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CHAPTER - II

BACKGROUND OF KOREAN WAR

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C H A P T E R- II

BACKGROUND OF KOREAN WAR

Korea, " The land of the morning calm " is a mountainous long Peninsula extending Southwards dividing the Sea of Japan from the Yellow Sea. It is encircled by Soviet Union, China and Japan - the three powerful nations and has always been a prey to the ambitions of these three nations.

Since 1854 both Russia and Japan desired to control Korea. " In 1895, Russia discussed with Japan, the possible partition of Korea roughly along the 38th Parallel. Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905 terminated in peace conference at Portsmouth in 1905 and it recognised Japan's paramount control over Korea<sup>1</sup>. Japan annexed Korea in 1910. Till 1945 i.e. till the end of the Second World War Korea formed a part of the Japanese empire.

The Second world war, changed the fate of many small nations. A turning point came in the life of Korea. And Korea hoped for its independence.

In Cairo Declaration, of December, 1, 1943, the United States, U.K. and China declared that " In due course, Korea shall become free and independent"<sup>2</sup>.

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1. Mahajan V.D., History of Modern Europe-Since 1789, S.Chand & Co., New Delhi, p.336.
  2. C.E.Black, E.C.Helmreich, A History Twentieth Century Europe, Alfred A.Knopf Inc., New York, p.624.

The Postdam Declaration of July 26, 1945, reaffirmed the Cairo Declaration. Both conferences envisaged an independent and sovereign state of Korea but no specific programme was worked out. It was only during the Moscow meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers in December, 1945, that a more detailed plan was worked out for Korea<sup>2</sup>.

After the defeat of Japan in Second World War the problem of sharing Korea as the spoils of the war arose. The surrender of Japanese north to the 38th parallel was accepted by the Russian forces and south of the 38th parallel by American forces. Since the major Soviet naval base in Pacific is situated across Korea's North-eastern sea-coast, Russia has always been interested in developing relations with Korea<sup>4</sup>.

At the time of Japanese surrender, while Americans were still far away from the Peninsula the Soviets were already in North Korea, preparing to move into all of Korea<sup>5</sup>. So U.S.A. tried to bargain with U.S.S.R. and it was finally decided that Soviet Union, whose troops were already in North

3. Ibid.

4. George Schwarzenberger, 'Power Politics', New York, 1954, p.418.

5. Lukas J., History of the Cold War, New York, 1961, p.89. Also Schwarzenberger, p.1.

would accept the surrender of Japanese in that part of Korea. " While Americans would perform the same duty in the other part "6. It was decided by Washington and Kremlin to divide Korea at the 38th parallel. This is how the two super powers became inevitably involved in the struggle for power over Korea and this bargaining between the two super powers proved to be the most tragic movement in the history of the Korean nation, which shattered all the hopes of the 'United Independent Sovereign Korea' of the Korean people.

In fact, as the impact of Second world war, many nations emerged as independent nations in the world. They enjoyed their freedom, but it was Korea which continued to remain in the politics of divide and rule. The Second world war changed the fate of many small nations, but to Korea it continued to remain under problems and as a colonial country. The two different forces of the two big rival blocks occupying two parts of Korea, ~~in~~ started exerting their ideological influences on the people of the two halves. And obviously these forces gradually established two hostile regimes in two parts of Korea. And 38th parallel starts hardening into a definite boundary.

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6. Zeon Gordnekar, The United Nations and the Peaceful Unification of Korea, (The Hague, 1959), p.4.

In May 1945, it was decided by the allies that the Korean peninsula would be jointly administered by U.S.A., China, Britain and U.S.S.R.<sup>7</sup> In December, 1945, it was further decided in Moscow "to entrust Korea on the four powers viz., U.S.S.R., U.S.A., U.K. and China on Trusteeship system"<sup>8</sup>. However, this proposal was totally rejected by Korean people as they considered themselves mature enough to shape the destiny of their own country independently. Moreover, they had become weary of the foreign yoke and desired for self government at the earliest possible opportunity.

