



## Chapter 1

# MacArthur at Inchon

General Douglas MacArthur stood at the bow of the *Mount McKinley*, the flagship of Task Force 90, facing the coast of South Korea in the darkness ahead. It was 2:30 a.m. on September 15, 1950. Operation Chromite, MacArthur's audacious amphibious invasion of the port city of Inchon, was scheduled to begin at dawn.

MacArthur's confidence throughout the planning of Chromite, which he had conceived to wrest control of the Korean War and liberate South Korea from the North Korean invaders, had been complete and seemingly unshakable. Yet, in the tense hours before dawn, he obviously felt the full weight of leadership. "Within five hours, 40,000 men would act boldly, in the hope that 100,000 others manning the defense lines of South Korea would not die," he later wrote. "I alone was responsible for tomorrow, and if I failed, the dreadful results would rest on judgment day against my soul."

For MacArthur, it was a portentous moment in an extraordinary life. The five-star general (one of only five Army officers who attained the rank) was standing at the pinnacle of a career that had stretched more than half a century. At age 70, MacArthur was the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, a position that made him the de facto leader of Occupied Japan and its 82 million citizens. Simultaneously, he was the

Commander in Chief of the United Nations Command, a position that made him the military leader of the allied forces in the Korean War, which to this point had been a bitterly fought defensive action.

With Chromite, MacArthur hoped to quickly transform the war through a decisive victory, and as anyone who lived through or studied the Korean conflict well knows, it was a resounding success. The invasion of Inchon reaffirmed MacArthur's reputation as a brilliant strategist. The plan, on which he had been forced to wager his power and reputation to obtain approval, was flawlessly executed. With the precision of a diamond cutter, MacArthur applied military pressure at the single most unlikely point and created a shining victory that turned the course of the Korean War.

With the success of Chromite, the General's career reached a new zenith. For those few weeks in the autumn of 1950, the entire world seemed to be ringing with praise for Douglas MacArthur. Although it would not last, there were few for the moment who would have contested Winston Churchill's assessment: "In trading space for time and in the counter-attack MacArthur did a perfect job."

With benefit of hindsight, we can see that Chromite's overwhelming victory also contained the seeds of MacArthur's downfall. It compelled the Communist Chinese to enter the war en force. Further, the power and influence that MacArthur gained in its aftermath acted as an accelerant in his ongoing conflict with President Harry Truman. In April 1951, this conflict would result in MacArthur's ignominious recall and a national controversy.

### *The Lessons of Inchon*

The story of Operation Chromite is a good place to briefly introduce a few of the many lessons that MacArthur offers contemporary students of leadership. By 1950, MacArthur had had a half-century-long military career that was astonishingly rich in both achievement and diversity of experience. He brought the accumulated weight and integrated application of his experience, learning, and intuition to the conception, planning, and execution of the invasion at Inchon.

Chromite itself dated to the earliest days of the war. Prior to the outbreak of the Korean War, there had been skirmishes on and around the 38th Parallel, the artificial borderline between North and South Korea imposed by the Allies in 1945. But South Korea was deemed to have a strong military, and some observers even believed that its outspoken nationalist government was more likely to invade North Korea than vice versa. Thus, on June 24, 1950, when the North Korean People's Army (NKPA) swarmed across the 38th Parallel, South Korea and its allies were taken by surprise. By June 28, the South Korean capital of Seoul had fallen, and the defending army was in a state of collapse. On the next day, MacArthur, who was then leading the postwar occupation and revitalization of Japan, flew to Korea to see the situation first hand.

The general and his party landed 20 miles south of Seoul at an airport that had been bombed by the North Koreans just hours before. He traveled by car to the Han River on Seoul's south side, to a point where enemy mortar shells were exploding approximately 100 yards away. Here, he stopped to examine the fighting and the deployment of the troops. This personal reconnaissance on a battle's front line was a MacArthur trademark. "I cannot fight them if I cannot see them," he first declared in World War I.

During his one-day visit, MacArthur's observations of the South Korean troops led him to the immediate conclusion that the army of the Republic of Korea (ROK) was defeated and that the introduction of U.S. ground forces would be necessary to stop the North Koreans from completely overrunning South Korea. Standing on the Han, facing the loss of the entire Korean Peninsula, MacArthur then did something else that was entirely in character. He began planning his campaign strategy.

