

TRUMAN, CONGRESS AND THE STRUGGLE FOR WAR AND PEACE IN
KOREA

A Dissertation

by

LARRY WAYNE BLOMSTEDT

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

May 2008

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ABSTRACT

Truman, Congress and the Struggle for War and Peace in Korea. (May 2008)

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Chair of Advisory Committee: Dr. Terry H. Anderson

This dissertation analyzes the roles of the Harry Truman administration and Congress in directing American policy regarding the Korean conflict. Using evidence from primary sources such as Truman's presidential papers, communications of White House staffers, and correspondence from State Department operatives and key congressional figures, this study suggests that the legislative branch had an important role in Korean policy. Congress sometimes affected the war by what it did and, at other times, by what it did not do.

Several themes are addressed in this project. One is how Truman and the congressional Democrats failed each other during the war. The president did not dedicate adequate attention to congressional relations early in his term, and was slow to react to charges of corruption within his administration, weakening his party politically. For their part, the Democrats gave HST poor advice concerning congressional involvement in the decision to take the nation to war. A number of them allowed their personal dislike for Secretary of State Dean Acheson to poison their support for the administration whenever U.S. fortunes in the war soured. Another issue was Truman's interpretation and use of the concept of bipartisanship in foreign policy. HST generally

manipulated the idea for political advantage. Ironically, had he listened to the counsel of an administration Republican early in the war, Truman could have mitigated the explosion over the firing of General Douglas MacArthur. A topic heretofore overlooked by historians concerns congressional peace initiatives proposed during the first half of the war. Analysis of the effectiveness of these resolutions, particularly during the heyday of McCarthyism, yields surprising conclusions.

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I also am grateful for the History Department at Texas A&M. The faculty members with whom I have studied with have been unfailingly encouraging. My fellow graduate students in the department have helped me in more ways than I can count, and I thank them for their assistance. They are true team players.

Most importantly, I want to thank my family. My parents, Curtis and Carolyn Blomstedt, have been unfailingly supportive. My wife, Colleen, and my children, Elizabeth and Alex, allowed me to uproot them to enable me to pursue my dream of making a contribution to the historical profession. I cannot thank them enough, for their sacrifices allowed me to see this project through to completion.

NOMENCLATURE

AIPO	Records of American Institute of Public Opinion Truman Library
CAH	Center for American History The University of Texas at Austin
CR	<i>Congressional Record</i>
FRUS	<i>Foreign Relations of the United States</i>
HSTL	Harry S Truman Library
MDLOC	Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.
NYT	<i>New York Times</i>
PP	<i>Public Papers of the Presidents, Harry S. Truman 1945-1953.</i> Truman Library website: http://www.trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/
PSF	President's Secretary's File Truman Library
SGMML	Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University (all citations to this source used by permission of Princeton University)
SMOF	Staff Member and Office Files, Truman papers.
SUL	Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Library
WHCF	White House Central File Truman Library
WHOF	White House Official File

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The United Nations Security Council held a meeting and passed on the situation and asked the members to go to the relief of the Korean Republic. It was unlawfully attacked by a bunch of bandits. . . . And the members of the United Nations are going to the relief of the Korean Republic to suppress a bandit raid on the Republic of Korea.- President Harry S Truman, press conference on June 29, 1950.

The Korean War stormed upon the world scene on June 24, 1950 when Premier Kim Il Sung launched a massive invasion by North Korea into its southern counterpart, hoping to unite the peninsula under his leadership. Neither the administration of President Harry S Truman nor the members of the 81st Congress could have known that their response to this attack would mark a monumental shift in how the U.S. government commits the nation to war. Believing that communist expansion into South Korea was a threat to American national security, Truman and Congress responded swiftly with military intervention. When China entered the war, however, HST and many American legislators became concerned that the regional conflict would escalate into a world war that they, wisely, were unwilling to wage. Instead, the Korean intervention introduced the American public to the concept of limited war, which contrasted sharply with the unconditional surrenders obtained in World War II. This conflict changed the roles of the president and Congress when committing the nation to major overseas military interventions, as chief executives dispensed with obtaining congressional declarations of war, changes that the nation later witnessed in Vietnam, the Persian Gulf, and Iraq.

This dissertation follows the style of *Diplomatic History*.

The war in Korea unfolded quickly. News of the attack reached Truman, and within three days he had dispatched air and naval support to South Korea, inspiring House members to rise and cheer the decision. In addition, he obtained a commitment from the United Nations (U.N.) to give military support to South Korea. On June 28, Congress overwhelmingly approved the commander in chief's order to extend the draft for one year and to call up reservists in all service branches, bolstering the manpower of an American military that had dwindled from 12.3 million at the end of World War II to 1.4 million, producing a force of 3.2 million some 15 months later. After meeting with key members of Congress two days later, Truman issued a statement approving Air Force missions over North Korea. It concluded: "General MacArthur has been authorized to use certain supporting ground units." In just one week, the United States had committed air and ground forces to a significant military intervention overseas without a declaration of war from Congress. When Secretary of the Army Frank Pace asked the president about obtaining a declaration, Truman replied, "Frank, it's not necessary. They are all with me." For the moment, he was right.¹

Despite the U.N. intervention led by U.S. forces, Il Sung nearly achieved his goal during the summer of 1950. Dismayed by the speed of the North Korean advance, Lieutenant General Walton Walker, commander of U.N. ground forces, issued a "stand or die" order on July 29. The U.N. troops did just that, and by August 15 they and South Korean forces had secured a small area encircling the southeastern port city of Pusan.

¹ Truman's statement in *Public Papers of Presidents of the United States: Harry Truman, 1950* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1965), 513; Truman to Pace in Robert H. Ferrell, *Harry S Truman: A Life* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1994), 324.

There, they managed to hold the line until U.N. Commander General Douglas MacArthur launched a daring counterattack at Inchon on September 15, some 150 miles behind enemy lines on the western edge of the peninsula. MacArthur himself underscored the risk of this maneuver, calling it a 5,000 to 1 shot. The general's gamble paid off, for the Inchon attack swung the momentum to the U.N., whose troops quickly took the offensive and reestablished control of South Korea. Admiral William Halsey wired MacArthur: "The Inchon landing is the most masterly and audacious strategic stroke in all history."²

Riding the impetus from Inchon, on October 7 the U.N. General Assembly approved a measure allowing the military coalition to take "all appropriate steps . . . to ensure conditions of stability *throughout Korea*," carrying the battle north of the 38th parallel, the original line dividing the peninsula. The purpose of this change was to be "the establishment of a unified, independent and democratic Government in the sovereign State of Korea." Although the U.N. had made reunification of Korea an objective in 1947, this resolution was a significant departure from its initial statement at the war's outset, which only called upon North Korea to withdraw its forces northward to the 38th parallel. Tom Connally (D-TX), chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, later stated, "I don't recall that any of us reminded the President that his objective had been only to liberate the Republic of South Korea." When the U.N. forces surged into the North, Communist China entered the war, perceiving the American

² "Five thousand to one shot" in David McCullough, *Truman* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), 797; Halsey quoted in Burton Ira Kaufman, *The Korean War: Challenges in Crisis, Credibility and Command* (New York: McGraw-Hill Companies, 1997), 54.

advance as a threat to its security. By late October, China had halted the U.N. offensive and then appeared to withdraw from the conflict. A month later, MacArthur initiated another offensive into North Korea, predicting he would have the troops home by Christmas. This was not to be. On November 25, some 250,000 Chinese troops overwhelmed MacArthur, forcing what one historian called the “longest retreat of American military history,” a withdrawal lasting over two months. In raging winter winds and temperatures dipping to -25°F, automatic weapons and vehicle gearboxes froze, forcing the retreating troops to mix kerosene with lube oil to keep their equipment functional. Grimly, the U.N. commander wired Washington: “We face an entirely new war.” How to fight this “new” war became the great question of the hour.³

The Chinese invasion produced hysteria in the American public and Congress. Believing World War III was imminent, Americans participated in civil defense drills, built bomb shelters, and read booklets on how to survive nuclear attacks. Senator Dennis Chavez (D-NM) advocated raising an international mercenary army of 20 million soldiers to retaliate, while Senator Owen Brewster (R-ME) and Rep. Mendel Rivers (D-SC) advocated nuclear attacks on the Chinese, reasoning that what had worked against Japan in 1945 would be effective in China. Republican legislators looked for scapegoats and quickly found one in Secretary of State Dean Acheson. In December 1950, the

³ “Resolution 376 (V), Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, October 7, 1950,” *FRUS, 1950, Volume VII, Korea* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1976), 904; Connally quoted in Alfred Steinberg, *Sam Rayburn: A Biography* (New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc., 1975), 263; Longest withdrawal in Gary R. Hess, *Presidential Decisions for War: Korea, Vietnam, and the Persian Gulf* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 63; Conditions of retreat in McCullough, 818 and Brian Catchpole, *The Korean War, 1950-53* (New York: Carroll and Graf Publishers, 2000), 159-60; MacArthur quoted in Office of the Chief of Military History, U.S. Army, *American Military History*, “The Korean War, 1950-1953,” p. 560, <http://www.army.mil/cmhp-g/books/AMH/AMH-25.htm>, (November 2, 2005). (Emphasis added.)

Republican Conferences in both the House and Senate submitted resolutions to oust the secretary, while House Minority Leader Joe Martin introduced a bill to cut off Acheson's salary.⁴

With China's entry into the conflict, sharp and public disagreements over war strategy emerged between Truman and his military commander. A few days after General MacArthur received word from the Joint Chiefs of Staff that the Truman administration was planning a peace proposal for the Chinese, he sabotaged it. On March 24, 1951, the general publicly mocked China's military and industrial abilities, then issued an ultimatum, saying failure to withdraw would "doom Red China to the risk of imminent military collapse" from a U.N. attack. Furious with MacArthur's blatant attempt to usurp the administration's foreign policy, HST relieved him of his command on April 11, 1951, triggering public outrage. Evangelist Billy Graham declared, "Christianity has suffered another major blow." Angry citizens hung the president in effigy throughout the nation, and the *Chicago Tribune* called him "a fool who is surrounded by knaves." The deposed commander returned to an unparalleled hero's welcome, highlighted by a parade in New York City attended by over seven million people, twice as many as for Dwight Eisenhower's victorious return from World War II. After the general addressed both houses of Congress, Rep. Dewey Short (R-MO) declared, "We heard God speak here today, God in the flesh, the voice of God." Short's

⁴ Chavez in James Richard Riggs, "Congress and the Conduct of the Korean War" (Ph.D. diss., Purdue University, 1972), 139; Brewster and Rivers in Rosemary Foot, *The Wrong War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), 115; Acheson's ouster in, "Memo, L. D. to Murphy 12/15/50-4:15 p.m.," State, Dept. of folder; Charles Murphy Papers, HSTL; Martin's bill in Thomas Connally, *My Name is Tom Connally* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1954), 353.

“God,” however, soon lost his aura of infallibility when the Joint Chiefs of Staff sided with the president in subsequent congressional hearings. The war then settled into a series of ebbs and flows, with neither side having the will nor the resources to drive the other from the Korean peninsula. This stalemate, however, prodded both sides to the negotiating table to find a way to end the fighting.⁵

The U.S. and its communist adversaries began to publicly discuss possibilities for peace during the spring of 1951. In mid-May, a cease-fire proposal by a U.S. senator drew significant attention from the Soviet news agency *Pravda*. By the first week of June, the U.N. proposed allowing Korea to remain divided at the 38th parallel instead of unifying the peninsula, a suggestion swiftly endorsed by the Truman administration. On June 22, a Voice of America radio broadcast challenged Jacob Malik, the Soviet ambassador to the U.N., to end the war. Malik responded with his own radio address aired in the U.S. suggesting that the conflict could be resolved and that armistice talks should begin. Hopes for peace rose as negotiations to end the war began at Kaesong, North Korea on July 10, 1951, approximately a year after the fighting erupted.⁶

The armistice negotiations dragged on for two long years. It took the negotiators 16 days to simply agree on an agenda for the talks, an omen of things to come.

Ultimately, the fate of prisoners of war (POWs) became the major obstacle to peace.

Truman believed it would be morally wrong for the U.N. to forcibly return North Korean

⁵ MacArthur quoted in Kaufman, 98; Graham quoted in Stephen Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 60; “Impeach Truman,” *Chicago Tribune*, 12 April 1951, p. 1; Short quoted in David Rees, *Korea: The Limited War* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1964), 227.

⁶ Cease-fire proposal came from Senator Edwin Johnson as noted in *FRUS, 1951, Vol. VII, Korea and China*, 445-6.

or Chinese POWs who wanted to defect from their communist countries. The Communist regimes, however, vehemently insisted on the repatriation of all POWs, regardless of whether they wanted to come home or not. In the meantime, military commanders waged a bloody war of attrition. Instead of attempting to conquer and hold more and more territory, both sides attempted to put pressure on the other at the armistice table by killing as many enemy soldiers as possible. During last two months of the war, some 100,000 Communist soldiers and almost 53,000 U.N. combatants would be killed, captured, or wounded, a grim testament to the strategy of attrition. Half of the casualties of the Korean War occurred after the peace talks began.⁷

Unsurprisingly, the war significantly affected the 1952 presidential election. Truman decided not to run for another term, a decision undoubtedly driven by his popularity sinking to a low of 23 percent as the peace process stalemated. The Democrats nominated a reluctant Illinois governor, Adlai Stevenson, while the Republicans chose World War II hero Eisenhower. While he admitted having no magical formula for ending the war, Ike captured the hope of the nation with a campaign promise to visit Korea to find a way to stop the bloodshed. His promise worked, propelling him to a landslide victory. Eisenhower made good on his vow to visit the warfront. More importantly, on July 26, 1953, some seven months after taking office, the new president announced that the Korean War was over. The conditions for the armistice, ironically, were virtually identical to those established during the Truman administration. Senator Paul H. Douglas (D-IL) suggested that if the armistice “had

⁷ “The Korean War: Years of Stalemate,” *U.S. Army Center of Military History*, 34. <http://www.army.mil/cmhp/brochures/kw-stale/stale.htm>, (November 2, 2005).

been put through by Truman and Acheson there would have been cries throughout the country to impeach them.”⁸

The result of the Korean War, unlike World War II, was not a clear-cut victory for the United States. The U.N. did deny Kim Il Sung’s bid to bring South Korea under communist rule. However, because South Korea refused to sign the armistice, the war did not resolve the political strife that precipitated the conflict. Testaments to this very uneasy peace are the nearly two million troops currently maintaining the 2.5 by 155 mile demilitarized zone between the Koreas. Little changed in terms of national boundaries. The negotiators slightly redrew the dividing line between the Koreas close to the pre-war boundary of the 38th parallel. South Korea gained 2,350 square miles of territory, while North Korea gained 850 square miles of land south of the parallel. America incurred enormous costs for its part in this intervention: 33,629 dead, 103,284 wounded, 5,178 missing or captured and \$153 billion of national wealth in today’s dollars. For this reason, the Korean conflict is worth remembering and studying in hopes of learning from its mistakes.⁹

Veterans of the Korean War dubbed it “The Forgotten War” because it receded from the American public’s attention during the prolonged peace negotiations. Yet, it is historically crucial. Korea began a trend of American presidents committing significant troop deployments overseas without obtaining a declaration of war from Congress. This

⁸ Truman’s popularity figures in Maeva Marcus, *Truman and the Steel Seizure Case* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973), 34; “Senator Douglas Doubtful,” *NYT*, 24 July 1953, p. 2.

⁹ Territorial changes and financial costs in Eric Goldman, *The Crucial Decade and After: America, 1945-1960* (New York: Vintage Books, 1962), 246-7; Casualty figures from *American Military History*, “The Korean War, 1950-1953,” p. 570, <http://www.army.mil/cmh-pg/books/AMH/AMH-25.htm> (November 2, 2005).

brings up a critical constitutional issue: Should a president have the authority to involve the U.S. in a major conflict? Did Truman seize this power, or did Congress abdicate it to him? Congressional peace proposals during the war, overlooked by historians until now, raise an important question that is still relevant today: Can Congress help the U.S. conduct effective international diplomacy, or is this best left to the executive? The war also ushered the American public into an age of limited foreign wars. Since Korea probably drove Truman from office, an analysis of his efforts to sell the war is worthwhile. Did the president simply do an ineffective job in rallying the nation to the Korean intervention, or did other things cause the decline in public support for a war in which unconditional surrender of the enemy was not an objective? Another relevant facet was the role of domestic politics, which is in the spotlight today over the Iraq war. How well did HST unite Congress behind the Korean cause? Did the Democrats help or hinder his efforts? What role did the opposition Republicans play in the conduct of the fighting? Did Truman believe in bipartisanship in the area of foreign policy, and how did he try to woo GOP support?

Several important books touch on national domestic politics during the Korean conflict. Of the Truman biographers addressing the commitment of troops to Korea, Robert J. Donovan gives the most detailed account in *Tumultuous Years: The Presidency of Harry Truman, 1949-1953* (1982). James L. Sundquist also covers this decision, placing it into historical perspective in *The Decline and Resurgence of Congress* (1981). Ronald J. Caridi's *The Korean War and American Politics: The Republican Party as a Case Study* (1969) dissects GOP factionalism and concludes that

key party leaders cynically chose to exploit the war for political gain, crippling Truman's efforts to unite the country. Historians have devoted little study to Congress's role in facilitating the armistice talks. Although Rosemary Foot touches on this briefly in *A Substitute for Victory: The Politics of Peacemaking at the Korean Armistice Talks* (1990), she dedicates most of the book to the effect of politics on the negotiations once they began. Concerning HST's salesmanship of the war, Halford R. Ryan's *Harry S. Truman: Presidential Rhetoric* (1993), *The Truman Persuasions* by Robert Underhill (1981) and a Ph.D. dissertation by Michael S. Twedt, "The War Rhetoric of Harry S. Truman During the Korean Conflict" (1969) analyze the effects of his speechmaking. The only study dedicated to the president's relationship with his own party is Sean Savage's *Truman and the Democratic Party* (1997), which concentrates on Truman's role as party leader in electoral politics. Kari Frederickson's *The Dixiecrat Revolt and the End of the Solid South, 1932-1968* (2001) is an excellent study that includes Truman's struggles with the Southern Democrats. Information on the Democrats during the war is also available in *The Democrats: The Years after FDR* by Herbert Parmet (1976) and in Alonzo Hamby's comprehensive political biography, *Man of the People: A Life of Harry S. Truman* (1995). The most thorough examination of efforts to maintain a bipartisan foreign policy during the war is *The Collapse of the Middle Way: Senate Republicans and the Bipartisan Foreign Policy, 1948-52* (1988) by David R. Kepley.

This study provides new interpretations of events researched by other historians. Concerning the commitment of troops to Korea, Donovan blames HST for skirting

congressional approval beforehand. Sundquist, on the other hand, faults Congress for abdicating its responsibility to declare war. I, more specifically, argue that the congressional Democrats are to blame for the lack of a proactive endorsement of troop commitments by the Congress. Truman's attempt to maintain a bipartisan foreign policy needs to be examined in a new light as well. While David Kepley's research is an important study of the Republicans on this topic, I will dissect bipartisanship from the perspective of Truman and his fellow Democrats. Kepley correctly asserts that the president's inclusion of the Republicans in the formation of his foreign policy left much to be desired. I, however, will explain why. My analysis will also show how Truman's desire to maintain bipartisan harmony led him to a regrettable decision at the war's outset which, ironically, could have been averted by heeding the advice of one of his token GOP advisors.

In addition to these original interpretations, this study explores fresh topics previously neglected by historians. While Caridi examines how the Republican Party undermined national unity behind the war effort, I will be the first to analyze the role of the Democrats in detail, as well as how Truman affected harmony within his party. Another topic previously not studied in depth is the behavior of congressional Democrats regarding the decision to go to war and how this factored into the president's choices. Concerning HST's efforts to sell the war, I will go beyond the studies of his rhetoric to include other ways that his administration sought to communicate his international aims to the public. Finally, no historian has examined Congress's role in getting the belligerents together at the negotiating table. Following MacArthur's

destruction of Truman's planned peace offer, several senators proposed ways to end the war. This study discusses them all, ranging from the bizarre to the surprisingly helpful.

This dissertation will explain how Harry Truman attempted to build and maintain support among congressional Democrats for his Korean War strategy and related Cold War policies. He had a challenging task, particularly with the Southern wing of his party. Friction with the Dixiecrats stemmed not only from foreign policy, but also from what they perceived as an overactive federal government in domestic issues. The level of Democratic Party unity and its effect on Truman's ability to maintain public support for the war is one theme of this study.

Truman sought support for his war policy from Republicans as well as his own party. Like other presidents before and since, he frequently expressed his belief that America had to present a united front to the world in order to be effective in world affairs. This study will reveal how the chief executive pursued bipartisan support and why he continued to do so, even after two years of harsh attacks by many Republicans. Moreover, it will explore his definition of nonpartisanship, and why many observers suggest bipartisanship in foreign affairs died during the war. Did HST truly believe that both parties should dutifully support him, or did he simply use this rhetoric to squelch dissent about his conduct of the war?

Another topic is Truman's effectiveness as a promoter of a new kind of conflict—limited war. The man from Missouri faced unique challenges to keeping the nation behind him, some of which he created by altering the war's objectives as he went along. This study will evaluate whether he succeeded or not.

Other themes of this dissertation are the roles that Congress played in committing American troops to Korea and the start of armistice negotiations. While Truman intentionally avoided asking Congress for a declaration of war, does he deserve *all* the blame for starting a trend of American presidents committing the nation to major overseas conflicts without congressional approval? This project will therefore analyze the influence of congressional Democrats in the president's decision to go to war. Congress also helped nudge the adversaries to the armistice talks through resolutions by both Democrats and Republicans. Since this occurred during at the zenith of McCarthyism, it is worthwhile to ask how lawmakers had the courage to suggest stopping the war short of annihilating the Communists.

The first part of this study tells the hidden history of Truman's attempts to marshal support for the war. Two chapters deal with the struggles that HST had in keeping the Democrats together. Chapter II traces how disharmony emerged over opposition to the Fair Deal in the 1940s and how the emergence of McCarthyism affected the 1950 mid-term elections, loosening Truman's grip on the party. The next chapter, "A Fallen Icon and a Lost Election, 1951-1952," picks up the story at the firing of MacArthur and explains how a combination of the war and corruption charges against the administration led to the Democrats losing control of Congress and the White House in 1952. The study then turns to Truman's dealings with the Republicans. Chapter IV describes the birth of the idea of a bipartisan foreign policy during World War II and analyzes the effects of the Tydings Committee hearings on Communist infiltration of the State Department. The decline and death of bipartisanship during 1951-1952 is the

subject of chapter V, focusing on the effects of MacArthur's removal. Truman's public relations effort is the subject of chapter VI, exploring how the administration sought the support of the American people through the various changes in the war, including the expansion of the war into the North, the declaration of a national emergency after China's entry, and the subsequent decision to settle for an armistice around the 38th parallel.

The second part of this study describes how Congress affected the processes of going to war and deciding to negotiate for peace. It begins with chapter VII, "Let the Chief Take the Heat: Congress and the Decision to Intervene," which examines the reactions of both parties in Truman's leap into Korea and analyzes the legalities of the intervention, particularly in light of the fact that it was America's first military action in conjunction with the U.N. The topics of chapter VIII are congressional peace initiatives from the war's outset through early 1952, particularly those made by senators Edwin C. Johnson, Brien McMahon, and Ralph Flanders. One of these, fortunately, gave significant impetus to the Kaesong talks. Less fortunately, by the time the two sides stopped fighting, the war had taken a massive toll. In addition to the U.S. losses mentioned earlier, South Korea suffered over 800,000 civilian and military casualties. On the Communist side, some 3 million North Koreans were injured or killed, and 152,000 Chinese soldiers perished.¹⁰

Americans grappled with defining the meaning of the war when it finally ended in 1953. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles declared, "For the first time in history an

¹⁰ War statistics from Robert L. Beisner, *Dean Acheson: A Life in the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 446.

international organization has stood against an aggressor and has marshaled force to meet force. The aggressor, at first victorious, has been repulsed.” Yet, a *New York Times* headline read, “Not Victory, Not Defeat: But Another War, Marked by Shining Deeds as Well as Misery, Passes Into History.” Harry Truman and the Congress had no less of a struggle in conducting the war and deciding when the time was right to begin the process of ending it. The pages that follow tell the story of how they met these challenges.¹¹

¹¹ White, William S., “Congress Cautious in Korean Comment,” *NYT*, 28 July 1953, p. 1; Baldwin, Hanson W., “Not Victory, Not Defeat: But Another War, Marked by Shining Deeds as Well as Misery, Passes Into History,” *NYT*, 28 July 1953, p. 6.

CHAPTER II

A SPORADIC ALLIANCE: HST AND HIS PARTY, 1946-1950

“There are liars, trimmers and pussyfooters on both sides of the aisle in the Senate and the House,” wrote President Harry S Truman in late 1950. He had other reasons for being in a foul mood. China’s entry into Korea had transformed the war, plunging U.N. forces into a lengthy retreat and raising the specter of another world war. The Republicans had just taken seats from the Democrats in both houses of Congress during the mid-term elections. Legislators from both parties were calling for the resignation of Truman’s most trusted cabinet member, Secretary of State Dean Acheson. Things looked grim for the president.¹

Nevertheless, throughout the Korean War Truman had an apparent advantage that presidents crave: His party controlled both houses of Congress. When the conflict erupted in 1950, the Democrats held majorities of 263-171 in the House and 54-42 in the Senate. These margins narrowed to 235-199 and 49-47 after the November congressional elections, reflecting typical losses by the president’s party at mid-term. However, these nominal Democratic majorities did HST little good as he led the nation into an unexpected and perplexing conflict. Although the Democrats united against Senator Joseph McCarthy’s initial bombshells alleging a communist infestation in the State Department, their cohesiveness quickly disintegrated. Criticism of Truman,

¹ Truman diary entry, November 30, 1950; PSF: Longhand Notes File, November 30, 1950 folder; Truman Papers, HSTL.

particularly from Southern Democrats, sharpened throughout the remainder of his term, crippling his ability to unite the country behind the war effort.

This chapter will examine why the Democrats failed to stick together. Was Truman's leadership to blame? Did fear of McCarthyism overwhelm party loyalty, or did Democrats divide over regional agendas? How did the onset of the Korean conflict affect party unity, and what was the effect of China's entry into the war?

The answers lie in the environment within the party when the war broke out, which began to take shape shortly after Truman took office. In 1946, racial violence directed at Southern blacks erupted in the form of lynchings and police brutality. To Anglos, the Supreme Court's termination of white primaries, surging African-American voter registration, and black World War II veterans denouncing discrimination represented threats to the status quo that had to be squashed. Driven by Jim Crow, many black voters left the South and began returning to the party of Lincoln, helping produce a Republican landslide in the 1946 congressional elections. Motivated primarily by revulsion at the racial violence, but also realizing the value of the black vote, Truman established the President's Committee on Civil Rights in December. Shortly thereafter, HST declared, "We can no longer afford the luxury of a leisurely attack upon prejudice and discrimination." In October 1947, the committee recommended federal legislation to stop lynchings, to prevent various forms of racial discrimination, and to desegregate the armed forces. The chief executive followed up with an unprecedented speech to

Congress dedicated to civil rights in February 1948, strongly endorsing the committee's report.²

Harry Truman therefore became public enemy number one in much of the white South. A Mississippi woman wrote the president that he surely would not want his daughter to travel by bus across the country sitting next to "a dirty, evil smelling, loud mouthed negro man." Southerners, who chaired most of the key panels in Congress, killed all of the president's civil rights initiatives in committee. In the 1948 presidential campaign, Southern Democrats vowed to defeat HST and his pursuit of racial equality. At the Democratic convention, the entire Mississippi delegation and half of Alabama's stalked out after passage of a civil rights plank in the party platform, and the Southerners who remained all supported Georgia senator Richard Russell rather than Truman as the party nominee. Soon afterwards, disgruntled Southerners led by those bolting the Democratic convention formed a third party, the States-Rights Democrats, or Dixiecrats. Even though the Dixiecrats carried four states and liberals ran Henry Wallace as a candidate for the Progressive party, Truman scored the greatest upset in U.S. history, defeating the two splinter parties and Republican Thomas Dewey. Voicing his understandably hard feelings toward the Democratic defectors a few days after the election, the president told his staff, "I don't want any fringes in the Democratic party, no Wallace-ites or states'righters."³

² Kari A. Frederickson, *The Dixiecrat Revolt and the End of the Solid South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 52.

³ Woman quoted in Frederickson, 77; Truman quoted in Robert H. Ferrell, ed., *Truman in the White House: The Diary of Eben A. Ayers* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1991), 283.

In spite of these remarks, the victor meted out only a measured punishment to the Dixiecrats. While Truman did purge the Democratic National Committee (DNC) of his Southern opponents, he allowed them to retain their positions in the congressional Democratic Party caucuses and as committee chairs. Despite failing to boot Truman from the White House, the Dixiecrats emerged from the 1948 election as strong as ever. Senator Clinton P. Anderson, a strong backer of the administration and chairman of the Democratic Campaign Committee, called the Southern bloc the “strongest single force in the Senate” from 1949 into the early 1950s. Though a few Southerners, most notably Foreign Relations Committee chairman Tom Connally of Texas, remained strong Truman allies on international issues in spite of administration civil rights policies, many did not, draining the president of support at the outset of the war. As one historian argued, HST could have saved himself some grief by removing Dixiecrats from their congressional positions of power. Instead, with vindictiveness giving way to the urge to unite his party and the nation following the election, the president left them in the saddle—which would come back to haunt him.⁴

Democratic disharmony prior to the Korean conflict also surfaced when Truman’s Secretary of State began to draw fire from Republicans over U.S. policy towards China and alleged communist infiltration into the State Department. Part of Dean Acheson’s friction with Congress stemmed from personalities rather than policies.

⁴Purging of DNC in Sean J. Savage, *Truman and the Democratic Party* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1997), 67-8; Clinton P. Anderson with Milton Viorst, *Outsider in the Senate: Senator Clinton Anderson’s Memoirs* (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1970), 96; Tom Connally to George H. Crank, August 17, 1948; Box 104; Tom Connally Papers, MDLOC; Robert S. Ferrell faults Truman for insufficient punishment of the Dixiecrats in his *Harry S. Truman: A Life*, 291.

The secretary believed the legislative branch was a nuisance due to its penchant for wasting his department's time in endless hearings. Recalling his dealings with Capitol Hill, Acheson wrote, "Those who assert that I do not suffer fools gladly . . . do me less than justice for these anguishing hours. Despite current folklore, one could and did learn to suffer." The secretary turned off many legislators with his aloofness and, of all things, his preference for British clothing. In their eyes, Acheson did not approach members of Congress with the deference that they expected, and so he had few Democratic allies when the Republican attacks began prior to the war. Even though Truman steadfastly backed his beleaguered secretary, most Democrats increasingly distanced themselves from Acheson over time, creating another division within the party.⁵

The administration's change of course regarding China policy presented challenges to the Democrats. When the Chinese civil war resumed following World War II, the U.S. funneled millions of dollars to Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalists in their struggle against the Communists. Realizing the futility of continued American support of the Nationalists, Acheson generated a 1,054-page "white paper" on America's China policy in late July 1949. The report concluded that popular support for Chiang had evaporated, making continued assistance of his regime a waste of American resources. The paper advocated termination of aid to the Nationalists and conceding Formosa, a

⁵ John W. Spanier, *The Truman-MacArthur Controversy* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1965), 155 and Alonzo Hamby, *Man of the People: A Life of Harry S. Truman* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 511 describe Acheson's relationship with Congress; Acheson quoted in Dean Acheson, *Present at the Creation* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1969), 101.

large island off the coast of mainland China, to the Communists. By October, the Communists had driven Chiang's forces from the mainland to Formosa.

Although Acheson's report correctly held that America had limited ability to control internal events in China, the Republicans would have none of it, blasting the Truman administration for a defeatist attitude that allowed the Communist victory. Senator Styles Bridges (R-NH) led the initial attacks, claiming that the State Department had plunged to a "new low in governmental integrity and rectitude of high principles." Bridges argued that the U.S. showed inconsistent commitments against the spread of communism in different parts of the globe, asking, "Have we manhood in Europe and none anywhere else in the world? Are we men in Europe and mice in Asia?"⁶

The complexities of the geopolitics of the day worked against the administration and in favor of black and white perceptions such as those articulated by Bridges and his allies. Recalling World War II, which ended in an American victory over the twin evils of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and Adolf Hitler, the right wing of the Republican Party viewed communism as equally evil and therefore advocated forceful opposition to it at all costs anywhere on the globe.

Acheson disagreed. In an address to the National Press Club, he pointed out that making opposition to communism the top priority of America's national interests was "putting the cart before the horse." Although the secretary's statement was valid, it seemed to contradict the Truman Doctrine put forth in 1947, which proclaimed U.S. policy was to "support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed

⁶White, William S., "Senate Will Query Military Leaders on Formosa Policy," *NYT*, 14 January 1950, p. 1.

minorities or by outside pressure.” Did the Nationalists therefore merit American support, regardless of the ineptness of their leadership? The secretary implied that in some situations, American opposition to communism was in the nation’s interest, while in other cases, such as Formosa, it was not necessarily vital to prevent a Communist takeover. Furthermore, Acheson declared that Chiang’s support had “melted away.” Even though it was unfathomable to Bridges and company that the Nationalists lost due to poor leadership rather than inadequate U.S. assistance, the secretary portrayed the situation accurately. Initially, Senate Democrats agreed. In a rare show of unity, they responded to Bridges’ attack by unanimously endorsing the administration’s decision, arguing that continued aid to the Nationalists could draw the U.S. into a war.⁷

However, Democratic solidarity behind the secretary of state did not last long. After a sensational trial concluding a couple of weeks after the Bridges attack on China policy, a jury convicted former State Department official Alger Hiss of lying under oath about his connections to the Communist Party. At a press conference shortly thereafter, Acheson declared that despite the verdict, he would not turn his back on Hiss. Even though the secretary clearly was expressing personal loyalty to Hiss rather than political policy, his statement produced a firestorm of criticism. House Republicans Richard Nixon (CA) and Minority Whip Les Arends (IL) described Acheson’s response as “disgusting” and “an affront to the nation.” Democrats chimed in. Rep. James C. Davis (GA) asked, “How long can Americans be expected to show respect for Acheson when

⁷ Truman doctrine in “Special Message to the Congress on Greece and Turkey,” March 12, 1947, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, Harry S. Truman, 1945-1953* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1966); Acheson’s Press Club speech in Waggoner, Walter H., “Four Areas Listed,” *NYT*, 13 January 1950, p. 1; White, William S., “Democrats Unite in Senate on China,” *NYT*, 18 January 1950, p. 3.

he hugs to his bosom those who have betrayed their country?" Senator James Eastland (MS) presented a resolution his state's legislature calling Acheson's backing of Hiss a "dangerous precedent to the security of the nation." No Democrats defended the secretary, including the president.⁸

In this environment, the administration struggled to explain to the American people why the U.S. was powerful enough to stop the Nazis and Japanese in World War II, but not the Communist Chinese in 1949. The answer proposed by the Republican senator from Wisconsin, Joseph McCarthy, was: The U.S. "lost" China because Communists like Alger Hiss were running the State Department.

Shortly after the Communist victory in China, McCarthy launched a series of accusations of Communists working for the State Department. On February 9, 1950 in Wheeling, West Virginia, the senator from Wisconsin made his infamous speech in which he claimed to have a list of 205 Communist infiltrators. The next day in Salt Lake City, he said he had 57 names. During a six-hour speech on the floor of the Senate on February 20, McCarthy changed his story again, declaring he knew of 81 Communists in the department. This speech quickly became a free-for-all, as a trio of Democratic senators repeatedly, but unsuccessfully, tried to pin the Republican down on specific charges. Majority Leader Scott Lucas (IL), Brien McMahon (CT) and Herbert Lehman (NY) interrupted McCarthy's speech 61, 34 and 13 times, respectively, to no avail. Despite McCarthy's changing story, the Senate convened a special committee headed by

⁸ "Acheson Renews Defense of Hiss," *NYT*, 26 January 1950, p. 14; Nixon, Arends and Davis quoted in, "I Do Not Intend to Turn My Back," *Time*, February 6, 1950, p. 12; Eastland in "Acheson Under Fire in Senate and House," *NYT*, 1 February 1950, p. 20.

Millard Tydings (D-MD) that began hearings on March 8 to investigate the charges. Tydings appeared to be the perfect choice for leading the investigation, from the Democratic perspective. Respected as an able senator, yet having, in one historian's words, a "political killer instinct," Tydings detested McCarthy and intended to plow him under. Furthermore, the Maryland senator's reputation as an ardent anti-communist would seem to insulate him from the "soft on communism" charges that McCarthy attempted to pin on any political adversary.⁹

As the hearings progressed, Senator Bridges announced that the Soviet government had planted a "master spy" who was "using our State Department as he wills." He therefore promised that a group of fellow Republican senators would be gunning for Acheson in the weeks ahead. Few Democrats responded. During the first two and a half weeks of the Tydings hearings, Truman's party replied to the charges with a deafening silence. Finally, freshman Senator William Benton (CT), a former State Department official, stepped forward to defend the secretary, saying of the alleged problems in the department, "You certainly do not cure a man's headache by cutting off his head." Rep. Stephen M. Young (D-OH) called McCarthy a "rabble rouser" and declared the State Department employed no subversives. Senator Warren Magnuson (D-WA) noted that McCarthy's charges "probably caused great joy in Russia." Despite these courageous rejoinders, the problem was they came from congressional lightweights. The only influential Democrat who consistently and publicly backed the Truman administration during the Tydings hearings was Senator Tom Connally (TX),

⁹ Allan Nevins, *Herbert H. Lehman and His Era* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1963), 336 describes the hearings. Tydings' "killer instinct" in Hamby, *Man of the People*, 530-531.

chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee. However, even Connally did not defend Acheson on the Senate floor until six weeks into the hearings.¹⁰

The White House and party liberals grew concerned about Democrats' abandonment of Acheson during the Tydings hearings. Charles Murphy, preparing the president for a routine meeting with the "Big 4" congressional leaders (Vice President Alben Barkley, House Speaker Sam Rayburn, majority leaders of the Senate and House), suggested that Truman ask them "if anyone will defend Acheson in the Senate." At its national convention just a few days afterwards, the Americans for Democratic Action (ADA), a liberal lobbyist group, said they were "outraged by the reluctance of many Democratic Senators and Congressmen to reply to these attacks with the truth which is common knowledge to every one of them and which, had it been spoken, would long since have disposed of the whole contemptible campaign."¹¹

By May 1950, Acheson began to see the light at the end of the tunnel despite the relentless Republican attacks during the Tydings hearings. More Democrats were starting to defend him, highlighted by a "performance unparalleled in recent years" on the Senate floor by eight senators led by Majority Leader Lucas and Majority Whip Francis Myers (PA). In a well-orchestrated attack, the likes of which veteran Capitol Hill aides had never seen, the Democrats pointed out the inconsistencies in McCarthy's accusations and the lack of evidence presented. At one point, Vice President Barkley

¹⁰Bridges quoted in, "G.O.P. Bloc Drives to Oust Acheson," *Dallas Morning News*, 28 March 1950, p. 1; Benton, Young and Magnuson quoted in Albright, Robert C., "Democrats About Ready to Rake in GOP's," *Washington Post*, 26 March 1950, p. B3; Connally in White, William S., "President Implies It Is Not Possible to Libel McCarthy," *NYT*, 14 April 1950, p.1; "White, William S., "Political Stake is High in M'Carthy Inquiry," *NYT*, 16 April 1950, p. E3.

¹¹ Memorandum, Charles Murphy to Truman, March 27, 1950; Memos-Big Four Meetings folder; Charles Murphy Papers, HSTL; Loftus, Joseph A., "A.D.A. is 'Revolted' by Acheson Attack," *NYT*, 4 April 1950, p. 7.

ordered Lucas to sit down for calling McCarthy a liar. Another senator roared that if McCarthy's charges turned out to be unfounded, the Wisconsin senator should be "scourged by public opinion from the society of decent men and women." Acheson therefore wrote an acquaintance there were "evidences that this storm is about over." Unfortunately, just when the skies seemed ready to clear for the secretary, the Korean War exploded, precipitating a new wave of Republican criticism.¹²

A combination of the Dixiecrat revolt over civil rights, McCarthyism and conservatives' weariness of big government weakened Truman's influence in Congress during the months before the war erupted. The president, who owed the start of his political career to the Pendergast machine organization in Kansas City, believed in party loyalty as an act of faith. As an aide later noted, Truman believed that you either supported the party or got out of it, and therefore had little patience for those unfaithful to him as the Democrat occupying the White House. Early in 1950, HST grew increasingly wary regarding Democratic support for his legislative programs and policies. For the first time during his presidency, White House aides prepared voting record summaries of the 81st Congress to gauge support for presidential programs. The State Department got involved as well. Undersecretary of State James E. Webb provided Truman an analysis of which House Democrats supported various versions of a Korean aid bill as it worked its way through Congress. This report, which included a separate tally of Southern Democrats' voting patterns, was bluntly titled, "Democratic

¹²Quotes of senators in Friendly, Albert, "Senate Bloc Seeks to Tag McCarthy as Liar on Floor," *Washington Post*, 4 May 1950, p. 1; Acheson to H. H. Fisher, May 3, 1950; Alphabetical File, F (2 of 2) folder; Dean Acheson Papers, HSTL.

Members Who Voted Against H.R. 5330,” a testament that the White House was now taking notes on who its enemies were within the party.¹³

Rumblings of discontent among the congressional Democrats plagued the president in several ways, beginning with a planned move to repeal the House 21-day rule. Retaliating against the “do-nothing 80th Congress” that Truman blasted during the 1948 campaign, the president’s supporters passed this protocol in early 1949, empowering committee chairs to bring any bill to a floor vote that the Rules Committee did not act upon within three weeks. The rule was designed to prevent a coalition of Republicans and conservative Southern Democrats on the Rules Committee from killing Truman’s Fair Deal programs. In January 1950, an aide alerted HST that something was afoot on repealing the rule, and therefore a “serious threat” to his agenda. The Trumanites in the House managed to keep the 21-day rule in place throughout 1950, but things would change following that year’s congressional elections.¹⁴

The chief executive also suffered from having few committee leaders in his corner on Capitol Hill. Writing to a Senate ally in June 1950, Truman admitted, “The main difficulty that I have to contend with is that in both Houses of the Congress there are not over four or five Chairmen of Key Committees who are friendly to the President.” He had good reason to be concerned, since Congress had some thirty-four standing committees at the time. Because Southerners enjoyed one-party rule in their

¹³Truman’s loyalty beliefs in Savage, 24; Voting summary activities explained in George M. Elsey, Memorandum for File, January 17, 1950; Hechler, Ken folder; George Elsey Papers, HSTL; James E. Webb to Truman, Memorandum for the President, February 15, 1950; PSF: Korean War file, General Data folder; Truman Papers, HSTL.

¹⁴ Charles S. Murphy to Truman, January 16, 1950; Truman-memos to and from, 1947-53 folder 5 of 5; Charles S. Murphy Papers, HSTL; John Fisher, “Knock Out New Deal Power to Railroad Bills,” *Chicago Tribune*, 4 January 1951, p. 3.

region, they generally had the most tenure, translating into control of leadership of important panels, particularly in the Senate.¹⁵

Making matters worse, the White House did not have effective communication with Congress, a problem it wrestled with before and during the war. In the Senate, Vice President Barkley had little influence even though he was a former majority leader. Moreover, Truman did not dedicate any staffers to congressional relations until his fifth year in office because he preferred to deal with legislative leaders personally, and felt that contacting them via his staffers demeaned them. Instead, he had the various departments of the executive branch deal with Congress directly. The absence of clear links between the White House and Congress, however, contrasted sharply with the well-defined channels between the administration and the Democratic National Committee (DNC). Furthermore, Truman allies in the House and Senate complained about the ineffectiveness of the two Capitol Hill liaisons finally added to the White House staff. Truman aide Ken Hechler admitted, “Measured by the standards of other administrations, President Truman’s machinery for congressional relations left much to be desired.”¹⁶

Members of Congress agreed with Hechler. In a meeting with Acheson, Senator Benton, one of Truman’s strongest allies, was “quite critical” of the administration’s relations with Congress, complaining they spent too much time “conciliating our

¹⁵ Truman quoted in his memo to Sen. Elbert D. Thomas, June 14, 1950; PSF Subject File 124: Congress-Miscellaneous; Truman Papers, HSTL; “President’s Conference With ADA Leaders- 5/21/51,” Lloyd, David D. folder; Charles Murphy Papers, HSTL; Winthrop Griffith, *Humphrey: A Candid Biography* (New York: Morrow Publishing, 1964), 188 discusses one-party rule in the South.

¹⁶ Ken Hechler, *Working With Truman* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1982), 152-155, 162, 174; Savage, 59.

opponents and not enough time working with our friends.” Acheson concurred.

Freshman Rep. John C. Davies (NY) criticized the administration’s failure to acclimate a group of enthusiastic Democratic newcomers to the House in 1949, complaining they did not get enough direction or acknowledgement from the White House. As a result, these Democratic rookies started to “look to their home communities and local problems and overlooked Administration legislation.”¹⁷

Why, then, did Truman wait until the fourth year of his presidency to dedicate any staff members to congressional relations, and why did he not appoint stronger assistants for this role? The president’s personal philosophy and his past political experiences provide the answers. HST was comfortable with personally contacting members of Congress as he felt necessary and eschewed building a large White House staff. An aide suspected the president remembered his dealings in the Senate, where he and his colleagues resented Roosevelt’s aides and their pressure tactics. More importantly, Truman believed so strongly in party loyalty that he did not think he should have to coddle or twist the arms of his fellow Democrats to maintain their support. If the president had dedicated effective staffers to help mentor the large and energetic freshman class of Democrats in 1949, he could have enhanced his influence in Congress and cut into the Southern power bloc, strengthening his power in the party during the war. Although one historian suggests that the freshman class did not show the potential to go to war with the Southerners, a more focused effort by the White House to mentor

¹⁷ Benton’s and Acheson’s views in, “Confidential,” March 16, 1951; Memoranda of Conversations File, 1949-1953; March 1951 folder; Dean Acheson Papers, HSTL; Davies story in Memorandum, January 5, 1951; Hechler, Kenneth W. folder; Charles Murphy Papers, HSTL.

the newcomers could have armed them to combat the Southerners effectively. Overall, a stronger commitment to the Democrats on Capitol Hill earlier in Truman's administration would have provided some vital cohesion for the party when the Korean crisis occurred. The president apparently recognized these shortcomings and later began holding weekly meetings with small groups of congressional Democrats. However, things may have turned out better for HST had he begun such discussions earlier.¹⁸

During the 1950 election season, unity within the Democratic Party ranged from one extreme to the other as is dealt with sectionalism, the outbreak of the Korean War, the bitter conclusion of the Tydings hearings and renewed attacks upon the State Department. Early in the year, Truman already was grappling with internal political issues. Angered because the president had told his former Secretary of State James Byrnes to "do as he damn well pleases" regarding the latter's run for the South Carolina governorship, Virginia Democrats refused to attend the Democratic Party's regional conference. A White House aide concluded, "People in control of the party machinery in Virginia are completely out of step with the President."¹⁹

In February, HST went on the offensive against Southern recalcitrance and McCarthy's attacks on the State Department, announcing plans for a "whistle stop"

¹⁸ Truman did not designate a Chief of Staff per se. He gave his staffers generic titles such as "Assistant to the President" or "Special Assistant to the President," with their duties often overlapping. John R. Steelman, Truman's defacto Chief of Staff, carried the title of "*The Assistant to the President*" (emphasis added). Truman's style in Francis H. Heller, ed., *The Truman White House: The Administration of the Presidency 1945-1953* (Lawrence, KS: The Regents Press of Kansas, 1980), 229-30; Hamby, *Man of the People*, 493 discusses the lack of potential of freshman class of Democrats in 1949; Memorandum, Meetings with small groups discussed in Charles Murphy to Truman, May 19, 1951; PSF: General File; Meetings: White House, Special folder; Truman Papers and "Suggested Items for Discussion with the Big Four, Monday, May 21, 1951;" Memos-Big 4 Meetings folder; Charles Murphy Papers, both from HSTL.

¹⁹ Truman quoted in *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 25 January 1950; Charles Murphy is the aide quoted in his memo to Truman, January 25, 1950; Truman-memos to and from, 1947-53 folder 5 of 5; Murphy Papers, HSTL.

campaign tour. Repeating his successful formula from his 1948 campaign of stumping from trains, the president rambled to 57 towns in 16 states, primarily in the West, covering some 17,000 miles during the first half of May. Built around the theme of, “A Report to the People,” Truman’s campaign circuit was quite successful by all accounts. The president even won grudging praise from Victor Johnston, who followed the tour at the behest of the Republican National Committee. After witnessing a turnout of 35,000 people at Ottumwa, Iowa, a crowd equivalent to the population of the town, Johnston termed Truman’s tour a “traveling medicine show,” but admitted, “Nobody hates him.” After offering the surprised Republican operative a ride on the train--if he would buy a ticket--the president said he hoped Johnston was as “highly pleased with the reception . . . as I have been.” The chief executive was a hit with the livestock as well. When a stubborn lamb raised a ruckus as he pinned a blue ribbon on it, HST called it a “Republican sheep.” Immediately, the animal quieted down. The whistle stop tour went so well that Truman believed he could reverse the trend of the incumbent president’s party losing seats in Congress during mid-term elections.²⁰

The Korean crisis forced President Truman to cancel a second whistle stop tour planned for the fall, minimizing his campaigning for the Democrats. After the spring tour, he got involved in only two Senate races. In his home state of Missouri, the president wanted to oust incumbent Republican Forrest C. Donnell, a harsh critic of the administration. Although Truman boosted the candidacy of state senator Emery W. Allison, former U. S. Rep. Thomas C. Hennings, Jr. prevailed in the primary, much to

²⁰ Hechler, 133-4, 138-9, 143-4, 146.

the president's irritation. Ironically, this helped HST in the long run. Hennings triumphed in the general election, the only Democrat who unseated a GOP incumbent. Moreover, Missouri's new senator went on to become a dogged opponent of Joseph McCarthy in the Senate. Truman also lent some support to the campaign of Rep. Helen Gahagan Douglas for an open Senate seat in California, even though he once referred to her as "one of the worst nuisances." Again, chief executive's backing was to no avail as Nixon trounced the Democrat in the general election. Other than one speech on the eve of the election, this was the extent of Truman's involvement in the 1950 races. As Ken Hechler wrote of the president, "He put on his commander in chief's hat and his political hat gathered dust."²¹

Primary elections by their nature test party unity, but the 1950 Democratic primaries were particularly bad news for Truman because two key incumbent senators who backed his foreign policies went down to defeat. In Florida, Claude Pepper, a 14-year veteran of the Senate, lost to George Smathers in the primary. Smathers, a campaign manager for Pepper in the 1930s and recipient of a U.S. attorney post procured for him by the Florida senator, rode a wave of anti-communism attacks to victory. The challenger equated Pepper's support of Fair Deal programs with support of socialism. Unscrupulously, Smathers used superimposed photographs and headlines from the communist publication, *The Daily Worker*, to paint his opponent as an admirer of Josef Stalin, dubbing his opponent, "Red Pepper." Though Truman and Pepper disagreed on many issues, the Floridian agreed with the president's international approach and

²¹ Savage, 177, 180-3; Hamby, *Man of the People*, 550; Truman quoted in Savage, 180 (re Hennings) and in Savage, 177 (re Douglas); Hechler, 147.

support of the U.N. Another HST ally, Senator Frank Graham of North Carolina, lost his primary contest due to a combination of race and red-baiting. Graham's previous association with organizations having communists in its membership, such as the American Civil Liberties Union and the Southern Council of Human Welfare, made him vulnerable to this tactic. Truman told his staff Graham's defeat was one of the "most serious losses for the administration." In light of the president's struggles with conservative Southerners, the demise of these two liberal Democrats from the region was particularly damaging to him.²²

McCarthyistic attacks from within the party bludgeoned other pro-Truman Democrats to the brink of defeat in the primaries, helping Republicans finish them off in the general election. Helen Gahagan Douglas's opponent in the California Senate primary, Manchester Boddy, compared her voting pattern with that of pro-communist Rep. Vito Marcantonio of New York. Boddy accused Douglas of associating with a "subversive clique of red-hots" and called her "the pink lady," a nickname her Republican opponent, Richard Nixon, used effectively in the general election. California's state Democratic committee reported that the Republicans got help from "extreme right-wing elements" in the Democratic Party. Something similar happened to the most unlikely of candidates, Millard Tydings. A steadfast anti-communist, the Maryland Senate veteran seemed invulnerable to charges of failing to oppose the Red Menace. Nevertheless, Tydings had to fight off two Democratic challengers in the primary, former congressman John Meyer and Hugh M. Monaghan II. Meyer called

²² Savage, 171-175; Truman quoted in Savage, 172.

Tydings' leadership of the committee investigating the State Department a whitewash. Monaghan latched onto the same theme, calling the committee's dismissal of McCarthy's charges a "green light to Stalin's agents in this country." Although Tydings breezed to victory against these two Democratic challengers with 66 percent of the vote, Monaghan refused to endorse the incumbent in the general election, thereby lending a helping hand to Tydings' upset defeat in the general election.²³

The Democrats faced a dilemma in Idaho's Senate primary. Glen H. Taylor, the incumbent and a country-western singer, had bolted the party in 1948 to run for vice president on the Progressive Party ticket headed by Henry Wallace. He now found himself in the uncomfortable position of trying to return to the fold and win the Democratic primary. Local Democratic leaders were in no mood to back Taylor, complaining that they were being "treated like Dixiecrats" because all the political favors were going to the ex-Progressive's supporters. This further rankled the Trumanites because in 1948, the Wallace/Taylor ticket had garnered less than 5,000 votes out of 200,000 cast in Idaho. The national party chieftains nevertheless stuck with the incumbent Taylor, producing heartbreak for their candidate and disaster for the party in the general election. Taylor lost in the primary by 948 votes to D. Worth Clark. The incumbent, however, did not go quietly, initiating a probe of the election that had its colorful moments, such as complaints about a Senate investigator "frequenting Boise clubs often inebriated conducting a propaganda campaign" for the defeated country

²³ Savage, 175-180; Boddy quoted in Savage, 176; Attacks on Douglas described by Glenn M. Anderson, Chairman of the Democratic state committee in California in his memo to Clinton P. Anderson, November 28, 1950; Box 1052; Clinton Anderson Papers, MDLOC ; Monaghan quoted in Savage, 178.

crooner. While the investigator apparently enjoyed himself, he failed to deliver a win in the primary for Taylor, and Republican Herman Welker thrashed Clark 62 to 38 percent in the general election.²⁴

Democratic unity faced another test when the conflict in Korea erupted in June, as Dean Acheson again became a political lightning rod. This time, the GOP blamed him for policies emboldening North Korea to invade the South. During the week the invasion began, and even before the commitment of American troops, Ohio senator Robert Taft led a Republican chorus demanding the secretary's resignation, citing a January 12, 1950 Acheson speech to the National Press Club as an invitation for the North Korean attack. In his remarks, the secretary had defined the U.S. Pacific "defense perimeter" along a line running from the Ryukyu and Aleutian islands off the coast of Alaska and south to the Philippines. This line of defense did not include the Korean peninsula, leading Republicans to argue that the speech sent a tacit message that the U.S. would not defend South Korea from an invasion. The GOP's argument overlooked other references in the speech to the defense of Korea, as well as the source of Acheson's definition of a Pacific defense perimeter. The secretary emphasized that if an attack occurred in a region outside the defense perimeter, additional countries besides the U.S. should repel the aggressor by virtue of their commitments to the United Nations.

²⁴ "Treated like Dixiecrats," in Clinton Anderson to William Boyle, March 15, 1950; Similar concerns over Taylor in Frank Keenan and James H. Hawley to Anderson, March 1, 1950; "Frequenting Boise clubs" in telegram from Gilbert Larsen to Senator Clinton P. Anderson, September 9, 1950; all from Box 1052; Clinton Anderson Papers, MDLOC.

Contradicting the defense perimeter statement later in the speech, Acheson implied that Korea and Japan could expect U.S. assistance in the event of an attack.²⁵

The outcry over the secretary's speech, well after the fact, was unjustified. Ironically, Acheson obtained the definition of his defense perimeter from General Douglas MacArthur, who many Republicans regarded as the foremost American authority on Far Eastern policy. In a March 1949 interview with a British journalist, MacArthur had explained his idea of the American line of defense in the Pacific, matching the one Acheson articulated in January 1950. The secretary later regretted his reference to the general's strategy, calling it an example of the dangers of using military positions to explain the nuances of foreign policy. In another ironic twist, the speech produced antagonistic statements from North Korea blasting Acheson for *subjugating South Korea into the U.S. orbit*. Even though MacArthur had previously defined the defense perimeter and the overall context of the secretary's speech clearly did not indicate that the U.S. was writing Korea off, Republicans blamed Acheson for the North Korean attack.²⁶

Most Democrats on Capitol Hill rallied around Acheson and the Truman administration from the outbreak of the war through the summer of 1950. Senator McCarthy led the Republican attacks, blaming war casualties on a "group of untouchables" in the State Department for gutting Korean aid prior to the war, in

²⁵ Hinton, Harold B., "Taft Says Truman Bypasses Congress," *NYT*, 29 June 1950, p. 4; Waggoner, Walter H., "Four Areas Listed," *NYT*, 13 January 1950, p. 1; McCormick, Anne O'Hare, "Abroad: The Search for a New Policy in the East," *NYT*, 14 January 1950, p. 11.

²⁶ "M' Arthur Pledges Defense of Japan," *NYT*, 29 March 1949, p. 22; David S. McLellan, *Dean Acheson: The State Department Years* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1976), 209-10 relates Acheson's regret for using MacArthur's definition of a Pacific defense perimeter. North Korean reaction in Beisner, 328.

addition to the perimeter speech. Senator Tydings, ignoring these specific charges, defended the administration's foreign policy, pointing out that Korea was likely only one of many areas in the world in which the Soviets planned to test their ability to expand. Curiously, the Democrats defending the State Department never pointed out that MacArthur had originally articulated the Pacific defense perimeter used in Acheson's controversial speech. With better communication between the secretary and congressional Democrats, the latter could have used this as ammunition against Republican attacks. Even though the war was not going well at the time, the Democratic National Committee (DNC) decided to make it an issue in the mid-term elections, highlighting the January 1950 defeat of a \$150 million Korean aid bill in the House. Senate Majority Whip Francis J. Myers (D-PA) planned to emphasize that some politicians who earlier had demanded military cutbacks "are the loudest now in criticism of the lack of preparedness." In the face of Republican criticism in his state, Senator Warren G. Magnuson (D-WA) believed his constituents would respond to the need to rally behind the president during wartime rather than second-guessing pre-war policies. Although the national press did not publicize their views, a few Democrats reacted to Republican condemnation a bit more creatively. Rep. Emmanuel Celler (NY) argued that all Americans shared blame for the Korean attack due to the demobilization mentality following World War II. Tydings and Rep. Robert L. F. Sikes (FL) presciently noted that the U.S. military needed a new paradigm because it based its existing planning on fighting a major power rather than a regional war. Recalling the context of Acheson's defense perimeter speech, Rep. Mike Mansfield (MT) reminded

his colleagues that the plan all along had been for the U.N., not solely the U.S., to protect Korea.²⁷

On July 20, the Tydings Committee issued its report on McCarthy's allegations of communist spies working in the State Department. Party loyalty ruled the day. The committee, comprised of three Democrats and two Republicans, voted to submit the majority members' report in a straight party line vote. The majority statement, calling the charges "a fraud and a hoax," concluded that no one accused by the Wisconsin senator had committed any wrongdoing. When the report reached the Senate floor for debate, partisan sparks flew. Republican William E. Jenner (IN) lambasted Tydings for overseeing the "most scandalous and brazen whitewash of treasonable conspiracy in our history." The chairman reacted by charging across the room during the debate, shaking his fist at Jenner. When the smoke cleared, the Senate voted three times on the report, and each time, all 96 senators voted with their party members on the committee, thereby accepting the majority report. The vote on the Tydings Committee findings was the peak of Democratic Party unity during the Korean War.²⁸

Unfortunately for the Democrats, their solidarity again began to crumble as the mid-term congressional elections approached. Republicans charged that Acheson's January defense perimeter speech "electrified all Asia because Korea and Formosa . . .

²⁷ McCarthy and Tydings response to him in "M'Carthy Assails Acheson on Korea," *NYT*, 3 July 1950, p. 2; DNC strategy in Morris, John D., "Democrats Assail G.O.P. on Korea," *NYT*, 28 July 1950, p. 3; Magnuson and Myers in "Korea to be Issue in November Vote," *NYT*, 8 August 1950, p. 20; Comments of Celler, Tydings, Sikes and Mansfield in Charles A. Lofgren, "Congress and the Korean Conflict," (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 1966), 58, 60-61.

²⁸ Majority report quoted in Richard Fried, *Nightmare in Red: The McCarthy Era in Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 128; Jenner quoted in Robert Griffith, *The Politics of Fear: Joseph R. McCarthy and the Senate*, 2d ed., (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1987), 101; Griffith, *The Politics of Fear*, 105-6 notes that the Tydings vote was the last display of Democratic unity until December 1954.

were designated as abandoned by America,” initiating “Mr. Truman’s Korean War.” In response, Rep. Michael J. Kirwan (OH), chairman of the House Democratic Campaign Committee issued a nineteen page summary of legislators’ voting records against Korean aid packages in 1949 and early 1950, proclaiming, “The isolationist bloc of the House must shoulder the responsibility for the Communist attack on South Korea.” The rub for the Democrats was that 42 of their own, primarily Southerners, had voted against all aid packages for Korea and therefore fell into the “isolationist” category. Interestingly, in preparing this statement the DNC intentionally took pains not to blame the Republican Party by name, targeting the isolationists in both parties. Kirwan’s report, released during the primary season, aimed to replace anti-Truman Democrats with party faithful more sympathetic to the president’s foreign policy.²⁹

Democratic attacks upon Truman flared at the grass-roots level as well. In Tarrant County, Texas, Jack Carter, a member of the State Democratic Executive Committee, wrote to Sam Rayburn expressing serious concern about an anti-Truman faction of delegates challenging the pro-administration slate officially chosen at the county convention. The group attacked the president harshly, passing a resolution blaming the State Department for creating “the darkest hour and the most crucial period that ever existed in the state of Texas,” including the initial division of Korea, which really caused the war in the first place. To remedy this sorry state of affairs, the delegates demanded, “Congress should take a common everyday weeding hoe and chop

²⁹ “Electrified all Asia” in “Democrats and G.O.P. Feud over Blame in Korea,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 28 July 1950, p. 4; “Korean Aid Defeat Blamed for Attack,” *Dallas Morning News*, 28 July 1950, p. 3; John M. Redding to Michael J. Kirwan, July 26, 1950; Box 1052; Clinton P. Anderson Papers, MDLOC notes use of the “Mr. Truman’s War” moniker by the Republican National Committee.

down every Pansy that exists in the State and other Departments of the United States Government.” Carter noted that the resolution “could have been written by Senator McCarthy himself.”³⁰

Democratic dissonance increased in Washington as the campaign season moved into the late summer and early fall. Just two weeks after the Tydings report, a journalist shocked Truman by informing him that Rep. J. Percy Priest (TN), the Democratic Whip and a consistent backer of his programs, said that both Acheson and Defense Secretary Louis Johnson should resign to help unify the country. HST, incredulous that a party leader made such a statement, told the reporter to inform Priest that Acheson and Johnson would stay on. (Ultimately, the president retained Acheson but fired Johnson.) Truman showed increasing sensitivity to this issue in correspondence with Rep. Charles E. Bennett (D-FL), a first term legislator. Bennett noted that replacing Secretary Acheson was a topic “pressed with great vigor by quite a number of my constituents,” and said Acheson should step down. The chief executive fired back that Democrats “should not be accepting lies and propaganda put out by people like McCarthy.” Non-Southerners also began to grow concerned about the secretary, as legislators like Senator Paul Douglas, a staunch Fair-Dealer, confided to a colleague that Acheson had become a “political liability.”³¹

³⁰ Carter to Rayburn, September 5, 1950 and Rayburn to Carter, September 13, 1950; 1950 Political*Texas and District folder; Rayburn Papers, CAH.

³¹ Folliard, Edward T., “President Enters Disputes; Defends Johnson and Acheson,” *Washington Post*, 4 August 1950, p. 1; “Congressional Voting Records (as of 8/1/51)- Table VI,” Ken Hechler to Truman; Subject File: Congressional Voting Records folder; Ken Hechler Papers, HSTL demonstrates Priest’s consistent support of Truman’s programs; Truman to Charles E. Bennett, August 12, 1950, Bennett to Truman, August 8, 1950, Truman to Bennett, August 5, 1950, Bennett to Truman, July 31, 1950; PSF: General File, Ba-BI folder; Truman Papers, HSTL; Douglas quoted in Griffith, *The Politics of Fear*, 105.

In August, Senator Kenneth S. Wherry (R-NE) launched a vicious personal attack on Acheson, telling the press, “The blood of our boys in Korea is on his shoulders, and no one else.” Wherry argued that since the U.S. intervention amounted to a repudiation of Acheson’s pre-war Korean policy, Truman should replace him. Rep. Sikes responded that what the U.S. needed was a change in military leadership in the field. Without mentioning MacArthur by name, Sikes pointed out that the U.N. forces were taking a “terrific licking,” and suggested that someone must be available in Korea “who can and will get on with the job.” While no one publicly seconded Sikes’ proposal, his counterattack questioning the effectiveness of MacArthur, the darling of the conservative Republicans, was a bold move. Sikes, however, attracted little support from his Democratic colleagues.³²

By autumn, few Democrats publicly supported Acheson. Only twelve out of forty-nine Democratic senators spoke out in favor of him during the election campaign. Of this dozen, seven had joined the Senate since 1948, meaning that their statements carried little political clout. The party thus was at an impasse regarding foreign policy. Truman adamantly stood up for his secretary of state while most Capitol Hill Democrats ran from the beleaguered secretary of state.³³

In addition to Korean War policy, domestic issues divided the Democrats during the 1950 election season. Fair Deal initiatives such as national health insurance and civil rights drew the ire of Southern Democrats, prompting concerns about support for the administration in key states like Texas. Truman crony Henri Warren worried to the

³² White, William S., “Truman Terms Contemptible Wherry’s Attack on Acheson,” *NYT*, 18 August 1950, p. 1.

