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The Korean War: A 50-Year Critical Historiography

ALLAN R. MILLETT

Scholarly research and publication in many countries has made the Korean War not only remembered, but also better understood. Material from Russia and China have been especially helpful in adding nuance and detail to now-dated writing about the war's causes. Much more work needs to be done on Korean politics and the 1952-53 period, but in all the scholarship simply confirms the shared responsibility of all the belligerents – including the Koreans – in starting and continuing the war.

Just how one views the Korean War depends upon where one stands in geographic space, cultural time, and Cold War historiography. In the United States the war pales as a national trauma beside the war in Vietnam. Both wars stemmed from a conviction that Soviet and Chinese Communist expansionism through surrogates like the Koreans, Vietnamese, Malaysians, Indonesians, and Filipinos would eventually destroy the foundations of capitalist democracy in India and Japan, neither of which proved to be very capitalist-entrepreneurial nor democratic. For the Russians and Chinese the Korean War seemed essential to preserving the Chinese Revolution and disrupting a growing Japanese-American rapprochement: backed by its American dupe, Japan would form a counterrevolutionary alliance with Thailand, Vietnam, Malaya, the rump Republic of China on Taiwan, the Philippines, and Korea, unless stopped by China and Russia.

The European participants in the war saw some advantage in building the United Nations as an instrument of international security and in cultivating new security relations with the United States. Non-NATO nations that contributed forces to the United Nations Command saw the commitment as an inexpensive way to buy into the American military assistance program and to argue that their security needs should receive as much attention as the charter members of the year-old North Atlantic Treaty Organization. This collection of strange military bedfellows included Australia, New Zealand, Colombia, Ethiopia, Greece, Turkey, Thailand, and the Philippines. Although many of the international soldiers went to Korea for soldierly reasons, their governments sent them off for national self-interest and security.
The war does not look the same to Koreans as it does to all the other participants. In terms of war aims, the Koreans, divided between the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, had turned against one another in a complex struggle to create a new Korea built upon political wreckage that dated to the 1870s. After serving for centuries as a battleground for the Chinese, the Manchurians, the Mongols, and the Japanese, the Kingdom of Choson enjoyed a short century of relative political quiet as 'the Hermit Kingdom' of the late Yi dynasty. Unless foreigners enjoyed official protection, they faced expulsion or death, either by the Korean monarchy or xenophobic mobs. Catholic missionaries from China, commercial agents from the European enclaves in nineteenth century China, and shipwrecked or greedy sailors all faced common fates. Punitive expeditions mounted by France in 1866 and the United States in 1871 killed hundreds of courageous Korean soldiers, but did not extend the campaigns up the Han River to Seoul.

In 1875, however, a Japanese expeditionary force threatened the survival of the Yi regime, maintained by a regent, Grand Prince Yi Ha-ung, who governed in the name of his son, King Kojong or Yi Myong-bok. Acting on his own, the 23-year-old king chose to sign a treaty of commerce and friendship with Japan. His sudden personal diplomacy reversed the policy of isolation and resistance maintained by his father, best known by his title, the Hungson Taegwon-gun. King Kojong’s wife, Min Myong-song, forced the Taegwon into retirement and dominated the regime with her anti-Japanese relatives and clan members. Rival Korean factions soon aligned themselves against King Kojong and Queen Min, who had turned to the United States, Great Britain, Germany, and Russia for economic development, spiritual uplift through Christianity, and military security. The Chinese supported the Yi Dynasty in its struggle to resist the Japanese embrace, and Korea soon sank into a cycle of court assassinations, troop mutinies, rural guerrilla wars, and foreign punitive expeditions that ended only with its annexation to Japan in 1910.

Korean resistance to Japan never ceased after annexation, but the resistance movement, largely driven into a harried underground or into ineffective exile abroad, produced no clear or even dominant political heir, individually or collectively, by the time of the collapse of the Japanese empire in 1945. From the Japanese suppression of the mass protests and popular revolt of 1 March 1919 (the Sam-il Movement) until August 1945, the Korean liberation movement divided into two loose coalitions of revolutionary modernizers. Neither had a firm underground base in Korea, thanks to two decades of effective Japanese police work and mutual betrayal. The Marxist movement rallied around political and partisan leaders in China, Manchuria, and the Soviet Union. The nationalists, some
Christian reformers, others secular revolutionaries, found safe haven in Nationalist China and the United States. Both the Marxists and the Nationalists even considered sympathetic Japanese political radicals and members of the Korean underclass in Japan as potential allies. The American and Soviet armies that came to Korea to accept the Japanese surrender in 1945 and to deal a deathblow to Japanese political and economic oppression continued the tradition of intervention in modern Korean politics.


Although Korean and Anglo-American scholars view the Korean War as an internationalized civil war, they cede the presumed weight of the evidence in the legitimacy argument to the Marxists. The urge to blame Americans and the closet Japanese among the Korean political elite for all the subsequent ills of Korean politics at least puts Korean politics back into the causes of the war. For an indictment of American and United Nations intentions and the conduct of the war, see Jon Halliday and Bruce Cumings, *The Unknown War: Korea* (New York: Pantheon, 1988). Their sympathy for the plight of Korea is admirable, but their bias toward the Communists is unappealing. In his new book, *Korea's Place in the Sun: A Modern History* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997), Cumings does not relent much from his position that the Communists had the edge in legitimacy and popularity.

Several British authors have written significant books that tilt left: David Rees, *Korea: The Limited War* (New York: Macmillan, 1964); Callum A.

Although the number of influential monographs by British scholars on the Korean War almost mounts to a commonwealth of criticism, one of the most comprehensive accounts of the war is General Sir Anthony Farrar-Hockley, GBE, KCB, DSO, MC with Bar, *The British Part in the Korean War, Vol. I: A Distant Obligation* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1990) and Vol. II: *An Honourable Discharge* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1995). It is the British official history of the war, but much more. His own credentials as a soldier and sympathetic ally confirmed in two wars and as a two-year guest of Chinese warders, General Farrar-Hockley brings his scholarship up to the same standard of performance as his service as the adjutant, 1st Battalion, The Gloucestershire Regiment during its heroic stand along the Imjin River in April 1951. The British official history covers much of the entire Commonwealth participation as well as that of United Nations Command; Farrar-Hockley also provides exceptional insight into the military plans and operations of the North Koreans and Chinese. The maps, photographs, and appendices are outstanding. Although sympathetic to United Nations Command, Farrar-Hockley is no apologist for American political and military leadership, which he finds dim-witted in its grasp of the realities of limited war and coalition operations.


Richard C. Thornton, *Odd Man Out: Truman, Stalin, Mao, and the Origins of the Korean War* (Washington DC: Brassey's, 2000) circles back to I.F. Stone's position, but internationalized. Thornton argues that Stalin and Truman entrapped Kim Il-sung and Mao Zedong in a grand scheme to start and sustain a war in a region where both the superpowers would not lose, but could advance their global agenda for hegemony. Thornton's barrage of insights and assertions range from penetrating to confusing to laughable, but his book is worth some willing suspension of disbelief — but not much.