This almost immediate leap from observation to strategic planning was also a MacArthur trademark. Before President Truman committed ground troops to Korea and before he had formally assigned MacArthur command of the U.S. forces in Korea, MacArthur was already thinking through the defensive strategy and logistics that would be required to maintain a foothold in South Korea. Further, and in yet another MacArthur trademark, the General's mind just as quickly moved from defense to offense.

Later, MacArthur described his thought process while standing on the bank of the Han River. He said, "[I]n these reflections the genesis of the

Inchon operation began to take shape—a counter-stroke that could in itself wrest victory from defeat.” Thus, the conception of the Inchon invasion was firmly rooted in the famous precept that guided MacArthur’s approach to command: “In war, there is no substitute for victory.”

Just three days later, the General launched the planning effort for Operation Bluehearts, the first iteration of his counteroffensive. The importance that MacArthur placed on speed of movement was obvious in Bluehearts; the invasion was initially scheduled to begin on July 22, less than a month after the start of the war. “The history of failure in war can almost be summed up in two words: Too Late,” he wrote.

In fact, in early July, the larger logistical challenge of mobilizing for the Korean War and the need to reinforce the existing defense of South Korea in order to maintain a foothold on the Peninsula forced a frustrated MacArthur to postpone Bluehearts. But, in the two months of bitter fighting that followed, he led an aggressive and costly defense designed to first, delay and then, stalemate the North Koreans. Throughout that critical period and in keeping with his primary precept, MacArthur was also actively planning the assault that would enable a two-pronged counteroffensive aimed at enveloping and destroying the enemy army. He told the Joint Chiefs of Staff:

*Every human effort in this command is now geared to the overriding first essential—to halt the enemy advance. [The enemy] is utilizing all major avenues of approach and has shown himself both skillful and resourceful in forcing or enveloping such roadblocks as he has encountered. Once he is fixed, it will be my purpose fully to exploit our air and sea control and, by amphibious maneuver, strike behind his mass of ground force.*

Toward that end, MacArthur renamed the invasion plan Operation Chromite and set a new date for mid-September. To many of MacArthur’s peers and superiors, Chromite’s target, the port city of Inchon, hardly seemed an auspicious choice. Inchon’s 30-foot tides, second only to the Bay of Fundy, are so extreme that it would be accessible to the invasion’s landing craft on only two days in September 1950. The daily fluctuations further limited access to three-hour windows. Any delay and/or unexpected resistance from the North Koreans could easily strand the invaders. Also, Inchon was many miles behind the front lines. If the North Koreans

could stop the existing UN forces from breaking out at Pusan, they could isolate and overwhelm the invasion force.

These difficulties were exactly why MacArthur was so adamant in his choice of Inchon. “In war, surprise is decisive,” said the General. He was convinced that the North Koreans would never expect or prepare for such an attack, so it would succeed.

In a series of meetings, conferences, and communiqués, MacArthur used all of his much-vaunted communication skills to gain approval for Chromite. The crucial meeting came on August 23, when according to MacArthur, the Army Chief of Staff and Chief of Naval Operations flew from Washington to Tokyo to “not so much discuss as to dissuade” him from attempting the landing at Inchon.

First, MacArthur listened to the numerous arguments against Inchon and to presentations of alternative plans for an invasion at Kunsan, a port further to the south and closer to the UN Forces at Pusan. He then launched, without notes, into what was by all accounts a convincing and compelling argument that stretched on for 45 minutes.

An avid student of the lessons of military history, MacArthur compared Chromite to British General James Wolfe’s capture of Quebec in the French and Indian War almost 200 years before. Wolfe’s equally unexpected plan called for 5,000 men to scale sheer 170-foot cliffs, on which the French had only light defenses, to gain position behind the fortified French city. The French lost the battle that followed on the Plains of Abraham, the city, and eventually, Canada itself. “Like Wolfe, I could take them by surprise,” MacArthur declared.

Next, the General refuted the objections to Inchon. He said that the Navy was underestimating its own capabilities; he had “more confidence in the Navy than the Navy had in itself.” He also eliminated the Kunsan option as one that would only extend the existing front and not trap the NKPA.

