

“Ignorantly Arrogant Souls”¹: Looking Back at U.S./UN Control Over North Korea in the Autumn of 1950

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Structured Abstract

Article Type: Research Paper

Purpose—This study will revisit and update the literature on the United States–led occupation of North Korea and explore the reasons for its failure, examining three key aspects: unclear direction and authority, prevalent extrajudicial violence, and widespread antipathy towards citizens residing in the occupied territory.

Approach—This article has deployed archival research and other primary documents juxtaposed against a wide range of existing literature.

Findings—This study first establishes what went wrong during the occupation of North Korean territory between October and December 1950, then determines which mistakes could have been avoided by allied authorities, demonstrating that the occupation of North Korea was subject to a series of unforced errors which substantially degraded the legitimacy of the overall United Nations effort in Korea.

Originality—By incorporating new documents from UK archives, CIA digital collections, and some U.S. military papers, this article advances our understanding of the United States–led occupation of North Korea.

Keywords: administration, Cold War, government, insurgency, Korean War, North Korea, occupation, United Kingdom, United Nations, United States

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I. Introduction

In the initial months of the Korean War, the United States communicated with North Korea's supreme leader not with letters, but with leaflets dropped by military aircraft probing north of the 38th parallel.² One of these leaflets, signed by America's General Douglas MacArthur and dropped in October 1950, included symbols of the United Nations, photographs of U.S. President Harry Truman, and demands for Kim Il-sung's surrender.³ While British and American observers in Tokyo did not predict a swift retort, North Korean leader Kim Il-sung responded with a broadcast of his own, seeking outside help to continue the war.⁴ The armies of the United Nations coalition would go on to occupy North Korea from mid-October until early December 1950, at which point, they were dislodged by an unexpected offensive from the north by the Chinese People's Volunteers.⁵ More than seventy years after these events, the genre of communication has changed—leaflets have given way to tweets—and in 2018 Kim Il-sung's grandson sat opposite one of Harry Truman's successors in Singapore for an unprecedented face-to-face meeting.⁶ Among other things, the two men discussed the legacy of a still-unresolved war.⁷ At a press conference shortly after these meetings, then U.S. President Donald Trump twice evoked the autumn of 1950, noting not only the large numbers of American deaths along the roadsides of North Korea during the great retreat of that cold November, but also recalling that the war itself “had largely been fought in North Korea.”⁸

Looking back today at the attempted rollback of the North Korean nation-state and what was, at the time, a relatively new communist experiment, brings several benefits to contemporary observers. The occupation of North Korea by the United States, South Korea, and their partners was brief but consequential. Along with the bombing of North Korea for the duration of the war, the occupation of autumn 1950 has left traumatic memories for North Koreans, which the government continues to exploit via a battery of museums and patriotic education campaigns.⁹ Combining national humiliation narratives with Kim-centered paeans extolling the virtues of prideful nationalism, North Korea has built a dense and sycophantic mythology upon the wartime leadership of Kim Il-sung.¹⁰

The U.S./UN occupation of North Korea in the autumn of 1950, conducted in the aftermath of General MacArthur's overwhelming military victory at Incheon, was a failure. Though it is easy to conclude that an end to United Nations rule in Pyongyang was brought about by the obvious exigencies of Chinese military intervention—the “glut of Chinamen” given prominent place by conventional scholarship and contemporary observers—this study argues that systemic, preventable problems had already cast serious doubt over the future of a U.S./UN-aligned North Korea long before the Chinese People's Volunteers ever crossed the Yalu River.¹¹ The occupation's problems can largely be attributed to three closely linked conditions: a failure to establish clear authority over the occupied territory, a failure to control the inhumane behavior of those who conquered that territory, and a failure to secure, or in some cases to even seek, influence among North Koreans.

The timespan of the occupation varied across the cities and counties of North Korea. The capital of Pyongyang was evacuated by North Korean officials on October 12, and abandoned by the United Nations forces “in the early hours” of December 5, 1950.¹² However, American troops evacuated Hamhung on the eastern coast almost two weeks later on December 16.¹³ Owing perhaps to its temporal brevity and the looming geopolitical

