

Truman and the Korean War: Five Command Decisions that Crystallized Containment¹

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Although sixty-seven years have passed since the outbreak of the Korean War, many oddities remain. Perhaps oddest of all is the absence of any discussion in the literature about the main decisions of the war made by U.S. President Harry S. Truman. Part of this stems from a mythology about the big questions concerning the origins and purposes of the conflict. For example, the mythology holds that the Korean War was solely about Korea, that Kim Il-sung determined Soviet foreign policy, that Mao Zedong was a willing accomplice to Stalin, and that Truman did not know war was coming. The result of these myths has been a largely fictitious history of what has been termed the “forgotten war.”

We now know better, but so many careers have been built around the mythic history that setting the record straight will be a lengthy and tendentious task. The release of much new information, however, compels a reassessment. We now know that the Korean War was about more than just Korea; that Stalin decided on the war, not Kim Il-sung, although Kim was a witting co-conspirator; that Stalin’s purpose was to preempt Mao’s plan to seize Taiwan and then pit China against the United States; and that his ultimate and long-term objective was to forestall any possibility of Sino-American rapprochement. And we now know

¹ This article is a revised and enlarged version of Richard Thornton, “Truman’s Five Command Decisions and the Korean War,” that appeared in *Korea and World Affairs* (Fall 2004), 295-305.

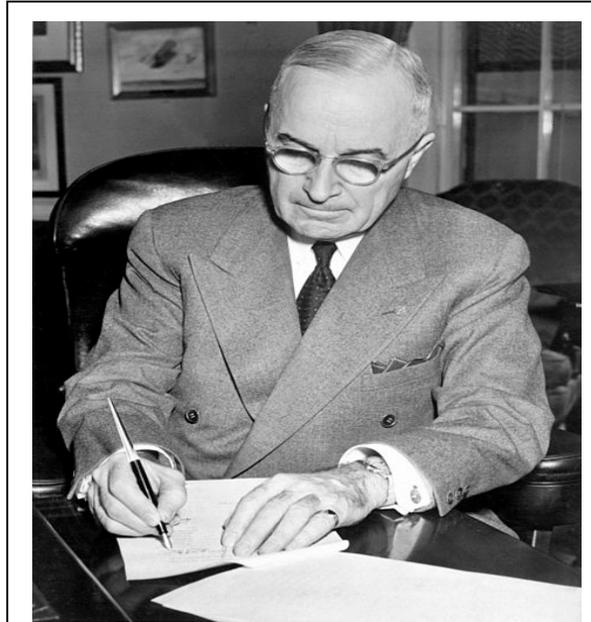
that Mao, outmaneuvered by Stalin and boxed in by Truman, was left with no other choice than either to fight to preserve a North Korean buffer regime, or permit the creation of a united, pro-U.S. state in control of the entire Korean peninsula.

We also now know that Truman had reasons of his own to engage in war on the Korean peninsula, and so ignored signals that it was coming. For Truman, too, the war was about much more than who would control the peninsula. It was about shaping the emerging regional and global balance of power, then in considerable flux. The war, particularly Chinese entry into it, crystallized the grand structure of Cold War politics, globalizing the East-West struggle epitomized by the strategy of Containment and the Sino-Soviet alliance.

The outcome of the Korean War saw Stalin subordinate China to Soviet strategic design and Truman integrate both European and Asian allies into a U.S.-directed global association against the communist menace. As I note in my book, Mao was “odd man out” in this process, his newly established country consigned to a future of backwardness and poverty for several decades.²

The historiography of the Korean War, at least on the American side, is almost entirely focused on battle history, not strategy. Battle history is a necessary ingredient to strategic analysis, but it cannot be a substitute for it. Furthermore, battle history can only illuminate one corner of the leadership decision-making process, not explain it fully, for there are many extra-military factors that enter into a military decision. What little discussion there is of strategy, or politics, in the literature on the war is narrowly focused on military affairs with little attention paid to the larger picture. Even more remarkable, save for my own work, there is not a single volume that analyzes, interactively, the decision-making processes of the United States, the Soviet Union, and the People’s Republic of China on the war.

