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Anglo-American relations and the making and breaking of the Korean phase of the 1954 Geneva Conference

Robert Barnes

Peter Lowe wrote numerous excellent books and articles on the Korean War during his long career. *The Origins of the Korean War*, in particular, ranks as one of the seminal works on this topic.[1] In the main, though, he focused on Britain's role and Anglo-American relations during the conflict and paid little attention to developments during the eleven months between the signing of the Korean Armistice Agreement on 27 July 1953 and the termination of the Korean phase of the 1954 Geneva Conference.[2] In fact, very few historians of the Korean War have scrutinised this period and the few scholarly works that do go beyond the beginning of the ceasefire have generally focused on the implementation of the armistice on the ground in Korea and not on diplomatic relations.[3] Nonetheless, tensions continued to simmer between Washington and London and the bonds that held together the so-called 'special relationship' were tested almost to breaking point, just as they had been during the numerous crises that erupted while the fighting raged in Korea. This much-overlooked episode of unrest between the Western camp's closest and most powerful allies will thus form the focus of this chapter.

On the surface the disagreements between the United States and Britain stemmed from the terms of the Korean Armistice Agreement. This document only created a military cease-fire at the thirty-eighth parallel between the belligerents. The fundamental political issue of Korean unification was not settled. Instead, the US and Communist military negotiators at Panmunjom had only agreed to recommend that a political conference should be held within 90 days of the termination of hostilities. The date, location, agenda and membership of this conference was left undecided. While all of these issues produced strains, as will be demonstrated below, it was the composition question that proved most controversial in terms of Anglo-American relations. At the heart of this matter was whether neutral nations, specifically India, should be invited to the conference.

After months of trying both at the UN and bilaterally, a solution to the composition question was found at the US, Soviet, British and French foreign ministers meeting in Berlin in February 1954. This agreement paved the way for the opening of the Korean phase of the Geneva Conference in late April. Very little scholarly attention has been lavished on these discussions and even less has been written on Anglo-American animosity during this stage of the conference.[4] Central to this oversight is that the Korean debates produced no positive results, and that more eventful negotiations soon took place at Geneva on Indochina. Historians have thus concentrated on this later phase of the conference since the decisions taken here are usually seen as integral to the outbreak of the Vietnam War over a decade later. The rifts between the US and British delegations were also clearer to see during these debates. Still, serious problems had already been encountered between the two allies

during the Korean talks since they disagreed on what course to pursue to bring these proceedings to a timely end.

Invariably, when push came to shove the British government made the major concessions over the composition question and the handling of the talks at Geneva. Britain may have still been a global player in 1953-4 but its influence was rapidly fading and it had accepted a role as junior partner to the United States in the Western alliance. Prime Minister Winston Churchill and Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden, moreover, recognized that they had to compromise if they hoped to maintain the special relationship. President Dwight Eisenhower, in contrast, was at the peak of his powers at this time since he had ended the deeply unpopular Korean War just six months after being elected. But to say that Washington got everything its own way during this period would be to ignore the efforts it made to appease its closest friend while not upsetting its newest ally, the Republic of Korea (ROK).

Two central issues lay at the root of the fissures that formed in the special relationship during these months. To start with, Washington and London both had other international loyalties that pulled them in opposite directions on the Korean issue. For its part, the US government felt it had to work closely with the ROK after having spent three years of fighting alongside it, incurring great losses in manpower and resources, in order to maintain its existence. The Eisenhower administration, therefore, believed it could not ride roughshod over the wishes of ROK President Syngman Rhee even when he adopted a hard-line approach demanding Korean unification on his terms. The Churchill government, however, greatly disliked Rhee, who was considered to be undemocratic and manipulative. The British were also much less interested in Korea which it considered a peripheral matter that only distracted attention away from more important Cold War theatres. In consequence, London was much more interested in cooperating with its Commonwealth partners, particularly India whose friendship the British desired for strategic reasons and as a means of maintaining Third World goodwill. Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, however, was the one international statesman determined to find a compromise solution to the Korean problem, much to Washington and Seoul's ire.

Even more significantly, since Stalin's death in March 1953, British and American Cold War strategies had been slowly diverging. For Churchill, the subsequent 'peace offensive' launched by the Soviet collective leadership had opened an opportunity to establish some form of *détente* with Moscow and he had made attaining this his final crusade in international affairs. Ultimately, the British Prime Minister desired a three-power summit composed of the United States, the Soviet Union and Britain to resolve all outstanding problems and saw the holding of a political conference on Korea as a small step towards achieving this goal.[5] In addition, London had long been convinced that it was foolish to treat the People's Republic of China (PRC) as a pariah state, especially given Hong Kong's precarious position. Rather, the British government believed that now the Korean War was over the PRC should be brought into the community of nations; China would then gravitate away from the Soviet bloc. But the Eisenhower administration did not share Churchill's convictions and doubted the sincerity of the new Soviet leadership's

overtures. US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, specifically, had little desire to negotiate with the USSR and even less with the PRC which Washington continued not to recognize and considered an aggressor since its intervention in Korea.[6]

Round One: The UN and the Membership Question

With the signing of the Korean Armistice Agreement a special session of the UN General Assembly was scheduled to open on 17 August 1953. All parties expected that this forum would take up the Korean political conference issue. However, to complicate matters, in the brief interim period the Eisenhower administration tied itself firmly to the ROK. Dulles and the US Ambassador to the UN, Henry Cabot Lodge, travelled to Seoul almost immediately after the fighting stopped to conclude the US-ROK mutual security treaty that had been promised to Rhee a month earlier in order to convince him to accept the armistice. This pact thus made South Korea Washington's newest ally and bound America's international prestige to the continued existence of the ROK.

