

6·25전쟁기 중공의 인식과 대응

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6·25전쟁(1950~1953)은 중화인민공화국의 건국 직후에 개입하게 된 첫 국지(局地) 전쟁이었으며 함축적 의미가 크고 광범위하다. 한반도는 지정학적으로 매우 중요한 지역이다. 한반도 주변국가 가운데 하나인 중국이 이 지역의 실질적 또는 잠재적 군사적 충돌에서 중립적 입장을 취하기는 불가능하다. 6·25전쟁(1950~1953)이 바로 그러한 분쟁중의 하나였다. 따라서, 한국전이 임박해지면서 중국 지도부는 주로 국익적 차원에서 이에 대처하기 위한 필요한 조치를 취해야만 했으며, 이 전쟁의 경우 이데올로기 또한 일정 부분 역할을 했다.

한국전은 북한이 남한에 대해 대규모 군사적 공격을 개시하면서 발발했다. 중국 지도부는 6·25전쟁 발발 이전 김일성이 남한에 대해 군사적 공격을 개시할 것이라는 계획을 알고 있었으며, 소련 최고 지도자인 스탈린이 재가를 한 이후 마지못해 전쟁을 승인했다.

구소련에서 입수한 문서를 보면 중국 지도부가 자세한 전쟁 일정을 알거나 전쟁을 계획하고 준비하는데 참여했다는 사실은 입증할 수 없었다. 마오쩌둥은 북한의 군사공격 개시 일자를 알지 못했으며, 중국 지도부가 고심했던 것은 새로운 중국의 재건설이었음을 보여주는 일부 중국 자료가 있다. 중국 지도부는 자세한 전쟁 일정을 알지 못했으며, 김일성이 무력으로

그의 조국을 해방시키겠다는 계획을 중국으로선 반대하기가 불가능했던 것으로 보인다. 더욱이 마오쩌둥은 북한의 계획을 마지못해 승인했다. 그러므로 중국이 ‘공모’에 가담했다고 말하는 것은 정확하지 않다. 그러나 우리의 견해를 뒷받침하기 위해서는 중국으로부터 기밀 해제된 더 많은 문서들이 여전히 필요하다.

6·25전쟁은 1950년 6월 25일에 발발했다. 스탈린과 김일성의 예견과는 반대로, 미국 정부는 자국 병력을 한국전에 보냄으로써 신속하게 대응했다. 그 결과, 6·25전쟁은 시작 직후부터 국제전 양상으로 변모했다. 게다가 트루먼 행정부는 美 해군 제7함대를 타이완 해협에 순찰하도록 명령을 했는데, 이는 당시 장제스가 통치하고 있던 타이완을 중공군이 공격하지 못하도록 하기 위한 목적이었다.

트루먼은 한국전을 소련이 주도하고 중국이 가담한 공모라고 인식했다. 미국의 군사적 행동으로 인해 중국은 어쩔 수 없이 타이완을 해방시키는 것을 연기하지 않을 수 없었다. 미국이 주도하는 UN군의 개입은 또한 중국의 국가안보에 중대한 위협을 가했다.

중국 지도부는 힘든 의사결정의 기간을 보냈다. 중국 지도부는 국가 이익과 이데올로기 두 가지 목적으로 최종적인 결정을 내렸다. 전쟁 발발 이후, 특히 인천상륙작전 이후 중국 지도부는 한반도의 상황을 심각하게 고려해야만 했다. 그러나 마오쩌둥은 한 동안 망설임과 숙고를 한 후 전쟁에 참여하기로 최종결정을 내렸다. 마오쩌둥은 정책결정과정에서 결정적이고 핵심적인 역할을 하였다. 가장 중요한 동기는 중국의 국가안보를 지키겠다는 것이었다. 물론 이념과 도의적인 면도 한국전에 참여하겠다는 주요한 동기 중 하나였다.

한국전은 동북아시아에서 군사동맹의 형태에 큰 영향을 주었다. 그 전쟁은 소련과 미국의 주도하는 양자간 동맹을 강화하고 공고히 했다. 전쟁기간동안 중국은 소련, 북한과 원활하게 협력했으며, 그 결과 한국전은 中-蘇 동맹관계를 강화했고 중국은 사실상 북한과 동맹을 형성했다.

일반적으로 말하면, 한·미동맹과 미·일동맹에 대한 중국의 인식과 반응은 매우 분명했고 단순했다. 그러나 이러한 주제에 관한 중국자료는 거의 없다.

중국 지도부가 한·미동맹과 미·일동맹관계 구축을 전혀 예기치 않은 것은 아니었다. 그리고 중국은 한국전이 최고조에 달했을 때 미·일동맹이 이루어진 것과, 전쟁이 끝난 직후 한·미 상호방위조약을 체결한 것을 자국 국가 안보에 적대적 요소로 생각했다.

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K C I

China's Perception of and Response to the Korean War

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1. China's attitude towards Kim Il-sung's plan
2. China's Decision to Enter the Korean War
3. China and the Bilateral Military Alliances during the Korean War
4. Conclusion

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The Korean War (1950-1953) was the first “hot war” which was fought between the East and the West during the four-decades Cold War in the 20th century. It was also the first regional armed conflict in which China (PRC) got involved shortly after its founding in 1949. The Korean War is obviously a very important historical case for the scholars to analyze the behavior and decision-making process of the newly-founded PRC in the context of the Cold War. This article is to elaborate on China’s perception of and response to the Korean War, by focusing on China’s connection with the origins of the Korean War, China’s decision to enter the war, and China’s attitude towards the military alliances during the Korean War. This author is arguing that China’s perception of and response to the Korean War was basically motivated by the rational calculation of her own national interest, that is to safeguard the security of the newly-founded country.

It should be pointed out that, because most of the Chinese archives on the Korean War has not been declassified and opened to the researchers yet, the author of this paper could only make use of a quite limited number of Chinese sources, including the declassified official documents, published memoirs, second-hand books and articles by the Chinese researchers (including some of the “insiders”).¹⁾ At the same time, I also rely upon the released Russian files on the Korean War which have been translated into English or Chinese.

1) The most recent book written by one of the insiders is Xu Jingli’s *Jiemi zhongguo waijiao dangan* (*The Declassified Chinese Diplomatic Documents*, Beijing: World Affairs Press, 2005). The author of this book is Deputy Director of Diplomatic Archives, Foreign Ministry of China.

Therefore, in this paper I could only give some tentative analysis and express my personal views on the Korean War.

1. China's attitude towards Kim Il-sung's plan

In order to analyze China's perception of and response to the Korean War, we have to understand the Chinese leader Mao Zedong's attitude towards the North Korean leader Kim Il-sung's plan to unite the Korean peninsula by force before the outbreak of the Korean War on June 25, 1950. It is an important issue about whether China had any connection with the origins of the Korean War. But unfortunately the documents on this issue from the Chinese side have not been fully available yet. Most of the Chinese researchers had to depend heavily on the declassified files of the former USSR in this regard.