MacArthur reiterated Inchon’s position as the proper place to cut the NKPA’s supply lines. In the strongest terms, he declared the urgency of the situation and urged his superiors to act decisively:

*Make the wrong decision here—the fatal decision of inertia—and we will be done. I can almost hear the ticking of the second hand of destiny. We must act now or we will die.*

MacArthur concluded his argument with a direct statement of responsibility and accountability. He promised to personally oversee the invasion and withdraw quickly if the plan went awry. "The only loss then will be to my professional reputation," he said. "But Inchon will not fail. Inchon will succeed." On September 8, the Joint Chiefs of Staff approved Operation Chromite.

MacArthur's confidence was a leadership trait that was evident throughout his career, but it was rarely sheer bravado. His choice of targets and operational plans were always informed by military intelligence and reconnaissance. "Battles are not won by arms alone," he said.

Prior to Inchon, information collected from prisoner-of-war interrogations suggested that the NKPA had approximately 1,000 poorly trained troops in that area and confirmed that no attack was expected. MacArthur also had the benefit of direct reconnaissance derived from covert missions. Two weeks before the invasion, Eugene Clark, a Navy lieutenant attached to MacArthur's G-2 (Intelligence) staff, was dispatched to Inchon, where he reported on the islands and conditions in the channel and harbor. Clark's information on tides, enemy strengths, mines, and other defenses confirmed Inchon's vulnerability. It was also used to target and destroy enemy fortifications prior to the landing. While MacArthur was waiting aboard the *Mount McKinley*, Clark was turning on the lamp at the Palmido lighthouse that would guide Task Force 90 up Flying Fish Channel to Inchon.

The fact that MacArthur was actually aboard the flagship was also in keeping with the General's approach to leadership. Throughout his life and after, MacArthur has been criticized for being both too close to the front lines of battle on some occasions *and* too far away on others. In reality, he tended to want to be close to the front.

MacArthur believed in *visible* leadership as a motivational force. Perhaps more importantly, he wanted to be close enough to personally observe the battle in high-risk operations such as Inchon and to be able to quickly adjust his plans when necessary. MacArthur often labeled such an operation a "reconnaissance in force," and he ensured adaptability and speed in decision-making by being present on the scene. Thus, on the day of the invasion, MacArthur commandeered a barge for an even closer look at the action. On September 17, he went ashore and drove east through Inchon into the combat zone itself.

As it turned out, there was no need to adjust Chromite. By the end of the invasion's first day, the U.S. Marines had captured a secure foothold at Inchon—roughly 150 miles behind the bulk of the NKPA and the hotly contested front lines of the Korean War.

The Inchon invasion was a catastrophic surprise to the North Koreans. As U.S. troops and supplies streamed ashore, the NKPA's supply lines were cut from behind, and the enemy army found itself trapped. When the North Koreans turned to face the threat to their rear, the pressure eased on the combined ROK, U.S., and UN forces, which had been bottled up behind the Pusan Perimeter, their final 100-mile-by-50-mile foothold in the southeastern corner of the Korean Peninsula. South Korea's defenders launched a full-fledged offensive and broke out.

Caught between two pincers, just as MacArthur had planned, the North Korean army was soon decimated. In the month of September, the UN Command recorded 130,000 enemy captured and 200,000 enemy casualties. It was estimated that only 25,000 NKPA troops made it back above the 38th Parallel.

The initial goal of the war, the liberation of South Korea, was accomplished in short order. On September 29, MacArthur formally restored Seoul to the Republic of Korea President Syngman Rhee. By the final week of October, the UN forces, under the command of MacArthur, had driven north of the 38th Parallel. In fact, they occupied the North Korean capital of Pyongyang and had reached as far as Chosan, a city hard on the Yalu River—the border between North Korea and Communist China.

### *A Leader Worth Knowing*

As dramatic and successful as Operation Chromite was, it remains just one event in a life that offers a wealth of lessons to contemporary and future leaders. Throughout his adult life, Douglas MacArthur (as you will see in greater detail in Chapter 2) held an impressive array of top leadership positions in a variety of disciplines—including the military, public administration, education, sports, and business.