With Dulles and Lodge away, discussions between the US and British delegations at the UN on the Korean political conference got underway only days before the special session opened. Lodge met with the British Minister of State, Selwyn Lloyd, who was present in New York because Eden was incapacitated with a serious bile-duct problem, and duly outlined a draft resolution that had been written on the flight back from Korea. This proposal recommended a two-sided conference with the 'UN' side composed of the member states which had contributed forces and the ROK. The Communist 'aggressors' should then name their own side. The proposal also stated that the conference should take place at a time and place to be arranged in discussions between the US government, acting on behalf of the UN, and the Communist side.

On hearing this proposal, Lloyd argued that the conference should be round-table in nature and include interested non-belligerents, particularly the Soviet Union and India. Lloyd also revealed that Britain had already promised a seat to India and stressed that the Commonwealth countries all felt that such a conference would be more acceptable to the Communists and stood a much better chance of success than resurrecting the tense cross-table talks at Panmunjom.[7] Dulles, though, instructed Lodge to refuse membership to neutral countries and only to accept Soviet participation as part of the Communist side.[8] At a meeting of the sixteen contributing states, therefore, the US delegation presented its draft resolution and all of these states, except South Africa which claimed it no longer had any interest in Korea now the fighting was over, agreed to co-sponsor it. Even Britain, in spite of its misgivings, acted as a sponsor in the interests of maintaining Western unity.[9]

Yet relations between the United States and Britain soon began to deteriorate over the issue of Soviet participation. Acting Foreign Secretary Lord Salisbury, who was temporarily in charge of British foreign policy with Churchill having recently suffered a stroke, insisted on a separate draft resolution inviting the Soviet Union as

an interested party. Salisbury argued convincingly that if it was left to the Communist side to invite Moscow this would imply that the USSR was an aggressor.[10] In response, Dulles argued that the American public would not tolerate Soviet participation.[11] With tensions mounting, the inexperienced Salisbury simply instructed Lloyd to accept any procedure acceptable to Washington that would bring about Soviet membership.[12] This action, however, proved premature since Dulles eventually grudgingly accepted the need to invite the Soviet Union if the conference was to stand any chance of success.[13]

Problems over Soviet membership paled into insignificance compared to those produced concerning India's membership. Salisbury had already instructed the British delegation to sponsor a draft resolution inviting India to participate at the conference.[14] Importantly, all of the other Commonwealth members had also agreed to sponsor this proposal. They argued that India had played a key role in finding a solution to the prisoners-of-war problem, helping to bring the Korean conflict to an end, and was directly interested in a peaceful settlement as chairman of the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission (NNRC). The NNRC was the body created by the armistice agreement to take custody of prisoners who refused to return home after the fighting stopped until a solution to this problem was found at the political conference. The Eisenhower administration, however, refused to accept Indian membership since it did not want Nehru hijacking the conference and advocating concessions in order to appease the Communists. Evidently, the US government had become exasperated with what it perceived as India's meddling in Korean affairs during the years of fighting. Furthermore, Washington was sensitive to views of the ROK government that claimed it would not attend the conference if India was present. Rhee argued that India had no right to interfere in Korean affairs and that Nehru was sympathetic to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). For the Americans it was essential to have the ROK on-board or else the conference would be pointless.[15]

To try to nip this problem in the bud, Lodge decided to bypass the British and approached directly V. K. Krishna Menon, Nehru's special representative at the UN. Lodge told Menon that while his government had the 'greatest respect and admiration' for India, its participation at the conference would cause 'great embarrassment' between the United States and the ROK. The US delegation hoped, instead, that India would announce it would not pursue a place at the conference. In response, Menon cryptically stated that it would only participate if requested by both sides but stressed that India had a right to be present at the conference since it had contributed a field hospital unit to the UN action in Korea.[16] To further confuse matters, Menon then told Lloyd that India definitely did wish to participate and criticized the US draft resolution for inviting only belligerents.[17]

The special session of the General Assembly thus got underway with the US and British positions poles apart. These differences were soon made public in the First Committee. While Lodge argued against the participation of non-belligerents, Lloyd argued that the General Assembly had the authority to recommend the membership of any nation, including India.[18] Gauging the response of the other member states, the Eisenhower administration became increasingly concerned that the Commonwealth

draft resolution inviting India would win widespread support. Accordingly, Dulles instructed Lodge to make it abundantly clear to the British delegation that the US government would vote against Indian participation.[19] Nevertheless, in talks in Washington Salisbury told the US secretary of state that the British government had made a firm commitment to India.[20] Even so, privately Salisbury was becoming increasingly concerned at the damage being done to Anglo-American relations. Consequently, he instructed the British delegation not to canvass other members to support the Commonwealth draft resolution.[21]

