*The Decision for War in Korea:*

*Pyongyang, Moscow, and Beijing*

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The sixty-fifth anniversary of the outbreak of the Korean War is an auspicious time to take stock of the state of knowledge and debate about the important issue of the war’s origins. Scholars now have access to extensive documentary evidence from Russia and China of the decision-making on the communist side and have had well over a decade to analyze these records.[[1]](#footnote-1) Earlier interpretations of the war’s origins that were based primarily on American sources have been re-evaluated in light of the new evidence and the more detached perspective made possible by the end of the Cold War. In particular, scholars have gained a more sophisticated understanding of the complex interactions between the domestic and international factors that combined to produce this devastating war.

This brief essay will survey what is now known about the key question of how and why a decision was made to attempt to reunify Korea through a full-scale military campaign against the South. An influential interpretation of the war’s origins published in 1990, based primarily on American sources, argues that the conflict did not have a clear starting point, that as a civil war it evolved gradually from the unrest caused by the division of Korea into two ideologically hostile states.[[2]](#footnote-2) It is true, of course, that the precondition for the decision for war was the division of the country by the United States and the Soviet Union, who neither intended nor desired such an outcome. However, as the Russian documents discussed below record in detail, the move from armed border clashes to full-scale invasion of the ROK was a deliberate decision made by specific individuals at a specific time. As we deepen our understanding of the war on the 65th anniversary of its outbreak, it is important that we begin with an accurate view of how and why it began.

The first issue to establish is the relationship between the North Korean leadership and its great power patron, the Soviet Union. While Kim Il Sung shared with political leaders throughout Korea his determination to end the tragic division of the country, the DPRK leader also shared with Syngman Rhee’s government in Seoul an inability to use military force to bring about this end without the approval and support of the state on which he relied for his political and military survival. Prior to the release of Russian archival documents on Korea, some historians argued that the DPRK could have launched the attack on the ROK on its own.[[3]](#footnote-3) However, the thousands of pages of Russian documents recording Moscow’s dealings with Korea from 1945-1950 that were declassified and made available to scholars following the collapse of Communist rule in Russia reveal a very different picture.

The records of the Russian Foreign Ministry, the Ministry of Defense, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, and the highest offices of the Kremlin show that, although the DPRK gained considerable autonomy in the years following the Korean War, prior to and during the war the rump state created in the northern half of the peninsula was profoundly dependent on and subordinate to the Soviet Union. In addition to their economic and military dependence on Soviet assistance, the North Korean leadership naturally deferred to their Soviet mentors as the indisputable leaders of the worldwide Communist movement.[[4]](#footnote-4)

When the Soviet Army entered Korea in 1945, Moscow intended to extract Korea’s economic resources for its own use. It therefore immediately brought its occupation zone north of the 38th parallel firmly into the Soviet economic system, severing the North’s previous ties with the rest of Korea as well as with Japan and Manchuria. Furthermore, because Korea had been economically devastated by Japanese rule and Tokyo’s wartime exactions, the North was dependent on economic support from the Soviet Union. Except for very limited trade with Hong Kong and two Manchurian ports, the Soviet Union was the only source of supply and the only market for North Korean goods. Moreover, since Japan had permitted only a small number of Koreans to gain higher education or management experience and most of those had fled to the American occupation zone to avoid persecution as Japanese collaborators, North Korea was dependent on the Soviets for technical expertise in virtually all fields of economy and administration.[[5]](#footnote-5)

The historian Bruce Cumings argues that China always offered an alternative source of support to North Korea, but Russian and Chinese sources show that prior to the war this interaction was quite limited.[[6]](#footnote-6) Besides, in the early years of the People’s Republic, the Chinese were themselves dependent on Soviet assistance for their economic and military development.[[7]](#footnote-7)

Perhaps even more importantly, Kim Il Sung was constrained by his political dependence on Moscow. With little support base within Korea and faced with numerous challenges to his leadership from more prominent political figures, Kim Il Sung owed his position solely to Moscow’s patronage. Moreover, with American troops across the sectoral divide, Soviet authorities exercised very close supervision of Korean affairs, even after Soviet troops were withdrawn. In the pre-war years, DPRK leaders willingly subordinated themselves to Moscow’s direction. Like Communist leaders elsewhere, Kim Il Sung feared and respected the Soviet leader, Joseph Stalin; he neither could nor would take an important step without Moscow’s approval. As Kim Il Sung declared to Soviet Ambassador Terentii F. Shtykov in January 1950 “he himself cannot begin an attack, because he is a Communist, a disciplined person and for him the order of Comrade Stalin is law.”[[8]](#footnote-8)

