by its Ambassador in China, Chester Ronning, "It is better for all that we have a seat inside the bamboo curtain rather than trying to peer in from the outside, and that we should not lose the advantages of having a foot in the door."²⁰⁰ The strategy that Pearson had hoped to use with the PRC resembled the one he had pursued with the Soviet Union – developing links that firmly planted these states within the international community. The presence of a new communist government in Asia, while not welcome, did not directly threaten Canada. Pearson did not see any loss of face or credibility at stake in the recognition issue. In fact, there was no call from any quarter in Canada, as there was in the U.S., to support vague notions of freedom in China. Instead, Canada acted on pragmatic goals unhindered by the demands of ideology and sentiment that influenced American foreign policy in Asia in 1949-1950.

If communism in China did not disturb the DEA, Korea's division was essentially a

¹⁹⁸ Stephen Beecroft, "Canadian Policy Towards China, 1949-1957 : The Recognition Problem" in *Reluctant Adversaries : Canada and the People's Republic of China, 1949-1970*, edited by Paul M. Evans and B. Michael Frolic, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), pp. 43-47 (43-72); Richard Kim Nossal, "Chungking Prism: Cognitive Process and Intelligence Failure," *International Journal*, vol. 32, no. 3, (Summer 1977), pp. 559-576

¹⁹⁹ Pearson to Chester A. Ronning (Canadian Ambassador in Nanking), 26 November 1950, RG 25, vol. 4719, file 50055-B-40 pt.2, LAC

²⁰⁰ Ronning to Pearson, 15 August 1949, *DCER*, vol. 15, p. 1175; Pearson to A.D.P. Heeney, 2 November 1950, *ibid*; Pearson to Canadian Delegation to the General Assembly of the United Nations, 7 November 1950, *ibid*

non-issue. Canada's nominal participation on UNTCOK in 1948 was the DEA's only substantive contact with the Korean problem born with the end of World War II. The State Department, frustrated by its failure to unify and democratize the entire Korean peninsula, sent the issue to the UN with hopes that its allies, and Canada in particular, would manufacture an appropriate resolution that would deprive the State Department of that burden.²⁰¹ The leader of Canada's Delegation to the UN in 1947, Minister of Justice J.L. Ilsey, allowed Canada to become a potential candidate for the new commission on Korea in late 1947 based on the assumption that participation would have only "temporary and routine significance."²⁰² King revolted at the idea of becoming involved in such a project. "I felt a great mistake was being made by Canada being brought into situations in Asia and Europe of which she knew nothing." Certain that Canada was being forced to do Washington's work as the U.S could not resolve its issues with the Soviet Union, King believed "that for us to go into Korea and tell Russia what to do was just an impossible thing."²⁰³ Not only would the commission be useless, King wrote to Truman, it could prove to be an "embarrassment" to Ottawa and Washington.²⁰⁴ At the root of his concerns was Canadian sovereignty. Telling his closest advisors that Canada would not play "cat's paw of United States policy," King would not allow his nation to be a pawn in Truman's dangerous game of containment.²⁰⁵

But King's influence was waning. St. Laurent and Pearson were much keener to support the commission and even threatened resignation once the Prime Minister had voiced

²⁰¹ Memorandum by Pearson, 10 January 1948, *DCER*, vol. 14, pp. 136-138

²⁰² Stairs, *Diplomacy of Constraint*, p. 8

²⁰³ WLMK Diary, 18 December 1947, MG26-J13, LAC

²⁰⁴ King to Truman via Pearson to Wrong, 8 January 1948, "Korea – Canadian Membership to UNCOK – 1947-1948," LBPP, vol. 35, LAC

²⁰⁵ Draft Memorandum "Korean Commission," 30 December 1947, "Korea – Canadian Membership to UNCOK – 1947-1948," LBPP, vol. 35, LAC

his opposition. Even then, their efforts to get Canada on the commission were inspired more by a desire to maintain the image of Canada-U.S. relations and dedication to the UN Charter than out of security considerations or concern for Koreans.²⁰⁶ Pearson sympathized with King's "anxiety about certain developments in United States foreign policy that were possibly unwise and provocative" and admitted the UN working group charged with organizing free Korean elections had very little chance of accomplishing tangible results since the Soviets were likely to veto free elections in its satellite, the DPRK.²⁰⁷ Once King was reassured the commission would not prompt great power conflict and its impact on international affairs would be minimal, he agreed to Canada's participation in UNTCOK as non-participation could only further divide his government and upset Canada's closest ally.

While Pearson had spearheaded getting Canada on UNTCOK, he displayed some displeasure about how the Americans had pressured him on the issue. During an impromptu trip to Washington in January 1948 to discuss the matter with President Truman and senior State Department officials Robert Lovett and John Hickerson, Pearson complained directly to Truman that Canada "did not like being pushed into a position at the head of a procession so far away as Korea, where the USSR and the U.S.A. could not themselves get along."²⁰⁸ He was not speaking without just cause for Prime Minister King had received a letter from the Acting Secretary of State which, questioning Canada's dedication to the UN, had stated Canada's prestige amongst its allies would deteriorate if it failed to support UNTCOK.²⁰⁹ Truman likewise appealed directly to King via Pearson to emphasize the important role Canada had played in UN matters thus far and how disastrous it would be to the common

²⁰⁶ Pearson to Mackenzie King, 4 January 1948, *DCER*, vol. 14, p. 141

²⁰⁷ Pearson, *Mike*, vol. 2, p. 138; Stairs, *Diplomacy of Constraint*, p. 16

²⁰⁸ Memorandum by Pearson, 10 January 1948, *DCER*, vol. 14, p. 137

²⁰⁹ Acting Secretary of State to Prime Minister, 30 December 1947, "Korea – Canadian Membership – UNCOK 1947-1948" file, LBPP, vol. 35, LAC. No indication is provided on the document as to the author's name.

cause of “western civilization” if Ottawa reneged on its promise.²¹⁰ Claims of this nature may have motivated Pearson and St. Laurent to encourage Canadian sponsorship of UNTCOK, but they did little to endear them to U.S. authorities who, Pearson believed, took Canada’s consent for granted.²¹¹ Meanwhile, King and St. Laurent agreed the commission was ultimately useless. St. Laurent suggested to Pearson that he should travel to Washington to convince the Americans the Korean commission was bound to fail.²¹² There was, it seems, little Canadian enthusiasm for creating a unified and independent Korea.

The UNTCOK affair affirmed the principle of “obligation” that St. Laurent had articulated in his Gray Lecture; Canada was an international power and would have to play the part. While Canadian diplomats understood the necessity of fulfilling certain political responsibilities, such actions were based on the premise that participation would strengthen the multilateral system that could limit the Soviet threat and control U.S. aggressiveness. In retrospect, Canadian fears of American encroachment on Canadian sovereignty were abundant but largely exaggerated. For Pearson and others, however, the *lack* of interest that the State Department took in Canada affirmed DEA concerns that the U.S. retained de facto authority the Western Alliance’s foreign polic. Responding to some of the public statements made by Pearson and others over the preceding years, Assistant Secretary of State George Perkins from the Bureau of European Affairs composed a short study in March 1950 about recent trends on Canada-U.S. relations. Noting the “touchiness and lack of self-assurance” that Canada expressed in international affairs, Perkins revealed that Canadians possessed

²¹⁰ Truman to Mackenzie King, 5 January 1948, *DCER*, vol. 14, pp. 145-146

²¹¹ Memorandum by Pearson, 10 January 1948, *DCER*, vol. 14, p. 137

²¹² Draft Memorandum of Conversation by Pearson between St Laurent and Mackenzie King, 30 December 1947, “Korea – Canadian Membership – UNCOK 1947-1948” file, LBPP, vol. 35, LAC

“latent fears” that they would somehow be absorbed by the U.S. as a result of America’s “overpowering weight and energy.” But Canadians should not fear the United States, for:

Perceiving no reason to fear or envy the Canadians, we have the friendliest of feelings toward them as neighbours, and as partners in the various international endeavours, including the cold war. We have no designs on their territory or their sovereignty. In fact, we are not as a rule deeply interested in or well-informed about Canadian affairs. As for harmonious relations, we are inclined to take those for granted, having too many compelling troubles elsewhere in the world to search for more beneath the surface of U.S.-Canadian relations.²¹³

Contrary to Perkins’ beliefs, this is precisely what the DEA feared – a United States utterly indifferent to its neighbour’s ideals and interests. Although opinions such as these were not often expressed by the State Department, neither were views that stated the opposite. In this case, there was some validation of the Canadians’ sovereignty concerns.

Conclusion

Between 1945 and 1950, Canadian values directed official thinking on security towards the European continent and multilateral institutions aimed at limiting both Soviet and American militarism. While the former was a definite priority for Pearson and the DEA, Ottawa’s effort to gain the latter cannot be ignored. The realization following World War II that Canadian and American security policies were so intertwined as to limit Ottawa’s ability to craft a truly independent foreign policy guided Canada to construct an infrastructure, first through the UN and later NATO, that guaranteed some leverage against Washington in crises. Otherwise, policymakers rightly decided, Canadian interests would be quickly subordinated to those of the United States. This style of collective security nevertheless suffered from a major flaw. The functional approach taken by the DEA never

²¹³ Perkins to Webb, 8 March 1950, cited above

formed a contingency plan for aggression outside of NATO's mandate on the assumption that aggression in regions other than Europe was either unlikely or simply not detrimental to Canadian national security. Would Canada support a UN-sanctioned mission to counter aggression if it occurred in a remote part of the globe? Canada's government had placed so much emphasis on collective security that by 1950 it had become nearly synonymous with Canada's national security. As a consequence, to shirk this responsibility in times of crisis would threaten the foundations of Pearson's foreign policy. Yet the DEA and others had underappreciated the problems in Asia and their implication for Canada's sovereignty. Indeed, much to the displeasure of politicians, bureaucrats and commentators nation-wide, Canada would come to play a much larger role in securing the North Pacific than it had ever desired or intended.

Chapter III: “Prompt Action is worth more than Perfect Action”:

The U.S and Korean War

On 25 June 1950, North Korea’s armies invaded the ROK. The following day, the U.S. Ambassador to the Soviet Union, Alan G. Kirk, reported to Acheson that the invasion of South Korea was “a direct challenge to the free world and US leadership thereof.” Consequently, each day America allowed North Korean forces to hold South Korean territory would “reduce our prestige in all Asia as well as in the friendly western world.”²¹⁴ Secretary Acheson agreed.²¹⁵ Without a doubt, upholding the virtues of American leadership through the defence of non-communist states became the predominant security concern for Truman after the NKPA crossed the 38th Parallel. Although U.S. economic and political support for the ROK had been lukewarm at best before the war, the small Asian republic now became the “testing ground” for American resolve in the Cold War. Truman, his closest advisors, and a considerable portion of Americans reasoned that a U.S. failure to meet the challenge in Korea would erode its global standing and render future efforts to contain communism significantly more difficult.²¹⁶ As noted in Acheson’s account of the Korean War, failing to meet the communist challenge would have been “highly destructive of the power and prestige of the United States.”²¹⁷ Holding the line against North Korea was not about denying international communism a strategically insignificant piece of land in Asia. Instead, Washington would fight monolithic communism in Korea to demonstrate the virility of American military, political and moral power.

²¹⁴ State Department Summary of Telegrams, 3 July 1950, Naval Aide to the President Files, Box 23, HSTL

²¹⁵ Alan Kirk to Acheson, 26 June 1950, *FRUS*, 1950, VII, p. 169

²¹⁶ “Notes on the Meeting in the Secretary’s Office on MacArthur Testimony,” 16 May 1951, “MacArthur – Testimony, Re” file, Acheson Papers, Subject File, Box 64

²¹⁷ Dean Acheson, *The Korean War*, p. 20.

Early reactions to the invasion revealed that defending U.S. prestige was the administration's chief pre-occupation. While officials linked images of U.S. power to principles of peace and freedom, those connections proved difficult to maintain. Of course, prestige was dependent on Truman's ability to defend sovereign states. But the abstract notion of freedom rarely motivated the U.S. government in the Korean War as Truman, the State Department and the JCS had more pressing concerns directly linked to American national security. First, concerns about a lack of military preparedness pushed the administration towards a rapid mobilization program similar to that prescribed under NSC-68. As well, U.S. officials were preoccupied with defending the new *status quo* in China, first through measures to neutralize Formosa and then efforts to keep the PRC out of the UN. These measures, designed to project images of American strength and superiority which had replaced abstract notions of universal freedom as the motivating principle of U.S. foreign relations, strained relations with Canada.

Scholars have long accepted that the Korean invasion confirmed for Truman and Acheson the dictums of NSC-68.²¹⁸ In fact, as John Lewis Gaddis has pointed out, the Truman administration followed the document so closely in its reaction to the crisis that it even replicated many of NSC-68's contradictions.²¹⁹ But Canadian officials had not read this document. Moreover, based on the actions of Canadian diplomats throughout the conflict's first year, it is highly unlikely that they would have accepted Nitze's analysis of the Soviet Union or his policy recommendations. The anti-communist rhetoric and ultra-nationalist appeals to American values engendered in NSC-68 – discursive devices that many

²¹⁸ Robert Jervis, "The Impact of the Korean War on the Cold War," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 24, no. 4, (December 1980), pp. 563-592; Beatrice Hauser, "NSC 68 and the Soviet Threat: A New Perspective on Western Threat Perception and Policymaking," *Review of International Studies*, vol. 17 (1991), pp. 17-40; Hogan, *A Cross of Iron*, pp. 305-306; Stueck, *The Korean War*, pp. 44-46; Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, pp. 93-124.

²¹⁹ Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, pp. 108-109.

policymakers appear to have fully believed – ran counter to the twin goals of sovereignty and collective security that defined Canada’s response to the Korean War. Although there was a concerted effort by Truman’s administration to link U.S. action in Korea to the UN and universal values, this chapter argues that the communist invasion of the ROK was viewed by American officials as a distinctly national security crisis.

What would also become obvious to Canadian observers was the tension between U.S. national security goals and UN objectives. The words and deeds of the Truman administration left many asking whether U.S. action in Korea was about protecting American interests or an act of collective security engineered under the UN’s banner to repel unprovoked aggression. The United Nations Command (UNC), established by the U.S. under MacArthur’s leadership, was a multinational force with a mandate to repel aggression and liberate the ROK. Powerful UN members such as Britain, Canada and India pressured the U.S. to keep the Korean affair a solely UN project. Truman famously dubbed the UNC’s mission as an international “police action” and claimed on 25 June that he “was working entirely for the UN.”²²⁰ Yet U.S. officials were reluctant to fully develop the UNC as a multinational force representative of the contributing member states and the State Department demonstrated ambiguous support for increased participation by UN member states. General J. Lawton Collins, Army Chief of Staff during the Korean War, once argued the U.S. went to war in 1950 to defend American “prestige in Asia *and* that of the United Nations,” but there is no corroborating evidence to support his claim.²²¹ At best, UN prestige was an incidental product. As Truman noted on 30 November 1950 just as it became evident

²²⁰ Memorandum of Conversation by Philip Jessup, 25 June 1950 *FRUS*, 1950, VII, p. 160; *PPP:HST*, 1950, p. 504

²²¹ J. Lawton Collins, *War in Peacetime: The History and Lessons of Korea*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969), p. 41. Italics added.

that the PRC had entered the conflict with several hundred thousand troops, “We are fighting for our own national security and survival.”²²² Evidently politicians and security analysts conflated American values with those of other free nations. Unfortunately for Truman, many of America’s closest allies were not so easily convinced.²²³

Initial Reactions and Rearmament, June – August 1950

President Truman remarked in private to his chief aide George Elsey shortly after the NKPA invasion that Korea was “the Greece of the Far East. If we are tough enough now, if we stand up to them [the Soviet Union] like we did in Greece three years ago, they won’t take any next steps.”²²⁴ The problem was the UN had no role in administering the Truman Doctrine. Hence, we must assume the President was referring specifically to America and not the “free world” generally. Indeed, the Soviet-led challenge had to be met by the United States specifically because it tested American credibility. David Bruce, the U.S. Ambassador in Paris, described the ROK’s invasion as a “direct defiance of the United States” and the State Department could be certain that “all Europeans to say nothing of the Asiatics [were] watching to see what the United States [would] do.”²²⁵ Or, as summarized by Acheson in an interview in 1954, the “fate of the rest of the world” depended on what the U.S. had done in Korea.²²⁶ There was likely some truth to these remarks, that Korean War *was* a test of American resolve. Yet the limited evidence available from archives of the former Soviet bloc renders such confirmations difficult. Again, what mattered was the perception that U.S.

²²² Truman cited in Susan Brewer, *Why Americans Fight: Patriotism and War Propaganda from the Philippines to the Iraq War*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 161

²²³ Teigrob, *Warming up to the Cold War*, p. 190

²²⁴ Truman cited in Steven Casey, *Selling the Korean War: Propaganda, Politics, and Public Opinion in the United States, 1950-1953*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), p. 30. See also Leffler, *Preponderance of Power*, p. 367

²²⁵ David Bruce to Acheson, 26 June 1950, *FRUS*, 1950, VII, p. 174

²²⁶ Dean Acheson, Princeton Seminar Discussions, 13 February 1954, Acheson Papers, Princeton Seminars File, Box 81, HSTL

prestige was at stake.

Decision-making in Washington and Ottawa was heavily influenced by recent history. Truman and Acheson likened the ROK's invasion to the abject failures of appeasement in the 1930s in Manchuria, Ethiopia and Munich, which had become catchphrases for missed opportunities to prevent or punish aggression. "If this [Korean aggression] was allowed to go unchallenged," Truman remarked in his memoirs, "it would mean a third world war, just as similar incidents had brought on the second world war."²²⁷ According to Richard Neustadt and Ernest May, the analogy supported every national security decision the Truman administration made in June and July, but policymakers had not properly compared the domestic and international contexts of these epochs. For instance, the authors noted that American isolationism, which defined foreign policy in the 1930s, was not longer a factor. As well, the Korean crisis was not between two internationally-recognized governments, but a quasi-civil conflict with international dimensions. The conclusions Truman drew from history were therefore flawed.²²⁸ Nevertheless, policymakers strongly believed any moderation in dealing with communist aggression would only encourage more Soviet attacks. Appeasement now, they surmised, would only mean the U.S. would have to fight a larger war in the future.

On 1 July, the NSC came to a similar conclusion. NSC-73 claimed the USSR wished to "probe" U.S. resolve in Korea and argued that allowing communists to control the entire peninsula would lead to a "tremendous prestige defeat and the loss of public confidence everywhere." If Truman failed to act, America's European allies might grow disillusioned

²²⁷ Truman, *Memoirs*, vol. 2, pp. 332-333. See also Wrong to Pearson, 27 June 1950, *DCER*, vol. 16, edited by Greg Donaghy, (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1994), p. 27

²²⁸ Richard E. Neustadt and Ernest May, *Thinking in Time: The Uses of History for Decision Makers*, (New York: Free Press, 1986), pp. 34-43

with U.S. leadership and thus jeopardize the unity of the Western. The following passage from this report, which was approved by the State Department with no comment about the impact of Korea on U.S. prestige, is telling of U.S. motives for intervening in Korea. “The testing of our firmness in other areas may take every form known to Communist ingenuity...If any weakness or hesitation is encountered on our part, anywhere, it will instantaneously be exploited by the Communists to undermine confidence in us in Europe and elsewhere and to promote a turn of political sentiment against us.”²²⁹ Thus, defending American prestige and public confidence in Washington’s ability to lead the ideological campaign against communism was paramount.