By the end of the first week of the special session an open split between the United States and Britain on Indian participation seemed inevitable. But at the eleventh hour Menon intervened, thus preventing this from happening. He told Lloyd that while he was practically certain that the Commonwealth draft resolution would obtain a simple majority of votes, he doubted it would receive the two-thirds majority necessary to be formally adopted. He revealed that in these circumstances India would withdraw its candidacy.[22] Menon stated in the General Assembly, moreover, that India would not seek a place at the conference unless it was clear that all the major parties desired its presence. Seizing on this point, Lodge publicly announced that the US government opposed Indian membership on the grounds that its presence would prevent the ROK from attending the conference.[23] Following these developments, Salisbury decided that if the Commonwealth draft resolution did not receive overwhelming support Britain would seek the agreement of the other Commonwealth co-sponsors to withdraw their proposal.[24]

After ten days of deliberation, therefore, the debate in the First Committee concluded in chaotic scenes. At the last minute, the Soviet delegation introduced a number of amendments to the various draft resolutions. After each of these amendments was decisively rejected, the fifteen-power draft resolution was voted upon and was overwhelmingly approved. Next, the draft resolution recommending Soviet participation was approved with almost all members voting for it. The Commonwealth draft resolution proposing Indian membership was then approved narrowly by twenty-seven votes to twenty-one, with eleven abstentions. Significantly, Britain and all of its Commonwealth partners supported this proposal but the United States voted against it. This represented the first time such a split had occurred at the UN over Korea. Finally, a Soviet draft resolution proposing the establishment of a round table conference composed of the two Koreas plus the Soviet Union, China, the United States, Britain, France, Czechoslovakia, Poland, India and Burma, was rejected, with the United States and Britain united against it.[25]

The Commonwealth delegations met straight after this voting had taken place. Lloyd and the other Commonwealth representatives pressed Menon to withdraw India's candidacy now it was clear that their draft resolution would not gain the necessary two-thirds majority to be formally adopted by the General Assembly. The Indian representative grudgingly accepted this course and the four co-sponsors agreed that their proposal should not be put to the vote.[26] This plan was put into action the following day with Menon announcing that India 'declined to participate' in the conference. The New Zealand delegation then called for the Commonwealth draft

resolution not to proceed to the vote. On 28 August 1953 General Assembly Resolution 711 (VII) was thus adopted inviting the 'UN' side and the USSR to participate, as well as asking the Communist belligerents to name their side.[27]

The US and British positions had been publicly aligned during the talks but privately neither government was entirely happy with the outcome of the special session. Washington had gotten its way on the question of Indian membership but, partly in response to British pressure, had unenthusiastically accepted the need to invite the Soviet Union to the conference. The Churchill government was even more disappointed since it had been forced to concede, against its better judgment, on the matter of Indian participation to avoid an open split with the United States. British resentment was then amplified when, as predicted, Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai rejected General Assembly Resolution 711 (VII) on the grounds that neutrals should be present at the conference. India saw this as an opportunity to revive the composition question at the General Assembly when it met again a few weeks later. But the British government, reluctant to open old wounds, accepted the American argument that the UN should stick by its decision and not be held to ransom by the aggressors.[28] Consequently, the Korean item was placed last on the General Assembly's agenda.

Round Two: Panmunjom and the Membership Question

With the Korean debate at the UN postponed, Dulles sought to start bilateral negotiations between the United States and the PRC to resolve the composition question. To achieve this end he utilized the provision in General Assembly Resolution 711 (VII) permitting the US government to discuss the time and place of the conference with the Communist side. Dulles thus transmitted a communication to Beijing suggesting a meeting of emissaries at Panmunjom. Somewhat surprisingly after his negative response only weeks earlier, Zhou Enlai accepted this proposal and a meeting was set for 26 October 1953.[29] For this task Dulles appointed Arthur Dean, a trusted former colleague from the Sullivan and Cromwell international law firm.[30]

The talks between Dean and his Chinese counterpart, Huang Hua, however, were doomed from the outset. The Communist representative refused to discuss technical details such as the date and location of the conference until the presence of neutral countries at the conference was accepted.[31] Dean, in contrast, was under strict instructions not to discuss the composition question until the date and location had been agreed.[32] As a result, these meetings quickly descended into bitter slanging matches as each side accused the other of trying to sabotage the conference. But, even though a breakthrough was very unlikely, Dulles insisted that the talks be dragged out to head off debate at the UN.[33] In the meantime, he instructed Lodge to move to adjourn the General Assembly for an indefinite period on the grounds that the Korean question was under active discussion at Panmunjom.[34] The Indian delegation, however, insisted that a date be set to reconvene the General Assembly to discuss the work of the NNRC before it disbanded on 22 February 1954.[35]

For that reason, Eden – who had recently returned to active duty and assumed responsibility for foreign affairs with Churchill, now 78, frail after his stroke – was placed in a difficult position. He agreed with the Americans that the UN debate should be postponed so as not to interfere with Dean's efforts, but he was also sympathetic to India's desire to report on its difficult task as chairman of the NNRC. To bridge these divergent views Eden sought to persuade Lodge to amend his draft resolution so that a special session of the General Assembly could be called if the Panmunjom talks broke down.[36] Yet Lodge refused to budge suspecting that India wished to reopen the composition question.[37] Given the strength of Washington's convictions and since this was a point of procedure rather than substance, Eden instructed the British delegation to support the US proposal.[38] General Assembly Resolution 716 (VIII) was thus adopted on 8 December 1953 indefinitely recessing the UN debate. [39]