For all the above reasons, after the establishment of the DPRK and the ROK in 1948 ended any hope for reunification by political means, Kim Il Sung turned to Stalin for permission to reunify the country by military means. While in Moscow in March 1949 to establish the first formal treaties between the DPRK and the USSR, the North Korean leader first raised the issue of a military campaign against the South. At that time, however, American armed forces were still in South Korea. Stalin consequently refused the request and informed Kim Il Sung that while he should be prepared to counter-attack in case of an invasion from the South, he must not mount an offensive.[[9]](#footnote-9)

In August 1949, after the U.S. had withdrawn its armed forces from the ROK, Kim Il Sung again requested permission to attack the South, this time claiming that Seoul was preparing to invade the DPRK. Under the new circumstances, the Soviet leadership was ready to entertain Kim’s request, but in the end decided that the limited offensive operation Kim proposed was inadvisable at that time. Since the Korean People’s Army was not sufficiently strong, in their opinion, such an operation would probably turn into a prolonged civil war, which would be disadvantageous both militarily and politically. Moreover, a “drawn out civil war” initiated by an attack from the North would give the Americans an opportunity to intervene “more decisively than they had in China,” and in general to agitate against the Soviet Union. Thus, an attack on the South would be “correct” only if the North Koreans could be certain that the war would end quickly. In the meantime, the Soviet leadership instructed the North Koreans to strengthen the partisan movement in the South in order to prepare to unify the country through an armed uprising.[[10]](#footnote-10) It should be noted that the Soviet leadership did not question the goal of bringing the rest of Korea under DPRK control; the issue was only whether the means would bring disadvantageous results to Moscow.

On 17 January 1950 Kim Il Sung again raised the issue, this time with increased urgency. The establishment of the People’s Republic of China in October 1949 had made it intolerable to the DPRK leader that Korean Communists were not allowed similarly to bring revolution to the rest of their country. Citing a promise Mao Zedong allegedly made in May 1949 that the People’s Liberation Army would help the Koreans once their struggle with the Chinese Nationalists was over, Kim fervently entreated Ambassador Shykov to allow him to go to Moscow to discuss with Stalin the possibility of launching an attack on South Korea. On 30 January the Soviet leader informed Kim that he was “ready to help him in this matter” but that “such a large matter in regard to South Korea such as he wants to undertake needs large preparation.” Since he remained worried about the possibility of an American intervention on behalf of South Korea, which could endanger the Soviet Union, Stalin added that “the matter must be organized so that there would not be too great a risk.”[[11]](#footnote-11)

In late March Kim Il Sung and DPRK Foreign Minister Pak Hon-yong went to Moscow to work out plans for the offensive together with Soviet military and political officials. Stalin personally met with the North Korean leaders for three discussions, during which he explained his reasoning in finally supporting their request. He explained that the “changed international situation” made it now possible to reunify Korea by military means. First, the victory of the Chinese Communist Party in October 1949 which freed Chinese troops to go to Korea, if necessary. Moreover, the establishment of the People’s Republic of China showed the weakness of the United States. The Americans had not fought to prevent a Communist victory in China, and thus would not fight for the smaller prize of Korea. Another element of the “changed international situation” was the defensive alliance Moscow and Beijing had concluded the previous month, which, Stalin declared, made the Americans “even more hesitant to challenge the Communists in Asia.”[[12]](#footnote-12)

Reinforcing his point, the Soviet leader added that “according to information coming from the United States, it really is so. The prevailing mood is not to interfere.” This statement appears to be a reference to the new American strategic policy for East Asia adopted in late December 1949, titled NSC 48, whose substance Stalin was in a position to know through his highly-placed British spy in Washington, Donald McLean. In any case, on January 12 Secretary of State Dean Acheson revealed the new policy in a public statement at the National Press Club. In light of the establishment of the People’s Republic of China and the limited military resources the U.S. had available in the wake of post-World War II demobilization, strategic planners in Washington had decided to restrict the territory the US was committed to defending in Asia to lands lying to the east of a line drawn between Japan and the Asian mainland and the Philippines and the mainland. The new “defense perimeter” thus excluded the Korean peninsula.