² Richard C. Thornton, *Odd Man Out: Truman, Stalin, Mao and the Origins of the Korean War* (Dulles: Brassey’s, 2000).



President Harry S. Truman signs a proclamation to strengthen U.S. defenses against Communist aggression, December 16, 1950—

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One looks in vain in the history books for any suggestion that Truman had larger objectives in engaging in war on the Korean peninsula. Instead of being treated as the key decision-maker and shaper of events that he was, the president is treated as if he were an innocent bystander to events, taken by surprise not once, but twice, and undermined by his own field commander, who was responsible for the prolongation of the conflict. Such a view of Truman does not even remotely accord with the facts.

This article focuses on five of President Truman's command decisions, which are defined as those that decisively shaped policy toward a larger, structural end. The first of these was NSC-68, familiar to all as the strategy document that shaped American foreign policy for two decades. Unfortunately, historians of the Korean War do not seem to remember NSC-68 and, if they do, assert that it was not decided upon until well after the war had begun. In other words, the argument in the literature is that the Korean War shaped U.S. strategy after and not before the war began.

This interpretation is based upon a semantic obfuscation that fails to distinguish between when a decision was made and when it was formalized. While NSC-68 was formally (and secretly) adopted in September of 1950, Truman had accepted it in April and quietly begun implementing it, before the outbreak of the war.³ In fact, NSC-68 simply enlarged and expanded the existing strategy of containment that had been decided upon earlier, in NSC-20 of November 24, 1948, but had been limited in application to Europe.

NSC-68 was adopted because existing strategy had failed. The president and his Secretary of State, Dean Acheson, had striven for a year to keep the Russians and the Chinese apart, the so-called "wedge strategy." As spelled out in NSC-34, January 11, 1949, the primary policy objective of the United States was "to prevent China from becoming an adjunct of Soviet power."⁴ Once it was clear that the Russians and Chinese were going to enter into an alliance, which was no later than mid-January 1950, Truman abandoned the aim of keeping the two communist giants apart and instead determined to keep them together. NSC-68 was the reciprocal of the Sino-Soviet treaty of friendship and alliance. In January 1950, Truman decided to

³ See "NSC-68, A Report to the National Security Council, April 14, 1950," *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS)*, 1950, National Security Affairs; Foreign Economic Policy, Volume I, eds. Neal H. Petersen et al. (Washington: U.S. GPO, 1977), Document 85.

⁴ *FRUS*, 1949, The Far East: China, Volume IX, eds. Francis C. Prescott et al. (Washington: U.S. GPO, 1974), Document 501.

extend European containment around the entire periphery of the newly created Sino-Soviet bloc.

The strategy of global containment, in other words, had been decided upon months *before* the Korean War broke out, and policies were being crafted in accordance with it. Specifically, before war broke out the United States had already quietly reversed policies toward Japan, Taiwan, and Indochina. Once the war began, of course, Truman openly shaped all subsequent policies in terms of the new strategy.

Two of Truman's command decisions are not mentioned in any book on the war. These were NSC-76 and NSC-73. These two decisions, made in July and August 1950, addressed the issues of whom the United States should fight in Korea. NSC-76, dated July 27, said that in the event of overt Soviet intervention, the United States would curtail its involvement, perhaps withdraw entirely from the Korean peninsula, and activate contingency plans for World War III. The reasoning was that Korea could not be a decisive battlefield in a world war against the Soviet Union, which we would wish to fight on terms and places of our own choosing.⁵ Fighting the Soviets in Korea, as General Bradley put it, would be the wrong war at the wrong time and in the wrong place.

NSC-73, on the other hand, in particular NSC-73/4, dated August 24, addressed the issue of overt Chinese intervention. In that eventuality, the United States would continue to pursue its objectives in Korea as long as there was a "reasonable chance" of success. The meaning of the phrase "reasonable chance" was left undefined, but it gave the president the latitude to continue military operations after Chinese forces had entered.⁶ These two command decisions determined that

⁵ "Memorandum by the Executive Secretary of the National Security Council (Lay) on U.S. Courses of Action in the Event Soviet Forces Enter Korean Hostilities," July 25, 1950, *FRUS* 1950, Korea, Volume VII, ed. John P. Glennon (Washington: U.S. GPO, 1976), Document 356.