That same day Dean made a final effort to find a breakthrough on the composition question at Panmunjom. He conceded that some non-belligerent nations should be allowed to 'participate' at the conference but not be permitted to introduce items or vote. But Huang Hua dismissed this proposal as 'absurd, ridiculous and stale' and left the text received from Dean lying on the table at the end of the meeting.[40] Dean wished to break off the talks at this point but in light of the decision to recess the Korean debate at the General Assembly, Dulles instructed him to prolong the talks until 12 December 1953 to avoid controversy.[41] At a meeting that day, therefore, Dean unilaterally recessed the negotiations on the pretext that Huang Hua had charged the United States with perfidy.[42]

Round Three: The 1954 Berlin Conference and the Membership Question

With the prospect of finding a solution to the membership question at Panmunjom all but dead the Eisenhower administration became convinced that the Korean political conference could only be established through bilateral negotiations with the Soviet Union. The president, in consequence, agreed with Churchill and French Premier Joseph Laniel, when they met at Bermuda in December 1953, to accept Moscow's suggestion that the foreign ministers of the Soviet Union, the United States, Britain and France meet in Berlin in January 1954.[43] This conference was called ostensibly to discuss the German and Austrian questions. But it was evident to all concerned that matters would quickly turn to more pressing Asian issues – namely the Korean political conference and the conflict in Indochina in which the Viet Minh, with increased Chinese support since the end of the Korean War, had gained the upper hand over the French colonial forces.

Nonetheless, before the Berlin Conference got underway Menon again called for the General Assembly to be reconvened. He argued that with the Korean political conference nowhere in sight the UN members had to discuss the fate of the remaining non-repatriate prisoners held by the NNRC before 23 January 1954 when the custody period specified in the Korean Armistice Agreement expired. The British delegation

at the UN believed that this demand was reasonable given the collapse of the negotiations at Panmunjom.[44] Yet Dulles opposed the Indian proposal, fearing renewed debate on the composition question that would interfere with the upcoming talks at Berlin.[45] He thus sought to stymie Menon's campaign by instructing Kenneth Young, Dean's deputy at Panmunjom, to attempt to resume talks on the condition that the Communists retracted their charge of perfidy.[46]

However, the NNRC's decision to simply return the remaining non-repatriate prisoners of war to their former captors at the end of the custody period ended any possibility that the General Assembly would be reconvened at this time. Dulles now argued that since the NNRC had failed to complete its task, the UN was under no obligation to meet to hear its report.[47] Crucially, this argument resonated with Eden and the vast majority of other UN member states who opposed India's calls to reconvene the General Assembly. At the same time, after a number of weeks of trying, Young concluded that the Chinese delegation at Panmunjom had no interest in negotiating on the composition question.[48]

The Berlin conference became, consequently, the only remaining venue in which to discuss the Korean political conference. Talks commenced on 25 January 1954 between Dulles, Eden, Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov and French Foreign Minister Georges Bidault and, as predicted, immediately shifted away from the German and Austrian questions. The first item on the agenda tabled by Molotov was a proposal for a five-power conference consisting of the four countries present plus the PRC to tackle all outstanding Asian issues.[49] Dulles refused to accept this proposal on the grounds that the US government did not recognize the PRC. He also opposed discussing any other Asian issues until the Korean question had been resolved.[50] Eden and Bidault were more sympathetic to the Soviet proposal. The French foreign minister was unwilling to rule out a five-power conference since his government was desperate to start talks over Indochina given its desperate military situation there. Eden, moreover, felt that it would be difficult to publicly defend refusing a five-power conference now that talks were being held neither at the UN nor Panmunjom.[51] In addition, Churchill believed that it would be 'wise' to accept the Soviet proposal if this presented an opening for wider talks to lessen Cold War tensions.[52]

While the Western foreign ministers presented a united front in the meetings with Molotov, behind-the-scenes bickering between Dulles, Eden and Bidault intensified. Importantly, though, Dulles was determined to get the Korean political conference underway with domestic and international pressure building. He proposed a conference on Korea, therefore, which would be sponsored by the Big Four who would then invite the ROK, the other contributing UN member states, the PRC and the DPRK. If before the adjournment of this conference developments indicated positive results the four inviting powers would consult on steps to establish a conference to restore peace in Indochina. The US proposal also included clauses stating that the conference was in line with General Assembly Resolution 711 (VII) and that the holding of the conference did not imply diplomatic recognition of the Beijing and Pyongyang regimes.[53]

Bidault was generally in favour of this proposal, although he also wanted a clearly indication that a conference on Indochina would definitely take place. Eden also saw the benefits of the proposal since it would get the United States, the Soviet Union and the PRC sitting at the same table. But the British foreign secretary was convinced that Molotov would reject the proposal given the references to recognition of the PRC and the General Assembly resolution.[54] He thus took the lead in redrafting the proposal effectively removing the comments Molotov found objectionable. Luckily, while Dulles was uncomfortable with some of these concessions, he accepted them since the key principles remained.[55] As a result, after lengthy and often rancorous debate, the four foreign ministers agreed that a meeting of their nations would take place at Geneva on 26 April 1954 to resolve the Korean question. The United States would invite the ROK and the other UN contributing states while the Soviet Union would invite the PRC and the DPRK. If the discussions on Korea made satisfactory progress then a separate but contemporaneous conference on Indochina could be established, with its composition to be decided at the time.[56]