In addition to Stueck's *The Korean War*, the secondary literature on the United Nations' perspective on the war, including the armistice negotiations, includes some excellent studies, but too few in number and


**Which Korean War?**

The distinctions that have emerged over whether the Korean War was ‘international’ or ‘civil’ have created not a false dichotomy, but an irrelevant one. Civil wars are seldom (if ever) fought in an international vacuum; established regimes and insurgents search for external sponsors in proportion to their weaknesses, which can be compensated for by the recruitment of patrons and the establishment of sanctuaries out of the reach of one’s opponent. The wars of decolonization of the twentieth century
require analysis as a complex web of client-patron, exploiter-exploited relations that cannot always be measured just by the obvious criteria of ideology, money, military forces, and social support. The Korean War should be treated as one of several Asian wars of decolonization that began during World War II, not a war encouraged by design or inadvertently started by the Soviet Union and the United States.

One advantage that Korea has in such an analysis is that economic determinism can be ignored as a causal factor; Japan had beggared Korea to support its imperialist war in China and then to fight the United States and British Commonwealth. The Russians then treated their part of occupied Korea as just another Japanese property to be looted as part of the reparations pogrom the Russians started in Manchuria. The Americans inherited a truncated, crippled agricultural state that could not feed itself or generate its own electricity.3

The best approach to understanding the interaction of external and internal factors in shaping the Korean War is to forget that it began on 25 June 1950. Almost any alternative date is better, whether it is 15 August 1945 (the day the Japanese turned over power to a provisional Korean government composed of a committee of nationalist notables), March–April 1948 (when the southern Marxists tried to block the United Nations from creating an independent state south of the 38th Parallel), 15 August 1948 (the establishment of the Republic of Korea), or the spring of 1949 (when army and police forces of the two Koreas clashed on both sides of the 38th Parallel). The best way to understand the Korean War is to see it as a three-phase Maoist war of national liberation in which two competitive parallel political movements, neither strong enough to stand alone, started their struggle to prevail in 1945–48.

Unlike French Indochina and Malaya, for example, the liberation struggle in Korea took place in collaboration with two pseudo-colonial powers, the United States and Soviet Union, not a war against a colonial regime and its supporters. The Communists in Korea won the organizational war hands down. In North Korea the Soviet occupation authorities brought their man with them, a minor guerrilla-patriot with the nom de guerre of Kim Il-sung. More established and battleworn Communist organizers like Kim Tu-bong and Pak Hon-yong had places in Kim’s inner circle, but not his plans. What the Korean Communists had in common in 1945–48 was a shared desire to eliminate their potential rivals; in the Russian zone they used their control of the police and emerging party structure to arrest, isolate, beggar, and drive away northern Koreans with any competitive political power by virtue of family, military service, wealth, Christian leadership roles, learning, and character. The rapacious nature of the Soviet occupation made creating refugees easy; official confiscations and
unchecked banditry along the 38th Parallel made certain that much wealth and some people never made it to the south. The Communists very quickly jailed their foremost rival, Cho Man-sik, a Christian lay-leader of national reputation and chairman of the people's committee of Pyongyang.

In the southern occupation zone the US Army Military Government in Korea (USAMGIK) carried out its task of disarming and repatriating the Japanese with speed, efficiency, and little of the anticipated loss of life. The Koreans may have let the Japanese depart without a wave of retributive vigilantism because they wanted no confrontation with the Americans while devoting their time and energy into organizing competitive political organizations. Street violence and political assassinations started almost immediately. As in northern Korea the quickest way to tarnish an adversary leader or group was to accuse them of collaborationism with the Japanese; in truth, except for a handful of nationalist and Communist militants, all the Korean elite had made accommodations of some sort for personal and family economic advantage and to have access to educational and occupational opportunities. Only some degree of accommodation had allowed Christianity to survive in Korea, but the Presbyterians thought the Methodists (the two largest denominations) had been too cooperative with the Japanese, thus contributing to the social tension. The American military authorities found no easy way to encourage the development of a centrist coalition; all the political factions of real strength sought confrontation and polarization.


Rhee’s political contemporaries, who often shifted between being rivals and supporters, left extensive but untranslated memoirs. An exception is Louise Yim, *My Forty Year Fight for Korea* (London: Gollancz, 1952).

Collective portraits of North Korea’s civilian and military leaders are found in Lee Chong-sik, *Communism in Korea*, 2 vols. (Berkeley, CA:

As a research area that offers alluring research opportunities, the politics of the 1945–50 period in Korean history deserve more treatment, especially the interaction between the Koreans, Russians, and Americans. Three major books underway should provide new information and analysis since they are being written by ‘Old Korea Hands’ with language skills, cultural sensitivity, and contacts inside the Korean political elite. Professor Carter Eckert of Harvard University is writing the biography of General-President Park Chung-hee, the enigmatic southern Korean whose politics started with the South Korean Labor Party and ended in an authoritarian-xenophobic-capitalist-corporatist government in 1961–79. Only those steeped in the politics of Korean nationalism will be able to understand how an officer in the Japanese Army could be a Communist, plot to overthrow the Rhee regime, be sentenced to death, and then reemerge as a respected officer in the South Korean Army, only then to accomplish his life-long goal of destroying Syngman Rhee and revitalizing Korea.

The other books will focus on the Americans in Korea, few in numbers, but a considerable force in its modernization politics. Professor Michael Devine of the University of Wyoming, like Eckert a former Peace Corps field worker in Korea, is working with Dr Horace G. Underwood, the third generation of his family to build Christianity and western liberalism in Korea through Yonsei University and the Korean Presbyterian Church, on a book about the Underwoods. Now recognized by the Korean government as a national treasure, the Underwood family through four generations has exerted whatever moral influence it could to advance the cause of Korean independence and enlightenment. Horace G. Underwood served as a US Navy intelligence officer and Panmunjom interpreter-translator during the Korean War as did his younger brother Richard in the US Army. The North Koreans have identified the Underwoods as enemies of the Revolution, a distinction of honor.

The third book is a study of the influence of Americans upon Korean modernization by Professor Donald Clark of Trinity University (San Antonio, Texas). Professor Clark has an advantage over the former Peace Corpsmen; he grew up in post-World War II Korea in a missionary family long associated with the Methodist Church, and he is the expert on Protestant missionary activities in Korea. His book, however, will also deal with businessmen, diplomats, and military advisors as well as missionaries.
The second phase of the Korean war of national liberation began with a general strike in February–March 1948 organized by the outlawed South Korean Labor (Communist) Party. The Communists sought urban unrest sufficient to set off a repetition of the Taegu Rebellion of October 1946, a mob action against the Korean National Police and government tax collectors. There is no mystery about the revolt on Cheju-do, April 1948, mounted according to a plan drafted by an underground committee of the South Korean Labor Party, supported by the Kangdong Political Institute, Haeju, Hwanghae Province, North Korea, an agency directed and manned by southern Communists driven into exile. Just what role the Chinese and Soviets played in the Korean insurgency still remains indistinct. Thus far the documents published or released for translation, some of which have appeared in the Bulletin of the Cold War International History Project of the Woodrow Wilson Center for Scholars, Washington DC. (12 issues since 1992) raise more questions about the 1948–50 insurgency than they answer. Much of the evidence and the scholarly dialogue the documents have encouraged focus on the ‘background’ for the ‘start’ of the war in June 1950. Another potential distortion is that the Soviet documents, which were released by Mikhail Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin to smooth relations with the South Koreans, came from the Presidential and Communist Party archives in Moscow and include limited documentation from the Soviet intelligence services and armed forces. Alexandre Mansourou's forthcoming book on the Russian role in North Korea may help clarify the Soviet side of the conflict.

