

Articles

The Potsdam Conference and  
the Role of the U.S. in the Division of  
Korea along the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel North:  
August-11 Draft Theory vs.  
July-25 Conception Theory

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## Introduction

The Potsdam Conference (July 17 - August 2, 1945), attended by the three heads of the governments of the United States, United Kingdom and Soviet Union, was the lengthiest executive-level conference held during World War II, and it represented an important milestone in the history of the Cold War. As Japan's early surrender was expected, the U.S. and the Soviets showed gestures of peace and cooperation on the surface, while competition and confrontation between the two powers had already begun. The U.S. President Harry S. Truman had been informed about the success of the atomic bombing test right before the opening of the conference in Potsdam, and he attempted to obtain a secure victory in the Northeast Asian region by dropping nuclear bombs on Japan (W. Lee 2005, 69-103). He also planned the U.S. occupation of Korea, bearing in mind the possibility of division should such an attempt fail. The plan of Korea's division was mapped by Lieutenant General John E. Hull, chief of the Operations Division, who placed a line bisecting Korea along the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel north. Based on the oral testimony records of Lieutenant General Hull discovered in the U.S. National Archives, the present paper plans to reflect on the division of Korea along the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel north, as drafted during the Potsdam Conference.

Conventional theories contend that the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel was drafted around August 10, 1945, but this essay will claim that the idea had been conceived about ten days earlier, around July 25. In addition, the present study is in partial agreement with the non-standard view towards the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, which says that the division of Korea along this line was secretly discussed during the Potsdam Conference (Shin 1988, 32-33; Y. Yi 1965). However, as there is little possibility that the U.S. made a secret pact with the Soviet Union while preparing to end the war by utilizing the atomic bomb, this study will argue that the theory of a secret pact during the Potsdam Conference should be revised as the theory of a U.S. draft of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel in Potsdam.

## Discussion on Military Problems of Korea during the Potsdam Conference

### *The U.S. Strategy to Make Korea into a Power Vacuum and the Soviet Postponement of Attack on Korea*

At the tripartite military meeting that began at 2:30 p.m. on 24 July 1945 in Potsdam, the chief of the Soviet General Staff, Aleksei Innokent'evich Antonov, commented on the timing and goal of the Soviet entry in the war against Japan. The Soviet Union would, after discussing the matter with China, join the war in late August of the same year,<sup>1</sup> and would aim to achieve the goal allotted by the U.S., which was to defeat the Kwantung Army (Japanese army group stationed in China) and to occupy Liaodong Peninsula.<sup>2</sup> While discussing U.S.-Soviet strategic cooperation in the Kuril Islands in order to create a tunnel connecting Alaska and Siberia, General Antonov also briefly mentioned the issue of Soviet advancement toward the Korean Peninsula. He asked “if it would be possible for the United States forces to operate against the shores of Korea in coordination with the Russian forces which would be making an *offensive* against the peninsula.”<sup>3</sup> This dialogue highlights two important facts. First, regarding the advancement into Korea, the Soviet tone was aggressive, as if the matter had been planned. Secondly, however, the Soviets at this point did not contemplate exclusive occupation of the Korean Peninsula. In fact, they did not have such capability.

The Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army, George C. Marshall, acknowledged “the importance of Korea to the Russian operation,”<sup>4</sup> but he argued that a

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1. U.S. Department of Defense, *The Entry of the Soviet Union into the War against Japan: Military Plans, 1941-1945* (hereafter *The Entry*), Manuscript (Department of Defense, Washington, DC, 1955), 92.

2. “Tripartite Military Meeting, Tuesday, 24 July 1945, 2:30 p.m.,” *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers* (hereafter *FRUS*) *The Conference of Berlin (The Potsdam Conference)*, 1945, vol. II, (U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC, 1945), 345.

3. *Ibid.*, 351. Emphasis added. The phrase, “would be making an offensive” could have been interpreted as “may be making” instead. On the other hand, according to Erik Van Ree (1989, 47), it is interpreted that the Soviet Union truly wanted a joint operation with the U.S. However, in this author’s opinion, the Soviet may have just “tested” the U.S. in order to figure out the U.S. strategy given the uncertain circumstances.

4. *Ibid.*, 352.

higher priority should be placed on Operation Olympic (invasion of Kyushu). As occupation of Korea would require diversion of the Allied force's weapons and troops, "the possibility of an attack on Korea would have to be determined after the U.S. Forces' landing on Kyushu." General Marshall also declared that the U.S. Forces would be dispatched to Korea and the Liaodong Peninsula would be limited to naval and air forces. Marshall's mention of "southern Korea," along with Japan and Kyushu,<sup>5</sup> may imply the U.S.'s claims on this region. However, Marshall's phrase, "the importance of Korea to the Russian operation," should not be erroneously understood as an acknowledgement of Korea as falling within the Soviet sphere of influence. Another argument states that the Soviet Union suddenly started planning for occupation of the entire Korean Peninsula, based on the belief that the U.S. had no plan for operations in Korea (Slusser 1977, 135-36), but this is also another uncertain theory. The U.S. delayed landing operations on the Korean Peninsula without allotting the work to the Soviets, but it probably did not rule out the possibility of its involvement in the matter of Korea. Instead, the U.S. may have developed concerns that the Soviet leader Stalin might opportunistically approach the Korean issue after hearing that the U.S. delayed making any agreement on it (Stueck 2002, 22).

In reply to Marshall's comment, General Antonov confirmed that the Soviet Union's first targets would be the Kwantung (Guandong) Army in Manchuria and then southern Sakhalin; he did not mention Korea again.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, as the Soviets were the first to mention operations on the Korean Peninsula, the U.S. must have recognized the fact that Korea could be well within the Soviet target zone.

Although the U.S. did recognize the necessity of a joint operation on the Korean Peninsula in order to prevent its exclusive occupation by the Soviets, it responded to the Soviet proposition with a delaying strategy rather than a positive answer. The U.S. could not outwardly thwart a Soviet attack on Korea,

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5. Ibid., 351.

6. Ibid., 352. Therefore, the U.S. may have expected that the Soviet Union would consider the Korea operation as a part of the second target zones; although it would result in an enormous sacrifice should the Soviets carry it out alone. The U.S. must have determined that southern Sakhalin, which was more important to the Soviet Union, would be a sure second target area for the Russians, but the Korean Peninsula would remain as a second or later priority zone.

so it intended to delay such an attack and keep Korea as a power vacuum. By stating that there could not be a joint operation at this moment, it left the Soviets to think that “Korea could be left under Soviet Union’s control for a while.” Regarding Korea, the U.S. did consider occupation and military administration in addition to an attack, but it hid such intentions and avoided discussion on this matter altogether—so that Korea would be kept free of any powers. Both the U.S. and Soviet Union initially explored the possibility of occupying Korea, but ultimately decided against it, as revealing such ideas to the other party would be a provocative move. In addition, neither country could tolerate an exclusive occupation of Korea by the other. Both would have preferred exclusive occupation, but it was not an easy option, considering their capabilities or circumstances. Therefore, division of Korea must have appeared as a negotiable, acceptable and also realistic option.

At the military meeting of July 26, General Antonov asked General Marshall when the U.S. would carry out Operation Olympic. Marshall answered that the landing operation would happen in late October, and predicted that Tsushima Strait would be opened after the Allied forces ensured victory in Kyushu, or within six weeks of the initial landing.<sup>7</sup> During the course of such discussion, the Soviets must have foreseen that they could take control over Korea during those few months.

Therefore, it may seem that the U.S. achieved diplomatic success in excluding the Korean Peninsula—the area which had been considered as a part of the Soviet sphere of influence—from Soviet Union’s first military operation target zone. In addition, the U.S. made sure to fence off the Soviet monopoly over the Korean and Liaodong Peninsulas (including Dairen) by listing these regions as the U.S. Navy and Air Forces’ target areas, albeit leaving out the possibility of a ground operation.

The Americans intended to end the war by using the atomic bomb before

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7. *The Entry*, 101-2; “Meeting of the United States and Soviet Chiefs of Staff, Thursday, 26 July 1945, 3 p.m.,” *FRUS 1945, The Conference of Berlin*, vol. II, 415.

On the other hand, according to the war plan approved by the Joint Chiefs of Staff on July 11 of 1944, the landing on Bonin and Ryuku would be done between April 1 and June 30 of 1945; the landing on Kyushu would be done on October 1 of 1945; and the attack on Tokyo will be done by late December of 1945. However, at the White House meeting on June 18 of 1945, the target after Okinawa became Kyushu and the D-Day was changed to November 1; Marshall could thereby give the Russians a more correct date.

the Soviets entered the war, so rejecting the discussion on the Korea operation successfully served the role of delaying the Soviets. If the strategy to end the war early fully succeeded, the U.S. would be able to take control over both Manchuria and Korea. Also, if Japan were to surrender before the Soviet Union entered the second target zone, Korea, then they would not be able to take control over Korea. By removing Manchuria and Korea from its control zone, the U.S. therefore intentionally induced the Soviets to believe that Korea would be potentially under Soviet control. However, circumstances were evolving in a direction unfavorable to the Americans' exclusive control.

Meanwhile, although the Soviets believed the American plans in general, they also had an alternative strategy in mind. They abandoned the option of attacking Korea, whose future was rather uncertain, and set their target firmly upon Manchuria, an area of key interest. Even though the Soviets may have been taken advantage of by the American strategy to create a state of power vacuum in Korea, they kept a mobile strategy which could be rapidly adapted to suit any abrupt changes in the future. Why did the Soviets, in spite of their geographical advantage, give up on taking control over the entire Korean Peninsula, even though they likely had the capability to do so? They passed up on Korea because greater Soviet interests were at stake in Manchuria, a region of key strategic significance to the Soviets, and also because they did not actually have the capability to capture the entire Korean Peninsula alone. The Soviets were comfortable with the U.S.-Soviet joint plan to keep Korea as a sort of buffer zone—which would prevent it from becoming a Japanese attack base, as it had been during the Russo-Japanese War.

### *The U.S.-Soviet Discussion on the Military Operation Line and the Evasion to Discuss Land Operation Line*

Ever since the Moscow Conference of October 1944, the U.S. had tried to restrict the Soviet target zone within Manchuria. On the other hand, the Soviets had to try to expand their target zone to include Korea and other areas in China. A similar debate unfolded during the Potsdam Conference.