Anglo-American relations had been tested at the Berlin conference. At the heart of the problems experienced was Britain's desire to engage with the Communist powers and settle the Korean question to kick-start the process toward *détente*. If this involved Western recognition of the PRC then this was a concession London was willing to make since it had already done this in early 1950. The Eisenhower administration, conversely, remained wary of engaging with the Soviet bloc and was under no circumstances going to recognize the government of a country it had recently been fighting against. Friction at Berlin was also partly a response to the poor relations that existed between Eden and Dulles. The two men had quarrelled over a number of issues in the past and Eden had even advised Eisenhower not to appoint Dulles as his secretary of state in November 1952. Additionally, the Englishman's extroverted aristocratic personality distinctly clashed with that of the dour Presbyterian American.

The Korean phase of the 1954 Geneva Conference

Despite the agreements reached at Berlin, the two-and-a-half month period before the opening of the 1954 Geneva conference was full of controversy. The Eisenhower administration's priority was convincing the reluctant ROK government to participate. On his part, Rhee demanded vast amounts of military assistance from Washington before finally agreeing to attend just eight days before the conference was due to begin. The Western sponsors also ran into many difficulties with Moscow in regard to the technical arrangements for the conference. The three Western governments argued that the conference should take place in the UN's Palais des Nations and be serviced by UN Secretariat personnel, since this was the only practical solution and would maintain the world organization's link with the Korean question. The Soviet leadership, however, opposed any UN role until only a few weeks before the conference was due to start when they accepted there was no practical alternative.

In addition, Anglo-American friction flared up over the seating arrangements at the conference. The Eisenhower administration remained adamant that it would only accept a two-sided conference. But the British government argued that a round-table conference would be more conducive to compromise. Yet with the conference about to start Eden conceded to prevent a major crisis occurring. A horse-shoe seating arrangement, with the delegations seated in alphabetical order, was thus agreed with the Soviet Union.[57]

More significantly, planning for the Geneva Conference was greatly complicated by events in Indochina. On 12 March 1954 the Viet Minh launched a final assault on the French military's stronghold at Dien Bien Phu sparking a major crisis within the Western alliance. The US government, now funding 80 per cent of France's military effort, seriously contemplated direct intervention in the conflict and even the use of atomic weapons. But in the end Washington decided to supply the French only with additional aircraft and pilots. Central to this decision was the British reaction. The Eisenhower administration was only willing to deploy US troops to Indochina as part of a coalition with the British. The Churchill government, however, was convinced that the French would be defeated and that the best course was to find an acceptable political solution at the negotiating table.

Ominously, the Korean phase of the Geneva conference got underway at the height of this crisis. Hence from the outset it was clear that all the non-Korean participants shared the view that Indochina was now the much more important international crisis and should be dealt with straightaway. In addition, the majority of the delegations present agreed that a balance of power now existed in Korea, the resumption of hostilities was unlikely, and the peninsula could be allowed to remain divided since a solution acceptable to all would be impossible to attain. As a result, neither side was willing to make any concessions which risked its position on the peninsula. Nevertheless, in accordance with the Berlin agreements, the Korean phase of the conference had to be dealt with before Indochina could be discussed. The question that plagued the US and British delegations in Geneva, therefore, was how to terminate the talks on Korea as expeditiously as possible.

The first act of the conference was to appoint Eden, Molotov and Prince Wan Waithayakon, the foreign minister of Thailand, as its joint chairmen.[58] While the chairmanship was a strictly administrative position, Eden believed that his appointment placed him in a position of responsibility for the fate of the conference. For that reason he felt that the conference had to be treated as a genuine attempt to find a solution to the Korean question even if he had little faith that the unification of the peninsula could be achieved. Eden also desired real dialogue with the Communist side, especially with the Chinese whom he hoped to entice back into international society and away from the USSR. To achieve these ends Eden proposed that the UN side put forward a moderate proposal from the start in order to win over international opinion. If, as expected, the Communists rejected this position the Korean talks could be terminated without any harm being done to the Western alliance. Attention could then shift to the Indochina question. Importantly, this strategy garnered widespread support, particularly from Britain's Commonwealth partners.

Dulles agreed with Eden that the likelihood of finding a breakthrough on Korea was minimal and made this clear by declaring he would only attend the first week of the conference, during which he controversially refused to shake hands with Zhou Enlai.[59] But, despite these views, Dulles wanted to drag out the conference for two reasons. First, he believed that the longer the Communists were exposed to international scrutiny the more they would demonstrate their intransigence. This would allow the UN side to break off the negotiations while winning a propaganda victory. Furthermore, Washington needed time to coordinate its policy with the ROK government. This process had begun long before the conference opened since the US government appreciated that South Korea had the most at stake. Yet the Eisenhower administration feared that if Seoul adopted an aggressive independent policy at the conference this would highlight the divisions within the Western alliance and permit the Communists to end the talks in an advantageous position.[60] Accordingly, the US ambassador to the ROK, Ellis Briggs, and Dulles' special envoy Arthur Dean, pressured Rhee to temper his views. At the same time, the US delegation worked more closely with its South Korean counterpart, led by Foreign Minister Pyun Yung-tai, than with any other delegation at the conference.