From Stalin’s point of view, Washington’s new strategic policy for East Asia created a power vacuum in the region, which he moved quickly to fill. In the first weeks of 1950 the Soviet leader altered his entire policy toward East Asia. On January 6 he informed Mao Zedong that he would now conclude an alliance with the People’s Republic of China, which he had been unwilling to do when Mao had arrived in Moscow the previous month.[[13]](#footnote-13) Because the agreement the Soviet Union had concluded with its wartime allies at Yalta in 1945, which had given the USSR significant territorial gains in East Asia, had been contingent on Moscow concluding a treaty with the Nationalist government of China, Stalin feared that abrogating that treaty through an alliance with the PRC would give the Americans a pretext for revising other terms of the Yalta agreement. However, after learning of NSC 48, Stalin concluded that such fears were baseless. He thus moved not only to ally with Beijing, but also to approve the North Korean attack on South Korea, to recognize Ho Chi Minh’s government in Vietnam, and to instruct the Japanese Communist Party to adopt a forward stance in place of its earlier defensive policy.[[14]](#footnote-14)

Completing his explanation of the “changed international situation” to Kim Il Sung and Pak Hon-yong, Stalin cited the fact that the USSR now had an atomic bomb. Nonetheless, despite these developments, the cautious Soviet dictator, who had come close to defeat at the hands of Nazi Germany, remained worried that the North Korean action might pull the Soviet Union into war with the United States. He was not in principle opposed to such a war, but he wanted to be sure that it would not come before the USSR was strong enough to win it. He therefore told Kim Il Sung and Pak Hon-yong that they had “to weigh once again all the ‘pros’ and ‘cons’ of the liberation. First of all, will Americans interfere or not?” Second, since he counted on the availability of Chinese reinforcements should North Korea need help, Stalin stipulated that “the liberation can be started only if the Chinese leadership endorses it.” [[15]](#footnote-15)

Kim Il Sung confidently asserted to Stalin that the Americans will not interfere. “Now that they know the USSR and China are behind Korea and are able to help it, Americans will not risk a big war.” As for the Chinese, Kim assured Stalin that Mao Zedong “always supported our desire to liberate the whole country” and had said on several occasions that “after the Chinese revolution is completed, China will help us, if necessary, it will provide troops.” Nonetheless, the North Korean leader was reluctant to seek assistance from his Chinese comrades, and thus proudly declared that we “want to rely on our own forces to unify Korea. We believe that we can do it.”[[16]](#footnote-16)

Stalin then discussed the measures that would be needed to prepare the Korean People’s Army for war and assured Kim and Pak that the Soviet Union would provide the requisite weapons and supplies. The Soviet leader laid out a three stage plan for the offensive. First, troops would be concentrated near the 38th parallel. Second, the DPRK would issue new proposals for reunification. Third, once those proposals are rejected, an attack would take place. Stalin agreed with Kim’s suggestion to begin by engaging ROK forces on the Ongjin peninsula, “as it will help disguise who initiated combat activities.” After the South counterattacks on Ongjin, the DPRK would have a pretext for enlarging the front. Stalin emphasized that “the war should be quick and speedy. Southerners and Americans should not have time to come to their senses. They won’t have time to put up a strong resistance and to mobilize international support.”[[17]](#footnote-17)

Stalin made it clear to Kim Il Sung and Pak Hon-yong that they should not count on direct Soviet participation in the war, as he was determined to avoid being drawn into premature war with the United States. He thus repeated his instruction that Kim must consult with Mao Zedong before the war could begin. Assuming Beijing’s approval would be forthcoming, the Soviet and North Korean leaders agreed that “the North Korean army would be fully mobilized by the summer of 1950 and by that time the Korean General Staff, with the assistance of Soviet advisers, will draw the concrete plan for the offensive.” [[18]](#footnote-18)

