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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

17 June 1954

STAFF MEMORANDUM NO. 44-54

SUBJECT: Probable Reaction of President Rhee to Termination of
Korean Talks at Geneva (Draft for the Board)

1. The ending of the Korean talks at Geneva will probably set off a vigorous renewal by Rhee of his efforts to obtain some kind of US support for unification of Korea by force. His first step in this direction is likely to be a call for an immediate US-ROK conference in accordance with the Dulles-Rhee agreement of 8 August 1953.

2. Prior to such a conference and during it, Rhee will probably try to strengthen his bargaining position by threatening to make a unilateral attack northward at any moment. In addition to this and other threats, he may seek to embarrass the US by such actions as expelling the NNSC observers from South Korea, giving notification that the ROK is no longer bound by the armistice agreement, and adamantly refusing to make concessions in any negotiations concerning the military conversion rate of the won to the dollar. However, so long as the conference is pending or in progress, Rhee probably will not launch unilateral attack or withdraw his forces from the UNC.

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3. Rhee is probably sincerely convinced that Korean unification could be gained at the present time only through a joint US-ROK military effort. At the same time, he almost certainly realizes that the US would not be willing to join in such an undertaking, and he would probably be willing to settle for a US commitment to support the rapid augmentation of ROK forces. He would probably want such an augmentation to be on a scale which would permit him to undertake the conquest of North Korea within a year or two at the latest.

4. If Rhee is unable to gain US support for these plans, he may be willing to settle for ROK inclusion in an Asian defense arrangement. In so doing, he would hope within a short period of time to turn this defensive arrangement to his own use for conquering North Korea.

5. If Rhee becomes convinced at any time that there is no avenue by which he can secure US support for the unification of Korea by force of arms, US-Korean relations will enter an extremely critical phase. We have no adequate basis for estimating what course Rhee will take at this time.

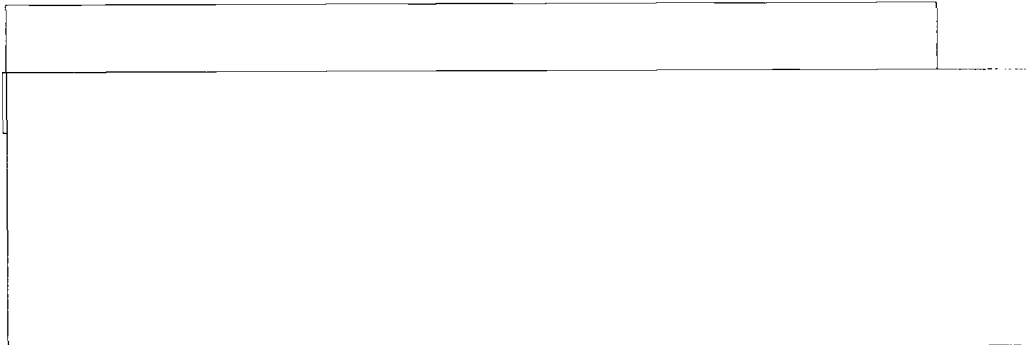
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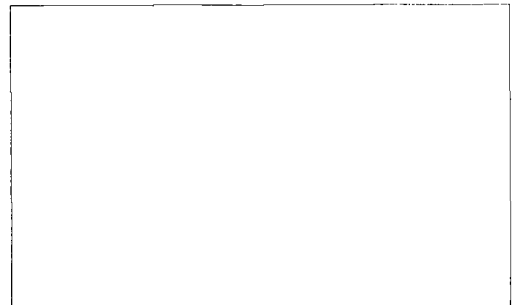
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6. On balance, however, we believe he will not risk a unilateral attack northward but will instead either seek to involve the US militarily in some fashion or continue his efforts to obtain US support piecemeal through negotiation.



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