MacArthur's most dramatic leadership roles were those related to command positions in wartime. He personally led troops in World War I

as the Rainbow Division's chief of staff and briefly was its leader and the youngest divisional commander of the war. In World War II, MacArthur first served as the Commanding General of the U.S. Army Forces in the Far East. He was then appointed Commander in Chief of the Southwest Pacific area and finally Commander in Chief of the U.S. Army Forces in the Pacific. In the Korean War, as we have seen, he served as the Commander in Chief of the United Nations Command.

Although MacArthur's military accomplishments garnered comparisons with Robert E. Lee and earned him a leading position among the nation's greatest commanders, his work as an organizational leader and public administrator was equally impressive. MacArthur served as the Army's Chief of Staff through the Great Depression. He was a Field Marshal in the Philippines and responsible for the development of that nation's military forces. Most notably, he oversaw the occupation and recovery of postwar Japan as Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers.

In education, MacArthur served as Superintendent of West Point. In sports, he was appointed President of the American Olympic Committee and led the U.S. team in the 1928 Olympics in Amsterdam. Entering the world of business after his "retirement," MacArthur accepted a position as Chairman of the Board of Remington Rand Corporation, which after several mergers, is now known as Unisys Corporation.

MacArthur's accomplishments as a leader in a variety of positions and disciplines suggest that his principles and approach can be effective in a wide range of organizations. The longevity of his career, the diversity of its circumstances, and the magnitude of the changes his world underwent (as a child, MacArthur lived on a frontier army post during the final years of the Indian Wars; in his final years, astronauts were routinely orbiting the earth) suggest that lessons derived from his experiences can be relevant to today's leaders.

This book contains 50 of General MacArthur's lessons for leaders. They are drawn from the General's life and career, and they are described and illustrated by his own words whenever possible. MacArthur's lessons are organized into four categories, each of which is presented in a dedicated section, as follows.

### **Principles of Strategy**

Part Two presents 14 principles representing an inside look at the thinking and process of MacArthur, the master strategist. First and foremost, great leaders in every field of endeavor are visionaries and strategists. They must be able to choose the goals they and their organizations will pursue and then, design strategies capable of attaining them. MacArthur was an expert at both tasks.

MacArthur's ability to envision and prioritize goals was much in evidence in his peacetime activities. For instance, he pursued a new educational curriculum during his stewardship of West Point, one that would prepare cadets for the modern version of warfare that had emerged in World War I. Typically, in wartime, MacArthur's ultimate goals, such as defeating the Japanese or restoring South Korea to its citizens, were established by the U.S. government. But even when goals were imposed on him, MacArthur usually quickly adopted them as his own and pursued them with all of his energy.

Strategy was MacArthur's forte and, based on operations such as Chromite, he earned a well-deserved reputation as a brilliant military strategist. Although no strategist is infallible, during WWII and in the opening months of the Korean War, creative leaps in strategic thinking seemed to become an almost effortless and natural activity for MacArthur. Witness how the initial plan for Chromite emerged during the General's first visit to the front lines of the Korean War. But like any highly experienced and well-practiced professional, MacArthur's talent for strategy was learned and honed over the years, and it was based on observation, sound thinking, and practical conclusions.

### **Inspirational Leadership**

Part Three presents eight lessons that describe MacArthur's approach to motivational leadership. A leader must, by definition, have followers. To effectively execute strategies and successfully achieve goals, great leaders must motivate those followers to act. Throughout his career, MacArthur exhibited an extraordinary ability to inspire his followers to act.

MacArthur combined command authority, charismatic image, and a paternal humanity into a leadership persona that sustained him throughout his career. Using this model, he could influence and motivate a wide

variety of people. On his command, tens of thousands of soldiers risked their lives, and 80 million citizens of Japan embraced radical cultural change and a new constitution and government.

MacArthur adjusted the scale of his leadership persona to the circumstances in which he found himself. Thus, he could effectively lead a small group as well as a nation using the same basic approach. Whether his followers were soldiers or citizens, they responded to his confidence-inspiring bearing and manner. They recognized his intellect and his dramatic flair. Although MacArthur was neither seen as a “common man” nor beloved as a “man of the people,” he was nevertheless widely respected by those who did not have direct contact with him. More tellingly, among his direct subordinates, MacArthur was almost universally admired, and many of them remained loyal to him throughout their lives.