Still, when the plenary sessions on Korea commenced Pyun called for the Chinese 'aggressors' to withdraw from Korea and for UN-observed elections to take place solely in North Korea to fill the 100 seats left open in the ROK National Assembly. In retaliation, the North Korean representative, Nam-Il, demanded that all foreign forces be withdrawn within six months and that all-Korea elections be arranged by an equal North-South committee in order to establish a new fully representative government.[61] In the debates that followed, the Soviet and Chinese delegations backed Nam Il's proposal while the Americans supported Pyun's suggestion. Significantly though, very few of the other UN contributing states, including Britain, became involved in the debate. This silence infuriated Dulles who, shortly before leaving Geneva, strongly complained to Eden that the British delegation had not spoken to defend the US position despite the attacks being made by the Communist representatives. He claimed this presented, 'a pathetic spectacle of drifting without any agreed policy or purpose'. In response, Eden explained that Britain and the other Commonwealth delegations had not spoken in the debate since they did not want to get tied to the ROK formula which they opposed.[62]

And so by the end of the first week of the conference the UN side was thoroughly divided. The new head of the US delegation, Under-Secretary of State Walter Bedell Smith, nonetheless, was determined to find a means to bring the Korean phase of the conference to a close in a way acceptable to both Britain and the ROK. The impetus for this drive was the news on 8 May 1954 that Dien Bien Phu had fallen to the Viet Minh. As a result, the Indochina phase of the conference commenced and Washington now wished to focus its attention on this matter. The Eisenhower administration was also concerned that the united Communist side was so far winning the psychological battle. Smith thus called for the UN side to formulate a set of general unification 'principles' that would uphold the UN's authority to answer the Korean question. He thought this could best be achieved by calling for the world

organization to supervise all-Korea elections. Smith had no apprehensions that the Communists would accept this proposal since they had consistently refuted the UN's right to interfere in Korea's future. But he hoped both the British and South Koreans might accept this proposal as a way to means to terminate the talks.[63]

Significantly, the US government discussed this proposal with the ROK in Seoul and Geneva before it approached the British. Rhee and Pyun, however, continued to argue against all-Korean elections and to demand China's immediate withdrawal. After almost a fortnight of fruitless discussions, Smith then sought to coordinate policy with the United States' other allies, starting with the British. Eden welcomed the idea of all-Korea elections but was less certain over the principle of UN supervision. He argued that if the Communist side was willing to accept some form of international supervision then the British government would find it difficult to justify terminating the talks on the UN principle. Furthermore, Eden argued that the talks should not be terminated without any prospect of resurrecting them in the future. Working closely with Menon, who was present in Geneva even though India was not a participant, Eden therefore suggested that a statement be issued highlighting the 'points of agreement' with the Communists. However, the US delegation dismissed this proposal out of hand since it did not want to commit to another round of negotiations given the lack of progress at Geneva.[64]

Meanwhile, at a meeting of the sixteen allied delegations Pyun had unexpectedly presented a fourteen-point unification plan that essentially embodied Smith's principles.[65] The reasons behind the ROK's *volte face* are unclear, although it is probable that Rhee finally accepted the US argument that the Communists would reject these principles, thus allowing the Korean discussions to be terminated. Evidently, the South Korean president preferred no unification plan over one that might jeopardize the ROK's and his own future. In addition, Rhee knew that he could only push Washington so far since his country relied on American support and goodwill.

In this climate, Eden also now accepted the US proposal in the interest of Anglo-American relations, stating that the principle of UN supervision was defensible, and because he agreed that the Indochina phase was now the priority.[66] Consequently, all of the sixteen Allied delegations, including the British and South Koreans, worked in harmony to draft a declaration terminating the conference if the Communists rejected the principle of UN supervision.[67] This plan was put into action on 15 June 1954 when the Communist side refused to accept the UN's authority in this matter, claiming that the world organization was a belligerent in the conflict and had no right to interfere in the domestic affairs of a sovereign state. The Korean phase of the conference thus ended without any decisions being taken on the fate of the peninsula.[68]

The US delegation had achieved its difficult task of holding together its disparate allies in Geneva. The divisions within the UN side, however, had not been kept private. Smith's claims on his return to Washington that allied unity had been maintained throughout the conference thus sounded false.[69] The US under-secretary of state was far more truthful in his telegram to the Department of State a week earlier

when he wrote of relations with the other members of the UN side, 'it was like herding a flock of rabbits through a hole in a fence, and there was cause for extreme exasperation'.[70] Clearly, Washington's and London's differing loyalties and conceptions of the Cold War had come to the fore at Geneva creating friction between the two Western allies. But in the end the US delegation, due in large part to Smith's patience and skill, was able to force Britain and the ROK to toe the line. Even so, the US delegation did make a number of concessions to appease Eden and his Commonwealth partners allowing attention to shift to the more pressing Indochina crisis.