The Moscow decision also set up a Joint U.S., U.S.S.R. Commission to establish Provisional Government for entire Peninsula. But this commission also reached a dead-lock, due to the controversy between U.S.A. and U.S.S.R., U.S.A. insisted on popular vote because South Korea had two-thirds of the country's population and this obviously would help to establish a non-communist regime for the whole country. The Soviet Union wanted the entire Peninsula to be under its influence so it put forth proposals which would assure a communist dominance over the provincial government<sup>9</sup>. U.S.S.R. suggested consultation only with such Korean group that had

7. Robert E. Shroyd, Roosevelt and Hopkins (New York, 1948), p. 903.

8. Zeland M. Goorich, Korea- A Study of U.S. Policy in U.N., p. 16.

supported the four-power trusteeship programme<sup>9</sup>. As both the proposals were rejected by each other the Commission reached a deadlock and 38th parallel which was established at first only for military convenience gradually hardened into a political line of division. And thus the traditional methods failed to preserve peace.

Thus the only peaceful alternative left was to seek a solution by taking the issue to international forum.

" So the U.S. decided to lay the whole question of Korea's independence and unification before the Second Regular Session of the U.N.'s General Assembly on 17th September, 1947<sup>10</sup>.

On 28th October, 1947, when the first committee of the General Assembly began the consideration of the Korean problem, " two separate draft resolutions were submitted by the U.S. and U.S.S.R. respectively"<sup>11</sup>. The U.S. draft resolution was based on a three point proposal, " namely holding of elections in the two separate zones by the respective occupying forces, creation of Korean national

9. Andre Fontaine, A History of the Cold War, London, 1970, p.395.

10. U.N.General Assembly, Official Records Sess.II, Plenary Mtgs. 1947, Plen Mtg.82, pp.21-22.

11. GAOR Sess.2, Committee of 1947, Meetings 87, pp.248-52.

security forces prior to the withdrawal of the occupation troops and the setting up of a neutral nations temporary commission for the supervision of these functions"<sup>12</sup>.

The Soviet Union proposed that the occupied troops should be withdrawn from Korea, and Koreans should be given opportunity to form a government by themselves without the aid and participation of the Allies<sup>13</sup>. This proposal was not acceptable to Washington as it knew the communist regime in North was well established and it was strong enough to win the South in the absence of American presence.

The U.S.S.R. moved a formal proposal in the 'First Committee' incorporating this view. " The Second Soviet proposal provided for inviting the elected representatives of the Korean people to take part in the discussions of the Korean question"<sup>14</sup>. To this second draft proposal U.S. submitted an " amendment providing United Nations Temporary Commission on Korea (UNICOK) be established to facilitate, the participation of Korean representatives in the consideration, of the Korean question and to ensure that such representatives be in fact duly elected by Korean people and not be mere appointees of the military authorities"<sup>15</sup>.



12. Ibid.  
13. United Nations, General Assembly Official Records (hereafter referred to as GAOR) Section 2, First Committee, Annex.166, pp.602-603.  
14. GAOR, Second Session, First Committee, p.607.  
15. Ibid., p.606.

Both proposals clearly show that the integrity and happiness of the Korean people was not at all cared for. The only aim of the big powers was to retain at least half part of the Korea under their respective influence. The big powers never bothered about just-unjust or good and bad or happiness and feelings of the Korean people. So both parties were not ready to give in from their own selfish motives.

Finally at the 91st meeting of the First Committee on 30th October, 1947, India expressed its view that " while the Soviet proposal was likely to create confusion, the U.S. proposal seemed unduly vague<sup>16</sup>. The Indian representative suggested that " the elections instead of being held on zonal basis should be held on national basis under the supervision of the United Nations Temporary Commission of Korea (UNICOK). Thereby removing the political and moral barriers which had been created by the division of the country"<sup>17</sup>.

With this background of the proposals of, U.S.A. and U.S.S.R. the above stand taken by the Indian representative

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16. GAOR, Session 2, Committee 1, 1947, Meeting 91, p.285.

17. Ibid., page 285.



sheds enough light on the morality of India in International context. India rejected and opposed the elections to be conducted on zonal basis. India rather thought that Korea, should do that which can develop her integrity and a strong sense of Nationalism. This stand makes it amply clear as what India's Foreign Policy stood for.