### **Organizational Management**

Part Four presents 12 lessons that draw on MacArthur’s experiences in organizational management. Today, it is widely recognized that the structure and management of organizations has a significant impact on strategic execution and goal achievement. MacArthur was an expert administrator and people manager.

The drama of MacArthur’s life and career can obscure his competence as an executive. His approach to the occupation of Japan still stands as one of the few successful occupations in history and offers significant lessons for those public administrators who are struggling to establish and encourage new governments in Iraq and Afghanistan. Over half a century ago, MacArthur was building the kind of sleek, fast-response organizations that many business leaders are pursuing today. Today’s merger and acquisition experts can learn much from his ability to create efficient, integrated structures out of collections of preexisting organizations.

By most measures, MacArthur was a superb manager of people. He was an excellent boss who understood the fine balance between personal control and delegation. He knew how to coax the highest level of performance from his subordinates. The conflict with Truman notwithstanding, he was also skilled at managing up. MacArthur had an enviable ability to persuade his superiors—from U.S. presidents to the Congress to the Joint Chiefs of Staff—to adopt policies and approve strategic and budgetary plans with which they initially disagreed.

### **Life and Career Management**

Part Five presents a final set of 16 lessons that delve into the personal beliefs, traits, and skills that supported MacArthur's achievements as a leader. Great leaders develop and manage themselves before and after they take on the work of leading others. MacArthur embraced his future as a leader at an early age, and he managed his own life and career to maximize that future.

MacArthur was an early adherent of value-based leadership. Values, particularly West Point's "Duty, Honor, Country" played a large role in his success. MacArthur's values served as the foundation on which he based his life, the guideposts by which he navigated his career, and the basic criteria by which he judged himself and others.

As for personal traits and skills, MacArthur was fortunate to be born with some inherent advantages—such as family connections, intelligence, and a phenomenal memory—which aided him in his life and career. But in and of themselves, these traits were not enough to take him to the heights that he achieved. MacArthur bolstered his natural advantages by learning and developing traits that were not birthrights.

Always in pursuit of excellence, MacArthur preached and practiced preparedness, confidence, and initiative. He trained himself to become a dedicated learner and remained a learner throughout his life, utilizing his extensive reading and knowledge of history to support the achievement of his goals. MacArthur was also a master of the art of communication. He was practiced in image-building and media presentation. Although he was criticized for self-aggrandizement, he was undeniably successful at manipulating the media in pursuit of worthy objectives.

### *A Results-Based Perspective*

Virtually every reader who opens this book will have a preconceived opinion about Douglas MacArthur. He has been the subject of hundreds of books and films. *American Caesar*, the MacArthur biography by William Manchester, was a national bestseller; Gregory Peck played the title role in the feature film *MacArthur*.

Throughout his lifetime (and in the four decades since his death in 1964), MacArthur has been both widely admired and disparaged. His reputation has risen and fallen more than once. It, and the many events and controversies with which he was associated, will surely continue to be hotly argued in the future.

Today, like other great leaders of his generation, including Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Winston Churchill (both distant relatives of his, by the way), MacArthur is often the subject of revisionist criticism. Sometimes the criticism is justified, but we have found that it often exaggerates a flaw or foible and underplays MacArthur's actual achievements. Perhaps this is a natural response to the iconic stature MacArthur attained and attempted to maintain during his lifetime. Perhaps it is simply because icons are really only caricatures of whatever they represent and are thus easy targets.

In any case, famous personages are judged in many ways. MacArthur has often been judged by his personality, beliefs, and image. He is also often judged with the benefit of 20/20 hindsight. Of course, he was not infallible and sometimes behaved in ways that were less than attractive (like most of us). But it is not our purpose to judge MacArthur from any of these perspectives.

We are interested in MacArthur as a leader; in that light, we have chosen to examine him based on his effectiveness as a leader and the results he obtained. Toward that end and before we detail the leadership lessons he offers, the next chapter of biography is meant to familiarize you, the reader, with his life and give you a chance to decide for yourself whether MacArthur was a leader worth knowing.