⁶ "Memorandum by Mr. Walter P. McCaughy, of the Staff of the Ambassador at Large, (Jessup)," August 25, 1950, *FRUS*, 1950, Korea, Volume VII, Document 474, note 4.

the United States would not fight the Soviet Union in Korea, but would engage Chinese Communist forces there for an undetermined period of time.

This is not to say that President Truman wanted full-scale war with China. On the contrary, Truman wanted to avoid a major war. Nevertheless, NSC-73/4 went on to say that in case of Chinese entry, the United States would be prepared “to take appropriate air and naval action outside Korea against Communist China.”⁷ In practical terms, this meant that the United States was prepared to strike Chinese forward bases and supply lines in Manchuria and the Shantung peninsula. It was this decision, by the way, that became the focal point of the controversy between the president and General Douglas MacArthur when China did intervene. And it was Truman’s reversal of this provision in NSC-73/4 that would lead to the general’s dismissal. Truman’s reversal signaled that the United States would fight only a limited war in Korea and not seek victory.

Important to note is that Truman made these two command decisions when it seemed that North Korean forces were an unstoppable juggernaut and when the more immediate question was: Could U.S. forces hold the Pusan perimeter against the North Korean onslaught? This, too, was a myth. On July 13, less than three weeks into the war and when American forces had been in combat a mere nine days, Eighth Army Commander, General Walton Walker had decided after conferring with the Joint Chiefs that “barring unforeseen developments, he could hold a sizeable bridgehead in the southern tip of the peninsula.”⁸ MacArthur waited less than a

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ John Toland, *In Mortal Combat: Korea, 1950-1953* (New York: William Morrow, 1991), 93. For the Joint Chiefs perimeter plan, see “Estimate of the Situation in Korea, decision on J.C.S. 1924/19,” July 13, 1950, 318. National Security Archive, The George Washington University.

week before informing President Truman “our hold upon the southern part of Korea represents a secure base.”⁹

The fourth and fifth command decisions were the Inchon decision and the decision to force China into the war. Both should be understood as strategically linked and part of the overall shift to the counter-offensive. The Inchon decision is always presented as MacArthur’s stroke of genius, which it was, but there was much more to it than that. I wish to take nothing away from MacArthur on this. He argued eloquently for the mid-September strike, overcoming serious opposition from the Joint Chiefs, but an amphibious landing at Inchon was in U.S. plans long before the war began.

I refer to Strategic War Plan SL-17, the contingency plan for how the United States would wage war on the Korean peninsula. As far as I know, only one book, Clay Blair’s *Forgotten War*, mentions this plan, but only in passing.¹⁰ The plan was finalized in September 1949 and, when war broke out, American policy closely followed the prescription set forth in it.

The basic military strategy was to overextend an invading force, then strike behind its lines at vulnerable points. In response to an invasion, SL-17 called for a “retreat to and defense of the Pusan perimeter.” Then, following a buildup of forces, there would be a breakout. During the breakout phase the plan called for “an amphibious landing at Inchon to cut enemy supply lines.”¹¹ The plan also called for two subsequent, additional landings further north on the east and west coasts pursuant to destroying the North Korean Army and occupying the entire country.

⁹ “General MacArthur’s Estimate of the Military Situation,” July 19, 1950, *Military Situation in the Far East*, Hearings Before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations and Senate Committee on Armed Services, 1st session 82nd Congress (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1951), 3381-82.

¹⁰ Clay Blair, *Forgotten War: America in Korea, 1950-1953* (New York: Times Books, 1987), 87.

¹¹ U.S. National Archives, College Park, Md. Records Group No. 319, Army G-4 Decimal 1949-1950, Box 39.