The critical problem with analyzing the Russian role in the Korean insurgency is that much of the writing on Soviet policy in Asia is shaped by the tension in the Soviet-Chinese relationship, not the Soviet-North Korean relationship. As in writing on Korea in the West, the central concern becomes the politics of alliance cooperation and competition as Russia shifted its diplomatic relations from the Chinese Nationalists to the Communists in order to preserve the concessions it had collected during World War II. Only one study keeps the focus on the Russian role in the creation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK): Eric Van Ree, Socialism in One Zone: Stalin's Policy in Korea, 1945–1947 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988). If the 1949–50 Soviet documentation is any guide, the local senior officers of the Red Army may have enjoyed a considerable degree of autonomy from Moscow, and one surmises that the Soviet military mission in China may have been equally capable of making policy on the spot. The current studies, however, keep the spotlight on Stalin and Moscow and Mao and Beijing where it may not belong. Three titles in this genre are

The Chinese documentation is selective in different ways. Although the Russians are more than happy to discredit Josef Stalin and pillory Kim Il-sung for sponsoring a bit of military adventurism that backfired, the Chinese political and military establishment of the 1990s was not quite ready to condemn Mao Zedong for the gross misjudgments that cost the lives of hundreds of thousands of Chinese soldiers. The Chinese see the Korean War as a victory, even if incomplete, over a counterrevolutionary coalition of Americans, Koreans, Chinese Nationalists, and Japanese bent on reversing the results of the Chinese civil war in 1949. The Chinese publication of official and personal correspondence, memoirs, and other primary documents seems designed to vindicate the judgment of the Chinese Communist political elite and to pin the responsibility for the failed invasion of 1950 on Kim Il-sung and the Russians. Despite the active role of the Korean Communists in the victory of 1949, the Chinese do not deal with the Korean insurgency as a natural by-product of their own struggle to eject the European imperialists from Asia.


For example, the conventional wisdom is that Kim Il-sung, accompanied by his deputy premier and foreign minister Pak Hon-yong, went to Moscow for the first time in March 1949 to discuss the possibility of open intervention in South Korea to support the insurgency then raging in
Korea's four southernmost provinces. In the middle of a long and detailed review of the situation in Korea, the Foreign Ministry summary of the conversations reads:

Stalin remembers the last time [italics mine] the two came to Moscow, and asks, appealing to Pak Hon-Yong, if he was the second. Pak Hon-Yong confirms this. Stalin says that Kim and Pak have both filled out and that it is difficult to recognize them now. If the March 1949 is the first meeting of Stalin and Kim Il-sung, what does last time mean? Apparently Stalin saw Kim and Pak in Moscow before March 1949 and it must have been some time in 1947 or 1948 since Pak did not flee South Korea until the Taegu Rebellion in the autumn of 1946. None of the documents released by the Russians predate 1949, so the mystery remains: what is the relationship of the Soviets and the North Koreans in supporting the insurgency in South Korea, a revolt designed to upset the creation of the Republic of Korea?

The real 'forgotten' war in Korea is the counterinsurgency campaign waged in 1948–50 by the Korean Constabulary (renamed the Army of the Republic of Korea in December 1948), the maritime coast guard that became the South Korean Navy and Marine Corps, the Korean National Police, and a group of paramilitary police auxiliaries, home guards, and vigilantes. At the insistence of the Department of Defense, the last American ground troops, the 5th Regimental Combat Team, departed from Korea in May–June 1949, leaving an advisory group of about 400 officers and men to train the South Korean Army. The available Soviet and Chinese documents give more attention to the American military posture in Korea and Japan than Secretary of State Dean Acheson's infamous Washington Press Club speech of January 1950, in which, his critics charge, he 'invited' the North Korean invasion by putting South Korea outside America’s strategic perimeter in Asia. Foreign scholars should remember that many of America's 'war aims' first breath life as partisan accusations against the political party in power as they did in 1814, 1847, 1861, 1898, and 1952.

The Cheju-do insurgency of April 1948 became a guerrilla war throughout South Korea's four southern most provinces (the Chollas and the Kyongsangs) during the autumn of 1948. The Yosu-Sunchon mutiny of the 14th Regiment of the Korean Constabulary in October was the most dramatic event of the rebellion, but guerrilla warfare broke out eventually in every one of the Republic of Korea's eight provinces. By the following year the expanded South Korean Army, the Korean National Police, and a variety of anti-Communist paramilitary groups numbered more than 200,000 personnel and engaged perhaps 10,000 active guerrillas and probably four
times that number of underground supporters. This war as interpreted by Cumings in *The Roaring of the Cataract, 1947–1950* and Merrill, *Korea: The Peninsular Origins of the War* was a broad-based popular reaction to the repressive policies of the new national government formed in August 1948 under President Syngman Rhee. The contemporary evidence collected by the US Army 971st CIC Detachment (Korea), the G-2 section of the South Korean Army headquarters, the American embassy, and the US Army Korean Military Advisory Group (K MAG) emphasizes a more complicated picture of local and regional conflicts, the critical leadership role of members of the South Korean Labor Party, and the active support of North Korea and, perhaps, the Soviet Union without denying local grievances against Seoul.

The insurgency of 1948–50 is undergoing increased study in a growing body of literature. One of the key works is near publication: Andrew J. Birtle, *The US Army Counterinsurgency and Contingency Operations Doctrine, 1941–1975* (Washington DC: US Army Center of Military History, forthcoming), which draws comparisons between the American counterinsurgency actions in Korea with those in Greece, the Philippines, and Vietnam in the same period.


The US Army's account of its advisory effort in Korea is Robert K. Sawyer, *K MAG in War and Peace* (Washington DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1962), a model of official history in its prudence and silence. Sawyer's work is essentially administrative history with its focus on Army policy, not the actual conduct of training and operations by the South

The history of KMAG is one of the American success stories in Korea since the enlargement and improvement of the South Korean Army became essential to American policy. The extensive KMAG records in the National Archives are being supplemented by a private papers collection now being organized by Professor Eckert and Lieutenant Colonel Kim Jiyul, US Army for a collection about Korean-American military relations at Harvard University's Korea Institute. The greatest untapped source of KMAG insight are the reminiscences of the South Korean officers who worked most closely with Brigadier General William L. Roberts, Hausman, and other American officers to form a competent, apolitical army that truly protected the Korean people. Some of that story is available in the memoirs of two of the giants of Korean army history: General Paik Sun-yup, *Gun kwa Na [The Army and Me]* (Seoul: Daeryuk Yonkuson, 1989) and General Chung Il-kwon, *Cheonjaeng kwa Hyuchon [War and Truce]* (Seoul: Dongha Daily, 1986).