To the Chinese researchers, China's connection with the origins of the Korean War has always been the most sensitive and debatable issue concerning the history of the Korean War. From the onset of the Korean War until mid-1980s, the Chinese publications on Korean War, without an exception, described the origins of that war as the following: On June 25, 1950, the South Korean regime, supported by the United States, attacked the Democratic Peoples' Republic of Korea (DPRK) by force, the Korean War therefore broke out. For example, one of the widely-used university textbooks on the history of international relations wrote: "At dawn of June 25, 1950, with the

deliberated plan by the American imperialists, the South Korean army made a large-scale military strike on DPRK from the 38th Parallel.”²⁾ But since mid-1980s, most of the Chinese books or articles on this subject began to evade discussing the origins of the Korean War. They used to explain the beginning of the Korean War with just one single and simple sentence: “On June 25, 1950, the Korean War broke out.”³⁾ Of course, there still has been another popular Chinese explanation on the origins of the Korean War. Some retired generals and scholars treated the origins of the Korean War as the outbreak of a civil war. They argued that the Korean War broke out first as a civil war and then turned into an international conflict.⁴⁾ Before the end of the Cold War, almost all of the Chinese publications declined to elaborate on the PRC’s role in the origins of the Korean War. With the end of the Cold War and declassification

2) He Chunchao, et al., *Guoji guanxi shi (History of International Relations, 2nd volume*, Wuhan: Wuhan University Press, 1983), p. 137. In early 1980s, when I was an undergraduate at Peking University, all of my professors followed this line of explanation quietly strictly.

3) Such as Han Nianlong, et al., *Dandai zhongguo waijiao (Contemporary Chinese Diplomacy*, Beijing: Chinese Social Sciences Press, 1987), p. 35; Shi Zhe, *Zai lishi juren de shengbian (In Company of the Great*, Beijing: The Central Press of Historical Documents, 1991), p. 492; Zi Zhongyun, et al., *Zhanhou meiguo waijiao shi (History of the Post-war US Diplomacy, 2nd volume*, Beijing: World Affairs Press, 1994), p. 205; Shi Zhifu, et al., *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo diuwxai guanxi shi (History of the PRC’s Foreign Relations*, Beijing: Peking University Press, 1994), p. 53.

4) Chai Chengwen, “Sishi nian hou hua kaicheng” (“Korean Armistice Talks in Retrospect”), *Journal of Beijing Foreign Affairs College*, No. 4, 1990; Pei Jianzhang, et al., *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo diuwxai guanxi shi, 1949-1956 (History of PRC’s Foreign Relations, 1949-1956*, Beijing: World Affairs Press, 1994), p. 184.

of the former USSR's once secret documents on the Korean War, the Chinese scholars started to publish articles to touch upon that issue first in overseas' journals and internally circulated (neibu) Chinese periodicals,⁵⁾ and then in publicly printed articles and books.⁶⁾

As regards to the origins of the Korean War, with the newly available Soviet Union's archives, most of the Korean War historians seemed to reach a consensus: The North Korean leadership desired to unify the Korean peninsula by military means after the founding of DPRK. Joseph Stalin did not give his consent at first because he worried that, if the North launched a military strike, the US government might intervene. But Stalin changed his mind early 1950 by endorsing Kim Il-sung' scheme. As a result, the Korean War broke out on June 25, 1950.⁷⁾ But historians' explanations on China's role in the origins of the Korean War are diversified. Some of them argued that China did participate in the planning and preparing of the Korean War, and the war was in fact the product

5) Qing Shi, "Kim Il-sung zuzhi Mao Zedong jiefang Taiwan de jihua" ("Kim Il-sung Stopped Mao Zedong's Plan to Liberate Taiwan"), *Ming Pao Monthly* (Hong Kong), July 1994; Shen Zihua, "Zhongguo chubin chaoxian de juece guocheng" ("China's Decision-making Process to Enter the Korean War"), *Research Materials on Party History*, No. 1, 1996.

6) Liu Jinzhi, Zhang Minqiu, Zhang Xiaoming, *Dangdai zhong han guanxi* (*Contemporary Sino-Korean Relations*, Beijing: Chinese Social Sciences Press, 1998), pp. 21-24; Zhang Xiaoming, *Lengzhan jiqi yichang* (*Cold War and Its Legacy*, Shanghai: Shanghai People's Press, 1998), p. 269; Qu Xing, *Zhongguo waijiao wushi nian* (*PRC's Foreign Relations: A 50-Years History*, Nanjing: Jiangsu People's Press, 2000), pp. 61-64; Shen Zihua, *Mao Zedong, sidalin he chaoxian zhanzheng* (*Mao Zedong, Stalin and the Korean War*, Guangzhou: Guangdong People's Press, 2003), pp. 185-193.

7) Hakjoon Kim, "Russian Foreign Ministry Documents on the Origins of the Korean War," *Korea and the World Affairs* (Vol. 20, N. 2, Summer 1996).

of a conspiracy of Stalin, Kim and Mao.⁸⁾ On the other hand, some scholars denied that accusation.⁹⁾

The former Soviet Union's archives and some Chinese materials seem to come close to the argument that, before the outbreak of the war, the Chinese leaders knew and endorsed Kim's plan to launch a military strike against the south, and therefore she seemed to have something to do with the origins of the war. There are at least two convincing evidences.

The first one is Kim Il's visit to China in late April and early May 1949. As early as late April 1949, just months before the founding of the PRC, Kim Il, the Political Department Director, North Korean People's Army, visited China secretly. He met the Chinese Communist Party top leaders (including Mao Zedong, Zhu De and Zhou Enlai) and asked for the transfer of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) divisions of Korean origins to their homeland and joined the People's Army. The Chinese leadership accepted the request and agreed to send three of the PLA divisions of Korean origins to North Korea. According to the declassified files and the estimates of some historians, from July 1949 to April 1950, about 37,000 Korean-national PLA soldiers arrived in North Korea and joined the People's Army, enhancing the North's military power.¹⁰⁾

8) Ibid.

9) Shen Zihua, "Zhongguo chubin chaoxian de juece guocheng"; Zhang Baijia, "Looking at Sino-American Relations during the Cold War from Chinese Perspective," Paper prepared for the conference "New Evidence on the Cold War in Asia," Hong Kong, January 1996; Hao Yufan and Zhai Zihai, "China's Decision to Enter the Korean War: History Revisited," *China Quarterly* (March 1990).

10) "May 15, 1949, ciphered telegram Shtykov to Vyshinsky re Kim Il-sung's report

That was cited by some South Korean scholars as the evidence that China was part of the conspiracy of Korean War.¹¹⁾ But some Chinese scholars denied that kind of accusation by arguing that Mao agreed to send the three Korean-national PLA divisions to the North Korea just for strengthening the North's defense against the potential attack from the south, and further more, as the Chinese civil war came to a close, the PLA soldiers of Korean origins themselves wished to go back home.¹²⁾ According to Kim Il-sung's account, Mao even told Kim Il that, China would sent its soldiers to North Korea secretly to help if it was necessary.¹³⁾ But Mao Zedong's own account on that meeting is a little bit different from and more accurate than Kim Il-sung's. Mao said, he told Kim Il, if there was a war on the peninsula between the South and North, China would do all it could to help. But he also advised the North Korean "not to launch an attack upon the South Korea, even if the American troops have withdrawn and the Japanese troops have not arrived, but to

on Kim Il's meetings in Peking," Russian Archives, No. SD00231 (Chinese translation); Xu Yan, *Mao Zedong yu kan mei yuan chao (Mao Zedong and the War to Resist the US and Support Korea)*, Beijing: The PLA Press, 2003), p. 45; Shen Zihua, "Zhongguo chubin chaoxian de juece guocheng"; Nie Rongzhen, *Nie Rongzhen huiyilu (Nie Rongzhen's Memoirs)*, Beijing: People's Liberation Army Press, 1982), pp. 743-744; Shen Zihua, *Mao Zedong, sidalin he chaoxian zhanzheng*, p. 188; Chen Jian, "China and the Korean War: A Critical Historical Review," *Korea and World Affairs*, Summer 1995.