Naturally, this perspective increased the pressure on administration officials to act quickly and decisively. The political advantages the Soviet Union would achieve if the communist takeover of the ROK was successful would bring into question the foundations of American foreign policy. Acheson was concerned that if the United States did not act quickly and decisively, the “whole system” of diplomacy and the “big, central ideas” that the administration had been implementing in Europe since 1947 would fall apart. According to Acheson, the Marshall Plan and NATO would lose their deterrent value and become powerless against the political power of international communism.²³⁰ Therefore, not only American values but also the products those values crafted would be crippled if the U.S. did not demonstrate to the Soviets that it would defend free states from attack. As Acheson told the Cabinet on 14 July, “prompt action is worth more than perfect action.” What mattered was that American resolve be demonstrated so that we can offer “some reassurance to our

²²⁹ See NSC 73, “The Position and Actions of the United States with Respect to Possible Further Soviet Moves in the Light of the Korean Situation,” 1 July 1950, PSF Subject Files, “National Security Council – Meetings” file, Box 180, HSTL

²³⁰ Acheson cited in Beiser, *Dean Acheson*, p. 333

friends” and “strike fear into our enemies.”²³¹ Intelligence estimates from the Office of Intelligence Research painted a similar picture. North Korea, the Estimates Group claimed, was so firmly posited in the Soviet sphere of influence that it would be impossible for Kim Il-Sung to have invaded South Korea without substantial support from Moscow. America’s reluctance to meet this new challenge would only “cause significant damage to US prestige in Western Europe” and encourage leaders of communist states to become “more bold” in their efforts to spread socialist ideologies. On the other hand, a firm response would demonstrate to non-aligned states the inferiority of socialism and weaken the Kremlin’s grip on Marxist-Leninist regimes.²³²

Capitol Hill approved Truman’s actions against communist expansion. After years of castigating the White House for its failed Far Eastern policy, legislators suddenly called upon the executive to lead the American people and the world at this pivotal moment. On 26 June, Senator Styles Bridges (R – New Hampshire) was the first to commend President Truman’s swift action in the face of aggression. Alluding to appeasement’s failures in the 1930s, Bridges pronounced that “free peoples” everywhere were now looking towards the U.S. for protection and guidance in a volatile world. This view was shared by others. Senator Herbert Lehman (D – New York) stated emphatically that “Mr. President, there are times for greatness. This is such a time.” Lehman continued that “anxious millions, hundreds of millions, are watching what we do and listening to what we say.” The role of the United States in the struggle against communism was not more crucial than ever. As noted by Senator Knowland on the same day, “Korea is not likely to be saved by a United Nations

²³¹ Memorandum of Conversation, Acheson to Cabinet, 14 July 1950, Acheson Papers, Memoranda of Conversations File, 1949-1953, Box 67, HSTL

²³² Intelligence Estimate Prepared by the Estimates Group, Office of Intelligence Research, Department of State, 25 June 1950, *FRUS*, 1950, VII, pp. 148-154

resolution alone.”²³³ Knowland’s associate, Senator George W. Malone (R – Nevada), made remark that “The United Nations under its present leadership will do nothing for us. We must do it ourselves if it is to be done.”²³⁴ Multilateral institutions required military capabilities and firm leadership. The United States, these Senators believed, was the only state that could provide either. Hume Wrong observed that no members of Congress “dared [to] publicly question” Truman’s decision to commit U.S. forces to Korea, noting that “[e]motions are deeply aroused by the conviction that the United States has taken the lead, at a high cost, in defending the principles of the United Nations and the whole of the non-communist world.”²³⁵

Just as the Korean invasion cemented pre-existing notions of American leadership, the image of monolithic communism directed from Moscow was similarly reinforced. Although efforts by U.S. officials to discern Soviet motives in Korea were “pure guesswork,”²³⁶ the invasion was commonly framed as a Stalinist project and very little consideration was given to the perhaps different motivations of the North Korean or Communist Chinese leaders. Even before the attack, many State Department officials held that North Korea was a vassal state completely dependent on Moscow for its very existence. Therefore, it was impossible that the invasion had begun without Stalin’s explicit orders.²³⁷ As Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs Edward Barrett comically described when asked by a reporter who was responsible for the invasion, “Can you imagine Donald Duck going on a rampage without Walt Disney knowing about it?” Acheson, however, found this

²³³ *Congressional Record*, 1950, vol. 96, pt. 7, pp. 9155-9157

²³⁴ *Ibid*, p. 9294

²³⁵ Wrong to Pearson, 12 July 1950, 100.009 (D8), DHH

²³⁶ Charles Bohlen, Minutes of Conversation between France, U.K. and U.S., 3 August 1950, *FRUS*, 1950, VII, pp. 519-521

²³⁷ Memorandum by the Central Intelligence Agency, “Current Capabilities of the North Korean Regime, 19 June 1950, *FRUS*, 1950, VII, pp. 109-111

comment ill-timed as the administration was downplaying any Soviet role in order to localize the conflict.²³⁸ Nevertheless, although Acheson had “no evidence” of Soviet involvement, both he and Truman had a “strong suspicion” from the war’s first hours that the attack had been orchestrated by Moscow. The President, the Secretary of Defence, the JCS and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), all making judgments with minimal intelligence, agreed.²³⁹ The widely-held assumption that communism has a monolithic force directed by Moscow only reinforced the perceived vulnerability of U.S. security and, consequently, the resolve of the American public to support Truman’s decisions.

America’s growing geopolitical vulnerability was the driving force not only for military action in Korea, but for completely mobilizing U.S. defence industries as outlined in NSC-68. Although Truman and Acheson had sought to limit the Korean conflict to the peninsula, placing events in the Far East in global perspective, they projected the invasion of Korea as likely the first of several “Soviet moves” geared towards the eventual destruction of the United States. Acheson reported to Truman’s Cabinet on the morning of 14 July that American capabilities were insufficient to keep the USSR from attacking “any one of a dozen places” along its periphery,²⁴⁰ although intelligence experts had already concluded

²³⁸ Edward Barrett, *Truth is Our Weapon*, (New York: Funk & Wagnall, 1953), pp. 156-157

²³⁹ Memorandum of Conversation, Acheson to Senator Wiley, 26 June 1950, Acheson Papers, Memoranda of Conversations File, 1949-1953, Box 67; Memorandum of Conversation by the Ambassador at Large (Jessup), 26 June 1950, *FRUS*, 1950, VII, pp. 157-161; National Intelligence Estimate (NIE-3), “Soviet Intentions and Capabilities,” 15 November 1950, PSF: Intelligence File, Box 213, HSTL

²⁴⁰ Senator William Benton, who had organized Truman’s “Campaign for Truth” before the Korean War, reiterated a similar view in Congress during mid-July. “If the Soviets can convince people that they are peace-loving while they attack and they shoot and they bomb, why should they hold back in Iran, in Greece, in Indochina, or even France or Italy? The United States is vulnerable, unfortunately, and tragically vulnerable on a dozen exposed fronts.” The Parallels between the statements of the JCS and Benton suggest perhaps the Truman administration was feeding the Senator information to buoy its case in Congress. See *Congressional Record*, 1950, vol. 96, pt.7, p. 9908

Moscow had nothing to gain by attacking many of these regions.²⁴¹ As a consequence of this imbalance, Acheson said, the sentiment in the U.S. and Europe had shifted to “petrified fright.” NATO did nothing to alleviate this fear as it lacked the military means to repel a communist invasion. “Our intentions are not doubted, our capabilities are doubted,” Acheson reminded his peers. If the United States exhibited a lack of preparedness and productivity, confidence in its leadership would be lost. Truman, the Department of Defence and the JCS concurred with Acheson that the U.S. should immediately expand its industry and military.²⁴²

On 19 July, Truman told Congress that his national security recommendations were designed to meet the new threats faced by the United States. Although the UN had resisted an NKPA takeover of Korea, it had become “plain beyond all doubt that the international communist movement is prepared to use armed invasion to conquer independent nations. We must recognize the possibility that armed aggression may take place in other areas.” Therefore, it was imperative the U.S. rearm immediately.²⁴³ Congressional bi-partisanship was at its apex during this period. Republican Senator Robert Taft, no admirer of the President, believed that national security was above party politics: “now is not the time to argue origins, mistakes, responsibilities and consequences. There is only one way out of such situations as this: that is to win. To win we must have unity of purpose and action.”²⁴⁴ The military build-up described by the NSC was already been underway. Legislators immediately passed a number of bills to extend the peacetime draft and to authorize over

²⁴¹ NSC 73 reported that “Even granted a Soviet desire to unleash a new world war, it is considered that the Soviet Union would not gain by isolated attack on Iran, Greece, Turkey, or on Yugoslavia.” See NSC 73, cited above

²⁴² Memorandum of Conservation, Acheson to Cabinet, 14 July 1950, cited above

²⁴³ *PPP: HST*, 1950, p. 531

²⁴⁴ Taft cited in Arthur Brock, “The Time, the Place and the Occasion,” 30 June 1950, *New York Times*, “Foreign Relations – General, 1950-1951” file, Elsey Papers: Subject File, Box 58, HSTL

\$1.2 billion in military aid to Europe and Asia, including Korea.²⁴⁵ Truman requested an additional \$10.4 billion from Congress on 24 July, but altogether extracted nearly \$34.8 billion for the military by the end of 1950 for the following fiscal year, a 257 percent increase from the budget he had put forth only months before.²⁴⁶ Evidently, defending American prestige did not come cheaply.

Luckily for the administration, Congress and the public fully backed its decisions.²⁴⁷ According to a Gallup Poll in August 1950, the American public – previously reluctant to approve increased taxation – overwhelmingly supported higher levies to pay to rapidly for build-up the armed forces. George Gallup, Director of the American Institute of Public Opinion, exclaimed that “rarely has the Institute in its fifteen years found such heavy majorities [70 percent] expressing a willingness to pay more taxes for any public purpose.” Gallup’s press release indicated Truman’s administration was actually trailing behind public opinion regarding military mobilization.²⁴⁸ Similar polls also revealed that the electorate wanted Truman to take a stronger stand against domestic communists, including putting Communist Party members in internment camps or executing them in the event of war between the U.S. and the Soviets.²⁴⁹ Perhaps the White House’s anti-communist campaign in the years preceding the Korean invasion had worked too efficiently.

The Korean War was thus much more than a limited military confrontation. Indeed, the administration argued the U.S. needed to win the ideological battle if it was ever to triumph

²⁴⁵ “The Congress: Time for Unity,” 10 July 1950, *Time*, available at <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,805447,00.html>

²⁴⁶ *HST: PPP*, 1950, p.537; Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, p. 111.

²⁴⁷ Walter S. Poole, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and National Policy, Volume IV, 1950-1952*, (Washington: Historical Division of the Joint Secretariat, Joint Chiefs Division, 1979), pp. 54-55

²⁴⁸ George Gallup, “Stand-by Mobilization Bill Gets Increased Public Support,” 5 August 1950, American Institute of Public Opinion Records, 1945-1952, Box 1, HSTL

²⁴⁹ Support for internment was 22 percent, while 13 percent said “shoot them, hang them.” Only one percent said communists deserved the same freedom of thought as other Americans. See George Gallup, “Public for Tougher Curbs than Truman on Handling U.S. Reds, Survey Shows,” 19 August 1950, *ibid*

in the Cold War. As noted by the NSC in NSC-68/1, “ideas and principles play an equal part with guns and butter” in the fight against communism.²⁵⁰ To an open session of Congress on 6 July, Senator William Benton (D – Connecticut), one of Truman’s most powerful Congressional allies, proclaimed that “it saddens me to think we meet today to discuss how we can best project democracy in the world at a time when our failure to do so has involved this Nation in what may be the shooting start of another global war.” Using language borrowed from the European Recovery Program, Benton emphatically concluded the NKPA challenge was social, not military. “The fight,” he claimed, “is for the minds and loyalties of all mankind. It is nothing less than that.”²⁵¹ A week later, Truman asked Congress for an \$89 million expansion of the Campaign for Truth, arguing that “communism is seeking to discredit the United States and its actions throughout the world” and was therefore “vital to our National Security.”²⁵² According to these claims, the image that independent states had of the United States was just as important as the dollars and guns the Americans supplied.

Acheson also supported an intensified “Marshall Plan of ideas” to counter Soviet claims of “Yankee imperialism” and to re-establish the U.S. as the harbinger of “peace, democracy, justice [and] national independence.”²⁵³ In July, he demanded a 500 percent increase in funding for Voice of America, the U.S. radio propaganda program in Europe. He also pushed to establish an organization to create motion pictures with pro-American themes.²⁵⁴ Senate Resolution 243, authored by Benton and tabled in Congress in early July, advocated an immediate expansion of the propaganda campaign already in place. Chairman of the Board of the Radio Corporation of America, Brigadier-General David Sarnoff,

²⁵⁰ NSC-68/1, “United States Objectives and Programs for National Security,” 21 September 1950, “Meetings: 68: September 29, 1950” file, PSF: Subject File, 1940-1953, Cabinet File, Box 137, HSTL

²⁵¹ *Congressional Record*, 1950, vol. 96, pt. 7, pp. 9694-9696

²⁵² *PPP: HST*, 1950, p. 521

²⁵³ *Congressional Record*, 1950, vol. 96, pt. 7, pp. 9696-9697

²⁵⁴ *ibid*

supported Benton's resolution in the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee and demanded that the State Department be given \$200 million to construct a ring of radio stations worldwide but concentrated around the Soviet Union, to disseminate American values of individual freedom and democracy.²⁵⁵ Republicans were reluctant to support these investments, not because they did not see the value in propagating American culture, but because they feared Voice of America might be manipulated to favour the Democratic Party.²⁵⁶ There was, however, agreement in Congress that much more at stake than the balance of military power. The Korean War had made ideological and moral values a source of international political leverage.

Although Truman acted with great resolve in the last week of June, decisions at the White House were not being made under ideal circumstances. Many pre-existing biases and the lack of intelligence about North Korea undoubtedly skewed the official interpretation of events in Korea. In 1954, Dean Acheson admitted that intelligence about North Korea was quite inconsiderable, noting "not a soul" from the Western diplomatic corps had ever stepped onto North Korean territory. Knowledge of the country, he said, "was a complete blank." Moreover, reports from MacArthur's office in Tokyo were "schizophrenic" and inconclusive.²⁵⁷ Acheson was not the only one to criticize U.S. intelligence failures. As one historian summarized nearly forty years after the invasion, "The intelligence people had blown it."²⁵⁸ They simply knew little about North Korean politics or intentions except that the country's leadership was socialist and militant. Uninformed opinions about the nature of international communism, and not hard facts, defined the American response in Korea.

²⁵⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 9698-9701

²⁵⁶ David Kruger, *The Voice of America and the Domestic Propaganda Battles, 1945-1953*, (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000), pp. 125-126

²⁵⁷ Dean Acheson, Princeton Seminar Discussions, 13 February 1954, Acheson Papers, Princeton Seminars File, Box 81, HSTL

²⁵⁸ Schoenbaum, *Between War and Peace*, p. 210

These intelligence gaps notwithstanding, the U.S. government made a conscious effort to shape public opinion in its interest. Recent studies have demonstrated that the Truman administration's propaganda campaign early on in the Korean War was calculated to generate the maximum domestic and international support for an American military commitment to the peninsula. Truman felt that the press releases coming from the White House could not be overly heated or patriotic, at least during the conflict's initial days,²⁵⁹ as he assumed that ideological arguments would likely to stir up anti-communist public opinion that might hinder decision-making. Concurring, the State Department suggested the U.S. "should carefully consider measures likely to cause hysteria."²⁶⁰ Susan Brewer has argued that although Truman wished to construct an official narrative of events that placed the Korean War in the paradigm of "Free world vs. Communist world," the administration and the State Department wanted to make the war more appealing to Americans by presenting it as a national struggle uniquely tied to maintaining domestic freedom.²⁶¹

Yet Truman was also conscious of his allies and his enemies. Thus, he underscored the UN's role whenever possible. For instance, reminding Congress on 19 July that the United States was acting solely on the basis of the UN resolutions passed at June's end, he emphasized the invasion was "a demonstration of contempt for" and "a clear challenge to the principles of," the United Nations.²⁶² These assertions, although correct, were misleading as the UN's prestige was never among the stated reasons for U.S. intervention in Korea. Promoting the connection between U.S. and UN action nevertheless served two key political purposes. First, it provided a legal and moral basis for American involvement which

²⁵⁹ Steven Casey, "White House Publicity Operations During the Korean War, June 1950-June 1951," *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, vol. 35, no. 4, (December 2005), p. 703 (691-717)

²⁶⁰ Cited in Steven Casey, *Selling the Korean War: Propaganda, Politics, and Public Opinion in the United States, 1950-1953*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), p. 33

²⁶¹ Brewer, *Why America Fights*, pp. 141-178

²⁶² *HST: PPP*, 1950, p. 528

enhanced the domestic credibility for Truman's decision to send troops to Korea.²⁶³ As well, this public demonstration of American subordination to the UN supported Truman's other claim that the U.S. had no territorial ambitions in Asia and that its response to the Korean crisis should not be interpreted as aggressive.²⁶⁴ In particular, this message was directed at the USSR and the PRC, who charged the Korean mission as "a manifestation of American imperialism." Defence planners believed these states might intervene if they felt their security was compromised.²⁶⁵ Truman's policies were smart politics, but they added substantially to the ambiguity of U.S. goals and UN authority in Korea.

Some State Department officials questioned the 'NSC-68 doctrine.' Sovietologist Charles Bohlen maintained the Korean invasion was an isolated incident, not the first of several possible moves by the Soviets. He continued that the administration was "misled" in its belief that Korea validated Soviet motives as they were outlined in NCS-68.²⁶⁶ George Kennan also had several reservations about U.S. policy in Korea during the summer of 1950. In late August, Kennan forwarded his thoughts to Acheson on the subject of Far Eastern policy. First, U.S. objectives were not "clear or realistic" and the various departments running the war were "indulging themselves in emotional, moralistic attitudes" which could soon lead to a general conflict with the USSR. Further, as it would be impossible in the long term to deny Korea to the Soviets, the U.S. should refrain from trying to establish "an anti-Soviet regime extended to all of Korea for all time," provided such a state of affairs reduced the chance of war. Sadly, Kennan added, the fickle nature of public opinion and the Republican attacks in Congress killed such moderate policies. In fact, any attempt to work

²⁶³ Prime Minister Clement Attlee to St. Laurent, 25 July 1950, "Korea: Canadian Policy – 1950-1951" file, Pre-1958 Open Files, LBPP, vol. 35, LAC

²⁶⁴ *HST: PPP*, 1950, p. 531. See also *ibid*, pp. 610-613, 729-731

²⁶⁵ Minutes of Conversation between France, U.K. and U.S., 3 August 1950, *FRUS*, 1950, VII, pp. 519-521

²⁶⁶ Bohlen, *Witness to History*, pp. 308-312

with the communists would “mean pouring oil on the fires already kindled by the Republican opposition in the charge that our Far Eastern policy has been over-lenient to Communism and therefore neglectful of our national security.”²⁶⁷ Even following the PRC’s entry into the conflict, Kennan found insufficient evidence to suggest events in Korea fit into the Kremlin’s “master plan” nor that the Soviets were likely to instigate “another Korea” elsewhere.²⁶⁸

The inflammatory rhetoric and impetuous decision-making of these early weeks that Kennan found so dangerous belied the administration’s aforementioned desire to limit the conflict. As famously noted by General Omar Bradley, Chairman of the JCS, a prolonged war in Korea with the PRC would embroil the United States “in the wrong war, at the wrong place, at the wrong time, with the wrong enemy.”²⁶⁹ Second, the U.S. must maintain strategic flexibility as there remained a distinct possibility of a Soviet attack anywhere at any time.²⁷⁰ As the NSC reported there was no evidence Soviet forces were in Korea, Truman was advised to minimize the U.S. military commitment there lest American forces “become involved in a profitless and discreditable war of attrition with the Soviet satellites in Asia, wasting our military forces and turning all Asiatic peoples against us.”²⁷¹ Others, such as Bradley and John Allison, Director of the Office of Northeast Asian Affairs, made similar remarks throughout the summer.²⁷² Since national security planners also believed that Stalin

²⁶⁷ Kennan to Acheson, 21 August 1950, Dean Acheson Papers, Memorandum of Conversation file, Box 67, HSTL

²⁶⁸ Memorandum of Conversation, 3 December 1950, *FRUS*, 1950, VII, pp. 1335-1336

²⁶⁹ Senate Committees on Armed Services and Foreign Relations, *Military Situation in the Far East*, 15 May 1951, 82nd Congress, First Session, pt. 2, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1951), pp. 721-722

²⁷⁰ NSC 73/3, “The Position and Actions of the United States with Respect to Possible Further Soviet Moves in the Light of the Korean Situation,” 22 August 1950, PSF: Subject Files, National Security Council – Meetings file, Box 180, HSTL

²⁷¹ NSC 73, 1 July 1950, cited above

²⁷² Draft Memorandum by Allison, 12 August 1950, *ibid*, p. 568; JCS to Johnson, 10 July 1950, *FRUS*, 1950, VII, p. 346. Bradley did not specify where exactly American forces would be dispatched and mentioned only that the U.S. would move towards the implementation of “war plans” in the event of a war with the Soviet

would not risk a general war,²⁷³ it was in Washington's strategic interests to confine the conflict to the peninsula. The UN, which had been a flurry of activity since 25 June, agreed with Truman that all efforts should be made to localize the Korean War.²⁷⁴

Fighting a Localized War: The UN, Formosa and the 38th Parallel, June – November 1950

Truman, thanks to domestic support, had no difficulty dispatching U.S. forces to Korea post-haste or securing UN approval for his "police action." He met with his chief advisors from the JCS, the Departments of State and Defence, at Blair House on 25 and 26 June to discuss U.S. options. On the second day of meetings, Truman decided, with the JCS's concurrence, that General Douglas MacArthur – who had *de facto* authority from Washington to repel the NKPA – should immediately provide air and naval cover to the retreating ROK forces.²⁷⁵ However, MacArthur told Washington the South Korean army was weak and disorganized. If Truman wanted to keep a toe-hold in Korea, American forces were needed immediately to repel the much stronger and better-equipped NKPA.²⁷⁶ On 30 June, one week before the UN General Assembly passed the resolution establishing the UNC, Truman opted to send ground forces to Korea. These actions, while taken unilaterally, were in accordance with the vaguely-worded UN resolutions of 25 and 27 June which demanded "an immediate cessation of hostilities" and called upon member states to furnish assistance to the ROK to repel aggression.²⁷⁷ But as Walter Pool, the official historian of the

Union. The State Department demanded clarification on this phrase, but there are no documents to suggest it was ever formally received. Nevertheless, fighting a general war with either the U.S.S.R. or the PRC in Korea was to be avoided at all costs.

²⁷³ NSC 73/1, 29 July 1950, PSF: Subject Files, National Security Council – Meetings file, Box 180, HSTL

²⁷⁴ Stueck, *The Korean War*, pp. 48-50. Stueck rightly asserts that all states except for the Chinese Nationalists on Formosa wanted to limit the conflict.

²⁷⁵ Memorandum of Conversation, 25 June 1950, *FRUS*, 1950, VII, pp. 157-161; *ibid*, 26 June 1950, pp. 178-183

²⁷⁶ MacArthur to Acheson, 30 June 1950, *FRUS*, VII, pp. 248-249

²⁷⁷ See *ibid*, pp. 155-156, 211

JCS, has established, Truman committed U.S. forces to Korea using only “a cloak of UN resolutions.”²⁷⁸ The UN followed the U.S. lead, not vice versa.