In accordance with Stalin’s instructions, Kim Il Sung went secretly to Beijing on 13 May and informed Mao Zedong that he planned to attack the South. Mao was surprised and sent a telegram to Stalin requesting confirmation of this news. After receiving a reply from the Soviet leader that he had, in fact, decided to proceed with the military action, in Korea, Mao Zedong had little choice but to agree to the plan. Having just concluded an alliance with the Soviet Union that was essential for the PRC’s economic development and national security, Mao was not in a position to refuse to grant the assistance that Stalin counted on him to provide. Consequently, on 15 May Mao informed Kim Il Sung that he had intended to help North Korea liberate the South once Taiwan was liberated, but since this decision had been made to proceed first in Korea, he would assist the common cause by sending troops if the Americans intervened.

According to Kim Il Sung’s report to the Soviet ambassador to Beijing, Mao explained that “it is not convenient for the Soviet Union to participate in combat activities because it is tied by the agreement with America on the demarcation line along the 38th parallel. China is not tied by similar obligations and therefore can easily extend assistance to the North.”[[19]](#footnote-19)

After Kim Il Sung returned from Beijing in mid-May, preparations for the campaign proceeded rapidly. At the same time, Stalin became increasingly nervous over growing signs of American commitment to South Korea, including a $100 million economic and military aid package for the ROK and visits by high-ranking American officials to Seoul. On 29 May Ambassador Shtykov reported to Stalin that most of the armaments and equipment the Soviet Union had agreed to supply for the offensive had arrived. Kim Il Sung had inspected the newly formed divisions of the KPA and concluded that they would be ready for combat by the end of June. The KPA Chief of Staff together with Soviet General Vasiliev had prepared the “overall program for the offensive,” which Kim Il Sung had approved.[[20]](#footnote-20)

The movement of KPA troops to their positions 10-15 kilometers from the 38th parallel began on 12 June. Shtykov reported to Stalin the following day that “a special meeting was held for commanders of divisions, chief of staff and chiefs of artillery of the divisions and of the first echelon. At this meeting specific and concrete assignments were given to each formation. Special stress was put on keeping total secrecy of the preliminary arrangements.”[[21]](#footnote-21) Because of the emphasis on preventing the enemy from learning of the plan, Beijing was not informed of the specific preparations. The Chinese leadership learned that the offensive had begun only from foreign news services reporting the attack, a slight that caused lasting resentment in Beijing.[[22]](#footnote-22)

On 15 June the operational plan for the offensive was ready and the following day Shtykov reported to Stalin that the advance would start in the early morning of 25 June. “At the first stage, formations and units of the KPA will begin action on the Ongjin peninsula like a local operation and then deliver the main strike along the western coast of Korea to the South. At the second stage, Seoul must be taken and the Han River put under control. At the same time, on the eastern front, North Korean troops will liberate the cities of Chunchon and Kangnung. As a result, the main forces of the South Korean army have to be encircled around Seoul and eliminated. The third stage, the final one, will be devoted to the liberation of the rest of Korea by destroying the remaining enemy forces and seizing major population centers and ports.”[[23]](#footnote-23)

As the invasion date drew near, Stalin continued to be concerned about the possibility of American intervention. Although he approved Shtykov’s request on 20 June to allow the KPA to use Soviet ships for amphibious landings in the South, he refused to allow Soviet personnel on the ships “because it may give the adversary a pretext for interference by the USA.”[[24]](#footnote-24) At the same time, however, the Soviet leader made a decision that greatly increased the likelihood of American intervention. On 21 June he received a report from Shtykov relaying Kim Il Sung’s message that North Korean intelligence had reported that Southerners had learned the details of the forthcoming KPA advance and were reinforcing their troops in the direction of Ongjin. In light of this development, Kim Il Sung urged that the original plan of the offensive be modified. “Instead of a local operation on Ongjin peninsula as a prelude to the general offensive, Kim Il Sung suggests an overall attack on 25 June along the whole front line.”[[25]](#footnote-25) Stalin replied the same day that he agreed with Kim Il Sung’s idea for “an immediate advance along the whole front line.”[[26]](#footnote-26)