11) Hakjoon Kim, "Russian Foreign Ministry Documents on the Origins of the Korean War."

12) Shen Zihua, *Mao Zedong, sidalin he chaoxian zhanzheng*, pp. 188-189.

13) "May 15, 1949, ciphered telegram Shtykov to Vyshinsky re Kim Il-sung's report on Kim Il's meetings in Peking," Russian Archives, No. SD00231 (Chinese translation).

wait for a more favorable situation, because in the process of military operation, McArthur could quickly mobilize the Japanese troops and weapons and transfer them to Korea. At the same time, we could not give you a hand immediately and effectively, because the PLA main force is now deployed south of the Yantze River.” Mao said, “We think, a military operation against the south could be taken only if the international situation in early 1950 is going to be favorable. If the Japanese troops invaded Korea, we could immediately send our forces to destroy the Japanese troops.” Mao added, “We could only take all of those steps after consulting Moscow.”¹⁴⁾ It seems to me that we still need more Chinese documents to support our explanation on Kim Il’s secret visit to China in April and May 1949.

Another widely-cited evidence is Kim Il-sung’s visit to China in May 1950. As the former USSR’s declassified documents show, Joseph Stalin refused to support Kim Il-sung’s plan for military unification before January 1950, but changed his mind in January 1950 by sending his clear message to Kim, through then Soviet ambassador to the North Korea. Stalin let Kim know that he was “ready to receive him (Kim)” and “assist him in this matter.”¹⁵⁾ Kim Il-sung was satisfied and then to make a secret trip to Moscow in April 1950, to discuss the question “about the path and methods of

14) “May 18, 1950, ciphered telegram Kovalev to Stalin re Mao Zedong’s report on Kim Il’s meetings,” Russian Archives, No. SD00232 (Chinese translation).

15) “January 31, 1950, ciphered telegram, USSR Ambassador to the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) T.F. Shtykov to Soviet Leader Joseph Stalin re meeting with North Korean Leader Kim Il-sung,” *Cold War International History Project Bulletin* (Winter 1995/ 1996), Issues 6-7, p. 36.

unification of the south and the north of the country”.¹⁶⁾ Stalin finally endorsed Kim’s scheme with the precondition that Kim should seek the approval of the PRC leadership before proceeding. But the Chinese leadership was not informed of Kim’s secret meeting with Stalin, although the North Korean ambassador to China initiated a meeting with Mao and proposed a meeting between Mao and Kim while Kim was in the Soviet Union. Mao Zedong connected the proposed meeting with the question of the unification of Korea, indicating in this regard that if there was a concrete plan for the unification of Korea, then the meeting should be organized secretly (not openly), but if there was not yet such a plan for unification of Korea, then the meeting with Kim Il-sung could be conducted officially. The North Korean ambassador did not give a concrete answer to the question of the time and form of the meeting, referring to the fact Kim Il-sung was presently undergoing medical treatment.¹⁷⁾ Nearly three weeks after he was back home from the above mentioned secret trip to the Soviet Union, Kim and his foreign minister Park Hon-yong arrived in Beijing on May 13, 1950, to make another secret trip, this time to the People’s Republic of China. They met Mao and convey Stalin’s message to him. Mao was told that Stalin changed his mind and supported the North’s plan with the argument that “the international situation has changed” and the

16) “March 21, 1950, ciphered telegram, Shtykov to Vyshinsky re meeting with Kim Il-sung,” *Cold War International History Project Bulletin* (Winter 1995/1996), Issues 6-7, p. 38.

17) “April 10, 1950, ciphered telegram, Soviet representative Aleksei Ignatieff in Pyongyang Ignatiev to Vyshinsky,” *Cold War International History Project Bulletin* (Winter 1995/1996), Issues 6-7, p. 38.

North Koreans could take action. Mao endorsed Kim's plan after confirming Stalin's meaning.¹⁸⁾

These two events did really tell us that the Chinese leadership did know Kim Il-sung's plan and endorsed it with some conditions before the outbreak of the Korean War. But there are still two puzzles to be solved.

Firstly, did the Chinese leadership acknowledge the war schedule in advance? The available documents of the former Soviet Union could not prove that the Chinese leadership did know the detailed war schedule and participated in the planning and preparing of the war.¹⁹⁾ In fact, the preparation of the military operation was carried out quite secretly, with the participation of Soviet advisers.²⁰⁾ So far we could not reach a conclusion from any released file that the Chinese leadership was informed of the plan and the time of the beginning of troops operations. On the contrary, there are some Chinese materials which demonstrate that Mao didn't know the preset date of the military strike, what the PRC's leadership was concerned about right before the outbreak of the war, was the peaceful reconstruction of the new China.²¹⁾ Shi Zhe, Mao's inter-

18) "May 13, 1950, Roshchin to Stalin re Kim Il-sung-Mao Zedong meeting," Russian Archives, No. SD00278; "May 14, 1950 Stalin to Mao Zedong," Russian Archives, No. SD00279 (Chinese translation).

19) *Cold War International History Project Bulletin* (Winter 1995/1996), pp. 36-84.

20) "June 26, 1950, top secret report on military situation by Shtykov to Comrade Zakharov," *Cold War International History Project Bulletin* (Winter 1995/1996), Issues 6-7, p. 39.

21) Liu Tong, "Zhonggong dui chaoxian zhanzheng chuqi jushi de yuce yu duice," ("The Chinese Communists' Calculation of and Steps in the Early Period of the Korean War"), *The Party's Documents*, No. 6, 2001.

preter, remembered in his memoir, he visited Mao's residence (Fengzeyuan) early morning, June 26, 1950. Mao was then taking a walk in the yard. He said to Shi Zhe: "Last night, I read from a telegraph report from Paris that the Korean War broke out." That is to say Mao himself got the news on the breakout of the Korean War from a western news agency. According to Shi Zhe, on June 28, 1950, three days after the break out of the war, the North Korean authority sent a low-ranking officer to Beijing, briefing the Chinese leadership of the war development. Mao was unhappy about it by complaining to Shi Zhe: "They are our neighbor. But they did not consult us before the war started. They didn't let us know until now."²²⁾ Mao's complaint seems to show that the Chinese leadership did not know the war schedule and China did not get involved in planning and preparing the war. One scholar argued that Mao played a great role in "planning and preparing for the Korean War" and June 25 was the "arranged date" among North Korea, the Soviet Union, and China."²³⁾ I don't think this argument is solidly founded. It seems to me Mao was kept informed of the general scenario but not the detailed schedule.