The U.S. Eighth Army, which had been stationed in Japan since 1945 as part of the Far Eastern Command, had five under-strength divisions filled with raw recruits, ill-trained and ill-equipped for combat with the experienced and Soviet-trained North Korean troops. Nonetheless, it was the only contingent capable of meeting the NKPA. It first encountered the North Koreans at Osan on 5 July, a disastrous engagement for the small American task force sent to probe enemy defences. The U.S. Army and the ROK began a full retreat south.²⁷⁹ The State Department had kept U.S. allies informed of the deteriorating military situation, but the JCS had received only some token offers from the U.K and the Commonwealth nations, Republican China and the Netherlands, which were insufficient to halt the NKPA advance. Admittedly, few countries had suitable mobile forces to spare.²⁸⁰ But Truman, sincerely wanting to emphasize the UN role to counter Soviet accusations that Korea was an example of U.S. imperialism and “aggression,” urged the State Department to secure larger infantry contingents from the member states. The burden fell largely on the administration’s Commonwealth allies at the UN – Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand – which were expected to give more as a result of their close ties to the U.S.²⁸¹

²⁷⁸ Walter S. Poole, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and National Policy*, p. 37. The British Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations made a similar observation on 27 June 1950, when he noted the U.K. would support the UN resolution on that day “to validate action [already] being undertaken by the United States.” See Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations to Pearson, 27 June 1950, 100.009 (D8), DHH

²⁷⁹ Ibid, pp. 56-57; James F. Schnabel, *United States Army in the Korean War, Policy and Direction: The First Year*, (Washington: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1972), pp. 54-60, 82, 112-113; Collins, *War in Peacetime*, p. 45-55; Wainstock, *Truman, MacArthur and the Korean War*, p. 10. MacArthur requested an additional four divisions from the JCS in early July in order to fulfil UN objectives. See MacArthur to JCS, 9 July 1950, *FRUS*, 1950, VII, p. 336.

²⁸⁰ Wrong to Pearson, 13 July 1950, 100.009 (D9), DHH; Wrong to Pearson, 21 July 1950, “Korea: Canadian Policy – 1950-1951” file, Pre-1958 Open Files, LBPP, vol. 35, LAC; Prime Minister Clement Attlee to St. Laurent, 25 July 1950, cited above.

²⁸¹ Acheson to Certain Diplomatic Offices, 14 July 1950, *FRUS*, 1950, VII, pp. 377-378; Wrong to Pearson, 21 July 1950, “Korea: Canadian Policy – 1950-1951” file, Pre-1958 Open Files, LBPP, vol. 35, LAC; Woodward

Meanwhile, UN Secretary-General Trgvie Lie cabled those governments on 14 July to the same effect, a message which prompted consternation and embarrassment in Ottawa and other capitals.²⁸² Lie's telegram did not have the desired effect, however. Lester Pearson's suspicion that Washington had coerced Lie into drafting the message only aggravated existing anti-U.S. sentiment in the DEA.²⁸³

While recognizing the political importance of fighting within a multilateral framework, most U.S. officials never contemplated offering the UN any significant role in pushing back North Korean forces. The Americans would fight under the UN flag but officials from several departments ensured that relationship would be loose. For instance, while Canada and Great Britain favoured creating a Committee on Coordination of Assistance for Korea to bolster UN influence over political and military affairs, the initiative was marooned by the Joint Chiefs.²⁸⁴ As well, Bradley forbade direct communication between MacArthur and the Security Council. The UN had established in the 7 July resolution establishing the UNC that all communications between the battlefield and the UN would go through Washington. Thus, the final resolution included the stipulation that the UNC would be developed under an explicit American aegis with no UN strings attached.²⁸⁵

Both acts stemmed from the fact that the JCS harboured fears the U.S. would be excluded

to State Department, 11 August 1950, "Contributions to the UN Effort [2 of 3: July – August, 1950]", Staff Member and Office Files (SMOF): Korean War File, Department of State: Topic File Subseries, Box 5, HSTL

²⁸² Memorandum of Conversation between Canada, French and U.S. Delegations to UN, 19 July 1950, "Role of the UN in the Korean Conflict [1 of 2: July – August, 1950] file," SMOF: Korean War File, Department of State: Topic File Subseries, Box 5, HSTL

²⁸³ Wrong to Pearson, 18 July 1950, 110.009 (D9), DHH; Stairs, *Diplomacy of Constraint*, p. 71; Pearson to Wrong, 20 July 1950, "Korea: Canadian Policy – 1950-1951" file, Pre-1958 Open Files, LBPP, vol. 35, LAC;

John Holmes to Pearson, 15 July 1950, RG 25, vol. 4738, file 50069-A-40, pt. 4, LAC

²⁸⁴ Collins, *War in Peacetime*, p. 34

²⁸⁵ Wrong to Pearson, 15 July 1950, 100.009 (D9), DHH. Wrong wrote that John Hickerson had argued the only practicable communication structure between the UN and MacArthur was through the Department of Defence. Wrong continued that "He [Hickerson] emphasized that, as I had suspected, the reason why the United States were insistent in adding the words "under the United States" after the recommendation to members of contributing forces to place them under "a unified command" was that the whole operation must be directed from Washington with MacArthur as Field Commander."

from the war's political direction.²⁸⁶

Influential State Department bureaucrats also did not think the organization was capable of organizing Korea's defence. Gladwyn Jebb and Terence Shone from the British Delegation to the UN revealed to their American counterparts, Warren Austin and Ernest Gross, that it was important to maximize the UN's visibility largely for "propaganda" purposes.²⁸⁷ Some officials, such as Assistant Secretary of State for United Nations Affairs John Hickerson, believed the UN had demanded that the Americans play the dominant role in the Korean War. Conversing with John C. Ross of the State Department's United Nations section on 28 June, Hickerson explained the Assistant Secretaries concluded "it was a good idea to use the United Nations umbrella as much as possible. Still, Lie should function as no more than a post office." Hickerson further assumed "it was not practicable for the United Nations to get into the actual use and control of assistance."²⁸⁸ Hickerson forwarded his ideas to Acheson on 8 July, adding the U.S. had full authorization to use the symbol of the United Nations in its military operations but that it was at the "discretion" of the UNC – which he equated with the United States – to determine how this was done.²⁸⁹ As the UN Secretariat had already passed a resolution giving Truman the right to establish the UNC, it was the President's responsibility to carry out the resolution.²⁹⁰ What was important to the U.S. government, stated Stanley Woodward, the U.S. Ambassador to Canada, was the

²⁸⁶ Poole, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and National Policy*, p. 133; Schnabel, *Policy and Direction*, p. 101

²⁸⁷ Memorandum of Conversation, British and U.S. Delegations to UN, 29 June 1950, "Role of the UN in the Korean Conflict [1 of 2: July – August, 1950]" file, SMOF: Korean War File, Department of State: Topic File Subseries, Box 5, HSTL

²⁸⁸ Memorandum of Conversation, John Hickerson and John Ross, 29 June 1950, "Contributions to the UN Effort [1 of 3: June – July 1950]" file, SMOF: Korean War File, Department of State: Topic File Subseries, Box 5, HSTL

²⁸⁹ The JCS cabled to MacArthur that "You are authorized to use at your discretion the United Nations flag." See JCS 85370, 10 July 1950, Records of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff (RG 218), "Outgoing Messages - Declassified" file, Box 9, NARA

²⁹⁰ John Hickerson to Dean Acheson, 8 July 1950, "Contributions to the UN Effort [1 of 3: June – July 1950]", SMOF: Korean War File, Department of State: Topic File Subseries, Box 5, HSTL

“symbolic significance” of international contributions. Even if U.S. authorities did not accept a contingent from a particular country – and it did decline certain offers, notably from Formosa – the offer itself would add legitimacy to the UNC.²⁹¹

On 25 July, Major General Floyd Parks, Chief of Information at the Department of the Army, met with State Department’s UN desk officers to coordinate MacArthur’s dispatches to the Security Council in order to promote multilateralism. John MacVane and Ernest Gross of the State Department urged Parks to have MacArthur send weekly reports to the Security Council to “keep members fully in the war picture” since it would help improve the image of the mission and maintain the support of American allies. Hickerson’s Assistant, Andrew Cordier, suggested appointing a non-U.S. member to work beneath MacArthur within the UN command to handle the Unified Command’s correspondence, “preferably a Canadian,” he added, since this might alleviate some of the pressures UN member states such as Canada faced in selling the war to their domestic audiences. While Parks was “fully aware of the necessity of making the present operation a United Nations affair in the full military sense,” nothing came of this option.²⁹² There was a recognized need to uphold the appearance of UN involvement in Korea, yet this need was not often acted on except in the most perfunctory ways.

Other U.S. leaders, however, demanded more than moral support from the fifty-three UN member states that had supported the initial resolutions condemning the attack.²⁹³ As it

²⁹¹ Memorandum, Pearson to St. Laurent, 26 July 1950, “Korea: Canadian Policy – 1950-1951” file, Pre-1958 Open Files, LBPP, vol. 35, LAC. Pearson reported that in his conversation with Woodward, the Ambassador revealed Turkish troops had been declined. Truman had also contemplated accepting an offer from Chiang to use 33,000 Chinese Nationalist troops in Korea, but eventually declined since it would leave Formosa undefended. See Poole, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and National Policy*, p. 389

²⁹² Memorandum of Conversation, “Emphasizing UN Aspect of Korean Situation,” 25 July 1950, “Contributions to the UN Effort [1 of 3: June – July 1950]” file, Korean War File, Department of State: Topic File Subseries, Box 5, HSTL

²⁹³ *HST: PPP*, 1950, p. 611

became obvious the Eighth Army could not save Korea on its own, criticism regarding the lack of allied participation grew. Senator Alexander Wiley of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee blasted the administration for not pushing the UN for more allied military assistance. “We appreciate the moral help of half a hundred countries,” he bellowed. “But we are not going to let them think that they have fulfilled their commitments by these half-hearted, half-baked measures.”²⁹⁴ Canada was surely amongst those UN members that Wiley believed were not contributing sufficiently to the war. Senators Benton, Knowland and Homer Ferguson (R – Michigan) also agreed that those who supported the UN resolutions to counter Korean aggression had a moral obligation to contribute militarily to the mission.²⁹⁵ Ferguson, who also chaired the Republican Policy Committee, thought the conflict’s nature necessitated recruiting international troops. “I realize that there are some in America who believe that only Americans can fight, that only Americans are the soldiers who can win freedom, but we find opposed to Americans those who do not believe in the ideals of America.”²⁹⁶ Or perhaps Sir Oliver Franks, Britain’s Ambassador to the U.S., correctly recorded that “despite the power and position of the United States the American people are not happy if they are alone. This feeling is paradoxical but it is real and a reality in the Korean situation.”²⁹⁷ Both conclusions appear equally valid.

While the State Department decided the United Nations would not contribute much politically to the fighting in Korea, Acheson still hoped that other UN members would offer ground troops primarily to maintain the image of multilateral action. Public opinion, he told Hume Wrong on 15 July, had become agitated over America’s “share of the load” in the

²⁹⁴ *Congressional Record*, 1950, vol. 96, pt. 7, p. 9738

²⁹⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 9908-9909

²⁹⁶ *Ibid*, p.9909

²⁹⁷ Franks to High Commission (Ottawa), 25 July 1950, “Korea: Canadian Policy - 1950 – 1951” file, LBPP, vol. 35, LAC.

Korean campaign and he wanted to allay these fears.²⁹⁸ Acheson's pressure on Pearson to increase Canada's contribution to the UNC continued throughout July and did not abate until St. Laurent announced the establishment of the Canadian Army Special Force (CASF) on 7 August. Although still unsure about the direction of U.S. policy with regards to Formosa, Pearson met Acheson in Washington on 29 July 1950 to make clear Canada would only contribute to a solely United Nations mission.²⁹⁹ U.S. documents reveal very little about what transpired at the meeting, although Acheson emphasized he had been very "frank" with Pearson about the State Department's Formosa policy and the necessity for a Canadian troop contribution.³⁰⁰

Pearson's papers, however, reveal a much more dynamic encounter that displayed the cunning of Acheson's diplomacy. According to a long memorandum to St. Laurent dated 1 August, Pearson said Acheson appeared "in very good condition; cool, calm, but determined." Acheson knew what Pearson wanted to hear and expressed his arguments in rhetoric that the Canadian understood. The U.S. response in Korea, Acheson reported, had been an act of "free peoples" against "Communist aggressive tactics." Further, Acheson relayed both he and Truman were concerned that the present conflict not be framed as one solely between the U.S. and the USSR, but of the "free world vs. the communist world." Through collective measures, he added, independent and peace-loving states could unite to contain aggression and the communist menace. As Acheson had been careful to invoke the label of the UN as much as possible and had avoided mentioning U.S. prestige, Pearson left

²⁹⁸ Wrong to Pearson, 15 July 1950, RG 25, vol. 4738, file 50069-A-40 pt. 4, LAC

²⁹⁹ Pearson's hand-written notes made prior to the meeting indicate he was unclear about the specifics of U.S. policy, especially in Formosa. "Resist in Korea? Resist anywhere? At what point does resistance [illegible] direct action against USSR?" He also exclaimed "US can't place its forces under a UN Commander, we must." Emphasis in original. See untitled notes, LBPP, vol. 35, LAC

³⁰⁰ Memorandum of Conversation, 29 July 1950, Memorandum of Conversations File, Acheson Papers, Box 67, HSTL

feeling that he was “inspired by the highest motives. There is no trace of warlike excitement or boastful imperialism in his attitude, but a sober and realistic determination to press along the path which he thinks is the only one that can lead to peace.”³⁰¹ Elated, Pearson returned to Ottawa with the impression that while Canada and the U.S. would differ with regards to tactics, they agreed on the issue’s fundamentals – the “common objective to preserve peace,” as Pearson later reported to Cabinet.³⁰² Once in Ottawa, Pearson recommended that Canada organize an expeditionary force to fight in Korea.³⁰³

But Pearson was not blind to the problems and ambiguities in U.S. policy. On 26 June, intent to localize the conflict in Korea, Truman had ordered the U.S. Navy’s Seventh Fleet to blockade the Formosan Strait.³⁰⁴ Formosa, U.S. military planners decided, was simply too strategically important to leave to the Nationalists alone to defend. MacArthur had submitted a memo to the JCS days before the ROK’s invasion which emphasized the island’s strategic importance and the need to deny it to enemy forces. Truman agreed, later justifying the fleet’s dispatch with a claim it was essential to safeguard the U.S. forces operating in Korea.³⁰⁵ Yet Acheson, Secretary of Defence Louis Johnson and the JCS agreed with MacArthur that regardless of multilateral action occurring in Korea, the U.S. must work with Chiang to prepare for Formosa against attack.³⁰⁶ While State Department support for Chiang had mostly dissipated and Acheson had made clear before the war the United States was “not going to get involved militarily in any way on the Island of Formosa,” the White House still believed the Nationalists could contribute to the U.S. containment strategy in the

³⁰¹ Memorandum of Conversation to St. Laurent, 1 August 1950, “Korea: Canadian Policy – 1950-1951” file, Pre-1958 Open Files, LBPP, vol. 35, LAC. See also Pearson, *Mike*, vol. 2, pp.152-154

³⁰² Extract from Cabinet Conclusions, 2-7 August 1950, *DCER*, vol. 16, p. 99

³⁰³ See Chapter IV

³⁰⁴ Statement by Truman, 27 June 1950, *FRUS*, 1950, VII, p. 202-203

³⁰⁵ Memorandum by MacArthur, 14 June 1950, *ibid*, pp. 161-165; *PPP: HST*, 1950, p. 492

³⁰⁶ NSC 37/10, “Immediate United States Courses of Action with Respect to Korea,” 21 July 1950, PSF Subject Files, National Security Council – Meetings file, Box 180, HSTL

Far East by defending strategic locations against a common enemy.³⁰⁷

Truman and Acheson had hoped to link Formosa's defence to the security of UN forces in Korea – “a simple matter of mil[itary] prudence” Acheson described. But the JCS also concluded that if the U.S. lost Formosa, the “international political repercussions would be so far reaching as to be entirely out of proportion to the value of the island itself.”³⁰⁸ Why Formosa's loss would be politically detrimental the JCS did not say. State Department briefs produced before the conflict suggested that keeping Formosa from Communism's grasp was directly linked to U.S. prestige in the Far East.³⁰⁹ As a result, the island's status had been a contested topic since the PRC's establishment in October 1949. Jacob Malik, the Soviet representative at the UN, had boycotted the Security Council since January 1950 over the U.S. refusal to transfer China's UN seat from the Nationalists to the PRC.³¹⁰ The East-West tensions embedded in the Formosa dispute led both Pearson and British Foreign Minister Ernest Bevin to demonstrate grave concern over Truman's decision to isolate Formosa to prevent a PRC attack. Their justification was that since MacArthur held two separate commands – one for the UN and one for the U.S. military – the policy expanded the conflict unnecessarily and would harden PRC's attitudes against the West.³¹¹ Nevertheless, much to the chagrin of Truman's Commonwealth allies who wanted to keep the two missions

³⁰⁷ State Department Bulletin, Remarks by Acheson on United States Policy Towards Korea, 16 January 1950, Elsey Papers, “Foreign Relations – China (policy on Formosa)” file, Subject File, Box 58, HSTL

³⁰⁸ JCS to Acheson, 28 July 1950, “Meetings: 63: August 3, 1950” file, PSF: Cabinet File, 1940-1953, Box 137, HSTL

³⁰⁹ Policy Information Paper, Formosa – Special Guidance #28, 23 December 1949, “Douglas MacArthur Hearings: Briefing Book” file, W. Averell Harriman Papers (Harriman Papers), Box 304, Library of Congress (LOC). Although it was assumed Formosa would fall to communists, the State Department aimed to “minimize the damage to U.S. prestige and others' morale.”

³¹⁰ Warren Austin to Acheson, 27 June 1950, *FRUS*, 1950, VII, pp. 208-209

³¹¹ *HST: PPP*, 1950, p. Acheson to UK Embassy, 10 July 1950, *FRUS*, 1950, VII, pp. 347-351; Lew Douglas (Ambassador to UK) to Acheson, 11 July 1950, *ibid*, pp. 361-362; Memorandum of Conversation, Acheson and Pearson, 29 July 1950, Memoranda of Conversations File, ox 67, HSTL; Rosemary Foot, *The Wrong War: American Policy and the Dimensions of the Korean Conflict, 1950-1953*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), pp. 64-65; Pearson to Wrong, 6 July 1950, *DCER*, vol. 16, pp. 56-57

institutionally distinct, the Seventh Fleet was placed under MacArthur's control.³¹²

Seventy years old in 1950, MacArthur was the most decorated soldier in the U.S. military and had singularly ruled Japan as the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers (SCAP) and CIOFEC since 1945. As noted, MacArthur was the only real option available to Truman to lead U.S. and UN troops in the Far East. However, that did not make him the ideal. In his 50-year Army career, MacArthur had acquired a reputation for emotionalism, arrogance and insubordination.³¹³ For instance, he faulted Washington for not arming the ROK to resist aggression and felt that Truman had "encouraged" the NKPA attack.³¹⁴ Also, he was involved with the Republican Party and often overstepped the boundaries of acceptable press releases for a military commander. Worse, he exacerbated the ambiguities in Truman's Korean and China policies by offering strong support for Chiang's anti-communist policies.³¹⁵ As a result, civilian authorities oft found MacArthur a definite political liability.

MacArthur's conduct during the Korean War proved characteristic. Two events in August directly exacerbated tensions, not only between the U.S. and its allies, but also between the President and the General. With JCS permission, MacArthur flew to Formosa to survey its defences and pledged three US fighter plane squadrons to Formosa. Truman quickly sent his personal envoy, W. Averell Harriman, to Japan to verbally reprimand MacArthur and to make clear the limits of the U.S. commitment to Formosa's security. Of

³¹² The JCS messaged to MacArthur on 29 June 1950 that "There is no intent to restrict your employment of VALLEY FORGE [U.S Aircraft Carrier] or other units of Seventh Fleet as between support of Korean and defence of Formosa," which technically led to a consolidation of MacArthur's commands. See JCS 84682, 29 June 1950, RG 218, "Outgoing Messages Declassified" file, Box 9, NARA

³¹³ D. Clayton James, *The Years of MacArthur: Volume III, Triumph and Disaster, 1945-1964*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1985), 1-34; 355-384. MacArthur was given orders to offer support air and logistical support to ROK forces on 25 June 1950. No other officers were seriously considered for repelling the NKPA. See Memorandum of Conversation, 25 June 1950, *FRUS*, 1950, VII, pp. 157-161

³¹⁴ Douglas MacArthur, *Reminiscences*, (Greenwich: Crest, 1964), p. 375

³¹⁵ Pearlman, *Truman and MacArthur*, pp. 1-16; Schaller, *Douglas MacArthur*, pp. 158-212

the meeting, Harriman wrote that “[h]e accepted the President’s position...but without full conviction. He has a strange idea that we should back anybody that will fight communists.”³¹⁶ The incident led Kennan to point out the “wide and relatively uncontrolled latitude” that MacArthur was afforded in his decision-making would harm the Truman administration’s ability to craft a sensible policy. Kennan rightly observed “we are tolerating a state of affairs in which we do not really have full control over the statements being made—and the actions taken—in our name.”³¹⁷

Three weeks later, MacArthur forwarded a message to the association of Veterans of Foreign Wars association about his mission in the Far East. He reiterated his commitment to denying Formosa to communist forces, asserting the U.S. military could use the island to act against the PRC in the event of a conflict and to expand the U.S. sphere of influence to include almost all of Asia. Strikingly, he argued against “those who advocated appeasement and defeatism in the Pacific that if we defend Formosa, we alienate continental Asia.” Truman and Acheson were livid. According to Acheson, MacArthur’s message amounted to a declaration stating “we’re going to dominate everything from Vladivostok to Singapore and the Pacific will be our lake.”³¹⁸ MacArthur’s dispatch, the State Department reported, would damage U.S. relations with its allies at the UN and provide Moscow with excellent propaganda fodder, especially since Truman had claimed numerous times that America had no designs on any Asian territory.³¹⁹ Harriman concluded that if the message was made public, “there [would] be confusion all over the world” and Truman demanded the message

³¹⁶ Memorandum of Conversation, 4-8 August 1950, “MacArthur, Douglas: Korean Trip Aug. 1950” file, Harriman Papers, Box 304, LOC

³¹⁷ Kennan to Acheson, 21 August 1950, Memorandum of Conversations File, Dean Acheson Papers, Box 67, HSTL

³¹⁸ Dean Acheson, Princeton Seminar Discussions, 14 February 1954, Acheson Papers, Princeton Seminars File, Box 81, HSTL