³³ Griffith, *The Politics of Fear*, 104-5 quantifies support for Acheson among Senate Democrats.

president that anti-administration delegations from the large metropolitan areas of Houston, Dallas and Fort Worth could control the upcoming state Democratic convention. He predicted, “Delegates will be brought in from East Texas who definitely know that President Truman and Roosevelt want their daughters to marry negroes,” who also believed that “a federal police force will require that negroes be employed in the shops and factories and on the farms.” Warren complained that HST’s congressional allies rarely appeared at such state gatherings, and urged the president pressure them to attend in order to blunt attacks on the administration.³⁴

Civil rights concerns notwithstanding, the perceived problem of communist infiltration into the government drove the largest wedge between Truman and his Democratic comrades during the 1950 election season. Senate Judiciary Committee chairman Pat McCarran (D-NV), who, like McCarthy, made anti-communism his signature issue, was the prime cause of this friction. His quest to fight communism at home as well as in Korea came to fruition with Internal Security Act of 1950, or McCarran Act. A strident Truman nemesis, McCarran patterned the bill after a similar one sponsored by House *Republicans*. The McCarran Act required registration of all members of the Communist Party with the Justice Department, and directed the department to compile literature containing membership and financial information about all Communist-related organizations. It banned the federal government and defense

³⁴ Truman to Bill Boyle, August 22, 1950 and attached memorandum from Henri Warren to Truman; PSF: Political File; Truman Papers, HSTL; “The President’s Day- January 25, 1950,” President’s Daily Appointment Calendar, n.d., <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/calendar/main.php?curYear=1950&currMonth=1&currDay=24>, (February 11, 2006) notes Warren’s relationship with Truman, as do his several visits to the White House during 1949-1950, also documented in WHCF: PPF 774 (Henri Warren), Truman Papers, HSTL.

contractors from employing Communists, and blocked aliens advocating totalitarianism from entering the country. Indicating the power of McCarthyism during an election year, only seven Democrats out of fifty-four voted against the McCarran Act, despite its restrictions on civil liberties. With such overwhelming Democratic approval and amidst daily Republican attacks on his secretary of state for being soft on communism, it seemed the president had no choice but to sign the bill.³⁵

But he did not. Truman courageously vetoed it, partly motivated by his long time personal dislike of McCarran, who he once described as having a “record for obstruction and bad legislation . . . matched by that of only a few reactionaries.” Another more worthy reason was the president’s belief that the bill was a tyrannical infringement on the First Amendment right of free speech. HST saw the law as another sedition bill. In his veto message of September 22 the president declared, “In a free country, we punish men for the crimes they commit, but never for the opinions they have,” and argued that the bill would put the U.S. government into the “thought control business.”³⁶

The chief executive, nevertheless, could not overcome the McCarthyist atmosphere of the day, as Congress overwhelmingly overrode his veto. House members infuriated by the veto chanted, “Vote! Vote!” forcing Speaker Rayburn to plead with them simply to have Truman’s veto message read on the floor. Emotions ran high.

³⁵For the importance of anti-communism to McCarran’s career, see Fried, *Nightmare in Red*, 3; Savage, 171 discusses McCarran’s divisiveness within the party.

³⁶Truman quoted in Hechler, 190 on his opinion of McCarran; Truman’s veto message quoted in Hamby, 549 and Robert J. Donovan, *Tumultuous Years: The Presidency of Harry Truman, 1949-1953* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1982), 296; Hamby, *Man of the People*, 548-549 analyzes why Truman vetoed the McCarran Act..

Republican maverick William “Wild Bill” Langer (ND) collapsed on the Senate floor while filibustering against the bill, prompting emergency personnel to cart him off on a stretcher. After all this excitement, the House voted 248 to 48 (161 to 45 among the Democrats) to override--just one hour after the president’s veto. The next day, the Senate voted 57 to 10 to do the same, with twenty-six Democrats voting to override and an additional ten agreeing even though they were conveniently absent. The ten Democrats voting to sustain the veto took care to issue a press release distinguishing themselves from the “dastardly group” of Communists opposing the bill and cautioning the public to urge repeal of it through anti-communist organizations. Only three members running for a seat in Congress in 1950 voted against the measure, and two of them lost.³⁷

Despite its bluster, the McCarran Act had little lasting effect upon America. The courts ruled several portions of the law unconstitutional, and the parts that survived touched few individuals. No “communist” organizations ever bothered to register with the Justice Department. In the short term, however, Congress’s vote reflected the communist phobia of the country, for the nation seemed more than willing to sacrifice civil liberties to battle communism at home while its soldiers fought the “reds” in Korea.

³⁷ David M. Oshinsky, *A Conspiracy So Immense: The World of Joe McCarthy* (New York: The Free Press, 1983), 173 describes the histrionics on the House and Senate floors over the veto; Breakdown of vote in Folliard, Edward, “Vote of 286 to 48 Polled Within Hour After Truman Calls Measure ‘Mistake,’” *Washington Post*, 23 September 1950, p. 1 and “How Senate Voted On Anti-Red Bill Veto,” *Washington Post*, 24 September 1950, p. M8; “Dastardly group” from Press Release, Sunday, October 1, 1950 from offices of senators Paul H. Douglas and other Democrats voting with Truman; Box 603; Theodore Green Papers, MDLOC; The two losers in 1950 races, John Carroll (CO) and Helen Gahagan Douglas (CA) were House members who ran unsuccessfully for the Senate.

Truman's inability to scrounge up the handful of Senate votes needed to sustain his veto emphasized the divisions within his party forged by McCarthyism.³⁸

Democrats recognized that Republicans intended to "keep the Communist pot boiling" during the campaign, with the junior senator from Wisconsin as the lead chef. The GOP saw Joseph McCarthy as its "new political alchemist" in 1950, able to "turn fear and mistrust into votes." Although he campaigned in fifteen states, "Tailgunner Joe," as he liked to call himself, had a direct role in shooting down only one of the many Democrats in his sights, Millard Tydings of Maryland.³⁹

In July, McCarthy took over the campaign of Tydings' opponent, political newcomer John Marshall Butler. The Wisconsin senator overhauled Butler's organization from top to bottom, bringing in a Chicago public relations man to organize the day-to-day details. More importantly, Senator McCarthy used his personal contacts to raise money for Butler, enabling the challenger to outspend Tydings three to one. The coup de grace that miraculously and unscrupulously discredited the incumbent's long record of steadfast opposition to communism was a widely publicized photograph showing Tydings apparently sitting and listening thoughtfully to Earl Browder, chairman of the Communist Party USA. The picture was a fake, produced by artificially merging two separate photos, as the two men had never met before Browder testified to the Tydings committee. Maryland's veteran senator, behaving with the confidence of any

³⁸Effects of the McCarran Act in Richard Fried, "Electoral Politics and McCarthyism: The 1950 Campaign," in *The Specter: Original Essays on the Cold War and the Origins of McCarthyism*, ed. Robert Griffith and Athan Theoharis (New York: New Viewpoints, 1974), 221.

³⁹"Communist pot boiling" in "Tydings in Trouble," *Newsweek*, October 23, 1950, p. 35; "Alchemist" in Oshinsky, 174; McCarthy quoted in Griffith, *The Politics of Fear*, 125; Fried, "Electoral Politics and McCarthyism," 216, 218 describes limits of McCarthy's influence in the campaign.

incumbent running for a fifth term, avoided responding directly to the smear campaign until October. By then, however, it was too late to stop the momentum of McCarthy's onslaught.⁴⁰

The Democrats reacted to the Republican senator from Wisconsin in curious ways during the campaign. For example, the DNC distributed a booklet titled, "Scare Words," a collection of Republican quotes and predictions that had failed to materialize. Despite McCarthy's notoriety, it barely mentioned the red scare. The Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee circulated a flyer lambasting the Wisconsin senator for publicly defending German S. S. troopers accused of murdering American prisoners of war in the "Malmedy Murders" case, suggesting he would similarly "leap to the defense of the North Korean war criminals" in the current conflict. The harshness of this attack prompted one committee member to criticize it as being so badly written that it would damage the panel's credibility, calling the charges against McCarthy "preposterous" and "gutter politics against a gutter snipe." Unsurprisingly, Tydings and Brien McMahon, another McCarthy target, had crafted the booklet. After being on the receiving end of the Wisconsin Republican's salvos, they appeared ready to plunge into the muck and slug it out with him. Only one was successful.⁴¹

The Korean War loomed even larger than Joseph McCarthy in the 1950 campaign. Throughout the election season, Democrats clamored for fact sheets

⁴⁰ Oshinsky, 175-6; Griffith, *The Politics of Fear*, 126-8; Savage, 180.

⁴¹ "Scare Words" in William F. Boyle, Jr. to Fellow Democrats, August 25, 1950; Box 584; Theodore F. Green Papers, MDLOC; Edwin C. Johnson to Clinton Anderson, September 2, 1950; Box 1052; Clinton P. Anderson Papers, MDLOC indicates Johnson's criticisms of the Malmedy attacks on McCarthy.

justifying the war from their Senate campaign committee. In early August, as U.N. forces desperately clung to Pusan on the southeast corner of South Korea, the Republicans issued a perfectly timed announcement proclaiming the conflict a key election issue. A survey of lead editorials in over sixty small town newspapers underscored the war's importance. Although the author of this analysis intended to call attention to tax policy as a campaign issue, it actually showed the war as a more prominent concern in small town America. Democratic incumbents in the Senate struggled to respond to common questions on the campaign trail, such as, "Why did we stop the communists in Europe [via the Marshall Plan], but left Asia 'wide open' [China and Korea]?"⁴²

General MacArthur's daring and successful counterattack at Inchon launched on September 15, 1950 led some Democrats to see the war as an advantage rather than a liability in the campaign. As the U.N. counteroffensive forged north of the 38th parallel in October, cautious optimism turned to euphoria. Senator McMahon proclaimed, "The lessons of this victory will be carefully studied both in Moscow and in the capitals of the free world," and wrote in a published letter to the State Department that Korea had "exploded the legend of the Red invincibility." The other Connecticut incumbent senator running for election, William Benton, thought Korea would help Democrats get out the vote. Apparently, their political opponents agreed, sending cynical letters to the

⁴²"Foreign Policy Set as G.O.P. Vote Issue," *NYT*, 8 August 1950, p. 20; Examples of requests for fact sheets in Ed Downs to Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee, August 1, 1950; Secretary to Senator Anderson to A. S. Mike Monroney, October 26, 1950; and M. P. Hogan to Senator Clinton Anderson, August 25, 1950; all from Box 1052; Analysis of small town newspapers in J. J. Perling to Anderson, "What Voters Are Discussing," August 10, 1950; Box 1056; "Asia wide-open" in Anderson to Senator William Benton, October 18, 1950; Box 1052; all from Anderson Papers, MDLOC; Gallup, George, "Survey Finds GOP Stock On Upgrade," *Los Angeles Times*, 20 September 1950, p. 12 demonstrated the effectiveness of the Republican strategy.

Democrats' Senate campaign headquarters accusing them of timing the victory in Korea to coincide with the elections.⁴³

The Democratic celebrations of victory in Korea were premature: Three days after the commander in chief listened to MacArthur's assurances that China would not enter the conflict, Chinese troops crossed the Yalu River into North Korea, engaging South Korean troops for the first time on October 25. The new war ushered in a new campaign for the Democrats. During the week leading up to election day, newspaper headlines screamed: "U.S. Units Retreat 50 Miles in Korea," "Another Acheson Betrayal," and "Red Counterblows Again Throw Allies Back in Furious No. Korea Clashes." On November 7, in the midst of nothing but bad news coming from Korea, Americans went to the polls to elect their legislators. Reminiscing about that day two decades later, Rep. Richard Bolling (D-MO) recalled, "We could feel the ground slipping out from under us."⁴⁴

While the 1950 contests did not deliver control of Congress to the Republicans, they did rob Truman of key congressional allies and shrank the Democrats' numerical margins over the Republicans in both houses. Overall, as in the 1946 elections, non-

⁴³ Clinton P. Anderson to Carl V. Rice, September 18, 1950 and Senator William Benton to Galen Van Meter, October 9, 1950; Box 1052; Anderson Papers, MDLOC are examples of Democratic optimism; "Press release from headquarters of Senator Brien McMahon," October 1950 and Brien McMahon to Edward W. Barrett (State Department), October 17, 1950; Box 8; Brien McMahon Papers, MDLOC; Clinton Anderson to Thomas H. Gunter, October 10, 1950 and Gunter to Anderson, October 5, 1950; Box 38; Clinton P. Anderson Papers, MDLOC indicates GOP accusations.

⁴⁴ Spencer C. Tucker, ed., *Encyclopedia of the Korean War: A Political, Social, and Military History* (New York: Checkmark Books, 2002), 130; Clinton Anderson to Francis J. Meyers, October 12, 1950; Box 1052; Clinton P. Anderson Papers, MDLOC; "U.S. Units Retreat 50 Miles In Korea," *Dallas Morning News*, 3 November 1950, p. 1; "Another Acheson Betrayal," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 4 November 1950, p. 10; "Red Counterblows Again Throw Allies Back in Furious No. Korea Clashes," *Washington Post*, 4 November 1950, p. 1; Bolling quoted in Hamby, *Man of the People*, 550.

Southern liberals were the most likely casualties, particularly in the House. In the Senate, Majority Leader Scott Lucas and Majority Whip Francis Myers went down in flames, along with Tydings. Three-term senator Elbert Thomas, another staunch Truman backer, lost as well. The elections repudiated the Democratic power structure in the Senate, as six of the thirteen members of the steering committee lost in either the primaries or the general election, decimating the leaders who were strong supporters of the president. With the defeats of so many HST allies in the Senate, the election was more of a setback for him than for his party. Truman recognized this as he watched the results roll in. Although the president frequently enjoyed his bourbon over a poker game with friends, an aide recalled that election night in 1950 was the only time he saw the chief executive using it to drown his sorrows.⁴⁵

Many reasons explained the 1950 Democrat losses. Truman staffers and some members of Congress blamed the DNC leadership of William Boyle, even though the party outperformed the Republicans in fund-raising from 1949 through 1951. One congressman grouched, “The only time the Democratic National Committee shows any signs of life is at the cocktail hour.” More specifically, some Democrats complained about the failure of the DNC to staff a permanent research division, which had effectively gathered facts to spotlight Republican inconsistencies and Democratic successes during the 1948 campaign. Another weakness was the selection of a rookie senator, Clinton Anderson, to chair the Senate Democratic campaign committee.

⁴⁵ Savage, 183 notes vulnerability of non-Southern liberals; Steering committee losses in Helen Dunphy to Edward J. Higgins, November 20, 1950; Box 595; Theodore F. Green Papers, MDLOC; Hamby, *Man of the People*, 551 relates aide George Elsey’s observations of Truman on election night.

Anderson had been a three-term member of the House and Truman's Secretary of Agriculture before his election to the Senate in 1948. However, since he was a senator from a small state with only one Senate campaign under his belt, putting Anderson in charge of all Senate races across the nation did not make sense.⁴⁶

At the time, Republicans and Democrats agreed with Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.'s assessment of the 1950 election as a "triumph for McCarthyism"; however, a closer examination indicates this was not the case. The fate of Democrats voting against the McCarran Act demonstrates this point. Supporting the bill did not provide political sanctuary for Democrats in the House, as twenty-three of the twenty-eight who backed the McCarran Act lost in November. Conversely, only five of twenty-one House members who opposed McCarran suffered defeats, and three of those five lost in quests for Senate seats.⁴⁷

While McCarthy liked to take credit for Scott Lucas's defeat in Illinois, other factors entered in. Senator Anderson and at least one historian blamed the majority leader's defeat on the highly publicized probe into organized crime led by Senator Estes Kefauver (D-TN), which uncovered corruption in the Chicago police department and pinned guilt on Lucas by association. Curiously, Lucas focused on farm issues, attempting either to cut into opponent Everett Dirksen's strength in rural areas or to deflect attention from the Kefauver investigation. Anderson and Truman had

⁴⁶ Congressman quoted in Savage, 71; Savage, 69-77 and Hechler, 132 describe complaints about Boyle and lack of a research division; William Benton, Statement to campaign supporters, December 13, 1950; Box 1052 Clinton P. Anderson Papers, MDLOC notes that Anderson replaced Boyle late in the campaign. The Democrats reinstated a research division in the 1952 presidential campaign.

⁴⁷ Schlesinger quoted in Hamby, *Man of the People*, 551; Data on McCarran Act from Fried, "Electoral Politics and McCarthyism," 221.

considerably different takes on how Lucas's support of the president contributed to the former's defeat. HST claimed the majority leader lost because he was too wishy-washy, while Anderson suggested Lucas's unquestioning support of the White House was to blame. In light of the electoral trends elsewhere, Anderson's explanation is closer to the reality. Democrats backing the president showed significant vulnerability in the election.⁴⁸

McCarthy's role in Tydings' defeat in Maryland, however, was undeniable. Senate Democrats therefore followed up with an inquiry into the unscrupulous methods the Republican used to engineer John Butler's surprise victory. As Senator Anderson pointed out in a letter to the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, the Democrats pushed for and obtained this probe as a matter of principle, for Tydings was not asking for a new election. The Democrats had no hopes of immediate political gain from the investigation; instead, they hoped to teach McCarthy and those employing his tactics a lesson for future campaigns. Imploring his colleagues to pursue the matter, Brian McMahan produced a copy of "Common Sense," a Fascist publication used against him in his contest, bearing the headline, "McMahan—Communist Dupe." The Connecticut senator warned his colleagues, "I beat it, boys, but maybe you can't in 1952." After investigating allegations of unlawful political fundraising practices, the use of fraudulent campaign literature and improper involvement by groups outside the state of Maryland in Butler's organization, a Senate Rules subcommittee agreed that Tydings had a

⁴⁸ Anderson, 106-7 and Fried, "Electoral Politics and McCarthyism," 216 discuss effect of Kefauver probe; Various letters between Anderson and Lucas; Box 1052; Clinton P. Anderson Papers, MDLOC; Truman's view of Lucas's defeat in Robert H. Ferrell, ed., *Off the Record: The Private Papers of Harry S. Truman* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1980), 282-3.

legitimate complaint. Although the subcommittee called the Butler campaign's tactics "despicable" and declared McCarthy played a "leading and potent" role, the Senate stopped short of denying the victor his seat or formally censuring either of the two. An outraged Senator Benton reacted to the report by delivering the "most outspoken attack on McCarthy that had ever been heard in Congress," submitting a resolution demanding the Wisconsin senator's resignation. Benton's outburst sparked a chorus of "amens" from a trio of fellow Democrats and commendation from columnist Drew Pearson for accurately documenting McCarthy's falsehoods. However, the Democrat's colleagues did not immediately leap to his defense and one of them half-jokingly remarked that the Benton-McCarthy feud could produce the "ideal double murder."⁴⁹

McCarthy's direct effect on the 1950 elections was spotty, but this was not the perception in Congress or the rest of the nation at the time. Even though an investigative subcommittee *unanimously* agreed the Wisconsin senator had acted unethically and unlawfully in the Maryland senate campaign, the Senate, with its Democratic majority, let him off with a slap on the hands. *Newsweek* aptly declared, "Democrats Fume at McCarthy, But He Has Them Terrorized."⁵⁰

The 1950 election results also stiffened the resolve of Truman's congressional enemies, adding to the challenges of keeping his party together during wartime. The president accurately described Congress as nominally controlled by Democrats, but

⁴⁹ Clinton Anderson to Irving Dilliard (of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*), January 10, 1951; Box 519; Anderson Papers, MDLOC; Charges against McCarthy in Savage, 180; McMahon quoted in Pearson, Drew, "Campaign Photo Rouses Ire," *Washington Post*, 9 January 1951, p. B13; Benton's initiative in Pearson, Drew, "McCarthy Ouster Move Detailed," *Washington Post*, 11 August 1951, p. B13; Unidentified Democratic senator quoted in Oshinsky, 218.

⁵⁰ "Democrats Fume at McCarthy, But He Has Them Terrorized," *Newsweek*, August 20, 1951, p. 19.

conceded, “The majority is made up of Republicans and recalcitrant Southern ‘Democrats’—who are not Democrats.” He continued, “My ‘friend,’ Harry Byrd [D-VA] says he has the professional southerners lined up against Yugoslav Aid. Wonder if he’d like being branded Stalin’s No. 2 helper in the Senate.” Although people like Rep. Hale Boggs (D-LA) informally organized small groups of legislators to support Truman, the president faced an even steeper uphill battle as the 82nd Congress went to work.⁵¹

The elections thus affected the dynamics of lawmaking on Capitol Hill. In the House, the Democrats’ numerical edge slipped from 92 to 36, and Truman’s opponents took this as a cue to flex their political muscles. On Congress’s first day in session in 1951, Edward E. Cox (D-GA) proposed a vote to end the 21-day rule, which would restore the power of the Rules Committee to bottle up legislation indefinitely. Majority Leader John McCormack and Adolf J. Sabath (D-IL), the dean of the House, spearheaded the effort to protect the rule. As chairman of the Rules Committee, Sabath’s support for the rule seems surprising, since its repeal would restore enormous power to his panel. However, with five Southern Democrats (of eight total) on the Rules Committee joining forces with the four Republican members, the chairman could not ensure that Truman’s legislation would reach the House floor for a vote. Sabath therefore decided that the best way to support HST was to back the rule, allowing committee chairs to force floor votes on bills not acted upon by the Rules Committee within three weeks. When the president’s congressional allies tried to persuade their

⁵¹ Truman diary entry, November 30, 1950; PSF: Longhand Notes File, November 30, 1950 folder; Truman Papers, HSTL; Boggs’ activities in Charles Murphy to Truman, May 19, 1951; PSF: General File, Meetings: White House, Special folder; Truman Papers, HSTL.

colleagues to keep the rule, his opponents countered that Fair Deal initiatives such as national health insurance and the Brannan plan for agricultural assistance were the real reasons behind the dispute. At the mention of these programs, the entire floor demanded a vote to end the rule. The administration lost decisively, 244 to 179, with 92 (of 235) Democrats joining 152 Republicans in voting to restore power to the Rules Committee, even though House Speaker Sam Rayburn and Majority Leader John McCormack were strong administration allies. An examination of the Southern states having only Democrats in their congressional delegations indicates the antipathy towards Truman. Only 19 of 99 Dixie Democrats voted to back the president and retain the rule. McCormack observed that Republicans appeared content to ride along on “the tail of the Dixiecrat kites.”⁵²

Like Adolph Sabath, the scarce Truman allies chairing other committees struggled to maintain control during and after the 1950 campaigns. In May 1950, House Foreign Affairs Committee chairman John Kee (D-WV) complained to Truman and Secretary of State Acheson that fellow Democrats on his committee were causing problems. Early in 1951, Clarence Cannon (D-MO), the powerful chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, faced open revolt as a group of Democrats allied with Republicans voted to remove his power to name members of subcommittees. Such a maneuver would have empowered them to run the committee rather than Cannon.

⁵² Description of the vote in Charles Maylon to Matthew Connelly, January 4, 1951; PSF: General File- Maylon, Charles folder; Truman Papers, HSTL; Data on Southern defections in David D. Lloyd to Charles Murphy, January 20, 1951; Chronological File, January 1949-May 1953 folder 1; David D. Lloyd Papers, HSTL; McCormack quoted in “The Coalition Reigns,” *New Republic*, January 15, 1951, p. 7.

Fortunately for the chairman, the mutiny lasted only a few days, probably due to his long tenure in the House.⁵³

Under Secretary of State James E. Webb tried to help the president improve his relationship with Southern senators shortly after the elections. A North Carolinian experienced in regional politics, Webb explained that the Southerners felt they were spending a lot of energy defending themselves politically against Truman's civil rights initiatives, and pointed out that they had generally supported the president's foreign policy. (For example, the Senate's Southern leader, Richard Russell, shared the president's belief in the futility of funding Chiang Kai-Shek by the late 1940s.) Suggesting the administration could find common ground with the Southerners in areas other than racial issues, the under secretary floated a "what if" scenario in which Truman and Russell would agree to warn each other privately of impending disagreements over policy before going public with them. HST, who once disparaged Russell as "the great Georgian Senator, representative of the National Chamber of Congress, the Coca-Cola Company, etc.," expressed appreciation for the letter but little else. While there is no known evidence of a rapprochement between the two along these lines, Russell later helped the administration immensely through his conduct of the Senate inquiry into the firing of General MacArthur. However, the residual enmity

⁵³ Memorandum of Conversation with President and Judge Kee," May 4, 1951; Memoranda of Conversation File, May-June 1950 folder, Dean Acheson Papers, HSTL; Charles S. Murphy to Truman, February 3, 1951; Truman-memos to and from the President, 1947-53 folder 4 of 5, Charles S. Murphy Papers, HSTL; Ryan, Edward F., "Cannon's Face Winning Fame on TV Screen," *Washington Post*, 26 July 1952, p. 3.

between the president and the South over civil rights probably was too much for either the Georgian or Truman to overcome.⁵⁴

This hostility manifested itself in Congress as Dixie Democrats formed coalitions to bury Truman's Fair Deal agenda. Southerners organized the "Committee of 78," an unofficial opposition group opposing the pro-Truman leaders in both houses. In addition, House Democrats from the 11 former Confederate states and Kentucky headed by William G. Colmer (MS) built a Dixiecrat-Republican alliance in early 1951 that became an imposing political force. Originally formed to oppose civil rights legislation, the scope of the group grew to controlling the fate of all appropriations bills. Each state had a designated member of this secret committee and most named an alternate as well. A subset of these Democrats formed a "Liaison Committee" with key Republicans, who supplied a GOP staffer to scrutinize appropriations bills and plan amendments as needed.⁵⁵

This alliance grew powerful enough to challenge Sam Rayburn. After personally taking the floor to push for a project for his district, the speaker looked on in dismay as his colleagues scuttled it. Rayburn reportedly cornered Rep. Cox and said, "Gene, you knew that item was my pet baby. Why did you oppose it?" Cox replied, "Sam, you should have informed our group that you were interested in this item." Incredulously, Rayburn asked, "What group?" Cox retorted, "Our special group to consider what items

⁵⁴ Webb to Truman, December 11, 1950; PSF: Political File, S folder, Truman Papers, HSTL; Truman quoted in Ferrell, *Harry S. Truman*, 291; Russell's views in Gilbert C. Fite, *Richard B. Russell, Jr., Senator from Georgia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 251.

⁵⁵ "What's Happening in Taxation and Government," *What's Happening in Washington*, September 4, 1950; 1950 Congressmen III folder, Sam Rayburn Papers, CAH.

should be defeated.” According to an observer, the speaker was “infuriated to the point that he had to restrain himself to keep from taking a swing at Cox.” All House Democrats knew the project was important to Rayburn, and that the purpose of killing it was to “chastise” him. This defeat of the Texan’s bill, along with his ignorance about the coalition’s existence, illustrated how far the Truman’s congressional allies had fallen in political influence.⁵⁶

Democratic unity faced another challenge shortly after the elections when the Chinese drove the U.N. forces from North Korea. After anticipating MacArthur’s pledge to have the troops home for Christmas, America’s misfortunes in Korea became particularly distasteful. As was the case following the outbreak of the war, Dean Acheson became the lightning rod for attacks against the administration. Before the Christmas recess, both the Senate and the House Republican Conferences submitted resolutions to Truman demanding that he fire Acheson because the secretary had lost the support of Congress and the American public.

The secretary of state also lost the support of congressional Democrats—again. Under Secretary Webb conceded that a big part of the problem was the bombardment of letters from the public to their legislators demanding Acheson’s resignation. As columnist James Reston noted, Acheson’s problem was not as much with the Republicans as with Democrats who, due to the election results, had decided he had become a drag on the party and therefore needed step down. Of six Democratic senators up for re-election in 1950 who had strongly backed Acheson, only three won: Herbert

⁵⁶ Memorandum (author unknown), “Republican-Dixiecrat Coalition,” April 30, 1951; PSF: General File-Boyle, William folder; Truman Papers, HSTL.

Lehman of New York, and William Benton and Brien McMahon of Connecticut. Some Republican operatives even suggested easing off the Acheson attacks, believing they could avoid blame for eliminating the secretary by allowing the president's party to do the job. Webb told the White House of the need to recharge the Democrats, saying many were "disturbed in their own minds." Although the under secretary wisely recommended enlisting moderate Democrats such as Carl Hayden, Lister Hill and Harley Kilgore rather than staunch Trumanites to defend Acheson, there is no evidence that they stepped forward or that Truman asked them to do so. A handful of House Democrats endorsed Secretary Acheson, with one declaring, "He and his accomplishments will live in history long after the names of his detractors are forgotten." In the Senate, however, "not one Democrat rose . . . to defend Acheson."⁵⁷

Rep. Richard Bolling (D-MO) blamed public animosity towards the State Department on a combination of things. In analyzing the demise of Democrats in the recent congressional elections, Boling claimed that Republicans intentionally employed the "McCarthy technique of big lies, little lies, half-truths" to confuse the public about the administration's foreign policy aims. Since he believed that voters who understood Truman's policies usually supported the president, Boling saw the "get Acheson" movement as an education problem. Moreover, he attributed confusion among the

⁵⁷ Reston, James, "Democrats' Election Losses Weaken Acheson's Position," *NYT*, 9 November 1950, p. 28; James Webb to Charles Murphy, "Action by the Senate Republican Conference," December 7, 1950; State, Department of folder; Charles S. Murphy Papers, HSTL; "He and his accomplishments" and "not one Democrat" in "Republicans," *Time*, December 18, 1950, p. 17.

voters to their Democratic legislators, admitting in a letter to HST that it was “an unfortunate fact that a great many politicians do not . . . understand our foreign policy.”⁵⁸

This problem festered for the Democrats as the Korean conflict continued. Limited war was a new concept to the American public and to its political leaders. On the heels of the unconditional surrender of America’s World War II foes, how could the administration convince the electorate that total war against North Korea and China was not a wise objective, particularly when the top military commander in the field advocated just that? As a result, most Democrats stood aside and allowed Truman to take the heat as he stood firmly behind his Secretary of State. However, the furor over Acheson in late 1950 paled in the face of the firestorm the commander in chief would ignite just a few months later, straining Democrat Party unity yet again.

⁵⁸ Richard Bolling to Truman, December 18, 1950; PPF 4379, Truman Papers, HSTL.

CHAPTER III

A FALLEN ICON AND A LOST ELECTION, 1951-1952

“President Truman must be impeached and convicted,” proclaimed the front page of the *Chicago Tribune* the day after the president fired General Douglas MacArthur from his U. N. command in Korea. Truman, the paper continued, was “unfit, morally and mentally, for this high office.” MacArthur’s dismissal heralded the largest outpouring of public outrage against HST during his presidency. Yet the furor evaporated quickly, thanks to a helping hand from an unexpected source.¹

Other challenges unfolded as HST struggled to keep the Democrats together during his final two years in office. Charges of corruption persisted against the White House, giving political ammunition to the president’s detractors within the party. Joseph McCarthy and his allies in both parties had not gone away, either, and seemed positioned to capitalize on the sacking of MacArthur. These issues, along with the ongoing Southern resentment of Truman seemed capable of sweeping the Democrats from power in the 1952 elections, despite the president’s early withdrawal from the race. The Korean War also returned to prominence as the campaign heated up between Adlai Stevenson and Dwight Eisenhower. This chapter analyzes the forces tearing at Democratic unanimity during the final two years of the Truman presidency, and describes how the curtain fell on the Democrats’ two-decade reign in Washington.

On April 11, 1951, the commander in chief shocked the nation by terminating General MacArthur for insubordination. The general had made several public criticisms

¹ “Impeach Truman,” *Chicago Tribune*, 12 April 1951, p. 1.

of American foreign policy. Early in the war, he openly advocated using the Chinese Nationalist forces in the U.N. contingent and urged a vigorous defense of Formosa against a possible Communist attack, which contradicted the administration's intent to keep the Nationalists out of the war. Defying the president's subsequent ban on unauthorized statements to the press, the general later publicly complained about the "existing limitations upon our freedom of counter-offensive actions." In the spring of 1951, MacArthur wrote to House Minority Leader Joe Martin promoting expansion of the war into mainland China. The letter, read into the *Congressional Record* on April 5, was the last straw. Truman fired him.²

Immediately, thousands of letters and telegrams swamped the White House, initially running two to one against the president. HST remained unflappable, writing in his diary, "Quite an explosion. Was expected but I had to act. Telegrams and letters of abuse by the dozen." In the midst of the unprecedented public tumult, Republicans demanded an inquiry designed to put the president's Far East foreign policy on the hot seat. The Senate decided on joint hearings of the Armed Services and Foreign Relations committees.³

One senator's response to a disgruntled citizen portrayed the prevailing public view of MacArthur's firing. Answering a constituent who demanded to know why Truman rejected the general's attempt to enlist the help of the Nationalist Chinese in the

²Truman's gag order in Dennis D. Wainstock, *Truman, MacArthur, and the Korean War* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999), 116; "Text of MacArthur Statement on Korea," *NYT*, 8 March 1951, p. 3.

³ Mail distribution described in William J. Hopkins, Memorandum for the President, May 8, 1951 in Dennis Merrill, ed., *The Korean War: President Truman's Dismissal of General Douglas MacArthur*, vol. 20 of *Documentary History of the Truman Presidency* (University Publications of America, 1997), 227; Truman quoted in Hamby, *Man of the People*, 557.

fight against the Communists, Senator Clinton Anderson pointed out that Chiang Kai-shek had already squandered four billion dollars in arms and supplies from the West. He had also frittered away an army of four million in losing the Chinese civil war. Anderson added that Chiang had never asked to land troops in China and was “delighted to remain on Formosa.” The senator concluded, “You would think that Generalissimo Chiang was a ferocious bulldog tied by a leash which is held by the United States and that if we would just let go . . . he would paddle across the water, take on the Chinese Communists and they would lay down their arms.”⁴

In a replay of December 1950, MacArthur’s firing sparked Republican calls for Dean Acheson’s scalp. This time, Acheson’s crime was creating policies the general did not like. Joseph McCarthy proclaimed the secretary should resign and go to the Soviet Union, “for which you have been struggling and fighting so long.” Few Democrats defended the secretary. In a letter to Truman, Senator William Benton reported that Eleanor Roosevelt was pleading with him to participate in a debate on her television program because, “The Republicans are eager to talk and I can’t find Democratic senators to talk against them.”⁵

Two freshman Democratic senators, however, were ready to spar with Republicans--using their fists. Hubert Humphrey (MN) and Herbert Lehman (NY) took the excitement up a notch in the aftermath of MacArthur’s firing by getting into a “little brawl” with Republican Homer Capehart (IN) in a Senate recording studio following a

⁴ Clinton Anderson to Dr. Martin H. Bartlett, April 17, 1951; Box 515; Clinton P. Anderson Papers, MDLOC.

⁵ McCarthy quoted in Hamby, *Man of the People*, 564; Benton to Truman, April 30, 1951; PSF: General File, Benton, William-U.S. Senate folder; Truman Papers, HSTL.

foreign policy debate on the radio program, “Meet Your Congress.” Even though the 53 year-old Capehart weighed in at 220 pounds, giving him advantages of 60 pounds in weight over Humphrey and 20 years in youth over Lehman, the senate rookies waded into battle like prizefighters. The issue causing the altercation was the wisdom of Acheson’s refusal to bring Chinese Nationalists into the war, a view that many Republicans, like Capehart, despised. When Lehman and Humphrey rejected the Indiana Republican’s argument, he said he could only conclude that they were communist sympathizers. As soon as the broadcast ended, Humphrey angrily confronted Capehart, calling him a son of a bitch and blasting the Republican for “vilification, character assassination, and malicious unfounded” statements. Capehart thereupon grabbed Humphrey by the arm and raised his fist to club the Minnesotan before Lehman and others stepped in to prevent any bloodletting. Such were the hazards Democrats faced when defending Acheson policies. Regarding his adversaries, Lehman noted, “Anybody who disagrees . . . is dubbed a Communist.”⁶

A surprise policy reversal by Acheson’s own department added to the Democrats’ problems. In a May 1951 speech, Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs Dean Rusk affirmed American support for the Chinese Nationalists, saying the U.S. would not “acquiesce in the degradation that is being forced upon them,” adding that they would “continue to receive important aid and assistance from the United States.” Rusk’s remarks attracted significant attention, and rightfully so, since

⁶“A little brawl” in “Cabinet Meeting, Monday, April 23, 1951,” Box 2; April 1951 folder; Matthew Connelly Papers, HSTL; Lehman quoted in Ryan, Edward F., “Sens. Capehart, Humphrey, Lehman Scuffle,” *Washington Post*, 21 April 1951, p. 1. Capehart attributes the “son of a bitch” comment to Humphrey in Ryan’s report. Humphrey quoted in Nevins, 403.

Acheson's China white paper in 1949 had concluded that such aid no longer made sense. The State Department swiftly issued a statement insisting that Rusk's remarks did not mean a policy change, further muddying the waters. One Democrat telegraphed Truman that Rusk's speech "seems worse than MacArthur's program," adding that in the upcoming elections, the State Department's constant "apologizing and backing water" would "get a lot of Democrats beat unnecessarily."⁷

Many Democrats jumped on the Republican bandwagon to oust the Secretary of State. Rep. Omar Burlison (D-TX), correctly believing there was no chance that he could convince Truman to fire Acheson, sent a private letter to the secretary asking him to resign, citing a loss of confidence in his leadership. Later, he released the letter to the press. Senator Paul Douglas (D-IL), a Fair Deal ally of the president, agreed that Acheson should leave, declaring, "In a war you recognize your casualty, take him out of the field and put him in a field hospital." The Illinois senator claimed he had even asked Republicans to ease up on their sniping about the secretary to enable him to resign honorably. Just before Acheson testified at the MacArthur hearings, a cohort of influential congressional Democrats reportedly visited Truman to ask for the secretary's resignation, including Senate Majority Leader Ernest McFarland, Senate Foreign Relations Committee chairman Tom Connally, Senate Democratic Whip Lyndon Johnson, Senate Campaign Committee chairman Clinton Anderson, House Majority

⁷ Rusk quoted in Porter, Russell, "Rusk Hints U.S. Aid to Revolt in China," *NYT*, 19 May 1951, p. 1. For examples of the media attention Rusk generated, see Childs, Marquis, "Another China Policy," *Washington Post*, 23 May 1951, p. 15 and Editorial, "Our Changing China Policy," *NYT*, 19 May 1951, p. 11; "Policy Change On China War Denied Here," *Washington Post*, 22 May 1951, p. 1; Democrat Maury Maverick quoted in Maverick to Truman, May 22, 1951; PSF: General File, M (1 of 2-Ma-Me) folder, Truman Papers, HSTL.

Leader John McCormack, and House Speaker Sam Rayburn. A knowledgeable Senate staffer observing Acheson's testimony at the hearings noted that several senators on the committee clearly were out to get the secretary, who increasingly looked like an albatross for the Democrats.⁸

The attacks on Dean Acheson took their toll on the Truman's allies. Rayburn, normally a beacon of optimism, lamented to his old friend, former Vice President John Nance Garner that the Democrats were "as low as the bottom of the ocean now and do make many mistakes." John A. Carroll, a former congressman added to the White House staff in 1951, wrote that the "liberal Democratic forces seem to have lost their fighting spirit."⁹

Yet, the controversy swirling around Acheson subsided again during the MacArthur hearings, managed by Senator Russell. Chairman of the Armed Services Committee, Russell intentionally jockeyed for leadership of the joint MacArthur hearings, aiming to complete the proceedings with minimal political damage to his party. He probably also saw this as an opportunity to bolster his presidential candidacy for 1952. The Georgian ran the hearings with a minimum of controversy, and banned

⁸ Burlison to Acheson, May 7, 1951; Personal Correspondence File, A-B folder, Dean Acheson Papers, HSTL; "Acheson Won't Resign till Truman Asks, He Repeats," *Washington Post*, 17 May 1951, p. 5; "Acheson Is 'Liability,' Senator Douglas Says," *NYT*, 27 May 1951, p. 1; Alsop, Stewart, "Acheson: Not Whether But When," *Washington Post*, 2 June 1951, p. 7. Anderson responded to Alsop's article with a letter to the editor of the *Washington Post*, denying his participation in the meeting. See Clinton Anderson to Editor, *Washington Post*, June 6, 1951; Box 38; Anderson Papers, MDLOC. Francis O. Wilcox Diary entry, June 1, 1951; Diary, 1951-1952 folder, Francis Wilcox Papers, HSTL. Wilcox, the key congressional aide mentioned, was Chief of Staff of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee from 1947-1955, serving the committee under both Democratic and Republican control. He therefore had no political ax to grind in his observations, and likely gave a fair assessment of Acheson's treatment in the hearings. Sam Rayburn to George Nokes, July 28, 1951 and Nokes to Rayburn, July 19, 1951; 1951 Political-National folder, Sam Rayburn Papers, CAH indicates the political pressures caused by Acheson even at the local political level.

⁹ Rayburn to Garner, May 19, 1951; Correspondence: Presidents, Vice Presidents, and Others, 1951-1952 folder; Sam Rayburn Papers, CAH; John A. Carroll to Truman, "Suggestions for This Evening's Meeting," July 10, 1951; Truman-Memos to and from the President, 1947-52 folder; Charles S. Murphy Papers, HSTL.

reporters, microphones and cameras from the hearing room. By avoiding live television broadcasts that could have been viewed by some 30 million Americans, Russell defused the emotions of the moment, focusing the public on the content of the transcripts released daily. Democrats probed the war hero during his testimony courteously, but thoroughly. Under Russell's leadership, the inquiry eventually exposed MacArthur's insubordination and ignorance of international issues outside the Far East, dousing the political firestorm over the general's removal. The leader of the Southern Democrats became, in one historian's words, the "hidden rock against which MacArthur was shattered."¹⁰

By August, the political climate had changed considerably. When Republicans attempted to remove Acheson by cutting off his salary as part of an appropriations bill, the Democrats dug in their heels. Rep. John J. Rooney (D-NY) led the charge on the House floor, shouting that the people of his district did not like "slippery, snide, and sharp practices," and accusing the Republicans of using "lynching" tactics against the secretary. The House defeated the measure 171-81 with only two Democrats voting for it, a remarkable turnabout in the party's support for Acheson.¹¹

The MacArthur hearings thus solved a major public relations problem for the Truman administration surprisingly quickly, blunting the assaults on the Secretary of State. Senator Russell's management of these proceedings underscored his political

¹⁰ Fite, 255-264 describes Russell's desire to head the committee and his strategy for leading it; Potential television audience in David Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter: America During the Korean War* (New York: Hyperion, 2007), 612; "Hidden rock" in Sidney Hyman, *The Lives of William Benton* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1969), 448.

¹¹ Rooney quoted in "Needling Acheson," *Newsweek*, August 6, 1951, p. 17.

importance to Truman as a consistent supporter of the president's foreign policies. By the fall of 1951, the ruckus over the firing of MacArthur had faded from the public's consciousness like an "old soldier," as did the outcry for Acheson's head.

Yet, the Democrats had other issues threatening to fracture the party during the last two years of the Truman administration--corruption scandals collectively dubbed the "mess in Washington." In May 1950, Senator Estes Kefauver (D-TN) launched an inquiry into organized crime. *Washington Post* publisher Philip Graham suggested it to Kefauver as a way to further his political ambitions. It worked. The Tennessean's investigation got plenty of publicity, with some of the hearings broadcast on the brand-new medium of the day, television. Moreover, the probe kept Kefauver's name in the newspapers for a long time as the hearings dragged on until the end of 1951, just in time for the 1952 campaign season.¹²

The president never thought much of Kefauver or his crusade against organized crime, seeing the investigation as a political move to enhance the senator's national image. Truman described the Tennessean as having "had no reputation for anything in particular but his being unable to understand what was going on" in Congress, and saw Kefauver's inquiry as divisive to the party. HST complained that the committee unfairly tainted him in its muckraking expedition in East St. Louis, Illinois, giving "the President of the United States . . . all the credit for Illinois crime." Accusing the Tennessee senator

¹² Graham's role in Savage, 167.

of profiting on speeches and book sales from his investigation, Truman concluded, “What a President this demagogic dumb bell would make!”¹³

The Kefauver probe, which took its traveling show to some fourteen cities, revealed little of substance. It found local and state government officials facilitating illegal gambling operations, which came as no surprise to the local residents. However, the inquiry made for great television, attracting an estimated 20-30 million viewers anxious to see notorious crime figures such as Greasy Thumb Guzik and Frank Costello (seeing only his hands and hearing his raspy voice), as well as Virginia Hill, a former actress and mistress of famed Las Vegas figure Bugsy Siegel. The closest the investigation got to Truman was through the testimony of William O’Dwyer, a former mayor of New York City now serving as a U.S. diplomat. O’Dwyer admitted to appointing friends and relatives of known gangsters to political office during his stint as mayor, which was one of the issues forcing him to resign, making him a convenient choice as the ambassador to Mexico. HST steadfastly refused to recall the ex-mayor from his diplomatic post, giving him a ringing endorsement for being “a fighter, just like I am.” The president’s backing of O’Dwyer, coupled with Kefauver’s visit to Kansas City reminding people of Truman’s roots in machine politics, began to convince the public to believe there was a mess in Washington.¹⁴

¹³ Ferrell, ed., *Off the Record*, 260-1.

¹⁴ Hearings described in Savage, 168-9 and Hamby, *Man of the People*, 585-8; Truman quoted in Hamby, *Man of the People*, 588. The Kefauver hearings caught the public’s fancy. For example, Senator Theodore Green’s papers include 10-20 letters from constituents supporting extending the hearings with no letters opposed. See “Misc. Legislation #2” folder; Box 2; Theodore F. Green papers, MDLOC.

Influence peddling by members of his administration produced another corruption scandal pestering Truman. Federal officials were obtaining government contracts for businesses and, as compensation for their services, charging a five percent cut of the contract, a down payment and a monthly retainer fee. Congress launched several investigations of the “five percenters,” including one headed by Senator William Fulbright (D-AR) that found questionable dealings with the Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC). Initially created to make federal loans to help banks and industrial concerns recover from the Great Depression, the RFC had deteriorated, as exemplified by a case uncovered by the Fulbright committee. Responding to a housing shortage, the RFC made a multi-million dollar loan to the Lustron Corporation to build prefabricated homes. After the RFC finalized the loan, its chief examiner, E. Merl Young, a Missourian and former Senate aide to Truman, left the agency to go to work for Lustron. Young’s new employer paid him a handsomely—some two and a half times his RFC salary. The inquiry also discovered Young had given his wife, a White House stenographer, a \$9,540 mink coat paid for by a Lustron lawyer. Lustron eventually went bankrupt and defaulted on its RFC loan. To the public, it looked like Truman’s Missouri cronies were working for the federal government, taking bribes and buying their spouses mink coats with the proceeds, an image that the Republicans hammered upon during the 1952 campaign.¹⁵

The Lustron incident did not smell right to the investigating committee. When the panel discovered Young’s activities, Fulbright and two other committee members

¹⁵ Investigation details from Ferrell, *Harry S. Truman*, 359-63; Young’s background in Savage, 186.

took their findings to Truman to try to minimize the political damage, asking him to do something to reform the RFC. The president, however, saw the investigation as a personal attack, and later vented his anger on a committee member. Pulling him from a meeting, HST said, “The real crooks and influence peddlers were members of this committee, as we might soon find out,” adding that “a great many members of Congress had accepted fees for their influence in getting R.F.C. loans for their constituents.” Truman proceeded to dig up correspondence between members of Congress and the RFC, including loans Fulbright obtained for a resort hotel in his home state. The chief executive’s reaction largely came from his personal dislike for Fulbright stemming from previous political clashes, privately calling him “Senator Halfbright” and “an overeducated Oxford s.o.b.” Fulbright, concluding that the president did not intend to reform the RFC, submitted the committee’s preliminary report in February 1951. Its title was short and devastating: “Favoritism and Influence.”¹⁶

Although the Fulbright committee probe dragged on for months, hearing testimony from a number of administration officials, the only high-level casualty was DNC chairman William Boyle, Jr., who resigned in October 1951. Yet, the RFC investigation was not the end of the corruption story. Improprieties in the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) and the tax division of the Justice Department produced more headaches for Truman and his party. As Truman aide Ken Hechler wrote, “The situation

¹⁶ Truman quoted in Ferrell, *Harry S. Truman*, 363; Andrew J. Dunar, *The Truman Scandals and the Politics of Morality* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1984), 89 notes that Fulbright had previously spoken out against RFC loans to build hotels, making him sensitive to Truman’s charges.

with five per centers and the RFC was penny-ante stuff,” compared to the tax agency scandals.¹⁷

A congressional investigation into the BIR produced startling discoveries. Officials in the agency showed favoritism to gamblers under investigation for tax evasion and used the department to dole out political patronage. Ultimately, the government convicted a number of BIR employees of bribery, extortion, embezzlement and, to the outrage of American taxpayers, tax evasion. The culprits included about ten collectors overseeing BIR activities in large cities throughout the U.S. All of them were products of political machines, casting an additional shadow over the Truman administration due to the president’s longtime ties to the Pendergast machine based in Kansas City.¹⁸

Conditions within the tax division of the Justice Department were no better. A House probe learned that Theron Lamar Caudle, head of the division, accepted gifts from tax lawyers and business people under investigation for tax violations, including a new car, plane trips to Florida, and, again, mink coats. Attorney General Howard McGrath did little when investigators began closing in on Caudle, forcing Truman to go around McGrath and terminate Caudle himself. Making matters worse, the Attorney General refused to cooperate with an assistant hired to ferret out the problems uncovered by Congress. HST then asked McGrath for his resignation, firing him over the telephone

¹⁷ Hechler, 197.

¹⁸ Results of BIR investigations in Hamby, *Man of the People*, 588-9; Links of culprits to political machines in Ferrell, *Harry S. Truman*, 364. Throughout his political career, Truman defended himself against charges of ties to political machines due to his association with the Pendergasts. The president had friendly relations with the Pendergast organization, but kept his hands clean otherwise.

during the president's staff meeting. Truman's appointments secretary, Matt Connelly, eventually served prison time for activities associated with the tax division scandal.

Unlike the organized crime and five percenter investigations, the chief executive actually responded to the tax probes by proposing BIR reforms, probably due to the larger number of people who lost their jobs and earned criminal convictions. The fact that the tax scandals were emerging as a hot button issue for the electorate with the 1952 election looming contributed as well. Yet, Truman's response was too late to keep corruption charges out of the Republicans' arsenal.¹⁹

Of the corruption issues publicized by the Kefauver, RFC and BIR probes, the latter produced the loudest public outcry. Because the BIR and Justice Department scandals surfaced as Truman was pushing through frequent tax increases to support the Korean War and overall defense build-up, Americans became particularly incensed to learn that government officials were dodging their income taxes and helping their cronies do the same. Moreover, a Gallup poll reported that 82 percent of Americans knew about the BIR corruption probe, an exceptionally high level of awareness.

"Indignation against any monkey business in the collection of income taxes," according to one assessment, was "bound to be as hot as a blow torch." The report continued that the administration had suffered "substantial damage" due to the public perception about

¹⁹ Caudle details in Savage, 188; McGrath resignation particulars in Ferrell, *Harry S. Truman*, 368.

the mink coats, plane trips and tax evasion, suggesting problems in the 1952 campaign unless the president “gets rid of the smoke and the smell by putting out some fires.”²⁰

Due to the fallout from the investigations and scandals, the Republicans found a third prong for their 1952 campaign strategy to go along with the issues of the Korean War and Communism they had used two years earlier: Corruption. The Republicans hoped their “K₁C₂” formula would regain control of the White House and Congress for the first time in decades.

The Democrats, however, handed the GOP another weapon that was a hangover from the 1948 election, the rebellion of the Southern wing of the party against the Truman liberals. Many Southern Democrats made it clear they would not support Harry Truman in 1952 for another term under any circumstances. At a Jefferson-Jackson Day dinner in June 1951, Senator Harry F. Byrd (VA) vowed to oppose any Fair Dealer, particularly the president. Calling on Democrats to restore a convention rule that would aid Southern influence by requiring a two-thirds majority to select a candidate, Byrd, sounding like Truman’s worst Republican enemies, accused the administration of “corruption,” “irresponsibility,” and “moral and ethical turpitude.”²¹

Truman loyalists fought back. At New York’s Democratic state committee gathering a few days later, state chairman Paul Fitzpatrick counterattacked, lambasting the “infamous, reactionary Dixiecrats” for making their “unholy alliance” with

²⁰ Poll data from “Opinion Surveys on Issues,” Frank McKinney to Democratic National Committee, February 8, 1952; Box 666; Theodore Green Papers, MDLOC; UAW Report from Paul Sifton to Abraham A. Ribicoff, January 7, 1952, pp. xiii-xiv; Box 5; Abraham A. Ribicoff Papers, MDLOC assessed the effects of the scandals.

²¹ “Democrats Afraid Truman Will Run,” *Newsweek*, July 9, 1951, p. 22.

Republicans to kill the Fair Deal. Friction between the Fair Dealers and their Dixiecrat opponents heated up at the November 1951 Southern Governors Conference in Hot Springs, Arkansas. Ironically, this meeting traditionally had avoided political speechmaking, but the Southerners broke this precedent in flamboyant fashion. The loyalists, led by host Governor Sid McMath, maneuvered behind the scenes to arrange for House Speaker Sam Rayburn to speak, without bothering to seek approval from states-righters such as Governor James Byrnes of South Carolina. Responding to criticism for breaking the Southern governors' tradition of avoiding partisanship at their meeting, McMath retorted that the key speaker at the group's 1949 gathering was Governor Byrnes, who had used the occasion to berate the Truman administration. Rayburn gave his audience a strong admonition to be loyal to the Democratic Party, defending its record since the New Deal era. The Speaker went on to remind the governors that Southern Democrats controlled key committees in Congress, and electing a Republican president in 1952 would jeopardize their power. Harkening back to 1948, he urged the former Dixiecrats in his audience to recall the futility of backing a third party candidate and invoked patriotism as the incentive to back the president regardless of whether they loved or hated President Truman.²²

Rayburn's speech brought Democratic internal strife into the open. "The best way to avoid a split in the party is for Mr. Truman not to be nominated," grumbled Georgia's governor, Herman Talmadge, and Texas Governor Allan Shivers added,

²² Fitzpatrick quoted in "Democrats Afraid Truman Will Run," *Newsweek*, July 9, 1951, p. 22; Details from governors' meeting in Duckworth, Allen, "Byrnes Backing Shivers to Run South's Revolt," *Dallas Morning News*, 15 November 1951, p. 1 and Duckworth, "Maryland's Chief Snubs Texan's Talk," *Dallas Morning News*, 13 November 1951, p. 1.

“Some fellow once wrote, ‘methinks thou protests thy virtue too loudly’.” Conveniently forgetting his 1949 speech to the group, Byrnes accused Rayburn of being the one to break the Southern Governors’ tradition of avoiding political discussion. Despite the rift it exposed in the party, Rayburn expressed no remorse, writing a friend, “I do not think I enjoyed making a speech in my life more . . . especially to the Dixiecrat crowd of them. . . . I told some of them if they were tired of hearing that kind of speech they would get more tired between now and 1952.” President Truman, of course, loved the speaker’s message, telling Rayburn it “hit some people in the raw in exactly the right place.”²³

Truman and Rayburn enjoyed getting their digs in against the former Dixiecrats, but this attack did not make political sense. While the president and the speaker had endured challenges to their leadership of the party through the rejection of the 21-day rule in the House and the formation of anti-Truman coalitions, these governors were not direct participants in the Democrats’ intra-party clashes in Washington. It therefore may have been easier mend the party’s fences through dialogue with the governors than with the Trumanites’ Democratic adversaries in Congress. Despite Governor Byrnes’ ongoing feud with the president, Rayburn could have taken a more conciliatory stance towards the others that might have encouraged party unity. This confrontation also was a bad idea because it occurred only six months after Senator Russell had led the MacArthur hearings to a conclusion that proved very helpful to HST. The Georgian

²³Talmadge quoted in Popham, John N., “Rayburn Delivers Warning to South,” *NYT*, 13 November 1951, p. 25; Shivers quoted in Duckworth, Allen, “Maryland’s Chief Snubs Texan’s Talk,” *Dallas Morning News*, 13 November 1951, p. 1; Byrnes accusation in Duckworth, “Byrnes Backing Shivers to Run South’s Revolt,” *Dallas Morning News*, 15 November 1951, p. 1; Byrnes’ 1949 speech in “Byrnes Blasts Administration for Spending,” *Dallas Morning News*, 22 November 1949, p. 1; Rayburn to William J. Holloway, November 20, 1951 and Truman to Rayburn, November 16, 1951; Correspondence: Presidents, Vice Presidents and others, 1951-1952 folder; Sam Rayburn Papers, CAH.

helped Truman's cause immensely, and the president and his people could have tried to build upon that. Instead, they elected to go on the attack against the Dixiecrats.

A few days after the Southern Governors conference, the president made a momentous announcement to his senior staff. Vacationing in Key West on November 19, 1951, Truman read a memorandum he had written to himself in 1950 before the war erupted: He would not run for another term. Incredibly, to their credit, his staff kept a lid on this bombshell. HST nonetheless was determined to play kingmaker and immediately began working behind the scenes to find a Democratic standard-bearer for 1952. His first choice was Fred Vinson, a good friend who happened to be Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. Vinson declined, forcing the chief executive to turn to his NATO commander, Dwight Eisenhower. When Ike announced in January 1952 that he would run—as a Republican, Truman approached Illinois governor Adlai Stevenson, who vacillated for six months.²⁴

Publicly, the president was coy about his intentions. The day after he told his staff he would not be a candidate, Truman spoke to the National Women's Democratic Club. Calling the upcoming election "a matter of considerable interest to me," HST said he was not going to disclose who the candidate would be, although he did "have some ideas on that subject." The *Dallas Morning News*, assuming the worst, interpreted this as his clear intent of his candidacy. On February 18, 1952, the chief executive met with six of his closest advisors and discussed possible nominees, himself included. They

²⁴ Truman, note to self, April 16, 1950; PSF: Longhand Notes File, April 16, 1950 folder; Truman Papers, HSTL; Jerry N. Hess, "Oral History Interview with Admiral Robert L. Dennison," November 2, 1971, <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/oralhist/dennison3.htm#193>, pp. 193-196, (March 1, 2007) describes the staff keeping Truman's intentions confidential; For Truman's kingmaking activities, see Hamby, *Man of the People*, 600-03.

were divided over whether he should run. A few days later at an address to fellow Masons, while discussing the job of being president, he remarked, “Just between you and me and the gate post, I like it.” In March, Truman released a book of his presidential papers, *Mr. President*. Unusual because presidents typically did not release personal papers while still in office, the book fueled rumors that the HST was considering another run.²⁵

Other Democratic presidential hopefuls waited on the sidelines for “Give ‘em hell Harry” to announce his intentions, save one. Estes Kefauver jumped into the race first and emerged as the early leader even though Truman turned down his request for an endorsement. A loner in the Senate, Kefauver’s organized crime probe had made him popular with the voters but unpopular with Democratic leaders, some of whom were smarting from the fallout over the investigation. Others worried about the presence of political mavericks such as Robert La Follette, Jr. in the senator’s organization. When the Tennessean announced he would enter the California primary, Florida’s Democratic governor issued a press release calling the candidate a “fabulous faker” and a “political phony,” and offered to debate this “cunning conniver.”²⁶

²⁵ “Address before the Women’s Democratic Club, November 20, 1951,” *PP*, <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/index.php?pid=560&st=&st1=> (March 3, 2007); “Candidate Truman Forgets One Issue,” *Dallas Morning News*, 22 November 1951, Part III, p. 2; Meeting with advisors in Hechler, 246-7; Remarks to Masons in “People: President Likes Job; On Drafting Doctors,” *Dallas Morning News*, 22 February 1952, Part I, p. 6; Leviero, Anthony, “President’s Papers Printed; His Charges Stir Disputes,” and Prescott, Orville, “Books of the Times,” *NYT*, 18 March 1952, pp. 1 and 25, respectively; “Mr. President,” *NYT*, 19 March 1952, p. 28.

²⁶ Kefauver’s request for HST’s endorsement in Hamby, *Man of the People*, 602; Robert A. Divine, *Foreign Policy and U.S. Presidential Elections, 1952-1960* (New York: New Viewpoints, 1974), 19; Concerns about La Follette in Clinton P. Anderson to Sheldon F. Sackett, July 29, 1952; Box 38; Anderson Papers, MDLOC; “Statement of Fuller Warren, Governor of Florida,” December 4, 1951; Box 5; Abraham Ribicoff Papers, MDLOC.

Kefauver affected the race in an important way by helping nudge Truman out of the contest. The president did not campaign for the March 11 New Hampshire primary. Yet, he left his name on the ballot, probably due to a combination of his distaste for Kefauver and a desire to test the political waters. The Tennessee senator, after stumping vigorously in the state, soundly thrashed the president 55 to 44 percent. Despite Truman's lack of campaigning, the results shocked his state chairman. After the primary, HST again discussed the possibility of running with his top advisors. This time, they unanimously agreed that he should step aside. The New Hampshire verdict and a job approval rating languishing between 23-25 percent told the president what he needed to do. On March 29, at a Jefferson-Jackson Day dinner, Truman announced he would not actively campaign for another term nor accept a draft at the convention, provoking cries of, "Oh, my God!" and "Oh no!" among the party faithful in attendance. Still, he wielded considerable power in the selection of his successor as the party's standard-bearer.²⁷

The South pinned its hopes on the candidacy of Richard Russell. The Georgia senator had enhanced his already solid credibility within the party during the MacArthur hearings. Truman thought highly of him, saying Russell had "all the qualifications as to ability and brains." Influential members of the Senate shared the president's sentiments in spite of their ideological differences with Russell. Even though Senator Russell tried

²⁷ Truman's approach to the primary in Hamby, *Man of the People*, 603-4; Reaction of New Hampshire state chairman in Fenton, John H., "Eisenhower Defeats Taft, Kefauver Wins Over Truman in New Hampshire's Primary," *NYT*, 12 March 1952, p. 1; Truman job approval ratings in Gallup, George, "Popularity of Truman Rising From November All-Time Low," *Washington Post*, 8 February 1952, p. B6; Input of HST advisors in Savage, 192; Reactions to announcement in Divine, 19.

to portray himself as a moderate and emphasized his internationalist approach to foreign policy, he could not overcome the stigma of being a regional, anti-civil rights candidate. As Truman noted, the Georgia senator was “poison to Northern Democrats and honest Liberals.”²⁸

Southern Democrats made contingency plans in case the nominee did not appeal to them. One tactic was to change Electoral College rules to allow Democratic slates of presidential electors to cast their votes for an opposition candidate, even if the Democratic ticket carried the state. Truman aide David D. Lloyd, recalling Virginia passing a law in 1948 empowering the state’s Democratic committee to instruct Democratic presidential electors, wisely pushed the administration to mount a legal opposition to such moves, and tried to spur the Democratic National Committee (DNC) to commit resources to do the same. In Alabama, a court battle ensued over an attempt to permit Democratic presidential electors to vote for candidates from other parties. During the litigation, one witness even declared under oath that he would be willing to steal votes to prevent Truman’s nomination. HST loyalists successfully challenged this move, winning a U.S. Supreme Court decision binding Alabama electors to support the party’s candidate. However, Trumanites failed to stop Georgia from passing a law that banned showing the names of presidential candidates on the ballot, listing the names of the presidential electors instead. This freed electors from the moral and legal obligation to vote for a particular candidate, enabling them to select as they pleased. Such activities

²⁸ Truman quoted in Ferrell, ed., *Off the Record*, 260; Edwin Johnson to Theodore F. Green, June 4, 1952 and Green to Johnson, June 11, 1952; Box 675; Green Papers, MDLOC; Clinton P. Anderson to A. H. Sarrett, Jr., April 1, 1952; Box 38; Anderson Papers, MDLOC; Russell’s self-portrayal in Savage, 194.

emphasize the potential value of HST trying to patch things up with the Southern governors, who could have helped shape the fate of state laws designed to circumvent the national party.²⁹

In Texas, where the intensity of Democratic disharmony matched the size of the state and its strength in the Electoral College, Governor Allan Shivers pursued a different strategy to undermine the Truman loyalists. After slapping the administration in the face by coordinating a speaking tour by General MacArthur in Texas, the governor facilitated the first *Republican* primary in state history for the 1952 elections. Shivers' was not planning to jump to the GOP, but he did want to help Dwight Eisenhower get the Republican nomination in case a Trumanite became the Democratic candidate. By legalizing cross-filing, which would permit the names of local Democratic contenders to appear on both parties' slates, conservative Democrats could vote for Eisenhower as the Republican nominee and select Democratic candidates for state office in the Republican primary. A worried Truman supporter wrote the president, "Something must be done or we real Democrats are blown up." The president, perhaps weary of the internal divisiveness in the party, responded that if Texas wanted to vote Republican, he could do little about it.³⁰

Shivers' moves in Texas drew national interest, inspiring Republican dreams of finally returning to power on Capitol Hill. Senator Karl Mundt (R-SD) jumped on the

²⁹ Memorandum, David D. Lloyd to Charles Murphy, November 27, 1951; Lloyd, David D. folder; Charles Murphy Papers, HSTL; Frederickson, 223-5 describes Alabama situation; Georgia's law in "Southern Democrats' Strategy: Pick President, Control Party," *Newsweek*, March 3, 1952, p. 21.