Conclusion

The eleven months following the signing of the Korean Armistice Agreement represented a dangerous period in the Cold War. The prospect of fighting in Korea resuming loomed large while the situation in Indochina threatened to create another 'hot' conflict on the Asian mainland. Additionally, with Stalin's death and Eisenhower's election much uncertainty existed. Some, such as Churchill, hoped that tensions between the two blocs could be lifted but others, most notably Dulles, were seeking ways to put pressure on Moscow. For these reasons it is understandable why the crisis in Anglo-American relations regarding the post-war political conference on Korea has been largely ignored by historians. Yet the level of tension created between the United States and Britain surrounding this issue was palpable.

On the membership question, Washington and London came extremely close to splitting at the UN over India's right to participate demonstrating that the two capitals had differing alternative alliance loyalties. But Britain did eventually concede, prioritising Anglo-American relations over Commonwealth allegiances. Then again at the Berlin conference Dulles and Eden clashed repeatedly over the Soviet proposal for a five-power conference, including the PRC, to resolve all outstanding Asian issues. Here the United States' and Britain's opposing conceptions on establishing dialogue with the Communist states proved troublesome. Yet Dulles and Eden were willing to compromise paving the way for the agreement to hold the Geneva conference. Rifts between the US and British delegations during the Korean phase of this conference, however, were quick to appear. The Eisenhower administration, eager to work closely with the ROK government and with no interest in appeasing the Communists, wished to take a hard line. In stark contrast, the Churchill government, with the support of its Commonwealth partners, wished to put forward a proposal that at least appeared to be a genuine attempt to bring about Korean unification. Nonetheless, events in Indochina made terminating the Korean negotiations everyone's priority. Eden thus accepted the Smith's principle of UN supervision of all-Korea elections before any lasting harm was done to the special relationship.

The Korean phase of the 1954 Geneva conference marked the final time the international community seriously attempted to find a solution to the Korean

unification question. Nevertheless, for two decades after Geneva the Korean item continued to be debated at the UN. But discussions invariably descended into a propaganda contest over whether the DPRK should be invited to participate. Evidently, the two Koreas and their superpower patrons were satisfied with the *status quo* for the time being. Importantly for Anglo-American relations Britain happily followed America's lead at the UN. After the problems encountered between the two states over the making and breaking of the Korean phase of the Geneva conference, neither Washington nor London wished to revisit this issue. For the British government Korea was no longer a problem over which it was worth risking the special relationship. For the US administration Korea had become its responsibility and it would not accept any more allied interference on this matter.

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[7] The National Archives, Kew (TNA) FO371/105524 Lloyd (UN NYC) to Salisbury 13 Aug.
1953.

[8] Dwight David Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas, (DDEL), Papers of JFD—Telephone Calls series, box 1, file: telephone memos (except to and from White House) July–October 31, 1953 (3), telephone conversation (Lodge) 12 Aug. 1953.

[9] DDEL Papers of JFD—Telephone Calls series, box 1, file: telephone memos (Except to and from White House) July–October 31, 1953 (3), telephone conversation (Lodge) 14 Aug. 1953.

[10] TNA FO371/105525 Salisbury to Lloyd 14 Aug. 1953.

[11] DDEL Papers of JFD—Telephone Calls series, box 1, file: telephone memos (Except to and from White House) July–October 31, 1953 (3), telephone conversation (Lodge) 14 Aug. 1953.

[12] TNA FO371/105525 Salisbury to Lloyd 15 Aug. 1953.

[13] TNA FO371/105525 Lloyd to Salisbury 15 Aug. 1953.

[14] TNA FO371/105524 Salisbury to Lloyd 13 Aug. 1953.

[15] TNA FO371/105525 Lloyd to Salisbury 15 Aug. 1953.

[16] *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) 1952–54* vol. XV memorandum of conversation Lodge (UN NYC) 14 Aug. 1953, pp. 1494–5.

[17] TNA FO371/105526, Lloyd to Salisbury 18 Aug. 1953.

[18] United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), Official Records, 7th Session 1st Committee 613–618th meetings 18–21 Aug. 1953, pp. 699–730.

[19] National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), Archives II, College Park, Maryland, RG59/250/49/26/07 entry 1380, box 2, file: 7th General Assembly, Assistant Secretary ofState for UN Affairs (Robert Murphy) to Dulles 19 Aug. 1953.

[20] DDEL, Papers of JFD—Telephone Calls Series, box 1, file: Telephone Memos (Except to and from White House) July–October 31, 1953 (3), telephone conversation (Lodge) 24 Aug. 1953.

[21] TNA FO371/105526 Salisbury to Lloyd 24 Aug. 1953.

[22] TNA FO371/105526 Lloyd to Salisbury 23 Aug. 1953.

[23] UNGA, 7th Session 1st Committee 623rd meeting 25 Aug. 1953, pp. 749–55.

[24] TNA FO371/105527 Salisbury to Lloyd 27 Aug. 1953.

[25] UNGA, 7th Session 1st Committee 625th meeting 27 Aug. 1953, pp. 765–70.

[26] TNA FO371/105527 Lloyd to Salisbury 27 Aug. 1953.