Secondly, did the Chinese leadership endorse the North's plan reluctantly? As mentioned above, Mao did not oppose and even offered to support the North's plan when Kim Il and Kim Il-sung visited China in April-May 1949 and May 1950 respectively. But

22) Li Haiwen, "Zhonggong zhongyang jiu jin heshi jue ding zhi yuan jun chuguo zuozhan?" ("When did the CCP Central Committee Make the Decision to Enter the Korean War?"), *The Party's Documents*, No. 5, 1993.

23) Hakjoon Kim, "Russian Foreign Ministry Documents on the Origins of the Korean War."

Mao's consent was not without preconditions. According to the newly released documents, on one hand, Mao promised Kim Il to support and help the North, but on the other hand, he was cautious to let the North Korean leadership know that the North should not initiate a military attack in the immediate future. Because Mao argued that the general international situation was not favorable and the CCP was still tied down in the continuing civil war.²⁴⁾ The materials on Kim Il-sung's meetings with Mao in May 1950 also show that Mao's main concern was the unification of China and he approved the North's scheme reluctantly. Kim Il-sung conveyed Stalin's message to Mao and assured him that the North didn't need China's help because the USSR already helped them with enough preparations and the possibility of US intervention was little. After receiving Stalin's personal clarifications, Mao gave his consent. At the same time, Mao told Kim that from the Chinese perspective, the "liberation" of Taiwan was China's first priority. But Mao said, China would put the unification of Korean peninsula ahead of the liberation of Taiwan on its agenda since Stalin had already approved the North's scheme.²⁵⁾ It seems to me that Mao endorsed the North's plan reluctantly. Of course, the two puzzles could be solved perfectly only after all the parties concerned released their secret files.²⁶⁾

24) "May 18, 1950, ciphered telegram Kovalev to Stalin re Mao Zedong's report on Kim Il's meetings," Russian Archives, No. SD00232 (Chinese translation); Qing Shi, "Kim Il-sung zuzhi Mao Zedong jiefang Taiwan de jihua" ("Kim Il-sung Stopped Mao Zedong's Plan to Liberate Taiwan"), *Ming Pao Monthly* (Hong Kong), July 1994.

25) Qing Shi, "Kim Il-sung zuzhi Mao Zedong jiefang Taiwan de jihua"; Xu Yan, *Mao Zedong yu kan mei yuan chao*, pp. 45-47.

26) In June 1994, Boris Yeltsin, the Russian president transferred 548 pages of once

In a word, it is now obvious that China had some thing to do with the origins of the Korean War. The PRC's leadership was informed of and finally endorsed the North's scheme. China agreed to send several PLA divisions of Korean origins back to North Korea with heavy military equipment, they played a great role in the implementation of the North's plan. But at least at present time, we are not sure if the top Chinese leaders were fully informed of the detailed military schedule and precise timing of the attack. The available Chinese materials seem to demonstrate that Mao was not kept informed of the exact schedule and he endorsed Kim's plan reluctantly. It is not adequate to say that China joined the conspiracy of planning and preparing the Korean War. According to the realist scenario, the basic motive of every country's foreign policy is to defend its own national interest. At the same time, ideology and morality also plays a role in the foreign policy decision-making process. Every policy maker has to balance the purposes of national interest and ideology, although national interest used to be regarded as the first priority. Mao was no doubt a revolutionary. But he was also a Chinese nationalist leader. The East-West Cold War started prior to the founding of the PRC and the outbreak of the Korean War. As an ideological partner and a close neighbor, China did not have any reason or justification to oppose the DPRK's plan for national unification. On the other hand,

secret Soviet files on Korean War to the visiting ROK president, Kim Young Sam. Those files are very important to the researchers of the Korean War. But they are only one part, not all, of the Soviet files on the Korean War. And we also need carefully to compare the Soviet files with the Chinese and North Korean files.

China was then facing a series of pressing domestic tasks, such as winning the civil war, liberating Taiwan, Tibet and other areas, economic recovery and political restructuring, etc. For the sake of her national interest, China was by no means willing to get involved into an international war shortly after its founding. After balancing the conflicting purposes of national interest and ideology, Mao finally agreed to Kim's plan but reluctantly.

We might draw a conclusion from the above analysis that China was informed of Kim's general scenario and offered to help. But the Chinese leadership did not participated in the planning and preparing of the Korean War. That is to say, China played a limited role in the origins of the Korean War. I could not agree with the argument that China was part of the conspiracy.

2. China's Decision to Enter the Korean War

Compared with the PRC's role in the origins of the Korean War, China's decision to enter the Korean War is not so sensitive. Therefore there are relatively much more released Chinese materials on this issue which are now available for the researchers and even for the public. In recent years, Chinese scholars have had heated debates on China's decision to enter the Korean War. A lot of books and articles on that topic have been printed. Most of the Chinese scholars praise Mao's courage and wisdom in making the final decision to send the Chinese People's Volunteers to join the Korean

War. But some Chinese scholars questioned the rationality of Mao's decision, and they were criticized.²⁷⁾

The North Korean military operations began in the early morning, June 25, 1950, and the Korean War therefore broke out. Contrary to the pre-war predictions of both Stalin and Kim Il-sung, the United States government was shocked by the outbreak of the war and responded to it immediately, by sending its forces to join the war. As a result, the Korean War turned into an international war right after it started. Further more, Truman administration ordered the 7th fleet of the US navy to patrol in the Taiwan Strait for the purpose of stopping PLA's attack on Taiwan then controlled by Jiang Jieshi, because Truman perceived the Korean War as a Moscow-led conspiracy of which China was a partner. The US actions forced China to postpone liberating Taiwan. The American-led UN military intervention also posed a grave threat to China's national security. The Chinese leadership experienced a difficult period of time for decision making. The Chinese leadership made the final decision both for the sake of national interest and ideology.

Prior to the war, Mao reminded the North's leadership of the possibility of Japanese or American interventions. But the North's leadership assured Mao that the intervention of outside powers was almost impossible. Mao was still very cautious and told Kim Il-sung that China was going to deploy 3 PLA armies along the Yalu river for the unexpected. Mao also said, China would send its military forces to help the North if the imperialists crossed the 38th Parallel.

27) Bao Guojun, "The History of the War to Assist the Korea and Oppose the United States Should Not Be Distorted," *PLA Daily*, November 1, 2000.

The North leader was said to express his gratitude to Mao's offer but declined to accept it in a polite way.²⁸⁾ That is to say, Mao took the unexpected into consideration and prepared for the worst just before the war started. But it doesn't mean that Mao made up his mind to join the coming war at that time. China didn't wish to intervene in an international war. There were even not Chinese diplomats in Pyongyang while the Korean War started, although the PRC and the DPRK established diplomatic relationship right after the founding of the PRC in October 1949. As a result, the North Korean leadership complained to Stalin that there was no representative of China in Korea, and Stalin asked Mao Zedong to send a representative to the North Korea as soon as possible in early July 1950.²⁹⁾ It is obvious that PRC was then newly founded and her main task was to concentrate on the domestic issues, including the liberation of Taiwan and Tibet. With the outbreak and development of the Korean War, the PRC leadership began to shift their attention to the Korean peninsula, considering the need to send its forces for help. But Mao made the final decision after hesitations and balancing the positive and negative factors.³⁰⁾

28) Qing Shi, "Kim Il-sung zuzhi Mao Zedong jiefang Taiwan de jihua."