³⁰ Shivers' intentions in Ricky Dobbs, *Yellow Dogs and Republicans: Allan Shivers and Texas Two-Party Politics* (College Station, Texas A&M University Press, 2005); 66-71; Truman to Maury Maverick, June 27, 1951 and Maverick to Truman, June 23, 1951; PSF: General File, M (1 of 2: Ma-Me) folder, Truman Papers, HSTL.

opportunity to woo anti-Truman Democrats, suggesting Texas could “pull most of the South along on some effective program of political realignment.” Mundt went on to make a bizarre proposal that would have allowed Rayburn to continue as House Speaker and Southern Democratic committee chairs to retain their posts in return for their support of Republicans, if the GOP became the majority party following the 1952 elections.³¹

The few Southern Democrats responding to the Mundt plan did so quite cautiously, lulling the White House into a false sense of security about the upcoming elections. After meeting with a key Texan on the DNC, Truman advisor Clark Clifford dismissed the Shivers crusade, “The South cannot get anywhere by leaving the Democratic Party.” Clifford failed to recognize political realities. Shivers and company were not trying to engineer another Dixiecrat third-party revolt like in 1948. The whole point of the cross-filing bill was to allow Democrats to oppose Truman or any other Fair Dealer for president *without* leaving the party.³²

Governor Shivers’ opposition to Truman, like that of other Southern Democrats, had little to do with the Korean War. Southerners were determined to stop the continuing expansion of federal government power at the expense of the states, begun during the New Deal and attempted by Truman through the Fair Deal. Thus, the South’s main concern early in the campaign was halting federal programs such as Fair Employment Practices (FEPC) legislation, a civil rights initiative, and the Brannan

³¹ Hornaday, Walter C., “Texas Called Key State For Beat-Truman Tie-Up,” *Dallas Morning News*, 31 July 1951, Sec. I, p. 3.

³² Response of Southern Democrats in Hornaday, Walter C., “Capitol Hill Cool Toward Mundt Plan,” *Dallas Morning News*, 1 August 1951, Sec. I, p. 13 and “Party Alliance Backed,” *NYT*, 1 August 1951, p. 47; Clifford in Dobbs, 87-88.

agricultural plan. Some Southerners publicly endorsed the “principles of 1840,” apparently waxing nostalgic for the days when whites reigned supreme. However, the war handed them a campaign weapon against the liberal wing of the party because it gave McCarthyism a new lease on life, reviving fears of communist infiltration at home. The South believed that redbaiting could help their cause against the Trumanites, leading Shivers to trumpet, “I’m tired of a lot of ultra-intellectual parlor pinks and so-called liberal crackpots running the Democratic Party.” Such rhetoric gave credence to *Newsweek’s* report on the eve of the national convention that if HST tried to nab the nomination, then conservative Southern Democrats would definitely “try to blow the Democratic Party to bits.”³³

One historian called the 1952 Democratic convention “relatively harmonious,” while another called it a “free-for-all marked by confusion, uncertainty and near-chaos.” They were both right. Compared to the 1948 convention featuring a Dixiecrat walkout and another faction splintering into the Henry Wallace Progressive Party, 1952 could indeed have looked relatively tranquil. On the other hand, the lack of a clear front-runner for the nomination and the chaos over Southern recalcitrance made the convention far more exciting than the staged coronations of recent decades.³⁴

³³Shivers’ opposition to Fair Deal in Ford, Jon, “Resolutions Pin Truman’s Ears,” *San Antonio Evening News*, 28 May 1952, p. 1 and “Remarks of Governor Allan Shivers-State Democratic Executive Committee Meeting-New Braunfels, Texas,” April 18, 1952; Democratic National Committee folder; Charles Murphy Papers, HSTL; “Principles of 1840” in Truman to Maverick, June 2, 1952 and Maverick to Truman, May 29, 1952; PSF: Political File, Texas folder, Truman Papers, HSTL; Shivers quoted in Dobbs, 83; “Southern Democrats’ Strategy: Pick President, Control Party,” *Newsweek*, March 3, 1952, p. 21.

³⁴“Harmonious” in Herbert S. Parmet, *The Democrats: The Years After FDR* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1976) 100; “Free for all” in Divine, 17-8.

The Chicago convention focused on domestic issues, almost to the exclusion of foreign affairs and the Korean War. Little debate occurred over a frequent source of division, the policies of Dean Acheson. Since this was the first time in twenty years that the Democrats did not have an incumbent president to nominate, opponents of Franklin Roosevelt and his legacy saw a window of opportunity. Would the party maintain the trend begun by Roosevelt and continued by Truman advocating an activist federal government in areas such as civil rights, or would Southerners regain control of the party and rein in Washington? Determined to prevent a recurrence of the Dixiecrat walkout, DNC chairman Frank McKinney told the press that the main mission of the Platform Committee would be “to remove the disunity that existed in 1948.” Liberal Democrats therefore bent over backwards to appease the Southerners, diluting the party’s civil rights plank, backing away from enforcing loyalty to the national candidate, and accepting a compromise candidate opposed to much of the Fair Deal.³⁵

A pair of Southern states managed to create crises of party unity before the convention even got started. Mississippi’s controversy was a carryover from its bolt to the Dixiecrat Party. The 1948 Democratic convention ended up seating the Mississippi delegation with limited credentials, which gave the state organization the authority to oppose the presidential ticket and the party platform even though its delegates participated in the national convention. The Mississippi state convention selected its delegates in June 1952 with similar instructions, apparently expecting to get the same concessions as in 1948. Protesting this threat to party unanimity, a breakaway group of

³⁵McKinney quoted in John Bartlow Martin, *Adlai Stevenson of Illinois: The Life of Adlai E. Stevenson* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1976), 579.

Mississippi Democrats loyal to the national party held a rump convention on July 5 and picked its own slate of delegates. Two Mississippi delegations thus showed up in Chicago, challenging the convention to decide which group to seat without provoking another Dixiecrat walkout. The Kefauver and Averell Harriman forces immediately went to work on behalf of the loyalists, but to no avail. The convention seated the former Dixiecrats.³⁶

Texas also produced two slates of delegates, one group elected by HST loyalists and the other by Shivers Democrats opposed to the president; Truman called them “Texas Bolsheviks.” The Shivers contingent, naturally, refused to promise their unconditional support for the party’s nominee. Legally, they had a strong position and could threaten to bolt if the convention refused to seat them, possibly sparking a reprisal of the 1948 Dixiecrat exodus. Harriman and Kefauver again backed the loyalists. Although sympathizing with the Trumanites, convention chairman Sam Rayburn met privately with Governor Shivers when the Texans arrived in Chicago, producing an agreement that sent the pro-Truman delegates home. Rayburn came away believing that he had agreed to seat the Shivers delegation in return for the governor’s promise to support the party nominee, no matter who it was. Later, the speaker found that Shivers thought otherwise.³⁷

³⁶ Paul T. David, Malcolm Moos and Ralph M. Goldman, *Presidential Nominating Politics in 1952: Vol. 1, The National Story* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1954), 103-5, 113. Averell Harriman, a Truman foreign policy advisor, was a presidential candidate in 1952.

³⁷ Truman quoted in “Confidential-The Texas Situation,” July 12, 1952; Democratic platform July 1952 folder; Charles Murphy Papers, HSTL; Kefauver/Harriman alliance in David, et al., 112; Dobbs, 86-7 describes Rayburn’s motives.

The controversy over the seating of the Texas and Mississippi delegations precipitated a larger debate over an attempt to enforce party unity in the upcoming presidential contest. Senators Humphrey, Lehman and Blair Moody (MI) drafted a resolution stating, “No Delegate shall be seated unless he shall give assurance to the Credentials Committee that he will exert every honorable means available to him in any official capacity he may have” to ensure that the party’s nominees appeared on their states’ ballots. They could do this by printing the candidates’ names on the ballot, or by listing the electors’ names, specifying that they were committed to voting for the Democratic ticket. Moody explained that the resolution merely intended to keep delegates from actively trying to prevent the convention’s nominees from appearing on state ballots. Although the newspapers termed the Moody resolution a loyalty “oath,” this was an overstatement because it did not require delegates to swear they would back the convention’s nominee. The liberals in the party were asking the Southerners to meet them in the middle, stopping short of mandating support for the convention’s candidate, but demanding that delegates not obstruct Democratic nominee’s name from appearing on the ballot.³⁸

Nevertheless, the resolution sent many Southerners into an uproar, for it potentially could have barred as many as six state delegations from participating in the proceedings, including heavyweights such as South Carolina Governor James Byrnes and Senator Harry F. Byrd (VA). Byrnes “trembled with rage” at the prospect of being booted from the convention, and moderate Southerners intentionally jockeyed to keep

³⁸ Resolution and Moody’s explanation quoted in David, et al. 125; Example of using “oath” term in Pearson, Drew, “Byrnes Enraged by Loyalty Oath,” *Washington Post*, 26 July 1952, p. 25

him off the podium, which would have risked negotiations on the Moody resolution. Texas took the pledge because, as Shivers pointed out, it did not require delegates to support the nominee personally. Mississippi and Georgia took a different approach, simply sending polite, but noncommittal, letters to the Credentials Committee. The committee seated them. Louisiana, South Carolina and Virginia, however, refused any such gesture. Their strategy, according to a defiant Senator Byrd was to “not communicate with the credentials committee, just remain in our seats and let them be the aggressors and let them read us out of the convention or throw us out bodily if they will.” The loyalists blinked first. Even though the Louisiana, South Carolina, and Virginia delegations refused to sign the loyalty pledge, Rayburn seated them anyway for the sake of party unity.³⁹

Sectional divisions in the party manifested themselves at the convention in other ways. Civil rights was the only issue producing significant debate on the platform in contrast to foreign policy, where delegates adopted a “stay the course” position. Party liberals and Southern conservatives eventually compromised on the civil rights plank, as the liberals abandoned a proposal to ban Senate filibusters and avoided explicit endorsement of FEPC legislation. Instead, the platform advocated the “right to equal opportunity of employment” and a commitment to fight racial discrimination. This compromise represented a significant step back from the party’s 1948 stand on civil rights. Yet, one journalist called these provisions the “largest concessions that Southern

³⁹ David, et al., 111-2, 133-4; Krock, Arthur, “A Big Wind Dies Down,” p. 10; Pearson, Drew, “Byrnes Enraged by Loyalty Oath,” *Washington Post*, 26 July 1952, p. 25; Belair, Felix, Jr., “Russell Declares He Won’t Quit Race,” *NYT*, 23 July 1952, p.12; Frederickson, 227-8; Palmer, Kyle, “Stevenson Heads Field as South Bolt Reversed,” *Los Angeles Times* 24 July 1952, p. 1.

Democrats have ever consented to.” Reflecting the goal of preventing another Southern exodus at all costs, platform committee chairman and House Majority Leader John McCormack congratulated a colleague for producing “a strong platform, and above all-- maintaining unity in this Party.” For some Southerners, even the platform and loyalty pledge conciliations were not enough. As Eleanor Roosevelt provided the most stirring moment of the convention with a speech that electrified the attendees, the entire Shivers Texas delegation remained seated throughout. When the audience rose to cheer the former First Lady, Senator Byrd stalked out.⁴⁰

The Democrats then turned to selecting a candidate. Coming into the convention, no one was close to having a majority of delegates, but a “draft Stevenson” committee hit the ground running once the proceedings began. On Thursday of convention week, the governor called Truman, asking if the president would be embarrassed if he allowed his name to be placed in nomination. In his memoirs, Truman said he responded with “a show of exasperation and some rather vigorous words” and then gave his enthusiastic assent. After the first two ballots, Kefauver took the lead, with Stevenson running a close second and gaining ground. Yet the Tennessean had little chance of winning, and not just because of the animosity of the party’s leadership. Since Kefauver had led the unsuccessful crusade to take a hard line against the Southerners over the loyalty pledge issue, delegates labeled him as an extremist. He and

⁴⁰ Civil rights issue and Byrd’s walkout discussed in David, et. al, 111-2,128, 131-2; “Largest concessions” in Ernest K. Lindley, “Consequences of the Democratic Convention,” *Newsweek*, August 4, 1952, p. 25; Theodore Green to McCormack , August 18, 1952 and McCormack to Green, August 12, 1952; Box 663: Theodore F. Green Papers, MDLOC; Platform quoted in John Frederick Martin, *Civil Rights and the Crisis of Liberalism* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1979), 108; Divine, 38-9 describes Roosevelt’s speech.

other candidates dropped out and endorsed Stevenson, giving the Illinois governor the nomination he had resisted for so long.⁴¹

A big reason for Stevenson's acceptability as a compromise candidate was his moderate approach to government activism. He believed that on the civil rights issue the federal government should not "put the South completely over a barrel," leaving enforcement to the states. The irony of the governor's selection by a convention dominated by domestic issues was that he proved much more passionate about world affairs. His nomination amounted to a ringing endorsement of the administration's Korean policy. Later, on the campaign trail, Stevenson declared that if the president had not fought in Korea, "Munich would follow Munich."⁴²

Governor Stevenson chose Alabama Senator John Sparkman as his running mate, but six Southern delegations refused to endorse the ticket immediately. Sparkman had supported most Truman policies, except civil rights. The delegations of South Carolina, Louisiana, Mississippi, Georgia, Texas, and Virginia decided to have follow-up state conventions after departing Chicago to decide whether they would support the nominee. The state gatherings in Louisiana, Georgia and Virginia endorsed Stevenson. Conventions in Texas, South Carolina and Mississippi went the opposite direction, deciding that by law their delegates did not have to support the national nominee.⁴³

⁴¹Stevenson's call to Truman in Hamby, *Man of the People*, 608-9; Harry S. Truman, *Memoirs by Harry S. Truman: Volume 2, Years of Trial and Hope* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1956), 496; David, et al, 150 analyzes opposition to Kefauver.

⁴²"Over a barrel" quoted in Martin, John Barlow, 540; "Munich" quote from Divine, 21.

⁴³Frederickson, 229-232 describes efforts to free delegates from national party loyalty; "Georgia Endorses Democrats' Ticket," *NYT*, 5 August 1952, p. 10; Smith, William H., "Va. Party Gives Adlai Lukewarm Support," *Washington Post*, 29 August 1952, p. 8.

The results of these state conventions, however, did not show the whole picture of Southern sentiment towards the Stevenson-Sparkman ticket. South Carolina's state convention paradoxically voted to support the ticket, but allowed its delegates the freedom to support Eisenhower. Some key Southerners got behind the nominees. Richard Russell pledged to deliver not only Georgia, but also the entire South to Stevenson. Mississippi Governor Hugh White, who had fought for his delegation's right not to endorse the national ticket at Chicago, called Stevenson "an elegant gentleman and a very capable man" who would unite the party.⁴⁴

Yet, many Southerners decided they liked Ike. "Democrats for Eisenhower" organizations developed in several states. Governor Byrnes blasted his party even though the South Carolina's state convention endorsed the Stevenson-Sparkman ticket. He refused, however, to go so far as to approve of a scheme allowing Democratic presidential electors to cast their votes for Eisenhower as the Republican nominee. Byrnes instead approved a petition containing 53,000 signatures (only 10,000 were required) to list Eisenhower and running mate Richard Nixon on the state's ballot as an *independent* ticket, apparently enabling the South Carolina governor to support Ike without the guilt of voting with the opposition party. This provision let Democrats cast their votes for Eisenhower/Nixon as independents rather than as Republicans. Mississippi did the same thing. Byrnes subsequently came out publicly for Eisenhower, adding to the hard feelings between Truman and his former Secretary of State.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Frederickson, 226-7 notes White's previous independence from party loyalty; White quoted in "Democrats Together," *Newsweek*, August 18, 1952, p. 21.

⁴⁵ Petition data in Frederickson, 229-30

Virginia Democrats also produced a splinter faction for Eisenhower, even though Governor John Butler and the state's organization threw their weight behind Stevenson. The backing of the state's convention, however, turned out to be worthless because the Virginia Democrats were controlled by a bitter foe of the Truman administration, Senator Harry F. Byrd. The Virginia senator differed a bit from most of his Southern colleagues because he had been vehemently opposed to the New Deal from day one, fighting the Social Security Act and the National Recovery Act. He also believed the Marshall Plan had been a waste of money. Byrd loathed Truman. Although the senator was unwilling to campaign for Eisenhower, he made sure the Democratic machine did little to help Stevenson. Byrd called the main issues of the campaign "usurpation of power by the Executive" and "trends to socialism." In response, Vice President Barkley retorted that Democratic defectors were "like the woman who keeps her husband's name . . . but bestows her favors to the man across the street." Thanks in part to Byrd, in 1952 Eisenhower became the second Republican to carry Virginia since Civil War reconstruction.⁴⁶

Unlike Virginia, the state organization in Texas repudiated the ticket and its leadership actively campaigned for Eisenhower. Governor Allan Shivers concocted what became the top issue of the campaign in his state. Texans prided their oil, and they had been fighting with the federal government since the 1930s over revenues from offshore drilling lands, or the "tidelands," as the Southerners disingenuously termed them. According to the Truman administration's estimates, some \$40 billion of

⁴⁶ Butler's actions in Parmet, 100; Byrd and Barkley quoted in "Against Trumanism," *Time*, October 27, 1952, p. 27. Herbert Hoover (1928) was the other Republican carrying Virginia.

petroleum revenues were at stake for coastal oil-producing states like Texas, California, Louisiana and Alabama. Furthermore, the Korean War had increased the demand for petroleum products, leading the U.S. Petroleum Administration for Defense to predict that world demand for oil would exceed supply by the end of 1951, increasing the stakes in the tidelands fight. The U.S. Department of the Interior quantified a deficit in domestic oil production of 276,000 barrels/day along with a significant shortfall in natural gas. Shivers therefore decided to make the tidelands the litmus test for whether to support Stevenson.⁴⁷

Key politicians alerted the candidate to the sensitivity of the tidelands issue, suggesting it could cost the Democrats Texas, Louisiana, and perhaps Alabama and California in the election. Even Southern states without offshore oil saw the tidelands as a states-rights issue. Nevertheless, Stevenson told Shivers that he could not support Texas' claim for the tidelands, prompting Senate Majority Whip Lyndon Johnson (D-TX) to call him a "goddamned fool" for allowing the Texas governor to pin him down on the issue. Rejecting Stevenson's offer to work out a compromise, Shivers immediately renounced his support for the Democratic nominee and campaigned for Eisenhower, who supported state claims for tidelands oil. Believing Shivers had reneged

⁴⁷ Administration's oil volume estimates in "President Assails Offshore Oil Bill," May 18, 1952, *NYT*, p. 1; An example of the president's blunt opposition to state control of tidelands oil is Truman to Amon Carter, June 3, 1952; Correspondence: Presidents, vice presidents and others, 1951-1952 folder; Importance of tidelands issue to Texas in Rayburn to O.O. Touchstone, June 22, 1950 and Touchstone to Rayburn, June 14, 1950; 1950 Political*National folder; all from Sam Rayburn Papers, CAH; Domestic oil deficit in Anderson, 113; Daniel Yergin, *The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money and Power* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993), 464 also notes that the ongoing British embargo on Iranian oil was contributing to the stress on oil supplies. Shivers' plans for using the tidelands issue in Dobbs, 76-7.

on his promise to back the party's nominee, Sam Rayburn fumed, "He lied to me. . . . You don't lie to me. I don't want the son of a bitch at my funeral."⁴⁸

Governor Shivers did a masterful job in using the oil rights controversy against Stevenson. "Most people in Texas didn't give a damn about the Tidelands," a Shivers aide conceded. The key was: "We made them feel they were losing something." Rep. Frank Boykin (D-AL) noted that during a visit to Texas "a taxicab driver told us that we were trying to take the school children's lunch money away" by opposing the state's rights to the tidelands. Yet, the ballyhoo over offshore oil revenue was a smokescreen Shivers used to oppose any Democrat endorsing an activist federal government of the Truman tradition. In a brass knuckles campaign in which the Shivercrats ridiculed House Speaker Rayburn as a "pinhead" and "peanut-brain" for backing Stevenson, they delivered Texas for Eisenhower.⁴⁹

The tidelands issue had little effect elsewhere in the South. Although Louisiana and Alabama both stood to profit from gaining state control of offshore mineral rights tax revenue and had joined the Dixiecrat revolt in 1948, Stevenson carried them handily in the election. However, as far as other Southerners were concerned, there was a more

⁴⁸Warnings to the Stevenson campaign about the tidelands issue in Philip B. Perlman to Adlai E. Stevenson, August 19, 1952, Clinton P. Anderson to Stevenson, August 18, 1952, and Anderson to William C. Blair, August 28, 1952; all from Box 1056; Clinton P. Anderson Papers, MDLOC; Also noted in Sam Rayburn to Boykin, August 21, 1952 and Boykin to Stevenson, August 19, 1952; 1952 Congressmen folder; Sam Rayburn Papers, CAH; Parmet, 99 notes support of Southern states without oil reserves; Johnson quoted in Dobbs, 90; Stevenson's rejection of state claims to tidelands in "Press Release from Governor Adlai Stevenson, August 23, 1952," Box 6; Clinton P. Anderson Papers, MDLOC; Rayburn quoted in Dobbs, 86; Dobbs, 86-90 analyzes whether Shivers double-crossed Rayburn about supporting the national presidential nominee.

⁴⁹ Shivers aid quoted in Dobbs, 91; Stevenson quoted in Parmet, 99; Congressman John E. Lyle (D-TX) to Sam Rayburn, undated; 1952 Congressmen K-O folder, Frank Boykin to Steve Mitchell, October 9, 1952 and Boykin to Rayburn, November 11, 1952; 1952 Congressmen folder; Sam Rayburn Papers, CAH; Dobbs, 96; Shivers quoted in Dobbs, 94; Name-calling by the Shivercrats of Rayburn quoted in Dobbs, 93. Unlike Rayburn, Johnson campaigned half-heartedly for Stevenson, probably anticipating Eisenhower's triumph. He became the Senate's Minority Leader in January 1953. See Parmet, 98-9.

important reason to oppose Adlai Stevenson. Harry Truman had endorsed the Illinois governor, which, in their eyes, was the ultimate curse.

In Mississippi, a faction of former Dixiecrats kept the spirit of 1948 alive. They felt the national party had been in danger since 1948, a condition continuing in 1952 even though Truman had decided to forgo another term. Railing against “active and dangerous minority and racial groups,” the Mississippians blasted the Truman wing of the party. The ex-Dixiecrats warned, “As long as this gang, with its pinks and punks, is in control of the National Democratic Party those who stand for Constitutional government and States’ Rights can expect absolutely nothing.” The States Rights Democrats also threatened to organize a splinter group, suggesting a third party could prevent any candidate from gaining a majority in the Electoral College and throw the election into the House of Representatives, where they believed (for reasons known but to them) that Richard Russell could be elected. The hatred of this group towards the Fair Dealers was striking, as was their adamant refusal to compromise with the Trumanites. Nevertheless, due to Governor Hugh White’s leadership, these Dixiecrats did not get their way in the general election; Stevenson carried Mississippi handily.⁵⁰

Other influential Southerners such as Strom Thurmond and Louisiana governor Robert Kennon backed Eisenhower. Interestingly, Stevenson managed to carry these Deep South states anyway. However, with help from disaffected leaders such as Texas Governor Allan Shivers, Eisenhower carried the traditionally Democratic states of Florida, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia, providing a final indicator of the

⁵⁰ Former Dixiecrats quoted in “Mississippi States’ Rights Democrats,” undated; PSF: Political File, Mississippi folder; Truman Papers, HSTL; White’s role in Frederickson, 230.

disenchantment of many Southern Democrats with the Truman wing of their party. In these five states, the president's backing of Stevenson was the kiss of death.

The president's elation over the nomination of Stevenson dissipated when the candidate took charge of his campaign. The nominee moved his headquarters to Springfield and replaced DNC chairman Frank McKinney, a Truman man tainted by charges of financial improprieties. The governor named Stephen Mitchell, a "reform-minded" Chicago lawyer who recently had served as counsel for the House's investigation of the Justice Department, as the new DNC chairman. Although Mitchell was relatively unknown in political circles, his appointment was designed to ease tension within the party over the corruption issue. HST initially kept a stiff upper lip, inviting Stevenson and Sparkman to a meeting at the White House to discuss campaign strategy, where they agreed that the president would wait until October to hit the campaign trail. However, when a reporter baited Stevenson into conceding that there was a mess in Washington that needed cleaning up, Truman's resentment bubbled over. Venting his anger in an unsent letter, HST told the nominee to "take your crackpots, your high socialites with their noses in the air, run your campaign and win if you can," describing himself as "a bystander who has become disinterested." *Newsweek* reported, "Harry S. Truman was good and mad at him, and didn't care who knew it."⁵¹

Republicans mistakenly believed that the other "C" in their K_1C_2 formula, Communism, could be useful due to the apparent success of Joseph McCarthy's antics in

⁵¹ Accusations against McKinney in "Press Release- Democratic National Committee Publicity Division," May 19, 1952; Box 666; Theodore F. Green Papers, MDLOC; Mitchell's appointment in Divine, 47; Stevenson's "mess in Washington" gaffe in Ferrell, *Harry S. Truman*, 376-7; Truman's unsent letter in, Ferrell, ed., *Off the Record*, 268-9; "Everybody's Huffy," *Newsweek*, September 1, 1952, p. 19.

the 1950 elections. The Wisconsin senator campaigned in thirteen states for Republican incumbents, and was instrumental in the unseating of a personal nemesis, Senator William Benton (D-CT), a victory that had eluded them in a special election two years earlier. Yet, McCarthy wielded little other influence in the 1952 campaign. Even in the Connecticut race, Benton garnered more votes than Stevenson in a losing effort, showing the limits of McCarthy's potency in a race he treated as his second-highest priority (after, of course, his own re-election). This trend held true in every state where McCarthy specifically targeted Democratic senatorial candidates.⁵²

The Illinois governor stood with Truman against McCarthyism. Most notably, he refused to abandon Dean Acheson. The Secretary of State delivered two major speeches during the campaign attacking the Soviet Union, and Stevenson defended him by reminding voters of recommendations by both Eisenhower and MacArthur to pull American troops out of Korea prior to 1950. While he allowed a key backer to predict his administration would have a new Secretary of State, Stevenson refused pleas by DNC chairman Mitchell and India Edwards, the top woman in the party organization, to announce that Acheson would retire after the election.⁵³

The Democratic nominee faced the challenge of supporting Truman's foreign policies while avoiding political damage from the president's abysmal approval rating, holding steady at 32 percent through the last half of 1952. Moreover, Stevenson was in

⁵² McCarthy's targeting on Benton and overall effect on campaign in Oshinsky, 238-9, 242-5; Hyman, 478 contrasts the GOP's acceptance of McCarthy in Connecticut in 1952 with its rejection of him in 1950. Connecticut's governor appointed Benton to the Senate due to a vacancy shortly before the 1950 election. In 1950, he had to stand for election to complete the six-year term expiring in 1952.

⁵³ Divine, 67, 72.

the ticklish situation of managing an incumbent president wanting badly to mix it up with the Republicans on the campaign trail. During the final month of the election, Korea became the most prominent element of the Republican K₁C₂ formula. Paradoxically, this occurred due to Harry Truman's success on campaign trail and his and failure to produce an armistice.⁵⁴

By late September, Republican attacks on the president's record had riled him up so much that he could not help himself; he had to enter the fray whether Stevenson invited him in or not. After hearing Eisenhower criticize his foreign policy, Truman said, "I nearly choked to hear him," believing the general had been heavily involved in the development of the administration's international approach. HST made a difference in the campaign despite his lame duck status. Over the next several weeks, the commander in chief threw himself into a whistle-stop trip covering 19,000 miles in which he made 211 speeches. Truman energized voters with his freewheeling attacks on the Republicans, contrasting with Governor Stevenson, who sometimes talked above their heads. As one historian wrote, "Truman's most valuable contribution to Stevenson's cause was to take on Eisenhower personally, and thus end the pretense that the General stood above partisan politics." Among other things, the president hammered on the fact that Eisenhower had recommended withdrawal of troops from Korea in 1947. The president recalled years afterward that he "took the hide off" Eisenhower, and "skinned him from the crown of his head to the heel of his foot." Truman's tactics started to work by early October. One poll showed that the gap between Stevenson and

⁵⁴ George Gallup, *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion, 1935-1971, Vol. 2, 1949-1958* (New York: Random House, 1972), 1071, 1102. Polls taken in June and October of 1952 showed a 32% approval rating for Truman.

Eisenhower had shrunk to four percentage points, prompting a Republican research service to report there was “little doubt that Truman is responsible for this alarming shift of public opinion.” An analysis for the Democratic campaign said Truman was the “only threat to the whole farm vote falling into Ike’s lap . . . and it is a real threat.”⁵⁵

The Republicans responded by making the war the top issue for the rest of the campaign. Polling data indicated that Korea was the number one concern of independent voters weary of armistice negotiations that had gone on for over a year with seemingly little progress. A Gallup poll produced the most dramatic numbers, indicating that two-thirds of potential voters thought Eisenhower was the candidate best able to handle Korea, versus 9 percent for Stevenson. Shortly thereafter, events in the war intervened. Following a July-August U.N. bombing campaign designed to induce communist concessions at the peace talks, the negotiations broke down on October 8 over the repatriation of POWs. The Truman administration refused to force North Korean and Chinese prisoners to return home if they did not want to, recalling the Russian POWs executed or sent to Siberia after World War II, and those who committed suicide rather than accept such fates. With the fifteen month-old armistice talks stalled, the war escalated, producing some 1,000 American casualties per week.⁵⁶

The war presented a tough problem for Stevenson. Some Democrats had optimistically predicted the war would end since the summer of 1951, creating

⁵⁵ “I nearly choked” in Donovan, 398; Data on HST campaign efforts and Truman quotes “Took the hide off” and “skinned him” in Ferrell, *Harry S. Truman*, 377-8; GOP research report quoted in Divine, 69; Analysis quoted from “Editorial Material-The Campaign,” undated, author unknown; Box 1056; Clinton P. Anderson Papers, MDLOC; “Truman’s most valuable” in Divine, 68; Polling data and casualties from Divine, 79.

⁵⁶ Polling data in Divine, 69-70; Casualty figures from Divine, 79.

disillusionment among the electorate. Yet, the nominee stuck by Truman's policies, backing the continued armistice talks even though they were at a temporary halt. The governor mused, "Many wars have been avoided by patience and many have been precipitated by reckless haste." He was right, but the public was in no mood for such analysis. Stevenson also affirmed Truman for going into Korea, making Wilsonian statements like, "God has set for us an awesome mission: nothing less than leadership of the free world."⁵⁷

The Democrats also countered the Republican emphasis on Korea by attacking Eisenhower, attempting to use his war hero image against him. The DNC reminded the public of a January 1951 statement in which Ike said that military draftees should receive little pay, if any, because they were simply fulfilling their obligation to their country. Stevenson's team attempted to undermine the Republican's credibility, pulling out a 1948 quote of the general saying, "The necessary and wise subordination of the military to civil power will be best sustained . . . when life-long professional soldiers . . . abstain from seeking high political office." In addition, the Democrats tried to take advantage of previous Eisenhower statements supporting Truman's actions in Korea, such as his November 1951 assertion that there was "no recourse but to do what President Truman said and did." Democrats reminded the electorate that in June 1952, the general had supported the armistice talks, saying he did not think it "possible for our forces to carry through a decisive attack," and that the best bet was to "try to get a decent

⁵⁷ For examples of Democrats' premature predictions of the end of the war, see Senator Blair Moody-Speech before Indiana Young Democrats, July 21, 1951; Box 634; and "Research Institute of America Recommendations," July 26, 1952; Box 663; Theodore F. Green Papers, MDLOC; Stevenson quoted in Divine, 67, 74.

armistice out of it.” HST dared Ike and his “snollygoster foreign state advisers” to tell the public how he proposed to end the war.⁵⁸

Eisenhower did not help himself much on Korea early in the campaign. In August, he cited “the really terrible blunders that led up to the Korean war,” but added, “I do not see how these conditions, having occurred and having been created, how you could stay out of the thing. I don’t know.” In an October speech foreshadowing the Vietnamization crusade of America’s next limited war, the general said of the Korean conflict, “If there must be a war there, let it be Asians against Asians, with our support on the side of freedom.” While it played well with his Republican base, Eisenhower’s comment seemed racist to several UN observers. On October 8, the same day that armistice negotiations collapsed, the GOP nominee criticized Truman for entering the peace negotiations because it allowed the enemy forces to regroup.⁵⁹

Ike’s best move, however, was soon to come. On October 24, speaking in Detroit, Eisenhower responded to the president’s challenge to tell the nation how to end the Korean War, delivering the knockout punch of the election. The Republican began by railing that the current administration “cannot be expected to repair what it failed to prevent.” Then, he made the dramatic announcement: “The job requires a personal trip to Korea. I shall make that trip. Only in that way could I learn how best to serve the American people in the cause of peace. I shall go to Korea.” Even though Eisenhower

⁵⁸ “Does Eisenhower Really Expect Veterans to Vote for Him?” undated from Democratic National Committee and “Report RD-60- Eisenhower Quotes,” August 23, 1952, from Democratic National Committee Research Division; Box 666; Theodore F. Green Papers, MDLOC. Truman quoted in Divine, 74.

⁵⁹ “Report RD-60- Eisenhower Quotes,” August 23, 1952, from Democratic National Committee Research Division; Box 666; Theodore F. Green Papers, MDLOC; Concerns of U.N. observers in Divine, 71.

failed to say what he would do in Korea, the media immediately declared him the victor with election day still two weeks away. Reporters told an aide of the general, “That does it—Ike is in.” *Newsweek* trumpeted that the Eisenhower campaign had “hit its peak in a single sentence. Even the editors of the liberal *New Republic* later agreed, admitting, “twelve million parents found it hard to turn down a five-star General who assured them he would protect their sons from enemy fire.”⁶⁰

Eisenhower defeated the Illinois governor in a landslide, taking 55 percent of the popular vote and carrying 39 states, including the home states of both Stevenson and Truman, and four Southern states in the Democrats’ traditionally “solid South.” Americans showed much more interest than in the previous presidential race, with thirteen million more people casting ballots than in 1948. Ironically, Governor Stevenson garnered two and a half million more votes in a losing cause than the victorious president did four years earlier. Yet, a quarter of the people who said they voted for Truman in 1948 voted for Eisenhower in 1952. Thus, the contest rejected the conventional wisdom that higher voter turnout favored the Democrats because they had more registered voters than the Republicans.⁶¹

The election results surprised most Democrats. Hoping for a repeat of 1948, they apparently were counting on an Election Day switch to Stevenson that never materialized. Some took it hard. A New York grocer turned in five false fire alarms the

⁶⁰“Ike is in” quoted in Divine, 75; Brown, Charles and Norman Nicholson, “Eisenhower: ‘I Shall Go to Korea,’” *Newsweek* November 3, 1952, p. 26; “Has Eisenhower Delayed Peace in Korea?” *New Republic*, November 10, 1952, pp. 5-6. Ironically, Stevenson decided in August 1952 that *he* would visit Korea if elected. Although he briefly considered mentioning it in the campaign, his advisors nixed the idea. Martin, John Barlow, 705.

⁶¹ Angus Campbell, Gerald Gurin and Warren E. Miller, *The Voter Decides* (Evanston, Illinois: Row, Peterson and Company, 1954), 16.

day of the election, arrested by police as he tried for a sixth. A Democratic renter, upset by the “triumphant smirks” of his Republican landlord, took out his frustrations by setting her house ablaze. “I just didn’t like her attitude,” he explained to firefighters. Others took the defeat more gracefully as they paid off losing bets to Republicans. In Alabama, a girl had to eat the front page of the pro-Eisenhower Montgomery *Advisor*, but not before burning it and dunking it in her coffee. A Lowell, Massachusetts Democrat allowed a triumphant friend to pelt him with custard pies. Perhaps the taste of defeat was not so bad, after all.⁶²

Democratic politicians, of course, had a more bitter taste in their mouths. Senator Guy Gillette (IA) confided to a colleague that he expected to lose the White House and the House, but not the Senate, lamenting the second consecutive loss of the Democrats’ majority leader in the Senate. This time, Ernest McFarland (AZ) bit the dust. Senator Clinton Anderson consoled his fallen colleague, “My guess is that every person who was cussing President Truman voted against you.”⁶³

Eisenhower had short coattails. The Republicans picked up only one seat in the Senate, but it was enough to give them a single seat majority. In the House, the GOP gained twenty-two seats, which left them with a meager eight-vote majority. Moreover, eighteen of the twenty-three Democrats running for a Senate seat ran more strongly in their states than Stevenson did against Ike, another indication that the crossover vote

⁶² “The Election,” *Time*, November 17, 1952, p. 23-4.

⁶³ Guy Gillette to Lister Hill, November 6, 1952; Box 675; Theodore F. Green Papers, MDLOC; Clinton Anderson to Ernest W. McFarland, November 28, 1952; Box 1056; Clinton P. Anderson papers, MDLOC. Recall that majority leader Scott Lucas lost in the 1950 mid-term elections.

went to Eisenhower specifically, but not to Republicans in general. Nevertheless, for the first time since the Herbert Hoover administration, the GOP had control of the White House and both houses of Congress.

Analysis of the issues affecting the election results yielded some surprises. One pollster found that only three percent of voters brought up negative views about the Truman administration's "softness on communism" or its suffering from communist infiltration as factors in their voting decision, despite their prominence in campaign rhetoric. Southern voting produced interesting patterns. Stevenson lost only four states in Dixie, but the popular vote told a more complete story. In the eleven states of the former Confederacy, Governor Stevenson collected 51 percent of the vote, compared to Truman's 53 percent and Dixiecrat Strom Thurmond's 17 percent in 1948. Thus, even without a Dixiecrat party to siphon away white Democratic votes, the governor did not do as well as the president. Among blacks throughout the nation, Stevenson did as well as HST in 1948. Why, then, did a large chunk of the white South vote for Eisenhower? According to pollster Louis Harris, Southern whites voting for Eisenhower did so out of concern for economic issues, the Korean War and the "mess in Washington" rather than Stevenson's views on civil rights. A regional economic concern was tidelands oil, the main factor in Texas and probably contributing to California going Republican. The tidelands matter was also a psychological issue symbolizing the president's perceived attack on states' rights.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Softness on communism data from Campbell, et al., 52; Harris's analysis in Savage, 200.

Ultimately, just about everyone agreed that the Korean War was the biggest factor in voters' minds. Did Truman deliver victory to Eisenhower by choosing to suspend the peace talks in October rather than compromising with the Communists on the POW repatriation issue and possibly ending the war before election day? The answer is no. The Pentagon and the American public backed the president's stand, and anything perceived a capitulating to the adversary would have made things even tougher on Stevenson. Nevertheless, political scientists noted, "Foreign policy became a dynamic component of total public motivation in 1952 in a manner which contrasted sharply with the 'bipartisan' era of 1948." The war thus accounted for the big increase in voter turnout in 1952 because, unlike 1948, debates on foreign affairs were no longer taboo. Secretary of the Interior Oscar Chapman, a key Truman political operative, said the Democrats lost due to "Korea, more than anything else." Virtually all the media agreed with him, and so did Stevenson. Political analysts noted that the ability to handle the war was the most frequently mentioned positive quality voters saw in Eisenhower. Based on interviews of Massachusetts voters, James MacGregor Burns and Philip Hastings wrote that Eisenhower "served as a symbol of national security much as Roosevelt served as a symbol of economic security in the 1930s."⁶⁵

During the latter half of 1951, Truman assistant Ken Hechler prepared a voting summary of Democratic committee chairs and other congressional leaders for the period

⁶⁵Pentagon and public opposition to forcible repatriation described in Rosemary Foot, *A Substitute for Victory: The Politics of Peacemaking at the Korean Armistice Talks* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), 135-140; Political scientists quoted in Campbell et al., 175; Consensus about Korea as main election factor in Divine, 82, Ronald J. Caridi, *The Korean War and American Politics: The Republican Party as a Case Study* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1969), 210-211 and Campbell et al., 56-8, 176; Chapman, Burns and Hastings quoted in Divine, 83; Stevenson's view in Martin, John Bartlow, 762.

of January 1947-July 1951 that revealed insights into the harmony between them and the administration's agenda. The breakdown of seventeen Democratic Senate leaders indicated that six consistently backed the president (all Westerners), while four of them (three Westerners and one Southerner) steadfastly opposed him. The remaining "middle" group of six Southerners indicated a drastic reduction in support of Truman beginning in 1949 and lasting through 1950. Yet, this group's support of the president rebounded strongly into the plus column in 1951. Analysis of the twenty-one Democratic leaders in the House showed that eleven (including two Southerners) consistently backed Truman's programs. The remaining ten, all from the South, indicated the same trend as the "middle" group in the Senate, with steeply declining support of Truman in 1949-1950 that rebounded sharply the following year. The UAW's report on Congress's 1951 performance noted that a strong majority of Democrats backed the president on rearmament and foreign policy issues.⁶⁶

What does this all mean? First, it surprisingly shows that in the Senate, most Southern leaders did not oppose Truman throughout his administration. Certainly, the erosion of support among Southerners in 1949-1950 stemmed from a reaction to Truman's 1948 civil rights initiatives and the Communist victory in China. As a result, the commander in chief entered the war in a very weak position within his party in June 1950. With a lack of Democratic solidarity at the war's outset, HST faced an increasingly difficult time rallying support for the war as it descended into stalemate. An unexpected conclusion from the Senate

⁶⁶ "Report on Congressional Voting Records as of 8/1/51 tables I and VI," Hechler to Truman; Subject File, Congressional Voting Records folder; Ken Hechler Papers, HSTL; UAW Report from Paul Sifton to Rep. Abraham A. Ribicoff, January 7, 1952; Box 5; Abraham A. Ribicoff Papers, MDLOC.

analysis is that Truman's most consistent detractors among the Democrats came from the West rather than the South. The failure of the Democrats to rally around Acheson gave McCarthyism a boost following the 1950 elections, but did not significantly affect Truman's conduct the war. Finally, Hechler's report indicates that Democratic support of Truman survived the furor over China's intervention into the war and the termination of MacArthur, rebounding in the first half of 1951. The president, however, did not content himself with demanding party loyalty as he conducted the war. He believed that in foreign policy, the opposition party should also rally around the president.

CHAPTER IV

ON-AGAIN, OFF-AGAIN: BIPARTISANSHIP, 1945-1950

It is most important that every effort be made to maintain a true bipartisan foreign policy. It will be my purpose . . . not only to keep the members of the minority currently informed, but to solicit their views and take them into serious account in both the formulation and implementation of our foreign policy.

--President Harry S Truman, April 18, 1950

To hell with all that.

--Senate Foreign Relations committee chairman Tom Connally (D-TX), November 27, 1950, responding to Republican demands for more input into foreign policy.¹

World War II was a time devoid of political partisanship over foreign policy; it was in the national interest for the United States to present a united front “at the water’s edge.” The idea of a bipartisan or nonpartisan foreign policy suggested that political give and take would help America’s enemies exploit its weaknesses. Debate on international issues between Democratic and Republican politicians therefore was a delicate matter in the 1940s. Once the president made a policy decision, ostensibly after getting input from both parties, he expected them either to support him or to refrain from publicly criticizing him. Moreover, during World War II foreign policy issues were taboo during electoral campaigns.

¹“Statement by the President on the Importance of Maintaining a Bipartisan Foreign Policy- April 18, 1950,” *PP*, <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/index.php?pid=712&st=bipartisan+foreign+policy&st1=> (March 28, 2007); “Connally Says ‘To Hell With All That’ In Reply to GOP Moves for More Policy Say,” *Washington Post*, 28 November 1950, p. 6.

The Korean War presented major challenges to bipartisanship. The overwhelming endorsement of Truman's decision to intervene evaporated quickly, and the Republican Party unapologetically made the war a campaign issue in the 1950 mid-term elections. In the spring of 1951, the commander in chief's termination of MacArthur drove the final nail into the coffin of the nonpartisan foreign policy.

Part II of this study evaluates the ways that bipartisanship—or the lack thereof—manifested itself under Truman's leadership during Korea. Unlike Ronald J. Caridi and David R. Kepley, who examined the Republican dynamics of bipartisan foreign policy, this analysis scrutinizes the ways that HST and the Democrats approached the issue. How did the president and his party define bipartisan foreign policy, and did they practice what they preached? Did the administration solicit Republican input? To the Democrats, what was the real purpose of bipartisanship in foreign affairs? How did McCarthyism influence nonpartisanship? The answers to these questions will describe the degree of unanimity as Truman oversaw the war.²

Two chapters are devoted to this topic in chronological order. This one traces the birth a nonpartisan foreign policy during World War II and the political events affecting inter-party relations leading up to Korea. Next, it examines the political dynamics and the beliefs of the key players involved in bipartisanship. The chapter then analyzes how McCarthyism and the Tydings Committee hearings influenced the administration's conduct of international affairs. Subsequent issues are bipartisanship in the nation's

² Caridi, *The Republican Party as a Case Study* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1969); David R. Kepley, *The Collapse of the Middle Way: Senate Republicans and the Bipartisan Foreign Policy, 1948-52* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1988).

conduct of the war through the Chinese intervention, and the significance of Far East policy debates during the 1950 elections. Chapter IV begins by analyzing HST's efforts to retain Republican support in the aftermath of China's entry. It looks at the effects of MacArthur's termination upon the bipartisan foreign policy, and examines the president's counter-attacks on Republicans through his probe of the China Lobby. The chapter concludes with a study of the bipartisan support for Truman's stand against the forcible repatriation of POW's.

The idea that both parties should work together to craft U.S. foreign policy took shape during World War II. As the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration began planning an international organization to prevent a third world war, they were determined to avoid repeating Woodrow Wilson's failure to sell the League of Nations to Congress. Wilson's team at Versailles included himself, three other Democrats, and only one Republican, contributing to disaster when the Senate rejected the treaty. In March 1944, Secretary of State Cordell Hull asked the Senate Foreign Relations committee to form the "Committee of Eight" to evaluate drafts of what became the U.N. charter. Breaking with tradition, Foreign Relations committee chairman Tom Connally balanced the subcommittee members evenly by party rather than giving his Democrats the majority. The Roosevelt administration supplemented the Committee of Eight by including key Republican leaders from both houses in the U.N. planning process. FDR's team wisely took pains to involve all GOP factions rather than selecting only those Republicans friendly to the administration. Their strategy paid off handsomely when the Senate

approved the U.N. charter 89-2, marking the official beginning of the bipartisan foreign policy.³

HST encouraged bipartisanship when he became president. Following the Truman Doctrine speech of March 1947, the foreign affairs panels in both houses unanimously endorsed aid for Greece and Turkey as the president requested, although Republicans were annoyed that he did not tell them about the speech beforehand. Truman included prominent Republicans such as Senator Arthur Vandenberg (R-MI) and John Foster Dulles in early discussions on the Marshall Plan, paving the way for unanimous approval by the Senate Foreign Relations committee. The committee also backed the North Atlantic Treaty without dissent in 1949, leading the Senate to pass it by an 82-13 landslide. It is noteworthy, however, that these foreign policy successes all dealt with European affairs. After the Communist victory in the Chinese civil war, some suggested that there had never been the same bipartisanship in the formation of Far East policy as with European issues.⁴

Truman and his secretary of state defined an unpartisan foreign policy in different ways. HST wrote that bipartisanship meant “the President can repose confidence in the members of the other party and that in turn the leaders of that party have confidence in the President’s conduct of foreign affairs.” He appreciated

³ Motives of FDR administration in Cecil V. Crabb, Jr., *Bipartisan Foreign Policy: Myth or Reality?* (Evanston, IL: Row, Peterson and Company, 1957), 33, 46-7; Tom Connally, 265 notes the break with tradition.

⁴ GOP involvement in aid to Turkey and Greece in Crabb, 56-60; Reston, James, “Vandenberg Acts to Restore Bipartisan Policy,” *NYT*, 26 March 1950, p. 141 and Donovan, 27 exemplify the skepticism about Republican input into Far Eastern affairs. Dean Acheson insisted there were “endless consultations” with Republicans on Far East policy, suggesting that they understandably wanted to deny this because things did not turn out as well in Asia as in Europe. See his memoir, *Present at the Creation*, p. 96.

Vandenberg's input on issues and, more importantly, that the Michigan senator did not attempt to undermine administration policies he disagreed with. To Truman, bipartisanship could not work unless he and the Republicans could trust each other not to use disagreements on foreign policy for political gain. Acheson viewed the idea more cynically, calling it the "holy water sprinkled on a political necessity." The secretary believed the executive branch should run foreign policy, and getting the GOP on board helped grease the friction between the executive and legislative branches created by the Constitution's checks and balances. Acheson declared the way to execute a nonpartisan approach was to proclaim to Capitol Hill and the public that "politics stops at the seaboard—and anyone who denies that postulate is a son-of-a-bitch and a crook and not a true patriot," adding, "Now if people will swallow that, then you're off to the races."⁵

Changes in leadership of the Senate Foreign Relations committee prior to the war influenced the dynamics of conducting international affairs. The Democrats regained control of the Senate following the 1948 elections, causing Vandenberg to relinquish the chairmanship to Connally. The Michigan senator was the straw stirring the drink of bipartisanship, and Truman revered him, even though he did not always agree with the president and distanced himself from the administration in such situations. Acheson respected Vandenberg as well, a sentiment he did not share regarding Connally. The Texan had an inferiority complex about his Republican counterpart, which sometimes hampered bipartisan efforts. Connally once attempted to have the chief White House

⁵ Truman quoted his *Memoirs*, Vol. 2, 430-1; "Holy water" from *Present at the Creation*, 95-97; "Politics stops at the seaboard" from Thomas G. Paterson, "Presidential Foreign Policy, Public Opinion and Congress: The Truman Years," *Diplomatic History* 3 (1979): 17.

usher fired for placing the Michigianian ahead of him in a reception line. Another time, when asked about Vandenberg's views on an issue during a press conference, Connally railed, "Van, Van; that's all I hear is Van! Who gives a damn what Vandenberg thinks?" The Texan was not the student of foreign affairs that Vandenberg was, nor was he as dedicated to the concept of a nonpartisan foreign policy. Moreover, Connally's insistence on being the "first to know" made it difficult for Acheson to have direct dialogue with Republican members of congressional foreign affairs committees.⁶

The power structure in Congress in the late 1940s consisted of an alliance of the Democrats and the internationalist wing of the Republican Party led by Vandenberg and Senator William Knowland (CA). An isolationist faction of the GOP led by Robert A. Taft (OH) opposed them. Although Taft was not on the Foreign Relations committee, he was able to hinder Truman's agenda once Vandenberg fell ill to cancer in the spring of 1950 because no other GOP heavyweights were on the panel. Vandenberg's absence removed the only Republican on the committee that the president respected and trusted enough to consult with, weakening bipartisanship in foreign policy.⁷

⁶ Examples of the Truman administration's good relations with in Vandenberg to Truman, March 29, 1950 and Truman to Vandenberg, March 31, 1950; PSF: General File, V folder; Truman Papers, and "Substance of Conversation with Senator Vandenberg," January 21, 1951; Memoranda of Conversations File, January 1950 folder; Acheson Papers, both from HSTL. See also Truman, *Memoirs*, Vol. 2, 103; Connally quoted in Lawrence John Letellier, "Departure of a Statesman: Senator Tom Connally" (Master's thesis, University of Maryland, 1995), 11; Descriptions of Connally in McCullough, 529-30; McLellan, 236; Donald A. Richey, "Oral History Interview with Francis O. Wilcox, February 10, 1984," <http://trumanlibrary.org/oralhist/wilcox2.htm#74>, pp. 78-81 (April 6, 2007); Ferrell, ed., *Diary of Eben A. Ayers*, 295-6; and Vandenberg, Arthur, Jr. and Joe Alex Morris, eds, *The Private Papers of Senator Vandenberg* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1952), 505-6.

⁷ Republican factions described in Kepley, 53-74; Vandenberg's importance in Donald A. Ritchie, "Oral History Interview with Francis O. Wilcox, February 10, 1984," HSTL, www.trumanlibrary.org/oralhist/wilcox2.htm#74, pp. 81-83 (April 6, 2007).

The Democrats shot themselves in the foot when they regained control of the Senate following the 1948 election. During 1947-8, the GOP majority aligned the Foreign Relations committee with seven of its own against six Democrats. When the election transformed the 51-45 Republican majority to a Democratic edge of 54-42, things changed in a larger way than expected. Connally, upon regaining the committee chairmanship in January 1949, pledged to strengthen bipartisanship, saying, “It is “essential that we have an American foreign policy, rather than a Republican or a Democratic policy.” The Texan reportedly tried to fight off an attempt to increase the numerical edge of Democrats in the committee, but two days later, Vice President Barkley dropped a bombshell: The Democrats would appoint 8-5 majorities (rather than the usual 7-6) on several key committees, including Foreign Relations, justifying the move by their larger majority than the GOP previously had. Vandenberg, with his typical moderation, called the announcement “not particularly impressive in its bipartisan hospitality.” Senator Wayne Morse (R-OR) called it a “shocking repudiation of a bipartisan foreign policy.”⁸

Korea forged another crack in the bipartisan coalition before the war erupted. In January 1950, the House rejected an \$11 million aid package for Korea, 192-191, the first major foreign policy bill rejected by Congress in four years. Although Congress passed the bill the following month, it came with a price for Truman. In return for the

⁸ Connally quoted in “Connally Pledges New European Aid,” *NYT*, 3 January 1949, p. 3; Vandenberg and Morse quoted in “Democrats Get 8-5 Rule of Key Senate Groups,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 5 January 1949, p. 7.

Korea funds, the administration had to postpone cutting off funds to the Chinese Nationalists until June.⁹

While Congress deliberated the fate of aid to Korea, Joseph McCarthy began attacking the administration with his accusations of communist infiltration into the State Department. The Tydings Committee, formed to investigate McCarthy's charges, began twelve weeks of hearings in March. The committee members included Democrats Tydings, Theodore Green (RI) and Brien McMahon (CT), along with Republicans Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr. (MA) and Bourke Hickenlooper (IA). McCarthy declared it a good committee. With Lodge having a solid history of supporting Truman's foreign policy, and with Hickenlooper the only McCarthy supporter, Tydings had an opportunity to get some Republican help in reining in the Wisconsin senator's wild charges. Instead, enraged by McCarthy's antics, Tydings opted for a total offensive to squash him quickly.¹⁰

The chairman's strategy backfired when he made no attempt to conduct impartial hearings. Minutes after the proceedings began, they degenerated into a partisan donnybrook. Tydings immediately attacked McCarthy, refusing even to let him finish his opening statement. As the panel's chairman, the Maryland senator should have postured himself as the mediator of the hearings rather than the chief protagonist, regardless of McCarthy's infuriating tactics. Tydings' behavior behind the scenes gave credence to McCarthy's claim that the Democrats had conducted a whitewash. The

⁹Beisner 329-30. The administration originally intended to end aid to Chiang Kai-shek in February 1950.

¹⁰Tydings's intent in Oshinsky, 119-20; McCarthy's approval of committee in "Tydings Promises 'Fair' Jobholder Probe," *Washington Post*, 26 February, 1950, p. M4.

chairman worked closely with the State Department, planning issues to emphasize and witnesses to call.¹¹

Press coverage of the hearings during March supported Tydings in spite of his tactics, and McCarthy seemed headed for irrelevance. However, things changed in April when the chairman's zeal began to make observers feel he was not delving into the charges deeply enough. This came to a head over the investigation of Owen Lattimore, a professor accused of having Communist ties. After Tydings pronounced Lattimore innocent, Lodge disagreed and asked for more testimony. Newspaper stories now blamed Tydings as much as McCarthy for the chaos of the hearings. Behind the scenes, the Maryland senator continued his quest. Truman told a staffer that Tydings said he intended to "finish the discrediting of McCarthy." The next day, after another call from the senator, HST quipped that Tydings was the "most nervous individual" he had ever seen, as the negative press began taking its toll. By June, the embattled chairman was in a panic, besieging the White House daily with phone calls and even asking the president to set a deadline for completion of the hearings. Wisely, Truman declined, knowing such interference would invite blame for cutting off the investigation. The president believed Tydings had totally botched the hearings and now wanted Truman to save him. As the hearings wound down, Tydings continued his pursuit of openly trying to refute McCarthy's charges while the other Democrats on the committee either sat in silence or

¹¹ Oshinsky, 120 describes the proceedings; Discussions between Tydings and the State Department on the proceedings in Memoranda to File, L. D. Battle, April 3 and April 17, 1950; Memoranda of Conversations File, April 1950 folder; Acheson Papers, HSTL.

skipped sessions altogether. One journalist called the probe “an inquiry which in its bitterness and partisanship was unique in the annals of Congress.”¹²

The Tydings Committee hearings damaged bipartisanship in foreign affairs. McCarthy’s salvos triggered Republican calls for Secretary Acheson’s resignation, causing the State Department to create a special group of people inside and outside of the government to investigate and rebut McCarthy’s charges. Truman counterattacked the GOP vigorously. In a press conference, the president said he was “fed up” with the criticism, declaring that this attempt to “torpedo” his nonpartisan policy was “just as bad . . . as it would be to shoot our soldiers in the back.” After praising key Republicans who were supporting foreign policy, such as senators Vandenburg and Leverett Saltonstall (MA), the president singled out Minority Leader Kenneth Wherry (NB) and Styles Bridges (NH) as McCarthy’s co-saboteurs of the administration’s international policies. In the middle of the press conference, Truman paused to rephrase his assessment for the record: “The greatest asset that the Kremlin has is the partisan attempt in the Senate to sabotage the bipartisan foreign policy of the United States.”¹³

Soon, however, the president tried to shore up his relationship with a key Republican antagonist, Senator Styles Bridges (NH). The Tydings Committee

¹² “Supplementary Days: More Washington Press Comment,” n.d.; Box 1107, Theodore F. Green Papers, MDLOC. This source contained newspaper opinion from March 16-April 1, 1950. Caroline H. Keith, *For Hell and a Brown Mule: The Biography of Millard E. Tydings* (New York: Madison Books, 1991), 75 also notes press coverage; Truman quoted in Ferrell, ed., *Truman in the White House*, 348-50; Behavior of committee Democrats in Harvey Klehr and Ronald Radosh, *The Amerasia Spy Case: Prelude to McCarthyism* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 196-7; Journalist quoted in Brown, Constantine, “This Changing World,” *Washington Star*, 19 July 1950, p. A7.

¹³ Creation of special State Department group in McLellan, 235; “The President’s News Conference at Key West,” March 30, 1950, *PP*, <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/index.php?pid=703&st=bipartisan&st1=>> (March 31, 2007).

proceedings, which began to sour for the Democrats in April, and Vandenberg's illness probably nudged Truman in this direction. Bridges, who was the ranking minority member of the Armed Services committee at the time and became the GOP floor leader in 1951, had clout. HST met with Acheson and Bridges on April 18 and had a fruitful conversation on a range of international issues. All agreed that such discussions needed to continue to maintain a bipartisan foreign policy, and Truman publicized his "very satisfactory talk" with Bridges in a press release, pledging to solicit Republican input. He followed up, telling Acheson to set up meetings with senior Senate Republicans to discuss an upcoming foreign affairs summit. Connally, who reportedly "snorted like a Texas longhorn" and called the president's olive branch a "blunder" and an "affront," stepped in and limited the secretary's meetings to only the Republicans on the Foreign Relations committee. Truman's efforts paid off, as Bridges stifled his attacks on Acheson for a year.¹⁴

Connally's reaction again shows how he complicated HST's efforts to enhance nonpartisanship in foreign affairs. Although "Texas Tom" had good relationships with Republicans Alexander Wiley (WI) and Lodge on his committee, his animosity towards Bridges hampered bipartisanship. If a president as partisan as Truman could extend the olive branch to Bridges in spite of the latter's attacks on Acheson, the Texan could and should have done the same. Moreover, turf issues drove Connally's refusal to invite Republican leaders to confer with the Secretary of State, for he insisted that only the

¹⁴"Statement by the President on the Importance of Maintaining a Bipartisan Foreign Policy," April 18, 1950, *PP*, <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/index.php?pid=712&st=bridges&st1=> (March 31, 2007); Meeting and follow-up described in Kepley, 82; Connally quoted in Pearson, Drew, "Mixed Signals Scuttle GOP Parley," *Washington Post*, 29 April 1950, p. B13; Cessation of Bridges attacks in Hamby, *Man of the People*, 524.

Foreign Relations committee would have a say in diplomatic issues. The president may have been better off had Vandenberg stayed healthy and the GOP maintained a majority in the Senate.¹⁵

The Democrats worked in other ways to foster harmony with the Republicans during the Tydings hearings. Rep. Brooks Hays (D-AR) visited Acheson, asking him to rekindle bipartisanship, suggesting that GOP congressmen such as Walter Judd (MN) actually “held a kinder feeling” toward Acheson than some of his public comments indicated. The secretary responded positively, but had to be skeptical because Judd, a charter member of the China Lobby, had been screaming for his resignation. Acheson made a remarkably conciliatory response when Republican New York governor Thomas Dewey phoned to clear an upcoming speech with him. Dewey’s draft noted in “strong terms” that the Democrats had given China away at Yalta and blamed the Communist victory on the administration’s policy reversals regarding support for the Nationalists. Secretary Acheson accepted these criticisms without complaint. He did ask Dewey to amend a passage characterizing Formosa as the only hope of the Far East, which the governor agreed to do. Moreover, at Acheson’s suggestion, Dewey agreed to reword a couple of sections that seemed to condone McCarthyism. Truman took pains to congratulate former president Herbert Hoover for his speech exhorting the need for unity of moral purpose in the struggle against communism. Notably, HST refused to criticize

¹⁵Connally’s relations with Wiley and Lodge in “Memorandum of Conversation- The President, Secretary Acheson, and Senator Tom Connally,” April 27, 1950; Memoranda of Conversations File, April 1950 folder; Acheson Papers, HSTL.

Hoover's call in the same speech to oust all Communist nations from the U.N., a position the administration opposed.¹⁶

The president added two Republicans to the State Department during the Tydings hearings to bolster bipartisanship. In March, the administration named John Sherman Cooper, a Kentucky Republican, as a consultant to the Secretary of State. Unfortunately, Cooper turned out to be a lackluster choice due to his lack of previous foreign policy experience. Truman did better by appointing John Foster Dulles, a former senator, to a similar position on April 6. Just two weeks earlier, the president had said that he would never appoint a "stuffed shirt" like Dulles, despite the Republican's extensive experience in foreign affairs. Pressure from the Tydings hearings and the ailing Vandenberg, however, probably persuaded Truman to change his mind. Political expediency entered into the equation as well. Acheson confided to Senator Herbert Lehman (NY), who had recently ousted Dulles from his Senate seat, that an advantage of this move was to prevent the appointee from running for the Senate in 1950. On the day the White House announced his appointment, Dulles was still haggling with Acheson about his job title. Although he claimed he "personally was not concerned about rank," it actually consumed Dulles. Rebuffed after bucking for the title of "Ambassador at Large," the Republican, wanting to make sure he outranked Cooper, asked that the word "top" be added to his job title of Consultant to the Secretary. Truman refused to placate him on the wording, but the appointment accomplished its purpose. The administration made

¹⁶ Dean Acheson, "Visit of Congressman Brooks Hays," April 4, 1950 and L.D. Battle "Memorandum of Conversation (with Governor Dewey)," April 10, 1950; Memoranda of Conversations File, April 1950 folder; Acheson Papers, HSTL; Leveiro, Anthony, "Truman Applauds Hoover on Speech," *NYT*, 29 April 1950, p. 5. The China Lobby was a group of congressional and business figures who passionately backed Chiang Kai-shek.

sure the press understood the New Yorker's importance. A *New York Times* headline proclaimed, "Dulles Named U.S. Adviser to Renew Bipartisan Policy."¹⁷

As the Tydings hearings raged on, the administration announced a reorganization of the Foreign Relations committee designed to enhance congressional input into policy formation. The new system created eight bipartisan subcommittees of three to four senators each corresponding to principal areas of the State Department, such as European affairs, U.N. affairs, and Far Eastern affairs. Leaders of these functional units in the State Department were to meet with these subcommittees monthly to consult with the senators about international issues in their areas. Although Connally took credit for creating the reorganization, he merely blessed the final product. Jack McFall, Assistant Secretary of State in charge of congressional relations, recalled he initiated the plan, convincing Foreign Relations to go through with it by allowing the chairman to call it "The Connally Plan." Francis Wilcox, chief of staff for the Foreign Relations committee, claimed he was the one who pitched it to Connally. McFall most likely hatched the scheme as a way to quell the Republican attacks arising during the Tydings hearings. He probably pitched it to Wilcox, who had the Texan's ear and convinced the senator to restructure the committee.¹⁸

¹⁷ Truman quoted and Cooper's appointment described in Donovan, 168; "Memorandum of Conversation, Dean Acheson and Herbert Lehman," April 5, 1950 and "Memorandum of Conversation, Acheson and John Foster Dulles," April 6, 1950; Memoranda of Conversations File, April 1950 folder, Acheson Papers, HSTL; Reston, James, "Dulles Named U.S. Adviser to Renew Bipartisan Policy," *NYT*, 7 April 1950, p. 1.

¹⁸"President Praises Plan by Connally," *NYT*, 28 April 1950, p. 22; "Senate Foreign Relations Committee- Suggested Subcommittees for Consultative Purposes," April 10, 1950; Box 586, Theodore F. Green Papers, MDLOC; Horace, H. Smith, "Reorganization—Senate Style," *The American Foreign Service Journal*, June 1950, 18-19, 50-52; Jerry N. Hess, "Oral History Interview with Jack K. McFall," June 24, 1970; <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/oralhist/mcfallj.htm> (April 4, 2007), pp. 68-71. According to McFall, the House later adopted a similar system, but named their subcommittees differently. This apparently did not occur until sometime after 1950, per a check of the *New York*

The reorganization of the Foreign Relations committee ultimately became a missed opportunity to enhance bipartisan support for Truman's policies. The new system seemed like it could not help but improve communication between the State Department and the Senate, and it was an effective symbolic gesture. Senator H. Alexander Smith (R-NJ) of the Foreign Relations committee promptly telegraphed his congratulations to Connally when he found out about the reorganization. Yet, the devil was in the details, as some subcommittees were more bipartisan than others. Four senators (two Democrats and two Republicans) comprised the U.N. Affairs and European Affairs subcommittees, foreign policy areas with the strongest traditions of cooperation between the political parties. The remaining subcommittees, most notably Far Eastern Affairs, contained two Democrats and one Republican. Since the 1949 Communist triumph in China, Republicans, including Vandenberg, had complained that Democrats had not solicited their input on Asian issues. The imbalanced representation on the Far East subcommittee lent credence to GOP complaints.¹⁹

Democrats and Republicans temporarily united when the Korean War broke out. Senator Bridges announced, "I approve completely what has been done." Republican Charles Eaton (NJ), an ordained Baptist minister, proclaimed, "We've got a rattlesnake by the tail and the sooner we pound its damn head in, the better." When even Senator Taft, Truman's most persistent nemesis, admitted he supported the "general policies"

Times. Donald A. Ritchie, "Oral History Interview with Francis O. Wilcox," March 21, 1984, <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/oralhist/wilcox3.htm#99> (April 4, 2007), p. 158.