The U.S. proposal for operation areas, dated 24 July 1945, did not separate the sea and overland zones; it only demarcated naval and air force operating zones, without mentioning ground operation zones. In case of Korea, the Soviet air force's operating zone was a very small area on Korea's northeastern

coast, located west of the line on the map connecting the Tumen River railway bridge near Cheongjin and Namyang. As for the naval forces, the U.S. could operate without limit in the East Sea. As for submarine operations, the area where the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel north line and the Korean Peninsula meet was the one end of the demarcation line.<sup>8</sup> The 38<sup>th</sup> parallel north roughly divided the East Sea in half, so the Americans must have noticed its convenience. In almost all later proposals the U.S. created, lines that divided Korea approximately in half, such as the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel north, were used as reference points. It is evident that the U.S. recognized the southern half of Korea as falling under its sphere of influence during the last stage of the Pacific War. Such ideas of balanced control were tacitly shared between the policymakers of the U.S. and Soviet Union.

Based on the Antonov-Marshall meeting of July 24 and the aforementioned U.S. proposal, the Soviet Union determined that the U.S. was not planning ground operations on the Korean Peninsula. So at the military meeting of July 26, it omitted the issue of ground operations in accordance with the prior U.S. proposal and only attained an amendment on the military lines for the naval, air and underwater operations.<sup>9</sup> The Soviet modification generally widened its operation zones while separating sea and ground operation areas. To examine the Soviet military operation line for the sea, it lay above Musudan in North Hamgyeong Province (just below the 41<sup>st</sup> parallel north) and served to distinguish all of the naval, air and submarine operating zones.<sup>10</sup> In the end, the Soviet Union revised the former U.S. proposal to operate without limitation in all regions of the East Sea, and it secured the majority of the coastal areas

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8. "The United States Chiefs of Staff to the Soviet Chiefs of Staff, 24 July 1945," *FRUS 1945, The Conference of Berlin*, vol. II, 132; *The Entry*, 93.

9. Was the line for overland operation really not discussed at all? As I will elaborate later, such omission may not be true. There are possibilities that either it was not discussed on July 26, or it was discussed at the high-level official meeting in secret, without the proceedings being recorded. There was a discussion on the ground operation on the northern Korean Peninsula as a part of the Manchuria operation.

10. "Meeting of the United States and Soviet Chiefs of Staff, Thursday, 26 July 1945, 3 p.m.," *FRUS 1945, The Conference of Berlin*, vol. II, 410; *The Entry*, 96; "General Hull's Memorandum," WARX 44767, 6 August 1945, RG 165, ABC 387 Japan (15 February 1945), Sec. 3 [TS], Box 506. Considering that the proposal to have the military operation line near Musudan near the 41<sup>st</sup> parallel north, it does not seem likely that the Hull line, to be discussed later, was not the outcome of a secret pact between the U.S. and Soviet Union. I am not denying the fact that the Hull line was drafted. There is a possibility that the draft was not made into a secret agreement.

of North Hamgyeong Province as its own operating zone. It also widened the Soviet air force's operating zone to include most of the industrial district in North Hamgyeong Province as well as Eastern Manchuria. It compromised only on the submarine operating zone, by allowing the demarcation line to move about 3° latitudes further north. Similarly, the formerly restricted Soviet air force operating zone was broadened to include areas north of the line connecting Musudan (Cape Boltina located near Gilju, North Hamgyeong Province, on the 41<sup>st</sup> parallel north) and Changchun<sup>11</sup>—and therefore, almost all of North Hamgyeong Province.<sup>12</sup>

In attack operations, no clear distinction is made among the naval, air and ground operations. Hence we can identify the characters of the Soviet ground operations from the demarcation of the Soviet naval and air force operating zones. The core of the Soviet naval and air force operation zones, which the Soviet Union tried to broaden by revising the U.S. proposal, was all of North Hamgyeong Province and areas above Beijing. The Korean Peninsula was a joint military operation zone for the navy and the airforce. At the working-level meeting of the Allied Forces' Chiefs of General Staff, the primary objective was to wrap up the details of operations toward Japan. The discussion on the ground operation toward Korea was avoided, but it was agreed that the Allied naval and air forces would mount joint operations on the Korean Peninsula. As for the only briefly mentioned ground operation on the Korean Peninsula, the U.S. acknowledged the Soviet advantage to reach a tacit agreement. As for the naval and air force operations, the Soviet Union agreed that the U.S. would operate in the wider vicinity and therefore wield greater influence.

Meanwhile, the Soviet Union was interested in North Hamgyeong Province not because of its habitual preference for nonfreezing ports but rather because obtaining it would cut off the Kwantung Army's retreat and

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11. "Meeting of the United States and Soviet Chiefs of Staff, Thursday, 26 July 1945, 3 p.m.," *FRUS 1945, The Conference of Berlin*, vol. II, 411.

12. To Arnold from Eaker signed COMGENAIR, "Terminal," WAR 38765, 26 July 1945, RG 165, Entry 422, OPD Exec. File, Box 32, Folder: Terminal-Jan, July, Aug. 1945.

Even though the U.S. had not specified the North Hamgyeong Province region as its operation zone before the Soviet entry, it raided ports including Najin. Feis (1953, 326) pointed out that almost all of the Korean Peninsula, Japan, and southern Manchuria could be included in the American operating target. He showed that the U.S. secured almost all of the Korean Peninsula through demarcation of the operation zone.

transportation. If the Soviet Union did plan an all-out attack on the Korean Peninsula, it would have tried to acquire more operation areas. However, because the U.S. left Korea as a power vacuum, the Soviet Union did not necessarily have to hasten its attack, especially when it was a difficult option.

At the Potsdam Conference, the three Japanese-controlled areas slated for division, as identified by the U.S., are as follows: the islands of Japan as the U.S. zone of influence; Manchuria as the Soviet sphere of influence; and the colony (Korea) as a power vacuum to be controlled by neither power. The U.S. also allowed a possibility of maintaining balance of power or shared occupation by the two powers by dividing the Korean Peninsula, depending on how the circumstances evolved. The American strategy to maintain Korea in a power vacuum surely succeeded because only the small northern tip of the peninsula was included in the Soviet attacking route of its Manchuria operation, and consequently, an exclusive Soviet occupation of Korea was prevented. Moreover, Cho Soon Sung argued that the U.S. certainly thought about the overland demarcation line of the Korean Peninsula (Cho 1967, 51-52). This author's point of view, however, is that it was not just a thought and the U.S. doubtless undertook serious deliberations on that subject.

## **The U.S. Preparation to Occupy the Korean Peninsula and to Draw the Dividing Line**

In both the general and working-level discussions of the Potsdam Conference, the U.S. made no comment on the subject of ground operations on the Korean Peninsula. The argument that Korea was not a critical area for the American military strategy is not convincing, and the omission should be interpreted as a deliberate move, undertaken while the U.S. maintained an aggressive single or partial occupation strategy.<sup>13</sup> In other words, the U.S. did consider and prepare

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13. According to Oh Chunggeun (1988, 300-4), no conspiracy existed, but rather simply a compromise between two factions was made not to discuss Korea: the State Department, which argued for aggressive action in Korea; and the military headquarters, which considered it to be strategically unimportant and therefore to be excluded from the U.S. plan. However, without the assumption of political calculation at this time, one cannot explain America's more aggressive actions taken toward the Korea issue after the onset of the Cold War.

for occupation, but felt no necessity to reveal such a plan and accelerate the Soviet attack on the Korean Peninsula.

President Truman secretly maintained the strategy to have political control over the whole Korean Peninsula, and at the same time formulated plans to militarily control Korea and Manchuria. In parallel with the strategy to create Korea into a regional power vacuum, a plan to occupy Korea was under way. The occupation plan was refined further in terms of realistic military strategies from late July of 1945, just before Japan's surrender, and the details are as follows.

The strategy for occupation of Japan and the Korean Peninsula was created by the U.S. Army and Navy, which were in action in the Asia Pacific, following the order of the Joint Chiefs of Staff dated 14 June 1945. The army headquarters of General Douglas MacArthur drafted the plan, codenamed "Blacklist," and the Asia Pacific navy headquarter of Admiral Chester W. Nimitz drafted it with another codename, "Campus." However, the original draft of Blacklist created on 16 July 1945 contained no mention of the Korean Peninsula.<sup>14</sup> General Marshall then issued an order to MacArthur and Nimitz to include the Korean Peninsula in the draft, sometime between July 16 and July 21 (G. Yi 1997).

On 21 July 1945, the Joint Chiefs of Staff sent a telegram message to General MacArthur and Admiral Nimitz and warned them that certain measures should be taken in order to coerce Japan's surrender before the Soviets' possible entry into the war on August 15 and that a plan for the Korean Peninsula should be added to their landing operation plans.<sup>15</sup> This order was in line with Truman's single occupation strategy and proves the shared sentiment

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14. Whereas the revised Blacklist operation included occupation of Korea, the Campus operation only included occupation of Japan. See Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), "Over-all Examination of Planning for the Occupation of Japan," JWPC 264/8, RG 218, Geographic File, 1942-1945, 386.2 Japan (4-9-45), Sec. 3, Box 135.

15. "Message by JCS to Gen. MacArthur, Adm. Nimitz, and Gen. Wedemeyer," 21 July 1945, in *The Entry*, 106; "Japanese Capitulation," July 1945, p. 1, enclosed in Memorandum of Marshall to President, 25 July 1945, RG 165, ABC 014 Japan, Sec. 1-A [TS], Box 19; "Japanese Capitulation," July 1945, p. 1, enclosed in Memorandum of Brig. Gen. G. A. Lincoln to Col. Roberts, 25 July 1945, RG 165, ABC 387 Japan, Sec. 1-B [TS], Box 505; "Memo. Marshall for Roosevelt [Truman, sic]," delivered at Potsdam, 25 July 1945, OPD 370.9, Case 17/8; James F. Schnabel (1972, 7); OPD 370.9, Case 17/8, 25 July 1945, ABC 384.1 Japan, in Kim Gijo (1994, 185); Ray S. Cline (1951, 348).

among the political and military leaders regarding the “ending of the war before the Soviet entry.”