29) "July 1950, ciphered telegram, Filippov (Stalin) to Soviet Ambassador Roshchin in PRC transmitting message to Mao Zedong," *Cold War International History Project Bulletin* (Winter 1995/1996), Issues 6-7, p. 44.

30) Liu Tong, "Zhonggong dui chaoxian zhanzheng chuqi jushi de yuce yu duice," ("The Chinese Communists' Calculation of and Steps in the Early Period of the Korean War"), *The Party's Documents*, No. 6, 2001; Chen Xiaowei, Huang Xiaoqin, "Shilun zhongguo zai chaoxian zhanzheng zhong de juece" ("On the Chinese Decision Making during the Korean War"), *Military History*, No. 2, 2000; Pang Xianzhi, Li Jie, *Mao Zedong yu kang mei yuan chao* (*Mao Zedong and the*

On June 27, 1950, Truman ordered the US forces to intervene in the Korean War. On July 2, US army landed at Pusan. Five days later, UN Security Council, with absence of the Soviet representative, passed a resolution, authorizing the establishment of a UN army to join the war. In order to defend the security of its northeastern region and prepare for the unexpected, in the early July 1950, Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai proposed to deploy 9 Chinese divisions along the Sino-Korea border, in order to cross the Yalu River to fight if the enemy would cross the 38th parallel. They informed Stalin of this proposal and got a positive response from Stalin. Stalin even promised to provide air cover for those Chinese divisions.³¹⁾ On July 13, 1950, Central Military Committee of PRC decided to set up the Northeast Frontier Force, first deployed 3 armies along the Sino-Korea border and then mobilize more armies to this area. As a result, there were 5 armies deployed along the Sino-Korea border area in September 1950.³²⁾ In August 1950, the People's Army of DPRK suffered a setback on the battlefield. That development made the Chinese leadership take the possibility of sending its forces to Korea into serious consideration. On August 4, the political bureau of CCP met to discuss the situation of Korean peninsula. At the meeting Mao said: "If the US imperialists won the war, they would become more arrogant and would threaten us. We should not fail to assist the Koreans. We must lend them our hands in the form of

War to Resist the US and Support the North Korea, Beijing: Central Documents Press, 2000), pp. 12-31.

31) "July 5, 1950, Stalin to Roshchin re the deployment of Chinese forces along the Sino-Korea border," Russian Archives, SD00284 (Chinese translation).

32) Xu Yan, *Mao Zedong yu kan mei yuan chao*, p. 61.

sending our military volunteers there. The timing could be further decided, but we have to prepare for this.” Premier Zhou Enlai added: “In order to win the war, China’s strength must be added to the struggle.”³³⁾ That is to say, shortly after the war broke out, the Chinese leadership anticipated the need of sending troops and made the necessary military preparations.

On September 15, 1950, MacArthur successfully landed his forces at Inchon, fundamentally altered the military situation on the Korean peninsula. After the Inchon landing, the North Korea was in a very difficult situation, and the North Korean leadership began to inform the Chinese leadership more about the war by relying on the Chinese ambassador to the DPKR as a communication channel.³⁴⁾ The Chinese leadership was also deeply concerned about China’s security and the North’s destiny. The Chinese government repeatedly sent its warnings to the US, by hinting that China would not tolerate UN forces to cross the 38th Parallel.³⁵⁾ But on September 30, US Joint Chief of Staff (JCS) approved the military operations north of 38th Parallel. Meanwhile, Kim Il-sung and Park Hon-yong jointly cabled an appeal to Stalin on September 29 in which they asked him to send the Soviet armed forces “to directly participate (in the war),” or “organize and send the international volunteer armies of China and other democratic countries to help our struggles.”³⁶⁾ But

33) Bo Yibo, *Ruogan zhongda juece yu shijian de huigu (Some Important Decision Makings and Events In Retrospect, Vol. 2*, Beijing: CCP Party School Press, 1991), p. 43; Li Haiwen, “Zhonggong zhongyang jiu jin heshi jue ding zhi yuan jun chuguo zuozhan?”.

34) Xu Yan, *Mao Zedong yu kan mei yuan chao*, pp. 70-73.

35) Shen Zihua, *Mao Zedong, sidalin and chaoxian zhanzheng*, pp. 218-219.

Stalin refused to send Soviet forces to Korea. Instead he suggested to the North's leadership to ask for the Chinese help.³⁷⁾ On Oct. 1, 1950, Kim Il-sung summoned the Chinese ambassador and formally appealed for the Chinese help.³⁸⁾ The next day, Mao sent a telegram to Stalin: "We have decided to send some of our troops to Korea under the name of Volunteers to fight the United States and its lackey Syngman Rhee and aid our Korean comrades. We think it is necessary for us to do so. The Korean revolutionary force will meet with a fundamental defeat, and the American aggressors will rampage unchecked once they occupy the whole of Korea. This will be unfavorable to the entire east."³⁹⁾ That was Mao's first but not the final decision to send Chinese troops to Korea, because this telegram was not sent out to Stalin.⁴⁰⁾ Mao instead sent another message to Stalin on October 3, 1950, which indicated that China would not send its forces to Korea at present time, but need to make more preparations and wait for a more favorable moment. Mao explained to Stalin that the poorly-equipped Chinese divisions might

36) Kathryn Weathersby, "The Soviet Role in the Phase of the Korean War: New Documents Evidence," *The Journal of America-East Asia Relations* (Winter 1993).

37) Ibid.

38) Hong Xuezhì, *Kanmei yuanchao zhanzhen huiyi (Recollections of the War to Resist the US and Support the Korea)*, Beijing: People's Liberation Army Literature Press, 1991), pp. 14-15. Kim's letter to Mao (signed jointly by Kim Il-sung and Park Hon-yong on Oct. 1, 1950, and delivered to Mao on Oct. 3, 1950) was declassified and printed in Chinese newspapers and websites in 2000, see <http://www.ebnet.com.cn/kmyc/lsnml.htm>.

39) *Jianguo yilai Mao Zedong wengao (Mao Zedong's Manuscripts since the Founding of PRC)*, Vol. 1, Beijing: Central Press of Historical Documents Press, 1987), p. 539.