¹⁹ Telegram, H. A. Smith to Tom Connally, April 17, 1950; Box 101; H. Alexander Smith Papers, SGMML; Kepley, 94-5; Vandenberg and Morris, 543.

laid out by the commander in chief, White House Press Secretary Charlie Ross exclaimed, “By God! Bob Taft has joined the U.N. and the U.S.” Limited as it was, Taft’s response “caused great joy at the White House.”²⁰

The administration did what it could to maintain this spirit of unanimity. Acheson contacted Senator Wiley, the second-ranking Republican on the Foreign Relations committee, early during the first week of the crisis to apprise him of the situation. Significantly, the secretary turned down a request from Senator Elbert Thomas (D-UT) to speak at a state Democratic gathering in late July. Even though Thomas was a staunch administration ally, Acheson demurred, with Truman’s blessing, saying there was a “great deal of business to get through on a unified basis” in the upcoming months. This showed remarkable sensitivity to avoiding political partisanship despite the looming mid-term elections. The president took time in the midst of the crisis to pen a heartfelt letter to Vandenberg, who was recovering from surgery. Although HST was responding in part to refute the senator’s criticisms of Far East policy prior to the war, he also was making it a point to reply swiftly to the ailing Republican out of respect for his views. Truman forthrightly justified his policies because he believed Vandenberg had “decidedly wrong information and wrong impressions” about the causes of the Korean crisis. Nevertheless, HST concluded, “We have never needed you so badly.”²¹

²⁰Bridges quoted in “Time for Unity,” *Time*, July 10, 1950, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,805447,00.html> (April 12, 2007); Eaton quoted in White, William S., “Congress Adheres Swiftly to Action,” *NYT*, 1 July 1950, p. 1; Ross quoted and White House reaction in Hechler, 151.

²¹“Memorandum of Conversation with Sen. Wiley,” June 26, 1950; Memoranda of Conversations File, May-June 1950 folder; Acheson quoted in L. D. Battle, “Memorandum for Sec. of State,” July 12, 1950; Memoranda of

A progressive bloc of the GOP provided the Democrats an opportunity to forge bipartisan ties at the war's outset. Republicans from the public and private sectors calling themselves the Republican Advance emerged from a secret gathering with a thirteen-page "Declaration of Republican Principles." This faction aimed to separate itself from the attack dog tactics against Truman's foreign policy that the Taft was planning for the upcoming elections. The Republican Advance called for the party to stop its "purely negative opposition" to administration objectives ranging from domestic issues to Far East policy, and to create progressive party initiatives. This group, while opposing some aspects of Truman's Asian policies, formally endorsed the Korean intervention. The declaration of principles attracted the endorsement of only twenty-one GOP congressmen and four senators, but several publicly backed the proposal.²²

Yet, the administration did nothing to enlist the Republican Advance in its quest for a bipartisan foreign policy. This was a mistake, albeit not a calamitous one. Unlike the Taft wing of the GOP, the Advance seemed willing to put aside opposing just for the sake of opposing. The progressive Republicans, despite their lack of numbers in Congress, did count among their ranks Rep. Judd, who carried influence regarding Far East policy, as well as H. Alexander Smith of the Senate Foreign Relations committee. While it would not have guaranteed broad Republican support for a nonpartisan foreign policy, Democratic overtures towards this faction could have been helpful.

Conversations File, July 1950 folder; both documents from Acheson Papers, HSTL; Truman to Arthur Vandenberg, July 6, 1950; PSF: General File, V folder; Truman Papers, HSTL.

²² Quote from "GOP Group Forms 'Progressive' Bloc," *NYT*, 2 July 1950, p. 1; "Press Release, July 1, 1950 (from Sen. Ralph Flanders)," Box 110, Politics: "Declaration of Republican Principles"-released July 1, 1950 folder; Ralph Flanders Papers, SUL elaborates on the progressives' intent; For GOP views, see "Republican Advance Finds Old Guard Cold," *NYT*, 6 July 1950, p. 24; and "The Nation," *NYT*, 9 July 1950, p. E2.

Political unanimity behind the decision to go to war dissolved in a couple of weeks. As U.N. troops retreated to Pusan and headlines screamed, “G.I.’s Curse Lack of Tanks, Planes,” legislators returned to their partisan ways. Senator Hickenlooper demanded an accounting of all defense spending since 1947, lamenting in a “choking voice” that the U.S. seemed incapable of stopping the “alleged bandit raid.” When Senator Lucas replied that he would speak when Hickenlooper stopped choking, the Republican shot back that the war was “enough to make a great many of the American people choke.” Senators Capehart and Connally had a sharp exchange over the number of troops that European allies had sent to Korea. After the Texan asked Capehart if he felt the U.S. should surrender because it was fighting alone at the moment, the Indiana Republican called him a “clown” putting on a “vaudeville act.” By mid-July, both parties already were discussing Korea as an issue for the 1950 elections.²³

The Republicans obstructed bipartisanship early in the war by making unreasonable demands upon the administration. Senator Knowland suggested Truman should give the GOP more say in foreign policy by replacing some Democrats in his Cabinet with Republicans. Knowland probably recalled FDR creating a bipartisan Cabinet in 1940 by nominating Republicans Frank Knox and Henry Stimson to the posts of Secretary of the Navy and Secretary of War, respectively. While Roosevelt clearly did this to gain Republican support for his foreign policies, he had additional motivations. Roosevelt was preparing a third run for the White House and wanted to

²³ “G.I.’s Curse Lack of Tanks, Planes,” *NYT*, 9 July 1950; Hickenlooper and Capehart quoted in Leveiro, Anthony, “Truman Preparing Messages on War,” *NYT*, 15 July 1950, p. 1; “‘Blame’ for Korea to be Polls Issue,” *NYT*, 16 July 1950, p. 51.

remove international affairs as a campaign issue. Moreover, Knox's and Stimson's predecessors had become difficult to work with, making Roosevelt more than willing to replace them. Moreover, the end of a presidential term was a logical time to make changes to his inner circle. Things were different in 1950. Truman had just appointed two Republicans to high-ranking positions in the State Department, and had no Cabinet members he wanted to get rid of at that moment. Defense Secretary Louis Johnson's open warfare with Acheson did lead HST to replace him several months later, presenting the best opportunity to add a Republican to the cabinet. This exception aside, the president was in the middle of his term, and arbitrarily asking Cabinet members to step down because they were Democrats was unthinkable for someone like HST, who was loyal to a fault. Such changes would have heightened the sense of crisis surrounding Korea, which the administration was trying to downplay at this early stage of the crisis.²⁴

Knowland followed up with a worse idea, saying Truman should not stump for Democrats in the 1950 congressional elections. Asking a sitting president, the leader of his party, to remain on the sidelines veered from the purpose of a nonpartisan foreign policy. Although Republicans rightfully asked Democrats to consult them on international issues as a way to seek a national consensus, the Californian's suggestion was an attempt to manipulate the bipartisan foreign policy issue for political gain. Nevertheless, Knowland's wish largely came true. While HST campaigned little in

²⁴ Knowland's suggestion in White, William S., "Bigger G.O.P. Role in Crisis Proposed," 11 July 1950, p. 21; David M. Kennedy, *Freedom From Fear: The American People in Depression and in War, 1929-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 457-8 describes FDR's cabinet.

1950, he was not trying to placate the Republicans; he simply was too busy with the war to hit the campaign trail.²⁵

The day after the outbursts by Knowland and others demanding more GOP input into the conduct of the war, Dulles met with Republican senators to get suggestions. Their main proposition was to push other U.N. members to send soldiers to bolster the ground troops in Korea. Dulles handled this well, assuring them the administration could achieve such ends by “working quietly.” After the meeting, Senator Smith said that although historically there had been no bipartisanship in Far East policy, he felt the administration was moving in that direction. Taft felt otherwise, saying, of Republican views, “I haven’t seen any evidence that the Administration wants any.” Thus, the GOP senate leader had discarded the idea of a nonpartisan foreign policy from the outset of the war, if not sooner. Truman’s Republican appointments in the State Department did not matter, nor did his rapport with Vandenberg. Either the president had to follow all of Taft’s wishes in Far East policy, or the Ohioan would fight him. The problem was that Taft knew little about foreign affairs, yet wielded significant power in the Senate.²⁶

Meanwhile, the Tydings Committee wrestled with partisan acrimony as it drafted its final report. Democrats on the committee tried in vain to get the endorsement of at least one of the two Republicans, with Senator Lodge the obvious choice. Even though Tydings tried to entice him with a trip to Europe to “investigate” State Department security from abroad, Lodge refused to sign the report. The Massachusetts Republican

²⁵ White, “Bigger G.O.P. Role in Crisis Proposed,” p. 21.

²⁶ Albright, Robert C., “Dulles Helps Senators Plan Part in Policy,” *Washington Post*, 12 July 1950, p. 2.

correctly believed that the Democrats were more interested in attacking McCarthy than in investigating the State Department. With no hope of getting Lodge's support, the committee report made no attempt to compromise with the GOP. It called McCarthy's charges "perhaps the most nefarious campaign of half-truths and untruths in the history of the republic," and ripped the Republicans on the committee for their poor attendance and lack of zeal.²⁷

The debate got ugly when the majority report hit the Senate floor on July 20. As the session began, Minority Leader Kenneth Wherry asked for the removal of Edward Morgan, counsel for the committee Democrats, from the Senate floor. When this effort failed, Wherry cornered the lawyer near the back door of the room and called him a "dirty son of a bitch" for writing the report. The GOP leader and former undertaker thereupon threw a wild punch at the athletic Morgan, grazing his shoulder. Others quickly separated them and the lawyer later quipped, "I could have punched his lights out." All Senate Democrats approved the report, and all Republicans voted against it.²⁸

By the time the Senate voted on the Tydings Committee report, Republicans previously considered friendly to administration foreign policy were planning attacks on the Democrats' Korean strategy in the upcoming elections. Smith decided to push for a GOP statement on Far East policy "so that the Democrats will not claim that they saw the issues" correctly, as the Republicans did. On August 13, Smith and the other

²⁷ Europe trip and description of report in Oshinsky, 168-71; Importance of Lodge's endorsement in Brown, Constantine, "This Changing World," *Washington Star*, 19 July 1950, p. A7; Report quoted in White, William S., "Red Charges by M'Arthy Ruled False," *NYT*, 18 July 1950, p. 1.

²⁸ Oshinsky, 169-70.

minority members of the Foreign Relations committee released a manifesto covering Cold War policies since 1945. Three of the four authors, Smith, Lodge, and Wiley, were part of the Vandenberg faction of the party. They believed their statement reflected the spirit of a nonpartisan foreign policy, striking a compromise position between the Taft/Wherry wing, which was demanding Acheson's resignation, and Truman's approach. The statement declared, "The major tragedy of our time was the failure and refusal of American leadership in 1945 to recognize the true aims and methods" of the Soviets. In the Far East, the Democrats had tried to convince Republicans that Chinese communism was "only a great agrarian reform movement." The Republican internationalists blamed the opposition party for Korea's division at the 38th parallel in the first place due to agreements at Yalta. Far East policy had given the Kremlin a "green light to grab whatever it could in China, Korea, and Formosa." In Asia, the Republicans claimed, "This was never a bipartisan policy. It was solely an Administration policy." The GOP senators warned, "The American people will not now excuse those responsible for these blunders."²⁹

One historian has characterized the Republican statement as "temperate." This is a bit generous. Taft endorsed the manifesto, and never would have done so unless he believed it would help his party hammer the Democrats. The fact that Smith came up with the idea for the statement with an eye to the election was apparent in the threat that the public would hold the "blunderers" accountable for their foreign policy gaffes. In a

²⁹ GOP planning in Kepley, 92-5 . Senator Vandenberg did not sign the GOP statement due to his illness. The drafter kept in touch with him by phone, and he stated his agreement with it in principle when it was released. "Text of G.O.P. Senators' Statement Charging Foreign Policy Bungling in Europe, Asia," *NYT*, 14 August 1950, p. 10.

New York Times story about the statement, “Truman is Blamed,” Republicans nonetheless insisted, “In this crisis there can be no ‘politics as usual.’” Such apparent doubletalk foreshadowed the GOP strategy of supporting the war effort while criticizing the policies leading up to it. As one Republican senator quipped, “We’ll man the pumps and unroll the hose, but damned if we’ll sing, ‘Hail to the Fire Chief.’”³⁰

The Democrats justifiably perceived the GOP statement as an attack and responded in kind. Connally called it a purely political statement and suggested that if the Republicans really wanted international peace, they should pursue “unity at home instead of quarrelsome and pettifogging attacks on the Administration.” He pointed out that Dulles had been in Korea only days before the attack, yet had reported no imminent danger. Senator Brien McMahon (D-CT) chimed in, “These masters of hindsight seek to cut themselves in on the victories of our foreign policy and to divorce themselves from our defeats.” Although the president’s advisors felt he should not react in any way that would be perceived as harmful to the bipartisan foreign policy, HST confided his belief that Republicans such as Taft, Wherry and McCarthy had invited the North Korean invasion through their criticism of the administration, presenting a divided America to the Communists. Privately, the president called the statement “demagogic,” and accused Dulles of instigating it. (Although Dulles did not initiate the idea, the authors did enlist his support.) When Wherry declared that the blood of casualties on Korea was on Acheson’s shoulders, Truman took off the gloves, calling the Nebraskan’s comment a

³⁰ “Temperate” in Kepley, 95; White, William S., “Truman is Blamed,” *NYT*, 14 August 1950, p. 1; GOP senator Eugene Millikin quoted in “Upsets & Switches,” *Time*, August 21, 1950, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,812978,00.html>, (April 12, 2007).

“contemptible statement and beneath comment.” Wherry retorted, “The President’s failure to remove Acheson, after repudiation of his stupid foreign policies, is contemptible.”³¹

The nature and source of the August GOP statement made it nearly impossible for HST and his party to pursue any semblance of a bipartisan foreign policy until the conclusion of the 1950 elections. The Republicans on the Foreign Relations committee laid the blame for Korea on the Democrats and made it a campaign issue. They believed Truman had cut them out of Far East policymaking from the beginning, Acheson had made a mess of it, and the Democrats needed to pay. As journalist William S. White wrote, the Republicans were “genuinely and profoundly bitter about the Far East, where, they think, some sort of Socialist virus within the Administration has worked a great, historic wrong.” Since 1945, the Foreign Relations committee, under Vandenberg’s influence, had been the one entity of government where legislators had laid their party affiliations aside. But due to the strident criticism, even coming from people like Smith, Wiley, and Lodge, Truman’s minions had no choice but to hit back.³²

Nevertheless, the president backed up his bipartisan foreign policy rhetoric with several Republican appointments in the midst of the campaign mudslinging. Pundits praised Truman for selecting people based on competency rather than as paybacks for

³¹ Connally quoted in White, William S., “Connally Decries Foreign Policy Rift,” *NYT*, 15 August 1950, p. 1; Connally’s mention of Dulles in “Press Statement of Senator Tom Connally (Dem., Texas,” August 14, 1951; Box 7, Addresses & Releases, Aug 1950 folder; Brien McMahon Papers, MDLOC; “Demagogic” in Truman to Clinton P. Anderson, August 5, 1950; PSF: Chronological Name File, Anderson, Clinton P. folder; Truman Papers, HSTL; For Dulles’s involvement in preparing the GOP statement, see William M. Leary, “Smith of New Jersey: A Biography of H. Alexander Smith” (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1966), 161; McMahon, Truman and Wherry quoted in “Blood on Whose Hands?” *Time*, August 28, 1950, <http://www.timecom/time/magazine/article/0,9171,813054,00.html> (April 12, 2007).

³² White, William S., “Bipartisan Policy Now a Campaign Casualty,” *NYT*, 20 August 1950, p. 119.

political favors, thereby attracting support from both parties. Most notably, HST named Robert A. Lovett and Walter S. Gifford to the posts of Deputy Secretary of Defense and Ambassador to Great Britain, respectively. Gifford represented a noteworthy appointment in that Truman previously had promised the job to one of his chief fundraisers, but reneged in order to name the GOP businessman to the post. Lovett, an experienced bureaucrat, added another Republican to the top echelons of the State Department to supplement Dulles and Cooper. Yet, the GOP cared little about these gestures. Their chief interest lay in improving their numbers in Congress.³³

The Republicans followed up on the Smith statement with their white paper on Far East policy, *Background to Korea*. The party designed this pamphlet of nearly sixty pages for GOP candidates and the public, which traced U.S. policy in China and Korea from the late 1940s forward. The white paper opened with a blunt statement: “The area of bipartisan foreign policy is clearly defined. Asia, including China and Korea, has been excluded.” Moreover, it declared that a “spirit of consultation” was “totally lacking.” This was a valid criticism, to a point. As the Korean crisis unfolded, Truman did meet with bipartisan groups of Congress, but strictly to inform them of his decisions rather than to solicit input. The document, naturally, ignored the recent additions of Republicans to the State Department. Reaching back to 1948 testimony from George Marshall that defending Korea was infeasible, the pamphlet was an “I told you so” document. It included a chronology of events sprinkled with quotes criticizing Democratic policies such as one from Senator Homer Ferguson (R-MI). Ferguson,

³³ Krock, Arthur, “Truman Appointments Rise Above Politics,” *NYT*, 1 October 1950, p. 151; “New Appointments,” *Washington Post*, 29 September 1950, p. 22.

reacting to the administration's January 1950 decision not to intervene in the Chinese civil war, sputtered that the bipartisan foreign policy had been "kicked out the window" by Truman and Acheson. The booklet reproduced portions of a July 1950 speech made on the floor of the House by Rep. Walter Judd (R-MN) complaining that, "In Europe we insisted that . . . the governments must keep the Communists out, but in China we insisted that . . . the government must take Communists in." Judd's comments overlooked the fact that post-war Europe had a smaller Communist presence than China. More importantly, Allied troops occupied much of Western Europe following World War II, which was not the case in China. The U.S. therefore was in a much better position to ward off Communist influence in Europe than in China. This reality, however, did not prevent the Republicans from attacking the administration as the 1950 election season began.³⁴

A solitary Republican voice spoke out against using foreign policy missteps by the opposition as campaign fodder. In September, Senator Lodge wrote an article for the *New York Times* analyzing the response to the August GOP statement (that he had helped write) and describing his definition of bipartisanship. Lodge felt that the primary value of the statement lay in its recommendations for future direction in policy, rather than in its critique of the past. He was dismayed that the announcement was "cheered by many Republicans as a blow for party victory in November" and "denounced by many Democrats as an ending of the bipartisan foreign policy." Rebuking the Taft faction, the Massachusetts senator wrote, "The opposition should not follow the desires of some

³⁴Republican National Committee, *Background to Korea* (Republican National Committee: Washington, D.C., 1950), 3, 45, 49-50.

Republicans who say that we . . . should always oppose the Democrats no matter what they do,” lest they be accused of “me-tooism.” He also criticized Democrats who defined bipartisanship as the GOP going along with the administration no matter what. Lodge argued that Republicans should focus on steering Truman toward the best possible policy. Unfortunately, the heat of campaign rhetoric obliterated his wise counsel. Even internationalist Republicans continued to attack the administration, while the Trumanites branded their opponents as isolationists. By ignoring Lodge, the Democrats missed a chance to foster the idea of a bipartisan foreign policy.³⁵

Instead, the Democrats made GOP opposition to a bipartisan foreign policy a campaign issue. Averell Harriman, the president’s foreign policy guru who rarely soiled himself in political mudslinging, surprisingly got into the act. Harriman attracted attention across the nation with a speech at an organized labor convention. Ripping Taft, in *Time*’s words, for his “constant guerilla warfare” against administration foreign policy, Harriman declared that after examining the senator’s record, “You cannot escape the conclusion that if the Congress had adopted his positions, Communist objectives would thereby have been furthered.” When asked at his press conference if he agreed with Harriman’s harsh assessment, HST said yes, Taft’s record spoke for itself. Not to be outdone, the Ohioan replied that until recently, Harriman and the president believed “Joe Stalin was ‘Good old Joe.’”³⁶

³⁵ Lodge, Henry Cabot, Jr., “Lodge Defines the Minority Role,” *NYT*, 17 September 1950, p. 176 (emphasis his). Effects of campaign in Kepley, 96-8.

³⁶ Harriman and Taft quoted in “Situation Fluid,” *Time*, October 2, 1950, <http://www.time.com/time/printout/0,8816,813404,00.html> (April 12, 2007); “Truman Backs Harriman, Says Taft Views Aid Reds,” *NYT*, 22 September 1950, p. 35.

Democrats used the nonpartisan foreign policy in other ways. Their Senate campaign committee defended Senator William Benton (CT), who was fending off accusations that he was a Communist because he frequently had voted with Claude Pepper (D-FL) and Glenn Taylor (D-ID), losers during the primaries victimized by red-baiting tactics. Examining thirty key votes on foreign policy issues, the committee reported that Pepper had voted “against the Communists,” and, therefore, in favor of the bipartisan foreign policy twenty-seven times for a “batting average” of .900. Taylor, the erstwhile Progressive, came in with at a much less spectacular average of .344. Both Pepper and Taylor, however, came in with higher anti-communist batting averages than thirty-two Republican senators, most notably Minority Leader Wherry at .233. The committee’s point was that Benton’s voting with Pepper and Taylor was not such a bad thing.³⁷

Truman pounded on the bipartisanship issue in his only speech of the campaign, broadcast nationally just days before the election. Repeatedly taking care to note that *some* Republicans *were* working with Democrats on international affairs, the president labeled opponents of his foreign policy as isolationists. HST railed that the isolationists had “dragged foreign policy into politics,” and wanted the U.S. to “shut ourselves off from the rest of the world and abandon our friends and allies,” prompting cries from the crowd of, “Give ‘em hell, Harry.” He proceeded to do just that, chastising certain

³⁷ Memorandum, Charlie Markham to Senator Anderson, October 13, 1950; Box 1052; Clinton Anderson Papers, MDLOC.

Republicans for besmearing the bipartisan foreign policy, losing “all proportion, all sense of restraint, all sense of patriotic decency.”³⁸

Truman’s attack on Republican isolationism was a questionable tactic. The main GOP beefs had been why the U.S. had not done more to support the Chinese Nationalist regime, Acheson’s defense perimeter speech supposedly inviting the North Korean attack, and steady bleating about lack of consultation of Republicans by the White House. The commander in chief would have been better off emphasizing the roles of Republicans Dulles and Cooper in decision-making, the recent appointment of Lovett, and how he had selected them in a spirit of bipartisan cooperation, arguing that it was impossible to satisfy the GOP, no matter what he did. By now, however, the opposition party had a new foreign policy issue with which to pummel the administration.

China, after some initial skirmishes in late October, entered the war just days before the election. On Election Eve, the magnitude of the Chinese intervention spread to the nation and the Republican National Committee responded immediately with a press release. The announcement noted that the crisis showed “clearly the ineffectiveness of our United States foreign policy where it has not been a united policy,” contrasting it with bipartisan measures such as the Marshall Plan. Criticizing a State Department “intent on appeasing the Chinese Communist Revolution,” the Republicans said the administration had “inexcusably turned its back on those patriotic Chinese groups,” referring to the Nationalists. Then, the politicizing kicked in: “This is

³⁸ “Address in Kiel Auditorium, St. Louis,” November 4, 1950; *PP*, <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/index.php?pid=909&st=republicans&st1=attack> (April 10, 2007).

the issue on which the American people are called upon to express themselves as they go to the polls on Election Day.”³⁹

Americans then went to the polls and shrunk the Democrats’ majority in both Houses. Yet, some in the administration believed there was still hope for Truman’s bipartisan foreign policy in the 82nd Congress. A White House analysis of the effects of the elections began with a summary of how frequently senators supported the administration on thirty key foreign policy votes between 1947 and the outbreak of the war, as shown in Table 1 below:

TABLE 1

Senators Serving in 81st Congress, 2nd Session- Votes on Key Foreign Policy Issues

Number of Senators	Frequency of Supporting Truman, 1947-June 1950
32	100%
15	90-99%
11	80-89%
10	70-79%
4	60-69%
7	50-59%
17	0-49%

Nine of the thirty-two “100 per centers” lost their seats in the elections. Opponents of Truman’s foreign policy replaced four these nine, with the remaining five supplanted by either Democrats or Republicans that were expected to back the administration. In Missouri, a Democrat expected to staunchly back Truman unseated a Republican,

³⁹ Republican National Committee, “News Release,” November 6, 1950; Box 100, Unlabelled folder in front of “Twitchell Report” folder; H. Alexander Smith Papers, SGMML.

resulting in a net reduction in the 100 percent category from 32 to 29. The elections produced no net change in the 90-99 percent category, leaving the White House with 44 senators expected to support foreign policy issues 90 percent of the time or better. Since the administration would need 49 votes to win, their remaining 5 would have to come from the 11 senators in the 80-89 percent bracket. Because this group included 4 Republicans perceived as “internationalists” along with 4 Democrats, the White House believed it could scrounge up 5 votes from this group on nearly all foreign policy initiatives.⁴⁰

The administration’s use of the “isolationist” label to describe enemies of bipartisanship underscored how the Korean War changed the nature of foreign policy debate. The above analysis mainly reflected how senators voted on early Cold War issues such as the Marshall Plan and aid to Greece and Turkey, in which the discussion was about whether the U.S. should commit itself to situations around the globe. However, the Communist victory in the Chinese civil war coupled with North Korea’s invasion redefined the challenges to Truman’s attempt to maintain a nonpartisan foreign policy. After these events, most of the commander in chief’s opponents were not Republicans isolationists trying to prevent American entanglement in other nations’ business. Rather, much of the opposition came to disagree with the president in the locale and degree of U.S. involvement in international situations. China’s entry into the Korean fray became a springboard for this change in debate. Truman’s main challenge

⁴⁰ Charlie Markham to Ken Hechler, “Analysis Shows Bi-Partisan Foreign Policy Will Have Majority Support in the 82nd Congress Despite Republican Gains,” n.d.; Bipartisan Foreign Policy-study by Hechler folder; Ken Hechler Papers, HSTL.

was no longer merely trying to overcome Republican (and Democrat) isolationists. Instead, he had to convince them how far the U.S. should go to contain Communism in Asia.

A combination of Democratic losses in the elections and the specter of world war brought on by the Chinese invasion led HST to push anew for bipartisan support of his war policy. The Republican leadership did not make it easy for him. In late November, Taft and Wherry called for Truman to re-examine his policies in response to the election results. Acheson responded by likening the “re-examinists” to a farmer who pulls up his crops every morning to see how they did overnight. Senator Eugene D. Millikin (R-CO) responded by calling the secretary’s policies, “Achesonian Jackassery.” As *Time* observed, “There was no harmony of suggestions.” Connally displayed the administration’s difficulties at a press conference announcing Acheson’s forthcoming meetings with the foreign affairs committees in both Houses to discuss the world situation. Initially, the Texan responded calmly and positively when reporters asked him about Republican demands for input, saying the administration was “always prepared to reexamine anything we don’t think is right.” But when the journalists continued harping on the subject, Connally “pounded the table and let fly,” barking, “That’s all they have been doing—reexamining, complaining and growling.” Asserting the Democrats had consulted Republicans all along, the Texan asked of the GOP, “Do they want to undo all

of these things? I don't think they do," even if "some of their big-mouthed advocates do."⁴¹

Nevertheless, Acheson and Truman kept on trying to include Republicans in the process. The secretary reported that his meetings with the House Foreign Affairs and Senate Foreign Relations committees went well, believing that both groups came away "sobered by the events in Korea" and now more fully realized what the nation faced. On December 1, the president had the Joint Chiefs of Staff brief thirty top congressional leaders from both parties. While Republicans asked about troop commitments by U.S. allies and poor intelligence regarding Chinese troop strength before Mao intervened, they emerged from the meeting in a spirit of cooperation. Noting that Truman asked for increased military appropriations and soon, Wherry said, "He's going to get it." Within two hours, lawmakers began drafting the legislation. A couple of days later, the State Department hastily summoned floor leaders from both parties along with ranking members of foreign relations committees from both chambers to solicit their input into the worsening situation in Korea. Undersecretary of State James Webb bluntly asked the attendees what they thought the administration should do. Rep. John Vorys (R-OH) exhibited the mood of lawmakers exiting the meeting, saying, "I think I had better keep my trap shut." Soon afterward, a group of eight legislators, four from each party, sent

⁴¹ Acheson, Millikin and Connally quoted in "Connally Says 'To Hell With All That' In Reply to GOP Moves for More Policy Say," *Washington Post*, 28 November 1950, p. 6; "The Greeks Had a Word," *Time*, December 11, 1950, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,814035,00.html> (May 11, 2007).

Truman a letter commending his decision not to abandon Korea in the face of the Chinese intervention.⁴²

Paranoia over U.S.-British relations, however, was about to make a decided dent into the newfound spirit of unanimity. In his November 30 press conference, the president alarmed his British allies so much that he provoked a five-day unscheduled summit with the prime minister of the U.K. Responding to reporters' questions about MacArthur's options for dealing with the Chinese intervention, Truman said that he was considering use of atomic weapons in the war. When astonished journalists repeated the question a couple of times, probably to allow the president to qualify his response, he not only confirmed his answer, but also made it sound like MacArthur could use nuclear weapons at his discretion. This brought a very nervous Prime Minister Clement Attlee, across the Atlantic to discuss Truman's intentions in Korea.⁴³

Attlee's meetings with the president proceeded to make many Republicans nervous, who justifiably feared the Brit intended to convince Truman to withdraw from Korea and endorse seating Communist China in the U.N. The day the meetings began, Senator Knowland challenged the prime minister about Britain's reliability as an ally. Hinting that future American support for Europe could be at stake, Knowland said the

⁴² Acheson quoted in George Elsey, Notes from Cabinet Meeting- 4:20 p.m. on 11/28/50; Subject File; Korea-November 1950 folder; Elsey, Notes from Congressional leaders meeting; Subject File, Korea-Congressional leaders meeting, 11:00 a.m., Dec. 1, 1950; both documents from Elsey Papers, HSTL; Wherry quoted in White, William S., "President in Plea," *NYT*, 2 December 1950, p. 1; Vorys quoted in Young, Robert, "Senate, House Chiefs Confer at State Department," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 4 December 1950, p. 1; Letter from Eight Congressmen to Truman, December 5, 1950; WHCF: OF 571B; Korean Emergency (Dec. 1950-Aug. 1951) folder; Truman Papers, HSTL. In this letter, the congressmen also urged Truman to allow 500,000 Nationalist Chinese troops to attack the Communist China.

⁴³ "The President's News Conference," November 30, 1950, *PP*, <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/index.php?pid=985&st=&st1=>, (May 7, 2007).

U.S. hoped to meet future threats with staunch allies “in the common cause of freedom, not just regional freedom, Mr. Prime Minister.” Democrats, including Connally, chose not to respond to Knowland, possibly to avoid drawing attention to him. GOP criticism intensified the next day when Taft demanded that the commander in chief give the nation “more complete information” about the Korean crisis. The Ohioan complained that the administration was informing congressional Republicans about decisions after the fact rather than consulting with them beforehand, conveniently ignoring Webb’s recent session with legislators. He also proposed that the president make a public report on his talks with Attlee at their conclusion. Senator George Malone (R-NV) was harsher: “I prophesy that we will do exactly what England and France tell us to do, for we still have officials without the backbone to stand up to Europe leaders.”⁴⁴

Republican paranoia peaked on the third day of the Attlee-Truman talks. Twenty-four GOP senators submitted a resolution requiring the president to obtain Senate approval before making any “understandings or agreements” with the prime minister. The Republicans intended to stretch the Senate’s constitutional power of approving international treaties as far as possible, fearing HST could make an agreement to withdraw from Korea or restrict American use of nuclear weapons in the conflict. Despite Majority Leader Scott Lucas and Connally swiftly blocking the resolution from coming to a floor vote, the Democrats generally continued their “passive spirit” regarding these opposition outbursts, which included—again—a demand for Acheson’s

⁴⁴ GOP nervousness in Acheson, *Present at the Creation*, 481; Knowland quoted and Connally’s silence in White, William S., “Knowland Prods Attlee on Stand,” *NYT*, 5 December 1950, p. 11; Taft quoted in “Taft Bids Truman Tell Public More,” *NYT*, 6 December 1950, p. 11; Malone quoted in “Taft Demands That Truman Give Nation More Information on Affairs in Asia, Europe,” *Washington Post*, 6 December 1950, p. 2.

ouster. Since three of the six on the Foreign Relations committee Democrats had been defeated in the 1950 elections, it must have been particularly difficult for the lame ducks not to lash out at the GOP. Nevertheless, the State Department “appealed in the strongest terms” for Democrats not to counter with attacks on General MacArthur, darling of the Old Guard Republicans, for his failure to anticipate the Chinese intervention. Acheson showed notable restraint, since the GOP was trying to have him fired. Senator Paul Douglas (IL) demonstrated the Democrats’ stance, quipping, “It’s about time we stopped fighting one another and started fighting the Chinese Communists.”⁴⁵

The administration did, however, notice the Republican uproar. Truman recalled that during dinner with Attlee one evening, he discussed problems with his opponents in the Senate, “who seemed to be violently determined to disrupt the nation’s foreign policy.” Acheson displayed his sensitivity to the GOP concerns during “one of those close calls that lurk in summit meetings.” On the last day of the talks, the president and the prime minister emerged from a private meeting, happily announcing they had agreed for neither the U.S. nor the U.K. to use nuclear weapons without consulting each other first. A perplexed Acheson reminded the commander in chief that HST had repeatedly insisted that no other country or entity could limit his use of atomic weaponry if needed for defense of the U.S. Moreover, the resolution of the twenty-four Republican senators

⁴⁵ Resolution and Douglas quoted in Albright, Robert C., “GOP Seeks Senate Consent on Deal,” *Washington Post*, 7 December 1950, p. 3; “Passive spirit” and “appealed in strongest terms” in White, William S., “24 in GOP Demand Truman Submit Attlee Pacts to Senate,” *NYT*, 7 December 1950, p. 1. The Republican push for Acheson’s removal produced resolutions from the House and Senate GOP on December 15. See Albright, Robert C., “Congress GOP Asks Ouster of Acheson,” *Washington Post*, 16 December 1950, p. 1.

gave “fair warning of the temper of Congress,” which would not stand for an agreement to consult with the British before using an atom bomb. The secretary argued that going public with the proposed measure would provoke a “most vicious offensive” against Truman and Britain by the Republican opposition. Acheson proved persuasive, and the two heads of state agreed to a less specific language in which Truman said he hoped never to have to use atomic weapons and that he planned to “keep the Prime Minister at all times informed of developments which might bring about a change in the situation.”⁴⁶

Acheson’s reaction highlighted how reactive the administration became to Republican criticism in the wake of China’s entry into the war. Most of the twenty-four Republicans signing the proposed resolution were anti-communist hawks like Wherry and McCarthy. Taft, the Republican feared most by the Truman team, did not sign the resolution. Neither did any of the GOP senators from the Foreign Relations committee, the Republicans perceived as being the easiest to work with. Thus, only the hard-core opposition Republican senators proposed the resolution; yet, the administration greatly feared their wrath in the event of a misstep during the Attlee meetings. The Truman administration knew that its gamble to reunify the Korean peninsula had backfired, making them vulnerable to Republican criticism.

The White House therefore responded to GOP cries for inclusion. Several congressional Republicans dined at a luncheon aboard the presidential yacht during the summit, producing a victory of sorts for bipartisanship. The icy atmosphere melted

⁴⁶ Truman’s quote from his *Memoirs*, Vol. 2, 409; Acheson quoted in his memoir, *Present at the Creation*, 484; “Joint Statement Following Discussions With the Prime Minister of Great Britain,” December 8, 1950, *PP*, <<http://www.trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/index.php?pid=991&st=&st1=>> (May 10, 2007).

when Senator Wiley (WI), ranking Republican on the Foreign Relations committee, spotted dessert. Wiley, grinning broadly, announced, “Mr. Prime Minister, you are privileged to eat America’s choice dessert,” Wisconsin bleu cheese. The meals and meetings concluded, as Taft suggested the president issued a press release summarizing what the two heads of state had discussed. Reaction from the Republican right was mixed. Wherry complained of a lack of additional allied troop commitments to battle the Chinese, while Senator Owen Brewster (ME) stayed on the fence, saying the agreements “are very good, as far as they go,” but cautioned, “The proof of the pudding is in the eating.” Acheson followed up the next day by giving a synopsis of the world situation and the Attlee talks to the Senate Foreign Relations committee. Connally and Wiley issued a joint statement acknowledging the meeting with the secretary, which noted that he “made clear that the United States is definitely and firmly opposed to any appeasement in the Far East.”⁴⁷

The same day, White House aide Charles Murphy proposed that Truman begin a series of monthly meetings with legislators from both parties to discuss international issues. Murphy suggested the floor leaders from both chambers, the chairs and ranking minority members of the committees dealing with defense and foreign affairs, the Speaker of the House and the Vice President as attendees. Interestingly, even though Taft was not on any of these committees, nor was he the Republican floor leader,

⁴⁷ Wiley quoted in Pearson, Drew, “Legislators Spurred by Korea Report,” *Washington Post*, 11 December 1950, p. B13; “Taft Demands That Truman Give Nation More Information on Affairs in Asia, Europe,” *Washington Post*, 6 December 1950, p. 2; Wherry’s view and Brewster quote from “Senators Disagree on Result of Talks,” *NYT*, 9 December 1950, p. 4; “Statement for the Press by Senator Tom Connally and Senator Alexander Wiley,” December 9, 1950, Box 101, Miscellaneous-1950 folder; H. Alexander Smith Papers, SGMML.

Murphy asked the president to give “serious consideration” to including the Ohio senator. Murphy said there were signs that Taft was “seriously concerned about the present situation and would honestly like to try to help.” This, combined with his influence in the Senate, convinced Truman’s counsel that Taft should sit in on the meetings. It probably took Murphy a bit of courage to make this suggestion, knowing the president’s weariness of Taft’s naysaying.⁴⁸

Truman did not follow up on Murphy’s suggestion, but did resume impromptu sessions with Republicans following the Attlee summit, which had stopped during the 1950 campaign season. Although the White House did not keep notes on the topics of these meetings, it is reasonable to assume that HST was more likely to consult with Republicans on foreign affairs rather than on domestic issues. Whatever the topics, the president was keeping communication lines open with the opposition.⁴⁹

On December 11, three days after the end of the Attlee talks, Truman announced he was convening a bipartisan meeting of key congressional leaders to solicit their input on foreign policy. Particularly, he was considering declaring a national emergency in response to the Chinese intervention. Until this point in the Korean crisis, the president had resisted ordering a full mobilization like that employed at the outset of World War II for a simple reason: He did not want Americans nor the international community to feel that a third world war was underway. Now, the gravity of the situation warranted a

⁴⁸ Charles S. Murphy, Memorandum for the President, December 9, 1950; PSF: General File; Murphy, Charles S. folder; Truman Papers, HSTL.

⁴⁹ List of Meetings at White House with Republican Leaders, April 17, 1945-March 1, 1951; Box 59, Foreign Relations-Hechler Study in Bipartisan Foreign Policy folder; George M. Elsey Papers, HSTL.

higher level of mobilization, making GOP support desirable. Moreover, this bipartisan gathering was not merely a response to Taft's December 5 demand for Republican input; Jack McFall of the State Department had been pushing for such a meeting since late November.⁵⁰

The bipartisan conference marked some notable changes in the president's dealings with the GOP. For the first time in over three years, HST included Senator Taft in a consultative meeting at the White House. This was a significant gesture recognizing that while Taft was not a member of either the Armed Services or Foreign Relations committees, he held the powerful post of chairman of the Republican Policy committee. Moreover, the president was asking for input from the opposition *before* making a final decision on a policy announcement, unlike at the war's outset, when Truman simply called congressional leaders in to tell them he had decided to commit armed forces to Korea. The commander in chief's change of approach attracted attention from the national media.⁵¹

Eighteen congressional leaders, eight of them Republicans, marched into the White House at 10 a.m. on December 13 to share their thoughts on foreign policy. As they filed in, Senator Wherry jovially greeted Acheson, "You are looking square at your opposition." When the secretary reddened and Wherry's GOP colleagues squirmed in

⁵⁰ Jack McFall, Memorandum for the President, November 29, 1950; Box 14; Truman-memos to and from the President, 1947-1953 folder 5 of 5; Charles Murphy Papers, HSTL.

⁵¹ "Duty Done," *Time*, December 25, 1950, <http://www.time.com/time/printout/0,8816,859059,00.html> (May 14, 2007); List of Meetings at White House with Republican Leaders, April 17, 1945-March 1, 1951; Elsey Papers, HSTL; Friendly, Alfred, "Bi-Partisan Group to Discuss Crisis Before Address On Defense Plans," *Washington Post*, 13 December 1950, p. 1; Leveiro, Anthony, "President Defers Decision on Curbs as Advisers Meet," *NYT*, 12 December 1950, p. 1.

their chairs, the Nebraskan quickly and disingenuously added, “I mean your constructive opposition.”⁵²

Truman began by reading a summary of a CIA report, “Probable Soviet Moves to Exploit the Present Situation.” He then recommended that the legislators read the full top-secret report, showing surprising deference by merely saying he hoped they would not leak the information rather than ordering them to keep their mouths shut. The president appeared particularly interested in soliciting Taft’s support, which was a tall order. When HST discussed declaring a national emergency, Taft unsuccessfully tried to pin him down on the degree of mobilization the commander in chief envisioned. Their dialogue indicated a typical struggle between the executive and legislative branches during wartime. Truman requested the power to make the preparations needed in case the country had to mobilize fully, without committing the U.S. to complete mobilization immediately. He wanted flexibility. Taft argued that the chief executive should explain exactly what he believed the country needed in terms of defense appropriations and tax increases, and then come to Congress as needed throughout the conflict to get its approval. HST opposed the senator’s approach as being too time-consuming.⁵³

The meeting, which lasted an hour beyond its scheduled duration of one hour, proceeded with Truman going around the table asking each congressman his views on declaring a national emergency. House Minority Leader Joe Martin (MA) was the first

⁵² “Duty Done,” *Time*, December 25, 1950.

⁵³ George Elsey, “Meeting of the President with Congressional Leaders in the Cabinet Room, 10:00 a.m., Wednesday, December 13, 1950,” Subject File, Korea-Congressional leaders meeting, 10:00 a.m., Dec. 13, 1950 folder; George Elsey Papers, HSTL; Truman’s interest in Taft’s views reported in Pearson, Drew, “Truman-GOP Talk Described,” *Washington Post*, 18 December 1950, p. B11.

Republican called upon, and said he was unsure what a declaration of a national emergency involved. HST responded by handing Martin a list of powers automatically afforded the president during a national emergency. Martin said he was not against declaring an emergency. Taft was the next Republican to give his views. He began tentatively, saying he spoke only for himself and “with some hesitation.” The Ohioan questioned the psychological value of declaring a national emergency that Truman had touted, and believed the “exact size of the military program ought to be decided.” He therefore was “generally inclined against” declaring a national emergency without knowing the specifics of the military buildup. Senator Wherry spoke next from the GOP side and, like Taft, said he preferred the Truman come to Congress with specifics on resources and authority needed. The president opposed this approach, declaring, “Time is of the essence.” Wherry then suggested that the commander in chief should ask for all powers short of declaring a national emergency, whatever that meant. After agreeing with Taft, Senator Eugene Millikin (R-CO) said the U.S. needed to strengthen itself immediately, “pounding the table with his fists” in excitement as several responded, “Aye, aye.” Three Republicans, Rep. Charles Eaton (R-NJ), Senator Wiley, and House veteran Dewey Short (MO) endorsed the national emergency declaration outright.⁵⁴

The Democrats lined up behind the commander in chief with varying levels of courage. Vice President Barkley was the first Democrat called on for his views and gave a persuasive explanation of how he had abandoned his initial skepticism. House Speaker Sam Rayburn showed little leadership, declining comment when called upon because he

⁵⁴ Elsey, “Meeting of the President with Congressional Leaders in the Cabinet Room, 10:00 a.m., Wednesday, December 13, 1950.

wanted to hear from committee chairmen first. Senator Tydings, smarting from his recent electoral defeat, said he was speaking only because Truman asked him to, noting, “I’ve had my horse shot out from under me.” Having licked his wounds, Tydings gave Truman a ringing endorsement, as did several other Democrats. Connally responded in a surprisingly diplomatic fashion, supporting the declaration of an emergency while agreeing with the Republicans that the public needed details about what such a declaration would mean for the nation. Walter George (GA), completing this thirtieth year in the Senate, emphasized the importance of bipartisan backing and endorsed Taft’s call for details on the effects of mobilization on taxes. Senator Lucas, another lame duck, made a more pointed appeal for bipartisanship, imploring Taft, Wherry and Martin by name not to tell the press they opposed Truman about the national emergency declaration after the meeting concluded.⁵⁵

Taft and company heeded Lucas’s plea. Before leaving the White House following the meeting, the Ohio senator drafted a statement and cleared it with Truman before releasing it to the press. It noted Taft’s agreement with the administration that a “dangerous emergency” existed for the U.S. and endorsed a rapid military escalation. However, because he did not believe the Republicans were “sufficiently advised as to the legal effect” of a declaration of a national emergency, they could not take a “final

⁵⁵ Elsey, “Meeting of the President with Congressional Leaders in the Cabinet Room, 10:00 a.m., Wednesday, December 13, 1950.

position on that question.” The president’s press release on the meeting accurately reflected the concerns of Taft and his GOP comrades.⁵⁶

Truman’s gathering with congressional leaders was closest the two parties came to working together once the war started. The administration’s gesture toward the GOP might have seemed like a charade because of widespread reports that the president was planning to declare a national emergency before he met with the congressmen.

However, the meeting was valuable due to the way the president conducted it. Instead of simply giving the legislators a sneak preview of an impending press release on war policy, HST took time to hear the views of the opposition and respond to their concerns. He also reached out to Taft, a distasteful chore, since the Ohio senator was the Republican most responsible for making foreign policy a political issue in the 1950 elections. The president also deserves credit for his treatment of the GOP even as many of them were trying to force Acheson out. But because Truman took the time to listen to the opposition, each side portrayed the meeting in a positive light to the press, emphasizing common ground and qualifying their differences. This was good for the country in a time of crisis.⁵⁷

Truman believed that a nonpartisan foreign policy was in the national interest. The president indicated such at a staff meeting in November 1950, in which he called

⁵⁶ Pearson, Drew, “Truman-GOP Talk Described,” notes Taft’s clearing his statement with Truman; Quotes from Taft’s statement in Trussell, C. P., “Congress Chieftains Agree on Rapid Military Build-up,” *NYT*, 14 December 1950, p. 1; “White House Statement Concerning a Meeting With Congressional Leaders to Discuss the National Emergency,” December 13, 1950, *PP*, <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/index.php?pid=992&st=&st1=> (May 14, 2007).

⁵⁷ Andrews, Marshall, “Emergency Plan Finds GOP Doubtful,” *Washington Post*, 14 December 1950, p. 1 and Trussell, “Congress Chieftains” mention Truman’s plans to declare a national emergency before his December 13 meeting with the congressmen.

their attention to an article in *Pravda* discussing how divided the American people were over the Korean War. HST remarked that this article indicated how foreign policy opponents were at least partially responsible for China's entry into the war. Yet, Truman inconsistently nurtured bipartisanship during the early stages of the conflict. A White House report (see Table 2 below) provided a rough, but useful, measure.

TABLE 2

Selected List of White House Appointments with Republican Congressmen and Other Leading Republicans

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number of Meetings</u>
1948	25
1949	28
1950	38

The second session of the 80th Congress in 1948 was one of the most contentious in history. In the 1948 elections, the Democrats regained control of Congress and Truman pulled off an upset victory. They were in no mood for bipartisanship in 1949, and the Democrats loaded up key committees with inordinate majorities. The number of presidential consultations with Republicans only increased by three from 1948-1949, indicating no special effort to reach out to them, particularly when accounting for the election recess in the fall of 1948. In 1950, HST dramatically increased his meetings with Republicans, driven by McCarthyism and Korea, particularly after China entered the fray.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Reference to November 1950 staff meeting in John Hersey, *Aspects of the Presidency* (New Haven: Ticknor and Fields, 1980), 30; Memorandum, Ken Hechler to George Elsey, April 4, 1951 and Appendix B, Selected List of White House Appointments with Republican Congressmen and Other Leading Republicans; Box 57, Foreign Relations-Hechler Study on Bipartisan Foreign Policy folder; George Elsey Papers, HSTL.

Changes in GOP leadership and behavior contributed heavily to the inconsistency of bipartisanship through 1950. Taft began to voice his views in foreign affairs as he contemplated a run for the White House in 1952, filling the Republican void created by Vandenberg's illness. Unlike the Michigan senator, Taft believed that pointing out the differences between the parties on international issues would help his party politically. The 1950 elections seemed to prove him right. Yet, Truman would face an even greater challenge to the "sacred cow" of bipartisan foreign policy in 1951.

CHAPTER V

THE DEATH OF BIPARTISANSHIP, 1951-1952

Bipartisan Foreign Policy Dead

--columnist James Reston, June 3, 1951, *New York Times*¹

Senator Robert Taft declared throughout 1950 that the bipartisan foreign policy had been dead for months. Sometimes, he said it died when Dean Acheson became Secretary of State; other times, he proclaimed Truman's election in 1948 as the end of nonpartisanship. Although Taft's assessment arguably represented an extremist viewpoint at the time, it became the national consensus by the summer of 1951. The commander in chief's decision to fire a revered military commander, who also happened to be a Republican, delivered this blow to bipartisanship. Responding to the resulting GOP explosion, the administration lashed out at its enemies while touting the Holy Grail of bipartisanship. Surprisingly, however, both parties backed HST on an issue that ground the armistice negotiations to a halt during his final months in the White House.²

The bipartisan cooperation of Truman's December 13, 1950 meeting with congressional leaders concerning the national emergency vanished quickly. Two days later, Republicans in both houses overwhelmingly passed resolutions demanding Acheson's resignation. Even GOP senators who normally cooperated with the administration joined in. Henry Cabot Lodge called the Senate Foreign Relations

¹ Reston, James, "Issue is not M'Arthur or Acheson, But 1952," *NYT*, 3 June 1951, p. 145.

² Beisner, 305; "Truman Charges False, Says Taft," *NYT*, 6 November 1950, p. 19.

committee office complaining that he could not get an answer to a question that “everybody in the country” was asking, “Why do we stay in Korea?” Francis Wilcox, the committee’s chief of staff, admitted privately it was “entirely possible that no policy has yet been worked out.” H. Alexander Smith complained that the administration’s relationship with Republicans amounted to “complete non-cooperation” on Far East issues. Senator Margaret Chase Smith (ME) foolishly insisted that HST had to consult Republicans such as Joseph McCarthy to have a legitimate foreign policy, even though she had publicly castigated McCarthy’s methods only months before. All of this took place in the midst of bad news from the war front between December 1950 and February 1951 as the Chinese onslaught forced U.N. troops to retreat.³

Leaks from executive sessions of the Foreign Relations committee plagued the cause of bipartisanship. On one occasion, when General Omar Bradley testified that the U.N. probably needed to abandon Korea, his words appeared in newspapers three hours later. Such breaches in confidence created a dilemma for the administration. If the leaks continued, the executive branch would be reluctant to share confidential material or frank assessments with the committee. If they withheld information, the Republicans would blast the Democrats for failing to consult them.⁴

The Republicans tried to implement a bipartisan policy forcibly in the “Great Debate” over Truman’s decision to commit four divisions of American troops to Europe.

³ Francis Wilcox diary entry, January 24, 1951; Diary, 1951-1952 folder; Francis O. Wilcox Papers, HSTL; H. Alexander Smith, diary entries of January 7 and 15, 1951, H. Alexander Smith Papers, Box 282, SGMML; Smith’s views in “Bipartisan Unity Urged,” *NYT*, 13 February 1951, p. 24.

⁴ Note to Senator Smith from WI, December 21, 1950, H. Alexander Smith Papers, Box 101, SGMML.

When the Korean War erupted, the president and other Western leaders believed the Soviet Union ordered the North Korean attack and feared it could be a prelude to Communist aggression elsewhere. Europe looked vulnerable, with only twelve NATO divisions in West Germany to defend against twenty-seven Russian divisions in East Germany. When the president made a brief announcement of his plans to dispatch the four divisions to Europe on September 9, 1950, his political opponents said nothing. In December, their silence changed to bedlam. A few weeks after China invaded Korea, NATO representatives gathered in Brussels to finalize their plans to defend Europe from the Soviets, including the commitment of additional American forces. The Chinese intervention, however, cast serious doubts on whether the U.S. could fulfill its troop allotment to NATO. The Brussels conference also worried some Republicans that Truman planned to abandon Korea and Formosa to support Europe.⁵

The GOP therefore tried to impose its will, seeking to force HST to obtain congressional approval before committing troops to Europe. The debate raged from December 1950 to April 1951. Truman believed that as commander in chief, he had the constitutional authority to send American troops anywhere, whenever he desired. Although prominent Democrats such as senators Harry Byrd (VA) and Walter George (GA) expressed some interest in joining the efforts led by Taft and Kenneth Wherry, the Great Debate was largely partisan. Calling NATO a “tremendous mistake,” Taft said, “The president has no power to agree to send American troops to fight in Europe.”

When Taft argued that the Soviets would not necessarily attack Europe if the U.S. did

⁵ Ferrell, *Harry S. Truman*, 323; Ted Galen Carpenter, “United States’ NATO Policy at the Crossroads: The ‘Great Debate’ of 1950-1951,” *The International History Review* 8 (1986), 390-91, 394-5, 398-9.

not station forces there, Senator Connally replied that Soviet puppets were presently killing Americans in Korea. “In Texas,” he snorted, “we are strongly of the opinion that when a person shoots at you, he is being unfriendly.”⁶

The two sides ultimately compromised, albeit over Truman’s strenuous objection. The Senate passed a non-binding resolution approving the four divisions to Europe, but banning the dispatch of additional troops without its approval. Both parties claimed victory. However, the Great Debate damaged the mutual respect exhibited by the legislative and executive branches regarding their respective responsibilities for national defense.⁷

The administration nevertheless continued to promote bipartisanship. The president vigorously rejected GOP calls for Acheson’s resignation, calling them “old, in the sense that they are the same false charges.” Yet, he carefully acknowledged there were “some Republicans who recognize the facts and the true reasons for these attacks on Secretary Acheson, and who do not agree with their colleagues.” Dean Rusk of the State Department met with H. Alexander Smith in an unsuccessful attempt to alleviate the Republican moderate’s concerns about Far East policy. The White House and the State Department took the time to thank some Republicans simply because they had commended the president’s state of the union address. In February 1951, Truman asked his staff to prepare a report showing the “extent of bipartisan cooperation and

⁶ Carpenter, 405, 413-4; Taft quoted in “Our First Consideration,” *Time*, January 15, 1951, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,814206,00.html> (June 20, 2007); Taft’s disbelief in a Soviet attack on Europe and Connally quoted in “The Fin of the Shark,” *Time*, January 22, 1951, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,888874,00.html> (June 20, 2007).

⁷ Carpenter, 413-4.

congressional cooperation in foreign policy” for Vice President Barkley to use in an upcoming speech. The president suggested including things like Republican appointments in the State Department and U.N. delegations, bipartisan agreement in the Marshall Plan, and GOP support of the Defense Production Act, the law that mobilized the U.S. for the Korean conflict. Aide Ken Hechler ultimately compiled a list of all meetings the president had with Republicans even though he had little proof of their content. Barkley’s speech, unfortunately, attracted scant coverage in the national media that made no mention of bipartisanship. Still, when a Democratic senator suggested of the GOP, “Let’s have our foreign policy, let them have theirs and may the best man win,” Hechler argued that the bipartisan foreign policy was “too much of a sacred cow to trample underfoot.”⁸

The events leading to Truman’s recall of MacArthur demonstrated that the general was nearly as sacred. John Foster Dulles, the Republican advisor recently named to the State Department, happened to be in the Far East for consultations with MacArthur when the North Koreans invaded the South. Dulles’s report to the president on his trip painted an unflattering portrait of the general’s performance. When news of the attack initially reached Tokyo, MacArthur downplayed it, saying the South Koreans

⁸“Old in the sense . . .” and “some Republicans” from “The President’s Press Conference-December 19, 1950,” *PP*, <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/index.php?pid=999&st=&st1=> (May 7, 2007); Rusk/Smith meeting described in H. Alexander Smith, Diary entry, January 17, 1951, H. Alexander Smith Papers, Box 282; SGMML; For administration appreciation of Republican support, see Rep. Thomas E. Martin (R-IO) to Truman, January 13, 1951 and Matt Connelly to Martin, January 20, 1951; WHCF: OF 571B; Korean emergency (Dec. 1950-Mar. 1951) folder; Truman Papers, and Dean Acheson, Memorandum of Conversation with Sen. William Knowland, n.d.; Memorandum of Conversations file; Jan. ’51 folder; Acheson Papers, all from HSTL; “Extent of bipartisan cooperation” in Hechler, 156-7; Additional information on the bipartisan foreign policy report in Ken Hechler to George Elsey, April 4, 1951; Democratic senator and Hechler quoted in Hechler to Elsey, March 20, 1951; Both Hechler memos from Subject File, Bipartisan Foreign Policy Study by Hechler folder; Ken Hechler Papers, HSTL; “Demobilize, Lift Curtain, Barkley Advises Stalin,” *Washington Post*, 25 February 1951, p. M2. Neither the *New York Times* nor *Time* mentioned Barkley’s Topeka speech.

could handle it alone. Later that evening, word arrived that the ROK was in full retreat, prompting Dulles to ask the MacArthur's staff to inform their boss. They refused, fearful of violating the general's "strict orders" not to disturb him after office hours, forcing Dulles to notify MacArthur himself. The next day, a despondent general told the diplomat and the rest of the delegation, "All Korea is lost." When Dulles returned to Washington, he told Truman he should recall MacArthur immediately. HST, however, explained that due to MacArthur's status in the Republican Party, such a move would provoke a massive reaction.⁹

Ironically, Truman could have saved himself some grief had he heeded his Republican advisor's advice at the war's outset. While removing MacArthur in July 1950 would have precipitated a political firestorm (and possibly sacrificed the benefits of the Inchon counterattack), the president could have used Dulles's influence to mitigate the GOP uproar. By 1951, the political climate had worsened such that Dulles could not have helped the commander in chief justify removing the general, even if the GOP advisor had wanted to.

MacArthur's speech written for a Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) convention in August 1950 was a key step leading to his dismissal, escalating partisan acrimony. Policy regarding Formosa was the point of contention. The administration had dispatched the U.S. Seventh Fleet into the Strait of Formosa at the start of the war to deter conflict between the Nationalists on the island and the Communists on mainland China. Truman designed his neutrality policy to quell fears of his U.N. allies that he

⁹ Dulles's and Truman's views of MacArthur in Ferrell, ed., *Diary of Eben Ayers*, 359-60; All direct quotes from Townsend Hoopes, *The Devil and John Foster Dulles* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1973), 98-103.

intended to occupy the island. Perceived aggressive behavior by the U.S. regarding Formosa could play into Soviet charges that America was using the Korean crisis to grab nearby territory. MacArthur thought otherwise, saying, “Nothing could be more fallacious than the threadbare argument by those who advocate appeasement and defeatism in the Pacific that if we defend Formosa we alienate continental Asia.” Adding, “Those who speak thus do not understand the Orient,” the general went on to extol the strategic importance of the island. MacArthur thus publicly disagreed with U.S. policy and called the administration incompetent. The general distributed advance copies to the media, and the State Department found out about the speech from an Associated Press ticker report.¹⁰

Truman ordered MacArthur to withdraw his statement. He complied, but the damage was done, as *U.S. News and World Report* had already printed the speech in its next edition, which was already in the mail. The president also considered removing MacArthur from his post as commander of the Far East, but leaving him in charge of Japan. After some thought, HST decided against it because he felt such a move would look like a demotion, and he “had no desire to hurt General MacArthur personally.” The commander in chief probably had political motivations as well, with good reason. Republicans jumped on the policy disagreement, slapping Truman by entering MacArthur’s rescinded speech into the *Congressional Record*. House Majority Leader John McCormack (MA) warned Republicans against using the episode as a campaign issue, pointing across the aisle and chiding them for their “desperation and extreme

¹⁰ Quoted in Caridi, 62; Methods of MacArthur’s release of the speech in Wainstock, 42.

political emotionalism.” In a note thanking McCormack, HST recalled his own role in advancing MacArthur’s career. Senator Wherry called the general a martyr, saying the only thing boosting the U.S. at the time was “our faith in the rugged Americanism of General MacArthur.”¹¹

MacArthur ensured his demise—and the ensuing Republican upheaval—in late March 1951. Learning that the president planned a peace overture to Communist China, the general upstaged him by issuing his own statement proposing armistice talks, taking the State Department and U.N. by “complete surprise.” One could “almost hear the swish of the MacArthur sword as it cut through the air” upon reading the announcement. A problem with the statement was that the general had not cleared it with the State Department, violating a presidential directive designed to curb MacArthur’s tendency to conduct diplomacy on his own. Moreover, he threatened to expand the war into mainland China if Mao rejected his offer, something the administration was not prepared to do. The State Department therefore swiftly repudiated MacArthur’s veiled ultimatum. Though the administration seethed, Congress paid the general’s announcement little heed, distracted by the Easter recess and the Great Debate. Truman, however, decided he would have to relieve his field commander; it was just a matter of time.¹²

¹¹ Release to *U.S. News* in Caridi, 62; Truman quoted in his *Memoirs*, Vol. 2, 355-6; For the GOP’s entry of the speech into the *Congressional Record*, see “The MacArthur Incident,” *NYT*, 29 August 1950, p. 26; McCormack quoted in “Republicans Warned on M’Arthur Issue,” *NYT*, 1 September 1950, p. 19; Truman to John McCormack, September 7, 1950; PSF: General File; MacArthur, Douglas, Dismissed folder; Truman Papers, HSTL; Wherry quoted in Caridi, 64.

¹² Complete surprise in “MacArthur’s Move,” *NYT*, 25 March 1951, p. 119; swish of the MacArthur sword in Childs, Marquis, “Korean Stalemate,” *Washington Post*, 29 March 1951, p. 11; Truman, *Memoirs*, Vol. 2, 442-4.

MacArthur created a major stir on Capitol Hill when Minority Leader Joe Martin read a letter from the general on the House floor on April 5, the day after the Great Debate ended. Responding to a previous note from Martin, MacArthur wrote that he agreed wholeheartedly with the legislator's push to enlist Chiang Kai-shek's help in the fight against Communist China. Regarding the Nationalists, Martin asked his colleagues, "Why in God's name, are we not using them?" Conflicting signals from key leaders did not help the Democrats' cause. On the same day that House Speaker Sam Rayburn had said the U.S. was in "terrible danger" of a third world war, Senator Connally assured the public that World War III would not start in 1951. Martin therefore blasted the administration for failing to "come clean" with Congress. Senator Robert Kerr (D-OK) quipped that he had added MacArthur's name to his "list of letter-writers who need the writer's cramps."¹³

Others joined the fray. Taft demanded an end to the "tragic and ridiculous policy of . . . neutralizing the Chinese Nationalist Army." A House Republican recommended bringing MacArthur stateside for foreign policy consultations, while a GOP senator proposed sending a congressional delegation to the general in Japan to get his input on international policy. Such radical suggestions prompted Democratic rebuttals. Senate Majority Leader Ernest McFarland (D-AZ) naively questioned why MacArthur, who was aware of "our constitutional history that the civilian arm and not the military makes policy," would help the Republicans circumvent Truman. McCormack called the Senate proposal "the most unusual thing I ever heard of." Kerr said the "Big Chief in the Far

¹³Martin and Connally quoted in "M'Arthur for Front in Asia, House Told," *Washington Post*, 6 April 1951, p. 10; Kerr in Waggoner, Walter A., "M'Arthur Rebuke by Truman Likely," *NYT*, 8 April 1951, p. 1.

East” was not satisfied with “all that big brass on his head” from his multiple job titles. The senator suggested MacArthur was trying to grab another hat, the “high silk topper of the diplomat.”¹⁴

Meanwhile, the White House maintained an ominous silence regarding the Martin letter, making the GOP increasingly nervous amid press speculation about whether Truman would reprimand the general or do something more forceful. H. Alexander Smith was “much concerned” about it, and, after meeting with Dean Rusk, worried about an apparent “rupture” over MacArthur’s comments. After learning of a meeting of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Senator Knowland hypothesized that the “hatchetmen of the Administration have been turned loose” to the undoing of the U.N. commander. Concern turned to desperation when Senator Bridges tried a bipartisan approach of sorts, accompanying Senator Pat McCarran (D-NV) to see Acheson on April 10. McCarran, an ally of McCarthy in his crusade against alleged Communist infiltration of the administration and a constant critic of Truman, asked Acheson to urge the president “not to make any changes in so far as General MacArthur’s status was concerned.” McCarran said he was making his appeal as a fellow Democrat, as if party loyalty had ever influenced his dealings with HST. But by then, it was too late. The “Caesar of the Pacific” had less than twenty-four hours left on his throne.¹⁵

¹⁴ Taft quoted in “Taft Supports General,” *NYT*, 7 April 1951, p. 4; Republican proposals and McFarland in Lawrence, W. H., “Republicans Move to Back M’Arthur,” *NYT*, 10 April 1951, p. 1; Kerr in Waggoner, “M’Arthur Rebuke by Truman Likely,” p. 1.

¹⁵ Press speculation and Knowland quoted in Walz, Jay, “Joint Chiefs of Staff Confer as MacArthur Issue Flares,” *NYT*, 9 April 1951, p. 1; H. Alexander Smith, diary entries, April 9-10, 1951, Smith Papers, Box 282; SGMML; Bridges and McCarran meeting in Memorandum of Conversation, “Senate Appropriations Hearings,” April 10, 1951; Memoranda of Conversations File, April 1951 folder; Acheson Papers, HSTL; Caesar in Baldwin, Hanson W., “MacArthur—I,” *NYT*, 28 March 1951, p. 4.