The timing of the counterattack at Inchon obviously could not be foretold because it was a function of the speed of the North Korean advance toward Pusan. From prewar intelligence, it was assumed that the North Korean Army (NKA) would execute a lightning strike for Pusan based on the power and mobility of the Soviet-supplied T-34 tank. Initially, therefore, MacArthur planned for an early amphibious counterattack at Inchon, code-named *Bluehearts*.¹² In fact, he had begun planning for it before the first American delaying force, Task Force Smith, had encountered the NKA on July 5. He had assumed that by July 22, his date for the counterattack, the NKA would have reached the Pusan perimeter and be unable to recover and defeat a landing at Inchon.

But the North Korean advance had been slower than expected, not more rapid as myth holds, forcing MacArthur to cancel *Bluehearts* on July 10. What had happened was this. On July 8, the main North Korean invasion force, comprised of the Sixth, Fourth, and Third Divisions, had captured Ch'onan, about fifty miles south of Seoul, and halted. At this point, the NKA Sixth separated from the Fourth and Third Divisions and was assembling at Yesan, west of Ch'onan, preparatory to moving down the west coast. By the July 10, they were still only sixty miles from Inchon and thus easily able to retreat to defend against a landing. So MacArthur canceled, and waited.

Twelve days later the situation had changed. By July 22, the NKA Sixth had moved to the southwestern-most part of the peninsula, and the NKA Fourth and Third Divisions had crushed U.S. forces at Taejon. MacArthur could now anticipate that by September the NKA would have reached and be engaged against larger American forces at the Pusan perimeter and be unable to withdraw to defend against an assault behind their lines. Therefore, on July 23, the day after the defeat at Taejon, when the route to Pusan seemed open, MacArthur informed JCS

¹² Roy Appleman, *South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1961), 488-89.

that he intended to mount “major amphibious operations” in mid-September, which he believed would be “decisive.”¹³

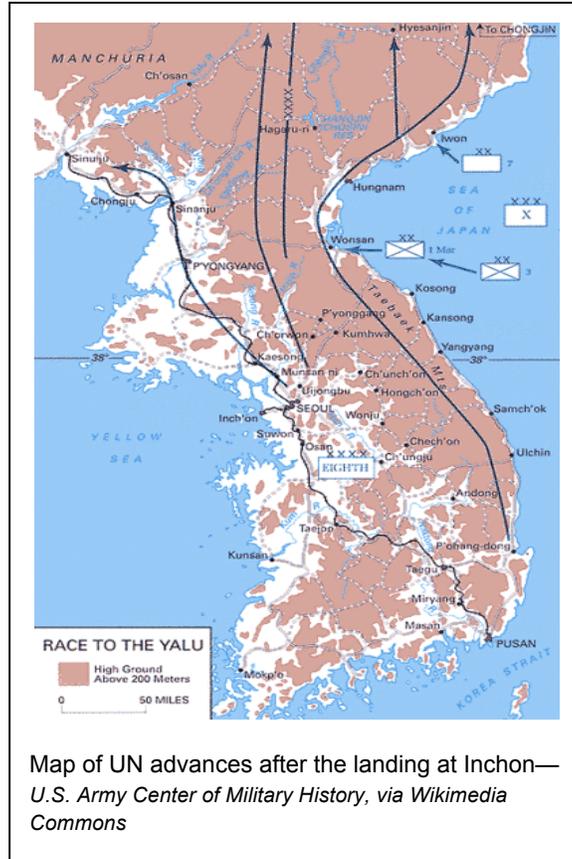
President Truman approved MacArthur’s plan for a counteroffensive on August 10 and promptly tied his larger strategy of global containment to it. With the mid-September landing at Inchon, the turning point of the war, Truman now moved to compel Chinese entry into it. In conjunction with the Inchon landing, the president unveiled an array of initiatives that clearly signaled American plans. These were to declare American intentions to rearm Japan and West Germany, isolate Beijing, demonstrate Sino-Soviet cooperation in Korea, reorganize UN procedure to permit action in the face of a Soviet veto, integrate Taiwan into the U.S. sphere, and gain passage of a UN resolution authorizing the deployment of forces to unify Korea.