40) Xu Yan, *Mao Zedong yu kan mei yuan chao*, p. 86.

be forced to retreat by the enemy, and even worse, it might lead to an open conflict with the US, and the USSR might be drawn into that conflict. Mao argued that the North Korean should fight a guerilla war.⁴¹⁾

Whether or not to sent Chinese troops to Korea was a critical issue with relevance to the PRC's destiny. The Chinese leadership therefore was very serious and cautious about it. It took a period of time for them to make the final decision. As one scholar commented: "Even though Mao had anticipated this turn of military events in Korea since early July and had made the necessary preparations, reaching a final decision was tortuous."⁴²⁾ The top Chinese leaders met to discuss the issue for several times with intense debates among them. Many among the top leaders expressed reservations about China's direct military participation, with the argument that China needs time and energy for recovery after a long period of war time.⁴³⁾ Mao played a decisive role to persuade the political bureau members to send troops to Korea. On Oct.5, 1950, with the support of Peng Dehuai, Mao seemed to make up his mind to join the war.⁴⁴⁾ On Oct. 8, 1950, just one day after the US

41) "October 3, 1950, Roshchin to Stalin, transmitting Mao Zedong's message on refusing to send the Chinese forces for the time being," Russian Archives, SD00316 (Chinese translation).

42) Chae-jin Lee, *China and Korea: Dynamic Relations* (Stanford, Ca.: The Hoover Institution Press, 1996), p. 17.

43) Nie Rongzheng, *Nie Rongzheng huiyilu*, p. 735.

44) Xu Yan, *Mao Zedong yu kan mei yuan chao*, p. 93; Zhang Baijia, "Resist the United States and Support Korea' and 'Assist Vietnam against the United States': How Did China Responded to the Korean War and Vietnam War," *World Economy and Politics*, No. 3, 2005.

forces crossed the 38th Parallel, Mao signed the order to set up the Chinese People's Volunteers (CPV) and appointed Peng Dehuai as its commander in chief. On the same day, Zhou Enlai made a secret visit to the USSR and asked for the Soviet help to assist China's military actions in Korea.⁴⁵⁾ Stalin reneged on his promise to provide air cover with the argument that the Soviet air force had not been prepared for it.⁴⁶⁾ On Oct. 12, Mao received Stalin's message and ordered Peng to halt the military action and return to Beijing for discussion.⁴⁷⁾ The next day, Mao presided over the urgent meeting of the political bureau. The political bureau reaffirmed the decision to enter the war, even without the Soviet air cover.⁴⁸⁾ Mao sent a telegram to Zhou in Moscow, informing him of the decision: "In short, we hold that we should enter the war. We must enter the war. Entering the war is greatly to our advantage; conversely, it is greatly to our disadvantage if we don't enter the war." At the same time Mao instructed Zhou to stay in Moscow for several days and try to ask the Soviets to provide China with more military equipment on lend-lease and send its air force to Korea after two and half a months.⁴⁹⁾ It is obvious that, at that time, in Mao's mind, there still was the hope for the Soviet air umbrella. As Mao argued, we would

45) Xiong Huayuan, "Kanmei yuanchao zhanzhen qianxi zhouzongli mimi fangsu" ("Premier Zhou's Secret Visit to the Soviet Union during the War to Resist the US and Support the Korea"), *Party Documents*, No. 3, 1994.

46) Shi Zhe, *Zai lishi juren de shengbian*, pp. 495-498.

47) *Jianguo yilai Mao Zedong wengao*, Vol. 1, p. 552.

48) Wang Yan, et al., *Peng dehuai zhuang* (*Biography of Peng Dehuai*, Beijing: Contemporary China Press, 1993), pp. 405-406.

49) Li Haiwen, "Zhonggong zhongyang jiu jin heshi jue ding zhi yuan jun chuguo zuozhan?".

not be afraid of the enemy's air strike if the Soviet Union provided air cover for our military operations on the Korean peninsula and protected several big cities of China in the near future. Zhou made an urgent appointment with Molotov at night, asking him to transfer Mao's message to Stalin.⁵⁰⁾ But Stalin let Molotov to inform Zhou that the Soviet air force would only station along Yalu river and could not provide air cover to the CPV's military operations in Korea.⁵¹⁾ Zhou was depressed and returned to Beijing on Oct. 16. As a result, Mao again sent a telegram to Peng and asked him to return to Beijing, the CPV's plan to cross Yalu was postponed temporarily.⁵²⁾ On Oct. 18, one day before the UN forces captured Pyongyang, Mao presided over a meeting. After listening to Peng's and Zhou's reports, he said: "Our enemy is now encircling Pyongyang and will move to Yalu river within days. The CPV's plan to cross the river and assist North Korea should not be changed. The time schedule should not be delayed. We should cross the river on schedule whatever difficulties we meet."⁵³⁾ At the conclusion of the meeting, Mao ordered the CPV to cross the Yalu river at night of Oct. 19.⁵⁴⁾ That was the final decision Mao made. Mao finally made a strategic choice shortly after the founding of the PRC.

It is still impossible for the researchers to draw a very clear and comprehensive picture of China's decision-making process for entering the Korean War, because not all of the Chinese documents

50) Xiong Huayuan, "Kanmei yuanchao zhanzhen qianxi zhouzongli mimi fangsu".

51) Ibid.

52) *Jianguo yilai Mao Zedong wengao*, Vol. 1, p. 567.

53) Wang Yan, et al., *Peng dehuai zhuang*, p. 407.

54) *Jianguo yilai Mao Zedong wengao*, Vol. 1, p. 568.

are released to the public. Nevertheless, we might draw a conclusion from the above analysis that prior to the outbreak of the war, the Chinese leadership anticipated the possibility of sending its troops to help the North. After the Inchon landing, they started to take it into serious consideration. But Mao made the final decision only after a period of time for hesitation and consideration. Mao played a decisive and pivotal role in the policy-making process. Mao was very cautious to deal with the Korean War. He experienced a spiritual torture. It is necessary for the researchers to analyze Mao's motives to send CPV to Korea in depth. It seems to me, the main motive is to safeguard China's national security. As the Chinese slogan "Assist the Koreans to resist the United States, defend our own motherland" shows that China's action was basically motivated by realist consideration. Of course, ideology and morality also consisted one of the China's motives to enter the Korean War. In this case the national security and ideology are not necessary to conflict with each other. The safety of North Korea would provide China with a friendly neighbor and a buffer against the hostile powers.

3. China and the Bilateral Military Alliances during the Korean War

The Korean War developed into a war between two opposing military alliances and it was a reflection of the struggle between the East and West camps led by the USSR and the US respectively.

China joined the war and allied with the USSR and the DPRK against the US and its alliances. Therefore the Korean War had a great effect upon China's perception of and response to military alliances. But there are very few Chinese sources on this topic.

To begin with, it is obvious that China's entry into the Korean War enhanced the Sino-Soviet alliance. The Sino-Soviet alliance treaty was signed months before the outbreak of the Korean War, and it was tested by the war. China's participation into the Korean War lessened, if not got rid of, Stalin's suspicion and mistrust of Mao and the Chinese leadership as a whole. Right after China decided to send its troops to Korea, the USSR began to provide China with a large amount of aids, strengthening the solidarity and friendship between the two parties and countries. To some extent, the Korean War changed the nature of Sino-Soviet relationship from a treaty alliance to a real alliance.