Truman's firing of MacArthur predictably sparked a partisan reaction. Democratic Senator Hubert Humphrey (MN) said, "We cannot have two policies. . . . It was MacArthur's obligation to stay within that policy or resign his commission." Eleanor Roosevelt was succinct, declaring, "I do not think a general should make policies." Republicans, naturally, saw it otherwise. Senator Wherry suggested, "Compare the monumental record of General MacArthur with that of his accusers—with their record of moral decay, greed, corruption, and confusion." Referring to the Chinese Communists, Senator Richard M. Nixon (R-CA) railed, "President Truman has given them just what they were after—MacArthur's scalp." Thus began what Francis Wilcox called a "big knock-down drag-out fight" on the Senate floor over an issue he felt would "widen the cleavage" between the parties.¹⁶

The GOP leadership pounced. On the day of the firing, a cadre of key Republicans, including John Foster Dulles of the State Department, held a number of meetings to plan a congressional inquiry into Far East policy. Since MacArthur had "unsurpassed knowledge of the political and military conditions" in the region, they decided to invite him to address a joint session of Congress. Martin and the Republican National Committee (RNC) worked to maximize the political benefits of bringing MacArthur to Washington while stressing the need to portray the general in an apolitical light. To that end, the RNC made sure no committee member would be in San Francisco for MacArthur's return, even though it had assembled the schedule for his appearances by the fourth day after his termination. The Senate Republican Policy Committee also

¹⁶Humphrey, Roosevelt, Wherry and Nixon in "What They Said," *Time*, April 23, 1951, <http://www.time.com/time/printout/0,8816,821515,00.html> (May 30, 2007); Francis O. Wilcox, Diary entry, April 11, 1951; Diary 1951-1952 folder; Francis Wilcox Papers, HSTL.

decided not to officially sanction MacArthur's visit. Interestingly, even though Senator Eugene Millikin (CO) announced this to the press, it never made the major papers.

Perhaps the media took Republican hypocrisy for granted.¹⁷

The Democratic National Committee's (DNC) response was the opposite of its Republican counterpart. The day after the firing, senators were already asking the White House staff for information to use to answer questions from constituents and defend Truman against the GOP. Ken Hechler expressed his frustration with Charlie Van Devander, DNC public relations director, in three conversations in one day ranging between "the exploratory, the explanatory, and the hortatory." Hechler wanted the DNC to help provide ammunition for the Democrats. Van Devander, however, thought the controversy was a "national issue, and should not be made a partisan football," and felt it would be "dangerous to have the news circulate that the Democratic National Committee is spreading propaganda." The DNC told another Truman aide that it wanted to stay "non-partisan" regarding MacArthur, an amazing statement from a partisan organization. Hechler thought it was amazing, too, telling Van Devander that the RNC was "shooting information up to the Hill in an endless belt," and did not think the Democrats should "sit around with our hands tied." Eventually the DNC relented. Yet, when asked to put together some speeches, Van Devander claimed he was "not too clear" about what they should contain.¹⁸

¹⁷ Unsurpassed knowledge in Kepley, 123-4; Tyler Abell, ed., *The Drew Pearson Diaries: 1949-1959* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1974), 156-7. Pearson reported that Cincinnati newspapers did not mention Millikin's announcement. The author's search of *Time*, the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* also found nothing on Millikin's statement.

¹⁸ Kenneth W. Hechler, Memorandum, April 12, 1951; Subject File; DNC-Establishment of a Research Comm. folder; Hechler Papers, HSTL. The quotes attributed to Van Devander are from this memo in which Hechler summarized

Some Republicans launched vicious attacks. Senators McCarthy and William Jenner (IN) called for Truman's impeachment. McCarthy said if the Democrats would not help, they would be labeling themselves the "party of betrayal." Jenner declared that a "secret coterie . . . directed by agents of the Soviet Union" controlled the country; therefore, the nation needed to "cut this whole cancerous conspiracy out of our Government at once." Martin emphasized that the GOP was considering multiple impeachments, including Acheson and others. Others, such as Rep. Frederick R. Coudert, Jr. (NY) and Senator Robert C. Hendrickson (NJ), recognizing that Truman had not committed an impeachable offense, proposed constitutional amendments to enable Congress and the public to recall the president if they did not approve of his performance. Countering the Democrats for calling the GOP the "war party" for backing MacArthur's desire to expand the war into China, Republicans came up with a new epithet of their own when Senator Wherry proclaimed, "This is Truman's war."¹⁹

Not all Republicans subscribed to these assaults. Senator James H. Duff (PA) was one of few GOP senators calling for national unity in the aftermath of MacArthur's demise, and the Massachusetts duo of Henry Cabot Lodge and Leverett Saltonstall publicly backed Truman's decision. H. Alexander Smith privately hoped he could get some Democrats to support a centrist policy. Determined to hit Truman's "fear-ridden appeasement mentality hard," Smith wanted to enlist Chiang's help while avoiding a

their conversations. Thus, the quotes are Hechler's words describing what Van Devander said except for the last quote, which is a direct quote from Van Devander.

¹⁹ Martin, McCarthy, Jenner and Coudert in Spanier, 212-3; Hendrickson in White, William S., "M' Arthur Inquiry May Begin Monday," *NYT*, 24 April 1951, p. 4; war party and Truman's war in "M' Arthur Due Back in U.S. Next Week," *NYT* 13 April 1951, p. 1.

wholesale invasion of China. Smith believed that supporting the Nationalists might encourage the Chinese Communist regime to collapse. Interestingly, he mused that, in this scenario, Chiang's forces could "precipitate themselves into a wider sphere of action," requiring the U.S. to "go ahead and back them up," which sounded a lot like an American invasion of mainland China. The New Jersey senator exemplified the quandary of the Eastern internationalist wing of the GOP. They rejected the general's strategy for winning the war before and after his firing. Thinking ahead to the 1952 presidential race, the moderates feared that if the party backed MacArthur's aggressive strategy they would push Dwight Eisenhower into the Democratic camp. The partisan atmosphere around the general's firing, however, led them to express such concerns quietly.²⁰

The Democrats scored a few points during the week between MacArthur's removal and his address to Congress. Without mentioning the general's name, Truman got his licks in at a Democratic fundraiser, remarking, "It's been categorically stated that Russia will not come in if we bomb Manchuria. That statement was made to me about the Chinese not coming into Korea. And it was made on good authority, too, and I believed it." Senator McMahan defended the administration as effectively as anyone did. Speaking at a fundraiser for Indiana Democrats, McMahan called MacArthur a fine soldier, but emphasized the ideal of civilian authority over the military. The senator, "disturbed" by the GOP reaction, claimed he would take the same view if a Republican

²⁰ Duff in Wainstock, 130; Lodge and Saltonstall in Kaufman, 103; H. Alexander Smith, Memorandum, "Possible Aggressive Policy for the Far East," April 28, 1951, Smith Papers, Box 105, Special File- Acheson ouster folder,; SGMML; Concerns of moderate Republicans in Caridi, 153-4 and Lawrence, W. H., "M'Arthur As Asset Stirs G.O.P. Doubts," *NYT*, 18 April 1951, p. 5.

occupied the White House. McMahon welcomed the GOP demands for an investigation into Far East policy, commenting, “Let’s find out why the isolationists on the European front want an all out war in the Far East.”²¹

Senator William Benton (D-CT) used MacArthur’s firing to goad a Republican colleague into a major gaffe. Debating Senator Harry F. Cain (R-WA) in a national broadcast, Benton dared the Republicans to quit hiding behind the “brass, leadership or ideas” of MacArthur, saying, “If we want war with China, why don’t you get it out in the open?” Cain, a U.S. Army major in the European theater during World War II, took up Benton’s challenge, introducing a resolution calling for the U.S. to either declare war on Communist China or withdraw from Korea. The Washington senator was the first Republican willing to back up his party’s rhetoric with action. If limited war was intolerable, his resolution presented the only alternatives.²²

Cain, however, failed to recognize political realities. Benton bragged to Truman that the resolution was “one of the best breaks we’ve had.” The Senate’s Republican leadership agreed, fearing the proposal would validate Democratic charges of the GOP as the party of war. H. Alexander Smith wrote, “Cain has embarrassed us with his silly talk.” Some of Smith’s colleagues were harsher at an “explosive” Republican meeting, as Cain’s brethren “ripped into him unmercifully.” The

²¹ Truman in “Action on M-Day,” *Time*, April 23, 1951, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,821513,00.html> (June 2, 2007); Brien McMahon, Speech Transcript, April 14, 1951 and Press Release, April 16, 1951, McMahon Papers, Box 8, Addresses and Releases, Feb 1951 folder, MDLOC; Rhodes, Farwell, Jr., “1,500 Democrats Hear McMahon Defend Truman’s Firing of Mac,” *Indianapolis Star*, 15 April 1951, p. 1.

²²“ Sen. Cain to Ask War Declaration Against Red China,” *Washington Post*, 16 April 1951, p. 1; “Cain, Harry Pulliam” entry, *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress* <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=C000021> (June 4, 2007).

Washingtonian still refused to back down, bewildering his colleagues by arguing that the GOP should initiate a declaration of war to “pin this war on Truman.” Wherry, perennial nemesis of the Secretary of State, exemplified the GOP leaders’ disaffection, declaring of the Cain resolution, “I am on Acheson’s side.”²³

The Democrats also had to face some political realities. Although Rayburn and McCormack, their leaders in the House, initially responded coolly to GOP demands for MacArthur to address a joint session of Congress, they succumbed to pressure from Truman. Senator Connally agreed with the president, arguing that rebuffing a speech by the general would allow the Republicans make MacArthur a martyr at the Democrats’ expense. Democratic leaders therefore caved, formally inviting General MacArthur to speak to the legislators. Someone in the White House decided to make the best of a bad situation, circulating the following program for MacArthur’s speech:

Schedule for Welcoming of General MacArthur

12:30 p.m.	Wades ashore from Snorkel submarine
12:31	Navy Band plays “Sparrow in the Treetop” and “I’ll be Glad When You’re Dead You Rascal You”
12:40	Parade to the Capitol with General MacArthur riding an elephant
12:47	Be-heading of General Vaughn at the rotunda
1:00	General MacArthur addresses Members of Congress

²³Benton to Truman, April 30, 1951; PSF: General File; Benton, William folder; Truman Papers, HSTL; H. Alexander Smith, Diary entry, April 17, 1951, Smith Papers, Box 282, SGMML; Wherry, explosive, ripped and pin this war in Pearson, Drew, “GOP Held Wary of MacArthur,” *Washington Post*, 20 April 1951, p. B15.

1:30-1:49	Applause for General MacArthur
1:50	Burning of the Constitution
1:55	Lynching of Secretary Acheson
2:00	21-atomic bomb salute
2:30	300 nude D.A.R.'s leap from Washington Monument
3:00	Basket lunch, Monument grounds ²⁴

MacArthur's address to Congress made April 19, 1951 a day to remember. As he entered the building, "Democrats, Republicans, and the crowds in the galleries rose as one," applauding and shouting. The general gave an impressive performance that included a "scorching indictment" of the administration's conduct of the war since the Chinese entry. After thirty-seven minutes, during which the audience interrupted to applaud thirty times, the American icon ended in a "spine-tingling and theatrical climax" that was "audaciously beyond the outer limits of ordinary present-day oratory." *Time* proclaimed that history would "remember this day and this man, and mark him large."²⁵

Truman wasted no time trying to deflate MacArthur's return. The day after the general's address to Congress, *New York Times* reporter Anthony Leviero approached John Steelman, the president's top aide, about doing a story on the October 1950 Wake Island meeting between the president and MacArthur. Leviero wanted to discredit the

²⁴Truman's arm-twisting in "Cabinet Meeting," April 16, 1951, Thomas Connally Papers, Box 2, April 1951 folder, MDLOC; Connally's views in Steinberg, 266; "Schedule for Welcoming of General Mac Arthur," author unknown, n.d.; Subject File, Korea-Foreign Policy-MacArthur folder; George Elsey Papers, HSTL.

²⁵ Democrats and Republicans in Wainstock, 131; All other quotes from "The Old Soldier," *Time*, April 30, 1951 <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,81472,00.html> (May 25, 2007).

returning hero by documenting his assurances to the commander in chief that China would not enter the war and his promise to have the troops home by Christmas. For his story, the journalist wanted notes from the meeting. HST assented, giving Leviero his front-page scoop. In addition to exposing MacArthur's overconfidence about the war, Leviero reported the general had apologized for "embarrassments he had caused the president." Rep. Martin accused the administration of "trying to smear General MacArthur's war record," vowing, "they won't get away with it." Senator James P. Kem (R-MO) recommended a dose of MacArthur's advice for the "terrible-tempered Mr. Truman."²⁶

The president's declassification of the Wake Island notes, though helpful in discrediting MacArthur, produced undesirable consequences. "If the *New York Times* can gain access to such documents," declared Senator George D. Aiken (R-VT), "then I say it's time the Administration made them available to Congress." Senator Russell B. Long (D-LA) chimed in, berating excessive leaks of sensitive information by both parties. Truman's release of the Wake Island notes did not set a good precedent. During the subsequent MacArthur hearings, HST reaped criticism for reversing course and invoking executive privilege to prevent White House personnel from giving testimony on the details of private meetings.²⁷

²⁶ Steelman, Leviero and Truman in Elsemy, 207-8; Wake Island expose in Leviero, Anthony, "Wake Talks Bared," *NYT*, 21 April 1951, p. 1; Martin and Kem in "Joint Chiefs Will Answer M'Arthur and Will Analyze 'Basic Differences,'" *NYT*, 22 April 1951, p. 1.

²⁷ Leviero, "Joint Chiefs Will Answer M'Arthur."

The Republicans planned to make the hearings on Far Eastern issues the sequel to the general's speech in their quest to redirect Truman's policies. MacArthur led a parade of witnesses that included Cabinet members and the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the probe conducted from early May through mid-June 1951. By the conclusion of these hearings, the general would not loom as large as *Time's* editors had hoped, and the bipartisan foreign policy would appear extinct.²⁸

H. Alexander Smith's correspondence revealed the GOP's partisanship as he prepared for the hearings. In his diary, Smith mused not only about getting MacArthur's views, but also how the Republicans could "best protect him," unsurprisingly getting his colleagues' agreement to do so. Despite his seemingly cordial relationship with Acheson, Smith dedicated most of his preparatory work to drafting questions for the Secretary of State. While the New Jersey Republican held no personal animosity towards Acheson, he clearly hoped to force the secretary from office. Moreover, Smith felt MacArthur's recall had helped him persuade GOP isolationists to go along with him on U.S. involvement in Europe and the Far East by making them feel included regarding foreign affairs. Nevertheless, the senator had some concerns as the hearings began, writing a friend, "I am trying to find the hemlock to drink before my political demise."²⁹

Democrats and Republicans on the panel clashed over whether to conduct the hearings in closed session. Senator Russell, chairman of the proceedings, wanted them closed due to concerns over publicizing military secrets and the possibility of a media

²⁸ "The Old Soldier," *Time*, April 30, 1951.

²⁹ H. Alexander Smith, diary entries of April 23 and 28, May 1-31, June 1, 1951, Box 282; Smith to Phillip Marshall Brown, May 2, 1951 and other correspondence, Box 105, Special File-Acheson ouster; Smith Papers, SGMML.

circus if he allowed live broadcasts. While Russell did not consult Truman on this issue, he did discuss it with MacArthur, who also favored executive sessions. The chairman then obtained *unanimous* approval from the committee. Amid criticism of Russell's determination to keep the hearings closed, several committee Republicans backtracked and came out for public hearings. Francis Wilcox agreed with Russell due to the number of top-secret documents involved, observing that the Republicans saw open hearings as an "excellent opportunity to needle the Administration."³⁰

The chairman castigated the committee Republicans for changing their minds, pointedly reminding them, "There is something here that is more important than continued tenure in the Senate, or even the election of the President of the United States in 1952." Ultimately, Russell compromised a bit. While the committee barred cameras and reporters from the proceedings, it also made provisions to release edited transcripts of the testimony to the press on an hourly basis. Three of the nine Republicans on the panel joined all thirteen Democrats in voting for the compromise proposal. Despite the portentous connotation of "edited" transcripts, Wilcox recalled that the system worked well. As the typist transcribed each page of testimony, two officials, one from the Defense Department and the other from the State Department, immediately looked it over, removed any sensitive material, and then released it to the press "practically automatically." Years later, Senate historian Donald Ritchie reported that review of the unedited transcripts showed that the editors at the hearings held back only a "very small

³⁰ Russell's views in Fite, 257; Republican backtracking in Dodd, Phillip, "M' Arthur Firing Probe to Start May 3 in Senate," *Chicago Tribune*, 25 April 1951, p. 7; "The M' Arthur Hearings," *NYT*, 29 April 1951, p. E8 and Caridi, 152-3; Francis O. Wilcox, Diary entries, April 30 and May 2, 1951; Diary, 1951-1952 folder; Wilcox Papers, HSTL.

percentage” of the testimony. This underscores why Russell won so much praise from the opposition Republicans and even MacArthur for his conduct of the hearings in a striking contrast to Millard Tydings’ performance a year earlier.³¹

Republican rhetoric during the hearings varied wildly. After cautioning his colleagues about hitching their stars too closely to MacArthur’s wagon only days earlier, Taft endorsed the general’s strategy for winning the war four days before the proceedings began. This was pure political opportunism, since the Ohioan previously had suggested abandoning Korea and retrenching in Formosa and Japan. Taft also called Truman both an appeaser and a warmonger. Knowland and Hickenlooper mixed their questions to witnesses with speeches praising the general. Senator Wiley, typically associated with the bipartisan wing of the party, proclaimed that the nation would have avoided the tragedy of Korea if Truman had consulted the Senate at the outset, conveniently overlooking his own silence about the matter in June 1950. Other bipartisan Republicans such as Lodge, Saltonstall, and Charles Tobey (NH) avoided attacking MacArthur, yet indicated they did not approve of his policies by the nature of their questions. Only one Republican, Wayne Morse (OR), pushed MacArthur, grilling him for three hours at one point.³²

³¹ Russell quoted in “The General’s Case,” *Time*, May 14, 1951, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,935202,00.html> (June 2, 2007); Conduct of hearings described in Fite, 257 and Caridi, 153; “Oral History Interview with Francis O. Wilcox,” March 21, 1984, <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/oralhist/wilcox3.html#117> (June 2, 2007), 121-122.

³² Taft’s initial caution in Pearson, “GOP Held Wary of MacArthur”; Taft’s turnabout in Wood, 151; appeaser and warmonger in “Taft vs. Douglas,” *Washington Post*, 23 April 1951, p. 4; Wiley in Matthew E. Mantell, “Opposition to the Korean War: A Study in American Dissent” (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1973), 129; Hickenlooper, Knowland, Lodge, Saltonstall and Tobey in Kepley, 130-1; Morse in Andrews, Marshall, “Defeat Reds In Korea or Face Doom, U.S. Warned,” *Washington Post*, 6 May 1951, p. M1.

The Democrats approached the hearings fully aware of the political ramifications involved. Senator McMahon exposed the general's weak spots. When MacArthur assured the senator that the Soviets would not intervene if the war extended into mainland China the following dialogue ensued:

MCMAHON: Suppose, General, you are wrong about that? You could be wrong, couldn't you?

MACARTHUR: Most assuredly.

MCMAHON: You did not believe at one time that the communists of China would come into the conflict in Korea?

MACARTHUR: I doubted it.

MCMAHON: They did.

After some additional give and take, McMahon concluded, "And now, of course, we can all agree that there's a possibility that the Soviets will come in if we adopt the recommendations that you propose to carry out." When the senator pressed MacArthur about how to defend the U.S. in an all-out war with the Soviet Union, the general responded, "That doesn't happen to be my responsibility, Senator. My responsibilities were in the Pacific."³³

That prompted McMahon to whisper to Wilcox, "Now I've got him. I've really got him. He is a theatre commander, he doesn't know anything really about what's happening in the rest of the world. The Joint Chiefs of Staff are the only ones who have a knowledge of the whole military responsibility of this government."³⁴

³³ McMahon/MacArthur dialogue in White, William S., "Senate Inquiry On," *NYT*, 4 May 1951, p. 1; my responsibilities in "The Course Ahead," *Time*, May 14, 1951, <<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,935205,00.html>> (June 8, 2007)

³⁴"Oral History Interview with Francis O. Wilcox," March 21, 1984, 119.

Meanwhile, McMahon's Connecticut counterpart, Senator Benton, decided to give a holistic defense of the administration's side of the MacArthur saga. Taking to the Senate floor a few days after the hearings began, Benton announced his speech would last about forty-five minutes. As the gist of his remarks emerged, word spread quickly and Republicans stormed from their offices to do battle. Ten GOP senators joined the debate, interrupting Benton such that his speech lasted three and a half hours. Senators Humphrey and Kerr came to Benton's aid as the latter hammered on MacArthur's lack of knowledge outside the Far East. The Connecticut senator said he had urged Truman to relieve the general the day before the announcement, not knowing that HST had already made his decision. Benton reminded his peers that the president's move was not unique, proclaiming, "Many popular generals have been fired, and I personally hope they will continue to be fired when they push for too much authority and responsibility."³⁵

The Democrats grew optimistic as the hearings unfolded. Senator Clinton Anderson, replying to a constituent demanding Truman's impeachment, noted that the testimony proved the president made a courageous decision supported by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Anderson gloated, "It is interesting to notice that many men like Senator Taft who were very vocal in the beginning have been a little surprised by the developments of these past few days." The White House staff continued to try to light a fire under the DNC to reap political profits from the hearings. Ken Hechler again whined about the DNC spending a "great deal of space denouncing partisanship, and

³⁵ Hyman, 448-50.

trying to prove the Committee is not guilty of partisanship.” Hechler correctly reasoned that “nobody would ever be fooled into thinking that a body set up to be partisan ever could be nonpartisan,” and railed that DNC efforts to paint itself as a nonpartisan organization served as “a clock for its own timidity and masterly inactivity.” He wished the DNC would “come out swinging in a bold, courageous—and full-bloodedly partisan—fashion.”³⁶

The DNC soon took Hechler’s advice, sponsoring a mid-term gathering of Democrats in Denver. Truman Cabinet members and top advisors assailed Republican foreign policy views. Again calling attention to MacArthur’s testimony, Averell Harriman said, “We are engaged in a global struggle. It is not Asia versus Europe. It is Asia and Europe. It is the free world.” Agriculture Secretary Charles F. Brannan went after Republican congressional leaders by name, calling them the advocates of “big-war-now.”³⁷

A glimmer of bipartisanship emerged during the testimony of General Omar Bradley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. When Senator Wiley asked Bradley to divulge the details of a meeting the general and several advisors had with Truman on April 6 to discuss MacArthur’s future, Bradley refused, saying that since he was advising the president in confidence, he did not “feel at liberty to publicize what any of us said at that time.” Bradley’s response and the president’s refusal to allow any White House advisers to testify set off an explosion over executive privilege when Russell

³⁶ Clinton Anderson to William A. Blusher, May 9, 1951; Box 519, Anderson Papers, MDLOC; Kenneth W. Hechler, “Memorandum for Mr. Andrews,” May 9, 1951; Subject File, DNC 1950-1953 folder; Hechler Papers, HSTL.

³⁷ Leviero, Anthony, “Harriman Asserts Red Tide is Turned,” *NYT*, 25 May 1951, p. 5.

ruled in the general's favor. Senator Knowland worried that if the administration lowered an "iron curtain," the committee may have to report to the full Senate that it could not do its job. Senator Fulbright retorted, "I hope the Senator has not decided to sabotage or destroy this hearing simply because the evidence now being presented does not support General MacArthur." An incensed Wiley convened a meeting of a few Republicans and announced he would challenge Russell's ruling. The chairman expressed disappointment that Wiley was "having huddles with just members of his party" on the issue, saying the committee should be resolving such issues as Americans rather than as Democrats or Republicans. Russell was so angry that he wrote a four-page letter to the committee resigning his leadership post. Grumbling that the Republicans appeared more concerned with gaining "some political advantage" than in conducting an impartial investigation, he avowed, "I do not propose to act as a ring master of a political circus."³⁸

Russell nevertheless decided to weather the storm and never distributed the letter. Wilcox believed the chairman was right because Bradley had offered to tell the panel the results of the meeting. Ultimately, several committee Republicans agreed. Senator Smith decided to support Russell's ruling as a vote of confidence in his leadership, and clearly was pleased with the Georgian's performance. Moreover, Smith wanted to "keep the hearings away from any partisanship or suspicion of purely political motives."

Legally, he believed it was a borderline case, and felt that because the committee had not

³⁸ All quotes other than Russell from "Political Squall," *Time*, May 28, 1951, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,890037,00.html> (June 2, 2007); Russell quoted in Fite, 260-62. The term "executive privilege" was not coined until the Eisenhower administration. However, presidents dating back to George Washington have supported the idea.

forced MacArthur to discuss similar details of his meeting with Truman at Wake Island, Bradley should have the same privilege. The committee voted 18-8 to support Russell's rulings. Twelve of the fourteen Democrats backed the chairman, along with half of the twelve GOP senators. Later that day at a press conference, Truman answered questions that, in Smith's mind, gave the Republicans what they were after from Bradley when the president said he had been considering removing MacArthur since the August 1950 VFW incident. Although Wiley fumed about the majority's "frantic desire to cover up and whitewash," a pleased Smith wrote, "It was not a partisan vote."³⁹

By the conclusion of Bradley's testimony, Democrats and some Republicans had found common ground on several issues. Truman had the right to remove MacArthur and had twice ordered the general to keep his policy views to himself. They also established that MacArthur disagreed with the military restrictions imposed upon him and had lobbied publicly and privately for months to change the policy. A number of GOP senators now believed that MacArthur had been out of line.⁴⁰

The end of the hearings produced a fractured Republican Party contrasting to the united Democrats. Russell, reasoning that the public had already heard the various viewpoints on MacArthur's removal and Far East policy, persuaded an 18-5 majority of the committee not to issue a final report. The chairman believed a concluding commentary would be divisive and could negatively affect the peace negotiations just

³⁹ Francis O. Wilcox, Diary entries, May 15 and 17, 1951; Diary, 1951-1952 folder; Wilcox Papers, HSTL; H. Alexander Smith, Diary entries, May 17 and 18, 1951, Smith Papers, Box 282, SGMML; Wiley in "Political Squall," *Time*, May 28, 1951; "The President's News Conference," May 17, 1951, *PP*, <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/index.php?pid=320&st=&st1=>> (June 2, 2007). Emphasis Smith's.

⁴⁰ Points of common ground in "Political Squall," *Time*, May 28, 1951; GOP senators opposing MacArthur in Kaufman, 108.

underway in Kaesong. Nevertheless, eight committee Republicans decided to issue their own statement on August 19 after failing to get persuade any Democrats to sign on. The report called Truman's Far East policy a "catastrophic failure," rejecting any suggestion that it was "achieved under bipartisan sponsorship," and denying that "all must share the responsibility for the failure." The bashing of HST aside, it was noteworthy that the eight Republicans issuing the report were expected to support Taft as the GOP's 1952 presidential nominee, with the other four Republicans thought to favor Eisenhower. Senator Fulbright was the only prominent Democrat to comment on the statement, calling it "99 per cent political" and an indication of "desperation in regard to the next Presidential election."⁴¹

One of Truman's friends foresaw the political motivations of the MacArthur hearings. Bill Max, director of circulation for the *Chicago Sun-Times*, wrote of MacArthur, "The stupid G.O.P. is using him as a political football, and it will kick him in the teeth. They will be looking for a way to dump him," which is what the Republican Party did.⁴²

The administration continued to tout its bipartisanship in international policy despite the partisan rancor of the MacArthur hearings. With the enthusiastic blessing of the White House and the State Department, Ken Hechler assembled a sixty-page history of bipartisan foreign policy consultations. In October 1951, the administration released

⁴¹ Russell's views in Fite, 263; Failed GOP attempts to attract Democratic allies in H. Alexander Smith, Diary entry, July 29, 1951, Smith Papers, Box 282, SGMML; Hinton, Harold B., Report quoted in "8 G.O.P. Senators Find 'Catastrophe' in Far East Policy," *NYT*, 20 August 1951, p. 1; Eisenhower faction in Lawrence, W. H., "Both Sides Now Claim M'Arthur Case Victory," *NYT*, 26 August 1951, p. B3; Fulbright in "Fulbright Sees G.O.P. 'Desperate'," *NYT*, 21 August 1951, p. 18.

⁴² Bill Max to Truman, April 26, 1951; PSF: General File, M folder; Truman Papers, HSTL.

it. *Review of Bipartisan Foreign Policy Consultations Since World War II* sometimes stretched its case, claiming, for example, “Since the outbreak of the Korean conflict, there has been bipartisan support for the United States policy toward Formosa.”

However, it also included the major details of the Great Debate over troops to Europe, an incident Truman would not have cited as an example of nonpartisanship at its finest.

Overall, the report was a reasonably accurate and comprehensive summary. Despite the considerable efforts of the administration, it attracted little national media attention, probably because of the press’s preoccupation with the fight over Philip Jessup’s confirmation as a U.N. delegate. Though the project failed, it appeared to indicate Truman’s determination not to give up on promoting the idea of bipartisanship in foreign policy, even after the rancor of the MacArthur incident.⁴³

Yet, appearances were deceiving. While Hechler assembled his history of bipartisan cooperation, others in the administration planned an offensive against the opponents of Truman’s Far East policies. The China Lobby was a group of legislators, along with their media and business allies, desiring to help Chiang Kai-Shek reverse the results of the Chinese civil war. GOP senators Taft, Knowland, Wherry, McCarthy, Bridges, H. Alexander Smith, and Nixon, helped comprise the group, along with House Republicans Walter H. Judd (MN) and John Vorys (OH). Publishers Henry Luce of

⁴³ Hechler, 156-7 describes the project. For White House and State Department endorsement, see Roger Tubby to Joseph Short, July 24, 1951; Short to Charles S. Murphy, July 25, 1951; George Elsey, Memorandum for Lucius Battle, August 1, 1951; and Hechler to Elsey, August 14, 1951; all from Foreign Relations-Hechler Study on Bipartisan Foreign Policy folder; Elsey Papers, HSTL; Senate, *Review of Bipartisan Foreign Policy Consultations Since World War II*, 82nd Cong., 1st sess., 1952, S. Doc. 87. A search of the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Chicago Tribune*, and *Time* indicated no coverage of the report. Jessup’s confirmation was blocked because of his previous employment in the State Department as a Far East advisor just before the Communist victory in the Chinese civil war. Joseph McCarthy vilified Jessup as a communist sympathizer, killing the nomination.

Time and *Life* magazines and William Loeb of the *Manchester* (New Hampshire) *Union Leader* backed them up. The chief business supporter was importer Alfred Kohlberg. The administration believed that Chinese Nationalists were taking money received from American aid and funneling it to the China bloc politicians, who were using the funds to attack administration foreign policy. (The *Washington Post* called the China Lobby the “chief nourisher of McCarthyism.”) Another concern was that American and Chinese business interests in Formosa and China were pumping money into the hands of legislators for the same purpose.⁴⁴

Presidential aide George Elsey therefore recommended to Truman in March 1951 that Congress conduct a “vigorous investigation” of the China Lobby. Noting that the staffers in the DNC, State Department and White House endorsed the idea, Elsey believed the probe would be “highly embarrassing to a sizeable group of Republicans in and out of Congress,” revealing “interesting information” on monetary supporters of senators such as McCarthy and Knowland. HST agreed, noting at a meeting of the Americans for Democratic Action (ADA) that a previous congressional probe had fallen short due to the failing health of Rep. Frank Buchanan (D-PA), chairman of the Select Committee on Lobbying Activities. Despite Buchanan’s lack of success, Undersecretary of State James E. Webb suggested that the House would be more effective than the Senate as the source of the investigation due to “senatorial courtesy,” the unspoken law

⁴⁴ Administration’s interest in author unknown, “Draft, China Lobby,” n.d.; David D. Lloyd Files, Folder 2; Truman Papers, HSTL; Background on the China lobby in Ross Y. Koen, *The China Lobby in American Politics* (1960; reprint, New York: Octagon Books, 1974), 27-29, 33-55; “That China Lobby,” *Washington Post*, 26 June 1951, p. 10.

discouraging senators from going after each other on ethical issues. Webb's optimism turned out to be unfounded.⁴⁵

The administration's inquiries into the China Lobby remained under wraps until Dean Acheson's testimony near the end of the MacArthur hearings. Since the China bloc staunchly backed the general, its activities came up for discussion. When Senator Wayne Morse (R-OR) announced his intention to question Acheson on the topic, one journalist reported, "You could have heard a pin drop." Following the stunned silence, Senator McMahon exclaimed, "Oh! Oh!" and Senator Wiley chirped, "What's that? What's that?" Once they got their wits about them, the senators quickly let everyone know whose side they were on. McMahon declared that "speculators, grafters and corruptionists" sympathetic to Chiang were enriching themselves, courtesy of the U.S. government. Senator Bridges countered that the "so-called China Lobby and influence is a very minor thing compared to the whole." As the questioning continued, Acheson told the panel the president had required government agencies to gather information on the China Lobby and to work with any congressional inquiry "to the fullest extent."⁴⁶

The secretary of state's testimony lit a fire under the administration's languishing inquiry into the China bloc. Elsey reported that Truman aide Charles Murphy initiated

⁴⁵ George M. Elsey, Memorandum for the President, March 28, 1951; Foreign Relations-China Lobby folder; Elsey Papers, HSTL; David D. Lloyd, "President's Conference with ADA Leaders," May 21, 1951; Lloyd, David S. folder; Charles S. Murphy Papers, HSTL. Buchanan died on April 27, 1951. Webb in George Elsey, Memorandum to Mr. Tannenwald, April 30, 1951; Correspondence and General File A-G; China lobby folder; David D. Lloyd Papers, HSTL.

⁴⁶ Pin drop in Pearson, Drew, "The Washington Merry-Go-Round," *Washington Post*, 9 June 1951, p. B13; Oh, oh and what's that in Fleeson, Doris, "Way Open to Probe China Lobby," *Washington Evening Star*, 5 June 1951, p. A13; speculators in "China Lobby Study Pledged by Acheson," *Washington Post*, 8 June 1951, p. 1; Bridges and Acheson quoted in Kuhn, Ferdinand, "Acheson Informs Senate Hearing Chiang Propaganda Is Being Sifted," *Washington Post*, 10 June 1951, p. M1.

numerous discussions between White House and State Department staffers on the subject within days of the end of the MacArthur hearings. Truman's staff complained that the State Department "dragged its heels" on collecting information on the Lobby after being assigned the task months earlier, producing "only a watery 5-page memo" on June 5. Truman ordered Attorney General J. Howard McGrath to use "whatever Bureaus are necessary" to get the facts. By now, the president wanted to investigate the China bloc "from hell to breakfast."⁴⁷

The White House worked on the China Lobby probe through the summer and fall of 1951. In addition to the Cabinet agencies, the administration tapped non-governmental resources, such as editors Alfred Friendly of the *Washington Post* and Ed Harris of the *St. Louis Post Dispatch*. They even approached a Columbia University graduate student writing a thesis about the China Lobby, but who was "rather reluctant" to turn his research over to the government. The most fruitful effort came from cooperation with *The Reporter* magazine, which published a detailed story on the Lobby in consecutive issues that finally came out in April 1952. The story described the China Lobby as a "vast tentacular thing" that "developed its power through an incredible combination of crookedness and idealism." Noting that part of the Republican Party was "inextricably tied" to the alliance, the magazine also reported that, like other lobbyists, it

⁴⁷ Hell to breakfast in George M. Else, Memorandum on China Lobby, June 8, 1951; Subject File, China Lobby folder; Theodore Tannenwald Papers, HSTL; whatever bureaus in Truman to Attorney General, June 11, 1951; PSF: General File; China lobby folder; Truman Papers, HSTL.

had garnered a “large measure of bipartisan support,” menacing words for the Democrats. Legislators from both parties greeted the *Reporter* story with silence.⁴⁸

Truman’s team uncovered suspicious information on the China Lobby, but failed to find sufficient proof of wrongdoing to make a legal case against its political tormentors. Part of the problem was lack of zeal for the project within the bureaucracy, particularly the Federal Reserve, the Justice Department and the FBI. Another issue was the complexity and lack of a formal organization of the Chiang backers. An aide estimated it would take a staff of 50 to 75 people eight months for the Treasury Department to follow the money trail of aid to the Nationalists. The administration found that Alfred Kohlberg, a prominent businessman who traded in the Far East, had provided funds that two Republican congressmen used to fight the Jessup nomination. The White House believed Kohlberg and his staff were writing Styles Bridges’ speeches on the Far East. They found that an agent for the National Resources Commission of China had “entertained Members of Congress extensively.” Such fragments, while not passing the smell test, were inadequate to prove any lawbreaking. By December, the participating agencies felt they had done all they could and threw in the towel. Asserting only that they had indications of a “direct relationship between the money now being used for propaganda and political influence,” the administration conceded it did not have

⁴⁸Friendly, Harris and “rather reluctant” graduate student in Theodore Tannenwald, Jr. to George Elsey, “Notes on China Lobby Investigation,” July 9, 1951; Subject File, Foreign Relations-China Lobby folder; Elsey Papers, HSTL; J.S. Lanigan to W. A. Harriman, October 4, 1951; PSF: Subject File, China Lobby-General folder; Truman Papers, HSTL; For collaboration with *The Reporter*, see Elsey to Charles Murphy, “China Lobby,” July 6, 1951; Subject File, Foreign Relations; China lobby folder; Elsey Papers, HSTL; Quotes from *The Reporter* from “The Reporter’s Notes,” *The Reporter*, April 1, 1952, 1; other articles in the series were, Charles Wertebaker, “The China Lobby,” *The Reporter*, April 15, 1952, 4-24 and Phillip Horton, Wertebaker and Max Ascoli, “The China Lobby,” *The Reporter*, April 29, 1952, 5-24;. The author found no congressional comment on the *Reporter* story in the *NYT*, *Washington Post*, or *Time*. A *Post* reporter commented on the story; see Childs, Marquis, “Chinese In U.S. Politics,” *Washington Post*, 15 April 1951, p. 10 and “China Lobby II, *Washington Post*, 17 April 1951, p. 16.

information in hand “sufficient in itself to establish this connection.” They reported, “Since the passing of money, *if any* . . . has been skillfully conducted in very devious manners,” they had no case. While more investigation into corruption of Chinese Nationalists operating in U.S. political circles *possibly* could lead to proof of wrongdoing by legislators, a congressional probe involved a “grave risking of failure.”⁴⁹

Meanwhile, senators Morse and McMahon pushed for a congressional investigation. A couple of days after questioning Acheson about the China bloc during the MacArthur hearings, McMahon communicated his desire for an inquiry to the White House. Morse told Michael Straight, editor of the *New Republic*, that he hoped for approval to “open up on the China Lobby,” but only if it would not embarrass the administration. On July 6, the two senators sponsored a resolution requesting \$50,000 (\$400,000 in today’s dollars) for the Foreign Relations committee to conduct the investigation. Morse readily agreed to demands from Chiang supporters in the Senate to expand the probe to include improper Communist Chinese influence over U.S. policy. Henry Luce’s *Time* claimed that, “Just when cooler heads in the Administration had about decided to forget the whole thing,” McMahon had jumped up to “wave excitedly at an old dragon.”⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Challenges regarding the Federal Reserve, Justice Department and the FBI in Tannenwald to Elsey, “Notes on China Lobby Investigation,” July 9, 1951; Manpower issues described in Kenneth Hechler, Memorandum, July 18, 1951; entertained Members and Kohlberg/Jessup connection in “Summary of State Department Files,” author unknown, n.d.; Bridges in “Miscellaneous Information,” author unknown, n.d.. All other direct quotes summarizing the results of the probe from J. S. Lanigan to W. A. Harriman, October 4, 1951, “China Lobby”; all primary documents (except Tannenwald to Elsey) from PSF: Subject File, China Lobby-General folder, Truman Papers, HSTL. Duration and complexity of investigation in Matthew S. Flynn, “Reconsidering the China Lobby: Senator William F. Knowland and US-China Policy, 1945-1958,” Ph.D. diss., Ohio University, 2004, 69-70. (Emphasis mine.)

⁵⁰ Edwin O’Brien to Brien McMahon, June 10, 1951; PSF: Subject File, China Lobby-General folder; Truman Papers, HSTL; Michael Straight to George Elsey, June 5, 1951; Subject File, China Lobby folder; Elsey Papers, HSTL; Albright, Robert, “Proposed Chiang Lobby Quiz Would Cover Red China, Too,” *Washington Post*, 7 July 1951, p. 3;

Congress's probe into the China Lobby went nowhere. After months of inaction by the Senate Foreign Relations committee, Morse tried to reenergize the probe in April 1952. The Oregon Republican somehow got his hands on over two dozen incriminating cables sent from the Nationalist Chinese embassy in the U.S. to Chiang Kai-Shek and presented them to the Foreign Relations committee. One message discussed secret information Chiang obtained from Rep. Judd. Another related that a close associate of William Boyle had served as a lawyer for the Nationalists at a salary of \$30,000 per year while Boyle was chairman of the DNC. The major media, other than the *New York Times* ignored the story, and the Foreign Relations committee apparently did the same. A similar House probe led by Rep. Frank Karsten (D-MO) of the Committee on Executive Expenditures in Executive Departments was equally fruitless.⁵¹

Senator Harry Cain's outburst in June 1952 possibly provided a clue into the source of the inaction. Entering 73 pages from various reports into the *Congressional Record* to make his point, Cain accused Truman's 1948 campaign of accepting \$10,000 in small bills from representatives of the Chinese Nationalists, suggesting they believed "a little moola doled out in administration circles might do them good." The senator also hinted of information implicating former Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson, explaining why the Morse-McMahon resolution "now gathers dust in the pigeon hole of Sen. Connally." Rep. Fred Busbey (R-IL) piled on, demanding that Truman revive the

"Probe of Foreign Lobbies Asked," *Washington Post*, 6 July 1951, p. 8; "The 'China Lobby'," *Time*, July 16, 1951 <http://www.time.com/time/printout/0,8816,889064,00.html> (June 18, 2007).

⁵¹ Mason Drukman, *Wayne Morse: A Political Biography* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1997), 180; Kennedy, Paul P., "Senate Gets 'Files' On Secret Activity In U.S. To Aid Chiang," *NYT*, 11 April 1952, p. 1; Karsten's probe in "Investigation of China Lobby," July 10, 1951; Memoranda of Conversations File, July 1951 folder; Acheson Papers, HSTL.

investigation and accusing the administration of “running its own China lobby to cover up its treasonable acts.” Although Rep. Karsten had some dialogue with the White House a couple of weeks later about conducting hearings, nothing came of it. The congressional inquiry into the China Lobby died a quiet death.⁵²

Truman got bipartisan support on a major issue concerning the war during his last year in office without having to work for it. On January 1, 1952, six months into the armistice negotiations, the U.S. came out against the forcible repatriation of prisoners of war. The military did not like the idea, believing that ending the war and bringing American POWs home should take precedence over protecting North Korean and Chinese prisoners. Even Acheson opposed the idea initially. Nevertheless, the president stuck to his guns for moral reasons, remembering the executions and imprisonments of Soviet POWs forced to return home from Nazi concentration camps after World War II. HST also knew that many prisoners held in U.N. prison camps in Korea were former Chinese Nationalists or South Koreans pressed into service by the communists. On May 7, the president reiterated his stance, declaring, “We will not buy an armistice by turning over human beings for slaughter or slavery.”⁵³

The repatriation issue united Democrats and Republicans, even though it temporarily stifled the peace negotiations. Editorials and the general public praised

⁵²Cain quoted in Edwards, Willard, “Report Truman Kick-In in 1948 by China Lobby,” *Chicago Tribune*, 10 June 1952, p. 7; Busbey in Edwards, “Dares Truman Revive Probe of China Lobby,” *Chicago Tribune*, 15 June 1952, p. 10; Karsten in David D. Lloyd, Memorandum for the President, June 26, 1952; PSF: General File, China Lobby-General folder; Truman Papers, HSTL. Stalling of China Lobby probe in “China Lobby,” *Washington Sunday Star*, 20 April 1951, p. C4 and Pearson, Drew, “China Lobby Quiz Seems Stalled,” *Washington Post*, 23 May 1952, p. B15. Journalist Drew Pearson claimed that Johnson once offered him \$10,000 to make a favorable reference in his column to Dr. H. H. Kung, the brother-in-law of Chiang Kai-Shek. See Abell, ed., *Pearson Diaries*, 212.

⁵³Views of military and Acheson in Beisner, 437-8.

Truman's stance. One letter to the editor came from such unlikely allies as Senator Paul Douglas (D-IL), a New Deal liberal, right-wing king William F. Buckley, Jr., socialist Norman Thomas, and Rep. Judd of the China bloc. The most startling source of support came from Senator Jenner, normally the most venomous of the president's adversaries. Jenner assembled a bipartisan resolution supported by sixty members of Congress proclaiming their opposition to forced repatriation. Equally remarkably, Secretary of Defense Robert A. Lovett and a group of senators managed to persuade the headstrong Indianan to keep his resolution under wraps to avoid upsetting the armistice talks. The negotiations nonetheless came to a halt on October 8 when Communist recalcitrance on the POW issue caused the U.N. to declare an indefinite recess. Even though this happened in the heat of the 1952 campaign, few Republicans second-guessed Truman's position on repatriation.⁵⁴

Historians have debated whether the notion of a bipartisan foreign policy was worthwhile. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. called it a dangerous stifling of debate and an aid to presidential power. Cecil V. Crabb, Jr., reflecting on the topic after his tenure in the Acheson State Department, took a more moderate approach. Crabb believed that the disadvantages of nonpartisanship sometimes outweighed the advantages, and that it had a mixed track record of effectiveness. In another view, Gary W. Reichard argued that a bipartisan foreign policy was the exception rather than the rule during the early Cold

⁵⁴ Bipartisan support in Foot, *The Wrong War*, 191-2; Douglas, et al. in Buckley, William Jr., et al., "POW's Must Be Protected," *NYT*, 21 April 1952, p. 8; Jenner in Barton J. Bernstein, "Struggle Over the Korean Armistice," in *Child of Conflict: The Korean-American Relationship, 1943-1953*, ed. Bruce Cumings (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1983), 280, 296-7; Lovett in Acheson, *Present at the Creation*, 653; A *New York Times* search indicated the only Republican criticizing the repatriation position following the October 9 recess was Senator Homer Capehart (IN). See "Truce Held Scuttled," *NYT*, 11 October 1952, p. 73.

War, the only exceptions being 1947-1948 with the Truman Doctrine and Marshall Plan, and the first year of the Eisenhower administration. Schlesinger was correct only if the executive defines bipartisanship as the opposition party simply following the president's lead, no matter what. When a president includes the opposition party in policy making, whether through appointments (the most effective method) or congressional consultation, Schlesinger's view was questionable. Crabb was historically more correct than Reichard, for the latter ignores the bipartisan support at the outset of the Korean War and the Japanese Peace Treaty. The challenge in such analyses is that definitions of bipartisanship vary widely, and Korea was a prime example.⁵⁵

The bipartisan foreign policy during the Korean War ebbed away with Senator Vandenberg. In what had to be a painful irony for Truman, the Republican stalwart died the day before MacArthur gave his address to Congress. HST professed belief in nonpartisanship in international affairs through the end of his presidency and included it in his rhetoric, even after he fired his general. Yet, though McCarthyism and war crises such as the Chinese intervention prodded him to try to shore up relations with the GOP, the president never intended to allow them to influence his policies once Vandenberg was gone. Truman defined bipartisanship as communication of *his* policies to them; in return, he felt they should support and trust him. The Republicans expected HST to consult with them before making up his mind, and then, of course, to do what they wanted. With the firing of MacArthur, the GOP saw their last real chance to influence

⁵⁵ Arthur J. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Imperial Presidency* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1973), 129-30; Crabb, *Bipartisan Foreign Policy*, 2-4; Gary W. Reichard, "The Domestic Politics of National Security," in *The National Security: Its Theory and Practices, 1945-1960*, ed. Norman A. Graebner (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 243-274.

Far East policy slip away. In his heart, Truman had to know that bipartisanship disappeared when Vandenberg no longer was a force on the Hill.

The president's leadership style did not lend itself well to conducting a nonpartisan foreign policy. An anecdote from journalist Drew Pearson is illustrative. Attending the funeral for Harold Ickes, a member of Roosevelt's Cabinet, Pearson noticed Truman sitting practically alone in a pew with one of his staffers. A couple of rows back behind sat most of his and FDR's Cabinet members. The journalist mused in his diary, "Almost as he sat alone in the church, Truman operates alone as a President. Roosevelt had strong men around him to take the share of the criticism. . . . Truman takes it all on his own shoulders." HST was famous for "the buck stops here" slogan; he believed the President should lead, and leadership meant *him* making decisions in foreign policy. To him, meetings spent listening to congressional figures merely to make them feel good was a waste of time except under the most serious circumstances, such as the December 1950 gathering concerning the declaration of a national emergency.⁵⁶

Truman's own Doctrine exacerbated the irreconcilable differences between his Far East policy and the beliefs of many Republicans. "It must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures," he had declared in 1947. How, then, could HST give up on Chiang Kai-shek's quest to defeat the Communists in 1949? To irritate the GOP hawks even further, the administration passed up a chance to punish the Chinese

⁵⁶ Abell, ed., *Pearson Diaries*, 200.

Communist victors by refusing to commit the U.S. to total war with Mao in 1951 over Korean reunification. The president and much of the GOP fundamentally disagreed on the scope of the containment policy. Truman and Acheson believed that preventing Communist expansion in Europe was the top priority due to its industrial power and historic ties to America, and correctly realized that the U.S. did not have the resources to confront communism everywhere in the world. This view, however, contradicted Truman Doctrine rhetoric. A substantial bloc of Republicans saw otherwise, believing that the Far East was just as vital to American interests as Europe, and China's increasing economic might in the twenty-first century may yet prove them right. No amount of bipartisan consultation, even had Vandenberg lived longer, would have overcome this basic disagreement.⁵⁷

Harry Truman nevertheless helped create one bipartisan tradition that continues today. Perhaps recalling his own lack of knowledge of the international situation when FDR died, HST took pains to make sure Eisenhower would have few surprises when the general became the commander in chief. Immediately after the election, Truman offered to work with Ike appointees to let them observe the preparation of a budget and the affairs of the major departments. Eisenhower dispatched his future budget director, Joseph M. Dodge, along with Senator Lodge, destined to be the new ambassador to the U.N., to work with the outgoing administration. The president also made his top aide,

⁵⁷ "Special Message to the Congress on Greece and Turkey: The Truman Doctrine," March 12, 1947, *PP*, <http://trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/index.php?pid=2189&st=greece&st1=> (June 19, 2007).

John Steelman, available as needed to consult with Sherman Adams, who would become Ike's chief of staff. The first transition team in presidential election history was born.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Donovan, 402-3.

CHAPTER VI

HARRY TRUMAN: WAR SELLER

The Korean crisis presented a clear-cut issue, which they [the American people] could understand, and the President . . . met it with a clear-cut policy.

--*Newsweek*, July 10, 1950

Shall only a part of the country [Korea] be assured this freedom? I think not.

--Warren Austin, American ambassador to U.N. General Assembly,
August 17, 1950

Our peace plan is the plan of the United Nations. The U.N. has demanded that the North Koreans . . . withdraw behind the thirty-eighth parallel, that U.N. members assist the Republic of Korea to repel the invasion

--Dean Rusk, Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, August 20, 1950¹

Harry Truman was the only American president to serve as commander in chief during two major wars. The first of these significantly affected the way he approached the second. World War II ended with the American use of nuclear weapons, the only nation to possess them at the time. By the time of the Korean conflict, things had changed dramatically because the Soviet Union had its own nuclear capability and now was an adversary of the U.S. Much as he wanted to stop what he perceived as expansion of Soviet communism in the Far East, Truman was equally determined to avoid a third

¹ "Truman's Stand Electrifies Nation," *Newsweek*, July 10, 1950, p. 24; "Verbatim Record of Yesterday's Session of the United Nations Security Council," *NYT*, 18 August 1950, p. 8; NBC television program, "Battle Reports from Washington- August 20, 1950," entered in *Congressional Record*, 81st Cong., 2d sess., 1950, 96, pt. 17: A6195.

world war. The president also had not forgotten how World War II started. He remembered that the 1938 Munich Conference gave part of Czechoslovakia to the Nazi regime to quench Hitler's thirst for lebensraum. In 1950 Truman believed, that like Hitler, Stalin craved world domination. HST thus interpreted the North Korean invasion as nothing less than a land grab orchestrated by the Soviet Union in its quest to conquer the globe.

Truman's speaking style was not an effective tool for promoting the war. With the exception of campaign stump speeches, the president typically spoke from a prepared text. Clark Clifford, head of the president's speechwriters early in his administration, remembered Truman "read poorly from written texts, his head down, words coming forth in what the press liked to call a 'drone.'" Clifford lamented that the contrast of Truman to "the brilliant and compelling style of his predecessor made the problem all the more serious." *Time* described one key speech on the war as "painfully deliberate" at times and moving "occasionally with a breakaway rush to the end of a jumbled phrase." Probably recognizing that oratory was not one of his strengths, Truman treated his speeches as unsavory chores to get through as soon as possible, which contributed to his ineffective delivery. Whereas a skilled orator like Roosevelt spoke at 95 to 120 words per minute (wpm), Truman zoomed through his speeches at 150 wpm.²

Truman seemed to prefer press conferences over formal speeches. The president usually enjoyed friendly banter with journalists, but could become defensive. He frequently cut reporters off in mid-sentence, answering their questions before they

²Clifford quoted in Halford R. Ryan, *Harry S. Truman: Presidential Rhetoric* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1993), 8; "The Days Ahead," *Time*, September 11, 1950, p. 22; Oratory speed in Ryan, 11.

finished asking them. While most of the White House press corps liked him personally, even when they disagreed with him, the press conference was no more effective than formal speeches in getting the president's ideas across to the public. He conducted one press conference per week, breaking with a tradition begun by Woodrow Wilson, who met with the press twice weekly. Although the administration tried to compensate by issuing more press releases than the Roosevelt team, statements were not as nearly as useful to reporters as question/answer sessions.³

Truman could have promoted the war more effectively by improving his rhetorical style and giving speeches. Press conferences reduced Truman's ability to shape his message. By their nature, open forums with journalists put the host in a defensive posture; reporters fired questions at the speaker, who tried to figure out a way to respond intelligently. The press, rather than the president, framed the debate.

In 1950, the president's decision to intervene against North Korea was wildly popular, producing a nation "revived by Harry S. Truman's immediate counterpunch." *New York Times* reporters in all corners of the country printed descriptions such as "real unanimity," "99-to-1 in favor," "virtually unanimous approval," and "no dissenting voices" to characterize public opinion. The *Roanoke World-News* said the president "spoke for every true American," adding, "we should be glad this showdown has come." Joseph C. Harsch of the *Christian Science Monitor*, who had lived in the capital for

³ Michael S. Twedt, "The War Rhetoric of Harry S. Truman During the Korean Conflict" (Ph.D. diss., University of Kansas, 1969), 80-81; Harry S. Truman, *Memoirs, Volume 1: Year of Decisions* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1955), 48, expresses his view of the importance of press conferences; Elmer E. Cornwell, Jr., *Presidential Leadership of Public Opinion* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1965), 162-3 describes Truman's change in press conference frequency; McCullough, 818-20 discusses Truman's relations with the White House press corps. Cornwell, 330, note 66 elaborates on Truman's shortcomings in using press conferences.

twenty years, declared he had never “felt such a sense of relief and unity pass through the city.” Telegrams and letters ten to one in favor of intervention deluged the White House, and support for the war came from astonishing places. Socialist Party leader Norman Thomas and former Progressive Party presidential candidate Henry Wallace bucked their parties to support the intervention because it was a U.N. action. Even the Carnegie Foundation for International Peace boarded the bandwagon. As historian Eric Goldman wrote, “For one moment, suspended weirdly in the bitter debates of the postwar . . . the bold response of Harry Truman had united America . . . as it had not been since that distant confetti evening of V-J.”⁴

Surprisingly, Truman communicated directly with the American public only sporadically during the first few weeks of his decision to commit U.S. forces. Even though radio and television began interrupting broadcasts on the afternoon of Sunday, June 25 with updates on the situation, and Korea made front-page news in major newspapers the following morning, the White House did not issue a statement until almost noon on Monday. The announcement commended the U.N. Security Council for its swift passage of an America-sponsored resolution calling for the withdrawal of North Korean troops and assistance from U.N. members to execute this directive. The next day, the administration issued its second press release regarding the war, announcing

⁴Counterpunch in “Truman’s Stand Electrifies Nation,” *Newsweek*, July 10, 1950, p. 24; *New York Times* reports and Roanoke in “The Nation,” *NYT*, 2 July 1950, p. E2; “Report From the Nation: All Eyes on Korea,” *NYT* 2 July 1950, p. E8; Harsch and 10 to 1 in Eric Goldman, *The Crucial Decade and After: America, 1945-1960* (New York: Vintage Books, 1962), 158-9; Thomas and Wallace in Lawrence Wittner, *The Struggle Against the Bomb, Vol. I- One World or None: A History of the Nuclear Disarmament Movement through 1953* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 316; Carnegie Foundation in “New Support for Truman,” *NYT*, 30 June 1950, p. 4; Support of other erstwhile peace activists in E. Timothy Smith, *Opposition Beyond the Water’s Edge: Liberal Internationalists, Pacifists, and Containment, 1945-1953* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1999), 122-4; Goldman quote from Goldman, 173.

that the president had ordered American air and naval support to South Korea. It also reported the dispatch of the U.S. 7th Fleet to the Straits of Formosa to keep the peace between the Chinese Communists on the mainland and the Nationalists.⁵

The June 27 statement took the rhetoric up a notch from the initial announcement. The previous day, the culprit was the “forces of North Korea,” but now, the offender was “communism,” an intentionally ambiguous term that could mean North Korea, China, or the USSR. The statement discussed the motivation for the North Korean attack, saying it clearly indicated “communism has passed beyond the use of subversion to conquer independent nations and will now use armed invasion and war.” It also represented a policy reversal regarding Formosa. Due to the North Korean invasion, a Communist occupation of the island would now represent a “direct threat to the security of the Pacific area and to the United States forces” in the region. Formosa now became a vital U.S. interest. This policy change delighted the “China Lobby” Republicans in Congress who had criticized Truman and Acheson for the communist victory in China. The move to protect Formosa, no doubt, helped Truman solicit broad support for the Korean intervention.⁶

Nevertheless, the president hardly mentioned Korea in previously scheduled addresses on June 27 and 28. Expecting Truman to discuss the Korean situation in

⁵ Broadcasts noted in John E. Wiltz, “The Korean War and American Society,” in *The Korean War: A 25-Year Perspective*. Ed. F. H. Heller (Lawrence: Regents Press of Kansas, 1977), 113; “Statement by the President on the Violation of the 38th Parallel in Korea- June 26, 1950,” *PP*, <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/index.php?pid=799&st=&st1=> (December 14, 2006).

⁶ “Statement by the President on the Violation of the 38th Parallel in Korea- June 26, 1950,” *PP*, <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/index.php?pid=799&st=&st1=> (December 14, 2006); “Statement by the President on Situation in Korea- June 27, 1950,” *PP*, <http://trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/index.php?pid=800&st=&st1=> (January 24, 2008), Analysis of Truman’s change in rhetoric in Ryan, 46-8.

person for the first time in his scheduled June 28 address to the American Newspaper Guild, the four major networks arranged to broadcast his message to the nation. The commander in chief disappointed them, saying only that the U.S. must “do everything we can to prevent such aggression.”⁷

The president finally elaborated on the Korean situation at his routine press conference on Thursday, June 29. Over half the reporters’ questions dealt with the conflict. They were hungry for information:

QUESTION: Mr. President, everybody is asking in this country, are we or are we not at war?

THE PRESIDENT: We are not at war.

Truman described the North Korean attack as a “bandit raid” and agreed with a reporter’s characterization of the U.N. response as a “police action.” In both cases, the journalists confirmed these descriptors with the president before going to press with them, and both terms came back to haunt him. Bandit raids do not conjure up images of tanks, airplanes and infantry. Critics would pound HST with the police action description as American casualties mounted. As one rhetorician explained: “Bandits’ are usually ‘suppressed’ through capture and incarceration by the ‘police.’ But Truman mixed the metaphor: The Security Council’s resolution called only for the ‘police’ to ensure that the ‘bandits’ withdraw to their hideout in North Korea.” On the day after this

⁷ Twedt, 75.

press conference, the president announced he was committing American ground forces to North Korea. Every day, the bandits looked more formidable.⁸

Truman hesitated before delivering a war message to the public. At a turbulent meeting on Monday, July 3, Dean Acheson pushed him hard to make a report on Korea within a couple of days. The president did not like the idea. Although the first contingent of 500 American troops had been on the ground for over a day enduring withering attacks, the commander in chief refused to comment on the status of the conflict during his July 6 press conference. A week later, when a reporter asked Truman directly if he intended to address Congress and the public about the conflict, he only said that he was thinking about it.⁹

The country grew impatient. As U.N. forces suffered early setbacks, journalists called the administration “secretive” and a “beehive of indecision.” Senator Margaret Chase Smith (R-ME) complained, “The gruesome reality of a shooting war should be brought home to the American people instead of being glossed over by the Truman administration.” Nervousness edged toward panic. Senator Owen Brewster (R-ME) suggested allowing General MacArthur to use the atomic bomb as he saw fit, and a Truman ally, Senator Lyndon Johnson, worried that Korea could become a

⁸“The President’s News Conference- June 29, 1950,” *PP*, <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/index.php?pid=806&st=&st1=> (December 14, 2006); Ryan, 50-1.

⁹Acheson in Beisner, 349; Troops in Matthew B. Ridgeway, *The Korean War* (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1967), 25-6; “The President’s News Conference-July 6, 1950,” *PP*, <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/index.php?pid=814&st=&st1=> (December 15, 2006); “The President’s News Conference-July 13, 1950,” *PP*, <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/index.php?pid=820&st=&st1=> (December 15, 2006).

“slaughterhouse for democracy.” The Rev. Dr. Billy Graham called the president, warning him that the public was in the grips of a “fear you could almost call hysteria.”¹⁰

Finally, nearly three weeks after committing troops, the commander in chief spoke to the American people about Korea on July 19. HST listed his reasons for intervening, but was short on specifics on how a Communist takeover of the ROK endangered America’s national interests in the short term. He portrayed the North Korean invasion as a replay of Munich, saying, “Appeasement leads only to further aggression and ultimately to war.” The Soviets, through Kim Il Sung, were continuing a quest for world dominance and the U.S. had to stop them. The president injected a moral component, a consistent theme of his war rhetoric. America was “united in detesting Communist slavery. . . . We believe that freedom and peace are essential if men are to live as our Creator intended us to live. It is this faith that has guided us in the past, and it is this faith that will fortify us in the stern days ahead.”¹¹

The speech had a religious tone, but it was most revealing through its omissions and vagaries. Truman did not call for victory. Instead, he urged the nation to meet the challenge “squarely” to “drive the Communists back,” and characterized the intervention as an effort “to help the Koreans preserve their independence.” The president also stopped short of instituting wartime wage and price controls or rationing, saying he did

¹⁰ Livingston, J. A., “It’s 1940 Again in Washington; City’s a Beehive of Indecision,” *Washington Post*, 19 July 1950, p. B8; secretive in Leviero, Anthony, “President Sees U.S. Holding In Korea for Counter-Attack,” *NYT*, 14 July 1950, p. 1; Alsop, Joseph and Stewart Alsop, “Matter of Fact,” *Washington Post*, 10 July 1950, p. 6 noted Truman’s reluctance despite his advisors pushing him to make an announcement; Smith quoted in Gallup, George, “Sugar-Coated War News Not Popular in America,” *Dallas Morning News*, 19 July 1950, Sec. I, p. 10; Brewster, Johnson and Graham quoted in “National Affairs,” *Time*, July 24, 1950, p. 11.

¹¹ “Radio and Television Address to the American People on the Situation in Korea-July 19, 1950,” *PP*, <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/index.php?pid=823&st=&st1=> (December 26, 2006); Analysis in Twedt, 148-9.

not feel consumer shortages would occur. Discussing the scope of the war, he declared the U.N. Security Council's initial resolution was asking members to "help the Republic of Korea repel the attack and help restore peace and security *in that area.*" Apparently, HST was leaving the door open for U.N. forces to attack north of the 38th parallel. While the commander in chief avoided talking about victory or the conquest of North Korea, he used language that left the battlefield goals open.¹²

The public reacted favorably to the July 19 speech. One journalist commended the president for waiting several weeks to give a "calm yet forceful statement." Another called the address a "bold answer to communism's drawn sword." The White House received five times more supportive letters than critical mail.¹³

Naturally, a minority criticized the speech. *Time* remarked that it lacked the "inspiration that the occasion called for," having no "ringing phrases of a Churchillian or Rooseveltian performance" or "compelling call to arms." Columnist Drew Pearson wrote that compared to Roosevelt's "master at the helm" image during World War II, Truman came across as a "sincere, somewhat inadequate little guy who was trying to do his best." Some felt that the public was ahead of the president on Korea. *Time* characterized the public attitude as "a willingness to do whatever had to be done, but an

¹² Omissions in Twedt, 93-5; "Radio and Television Address to the American People on the Situation in Korea-July 19, 1950" (emphasis added).

¹³ Calm in Childs, Marquis, "President's Message," *Washington Post*, 20 July 1950, p. 11; bold answer in Folliard, Edward T., "No Further Aggression, Notice Given World Reds," *Washington Post*, 20 July 1950, p. 1; Gould, Jack, "Radio and TV in Review," *NYT*, 20 July 1950, p. 32 also gave a favorable review; Ken Hechler, Memorandum for Mr. Elsey, August 2, 1950; Subject File, Establishment of a Research Comm. folder; Ken Hechler Papers, HSTL notes mail received..

irritated sensation of not being told what to do. A suspicion that the Administration doesn't quite trust the country, hesitates to give it bad news or require hard sacrifices."¹⁴

Truman deliberately took a circumspect approach. Kim Il Sung's invasion took him (and the rest of the nation) completely by surprise, requiring him to take some time to formulate a strategy for responding. The president decided immediately that the U.N. had to restore the integrity of the ROK for the international body to have any credibility in the future. The primary goal of the intervention was to avoid a repeat of 1930s appeasement. However, the commander in chief was equally determined to prevent another world war. These twin goals required finesse in managing public opinion.