³¹⁹ “Foreign Policy Aspects of the MacArthur Statement,” 27 August 1950, Dean Acheson Papers, Memorandum of Conversations File, Box 67, HSTL

be rescinded. But MacArthur's statement had already been leaked to the press with predictable consequences in Ottawa and elsewhere.³²⁰

Optimism returned to the UN when on 15 September, MacArthur successfully landed the U.S. X Corps behind enemy lines at Inchon on Korea's western coast. The amphibious landing turned the tide in favour of the UNC, which had been confined to the Pusan Perimeter around the port city of Pusan, and led to Seoul's swift recapture.³²¹ The sudden turn of events thrust upon the UN the decision of whether or not to cross the 38th Parallel, the border that had divided North and South Korea since 1945. The White House and the UN had two options: continue across the Parallel to destroy the NKPA and create a "free and united Korea" by force while risking a confrontation with the PRC or the Soviet Union; or, having successfully accomplished the goals of the initial UN resolutions calling for a return to the status quo, to halt at the 38th Parallel.³²² Since July, State Department officials such as John Allison had reminded the administration that North Korea had no legal status as an independent state and the U.S. should not compromise its "clear moral principles." The PPS and the NSC had each concluded that while venturing north of the 38th Parallel likely would strengthen the resolve of the leading communist powers in Asia and embroil UN forces with the Soviet Union, such action was consistent with the principles of the UN Charter and U.S. foreign policy objectives as outlined in NSC-68. Allison, Acheson, the PPS and the NSC all agreed that Truman had legal and moral justification to cross the Parallel based on the vague

³²⁰ DEF 89880, 26 August 1950, RG 218, "Outgoing Messages Declassified," Box 9, NARA; Memorandum of Conversation, 26 August 1950, Acheson Papers, Memoranda of Conversations File, Box 67, HSTL; Wainstock, *Truman, MacArthur, and the Korean War*, pp. 41-43

³²¹ Schnabel, *Policy and Direction*, pp. 172-177

³²² Phrase "free and united Korea" cited in Draft Memorandum by the Policy Planning Staff, 25 July 1950, *FRUS*, 1950, VII, pp. 469-473. According to NSC-81/1, forming an independent Korea had been a UN objective "strongly supported" by the U.S. since 1947. See *ibid*, pp. 712-721

UN resolutions of 25 and 27 June.³²³ Further, pressure from the press to mark a decisive victory against international communism and the impending Congressional elections in November no doubt also influenced Truman's decision to head north.³²⁴

On 27 September, three days before a UN resolution was passed authorizing the UNC to establish a sovereign and democratic Korea, the JCS instructed MacArthur to destroy the NKPA north of the 38th Parallel with the assumption that the North Korean forces would soon collapse or surrender.³²⁵ This message told MacArthur to refrain from employing non-Korean troops in the provinces bordering the Soviet Union or Manchuria, instructions at odds with the liberties afforded to him by the Department of Defense. Johnson's replacement as Secretary of Defense, General George C. Marshall, cabled on September 29 that "We want you to feel unhampered tactically and strategically to proceed above the 38th Parallel."³²⁶ MacArthur, who interpreted his directives liberally, ignored the political implications of his actions and ventured north with the entire UN force to North Korea's borders with the USSR and PRC.³²⁷ Following a personal meeting between Truman and MacArthur at Wake Island in mid-October during which MacArthur promised there was "very little" chance of Chinese intervention in Korea,³²⁸ U.S. authorities were so confident

³²³ Draft Memorandum by the Policy Planning Staff, 25 July 1950, cited above; Acheson, *Present at the Creation*, p. 452

³²⁴ Wainstock, *Truman, MacArthur, and the Korean War*, p. 59

³²⁵ JCS 92608, 27 September 1950, RG 218, "Outgoing Messages Declassified," Box 9, NARA

³²⁶ Marshall to MacArthur, 29 September 1950, *FRUS*, 1950, VII, p. 826

³²⁷ About MacArthur's understanding of his role in bring about a free and independent Korea, Acheson remarked that "MacArthur at once stripped from the resolution...its husk of ambivalence and give it an interpretation that the enacting majority in the General Assembly would not have accepted." See Acheson, *Present at the Creation*, p. 445.

³²⁸ While a more detailed treatment of the Wake Island conference is not possible here, the meeting is significant as it offered the impression MacArthur and Truman were in "complete agreement" over a series of controversial issues, such as the possibility of Chinese intervention and Formosa. MacArthur also revealed that "we are no longer fearful of their [PRC] intervention" and "if the Chinese tried to get down to Pyongyang there would be the greatest slaughter." See "Substance of Statements Made at Wake Island Conference on 15 October 1950," *FRUS*, 1950, VII, pp. 948-960. The conference was described by MacArthur as "innocuous" and it is clear that little substantive policymaking took place at Wake Island, which adds credibility to the

about forthcoming victory over the NKPA that they requested that UN nations contributing ground forces downgrade their deployments to “reduce the logistic burdens on the United States.”³²⁹ Despite warnings the PRC would refuse to “stand idly by” as the U.S. invaded North Korea and reports of a half-million PRC troops on the Korean-Chinese border, MacArthur retained and used the authority to unite Korea by force.³³⁰

A Perpetual Problem: The People’s Republic of China, July 1950 – April 1951

From the Korean War’s outset, two things were clear to the Truman administration. First, there existed a “strong possibility” the PRC would commit ground forces to the peninsula, especially if the UNC ventured north of the 38th Parallel or actively defended Formosa. As noted, the White House, while it wanted to avoid a general war with Communist China, maintained that it would fight PRC troops if they were encountered.³³¹ When red flags were raised by India’s representative at the UN who noted more than once that America’s provocative action would trigger a PRC response, Acheson replied “[w]e have stressed...our determination to conduct the hostilities in Korea so as to constitute no threat to China.”³³² The State Department argued that American actions in North Korea were not threatening to Communist China, but such claims were disingenuous. While Acheson observed the USSR “has an intensive and almost pathological sensitivity regarding Soviet

claims made by Dennis Wainstock and Michael Schaller that Truman wished to capitalize on the good publicity brought to MacArthur after the Inchon landing. See MacArthur, *Reminiscences*, p. 411; Wainstock, *Truman, MacArthur, and the Korean War*, pp. 65-69 ; Schaller, *The Far Eastern General*, p. 204-205

³²⁹ General Charles Bolté (Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3, Department of the Army) cited in Schnabel, *Policy and Direction*, p. 225. For instance, the State Department said Canada’s contribution should be limited to a battalion instead of the brigade it had already pledged since the former was no longer necessary. See Merchant to Matthews, 26 October 1950, *FRUS*, 1950, VII, pp. 997-998

³³⁰ Schnabel, *Policy and Direction*, pp.266-268; U.S. Ambassador to Burma (Key) to Acheson, 14 October 1950, *FRUS*, 1950, VII, pp. 944; Counsel General at Hong Kong (Wilkinson) to Acheson, 13 October 1950, *ibid*, p. 946 ; Memorandum from the Office of the Secretary of State, 9 October 1950, “State: General [2 of 2: 1949-1952], PSF: Subject File, 1940-1953, Box 137, HSTL

³³¹ NSC 73/3, “The Position and Actions of the United States with Respect to Possible Further Soviet Moves in the Light of the Korean Situation,” 22 August 1950, PSF Subject Files, National Security Council – Meetings file, Box 180, HSTL

³³² Memorandum from the Office of the Secretary of State, 9 October 1950, cited above

frontier areas,” no similar assessments were made concerning the PRC.³³³ In one historian’s words, the U.S. “horrendously underestimated China’s own vital interest in keeping the United States away from its border.”³³⁴ The JCS directed MacArthur to proceed nearly unrestricted in his campaign to unite Korea. If China intervened, he was to continue with his mandate “as long as, in your judgment, action by forces now under your control offers a reasonable chance of success.”³³⁵ MacArthur, who had an unusual confidence in his own abilities and did not consider the PRC a military threat to the UNC, proceeded accordingly.

Second, the United States vowed to make no concessions to the PRC. In particular, this meant keeping the Chinese Nationalists in the UN Security Council and the Chinese Communists out.³³⁶ This point, which coincided with the policy of “firmness” that had been implemented against the Soviet Union, often strained the relationship between the U.S. and its principle allies. But Acheson maintained it was important not to reward the PRC for the assistance it was giving North Korea.³³⁷ The Chinese and Russian communists, Acheson argued, were collaborating for “world domination” and attempts to “appease” either party would be “futile.”³³⁸ Recognizing the PRC would also mean relinquishing an influential seat on the Security Council and abandoning Formosa to the communists – consequences that

³³³ Acheson to Truman, 11 September 1950, “State: General [2 of 2: 1949-1952], PSF: Subject File, 1940-1953, Box 137, HSTL

³³⁴ Chang, *Friends and Enemies*, p. 77.

³³⁵ JCS 93709, 9 October 1950, RG 218, “Outgoing Messages Declassified,” Box 9, NARA

³³⁶ Acheson to Certain Diplomatic Officers and Consular Offices, 6 July 1950, *FRUS*, 1950, VII, pp. 309-310; Memorandum of Conversation, U.S. and Peruvian Representatives to UN, *FRUS*, 1950, VII, pp. 1130-1132. U.S. envoy to UN, Warren Austin, noted “anything which appeared to be appeasement or yielding would simply stimulate the enemy behind the Red Chinese to press its puppets onwards to ever-expanding aggression.”

³³⁷ Minutes of the Conference of the United States, United Kingdom and French Foreign Ministers, 14 September 1950, “Tripartite meeting of Foreign Ministers, September, 1950” file, SMOF: Korean War File, Department of State: Topic File Subseries, Box 6, HSTL

³³⁸ Acheson Statement from Donald Bliss to Escott Reid, 29 December 1950, “Canada-U.S. Relations” file, Records of the Foreign Service Posts of the United States (RG 84), Canada, U.S. Embassy, Ottawa, Classified General Records, 1950-1961, Box 9, NARA

would be detrimental to U.S. national security.³³⁹ International political considerations were a strong motivating factor in this policy, but domestic influences also had an impact. It was a mid-term election year, and Truman was mindful too of the venomous Republican attacks endured by the State Department after it was blamed for the “loss of China” in 1949. Senator Knowland made clear his party sought a hard-line approach on the China issue: “our veto [at the UN Security Council] will be used against the seating of the Communist regime or the unseating of the representatives of the Republic of China...The island of Formosa is an integral part of the Republic of China. Our honor as a Nation is so pledged.”³⁴⁰ Kennan had warned Acheson in August that the continuation of such a policy of alienation would bring the U.S. “into serious conflict” with the Commonwealth states and solidify the relationship between the PRC and Moscow.³⁴¹ However, Truman could not, politically or militarily, show leniency towards what his administration perceived as a Soviet pawn.

On 28 November 1950, after weeks of speculation, waves of Chinese military attacks upon startled UN forces compelled MacArthur to report the PRC had entered the conflict en masse and “[a]ll hope of localization of the Korean conflict...can now be completely abandoned.”³⁴² MacArthur, hoping to shed the limits placed on him by the JCS, pushed for a wider conflict with the PRC. Nationalist Chinese forces, he argued, must be employed against the 250,000 communist troops now seeking to destroy the UN armies. The proposal was briefly considered, although the JCS recognized that such action would “isolate” the

³³⁹ JCS to Secretary of Defence, 8 September 1950, “Neutralization of Formosa [2 of 2: September – December 1950]” file, SMOF: Korean War File, Department of State: Topic File Subseries, Box 6, HSTL

³⁴⁰ *Congressional Record*, 1950, vol. 96, pt. 7, p. 9631

³⁴¹ Kennan to Acheson, 21 August 1950, Dean Acheson Papers, Memorandum of Conversation file, Box 67, HSTL

³⁴² C 69953, 29 November 1950, RG 218, “Incoming Messages - Declassified” file, Box 1, NARA

Americans in the UN and would expand the war to include Formosa.³⁴³ But Chiang's troops were not used. MacArthur also requested permission to bomb communist "sanctuaries" in Manchuria, thus expanding the conflict outside the peninsula. Denied again, MacArthur complained to the press that such restrictions on his ability to wage total war against the PRC represented "an enormous handicap, without precedent in military history."³⁴⁴ Truman furiously claimed that "General MacArthur was ready to risk general war, I was not." As a result of MacArthur's indiscretion, Truman promulgated a "gag order" on 6 December which required military personnel to pass their press releases through the State Department before publication.³⁴⁵ The task at hand, argued Secretary Marshall, was no longer to destroy all communist forces but to "save our troops and protect our national honor at the same time."³⁴⁶ Consequently, the UNC began a fighting retreat to the south.

While U.S. forces fell back in Korea, the White House took the political offensive in Washington and at the UN. Acheson, publically castigating the intervention as "[a]n act of brazen aggression," vowed to crush "the international communist movement" with the full force of "the values and principles upon which our society is founded."³⁴⁷ The intervention of communist Chinese forces brought a new sense of urgency. On 30 November, the President admitted that use of atomic weapons had never been ruled out as an option in Korea. The announcement caused an international scare and British Prime Minister Clement

³⁴³ C 50021, 29 November 1950, RG 218, "Incoming Messages - Declassified" file, Box 1, NARA; JCS 97594, 29 November 1950, RG 218, "Outgoing Messages - Declassified" file, Box 9, NARA. The JCS also noted should they accept Nationalist Chinese forces, "it may be wholly unacceptable to the commonwealth countries" and extra care would have to be taken since "our position of leadership in the Far East is being most seriously compromised in the United Nations."

³⁴⁴ MacArthur cited in Acheson, *The Korean War*, p. 76

³⁴⁵ Truman, *Memoirs*, vol. 2, p. 416; Wainstock, *Truman, MacArthur, and the Korean War*, pp. 101-102

³⁴⁶ Marshall to Truman and Bradley, Memorandum of Conversation, 3 December 1950, "Massive Chinese Communist Intervention and Allied Reactions" file, SMOF: Korean War File, Department of State: Topic File Subseries, Box 7, HSTL

³⁴⁷ Acheson, "The Strategy of Freedom," 29 November 1950, Department of State Publication 4034, "Massive Chinese Communist Intervention and Allied Reactions" file, SMOF: Korean War File, Department of State: Topic File Subseries, Box 7, HSTL

Attlee flew to Washington immediately to confer with Truman. The leaders and their staffs disagreed over some fundamental aspects of relations with China. Attlee argued the West should drive a wedge between the communist powers by recognizing Peking as the rightful capital of China and affording the PRC a UN seat Truman resisted. Such actions were not politically practicable as the West could not give the impressions of weakness, for “if we showed a spirit of accommodation the price [for peace] would go up.”³⁴⁸ The State Department concurred. Acheson cabled to the major U.S. embassies on 7 December that the U.S. would accept a ceasefire “but we will not pay anything for it.” Until the PRC capitulated, the Americans “would fight as hard as we can.”³⁴⁹ Further, continued military action by the PRC should be treated in the UN “as a new and flagrant demonstration of aggression and evil design of reprehensive CHI COMMIE leaders.”³⁵⁰ Acheson also successfully directed his UN envoy, Warren Austin, to rally support for a condemnation of Chinese aggression in the Security Council.³⁵¹ However, the resolution did not pass without once again raising the ire of British and Canadian skeptics who believed that branding China as the aggressor only increased the potential for general war and hence was contrary to UN resolutions.³⁵² Despite these misgivings, Washington’s desire for an unlimited political conflict with international communism remained unabated.

Truman’s public statements throughout December pushed the limits of nationalist rhetoric and framed the Korean War as nothing less than an existential struggle. At the

³⁴⁸ Truman, *Memoirs*, vol. 2, pp. 396-400

³⁴⁹ Acheson to U.S. Embassy in Ottawa, 7 December 1950, “Korea” file, RG 84, Canada, U.S. Embassy, Ottawa, Classified General Records, 1950-1961, Box 9, NARA

³⁵⁰ Acheson to certain diplomatic and consular offices, 9 December 1950, “Massive Chinese Communist Intervention and Allied Reactions” file, SMOF: Korean War File, Department of State: Topic File Subseries, Box 7, HSTL

³⁵¹ Acheson to Embassy in the U.K., 28 November 1950, *FRUS*, 1950, VII, pp. 1249-1250

³⁵² Attlee to Truman, 3 January 1951, “Massive Chinese Communist Intervention and Allied Reactions” file, SMOF: Korean War File, Department of State: Topic File Subseries, Box 7, HSTL; Schnabel, *Policy and Direction*, p. 333

White House on 5 December, Truman stated “We are struggling to preserve our own liberty as a nation” in Korea. “As we engage in that struggle, we must preserve the elements of our American way of life that are the basic source of our strength.”³⁵³ Such proclamations resumed ten days later when Truman broadcast about the “National Emergency” now facing the United States. “Our homes, our Nation, all the things we believe in, are in great danger,” as a result of China’s offensive. “Our freedom is in danger,” he continued, “[but] let no aggressor think we are divided.... We pull together when we are in trouble, and we do it by our own choice, not out of fear, but out of love for the great values of our American life, that we all have a share in.”³⁵⁴ Although Truman linked UN values – peace and freedom – to those of the United States, the emphasis was that American interests were at stake. As Acheson noted in an off-the-record statement to State Department officials in January 1951, the conflict had turned existential for the United States: “You cannot permit a flopping over of vast power from the free world to the unfree world without even an effort because that will inevitably direct itself against your continuance and at that point this country then alone would be forced to maintain in whatever way it could its physical existence.”³⁵⁵

The overriding concerns during the winter months of 1951 were political. Communist forces pushed the UNC south only to see a subsequent US counterattack that retook Seoul. The result was a battlefield stalemate that devolved into trench warfare near the 38th Parallel. The State Department and the JCS concurred that no effort should be made to push beyond the Parallel or to establish it as the final border in negotiations with the PRC. But neither did they prevent MacArthur from crossing the artificial demarcation. However,

³⁵³ *PPP: HST*, 1950, pp. 733-736

³⁵⁴ *ibid*, pp. 741-746

³⁵⁵ Acheson address at State Department Auditorium, 3 January 1951, “Classified, Off the Record Speeches – Pre-Edited Copies, 1947-1952” file, Acheson Papers, Press Conferences File, Box 73, HSTL

U.S. authorities, having abandoned the notion of creating one “free and independent” Korea, instead adopted a “wait and see” approach.³⁵⁶ Knowing UN forces could not win a decisive victory against the PRC but recognizing China’s supply lines were overextended, Truman and his advisors allowed battlefield events to settle before contemplating any ceasefire proposal. Consistent with its concern with prestige and assessments of communist doctrine, the U.S. wished to negotiate from a position of strength so that only minimal political concessions would have to be made.³⁵⁷ The State Department’s resolve hardened thanks to the recognition that neither the USSR nor the PRC showed any inclination to negotiate a peace settlement. Therefore, U.S. authorities felt no pressure to make the first move.³⁵⁸

But what were America’s ultimate national security objectives if the unification of Korea was no longer viable? Truman, with JCS support, clarified U.S. objectives in January 1951. The UN could not abandon its position in Korea, aggression would not be tolerated and the West was united to resist communist expansion. Further, UN forces must persevere in order “to deflate the dangerously exaggerated political and military prestige of Communist China” and international communist movement. Of the ten U.S political objectives in holding Korea, only one – the ninth – noted the UN. Truman expressed to MacArthur his understanding of the current limits of his command, but he promised that Washington now had a “much clearer and realistic picture of the dangers before us” and would work tirelessly to shore up the Western defences so that the U.S. would no longer

³⁵⁶ JCS to Acheson, 27 February 1951, “Restudy of the question of the 38th Parallel” file, SMOF: Korean War File, Department of State: Topic File Subseries, Box 8, HSTL; Memorandum of Conversation, Herbert Graves (U.K. Embassy) and Dean Rusk, 12 February 1951, *ibid*

³⁵⁷ Schnabel, *Policy and Direction*, pp. 342-351

³⁵⁸ National Intelligence Estimate no. 10, 15 January 1951, CIA, “National Intelligence Estimates, 7-20” file, PSF: Intelligence File, 1946-1953, Central Intelligence Reports File, Box 213, HSTL ; Memorandum of Conversation, Rusk and Oliver Franks (U.K. Ambassador to U.S.), 5 April 1951, RG 59, General Decimal File, 1950-1954, 795.000/4-551, NARA

have to fight a defensive war.³⁵⁹

MacArthur found this state of affairs unsatisfactory as he pressed the JCS for reinforcements to make real his promise to destroy North Korea's armies, but to no avail. According to William Sebald, the U.S. Ambassador to Tokyo, MacArthur, increasingly disillusioned with Washington's civilian authorities, felt the war had lost its direction.³⁶⁰ Such frustration translated into criticism over the political conduct of the conflict. On 25 March 1951, one of MacArthur's supporters, Representative Joseph William Martin (R – Massachusetts), read a letter in Congress from the General which advocated using Chinese Nationalist troops in Korea and criticized diplomatic efforts to formulate a ceasefire. In MacArthur's mind, a political settlement would only strengthen the communist movement and further imperil international security. As noted in his conclusion, "There is no substitute for victory."³⁶¹ This statement violated Truman's "gag order" to deter such negative publicity. To the relief of many UN members, Truman quickly relieved MacArthur of his commands in Asia and replaced him in Korea with U.S. General Matthew Ridgway. Within two months, Ridgway successfully resisted two strong Chinese attacks near the 38th Parallel and stabilized the front. By May, policymakers realized the UNC could not make any further

³⁵⁹ JCS 81050, 13 January 1951, RG 218, "Outgoing Messages Declassified," Box 9, NARA. Briefly, the ten "important purposes" for the defence of Korea in the order listed were: a) "To demonstrate that aggression will not be tolerated"; b) "to deflate the dangerously exaggerated political and military prestige of Communist China"; c) "To afford more time for and to give [illegible] assistance to the organization of non-communist assistance in Asia"; d) "To carry out our commitments of honour to the South Koreans and to demonstrate to the world that friendship of the United States is of inestimable value in time of adversity"; e) "To make possible a far more satisfactory peace settlement for Japan"; f) "To lend resolution to many countries not only in Asia but also in Europe and the Middle East who are now living within the shadow of communism"; g) "to inspire those who may be called upon to fight against great odds if subjected to a sudden onslaught by the Soviet Union or Communist China"; h) "To lend point and urgency to the rapid build-up of the defenses of the Western world"; i) "To bring the United Nations through its first great effort in collective security and to produce a free-world coalition of incalculable value to the national security interests of the United States"; j) "To alert peoples behind the iron curtain that their masters are bent upon wars of aggression and that this crime will be resisted by the free world."