fallout of Chinese intervention, dedicated accounts of the management of the occupation are scarce, but those who have considered this event are critical almost without exception.¹⁴ There were few evaluations of these three short months in 1950 by English-speaking scholars until those of Bruce Cumings, who is scathing in his critique, especially with regards to the conduct of the Republic of Korea (ROK) and its president, Syngman Rhee.¹⁵ He argues that “government in the North had nothing to do with [the] United Nations ... [it was] the southern system imposed on the other half of the country.”¹⁶ The more recent work of Ra Jong-yil, however, contends that the failure to establish and empower a sole governing authority was the key issue, and he is otherwise more ambivalent towards UN/U.S. efforts, praising their lofty aims while lamenting the eventual result.¹⁷ Allan R. Millett noted that at the planning level, the occupation was hampered by overly-vague language and unclear lines of authority that ultimately left discretion over civil affairs in the hands of the U.S. Eighth Army and the X Corps of the U.S. Marines.¹⁸ On the conduct of South Koreans, particularly with regards to extrajudicial violence, condemnation is rife: Suh Hee-kyung and Kim Dong-choon write of “killings en masse” and “enormous civilian deaths,” while Cumings’ judgment is that “nary a good word [was] spoken about [South Korean] behavior.”¹⁹ Still others look at the extension of southern paramilitary activity into the north during the occupation, expanding their periodization of the war to incorporate the uprisings of 1948 and the killings that ensued.²⁰

Taken together, this existing research into the occupation identifies the most important cause-and-effect relationship visible in the U.S./UN occupation: effective control was not established by the authorities, and bloody strife inevitably followed. Somewhat less discussed, however, is the connection between these problems, which allowed for violence and hardship in such scale, and their effect on North Korean perceptions of the invading forces. The people beyond the parallel suffered from atrocities perpetrated by their southern counterparts, and were poorly protected by the purported liberating forces of democracy, so receptivity to their new occupiers would have been difficult at best.²¹ It is logical to argue that stronger, more morally motivated U.S./UN oversight could have averted the most egregious South Korean abuses of power, though incidents like the American massacre of refugees at No Gun Ri in South Korea in July 1950 cast a shadow over the Western members of the U.S./UN coalition as well, and the moral questions raised by the industrial-scale bombing of North Korean cities and dams throughout the later stages of the war remain operative.²²

II. Foundations of Failure: Uncertainty, Barbarity, Antipathy

Literature on the Korean War tends to focus on the internal debates in Western capitals over the crossing of the 38th parallel as a significant moment in the history of the Cold War. This study takes a more focused approach, examining the local, practical consequences of that decision, and interpreting the occupation of North Korea in the autumn of 1950 as a distinct and under-studied segment in the history of the Korean War. The failure of the U.S.-led occupation hinged upon three factors: an uncertain delegation of authority, a failure to prevent extrajudicial killings, and a general antipathy towards Korean civilians.

2.1 Uncertainty

Despite its leading role and apparent pride in the crossing of the 38th parallel in October 1950, the U.S. tended to shirk responsibility for the occupation and administration of the North Korean territory it had conquered, creating a void of authority which stands in stark contrast to the relatively orderly and far less kinetic occupation of Japan orchestrated just five years prior.²³ In this sense, the occupation of North Korea had continuity with the former U.S. occupation of South Korea in approximately 1947, when administrators and visitors from Washington, D.C., saw the occupation as lacking in both justice and fortitude.²⁴ It is very difficult to argue that the Truman administration was not the primary instigator of the occupation of North Korea. Though South Korean forces were understandably eager to cross the parallel and create conditions suitable for reunification, they would surely have been rebuffed without U.S./UN support, and many non-American members of the coalition favored a return to the *status quo ante bellum*.²⁵ An example of South Korean enthusiasm is shown by an American soldier of the 24th Infantry Division who, after driving north from Kaesong to Kumchong in October 1950, was frustrated that the South Korean guards would not allow him to make use of their provisions: the jealously-guarded supplies were to be used only to support their ongoing offensive.²⁶ South Korean national police forces attached to American divisions “absented themselves” during the move northward to the parallel, in effect advancing ahead without orders—and although the Americans thought that the value of these troops was questionable, they nonetheless noted the South Koreans’ ferocious enthusiasm, which far outstripped their own.²⁷

The official line from the Truman administration was that American military activities in Korea were but one component of a UN “police action,” so ultimate responsibility (and risk, and blame) should lie with that organization and not the United States.²⁸ But the UN was in no position to govern a country in 1950 (it has been convincingly argued by Ra that the UN was hardly in a position to govern itself at that stage, having been rendered little more than “a convenient scapegoat to minimize the damage done to the prestige of America” until the end of the Soviet boycott later that year), after the resolution permitting the “police action” in Korea had passed.²⁹ American officials were keen to uphold the primacy of the UN, and expected their allies to do the same. Syngman Rhee was privately reprimanded by the U.S. Ambassador to Korea, John Muccio, for exalting American virtues rather than those of the UN in his public statements.³⁰ Though the U.S. was comfortable controlling the military actions of the Korean War, especially by exercising its authority through the dominating personage of Douglas MacArthur, it failed to answer the difficult questions of governance and responsibility that those actions provoked beyond the 38th parallel.