However, chief executive should have taken his case directly to the people during the first week of July, as Acheson suggested, rather than waiting two more weeks. Speaking to the populace could have calmed the nation down as the initial negative reports from the war front rolled in. The president easily could have made a preliminary speech in early July, explaining why the U.S. was intervening and what U.S. national interests were at stake. He then could have followed up with the details on mobilization. Why did Truman wait so long? He probably felt no need to rally the public. Even his bitterest Republican political foes applauded the intervention, and support swept the country.

Bad news from Korea rocked the nation during the summer. U.N. forces finally stalled the North Koreans near Pusan on the southeast coast of the peninsula in early

¹⁴ Inspiration, ringing and compelling in "The Fabric of Peace," *Time*, July 31, 1950, p. 10; Pearson, Drew, "President Needs All Help in Crisis," *Washington Post*, 24 July 1950, p. B9; willingness in "National Affairs," willingness in *Time*, August 14, 1950, p. 7.

August, with the troops merely holding their position until late September.

Unaccustomed to retreat, which contrasted sharply with their memories of World War II victories, politicians and their constituents behaved badly. Democrats and Republicans on Capitol Hill blamed each other for the war. The public began panic purchasing of consumer goods that created shortages needlessly. Correspondents around the country reported that many Americans chafed at the prospect of fighting “small brush fires” against the Soviets around the globe, sparking calls for a pre-emptive nuclear attack upon the Russians. *Time* reporters often heard phrases like, “Let’s end it before it starts.”¹⁵

The State Department recognized the need to sooth the national psyche and published, “Information Objectives for the Rest of 1950,” to guide its personnel making public statements. These guidelines highlighted past successes of the containment policy in Europe and Turkey, reminding the public that similar efforts would need to continue for an “indefinite period.” The Department also published a “Korean Fact Sheet” for Democrats on the campaign trail in the upcoming 1950 elections to help them answer questions about Far East policy. In August, Dean Acheson met with a group of Democratic lawmakers concerned that the American people increasingly were supporting the idea of a preventive war with the Soviet Union. Acheson came down firmly against the idea of a preventive war. In a response as relevant today as it was in 1950, the secretary told them, “Any nation embarking upon a preventive war would . . .

¹⁵ Public and political behavior in Donovan, *Tumultuous Years*, 253 and Richard E. Neustadt, *Presidential Power: The Politics of Leadership* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1960), 105; brush fires and let’s end it in “National Affairs,” *Time*, August 14, 1950, p. 7.

find itself immediately without any Allies and would ultimately find itself in the unenviable position of having the world against it.”¹⁶

The American people nonetheless stayed solidly behind the war effort through the summer of 1950. Despite the defeats on the battlefield, a Gallup poll indicated 65 percent of the populace did not believe Korea was a mistake, while only 20 percent said it was a mistake. Truman’s approval rating stood at 43 percent in late August, up from 37 percent in June.¹⁷

At this point, the commander in chief’s subordinates sent confusing signals to the public about his war policy. General MacArthur released a message for the Veterans of Foreign Wars extolling the value of Formosa for American military purposes, asserting it was wrong to assume that a U.S. defense of Formosa would antagonize Communist China. MacArthur’s statement contradicted Truman’s policy of neutrality regarding Formosa, a tactic designed to avoid arousing Mao’s regime. To the administration’s alarm, Secretary of the Navy Francis P. Matthews advocated a preventative war with the Soviets, declaring, “To have peace we should be willing to pay . . . any price—even the price of instituting a war to compel cooperation for peace.”¹⁸

¹⁶ “Information Objectives for the Rest of 1950,” August 3, 1950; PSF: General File; Speech: Instructions for Public Statements folder; Truman Papers, HSTL; Korean fact sheet in Kenneth Hechler, Memorandum “State Department Campaign Materials on Foreign Policy,” August 31, 1950; Subject File, General Research-Truman White House folder; Ken Hechler Papers, HSTL; Acheson quoted in “North Atlantic Union and Related Matters,” August 14, 1950; Memoranda of Conversations File; Aug. 1950 folder; Dean Acheson Papers, HSTL.

¹⁷ “Speed of U.S. Advances in Korea Came as Big Surprise to U.S. Public,” October 4, 1950 and “Truman Popularity Turns Upward After Summer Slump,” September 25, 1950; 1950 folder, Records of American Institute of Public Opinion (hereafter referred to as AIPO), HSTL.

¹⁸ MacArthur’s message in Richard Halworth Rovere and Arthur Meier Schlesinger, *General MacArthur & President Truman: The Struggle for Control of American Foreign Policy* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 1997), 131; Matthews in “Instituting a War,” *Time*, September 4, 1950, p. 12.

Truman responded in a speech to the nation on September 1. The president stated that the U.S. did not want Korea to expand into a general war and had no interest in taking over Formosa. He rejected the idea of preventive war, calling it the “weapon of dictators, not of free democratic countries like the United States.” Yet, the address stated a major policy shift that most observers ignored: “We believe the Koreans have a right to be free, independent and *united*—as they want to be.” This represented a significant expansion of the scope of the intervention from the initial U.N. resolution, which declared the objective of the war as restoring the integrity of South Korea. If the U.S. wanted to keep other countries from getting involved in the war, why did its objective become more aggressive? *Time* was one of the few publications to criticize the speech, saying, “By every kind of wigwag and smoke signal . . . the Administration seemed to be trying . . . to tell the Chinese Communist Boss Mao Tse-tung that he had nothing to worry about the U. S.” However, the major media paid little mind to the administration’s new goal of reunifying the peninsula.¹⁹

In late September, the Truman administration promoted its Korean War policy by publishing a booklet entitled *Our Foreign Policy*. White House aide George Elsey initiated this publication to explain the administration’s objectives in layman’s terms. The president suggested a few editorial changes, disliking the passage, “Three times in recent years we have been forced to sacrifice peace . . . to preserve the independence and

¹⁹ “Radio and Television Report to the American People on the Situation in Korea-September 1, 1950,” *PP*, <<http://www.trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/index.php?pid=861&st=&st1=>> (December 27, 2006) (emphasis added); For examples of media support of the speech, see Leviero, Anthony, “Manpower Goal Up,” *NYT*, 2 September 1950, p. 1, “Fireside Chat,” *Washington Post*, 4 September 1950, p. 6, and “Policy on Formosa,” *NYT* 3 September 1950, p. 67; “National Affairs,” *Time*, September 11, 1950, p. 21; Truman followed up his September 1, 1950 speech with another on September 9, which dealt with the Defense Production Act and domestic economic controls.

freedom that we value even more highly.” “We haven’t ‘sacrificed peace,’” Truman told Elsey, “We got into Korea to *preserve* peace.” Capitalization of “Communist” and “Communism” irritated HST, who demanded printing these words in lower case. To make the document a more entertaining read, Elsey circulated drafts for input from academics such as Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.²⁰

Our Foreign Policy explained why the administration felt the need to go to war in Korea, but obfuscated the goals of the mission. Noting that the Soviet Union had gained control of 7.5 million squares of territory and 500 million people since 1945, it declared there were “no more side lines for a nation to sit on.” The fact that a totalitarian nation was “seeking to extend its power and to impose its system of communism over others” justified the U.N. intervention in Korea. Moreover, the Soviet Union had reneged on its “solemn pledge” to work with the U.S., Britain and China to restore Korean independence, and had “sealed off the northern area of Korea from all outside contact,” a reference to proposed reunification elections under U.N. supervision. However, the document contradicted the U.N.’s stated objective for the war at the time, the restoration of the ROK, saying the U.S. purpose was “helping the Koreans to become a united and independent people.” South Koreans, or all Koreans?²¹

Our Foreign Policy quickly exhausted an initial printing of 50,000 copies, and the State Department eventually printed over 400,000. The administration sent

²⁰ Truman’s editing in George M. Elsey, *An Unplanned Life: A Memoir by George McKee Elsey* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2005), 187-8; Schlesinger in Ken Hechler to George Elsey, “State Department’s ‘popular’ account of foreign policy,” September 9, 1950; Subject File, Foreign Policy-State Dept. Pamphlet, “Our Foreign Policy” folder; George Elsey Papers, HSTL; Ken Hechler, interview with author, January 16, 2007, confirmed Elsey’s role.

²¹ U.S. Department of State, Office of Public Affairs, *Our Foreign Policy*. Department of State publication 3972 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1950), 7-10, 15, 27, 58, 91-92.

thousands of copies to educate industrial leaders on defense preparations, and to public and university libraries, and principals of all secondary schools. Another 20,000 copies went to civics teachers, 2,500 to college professors teaching international relations, and to organizations representing women, labor, religions, and business interests. The *Washington Post* used it as a source in a series of question and answer articles about foreign affairs. Although critics dismissed the publication as a hasty and erroneous rebuttal to the Republican pamphlet “Background to Korea,” most of the press received the booklet favorably. Edward R. Murrow of CBS endorsed it and Earl Godwin of NBC called it a “very timely bit of reading matter” that was “as easy to read as a mystery tale.”²²

While the public was reading *Our Foreign Policy*, President Truman dramatically changed the scope of the Korean War. In October 1950, he authorized U.N. forces to carry the fighting north of the 38th parallel. Two months earlier, the U.S. ambassador to the U.N., Warren Austin, told the General Assembly they should expand the mission to prevent a future invasion by the North. After the successful counterattack at Inchon in mid-September, unification of the Koreas, a stated goal of the U.N. since 1947, increasingly appeared within reach. Hoping to realize this objective and to solidify its relationship with the U.S., Britain initiated a U.N. resolution supporting Austin’s suggestion. Following some revisions suggested by the U.S., the General

²² Distribution of the document in Ken Hechler to George Elsey, “State Department’s ‘popular’ account of foreign policy,” September 9, 1950, Hechler, 230 and Francis Russell to George Elsey, October 27, 1950; PSF: General File; Elsey, George folder; Truman Papers, HSTL; “How the U.S. Works Toward Peace in a Tense World,” *Washington Post*, 15 October 1950, p. B; Criticism of the booklet in Henning, Arthur Sears, “Truman Thrown on Defensive by G.O.P. Blasts,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 9 October 1950, p. 3; Murrow and Godwin from Memorandum, “Our Foreign Policy,” author unknown, n. d.; Foreign Policy-State Department Pamphlet folder; George Elsey Papers, HSTL.

Assembly passed it overwhelmingly on October 7, redefining the aim of the intervention. No longer content with repelling the Communist invaders from the north, the U.N.'s objective became enforcing "conditions of stability throughout Korea," and establishment of a "united, independent and democratic government in the sovereign state of Korea."²³

The commander in chief did little to convince the American public of the need to broaden the scope of the war. In his September and October press conferences, the president scarcely mentioned the subject other than to dodge questions about whether he had authorized MacArthur to go north. Truman's October 17 address to the nation from San Francisco was his only major speech during this critical phase of the war, and he only briefly touched on the policy change. Noting his discussions at Wake Island included plans for ensuring a "unified, independent and democratic" government in Korea, the purported Allied intent after World War II, the chief executive warned that the "evil spirit of aggression" still presented a "clear and present danger," but was sure that the U.N. would shortly "restore peace to the whole of Korea."²⁴

HST did not have to sell this "new" war to the public. One poll indicated that nearly three-quarters of the American people supported the decision to advance into North Korea. *Life* rejected the notion of stopping at the 38th parallel, deeming such

²³ Austin in "Verbatim Record of Yesterday's Session of the United Nations Security Council," *NYT*, 18 August 1950, p. 8; British role analyzed in William W. Stueck, *Rethinking the Korean War: A New Diplomatic and Strategic History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 98-100; All direct quotes from *Foreign Relations of the United States* (hereafter *FRUS*), 1950, Volume 7, Korea (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1976), 763-4, 768-73, 826-8, 903-5.

²⁴ "Address in San Francisco at the War Memorial Opera House- October 17, 1950," *PP*, <<http://www.trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/index.php?pid=899&st=&st1=>> (January 9, 2007).

“timidity” as “quite worthless.” The possibility of Chinese intervention caused no concern to its editors, who believed Mao Tse-tung certainly was awestruck by American air and sea power and must be “quaking in his boots.” Both parties backed the northern advance. Senator Joseph O’Mahoney (D-WY) wrote Truman that the U.S., which had “given so much of its blood and manhood” in Korea, should not allow the Communists to reestablish the “iron curtain” from which to launch future attacks. Rep. Hugh D. Scott, Jr. (PA), a former Republican national committee chairman, accused the State Department of planning to “cringe behind” the 38th parallel. With the 1950 congressional elections looming, Truman sensed the political consequences of not liberating North Korea.²⁵

Could the president have persuaded the American people that U.N. forces should stop at the 38th parallel? Alonzo Hamby points out Truman had to consider that halting at the boundary would have left the possibility of a future North Korean attack hanging in the wind. In light of the current international friction with North Korea, this argument seems stronger by the day. Halford R. Ryan and Melvyn Leffler, however, more plausibly suggest that Truman could have stopped at the 38th parallel, proclaiming victory by the U.N. forces for successfully repelling Communist aggression and protecting the sovereignty of the ROK. Leffler points out that, despite the popularity of taking the battle into the north, polls also indicated that many Americans were ready for

²⁵ Poll data in Beisner, 400; Strong public support noted in Melvyn Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), 378-9; “But What Comes Next?” *Life*, October 9, 1950, p. 38; O’Mahoney and Scott quoted in Donovan, 277.

a negotiated settlement to end the war in the fall of 1950. Moreover, Truman and Acheson had weathered political criticism before, and they could have done so again.²⁶

The DNC worked to justify the war to voters as the 1950 elections approached. As the party controlling the White House, Democrats were on the defensive, prompting the Senatorial Campaign Committee to prepare a pamphlet for party stump speakers, “The Truth About Korea.” Of the sixteen pages in the document, less than three explained why the administration intervened, the remainder dedicated to refuting Republican criticisms of Korean policy before the war. Arguing that Kim Il Sung’s strike was the first time the “international Communist movement” had used overt military force, the Democrats declared that inaction by America would have encouraged additional attacks elsewhere. Ignoring the policy change of reuniting Korea, the pamphlet asserted that the U.N. acted simply to “check and throw back the aggression.”²⁷

The State Department chipped in, collaborating with the White House to produce a series of questions and answers about foreign affairs for candidates to use. It effectively defended Acheson’s heavily criticized defense perimeter speech of January 1950, where the secretary had declared, “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.” This was exactly how the Korean intervention transpired. The

²⁶ Hamby, 541-2; Leffler, 377-80; Ryan, 60-1.

²⁷ Democrats’ defensiveness in Ken Hechler, Memorandum to Charles Van Devander, September 6, 1950; Subject File, General Research-Truman White House folder; Ken Hechler Papers, HSTL; Quotes from Clinton P. Anderson to Democratic Speakers, September 20, 1950 with attachment, “The Truth About Korea”; PSF: Political File, Washington folder; Truman Papers, HSTL.

pamphlet recalled the evils of appeasement, noting, “We have learned by hard experience in the 1930s that when we allow aggression to succeed anywhere in the world we invite aggression everywhere in the world.” Another publication stressed how the Communists changed tactics in Korea. Rather than relying on subversion, the “international communist movement, for the first time, adopted open warfare to achieve its purposes.”²⁸

The Democratic Party did everything possible to promote the administration’s Korean policy during the 1950 elections. Nevertheless, key Truman supporters saw shortcomings. Rep. Richard Bolling (D-MO) believed that when candidates adequately explained the “facts” of foreign policy, they did well. He conceded, however, “It is an unfortunate fact that a great many politicians do not know those facts and do not understand our foreign policy. Obviously they cannot make it understandable to their constituents.” Ken Hechler agreed, saying that in spite of their efforts, “The administration has not succeeded as well as it should in convincing the people, in simple terms, of the rightness of the course we are pursuing.” The problem was that foreign policy was more complicated than during World War II. Hechler observed there was “no great, unified, patriotic” feeling about Korea, lamenting, “the people do not fully

²⁸ Initial reliance and We have learned in Democratic National Committee, “Questions and Answers on Foreign Policy,” 1950; Subject File, General Research-Truman White House folder; Ken Hechler Papers, HSTL (emphasis theirs). Although the DNC published this document, Ken Hechler and the State Department put it together. International communist movement in U.S. Department of State, “Building the Peace,” *Foreign Affairs Outlines*, Publication 3971-Far Eastern Series 37, no. 24 (Autumn 1950), 8.

understand how much better off they are than if this should develop into an all-out war.”²⁹

Part of the president’s task was persuading the American consumer to make economic sacrifices for the war. HST went about mobilization cautiously, asking for the authority to control production and allocation of raw materials, but not prices. Political expediency contributed to his conservative approach. Sam Rayburn advised Truman that congressional approval for granting mobilization powers to the president would be easier if they did not include wage and price controls, which were unpopular during World War II. In retrospect, the commander in chief should have imposed price controls immediately. The nation’s overwhelming approval of the decision to intervene would have ensured congressional blessing for controls, which would have curbed inflation. As the conflict continued, inflationary pressures hampered Truman’s ability to rally the public for the Korean cause. Early in the conflict, however, the president did not want the populace to think of Korea as on the scale of World War II and therefore opted for partial mobilization rather than blanket controls. In his initial address to the nation on the war, HST said, “If I had thought that we were actually threatened by shortages of essential consumer goods, I should have recommended that price control and rationing be immediately instituted. But there is no such threat. We have to fear only those shortages which we ourselves artificially create.”³⁰

²⁹ Richard Bolling to Truman, December 18, 1950; WHCF: PPF, File PPF 4379 “Richard Bolling”; Truman Papers, HSTL; Hechler, 166.

³⁰ Rayburn in Neustadt, *Presidential Power*, 104; Truman’s ill-advised caution in Ferrell, *Harry S. Truman*, 325; “Radio and Television Address to the American People on the Situation in Korea- July 19, 1950,” *PP*, <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/index.php?pid=823&st=&st1=> (January 13, 2007).

Americans promptly went about creating such scarcities. Remembering the dearth of consumer items during World War II, people went about “hoarding everything from automobile tires to metal hair curlers,” all the while claiming their patriotism. Panic buying through the end of 1950 drove the price of rubber from \$0.34 to \$0.86 per pound and tin from \$0.76 to \$1.84 per pound, creating needless shortages and sharp inflation. A month into the war, a dollar was worth only 59.3 cents compared to a dollar in 1939, when the Great Depression still lingered. Americans responded creatively to shortages of certain foods. New Jersey Bell Telephone added pot roast of whale to its employee cafeteria menu. A Toledo, Ohio car wash added a frozen meat section for their customers’ convenience, charging them \$1.75 per pound for filet mignon, compared to \$1.50 for a car wash. Runs on consumer goods flowed with the military fortunes in Korea, spiking initially, subsiding after the U.N. success at Inchon, then running rampant again when China intervened.³¹

The American people cried out for more government action at home. One poll indicated seventy percent of Americans favored higher taxes to increase the size of the military, and backed universal military training by a margin of four to one. In the early months of the war, they clamored for total wage and price controls. The populace expected Washington to implement a complete mobilization as it had during World War II, and bombarded its representatives on Capitol Hill in a sign of “profound public

³¹ Quotes from Goldman, 187; Rubber and tin prices from Paul G. Pierpaoli, *Truman and Korea: The Political Culture of the Early Cold War* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1999), 30-1; Consumer and war trends in Neustadt, *Presidential Power*, 105.

reaction.” One journalist wrote, “One could almost hear Congress saying to the citizen in the White House: ‘Say, you—don’t you know there’s a war on?’”³²

Heeding the public outcry, Congress passed the Defense Production Act. The law gave the president the economic powers he asked for, plus one he did *not* request: The discretion to implement wage and price controls. Truman followed up with a forceful speech to the nation on September 9. To help keep inflation in check while increasing defense spending, the president demanded a “pay as you go” policy. Declaring that the nation had borrowed too much during World War II, he told the country that Korea would mean “heavier taxes for everybody.” The chief executive told consumers to “buy only what you really need and cannot do without,” and asked workers not to ask for raises beyond those to keep pace with cost of living increases. Although HST unfortunately did not exercise his power to cap prices or wages for several months, his timely September 9 speech bluntly exhorted Americans to sacrifice for the war effort.³³

China’s leap into the fray created new challenges to the administration’s efforts to retain public support for the war. The first encounters between Chinese and ROK forces near the Yalu River took place on October 25, 1950. Intense combat lasted though November 6, when China temporarily withdrew from the field. On November 25, a day after General MacArthur resumed an offensive to end the war, the Chinese

³² Pierpaoli, 34, 59 describes public demands for more controls; Poll data from Hugh G. Wood, “American Reaction to Limited War in Asia: Korea and Vietnam, 1950-1968” (Ph.D. diss., University of Colorado, 1974), 75-6; Journalist quoted is Stokes, Thomas L., “Congress Faces the Crisis—and the Voters,” *NYT*, 3 September 1950, p. 87.

³³“Radio and Television Address to the American People Following the Signing of the Defense Production Act-September 9, 1950,” *PP*, <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/index.php?pid=872&st=&st1=> (January 13, 2007).

counterattacked. Communist China and its massive army would stay in Korea for the duration.

Congress and the public were alarmed. Some wanted to attack Communist China and drive for total victory. Others advocated a complete pullout of American troops, while a third faction supported Truman's ultimate course of salvaging whatever was possible without expanding the war's scope. A November poll taken before the public knew the extent of the Chinese involvement indicated only 39 percent of Americans said the U.S. should carry the battle into China if the latter entered the conflict. In January 1951, a Gallup poll tainted by questions biased towards an American withdrawal reported that two-thirds of Americans favored pulling U.S. forces out of Korea. Another Gallup survey that month with less biased questions said 49 percent of Americans now regarded the war as a mistake, versus 20 percent four months earlier.³⁴

Truman was slow to rally public response to the Chinese invasion. He did not even mention it publicly until his November 16 press conference, which he opened with a statement that condemned China's involvement, but reassuring the Chinese that the U.N. had no designs on its territory. However, the president refused to answer questions about the issue. At his next news conference two weeks later, he fielded questions on China's intervention, the predominant topic of the day, and dropped a figurative

³⁴ Congressional factions in Lofgren, "Congress and the Korean Conflict," 106-7; November poll in Wiltz, 127; "Public Favors Withdrawing Troops From Korean Front," January 20, 1951; 1951 folder; Records of American Institute of Public Opinion, HSTL. The Gallup pollsters asked Americans, "Now that Communists have entered the fighting *with forces far outnumbering the United Nations troops* there), which ONE of these two courses would you, yourself, prefer that we follow?" (emphasis added) This poll then gave the person only two options, a troop pullout as soon as possible or, "Keep our troops there to fight these larger forces." The design of the question clearly attempted to bias the interviewee by emphasizing the disparate troop sizes, ignoring the possibility of U.N. troop escalations.

bombshell when he asserted repeatedly that using atomic weapons was an option in Korea at MacArthur's discretion. Although the president's staff swiftly clarified his remarks to reassure allies that he had not given his field commander the authority to use the bomb, these remarks fueled growing public fears that another world war was at hand. HST waited another two weeks to address the American people directly about the new war they faced. By the time he did, American forces had been fighting Chinese Communists for over a month.³⁵

Why did the president wait so long to discuss the Chinese intervention with the public? Shock was part of the reason. In a matter of days, the administration went from expecting the war to end shortly to facing an enemy with several hundred thousand troops and a possible world war. However, they could not have been totally surprised. China, through Indian diplomats, had issued warnings in October that they would get into the war if U.N. forces crossed the 38th parallel, and some in the State Department took them seriously. The sudden death on December 5 of Press Secretary Charlie Ross, a close friend of Truman, did not help the president's morale or the effectiveness of White House communications. As at the outset of the war, the commander in chief waited an unacceptably long time before making a speech to the nation about a new international crisis. This was important because people were getting nervous. In a poll

³⁵ "The President's News Conference- November 16, 1950," *PP*, <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/index.php?pid=977&st=&st1=> (January 14, 2007); The President's News Conference- November 30, 1950," *PP*, <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/index.php?pid=985&st=&st1=> (January 14, 2007).

taken in mid-November after China crossed the Yalu, over half of the respondents said they believed World War III had begun.³⁶

Nevertheless, once Truman decided to address the public, he was effective. On December 15, he disclosed his response to the serious situation in Korea, an accelerated mobilization adding one million people to active military duty and imposing selected price controls. The commander in chief also created the Office of Defense Mobilization, which had more power than the War Industries Board of World War I, and announced he would proclaim a national emergency the following day.³⁷

Truman's address on the national emergency went over well with few exceptions. *Time* criticized the delivery of the speech, saying it had a "thin, overworked and flat quality," adding it "had gone through ten draftings and it showed it." More commonly, the president earned high marks. Reports from *New York Times* regional correspondents across the country indicated people supported the sacrifices Truman outlined, and that some were ready to go even further. A California man wrote, "My partner and I expect to lose our small business as a result of the defense effort. . . . That is not important. Our only concern is the safety of our country, and of free people everywhere."³⁸

³⁶ Ross's death in Hamby, *Man of the People*, 542-3, 546; October warnings in Donovan, 277-9; "55 Per Cent in Survey See United States Already in Third World War," December 6, 1950; 1950 folder; Records of American Institute of Public Opinion, HSTL.

³⁷ "Radio and Television Report to the American People on the National Emergency- December 15, 1950," *PP*, <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/index.php?pid=993&st=&st1=> (January 14, 2007).

³⁸ "National Affairs," *Time*, December 25, 1950, p.7; "Report from the Nation: Facing the Crisis," *NYT*, 17 December 1950, p. E3; California man in Pierpaoli, 43.

Critics have suggested several flaws in Truman's declaration of a national emergency. A valid complaint is that the commander in chief again stopped short of full mobilization, electing to implement only selected wage and price controls. If the nation was in a true emergency, why not impose price controls across the board, which would have put the consuming public at ease? Less convincing is criticism of the president for making only four nationally broadcasted speeches between the start of the war and the announcement of a national emergency. When presidents give nation-wide addresses too often, the speeches lose their dramatic effect. Another dubious critique is that the declaration of a national emergency was merely a psychological ploy to rally the public behind HST. He gave the speech for a genuine psychological reason: The public needed reassuring that the government was responding decisively to the new war. Since Truman was declaring his plans to draft more Americans into the military and demanding more economic sacrifice from the rest, he had to impart a sense of urgency.³⁹

The president's national emergency address told the nation what lay ahead, using familiar themes and new ones. Like previous speeches, the chief executive reminded the nation about the dangers of appeasement and his determination to finance the war on a pay as you go basis. In the most inspiring line of the speech, Truman recalled the theme of personal sacrifice: "Each of us should measure his own efforts, his own sacrifices, by the standard of our heroic men in Korea." To justify that a national emergency existed, HST put much more emphasis on the threat to Americans at home, repeating a dozen

³⁹ Valid complaint in Robert L. Ivie, "Declaring a National Emergency: Truman's Rhetorical Crisis and the Great Debate of 1951," in *The Modern Presidency and Crisis Rhetoric*. Ed. Amos Kiewe (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 1994), 6; Critique of only four speeches in Twedt, 70; Psychological ploy in Foot, *The Wrong War*, 108.

times that the U.S. was in danger. As the immediate public reaction to the speech indicated, Americans were ready to deal with the Chinese intervention and believed that the Communist expansionism was a threat.⁴⁰

The nation did not hear much from the president during early 1951 and therefore saw little leadership of the war effort. Between declaring the national emergency and his firing of General MacArthur on April 11, 1951, Truman made only one address to the nation. White House staffer George Elsey recalled his boss “hunkered down and worked harder than ever at his desk.” Recognizing HST needed to take a higher profile, Elsey proposed a series of informal presidential visits to military and defense industry establishments. However, he only took one brief trip, dismissing the tour as “gimmickry.” Taking another tact, Elsey suggested having a friendly senator publicly ask Truman why the nation was staying in Korea, allowing him to respond for the benefit of the nation. The president flatly rejected what he saw as a publicity stunt.⁴¹

Meanwhile, public support for “Truman’s War” began to suffer. The gung-ho spirit that greeted the declaration of a national emergency had withered by the spring of 1951, despite the improved battlefield situation for U.N. forces. Preparing for a nuclear holocaust, Californians shopped for bomb shelters outfitted with Geiger counters. A congressman wrote the president that his district overwhelmingly wanted out of not only Korea, but Europe as well. By early March, resistance was beginning to form against the administration’s overall defense buildup, and organized labor, rejecting its World

⁴⁰ “Radio and Television Report to the American People on the National Emergency- December 15, 1950”; Emphasis on danger in Ivie, 3.

⁴¹ Elsey, 203.

War II stance, refused to agree to a no-strike pledge as part of the mobilization effort. Polling data indicated Americans were losing enthusiasm for reuniting the Koreas. One survey indicated the public was willing to end the war with a division of Korea at the 38th parallel by a margin of 43 to 36 percent. Another reported over half of Americans were unwilling to sacrifice their lives or those of a loved one to prevent a Communist takeover of Asia. Surprisingly, 57 percent said they would accept the seating of the Communist Chinese government in the U.N. in exchange for peace in Korea.⁴²

On April 11, 1951 at 10:30 p.m., the president gave a short radio address to the American people concerning his policy in Korea. The speech was a follow up to the hastily arranged news conference of 1:00 a.m. the same day in which his press secretary announced the firing of Douglas MacArthur. Using most of the talk to justify the nation's continued involvement in Korea, the commander in chief discussed the general's termination only briefly near the end of his remarks.

Incredibly, given the importance of the decision to relieve MacArthur, the chief executive apparently gave the address only as an afterthought. While White House aides took four days to prepare the press statement announcing the recall, they drafted Truman's address to the nation the same day he gave it. Elsey remembered they were in such a hurry they failed to include the name of MacArthur's successor in the text, and had to clip it onto the president's reading copy just before he went on the air. Television

⁴² Truman's War in White, William S., "M' Arthur Due Back in U.S. Next Week," *NYT*, 13 April 1951, p. 1; Geiger counters in Kaufman, 95; Congressman Edward H. Jenison to Truman, February 19, 1951; WHCF: OF 471B, Korean Emergency folder; HSTL; Resistance to build-up in Reston, James, "U.S. is Now Running A Marathon, Not a Sprint," *NYT*, 11 March 1951, p. 143; Labor recalcitrance in Pierpaoli, 87; Acceptance of ending war with divided Korea in Gallup, George, "Poll Favors Split Korea to End War," *NYT*, 28 March 1951, p.7; Other polling data from Wood, 141.

did not carry the address, probably due to the last-minute decision to make the speech. Lack of television coverage may seem trivial because relatively few Americans owned television sets. The point, however, is that White House myopia over the plans to replace the U.N. commander led to neglect of the key public relations issue--tying MacArthur's removal to the administration's war policy. Truman claimed that the public outcry over the general did not surprise him. However, it appears that even he did not anticipate the intensity of the uproar, prompting him throw a speech together for the nation at the last minute.⁴³

The most important aspect of the address was that, for the first time since China's intervention, Truman now stated his intention to keep the scope of the war limited. Although he had mentioned preventing another world war in his national emergency speech the previous December, he did not explain precisely what he meant. Now, however, Truman declared that contrary to MacArthur's desires, the U.N. forces would not expand the war into China because, "It is easier to put out a fire in the beginning when it is small than after it has become a roaring blaze." Concluding his remarks, the president revealed his disagreement with MacArthur, saying the question was "whether the Communist plan of conquest can be stopped without a general war."⁴⁴

Two other things stand out about the April 11 speech. As proof that the war was but the first step in a Communist plot to conquer all of Asia, the president cited

⁴³Four day preparation in Merrill, 82-3; Elsey, 206; Radio coverage in Lawrence, W. H., "President on Radio," *NYT*, 12 April 1951, p. 1; Truman's thoughts in Ferrell, *Off the Record*, 211.

⁴⁴ Analysis in Twedt, 180, 187; "Radio Report to the American People on Korea and on U.S. Policy in the Far East," April 11, 1951, *PP*, <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/index.php?pid=290&st=&st1=> (January 21, 2007).

intelligence reports obtained from Communist army officers in North Korea. Truman did not divulge anything about the source of these reports, and they apparently did not impress the public. The national media said nothing about this evidence. Another curiosity was the lack of discussion about MacArthur, limited to two short paragraphs near the end of the speech, with the president devoting most of his words to Korean policy. He did say that he fired the U.N. commander to eliminate confusion about the nation's policy. However, HST did not explain the general's specific transgressions, simply saying, concerning administration policy, "A number of events have made it evident that General MacArthur did not agree."⁴⁵

The general's firing overshadowed—but did not eclipse—Truman's follow-up message. General Omar Bradley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and staunch supporter of the president's decision, called the speech a "complete flop." Bradley felt the president erred by emphasizing the "duller" topic of foreign policy instead of giving his specific reasons for firing MacArthur. Some, however, took notice of Truman's address. *Time* reported, "The drama of MacArthur's removal and homecoming obscures a far more important fact: President Truman has brought his foreign policy into the open." If the president's policy was out of the bag, not everyone digested it. The *New York Times* claimed that the United Nations never had said it sought to reunify the

⁴⁵ Discussion of intelligence reports in Twedt, 183. Major publications such as *Time*, *Newsweek*, the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* said nothing about Truman's spy reports in their coverage of his April 11, 1951 speech. "Radio Report to the American People on Korea and on U.S. Policy in the Far East," April 11, 1951.

Korean peninsula by force, while columnists reported, “Debate Over M’ Arthur *May* Clarify U.S. Policy.”⁴⁶

The commander in chief’s remarks to the nation came at a pivotal moment in his quest to sell the war—with its revised objective-- to the nation. Yet, the speech was a missed opportunity. Preoccupied with planning how and when he should remove the general, Truman inadequately prepared the public for his new policy. The president should have been more specific about why MacArthur had to go. The nation had awakened that morning to the shock of the general’s demise, and their first question was, “Why?” However, the argument of Bradley and others that HST should have made his justification for MacArthur’s removal as the top priority in the speech is off the mark. Instead, the president should have placed equal emphasis on the change in command and his new policy. He wisely began his remarks by laying out the case for limited war, but should have included more specifics on how MacArthur had undermined that policy, forcing the commander in chief to remove him. With better planning of this crucial address, Truman could have reduced the duration of the ensuing storm over the change in military commanders.⁴⁷

The administration continued to make its case for limited war through the spring and summer of 1951. In a speech to Democrats televised nationally a few days after replacing MacArthur, Truman made a good case for limited war, but repeated an

⁴⁶ Omar N. Bradley and Clay Baird, *A General’s Life: An Autobiography by General of the Army Omar N. Bradley* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), 637; “MacArthur v. Truman,” *Time*, April 23, 1951, 31; Assertion that U.N. never wanted to reunify Korea in “Policy for Korea,” *NYT*, 13 April 1951; Krock, Arthur, “Debate Over M’ Arthur May Clarify U.S. Policy,” *NYT*, 15 April 1951, p. 135 (emphasis added).

⁴⁷ Twedt, 189-93 points out Truman’s failure to explain reasons for dismissal.

imprudent description he used at the conflict's outset. Drawing parallels to the triumph of the U.S. marines over the Barbary pirates in the 1800s, HST reminded his audience that in Korea, "We smashed the power of those bandits." Three weeks later, he gave an address to the Civil Defense Conference carried live by the networks. It was the president's best speech expressing his determination to control the scope of the conflict, declaring that a general war would endanger Japan and the Philippines, leave Europe vulnerable and alienate America's allies. Raising the specter of nuclear war, the commander in chief said the nation would expect "many atomic bombs to be dropped on American cities and a single one of them could cause many more casualties than we have suffered in all the fighting in Korea."⁴⁸

Meanwhile, the public continued to struggle with the concept of fighting for something less than the enemy's unconditional surrender. A congressman told a White House aide that China's involvement in Korea was "very hazy in the public mind." People he talked to did not realize that the Chinese soldiers were not volunteers, but were fighting on the authority of their government. The presence of such misconceptions as late as July 1951 underscored the administration's challenges to selling the war. Newspapers reported U.N. forces taking nameless hills and then losing them a few days later. Soldiers in Korea sent word home that "the idea of this war as an endless one is almost universally accepted here." As a result, Truman's political allies were telling him, "The public may not understand the dangers of MacArthur's proposals

⁴⁸ "Address at the Jefferson-Jackson Day Dinner- April 14, 1951," *PP*, <
<http://www.trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/index.php?pid=292&st=&st1=>> (January 23, 2007); Quotes from Civil Defense Conference speech in Lawrence, W. H., "President Warns," *NYT*, 8 May 1951, p. 1.

for an expanded war in China, but . . . they do understand the impact of veal cutlets at \$1.50 and ‘low cost’ house dresses at \$11.95.” With the public mostly hearing military news, they were “beginning to confuse military policy with foreign policy.” Such confusion was understandable, since the decision to give up on reunifying the peninsula by force divorced the U.N.’s military objective from its political goal of uniting the Koreans.⁴⁹

The start of the peace talks at Kaesong on July 10 figured little in the administration’s promotion of the Korean cause. When asked about the negotiations at his press conference, the president declined comment. HST probably anticipated the long road of tough talks that lay ahead with the Chinese Communists and did not want to get the nation’s hopes up for a quick settlement. Nevertheless, he should have used the occasion to express his hope for a quick and just armistice, and to remind the negotiators of the high stakes involved. By refusing to comment on the peace talks, the chief executive risked giving the impression that he either did not take the negotiations very seriously, or was pessimistic about their chances for success.⁵⁰

Foreign policy emerged as a big issue when the 1952 presidential campaign season began. The *New York Times* reported the American people were “arguing it hotly all over the place—grocers and taxi drivers, farmers and mechanics, high school students and old-age pensioners.” Five thousand letters or telegrams per week besieged the State

⁴⁹ Quote from congressman Francis E. Walter (D-PA) in Harry H. Vaughan, Memorandum for the President, July 5, 1951; WHCF: OF 471B, Korean Emergency (April 1951-1953) folder; Truman Papers, HSTL; was as an endless one in Goldman 199; veal cutlets and military policy in Clark M. Clifford to Charles S. Murphy, May 10, 1951 and Chester Bowles to Clifford, May 2, 1951; Clifford, Clark folder; Charles Murphy Papers, HSTL.

⁵⁰ “The President’s Press Conference- July 12, 1951,” *PP*, <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/index.php?pid=367&st=sabotage&st1=> (January 25, 2007).

Department. Convincing the electorate of the virtues of the Korean effort was therefore a high priority, and the Democrats had their work cut out for them, wrestling with the apparent “uncertainty among the people as to our sense of direction and continuity of policy.” Moreover, the Democrats believed the press was against them, and they were right. A subsequent analysis found that pro-Eisenhower newspapers controlled 80 percent of national circulation.⁵¹

Nevertheless, the Trumanites did their best to defend the president’s war policy, beginning with an “old reliable.” A revised edition of *Our Foreign Policy*, the highly successful booklet first published in 1950, reappeared as 300,000 copies went out to the nation. The administration blanketed the media with this pamphlet. To reach rural America, the State Department sent copies to 10,000 weekly and non-metropolitan newspapers. The combined readership of the newspapers and periodicals receiving the booklet was an estimated 75 million, representing about 68 percent of the voting age population.⁵²

⁵¹Arguing in McCormick, Anne O’Hare, “Abroad,” *NYT*, 24 March 1952, p. 24; Five thousand letters in “Policy Stems Reds, Truman Declares,” *NYT*, 24 March 1952, p. 3; uncertainty among the people in Ken Hechler, Memorandum, “Mayflower Dinner Meeting of National Committee Research Group,” January 23, 1951; DNC Establishment of a Research Comm. folder; Ken Hechler Papers, HSTL; Dean Acheson to Harry Truman, “Suggested Quarterly Report Prepared by the Dept. of State on the Progress of our Foreign Policy,” March 28, 1952; PSF: Chronological Name File; Acheson, Dean folder; Truman Papers, HSTL also describes party concerns; Democrat beliefs that press was against them in “Final Report of Frank E. McKinney Submitted to the Democratic National Committee,” August 20, 1952, p. 29; Democratic National Committee folder; Charles Murphy Papers, HSTL; Pro-Eisenhower papers in Wood, 203.

⁵²Distribution of pamphlet described in Robert Thompson to George Elsey, April 23, 1952 and Madeline W. Harrington to Thompson, “Our Foreign Policy, 1952,” n.d.; Foreign Policy-State Dept. Pamphlet “Our Foreign Policy” folder; George Elsey Papers, HSTL; The voting age population of the U.S. as of the 1950 census was approximately 110 million, per the Geospatial and Statistical Data Center, University of Virginia Library, PO Box 400129 Charlottesville VA 22904-4129, November 2, 2006, <http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus/php/state.php> (January 28, 2007).

Our Foreign Policy 1952 made a good case for the Truman administration's war policy. However, it contained a few curiosities. Despite the war, only five pages dealt with Korea and the Far East, compared to the nine pages dedicated to European affairs. The pamphlet mentioned China only once, emphasizing "Soviet aggression . . . in Korea," including a drawing of a Stalinesque figure leaning over an Asian officer and examining a map of eastern Asia. It also noted that the U.S. went to war in Korea to stop aggression against "our particular interests in the Pacific" without explaining precisely what these interests were. These weaknesses notwithstanding, the booklet pointed out that the U.N.'s credibility was at stake if its fate were not to go the way of the League of Nations. The brochure argued that America's enemies had not "pushed us into the sea," and had ended up at the 38th parallel where they started. The State Department summed up its case for limited war perfectly: "The U.N. forces have not destroyed all the power of China. That was not their job, and to have attempted it might have precipitated World War III." The U.N. forces had repelled aggression in Korea.⁵³

The State Department booklet generated lots of attention, as it did in 1950. It was the subject of 30 editorials, 81 front-page stories, and 98 other news stories other than front page in the major metropolitan papers. The *Louisville Times* called it "must reading for every citizen," while the *Philadelphia Bulletin* quipped, "If the cracker barrel experts take time to read it, just possibly they might develop a better understanding" of

⁵³ U.S. Department of State, *Our Foreign Policy 1952* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1952), 10, 11, 42-44.

foreign policy. The department summed up press reaction as “widespread and on the whole very favorable.”⁵⁴

The administration had to play defense to sell its war policy during the 1952 campaign. In response to ten questions posed by columnist David Lawrence, the DNC published a ten-page rebuttal, including counterpoint questions for Republicans. For example, Lawrence asked, “Why was a ‘stalemate war’ and a ‘stalemate peace’ advocated by the by the Truman-Acheson administration?” The DNC accurately replied that the North Korean army had been “all but demolished” and that heavy casualties had been inflicted on the Chinese. Democrats reminded the public that the U.N. had driven the Communists to the armistice table. However, the DNC also responded that while the U.N. went to war “to repel the armed attack” and to “restore international peace and security to the area,” it “did not set out to take over North Korea by force.” This, of course, did not explain why U.N. forces had advanced deeply into the north before the Chinese intervention, underscoring the challenge the war posed for the Democrats in the election.⁵⁵

Truman did nearly everything possible to convince the American public of the virtues of intervention in Korea, seeking to educate them on the need for the war while simultaneously convincing them it was not the prelude to World War III. The president’s war salesmanship had its flaws. His oratory skills left much to be desired,

⁵⁴Madeline W. Harrington to Robert L. Thompson, “Our Foreign Policy, 1952” quotes the *Louisville Times* and the *Philadelphia Bulletin* without giving dates. It also summarizes media treatment of the pamphlet.

⁵⁵Democratic National Committee Research Division, “Answers to Questions on Peace and War,” April 2, 1952; Political 1952 folder; Sam Rayburn papers, CAH.

particularly when compared with those of his predecessor, Franklin Delano Roosevelt. HST made some tactical errors as well, getting off to a slow start in communicating with the public at the war's outset and being vague in his public statements about the momentous decision to carry the fighting north of the 38th parallel. Most importantly, he made his job much harder by changing the war's objective several times, and the concept of limited war proved inscrutable to many Americans, emerging so soon after the Allies obtained unconditional surrenders in World War II.⁵⁶

So how does history judge the president's attempt to sell the Korean War to America? In one sense, Truman appears to have failed because the war helped deal him the lowest presidential approval rating in U.S. history to date (22 percent) and facilitated the 1952 election of Republican Dwight Eisenhower. For all of his unpopularity, however, HST managed to keep the nation on board with his policies. Eisenhower essentially continued his predecessor's Korean strategy, concluding the war just six months after the Missourian left office and under the same terms that Truman had insisted on throughout the latter stages of the conflict. While many Americans called for changes ranging from expansion of the war into mainland China to a complete pullout of U.S. troops, these alternative approaches never generated enough support to force the chief executive to redirect his course. After a significant drop in popular support when China entered the war, backing for the U.S. involvement held steady for the remainder of Truman's term. Events such as the firing of MacArthur, stalemated peace talks, and

⁵⁶ Truman's attempt to prevent public fears of World War III noted in Marcus, 33.

several Chinese offensives did not steadily erode public opinion about the war as one might have expected. HST sold the war well enough to carry it out as he saw fit.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Approval rating from *Roper Center for Public Opinion Research*, 2006, <http://137.99.36.203/CFIDE/roper/presidential/webroot/presidential_rating_detail.cfm?allRate=False> (December 9, 2006); Trends in support after Chinese intervention in John E. Mueller, *War, Presidents, and Public Opinion* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1973), 45-52.

CHAPTER VII

LET THE CHIEF TAKE THE HEAT: THE U.S. INTERVENES

You have the right to do it as Commander-in-Chief and under the U.N. Charter.

--Senator Tom Connally, responding to President Truman's question about intervening in Korea without congressional approval.¹

Did Congress have any part in the decision to send American military forces into Korea, or did it just go along for the ride? President Truman determined that he alone would make the decision, a move that his Republican adversaries swiftly capitalized on when American fortunes in the conflict soured. Yet, the Constitution states, "Congress shall have power declare war." The Eighty-First Congress, controlled by the commander in chief's party, never exercised this power in a conflict producing over 130,000 U.S. casualties. Subsequent presidents have followed Truman's lead, sending American forces into major confrontations without a declaration of war from Congress.

Thus far, this dissertation has examined the ways that HST tried to maintain the support of his party, the opposition Republicans and the populace for the war. The remainder will analyze how Truman and the Congress got the nation into war in the first place, and how they subsequently worked to extricate the U.S. from the conflict.

Chapter VII covers the American entry into the conflict, addressing several questions.

Why did Truman go to war in the first place, and why did he see no need for congressional approval? How did the U.N.'s participation affect these decisions? Could

¹ Connally, 346.

HST have avoided the political thrashing he suffered after China's entry if Congress had endorsed the war? The chapter examines how both political parties reacted to the administration's response to the Korean crisis to determine whether the president bullied Congress out of the decision to intervene, or if the legislators abdicated their constitutional responsibility. Chapter 7 will examine the other side of the coin, making the first probe into how the Congress helped push the U.S. towards the peace table.

Trouble in Korea hit the administration with a jolt. On Saturday, June 24 at 3 p.m., President Truman was flying from Washington to his home in Independence, Missouri for what he thought would be a relaxing weekend. Little did he know that before he landed, Kim Il Sung's forces had thundered across the 38th parallel with almost 110,000 soldiers, over 1,400 artillery pieces and 126 tanks. Word reached Washington that evening, and at 11:20 p.m., Secretary Acheson phoned his boss, "Mr. President, I have very serious news. The North Koreans have invaded South Korea." That night, State Department officials began working on a request for a U.N. Security Council emergency meeting. Ambassador At Large Phillip Jessup recalled the attitude was, "We've got to do something, and whatever we do, we've got to do it through the United Nations."²

The attack made only a ripple when first reported in the American press. Korea made only page 20 of the Sunday edition of the *New York Times*, reporting there was "no indication that the United States intends to take direct military action." The *Washington*

² Glenn Page, *The Korean Decision: June 24-30, 1950* (New York: Free Press, 1968), 79-81, 93, 100.

Post relegated the story to a section near the end, noting that North Korea had formally declared war on Saturday at 9 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time.³

Meanwhile, Sunday had begun very early for American diplomats. Ernest A. Gross, ambassador to Korea, telephoned U.N. Secretary General Trygve Lie at 3 a.m. to request the Security Council meeting as news of the invasion spread to governments around the globe. Had the Soviets returned from a boycott of the Security Council to veto any actions against North Korea, the U.S. planned to call for an emergency gathering of the General Assembly. At 8 a.m., Washington got word that a North Korean regiment occupied Kaesong, only 40 miles northwest of the ROK capitol of Seoul (see Figure 1). Acheson rushed back to the State Department from his Maryland home around 11 a.m., giving reporters a whiff of crisis in the air by arriving coatless and disheveled. Minutes later, after getting reports of Communist strafing of nearby installations, Ambassador Gross began evacuating families of U.S. embassy staff members from Seoul.⁴

³ “Washington Holds Russia to Account,” *NYT*, 25 June 1950, p. 20; “North Korea Forces Drive Into South, Seoul Hears,” *Washington Post*, 25 June 1950, p. M1. All subsequent references to the time of day are Eastern Daylight Time unless otherwise noted.

⁴ Paige, 102-110. The USSR had been boycotting the Security Council over the latter’s refusal to recognize the Communist Chinese government.

Truman, after a 2:45 p.m. call from Acheson describing the deteriorating situation for the ROK forces, decided to return to Washington. The president believed North Korea would ignore the expected Security Council resolution calling for a cease-fire and withdrawal due to the “complete disregard” of the U.N. displayed by Kim Il Sung and his “big allies” in the past. If that happened, HST felt the U.S. would have to do something and therefore wanted to get back to Blair House. After rushing aboard the plane, leaving some of his staffers behind, Truman impatiently asked a Secret Service agent why they were not taking off. When the agent reported that the pilot was waiting for his navigator, the president insisted that they take off without him. Obediently, the pilot removed the boarding ramp and closed the door. As the pilot prepared to taxi to the runway, his navigator sped up next to the plane in his car and climbed a rope ladder to board the aircraft.⁵

The president had military intervention in mind at the outset. As he prepared to leave for Washington, he told reporters, “Don’t make it alarmist. It could be a dangerous situation, but I hope it isn’t.” However, Brigadier General Wallace H. Graham, Truman’s personal physician, told two journalists as he boarded the presidential plane, “The boss is going to hit those fellows hard.” Margaret Truman, after spending that weekend with her father and helping him prepare for his hasty return, wrote in her

⁵ Truman quoted in Paige, 113; Navigator episode in Donovan, 195-6. Truman was temporarily living in Blair House due to renovations of the White House.

diary that day, “Northern or Communist Korea is marching in on Southern Korea and we are going to fight.”⁶

While HST returned to the capitol, the U.N. Security Council met and Congress began to weigh in on the situation. Curiously, the Soviets continued their boycott of the Council rather than returning to veto the resolution, resulting in a 9-0 vote (with Yugoslavia abstaining) calling for North Korea to withdraw. Rep. John Kee (D-WV), chairman of the Foreign Affairs committee, told reporters that, from what he knew at the time, South Korea was in a “fairly good position to take care of itself.” H. Alexander Smith claimed the U.S. had a moral imperative to look after the “infant Korean Republic.” Other Republicans assailed the White House. Rep. Paul W. Shafer (MI) said Korea had been “flung into the Soviet orbit” by the State Department. Senator Wherry attributed the crisis to China policy, trumpeting, “The Administration should stand up and do something and then we’ll stop those Commies.”⁷

The president convened the first meeting on the Korean crisis with his National Security Council (NSC) upon arriving in Washington Sunday evening. Attendees included the Joint Chiefs of Staff and officials from the State and Defense departments. As they waited for dinner to be served, two of them recalled Truman seated near a window repeating softly to himself, “We can’t let the U.N. down!” After discussing the situation, HST directed the Seventh Fleet to head towards Formosa and await further instruction, and ordered American air and naval support to secure Seoul during the

⁶ Donovan, 195-6.

⁷ Paige, 116-122.

evacuation of U.S. citizens. They did not discuss obtaining congressional approval, and the president stressed, “We are working entirely for the United Nations.”⁸

Congress spoke out more on Monday, June 26. In the first Senate session after the invasion began, five Republicans and one Democrat brought up Korea in floor debate. Only two House members, both Republicans, did the same. Most of the GOP legislators blasted the administration for permitting the course of events, and Senator Knowland asked if the U.S. would “sit back and twiddle our thumbs and do nothing” if the USSR blocked U.N. action. Senator Connally shook his finger at the critics and questioned their “splendid attitude of doubt,” asserting, “The President . . . is not going to tremble like a psychopath before Russian power.” Despite the partisan sparring, when Republicans emerged from a GOP Policy committee meeting, Senator Eugene D. Millikin (R-CO) reported his colleagues seemed “unanimous that the incident should not be used as a provocation for war.”⁹

News from Korea worsened as the day went on. In a morning conversation with Rep. Kee, Acheson said South Korea was in “pretty good shape.” However, by 2 p.m., the White House learned that the South Korean government had fled Seoul. The president got varying advice from congressional Democrats. Rep. Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr. (NY) suggested a joint ultimatum delivered by the U.S. and USSR demanding a cease-fire and for the North and South Koreans return to their original

⁸ Let the U.N. down in Paige, 125; direction of 7th Fleet in Donovan, 197-9; working entirely for the United Nations in Dean Acheson, “Memorandum of Conversation- ‘Korean Situation,’ June 25, 1950; Memoranda of Conversations file; May-June 1950 folder; Acheson Papers, HSTL.

⁹ Republicans and Democrat in Paige, 150-4; Knowland, Connally and Millikin in Hinton, Harold B., “Connally Says U.S. is Firm on Korea,” *NYT*, 27 June 1950, p. 12.

positions. Roosevelt believed that if Russia declined, the ploy would expose that they were a “party of interest in the present invasion . . . disrupting the peace of the world.” Significantly, Truman asked Connally whether he needed to ask Congress for a declaration of war before sending American forces to Korea. Though the Texan later regretted it, he answered, “If a burglar breaks into your house you can shoot him without going down to the police station and getting permission.” Connally warned HST, “You might run into a long debate in Congress which would tie your hands completely.”¹⁰

Truman reconvened the NSC that evening. General Bradley, JCS chairman, shared MacArthur’s assessment that a “complete collapse is imminent.” When one of his generals reported that the U.S. had shot down its first North Korean plane (built by the Soviets), the commander in chief remarked, “I hope it’s not the last.” After hearing out his advisors, HST decided to have American naval and air forces assist the South Koreans as needed below the 38th parallel, removing the previous restriction limiting their activities to assisting with the evacuation of Americans. Notably, when asked by a general for permission to conduct operations in the North, Truman said, “Not yet.” He also ordered the Seventh Fleet to prevent skirmishing between the Chinese Nationalists on Taiwan and the Communists on mainland China. The NSC did not discuss asking Congress for a declaration of war, and John Hickerson, Assistant Secretary of State for U.N. Affairs, later asserted that such a request would have been premature. The president nevertheless felt it necessary to have some dialogue with the legislators, and

¹⁰ Acheson in Memorandum of Telephone Conversation, June 26, 1950 and untitled memorandum, June 26, 1950; Memoranda of Conversations File; May-June 1950 folder; Dean Acheson Papers, HSTL; Roosevelt in Matthew J. Connelly, Memorandum for the President, June 26, 1950; PSF: President’s Appointment File, Daily Appointment Sheets; June 1950 folder; Truman Papers, HSTL; Connally in Connally, 346.

scheduled a briefing with congressional leaders for the following morning. A statement summarizing his decisions was prepared for release to the press the next day.

Implementation, however, began immediately.¹¹

Hickerson, one of the last to leave as the NSC meeting broke up, later shared some poignant comments Truman made that Monday night. Relaxing with a drink after a taxing day, HST confided, “I have hoped and prayed that I would never have to make a decision like the one I have just made today.” The president expressed disappointment that lack of American support probably contributed to the failure of the League of Nations, underscoring his determination that the U.N. succeed in its first crucial test. Revealing his belief that the Soviets ordered the North Korean invasion, Truman declared, “Now is the time to call their bluff,” asserting, “In the final analysis, I did this for the United Nations.”¹²

The commander in chief reiterated this conviction during his first meeting with lawmakers on the Korean situation on the morning of Tuesday, June 27. Gathering fourteen congressional leaders (nine Democrats and five Republicans), Truman had NSC and military officials update them on the situation. He then read the statement prepared the night before, telling the group he would release it to the press at the conclusion of the meeting. During the ensuing discussion, the president affirmed the U.S was committed

¹¹ Complete collapse/not the last in Paige, 162-3, 165; lack of discussion of war declaration in Memorandum of Conversation, “Korean Situation,” June 26, 1950; Memoranda of Conversations File; May-June 1950 folder; Dean Acheson Papers, HSTL; Not yet in *Foreign Relations of the United States* (hereafter, FRUS), 1950, Vol. 7, (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1976), 179; John D. Hickerson, Oral History Interview by Richard D. McKinzie, June 5, 1973, Harry S. Truman Library, <http://trumanlibrary.org/oralhist/hickerson.htm#subjects> (June 29, 2007); immediate implementation noted in Acheson, *Present at the Creation*, 407-8.

¹² Hickerson Oral History Interview, June 5, 1973. Emphasis theirs.

to defending South Korea. Republicans stressed the importance of adhering to U.N. orders and Senator Connally asserted that America would not intervene alone. The JCS clarified that Truman's orders did not commit U.S. ground troops. Connally recalled that no one dissented, and Acheson said the consensus was that because the U.S. had responded with force, the lawmakers were satisfied. The commander in chief informed, but did not consult, the legislators.¹³

The White House released its statement following the meeting. Truman argued that the June 25 U.N. Security Council resolution calling on members to assist the cessation of hostilities and withdrawal of North Korean forces justified dispatching U.S. air and naval forces to "give Korean Government troops cover and support." House members lauded Truman's statement with a standing ovation, with one exception. Rep. Vito Marcantonio (NY) of the American Labor Party said the commander in chief had undermined Congress's constitutional authority to declare war, insisting, "For all purposes . . . we are at war." Marcantonio called the president's move a calamitous decision which could bring "disastrous consequences on the people of the United States unless checked by the people themselves."¹⁴

Tuesday concluded with two momentous events. Just before midnight, the U.N. Security Council adopted a resolution recommending that member nations "furnish such assistance to the Republic of Korea as may be necessary to repel the armed attack and to

¹³ Meeting specifics in *FRUS, 1950, Vol. 7*, 200-202; Connally quoted in Connally, 347-8; Acheson's comments from Acheson, *Present at the Creation*, 409.

¹⁴ "Statement by the President on the Situation in Korea," June 27, 1950, *PP*, <http://trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/index.php?pid=800&st=&st1=> (July 2, 2007); Marcantonio in Hinton, Harold B., "Legislators Hail Action by Truman," *NYT*, 28 June 1950, p. 1.

restore international peace and security in the area.” The wording was more aggressive than that of the Monday resolution, which called upon members to “render every assistance to the United Nations” in its call for North Korea to withdraw north of the 38th parallel. The Council approved it 7-1, with Yugoslavia opposed, Egypt and India abstaining, and the USSR absent. As the measure came to a vote, North Korean troops overran Seoul, prompting a triumphant Kim Il Sung to cable his troops, “Hail the united Korean people!”¹⁵

Congress united behind the president. A Senate-House conference committee assembled a bill in less than an hour extending the selective service for a year and giving Truman broad powers of implementation. The House passed the bill 315-4 and forwarded it to the Senate, which passed it 76-0 on Wednesday, June 28, after “not a word of debate.” Only two days earlier, both houses seemed to be in a “hopeless deadlock,” haggling over restrictions on the commander in chief’s use of the draft during peacetime. The outbreak in Korea changed all that, and editorials lauded Congress’s response. Interestingly, the press overlooked the fact that 120 of the 439 House members did not bother to show up to vote. Similarly, 20 of the 96 senators did not vote, although 12 of the absentees sent verbal word to colleagues that they supported the bill. The most likely explanation for the poor turnout is the overwhelming support for

¹⁵ “Resolution Adopted by the United Nations Security Council,” June 27, 1950 and “Resolution Adopted by the United Nations Security Council,” June 25, 1950, *FRUS, 1950, Vol. 7*, 211 and 155-156; Sung quoted in Paige, 207.

Truman's dispatch of naval and air support to Korea. Members knew that their vote would not make or break the bill's passage.¹⁶

Yet, Senator Taft was a significant exception to the rally around the president. The GOP leader delivered a major speech that, like Marcantonio's, argued that the president had exceeded his constitutional authority in committing American air and naval forces to Korea. "We are now actually engaged in a de facto war," Taft declared, and that if this intervention went unchallenged, the president could "go to war in Malaya, or Indonesia, or Iran, or South America without congressional consent." Saying Truman had "no legal authority" for his action, the Ohioan warned his colleagues that if they did not act, they would have "finally terminated for all time the right of Congress to declare war as provided by the Constitution." Taft also brought up a vital issue, the U.N. Participation Act of 1945 (UNPA), which required the president to get congressional approval before committing American armed forces for U.N. use. The law authorized the president to negotiate special agreements with the Security Council "providing for the numbers and types" of U.S. armed forces, along with "their degree of readiness and general location" to support a U.N. military action. Although the UNPA required congressional approval of such an agreement, none was in place in June 1950. Taft said the intervention was the right thing to do, but that there was a constitutional principle at

¹⁶ Less than an hour noted in "House Votes Draft Extension, Power to Call Reserves, Guard," *Washington Post*, 28 June 1950, p. 1; hopeless deadlock in "House Votes 315-4 To Prolong Draft," *NYT*, 28 June 1950, p. 1; not a word of debate in "Draft Extension Sent to President," *NYT*, 29 June 1950, p. 6; Examples of press support are "Selective Service," *NYT*, 28 June 1950, p. 26 and "Democracy in Action," *NYT*, 29 June 1950, p. 28. Constituents punished only one of the four House members opposing the draft extension in the 1950 elections, Vito Marcantonio. Reports in neither the *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, *Time*, nor Matthew Mantell's study of dissent during the war indicate that legislators abstained from voting as a matter of protest.

stake. He would endorse Truman's action if the president requested Congress's approval.¹⁷

Taft's speech drew immediate criticism. As soon as the Ohio senator sat down, Majority Leader Scott Lucas rose to the administration's defense. Lucas asserted the U.N. Charter gave Truman the authority he needed, and Senator Connally later read into the record a portion of the June 27 Security Council resolution calling on U.N. members to assist the South Koreans. The majority leader reminded his colleagues of the "traditions and precedents established more than 100 times" by previous presidents, including President Jefferson's dispatch of the Navy to combat the Barbary pirates and the use of American forces to quell the Boxer Rebellion in China. Republican Ralph Flanders (VT) said Truman's action was legal as long as military activity remained south of the 38th parallel. The *Washington Post*, conceding Congress's right to declare war, argued, "Police action to halt aggression is not war, as American history testifies." Secretary Acheson later dismissed Taft's opposition as "typical senatorial legalistic ground for differing with the President."¹⁸

The administration inched deeper into the Korean affair. During the morning of Thursday, June 29, the Pentagon began receiving reports that the ROK army was in a continuous retreat and suffering fifty percent casualties. Truman therefore convened

¹⁷ De facto war in Hinton, Harold B., "Taft Says Truman Bypasses Congress," *NYT*, 29 June 1950, p. 4; "United Nations Participation Act, December 20, 1945," *The Avalon Project at Yale Law School*, <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/decade/decad031.htm> (July 24, 2007); Malaya, no legal authority, and finally terminated quotes from Trohan, Walter, "Taft Demands Acheson Quit in War Fiasco," *Chicago Tribune*, 29 June 1950, p. 1; Other details of Taft's speech in *CR*, 81st Cong., 2nd sess., June 28, 1950, 96, pt. 7: 9323.

¹⁸ Lucas, Connally and Flanders in Albright, Robert C., "Taft Sees Acheson Reversed and Calls for Resignation," *Washington Post*, 29 June 1950, p. 1; police action in "Illegality Over Korea," *Washington Post*, 4 July 1950, p. 8; Acheson quoted in Acheson, *Present at the Creation*, 410.

another NSC meeting at 5 p.m., where the JCS recommended the introduction of American ground forces. General Bradley emphasized the purpose of the troops was only to secure the port of Pusan for protection of American evacuees. No troops would go to the invasion front. The generals, however, wanted permission to bomb targets in North Korea. The president urged restraint, saying that in Korea he did not want the U.S. to become “over-committed to a whole lot of other things that could mean war.” Truman therefore allowed attacks only upon ammunition dumps, air bases, and supply storage in the North, saying he “only wanted to restore order to the 38th Parallel.” None of the attendees apparently knew that MacArthur had already ordered the Air Force to make strategic strikes into North Korea.¹⁹

The decision to intervene in Korea culminated on Friday, June 30. General MacArthur, after returning from a personal inspection of the front, cabled Washington during the middle of the night of June 29-30, warning, “The only assurance of holding the present line, and the ability to regain later lost ground, is through the introduction of U.S. ground combat forces into the Korean battle area.” His request for a combat regiment immediately, followed by two divisions for a counteroffensive, reached the president at 5 a.m. Truman, already awake and getting dressed for his morning walk, approved the regiment, but held off on the two divisions until he met with his military advisors. At 8:30 a.m., HST and the NSC discussed an offer of 30,000 troops from the Chinese Nationalist government to help fight the North Koreans. The president liked the

¹⁹ Accounts of the meeting in Paige, 239-41, 245-6 and Bradley and Baird, 538; overcommitted to a whole lot in Beisner, 345; order to the 38th Parallel in George Elsey, “Meeting Notes,” June 29, 1950; Project File; Korea-June 29, 1950, White House, State, Defense Meeting folder; Elsey Papers, HSTL.

idea because it offered a way to get other U.N. members involved while avoiding sending American ground forces. Acheson felt otherwise, fearing the Nationalist troops would invite Communist China to join the fight. The JCS backed the secretary, citing logistical and tactical problems with using Chiang's forces. Truman, bowing to their judgement, declined the offer. The commander in chief then made the momentous decision: MacArthur could have his two divisions of U.S. troops.²⁰

The president briefed sixteen congressional leaders on Korea later that morning. HST read aloud an announcement summarizing his decisions, which he released to the press while the meeting was in progress. "In keeping with the United Nations Security Council's request," the president had authorized hitting targets in North Korea and the use of "certain supporting ground units." A long silence ensued before the legislators began asking their questions. Most dealt with the contributions by U.N. members other than the U.S., with several senators urging even token combat forces from other nations to emphasize that this was a U.N. action rather than an American response. At one point, Truman said the U.S. had sent no troops into "actual combat" yet, and that the plan simply was to secure communications and supply lines at Pusan. This was a stretch of the truth, given the president's approval of two divisions for a counteroffensive hours earlier.²¹

²⁰ MacArthur cable in Bradley, 538-9; Acheson, *Present at the Creation*, 412-3, Beisner, 346-7 and Truman, *Memoirs*, Vol. 2, 342-4 give accounts of the meeting.