³⁶⁰ Schaller, *Far Eastern General*, pp. 230-232

³⁶¹ Letter from Gen. MacArthur to Rep. Martin, and Remarks of Rep. Martin in the House of Representatives, 5 April 1951, "MacArthur, Douglas, Hearings: Briefing Book A" file, Harriman Papers, Box 304, LOC

military gains unless it seriously increased the risk of a general war with the Soviet Union.³⁶² Negotiations for a ceasefire were immediately forthcoming.

Conclusion

In the subsequent Congressional hearings concerning MacArthur's dismissal, the Truman administration attempted to discredit the General by demonstrating his thoughts on foreign affairs were completely at odds with official policy, that he often had completely overstepped his authority, and that he had been the decisive factor that had prompted the PRC's intervention.³⁶³ While some of these accusations were correct, it was clear the Truman administration had afforded MacArthur a high degree of flexibility and initiative to fight the war. Also, while MacArthur surely had aggravated the differences between the administration and its chief allies, the U.S. government bears chief responsibility for maintaining the divide between itself and other contributing members to the UNC.

From the conflict's start, Washington had acted on the assumptions outlined in two pivotal documents – NSC-68 and NSC-73 – which were at odds with its allies' objectives. The distinctly American desire to simultaneously defend U.S. prestige and display “firmness” towards the Soviet Union and its satellites influenced Truman's foreign policy to a far greater degree than sentimental beliefs in freedom or collective security. Further, while the UN could serve as a weapon in the U.S. political arsenal, it was never the foundation or motivating force behind American actions in Korea. Officials were most concerned with maintaining the image of collective security and Western solidarity which augmented the legitimacy of U.S. objectives and helped dispel propaganda from the communist powers that

³⁶² Schnabel, *Policy and Direction*, pp. 382-390

³⁶³ “An Analysis of the MacArthur Program,” 14 May 1951, “MacArthur, Douglas, Hearings: Briefing Book A” file Harriman Papers, Box 304, LOC

American intervention in Korea was aggressive and imperialistic. UN resolutions were often manipulated to fit the priorities of Truman and the State Department with only a minimum of concessions made to U.S. allies.

Chapter IV: Restrained Nationalism/Qualified Internationalism:

Canada and the Korean War

Although initially surprised by Truman's speedy response to North Korea's attack, Canada nevertheless backed the U.S. decision to intervene. On 28 June, Pearson claimed in the House of Commons that the United States "has recognized [its] special responsibility which it has discharged with admirable dispatch and decisiveness" and noted he was certain "that all honorable members applaud and support this action of high courage and firm statesmanship" demonstrated by the Truman administration. Privately, Defence Minister Brooke Claxton and Pearson remarked to U.S. Embassy officials that "Canada would not let [the U.S.] down." Confidently, Truman's Ambassador in Ottawa, Stanley Woodward, messaged the State Department that Ottawa was fully behind the U.S. response "without qualification."³⁶⁴ Yet unbeknownst to Woodward, Pearson's support for American intervention was dependent on two factors: the response should be a purely UN affair and Canada's participation must be minimal.³⁶⁵ When it became evident to Pearson that neither stipulation would be satisfied, his enthusiasm waned..

The DEA's emphasis on United Nations collective action came as no surprise to observers who had witnessed the 'internationalization' of Canada's external affairs over the preceding years. Ottawa's responses to Korean aggression and U.S. foreign policy were remarkably consistent with the views expressed prior to the crisis. However, certain aspects of collective security that had guided Canada's national security planning since World War II – such as how and when the Western alliance would react to events outside of Europe –

³⁶⁴ Pearson, *Mike*, vol. 2, p. 147; Woodward to Acheson, 5 July 1950, SMOF: Korean War File, Department of State: Topical File Subseries, Box 5, HSTL

³⁶⁵ Pearson, *ibid*, p. 148

had never actually been put into practice. The result was that Korea also functioned as a “testing ground” for the DEA as its understanding of collective security was challenged.³⁶⁶ In fact, Canada’s relationship with the United States and its national defence priorities were also subject to review. The DEA’s experience during the Korean War revealed that collective security was predicated on the good will and full participation of all. Needless to say, Korea was much more “collective” in name than in substance. While a portion of the blame should be placed on Canada and other allied states for their much smaller military contributions, most of the responsibility for UN weakness must be attributed to the U.S. which, as we have seen, showed little true regard for multilateralism aside from its usefulness in deflecting Soviet propaganda.

The small role relegated to the UN upset the DEA for two related reasons. First, Canada had spent several years crafting a foreign policy based on the functional principle in order to resolve international disputes. Pearson was sorely disappointed in this respect. At the international level, policymakers believed that unilateral U.S. action would upset not only the leading communist powers but also non-communist states in Asia, notably India, which supported the initial UN decision to intervene. In either case, the possibility of an expanded conflict could turn international opinion against the Western alliance and damage its long-term goal to contain communism.³⁶⁷ Pearson in particular wished to avoid giving any indication the West was acting provocatively or aggressively. However, this goal was regularly obscured by the Truman administration’s impetuous actions, notably the October decision to cross the 38th Parallel.

Concomitantly, the DEA continued to operate on the assumption expressed by Escott

³⁶⁶ Egerton, “Lester B. Pearson and the Korean War,” pp. 51-74

³⁶⁷ Draft Messages from Pearson to Mr. Nehru, Prime Minister of India, 29 and 30 November 1950, “Korea: Canadian Policy - 1950 – 1951” file, LBPP, vol. 35, LAC

Reid in 1947 that in the event of general war, “we shall have no freedom of action in any matter the United States considers essential.”³⁶⁸ Canada may have subscribed to the view the U.S. was the leader of the ‘free world’, but that did not make for an ideal scenario. One review of Canadian policy in Europe from August 1951, while observing “the obvious necessity of the closest cooperation with the United States in the interests of our own national security,” warned that “Canadian policy is increasingly dependent upon that of the United States.”³⁶⁹ After all, it was expected that in the event of general war, Canada’s *de facto* sovereignty would be usurped by the U.S. Canada’s perceived inferiority significantly influenced the positive aspects of its commitment to the peninsula – such as its decision to support the UN resolutions condemning NKPA aggression – as well as its negative dimensions – for instance, continued criticism of U.S. foreign policy. Pearson’s unwillingness to break publically with the U.S. on issues such as condemning the PRC as aggressors in Korea revealed Canada’s dependence on the U.S. for political leadership, continental defence and economic well-being.

Pearson made great efforts to minimize the public divergences between the Canadian and American positions. As a result, public Canadian criticism of U.S. foreign policy was remarkably subdued. But Ottawa’s problems with Washington -- and vice versa) -- which historians have largely downplayed, were clearly manifest throughout the conflict and revealed what Escott Reid termed “latent Anti-American hostility.”³⁷⁰ Such sentiments were a consequence of more than the mere “character” of U.S. foreign policy, as some have

³⁶⁸ Reid, “The United States and the Soviet Union: A Study of the Possibility of War and Some of the Implications for Canadian Policy,” cited above

³⁶⁹ Policy Paper no. 12, “Some Aspects of Canadian Policy in Europe,” 9 August 1951, RG 25, vol. 6137, file 50400-40, LAC

³⁷⁰ Reid, “Some Lessons to be Drawn from the Korean Crisis,” 19 February 1951, “Korea: 1 of 2” file, Reid Papers, vol. 29, LAC

suggested.³⁷¹ The DEA opposed several American initiatives, notably the Truman administration's desire to fight communism in Korea as opposed to purely repelling aggression, and Acheson's reluctance to give concessions to the PRC, believing these actions were counterintuitive and not just to Canada's national security. Perhaps, as was the case before June 1950, the DEA overestimated America's impact on Canadian policy and nationhood. We should recall that the U.S. had no territorial or political designs on Canada in the post-war period. In this instance, pre-existing anti-American biases likely influenced the thinking of senior officials, including Pearson and Reid, which exaggerated America's influence on Canadian policy. But as the conflict dragged on, each successive American action seemed to corroborate DEA apprehensions. Thus, as was the case before the war, the DEA used multilateralism to defend not only Canadian interests but also the system of values of collective security, multilateralism and sovereignty which Pearson and others had been developing for nearly a decade.

Initial Reactions and Rearmament, June – August 1950

In many ways, Canada's appreciation of the Soviet threat after the NKPA invasion resembled the American view. For instance, the DEA agreed events in Korea were part of a larger global confrontation with communism. Pearson employed the same Munich analogy used by Truman and Acheson to argue against appeasement.³⁷² Likewise, Hume Wrong agreed with State Department officials on 27 June that "risks of inaction are greater than the admitted risks" of intervention. If aggression went unchallenged, the Soviet Union would

³⁷¹ John English, *The Worldly Years: The Life of Lester B. Pearson, 1949-1947*, (Toronto: Vintage, 1992), p. 89

³⁷² Pearson cited in Egerton, "Lester B. Pearson and the Korean War," pp. 53-54

likely attempt a similar coup in Germany.³⁷³ In the House of Commons on 31 August, Pearson called the Soviet Union the real enemy while noting the Kremlin could just as easily strike in Europe. “In Korea, we are now faced with a plain and unmistakable military challenge; and we, in common with all the free world, must answer that challenge.” If the free world failed to do so, Stalin could easily grab Germany or Indochina.³⁷⁴ Pearson and others also commonly referenced the need to defend “democracy and Christianity” in Europe against marauding Soviet troops.³⁷⁵ In February 1951, when asked by the Parliamentary opposition to clarify the government’s foreign policy goals, Pearson replied “Our belief that freedom is valuable and precious in itself, and that loss of freedom anywhere in the world means an impairment and indeed endangering of our own freedom.”³⁷⁶ Therefore, the DEA’s rhetoric rivaled that of the State Department during the opening acts of the Korean War in some very notable instances.

However, appearances can be deceiving. The fact that Canada was taken by surprise indicates that Ottawa was not kept fully abreast of the change in American national security thinking in the months prior to the conflict. Had it been privy to NSC-68 or understood that the State Department considered U.S. prestige as linked to defending freedom everywhere, the DEA would not have been taken aback by Truman’s reaction.³⁷⁷ Additionally, Canada’s anti-communism differed from America’s in one crucial respect: while the DEA felt the “moral consequences” of Korea’s loss “would be extreme,” it still did not see the invasion as the first of several Soviet-inspired attacks. Based on notes from one of Pearson’s off-the-

³⁷³ Wrong to Pearson, 27 June 1950, *DCER*, vol. 16, pp. 24-27

³⁷⁴ Except of Pearson’s speech cited in *Department of External Affairs Programme*, September 1950, vol. 2, no. 9, (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1950), pp. 340-341

³⁷⁵ *Official Report of Debates: House of Commons*, 1 September 1950, Second Session, vol. 1, p. 133

³⁷⁶ *Official Report of Debates: House of Commons*, 2 February 1951, vol. 2, (Ottawa: Edmond Cloutier, 1951), p. 51

³⁷⁷ These positions outlined in NSC-68 and NSC-73. See Chapter III

record press conferences, Assistant Secretary of State A.D.P. Heeney wrote to Canada's diplomatic corps that it "is not (repeat not) our view that the attack on Korea is likely to herald a new series of outbreaks...Our tentative view is that the Communists decided to strike in South Korea in order to gather up one of the few remaining fragments in Asia now outside their control."³⁷⁸ Heeney's "tentative" view – which never changed – contradicted the U.S. position as Truman and Acheson believed the ROK's invasion signified a challenge to American prestige internationally and the first of several steps initiated by Moscow to destroy the United States. Rather than probing Western resolve, Heeney deemed the assault an isolated incident that was little more than a mopping-up operation.

Heeney's statement was confirmed by the fact that the DEA did not think the Truman administration would intervene in the conflict or that the Western alliance *should* assume the burden of the ROK's defence. Pearson had noted on 26 June that it would be unwise for the Western alliance to intervene since it might prompt general war with the Soviets.³⁷⁹ Moreover, Korea was not important to the "military security" of any nation other than the United States.³⁸⁰ While Acheson admitted in December 1950 that he could not "make [a] distinction between little aggressions and big aggressions," the Canadians and British certainly could.³⁸¹ The Munich analogy, which Pearson dictated in his memoirs decades later, was not manifest in his dispatches during the crisis, which suggests the historical connection was an afterthought.³⁸² It was not until he received word of Truman's

³⁷⁸ Heeney to All Diplomatic Missions, 28 June 1950, 100.009 (D8), DHH

³⁷⁹ See Stairs, *Diplomacy of Constraint*, p. 34-35.

³⁸⁰ Wrong to Pearson, 21 July 1950, "Korea: Canadian Policy - 1950 - 1951" file, LBPP, vol. 35, LAC

³⁸¹ Acheson to Woodward, 8 December 1950, RG 84, Classified General Records, 1950-1961, U.S. Embassy, Ottawa, "Korea" File, Box 8, NARA

³⁸² Pearson does not appear to have used the Munich analogy early in the war, although the argument could be found in other documents from July, including a memorandum summarizing Canada's position during the conflict by P.R. Hyndman from the UN division of the DEA written in late July. See "Canada and the Korean Crisis," 22 July 1950, RG 25, vol. 4738, file 50069-A-40, pt. 4, LAC.

decision that Pearson vowed to “keep US action within the framework of the UN.”³⁸³ Therefore, the argument that Canada fought in Korea to primarily to contain communism does not stand up to scrutiny. Likely, Pearson attempted to calibrate his comments with those of the U.S. to give the semblance of allied unity.³⁸⁴ When questioned by A.R.M. Lower, one of the era’s respected historians, about Canada’s “silence” over its apprehensions regarding U.S. policy, Pearson replied: “This is not because I say one thing in public and believe something else in private, but merely because it is not...wise, with the international situation as it is today to wash our democratic dirty linen in public in a way which would only give aid and comfort to an ‘enemy’ which is trying to make it dirtier.”³⁸⁵ Ottawa’s decision to participate in the conflict was based on the U.S.’s actions, not those of North Korea, the Soviet Union or the PRC. Accordingly, the rhetorical similarities between Canada and the U.S. were more superficial than substantive.

Canada’s position vis-a-vis the Soviet Union was clarified in mid-July during a meeting of the Cabinet Defence Committee (CDC). The CDC, comprised of St. Laurent, senior cabinet officials and military representatives, concluded that while the Soviet Union could exploit some international “trouble spots” – Iran, Hong Kong and Berlin – such actions would not likely alter the balance of power in Moscow’s favour. The Soviet Union would not be ready for war until it had significantly strengthened its armed forces, including a dramatic increase in nuclear capabilities. While the CDC did not know when such a time would come, it did not expect Soviet preparedness to reach optimal levels in 1950. The committee’s greatest concern was Korea’s impact on the defence of Canada and Western

³⁸³ Pearson, *Mike*, vol. 2, p. 147

³⁸⁴ John English, *The Worldly Years: The Life of Lester B. Pearson, 1949-1947*, (Toronto: Vintage, 1992), p.

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³⁸⁵ English, *The Worldly Years*, (Toronto: Vintage, 1992), p. 53

Europe. For NATO countries, trained and equipped soldiers were in short supply. Subsequently, as more U.S. soldiers went to Asia, the meeting's minutes reported, fewer would be available to deter communist forces in Europe where it mattered most.³⁸⁶ Canada's Chiefs of Staff agreed that any participation in Korea would weaken North American defences.³⁸⁷ Although the DEA supported the UNC in theory, a number of officials believed that if St. Laurent offered even a token infantry force, Canada would be left dangerously exposed to attack. Pearson, Wrong and Heeney concurred that any Canadian army contribution could not come at the expense of "our responsibilities for the direct defence of Canada and under the North Atlantic Treaty."³⁸⁸ The importance which the Canadian government placed not only on European defence but also on its vulnerability revealed a difference in priorities than the United States.

Yet the DEA's emphasis on North American security should be seen more from a political rather than a military perspective. Canada's armed forces were hardly capable of resisting even a modest Soviet land or air attack; the Canadian Active Force had just over 20,000 men.³⁸⁹ Likely, Pearson and others were reluctant to diminish Canada's small domestic reserves in part to protect against unwanted U.S. assistance – that is, the World War II-era policy of 'defence against help.'³⁹⁰ The Canadian armed forces were in such a state of woeful disrepair at in June 1950 that even if the DEA supported unilateral action, Canada simply lacked the military wherewithal to participate in the conflict's first months. State Department pressure grew throughout July for additional troops, but Pearson remained committed to continental defence and limited engagement: "the furnishing on short notice of

³⁸⁶ Minutes of Meeting of Cabinet Defence Committee, 19 July 1950, *DCER*, vol. 16, pp. 74-75

³⁸⁷ Extract from Cabinet Conclusions, 19 July 1950, *DCER*, vol. 16, pp. 80-81

³⁸⁸ Heeney to Pearson, 18 July 1950, *DCER*, vol. 16, p. 27; Wrong to Pearson, 21 July 1950, vol. 35

³⁸⁹ Herbert Fairlie Wood, *Strange Battleground: The Operations in Korea and their Effects on the Defence Policy of Canada*, (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1966), p. 19

³⁹⁰ See Chapter II

expeditionary forces capable of quick deployment in distant areas wherever acts of aggression might take place did not enter into Canadian planning.”³⁹¹ Whether he did not expect the Soviets to act or he did not want Canada helping to indefinitely contain the USSR is not clear, but one suspects both considerations influenced Pearson’s thinking.

Once committed to the UN resolution of 27 June, however, Canadian officials were steadfast in their political support for collective security. The DEA had consistently stressed the necessity of collective action in the Cold War. In fact, collective security through the UN and NATO was the only option Canadian policymakers had given themselves by 1950. To have not participated in the Korean War once the U.S. was committed would have exposed fundamental cracks in the Western alliance and upset Canada-U.S. relations, results that would have empowered the Soviet Union.³⁹² As observed in Canada’s NATO negotiations, any successful containment strategy was premised on the unity of purpose and close integration of the North Atlantic states. Thus, objecting to U.S. action in Korea would have not only damaged Canada-U.S. relations but also Ottawa’s long-term foreign policy objectives. General McNaughton, speaking for the Canadian government, stated in July that “we have learned that aggression must be resisted collectively and we know that in present circumstances the United Nations provides the only available means of organizing resistance on a world-wide scale.” He continued, with a somewhat distorted view of recent history, that “The Republic of Korea was established by action of the United Nations. It is a creature of the United Nations. An attack on Korea is, therefore, in a special sense an attack on the United Nations.”³⁹³ Likewise, Canadian policymakers, who kept close tabs on public opinion, were pleased that newspapers such as the *Montreal Gazette* and *Brockville*

³⁹¹ Wrong to Pearson, 21 July 1950, cited above

³⁹² Prince, “Limits of Constraint,” pp. 129-132

³⁹³ Draft Speech to be deliver 15 July 1950, RG 25, vol. 4738, file 50069-A-40, pt. 4, LAC

Recorder viewed the UN flag as the “banner of international solidarity” and supported Canada’s decision to back multilateral action. Editorial opinion maintained that if the UN was to survive this test, communists would have to be expelled from South Korea.³⁹⁴ Even Conservative leader George Drew agreed with St. Laurent that the “prestige of the United Nations...the fate of that organization upon which the hope of peace in the years ahead now rests” was linked to Korea’s successful defence.³⁹⁵

Pearson was far and away the most ardent supporter of UN action. His rationale for using the UN to combat aggression, like that of the U.S., was manifold and pragmatic. Denis Stairs has noted that Canadian policy makers were driven by idealistic principles of collective security and the desire to constrain U.S. action.³⁹⁶ St. Laurent was concerned, no less than Pearson, that unilateral American intervention would lead to general war with the Soviets.³⁹⁷ Second, multilateralism would help preserve national unity – an element that concerned St. Laurent’s Liberal government as much as it had King’s. On 13 July, Pearson cabled to Wrong that “if we are to keep this country united, and if we are to limit our intervention to Korea alone...we must continue to emphasize, at ever appropriate occasion, that we are participating in a solely United Nations operation.”³⁹⁸ In this last regard, Pearson was true to his word.

The DEA was cognizant of the small role that Truman ascribed to the UN. Pearson recognized in early July that “with the Americans fighting alone, they will become somewhat impatient with formal insistence of the United Nations character of operations.”³⁹⁹

³⁹⁴ “Korean War – Analysis of Canadian Editorial Content (July 6- 10) – English Language Newspapers”, RG 25, vol. 4738, file 50069-A-40, pt. 4, LAC

³⁹⁵ House of Commons Canada, *Debates*, 30 June 1950, vol. 90, p. 4460

³⁹⁶ Stairs, *Diplomacy of Constraint*, p. 94

³⁹⁷ Dale Thompson, *Louis St. Laurent: Canadian*, (Toronto: MacMillan, 1967), p. 292

³⁹⁸ Pearson to Wrong, 13 July 1950, *DCER*, vol. 16, pp. 62

³⁹⁹ *ibid*

Britain's Foreign Minister, Ernest Bevin, contacted the Commonwealth High Commissions to explain the limited importance that Washington afforded the United Nations. Bevin stated that the Americans had requested UN support for military action in Korea because presidential administrations traditionally desired legal and moral justification for going to war. They also do not want to appear imperialistic in the eyes of potential allies in Asia and elsewhere. Further, Truman wanted to go through the UN because the American people generally do not like to fight alone.⁴⁰⁰ It is doubtful that even if Canada had offered substantial ground forces to the UNC in June 1950 that Washington would have felt more inclined to share responsibility in policymaking.