2.2 Barbarity

Conversely, one power in the coalition was enthusiastic to govern the conquered territory: the South Korean regime of Syngman Rhee.³¹ But their partner nations continually worked against them, fearing the consequences of further empowering a “selfish, senile, or dangerously reckless” ruler like Rhee.³² American reporters who met Rhee glossed him as “a man of autocratic temperament but sincere democratic convictions,” but the CIA assessed

that his support “largely result[ed] from intimidation” with strength deriving from “his control of the national police, the military police, military elements not under UN command, and various terrorist and ‘strong arm’ groups.”³³ In its reports, the UN Command often opted for a brighter approach, praising the “enthusiasm and efficiency of the civil officials of the Republic of Korea in the re-establishment of governmental functions.”³⁴ However, British observers noted with distaste that citizens in the South were being shot for “political offenses” with concerning regularity, including nearly 800 executions in the week prior to 17 December 1950.³⁵ Even Allan R. Millett, a more sympathetic scholar, notes Rhee’s growing “thirst for vengeance and vindication” in October 1950 as evidence was unearthed of North Korean killings during their retreat from Southern cities in September.³⁶ However, one might question whether no authority and no accountability was better than South Korean authority and South Korean accountability. The fact remains that the Rhee regime was the only allied power who wanted to rule North Korea, and in the late summer of 1950 it was realistic to imagine that Rhee’s government would be the one responsible for the long-term stability of a united Korea after victorious U.S./UN forces had departed. Despite this, and despite the absence of an alternative channel of legitimacy, the ROK was denied the larger role in the administration of the occupied territory that it demanded.³⁷ Opposition to the Rhee regime came from across the UN coalition—the British government went public with its concerns over extrajudicial killings by South Korean troops and security services, but Whitehall also sought to pin responsibility on the United Nations in order to avoid excessive criticism of the American role in the occupation of North Korea.³⁸ The crisis of authority which dominated the occupation was a situation in which those with all the power accepted none of the responsibility, and those with all of the responsibility received none of the power.

South Korean contributions to the occupation’s failure were multiple. Rhee and those aligned with him were given a reasonable degree of autonomy from the U.S./UN effort, and that autonomy was, in some counties, used to initiate atrocities. One extensive list of individual and collective violence was submitted to the United Nations in late November 1950 by the DPRK Foreign Minister Pak Han Yong, including where “the American and Syngman Rhee authorities are liquidating the democratic achievements [including] all those who helped to introduce democratic changes and to establish popular organs of authority.”³⁹ In other words, for North Korean leaders the U.S. occupation of the north was doubly sorrowful as it represented also the undoing of the DPRK’s social order in the previously-liberated South. Though it was a mistake for the allied powers to deny the ROK the chance to rule without presenting a credible alternative, their decision to oppose and undermine Rhee was motivated more by global embarrassment than by the fervent anti-Communism and widespread brutality of his regime.⁴⁰

Once at war, the South Koreans quickly became a source of opprobrium for the U.S./UN effort at large. ROK executions of prisoners without trial were reported by news outlets worldwide, with victims sometimes killed under pretenses as flimsy as being “family members of Reds.”⁴¹ Cumings argues that, in part, the forces of order in South Korea acted this way because of their connections to the Japanese colonial regime—that they “lacked legitimacy” and so compensated with violence.⁴² Though it is undeniable that many of those with authority in the Rhee regime had found privileged positions under Japanese rule, the sheer quantity of extrajudicial violence after the outbreak of the war suggests a broader cause.⁴³ The existential nature of the conflict for many South Koreans is a stronger explanation.

Those who feared the imposition of Communism, in whatever form they believed that might entail, as well as the total destruction of their newly-established state, were more likely to view their enemy as irredeemable, and to act accordingly.⁴⁴

2.3 Antipathy

The U.S., too, was in a poor position to criticize its allies on this point. Many American troops sought to dehumanize Koreans into faceless “gooks.”⁴⁵ The nature of the war during the advance northwards, i.e., the risk of guerrillas or left-behind troops hiding among civilians, meant that any Koreans encountered by American troops were treated with intense suspicion, and the possibility of friendly relations at the local level was derailed early.⁴⁶ There was a pervasive belief that communists could be anywhere, bolstered by the frequency of insurgent action in the conquered territory and ongoing unrest in pockets of the South.⁴⁷ Though the No Gun Ri incident, in which American troops massacred at least 163 South Korean refugees, did not occur in occupied northern territory, it was a startling and revealing example of American disregard for Korean life.⁴⁸ The antagonistic tone of directives from military command, and the paranoid, prejudiced attitudes of common soldiers, created an extremely dangerous environment for all civilians, but especially those in occupied territories or along the border, where the fear of insurgents was at its highest.⁴⁹