**The Big War: The Communist Alliance**

Looming behind the history of the Korean War remains an intelligence history that remains unfocused, at least in terms of the content of the intelligence data and analysis used by policy-makers in Washington, Moscow, Beijing, Seoul, and Pyongyang. The network of the American intelligence effort can be reconstructed with some confidence from the daily intelligence summaries and conferences between Far East Command (General Douglas MacArthur's headquarters in Tokyo) and an intelligence committee in Washington representing all the relevant intelligence agencies; these documents are declassified and easily found in the papers of Major General Charles Willoughby, the FECOM G-2, in the Douglas MacArthur Library, Norfolk, Virginia. First, American and British intelligence agencies remained in close association in Asia, even after the defeat of Nationalist China in 1949, which created a natural division of effort. The British would spy on the Communists, the Americans on the Nationalists and (no doubt) vice versa. The United States moved a major signals intelligence unit from Shanghai to Taipei in Taiwan and placed another on Okinawa; MI-6 ran a wide range of human intelligence operations out of its embassy in Beijing. The most senior intelligence officers may have talked in London and Washington; certainly their joint offices in Hong Kong did. Of course, we would like to know how much information the Cambridge Five passed on to the Soviets and how much the Chinese intelligence service knew of the Allied intelligence effort.
To a larger degree than the intelligence history of World War II, the intelligence history of the Korean War is obscured by the complex and largely futile special operations mounted by Far Eastern Command (FEC) and the South Korean intelligence services. Of course, some of the special operations were part of the FEC collection effort; others diverted and misled the North Koreans from intelligence operations by mounting amphibious guerrilla raids and dropping saboteurs from clandestine aircraft. The National Security Agency has just released four internal-use histories of the communications security war, but its judicious writing and editing will only encourage curiosity. Eliot Cohen, 'Only Half the Battle: American Intelligence and the Chinese Intervention in Korea, 1950', Intelligence and National Security 5/1 (January 1990) pp.129-49, demonstrates the possibilities of insightful reconstruction.

Colonel Michael E. Haas, USAF (Ret.), Apollo's Warriors: United States Air Force Special Operations during the Cold War (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University Press, 1997) shows just how hard it is to sort out intelligence collection from other special operations mounted by the Combined Command for Reconnaissance Activities (Korea); Detachment 2, 6004th Air Intelligence Service Squadron; the Special Activities Group; and the 581st Air Resupply and Communications Wing, to name a few FECOM agencies. Haas tried to deal with the larger intelligence picture in In the Devil's Shadow: U.N. Special Operations during the Korean War (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2000) but he only further confuses his readers and make inexcusable mistakes like calling the Korea Liaison Office (a field agency of FECOM G-2) the 'Korean Labor Organization'.

Willoughby's detailed analysis of how right he was and how wrong Washington was in assessing the North Korean invasion and the Chinese intervention clearly identifies the Korean Liaison Office as an 'off-line' US-ROK intelligence effort sponsored by Rhee and MacArthur without much attention from Washington.

In World War II the American intelligence services became too dependent upon intercepting and decoding foreign radio communications, so much so that Ultra, Magic, and Enigma are now words as familiar as Roosevelt, Stalin, and Churchill. Korea duplicated the phenomenon. The detailed intelligence summaries in Willoughby's papers, done in both Tokyo and Washington, are best when they are based on signals intelligence (e.g. the order of the battle of the People's Liberation Army and the location of enemy units) and less positive on questions of inner circle decision-making, conducted by Kim, Mao, and Stalin in face-to-face meetings. Some source close to the Chinese Central Military Commission reported one meeting in July 1950; the unknown voice does not speak again. The Communists, of course, had the same sort of problem: plenty of information from open and
clandestine sources and limited success in predicting American intentions. In one case, identifying Inchon as the site of MacArthur's September 1950 counterstroke, the Chinese proved correct, even down to the landing date. Kim Il-sung first refused to act and when he did, his generals did too little, too late to stop the landing and defend Seoul.

The perestroika policy on Korean War documents has faded in Moscow, and the historical archives of Pyongyang remain as closed as most of the country. As I said to seven inscrutable Chinese officer-historians of the People's Liberation Army's Academy of Military Science during a visit to Beijing in July 1998, the Chinese now hold the key to greater understanding of the Communist conduct of the war. Actually, the archives captured by the US Eighth Army in Pyongyang in October 1950 offer importance evidence on the politics and military affairs of the DPRK until its temporary demise. The books, memoranda, and pamphlets swept up in Operation 'Indianhead' are now available and accessible (and have been for years) in a 'Captured Enemy Documents' collection in the records of Far East Command, Record Group 242, National Archives and Records Service – provided one reads Korean. If the North Korean record-keeping was as haphazard as the practices of Syngman Rheee's government, Chinese and Russian evaluations of the North Korean conduct of the war are the only hope of filling out the Communist side.

The North Koreans have not yet deviated from their line that South Korea attacked them as part of a Japanese-American plot to restore the Japanese empire. Ho Jong-ho, Kang Sok-hui, and Pak Thae-ho, The US Imperialists Started the Korean War (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Press, 1993) identifies the true villainous instruments of imperialism as a clique of South Korean generals, who actually invaded the DPRK in June 1949. The work of Kim Kook-hun, now a general in the South Korean Army, provides a more balanced picture of North Korea's dependence upon its Soviet advisors and Russian-controlled support system: 'The North Korean People's Army: Its Rise and Fall, 1945–1950', doctoral dissertation, King's College, University of London, 1989. Just from materials held in the west like POW interrogation reports and the personal memoirs of non-repatriated North Koreans, more comprehensive studies of North Korean military affairs, 1947–1950, could be written now and provide new insights into the guerrilla war in southern Korea.

Liberation War Museum (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1997), a guide to the Korean War museum in Pyongyang. The North Korean version of the war is notable for the immense casualties inflicted on the United Nations Command (1.5 million) and the number of aircraft destroyed (5,729) and warships sunk or destroyed (564). There is no mention of United Nations POWs and little acknowledgment of Chinese participation in the war, which is juche (self-reliance) in full flower.

The Chinese accounts of the Korean War could use a big dose of the South Koreans’ ‘sunshine policy’. The official history is the Shen Zonghong and Meng Zhaohui et al. for the Academy of Military Sciences, Zhongguo Renmin Zhiyuanjun Kangmei Yuanchao Zhanshi [The Chinese People’s Volunteers in the War to Resist America and Aid Korea], which has appeared in several forms since 1988 and can be found in two basic versions, one meant for internal use within the People’s Liberation Army and the other designed for a wider audience. There is also a shorter volume on the Chinese participation in the multi-volume Zhongguo Junzhi Baike Quanshu [Encyclopedia of the Chinese Military Experience], published by the Headquarters, Shenyang (Manchuria) Military District in 1990. Also untranslated are histories of each Chinese army (corps) and selected units like the air defense forces. The best introduction to the Chinese perspective on the Korean War, written by historians still resident in China, are the essays of Song Zhongyue and Han Gaoyun, senior researchers of the China Society for Strategy and Management, Beijing, which publishes occasional pieces in English.