Initially, Washington gave Pearson no reason to doubt his decision to support the American decision. On 27 June, Ambassador Wrong attended a briefing with George Perkins and George Kennan at the State Department. He reported to Ottawa only good news. U.S. authorities found "no evidence" of Soviet culpability and had left the door open for "the Russians to beat a retreat" once they had been overwhelmed by what Perkins dubbed "the welcome manifestation of American power and determination." Instead of a Third World War, Kennan postulated the West was dealing with "a purely local situation involving the disturbance of international peace and security" and the U.S. would support action in the UN to deal with the situation as such.⁴⁰¹ Wrong reported later that day that a "striking feature" was Truman's decision to head into Korea "without seeking to secure pledges of material assistance from other countries in advance." For the time being, he noted, the State Department sought only "moral and diplomatic support."⁴⁰² Perkins and Kennan did not solicit the views of the NATO allies, but instead presented them with a *fait accompli*.

⁴⁰⁰ Bevin to High Commission (Ottawa), 25 July 1950, cited above. This message was later sent to Pearson.

⁴⁰¹ Wrong to Pearson, 27 June 1950, *cited above*

⁴⁰² Ibid

For ‘moral’ encouragement, Canada sent three naval destroyers to the Far East,⁴⁰³ with St. Laurent telling the House of Commons on 30 June Canada could contribute naval vessels to Korean operations. But the Prime Minister clarified these vessels were not to be used “in war against any state” and would only be under the direct authority of the UN as part of a “collective police action.” It was, he continued, “only in such circumstances that this country would be involved in action of this kind.”⁴⁰⁴ Pearson explained privately to Ambassador Stanley Woodward that St. Laurent’s announcement had been “deliberately hedged” to temper possible criticism in Quebec over Canada’s failure to remain neutral in Korea.⁴⁰⁵ According to Pearson, Quebec’s support for intervention – or that of the whole country – could quickly collapse if Korea escalated into a wider confrontation.⁴⁰⁶

One of the major factors contributing to Canada’s hesitation was American diplomacy. Escott Reid considered U.S. pressure in July to be “the worst arm-twisting I ever saw.”⁴⁰⁷ Pearson also reacted negatively to U.S. pressure for a troop commitment to the UNC. Canada, he huffed, would “refuse to be stamped into action” by State Department officials who claimed that we were “dragging our feet.” Believing the destroyer contribution to the UNC was sufficient, Pearson expressed disdain that “American public opinion is becoming somewhat too excited and somewhat unreasonable over the inability of other nations at once to follow their boys into Korea.” As well, Truman’s decision to neutralize

⁴⁰³ Three Destroyers, H.M.C. Ships *Cayuga*, *Athabaskan* and *Sioux* were dispatched from British Columbia to Pearl Harbor on 5 July. See Wood, *Strange Battleground*, p. 13

⁴⁰⁴ St. Laurent cited in Wood, *Strange Battleground*, p. 13. Pearson ambiguously noted in May 1951 that the Korean War was also not an ideological struggle but observed how “We are not fighting to defeat communism as such but when communism results in [an] act of military aggression, that aggression should be met by any form of collective action.”

⁴⁰⁵ Statement by St. Laurent to the House of Commons, 30 June 1950, “Contributions to the UN Effort [1 of 3: June – July, 1950]” file, SMOF: Korean War File, Department of State: Topic File Subseries, Box 5, HSTL; Woodward to Acheson, 1 July 1950, *ibid*; Pearson to Wrong, 20 July 1950, *DCER*, vol. 16, pp. 85-87

⁴⁰⁶ Pearson to Wrong, 20 July 1950, “Korea: Canadian Policy - 1950 – 1951” file, LBPP, vol. 35, LAC

⁴⁰⁷ Denis Stairs interview with Escott Reid, 9 June 1969, “Korea: 1 of 2” file, Reid Papers, vol. 29, LAC

Formosa blurred the line between UN and U.S. action, thus increasing the likelihood of the PRC's intervention.⁴⁰⁸ Concerned that Canada could be entangled in the Formosa issue, Pearson subtly noted on a number of occasions that the allies who supported the UN resolutions in Korea might not defend Formosa.⁴⁰⁹ Worse, the Truman administration's decision to limit UN influence made it more difficult for Canada to constrain America's unilateral action. As early as July, Pearson recognized the U.S. government had more on its mind than collective security. "There is a feeling in certain quarters in Canada that while United Nations intervention in Korea is genuine and to be supported, the Americans may try to exercise too strong a control over that intervention for their own purposes."⁴¹⁰ Pearson was right – the U.S. sought to co-opt the UN for its own purposes. But this problem was a "Catch-22" for the Canadians. Without a substantial military contribution, Ottawa's influence in Washington would be negligible. However, Pearson was reluctant to send troops as a result of this power imbalance.

The Korean War's first months demonstrated functionalism's limits. If the DEA wanted to keep intervention a strictly UN affair and stabilize U.S. foreign policy, the government would have to invest more heavily in its armed forces and prepare itself for emergency action. In the preceding years, Canadian officials had viewed collective security as a cost effective arrangement that coincided with its national values as well as its budget. Thus, by July, Canada was working in tandem with the U.S. to increase not only its national defences but also NATO's collective strength. Hume Wrong summarized the views of many North Atlantic powers when he remarked that Korea forced the Western alliance to

⁴⁰⁸ Pearson to Wrong, 20 July 1950, cited above

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid; Pearson to Wrong, 6 July 1950, *DCER*, vol. 16, pp. 56-57; Pearson to Acheson, 15 August 1950, RG 84, Classified General Records, 1950-1961, U.S. Embassy, Ottawa, "Formosa" File, Box 8, NARA

⁴¹⁰ Lester Pearson to Hume Wrong, 20 July 1950, cited above

reconsider its defence planning and priorities.⁴¹¹ In Ottawa, Heeney and Claxton were advising Pearson and St. Laurent of the need to simultaneously strengthen home defence and to fulfill Canada's obligations under the UN and NATO charters.⁴¹² Collective security was not a vehicle fuelled by good intentions and quiet diplomacy alone.

While Europe was the DEA's perennial concern, the most pressing matter in the summer of 1950 was creating a contingent for service in Korea. There was little enthusiasm for recruiting a ground force. "I hope there will be no public and official appeals from Washington for assistance," Pearson revealed to Wrong. "General [Omar] Bradley's mysterious reference to offers of land forces...has already caused much speculation and some embarrassment here."⁴¹³ Unfortunately, the following day Ottawa received UN Secretary-General Trygve Lie's public appeal for land forces, a request that incited DEA criticism of UN and U.S. diplomats as Canada wanted to avoid publicly discussing the matter.⁴¹⁴ As Wrong wrote to Pearson, "Public attention has been focused altogether too much on the provisions by other members of the United Nations of ground forces for service in Korea....However irritating the contents and timing of Mr. Lie's message may have been, it is now a matter of record and a reply will have to be dispatched."⁴¹⁵ Canada, of course, had nothing to send although Ottawa readily had gone to war in 1914 and 1939 without the means to fight. What was lacking in 1950 was the desire to engage the enemy in a place and at a time when Canadian security was not directly impacted. The turning point came in late July. First, Britain, Australia and New Zealand, which were equally as ill-equipped to send forces to Korea, offered contingents for Korea, thus placing Canada in an awkward

⁴¹¹ Wrong to Pearson, 18 July 1950, 100.009 (D8), DHH

⁴¹² Heeney to Pearson, 18 July 1950, *DCER*, vol. 16, pp. 67-68; Draft Statement by the Prime Minister, *ibid*, pp. 69-70; Extract from Cabinet Conclusions, 2,3, and 7 August 1950, *ibid*, pp. 98-104

⁴¹³ Pearson to Wrong, 13 July 1950, cited above

⁴¹⁴ Holmes to Pearson, 15 July 1950, *DCER*, vol. 16, p. 65

⁴¹⁵ Wrong to Pearson, 18 July 1950, 110.009 (D9), DHH

position.⁴¹⁶ As well, Pearson's lengthy meeting with Acheson in Washington at July's end helped to allay Canadian fears that America would drag UN forces into a war with the PRC or the Soviet Union.⁴¹⁷ As noted, Acheson, who had close relations with Pearson and was familiar with Canada's political reservations, overstated the UN's role in Korea and downplayed U.S. national interests in repelling the NKPA. These factors, combined with mounting domestic and international pressure from news media,⁴¹⁸ made a greater commitment politically unavoidable.

Seeking to combine the Korean mission with national security policy, Pearson pushed to create the Canadian Army Special Force (CASF) which would be available for Korean service but not exclusively so. Once the decision to form a Brigade Group was made, Prime Minister St. Laurent specified "this Special Force would be trained and equipped to be available for use in carrying out Canada's obligations under the United Nations Charter and the North Atlantic Pact, in Korea or elsewhere."⁴¹⁹ This all-purpose force can be understood as an extension of Canada's existing security commitments in such a way as to not endanger the European theatre. Pearson and the DEA played a relatively small role in conceiving the CASF's inception. After advising St. Laurent on 1 August of the need to contribute, the Department allowed others to hash out the details.⁴²⁰ Following a series of arduous Cabinet negotiations concerning the legal and technical aspects of the force – issues which are of no immediate concern here – the call for recruitment for the CASF

⁴¹⁶ Stairs, *Diplomacy of Constraint*, pp. 84-85

⁴¹⁷ See Chapter III

⁴¹⁸ Wood, *Strange Battleground*, p. 22-23

⁴¹⁹ Extract from Cabinet Conclusions, 2,3, and 7 August 1950, cited above

⁴²⁰ Memorandum, Pearson to St. Laurent, 1 August 1950, DCER, vol. 16, pp. 106-107. After meeting with Acheson, Pearson strongly favoured a Brigade Group for Korea. This type of military unit, he wrote, "has...very much in its favour. It underlines the fact that from now on we fight only as a result of U.N. decisions, and with other U.N. members as a Police Force to make such decisions effective and to restore peace."

went out on 7 August 1950. St. Laurent and his advisors hoped that a Brigade Group with an authorized strength of 7,065 troops (including reinforcements), could be integrated into a Commonwealth division with Great Britain, Australia and others, a plan which made logistical sense as these nations shared equipment and organizational structures.⁴²¹ Ottawa successfully recruited and dispatched the 25th Canadian Infantry Brigade to Korea in December 1950, thus satisfying short-term necessities and long-term objectives.

But as Heeney rightly noted, “Korea is but a “side show” in the over-all struggle between the U.S.S.R. and the Western world....Indeed, the Korean incident stresses the need for stepping up Canadian defence preparations and the whole North Atlantic programme.”⁴²² Although the DEA did not expect the Soviet Union to precipitate a war in the immediate future, officials believed that a renewed push by NATO powers to shore up European defences would be the most effective deterrent in the coming years. Just as the details concerning the CASF were being settled, Claxton discussed with Cabinet the need for increased appropriations. In addition to the \$381 million allocated to the Canadian armed forces through fiscal year 1952-53, provisional estimates called for an additional \$503 million for the three services. Nearly sixty percent of this figure - \$297 million – was earmarked for the Royal Canadian Air Force, suggesting that Canada did not expect to fund a large standing army in either Europe or Asia to meet its collective security obligations.⁴²³ Escott Reid believed such measures were warranted. The Korean invasion offered NATO countries the opportunity to finally collaborate in “the creation and maintaining of an overwhelming preponderance of military, economic and moral power over the Soviet

⁴²¹ For more on the creation of the CASF, see Wood, *Strange Battleground*, pp. 16-38 and David Bercuson, *Blood on the Hills: The Canadian Army in the Korean War*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), pp. 28-41

⁴²² Heeney to Pearson, 18 July 1950, *DCER*, vol. 16, p. 67

⁴²³ Extract from Cabinet Conclusions, 2-7 August 1950, *DCER*, vol. 16, p. 102

World.” Canada, he argued, could not allow this opportunity to pass.⁴²⁴ The rearmament debate in Canada was hence very similar to that in the U.S. in that there was little opposition to increased federal spending on national defence. Both powers acknowledged the gravity of the Soviet threat and thus agreed it was in their national interests to invest heavily in mutual defences. All that differed was Pearson’s understanding of how, when and where Canada’s armed forces should be utilized.

A Limited Conflict? Formosa, the 38th Parallel and Asia in the Western Alliance

U.S. action regarding Formosa was the most divisive problem between Washington and Ottawa prior to PRC intervention in the war. While Canada supported UN action to defend the ROK, Heeney recognized that “[w]e have no (repeat no) such responsibility to assist in the defence of Formosa.”⁴²⁵ Pearson said that it was not a matter of responsibility so much as a matter of politics. The dispatch of the Seventh Fleet to the Formosan Strait, Pearson observed, offered communists “a golden opportunity to accuse the Americans of aggressive action intentions against China.” Moreover, he did not want Canadian forces to defend U.S. national interests or to contribute to the expansion of hostilities if the PRC attacked the island.⁴²⁶ In sum, Formosa was simply not the national security concern for Pearson as it was for Truman and Acheson. If the PRC occupied the island, Canadian security would not be imperiled. Yet if the American blockade led to war with the PRC, U.S. and UN forces would become bogged down in Asia while Europe remained relatively

⁴²⁴ Draft Memorandum from Reid to Pearson, August 1950, RG 25, vol. 4738, file 50069-A-40 pt. 7

⁴²⁵ Heeney to Holmes, 5 July 1950, 100.009 (D8), DHH

⁴²⁶ Holmes to Pearson, 30 June 1950, *DCER*, vol. 16, pp. 55-56; Pearson to Wrong, 7 July 1950, *ibid*, pp. 56-57; Pearson to Wrong, 20 July 1950, cited above

defenceless.⁴²⁷ But, much to Ottawa's chagrin, Canadian forces were linked to Formosa's defence through the UN. The 7 July resolution drafted by the U.S. had ambiguously stated that UN member states were responsible for "restoring peace and security *in the area*."⁴²⁸ These last three words incensed the DEA since Pearson and Heeney wanted UN action to only in Korea, not Formosa or elsewhere.⁴²⁹ Unlike the U.S. which had significant interests in Japan and the Philippines, Canada's interests in Asia were negligible. While the DEA accepted the need for the State Department to secure U.S. strategic interests, it neither had nor desired any similar responsibilities of its own.⁴³⁰

In a revealing letter to Acheson on 15 August, Pearson politely requested clarification on U.S. Far East policy, claiming that recent developments had obscured the understanding the two secretaries had reached in July. In particular, MacArthur's recent promise to Chiang Kai-shek substantially blurred the distinction between UN and U.S. action. "Who is suffering from schizophrenia?", Pearson wryly remarked about MacArthur simultaneously holding two commands, each with its own mandate. While Pearson did not want to face the "embarrassment" of having to distance Canada from America's Formosa policy, to continue with the present course invited war with the PRC. The West, he argued, would have fewer resources for the defence of Europe, the Peking-Moscow axis would be strengthened, and the PRC's involvement in the Korean War would spell disaster for the UNC. He thus urged Acheson to consider a meeting of NATO powers to form a consensus on the Formosa question since breaking allied unity would be disastrous.⁴³¹ Acheson's reply nearly four

⁴²⁷ Pearson and R.G. Riddell (Head of the UN division, DEA), Draft Memorandum, 7 August 1950, "Korea: Canadian Policy - 1950 - 1951" file, LBPP, vol. 35, LAC

⁴²⁸ Department of External Affairs, *Canada and the Korean Crisis*, "Far East Visit, 1951" file, MG 32 B5 (Brooke Claxton Papers), vol. 100, LAC. Italics added.

⁴²⁹ Heeney to Holmes, 5 July 1950, cited above

⁴³⁰ Wrong to Pearson, 27 June 1950, cited above

⁴³¹ Pearson to Acheson, 15 August 1950, "Korea: Canadian Policy - 1950 - 1951" file, LBPP, vol. 35, LAC

weeks later repeated Truman's claim that Formosa's neutralization was not politically motivated and that the U.S. had no territorial interests in China.⁴³² Pearson's nerves were not calmed when, just prior to receiving Acheson's response, Hume Wrong reported that the Secretary of State had mentioned the Korean and Formosan commands were "intimately linked" and could not be separated.⁴³³

The success of MacArthur's Inchon landing brought a whole new set of problems for Canadian diplomats to ponder, foremost being the decision to cross the 38th Parallel and the possibility of Chinese intervention. Although Canada eventually supported the 7 October resolution which authorized the UNC to cross the Parallel, the DEA did not want to invade North Korea. Pearson made clear his intent to stick to the initial resolutions from June as that was integral to the "prestige of the UN." Moreover, he felt the U.S. desire to cross the Parallel was contrary to the General Assembly's wishes. The UN, he remarked, had not discussed Korea's unification for three years. Even then, groups such as UNTCOK had only "sought to achieve these objectives by peaceful means." If the UNC attempted to occupy North Korea, Canadian forces would be unfortunately included in a "large occupation force on the Chinese and Soviet borders."⁴³⁴ According to Escott Reid, he and Norman Robertson urged Pearson, then in New York, to oppose the U.S. resolution. Pearson retorted that Robertson was oblivious to the "impossibility" of voting against the United States. But Pearson was also led to believe that the U.S. would offer North Korea a grace period of a few days before crossing the Parallel and that the UNC would advance no farther than the "northern neck" of the peninsula – between the 39th and 40th Parallels. According to Reid, "The Americans kept making assurances throughout this period, and then wouldn't keep

⁴³² Acheson to Pearson, 8 September 1950, "Korea: Canadian Policy - 1950 – 1951" file, LBPP, vol. 35, LAC

⁴³³ Wrong to Pearson, 8 September 1950, RG 25, vol. 4739, file 50069-A-40 pt. 10, LAC

⁴³⁴ Person to Holmes, 28 September 1950, RG 25, vol. 4739, file 50069-A-40 pt. 10, LAC

them.”⁴³⁵ This was no exaggeration. To Pearson’s “amazement and disgust”, U.S. Ambassador to the UN Warren Austin asked the General Assembly to grant authority to the UNC to march into North Korea without any geographic limitations.⁴³⁶ Nonetheless, Pearson bit his tongue and hoped for a prudent approach by the UNC.

Of particular concern to the DEA during late autumn were the long-term consequences of U.S. unilateralism in Asia. According to Pearson, the U.S. was viewing its involvement in Korea from a strictly military perspective. The United States should not only try to dissuade the Soviet Union from embarking on expansionist actions, it should also try to convince non-aligned states that American actions coincided with their interests. India’s Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, wrote to British leader Clement Attlee (who later forwarded the letter to Pearson), to make clear that Asia’s opinion of the UN depended considerably on the prudence of U.S. policy. However, the Western alliance had misunderstood the “forces that are now at work in Asia,” such as anti-colonialism and nationalism. Not only U.S. military action but French involvement in Indochina too worked to turn Asian opinion against the West and to “indirectly help the Soviet [Union] in Asia.”⁴³⁷ Canadian newspapers such as the *Windsor Daily Star* and *Saskatoon Star-Pheonix* echoed Nehru’s sentiments, observing that as a result of MacArthur’s visit to Formosa, “Russia has been able to set itself up as a friend of Asia, its only saviour in a struggle against western imperialism.”⁴³⁸ As for the UN decision to cross the 38th Parallel having the opposite effect, Pearson stated:

⁴³⁵ Denis Stairs interview with Escott Reid, 9 June 1969, cited above

⁴³⁶ Pearson, *Mike*, vol. 2, p. 160

⁴³⁷ Nehru to Attlee, 21 July 1950, RG 25, vol. 4739, file 50069-A-40 pt. 10, LAC

⁴³⁸ “Analysis of Canadian Editorial Comment (August 1 – August 7),” RG 25, vol. 4739, file 50069-A-40 pt. 10, LAC

What I find worrying is the inability of certain people in Washington to realize that it is not enough to occupy North Korea; that it is more important to remove, if possible, the impression in Asian minds, especially in Indian minds, that the policies and designs of the United States in this whole Korean question are not above suspicion. Apparently in Washington they feel that it is more important not to interfere with the military timetable than to make every possible move to bring fighting to an end in a way which would command the approval of the Asian members of the United Nations.⁴³⁹

The following February, Pearson made a statement in the House of Commons about the harnessing and cultivating of Asian nationalism, calling it “a restless and insistent demand for a better life” which was “the most important political phenomenon in Asia today.” Referencing Canada’s work on the Colombo Plan (1950), Pearson argued for the need to raise the standard of living and economic integration of the developing world not only for the humanity’s betterment but also to contain communism’s spread. A purely militaristic approach to containment might reverse the gains made in social and economic progress since the World War II.⁴⁴⁰ The DEA did not always agree with India’s views or its diplomacy and often felt that India sought too great a role in UN affairs.⁴⁴¹ Yet Canadian officials also understood the importance of Asian opinion and the developing world’s role in counterbalancing American and Soviet power.

Pearson’s preference for developing a ‘West-South’ axis between the NATO powers and emerging Asian nation-states flowed from the view he expressed during the late 1940s.

⁴³⁹ Pearson’s remarks from 8 October 1950 reprinted in Memorandum, “Canada and Korea,” 8 December 1950, “Korea. Canadian Policy - 1950 – 1951” file, LBPP, vol 35, LAC

⁴⁴⁰ *Official Report of Debates House of Commons*, 2 February 1951, vol 1, p 53. The Colombo Plan was signed in January 1950 by the Commonwealth states. It was defined by Antonin Basch as “a cooperative plan to enable members to help one another through bilateral arrangements for assistance, both capital and technical. Its objective is to raise the standard of living by accelerating the pace and extending the scope of economic development in the countries of South and South-East Asia with special emphasis on the production of food.” See Antonin Basch, “The Colombo Plan: A Case of Regional Economic Cooperation,” *International Organization*, vol. 9, no. 1 (1955), p 1

⁴⁴¹ Memorandum, Reid to Pearson, “Indian Warnings During the Korean Crisis,” October 1950, “Korea 2 of 2” file, Reid Papers, vol. 29, LAC, Pearson to Reid, 9 February 1951, cited above

Containment, he argued, involved the unification of the political, economic and social forces of the non-communist world.⁴⁴² Escott Reid commented in February 1951 that it was essential for the North Atlantic powers to maintain their ties to traditional allies, citing the United States' relationship with Latin America or Britain's connections with its Commonwealth. These bonds would "serve the interests of the whole alliance," not just the smaller, more vulnerable members. In the event of war, he argued, non-aligned states might be coaxed into providing "all aid short of war to the alliance."⁴⁴³ While Canadian documents show a great consideration for Asian opinion and the effects of an aggressive containment strategy in Korea and elsewhere, there is little indication the Truman administration ever seriously considered the advice of Asian leaders such as Nehru.⁴⁴⁴ Canada's decision to include leading non-communist Asian countries in the UN mission in Korea, as well as in the larger questions concerning the Soviet Union and the PRC, represented quite a different understanding of the social and political context of containment.