The last-minute decision to alter the operational plan may have been sensible from a strictly military point of view, but it reflected a disastrous failure to foresee how a sudden, massive tank-driven assault across an internationally recognized border would be perceived in the West. Leaders of the United States and of all Western countries immediately viewed the invasion of South Korea through the lens of the trauma of World War II that had ended just five years earlier. They saw the attack of 25 June as a Soviet offensive which, like the piecemeal Nazi aggression of the 1930’s, would lead to a new world war if it were not rebuffed. As a result, the United States quickly formed a coalition of fifteen countries that entered the war in defense of the Republic of Korea, fighting under the banner of the United Nations. The final decision by the North Koreans and Soviets regarding how to extend Communist rule into South Korea thus precipitated the outcome they hoped most of all to avoid—an American intervention that would prolong the war and deny them victory.

How then are we to view the decision for war in Korea as we mark the sixty-fifth anniversary of its outbreak? The evidence now available from the Communist side makes it abundantly clear that the attack on South Korea that began 25 June 1950 was the product of a carefully considered decision made after deliberations extending over many months, beginning in March 1949. It was not simply an escalation of the border fighting that occurred during that same period. Second, the evidence makes it clear that the initiative to reunify Korea through a full-scale military campaign came from Kim Il Sung but the decision to undertake such an action was made by his Soviet patron, Joseph Stalin. The Chinese leadership in Beijing played a supporting role in approving the decision already made in Moscow, but did not play any further role in the deliberations.

The question of Moscow’s reasoning regarding an invasion of South Korea is thus of central importance in understanding how the war came about. The Russian documentary record provides considerable evidence regarding why Joseph Stalin made this fateful decision, but since the Soviet leader was under no compulsion to record his reasoning fully, the question remains at least partially open. It is clear, however, that Stalin’s response to Kim Il Sung’s request to mount an offensive against South Korea differed significantly from the response of American officials in Seoul to statements by Syngman Rhee’s government expressing the wish to use military force to reunify the country. The Americans were unwilling even to consider such a venture, as they did not want to be drawn into a war on the Korean peninsula. The US thus failed to provide the ROK with the offensive weapons needed for such an action and furthermore informed the leadership in Seoul that any such attempt on their part would lead to a complete cessation of American aid. The Soviet leadership, on the other hand, never questioned the desirability of a military offensive against South Korea; the only question was whether such a campaign could succeed without bringing unfavorable consequences.

We must therefore ask why it was more important to Moscow to gain control over the southern half of Korea than it was to Washington to gain control over the north. Both great powers saw the issue of the political fate of Korea in terms of their concerns over the war-making capacity of Japan. The Soviet leadership was keenly aware of Russia’s loss to Japan in 1904/05, Japan’s occupation of much of Siberia from 1918-1922, and the real possibility of an attack on the Soviet Union in the 1930’s. Moscow was therefore determined to deny Japan access to Korea—the land bridge to an invasion of the Soviet Union. Having the northern half of the peninsula as a client state provided some security, but Washington’s lenient occupation policy in Japan and its support for right-wing political figures in South Korea heightened Soviet anxiety that Tokyo, Seoul and Washington would join forces to attack not only the DPRK but also the Soviet Union itself. The United States, on the other hand, was concerned that a Communist government in all of Korea would put dangerous political pressure on Japan—the reason Washington proposed a joint occupation of the peninsula in 1945. However, with Japan firmly under American occupation while the US faced escalating commitments to contain Soviet expansion in Europe and the Near East, Washington did not regard securing the Korean peninsula as a top priority.

Despite Moscow’s concerns over a possible Japanese attack via Korea, Joseph Stalin was not willing to risk war with the United States in order to gain control over southern Korea. As the Russian documents reveal, the possibility that a North Korean attack on South Korea might lead to American intervention was the key factor in Stalin’s deliberations. The Soviet leader therefore approved Kim Il Sung’s request to mount an invasion of the ROK only because he concluded, based on solid intelligence, that the US would not enter the war. In other words, if Washington had made it clear that it would defend the ROK against attack from the North, the war would never have begun.