²¹ "White House Statement Following a Meeting Between the President and Top Congressional and Military Leaders to Review the Situation in Korea," *PP*, <http://trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/index.php?pid=811&st=&st1=> (July 10, 2007); actual combat in Meeting Notes, June 30, 1950, 11 o'clock; Subject File; Korea-June 30, 1950 Congressional Leaders' Meeting folder; George Else Papers, HSTL; long silence in Connally, 349.

Only one of the sixteen, Senator Wherry, challenged the president. Rising as though speaking on the Senate floor, the minority leader asked HST if he would advise the Congress before dispatching ground forces to Korea. Truman responded that he had already ordered them into Korea, but would advise them in the event of a “real emergency.” When Wherry argued that Congress should be *consulted before* the president made such moves, HST gave a confusing response. Referring to the events of June 25 rather than his current decision to commit troops, Truman in effect said he could not confer with Congress because it had been a weekend emergency, asserting, “I just had to act as Commander-in-Chief, and I did.” Thus, the president indicated he would advise Congress in the event of a major crisis in the future, yet, in the next breath, said he did not have time to consult the legislature during emergencies. HST assured the congressmen that if any major actions occurred in the future, he would *tell* them. The senator did not go quietly, rising again and repeating his demand. Truman tried again to placate the senator, replying, “If there is any necessity for Congressional action, I will come to you. But I hope we can get those bandits in Korea suppressed without that.” Later in the meeting, the Nebraskan raised the issue a third time, correctly surmising the significance of the final sentence in the president’s press release authorizing the use of American ground troops. This time, a Republican colleague, Rep. Dewey Short (MO) sawed Wherry off at the knees, extolling Truman’s leadership and stating that nearly everyone Congress shared such sentiments.²²

²² Elsey, Meeting Notes, June 30, 1950.

Nevertheless, Senator H. Alexander Smith proposed a compromise in the form of a congressional resolution approving the actions that the commander in chief had decided to take. HST agreed to look into the idea and assigned Acheson to make a recommendation.²³

Despite the president's talk of suppressing bandits, the attendees clearly understood the weight of his decisions. Acheson noted in his memoirs, "We were then fully committed in Korea." As the congressmen filed out, Senator Connally recalled, "All of us were shocked by the realization that only five years after World War II, American youth were once more involved in military combat."²⁴

Truman considered the question of obtaining a congressional endorsement of the intervention on Monday, July 3. As Congress recessed for the Independence Day holiday, at Acheson's request the president called a meeting of the Cabinet, the Service secretaries, and the "Big 4" representatives of the Democratic leadership on the Hill (both majority leaders, Vice President Barkley, and House Speaker Rayburn). Of the Big 4, only Lucas bothered to attend. Acheson pointed out that several legislators were quite nervous about what they perceived as "excessive Presidential independence." The meeting therefore discussed whether HST should make an address on the Korean crisis to Congress, and whether he should seek a joint resolution supporting the war effort as Senator Smith suggested during the June 30 briefing. Acheson distributed a proposed resolution, which he had amended from endorsing the actions to maintain peace in the

²³ Acheson, *Present at the Creation*, 413. Interestingly, George Elsey's notes of the meeting do not mention Smith's proposal.

²⁴ Connally, 349.

“Pacific area” to ensuring security in the “Korean situation,” a change designed to avoid reopening the debate over China policy.²⁵

Senator Lucas was indecisive during the meeting, which was particularly problematic since he was the lone voice from Capitol Hill. When Truman asked for his opinion on the proposed resolution, the senator responded that it was difficult to do so without talking with his colleagues. After more prodding, Lucas said the president “had very properly done what he had to without consulting the Congress.” The majority leader therefore opposed the resolution, even though he deemed it “satisfactory” and said it could pass. Yet, Lucas reported many colleagues had told him that HST should “keep away from Congress and avoid debate,” and worried that discussion of the resolution would last at least a week. The senator appeared sensitive to Republican criticism. When Lucas noted that most legislators were “sick of the attitude” taken by Taft and Wherry, Truman correctly surmised that Wherry had lightened up a bit following the June 30 briefing (Lucas disagreed). The majority leader’s argument was baffling. If most in Congress were sick of Taft and Wherry, why fear a floor debate? Confounding his recommendation further, Lucas said that if Truman reconvened the congressional leaders from the Friday briefing, they probably would unanimously endorse the

²⁵Excessive presidential independence in “Congressional Action,” July 1950; Subject File; Korea-July 1950 folder; George Elsey Papers, HSTL; verbage change for statement discussed in “Memorandum of Telephone Conversation-Secretary of Defense Johnson and Secretary Acheson,” July 3, 1950; PSF: President’s Appointment File; July 1950 folder; Truman Papers, HSTL, appearing in “Two drafts, dated July 3, 1950, of a possible Resolution of Congress proposed by the Department of Defense, Papers of George Elsey, http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistelstopstudy_collections/korea/large/week2/kw_74_1.htm(July 12, 2007), HSTL.

resolution, ensuring its passage on the floor. The senator also worried that a presidential speech to Congress on Korea would be “practically asking for a declaration of war.”²⁶

The Cabinet members and service secretaries in attendance did not serve the president well, either. Few ventured their views on a congressional sanction. Bradley was an exception, opposing a resolution in order to avoid a lengthy debate in Congress on “matters which now seemed to be taken for granted.” The rest made neutral comments. Even Acheson, after opening the meeting and sharing his drafts of the resolution and a proposed address to Congress, said little else.²⁷

Truman nevertheless raised the issue of the constitutionality of his actions. However, when Lucas mentioned that a presidential speech to Congress could come across as asking for a war declaration (and therefore should be avoided), HST agreed, clarifying that he “had not been acting as President, but as Commander-in-Chief of our forces in the Far East.” Later, he noted the need to be “very careful” to avoid appearing to be “trying to get around Congress and use extra-Constitutional powers.” The president spoke of the challenges to keeping the legislators informed, but showed no inclination towards seeking their advice or approval. Truman refused to introduce the resolution, maintaining it was up to Congress to do so. The discussion ended with a decision to wait until the legislators returned after the recess before acting. By the time

²⁶ “Meeting at Blair House,” July 3, 1950; Memoranda of Conversations File; July 1950 folder; Dean Acheson Papers, HSTL. After leaving the June 30 briefing, Wherry indicated he still believed Truman should consult Congress beforehand. However, he couched it in more conciliatory language, saying, “I think Congress should be required to share the responsibility of whatever acts the President takes.” See Hinton, Harold B., “Sea Blockade Set,” *NYT*, 1 July 1950, p. 1.

²⁷ “Meeting at Blair House,” July 3, 1950.

the legislators reconvened, Acheson recalled, “We were pretty well won over to Senator Lucas’ view.”²⁸

The July 3 meeting was the last meaningful discussion in the administration about obtaining congressional approval for sending American forces into Korea. After meeting with the Big 4 a week later, Truman told Acheson they had advised him against making an address to Congress, and did not mention any discussion about a joint resolution. However, Senator Alexander Wiley (R-WI) passionately pleaded on the same day for the White House to submit a resolution for a congressional endorsement. Wiley contended that a resolution would safeguard Congress’s “integrity,” even if it occurred after the fact. He declared, “No single military action taken by the executive branch . . . has had as many widespread implications as this one,” reflecting concerns that Korea was but the first of additional Soviet forays elsewhere. Complaining that Congress had been yielding “more and more of its authority . . . to the executive branch,” Wiley asked if his colleagues should “sit by silently while the President takes actions which might lead us into a third world war.” Wiley’s pleas fell on deaf ears. White House aide George Elsey noted that a congressional resolution was “discussed half-heartedly from time to time, but the issue was never clearly thrashed out.” When Elsey told Truman in mid-July that drafts of such declarations had been floating around the White House, HST said he had never heard of them and expressed scorn for the idea. The staffer later concluded his boss was “dreadfully wrong.” Speaking of the president, Elsey lamented, “We of the staff had served him poorly by not . . . seeking congressional

²⁸ “Meeting at Blair House,” July 3, 1950; Acheson, *Present at the Creation*, 414.

involvement in the opening days of the conflict. It was soon too late. We had ‘Truman’s War’ to deal with.”²⁹

Congress responded in a variety of ways to the president’s decision to go to war. The liberal Democrats, unsurprisingly, backed Truman. Responding to constituent mail, Senator Theodore F. Green (RI) echoed the president’s belief that the Soviets were “testing the limit to which our appeasement . . . might go.” He also cited the League of Nations’ failure to respond to Italy’s attack of Ethiopia in 1936 to justify the U.N. action in Korea. Preaching the doctrine of Truman, Green wrote, “We are interested in a street fight where there is shooting, even if we are not shot at ourselves.” A member of the Foreign Relations committee, Green nevertheless held that “the President, and not the Congress, has the conduct of our foreign affairs.” The *Rhode Islander* made a distinction that most Americans probably did not notice, writing, “We did not go into Korea to fight communism,” but to “help the United Nations fight aggression.”³⁰

Senator Paul H. Douglas (D-IL) gave a scholarly defense of the administration. Sparked by Taft’s questioning of the president’s authority to lead America to war, Douglas reviewed James Madison’s notes from the Constitutional Convention to justify Truman’s approach. The Illinois senator said the Founding Fathers substituted the word “declare” for the word “make” in the clause giving Congress the authority “to declare

²⁹Truman to Acheson in “Memorandum of Conversation with the President-Item No. 6, Message to Congress,” July 10, 1950; Memoranda of Conversations File; July 1950 folder; Acheson Papers, HSTL; Wiley quoted in White, William S., “Bigger G.O.P. Role in Crisis Proposed,” *NYT*, 11 July 1950, p. 21 and Edwards, Willard, “Truman Calls Lawmakers to Korea Parley,” *Chicago Tribune*, 11 July 1950, p. 6; half-heartedly in “Congressional Action,” July 1950, Elsey Papers; Truman’s War in Elsey, 195.

³⁰Theodore Green to Gurney Edwards, August 5, 1950; Theodore F. Green Papers, Box 600; Green to William Greenlees, January 12, 1951 and Green to Mrs. Otis Rylander, June 18, 1951; Green Papers, Box 634; all from MDLOC.

war,” allowing the commander in chief the power to “repel sudden attacks” without obtaining congressional approval. Douglas cited Lincoln’s call for volunteers following the attack at Fort Sumter as one of many precedents. Since time was of the essence in responding to the Korean emergency, Truman, like Lincoln, could dispatch troops without a formal war declaration. Douglas conceded that previous presidents dispatched the military to defend against *direct* threats to American lives and territory. However, since there was no doubt that the Communists would attack elsewhere if they were not stopped in Korea, America’s “ultimate security” was at stake, justifying Truman’s action. Douglas implied that presidents could wage limited war, but not world war, saying it “would be below the dignity of the United States to declare war on a pigmy state.”³¹

Douglas’s assertion of the need to empower the president to make a quick military response echoed sentiments expressed by Senator Edwin C. Johnson (D-CO) five years earlier. Johnson, who typically opposed Truman, nevertheless declared that the atomic weapons used to end World War II had convinced him not to tie the president’s hands as commander in chief. He admitted that the bomb had reversed his views on congressional declarations of war. In the midst of a debate on the U.N. Participation Act, Johnson decried efforts to set numerical limits on the number of troops the president could deploy without congressional consent. Believing there would be no

³¹ Douglas quoted in “Truman Act Is Held Legal By Douglas,” *Washington Post*, 6 July 1950, p. 8; Madison and Lincoln in Paul H. Douglas, *In the Fullness of Time: The Memoirs of Paul H. Douglas* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1971), 496-7.

time for consultations in the nuclear age, Johnson had warned, “Nations not set to get under way trigger-quick will be whipped before they start.”³²

Senator Douglas acknowledged “grave dangers” in giving the chief executive the power to use military force. Douglas nevertheless believed that a president’s personal feeling of responsibility to the institution of the presidency and Congress’s power to impeach would act as restraints. Both arguments were weak. Presidents are generally forceful people, and want to lead the country as they see fit. The power of the office does not necessarily make executives more cautious about using it. Impeachment is too cumbersome and unlikely to be used at the outset of a war. Even after months of protests over the Vietnam War, Congress never seriously considered impeaching Lyndon Johnson or Richard Nixon as a means to get the U.S. out of the conflict.³³

Other Democrats supported HST’s decision for different reasons. Richard Russell said Congress could not declare war on North Korea because the U.S. had never recognized its existence as a sovereign state. Senate Guy Gillette (IA) held that articles 39 through 42 of the U.N. Charter, which describe directives by the Security Council to remedy breaches of the peace, gave Truman the right to go to Korea. Curiously, Gillette (and nearly everyone else, save Senator Taft) ignored section 6 of the U.N. Participation Act (UNPA) requiring the president to get congressional approval before sending American armed forces to respond to a Security Council request.³⁴

³² *CR*, 79th Congress, 1st sess., November 28, 1945, 91, pt. 13: 11085.

³³ “Truman Act Is Held Legal By Douglas,” 6 July 1950.

³⁴ Russell in Fite, 253-4; Gillette in Lofgren, “Congress and the Korean Conflict,” 72; “U.N. Participation Act of 1945, <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/decade/decad031.htm>, (July 16, 2007).

Sometimes, the zeal of the president's Democratic allies went into overdrive. Rep. John Walsh (IN) issued a statement, saying "an irate America" would soon "deluge Russia itself with atom bombs." Skeptical that the USSR had nuclear capability, he continued, "It won't be just a one-bomb attack either. . . . We have at least 250 bombs." Walsh asserted, "The only way to destroy an octopus is to strike at its heart," adding, ominously, that the U.S. was "not going to continue fighting secondary nations." A White House aide called this a "rather bad statement," and worried that anything said to the independent Walsh would "probably excite him to the point the he would make a statement far worse."³⁵

The GOP—at the time--overwhelmingly endorsed the commitment of U.S. forces to Korea as a legitimate action by the commander in chief. Three of the five Republican members of the Senate Foreign Relations committee backed the president, expressing no concerns about the lack of congressional approval. Senator Vandenberg, writing to Truman from his sick bed, applauded the decision and said he only wished the U.S. had pushed the U.N. action through sooner. On June 27, Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr. not only backed Truman's dispatch of air and naval support; he hoped the president would "not shrink from using the Army," if necessary. In his diary, H. Alexander Smith called Truman's action an "answer to prayer." Smith nevertheless was concerned about Taft's criticism of Truman for skirting congressional approval. He decided Taft was correct to assert that the UNPA did not authorize the president's action because there had been no previous agreement by Congress authorizing American military support of a U.N.

³⁵ Memorandum, Charles Maylon to Matt Connelly, August 24, 1950; PSF: General File; Maylon, Charles folder; Truman Papers, HSTL.

mandate. However, Smith also reasoned that the statute did not bar the president from using military force, and bought into Truman's argument that the president's constitutional powers as commander in chief allowed him to deploy military force. Like the administration, Smith felt that precedents cited by the State Department gave Truman plenty of justification for bypassing Congress. Nevertheless, throwing a political bone to the powerful Taft, Smith, proposed a joint resolution approving the president's action during Truman's June 30 congressional briefing. Of the GOP committee members, only Senator Wiley, who had lauded Truman's response on June 26, called for congressional approval during the opening days of the war.³⁶

Other Republicans completely agreed with HST at the war's outset. Senator Ralph E. Flanders (VT), recalling Hitler's aggression prior to World War II, said that in Korea, "We have the invasion of the totalitarian power according to the old pattern," and was pleased that the U.N. was not following the "pusillanimous policy of the League of Nations." Flanders declared, "All the world knows that it is Russia which is on the move and not North Korea." He wove a creative rationalization for the legality of the president's action as a police action. The Republican reasoned that since the U.S. had taken the Japanese surrender in southern Korea and overseen free elections forming its government in 1948, the U.S. held "certain responsibilities of military protection against military invasion" for South Korea. Flanders pointed out that the ROK needed protection because the U.N. had not formed its own police force. The U.S. did not need

³⁶ Vandenberg and Morris, 543; Lodge quoted in Hinton, Harold B., "Legislators Hail Action By Truman," *NYT*, 28 June 1950, p. 1; H. Alexander Smith, Diary entries, June 28-29, 1950; Smith Papers, Box 282 and Smith, "The U.N. Participation Act," n.d.; Smith Papers; Box 100; SGMML; GOP committee response in Caridi, 35.

a declaration of war because it was simply carrying out an “existing obligation,” provided it did not send forces north of the 38th parallel. Advancing into North Korea would “constitute action of a very different sort,” requiring a congressional war declaration. Even Senator William Knowland (CA), normally opposed to Truman’s Far East policies, voiced support. Echoing the president’s characterization of Korea as a “police action,” Knowland said HST had the right to commit troops as commander in chief. The urgency of the situation made the use of such power acceptable. Thus, Taft, Wherry and Wiley were the only Republicans to raise significant challenges to the legality of Truman’s decision to intervene at the time. As Smith noted, “We Republicans were all elated.”³⁷

However, after China entered the conflict, the GOP did not hesitate to hammer Truman for his decision to skirt a congressional sanction of the war. Senator Jenner demonstrated this change of heart. At the war’s outset, he proclaimed that Americans should not “shrink from our patriotic duty” and should see the Korean crisis through. Jenner redefined patriotism a bit in January 1951, asserting that if Congress had “a shred of courage and patriotism left,” it should “lay down an ultimatum to the President demanding either a declaration of war or the bringing back of American G.I.s to home shores.” In their statement at the conclusion of the MacArthur hearings, a group of eight Republicans said the American military involvement in Korea was “without precedent,”

³⁷Totalitarian power, pusillanimous policy, and Russia from Ralph E. Flanders, “Broadcast for Vermont Stations, Week of July 2, 1950,” Flanders Papers, Box 138; SUL; other Flanders quotes from *CR*, 81st Cong. 2nd sess., June 28, 1950, 96, pt. 7: 9315; Knowland quoted in Albright, Robert C., “Taft Sees Acheson Reversed and Calls for Resignation,” *Washington Post*, 29 June 1950, p. 1; Caridi, 45. GOP senators James P. Kem (MO) and Arthur V. Watkins (UT) briefly questioned Truman’s bypassing the Congress as they reacted to the commitment of naval and air forces on June 27. See Hinton, *NYT*, June 28, 1950. H. Alexander Smith, Diary entry, June 28, 1950; Smith Papers, Box 282; SGMLL.

and demanded that the administration resolve the constitutional issue of the president committing troops without congressional approval. During a televised debate, Senator Owen Brewster (R-ME) told his Democratic opponents, “It was your President who started this war in Korea.” His debate ally, Senator Homer Ferguson (R-MI) said of Korea, “It is not the United States’ war, because Congress has never declared it.”³⁸

Some historians have endorsed, in varying degrees, the wisdom of Truman’s decision to intervene militarily in Korea. David Rees saw the Korean crisis as Soviet aggression, believing that the U.S. intervention prevented a certain drift into World War III and strengthened the Western alliance. Biographer Alonzo Hamby emphasized the expectations of America’s Cold War allies, arguing that the nature of the North Korean attack magnified its geopolitical importance. With the eyes of the world on the U.S., HST had to act or risk losing current or potential allies against the Soviets. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. agreed the president had to go to war, but hedged his endorsement. Although Truman was wrong to assume the Soviets were the sole instigators of the attack (we now know that Kim Il-Sung begged Stalin for the green light), he still did the right thing. Schlesinger posited that if HST had not intervened, there was a good possibility that Stalin would have been tempted to encourage local communist offensives elsewhere.³⁹

³⁸ Patriotic duty in “Jenner Blames Korean Crisis On Democrats,” *Chicago Tribune*, 1 July 1950, p. 4; shred of courage in “The Fin of the Shark,” *Time*, January 22, 1951, <http://time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,888874,00.htm> (June 20, 2007); Hinton, Harold B., without precedent in “8 G.O.P. Senators Find ‘Catastrophe’ in Far East Policy,” *NYT*, 20 August 1951, p. 1; Brewster and Ferguson quoted in “Senator Denies Gen. M’Arthur Flouted Orders,” *Chicago Tribune*, 16 April 1951, p. 12.

³⁹ Rees, 442-5; Hamby, *Man of the People*, 534-7; Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., “Introduction to the Transaction Edition,” in Rovere and Schlesinger, xi-xv.

Revisionist historians have been less sympathetic to Truman's approach. Joyce and Gabriel Kolko suggested American determination to create a sphere of capitalist countries to trade with U.S. businesses following World War II drove the president to intervene. Bruce Cumings described the conflict as a civil war in which the U.S. meddled, purporting genocide on the Korean people, but halting its expansionist impulses in Asia. Stephen Pelz argued that Truman painted himself into a corner due to his inept policies and leadership. The president committed the U.S. to supporting a trusteeship of South Korea, then backed away by pulling American forces out of the country as he sought to shrink the American military budget. Pelz argued that this invited the North Korean attack. Because Truman's rhetoric had assured support for the South Koreans, he had no choice other than responding militarily.⁴⁰

Of the naysayers, only Barton J. Bernstein has discussed Truman's political alternatives, bluntly positing that HST could have avoided war "without producing a backlash at home or disrupting the alliance system." Bernstein suggested Truman could have covered himself politically by blaming the Republicans for resisting aid to Korea earlier in 1950. The GOP therefore invited the invasion by rendering South Korea powerless to stop it. Since John Foster Dulles was worried that military intervention could produce a quagmire akin to Dunkirk in World War I, Bernstein believed Truman could have convinced other Republicans to support a decision to stay out of Korea.

⁴⁰ Joyce and Gabriel Kolko, *The Limits of Power* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1972), 1-8, 565-7 ; Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War, Vol. II: The Roaring of the Cataract* (1990. Reprint, Seoul, South Korea: Yuksabipyungsa, 2002), 757-774; Stephen Pelz, "U.S. Decisions on Korean Policy," in *Child of Conflict: The Korean-American Relationship, 1943-1953*, ed. Bruce Cumings (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1983), 101, 112-3, 132.

Bernstein did not discuss how the U.S. would maintain its credibility with its allies had it walked away from Korea. However, it is difficult to imagine a significant change in the quality of America's alliances. The U.S. had established a firm military presence in Japan, and European allies such as Britain and France were not going to jump into the arms of the Soviets just because the Americans stayed aloof from Korea.⁴¹

Truman went to war in Korea for multiple reasons. Although he often spoke passionately of the need to uphold the credibility of the U.N., the president also said that had the Soviets attended the Security Council meetings dealing with Korea and vetoed U.N. action, the U.S. would have intervened unilaterally. During the first week of the war, HST told a group of legislators, "If we let Korea down, the Soviets will keep right on going and swallow up one piece of Asia after another," and possibly the Middle East and Europe as well. Since HST would have gone to war whether the Security Council sanctioned it or not, his *primary* reason for sending U.S. troops to Korea could not have been to ensure U.N. credibility. Nevertheless, since the Security Council endorsed a military response, Truman felt it was vital to keep the U.N. from collapsing like the League of Nations. Another contributory motive for the administration was to uphold American prestige in the international community. In his memoirs, the president wrote that failure to act would negatively affect the "confidence of peoples in countries adjacent to the Soviet Union," particularly if the U.S. did not protect a nation

⁴¹ Barton J. Bernstein, "The Truman Administration and the Korean War," in *The Truman Presidency*, ed. Michael J. Lacey (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 410-444.

“established under our auspices.” Acheson agreed, calling U.S. prestige “the shadow cast by power” that had “great deterrent importance.”⁴²

Did McCarthyism lead the president into a war that he otherwise would have avoided? The 1949 Communist victory in China’s civil war and Senator McCarthy’s antics in 1950 certainly created pressure on Truman to respond forcefully to the Korean crisis. Moreover, HST swiftly changed his policy towards Formosa once Korea ignited. Prepared to concede Taiwan to the Communists before the war, the commander in chief swiftly dispatched naval forces to protect the Kuomintang from the Communists on the mainland (and vice-versa) following the North Korean attack, gladdening the hearts of his GOP opponents. Nevertheless, McCarthyism was a negligible factor in Truman’s decision to respond militarily. He had resisted political pressure in staying out of the Chinese civil war and, later, when recalling MacArthur. The president possessed quite enough antipathy of his own towards communism and did not need additional encouragement from McCarthy and company. The nature of the North Korean attack motivated HST more than fear of the McCarthyites. Had Kim Il Sung pursued his quest by subversive means, he likely would have succeeded. Syngman Rhee’s political party had suffered a major defeat in recent South Korean elections, and his regime may well have collapsed if Il Sung had bided his time. When North Korea launched a large scale armed invasion (with equipment supplied by the Soviets), the president interpreted it as a replay of the 1930s. Thus, the main reason HST committed the U.S. to war was to stop

⁴² Unilateral intervention discussed in Acheson, 415; swallow up one piece in Arnold A. Offner, *Another Such Victory: President Truman and the Cold War, 1945-1953* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 371; Truman, *Memoirs*, Vol. 2, 339; Acheson quoted in Beisner, 333.

what he perceived as Soviet expansionism. Josef Stalin, in Truman's eyes, had replaced Hitler and Mussolini.

The president had ample reasons to be wary of the Soviet leader. Even though we now know that Kim Il Sung rather than Stalin initiated the invasion, the Soviet could have prevented it, yet chose not to. (In contrast, although Syngman Rhee gladly would have attacked North Korea, the U.S. did not allow him to do so.) Stalin's willingness to unleash Il Sung came as no surprise, given the former's international behavior during the previous decade. The USSR took control of the Baltic States and parts of Finland in 1939, followed by Bulgaria and Rumania five years later. In 1945, the Red Army occupied Poland, and Stalin demanded (unsuccessfully) that Turkey give him access to the Dardanelles Straits linking the Black Sea to the Mediterranean. When the Soviet leader made his famous speech in 1946 declaring that world war was inevitable as long as capitalism existed, it had a profound effect on the U.S., Truman included. These circumstances understandably led the president to jump to the erroneous conclusion that Stalin ordered the attack.⁴³

Another relevant question is whether it was legal for Truman to commit American forces to Korea without congressional approval. Since the U.S. went to war under the auspices of the U.N., some background on the implementation of the U.N. Charter is in order. Articles 39 through 43 of the charter deal with breaches of the peace (see Appendix A). They define the steps the Security Council takes to restore

⁴³Walter Lafeber, *America, Russia, and the Cold War, 1945-2002*, 9th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2002), 42 describes the American reaction to Stalin's speech; Offner, 355-6 explains the challenges the U.S. faced in controlling Rhee.

international order, leading up to the use of force. In Article 39, the Security Council identifies the act of aggression and makes recommendations on how to respond, while Article 40 empowers the Council to call for “provisional measures,” such as cease-fires. Article 41 discusses economic and political sanctions. If the actions of Article 41 are ineffective, Article 42 empowers the Security Council to “take such action by air, sea, or land forces . . . to maintain or restore international peace and security,” using forces of member nations. Article 43 explains how to implement Article 42. To provide military resources for the U.N., the Security Council and member nations negotiate a “special agreement or agreements” to provide “armed forces, assistance and facilities, including rights of passage” for the Council to use. The special agreements delineate the “numbers and types of forces, their degree of readiness and general location.” Such agreements are “subject to ratification by the signatory states in accordance with their respective constitutional processes.” In 1945, Truman took pains to assure Congress that he, as president, did not intend to circumvent them in these special agreements to commit American forces. As the Senate debated ratification of the charter, HST sent a message from the Potsdam Conference to Senate President Pro Tempore Kenneth McKellar (D-TN) that he would “ask the Congress by appropriate legislation to approve” such special agreements.⁴⁴

After approving the charter in July 1945, legislators wrestled with implementing it. A key issue was how to reconcile Congress’s constitutional authority to declare war with providing American military forces for U.N. usage. Senator Connally therefore

⁴⁴Truman to McKellar in Ruth B. Russell, *A History of the United Nations Charter: The Role of the United States 1940-1945* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1958), 945.

introduced the UNPA bill to integrate the charter with American law. After a week of debate on the Senate floor, both houses approved the bill and sent it to Truman, who signed it into law in December 1945. From the debates, it is clear that Congress intended to approve any commitments of American forces to the U.N. Section 6 of the statute (see Appendix B) authorized the president to negotiate the special agreements with the Security Council per Article 43. Congress then had to approve the special agreement before the U.N. could use American military resources. However, once Congress endorsed the special agreement, the president did *not* have to get its approval to dispatch forces for an Article 42 situation, so long as the scope of the deployment did not exceed the conditions in the special agreement.⁴⁵

The intent of Article 43, then, was to provide in advance a contingent of forces from member nations approved for use in case the Security Council needed them. In February 1946, the Security Council directed the U.N. Military Staff Committee to make recommendations for the special agreements, and the General Assembly subsequently asked the Council to “accelerate as much as possible the placing at its disposal of the armed forces mentioned in Article 43 of the Charter.” The committee produced its report in late June 1947, but the five permanent Security Council members never came to terms on special agreements. Discussions continued for an additional year, but were fruitless, with the Soviets usually at odds with the others. Thus, when the Korean crisis

⁴⁵ All citations describe the debate. “To Make the Charter Work,” *NYT*, 27 November 1945, p. 22; Leviero, Anthony, “Senate Today Gets U.S. Plan for UNO,” *NYT*, 26 November 1945, p. 1; Trussell, C. P., “UNO Bill in Senate Sparks a Debate,” *NYT*, 27 November 1945, p. 8; Trussell, “Senate Beats Plan to Hobble US in UNO,” *NYT*, 4 December 1945, p. 1; Trussell, “UNO Bill Approved by Senate, 65 to 7, With One Change,” *NYT*, 5 December 1945, p. 1; “The Big Four Dozen,” *NYT*, 2 December 1945, p. E8; “House for UNO Bill; Colombian is Irked,” *NYT*, 18 December 1945, p. 8; Charles A. Lofgren, “Mr. Truman’s War: A Debate and Its Aftermath,” *The Review of Politics* 31, No. 2 (April 1969), 228-9.

occurred, no special agreement per Article 43 (or congressional approval to use U.S. forces per Section 6 of the UNPA) was in place to provide U.S. forces for an Article 42 military intervention.⁴⁶

The U.N. intervened in Korea based on an Article 39 Security Council *recommendation* rather than an outright U.N. military action declared under Article 42. Truman did not publicize this distinction, but it was problematic because the UNPA did not mention congressional approval regarding resolutions under Article 39. The president therefore decided he had no need to involve Congress, claiming that the Security Council recommendation to assist the South Koreans and his constitutional powers as commander in chief justified his actions.⁴⁷

A couple of analysts have affirmed the chief executive's right to go forgo congressional approval for disparate reasons. Historian Ronald Caridi claimed that the UNPA permitted Truman to skirt Congress, citing the following portion of Section 6:

The President shall not be deemed to require the authorization of the Congress to make available to the Security Council on its call in order to take action under article 42 of said Charter and pursuant to such special agreement or agreements the armed forces, facilities, or assistance provided for therein: Provided, That nothing herein contained shall be construed as an authorization to the President by the Congress to make available to the Security Council for such purpose armed forces, facilities, or assistance *in addition to the forces, facilities, and assistance provided for in such special agreement or agreements.*

⁴⁶ Accelerate as much as possible in Leland M. Goodrich, Edvard Hambro and Anne Patricia Simons, *Charter of the United Nations: Commentary and Documents* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), 319; committee report in William R. Kintner, "The United Nations Record of Handling Major Disputes," in Franz B. Gross, ed., *The United States and the United Nations* (Norman: Oklahoma University Press, 1964), 71.

⁴⁷ Goodrich, et al., 315, 325-6.

Caridi misread the legalities in two ways. He mistakenly treated the June 27, 1950 Security Council resolution recommending assistance to South Korea as a special agreement discussed in the UNPA. In addition, Caridi interpreted the above portion of the UNPA as allowing the president to bypass Congress when supporting an Article 42 military action. This passage actually means that the president does not repeatedly have to get congressional approval to dispatch military forces to the U.N., so long as the deployment does not exceed the scope of the original special agreement that Congress previously approved.⁴⁸

Political scientist Edward Keynes also claimed Truman had sound legal footing to circumvent Congress. Keynes argued that the president did not need to declare war because World War II was not yet officially over. (The Japanese peace treaty was signed in April 1952.) Therefore, statutes passed legalizing the American involvement in World War II still applied when the Korean fighting erupted. From a practical standpoint, this reasoning is difficult to swallow, since few Americans believed World War II was still underway in 1950. Furthermore, Keynes said that since Truman intervened in support of a U.N. resolution, and since the U.N. Charter was a binding treaty, he had no need to get a declaration of war from Congress.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Caridi, 46-8; "U.N. Participation Act of 1945," <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/decade/decad031.htm>, (July 16, 2007); "Charter of the United Nations, Chapter VII," United Nations Human Rights Website, www.unhcr.ch/htm./menu3/b/ch-chp7.htm (July 28, 2007). Political scientist Louis Fisher gives an excellent explanation of the UNPA in his article, "The Korean War: On What Legal Basis Did Truman Act?" *The American Journal of International Law* 89 (1995), 29-32. (Emphasis mine.)

⁴⁹ Edward Keynes, *Undeclared War: Twilight Zone of Constitutional Power* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1982), 111.

More often, analysts have determined that HST violated the Constitution or the UNPA in the Korean intervention. Political scientist Louis Fisher hearkened back to the debates over the U.N. Charter. To help get the charter passed, Dean Acheson, Undersecretary of State at the time, assured a House panel, “It is entirely within the wisdom of Congress to approve or disapprove whatever special agreement the President negotiates” with the Security Council. Fisher argued that Truman clearly violated the substance of the UNPA and ignored its history. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. was also critical of Truman’s method, if not the decision to intervene. Schlesinger correctly pointed out that the State Department’s report describing eighty-five instances of chief executives using force without congressional approval was suspect in that none of them involved a military action against another nation. (Though not officially recognized by the U.N., North Korea was a sovereign state for all practical purposes.) Moreover, all of the incidents listed in the report involved military actions of a considerably smaller scope than the Korean crisis. Historian Arnold Offner conceded that during the first days of the crisis, Truman did not know how large the U.S. military commitment would be, and therefore excuses him for bypassing Congress in the initial commitment of air and naval support. However, when the president received MacArthur’s request for two divisions, Offner correctly argued that HST knew he was making a major commitment to Korea and therefore should have sought congressional approval immediately.⁵⁰

Why did the administration eschew a congressional endorsement for the war effort? Paradoxically, Truman and Acheson justified their action by citing both support

⁵⁰ Fisher, 30-32; Schlesinger, “Introduction to the Transaction Edition,” in Rovere and Schlesinger, xi-xv; Schlesinger, *The Imperial Presidency*, 131-5; Offner, 368-77.

and opposition in Congress. When Army Secretary Frank Pace asked Truman about getting congressional approval, the president replied, "Frank, it's not necessary. They are all with me." Acheson later affirmed, "We had complete acceptance of the President's policy by everybody on both sides of both houses of Congress." They were right. The president's archenemies, Taft and Wherry, guaranteed that Congress would pass a resolution endorsing the military action. Yet, the administration shied away from a resolution, fearing the political lumps they would take during the floor debate. The secretary later said he did not want to answer "ponderous questions" that could have "muddled up" Truman's policy.⁵¹

The administration had plausible reasons for not requesting a formal declaration of war from Congress early on. Noting the possibility of the North Koreans backing down upon a show of U.S. force, some suggested that a congressional declaration would have rendered such a tactic useless. A more important reason is that Truman did not want to inflame the situation at the outset, fearing that a declaration of war would raise the likelihood of drawing the Soviets or the Communist Chinese into the fray. Another justification was that American forces were acting under U.N. authority. Even though U.S. military preparations began before the passage of the Security Council resolutions, American forces ultimately acted on behalf of the U.N. A congressional declaration of

⁵¹ Jerry N. Hess, "Oral History Interview with Frank Pace, Jr.," February 17, 1972; New York, New York, <http://trumanlibrary.org/oralhist/pacefj3.htm#76>, p. 79, HSTL (July 24, 2007). Acheson quoted in Thomas Patterson, "Presidential Foreign Policy, Public Opinion and Congress," 18.

war would have been inappropriate for what technically was an international peacekeeping operation.⁵²

Nevertheless, Truman briefly considered seeking Congress's blessing. Early in the first week of the crisis, the president asked Senator Connally for his opinion regarding congressional input. A few days later, HST directed Acheson to research the history of presidential use of military force without Congress's approval. Acheson's list of eighty-five precedents did not build a convincing case. For example, the most recent use of force in the State Department report was the dispatch of about 2,800 troops to China in 1932 to protect Americans at the International Settlement in Shanghai. Such incidents bore little resemblance to the Korean situation.⁵³

The State Department's report, however, reinforced Truman's belief that he did not need a congressional approval of any kind. His comment at the July 3 meeting explaining he "had not been acting as President, but as Commander-in-Chief of our forces in the Far East" gave hints about his reasoning. The Korean crisis was not a war, it was a police action enforcing a U.N. directive. Therefore, a declaration of war was not necessary. Because the U.S. was acting at the behest of the U.N., Truman decided he had the constitutional right as commander in chief to deploy American forces as he wished. The president desperately wanted the U.N. to become an effective peacekeeping entity. Moreover, he felt strongly that he should not weaken the office of the

⁵² Lofgren, "Mr. Truman's War," 234.

⁵³ Offner, 376 describes Truman's directive to Acheson about the historical research; U.S. Department of State, "Authority of the President To Repel the Attack in Korea," *Department of State Bulletin* 23 (578), 178; Shanghai intervention described in "Text of White House Statement," *NYT*, 1 February 1932, p. 1.

Presidency. As an aide wrote to a Republican senator concerning a congressional sanction for the intervention, “It is quite certain that the President would never have asked for a resolution.”⁵⁴

Truman should have sought some form of congressional approval (other than a declaration of war) to commit American forces to Korea. The president and Acheson knew from their experiences with getting the U.N. Charter and the UNPA through Congress that it fully expected approve the use of American troops on behalf of the U.N. Technically, one could argue that the president acted legally because the Security Council did not implement Article 42 in the Korean crisis. (The UNPA required Congress’s approval to send U.S. troops to support an Article 42 intervention, but was silent on Article 39 interventions.) The administration had tried and failed for two years to hammer out an Article 43 special agreement with the Security Council. Truman’s intense desire for an effective U.N. response led him to take some short cuts. Still, it was unnecessary to circumvent Congress. If the administration did not violate the letter of the law, it clearly ignored the intent.

Congress, however, contributed significantly to Truman’s abuse of presidential power, a topic that historians to date have not fully investigated. The legislative branch performed weakly in various ways, one of which was failing to show up for work. The tumultuous initial week of the conflict ended on Friday, June 30 with the commander in chief’s announcement committing ground troops to Korea. This was an opportune time

⁵⁴ Truman quoted in Memorandum of Conversation, Meeting at Blair House, July 3, 1950, Acheson Papers; aide George M. Elsey quoted in his, Memorandum for Mr. Smith, July 16, 1951; Subject File; Korea- July 1950 folder; Elsey Papers, HSTL.

for Congress to push the administration to seek legislative endorsement. Instead, the legislature took a weeklong Fourth of July recess, giving the president another reason not to consult them. During the July 3 meeting, Truman indicated he preferred not to call Congress back to Washington to discuss Korea. Presidential counsel Charles Murphy later recalled legislators' antipathy towards special sessions, which may partly explain the president's reluctance to call one. Congress's lack of attention to the UNPA was a more important factor. Two-thirds of the senators and 256 of the 439 House members were holdovers from the Congress that debated congressional approval of U.S. military commitments to the U.N. in 1945. Most were in office when they approved amendments to the UNPA in 1949. Yet, only Taft seemed to remember the need to adhere to this law. Neither the urgency of the Korean crisis, nor the lack of precedent for a U.N. military intervention excuse Congress's lack of attention to the UNPA.⁵⁵

The Republicans could have done more to encourage Truman to seek Congress's approval. After hearing Truman's June 27 statement sending air and naval support to Korea, Republican Senator Arthur V. Watkins (UT) immediately questioned the legality of these actions. However, he reluctantly accepted Lucas's defense that the Security Council resolution made the president's action legitimate. After the war turned sour, Watkins published a cogent article explaining the importance of the UNPA. He could have pushed back harder in 1950. Another Republican remembered the UNPA--later. In the aftermath of the MacArthur firing, Senator Karl E. Mundt (SD) pointed out that

⁵⁵ Memorandum of Conversation, Meeting at Blair House, July 3, 1950, Acheson Papers; Jerry N. Ness, "Oral History Interview with Charles S. Murphy," June 24, 1969; <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/oralhist/murphy5.htm> (July 12, 2007).

the U.S. had not adhered to the UNPA or Article 43 at the outset. Mundt therefore argued that the U.S. had the right to push for total victory in Korea regardless of the U.N.'s desires. Although Taft and Wherry, leaders of the Senate Republicans, publicly asked the president to consent Congress, most of their colleagues sat on their hands. Had the Republicans rallied to their leaders' cause while professing their support for the intervention, HST may have reconsidered his decision.⁵⁶

Mccarthyism was an even larger factor. While Red Scare fanatics did not drive Truman to intervene in Korea, they had a lot to do with his reluctance to seek Congress's approval. This is the only explanation for why the administration and the Democratic leadership paradoxically feared congressional debate on the intervention amidst the overwhelming approval on the Hill for going into Korea. If Congress debated a war resolution, Acheson predicted the McCarthyites would rehash recent Far East policy in a chorus of "endless criticism."⁵⁷

The Democrats were more culpable than the Republicans because they were Truman's party. Senator Connally made a mistake on June 26 when he advised HST that congressional approval was unnecessary. Connally was an influential senator in the right place at the right time. Had he advised the president to solicit Congress's blessing, the Democratic leadership could have started the process of obtaining congressional approval to commit troops by the end of the week. In his memoirs, the Texan admitted the error, "as a matter of political strategy," recalling the GOP using the decision against

⁵⁶ Watkins' and Mundt's immediate reaction in Lofgren, "Mr. Truman's War," 225, 228-9; Arthur V. Watkins, "War by Executive Order," *The Western Political Quarterly* 4, no. 4 (1951), 539-549.

⁵⁷Acheson, *Present at the Creation*, 415.

Truman in 1951. Strangely, he said nothing about the UNPA, which he had introduced in 1945, even though the clear intent of the law was to ensure congressional approval before committing U.S. forces to U.N. action. Majority Leader Lucas's indecisiveness during the July 3 meeting could not have given HST much confidence in the Democratic leadership obtaining a congressional endorsement. Had the Democratic leaders told Truman he needed Congress's approval, the president would have had to comply. While Truman deserves the most blame for skirting constitutional checks and balances, the Democratic leadership should have steered him towards a wiser path. Consequently, a White House aide wrote that there was "no serious discussion" about a resolution from Congress, adding, "There was no strong Congressional leadership to push one through."⁵⁸

A final question is whether a congressional sanction of the war at the outset would have helped Truman politically when the war turned sour for the U.S. Hamby claimed the political value of a congressional endorsement has been overblown. He argued that the GOP was so keen to usurp Democratic control that they would have criticized Truman's foreign policy harshly during the 1952 election season, even if they had approved a declaration of war. Hamby was right. While the Republicans may have had to temper their attacks on "Truman's War" had they endorsed it, a congressional war resolution would not have saved the president much political grief in 1951-2. Arnold Offner argued that approval from Congress up front could possibly have put the legislators in a position to prevent the U.N. from going north of the 38th parallel, or at

⁵⁸ Connally, 351; aide George M. Elsey quoted in his Memorandum for Mr. Smith, July 16, 1951; Subject File; Korea-July 1950 folder; Elsey Papers, HSTL.

least forced a debate on it. This seems unlikely. The U.N.'s military momentum had most Americans in a state of euphoria, including Congress. The legislative branch was as eager to seize an opportunity to roll back Communist expansion as the executive branch. Congressional approval at the outset would have made no difference in subsequent war policy.⁵⁹

On June 30, 1950, moments after the White House announced the commitment of American troops to Korea, Senator John Stennis (D-MS) prophesied, "I believe we are creating precedents which will constitute new rules of international law." He was half-right. The Eighty-First Congress was helping create new rules of domestic (not international) law, allowing presidents to send Americans to war without its consent. Congress was perfectly content to let Truman take the heat for the war. A couple of weeks later, a political scientist wrote in the *New York Times*, "We seem to have come to the point where Americans are willing to accept the President as sole and undisputed master of our actions abroad in time of international crisis. Somehow we have moved a long way from the conceptions of 'checks and balances' that set some limit to the Chief Executive's role in making war and peace." Several members of the administration, along with Senator Connally, later expressed regret that they did not work harder to persuade HST to obtain Congress's blessing before going to war. The disconcerting thing about their remorse is that they all focused on the political ramifications of

⁵⁹ Hamby, *Man of the People*, 537-9; Offner, 368-77.

Truman's bypassing of Congress. None of them worried about the violation of the spirit of American governance.⁶⁰

Ironically, the president made several comments during the first weeks of the war that demonstrated the dangers of Congress's passivity. When asked by an aide about the need for a congressional resolution approving the Korean intervention, the commander in chief snapped, "It was none of Congress's business. . . . I just did what was in my power." Yet, he told another staffer, "I sit and shiver . . . at the thought of what could happen with some demagogue in this office I hold."⁶¹

⁶⁰ Stennis quoted in *CR*, 81st Cong., 2nd sess., June 30, 1950, 96, pt. 7: 9540; Burns, James MacGregor, "Is the Presidency Too Powerful?" *NYT*, 16 July 1950, p. SM7; comments of administration members in Elsey, 194-5 and Hechler, 150-1. Elsey and Hechler both note Averell Harriiman's failed attempt to persuade Truman to get a war resolution.

⁶¹ Congress's business in Elsey, 195; sit and shiver in Ferrell, ed., *Truman in the White House: The Diary of Eben A. Ayers*, 357.

CHAPTER VIII

CONGRESS AND THE DRIVE FOR PEACE

Korea has become a meat grinder of American manhood. —Rep. Albert Gore, Sr. (D-TN)¹

The U.S. exit from the Korean War proved more tedious than its entry. A year after the fighting started, the belligerents began armistice talks at Kaesong. Tragically, the conflict continued for another two years as the two sides jockeyed for a favorable settlement. The Truman administration had to watch from the sidelines as the newly-elected Eisenhower team ended the fighting in 1953 under the same terms that the Democratic regime had doggedly pursued for two years.

This chapter examines how Congress influenced the attempts to end the war during the Truman administration. Did the legislature simply follow the executive branch's lead in searching for an end to the conflict (as when it acquiesced in Truman's decision to go to war), or did it take a more activist role? What was the nature of congressional efforts to stop the fighting? Did Congress affect the commander in chief's decisions regarding peace overtures to the Communists? How did lawmakers manage to suggest ways to settle the conflict short of total victory during the heyday of McCarthyism? This chapter reveals congressional proposals ranging from the bizarre to the pragmatic to the idealistic as Capitol Hill, like the White House, struggled to simultaneously stop the shooting and claim victory over communism.

¹ "'Cataclysmic' U.S. Weapon Reported," *Los Angeles Times*, 16 April 1951, p. 1.

A couple of congressmen advocated ending the fighting in its early stages. In August 1950, Rep. Charles E. Bennett (D-FL) recommended to Truman that he ask the Russians to accept a cease-fire, and to allow the U.N. to station police forces throughout the Korean peninsula to oversee free elections. Bennett, a freshman congressman, admitted the proposal was a long shot. Nevertheless, he was naïve to suggest it, given that Soviet refusal to accept such elections had hardened the division of Korea in the first place. Later that month, Senator H. Alexander Smith met with Truman foreign policy advisor Averell Harriman, suggesting the U.S. should propose peace terms. Harriman rejected the idea, countering that America should pressure lesser U.N. members to make such initiatives. Smith's idea was nearly as bad as Bennett's. With U.N. troops struggling to hold onto a small piece of South Korea, Kim Il Sung would not have agreed to a cease-fire unless accompanied by his enemy's surrender.²

China's entry into the fray prompted a couple of House members to approach Truman with some tactics for exiting the war. Mao Tse-Tung would have liked both plans, had he known of them. Democrat Frank W. Boykin (AL), a staunch ally of the president, advocated the U.S. pull out of Korea to enable it to improve defense of its "outer ramparts" of Japan, Formosa and the Philippines. Boykin reasoned that retreat and retrenchment would be less humiliating to the U.S. than caving in to demands for U.N. recognition of the Communist Chinese regime in exchange for U.N. control of South Korea. Republican Francis Case (SD) submitted a more involved proposal that

² Charles E. Bennett to Truman, August 7, 1950 and Truman to Bennett, August 12, 1950; PSF: General File, B- 1 of 2, Ba-B1 folder; Truman Papers, HSTL; H.A. Smith, "Memo re Conference H.A.S. & Averell Harriman," H. Alexander Smith Papers, Box 101, Foreign Relations 1950 Averell Harriman folder, SGMML.

included abolishment of the U.N. Security Council and setting up an annual system for reviewing the admittance of new member nations. Both of these measures were designed to facilitate seating Communist China in the U.N. Case also wanted to withdraw the U.S. fleet from the Straits of Formosa by October 1951, which addressed China's insistence that Korean armistice talks needed to include other regional issues in the Far East. Truman responded politely to both suggestions, then ignored them.³

The president waited until March 1951 to make his first meaningful peace overture. By the middle of the month, U.N. forces had retaken Seoul and controlled most of South Korea. In the meantime, the U.S. and its allies had planned a diplomatic initiative proposing armistice talks before sending the U.N. army north of the 38th parallel for a second time. The administration drafted a statement suggesting a cease-fire and a willingness to discuss other Far East issues with the combatants once the Korean situation was settled. The Joint Chiefs of Staff had input into the statement and passed it along to General MacArthur. On Friday, March 23, the State Department was pushing for the concerned governments to approve the document by the weekend for possible issuance "on short notice."⁴

MacArthur, however, torched this olive branch. The next day, without bothering to consult his superiors, the general issued a statement to his battlefield opponents

³ Frank W. Boykin to Admiral Sidney W. Souers, December 5, 1950 and Truman to Boykin, December 8, 1950; PSF: General File, Bo-Bz folder and Telegram, Francis Case to President Truman, December 8, 1950; WHCF: OF 471B, Korean Emergency (Dec. 1950-Mar. 1951 folder); all from Truman Papers, HSTL. By early 1952, Case had reversed his conciliatory view towards Communist China, opposing its admittance to the U.N. See Richard Chenoweth, "Francis Case: A Political Biography," *South Dakota Historical Collections* 39 (1978): 367-8.

⁴ For descriptions of the planned peace overture, see Acheson, *Present at the Creation*, 518-9, *FRUS, 1951, Vol. VII*, 252-264 and William Manchester, *American Caesar: Douglas MacArthur, 1880-1964* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1978), 634. Quote is from *FRUS*, 256.

offering to discuss ways to end the war. He also mocked them. Calling the power of the Communist Chinese army “exaggerated,” the U.N. commander declared the enemy did not have the means to support a ground war without the “refinements science has introduced into the conduct of military campaigns.” Due to its weakness, MacArthur asserted, “The enemy . . . must by now be painfully aware” that an expansion of the U.N. war effort would “doom Red China to the risk of imminent military collapse.” His statement alarmed the international community. India, trying to initiate its own peace feelers, termed the statement “fraught with grave consequences.” The French press was “unanimous in its disapproval,” and predicted the statement would bolster the “resolve of Peking to continue hostilities.” On March 29, China unsurprisingly rejected MacArthur’s offer. Amidst concerns from allies and American diplomats abroad, the administration had no choice but to shelve its plans to initiate peace talks.⁵

As frustration over the stalemate mounted, proposals for peace became more bizarre. In a letter to Truman, Rep. Albert Gore, Sr. (D-TN) proposed putting newly developed technology to use by planting radioactive waste between the Koreas, producing an “atomic death belt.” Supposedly, after notifying all belligerents, the U.S. would deliberately lace a strip of land across the peninsula with nuclear waste; American troops would then re-contaminate it periodically until the U.N. and the Communists

⁵ Malik’s statement in *FRUS, 1951, Vol VII*, 265-6 (foreign reaction, 275); Indian reaction in “Nehru Scores MacArthur Move,” *NYT*, 29 March 1951, p. 3; French press in Telegram, Charles Bohlen to Secretary of State, March 26, 1951; Concerns from other nations in Memorandum of Conversation, Mr. Campbell (Canadian Embassy) and Mr. W. A. Johnson, “President’s Statement on Korea,” March 24, 1951, Telegram no. 1727, Moscow to Secretary of State, March 27, 1951, Telegram no. 1327, New York to Secretary of State, March 26, 1951 and Memorandum of Conversation, “Norwegian Inquiry re MacArthur Statement,” March 27, 1951. All correspondence from SMOF: Dept. of State Topical Subseries, Folder 36; Truman Papers, HSTL. Decision to pigeonhole the proposal in Beisner 427.

hammered out an official agreement to end the war. Radio broadcasts would warn intruders that entering the zone “would mean certain death or slow deformity to all foot soldiers.” As a member of the Appropriations Committee, which allotted funds to the Atomic Energy Commission, Gore probably had access to research projects on theoretical uses of nuclear material. His idea was similar to General MacArthur’s unpublicized plan for cutting off the Communist Chinese Forces (CCF) from their supply lines by planting radioactive waste along the border between Manchuria and Korea. To supplement his “dehumanized belt,” the Tennessee congressman would protect Japan from invasion or submarine attack by making available “such variety of atomic bombs and other weapons as might be necessary.”⁶

Gore’s plan got some attention when he publicized his letter to the president. The *Los Angeles Times* made the proposal a headline story, while the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* covered it for several days. Senator Brien McMahon (D-CT), chairman of the Joint Congressional Committee on Atomic Energy and a proponent of nuclear weaponry, downplayed the feasibility of the Tennessean’s idea. However, the Army was not as pessimistic. One report proposed dispersing one pound of nuclear material per square mile, and pointed out that, fortunately, such waste was already available. Acknowledging that while no type of warfare was good, the Army said such a tactic could be described as having “humane possibilities greater than those of most

⁶Death belt, slow deformity and atomic bombs in “Atomic Death Belt Urged for Korea,” *NYT*, 17 April 1951, p. 3; radio broadcast in “A Radioactive Belt Across Korea?” *NYT*, 22 April 1951, p. 157; Gore’s access to research in “‘Cataclysmic’ U.S. Weapon Reported,” *Los Angeles Times*, 16 April 1951, p. 1; MacArthur’s similar idea in Douglas MacArthur, *Reminiscences* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1964), 384; Wainstock, 118-119. It is unknown whether Gore’s idea came from MacArthur.

other weapons of modern war.” Telling the president that Korea called for “something cataclysmic,” Rep. Gore later asserted that if some called his idea lunacy, “Other people think it is crazy to keep swapping American lives for Chinese lives.”⁷

Although the administration disregarded Gore’s idea, it soon considered reviving a more conventional method for getting a cease-fire. At an April 24, 1951 meeting, they agreed to revise the planned armistice initiative that MacArthur had scuttled because, as an aide noted, “The old draft is like damp cotton, you can’t see through it and you can’t make anything of it.” Figuring out a time to use it was a problem, as the CCF had launched an offensive two days earlier producing the largest single battle of the war. Making a peace offer in the midst of this attack would be perceived as a sign of weakness. Moreover, hopes by American allies that MacArthur’s removal would make China more amenable to an armistice turned out to be futile. Throughout late April, the Chinese indicated the general’s firing meant nothing because U.S. policy in Korea had not changed. Even though the Communist offensive subsided at the end of the month, the administration did not issue the revised proposal.⁸

The influence of Congress on hopes for peace surfaced briefly in a conversation between American and Russian diplomats in early May. Offering their U.S. counterparts a car ride into Manhattan following a meeting, Soviet U.N. representative Jacob Malik

⁷ Page one attention in “‘Cataclysmic’ U.S. Weapon Reported,” 16 April 1951; McMahon, the Army and Gore quoted in “Atomic Belt Plan Held Not Feasible,” *NYT*, 18 April 1951, p. 16. For other press coverage, see Carey, Frank, “Radioactive Zone Across Korea Urged,” *Washington Post*, 17 April 1951, p. 7; Pearson, Drew, “Atomic Super-Weapons Reported,” *Washington Post*, 24 April 1951, p. B15 and *NYT* articles in note 6.

⁸ George M. Elsey, “Memorandum for Mr. Murphy,” April 24, 1951; Subject File; Korea-New Peace Proposal, 1951 folder; Elsey Papers, HSTL. The April 22-29, 1951 Chinese offensive employed 250,000 soldiers in 27 divisions fighting five U.S. Army divisions. See U.S. Department of Defense Commemoration of 50th Anniversary of the Korean War, http://korea50.army.mil/history/chronology/timeline_1951.shtml (September 12, 2007); Discussions of the initiative and China’s reaction in *FRUS, 1951, Vol. VII*, 370, 375, 379.

and his alternate engaged them in a freewheeling discourse. The Americans described the Russians as “enjoying a frank exchange of views with two antagonists.”

Significantly, the Soviets suggested the Korean War could and should be settled via discussions between the U.S. and the USSR. Malik challenged the Americans’ insistence that the U.S. wanted peace, noting “speeches of Senators which advocate dropping atomic bombs on Moscow.” Even though the discussion revealed the deep mistrust between the superpowers, the State Department interpreted Malik’s openness as a possible opportunity for further communications, and sent Soviet expert George Kennan to talk more with the ambassador. Kennan’s work would come to fruition several weeks later.⁹

Malik’s legitimate concerns notwithstanding, other senators were promoting ways to reduce Cold War tensions. In mid-May, Senate Majority Leader Ernest McFarland (AZ) talked with Secretary Acheson about a feature in *Cosmopolitan* magazine. The publication wanted to do an article on the views of several senators concerning how to ensure a peaceful world. McFarland outlined his own six-point plan for the secretary, who had concerns about two of them. One included, “End the arms race by establishing a truce in the rearmament process of the Soviet Union,” and the other proposed permanently disarming Germany and Japan. Acheson grew agitated over this, particularly when McFarland turned down his offer to send someone from the State Department to “assist” him with his comments for the article. The secretary worried that

⁹ *FRUS, 1951, Vol. VII*, 401-410, 421-2; Malik’s openness as an opportunity in John D. Hickerson, Memorandum for Files, May 16, 1951; SMOF: Dept. of State Topical File Subseries, Negotiations for Armistice, Dec. 1950-June 1951 folder; Truman Papers, HSTL. Quotes are from *FRUS* citation above, 401-402.

such a quote from McFarland could be “quite serious.” Acheson therefore had a State Department staffer to make an excuse to see the senator for other business, and then use the opportunity to water down the statement.¹⁰

Senator McFarland toed the administration line, but other senators commenting in the article did not. Instead of calling for an end to the arms race, the majority leader now suggested an “*armament program . . . for police purposes only.*” Rather than disarm Japan and Germany, McFarland proposed peace treaties to “insure the establishments of free governments.” Senator Paul Douglas (D-IL), however, called on U.N. forces to “complete the liberation of Korea,” an idea the administration had abandoned. In an obvious slap at the Soviet Union, Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr. (R-MA) suggested changing the U.N. charter to enable it to “expel members who want to destroy the organization.” Estes Kefauver (D-TN) declared, “To get peace, we shall have to surrender a part of our sovereignty.” Criticizing the administration for considering his measure “too drastic a step,” Kefauver quipped, “They overlook the fact that war is a drastic problem demanding a drastic solution.”¹¹

On May 17, Senator Edwin C. Johnson (D-CO) submitted a resolution outlining a peace plan for Korea. Calling the war a “hopeless conflict of attrition and indecisiveness and a breeder of bitter racial hatreds,” he proposed a cease-fire, effective on June 25, the first anniversary of the fighting. U.N. troops were to relocate south of

¹⁰ McFarland’s proposal and Acheson quoted in L.D. Battle, untitled note to file, May 14, 1951; Memoranda of Conversations File, May 1951 folder; Acheson Papers, HSTL. Additional discussion in James E. McMillan, ed., *The Ernest W. McFarland Papers: The United States Senate Years, 1940-1952* (Prescott, AZ: Sharlot Hall Museum Press, 1995), 285.

¹¹ “Can We Keep the Peace?” *Cosmopolitan*, August 1951, 32-5, 120-1. (Emphasis added.)

the 38th parallel, with the Communists moving north of the parallel. Johnson called for all non-Koreans to leave the peninsula, and for an exchange of all prisoners by the end of the year. The Coloradoan justified his suggestion by arguing that there was “no way to keep the limited war with China from developing into a full-scale war.”¹²

Johnson’s resolution was a reversal of his views on the conflict. A month earlier, he had called MacArthur’s firing a “tragic development,” presumably because he agreed with the general’s desire to expand the war. Four months after he submitted his peace proposal, the Coloradoan reversed field again. Asking why the U.S. did not use “these fantastically ferocious lethal weapons,” the senator dismissed the dangers of nuclear war, claiming that the possibility of Soviet retaliation was “too absurd to consider.”¹³

Initially, Senator Johnson’s peace initiative seemed irrelevant. The Senate did not debate it at all, referring it to the Foreign Relations Committee, which tabled it. The major U.S. newspapers barely mentioned it. Most of the political world probably dismissed the resolution as pie in the sky posturing by a reactionary isolationist. The editor of the *Denver Post* did not doubt the senator’s sincerity, but called his idea a “proposal of despair” from “Colorado’s senior ostrich.”¹⁴

¹² Hopeless conflict in S. Res. 140, May 17, 1951; SMOF: Dept. of State Topical Subseries, Negotiations for an Armistice, Dec. 1950-June 1951 folder; Truman Papers, HSTL; no way to keep in “Sen. Johnson Believes Cease-Fire Order Will Be Issued June 25 To End Conflict,” *Pueblo Star Journal and Chieftain*, 28 May 1951, p. 6; Johnson’s speech accompanying the resolution in *CR*, 82nd Cong., 1st sess., pt. 4, May 17, 1951: 5424.

¹³ Tragic development in Nover, Barnet, “Big Ed Disappointed By Truman’s Action,” *Denver Post*, 11 April 1951, p. 2; fantastically ferocious in “Big Ed Demands U.S. Use New Arms in Korea,” *Denver Post*, 9 September 1951, p. 14A; too absurd in “Use of Atomic Arms in Korea Is Urged by Senator Johnson,” *Washington Evening Star*, 5 November 1951, p. A3.

¹⁴ Press coverage discussed in Rees, 261; Example of scant coverage is “For Halt in Korean War,” *NYT*, 18 May 1951, p. 3; “Back in the Sand With Big Ed,” *Denver Post*, 18 May 1951, p. 18. The *Washington Post* did not mention Johnson’s proposal in its May 18, 1951 issue.

However, the proposal leapt into prominence two days later. *Pravda*, the Communist party newspaper in Russia, covered the resolution extensively, printing its entire contents, and it drew coverage by local radio. (Coincidentally, the CCF had launched a new offensive in Korea the same day that Johnson entered his resolution.) The Soviet paper suggested the proposal indicated some American leaders were “beginning to realize that Wall Street’s gamble in Korea is hopeless.” The *New York Times* noted this was the first peace initiative by the U.S. published by the Soviet press in quite awhile. Two Communist newspapers in Vienna also printed the resolution, one running a “Cease-Fire In Korea, June 25” headline. Marxist dailies in the West, such as the New York *Daily Worker* took notice, running the story on its front page for almost a week.¹⁵

The Communist coverage of the Johnson resolution attracted the attention of the non-communist world. A news story from London reported that the senator’s proposal apparently sparked a sudden concession by Andrei Gromyko, the Soviet representative at a meeting of deputy foreign ministers. The State Department voiced concern that the plan did not provide for supervision of the cease-fire or troop withdrawals, and Secretary Acheson felt it important enough to mention in a report to the U.S. United Nations contingent. While the State Department noted no new peace gestures from the Communists, they resurrected the possibility of submitting a revised version of

¹⁵Soviet press coverage described in: Telegram, Dept. of State to USUN, Circular #728, May 22, 1951; SMOF: Dept. of State Topical File Subseries, Negotiations for an Armistice, Dec. 1951-June 1951 folder; Truman Papers, HSTL and Alsop, Stewart, “Our Korean Objectives Decided,” *Washington Post*, 27 May 1951, p. B5. *Pravda* quoted in “Russians Play Up Johnson Peace Bid,” *NYT*, 21 May 1951, p. 6. “*Pravda* Prints Peace Bid by Senator of Colorado,” *NYT*, 20 May 1951, p. 8 notes this was the first U.S. peace initiative published since World War II. “Reds’ Interest in Korea Armistice Plan Heartens Sen. Ed Johnson,” *The Rocky Mountain News*, 28 May 1951, p. 3 notes coverage by the *Daily Worker*.