An Unfortunate Consequence: Canada, the U.S. and the PRC, November 1950 – April 1951

Like the United States, Canada received messages in early November warning that the PRC would not "stand idly by" as the UNC approached the Yalu River.⁴⁴⁵ Unlike the Americans, however, Canadian diplomats viewed took these warnings seriously. In July, the DEA received word from its High Commissioner in New Delhi that the PRC's leadership was convinced that U.S. military action in Korea was aimed at weakening Peking's

⁴⁴² Pearson to Wrong, 9 February 1951, *DCER*, vol. 17, edited by Greg Donaghy, (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1994), pp. 105-107

⁴⁴³ Reid, "Some Lessons to be Drawn from the Korean Crisis," 19 February 1951, cited above

⁴⁴⁴ Certain officials, such as the U.S. Ambassador to Moscow Alan Kirk, believed that Nehru's desire to act as a mediator between East and West was actually "play[ing] Stalin's game" and hindered U.S. action against communist aggression. See Kirk to Acheson, 19 July 1950, *FRUS*, 1950, VII, pp. 426-427. Nehru, who also believed that peace was dependent on the seating of the PRC at the UN Security Council, was also shunned by Acheson. See Acheson to Nehru, 22 July 1950, *FRUS*, 1950, VII, pp. 447-448.

⁴⁴⁵ Extract from the Minutes of Meeting of Heads Division, 6 November 1950, *DCER*, vol. 16, p. 218

power.⁴⁴⁶ John Holmes claimed that Canada's UN delegation had been misled into thinking the Truman administration would follow a "very prudent and unprovocative course" when nearing China's border. However, he complained that "prudence has gone by the board" when MacArthur was permitted to take the entire peninsula by force. Holmes had been led to believe that a "no man's land" would have been left in the northern-most provinces of Korea, thus allaying PRC's suspicions.⁴⁴⁷ U.S. Ambassador Woodward revealed Canada's Cabinet was deeply troubled by Chinese intervention and wanted MacArthur replaced.⁴⁴⁸ Faced with the fact that Canadian forces would be engaged in combat with the PRC troops, Pearson had to work to maintain allied unity without allowing the conflict to escalate.

Again, however, Canadian support was equivocal and the United States did not make any efforts to endear Canada to its cause. When Reid confronted the U.S. Embassy in Ottawa about the intelligence failure that had led MacArthur's troops to stumble into the PRC's firing line, Woodward informed the DEA the intervention had been a "complete surprise" to the Truman administration.⁴⁴⁹ Minister Don Bliss, who provided Washington with most of its reports on Canadian politics, retorted that Communist China had been planning to attack UN forces since mid-October. In fact, Bliss claimed the State Department had reports of troop movements even before the initial NKPA invasion, reports which had justified MacArthur's ambitious drive towards the Yalu River. The PRC would have attacked the UNC and risked general war regardless of whatever precautionary efforts the U.S. would have made. "Obviously, it is fantastic to suppose that an offensive involving half a million men could have been prepared impromptu," Bliss remarked. This view, he

⁴⁴⁶ High Commissioner for Canada (New Delhi) to Pearson, 8 July 1950, 100.009 (D8)

⁴⁴⁷ Holmes to Pearson, 6 November 1950, *DCER*, vol. 6, pp. 219-220.

⁴⁴⁸ Woodward to Acheson, 30 November 1950, "Korea" file, RG 84, Canada, U.S. Embassy, Ottawa, Classified General Records, 1950-1961, NARA

⁴⁴⁹ Extract from Cabinet Conclusions, 29 November 1950, *DCER*, vol. 16, pp. 241-243

continued, was unanimous with the JCS and the State Department.⁴⁵⁰ Such claims were at best disingenuous. At worst, they gave Ottawa with a false impression of the precarious military situation in Korea and the White House's appraisal thereof.

Canada had some incentive to accept the American position, at least in principle. John Hickerson had informed Hume Wrong that the U.S. needed to act strongly against the PRC as American public opinion would permit no wavering. The western alliance "must avoid falling into the booby-trap which the Russians had set to lure is into all-out war with China," but equally "the free world must not pretend that Chinese aggression did not happen." It took over a generation for Americans to accept the premise of collective security, Hickerson argued. If U.S. allies abandoned ship now, Congress might pull the United States out of the UN altogether. While the message did not constitute an ultimatum, Hickerson implied that if Canada and other allied countries did not go along with U.S. plans in Korea, the Truman administration might retreat into traditional American isolationism. Such a course would have been highly unlikely in 1950 given America's strategic and political interests worldwide. Nevertheless, Wrong and Arthur Menzies, Head of the Canadian Liaison Mission in Tokyo, judged that a weak response to aggression could foster American disillusionment and compel the State Department to reduce its commitments in Europe and elsewhere.⁴⁵¹ Pearson, who relied on NATO and the U.S. military for Canada's national security, found these consequences unpalatable.

Reluctant to either break with the Truman administration publically or to risk damaging collective security's delicate fabric, Canada deferred to the United States. But the DEA was willing to go much farther than the U.S. to accommodate the PRC. Canada,

⁴⁵⁰ Bliss to Reid, 8 December 1950, RG 25, vol. 4741, file 50069-A-40 pt. 16, LAC

⁴⁵¹ Wrong to Pearson, 29 December 1950, RG 25, vol. 4741, file 50069-A-40 pt. 16, LAC; Menzies to Pearson, *ibid*

Pearson argued, must work with the UN to “reconcile [the] legitimate interests” of communist regimes. If and when reconciliation proved impossible, the responsibility would not rest with the allied powers. Pearson further warned that a prolonged war in Asia would drain valuable resources from “our most important and...our most dangerous front, which remains Western Europe. That is still the part of the world where we must concentrate our main effort, on building up substantial defensive strength under the collective control of the members of the...North Atlantic community – on political, economic, military and social foundations.” He continued that “Canada must, in its own interests, and for its own security, but in a way consistent with our position, our size and our special problems as a young and developing country, make an appropriate contribution to that collective strength.” Don Bliss commented on Pearson’s speech, noting sardonically that Canada’s “appropriate” contribution to North Atlantic security had amounted to only one battalion to the Korean War, which Ottawa would have preferred to have in Europe anyway.⁴⁵²

Realizing aggressive action would only cement the monolithic communist bloc, Canada was determined to treat the PRC as distinct from the Soviet Union. A policy of “peace and stability” in Asia, was preferable to continued antagonism between East and West. “The Communist theories of the Chinese People’s Government are repugnant to the vast majority of Canadians. Nevertheless, if the rulers of Peking do not embark upon aggressive policies, Canadians would not wish to intervene in Chinese affairs.” To this effect, the Department also recommended establishing diplomatic relations with the PRC for

⁴⁵² Bliss to State Department, 7 December 1950, Central Decimal Files, 1950-1954, 795.00/12-550, NARA

only through the normalization of good relations pending a Korean armistice – not only political but social and economic – would it be possible to wrench Peking from Moscow.⁴⁵³

Pearson's moderate stance stemmed from the general belief within the DEA that the PRC was not directly controlled by Moscow. According to E.H. Norman, Canada's former delegate to the Far East Commission and a strong critic of MacArthur's command, while some Chinese leaders were convinced the United States was inherently "imperialistic," certain factions were open to a "modus vivendi" with the Western bloc. The Chinese people were sensitive, Norman claimed, and extra care was needed to alleviate pre-existing fears of U.S. "imperialistic" designs. If the Western alliance was serious about maintaining peace and security, its primary objective should be to demonstrate to the PRC that it "entertain[ed] no aggressive designs" and that it could make political compromises, notably over Formosa's status and UN representation.⁴⁵⁴ DEA functionary Jules Léger added that neither Canada nor the Western European governments supported the U.S. hard-line against the PRC for the allied governments would be automatically involved a Sino-American war regardless of their conviction. While making concessions to the PRC may be unfavourable in the short-term, it would promote international stability.⁴⁵⁵

Likewise, the U.S. and its allies were not ready for war with either the Soviet Union or the PRC. Pearson believed that by risking general war, the western alliance was setting itself up to lose. "Decisions as to future action in the United Nations," Pearson wrote on 27 December, "must be taken in the light of global strategy and of the present balance of armed

⁴⁵³ "A Re-Examination of Canadian Policy in the Far East," Policy Paper no. 5, 16 October 1951, RG 25, vol. 6137, file 50400-40, LAC

⁴⁵⁴ E.H. Norman, "Possible Effects in Asia of the Defeat in Korea," 8 December 1950, "Korea: Canadian Policy - 1950 - 1951", LBPP, vol. 35, LAC; Roger Bowen, "Cold War, McCarthyism, and Murder by Slander: E.H. Norman's Death in Perspective," in *E.H. Norman: His Life and Scholarship*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), pp. 60-61

⁴⁵⁵ Jules Léger, "Possible Effects in Europe of a Compromise Solution in Korea," 9 December 1950, "Korea: Canadian Policy - 1950 - 1951", LBPP, vol. 35, LAC

forces between the Soviet world and the democratic world. Given determination by the democratic world, time is on our side and we should, therefore, play for time so long as we can do so without appearing to deny our obligations to the United Nations Charter.” He advised that the Western states should rearm within the next twelve months while also giving the communist world no reason to escalate the conflict.⁴⁵⁶ Like the United States, Pearson assumed NATO was militarily inferior to the Soviet Union and supported the decisions for general rearmament. But he disagreed with the U.S. decision to resist aggression everywhere as that was not in Canada’s long-term security. Reid clarified the DEA’s position: “We shall have to make up our minds which positions are, in terms of our global strategy, essential and which we stand firm and where, on the other hands, we may have to accept rebuffs and local reverses.” The Western alliance, Reid added, simply did not have the means to contain the entire Soviet perimeter.⁴⁵⁷

Canadian opinion makers gave Pearson’s diplomacy mixed reviews. Many newspapers backed Pearson’s cautious approach and attacked the U.S. for its warmongering. Charles Woodworth, editor of the *Ottawa Citizen*, published a critique of the Truman administration on 5 December that alleged that “extreme fear of communism” had driven policymakers and others such as General MacArthur towards irresponsible action. The American government unfortunately possessed “the determination to fight against every regime which is called Communist and back up any regime which claims to be anti-Communist no matter how reactionary and ineffective it may be,” a reference to Chiang’s Nationalists.⁴⁵⁸ The *London Free Press* commented that “Mr Pearson is right that it is of

⁴⁵⁶ Memorandum, “Korea: Action in the United Nations,” RG 25, vol. 4739, file 50069-A-40 pt. 16, LAC

⁴⁵⁷ Memorandum from Reid to Pearson, 20 December 1950, “Korea: 2 of 2” file, Reid Papers, vol. 29, LAC

⁴⁵⁸ Donald Bliss (Minister) to Department of State (Washington), 6 December 1950, RG 59, Central Decimal File, 1950-1954, 611.42-12/650, NARA

supreme importance to the morale and survival of the free people that the responsibility for war should be placed upon Russia, China and her satellites.”⁴⁵⁹ Yet several papers felt the DEA was not anti-communist enough. The *Calgary Albertan* exclaimed the UN could not make concessions to the PRC. “Let there be no more Munichs, no more appeasement, no more heads in the sand.” Similar refrains were delivered by the *Brantford Expositor*, the *Montreal Gazette* and the *Edmonton Bulletin*.⁴⁶⁰ While Pearson did not modify his position on ceasefire negotiations with the PRC as a direct consequence of these editorials, such expressions made it more difficult for him to more strongly oppose the U.S. position.

Complicating matters was the fact that the DEA was not well-informed about the complex policy discussions ongoing within the State Department. According to Pearson, Truman’s intentions in Asia had been obscured several times throughout the Korean conflict, thus frustrating Pearson’s efforts to develop a consensus amongst the allied powers and to moderate U.S. behaviour. Since June, Pearson had received numerous answers from the State Department and public sources concerning Formosan and Chinese policy, the necessity to limit the war, and to formulate Cold War strategy. Writing angrily to Hume Wrong in February 1951, Pearson admitted that Canada relied on the United States for formulating foreign policy. “[Canada must] seek an early opportunity to discuss with the United States government, at a high level, the long term objects of their policy, in which we must inevitably be involved, in the Far East.” However, he did not envision such developments in the near future. “If a policy is coherent and logical, even if one disagrees with it, it may still command respect but some aspects of recent United States policy have seemed to us erratic and confused. At times it has been difficult for the Canadian

⁴⁵⁹ “Editorial Opinion on Canada’s Korean Policy,” 9 December 1950, “Korea: Canadian Policy - 1950 – 1951” file, LBPP, vol. 35, LAC

⁴⁶⁰ *ibid*

Government to discover exactly what the current United States policy is.” Pearson observed that Dean Rusk, who had been generally “wise and restrained” was often contradicted by Hickerson or Austin. But the State Department did not shoulder all of the blame. “MacArthur’s statements have of course, added to the confusion.” What Canada required from the United States, then, was an “[a]greement that our objective in the Far East is the defeat of aggression and not the use of the United Nations to overthrow Communist Governments.”⁴⁶¹ MacArthur and the State Department’s mixed opinions were indeed complicating factors for Canada. But America’s primary assumptions concerning the communist threat and distinction national security interests remained. Understandably, Canadian policymakers could not comprehend the subtle objectives of U.S. foreign policy - the ‘NSC-68 doctrine’ – in Korea during 1950-1951.

Canada quietly opposed an American proposal to condemn China’s actions in Korea, claiming that such a declaration would be provocative and detrimental to the initiation of ceasefire talks. Moreover, as E.H. Norman agreed the PRC was “guilty of aggression,” the DEA felt it was ill-advised to force the UN to support this claim. Not only would this action further destabilize the perilous situation in Asia, it would divide the allied nations and constrain future political and military initiatives.⁴⁶² Reid circulated a DEA memo stating that the present objectives did not require branding communists as aggressors or anything else. Canada did not seek “the subjugation of the Cominform empire or its unconditional surrender but the creation of a world in which the Cominform empire and the free democracies can live side by side in peace – not peace without friction but peace

⁴⁶¹ Pearson, *Mike*, vol. 2, no. 173; Pearson to Wrong, 1 February 1951, RG 25, vol. 4742, file 50069-A-40 pt. 20, LAC

⁴⁶² E.H. Norman, “Possible Effects in Asia of the Defeat in Korea,” 8 December 1950, *DCER*, vol. 16, pp. 275-278

without the threat of war.”⁴⁶³ Pearson, however, capitulated and instructed Holmes to vote in favour of the resolution on 1 February.⁴⁶⁴ Likewise, China was unwilling to enter into any ceasefire agreement unless it discussed “the fate of Formosa” – something the U.S. was not willing to consider.⁴⁶⁵ Events at the UN were thus at a stalemate.

In Ottawa, Pearson was busy rallying support for his government against mounting Parliamentary opposition. George Drew, the Conservative opposition’s leader, and Solon Low, head of the Social Credit Party, attacked St. Laurent and Pearson for Canada’s weak national defence policy, unpreparedness and lack of clarity with regards to its objectives in Korea. Perhaps unknowingly, Drew touched on the central crux of the problem facing Pearson with regards to Canada’s relations with the Americans:

Canada should have at all times a distinctly Canadian policy...But at this time it seems to me that while we must at all times protect our future and our own independence, we have no choice but to recognize that...the responsibility of international leadership falls mainly upon them, and why it is so important that we should at all times maintain the closest and most intimate relationships with them.⁴⁶⁶

Pearson reaffirmed his concurrence with the U.S. position in Korea, citing that differences between Ottawa and Washington “should not be exaggerated” and that each were in “complete agreement” over the need to oppose Soviet encroachment in Europe.⁴⁶⁷ However,

⁴⁶³ Reid, “The International Crisis: Some Basic Considerations,” 9 December 1950, *DCER*, vol. 16, pp. 269-272

⁴⁶⁴ Holmes to Pearson, 5 January 1951, RG 25, vol. 4741, file 50069-A-40 pt. 17, LAC

⁴⁶⁵ Canada’s High Commissioner (London) to Pearson, 8 January 1951, RG 25, vol. 4741, file 50069-A-40 pt. 17, LAC. It is not possible here to explore fully the details concerning Canada’s ceasefire negotiations and its problems with the U.S. resolution condemning Chinese aggression. However, readers are advised to consult Stairs, *Diplomacy of Constraint*, pp. 220-279.

⁴⁶⁶ *Official Report of Debates: House of Commons*, 2 February 1951, vol. 1, p. 53. Drew lists the much larger U.S. population as the primary factor in their “responsibility of international leadership.”

⁴⁶⁷ *Ibid*, p.54

such assurances were misleading. Canada and the U.S., naturally, had come to a consensus on the primacy of the European theatre, but their views on the PRC differed widely.

MacArthur's leadership had a direct impact on Canada's view of the Truman administration. In August and September, Pearson and Wrong were troubled by the General's relations with Formosa's leadership, MacArthur's political views and his Veterans of Foreign Wars message.⁴⁶⁸ The following month, Pearson expressed similar concern over MacArthur's public proclamation that ROK troops were not part of the UNC.⁴⁶⁹ For Canada, the emotional and erratic nature of U.S. policy was personified by MacArthur. Pearson initially had had a favourable impression of MacArthur, calling him the "most imperial, proconsular figure I had ever seen. He carried it all off with great élan and great impressiveness."⁴⁷⁰ However, as noted by Reid, the DEA really knew very little about him. By war's end, many considered MacArthur to be "the villain" and "an insubordinate general playing with fire."⁴⁷¹ Arthur Menzies, heading Canada's mission in Tokyo, was clearly not impressed with MacArthur's briefings, calling them the General's "recognizable mixture of fact and fiction." More importantly, Menzies reported on MacArthur's continued commitment to fighting communism wherever and whenever, regardless of the international political implications.⁴⁷² Neither the Canadian nor the British Embassy in Washington trusted MacArthur's reports, claiming he was purposely exaggerating the strength of enemy forces in order to manipulate the White House's opinion.⁴⁷³ By April 1951, Pearson had noted that MacArthur's press releases were "in direct contradiction to the policies and

⁴⁶⁸ Wrong to Pearson, 3 August 1950, RG 25, vol. 4738, file 50069-A-40 pt. 7, LAC : Wrong to Pearson, 8 September 1950, cited above

⁴⁶⁹ Pearson to Head of Canadian Liaison Mission, Tokyo (Menzies), 4 October 1950, "Korea, 1 of 2" file, Reid Papers, vol. 26, LAC

⁴⁷⁰ Pearson, *Mike*, vol. 2, p. 145

⁴⁷¹ Denis Stairs interview with Escott Reid, 9 June 1969, cited above

⁴⁷² Menzies to Pearson, 21 December 1950, RG 25, vol. 4741, file 50069-A-40 pt. 17, LAC

⁴⁷³ Wrong to Pearson, 28 December 1950, RG 25, vol. 4741, file 50069-A-40 pt. 16, LAC

objectives of the United Nations.”⁴⁷⁴ In short, Canada began to view the UNC Commander as a security threat in his own right.

On 31 March 1951, Pearson addressed the Canadian Bar Association in an effort to clarify Canada’s position in light of MacArthur’s recent publicity stunts. The DEA, Pearson stated, did not think the PRC “would soon collapse” or that the UN should attempt to overthrow Mao’s regime by crossing the Manchurian border. Canada and the U.S. instead were committed to Western European defence. But Pearson explained what he believed were the “two main threats to this unity of action.” The first danger was ambitious U.S. actions that ignored allied opinion. Canada would support American objectives if they were reasonable, but Washington should not take Ottawa’s acquiescence for granted. The second concern was directed at MacArthur. “It seems to me to be as unwise, indeed as dangerous, for the generals to intervene in international policy matters as it would be for the diplomats to try to lay down military strategy.”⁴⁷⁵ In a more critical address on 10 April, Pearson explained that Canada was a small power and its voice was not always heard in other capitals. As a result, “we must be sure, so as we can ever be sure, that the United Nations remains the instrument of collective policy of all of its members...and does not become too much an instrument of any one country.” With regards to Canada-U.S. relations, Pearson made his famous declaration that “easy and automatic political relations” had ended.⁴⁷⁶ Ambassador Woodward rightly noted that most of the statements were qualified and he did not expect a major rift between Canada and the United States to develop.⁴⁷⁷ Nevertheless, this speech signified that however strong the desire to maintain a united front against

⁴⁷⁴ Draft telegram from Pearson to Wrong, 10 April 1951, RG 25, vol. 4742, file 50069-A-40 pt. 20

⁴⁷⁵ Department of External Affairs, *Statements and Speeches*, 51/13

⁴⁷⁶ *Statements and Speeches*, “Canadian Foreign Policy in a Two-Power World,” 51/14, cited above

⁴⁷⁷ Woodward to Secretary of State, 10 April 1951, RG 84, Canada, U.S. Embassy, Ottawa, Classified General Records, 1950-1961, Box 9, NARA

aggression, Washington must recognize Canada's sovereign independence.