The official function of Korean War literature and museum exhibits is to remind the Chinese people of the great sacrifices of the generation of the Revolution and the requirement to remain ever-vigilant against counterrevolutionary histories. The stories of the heroic victory of the Chinese People’s Volunteers Force (CPVF the nom de guerre adopted by the People’s Liberation Army expeditionary force in Korea) over the firepower of United Nations Command is sanctified in the writings of Wei Wei, a journalist-propagandist in Korea, the most famous of which remains the ‘Who Are the Most Beloved People’, and the continued popularity of such classics as A Volunteer Soldier’s Diary (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1961). Over time, the official line has stressed the ardor of the Chinese soldiers in the face of the most severe combat conditions. The event of choice for patriotic emphasis is ‘the Battle of Shangganling’. The battle is part of the October–November 1952 battles along several ridges and mountains between Chorwon and Kumhwa. The most violent clashes were the defense of Triangle Hill, Sniper Hill, and Paekmasan [White Horse Mountain] by the US 7th Infantry Division and ROK 9th Division. Beyond its function of uplift, the Battle of Shangganling does deserve analysis since
it was the first test of the rearmed and retrained CPVF in a set-piece battle with the Americans and South Koreans and was, perhaps, a major effort to preempt a feared UNC amphibious turning movement.7

Behind the official history of the People's Liberation Army and the literature of national sacrifice and heroic service that shapes the Chinese image of the Korean War – images reinforced by the museums in Beijing and Dandung – there is a growing body of memoir literature (most of it untranslated except in excerpts) from the Chinese generals who fought the war. This writing suggests a more realistic view of the war. One afternoon in late July 1988 several retired generals gathered for tea. The host was retired Lieutenant General Chai Chengwen, head of the People's Republic of China's (PRC's) military mission to Pyongyang in 1950 and chief administrative officer for the Chinese negotiating team at Panmunjom. That day's conversation soon focused on the Chinese intervention in the Korean War as Chai reminded his guests that the day was the 35th anniversary of the signing of the Korean ceasefire agreement. Excited and nostalgic, the generals talked freely about their Korean experience. As Chai prepared to record the conversation, some warned that they should remain anonymous, but others insisted that 'now that we all are retired and carry no responsibility for any government units, we shall voice our opinions freely'.8 The result of that afternoon's chat – and many others – is the memoir, Banmendian Tanpan [Panmunjom Negotiations], an insider's account of the armistice negotiations. Chai stresses the leadership of Li Kenong, deputy foreign minister and intelligence director of the Central Military Commission. Li never sat at the negotiating table and remains invisible in Western accounts. In Chinese photographs of the negotiating team Li Kenong is seated in the center of the front row.

Chai's reminiscences and others offer an important source of information and opinion upon many aspects of the war including combat operations, logistics, political control, field command, and communications. Most of these high-ranking officers relied not only on their personal papers, but also on still-classified archives. Moreover, they cite such important documents as Mao Zedong Junshi Wenxuan – Neibuban [Selected Military Works of Mao Zedong – internal edition, published in 1981], Jianguo Yilai Mao Zedong Wengao [Mao Zedong's Manuscripts since the Foundation of the PRC, 1987–1993], Peng Dehuai Junshi Wenxuan [Selected Military Works of Peng Dehuai, 1988], Nie Rongzhen Junshi Wenxuan [Selected Military Writings of Nie Rongzhen, 1990]; the four volumes of Kangmei Yuanchao Zhanzheng Houqin Jingyan Zongjie [A Summary of the CPVF's Logistical Service Experience in the War to Resist the United States and Aid Korea, 1986–1987], and the two volumes of Zhongguo Renmin Zhiyuanjun Kangmei Yuanchao Zhanzheng Zhengzhi Gongzuo Zongjie [A Summary of
the CPVF’s Political Work in the War to Resist the United States and Aid Korea, 1985 and 1989].

Some personal accounts predate General Chai’s party. As the commander-in-chief and political commissar of both the CPVF and the Chinese-Korean Forces in Korea, Marshal Peng Dehuai gives detailed information and personal accounts of the major battles he commanded, important decisions made at the front, daily communications between him and Mao Zedong, cooperation with Kim Il-sung, and his visit to Moscow with Stalin. Peng wrote his autobiography during the decade when he was under arrest during the Cultural Revolution, so his recollections were not part of official China’s propaganda for its ‘glorious war’ in Korea but confessional. Peng’s name was even excluded from the literature of the Korean War for more than two decades, and his memoirs were not published until after his posthumous rehabilitation as Peng Dehuai Zishu (Beijing: PLA Press, 1981). An abridged version of Peng’s memoir is available in translation: Memoirs of a Chinese Marshal (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1984).

Acting Chief of Staff and Marshal Nie Rongzhen’s account of how the top CCP leadership debated and then decided upon the intervention in Korea is invaluable: Nie Rongzhen Hiyilu [Nie Rongzhen Memoirs] (Beijing: PLA Press, 1984). In charge of the war mobilization in 1950–52, Nie in particular recalled the difficulties the new regime faced in financing the Chinese intervention. Chief of Staff and Marshal Xu Xiangqian, who resumed the leadership of the PLA Headquarters of the General Staff late in 1952 after a two-year sick leave, reflected upon the subtle and sometime difficult PRC-USSR relationships in Xu Xiangqian, Lishi de Huigu [Remember History] (Beijing: PLA Press, 1987). His vivid description of his trip to Moscow for more material assistance in 1952 will enhance one’s understanding of that ‘special relationship’.

General Yang Dezhi’s memoirs, Weile Heping [For the Sake of Peace], (Beijing: PLA Press, 1987) and Yang Dezhi Huiyilu (Beijing: PLA Press, 1992) reveal the thinking of Chinese Communist officers on strategy and tactics. As a vice-commander of the CPVF responsible for operations in 1951 and commander, 19th Army, in 1952, Yang discussed in great detail how the CPVF designed and organized each battle, offensive and defensive alike.

Another vice-commander of the CPVF, General Hong Xuezhi, who took charge of the CPVF’s logistics during the war, provides a comprehensive account of CPVF’s rear service problems and performance in Kangmei Yuancho Zhanzheng Huiyi [Recollections of the War to Resist the United States and Aid Korea] (Beijing: PLA Press, 1991). It was only during the Korean War, Hong explained, that the Chinese Communist forces began to realize the importance of a standardized and efficient logistics system. An
answer to how the CPVF countered the air raids on Chinese supply lines is included in Hong's narrative.

Marshal Xu Xiangqian recounts the negotiations with the Russians over the rearmament program while General Yang Chengwu describes his experience as an army group commander in the fighting of 1951–53 in an article in *Dangshi Yanjiu Yu Jiaoxue* 5 (1990) pp.49–53.


The most significant point of Chinese-Russian military collaboration and coalition tension is the conduct of the Korean air war. From American air intelligence sources and the interviews with Russian air veterans by Jon Halliday, the depth of Soviet air force’s involvement in Asia is now public knowledge in the historical sense. (It was no secret to Far East Air Forces pilots that their MiG-15 adversaries were Russian pilots, gradually augmented with Chinese and North Korean aviators.) For the Soviets the Korean War provided an unparalleled opportunity to assess American air operations and technology – as long as the US Air Force did not attack the Russian air bases in Manchuria and the Maritime Province. If the Russians had not provided at least the air defense of Chinese base areas in Manchuria – which they were obligated to provide by the terms of the Treaty of Friendship, Alliance, and Mutual Assistance (February 1950) – the Chinese might not have intervened in Korea in October 1950.