### *Establishment of the Dividing “Hull Line”: Hull’s Oral Testimony Unearthed*

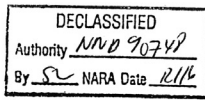
Between July 24 and 26, during the course of the Potsdam Conference, the Chief of the General Staff General Marshall told Lieutenant General Hull and another military staff (presumed to be Brigadier General Lincoln) “to be prepared to move troops into Korea” (Appleman 1961, 2-3). According to Hull’s recollection (see Document 1), Secretary of State William F. Byrnes (perhaps via General Marshall) “insisted that the American troops be in Korea” and “wanted Korea divided with the Russians.”<sup>16</sup> As the order was made outside Washington, in Potsdam, the situation must have required the matter to be dealt urgently. Therefore, there was a possibility that the decision would be hastily made. Through a telephone interview with Captain Harris (a former employee of the Office of Chief Military History), Hull described the conversation. (This interview of Hull is to be disclosed for the first time, so a thorough investigation and comparison with other data will be needed. It is so because Hull’s comment may have been flawed by his exaggeration of his own influence on the historical event. There may have been incorrect details as well, because the testimony was made four years after the actual event.<sup>17</sup>)

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16. “Col E. M. Harris’ Tel. conv with Gen John E. Hull,” 17 June 1949, RG 319, 2-3.7A BA2, USACMH Manus. File South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu (hereafter USACMH), Box 744; “Lt Col Roy E. Appleman’s Interview with Gen John E. Hull,” 1 August 1952, RG 319, 2-3.7A BA2, USACMH, Box 744. In a letter sent to the president on August 10, Harriman recalled, “at Potsdam General Marshall and Admiral King told me of the proposed landing operation in Korea and Dairen if the Japanese give in prior to Soviet troops occupying these areas.”

“The Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Harriman) to President Truman and the Secretary of State,” Moscow, 10 August 1945, *FRUS 1945, Far East, China*, vol. VII, 967; Harry S. Truman (1955, 433-34). This may point to General Marshall’s order given to Hull on July 24. If so, the “Hull line” was prepared for the occupation of Korea after Japan’s surrender, and therefore is the military zoning line for occupation and not the military limit for only operation.

17. “James I. Matray’s e-mail message to Youngsup Yoon,” 3:22 a.m., 17 December 2002. Matray, upon hearing about Hull’s interview, assessed that testimony solely derived from Hull’s memory may have bias issues. He especially pointed out the beginning of the last paragraph: “The line was given to General Hodge after the Potsdam meeting.” Just after



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File - Possible Soviet Plans for Korea in the Light  
of Historical Evidence Dtd 11 Jul 50 - OCMH  
Tel. conv Col E.M. Harris, Ex Of SS OCMH w/Gen John E.  
Hull 17 Jun 49

The 38th Parallel was established at Potsdam. Mr. Byrnes wanted Korea divided with the Russians. Byrnes insisted that the American troops be in Korea.

We, the Planners, looked over the three major ports of Korea and took two of them and drew the line just north of Seoul on the map and we figured that probably the best place was along the 38th parallel. We then gave it to General Marshall and the JCS, who O.K.d it. It then went to Mr. Byrnes who presented it to the Russians. It was an old line to the Russians...they had used it in the Russo-Japanese war. It was drawn with a view to establishing boundaries between armies and was purely a coordinating line....coordination during occupation in Korea. Nothing went beyond that at that time....it was purely a coordinating line of military forces...not of government nor of permanency. We were afraid there might be some clashes of forces so we drew that line.

It was not put down in writing .... there may be something in writing but we did not put it in writing....it may have been in the form of a JCS study, I don't know. Too, it may have been in a State Department memorandum, or the minutes of the meeting might indicate what form it was put in.\*

The line was given to General Hodge after the Potsdam meeting. It was drawn up at Potsdam and we worked it out on a purely military basis. It had nothing to do with politics control at that time. What Byrnes did with it when he talked to the Russians I'm not sure of.

\* Tel. conv w/Gen John E. Hull 17 June 1949

**Document 1.** "Col E. M. Harris' Tel. conv with Gen John E. Hull," 17 June 1949, RG 319, Entry 145, 2-3.7A BA2, USACMH Manus. File South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu, Box 744, U.S. National Archives.

The 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel was established at Potsdam. Mr. Byrnes wanted Korea divided with Russians. Byrnes insisted that the American troops be in Korea.

We, the Planners, looked over the three major ports of Korea and took two of them and drew the line just north of Seoul on the map and we figured that probably the best place along<sup>18</sup> the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. We then gave it to

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the Potsdam Conference, Joseph Stilwell was tentatively designated as the commander of the occupation forces in accordance with the Blacklist operation. So if the line had been delivered, it should have been to Stilwell, not Hodge. Matray argued that this inconsistency is evidence of incorrectness in the *ex post facto* account and that the reliability of the document is therefore low. Obviously, Hodge was not in a position to be involved in this matter just after the conference. But the interview only notes the timing as being “after Potsdam,” without clarifying the date. It certainly does not say “right after Potsdam,” as Matray interpreted. The interview is based on memory, so there can be pieces of recollection that do not perfectly match with actual facts—we need comparison of different documents for this reason. Also, the last paragraph of Document 1 may have been Harris’ interpretation, not an actual account of Hull. (However, from the subject “I” used in the very last sentence, after consistent of “we” throughout the previous sentences, these are more likely to be Hull’s recollections.) Therefore one should not argue for lack of reliability based on this very part. Matray’s criticism needs further review. In addition, Matray also argued that Hull incorrectly said that the Russians used this line during the Russo-Japanese War. Kim Hakjun, after reading this e-mail from Matray, added that Matray is inaccurate on this point, because Russia did use the 38<sup>th</sup> or 39<sup>th</sup> parallel north during the Russo-Japanese War (H. Kim 2008, 618).

18. Appleman argues on page 12 of the first draft of his thesis reviewed in 1957, “Korea Combat History, Volume I, Chapter I: The Land and Its Background,” (Manuscript, RG 319, Entry 145: OCMH, 2-3.7A BA2, USACMH, Box 732) and also in the preface (p. 3) where the result is shared, that “[the dividing line] was not *on* the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel but was near it and, generally *along* it.” This remark is based on Hull’s interview of August 1, 1952. As Hull’s actual interview only has the expression “along,” another explanation was added by Appleman himself. The expression “along” is different from “on,” so it may imply that the dividing line was not exactly the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel north. Hull said: “Drew line on map N[orth; author’s addition] of Seoul, was not 38°— but generally along there.” Hull may have just simply said “along the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel” as the expression went, but may not have actually meant that the line was not the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. This reasoning is probable because Hull argued in his memoir that the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel (accepted by the U.S. and Soviet Union) was prepared at the Potsdam Conference. Other trusted documents do not mention Hull much, and after noticing inconsistency between the comment made by Hull and others including Rusk, Appleman may have chosen to conceal Hull’s.

Below is a one-page handwritten reference note in which Appleman seems to have summarized Hull’s interview in 1952 (Document 2).

Marshall called me at Potsdam in 1 day & said feel Byrnes said he prepared to move troops into Korea get ready. Sat doing with map to try to decide where army boundaries be est[ablished]. Had done something for Secretary. Not occupation zone there line olu[only?] presented at Potsdam in group with navy people, wanted 2 ports. Drew line on map N[orth] of Seoul, was not 38°—but generally along there.

Not discussed with Russians in military meetings. In political discussions may be

General Marshall and the JCS, who O.K.d it.<sup>19</sup> It then went to Mr. Byrnes who presented it to the Russians.<sup>20</sup>

Nevertheless, it should be confirmed whether Byrnes really made an order to establish the demarcation line. James I. Matray assesses that Hull's interview is incorrect, because the official Potsdam records do not mention Byrnes' order for establishment of the dividing line.<sup>21</sup> Matray (1981, 161; 1985, 42) further notes that the Chief of General Staff General Marshall and Lieutenant General Hull together must have placed the dividing line. However, as another person, Rusk, also testifies that Byrnes ordered establishment of the dividing line (although on a different date, August 10), it is problematic to determine that Byrnes did not intervene at Potsdam. A different document other than Hull's interview confirms the following comment made by Byrnes to Marshall at Potsdam: "Americans should be sent to Korea right after the war with Japan ends."<sup>22</sup> Therefore, it should be seen that Byrnes actually led the atomic bomb and Korea-related policies amidst the rapidly changing situations at Potsdam. If this is the case, Hull could have indirectly received Byrnes' order through

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record[ed], State Dept. Hull & group did not know a historical background of 38°—coincided with Russian plans. They Accepted. Hull & Marshall gave to Byrnes & Byrnes may have talked with Russians.

Hull knew & kept background first in meeting with Gen. Hodge near later.

Appleman utilized this note in writing the preface of his work, *United States Army in the Korean War: South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu* (1961, 2-3).

19. According to the chronicle included in *Han-Mi gwangye, 1882-1982* (Korea-U.S. relations, 1882-1982) (Gu and Bae 1982, 34-35), the following remark which looks like Hull's interview is written under the date, July 26 of 1945: "Under the decision that at least Incheon and Busan should be included in the U.S. operation areas, Lieutenant General Hull drew a line north of Seoul, and it was almost identical with the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel north." This sentence is very similar in content with the reference note of Appleman (1961, 2-3), so it seems that Gu Yeongnok and Bae Yeongsu referred to the note. As endnote 2 on page 3 of Appleman's book also refers to the interview with Hull made on August 1 of 1952, it is confirmed that Appleman's writing was based on the Hull interview.
20. "Col E. M. Harris' Tel. conv with Gen John E. Hull," 17 June 1949, RG 319, Entry 145: OCMH, 2-3.7A BA2, USACMH, Box 744.
21. "James I. Matray's e-mail message to Youngsup Yoon," 17 December 2002.
22. Memo, CMH, DA (MG Orlando Ward) to LTG Maxwell D. Taylor, USA, "Establishment of the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel in Korea," n.d. [ca. 10 October 1952], DA File, CSUSA 091 Korea, Top Secret 1951-1952, Case 43, cited in James Schnabel and Robert J. Watson's *The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff* ([1978] 1990, 448).

*Handwritten notes:*  
 Marshall called me in 1 day & said he'd  
 Byrnes said he prepared to have troops into Korea  
 got ready - not done with map to try to decide where  
 army boundaries he est. I'd do same thing for  
 Germany. <sup>Not an occupation</sup> <sup>zone</sup> <sup>line</sup> present at Potsdam as group  
 with many people. wanted 2 parts. Drove line  
 on map N. of Seoul. was not 38° - but  
 generally along there.  
 Not discussed with Russians in military  
 meetings. In post discussion may be record. State Dept.  
 Hull & group did not know <sup>historical background</sup>  
 17 34' - <sup>confused with Russian plan; think Marshall</sup>  
 gave to Byrnes & Byrnes may have talked with Russians

**Document 2.** Lt Col Roy E. Appleman's Interview with Gen John E. Hull," 1 August 1952, RG 319, Entry 145, 2-3.7A BA2, USACMH Manus. File South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu, Box 744, U.S. National Archives.

Marshall, and Hull's draft of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel dividing line could have been delivered to Byrnes, also through Marshall. Therefore, Hull's comment that he received a direct order from Byrnes might have been an exaggeration—or he may have simply left out the details on how he indirectly received such order. Omission of such processes often happens in memoirs.