[27] UNGA 7th Session Plenary 430th meeting 28 Aug. 1953, pp. 724–34.
[28] NARA RG84/350/63/05/04 entry 2846, box 2, file: 310—Political Conferences January–October 1953 vol. I, Dulles to Dept. of State 17 Sept. 1953.
[29] NARA RG59/250/49/06/03 entry 1198, box 2, file: Korean Political Conference October 1953 (1), Zhou Enlai to Hammarskjold 19 Oct. 1953.
[30] For a detailed analysis of Dean's mission to Panmunjom, see Princeton University Library (PUL), John Foster Dulles Oral History Project, Arthur Dean interview 21 May and 13 July 1964, pp. 77–88.
[31] *FRUS 1952–54* vol. XV Dean (Munsan-Ni) to Dulles 1 Nov. 1953, pp. 1578–9.
[32] *FRUS 1952–54* vol. XV Dulles to Dean 4 Nov. 1953, pp. 1587–8.
[33] NARA RG84/350/63/05/04 entry 2846, box 2, file: 310—Political Conference November 1953 vol. II, Dulles to Dean, 18 Nov. 1953.
[34] NARA RG84/350/63/05/04 entry 2846, box 4, file: 312—United Nations (UN) 1953–1954–1955, Dulles to Lodge 20 Nov. 1953.
[35] TNA FO371/105596 Lloyd minute 25 Nov. 1953.
[36] TNA FO371/105596 Eden to Jebb (UN NYC) 1 Dec. 1953.
[37] TNA FO371/105596 Jebb to Eden 2 Dec. 1953.
[38] TNA FO371/105596 Eden to Jebb 3 Dec. 1953.
[39] UNGA, 8th Session Plenary 470th meeting 8 Dec. 1953, p. 446.
[40] *FRUS 1952–54* vol. XV Dean to Dulles 8 Dec. 1953, pp. 1651–2.
[41] NARA RG84/350/63/05/04 entry 2846, box 4, file: 312—United Nations (UN) 1953–1954–1955, Dulles to Dean 9 Dec. 1953.
[42] *FRUS 1952–54* vol. XV Dean to Dulles 12 Dec. 1953, pp. 1655–57.
[43] *FRUS 1952–54* vol. V Communiqué of the Bermuda Conference of the Heads of Government of the United States, United Kingdom, and France, Bermuda 7 Dec. 1953, pp. 1838–9.
[44] TNA FO371/105597 Jebb to Lloyd 14 Dec. 1953.
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[48] *FRUS 1952–54* vol. V Young to Dulles 26 Jan. 1954.
[49] *FRUS 1952–54* vol. VII Dulles (Berlin) to Dept. of State 25 Jan. 1954, pp. 814–17.
[50] *FRUS 1952-1954* vol. VII Dulles to Dept. of State 24 Jan. 1954, pp. 790-3.
[51] TNA FO371/110574 Eden (Berlin) to FO 25 Jan. 1954.
[52] TNA CAB128/27 CC(54) 5th Cabinet meeting 26 Jan. 1954.
[53] *FRUS 1952-1954* vol. VII Dulles to Dept. of State 4 Feb. 1954, pp. 953-4.
[54] *FRUS 1952-1954* vol. VII Dulles to Eisenhower 6 Feb. 1954, pp. 982-3.
[55] *FRUS 1952-1954* vol. VII Dulles to Dept. of State 15 Feb. 1954, pp. 1106-7.
[56] *FRUS 1952–54* vol. VII Final Communiqué of the Berlin Conference 18 Feb. 1954, pp. 1205–6.
[57] For detailed documentary evidence on the pre-Geneva Conference planning, see *FRUS 1952–54* vol. *XVI*, pp. 14–142.
[58] *FRUS 1952–54 v*ol. XVI Dulles (Geneva) to Dept. of State 26 Apr. 1954, pp. 144–45.
[59] This incident is graphically recounted in PUL John Foster Dulles Oral History Project, U. Alexis Johnson interview, 28 May 1966, pp. 20-1.

[60] *FRUS 1952-54* vol. XVI, Second Meeting of the Heads of the 16 Allied Delegations, US Delegation (Geneva) to Dept. of State 28 Apr. 1954, pp. 156-8.
[61] *FRUS 1952-54* vol. XVI Dulles (Geneva) to Dept. of State 27 Apr. 1953, pp. 148-51.
[62] *FRUS 1952-54* vol. XVI Dulles to Dept. of State 30 Apr. 1954, pp. 165-8.
[63] *FRUS 1952-54* vol. XVI Smith (Geneva) to Embassy in Korea 4 May 1954, pp. 201-2.
[64] *FRUS 1952-54* vol. XVI Smith to Dept. of State 1 June 1954, pp. 333-4.
[65] *FRUS 1952-54* vol. XVI Smith to Dept. of State 21 May 1954, pp. 304-6.
[66] *FRUS 1952-54* vol. XVI Smith to Dept. of State 11 June 1954, pp. 361-5.
[67] *FRUS 1952-54* vol. XVI Smith to Dept. of State 14 June 1954, pp. 371-2; Smith to Dept. of State 15 June 1954, pp. 374-6.
[68] *FRUS 1952–54* vol. XVI Declaration by the Sixteen, 15 June 1954, pp. 385–6.
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