On 14th November, 1947, the UN set up a Temporary Commission on Korea (UNICOK). The Commission was established by two General Assembly resolutions in which it was mentioned that elections should be held by 31st March, 1948 on the basis of adult franchise. The representatives would constitute the National Assembly which in turn would establish a National Government of Korea and the formation of the Government was to be reported to the Commission<sup>18</sup>.

So elections were held under the supervision of UNICOK and naturally it was required to act as a neutral observer of elections and report it to the General Assembly. The Commission consisted of the representatives from Australia, Canada, China, El-Salvador, France, India, Philippines, Syria and Ukraine. Ukrainian Government afterwards refused

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18. UN General Assembly Resolutions, 112 (11), adopted on 14th November, 1947.

to participate P.S.Menon of India, was unanimously elected as permanent Chairman of UNTCOK. Later on the Commission decided on rotational Chairmanship.

It seems, all nations unanimously expressed their faith in India by choosing its representative as a Chairman which doubtlessly accounts to impartial and neutral role of India having justifiable moral base which had no self interests. Moreover, it provided India, good opportunity to reflect her own moral views and thereby moved the policies of United Nations which would accept the ritious path in the case of Korea.

In the beginning, the Commission was fully confident about its success. Menon was hopeful, of the change in the attitude of Soviet Union and North Korean authorities<sup>19</sup>. But his hopes soon shattered when Northern regime refused the entry of the commission in the Northern zone<sup>20</sup>.

By 14th February, 1948, UNTCOK was convinced about the rigidity of North Korea. Then the question arose whether to conduct election in South Korea only. Obviously the proposal

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19. UNTCOK, Report Part-I, Vol.II, p.6.

20. Ibid.,

was welcomed by United States and her friendly nations as France, Philippines. On the contrary South Korean leaders, as Kim Koushik and Kim Koo were likely to oppose the suggestion as they believed that it would solidify the division and the two halves would never again unite "21.

Australia, Canada and India shared the same view and were against holding elections in South alone. As far as India's stand is concerned, she of recent had faced the tragic event of her own partition. So she stood firm against elections in south which would lead to the partition of Korea.

It was decided to refer the matter to the Interim Committee of the General Assembly. And the resolution calling for consultation with the Interim Committee was so drafted, that, Interim Committee might advice against holding elections in South only. The UNPCOK's resolution was passed by four votes in favour, three against and one abstention<sup>22</sup>.

The Interim Committee, met on 19th February, 1948. United States was doing everything in its power to impress the

21. UNPCOK, Report, Part-I, Vol. III, p. 57.

22. UNPCOK, n. 33, United Nations Temporary Commission on Korea, Vol. II, n. 33.

necessity of elections in the South at least and on 24th February, 1948 it proposed a resolution to this effect in Interim Committee<sup>23</sup>. The Committee adopted its draft resolution which said, " It was incumbent on the UNICOK ... to implement the programme... in such parts of Korea as are accessible to the Commission"<sup>24</sup>. It should be noted that this resolution was adopted in the absence of the USSR and the Soviet block who refused to participate in the proceedings of the Interim Committee which they considered illegal<sup>25</sup>.

Adoption of the resolution led to the immediate resignation of Kim Koushik from Korean Interim Legislative Assembly who feared that unification was now impossible<sup>26</sup>. And his fear was quite right which was proved by later events.

As per the plan, elections were held in Southern part of Korea on 10th May, 1948. And on 14th August, 1948 " The Republic of Korea " South to the 38th parallel was proclaimed. Syngman Rhee, who returned to Korea after a prolonged stay in U.S.A. was proclaimed the first President of the New Republic<sup>27</sup>.

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23. Ibid.

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid.

26. Zeon Gordenkar, The United Nations and the Peaceful Unification of Korea, p.4.

27. Ibid., p.8.

By the advice of Interim Committee, and conducting the elections exclusively in South, UNTCOK lost its role of neutral observer and became the adviser of one party.

As " The Republic of Korea " was proclaimed south to 28th parallel, to the North of 38th parallel was set-up. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea under the leadership of the Moscow returned Kim II Sung on 9th September, 1948<sup>28</sup>.

As UNTCOK became ineffective, the General Assembly did not renew it, instead it established UN Commission on Korea to continue its work.