Another important point is whether Byrnes discussed with the Soviets about this dividing line. In Hull's 1949 interview record, Harris' remark (or Hull's own interview; see Document 1) is included as given below.

What Byrnes did with it when he talked to the Russians I'm not sure of.<sup>23</sup>

Does this mean that Byrnes really talked to the Soviets? In the interview with Appleman conducted on August 1 of 1952 (Document 2), Hull recalled that although the issue of a dividing line was not discussed at the military meeting,<sup>24</sup>

23. "Col E. M. Harris' Tel. conv with Gen John E. Hull," 17 June 1949, RG 319, Entry 145: OCMH, 2-3.7A BA2, USACMH, Box 744.

24. *The 30 Years History of Ministry of Unification* (Ministry of Unification 1999, 9) says the

he and Marshall gave the draft to Byrnes, and Byrnes “may have talked with Russians.”<sup>25</sup>

### *Other American Records*

The official records do not confirm Hull’s informal accounts as illustrated above.<sup>26</sup> The U.S. official records and proceedings revealed on 21 January 1972,<sup>27</sup> the UK records of the British Foreign Office archives (Reference: CAB 99-38-8461) and the Soviet records (*Tegeran Yalte Potsdam* 1967; 1969; 1970; Beitzell 1970) all imply that the U.S. and Soviet Union did not have an official discussion on the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel line. However, if the line was covertly discussed, officially recording<sup>28</sup> such discussion may have been impossible. Shin Yongha has argued that the draft of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel line was submitted to the U.S.-Soviet military meeting in the Potsdam Conference and that both the powers either “secretly agreed,” “colluded” or “tacitly agreed.” Shin (1988, 32-33) had

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following without citing any reference: “Hull, the director of operations of the U.S. Army and a member of military representatives at the time, argued that no discussion on the dividing line over Korea took place at the Potsdam Conference.” It is assumed that this sentence was derived from Appleman’s book, *United States Army in the Korean War* (1961, 2-3), which makes a similar argument that the dividing line was not discussed at the U.S.-Soviet military meeting.

25. “Lt Col Roy E. Appleman’s Interview with Gen John E. Hull,” 1 August 1952, RG 319, Entry 145: OCMH, 2-3.7A BA2, USACMH, Box 744.
26. James I. Matray asserted in his email message to Youngsup Yoon (17 December 2002) on Hull’s interview: “In conclusion, this document is not authoritative,” because the official proceedings of the Potsdam Conference do not include any discussions between the U.S. and Soviet Union regarding the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. However, even the SWNCC recordings do not show such evidence, while it is believed that the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel was established here. If we broadly apply Matray’s logic, the current theory of August 11 establishment may also prove dubious because it is not based on official documents. However, establishment of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel is an historical fact, so given the lack of official documents, we have no option but to turn to secondary documents such as private memoirs in order to explore the truth and determine which of these secondary sources seem more reliable.
27. Among the documents at the U.S. National Archives, it is generally said that “The 740 Decimal Files” is the most useful source relevant to the Potsdam Conference (Mee 1975, 336-37).
28. According to Charles L. Mee, Jr. (1975, 336), the U.S. closely examined different versions of the proceedings while it compiled the *FRUS*. The Soviet document only included transcription of the plenary sessions, but all the conversations were recorded in great detail, and its content did not differ much from the British and U.S. documents. In case of the conference sessions, for which a Russian version does not exist, Mee mostly relied on the U.S. transcript, and it was in agreement with the British document on important matters.

uncovered a revealing article on page 15 of the July 3 issue of *Time*. This article was written based on the recollection of a U.S. Department of State official right after the outbreak of the Korean War, and its content is as follows:

“The 38<sup>th</sup> parallel was picked up by a tired meeting on a hot night in Potsdam,” said a State Department official last week. “It’s a line that makes no political, geographical, economic or military sense. But the Russians and Americans at the meeting simply couldn’t agree on who should occupy what. Finally a general suggested the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. And that was that.”<sup>29</sup>

Recently, Shin (2004, 21-25) has further developed the secret pact theory based on Appleman’s official oral testimonies and Hull’s interview records.

Comments on the establishment of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel at Potsdam are found in Hull’s two interview records, Appleman’s official oral testimony, and also in other documents such as “Establishment of the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel in Korea,”<sup>30</sup> and “Report by the State-War-Navy Coordinating Sub-committee for the Far East”<sup>31</sup>; as well as *Northern Korea Terrain Handbook*<sup>32</sup> (which, also without a sure basis, states that the victors of the war against Japan agreed on the division of its territories at Potsdam). Moreover, J. Lawton Collins also said that “an Allied agreement provided for the division of Korea at the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel” (1969, 25).

Many have supported the theory of a Potsdam draft ever since Korea gained independence. This theory is largely divided into two categories: 1)

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29. “International: North & South of the Parallel,” *Time*, Monday, July 3, 1950, 15; also quoted in Korean in Shin Yongha (2004, 21).

30. Memo, CMH, DA (MG Orlando Ward) to LTG Maxwell D. Taylor, USA, “Establishment of the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel in Korea,” n. d. [ca. 10 October 1952], cited in Schnabel and Watson ([1978] 1990, 448).

31. SWNCC 79/1, October 1945, *FRUS 1945*, vol. VI, 1095. According to the Discussion section in the Appendix B of this document which was approved on October 22, 1945 by the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee (SWNCC), “The existing division of Korea into two zones north and south of 38 degrees north latitude under control respectively of the Soviet Union and the United States, is the result of decision reached between the United States and Soviet Chiefs of Staff in regard to operational zones of their respective forces.” Although this assertion was made without documented evidence and the sentence does not show time and place (i.e., “at Potsdam”), we can assume that it refers to the Potsdam Conference as the meeting between the U.S.-Soviet Chiefs of Staff happened there.

32. In No. 66 RG 319, Entry 82, G-2, “P” File, Box 3684, p. 1.

theory of secret pact at Potsdam; and 2) theory of the “Hull line” at Potsdam. The latter states that the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel was drafted at Potsdam but did not gain the U.S.-Soviet agreement—the view I am in agreement with. The same theory is further divided into two versions: 1) that the issue was discussed with no agreement in the end; and 2) that the issue was not discussed at all. In line with the latter scenario, official records proving that the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel was discussed or some sort of agreement about it was reached are yet to be found. Therefore, existing data supporting the theory of draft at Potsdam tend to originate from persons who are unfamiliar with the exact process through which the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel dividing line was established. After Hull’s interview was discovered, however, the draft at Potsdam theory gained greater support. We can at least confirm the fact that policymakers of the time widely shared a positive opinion toward the draft of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel dividing line.

Furthermore, Yi Yonghui, who in 1965 highlighted the “Hull line” based on the Appleman record, interpreted it in his “Report on the Establishment of the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel” (1983, 228-29) that the Hull line came into being with clear political and strategic purpose, under the influence of the U.S.-Soviet conflict in the Far East.<sup>33</sup> Although a “secret pact” cannot be confirmed as a fact due to the lack of corroborative evidence, the line was certainly considered during the Potsdam Conference.

It seems unlikely that Truman made a secret pact with the Russians to hand over part of the Korean Peninsula north of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel while intentionally delaying the Soviet entry and aiming to capture Northeast Asia as a whole. However, the possibility that a conditional secret pact to “hand over the north of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel if the Soviet Union joins the war” cannot be ruled out. The conditions for the Soviet entry had already been discussed since 1943 and the discussion saw no further development at Potsdam. The probability of handing over the north of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel was not high, but if under the condition that the Soviet joined the war—the deal could have been a fair

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33. However, Kim Gijo argues for August 11 establishment of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, because the term “Hull line” does not appear on any official documents and the line appears on the official document dated August 11 (G. Kim 2006, 212). However, Lincoln’s establishment of the line did not appear on any official documents either, and other assertions for it (by Rusk, Bonesteel or Hull) appear only on private testimonies. Therefore, historical fact can be verified only through comparing these testimonies against one another.

one for the U.S. as well. This is not very probable either: because the U.S. actually intended to end the war before the Soviet entry, it was not in their interest to hasten the Soviet entry by promising them such attractive reward, even a conditional offer. However, it is quite unlikely that the most definite evidence, the secret pact itself, would be discovered in the form of written document. Yi Yonghui, on the other hand, argued that the private records of Roosevelt and the military conference proceedings of the Potsdam Conference have not been completely declassified and made accessible to the public and that the 1960 publication of the official American record of the conference was also incomplete (Y. Yi 1987, 71). Therefore, there is some potential that the full records, if any, will be revealed and confirm the secret pact theory in the future.

### *Records of Other Countries, Including the Soviet Union*

Some of the later studies done in the Soviet Union, albeit not being the actual proceedings or secret documents themselves, mentioned the establishment of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel at Potsdam. Pak Gil-yon<sup>34</sup> argues the following on page 162 in a chapter of *The History of Korea (Istoriya Korei)*: “At the Berlin Conference of the three powers held during the summer of 1945, the proposal to make the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel a dividing line for the American and Russian forces in Joseon, was accepted” (Soviet Academy of Sciences [1974] 1990, 238). He adds: “following this decision made in Berlin, the Soviet forces would accept the Japanese surrender in the region of Joseon above the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, while the U.S. forces would accept the Japanese surrender below the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel.”<sup>35</sup> This claim made

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34. Pak Gil-yon (V. K. Pak in Russian) was the vice minister of the North Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but after he was purged as a member of Russian group and voluntarily returned to the Soviet Union in 1959 he worked as a Senior Researcher at the East Asian Studies Institute of the Soviet Academy of Sciences. Born in 1920, he obtained Ph.D. with a dissertation entitled “Joseon gongsandang ui jaegon” (The Reconstruction of Joseon’s Communist Party). His profile is introduced in *The Secret of Kim Il Sung’s Diplomacy: Kim Il Sung’s Diplomatic Strategy Discovered after His Death* (Pak and Kim 1994); and *Birok Joseon minjujuui inmin gonghwaguk* (Secret Record of the DPRK) (Teukbyeol Chwijaeban, Joong-Ang Ilbo 1994, 43). Pak Gil-yon’s authorship of *The History of Korea* is described in *Russia’s Research on Korea: Historical Development in Recognition of Korea and Current Stage* (Vanin et al. 1999, 214).

