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A Historical Analysis of the United States' Role in the Korean War

The Korean War (1950-1953) was a conflict between South Korea and North Korea (Lin 222). The Korean Peninsula had been divided into South Korea and North Korea in 1948. The United States and the Soviet Union backed the South Korean government and North Korean government, respectively. On 25th June 1950, fighting erupted along the 38th parallel. The 38th parallel was a latitudinal line that split Korea into two halves. North Korean troops attacked various strategic points on that day. These troops would then head south toward Seoul. Kim Il-Sung, the North Korean leader, was convinced that reunification of Korea could only be achieved through a Soviet-backed assault. The Soviet Union provided multiple forms of assistance to North Korea, including military pilots, weapons, and combat advisors (Lin 223). In reacting to the Soviet-backed attack, the UN Security Council espoused a resolution that strongly condemned the assault by North Korean troops. During this period, the Security Council had no Soviet delegate after the Soviet Union left in protest. The Soviet Union maintained that the United Nations should seat a delegate from the Republic of China. The Korean War brought devastating military and civilian casualties and contributed to continued division and incessant conflict between South Korea and North Korea (Lin 222).

The United States played a critical role in the Korean War. U.S. forces had overtly occupied the southern part of Korea after WWII. On the other hand, the Soviet forces occupied the northern part. The Soviets eventually established a communist regime in North Korea. Before

the Soviet-backed invasion of strategic points, the U.S. military mainly engaged in rebuilding South Korea and training the South Korean army. Douglas MacArthur (U.S. General) coordinated the UN Command when the UN Security Council ordered member nations to defend South Korea. U.S. troops were the majority of the expeditionary force in the Korean Peninsula. The Department of State engaged in the coordination and management of U.S. strategic decisions (Office of the Historian). The Department worked closely with Syngman Rhee's government to encourage him to adopt a reform that would improve the accuracy and authenticity of the UN's claim of protecting Korea's democracy. Sixteen other countries contributed troops, reinforcing the UN's expeditionary force. A report dubbed "NSC 68" recommended increases in funding to help the U.S. forces contain the Soviets (National Archives).

The Cold War politics created a tense atmosphere that deeply influenced the U.S. verdict to intercede and defend South Korea from the communist north. President Truman was deeply concerned about the future of South Korea and other anti-communist governments in Asia. Despite the U.S.'s extensive involvement in the Korean War, the fighting was unpopular domestically (Office of the Historian). The American public seemed to have been disillusioned by the country's participation in war without victory. With the stalling of negotiation, President Harry Truman's public support was seriously eroded. The erosion of public support influenced the election of a Republican candidate – Dwight D. Eisenhower (Office of the Historian).

In conclusion, the Korean War underscored the critical role of the U.S. in protecting South Korea and mitigating the rapid expansion of communism in Korea and other Asian countries. The Korean War ended in July 1953 following a truce between the UN Command,

North Korea, and China. The truce led to the establishment of a demilitarized zone along the 38th parallel. The war led to devastating military and civilian casualties.

Works Cited

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