As early as in July 1950, Stalin sent a message to the Chinese leadership which indicated that if China had decided to deploy nine Chinese divisions on the border with the North Korea, then the Soviets were "ready to send you a division of jet fighter planes—124 pieces for covering these troops. We intend to train Chinese pilots in two to three months with the help of our pilots and then to transfer all equipment to your pilots. We intend to do the same thing with the aviation divisions in Shanghai."⁵⁵⁾ In his telegram to Chinese premier Zhou Enlai on August 27, 1950, Stalin informed the Chinese

55) "July 13, 1950, ciphered telegram, Filippov to Zhou Enlai or Mao Zedong (via Roshichin)," *Cold War International History Project Bulletin* (Winter 1995/1996), Issues 6-7, p. 44.

leadership that, the Soviet government accepted the Chinese request about sending Soviet military advisers, and 38 advisers would be sent to China, of which 10 were specialists in anti-aircraft defense, and 28 specialists in air force.⁵⁶⁾ A large amount of aid came to China after Mao decided to send Chinese troops to Korea, including various military equipments (such as rifles, heavy machine guns, light machine guns, sub-machine guns, handguns, TNT, sea mines, anti-tank mines, automobiles, gasoline, air planes, etc.) at discounted price. The Soviet air force even joined the war. As we know from the Soviet sources after the end of the Cold War, the Soviet air force participated in the Korean War shortly after the Chinese army joined the war, and provided a great help to the Chinese People's Volunteers and the North Korean People's Army. Just about less than two weeks after the Chinese People's Volunteers crossed the Sino-DPRK border into the Korean peninsula and joined the war, Stalin ordered the Soviet 64th Fighter Aviation Corps be sent to China and fight in Korea, with their airbases in Mukden, Anshan and Andong. The first MiG-15s entered the skies of North Korea on November 1, 1950, and shot down two F-82 planes.⁵⁷⁾ The Soviet airmen were dressed in Chinese uniforms and their aircrafts carried Chinese insignia. And initially, they were ordered to speak only

56) "August 27, 1950, ciphered telegram, Filippov (Stalin) to Zhou Enlai," *Cold War International History Project Bulletin* (Winter 1995/1996), Issues 6-7, p. 45.

57) Leonid Krylov, Yuriy Tepsurkayev, English version provided by Cookie Sewell, "Combat Episodes of the Korean War: Three out of One Thousand," *Mir Aviatsiya* 1-1997, pp. 38-44; "November 2, 1950, ciphered telegram, S. E. Zakharov, Soviet military representative in Beijing to Fyn Si (Stalin)," *Cold War International History Project Bulletin* (Winter 1995/ 1996), Issues 6-7, p. 48.

Korean over the radio. Since most Russian pilots did not know Korean and had to use Korean dictionaries for even the simplest words necessary for fighting and flying, this order was soon abolished.⁵⁸⁾ Any way, during the Korean War, they performed quite well, shooting down 1106 enemy's aircrafts of all types while losing only 335 aircrafts and 135 airmen of their own.⁵⁹⁾ In addition, the Soviet air force contributed a lot to the protection of the Chinese border cities, industrial centers, logistical bases, transportation lines and power stations. Further more, another productive Soviet contribution in the air war in Korea was the creation of the Chinese air force.⁶⁰⁾ I should point out that, in recent years, many Chinese researchers expressed their praise of and gratitude to the performance of the Soviet air force in the Korean War by using the Soviet released files in their articles or books.⁶¹⁾ But we are still waiting for the release of the Chinese sources in this regard.

Generally speaking, the Korean War strengthened the Sino-Soviet

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- 58) Igor N. Gordelianow, "Soviet Air Aces of the Korean War," *Small Air Forces Observer*, Vol. 17 (65), January 1993, <http://aeroweb.lucia.it/~agretch/RAFAQ/SovietAces.html>.
- 59) Lin Xiaoguang, "Chaoxian zhanzheng zhong de sulian kongjun," ("The Soviet Air Force in the Korean War"), *Siberian Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 2, April 2002.
- 60) Xiaoming Zhang, *Red Wings over the Yalu: China, the Soviet Union, and the Air War in Korea* (College Station, Texas: Texas A&M University Press, 2002), p. 142.
- 61) Shen Zhihua, "Chaoxian zhanzheng zhong de sulian kongjun," ("The Soviet Air Force in the Korean War"), *History of CCP Studies*, No. 2, 2000; Shen Zhihua, *Mao Zedong, sidalin he chaoxian zhanzheng*, pp. 329-338; Lin Xiaoguang, "Chaoxian zhanzheng zhong de sulian kongjun"; Wang Jinsheng, "Shi wu qian li de mimi kongzhan," ("The Unprecedented Air Battles"), *The Global Military*, No. 16-17, 2003; Yu Guang, "Chaoxian zhanzheng zhong de sulian kongjun," ("The Soviet Air Force in the Korean War"), *Yanhuang Zisun*, No. 1, 2004.

alliance, China and the USSR cooperated well with each other politically and militarily during the war. In a word, the Sino-Soviet alliance was tested and enhanced by the Korean War and it was conducive to China's national security. On the other hand, the Korean War also planted a seed of Sino-Soviet rift since Stalin didn't keep his promise to provide the air cover to the CPV before the Chinese crossed the Yalu.⁶²⁾

The impact of the Korean War on PRC's relationship with the North Korea was also quite great and long-lasting. It is obvious that the Korean War was the turning point in the PRC's relationship with the DPRK. The war forced China to get involved in the Korean peninsula again, and the PRC established a de facto bilateral military alliance with the DPRK during the Korean War, although the two countries did not sign a bilateral military alliance treaty until 1961, and to some extent, the pattern of China's relationship with the DPRK was set by the Korean War and lasted for several decades.

From the moment when Mao Zedong made the final decision to enter the Korean War, China's destiny had been closely linked to that of the DPRK. The CPV and the Peoples' Army fought side by side on the battlefields. They even captured Seoul and moved to the 37th parallel for a while. The military achievement of the PRC and DPRK was critical to the signing of the Korean War armistice agreement of 1953. Both China and North Korea suffered a great deal in human as well as economic terms. As a result, the Sino-North Korean friendship and alliance cemented by blood has been

62) Xiong Huayuan, "Kanmei yuanchao zhanzhen qianxi zhouzongli mimi fangsu".

maintained for decades. After the signing of the armistice agreement in 1953, the PRC continued to provide political, economic and military aids to the DPRK, and the Chinese troops did not withdraw from the North Korean until the end of 1958. In August 1961, the two countries signed the PRC-DPRK Treaty for Mutual Friendship, Cooperation and Assistance, and the formal bilateral alliance was finally established.⁶³⁾ This treaty is still legally valid.

The Korean War also shaped the military relations between the US and Japan, and between the US and the ROK. And to the Chinese the US-Japan alliance and US-ROK alliance were hostile factors against China's national security, the Chinese government perceived the bilateral military alliances led by Washington as parts of the strategic circulating line against the newly-founded PRC.