The new United Nations Commission on Korea (UNTCOK) was entrusted with the job of unification of Korea. And for the achievement of the same goal it was expected to facilitate the removal of barriers to economic, social and other friendly relations ceased by division of Korea and to do other needful things. The Commission consisted of seven members, India being the Chairman once more.

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28. Ibid., p.5.

As in the case of UNICOK, UNCOK was also unable to get into the North Korea and hence it was soon rendered useless. The only task it could perform was to observe the withdrawal of the American troops which was completed on 29th June, 1949<sup>29</sup>.

In 1949, the United Nations General Assembly on the suggestion of UNCOK added one more item to the list of UNCOK, and it was now required to observe and report any developments which might lead to, or otherwise involve military conflict in Korea<sup>30</sup>.

This indeed came in handy, when in June 1950 the UN branded North Korea as the aggressor against the South on the strength of North Korean 'invasion' reported by UNCOK<sup>31</sup>. The Commission became inactive after the completion of its report in August, 1950. It was dissolved by the General Assembly and a new commission was set-up.

Russia in meanwhile was still demanding withdrawal of forces and in January, 1949, it announced its complete withdrawal from North Korea. Americans also followed and completed the withdrawal of their forces by June, 1949<sup>32</sup>.

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29: GAOR, Session 4, Supplements. Supplement No. 9, A/939, p. 11.

30: GAOR, Session 4, Plenary Meetings, 1949 (A/1008).

31: UN Security Council Official Records, Year 5, 1950/S1507.

32: Lucas, J., History of the Cold War, New York, p. 90.

As the apparent conditions showed that there were no foreign troops on both South and North parts of Korea, the leaders again tried to utilize the opportunity for the unification of Korea. On 7th June, 1950 leaders of North Korea appealed to the people of both 'South and North Korea' for peaceful unification of country by holding general elections throughout Korea. South Koreans also suggested to hold a consultative conference either at Haeju, a North Korean border town or at Kaesung, a South Korean border town between 15th to 17th June, 1950.

But North Koreans refused to let the UNCOK inference in any way and also neglected Syngman Rhee<sup>33</sup>. These North Korean initiatives created tense situations in the South. Tensions developed in South and so the border became so sensitive that UNCOK, send, UN military observers to report on the situation along the 38th parallel<sup>34</sup>. On 11th June, three North Korean delegates who had crossed the border to appear to the leaders of the political parties were arrested. And this added fuel to the already existing tensions.

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33. Gupta Karunakar, 'How Did the Korean War Begin', China Quarterly, October-December, 1972, p. 701.

34. GAOR, Session 5, Supplements. Supplement 16 A/1350, p. 40.

With the passing period explosive tensions began to mount between the Korea's. The situation on the border gradually became tense and military incidents became more common to both parties being aggressive in turn. And the explosion came on 25th June, 1950. The Korean war broke out at 04.00 hours of the early morning of 25th June, 1950 shattering the peace and the quietness of the land of the morning calm.

The out break of war ended the UN's peace-keeping activities in Korea. On the contrary, it would not be exaggeration to say that UN, which primarily is a peace organisation, only helped towards the final outbreak of war. The two UN's commission UNICOM and UNCOK which were created with the intension of unifying Korea and maintaining peace ended up by confirming the division of the Peninsula.

In this chapter only an assessment of the Korean crisis has been attempted in an chronological manner. Events which took place and the stands taken by those countries involved have been examined. From this it can be calculated that the 'Korean Crisis' has been an event in which soon after the Second World War, many nations had participated and had also shown that bipolar struggle was still alive.



India realised that the bipolar system instead of solving the problem only provided an opportunity to super powers to enhance influence in each and every corner of the world. India knew very well that the global interest of the two poles would disturb the calmness of not only Korea but the whole world. Their ambitions would not be satisfied only with Korea, but all newly born small and undeveloped countries like India would be prey to their world wide ambitions. So India firmly decided to keep away from the politics of both groups, and emphasised its own policy of neutrality. India also made her policy a means to put an end to the over ambitious nature of big powers and thereby to save not only Korea but many small nations like Korea and also the ' World Peace '.