On the day of the landing, Washington announced that it was now ready to sign a peace treaty with a fully rearmed Japan. The United States would also station American forces in Japan for an indefinite period. Secretary of State Acheson was meeting with the foreign ministers of Britain and France in New York City when Inchon occurred, and he immediately announced allied intentions to rearm West Germany, too—even though he knew that his allies opposed West German rearmament. Of course, the rearmament of Japan and West Germany was *not* actual U.S. policy, but saying so at this moment served notice that the United States was actively consolidating the Western Alliance against the Sino-Soviet bloc.

President Truman then delivered successive blows against China, denying Beijing membership in the UN and asserting Chinese complicity in the Korean War. On September 18, three days after Inchon and a day before the vote on Chinese admission, MacArthur sent in his monthly report to the UN detailing progress on the war. In it, he accused Russia and

¹³ CINCFE 58473 to DA (for JCS),” July 23, 1950, cited in James Schnabel, *Policy and Direction: The First Year* (Washington, D.C.: OCMH, 1972), 142.

China of providing material and manpower aid to North Korea. Everyone knew that Moscow was guilty as charged, but the surprise accusation was that China was collaborating with Moscow.



In fact, China was not involved at this stage, but saying so served the U.S. purpose of denying Beijing admission to the UN. The truth was that, weeks earlier, Truman had sent Averell Harriman to Tokyo to tell MacArthur to dig up evidence on Chinese involvement specifically for use in preventing the

seating of Beijing. Harriman informed MacArthur on “the importance of getting evidence on the participation of the Chinese Communists in supporting the North Korean attack and present operations.” If, Harriman said, “we could obtain real evidence of direct support for the North Koreans, this might be the reason by which we could prevent the seating of the Communists on the moral issue involved.”¹⁴

Unfortunately, MacArthur couldn’t find any direct evidence of Chinese support for “present operations,” and was forced to manufacture some. In his UN report, MacArthur charged that the Chinese had sent some forty-to-sixty thousand North Korean troops who had fought in the Chinese civil war back to North Korea. His report thus supported the charge that Beijing was providing material assistance to Pyongyang that was “substantial, if not decisive.”¹⁵

The facts however, did not support the charge. Beijing had indeed sent back troops that had formed the backbone of three of the NKA’s crack divisions, in late 1949 and early 1950, but none since the war had begun, as MacArthur charged. Nevertheless, the U.S. ploy worked. The UN voted against Chinese admission 33-16.

At the same time, Washington gave the Republic of China on Taiwan a vice-presidency in one of the UN’s committees, and also began the process of rearming Chiang Kai-shek’s regime. Also, on the day of the UN vote denying Beijing’s admission, Acheson presented his “uniting for peace” formula, which would empower the General Assembly to authorize military action in cases where the Security Council was stymied by a Soviet veto. Finally, on October 8, Truman obtained UN

¹⁴ “Extracts of a Memorandum of Conversations by Mr. W. Averell Harriman, Special Assistant to the President, with General MacArthur in Tokyo on August 6 and 8, 1950,” *FRUS* 1950, East Asia and the Pacific, Volume VI, eds. Neal H. Petersen et al. (Washington: U.S. GPO, 1976), Document 253.

¹⁵ Walter Sullivan, “Russians and Chinese Reds Help Foe, MacArthur Says,” *New York Times*, September 19, 1950, 1.

authorization to send forces into North Korea for the purpose of unifying the country.

Within three weeks of Inchon, in other words, President Truman had fashioned a global structure of relationships that clearly lumped together Beijing and Moscow, isolating China, while integrating the West. Furthermore, the UN had authorized the deployment of forces north of the 38th parallel for the purpose of unifying Korea under Western auspices.

President Truman's fifth command decision was to force China into the war. The Chinese may have entered the war in any case, but Truman's decision foreclosed any other possibility. Why was it necessary to force China into the conflict? The answer is because protracted East-West conflict would provide both the crucible in which to forge the global containment structure and the rationale for American rearmament called for by NSC-68.

Korean War literature claims that the United States was surprised by both the initial North Korean attack against the South and later Chinese intervention. Neither is true because U.S. intelligence monitored the North Korean buildup before the war began as well as Chinese preparations in Manchuria and along the Yalu River later.¹⁶ Surprise was possible in only the most limited, tactical sense, and probably not even that.