The breakout of the Korean War made the Japanese territory a very important logistical base for the US military operations. In fact, the first US troops which were sent to Korean peninsula immediately after the Korean War broke out were the American forces stationing in Japan. Therefore, the Korean War made Japan a very important partner for the US. The US began to take various steps to strengthen its military position in Japan, and help the Japanese to rearm itself by supporting the concept of Japanese Self-Defense Forces. As the newly released Japanese sources tell us, in October 1950, with the request of the US military, the Japanese government even agreed to send Japanese mine sweepers to the Korean peninsula for mine sweeping operations. About 25 Japanese mine

63) Liu Jinzhi, Zhang Minqiu, Zhang Xiaoming, *Dangdai zhong han guanxi*, pp. 34-38.

sweepers joined the secret military mission, and contributed to the US military operations in the Korean War.⁶⁴⁾ Most important of all, in January 1951, the US-Japanese Security Treaty was signed while the Korean War was at its height. Under the terms of this treaty, American troops remained in Japan—they are there still—and American plans provide the nuclear umbrella that shielded Japan from outside harm. Thus, in less than a decade, the US-Japan relationship had gone from total hostility to alliance.⁶⁵⁾ To some extent, the US-Japan military alliance was the result of the Korean War, and it has been playing a very important role in East Asian regional security ever since.

The Korean War was also the turning point of the American-ROK relations. The US had been deeply involved in the division of the Korean peninsula after the end of the World War II. The US helped to create a separate South Korean government in 1948, and the ROK government had tried to secure a formal US security commitment.⁶⁶⁾ After the breakout of the Korean War, the US saved and preserved the independence of the ROK. As the war came to the end, Syngman Rhee agreed not to oppose the armistice in return for the

64) Lin Xiaoguang, “Chaoxian zhanzheng zhong riben saolei jiandui zhengxiang,” (“The Secrets of Japanese Mine Sweeper in the Korean War”), *Party History Monthly*, Vol. 176, No. 10, 2000; Sun Yu, “Chaoxian yu riben junbei chongzheng,” (“The Korean War and the Japanese Military Rebuilding”), *Japanese Studies*, No. 3, 2004.

65) Robert S. Scalapino, *The United States and Asia: Lectures at Peking University* (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2002), p. 38.

66) Heajeong Lee, “From War to Normalcy: The Korean War and the ROK-US Alliance,” *Collected Papers of the International Conference on the Origins of the Cold War in East Asia: 1945-1955*, Peking University, Oct. 2004.

US commitment to a mutual defense pact. In August 1953, immediately after the signing of the Armistice Treaty in July, the ROK and the US agreed upon a mutual defense treaty. The ROK-US Mutual Defense Treaty was formally signed in October 1953 and became effective in November 1954. The US-ROK alliance is a direct and enduring legacy of the Korean War.⁶⁷⁾ The US-ROK alliance is still there, and today about 37,000 US troops are stationing on the soils of the ROK.

As the Korean War broke out and President Truman ordered US 7th fleet to patrol in the Taiwan Strait, preventing the liberation of Taiwan by the PLA, and then as the two countries fought a bloody war on the Korean Peninsula, the PRC regarded the US as her No. 1 enemy, and it is quite natural that China took a very clear and opposing attitude towards the US-Japanese alliance and the US-ROK alliance.

As one of the victims of the Japanese invasions, China was very concerned about the US-Japan alliance and the rebuilding of the Japanese military forces. As mentioned above, at the height of the Korean War, the US took measures to enhance its bilateral relations with Japan, including the signing of a peace treaty with Japan and US-Japan Security Treaty. On December 24, 1950, Chinese Foreign Minister Zhou Enlai stated that, the PRC government was the only legitimate government in China, and she should participate in the preparation, discussion and signing of the peace treaty with Japan. As the US refused to invite the PRC to join the forthcoming San

67) Heajeong Lee, "From War to Normalcy: The Korean War and the ROK-US Alliance."

Francisco conference on the peace treaty with Japan in September 1951, Zhou Enlai declared on August 15, 1951, any peace treaty with Japan without the PRC's participation was illegal and invalid. He expressed the similar view after the signing of the San Francisco Peace Treaty. In the meantime, the Chinese government expressed its anger and opposition towards the US-Japan Security Treaty.⁶⁸⁾ But to the Chinese leaders, the formation of the US-Japan military alliance was not so unexpected, what they were most concerned about was the signing of the peace treaty and the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japanese government and the Nationalist government in Taiwan in April 1952.⁶⁹⁾

The US-ROK military alliance was also not so unexpected by the Chinese government, although it took a very negative attitude toward that alliance. In the process of the Korean War armistice talks, the PRC and DPRK representatives repeatedly argued that all foreign troops should withdraw from the Korean Peninsula after the war came to an end. At the Geneva conference in 1954, the PRC and DPRK foreign ministers expressed their views very clearly by suggesting that all foreign troops should withdraw from the peninsula within 6 months, but the ROK and US representatives refused to take that suggestion.⁷⁰⁾ In fact, the ROK-US Mutual Defense Treaty which was signed in 1953 and went effective in 1954, provided a legal basis for the extended stationing of the US forces

68) Han Nianlong, et al, *Dandai zhongguo waijiao*, pp. 194-195.

69) Pei Jianzhang, et al, *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo waijiao shi: 1949-1954 (The Diplomatic History of the PRC: 1949-1954)*, Beijing: World Affairs Press, 1994), pp. 156-158.

70) *Ibid.*, pp. 211-219.

on the Korean Peninsula. It should be pointed out that the Korean War made PRC and ROK to be hostile towards each other for decades. The CPV and ROK army got engaged into bloody conflicts on the battlefields. After the war ended, the ROK government followed the US containment policy towards the PRC and had maintained a close relationship with Taiwan authority until early 1990s. The Sino-ROK relationship was not normalized until 1992, almost 40 years after the Korean War armistice.

4. Conclusion

The Korean War (1950-1953) was the first regional war the PRC got involved shortly after its founding, with great and far-reaching implications. The Korean Peninsula is a region with a great geopolitical importance. As one of neighboring countries of the Korean peninsula, it is impossible for China to keep a neutral posture towards a military conflict in this region. Therefore, with the approaching of the Korean War, the PRC leadership had to take measures to deal with it, mainly for its national interest, but ideology also played some kind of role in this case.

As the released files show, the PRC leadership did know Kim Il-sung's plan to launch a military strike against the South Korea before the outbreak of the war, and endorsed it reluctantly after Joseph Stalin gave the green light. It seems to me that Chinese leadership did not know the detailed war schedule, and it was

impossible for China to oppose Kim's plan to liberate his motherland by force. It is not accurate to say that China was part of the "conspiracy."

After the outbreak of the war, especially after the Inchon landing, the Chinese leadership had to take the situation on the Korean peninsula into serious consideration. But Mao made the final decision to join the war only after a period of time for hesitation and consideration. Mao played a decisive and pivotal role in the policy-making process. The main motive is to safeguard China's national security. Of course, ideology and morality also consisted one of the China's motives to enter the Korean War.

The Korean War had a great impact on the patterns of military alliance in Northeast Asia. The war strengthened and hardened the bilateral alliances led by Moscow and Washington. During the war China cooperated quite well with the USSR and DPRK, therefore the war strengthened the Sino-Soviet alliance, and the PRC formed a de fact alliance with the DPRK. And the PRC regarded the formation of US-Japan alliance at the height of the war and the signing of US-ROK Mutual Defense Treaty right after the end of the conflict, as hostile factors against China's national security.

Key Words : Korean War, Regional Armed, National Interest, Ideology, Conspiracy