Note: An earlier version of this paper was published in Pierre Journoud, ed., *La guerre de Coree et ses enjeux strategiques, de 1950 a nos jours* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2014)

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1. A collection of captured North Korean documents has long been available in the National Archives of the United States, but these include only records that the North Koreans and their Soviet advisers did not destroy or evacuate before they withdrew from Pyongyang as UN troops entered the city in October 1950. This collection thus does not include records of high-level decision-making. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War, Volume II: The Roaring of the Cataract, 1947-1950* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990). Cumings repeats this argument in *Korea’s Place in the Sun: A Modern History* (New York and London: W.W. Norton and Company, 1997), only slightly altering his 1990 conclusions after the publication of translations of the most important Russian documents. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The most prominent such interpretation was Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War, Volume II: The Roaring of the Cataract, 1947-1950.* Similar arguments were made by Callum A. MacDonald, in *Korea: The War Before Vietnam* (London: Macmillan, 1986) and Gye-Dong Kim, in “Who Invented the Korean War?” in James Cotton and Ian Neary, eds., *The Korean War in History* Manchester, U.K.: University of Manchester Press, 1989). Bruce Cumings continues this argument in *Korea’s Place in the Sun,* p. 236., asserting that the return of tens of thousands of Korean soliders from China in 1949 “enhanced Kim Il Sung’s bargaining power, enabling him to maneuver between the two Communist giants.” [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. From 1991-1995, Kathryn Weathersby gradually obtained access to the vast collection of documents on Korea held by the archives of the Russian Foreign Ministry, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, and the Ministry of Defense. She also obtained copies of approximately 2,000 pages of records of the highest level decision-making on Korea held by the Presidential Archive in Moscow. For a fuller discussion of these documents, see K. Weathersby, “The Soviet Role in the Korean War: The State of Historical Knowledge,” in William Stueck, *The Korean War in World History* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2004): 61-92. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Russian Foreign Ministry files on Korea are filled with requests from Kim Il Sung for technical advisers to train his new administration in everything from railroads to banking to health care. See Kathryn Weathersby, “Making Foreign Policy Under Stalin: The Case of Korea,” in Niels Erik Rosenfeldt, Bent Jensen, and Erik Kulavig, eds. *Mechanisms of Power in the Soviet Union* (London and New York: Macmillan Press/St. Martin’s Press, 1993): 224-240. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. This point is emphasized in Sergei N. Goncharov, John W. Lewis, and Xue Litai, *Uncertain Partners: Stalin, Mao, and the Korean War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993): 134. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. See the discussion of the early years of the Sino-Soviet alliance in Odd Arne Westad, ed., *Brothers in Arms: The Rise and Fall of the Sino-Soviet Alliance* (Washington and Stanford: Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Stanford University Press, 1998). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Archive of the Foreign Relations of the Russian Federation [hereafter AVPRF] , Fond 059a, Opis 5a, Delo 3, Papka 11, Listy 87-91. For a translation of the entire document, see K. Weathersby, “To Attack or Not to Attack?: Stalin, Kim Il Sung, and the Prelude to War,” *Cold War International History Project Bulletin,* 5 (Spring 1995): 1-9. Available online at www.cwihp.org. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Conversation between Stalin and the governmental delegation of the DPRK headed by the Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers of the DPRK Kim Il Sung, 7 March 1949. Cited in Evgenii P. Bajanov and Natalia Bajanova, “The Korean Conflict, 1950-1953: The Most Mysterious War of the 20th Century,” unpublished manuscript based on records from the Presidential Archive of Russia. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Ciphered telegram from [Soviet Ambassador to the DPRK] Shtykov to [Soviet Foreign Minister] Vyshinsky, 3 September 1949, AVPRF, Fond 059a, Opis 5a, Delo 4, Papka 11, Listy 136-138; Ciphered telegram from [First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs] Gromyko to [Charge d’affairs of the Soviet embassy in Pyongyang] Tunkin, 11 September 1949 AVPRF, Fond 059a, Opis 5a, Delo 3, Papka 11, List 45*.