June 24–30 (New York: Free Press, 1968). Distressed by postwar Korean politics and war in general, Paige later denounced the book as too sympathetic to Truman and Acheson, but it remains a good work.

The Truman Papers, however, still provide some interesting materials that have not been fully exploited in examining the conduct of the war as viewed from Washington and not exposed in the appropriate volumes of Foreign Relations. The key figure in building a historical record for the conduct of the war was Dean Acheson. Preparing to write his memoirs after leaving office, the secretary had his private staff collect documents (some of them originals) on the Korean War; not surprisingly, the Truman–MacArthur controversy, dealings with the allies and the Rhee regime, and the armistice negotiations get the most attention. This special ‘Korean War File’ also served Truman in writing his memoirs. Acheson also conducted a running ‘debrief’ of his closest associates in a seminar conducted at Princeton University, 1953–55, and his papers contain the complete transcripts and supporting documents. In addition, Acheson had his former staff members screen his draft memoir chapters for security and discretion problems, which were many. The commentary, omitted excerpts, and more documents are in Acheson’s book notes. Although Acheson’s papers—supplemented by those of key staff members like George M. Elsey and John H. Ohly—contain no historical surprises, they reveal a President who had grave difficulty in making decisions, who often said and did things that required extensive damage-control, and whose reputation for strong leadership should be shared by his personal and executive department staffs.

For reasons personal and procedural, Truman felt overwhelmed in dealing with the collective expertise and experience of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and their service staffs. Truman solved part of the problem by appointing General George C. Marshall as Louis Johnson’s replacement as Secretary of Defense, teamed with Robert A. Lovett as deputy secretary and Marshall’s eventual replacement. The problem of analysis from the field Truman attacked by sending his personal representative to the Far East, Major General Frank E. Lowe, a reserve officer whom Truman trusted from their World War II association when Lowe served as Marshall’s liaison officer to Truman’s defense procurement investigating committee. Lowe’s reports (August 1950 to March 1951) are preserved in Truman’s personal papers and provide detailed and telling commentary of the problems of the US Army in the Far East. To Lowe, MacArthur was not a problem. Lowe’s critical reports are verified by independent assessments by teams from Headquarters, Army Field Forces, and the Defense Department’s Weapons Systems Evaluation Group.

The Eisenhower administration brought considerably more experience to the White House — at least to the Oval Office — but it also brought
considerable historical baggage that Eisenhower and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles did their best to forget or at least obfuscate. In 1950 both of them — on the record — had endorsed the Korean intervention, and both of them had served the Truman administration in 1950–51 when the war took its basic shape. In truth, they had no better solution to the war than Truman's: built up the Republic of Korea with military and economic assistance, maintain some military pressure from United Nations Command, string out the armistice negotiations, and hope something would turn up. Although both administrations periodically examined the theoretical option of using nuclear weapons, neither of them found much to gain in nuclear escalation and much to lose, a view supported by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The supposed influence of the fuzzy nuclear threats of 1953 were largely imagined, but useful in supporting the strategic concept of 'massive retaliation' and the deployment of new tactical nuclear weapons to NATO.

After Stalin's death (something did turn up) the Chinese became the principal barriers to a settlement and remained so until they had conducted a sustained offensive, April–July 1953, to recapture some important terrain in east-central Korea above the 38th Parallel and to drive United Nations Command off some key terrain in the Imjin valley in western Korea. In addition, the North Koreans and Chinese knew that the prospect of an armistice, which they encouraged with an exchange of wounded and sick POWs, widened the rift between Eisenhower and Rhee. Unhappy about an armistice and especially distressed because he had no firm commitment of economic aid and a military alliance outside of the United Nations context, Rhee encouraged waves of public protest marches, all sorts of non-cooperation with the United Nations Command, and the release of almost 27,000 former POWs. These 'detainees' remained behind the wire despite their demands to be freed into South Korean society, and they had already been screened for release by Rhee's counterintelligence and provost marshal commands. Rhee claimed these loyal Koreans were simply UN hostages, and his military police freed them, even in exchanges of gunfire with American personnel.

The Communists might reasonably conclude that Rhee's army might either mount a coup against him (by generals more sympathetic to the Americans than to Rhee) or withdraw from the war in confusion or both. Whatever their intent, the Chinese leaders demonstrated that the ROK army could not survive alone, thus making the United States responsible for Rhee's good behavior by remaining in Korea after the armistice. The Chinese were ready to declare victory and go home, which they did. The American forces are still in Korea, largely because neither the Chinese nor the former Soviet Union is willing to claim the Frankenstein's monster they created, a North Korea with nuclear capability.
The 'dialogue' between the Eisenhower administration and Syngman Rhee can be found in the two Foreign Relations volumes for Korea, 1952–1954, the Eisenhower Presidential Papers at Abilene, Kansas, and the John Foster Dulles Papers at the Princeton University Library. The private letters restore the influence of personality and contingency to the politics of armistice-making, 1953. Dulles, for example, emerges as a key conciliator between Rhee (a fellow Princetonian) and Eisenhower.

So, too, does General Mark W. Clark, Eisenhower's friend and the United Nations and American theater commander, 1952–53. Although Clark preferred an imposed settlement, he recognized that the military costs would be exhorbitant, and he urged that a pre-armistice security arrangement with Rhee was essential to insuring that an armistice would hold and should be part of a postwar alliance system in north Asia that included Japan. Clark's correspondence on Korea is preserved in the Eisenhower Papers as well as the Clark collection at The Citadel, Charleston, South Carolina.

Another key advisor whose papers are essential for 1953 is C. D. Jackson, the Time-Life executive turned psychological warfare advisor and political confident to Eisenhower. Of course, Eisenhower's National Security Council secretariat maintained copious relevant records, although some intelligence and nuclear matters remain classified, but at least subject to review for declassification.

At the strategic and operational levels of the conduct of the Korean War, the popular histories and official histories now offer a relatively consistent and detailed account of the war as viewed from United Nations Command/Far East Command, the first a coalition headquarters, the second the joint American theater command, both almost inter-changeable. These histories provide what might be called by cultural historians 'the agreed-upon narrative' or consensus history. Until Chinese and Russian military documents become more widely available, the current narrative is likely to remain intact, but it is by no means inviolable. The key works are Doris Condit, The Test of War, 1950–1953 (Washington DC: Historical Office, Office of the Secretary of Defense, 1988), the second volume in the 'History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense' series; James F. Schnabel and Robert J. Watson, The Joint Chiefs of Staff and National Policy, Vol. III, The Korean War (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1979) reissued in 1998 by the JCS Joint History Office in more polished format; and James F. Schnabel, United States Army in the Korean War: Policy and Direction: The First Year (Washington DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1972).

The South Korean accounts of the war have rapidly improved in the 1990s and will continue to do so for several reasons. One is the publication in 1998–2000 of a three volume revised, translated, and annotated English-
language version of the War History Compilation Committee, Ministry of National Defense, *Hanguk Chonchaengsa [History of the Korean War]*, 9 vols. (Seoul: Ministry of National Defense, 1967–70), under the title of The Korean War. The *Hanguk Cheonchaengsa*, however, and its companion volumes in *The Korean War* translation should not be confused with the War History Compilation Committee, *History of the United Nations Forces in Korea*, 6 Vols. (Seoul: Ministry of National Defense, 1975), which is valuable for its organizational and operational histories of the various non-Korean, non-American contingents in United Nations Command. It also includes short histories of the South Korean and American armed forces and the war. Some of the statistical and operational information, however, should be checked against more recent official histories published by the participating armed forces.