35. Pak also added a Soviet excuse for creating division: “The real purpose of the temporary

in *The History of Korea* was quoted by M. E. Trigubenko in the first chapter of *The Democratic People's Republic of Korea* ([1985] 1988, 14). Such argument may have stemmed from the U.S. proposition made at the U.S.-Soviet discussion of July 24, which included the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel as one of the military demarcation lines for the underwater operations. Nevertheless, it is difficult to make such connection because the establishment of such demarcation lines, including the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, was only a proposal made by the United States; and the line was never mentioned again during the U.S.-Soviet agreement reached on July 26. In addition, the Soviet documents are almost fully consistent with the Hull interview records, so we need to corroborate this claim with the other Soviet records. Further research endeavors should explore the secret documents of the Soviet departments of foreign affairs and national defense.<sup>36</sup> It would not be easy, however, to uncover the specific records of the U.S.-Soviet discussions and agreements. Many Russian scholars seem to consider the Potsdam secret pact theory as an established theory, and other scholars seem to be making baseless assertions.<sup>37</sup> Because of these scholars, textbooks in Russia and even Kazakhstan argue that the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel was established at Potsdam (Kodzaxmet-uli et al. 2004, 18-19, 111). Meanwhile, some European textbooks, including Spanish ones,<sup>38</sup> reflect such groundless viewpoints.

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division of Joseon by the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel was to receive Japan's surrender" (East Asian Study Research Center, Soviet Academy of Sciences, [1974] 1990, 238).

36. We first need to look at "List of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Document Reserve Official Proceedings" and "History of the U.S.-Soviet Relations based on the Foreign Relations Documents." Regarding the Potsdam Conference and the Yalta Conference, the Soviet accounts are as follows: *Berlin (Potsdam) conference of the leaders of the three allied powers - USSR, USA and UK: July 17 - August 2, 1945: a collection of documents*, edited by A. A. Gromyko (1980); and *Crimean conference of the leaders of the three Allied Powers - USSR, USA and UK, 4-11 February, 1945: a collection of documents*, by the same editor (1979). However, this collection of documents does not include discussion on the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel north. Similarly, such records do not exist in another source by the Soviet Union Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1984), "Sovetskiy Soyuz na Mezhdunarodnykh Konferentsiyakh Perioda Velikoy Otechestvennoy Voyny, 1941-1945" (International Conferences Participated by the Soviet Union, 1941-1945). Other official proceedings such as *Teheran Yalte Potsdam* (1967; 1970; 1976) and Robert Beitzell, ed., *Tehran, Yalta, Potsdam: the Soviet Protocols* (1970) do not show such evidence.
37. For instance, in *Seoul Diary: Soviet Debacle in the Far East* (1984, 5), written by a journalist named Vincente F. Barranco (former member of the UN Commission on Korea), there is the following incorrect statement: "The Potsdam Declaration includes a statement calling for the surrender of the Japanese army located south and north of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel north."
38. In the beginning of a section titled "The Korean War" in the following textbook, *Ciencias*

On the other hand, A. V. Torkunov, V. I. Denisov, and V. F. Li (2008, 59) says the following: “The three heads of the UK, U.S. and Soviet Union talked about the Korea issue at the executive meeting of the Potsdam Conference. Churchill insisted upon discussing this matter. However, no decision of any kind was reached. The Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov participated with Stalin.” Torkunov was the rector of the Moscow State Institute of International Relations and a committee member of the Kremlin Document Reserve, while Denisov is a former bureau director at the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ambassador to North Korea, and also a professor at the Academy of Diplomacy. Vladimir Li is a professor at the Academy of Diplomacy. Considering these authors’ backgrounds, it is certain that they referred to some diplomatic documents. As they show the absence of decision at the Potsdam Conference, it is confirmed that there was no official decision made at the time. Even if there were any discussions about it, they are likely to have been off-the-record. Therefore, there is little possibility that the archives contain any data confirming the Potsdam secret pact theory. Regarding this prospect, Park Jonghyo raised the question of how there could have been really no decision about the dividing line just a few weeks before General Order No. 1 was issued.<sup>39</sup>

Russia experienced a painful defeat at the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905, and since then sought to maintain the balance of powers by preventing Korea from being solely occupied by any country (Weathersby 1990, 1-74).<sup>40</sup>

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*sociales, geografía e historia* (Social Science, Geography and History) (Morales et al., 2008, 189), the following sentence appears: “After being occupied by Japan during WWII, Korea was divided into two regions just like Germany, following the decisions made at the Potsdam Conference.” This textbook was designed for fourth-year middle school students (ESO curso 4).

39. Park Jonghyo, conversation with the author, October 13, 2009; Park Jonghyo, e-mail message to the author, October 17, 2009.

40. A report created by Soviet diplomats on June 29, 1945, (Zhukov and Zabrodin, “Korea, Short Report,” 29 June 1945, Archive of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation, Fond 0430, Opis 2, Delo 18, Papka 5, 1, pp. 18-30) said that Russia rightly entered the Russo-Japanese war in order to prevent Japan’s expansion. The reason why Russia lost, he analyzed, was not only that Russia was weak at that time but more critically because other countries such as the UK, U.S., and Germany supported Japan. Also, he pointed out Japan as the biggest threat to Russia in the Far East, and suggested that Russia should aim to permanently prevent Japan’s control over Korea (Weathersby 1993, 6-7).

On the other hand, Matray discredits Hull’s recollection of 1949 that the Russians used the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel at the time of the Russo-Japanese War, because the Russians rejected the Japanese proposal [for the dividing line] in 1894 (“James I. Matray’s e-mail message to Youngsup Yoon,”

Presumably, the establishment of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel appealed to them as a moderate policy that they could accept in a spirit of compromise. However, it was not impossible for the Soviets to occupy Korea if they decided to push themselves to do so during or after the Potsdam Conference. As they chose not to do so, one can doubt that maybe they had secretly talked with the Americans on this matter and reached a certain agreement.<sup>41</sup> It is not easy to uncover the hidden incentives of these players in the publicly available documents, but the endeavor to find truth behind history would be a meaningful work.

### *Speculation on the Date of Hull's Draft*

When did Hull actually draft the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel north military demarcation line? Based on a number of documents, the date Hull established the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel north line falls between July 24 and 26 of 1945. Hull, together with General Lincoln,<sup>42</sup> his junior, and Admiral Gardner,<sup>43</sup> of the Navy, studied the map of

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17 December 2002). However, it should be noted that the UK proposal in 1894 to have Qing China and Japan share Korea was rejected by the Japanese, who intended to occupy entire Korea, and this rejection caused the Sino-Japanese War. In 1896, Japan's Yamagata suggested to Russia's Roanov about the division of Korea along Daedong River near the 39<sup>th</sup> parallel north. Because Russia did not evince much interest in this suggestion, Japan came up with an alternative proposal for division along the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel north (Library of Congress Legislative Service 1950, 2). As Russia considered southern Korea to be important, it indirectly refused the Japanese proposal to make a permanent division, but both parties agreed on a temporary division only under emergency situations. Later in 1903, Russia made a proposal to Japan to neutralize northern Korea above the 39<sup>th</sup> parallel, but Japan turned it down as it intended to exclusively control Korea and then expand into the continent, and this rejection instigated the war in 1904 (W. Lee 2002, 193-208, 215). Therefore, Hull's recollection varies from the fact, but Matray's argument is not so accurate either.

41. There may have been a secret discussion, but the Soviet Union may have not demanded the whole of Korea because it felt content to secure a sort of buffer zone in the northern region of Korea.
42. Lincoln remembers that he made an observation over the shoulder when Admiral Cook marked raid zones and drew other lines. "Letter from Col. G. A. Lincoln to Col. Appleman," 19 February 1954, RG 319, Entry 145: OCMH, 2-3.7A BA2, USACMH, Box 746, p. 2. Lincoln was constantly involved in this matter, and his direct supervisor was Hull—who was also at Potsdam and participated indirectly through his subordinate.
43. According to Walter Karig, Malcom W. Cagle, Frank A. Manson (1952, 5), the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel was suggested by Gardner. The following sources say that the directors of the Navy and Army studied Byrnes' demand. See Memo, CMH, DA (MG Orlando Ward) to LTG Maxwell D. Taylor, USA, "Establishment of the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel in Korea," n.d. [ca. 10 October 1952], cited in Schnabel and Watson ([1978] 1990, 448).

the Korean Peninsula in order to draw a military demarcation line dividing the American and Soviet territories. With this dividing line (also known as the Hull line), the U.S. for the first time denoted the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel north as the dividing line. In addition, Byrnes' proactive participation in the establishment of the dividing line was noteworthy. (This does not mean, though, that Byrnes directly gave an order to Hull to create the dividing line. It is assumed that the order went down via Marshall.) This serves as the basis for assuming that Byrnes gave instructions to establish the dividing line in mid-August of 1945.<sup>44</sup>

The aforementioned interview record significantly supports the "Potsdam secret pact theory." Even if it is not borne out by sufficient evidence, we can at least say that the U.S. and Soviet Union were reaching a tacit agreement to divide the peninsula to keep the balance of power regardless of whether or not they discussed the ways and methods in detail.<sup>45</sup> The possible existence of a secret pact should not be discarded. However, from such facts as the Soviet suggestion for drawing the military operation line for the sea above Musudan, as well as the debate initiated by America's Gardner and others in having the military operation line at the 39<sup>th</sup> or 40<sup>th</sup> parallel—which happened sometime between August 11 and 14—one may tentatively conclude that the possibility of the existence of a secret pact is slim indeed.

Although the official proceedings do not contain reference to an agreement regarding the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel as it does for the 16<sup>th</sup> parallel in Indochina (below

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44. Marshall must have been responsible for the establishment as well. At the UN General Assembly in Paris on October 13, 1948, Marshall, the U.S. Secretary of State at that time, met the Korean representatives (who went there to gain the UN approval for Korea's independence) and "explained confidentially how the existence of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel military boundary come about: due to certain discoveries which were made in September 1945 concerning the attitude of the Japanese Army Commander-in-Chief in Korea." See "Memorandum of Conversation, by the Secretary of State," (Paris, 13 October 1948, 740.00119 Control (Korea)/10-1348, in *FRUS 1948*, vol. VI, 1314. This means that Marshall took part in and knew about the process of establishing the line. However, the fact that September of 1945 dates after the establishment of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, suggests a possibility of a typo in the memorandum or Marshall's memory being incorrect. Based on the interview with Marshall just before his death published in the *U.S. News and World Report*, November 2, 1959, Kim Gijo (2006, 279) argued that the correct date would have been August. See his theory of Japanese origin in the preface of "Re-examining the Process of Korea's Division (along the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel)" (1993, 101).

45. Gu Daeyeol (1995, 199) doubts whether the Potsdam secret pact theory can be verified, but values it as a relevant point of debate showing how the military leaders of the time approached the political and military issues of the region surrounding Korea.

which belonged to the UK and above which to the Chinese Nationalists' Army) (Whelan 1990, 28), the possibility of discussion between the U.S. and Soviet Union still remains.