*; Ciphered telegram from Tunkin to the Soviet Foreign Ministry (in reply to telegram of 11 September), 14 September 1949, AVPRF, Fond 059a, Opis 5a, Delo 3, Papka 11, Listy 75-77. For the full text of these documents, see K. Weathersby, “To Attack or Not to Attack?: Stalin, Kim Il Sung, and the Prelude to War,” *Cold War International History Project Bulletin,* 5 (Spring 1995): 1-9. Available online at www.cwihp.org. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Ciphered Telegram from Shtykov to Vyshinsky, 19 January 1950, AVPRF, Fond 059a, Opis 5a, Delo 3, Papka 11, Listy 87-91; Ciphered telegram from Stalin to Shtykov, 30 January 1950, AVPRF, Fond 059a, Opis 5a, Delo 3, Papka 11, List 92. For the full text of these documents, see K. Weathersby, “To Attack or Not to Attack?: Stalin, Kim Il Sung, and the Prelude to War,” *Cold War International History Project Bulletin,* 5 (Spring 1995): 1-9. Available online at www.cwihp.org. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Report on Kim Il Sung’s visit to the USSR, March 30-April 25, 1950. Prepared by the International Department of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolshevik), Cited in Evgenii P. Bajanov and Natalia Bajanova, “The Korean Conflict, 1950-1953: The Most Mysterious War of the 20th Century,” unpublished manuscript based on records from the Presidential Archive of Russia. For the full text of this document, see K. Weathersby, “Should We Fear This? Stalin and the Danger of War with America,” Working Paper No. 39, Cold War International History Project, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington, D.C., July 2002. pp. 9-12, available online at www.cwihp.org. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. This message to Mao was given before Secretary of State Dean Acheson’s January 12 speech at the National Press Club. This chronology leads K. Weathersby to conclude that Stalin had learned of the substance of NSC-48 from Donald McLean prior to January 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Record of the Conversation between Comrade I.V. Stalin and Chairman of the Central People’s Government of the People’s Republic of China Mao Zedong on 16 December 1949. Archive of the President of the Russian Federation [Hereafter APRF], Fond 45, Opis 1, Delo 329, Listy 9-17; Record of Conversation between Comrade I. V. Stalin and Chairman of the Central People’s Government of the People’s Republic of China Mao Zedong on 22 January 1950, APRF, Fond 45, Opis 1, Delo 329, Listy 29-38. For the full text of these documents, see *Cold War International History Project Bulletin* 6/7, pp. 5-9. Available online at www.cwihp.org. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Report on Kim Il Sung’s visit to the USSR, March 30-April 25, 1950. Prepared by the International Department of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolshevik), Cited in Evgenii P. Bajanov and Natalia Bajanova, “The Korean Conflict, 1950-1953: The Most Mysterious War of the 20th Century,” unpublished manuscript based on records from the Presidential Archive of Russia. For the full text of this document, see K. Weathersby, “Should We Fear This? Stalin and the Danger of War with America,” Working Paper No. 39, Cold War International History Project, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington, D.C., July 2002. pp. 9-12, available online at www.cwihp.org. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. *Ibid,* pp. 9-10. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. *Ibid.*, p. 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. *Ibid.* pp. 10-11. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Telegram from [Soviet Ambassador to Beijing] Roshchin to Stalin, 16 May 1950. Cited in Evgenii P. Bajanov and Natalia Bajanova, “The Korean Conflict, 1950-1953: The Most Mysterious War of the 20th Century,” unpublished manuscript based on records from the Presidential Archive of Russia. For the full text of this document, see K. Weathersby, “Should We Fear This? Stalin and the Danger of War with America,” Working Paper No. 39, Cold War International History Project, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington, D.C., July 2002, pp.12-13. Available online at www.cwihp.org. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Telegram from Shtykov to Stalin, 29 May 1950. *Ibid,* pp. 13-14. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Telegram from Shtykov to Stalin, 13 June 1950. *Ibid.* p. 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Li Haiwen, “Zhonggong Zhongyang Jiujing Heshi Jueding Zhiyuanjun Chuguo Zuozhan” Dangde Wenxian No. 5 (1993): 85. Cited in Shen Zhi-hua, “Sino-North Korean Conflict and Its Resolution during the Korean War,” *Cold War International History Project Bulletin* 14/15, p.9. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Telegram from Shtykov to Stalin, 16 June 1950. *Ibid.*  [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Telegram from Stalin to Shtykov, 21 June 1950. *Ibid.* p. 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Telegram from Shtykov to Stalin, 21 June 1950. *Ibid.* [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Telegram from Stalin to Shtykov, 21 June 1950. *Ibid.* [↑](#footnote-ref-26)