Inchon was a true turning point. Before Inchon, much of what Truman did is best explained by a determination to deter China from intervening and tipping the balance against American forces before they could establish a secure base at the perimeter. Chinese intervention before August 1 could have turned the tide of battle in favor of the Communist side. After Inchon, however, when U.S. forces assumed the initiative, Truman's tactics changed. Now, he was no longer interested in deterring the Chinese. On the contrary, he was determined to force China in, refusing all opportunities to reach a settlement.

¹⁶ For the evidence for both, see Thornton, *Odd Man Out*, chapters 6 and 13.

Analysis of the U.S. decision-making process and of the course of the conflict indicates that prior to full-scale Chinese involvement, there were three chances to settle the conflict: in mid-October, in early November, and in late November. Each of these situations was perceived by the American (and allied) leaderships, discussed at some length, and rejected by Truman.

In mid-October, after Inchon and with UN forces poised for an attack on Pyongyang, Truman could have taken the North Korean capital and settled for a substantially enlarged South Korea, with a new border stretching across the peninsula from Pyongyang to Wonsan just above the 39th parallel. Admittedly, it would have been difficult to settle at this time because there seemed to be no obstacles to proceeding. The North Korean Army had been destroyed, the Chinese had not yet committed their forces, and our own forces were on the offensive. The real problem would have been persuading South Korean President Syngman Rhee to agree to a settlement with the goal of unification in sight.

President Truman, however, had another objective, which was to force China into the war. In the history books Truman's decision is subsumed in the controversy with MacArthur, who was also advocating an advance to the Yalu and who would take the blame for the ensuing disaster. But the question of MacArthur's views needs explication. The truth is Truman compromised his theater commander by first promising to pursue a policy which offered a clear chance for victory, then renegeing on that promise when the critical moment arrived. This brings the discussion back to NSC -73/4.

Once the UN had authorized movement of forces north of the 38th parallel, Truman sought to convince MacArthur that a rapid attempt to unify Korea was possible, even if the Chinese intervened, as they were publicly threatening to do. So, at Wake Island, in a private meeting with the general before the plenary session with staffs, Truman presented MacArthur with two essential assurances. The first, from the CIA estimate the

president brought with him, was that Chinese intervention was “not probable in 1950.”¹⁷ The second was that, *if* the Chinese should intervene against expectations, the president would fully support the implementation of NSC-73/4.

These two “assurances” assumed that there was a brief window of opportunity within which MacArthur could unify Korea before the Chinese could intervene in force. If, against expectations, the Chinese did intervene, the president would authorize the general “to take appropriate air and naval action outside Korea against Communist China,” In other words, Truman assured MacArthur that he would back his advance to the Yalu and that, if China intervened, he would authorize “air and naval action” against Chinese supply lines and forward bases in Manchuria and the Shantung peninsula.



President Truman and General MacArthur on Wake Island, October 15, 1950—*U.S. Defense Imagery, via Wikimedia Commons*

¹⁷ “Memorandum by the Central Intelligence Agency,” Threat of Full Chinese Communist Intervention in Korea, October 12, 1950, *FRUS*, 1950, Korea, Volume VII, Document 665.

Here again we encounter another myth about the war, perhaps one of the biggest. It is that MacArthur told the president what to do at Wake Island, which is the very opposite of the truth. The president was perfectly willing to propagate the notion that MacArthur had “decided,” because it shifted at least part of the blame for the larger war that was to come away from him and onto MacArthur.