Truman's March 1951 peace initiative to the U.N. once the new CCF offensive ended. Acheson also indicated a willingness to discuss seating Communist China in the U.N. provided it was not linked with a Korean settlement. Western diplomats in Moscow speculated that Soviet interest in Johnson's resolution could be "significant." Moreover, the proposal reportedly "stirred interest" at the U.N. India's representative, Sir Benegal N. Rau, said the plan motivated him to remind the General Assembly of General Matthew Ridgeway's earlier comment that it would be a "tremendous victory" for the war to end with U.N. forces controlling the ROK to the 38th parallel. Once the U.N. weathered the May 17-22 offensive, journalist Stewart Alsop speculated that the Communist reaction to the senator's plan could be a step towards a cease-fire. Warren Austin, U.S. ambassador to the U.N., prepared an alternative proposal to Johnson's that called for U.N. troops to stop pursuing the Communists upon reaching the 38th parallel. He reasoned that if the Chinese and North Koreans wanted peace, they would stop shooting as well. Unlike Johnson's idea, Austin suggested that the U.S. remain in the South long enough to train and arm ROK troops, continuing air reconnaissance of the North. Senator Ralph Flanders (R-VT) aired his views on the Coloradoan's resolution, worrying that the Communists might prevail in reunification elections held shortly after withdrawal of foreign troops. Instead, he said the U.N. should rebuild North and South Korea before holding elections to improve the odds of keeping Korea in the "anti-communist camp."¹⁶

¹⁶ London story in "Big Ed and Russia Start Peace Rumors Flying in West Europe," *The Rocky Mountain News*, 21 May 1951, p. 3; supervision of cease-fire in Kuhn, Ferdinand, "Safeguards Against New Attack Asked," *Washington Post*, 24 June 1951, p. M1; mention of Johnson proposal to U.N. representatives and seating of Communist China in Acheson to U.S. representatives to U.N., May 22, 1951; SMOF: Dept. of State Topical File Subseries, Negotiations

Others took notice of the Johnson initiative. Activists from the Denver Peace Council slipped into the audience at an international affairs forum sponsored by the Democratic Party and asked Averell Harriman about the proposal. Harriman responded that there was “no indication” of a cease-fire desire by the Communists. When the meeting broke up, the Peace Council members passed out leaflets urging the Democratic National Committee to endorse the resolution. A few days later, the leadership of the Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers Union sent a telegram to Senator Tom Connally asking for quick action on Johnson’s plan, calling it an “honorable method whereby war in Korea can be halted.”¹⁷

Surprisingly, given the McCarthyist atmosphere of the time, Senator Johnson refused to shy away from the Communist press’s embrace of his resolution. Brushing aside criticisms of his proposal as appeasement, he called Russian media coverage a “great opportunity” because it was a sign of Soviet interest. He was one of few politicians publicly questioning the wisdom of demanding the absolute capitulation of an enemy that had not been totally routed. The senator blamed slogans like “unconditional surrender” and “no separate peace” for dividing the Allies after World War II, and believed the U.S. should not repeat the error regarding Korea. In a nation-wide broadcast on NBC, Johnson said that no interest group drove the initiative; he had come

for an Armistice, Dec. 1950-June 1951 folder; Truman Papers, HSTL; significant in “Russians Play Up Johnson Peace Bid”; stirred interest and Ridgeway quote in Frye, William R., “Rau Asks UN Peace Offer With Partition of Korea,” *Christian Science Monitor*, 19 May 1951, p. 1; Also, “Our Korean Objectives Decided”; Austin proposal in *FRUS, Vol. VII, 1951*, 451; Ralph Flanders, “Broadcast for Vermont Stations- Week of June 16, 1951,” Box 152, Flanders Papers, SUL.

¹⁷ “Harriman Questioned on Big Ed’s Peace Plan,” *Denver Post*, 25 May 1951, p. 3; telegram quoted in “Union Backs Big Ed In Peace Program,” *Rocky Mountain News*, 30 May 1951, p. 12.

up with the idea himself. He contrasted the Communist coverage with that of most U.S. newspapers, accusing the latter as treating his resolution as a “hot potato.” Perhaps some of them shared the sentiments of a South Korean diplomat, who called Johnson “absurd beyond imagination—like a daydreamer.”¹⁸

Speculation about a cease-fire quickened in late May and early June. Thomas J. Hamilton of the *New York Times* reported on a Soviet offer to negotiate with the U.S. for peace based on the division of the peninsula before the war started. Hamilton noted that this gesture was consistent with the recent Communist rhetoric about the Johnson resolution. Although Jacob Malik’s spokesman denied the offer, other diplomats confirmed its legitimacy and speculated that Soviet officials backed away due to China’s irritation at the peace feeler. In a radio address sponsored by the U.N., Canadian foreign minister Lester Pearson declared that the scope of the war was limited to restoring South Korea, and did not require complete destruction of the enemy. Similarly, U.N. Secretary-General Trygve Lie said a cease-fire based on a boundary near the 38th parallel would satisfy the resolutions of the summer of 1950, ignoring the October 1950 resolution authorizing the advance of U.N forces into North Korea to reunify the peninsula. Responding to these and other rumors, the State Department, in Acheson’s words, “cast about like a pack of hounds searching for a scent.”¹⁹

¹⁸ Great opportunity and slogans quoted in “Reds’ Interest in Korea Armistice Plan,” *Rocky Mountain News*, 28 May 1951, p. 3; hot potato in Nover, Barnet, “Big Ed Claims Wide Support For Peace Plan,” *Denver Post*, 26 May 1951, p. 1; “Korean Envoy Calls Johnson ‘Daydreamer’,” *Rocky Mountain News*, 31 May 1951, p. 11. Johnson made a valid point about American print media coverage. Major publications such as the *New York Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Washington Post*, *Time* and *Newsweek* ignored his May 26, 1951 national address. The *Los Angeles Times* mentioned it briefly. See “Senator Pushes War Anniversary Armistice Plan,” *Los Angeles Times*, 28 May 1951, p. 4.

¹⁹ Hamilton, Thomas J., “Soviet Proposal to Discuss Truce in Korea is Revealed,” *NYT*, 24 May 1951, p. 1 and Hamilton, “Soviet Denies Move for Peace in Korea,” *NYT*, 29 May 1951, p. 1; Pearson and Lie in Rees, 261-2; rumors

Meanwhile, George Kennan met informally with Malik on May 31 and June 5. Although Kennan was not officially attached to the U.S. government at the time, his status as a Soviet expert coaxed the Russian to open up a bit on the Korean issue. Malik said his government wanted peace in Korea “at the earliest possible moment,” but felt his government should not be directly involved in armistice talks because it was not involved in the fighting. He recommended that the U.S. approach the North Koreans and Chinese Communists. In his reports to the State Department, Kennan worried that although the USSR did not want war, they also had a “mortal apprehension” about the specter of American troops in Manchuria or on the Korea-Soviet border. The Soviet guru warned, “The hour of Soviet action, in the absence of a cessation of hostilities in Korea, may be much closer than we think.”²⁰

Privately, the administration did not share Kennan’s belief that Malik wanted peace. Shortly thereafter, Truman met with Acheson and Secretary of Defense George Marshall on “a most important matter.” From the meeting, the president surmised that Soviet weariness of the Korean situation had made them “want to quit.” Yet, his reaction was, “Well, we’ll see.” A day after the Kennan-Malik meetings concluded, the State Department vented its frustrations internally in an open letter to the Russian:

in Leviero, Anthony, “Acheson Unaware of Talks,” *NYT*, 3 June 1951; Acheson quoted in Acheson, *Present at the Creation*, 532.

²⁰ *FRUS*, Vol. VII, 1951, 507-511, 536-8.

“Rumors of Peace in Korea” (excerpts)

Somebody has started these peace rumors . . . but who? This time they can't accuse the Western powers of starting them. For—on this issue, peace—we have never dealt in rumors. Our cards are on the table. We have put it on the line every time. We want peace, and, what's more, we're not ashamed of wanting it.

But there are, perhaps, other people who are a little bit ashamed of it.

Ahhh Mr. Malik, dear Mr. Malik, no one could ever accuse you of starting such rumors. You would not be ashamed of it, would you? You'd never beat around the bush, would you? You'd never deal under the table, would you? Of course not. . . .

Then why don't you say it? Straight out! The one word the whole world is waiting for. Speak up like a man. Gain yourself honor. Cover your nation with glory. Speak, Mr. Malik. Speak! . . .

We know who can stop the war. Stalin! . . .

So I'm writing him a letter. . . .My message is simple: . . . Stop the killing!”²¹

Finally, Malik spoke. The Soviet proceeded to make a key diplomatic move that helped trigger the armistice talks. In a radio address broadcast throughout the U.S. on June 23, the Russian called for a cease-fire and a peace based upon withdrawal of forces from the 38th parallel. The significance of Malik's remarks, however, lay in what he did not say. The Soviet dropped previous requirements that all foreign troops must leave Korea, that the U.N. must seat Communist China, and its demand for the transfer of

²¹Truman quoted in Truman, note to self, June 21, 1951; PSF: Longhand Notes File, June 21, 1951 folder; and H. Maier, “Rumors of Peace in Korea,” June 6, 1951; WHCF: OF471B, Korean Emergency, Apr. 1951-1953 folder. (Emphasis his). White House Press Secretary Joseph Short requested a copy of the open letter to Malik a month later, but apparently never released it. See Edward W. Barrett, Memorandum for Joseph Short, July 9, 1951; WHCF: OF471B, Korean Emergency, Apr. 1951-1953 folder. All documents from Truman Papers, HSTL.

Formosa to Mao. The speech attracted significant media and diplomatic attention in the U.S.²²

Congressional response to Malik's address varied. Senator William Jenner (R-IN) criticized the initiative as reminiscent of the Yalta agreement and Defense Secretary Marshall's failed attempt to reconcile the Chinese civil war a few years earlier. The Russian's "mock-peace terms" were repulsive because they played upon humanity's natural desire to stop the bloodletting. Democrat Walter George (GA) complained that the proposal would not reunify the peninsula. Senator Harry P. Cain (R-WA) declared that the U.N. should reject appeasement and attack the enemy "with everything we've got" until the two sides reached a peace satisfying to the U.S. Eugene Millikin, chair of the Senate Republican conference, said Malik's initiative sounded "completely false to me."²³

A more prevalent reaction in Congress was guarded optimism, sometimes from surprising sources. Senators James Kem (MO) and Bourke Hickenlooper (IA), consistently harsh administration critics, were willing to give the Soviet peace feeler a chance. Kem, while cautioning against appeasement, said the U.S. should "examine carefully any approach that has the possibility of leading to an honorable peace."

Speculating on whether Malik intended for the Chinese to pull out their troops, Hickenlooper expressed concern if withdrawal meant "only that they back away 10 feet

²² Importance of Russian move in Rosemary Foot, *A Substitute for Victory: The Politics of Peacemaking at the Korean Armistice Talks* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), 37; requirements dropped by U.S. in Rees, 263. See *FRUS, Vol. VII, 1951*, 548-83 for responses by U.S. foreign policy leaders to the Malik speech.

²³ Jenner quoted in Michael Paul Poder, "The Senatorial Career of William E. Jenner," (Ph.D. diss., University of Notre Dame, 1966), 91; George and Millikin quoted in Kuhn, "Safeguards Against New Attack Asked"; Cain quoted in "Cain Demands That U.N. Forces Hit Enemy 'With Everything'," *Washington Post*, 25 June 1951, p. 3.

from the thirty-eighth parallel,” but added that if China did withdraw, “I don’t think we should hesitate” to reciprocate. House Minority Leader Joseph Martin, Jr. (MA), a MacArthur ally, said he wanted to hear more about the Soviet’s intentions.²⁴

Other legislators from both parties responded to the Malik speech cautiously. Rep. Mike Mansfield (D-MT) recommended following up on the proposal, stressing the need to ensure South Korea’s security and, unrealistically, the withdrawal of Communist troops from *all* of Korea. GOP senator Zales M. Ecton (MT), anticipating that the Russian probably would not be coming forward with additional detail, nevertheless urged the administration to follow up on the Soviet gesture. Rep. Chet Holifield (D-CA), a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, offered the most prescient advice. Suggesting that the U.S. explore Malik’s offer, Holifield advised caution because the offer did not come from China. Senator Lyndon Johnson (D-TX) indicated the wariness of many of his colleagues, saying his initial reaction was to “beware of any wolves parading in the clothing of peace.”²⁵

Some of Truman’s strongest allies on Capitol Hill were more bullish on the Soviet’s address. Senator Brien McMahon (D-CT), after expressing concerns about previous dealings with Malik, added, “This country will never slam the door on any efforts to negotiate an honorable peace.” Democratic Senator Theodore Green (RI) publicly echoed McMahon’s cautious optimism, saying Malik’s offer merited “careful consideration” from the U.N., despite suspicions that it was “only a political move.”

²⁴ Kuhn, “Safeguards Against New Attack Asked.”

²⁵ Kuhn, “Safeguards Against New Attack Asked.”

While Green declared the U.S. had an obligation to avoid demonstrating “any apparent unwillingness” to end the war, he added that the country should accept “peace based on the removal of the causes which brought about the war.” Privately, some of the president’s supporters were less inhibited about endorsing the Malik initiative. Tom Connally told Acheson the U.S. should carefully scrutinize the proposal and “not turn it down cold.” Rep. John A. Blatnik (D-MN) urged Truman to accept a cease-fire at the 38th parallel because there was no hope for an absolute victory. Blatnik worried that the conflict could expand into another world war at huge human and financial costs, and told the president not to worry about the “political shysters and demagogues” who were calling him an appeaser. The Minnesotan, a combat soldier in World War II, declared, “War is a form of insanity.”²⁶

The Truman administration responded to Malik’s speech guardedly. A State Department press release expressed a willingness to talk peace, but also noted, “The tenor of Mr. Malik’s speech again raises the question as to whether this is more than propaganda.” Admiral Alan G. Kirk, the U.S. ambassador to the Soviet Union, was more optimistic. In a message to Acheson, Kirk called the address a “significant new turn” in the Russians’ approach to Korea, and recommended following up on “any element of sincerity” in Malik’s communication. Truman apparently delayed releasing advance press copies of his scheduled June 25 speech in Tullahoma, Tennessee due to

²⁶ McMahan quoted in Kuhn, “Safeguards Against New Attack Asked”; Telegram, Sidney Wilkinson to Senator Theodore F. Green and News Release, June 25, 1951; Green Papers, Box 620, MDLOC. Green’s quote from above news release. Memorandum of Telephone Conversation between Senator Tom Connally and Mr. Acheson, June 29, 1951; Memoranda of Conversations File, June 1951 folder; Acheson Papers, HSTL; Rep. John A. Blatnik to Truman, June 29, 1951; WHCF: OF 471B, Cease-Fire Truce-Pro folder; Truman Papers, HSTL.

the Soviet offer (presumably, to revise his remarks). The president's address conveyed wariness, saying the U.S. should "always keep the door open" to peace, but insisted a cease-fire had to be a "real settlement." A few days later, HST told an aide he was "not too optimistic," quipping that Malik's sudden unavailability to the press might mean that the Soviet was "in the doghouse with the Kremlin."²⁷

So Truman followed up six days after Malik's speech with action. Secretary Acheson notified congressional leaders of foreign affairs committees that the administration had authorized U.N. commander General Matthew Ridgeway to discuss armistice terms with his Communist counterpart. The proposal included a cease-fire around the 38th parallel and establishment of a demilitarized zone (DMZ). Acheson attempted to quell concerns such as that of Rep. Charles Eaton (R-PA), who was convinced that the Malik speech was a trick. The White House press corps noted that some on Capitol Hill were already grumbling that peace under such terms would constitute appeasement.²⁸

Senator Flanders seemed to approve of the administration's response, but still used the occasion to give it a strong dose of criticism. A tireless proponent of peace, Flanders acknowledged Truman's "cautious acceptance" of Malik's proposal.

²⁷ Department of State, "Statement Concerning Malik Broadcast of June 23," No. 553, June 23, 1951, Kirk to Acheson, Telegraph, June 25, 1951 and President Truman, Speech at Tullahoma, Tennessee, June 25, 1951; all from SMOF: Dept. of State Topical Subseries, Negotiations for an Armistice, Dec. 1950-June 1951 folder; Truman Papers, HSTL; Delay of text release noted in Folliard, Edward T., "Malik Cease-Fire Proposal Delayed Release of Text," *Washington Post*, 25 June 1951, p. 1; Truman's quote to aide in George M. Elsey, Memorandum for File, June 30, 1951; Subject File, Korean War folder; Elsey Papers, HSTL.

²⁸ Memoranda of Telephone Conversations, Dean Acheson and Senator Wiley, Acheson and Senator Connally, Acheson and Rep. Charles Eaton, June 29, 1951; Memoranda of Conversations file, June 1951 folder; Acheson Papers, HSTL; Reston, James, "Ridgeway in Offer," *NYT*, 30 June 1951, p. 1; "The President's News Conference," June 28, 1951, *PP*, <http://trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/index.php?pid=354&st=&st1=> (September 21, 2007).

Nevertheless, with the MacArthur hearings winding down, the Vermonter could not resist pointing out the administration's decision to have military commanders in the field (rather than governments) negotiate an armistice. Flanders argued that MacArthur had advocated the same approach and Truman had fired him; however, the senator failed to remind his audience that the general's statement was unauthorized and threatened China with annihilation. Moreover, Flanders took Acheson to task for not admitting sooner that the secretary had changed his mind about trying to reunify Korea through military conquest. Recalling his unsuccessful attempts to pin Acheson down on the issue during the MacArthur hearings, the senator likened Acheson to God's description in the book of *Job* of people who "darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge." Despite his vengeful ramblings, Flanders touched on a valid point: Malik had seized the initiative in the quest for peace. The Vermonter noted that had the U.N. made the first move, perhaps including his idea to rebuild the peninsula, they could have "put the Communists on the spot." As recently as two weeks earlier, the administration had been revising drafts of its aborted March peace initiative. The Soviets, however, beat them to the punch.²⁹

The Communist Chinese responded curiously to Malik's speech. While they knew about the Soviet peace feelers of the past several weeks, the Russians did not give their Chinese comrades advance notice about the address. Thus, Communist China did not broadcast Malik's offer locally until June 29, the same day that Ridgeway broadcast

²⁹ Ralph E. Flanders, (Radio) Broadcast for Vermont Stations, July 5, 1951, Flanders Papers, Box 152, Vermont Broadcasts-Week of July 1, 1951 folder, SUL; revised drafts discussed in "Draft UC Statement," June 14, 1951, author unknown; SMOF: Dept.of State Topical Subseries, Folder 36; Truman Papers, HSTL.

the U.N. armistice proposal. Interestingly, when China publicized the Russian's initiative, they also included the details of Senator Edwin Johnson's May 17 resolution. The Johnson proposal differed from the U.N.'s because he called for withdrawal of all foreign troops from Korea and a full exchange of prisoners, regardless of whether the POW's wanted to go home or not. These points of the Johnson resolution foreshadowed China's negotiating position once the talks began.³⁰

On July 1, the Communist Chinese agreed to begin armistice negotiations within a couple of weeks. A few congressional figures expressed hopefulness. Senator Connally said he was happy about the possibility of peace. Senate Minority Leader Wherry echoed Connally's pleasure, provided the terms had "positively no appeasement." Most members of Capitol Hill interviewed on the subject gave either noncommittal or negative comments. House Speaker Rayburn preferred to wait before giving his views. Senator Taft was suspicious because the Communists did not want to begin the cease-fire immediately, and complained, "Rather than punishment, it looks like a reward for aggression." Senator Pat McCarran (D-NV) declared he had "no confidence in that Communist group," insisting (erroneously) that the U.N. would be negotiating with the Soviets rather than the Chinese, making the process more difficult. Senator Karl Mundt (R-SD) expressed his hope that the talks would be a "prelude to

³⁰ Foot, *A Substitute for Victory*, 37.

peace.” Unfortunately, he prefaced his remark by warning the public of “possible Trojan horse tactics by the Russian bear.”³¹

Shortly thereafter, a new peace initiative spearheaded by Senator Brien McMahon rose to the forefront. McMahon seemed an unlikely proponent for such a cause. A co-chairman of the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy, the senator promoted himself as “Mr. Atom,” once declaring Hiroshima “the greatest event in world history since the birth of Jesus Christ.” At times, he seemed to feel that there was no way to avoid eventual war with the Soviets, and expressed no qualms about the prospect of nuclear conflict. Nevertheless, in early 1951, McMahon began crafting a “friendship resolution” directed at the Russian people, seeing it as part of a “great moral crusade for peace akin . . . to the Fourteen Points and the Four Freedoms.”³²

The Connecticut senator’s resolution sought to counter a Russian “peace offensive.” In March 1950, a series of international conferences promoting world peace and a ban on the use of atomic weapons culminated in Stockholm, Sweden. Communists from around the world dominated these meetings, with French Communist Frederic Joliot-Curie chairing the permanent committee of the World Peace Congress. In Sweden, Joliot-Curie’s group began circulating a petition around the globe demanding a ban on nuclear weapons. By August 1950, over 273 million people had signed the

³¹ Connally, Wherry and Rayburn quoted in Trohan, Walter, “Reds Accept Bid to Parley,” *Chicago Tribune*, 2 July 1951, p. 1; Taft, McCarran and Mundt quoted in “No Whistles Blew,” *Time*, July 9, 1951, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,806084,00.html> (September 29, 2007).

³² Jesus Christ in David Halberstam, *The Fifties* (New York: Villard Books, 1993), 36; McMahon’s views on nuclear war and Mr. Atom quote in Peter Pringle and James Spigelman, *The Nuclear Barons* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1981), 88 and 93, respectively; friendship resolution and great moral crusade in Brien McMahon, “We Can Get Through the Iron Curtain,” *NYT*, 24 June 1951, p. 150.

petition, some one-eighth of the world's population. Eighty-six percent of the signatures came from the Soviet bloc and China. However, 1.4 million people in the U.S. also signed the petition, or one out of every 111 Americans, a quantity much larger than the estimated number of Communists in the nation. As one journalist noted, the timing of the U.S. intervention in Korea "caught the United States in about as tight a propaganda trap as any it has fallen into in the post-war years." Senator McMahon crafted his own call for peace to neutralize the "spurious but unprecedentedly successful Stockholm Petition."³³

The friendship resolution took over six months to come to fruition. McMahon did his homework, lobbying the Foreign Relations Committee and involving the White House in the preparation. On February 8, 1951, the senator submitted the first version from the Senate, endorsed by twenty-two of his colleagues. The co-sponsors included nine Republicans, giving the resolution bipartisan clout, particularly since they included Foreign Relations Committee members Alexander Wiley and H. Alexander Smith. The resolution, lengthily titled, "A Declaration of Friendship from the American People to All the Peoples of the World, Including the Peoples of the Soviet Union," sought to assure the world that the U.S. was not a warmongering nation. It expressed regret over the "artificial barriers" separating the American people from their Russian counterparts and ended with a challenge for the Soviet government to share the resolution with its citizens. Commending the bill to the Senate, McMahon noted that the USSR was calling

³³ Taylor, Allen, "Story of the Stockholm Petition," *NYT*, 13 August 1950, p. E6; journalist quote from Phillips, Cabell, "What Russians Say About Korean War," *NYT*, 30 July 1950, p. E4; McMahon, "We Can Get Through the Iron Curtain."

the U.S. “atomic barbarians,” and said it was a “great tragedy that the Communists have stolen the word peace from the free nations of the world.”³⁴

Rep. Abraham Ribicoff, a fellow Connecticut legislator, sponsored the House version of the bill on the same day. A bipartisan group of eight representatives co-sponsored the measure with Ribicoff, and the friendship resolutions enjoyed favorable press coverage from across the nation. Like McMahon, Ribicoff took the moral high ground, noting, “Spiritual power and not material power—is the key to the world’s ills.”³⁵

The State Department strongly supported the friendship resolution. Responding to a request from the Senate Foreign Committee for an analysis of the bill, Secretary Acheson expressed a “most sympathetic interest” in the proposal. Acheson had his department help reconcile the House and Senate versions of the bill, consulting with McMahon and Ribicoff for their input. The legislators suggested that the department “tone down” the overall critiques of the Soviet government while adding details on past instances when it had kept its people in the dark about U.N. activities. Acheson agreed to the changes and generated a four-page evaluation of the McMahon-Ribicoff bill for Foreign Relations Committee chairman Tom Connally, which the *New York Times* printed in its entirety. The secretary expressed pleasure that the resolution clarified that

³⁴ Senate Concurrent Resolution 11 and accompanying Statement of Brien McMahon, February 8, 1951, Box 3, 82nd Congress, 1st Session folder, McMahon Papers, MDLOC; lobbying of Foreign Relations committee in Francis O. Wilcox, Diary entry, February 2, 1951; Diary, 1951-1952 folder; Wilcox Papers, HSTL.

³⁵ Ribicoff quote and nation-wide support for bill in Garrett, William A., “M’Mahon, Ribicoff To Call for Peace,” *Hartford Times*, 6 February 1951, p. 19.

Americans would “not sell our souls” to end war, by insisting on a peace based on “moral principles.”³⁶

Progress on combining the McMahon and Ribicoff resolutions into a joint bill slowed considerably following Acheson’s March 20 assessment. The full Senate did not approve its bill until May 4. Things went worse in the lower chamber. The full House did not vote on Ribicoff’s resolution until a month after the Senate did. Moreover, only 43 of 433 representatives showed up for the vote, passing it 36-7. Many felt the failure to make a quorum call to get more members onto the floor for the vote was a mistake. While there was widespread support in the House for the bill, the low turnout sent a negative message to the world, which was not helpful with a measure designed to combat Soviet propaganda. One Democrat attributed the poor turnout to everyone’s belief that the resolution would pass easily. Nevertheless, referring to American radio broadcasts beyond the Iron Curtain, he conceded the vote was “hard to explain on the Voice of America.”³⁷

Despite the vote, the House incorporated a couple of substantial changes into the final joint resolution that Truman signed into law. Both amendments toughened the bill. One asserted Congress’s policy to “exert maximum efforts to obtain agreements to provide the United Nations with armed forces.” Another, referring to the “artificial

³⁶Most sympathetic interest in “Memorandum of the Press and Radio News Conference, Wednesday, February 14, 1951,” SMOF: Dept. of State Topical File Subseries, Restudy of the Question of the 38th Parallel folder; Truman Papers, HSTL; tone down in “The McMahon-Ribicoff Resolution (H.Con.Res.57),” March 15, 1951; Memoranda of Conversations File, March 1951 folder; Acheson Papers, HSTL; not sell our souls in “Acheson Letter on U. S. Relations,” *NYT*, 22 March 1951, p. 36.

³⁷ Timeline for bill passage explained in *FRUS, Vol. IV, 1951*, 1607; concerns about low House vote in Francis O. Wilcox, Diary entry, June 7, 1951; Diary, 1951-1952 folder; Wilcox Papers, HSTL; Democrat quoted in “House Adopts Friendship Bid to Russians; Members Say Slim 36-7 Vote Ruins Effect,” *NYT*, 5 June 1951, p. 18.

barriers” between the American and Soviet people, suggested, “The Soviet government could advance the cause of peace immeasurably by removing those artificial barriers, . . . permitting the free exchange of information.” Finally, on July 6, President Truman invited McMahon and Ribicoff to the White House for a signing ceremony celebrating the peace initiative. Jacob Malik was so impressed he sailed out of New York Harbor to begin a two-month vacation.³⁸

It is not clear from the historical record why it took Congress and the president over five months to pass the friendship resolution. One possibility was that they treated it as a low priority. Although the bill began its trek from Capitol Hill to the White House in the midst of the Great Debate over U.S. troop deployments to Europe, the Congress and the State Department acted promptly on the bill during February and March. A more likely explanation for the delay was MacArthur’s torpedoing of the administration’s peace efforts in late March. With the White House shelving its plans to offer armistice talks to the Communists, it is likely that Truman’s team quietly put the brakes on McMahon-Ribicoff for a couple of months. The momentum toward armistice talks that reappeared in May probably encouraged lawmakers and the president to revive the friendship message to the Soviet people.

The official transmittal of the McMahon-Ribicoff resolution to the USSR government happened swiftly. Truman, however, did not approach this communication haphazardly. Noting press speculation that the Democrats might propose an official congressional endorsement of the impending armistice talks for political reasons, the

³⁸ House changes to bill in *CR*, 82nd Cong., 1st sess., pt. 6, June 4, 1951: 6095; Quotes are from *FRUS, Vol. IV, 1951*, 1607-08; Hamilton, Thomas J., “Malik, Sailing, Says Bid Was Censored,” *NYT*, 7 July 1951, p. 3.

president was not enthused about McMahon's plans to deliver a speech extolling the administration's peace efforts on the day of the bill-signing. "This is a very delicate matter," HST told his staff, "and if those fellows up on the Hill start making speeches they'll blow the whole thing out of the water." The senator did not make his address, probably due to White House concerns. An aide noted, "The President does not feel that this is a time for Congressional action, or a time for Congressional consultation." With the legislators under control, the White House dispatched the McMahon-Ribicoff resolution to the Soviet Union two hours after Truman signed it.³⁹

The administration sent the declaration to Soviet president Nikolay Shvernik under a cover letter from President Truman. In the spirit of McMahon's hope that the message would be "an extremely effective weapon in the battle for the minds of men," the first and last paragraphs of Truman's letter urged Shvernik to release the resolution to the Soviet public. The commander in chief pointed out, "We shall never be able to remove suspicion and fear as potential causes of war until communication is permitted to flow, free and open, across international boundaries." However, the president's message did not include something McMahon and Ribicoff suggested: an invitation for Stalin to come to the U.S. to confer with HST. The Voice of America broadcasted the letter and accompanying resolution twice each hour for three days. Truman now waited to see

³⁹ Truman and aide quoted in George M. Elsey, Memorandum for File, July 5, 1951; Truman Presidency Subject File, Korean War folder; Elsey Papers, HSTL; press speculation in Reston, James, "Korea Truce Issue Heading for '52 Political Cauldron," *NYT*, 5 July 1951, p. 9.

how the USSR would respond to his dare to communicate a message of peace from the U.S. to the Soviet people.⁴⁰

The McMahon-Ribicoff resolution attracted significant attention in the U.S. After Undersecretary of State Dean Rusk gave a speech on China policy voicing surprisingly staunch support for the Nationalists, he asserted he was simply expressing American support for the Chinese people as the friendship resolution had for the Russian populace. The *New York Times* endorsed the proposal, and Senator McFarland publicized it as a significant accomplishment of the 82nd Congress. More than anyone else, McMahon kept the initiative in the public eye. In a speech to the International Federation of War Veterans Organizations eleven days after transmittal of the peace message, he blasted the USSR for failing to release it to the Soviet people. As a product from his bill, the Connecticut senator suggested exchange visits between Russian and American veterans as a pathway to peace. A couple of weeks later, he kept the friendship resolution alive in a speech on the Senate floor chastising USSR inaction. Mocking Soviet president Shvernik's lack of response and figurehead status, McMahon posed a series of sarcastic questions: "Where is the man hiding? . . . Has Mr. Shvernik been liquidated? . . . Has he won . . . a one-way ticket to the salt mines of Siberia?" The senator added a new challenge, offering to send a congressional delegation to the Soviet

⁴⁰ Brien McMahon to Theodore Francis Green, February 1, 1951, Green Papers, Box 613, MDLOC; invitation to Stalin in Andrews, Marshall, "Truman Urges Soviet Chief To Publish U.S. Peace Aims," *Washington Post*, 8 July 1951, p. M1; Truman's letter quoted from *FRUS, Vol. IV, 1951*, 1610-11.

Union to deliver its message of goodwill personally. McMahon declared, “The Kremlin crowd has been caught without an answer.”⁴¹

Shvernik broke his silence. On August 6, the Soviet president released a personal response to Truman’s challenge accompanied by a resolution from the USSR’s Presidium of the Supreme Soviet. Using similar language to the McMahon-Ribicoff resolution, Shvernik declared that the Soviet people had “no basis for doubting that the American people also do not want war.” He blamed tensions on forces in the U.S. which were “striving to unleash a new world war” for “their own enrichment.” The presidium’s lengthy message primarily was a litany of American diplomatic offenses against the Russians. Nevertheless, it noted, “It goes without saying that one can only welcome the approach of the Congress . . . for the strengthening of friendly relations between the U.S. and the Soviet Union.” The substantive response of the letter reiterated Soviet demands for a Five Power peace pact to reduce the arms race, a position the U.S. had consistently opposed because it favored the U.N. as the proper forum for such issues. Shvernik released his response, along with the McMahon-Ribicoff resolution and Truman’s cover letter, to the Soviet press simultaneously. For the first time since World War II, the people of the USSR had heard a message from an American president.⁴²

⁴¹ Rusk speech in Telegram, Dean Acheson to USUN, New York, May 22, 1951; SMOF: Dept. of State topical File Subseries, Negotiations for an Armistice, Dec. 1950-June 1951 folder; Truman Papers, HSTL and Porter, Russell, “Rusk Hints U.S. Aid to Revolt in China,” *NYT*, 19 May 1951, p. 1; *New York Times* endorsement in “To the Russian People,” *NYT*, 8 July 1951, p. 112; McMillan, *Ernest McFarland Papers*, 295, 301; Brien McMahon, Speech to International Federation of War Veterans Organizations, July 18, 1951; McMahon Papers, Box 9, Addresses and Releases, July 1951 folder, MDLOC; “Exchange of Visits of U.S., Russian Veterans Urged,” *Los Angeles Times*, 19 July 1951, p. 28; McMahon quoted in “Address of Senator Brien McMahon in the Senate,” August 2, 1951, McMahon Papers, Box 9, Addresses and Releases, July 1951 folder, MDLOC; coverage of McMahon’s speech in “Freedoms of U.S. Scored by Pravda,” *NYT*, 3 August 1951, p. 3.

⁴² Quotes from Shvernik statement from Department of State Press Release No. 705, August 6, 1951; Russian Peace Offer folder; David D. Lloyd Papers, HSTL; first message since World War II noted in Salisbury, Harrison E.,

Shvernik's response to the friendship resolution did not impress the Truman administration. Although the State Department called the Kremlin's answer "a step forward," and expressed pleasure that the Russians had "finally seen fit" to communicate American goodwill to the Soviet public, Secretary Acheson publicly and bluntly declared he was skeptical that it signified a change in Soviet policy. Again rejecting the call for a Five Power agreement, the State Department called the counter-proposal a "propaganda trap." When an aide brought HST a copy of Shvernik's letter, the president quickly scanned it, then tossed it back to his underling, snorting, "Bunkum."⁴³

Some shared the administration's skepticism. Rep. Ribicoff said the Russian response fell "far short" of answering his friendship resolution, while Senate minority leader Kenneth Wherry said it "should not be taken at its face value." His adversary across the aisle agreed, as majority leader Ernest McFarland warned the American people not to be "deceived by the current peace drive of the Kremlin." A State Department analysis indicated that the non-Communist Western European press gave much more attention to Shvernik's response than to Truman's initial letter, regarding the former as "almost universally regarded . . . with suspicion." The executive council of the American Federal of Labor (AFL) called the Five Power proposal a "Trojan horse."⁴⁴

"Moscow Also Broadcasts McMahon Resolution on Nation-Wide Hook-Up," *NYT*, 8 August 1951, p. 1. The Presidium was a small group within the Kremlin authorized to act in behalf of the Soviet Parliament when the latter was not in session.

⁴³ Step forward and finally seen fit in *FRUS, Vol. IV, 1951*, 1635-6; "State Department Calls It 'Propaganda Trap'—Cites Obligations Ignored," *NYT*, 8 August 1951, p. 1; Truman quoted in "Man at Work," *Time*, August 20, 1951, <http://www.time.com/time/printout/0,8816,859245,00.html> (November 2, 2007).

⁴⁴ Ribicoff in "State Department Calls It 'Propaganda Trap'"; Wherry in Friendly, Alfred, "U.S., Britain, France Shrug Off Latest Soviet 'Propaganda' Bid," *Washington Post*, 8 August 1951, p. 3; McFarland in McMillan, *The Ernest W. McFarland Papers*, 309; State Department analysis in "World-Wide Reaction to the Friendship Resolutions Exchanged Between the US and the USSR, July and August 1951," September 10, 1951 and "Meeting Notes- Mutual

Yet, others perceived the Soviet response more optimistically. Edward Morgan of CBS cautioned against rejecting the proposal out of hand even though it appeared phony. The *New York Times* agreed Shvernik's response was a sham, but lauded the publishing of an American message to the Soviet public. The *Washington Post* said the McMahon resolution had "paid off—with a dividend" because it gave the Soviets an opportunity to back up their peace rhetoric with action. Even Senator Harry P. Cain, who had earlier demanded a declaration of war against Communist China, said the U.S. should be ready to come "more than half way" with the Soviets. Criticizing Shvernik for waiting a month before following the "usual Communist propaganda line with monotonous regularity," McMahon, nevertheless, was "delighted." He declared the friendship resolution was the "biggest hole blasted in the Iron Curtain since it was first established more than thirty years ago."⁴⁵

The administration and key congressional figures butted heads concerning how or whether Truman should answer Shvernik. The U.S. embassy in Moscow advocated a speedy reply from the president to keep the peace issue alive and the Soviets on the defensive. However, when reporters asked the president about responding to the Soviets three weeks after the Shvernik letter, he said there was "no hurry." Although at one point the State Department considered asking the Soviets to broadcast a Truman speech

Security Programs," August 8, 1951; Foreign Relations-Russia (1949-1951) folder; George Elsemy Papers, HSTL; Trojan horse quote from "Meeting Notes" citation above.

⁴⁵*New York Times* and Morgan reaction in "Meeting Notes- Mutual Security Programs," August 8, 1951; paid off in "On the Limb," *Washington Post*, 8 August 1951, p. 14; Cain quoted in "U.S., Britain, France Shrug Off Latest Soviet 'Propaganda' Bid"; delighted in "State Department Calls It 'Propaganda Trap'"; hole blasted in "Senate Address by Senator Brien McMahon," August 20, 1951; McMahon Papers, Box 9, Addresses and Speeches-Aug. 1951 folder, MDLOC.

live (calling it a “gimmick”), it dropped the idea in early October. Despite “working assiduously” on an answer to Shvernik, Acheson’s group concluded during a meeting with McMahon and Ribicoff that they had nothing meaningful to communicate, and that it would be better for HST not to respond at all than to reply “simply for the sake of replying.” The legislators strongly disagreed. McMahon pointed out that Winston Churchill, likely to be re-elected as prime minister of the U.K., was planning to convene a conference with Truman and Stalin. Arguing that the U.S. “should not be in a position of following Churchill’s lead,” the senator advocated a forceful initiative for peace by the president. McMahon noted that Soviet progress in producing atomic weaponry was another motivator to stop the war. Saying he did not believe the American people “could be reconciled to another winter of indecision in Korea,” he claimed that political pressure could force the administration to use nuclear weapons. This remark shocked everyone present, including Ribicoff. Nevertheless, the senator reasoned that as long as international tension and defense build-ups continued, people would believe war was inevitable, causing them to lose confidence in administration foreign policy. All of this, underscored McMahon, justified a continued push to end the war. Ribicoff suggested that HST respond directly to Stalin. After discussing the possibility of a major address on peace by Truman at an upcoming U.N. General Assembly gathering, the meeting concluded with nothing decided. Acheson, rather than the president, addressed the U.N. General Assembly in December, and the dialogue on the friendship resolution withered away.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Discussions on response to Shvernik in *FRUS, Vol. IV, 1951*, 1640, 1658-60; no hurry in “The President’s Press

Ironically, Edwin Johnson's peace proposal did more to drive the adversaries to the armistice table than the McMahon-Ribicoff resolution. Johnson introduced his resolution alone, and it went into the record with no debate or fanfare. It was a spontaneous act, reflecting the Colorado senator's vacillating views of the war, which mirrored the ambivalence of many Americans grappling with how to stop Soviet expansionism in the dawning nuclear age. In contrast, McMahon planned his initiative for months with an assist from the administration, garnering support from a number of colleagues and soliciting extensive U.S. media coverage. The two senators had different aims. The Connecticut senator targeted the Soviets, hoping to end not only the Korean War but the Cold War as well. His resolution was more of a propaganda weapon than a specific proposal to halt the fighting. Big Ed simply wanted to stop the shooting in Korea, using the psychological effect of the first anniversary of the war's eruption to spur the armistice. He directed his message to the U.S. adversaries on the battlefield, the Communist Chinese and North Koreans. Johnson's suggestion, seemingly made on a whim, restarted the move towards peace that MacArthur had scuttled in March 1951. While one historian correctly credited Jacob Malik's June 23, 1951 radio address with getting the armistice talks started in July, the Johnson proposal triggered the dialogue with the Communists that culminated in the Russian's broadcast. McMahon-Ribicoff

Conference," August 30, 1951; *PP*, <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/index.php?pid=425&st=&st1=> (November 7, 2007); gimmick in David D. Lloyd, Memorandum for Mr. Murphy, September 5, 1951; Lloyd, David D. folder; Charles Murphy Papers; quotes from meeting in Lloyd to Charles Murphy, "McMahon luncheon concerning reply to Shvernik," October 4, 1951; Foreign Relations-Truman-Shvernik folder; George Elsey Papers; Acheson's delivery of General Assembly address in Howland H. Sargeant to Lloyd, December 4, 1951; Files of David D. Lloyd; Truman Papers; all from HSTL.

began a war of words with the Soviets that may have cracked the Iron Curtain, but otherwise did nothing to help end the Korean War.⁴⁷

Senator Ralph Flanders proposed an innovative formula for peace in Korea at about the time the armistice talks began in July 1951. Flanders, whom Secretary Acheson described as a “peppery little man from Vermont,” had spent the early months of the war marshalling spiritual resources for the U.N. cause. Making a speech on the Senate floor titled, “Let’s Try God,” he had exhorted his colleagues to heed the command of Jesus Christ to “love thy neighbor as thyself” by applying it to the Russian people in a similar vein as McMahon’s peace resolution. The Vermont senator argued that the U.S. had to adhere to the moral law of the universe as well as to physical laws to prevail in Korea. Flanders thereupon persuaded twenty-six of his Senate colleagues to join him in submitting a petition urging President Truman to wage a “psychological and spiritual offensive against the Kremlin.” The senator later wrote, “Military forces . . . can bring victory only. Only moral forces can bring peace.”⁴⁸

Nevertheless, Flanders’ proposal to end the war went beyond moral exhortations. The Vermonter suggested a demilitarized zone (DMZ) fifty to one hundred miles wide along the Yalu River, which formed much of the boundary between North Korea and Communist China. The U.N. would permanently supervise the DMZ. Flanders probably got the idea for this feature from a plan pushed briefly by the British and discussed

⁴⁷ Foot, *The Wrong War*, 134.

⁴⁸ Acheson quoted in Acheson, *Present at the Creation*, 370; military forces in Flanders to John Foster Dulles, February 5, 1951; Flanders Papers, Box 105, Paul Hoffman folder; all other Flanders quotes from W. McNeil Lowry, “The Senator Who Would Call on God,” Ralph E. Flanders Papers, Box 139, October 1950 “The Senator Who Would Call on God” folder, both from SUL.

within the U.S. State Department during the lull between China's initial entry and its second offensive in November 1950. The senator's plan recognized China's sensitivity to its industrial complex along the Yalu and sought to ensure Communist concerns about the security of the key port cities of Rashin and Vladivostok. He also proposed that the U.N. negotiate an agreement with the "Korean government" to rebuild North and South Korea within three years.⁴⁹

Flanders fleshed out his plan through the spring of 1952. He specified that *Asiatic* U.N. member nations would supervise the DMZ to eliminate suspicions that America and its allies were seeking to "intrench [*sic*] themselves in the peninsula." Later, the senator stipulated that no capitalistic nations could participate in supervising the DMZ, nor should any "white races," reasoning that such restrictions would refute Communist accusations of U.S. imperialism in Korea. Calling the entire peninsula an "abode of unimaginable misery," Flanders justified his plan to rebuild Korea by pointing out that the U.N. had "practically ruined the people we set out to save." With his DMZ positioned at the Chinese border, the Vermonter was one of few in the government calling for "a Korean settlement of a Korean war." Flanders therefore proposed U.N. elections to unite Korea under one government after the second year of the three-year rebuilding plan. He believed that seeing the benefits of the reconstruction effort would win over skeptical North Koreans, persuading them to participate in reunification

⁴⁹ Flanders plan explained in "Address by Senator Ralph E. Flanders-Vermont Press Association," June 30, 1951, Flanders Papers, Box 140; June 30, 1951 Vt. Press Ass'n Bellows Falls Speech folder, SUL; Peter N. Farrar, "Britain's Proposal for a Buffer Zone South of the Yalu in November 1950: Was It a Neglected Opportunity to End the Fighting in Korea?" *Journal of Contemporary History* 18, no. 2 (April 1983): 331-4. The British proposal made the major newspapers. See "South Korean Bars North Buffer Strip," *NYT*, 18 November 1950, p. 2 and "Guns—and Talks," *NYT*, 26 November 1950, p. E1. "Capital Cautious in Truce Comment," *NYT*, 10 July 1951, p. 4.

elections. The senator then made some startling concessions. While he doubted that elections would produce a Communist regime after two years of U.N. rebuilding efforts, such a result was not unthinkable. Declaring he was certain that South Korea would have gone Communist if left to its own devices in early 1951, Flanders suggested that even though reunification elections could elect a Marxist regime, the U.S. “must run that risk.”⁵⁰

The Vermont senator’s proposal attracted little media attention at the time and only lip service from the Truman administration. Flanders obtained an audience with Secretary of State Acheson and others in the State Department in December 1951. Acheson’s notes on the meeting indicated he merely thanked the senator for his views and told him the proposal was “interesting.” Although the secretary had proposed a buffer zone ten miles wide on each side of the Yalu in November 1950, he had apparently discarded the idea. Flanders recalled that when he brought his idea to Truman and Acheson, they simply replied that the “Russians don’t understand anything but military force.”⁵¹

Flanders finally attracted public attention to his plan by the 1952 presidential election. Pitching his plan in Ottawa, Canada, to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, he suggested that since China entered the war to protect its interests in

⁵⁰ Run that risk in Ralph Flanders, “Proposals for a Positive Policy in Korea,” March 1, 1952; all other quotes from Flanders, “A New Peace Plan for Korea,” December 1951; both documents from Flanders Papers, Box 141; Folders of same titles as speeches, SUL. (Emphasis added.)

⁵¹ Searches of the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Chicago Tribune* and *Time* magazine yielded no coverage of Flanders’ proposal. Acheson’s meeting notes in Dean Acheson, “A Possible Line for US Action in Korea,” December 19, 1951; Memoranda of Conversations File, November-December 1951 folder; Acheson Papers, HSTL; Acheson’s proposed zone in Farrar, 333; Flanders quoted in *FRUS*, Vol. XV, 1952-54, 816.

Manchuria, his buffer zone plan would work. Flanders blasted the effects of the U.N. armistice objectives on the North Korean people, declaring, “To destroy them endlessly without giving them acceptable peace terms is to plumb the depths of human iniquity.” Pointing to America’s war costs at six billion dollars annually, Flanders argued he would rather spend the money for construction than destruction. At least one portion of his speech proved prophetic. The senator asserted that the ongoing negotiations would not guarantee peace. Instead, he predicted, “Two hostile armed forces will continue to face each other for an indefinite period.”⁵²

Senator Flanders was the only member of Congress to put forth a peace plan for Korea after the armistice talks began. It had some strong points. The senator’s proposal attempted to mitigate the effects of the war on the Korean people and the U.N. threat to Manchuria in the eyes of the Chinese. Applying the Marshall Plan formula, and he was banking on a similarly successful program in Korea. By his willingness to accept a Communist regime after reunification elections, Flanders recognized the fallacy of the domino theory. All of East Asia would not inevitably fall into the Soviet sphere if Korea went communist. Yet, in other respects, the senator’s plan was unrealistic. As one historian pointed out, his scheme did not address the POW repatriation issue, which became the main roadblock to peace. Moreover, China perceived the U.N. as its enemy, and would never have trusted it to maintain a DMZ on the Korea/China border. The U.N., after all, had declared China the aggressor in the war after bombing bridges over

⁵² To destroy them in Philips, P. J., “Truce Advocated at Ottawa Parley,” *NYT*, 13 September 1952, p. 2; other details of Flanders’ plan in Griffin, Eugene, “Neutral Zone in N. Korea Urged by U.S. Senator,” *Chicago Tribune*, 13 September 1952, p. 12; Ralph E. Flanders, “Peace Terms for Korea,” September 12-13, 1952, Flanders Papers, Box 142, Peace Terms for Korea-Ottawa, Canada folder, SUL.

the Yalu. Flanders also underestimated the determination of both Syngman Rhee and Kim Il-Sung to unite Korea under their individual rule. A reconstructed Korea would not have softened either man's desire to govern the peninsula. Finally, by mid-1951, Chinese Communists had decided to consider an armistice only at the 38th parallel. They stubbornly and successfully rejected an initial U.N. attempt to divide the peninsula in areas *slightly* north of that parallel. Acheson later faulted himself for not seeing that the his adversaries viewed settling the war at any location other than the 38th parallel as a loss of face. Unlike Flanders, the Communists would not have been willing to risk losing Korea to the other side in reunification elections, giving the senator's plan little hope for success.⁵³

How did these congressional peace initiatives surface during the heyday of McCarthyism? In the summer of 1950, a Brooklyn judge gave five people six months to a year in jail for painting "peace" on a sidewalk and monument pillars in a local park. Asserting that he was not calling the perpetrators Communists by name, the magistrate remarked, "When you see a duck that has the characteristics of a duck and associates with ducks, then it is reasonable to assume it is a duck." A Hollywood studio shelved plans for making a movie about Hiawatha; since the Henry Wadsworth Longfellow character smoked the peace pipe to end intertribal warfare, the studio feared the movie could be perceived as "Communist peace propaganda."⁵⁴

⁵³ Flanders as the only senator submitting a plan in Foot, *A Substitute for Victory*, 141; Acheson's reflections from Acheson, *Present at the Creation*, 536.

⁵⁴ "Four Men and Woman Sentenced to Prison For Painting 'Peace' Signs in Prospect Park," *NYT*, 2 August 1950, p. 6; Communist peace propaganda in "The Nation," *NYT*, 17 September 1950, p. 144.

Nevertheless, the McCarthyites did not go after the peace proposals from Congress. The McMahon-Ribicoff universal brotherhood theme bore little resemblance to appeasement of communism. Friendship for the Russian people did not equate to sympathy for Stalin's regime. The lack of flamboyance of the other proposals made McCarthyite attacks unattractive. Johnson's resolution received no attention from the U.S. media until the Communist news agencies began publicizing it. Similarly, the national media did not pick up on Flanders' DMZ idea until his 1952 speech in Canada. Neither plan dominated the headlines, and, as Joseph McCarthy once told a reporter, "My only forum is page one."⁵⁵

More importantly, by 1951 the political atmosphere had changed considerably. Although conservatives initially backed Truman's intervention as an overdue stand against communism, they reversed field when the war ground to a stalemate and American casualties mounted. They wondered: If stopping communism in Korea was so important, why had the U.S. not done the same in China? The McCarthyites also played upon the public confusion about limited war as a national policy. Thus, by the spring of 1951, many hard-line anti-communists were criticizing the war. Days before Johnson entered his resolution, McCarthy advocated gradually replacing U.S. troops with Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalists in order to "let our Chinese friends fight our Chinese enemies." Soon, he had declared the war a U.S. defeat, calling it, the "planned betrayal of 1951." Other Republicans, such as Senator Irving Ives (NY) and Rep. Walter Judd (MN) attacked the armistice talks as they got under way, saying the Communists

⁵⁵ McCarthy quoted in Oshinsky, 167.

had outwitted the U.S. and its allies from the outset of the discussions. In such an atmosphere, McCarthy and others could not very well criticize proposals from Congress to end the war. They, like everyone else, were searching for a way out of Korea.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Chinese friends in "McCarthy Sees Acheson Ouster Within 3 Weeks," *Chicago Tribune*, 13 May 1951, p. 13; planned betrayal in Fenton, John H., "McCarthy Brands Korea a 'Betrayal'," *NYT*, 30 June 1951, p. 2; Ives and Judd in Foot, *A Substitute for Victory*, 61.

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION

Congressional attempts to influence American foreign policy sometimes bordered on the bizarre. In April 1952, Gordon Diesing, president and general counsel of a Catholic anti-communist organization, told House Majority Leader John McCormack about a sixteen-year old Irish Catholic girl who had received visions from God concerning world events. Her visions sometimes included stigmata wounds (similar to Christ's on the cross), and Diesing claimed she had correctly predicted the outbreak of the Korean War. Most recently, the Virgin Mary had told the child that the USSR would attack Europe and the U.S. in 1952. McCormack was so impressed that he arranged for Diesing to see a several top officials in the FBI, the military and the State Department, including Dean Acheson. The attorney asked Acheson to appoint him as the secretary's special assistant. In this role, Diesing envisioned a secret mission to show film footage of the girl to British Prime Minister Winston Churchill. Although Acheson turned Diesing down, McCormack followed up by lobbying for increased defense spending on the House floor. The majority leader insisted that the Soviets' "next surprise attack will probably be right in [the] continental United States," adding, "this very year . . . is the crucial period." Within a couple of days, McCormack asked President Truman to see the attorney and his tape of the girl's testimony. Truman politely begged off, adding, "I hope very much the prophecy . . . will not come to pass."¹

¹ Diesing's background in Diesing to Acheson, March 11, 1952; Meetings with officials in Diesing to Acheson, April 10, 1952, L.D.Battle to Diesing, April 22, 1952 and Acheson, Memorandum of Conversation, "Predictions of Hostilities between the USSR and the West in 1952," April 9, 1952; all from Alphabetical File, Di to Dz folder; Acheson Papers; Content of visions in Diesing to McCormack, April 5, 1952 and Truman to McCormack, April 10,

HST had more significant challenges in dealing with his own party during the war, some of which he brought upon himself. A major obstacle was the Dixiecrat bloc. Emboldened by the defeats of key Democratic allies of the president in the 1950 congressional elections, Southerners wasted no time reestablishing their control over his agenda by reasserting the power of the House Rules Committee. They openly opposed the administration by joining Republican cries for Acheson's head when China entered the war and escalated their complaints following MacArthur's removal. While Truman's refusal to dump the secretary was an admirable act of personal loyalty, it strained party unity. Nevertheless, HST's decision not to punish the Dixiecrats for bolting in 1948 paid off during the MacArthur hearings when Senator Russell's masterful leadership quelled the firestorm over the general. The president alienated his party in other ways, waiting until late in his term to commit adequate resources to congressional relations and, more importantly, through his slow response to corruption within his administration. Although many Dixiecrats abandoned Truman's appointed standard-bearer, Adlai Stevenson, in 1952, civil rights and McCarthyism were not the main reasons. Southern disenchantment with the Trumanites stemmed from the Korean War and corruption in government. Ironically, the incumbent's successful hardball tactics against Dwight Eisenhower late in the campaign motivated the GOP to emphasize Korea as an election issue, helping them dethrone the Democrats.

The Korean War marked the end of a brief period of bipartisanship in foreign policy that began during World War II. Cooperation between the parties disintegrated

1952, both from PSF: General File, McCormack, John folder; Truman Papers; all collections from HSTL. McCormack's speech on House floor in *CR*, 82nd Cong., 2d sess., vol. 98, pt. 8, April 8, 1952: 3733.

due to a combination of divergent philosophies regarding nonpartisanship, the personalities of the players involved and honest differences of opinion over international issues. Truman and Acheson had very different definitions of a bipartisan foreign policy compared to that of the Republicans. HST believed bipartisanship simply meant communicating his intentions to GOP leaders on Capitol Hill before publicizing his policies to the nation. To him, nonpartisanship meant that he should take the Republicans into his confidence, and they, in return, should trust his judgment and refrain from publicly criticizing his policies. The GOP believed they should be consulted, not just informed. Truman's relationships with senators Vandenberg and Taft demonstrate how personalities affected his interfacing with the opposition. Vandenberg was the only Republican the president went to for advice, respecting his knowledge of international affairs. HST president never would (or should) have trusted Taft, who was bent on opposing the administration and unapologetically used the Korean War to do so. Another example of how personalities affected bipartisanship was Millard Tydings' conduct of the hearings on Joseph McCarthy's accusations of communist spies in the State Department. Tydings' transparent partisanship, inflamed by his arrogance, drove a wedge between the parties shortly after the war's outset. Most importantly, a significant GOP faction, the China Lobby, wanted the U.S. to treat the Far East with the same priority as Europe in opposing Communist expansion during the early Cold War. This made bipartisan agreement on East Asia policy much more difficult than on European issues, where Truman enjoyed broad support for NATO and the Marshall Plan. Once the Communists prevailed in China, the administration had little hope of maintaining a

nonpartisan foreign policy. “Why stay in Korea?” wondered the Republicans as the war plunged into stalemate, much as many Americans in the 1960s asked about Vietnam and today ask about Iraq.

The commander in chief’s dealings with General MacArthur had immediate and long-term effects upon bipartisanship. When the war erupted, one of Truman’s few Republican advisors, John Foster Dulles, recommended replacing the general. The president, however, demurred, citing the need to keep peace with the Republicans. In retrospect, HST should have heeded Dulles’s advice because the backlash over the firing would have been less intense than in April 1951.

The MacArthur hearings a few months later raised discussion of a more lasting issue in American politics, the concept of executive privilege. While the Dwight Eisenhower administration was the first to coin the term “executive privilege,” the concept was much older. George Washington initiated the idea that Congress was not necessarily privy to everything that went on in the executive branch, including foreign policy. When the legislature requested records of diplomatic correspondence with France in 1794, Washington responded that he would comply, with the exception of those details that he judged, “for public considerations, ought not to be communicated.” Congress did not challenge this, establishing the precedent that the chief executive could withhold information from the legislature if he deemed it in the public interest to maintain secrecy. Virtually every president since has followed suit. During the MacArthur hearings, General Omar Bradley refused to divulge the details of a conversation with Truman, arguing that the discussion was confidential. A large

majority of the Senate joint committee agreed. HST refused to allow subordinates to testify to Congress or provide other information on several other occasions, most notably when he declined to release files on government employees associated with his Loyalty Security Program.²

Eisenhower took the notion of executive privilege to a new level, invoking the idea over forty times. After a decade of losing battles to obtain information from the Ike era, a Democratic Congress fought back by passing the Freedom of Information Act in 1966, which required the government to give the fullest disclosure of information possible when requested. Richard Nixon's presidency represented another step-change in the concept with his attempt to use executive privilege to withhold information incriminating him in the Watergate scandal. Most recently, the George W. Bush administration has used the concept to deny Congress the names of advisors on energy policy (a legitimate use) and to give former presidents the power to determine when records of their administrations may be released (a disturbing use). Putting Bush's approach in historical perspective, political scientist Mark Rozell observed, "What feels different this time is how both sides are really digging in hard."³

President Truman firmly believed in executive privilege, maintaining the status quo in its contribution to the power of the presidency. When he asserted the right to

² Mark J. Rozell, *Executive Privilege: The Dilemma of Secrecy and Democratic Accountability* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 32-140 describes the history of executive privilege from the presidencies of George Washington through George H. W. Bush. See Rozell, 44, for Eisenhower's staff coining the term; Washington quoted in Rozell, 34. The Loyalty Security Program was a reaction to McCarthyism, instituting a screening process to ensure federal government employees were not Communist infiltrators.

³ Rozell, *Executive Privilege*, 43; Freedom of Information Act in Thomas Blanton, "The World's Right to Know," *Foreign Policy* No. 131 (July-August 2002): 52; Bush administration in Blanton, 50-52. Rozell quoted in Reynolds Holding, "A Fight over Privileged Positions," July 12, 2007, *Time* <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1642883,00.html> (December 13, 2007).

preserve confidentiality, the public and Congress accepted it because he limited its application to private conversations with subordinates and to protecting the reputations of government employees from the excesses of McCarthyism. The following anecdote illustrates the integrity of HST's staff in maintaining confidentiality in the midst of his struggles to maintain a bipartisan foreign policy. Following Truman's December 1950 meeting with a bipartisan group of congressmen to discuss the declaration of a national emergency, a White House usher brought presidential aide Charles Murphy a memo found under the meeting table that apparently had been dropped accidentally. In this note, the Senate Minority Policy committee advised GOP attendees Robert Taft and Kenneth Wherry that if the president asked for a pledge of bipartisan support for his continuing conduct of the war, they should resist "at all costs." The reason: The war could turn bad by the Easter recess, and Republicans "might wish to accuse Truman of treason and should be free to do so." Murphy's lieutenants "fell upon it with whoops of joy," crying, "get it copied . . . show it to the President . . . leak it to the press." Murphy, however, simply smiled, took the memorandum, placed it in a sealed envelope and had it hand-delivered to Senator Taft. In the Harry S Truman administration, the maxim, "What's said in the White House stays in the White House," applied even to his bitterest enemies.⁴

Truman's efforts to sell the war to the public were successful, but not flawless. Initially, the anti-communist fervor of the day squelched popular dissent. One example was Editor John W. Powell of the *China Monthly Review*, who received a \$130,000 fine

⁴Richard E. Neustadt, "The Constraining of the President: the Presidency after Watergate," *British Journal of Political Science* 4, no. 4 (October 1974): 383.

A number of historians have criticized President Truman for committing troops to Korea without congressional approval. Few, however, have thoroughly examined Congress's acquiescence in allowing this to happen. Though Korea was the first U.S. military venture in conjunction with the U.N., the legislators buried their heads in the sand when the president argued that a U.N. resolution gave him the authority to commit American troops to battle. A large majority of senators and representatives were in office during the debates over the UNPA only five years earlier, and therefore knew that Congress had never intended to give up its constitutional mandate to approve American troops going into battle. Senator Taft of the opposition Republicans was the only one to bring this up at the time, while a couple of his GOP colleagues raised the issue only after the war turned sour. Yet, the Democrats deserve the most blame for congressional reticence for they, unlike the Republicans, had the ear of the president. With better advice from the Democratic leadership in the Senate, HST almost certainly would have obtained congressional approval—if the legislators had delayed their Fourth of July recess.⁷

Korea was the first of two crises in which Congress failed to properly exert its authority to approve national decisions to go to war. In 1964, President Lyndon Johnson, a senator during the Korean conflict, determined not to repeat Truman's error and forged passage of the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. Responding to a North

⁷ For additional critics of Truman in addition to those in chapter 6, note 52, see Francis D. Wormuth and Edwin B. Firmage, *To Chain the Dog of War: The War Power of Congress in History and Law* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 28-9 and Hess, 225; For an opposing view see Thomas M. Franck and Faiza Patel, "UN Police Action in Lieu of War: 'The Old Order Changeth'," *The American Journal of International Law* 85, no. 1 (January 1991): 70-71.

Vietnamese gunboat attack on an American ship, Johnson secured a congressional mandate to “repel any armed attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression.” Moreover, Congress authorized the president to use armed force to “assist any member or protocol state of the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty” requesting assistance. This gave Johnson the legal footing to expand the defense of a U.S. gunboat into a war sending over a half-million troops overseas. Congress responded to the folly of the Tonkin Gulf Resolution with the War Powers Resolution (WPR) of 1973, which was somewhat of an improvement. While the WPR forces presidents to obtain congressional approval to maintain U.S. troops in extended combat, it allows the chief executive to dispatch the military into harm’s way for ninety days before seeking a validation from Congress. However, it is quite unlikely that Congress would remove troops from an incomplete military operation after three months, even if it disagreed with the decision to send them into battle in the first place.

The legislative branch indicated signs of reasserting itself in 1991 when it forced the George H. W. Bush administration to fight a tough political battle for approval to send U.S. forces to drive Saddam Hussein’s Iraqi troops from Kuwait, producing close votes of 250-183 in the House and 52-47 in the Senate. When Bush’s son, George W., set about to oust Hussein in 2002, he took care to solicit a congressional resolution approving his action several months in advance. Time will tell if Capitol Hill will force the executive branch to end a war, as it did in Vietnam.⁸

⁸ Johnson and the Tonkin Resolution in Lofgren, “Mr. Truman’s War,” 239; “Joint Resolution of Congress H.J. Res 1145,” August 7, 1964, The Avalon Project at Yale Law School, <<http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/tonkin-g.htm#joint>> (December 14, 2007); War Powers Resolution in Wormuth and Firmage, 215-6; Kuwait vote in Hess, 194-5.

The Korean War demonstrated that Congress could be a positive force for peace. Senator Flanders' plan for a DMZ near the Yalu River had some good features that could have been helpful had he pushed it before China attacked U.N. forces. The McMahon-Ribicoff resolution began a propaganda war with the Soviets that nevertheless opened a small crack in the Iron Curtain. McMahon pushed HST to pursue talks with Stalin, albeit unsuccessfully. Surprisingly, Edwin Johnson's solitary peace resolution caught the attention of the Communist press, starting the momentum leading to the beginning of the Kaesong peace talks. Yet, war would continue for two more painful years. As someone in the Truman White House wrote, "Korea is one place where we have had to learn hard."⁹

⁹Author unknown, "Some Notes on Republican Campaign Statements Regarding Korea," n.d.; White House file, Eisenhower-Korea troops folder; David Lloyd Papers, HSTL.

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APPENDIX A

UNITED NATIONS CHARTER (EXCERPTS)

Article 39

The Security Council shall determine the existence of any threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression and shall make recommendations, or decide what measures shall be taken in accordance with Articles 41 and 42, to maintain or restore international peace and security.

Article 40

In order to prevent an aggravation of the situation, the Security Council may, before making the recommendations or deciding upon the measures provided for in Article 39, call upon the parties concerned to comply with such provisional measures as it deems necessary or desirable. Such provisional measures shall be without prejudice to the rights, claims, or position of the parties concerned. The Security Council shall duly take account of failure to comply with such provisional measures.

Article 41

The Security Council may decide what measures not involving the use of armed force are to be employed to give effect to its decisions, and it may call upon the Members of the United Nations to apply such measures. These may include complete or partial interruption of economic relations and of rail, sea, air, postal, telegraphic, radio, and other means of communication, and the severance of diplomatic relations.

Article 42

Should the Security Council consider that measures provided for in Article 41 would be inadequate or have proved to be inadequate, it may take such action by air, sea, or land forces as may be necessary to maintain or restore international peace and security. Such action may include demonstrations, blockade, and other operations by air, sea, or land forces of Members of the United Nations.

Article 43

1. All Members of the United Nations, in order to contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security, undertake to make available to the Security Council, on its call and in accordance with a special agreement or agreements, armed forces, assistance, and facilities, including rights of passage, necessary for the purpose of maintaining international peace and security.

Article 43 (ctd)

2. Such agreement or agreements shall govern the numbers and types of forces, their degree of readiness and general location, and the nature of the facilities and assistance to be provided.
3. The agreement or agreements shall be negotiated as soon as possible on the initiative of the Security Council. They shall be concluded between the Security Council and Members or between the Security Council and groups of Members and shall be subject to ratification by the signatory states in accordance with their respective constitutional processes.

APPENDIX B

UNITED NATIONS PARTICIPATION ACT OF 1945

Section 6

The President is authorized to negotiate a special agreement or agreements with the Security Council which shall be subject to the approval of the Congress by appropriate Act or joint resolution providing for the numbers and types of armed forces, their degree of readiness and general location, and the nature of facilities and assistance, including rights of passage, to be made available to the Security Council on its call for the purpose of maintaining international peace and security in accordance with article 43 of said Charter. The President shall not be deemed to require the authorization of the Congress to make available to the Security Council on its call in order to take action under article 42 of said Charter and pursuant to such special agreement or agreements the armed forces, facilities, or assistance provided for therein: Provided, That nothing herein contained shall be construed as an authorization to the President by the Congress to make available to the Security Council for such purpose armed forces, facilities, or assistance in addition to the forces, facilities, and assistance provided for in such special agreement or agreements.

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