**Resource sheet 8.1A
Transcripts of Cabinet Office documents used in Lesson 8.1**

Document 1 – CAB 128/18/1, Labour cabinet minutes 03/07/50

b) Under Article 27 of the Charter decisions of the Security Council on matters other than procedural matters required the affirmative votes of seven members, including the concurring votes of the permanent members of the council; and it was argued that the Council’s resolution of 27th June was not valid since the representative of the Soviet Union, a permanent member, had not been present on that occasion. On the other hand, the Council has on previous occasions taken decisions despite the abstention of a permanent member; the Soviet Government had at least acquiesced in that procedure; and it was arguable that the written constitution of the Council was in process of modification by practice. It was relevant to this argument that forty members of the United Nations had subsequently declared their support of the resolution passed by the Security Council. Moreover, it was provided under Article 51 that nothing in the Charter impaired the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence against an armed attack on a member of the United Nations; and although South Korea was not such a member, the action taken on her behalf was clearly in accordance with the principle embodied in this Article of the Charter.

The Cabinet’s conclusion was that the Prime Minister, while he should not ignore the constitutional points which were being made, should argue that the action which the Western Powers were taking in South Korea was fully in accordance with the spirit of the United Nations Charter and was in fact the first significant demonstration of the principle of collective security against aggression. He would proceed to develop the argument that it was the duty of peace-loving nations to make the machinery of the United Nations work effectively, despite legal quibbles, and not to allow it to be frustrated by the abstentions of a single member; and that for this purpose they were entitled to take advantage of procedures which, though they might appear to conflict with the strict letter of the Charter, had been accepted as reasonable by member States.

c) The Cabinet was informed that the Chiefs of Staff were not disposed to recommend the despatch of any land forces to Korea. The point was also made that the United States action in covering Formosa had freed for other operations the Chinese Communist forces which had been about to attack it, and this increased the potential threat to Hong Kong. No formal request for reinforcements had been received from the United States Government; and in all the circumstances the Government spokesmen in the debate would be well-advised to discount any expectation that the United Kingdom could make further forces available for operations in Korea.

Document 2 – CAB 128/18/2, Labour cabinet minutes 04/07/50

The United States government has also enquired whether pressure could be brought to bear on the Shell oil company to suspend their deliveries of oil to Communist China. This, however, would have involved a reversal of the United Kingdom policy towards China; and the United States Government had been informed that Shell’s current oil supplies to China were of negligible importance and that the company would be asked to refrain from increasing them.

The Cabinet –

1. Invited the President of the Board of Trade to make an order prohibiting exports from the United Kingdom to North Korea.
2. Invited the Secretary of State for the Colonies to ask the Government of Hong Kong to take such measures as were necessary to prevent the shipment of goods from Hong Kong to North Korea.
3. Took note with approval of the reply returned to the enquiry received from the United States Government about the supply of British oil to Communist China.

Strategic Exports to China and North Korea (Previous Reference: CM (49) 1st Conclusions Minute 4)

The Cabinet next considered a memorandum by the Minister of State (C. P. (50) 157) recommending the United Kingdom Government should immediately impose the same control over strategic exports to China and North Korea as was already imposed over exports to the Soviet Union and her satellites in Europe, and should arrange for the Governments of Hong Kong and Singapore to impose the same control over exports from those territories.

In discussions it was pointed out that, as was admitted in paragraph 6 of C.P. (50) 157, the imposition of these controls would not secure any immediate practical results: the justification for the proposal lay in the political and psychological disadvantage of declining to co-operate with the United States Government on this subject in present circumstances. Ministers felt that this disadvantage must be balanced against that of appearing to offer an affront at the present juncture to Communist China. The action taken by the United States during the past ten days in the Pacific area had increased the potential threat to Hong Kong; and this was not a moment at which the United Kingdom Government should, for no practical advantage, make a gesture which might alienate the Communist Government of China.

The Cabinet’s conclusion was that, while these powers should be brought into immediate operation in respect of strategic exports to North Korea, they should not for the present be used in respect of such exports to China.

The Cabinet –

1. Authorised the President of the Board of Trade to take immediate steps to prevent the export of strategic goods from the United Kingdom to North Korea.
2. Invited the Secretary of State for the Colonies to arrange that the Governments of Hong Kong and Singapore should take general powers to control the export of strategic goods from those territories to any destination, and should make immediate use of those powers to prevent the export of strategic goods to North Korea.
3. Agreed to defer for the time being action to prevent the export of strategic goods to China, whether from the United Kingdom or from Hong Kong and Singapore.

Formosa

The Cabinet considered a memorandum by the Minister of State (C.P. (50) 156) on the present situation in respect of Formosa.