Although couched in Pearson's trademark politeness, the reactions in Canada and the U.S. to this speech were profound. Canadian newspapers were quick to disseminate Pearson's message. "Says Canada Not Willing to Be an Echo" and "Pearson Lays Down Canada's Declaration of Independence" were some of the headlines that adorned the covers of the *Ottawa Citizen* and *Ottawa Journal*, respectively. Don Bliss at the U.S. Embassy in Ottawa was far less enthusiastic, claiming "Its petulant tone reflects perhaps Mr. Pearson's annoyance with the poor press he has been receiving in the United States" or perhaps from his "personal prejudice against General MacArthur."⁴⁷⁸ Pearson later claimed the speech was intended for domestic consumption and that he had sought to prepare Canadian public opinion for the recognition of the U.S. as the leader of the free world.⁴⁷⁹ Yet his personal correspondence with Hume Wrong revealed something more. "I have been surprised at the extent of this reaction to my speech in the United States. This, however, confirms my thesis that we never get much attention down there unless we say something critical, and then the attention becomes surprised, pained and irritated." Pearson explained that had he known of Truman's decision to relieve MacArthur, he would have moderated his statement. But by Pearson's own admission, MacArthur was only one piece of a complex puzzle:

It is, I think, important, that our friends in Washington, and elsewhere in the United States, understand the anxiety and hesitation with which the majority of people in Canada watch the development of United States policy...The deep-seated, though often unconsciously felt, origin of this is, I suppose, our feeling of dependence on the United States and the frustration over the fact that we can't escape this no matter how hard we

⁴⁷⁸ Bliss to Secretary of State, 13 April 1951, RG 84, Canada, U.S. Embassy, Ottawa, Classified General Records, 1950-1961, Box 9, NARA

⁴⁷⁹ Woodward to Secretary of State, 13 April 1951, RG 84, Canada, U.S. Embassy, Ottawa, Classified General Records, 1950-1961, Box 9, NARA

try.

As a result, Pearson added that Canada now had to review completely its relations with the U.S., which made the preservation of cordial relations more important than ever.⁴⁸⁰

“Easy and Automatic”? Canada and the World Reconsidered, February – June 1951

With the worst of the Korean War crises behind them, the U.S. and Canada each realized that the differences in foreign policy made necessary a re-evaluation their relations with one another. Notably, Canadian sovereignty was a dominant theme for both countries. In March 1951, the State Department produced a policy statement which recognized America’s role in perpetuating Canada’s insecurities and the need for great cooperation between the two. “In too many instances, the U.S. Government takes action or fails to take action without considering its effect on Canada.” Since Canada was a “vital” element of U.S. foreign policy, it was essential that the State Department pay heed to Canadian proposals in the UN and other international organizations. Most importantly, the U.S. must keep in mind that Canadians were “characteristically fearful” of American encroachment on their sovereignty. “Their fear is demonstrated by the extreme caution which they display” in their continental defence arrangements with the U.S. and that “the [State] Department should be constantly on the alert to detect or ward off any proposals which might wound Canadian susceptibilities.” The document concluded that Canada was not the dependent state it had once been; it had “become a powerful friend and ally – a force to be respected.”⁴⁸¹ This statement revealed the State Department actually had a very accurate picture of Pearson’s views, recognizing, at least, that it could not take Canadian acquiescence for granted. How

⁴⁸⁰ Pearson to Wrong, 16 April 1951, “Korea: Canadian Policy - 1950 – 1951” file, LBPP, vol. 35, LAC

⁴⁸¹ Policy Statement: Canada, 19 March 1951, Department of State, RG 59, Central Decimal Files, 1950-1954, 611.42/3-1951, NARA

well these attitude adjustments translated into practical policy is questionable, but this report marked a significant departure from the laissez-faire attitude exhibited by George Perkins only one year earlier.⁴⁸²

The DEA produced a similar document a few months later which complemented the State Department's views. At Pearson's behest, the Privy Council Office distributed a review of Canada-U.S. relations to Cabinet members in June. Drafted by the DEA's American Division, the report posited that while a "firm friendship" existed between Ottawa and Washington, major problems had emerged as a consequence of the Korean War which challenged Canadian "autonomy." In particular, the great power disparity that existed between Canada and the U.S. and the "nature of United States leadership" were issues that drove a wedge through North American relations to the detriment of the junior partner:

Many of these problems result from the not unnatural desire of the United States to obtain the support of other countries for its policies, and from a lack of sophistication in the methods employed. This in itself would not be too serious if Canada and other countries could always be convinced of the soundness of the policies proposed (and very often imposed) by the United States. If there had been no fundamental divergence of views on such issues as the support of the Nationalist China or the attempt to negotiate with the Chinese Communists, the methods which seem to us at time to be rather crude and which had been adopted by the United States to bring its allies and associated into line would have been avoided...Our difficulties of this kind in the U.N. and NATO have been shared with other allied or friendly nations. Our views on the Formosan issue, on the attempt to negotiate a settlement of the Korean war, and on the danger of strengthening the association between the Chinese Communists and the Soviet Union have been more or less the same as the views of virtually all Commonwealth and NATO countries, with the exception of the United States.⁴⁸³

The report listed a number of reasons for the fundamental problems in Canada-U.S.

⁴⁸² See Chapter 2

⁴⁸³ Christopher Eberts (Secretary, Cabinet Defence Committee) to Claxton, 29 June 1951, "Canadian-American Relations" file, MG 32 B5 (Brooke Claxton Papers), vol. 96, LAC

relations. The particular U.S. republican form of government, which awkwardly divided the powers between the President and Congress and “puts a premium on irresponsibility,” prevented the formulation of a consistent foreign policy. Exacerbating this problem was the “impulsive” and “intolerant” nature of the American people. Canadians, the DEA observed, tended to be more conservative in their decision-making. Canada’s review was much more critical in tone than the State Department’s assessment of Canada, but the parallels between the two documents are nevertheless significant. In each case, America’s inconsideration for Canadian concerns were noted and the need for closer consultation between Ottawa and Washington was jointly recommended. Nevertheless, the DEA, convinced that its containment strategies differed in significant respects from the State Department, did not expect to make concessions on its national security interests. Meanwhile, U.S. authorities made no promises to actually moderate their policies or relinquish sovereignty over certain issues and expressed only the desire to consult Canada more fully on matters with which the latter was involved. Both countries, while recognizing the need for a consensus in the Cold War, were not eager to actually modify their policies to satisfy the other.

Escott Reid, who asked the author to develop more fully his criticisms of U.S. policy, thought the Truman administration required “psycho-therapeutic treatment” to cure its perpetual short-sightedness. State Department ignorance of Ottawa’s particular political problems, he continued, only increased Canada’s “latent Anti-American hostility.”⁴⁸⁴ Reid, in fact, had drafted a memorandum on the state of Canada-U.S. relations a few months earlier, which he had forwarded to Lester Pearson prior to the commencement of ceasefire negotiations. In a scathing critique of U.S. foreign policy, Reid suggested the Korean War revealed more than just political differences between the United States and Canada:

⁴⁸⁴ Memorandum for Mr. Grandy, 2 May 1951, “Korea: 2 of 2” file, Reid Papers, vol. 29, LAC

The differences of opinion between the United States and most of its allies over the Korean crisis have strained relations between them. On the surface unity has been preserved, but the cost of preserving the appearance of unity has been great. The principle cost is that the allied governments have had to support public policies of the United States government which they consider to be ill-advised, if not dangerous...The events of the past seven months have demonstrated that in Canada there exists only a little under the surface a more profound and general anti-Americanism and isolationism than most of us have previously considered existed.⁴⁸⁵

Reid, stridently anti-American on occasion, blamed the poor U.S. representation in Ottawa as a leading cause for the State Department's obliviousness of Canadian interests. "The United States Embassy here would appear to be competent neither to report to Washington the true state of Canadian opinion nor to explain in Ottawa United States policy when it differs from ours."⁴⁸⁶ But Reid's anti-Americanism was manifest as far back as the early 1940s during the development of the Alaskan highway project.

The Korean War brought Canada to review not only its relations with its closest ally, but also its larger foreign policy objectives. While its views on collective security were not drastically altered, the DEA was eager to clarify its position on certain matters in light of the challenges faced in 1950. First, officials recognized Canada's "junior position" in the Western alliance and the limits of its own capabilities. For instance, one report claimed that "it would be politically undesirable and militarily unrealistic" for Canada to seek a role on NATO's Standing Group since it was "not able to put up the military chips necessary for full partnership." However, this only hardened the DEA's resolve to increase the influence and integration of collective security organizations.⁴⁸⁷ The Korean experience suggested to

⁴⁸⁵ Reid, "Some Lessons to be Drawn from the Korean Crisis," 19 February 1951, cited above

⁴⁸⁶ *ibid*

⁴⁸⁷ Policy Paper no. 4, "Western Europe and the North Atlantic Community," 29 June 1951, RG 25, vol. 6137, file 50400-40, LAC

certain officials that “Canada’s size and importance” was much more influential in a multilateral framework than “in a Great power alliance to which it is attached as a junior partner.” Therefore, the DEA recommended the continued development of Canada’s role in the UN and elsewhere.⁴⁸⁸

Additionally, while NATO and the UN were the institutions best suited to maintaining international peace – especially since the Korean missions successfully demonstrated the UN’s “prestige and moral force,” the Western alliance could not make commitments everywhere and should prioritize regional security. As such, peripheral security interests should be sacrificed in favour of closer integration in the North Atlantic community in order to contain the “eccentricities” of U.S. foreign policy. Some officials demanded the political and economic strengthening of Western Europe to counterbalance the preponderant influence of American military power.⁴⁸⁹ Yet it was also clearly recognized that Canada and its allies lacked the military strength to uphold universal collective security. As noted by Douglas LePan, head of the DEA’s UN section, “unlimited collective security everywhere may mean no general security anywhere.”⁴⁹⁰ But collective security’s impact on the morale of non-communist states must also be considered in decisions to intervene in future conflict. The Western alliance should make every effort to frustrate aggression whenever possible, so long as there was a suitable “ad hoc” calculation of moral and strategic factors.” The conclusions, then, were somewhat unclear. Although every effort should be

⁴⁸⁸ Policy Paper no. 5, “A Re-examination of Canadian Policy in the United Nations,” 16 October 1951, RG 25, vol. 6137, file 50400-40, LAC

⁴⁸⁹ “Western Europe and the North Atlantic Community,” 29 June 1951, cited above; “A Re-examination of Canadian Policy in the United Nations,” 16 October 1951, cited above. The second report also suggested Great Britain could also help moderate Canada-U.S. relations: “Canada need no longer fear domination from Whitehall, but we are increasingly aware of the overwhelming influence, and sometimes pressure, of Washington. In this situation the Commonwealth connection may serve as a useful counterpoise to the one-sided pressure exerted on Canada by the U.S.”

⁴⁹⁰ Douglas LePan, “Some Guides to Immediate Action,” 9 December 1950, LBPP, vol. 35

made to resist aggression, Canada had to be selective in its commitments.⁴⁹¹

Other documents suggest it was legal obligations, not judgment, that would require Canada to take up arms once again. In June 1951, the Department of National Defence released its revised programme for 1951-1952 which confirmed Canada's adherence to the principles of collective security and the limited scope of its defence responsibilities. "The objectives of our national defence are simple and clear," the report stated. In order, Claxton listed the "immediate defence of Canada and North America from direct attack," the responsibility to carry out Canada's obligations under the UN or NATO and "the organization to build up our strength in the event of total war," which included the development of human and industrial resources.⁴⁹² Such modest aims underestimated the potential threat of the PRC or the Soviet Union, but nevertheless they further established Canada's desire to pursue a foreign policy based on limited collective security.

Lastly, Canada must actually pay the financial and political costs for international stability. If Ottawa was serious about the creation of a "western citadel" in Europe, "we could no longer afford to wriggle uncomfortably when we are asked to pay our modest contributions towards building General Eisenhower's headquarters." Not only would this allow Canada to temper some allied criticism that Canada had not done enough for NATO, it also would help secure Canadian influence in the decision-making process. "If we mean what we have said about "using our sovereignty" by pooling some aspects of it, we shall have to face the consequences in terms of some measure of financial, commercial, and political sacrifices."⁴⁹³ Perhaps the DEA realized that during the Korean War, its influence

⁴⁹¹ "A Re-examination of Canadian Policy in the United Nations," 16 October 1951, cited above. Emphasis in original.

⁴⁹² "Canada's Defence Programme, 1951-1952," 100.013 (D4), DHH

⁴⁹³ "Western Europe and the North Atlantic Community," 29 June 1951, cited above. Emphasis in original.

had been negligible largely as a result of its paltry contribution to the UNC in the critical early phases of the conflict. In many respects, Korea reaffirmed the need for functionalism in international affairs. Relying merely on the principle of collective security was insufficient to guarantee its realization. If smaller states wished to maintain their sovereignty in Great Power politics, they would, paradoxically, have to relinquish some.

Conclusion

From Ottawa's perspective, Korea was a failure in collective security. But this failure was partly of its own making. Pearson's quest to keep the entire affair under UN authority was noble but at odds with certain international realities, such as the overwhelming influence of the U.S. military and Soviet and Chinese political obstructionism. Moreover, Canada was militarily and politically unprepared to fight in limited wars such as Korea, which meant that its responses were often delayed and reactionary. Pearson clung to a series of vague principles and idealistic aspirations which often resulted in *ad hoc* policies in the UN and in Washington. Canadian officials also found it difficult to prioritize their aims. Was a limited war more important than maintaining allied unity? How important was UN prestige? When would Canada retract its support for U.S. foreign policy? These important questions were never truly resolved. In other words, the Truman administration and General MacArthur aggravated matters by confusing and irritating Canada's government. Disorganization on the American front made it difficult for the DEA to craft a consistent and coherent policy. In either case, Korea forced the DEA to reconsider the long-term implications of its position *vis-à-vis* the United States and in the Cold War.

The various dilemmas Canada faced during the Korean War's opening months, however, cannot be viewed in isolation. Concerns over security and sovereignty, which had

dominated Canadian foreign policy in the years before 1950, became manifest in new and often painful forms. Pearson supported Truman's decision in June to repel aggression, but did so for particularly national aims – to maintain UN primacy and hence Canada's independence from U.S. policy in the event of general war. Overall, the DEA's commitment to resisting aggression, to confronting belligerent communist states or to the establishment of a sovereign Korea were qualified. The sole element of Canada's foreign policy which remained unrestricted was its determination to maintain *de facto* sovereignty in a bi-polar world. Even though Pearson and others recognized Canada's inherent dependence on the U.S. for security, the DEA reacted negatively only when its *de facto* sovereignty was questioned and its core values challenged. Canada's criticism of American decision-making was most vehement when Ottawa had not been consulted or when Washington disregarded Canadian sensitivities. Pearson's paramount task throughout the Korean War, therefore, was not to establish peace in Asia but to convince his southern neighbour that there was more than one style of containment.

Conclusion

While Canada's focus on the UN during the conflict symbolized its 'internationalism' and highlighted some fundamental differences between Ottawa and Washington, many observers noted that the distinction between Canadian and American societies was quickly eroding. As one historian remarked, Canadian soldiers in Korea "seemed very American, steeped in culture which owed less to Anglo-Saxon roots than to the great republic whose neighbours they were and whose culture they now absorbed."⁴⁹⁴ Perhaps common social habits and attitudes were widely shared throughout North America. But, as Pearson poignantly stated, this did not guarantee an easy relationship. Small yet thorny issues continued to foment tensions on both sides of the 49th Parallel. In 1952, U.S. military authorities attempted to persuade Canada's Department of National Defence to accept responsibility for the POW camp on Koje-do, an island off Korea's southern coast. Given its notoriety for its violent prisoner uprisings, the DEA did not want Canada responsible for Koje-do. Pearson, rightly noting that Canada had not been fully consulted in the matter, refused, driving Dean Acheson to adopt what John Holmes called "Canada-phobia."⁴⁹⁵ Canadian forces eventually took some responsibility for the POW camp, but not before both anti-American and, at least in Acheson's case, anti-Canadian biases were reaffirmed.

Bound together out of circumstance rather than choice, the Korean War was simply one example of the complex and often contradictory relationship between Canada and the United States. In *Canada: America's Problem*, Journalist John McCormac wrote in 1941 that "Canada makes isolation impossible for the United States...Because she [Canada] is an

⁴⁹⁴ Michael Hickey cited in Bothwell, *Alliance and Illusion*, p. 95

⁴⁹⁵ John Holmes cited in Stairs, *Diplomacy of Constraint*, p. 253

American nation, tied to the United States by ever-stronger links.”⁴⁹⁶ Nevertheless, Korea proved the opposite is also true for the United States made Canada’s isolation impracticable. Canadian policymakers past and present have had to balance between close and necessary cooperation with the U.S. while maintaining Canada’s independence – or at least the appearance thereof. Sean Maloney has recently characterized this era as one which pitted “Internationalism versus Continentalism.”⁴⁹⁷ But these were complementary, not competing, outlooks. If Canada was to engage the world, it needed the U.S., and vice versa.

Still, intellectuals have continued to struggle with this false dichotomy. Several have recognized that St. Laurent had little choice but to work within the continental system, claiming that “mutual ideals” and “mutual esteem” helped to solidify this bond.⁴⁹⁸ Others were more optimistic about Canadian nationhood and more critical about Canada’s continental orientation. George Grant’s *A Lament for a Nation* and Donald Creighton’s *The Forked Road* lambasted Lester Pearson and Ottawa’s political “ruling class” for selling out Canadian interests to the United States and creating a state of “new colonialism.” As Creighton complained, by the Korean War’s end, “The influence of the United States and its citizens, on the Canadian economy, on Canada’s foreign and defence policies, and on every aspect of Canadian intellectual and culture life had grown steadily more dominant; but they [St. Laurent’s government] had made no conscious move to question or resist this growing domination.”⁴⁹⁹ This statement is, as we have seen, false. St. Laurent and Pearson may have cooperated with the Truman administration in Korea, but their diplomacy was neither

⁴⁹⁶ John McCormac, *Canada: America’s Problem*, revised ed., (New York: Viking Press, 1941), pp. 13-14

⁴⁹⁷ Sean M. Maloney, *Learning to Love the Bomb: Canada’s Nuclear Weapons during the Cold War*, (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books Inc., 2007), p. 2

⁴⁹⁸ Hugh Keenleyside and Gerald S. Brown, revised and enlarged edition, *Canada and the United States: Some Aspects of Their Historical Relations*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1952), p. 385

⁴⁹⁹ George Grant, *Lament for a Nation*, 40th anniversary edition, (Montreal-Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2005), p. 10-25; Donald Creighton, *The Forked Road: Canada, 1939-1957*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976), p. 226

acquiescent nor timid. John Holmes defended Canada's conduct during the Korean War as a national triumph. "In our basic alignment we stood with [the U.S.] not by compulsion but of our own free will," Holmes stated. "The policy of a small power is no less independent because it decides to be an ally rather than an abstainer."⁵⁰⁰

The above argument suggests it is difficult to fully distinguish the Korean War from the events and ideas from the decade leading up to the conflict. For the United States, the lessons of Munich and appeasement were profound and obvious. Truman and Acheson consciously avoided making the errors of former British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlin who had forfeited the Sudetenland to Nazi Germany in 1938 only to see war come the following year. Throughout the late 1940s, the evils of communism were consistently likened to those of Nazism; both, to the Truman administration, were ruthless totalitarian regimes. Further, the presumed righteousness of the U.S. decision to fight in Korea was comparable to that of World War II. Apart from the barbaric nature of the regimes, the political comparisons made between Hitler's Reich and Stalin's Soviet Union were mostly superficial, but they were nonetheless sincerely believed. For Pearson and the DEA, the experience of dealing with the U.S. government from 1940 until the Korean War's outbreak was no less formative. The generation of young diplomats that determined Canadian foreign policy in 1950 was the same group that had wielded so much influence during the Second World War. The close relations that began after the Ogdensburg Agreement convinced Prime Minister King and Ottawa's diplomatic corps of the necessity of strong institutional mechanisms to counterbalance U.S. power. Canada has never abandoned its internationalism or its support for collective security institutions, which tells us as much about the DEA's

⁵⁰⁰ John Holmes, *Life with Uncle: The Canadian-American Relationship*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), p. 39

fear of American encroachment as it does about its desire for a peaceful international environment. Therefore, King's ghost never fully left the DEA; it simply manifested itself in new and unconventional ways. Any attempt to view the Korean War in isolation is thus inherently misleading. In many ways, both Canada and the U.S. were attempting to fight the previous war. Historians must continue to look deeper for the origins of the political conflicts and crises which characterize the post-1945 period.

As well, this case study reveals the central role that perception can play in decision-making. In 1950, authorities had little valuable intelligence the intentions of the Soviet Union or its Asian satellites. Most of the images that American leaders had of communism were constructions that only vaguely resembled reality. Such impressions should not be attributed solely to the shortcomings of the U.S. intelligence community. In fact, I would argue that the inflated sense of responsibility, virtue and self-importance possessed by the Truman administration was the most potent factor in determining the nature of the Soviet threat. Communism in and of itself was not a menace. It was only when U.S. leaders considered it in relations to the liberal democratic values of the West that socialism's spread become the chief concern. Each reinforced the other to the point where any Soviet moves, whether direct or indirect, constituted an immediate threat to U.S. national security. Canada also harboured some false perceptions, but these were most often reserved for its closest ally. Pearson, Reid and St. Laurent were painfully self-conscious about the status of Canadian nationhood and acted accordingly. This, of course, was considered in tandem with Canada's reliance on the United States for its security. Whether or not the U.S. would have usurped control of Canada's armed forces had the DEA not pushed so hard for a multilateral framework is debatable. What is important is that is that these individuals *assumed* that this

would be the case. In some ways, the Department conducted itself during the Korean War as an adolescent with something to prove. It was maturing as an institution but still not able to navigate the tough streets of international politics without some stronger friends. While the Truman administration was focused almost entirely on international communism, Canada had to somehow juggle the dual (but unequal) threats of Soviet and American expansionism. Considering Ottawa's limited resources, Pearson and his cohorts performed respectably.

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