In addition to the use of American primary and secondary sources, *The Korean War* incorporates newly-available Chinese and Russian materials as well as interviews with veterans of the South Korean army in almost every officer rank. This publishing event, in which I was delighted to play a small editorial role, should encourage western interest in the South Korean war effort, first stimulated by the English-language portion of General Paik Sun-yup's memoir, *From Pusan to Pannmunjom* (Washington DC: Brassey's, 1992). The University of Nebraska Press will begin publishing a mass readership edition of *The Korean War* in 2000 to commemorate the war's anniversary, American version. In the meantime General Paik has written a history of the counterinsurgency campaign, 1948–50, which awaits translation.

Another important development is the creation of an international Korean War library and archive under the direction of the War History Department, Korean Institute of Military History, physically located within the War Memorial building in Seoul. In the summer of 2000, however, the Ministry of National Defense abolished the Institute over an internal management dispute and has just introduced its successor agency to the public. The final factor is the emergence of a new generation of Korean scholars in the United States and Korea who need not take the wrong road of mindless praise for Korean officialdom or equally mindless opposition to all things official and military, the traditional stance of Korean academics who are not retired officers or faculty members of the Korean Military Academy or National Defense University.

The examination of American military leadership in the Korean War tends to focus on General of the Army Douglas MacArthur and his strife with President Harry Truman over the conduct of the war, a focus that shifts in 1951 to the dynamic leadership of General Matthew B. Ridgway in putting the fight back in the US Eighth Army. Although Clay Blair’s *The
Forgotten War plumbs the problems of command in the Eighth Army and X Corps, the quality of American military leadership—deplored, for example, by many senior British Commonwealth officers—deserves more searching analysis. MacArthur's own conduct of the war is hardly exhausted by D. Clayton James' books, and there are no biographies yet of General Walton H. Walker and James Van Fleet, although books on both are underway. Walker's accidental death in a road accident on 23 December 1950 insured he would be a scapegoat, so identified by MacArthur's staff and Ridgway, as mean-spirited an American officer as ever wore stars. Moreover, Army JCS Chairman General of the Army Omar N. Bradley and Army Chief of Staff General J(oseph) Lawton Collins managed to wear teflon uniforms for much of the war and put the onus of misjudgments on MacArthur and Walker. MacArthur, in fact, seldom planned any major operation without Washington's prior approval, although he sometimes started an operation before he received formal approval. Neither Bradley nor Collins wanted to challenge him, as he knew.12

Despite his partial rehabilitation by Roy Appleman and Blair, General Walker deserves searching examination. In one case, the retreat from North Korea in December 1950, he may have beaten MacArthur at his own game. After an intense, crisis-shaped meeting in Tokyo (28–29 November) between MacArthur, Walker, and Major General Edward M. Almond, the US X Corps commander, MacArthur and the JCS agreed that he should establish a defensive position along the Pyongyang–Wonsan line if possible and blunt the Chinese intervention in North Korea, not below the 38th Parallel. With the JCS and MacArthur mesmerized by the possibility that X Corps would be forced into an Asian Dunkirk in northeast Korea, Walker may have ordered Eighth Army to retreat to the Han River valley before MacArthur concluded that the Pyongyang–Wonsan option could not be executed. In other words, Walker ordered a preemptive retreat even though he had not been ordered to do so and even though he had already extracted most of his army (in fact, all of his American divisions but one) from the Chinese trap in the Chongchon River valley. Walker's hasty withdrawal—which surprised the Chinese, who could not maintain contact—was not like Almond's hard-fought concentration of X Corps into coastal enclaves and subsequent redeployment deep into South Korea.13

Ridgway's period of command of Eighth Army, December 1950–April 1951, has been so celebrated by historians of the US Army that their accounts—and Ridgway's—have masked some interesting aspects of his command and have not given enough credit to Collins and the Army staff for their part in the 'resurrection' of Eighth Army. For one thing, Ridgway's first battle was a smashing defeat in the Chinese Third Offensive of January 1951; for another, MacArthur ordered Ridgway to avoid even regimental-
sized battles without his permission, and when Ridgway ignored his guidance, MacArthur sent him an informal letter of reprimand that enraged Ridgway (he blamed MacArthur's staff) and made him even less inclined to pay attention to MacArthur. Like Walker, Ridgway benefited from the fact that his chief of staff was Major General Leven C. Allen, US Army, a truly invisible figure, but a direct representative of Generals Collins and Bradley, who had served the former as secretary of the Army Staff and the latter as the chief of staff of the US 12th Army Group, 1944–45. After the Harriman-Pace visit to Walker in August 1950, Bradley and Collins sent Allen to Korea instead of relieving Walker. Allen, whose papers are still missing-in-action, probably insured that Ridgway could wage whatever war he chose with his Washington flank well protected.13

When Ridgway turned strategic conservative upon replacing MacArthur, the mantle of aggressive leadership in the field fell to Lieutenant General James A. Van Fleet, whose extensive papers are now held in the George C. Marshall Library. Van Fleet continued to improve Eighth Army, but his real accomplishment was the reform of the South Korean Army, 1951–53, in collaboration with a protégé from his service as senior advisor to the Greek Army, 1948–49, Major General Cornelius E. ‘Ed’ Ryan, US Army, Van Fleet’s choice to head the Korean Military Advisory Group. Van Fleet advocated an aggressive drive into North Korea by land and amphibious operations in May–June 1951 and again that autumn when the armistice negotiations stalled; his subordinate commanders and the Navy theater commanders supported his argument while the Air Force split on the issue. Ridgway chose the air interdiction campaign as his offensive weapon of choice, backed by the Air Force in Washington. In thrall to the Air Force, Ridgway even refused to confront the contentious issue of allocating close air support from three different services to Eighth Army, which further established a barrier to the offensive initiatives sought by General Mark W. Clark when he replaced Ridgway a year later.14 A forthcoming biography of Van Fleet by Paul Braim may help illuminate these issues.

Convinced of the value of their historical studies during and after World War II, the American armed forces mounted field history programs and interviewing that produced documentary and internal-use histories as well as the foundation for the official history publications series and unsponsored histories by private authors. Scholarly Resources Inc. has published on microfilm four sets of documents: (1) US Army historical studies and supporting documents done during the war over virtually every aspect of the conflict; (2) the interim evaluation reports done for the Commander Pacific Fleet (1950–53) based upon the periodic operational reports prepared by the Seventh Fleet and the Marine division and aircraft wing; (3) documents and
reports preserved by the Department of State on Korea, 1950–1954; and (4) the documents created and stored by the United Nations Military Armistice Commission, 1951–53. University Publications of America has produced a similar collection on microfiche of unpublished histories and after-action reports collected during and shortly after the war by the Far East Command’s military history detachment. The sources of these studies are largely the participants themselves, the interviews then supplemented with Army records.