### *Creating a Detailed Plan for Occupation of the Korean Peninsula*

As Hull designed the dividing line, as mentioned above, he submitted a memorandum to Marshall around July 25. In this memo, he clarified Korea's inclusion in the U.S. strategy following Japan's surrender, to be expected on August 15, and he asked for deliberation of a detailed plan for the peninsula.<sup>46</sup> It is notable that Hull proactively planned for occupation of Korea and that he correctly predicted the timing of Japan's surrender. The memo confirms that Hull was one of the early designers of the occupation plan for Korea. According to the standard theory, Marshall led the plan to take over Korea for the first time, and this memo reveals that Hull joined his initiative on July 25 after receiving his order on July 24.

Marshall's response for Korea was also immediate, as he demanded Truman to give detailed instructions regarding the Korea operation.<sup>47</sup> In addition, Marshall ordered MacArthur to report to him about the plan to occupy Japan in case of Japan's early surrender, and also to apprise him of the ongoing preparations for the landing operation on Korea. MacArthur, in turn, sent to Washington an incomplete plan to occupy Japan 12 days after Japan's surrender and to carry out the Korea operation some time later than that date.<sup>48</sup>

Truman, whose plan was to expedite the end of the war by using atomic weapons, also responded at once: he issued an order to General MacArthur and Admiral Nimitz via Marshall, stipulating that Korea should be included in the occupation plan for Japan. While preparations for the landing operation on

46. "Hull's Memorandum for Marshall," 25 July 1945, pp. 1-2, enclosed in Memorandum of Marshall to President, 25 July 1945, RG 165, ABC 014 Japan, Sec. 1-A, Box 19.

47. "Marshall's Memorandum for President," 25 July 1945, RG 165, ABC 014 Japan (13 April 1944), Sec. 1-A.

48. "Marshall to MacArthur," 25 July 1945; "H. A. Craig to John E. Hull," 25 July 1945, OPD 014.1 [TS], Sec. III, Records of the U. S. Army Staff; Harry S. Truman, *Memoirs by Harry S. Truman*, vol. 1 (1955, 433-34); James F. Schnabel, *United States Army in the Korean War* (1972, 7); James I. Matray's "Captive of the Cold War: The Decision to Divide Korea at the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel" (1981, 161) and *The Reluctant Crusade* (1985, 42).

Japan were under way, occupation of Korea was to be the next priority.<sup>49</sup> With this, he probably aimed to complement his plan for political control over Korea with a military backup: should the exclusive political control fail, occupation of Korea would be the last option. Not only Truman but also other U.S. policymakers, including Chief of Staff Marshall, Director of Operations Hull, General MacArthur and Admiral Nimitz, considered occupation of Korea on the earlier dates of late July, not later in mid-August. For them, it was a pressing matter. It is obvious that the top-level policymakers of the U.S. acknowledged the importance of Korea occupation before mid-August and made necessary preparations for it.

Moreover, because the U.S. aimed to end the war early before the Soviet entry, it was about to determine the first draft of the statement addressed to Japan. The U.S. sent this draft to Churchill and Chiang Kai-shek, before the Soviet Union could enter the war and sign this statement as well. The Potsdam Declaration was made on July 26 under the leadership of the U.S. and UK (Seong 1992, 552).<sup>50</sup> It was a measure taken to accelerate the process of Japan's surrender.

The Blacklist II, created by the U.S. Army Pacific Headquarters on July 25, was an outcome of such debate on the Korea occupation. This document designated Seoul as a first-priority target region after Tokyo (i.e., the Kanto Plain; the rest of the first-priority targets were Fukuoka-Shimonoseki, Osaka-Kyoto-Kobe, and Aomori-Ominato). Busan was the last region of the second-priority targets (which list Nagasaki-Sasebo, Nagoya, Sapporo and then Busan), and Gunsan-Jeonju was the last region of the eight third-priority targets.<sup>51</sup> While determining occupation of Japan as the main priority, this list also considered occupation of Korea as a secondary option. In this document, the U.S. for the first time noted Seoul as the most critical region in the Korean Peninsula. The document listed Seoul, Busan and Gunsan-Jeonju, but left out

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49. Paul C. McGrath, "U.S. Army in the Korean Conflict," Manuscript, Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of Defense, 1953, RG 407, p. 26; Matray (1985, 161).

50. The British signer was the Labor Party's Clement Attlee, newly appointed as the UK Prime Minister on July 26. The Soviet Union, which participated in the Potsdam Conference, was aware of this draft and signed it upon its entry to the war in August.

51. General Headquarters, United States Army Forces, Pacific, "Basic Outline Plan for 'Blacklist' Operations to Occupy Japan Proper and Korea after Surrender or Collapse," 25 July 1945, p. 9, [TS], RG 165, Entry 418, Project Decimal File, Box 1777.

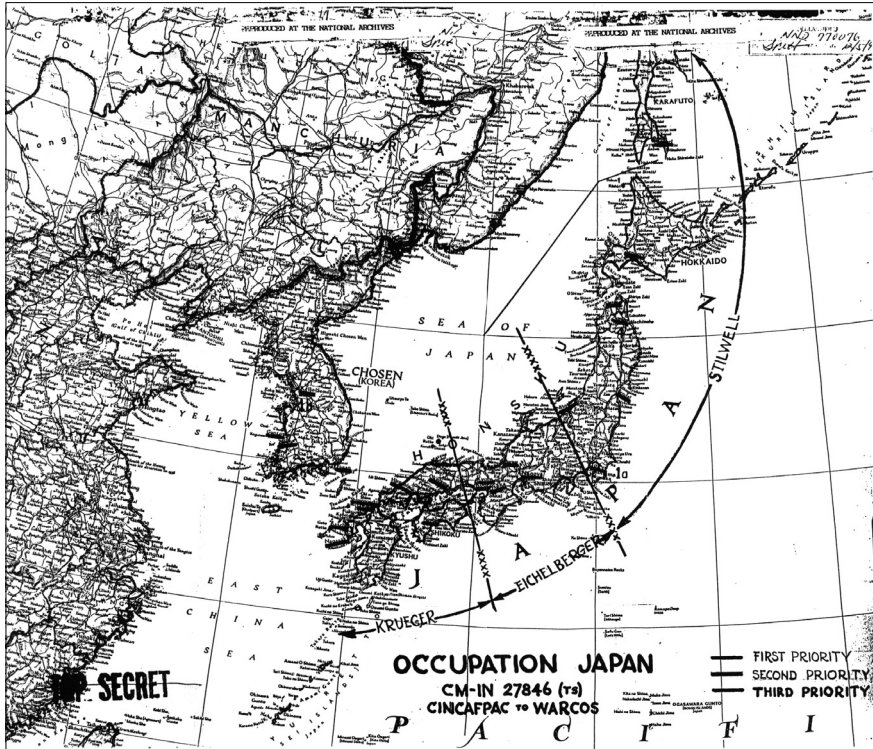
the northern region, so we can assume that it was under the influence of the Hull line drafted earlier or the proposal to divide Korea into north and south. Since almost all subsequent American military documents are based on the assumption of division, this reasoning appears to be more persuasive. This also implies that Truman's proposal for exclusive control was not endorsed by the military government. Truman's scheme must have been secretly carried forward, and if it succeeded, other proposals for division would not have been necessary. Truman must have considered an alternative resolution just in case the tentative exclusive control plan would fail, such as implementing a division plan, the Blacklist II.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff approached occupation of the continent from a slightly different angle. Upon receiving Truman's approval on July 26, they sent to MacArthur and Nimitz an instruction codenamed "VICTORY 357." This document interpreted that the Marines' landing on and occupation of Busan would be pursued as second priority within the larger landing operation plan for the Asian continent.<sup>52</sup> Busan was identified as the first region to be occupied in Korea and Seoul was not mentioned at all. The northern region of Korea was not mentioned either. It also instructed the Navy to take over a Chinese port which would serve as a ground base of the continent and asked the Army and Navy to carry out joint operations to attain Japan's surrender. This instruction followed the Navy's prior request, so it set the occupation of Japan as the top priority mission, in the face of opposition by MacArthur, who had planned the Army's separate action.

Nevertheless, MacArthur made a compromise under pressure from the higher authorities and sent a telegram message to Washington on July 27. He now had to consider occupation of Korea based on the Blacklist II, and

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52. JCS, "Message for MacArthur & Nimitz from TERMINAL," V-357, 26 July 1945, RG 218, Geographic File, 1942-1945, 386.2 Japan (4-9-45), Sec. 3, Box 135, p. 1; RG 165, ABC 387 Japan (15 February 1945), Sec. 3 [TS], Box 506; JCS, "Message for MacArthur & Nimitz from TERMINAL," V-357, 26 July 1945, in JCS 1331/6, 30 July 1945, RG 218, Geographic File, 1942-1945, 386.2 Japan (4-9-45), Sec. 3, Box 135, p. 17. Regarding the landing operations and occupation of the continent, it was suggested that the order should be Shanghai-Busan-Chefoo (Yantai)-Qinhuangdao (border area in Manchuria). Although Dagu would be a better option than Qinhuangdao, it would have been unrealistic in the Navy's point of view. Northern Taiwan was also a good option, considering the convenience of the naval operations and communications to Japan and China.