The Minister of State said that the full implications of the new United States policy towards Formosa were being studied, and an appreciation would shortly be submitted to the Cabinet of its effects.

Document 3 – CAB 128/18/10, Labour cabinet minutes 25/07/50

Korea Reinforcements. (Previous Reference: C.M. (50) 46th Conclusions Minute 2.)

3. The Prime Minister said that His Majesty’s Ambassador in Washington had represented very strongly that an early offer by the United Kingdom Government to send some land forces to Korea would make a valuable contribution to Anglo-American solidarity. The Defence Committee had reviewed the position, in consultation with the Chiefs of Staff. They adhered to the view that it would be unsound to divert to Korea troops required to meet other Communist threats in this area, in Hong Kong and in Malaya. They also recognised the military disadvantages of operating in Korea a mixed force with separate supply lines. They had, however, come to the conclusion that this disadvantage was outweighed by the political advantages which would be secured by an announcement that some British land forces were to be sent to Korea. Such an announcement would have a valuable effect upon public opinion in the United States, and it would also give a useful lead to other members of the United Nations. The Defence Committee had therefore recommended that the War Office should arrange for a Brigade Group to be formed, without reducing the strength of the forces now available in Hong Kong and Malaya, and sent out soon as possible to operate in Korea under United States command. They further recommended that the decision to send these land reinforcements to Korea should be announced in the course of the debate on 26th July.

The Cabinet –

Endorsed the recommendation of the Defence Committee that the United Kingdom Government should offer to provide a Brigade Group for service in Korea under United States command.

Document 4 – CAB 128/23/16, Conservative cabinet minutes, December 1951

Korea (Previous Reference: C.C. (51) 14th Conclusions. Minute 2)

6. The Foreign Secretary said that he had received from the United States Government a draft of the warning statements which were to be made if an armistice were concluded without effective arrangements for supervising compliance with it. He thought that the terms of the United States draft, which in the material part said that any further aggression ‘will result in hostilities outside Korea,’ were too threatening. He proposed to suggest a revised formula declaring that further acts of aggression would find us united and prompt in resistance and would have ‘consequences so grave that it might be impossible to confine hostilities to Korea.’

The Foreign Secretary said that he would like to comply with the United States wish that discussions at that present stage should be confined to the two Governments, since this was the first occasion on which they had consulted us in this matter. On the other hand, the other Commonwealth Governments which were contributing forces to Korea had already been told of the earlier exchanges and would expect to be kept informed of further progress. A possible solution of this difficulty would be to inform those Governments now that, while it was not practicable to consult them at all the intermediate stages in the discussion of a formula, they would be informed as soon as an agreed recommendation was reached between ourselves and the United States Government.

United States Aid. (Previous Reference: C.C. (51) 15th Conclusions, Minute 4.)

7. The Foreign Secretary informed the cabinet that the United States Ambassador had enquired whether the Prime Minister intended, during his forthcoming visit to Washington, to ask for financial aid from the United States. The visit would follow shortly after the United Kingdom’s payment of the first instalment of the interest on the American loan, and the Ambassador thought it would be preferable that the question of financial aid should be settled either before or after the Prime Minister’s visit.

The Prime Minister said that it was not his intention to ask for financial aid in the course of his discussions in Washington. He would ask for American assistance in the form of materials and equipment, for the purpose either of assisting our defence programme directly or of assisting our exports and thus furthering the defence programme indirectly. In this connection he attached great importance to steel. We should try to secure a decision on financial aid before the end of the year: but, if this proved impossible, the question should be left over until after his visit to the United States.

The Cabinet –

1. Took note of the Prime Minister’s statement.
2. Agreed that the intention of the Government to pay the first instalment of the interest on the United States loan should be announced before Christmas.

Document 5 – CAB 128/23/16, Conservative cabinet minutes, December 1951

6. Korea

A.E. US have given us a text of the warning. Think it goes too far. We have amended draft ‘We affirm… (get formula fr. F.O>)

 ‘Might’ vice ‘will’ be imposs. to localise hostilities as hitherto.

 C.O.S. prefer that formula to U.S. draft.

 U.S. don’t like our informing older Doms. (Can, A and N.Z.)

I. We told them earlier part of the story. Can’t close down on them now.

 Unless I can say it’s because of U.S. veto.

 They have troops fighting in Korea.

A.E. Means risking U.S. closing up on us.

I. Cd. say ‘we are playing this hand alone: will consult you before anything is decided.

P.M. Don’t repeat to Doms. the intermediate stages. But tell them as soon as a result is achieved. A.E. and I to concert a formula.

Agreed