At the operational and organizational level, the US armed forces historical divisions produced a set of official histories of the Korean War that within their self-defined missions remain useful factual and interpretative sources. Their drawbacks are common to the genre; they are muted in terms of institutional and personal shortcomings, and they are guarded about interservice conflict and intelligence matters. The official histories, however, have spawned complementary books that fill the candor gap. These works describe personal and interservice conflict and take strong stands on everything from Douglas MacArthur’s generalship to cold weather field gear. One often over-looked factor in the American official military history program is that the documentation remains unclassified and open to independent researchers, along with the critiques of the original manuscripts by many of the participants. These ‘book notes’ are sometimes more valuable than the original operational reports. The official history program also provides a reason to collect private papers, histories, and unofficial document collections organized for field use by the participants.¹⁵

As an example of the stimulus of official history, the late Roy Appleman, a retired official historian for the Army, examined the winter campaign of 1950–51 in great detail and with strong opinions, but his work is only the most voluminous in a set of works that are not subject to the same pressures for consensus that official histories reflect.¹⁶ A new, comprehensive history of the United Nations Command’s air war deserves special notice since it incorporates the experiences of the Soviet and Chinese air forces in the air superiority campaign over the Yalu River, using Soviet and Chinese accounts and documents: Conrad Crane, A Rather Bizarre War: American Airpower Strategy in Korea, 1950–1953 (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2000). John R. Bruning, Crimson Sky: The Air Battle for Korea (Dulles, VA: Brassey’s 1999) is ‘wild blue’ traditional air war history.

Although logistical matters are integrated into the general operational histories of the Korean War, the Army is the only service to focus upon the materiel aspects of the war. The best place to start the study of Korean War materiel mobilization is Terrence J. Gough, U.S. Army Mobilization and Logistics in the Korean War (Washington DC: US Army Center for Military

On the other hand, the issue of economic reconstruction and reform in Korea is virtually unexamined, either from the United Nations or American perspective where the documentation is voluminous. Beyond the obscure records and reports of the United Nations Command Civil Assistance Command, the United Nations Commission for the Unification and Rehabilitation of Korea, and the United Nations Korean Reconstruction Agency, the only study is Gene M. Lyons, *Military Policy and Economic Aid: The Korean Case, 1950–1953* (Columbus, OH: The Ohio State University Press, 1961). In addition, the US Economic Cooperation Administration and the Mutual Security Agency, headed by Ambassador Averill Harriman as Truman's shadow Secretary of State, had an active interest in Korean economic policy. Also buried in the organizational records of United Nations Command, Far East Command, the US Eighth Army, and the Communications Zone Korea are manuscript histories and supporting documents for Communist and United Nations prisoner-of-war administration, war crimes, espionage, counter-guerrilla operations, theater logistics, personnel administration, public affairs, and American procurement programs in Korea and Japan.

In addition to General Farrar-Hockley's official history of British participation in the Korean War, there is a good collection of published histories by almost all the members of United Nations Command. Of the European participants, only the French Army (somewhat distracted by a war in Indochina) did not produce a history of its battalion's participation, but the archives of the Service Historique Armée de l'Terre, Vincennes, hold many relevant reports, including 'lessons learned' reports from Colonel Ralph Monclar, in actuality Général de Corps d'Armée Raoul-Charles Magrin-Vernerey, a former officer of the Légion Etrangère and Free French commander who went to Korea to oversee French participation. By October 1951 Monclar had submitted 809 separate reports.

The British military experience provides the most accessible account of service with the Eighth Army with muted criticism of the high command. The newest treatment is Michael Hickey, *The Korean War: The West Confronts Communism, 1950–1953* (London: John Murray, 1999), which


The experience of the Philippines battalion combat team (actually four different teams rotated to the Eighth Army) is scattered in reports on file with the Military Historical Activities Division, Office of the Adjutant General, Army of the Philippines, in the memoirs of General Dionisio S. Ojeda, and Lily Ann Polo, *A Cold War Alliance: Philippine-South Korean Relations, 1948–1971* (Manila: Asian Center, University of the Philippines, 1984).

In addition to the summaries in the *United Nations Forces in the Korean War* and subject files in the Eighth Army history office, Yongsan, Seoul, there are brief histories of the Colombian, Ethiopian, and Thai battalions.

The historical section, Far East Command, did a postwar analysis of allied interoperability problems, expanded and analyzed in an article by B. Franklin Cooling III.18
As the 50th anniversary of the outbreak of the Korean War passes, the retrospective examination of the war will surely mount in sound and fury, but valuable reviews already exist: Lee Chae-jin (ed.) *The Korean War: 40-Year Perspective* (Claremont, CA: Keck Center for International and Strategic Studies, 1991); William J. Williams (ed.) *A Revolutionary War: Korea and the Transformation of the Postwar World* (Chicago: Imprint Publications, 1993); and 'The Impact of the Korean War', a special issue of *The Journal of American-East Asian Relations* 3 (Spring 1993). Steven I. Levine and Jackie Hiltz (eds.) *America's Wars in Asia: A Cultural Approach to History and Memory* (London: M. E. Sharpe, 1998) is a collection of essays that try to find linkages in America's Asian wars and the perceptions of the Japanese, Koreans, and Chinese.


Of the published aids to researching and understanding the Korean War, two hold the field. Lester Brune (ed.) *The Korean War: Handbook of the Literature and Research* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996) contains essays not only on the war, but on the Cold War history of all the belligerents. Each essay includes an extensive bibliography. The book also covers some aspects of the Korean unification conflict since the 1950s, and it includes materials on Russian and Chinese sources and publications. The focus of the collection, however, is heavily slanted to American perspectives and concerns. Of the existing almanacs, dictionaries, and reference works on the Korean War, the latest are also the most comprehensive. Spencer Tucker (ed.) *et al., Encyclopedia of the Korean War*, 3 vols. (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC/CLIO, 2000) is the work of several members of the Virginia Military Institute history department and more than 100 international contributors. Its weaknesses, like that of its predecessors, is the limited number of entries on Chinese, North Korean, and Russian subjects and the inevitable errors of fact written by inexpert authors. Nevertheless, many of the entries are comprehensive essays on critical aspects of the war like casualties, germ warfare, prisoners of war, special operations, and the air war.

A companion piece, James Hoare and Susan Pares (eds.) *Conflict in Korea: An Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC/CLIO, 1999) includes subjects from Korean history before and after 1950-53. The assumption that the only worthwhile thing to be understood is American military operations no longer holds.
As I completed the first draft of this essay, I tried to think of some rich Korean parable to cite or some nugget from Admiral Yi Sun Sin's wisdom about history and warfare, but I could not come up with a quote that truly spoke to understanding the Korean War. I went upstairs from my study and found my wife and daughter trying to complete a modern Korean puzzle. They had run into a perplexing problem. Unlike Western puzzles in which all the pieces have a different shape, the Korean puzzle had many pieces that were identical in shape, but different in picture. Maybe that is the best way to think about the Korean War, a puzzle in which all the pieces are not yet familiar.

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Ridgway position is easily found in the memoirs and papers of Generals Earl E. Partridge, USAF and Otto P. Weyland, USAF, the principal air war commanders during Ridgway's Asian service. The best running critique is in the papers of the senior Navy and Marine Corps commanders in the theater.


Belge en Corée (Brussels: Institute Géographique Militaire RDM No. 74, 1954.)