

Foreword:

The Navy's Role in Limited War

When the Communists invaded Korea on 25 June 1950, the United States was neither expecting nor prepared to fight in that remote area. They apparently had analyzed United States willingness, readiness, and ability to fight and concluded that we would simply watch and complain, but not fight. The Communists apparently saw an opportunity to seize some additional free world territory with little risk and at little cost.

The United States Army had no troops in Korea, the United States Air Force had only a few wings in the Far East, and the United States Navy had only one cruiser, four destroyers, and a few minesweepers in the Sea of Japan.

With so few combat forces initially available, control of the seas (taken for granted as is too often the case) was a prerequisite in implementing the United Nations decision to resist aggression against the Republic of Korea. *Without* the capability to use the seas, the decision to intervene on a rocky peninsula half-a-world away would have been meaningless and unenforceable. *With* control of the seas, the decision was sound and reasonable.

Once the decision was made, ships of the free world navies converged on Korea from every one of the seven seas—combatant ships, oilers, supply ships, ships loaded with troops, ammunition, guns, tanks, and aircraft; ships from the South China Sea, the Indian Ocean, the Pacific, the Atlantic, and from the far-away Mediterranean.

Control of the seas gave the United Nations the advantage of mobility—the opportunity to consolidate and combine the free world's economic and military strength. Seapower brought American troops, first from Japan, later from the United States. Seapower defeated the initial aggression with the classic amphibious assault at Inchon. Seapower made it possible to re-deploy the U. S. forces from Hungnam. Seapower helped to limit the conflict.

Use of the seas was denied to the Communists. This placed serious limitations on their ability to build up military power in Korea. It exposed the land flanks of the North Koreans (and later the Red Chinese). It denied them easy resupply by sea.

The Communists' attempt to seize Korea by military action was a failure. But this failure does not mean an abandonment of military adventures by the Communists. They will try again whenever other means fail or when they see a weakness they can exploit or find a vacuum they can fill.

The Communists have stated repeatedly that any means may be used to attain their goal of world domination, including war. The most important tenet of Communism—the one given most stress in their doctrine—is that Communism must continuously strive to possess all power, and conversely to destroy all rival power. This proposition is basic to Communism. It must be borne in mind constantly when dealing with Communists. Their tenet and their goal do not change.

There are many other explosive areas in the world. They are explosive because of this standing threat and this goal of Communism.

While the Korean War was unusual in many respects, it nevertheless has great meaning and significance for the future. In 1957 terminology, it would be called a "limited war." In the thermonuclear age, as major nations of the world improve their capability to wreak mutual destruction upon one another, the probability of all-out nuclear war is diminished. The probability of limited war is increased. It is important that the Korean War receive careful study. It is the first limited war the United Nations have fought against Communist totalitarianism.

The naval history of the Korean War is outlined in this book in great detail. The authors have distilled from it the lessons, results, and significance of the Korean War. This effort should be of great interest and benefit to every student of international or military affairs.

Of the many lessons of the Korean War, three stand out above all others:

1. The military forces of the United States must be vigilant and ready to defeat aggression in any area and in any form, whether it be large or small, atomic or conventional. Our hope, of course, is that our visible, vigilant strength will discourage Communist aggression. To do so, we must be capable of effective counteraction, ranging from the use of a squad of Marines to the use of atomic-tipped ballistic missiles. Our Navy must have many different arrows in its quiver.
2. Control of the sea is prerequisite to victory in modern war, whatever its size, type, or scope.
3. The Korean War was a limited war. A limited war is the type of war most likely to occur in the thermonuclear age.

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