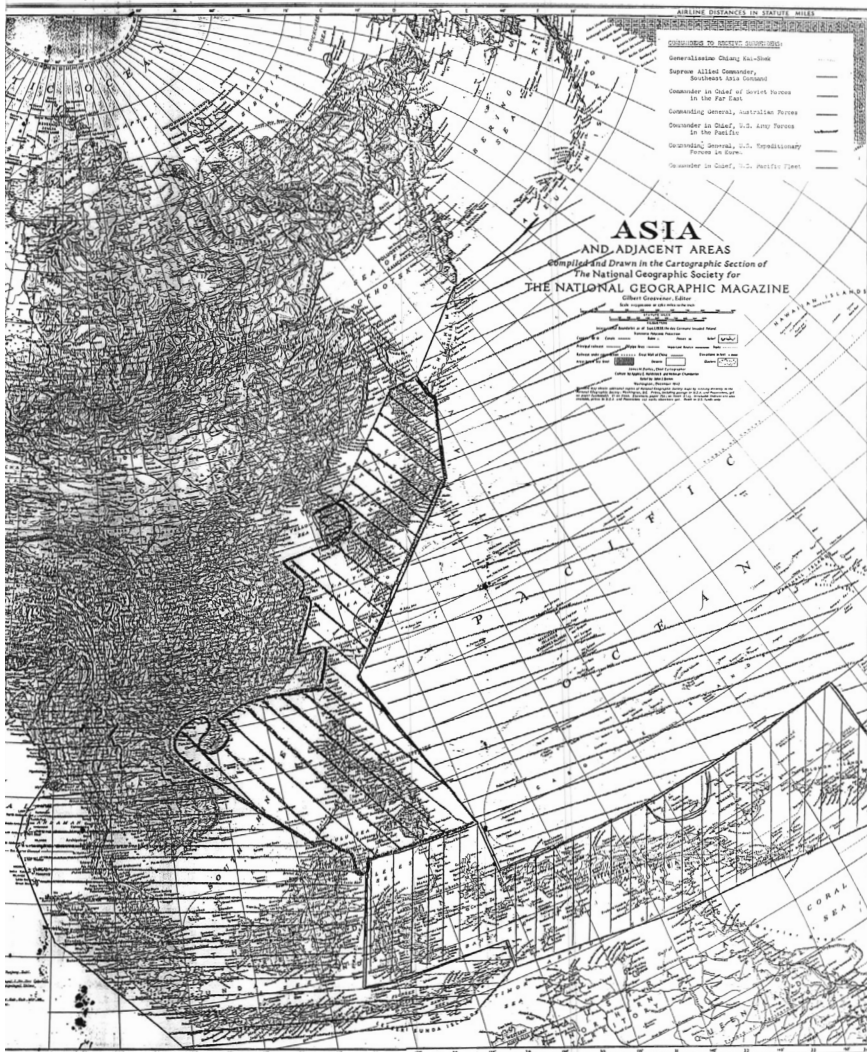


**Map 1.** Map indicating priority targets for occupation of Japan (July 27, 1945)

Source: "Occupation Japan," CM-IN 27846 [TS], CINCAFPAC to WARCOS, 27 July 1945, in CINCAFPAC (Gen. MacArthur), "Message for War Department," 27 July 1945, C 28793 [TS], RG 165, ABC 387 Japan (15 February 1945), Sec. 3, Box 506, U.S. National Archives.

he therefore categorized Tokyo and Seoul as the first-priority targets, Busan as the second, and Gwangju as the third (see Map 1). As the war was drawing to its end, the "view to prioritize Seoul" was highlighted. We should also notice that MacArthur had already prepared for the Soviet entry by noting that "Occupation of additional points in northern Korea by Allied forces is assumed."<sup>53</sup> Therefore, major cities of northern Korea such as Cheongjin,

53. See CINCAFPAC (Gen. MacArthur), "Message for War Department," 27 July 1945, C 28793 [TS], RG 165, ABC 387 Japan (15 February 1945), Sec. 3, Box 506, pp. 2-3 (Map 2 appears at the end of this document); RG 165, ABC 014 Japan (13 April 1944), Sec. 16-A; JCS, RG 218, Geographic File, 1942-1945, 386.2 Japan, Sec. 3, Box 135, pp. 2-3; RG 165, Entry 422, Box 98; "MacArthur to WARCOS," 27 July 1945, RG 9, Radiograms, MacArthur Archives, Norfolk, Virginia, in Michael C. Sandusky, *America's Parallel* (1983, 190). Here, a modification



**Map 2.** *National Geographic* map (marked around August 11, 1945)

Source: Gilbert Grosvenor, ed., “Asia and Adjacent Areas,” compiled and drawn in the cartographic section of the National Geographic Society for the *National Geographic* magazine (Washington, DC: National Geographic Society, 1942), in RG 353, Entry 516, SWNCC Subcommittee on the Far East, General Records, 1945-1948, Box 109, U.S. National Archives.

was made following the priority order in occupation drafted on May 8, 1945 (Busan-Jinhae went above Seoul-Incheon in the priority rank, following the rule of prioritizing Japan). See Joint Intelligence Staff, “Occupation of Strategic Positions upon Japanese Withdrawal, Collapse, or Surrender,” 8 May 1945, JIS 144/3, RG 165, ABC.014 Japan, pp. 22-23.

Wonsan and Pyeongyang had been already removed from the U.S. target list and were viewed as tentative occupation spots for the Soviet Union. This reflects that the key players of the scene shared the view of the balance of power by limiting the American occupation to the southern half of Korea and leaving the northern half under the influence of the soon-to-enter Russians. We can assume that all discussions of the time were either shaped or influenced by the thought of balance of powers, as portrayed by the Hull line. MacArthur's telegram also proves the point that the issue of division was by no means suddenly brought up in mid-August.

Although Truman considered exclusive occupation of the Korean Peninsula as the best option, he kept the Korea landing operation as a second option in case the Soviet entry into the war against Japan was realized as it had been earlier agreed between Roosevelt and the Soviets. Subsequently, Hull and others created a plan for Korea's division along the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel and its shared occupation.

## Conclusion

Currently, some U.S. and Soviet documents point to the fact that the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel dividing line was established at the Potsdam Conference. Hull's memoir especially notes that the U.S. at least attempted to establish the line at the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. In addition, the Hull line was not unrelated to the establishment of a similar concept created in the dawn of August 11, because all who participated in the establishment of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel line were under Hull's direct supervision. Furthermore, Marshall instructed Hull and another person, most likely Brigadier General Lincoln, to prepare for occupation of Korea: it is unlikely that Lincoln would have followed this order without being aware of the "Hull line" after being actually involved in the establishment of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel earlier on August 11. Therefore, it is not unusual to relate Hull's dividing line and all subsequently discussed lines along the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. In spite of this, Hoag assesses that it was only "a fortuitous coincidence"<sup>54</sup> that

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54. C. Leonard Hoag, "American Military Government in Korea: War Policy and the First Year of Occupation, 1941-1946," Manuscript, Department of the Army, 1970, p. 64.

the Hull line determined in late July and the dividing line set on August 11 turned out to be identical. It is possible that he omitted a thorough analysis of the situations preceding and following the event—or intentionally undermined such correlation as he tried to justify the explanation that the line was suddenly established, while all political considerations had been hidden. Indeed, one may suspect the possibility of intentional distortion because many works of research on the establishment of 38<sup>th</sup> parallel dividing line mainly mentioned Rusk and Bonesteel, while leaving out the role played by Hull.

The credibility of Hull's memoir remains somewhat tenuous, as it is not an official document or an immediate record of the event but an *ex post facto* interview, colored by a self-centered view. Matray also took notice of this weakness but acknowledged the fact that Marshall and Hull together drafted occupation of at least the half of Korea south of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, given the U.S.-Soviet military agreement on the 41<sup>st</sup> parallel and imminent Soviet entry into the war. However, he insists that no specific discussion on the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel was made with the Soviets, as the Americans had intended to end the war by using the atomic bomb. In other words, while ruling out the idea of the U.S.-Soviet discussion on the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel at Potsdam, Matray is also agreeing with the fact that the line was an important line drafted by the U.S. military officials at Potsdam. Highlighting the part of Hull's interview that says "Byrnes presented it [the line] to Russians," Matray argues that Hull's explanation is inconsistent with any official records released between July and August of 1945, and an impartial account based on distant memory and rumors.<sup>55</sup>

If similar logic is applied, credibility of materials related to Lincoln, Bonesteel and Rusk<sup>56</sup>—who are now regarded as the main participants in the decision of the dividing line—also becomes problematic, as accounts involving these figures do not appear on any official records of the time but only in private memoirs afterwards. In other words, even the widely accepted theory of the August 11 establishment has not been verified by official documents. No records about their involvement exist in the documents of SWNCC, the organization in charge of the establishment, between August 10 and 11. The

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55. "James I. Matray's e-mail message to Youngsup Yoon," 17 December, 2002.

56. The atmosphere of acceptance without criticism regarding Rusk's interview has lasted for a long time (Mun 1999, 40).

role played in the establishment by the three's superiors, Byrnes and Marshall, is not corroborated by any documents of the time. On the other hand, one should not discount the credibility of the testimony made by Bonesteel and Rusk just because no official record but only memoirs exist. In a similar vein, the assertion that the U.S. did not establish the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel north has been rendered untenable. We just need a more thorough examination of the relevant data (on such matters as discussions with the Soviets) by comparing them with one another. It is possible that the U.S. may have intentionally discarded all 38<sup>th</sup> parallel-related records and attempted to establish the line in secret. If we cannot find the official documents, then the private memoirs would be our next best choice. Hull's remark certainly should not be ignored but regarded as decisive evidence that can overwrite the standard August 11 establishment theory, given that he held such important positions as the Assistant Joint Chief of Staff and the Director of Operations, and his subordinate Lincoln was a direct superior to Rusk, whose role is highlighted in the standard view.<sup>57</sup> In no way should Hull's memoir be considered a less important source than the memoir of his subordinates. Hull was a responsible person of relatively high position: he did not have to exaggerate his role, as in the case of Rusk or Bonesteel, and his testimony is likely to be based on the truth. Nevertheless, Kim Gijo (2006, 211-12) refutes this by saying that Hull's role was limited to administration but not planning of operations; and that his account was, similar to Rusk's, merely an ex post facto summary of the inconsistent stories of other people and subsequently revealed facts.

However, what would have compelled Hull to incorrectly assert on two separate occasions, that the U.S. and Soviet Union had engaged in such discussion while others believed they had not? While Appleman (1961, 3) refers to Hull's 1952 interview, he only highlights the part that the military conference left out the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel talk. He leaves out the other piece of information from the very same interview that pertains to "Byrnes' talk with Russians." Moreover, Appleman does not refer to the more detailed account provided by Hull in his earlier 1949 phone interview. Hull's two interviews, of 1949 and 1952, were

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57. One may assume that a simple military operation line mentioned at the military meeting at Potsdam was exaggerated in this testimony based on memories. However, such assumption can be weakened as the testimony was resolute and conclusive.

both included in the file of documents collected by Appleman for writing this book. The fact that Appleman does not refer to the 1949 interview, even as he collected it, makes one wonder whether he intentionally concealed this piece of information.

Is there really no record on the establishment of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel dividing line in the conference proceedings and other official documents? Or is it that such records, even if they do exist, have not become available? To repeat the same point, after in-depth reading of the SWNCC proceedings between August 10 and 11, I found not a single sentence proving the establishment of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel and certainly not any evidence for Rusk's involvement, as argued by others. From this, I would strongly raise a different view: that the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel dividing line was not established between August 10 and 11, and that no official document was created. It is possible that the decision was made abruptly and so was excluded from the proceedings. The argument that the decision, although being important, was made in such a short time without much deliberation due to the urgency of the situation, remains credible.

Nonetheless, the establishment of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel was not a consequence of the U.S. president's direct order, so there must have been some meetings and discussions for drafting it. Because we cannot find any relevant documents, the doubts about intentional omission or later disposal of such record are justifiable. The establishment of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel dividing line is perhaps the most significant decision ever made in the modern history of Korea, but the absence of any official data stirs the suspicion that the U.S. may have intentionally covered up the truth behind it. In the absence of the official data, the testimony of Hull, the highest-ranking official<sup>58</sup> who was a part of this decision-making process, serves to be the most trustworthy evidence and an important primary source.