It was on the basis of President Truman’s “assurances” that MacArthur was quoted as saying in the plenary meeting following their tête-à-tête that “if the Chinese tried to get down to Pyongyang there would be the greatest slaughter.”¹⁸ He then hurried back to Tokyo to change his plans in accordance with the president’s instructions, and ordered a rapid advance to the Yalu. Since time was of the essence and as he was “assured” that no massive Chinese intervention was believed probable for two more months, MacArthur did not put in place the necessary logistical infrastructure to support an advance. In fact, theater commander General Walker complained to MacArthur that in forward areas his troops had only “one day of fire.”¹⁹

But, contrary to the CIA’s optimistic estimate, the Chinese did begin to engage UN forces in early November, changing the combat situation dramatically. Chinese forces had surreptitiously entered the conflict in division strength and were identified engaging American and Korean forces. Indeed, a two-division Chinese force had “slaughtered” the 3rd Battalion of the First Cavalry Division’s 8th Regiment at Unsan. But Chinese forces had suddenly withdrawn from the battlefield on November 6, even as U.S. officials were denying their presence, raising the prospect for a settlement.

¹⁸ “Substance of Statements Made at Wake Island Conference on 15 October 1950,” *FRUS*, 1950, Korea, Vol. VII, Document 680. Cf Douglas MacArthur, *Reminiscences* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), 362.

¹⁹ J. Lawton Collins, *War in Peacetime: The History and Lessons of Korea* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969), 197.

When MacArthur requested authority to strike targets in Manchuria he was denied. Secretary of State Acheson told him after the November 9 NSC meeting that he was “free to do what he militarily can do without bombing Manchuria.”²⁰ In other words, Truman had “revised” NSC-73/4, reneging on his Wake Island “assurance” to MacArthur. He was willing to engage Chinese forces in Korea, but forbade any attacks in Manchuria. His objective was not victory, but stalemate. Hence, the struggle with MacArthur.

A settlement here, just below the 40th parallel across a line from Sinanju in the west to Hungnam in the east, would have left North Korea as no more than a rump buffer regime wholly dependent for survival upon Russia and China, perhaps even satisfying Syngman Rhee. If an end to the conflict were sought, this was an obvious place to seek it. In fact, that is what our allies and some in the administration wanted, but not Truman.

The third week in November was the final opportunity for a settlement prior to full-scale Chinese entry. Had Truman decided to develop a fortified defensive position along the Ch’ongch’on River, which roughly parallels the Yalu River sixty miles to the south, a settlement was feasible. By this time, however, China had deployed over a quarter of a million troops into the area between the two rivers and had prepared a defense in depth, making a drive to the Yalu infeasible. At this point, Chinese forces were configured for forward defense of the Chinese border, not poised for attack.

The November 21 NSC meeting reaffirmed the decision to proceed on to the Yalu River into the teeth of fortified Chinese defenses, a decision that shatters another myth about the war. In the history books, Chinese intervention is depicted as an attack on unsuspecting stationary American forces, which was not the case. The decisions of November 9 and 21 called for the

²⁰ “Memorandum for the President, November 10, 1950, Meeting of NSC,” in Joseph Goulden, *Korea: The Untold Story of the War* (New York: Times Books, 1982), 316.

advance of UN forces to the Yalu River, that is, directly into fortified Chinese defensive positions. Worse, the decision to advance was taken despite the fact that the U.S. command had not prepared a forward logistics system to support an offensive.

President Truman deliberately absented himself from these meetings, his way of deflecting responsibility from what were highly controversial decisions. They were controversial because the administration's officials knew the Chinese were there in strength. Secretary Marshall, for example, observed that "the enemy had organized a strong-points defense of key terrain features in the area between the UNC front and the Yalu."²¹ Secretary Marshall was referring to the area between the Ch'ongch'on River and the Yalu. Yet Truman's decision was to advance to the Yalu, directly into these prepared strong points to engage in certain conflict with Chinese forces.

Chinese Communist intervention in Korea crystallized the structure of global politics from that moment forward. The point seems indisputable. President Truman's five command decisions were part of a larger comprehensive strategy of global containment, based on NSC-68, which the president began to initiate even before the war began. A lengthy, but limited, conflict between the United States and China on the Korean battlefield under the guise of United Nations forces and Chinese "volunteers" essentially insulated the United States and the People's Republic of China and provided the opportunity and the time for Washington to put in place a world system which would last for some two decades and form the basis of America's rise to hegemonic status in global affairs.

²¹ Doris Condit, *The Test of War: 1950-1953* (Washington: Office of the Secretary of Defense, 1988), 82.