In the interview carried out on 1 August 1952, Hull remembered that the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel north at the time of establishment was designed simply as "army

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58. Truman's memoir also assesses that the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel was an outcome of military convenience without mentioning the details of the establishment process. Although Truman was the highest executive in making decisions, he was not a direct participant in the discussion for the establishment of the line. So in this ex post facto account, he may have made an excuse in order to avoid being held responsible (for the division of Korea).

boundaries,” not as the borderline of occupied zones.<sup>59</sup> In an earlier interview (1949), however, he had acknowledged that the line served as a dividing line of occupied powers, saying that the line had the purpose of “coordination during occupation in Korea” in addition to being a military demarcation zone for the ground forces.<sup>60</sup> Therefore, his later remark in the 1952 interview might have been a justification to deny and diminish America’s historical responsibility for creating a permanent dividing line in Korea. Up to the opening of the Potsdam Conference, the U.S. plan for operations on Korea remained nebulous, confined to the consideration level but not elaborated further—so it is highly likely that the line was not a military demarcation line for landing operations but rather a dividing line for the U.S. and Soviet joint occupation of Korea after Japan’s surrender.<sup>61</sup>

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59. “Lt Col Roy E. Appleman’s Interview with Gen John E. Hull,” 1 August 1952, RG 319, Entry 145: OCMH, 2-3.7A BA2, USACMH, Box 744.

60. “Col E. M. Harris’ Tel. conv with Gen John E. Hull,” 17 June 1949, RG 319, Entry 145: OCMH, 2-3.7A BA2, USACMH, Box 744; “Lt Col Roy E. Appleman’s Interview with Gen John E. Hull,” 1 August 1952, RG 319, Entry 145: OCMH, 2-3.7A BA2, USACMH, Box 744; Roy E. Appleman, “Korean Combat History,” pp. I-11-12, RG 319, Entry 145: OCMH, 2-3.7A BA2, USACMH, Box 739; Roy E. Appleman, “Korea and the Background of Conflict,” p. I-4, RG 319, Entry 145: OCMH, 2-3.7A BA2, USACMH, Box 735; Appleman (1961, 2-3).

On the other hand, when McGrath interviewed Admiral Gardner and Cabell, who were at Potsdam, they both denied the establishment of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. See “McGrath’s Interview with LTG Charles P. Cabell,” Office of the Secretary of Defense, 27 January 1953, in Michael C. Sandusky (1983, 193). This rejection is not fully credible, however, because Gardner and Cabell’s comment had to be devotedly in line with the American official position that “the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel was not established before August 11.” Appleman’s transcription was created based on not only important interviews but also secret documents. Other than this transcript, the following documents only peripherally mention the recordings at Potsdam: “The Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Harriman) to President Truman and the Secretary of State,” Moscow, 10 August 1945, *FRUS 1945, Far East China*, vol. VII, 967; John M. Allison, *Ambassador from the Prairie or Allison Wonderland* (1973, 116-17). On the other hand, Appleman made the following criticism after reading the first draft of his fellow Schnabel’s transcript. Responding to Schnabel’s argument that the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel was established between August 10 and 11 of 1945, Appleman said, “I think it was earlier.” See “Appleman Comment,” RG 319, Entry 145: CMH-8P, OCMH (Korean War) Policy and Direction: The First Year, Box 714. Appleman’s position was later introduced in the following: Charles M. Dobbs, *The Unwanted Symbol: American Foreign Policy, the Cold War, and Korea, 1945-1950* (1981, 26); and James I. Matray, “Captive of the Cold War: The Decision to Divide Korea at the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel” (1981, 161); and *The Reluctant Crusade* (1985).

61. According to another view, the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel was an operation demarcation line the U.S. military prepared in case the Soviet Union were to bring up the issue of the line for ground

Considering the circumstances of the time, there is little possibility that a secret pact was made at Potsdam, but decisive evidence for its absence has not been discovered so far. Currently we only have Hull's testimony that there was a secret pact, and rather than refuting this evidence, as Matray and Kim Gijo did, we should try to corroborate it through further research, for instance of the declassified Russian documents.

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operations. Because the Soviet Union did not bring up this issue, it remained as a plan for internal discussions only (Schnabel and Watson [1978] 1990, 19). However, as a firm believer of such opinion, if I may further analyze the situation, the Soviet Union did not bring up the issue of military operation line at the working-level meeting of July 26 because the U.S. had earlier declared that there would be no attack on Korea for a while on July 24. Therefore, because it was the U.S. that caused the Soviet Union not to bring up the issue, the U.S. should be held responsible for any evasion that occurred as a result of its action—in other words, it was the Americans' evasion, not that of the Russians.

Harry S. Truman's *Memoirs*, vol. I and vol. II describe the actions taken by Truman and the U.S. military leaders at Potsdam as follows. "The State Department urged that in all Korea the surrender of Japanese forces should be taken by Americans, but there was no way to get our troops into the northern part of the country" (1956, 317). "There was no discussion of any zones for ground operations or for occupation, for it was not expected that either American or Soviet ground troops would enter Korea in the immediate future" (317). "No lines were set up for land operations since it was not anticipated by our own military leaders that we would carry out operations to Korea" (1955, 383). (In addition, the U.S. denied its responsibility by saying, "We expected that the division line of the country would be solely for the purpose of accepting the Japanese surrender and that that joint control would then extend throughout the peninsula. The Russians, however, began at once to treat the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel as a permanent dividing line.") However, it is not true that the Americans never considered the possibility of an early ground operation. They figured that although their operation would not possibly be done early, the Russians may make an early move toward Korea, so they established the dividing line. As Truman had considered the possibility of ending the war early by using the atomic bomb, he tried to prevent the Soviet entry (more fundamentally, the expansion of the Soviet influence). His staff members probably refrained from making the dividing line into an issue because they were aware of Truman's thought on this. In spite of this, in his ex post facto memoir, Truman went on to elaborate the subject of the dividing line: there was no U.S.-Soviet discussion on it, and the U.S. had absolutely no idea about it. Such a vehement denial from the U.S. President creates a reasonable doubt of intentional cover-up.

If we determine to trust the memoirs of Truman and also Hull, we can set forth the following possibility. Hull and Byrnes were both decision makers involved in the discussion with the Soviets regarding the establishment of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, but Truman either did not know about such discussion or forgot about it. Yet, there is little possibility that an important discussion as such was carried out without the president's knowledge or endorsement or that it was forgotten. Therefore, it is more probable that Truman may have created an intentional cover-up, distortion, and false testimony around the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel issue—all for the sake of U.S. national interests. Hull's recollection may have been a truthful testimony, intentionally hidden for a long time and unearthed only recently.

Since the U.S. had set the objective of exclusively occupying Korea through the means of the atomic bomb, there is little possibility of its agreeing to hand over Korea's northern half to the Soviets. Therefore, it is unlikely there was a secret pact or collusion between the U.S. and Soviet Union at Potsdam. However, given the Americans' intentional evasion of the discussion itself, we must consider the possibility that the two powers had a tacit agreement about the idea of power balance.

At present, the Potsdam secret pact theory is still in the process of verification. As we continue to look for its evidence, we should also pay attention to the very condition that may have led the two powers into negotiation, namely, the lack of a principal agency of power in Korea. Because Korea was a weak country, numerous powers ceaselessly discussed shared influence and interest. The 38<sup>th</sup> parallel may have been a direct result of Potsdam discussions, as argued by the secret pact theory, but even if it was not, it was likely an ultimate outcome of the accumulation of power-balance discussions. As detailed plans for the landing operation were being designed by the U.S. and Russia before the Soviet entry, it is only natural to think that consideration for a demarcation line was underway by either or both powers. The August 10 establishment theory argues that the line was suddenly determined without particular preparations or political intent, just for the convenience of the military. This is possibly a U.S. attempt to cover-up its actual political preparations. The large-scale map (by the National Geographic Society, see Map 2-1) through which Rusk and Lincoln testify to have attained an inspiration for the division along the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, ironically lacks the 38<sup>th</sup>



**Map 2-1.**

Enlarged section of Map 2.

Here, the *National Geographic* map only indicates 35° and 40° latitudes while the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel is clearly marked by hand, contradicting testimonies by Rusk and Lincoln.

parallel line. Therefore, their remarks were probably a false testimony, intended to conceal the fact that the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel had been considered from a previous date (W. Lee 2001, 218-34).

In conclusion, the argument based on these two officials' testimony, supporting the August 11 draft of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, is problematic. Following the example of other studies, this essay did not neglect their account either. Nor did this essay reveal any new evidence that could totally invalidate the existing testimonies. Although recognizing that Hull's interview is only a private testimony, the essay sheds new light on the study of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel by utilizing the Hull interview data, which had been neglected by previous research. Hull was a direct supervisor of the already confirmed witnesses such as Lincoln, Bonesteel and Rusk, so his comment certainly cannot be ignored. Therefore, I would argue that the division of Korea had been considered by the U.S. prior to August 11 and that Hull, with others, had already prepared a first draft for the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel after conceiving the idea around July 25.

Translated by  
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## Abstract

Conventional accounts of the division of the Korean Peninsula at the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel north see the line as having been suddenly drafted for the convenience of the military on August 11, 1945. This narrative was based on oral testimony records of Brigadier General Lincoln, who headed the strategic planning unit under the U.S. joint special operations agency. Lincoln and his subordinates, Colonels Bonesteel and Rusk, testified that their decision was based on a *National Geographic* map, which was later discovered at the U.S. National Archives. Cartographic discrepancies, however, suggest that the August 11 accidental draft may be a deliberate cover-up for actual deliberations that had taken place earlier. Interviews with Lieutenant General Hull reveal that the idea of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel line was created at an earlier date, around July 25, during the Potsdam Conference. The 38<sup>th</sup> parallel plan is therefore better interpreted as an outcome of U.S. decision-makers' advance preparation, which began at a date no later than July 25. It was apparently based on political interest to prevent the Soviet Union's southward advancement. While Hull's memoir partly differs from the conventional U.S.-Soviet secret pact theory, it should be regarded as relevant, especially because he was the superior in position to the three individuals on whose testimony the conventional theories are based. The present study concludes that while the actual draft of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel dividing line was confirmed and formulated to the superior authorities by Lincoln and others on August 11, the plan was devised earlier, around July 25.

**Keywords:** 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel, Potsdam Conference, John Edwin Hull, George A. Lincoln, Dean Rusk