While No Gun Ri later became a point of massive public interest, research, and archival excavation in the 1990s, during the war its significance went largely unrecognized.⁵⁰ However, individuals critical of American conduct during the war left a trail of complaints about a host of related issues which reveal a broader pattern of antipathy and aversion. One of the most interesting chroniclers is Melvin B. Voorhees, who served in a variety of roles within the U.S. 8th Army, including that of Chief Censor. Following a stint in West Germany, he spent a year and a half in Korea during the war, then returned to the U.S. to publish an idiosyncratic collection of sketches based on his wartime experiences. The *New York Times* said that “there are shafts of penetrating criticism in this writing ... [his] indictment is objective, well-rounded, fair, and in the end, more devastating than anything heretofore done on the same subject.”⁵¹ Voorhees described his colleagues, and the Korean reaction to them, in the following terms:

the Eighth Army’s sojourn in Korea has not been one of un-mixed delight for the native population. U.S. elements of the Eighth Army, naturally a cross-section of the Stateside population, were saddled with their quota of reckless men, sadists, criminals, degenerates, and those ignorantly arrogant souls who sow hatred for things American wherever they go, and who seem, it must be admitted sorrowfully, to have been almost everywhere in the last decades.⁵²

While his writings were geared towards an American domestic audience primarily concerned about American casualties, he nonetheless drew a lyrical and ironic sort of attention to “likely war crimes” committed by American troops against Korean civilians in the spring of 1951.⁵³ Voorhees’ description of multiple aircraft passes at white-clothed civilians was acknowledged by the UN Command, who noted that “problems of identification remained difficult, since many North Korean troops disguised themselves with white clothes over their uniforms, taking advantage of our continued efforts to protect the innocent refugees

along the highways.”⁵⁴ Broadening his lens to the occupation of Pyongyang, Voorhees wrote:

American military government so far has ruled in but one captured Communist capital city—Pyongyang, North Korea. The army’s performance there in the military government field was not what had been desired ... we won the shooting battle for Pyongyang and failed to gain the confidence and good will of that portion of the populace which had welcomed our military victory.... A book could be written on the subject and perhaps should be.⁵⁵

Yet the failure to secure North Korean “confidence and goodwill” extended beyond the behavior of the U.S. 8th Army. A key consequence of the haphazard nature of responsibility during the occupation is that very little was done to repair the damage done to the occupiers’ reputation, and an even lesser effort was made to explain the Western and South Korean justification for the invasion to the conquered North Koreans. According to Cumings, American Civil Affairs officers, receiving orders of a similar tone to their comrades-in-arms, were instructed to “liquidate,” among others, “all current and former members of the North Korean Workers’ Party (NKWP) ... [and] South Korean Workers’ Party (SKWP).”⁵⁶ These parties were organizations of immense scale, encompassing Koreans from all walks of life (as much as 14 percent of the North Korean population belonged to the NKWP), and so if the order had actually been carried out, as many as a third of North Korean adults might have been arrested or worse.⁵⁷ Cumings denounces the “complicity and involvement” of Americans in the “atrocious character of the northern occupation,” but later notes that “virtually all DPRK officials” had already fled by the time American troops arrived, making a massacre of local officials impossible.⁵⁸ The impractical nature of the “liquidation” directive demonstrates how unprepared the incoming American forces were for the practical aspects of conducting an occupation of North Korean territory. The South Koreans hardly fared better: their inexperienced attempts to ideologically recondition their captive countrymen turned out to be little more than lessons on rote obedience to President Rhee with scant reference to national unity or any kind of persuasive ideology.⁵⁹

Disorganized and dispersed as they were, left-behind Korean People’s Army (KPA) troops and bands of guerrillas should not have presented a substantial threat to the U.S./UN coalition.⁶⁰ In practice, however, they proved relentless and evasive, destabilizing the occupation in the eastern provinces along the border, where a “general collapse” of county governments was instigated by “a minimum of forty thousand guerrillas.”⁶¹ Cumings estimates that between 120,000 and 140,000 “left-back KPA guerrillas” still remained behind U.S. lines in late November 1950, but does not cite a source for this figure. The captured notebook belonging to Choe Pae-yun, a KPA intelligence officer, stated that rear-guard units would allow the KPA to “envelop these [UN] troops and annihilate them.”⁶² Areas of South Korea that the Rhee government had spent the pre-war years pacifying again became restive, indicating an upswell in opposition that was not limited to the occupied territories.⁶³ A CIA information report from this period paints a damning picture of the state of public order across the Korean peninsula, suggesting that the number of anti-Rhee guerrillas was up to 30,000 higher than previous estimates.⁶⁴ Active resistance is an especially instructive feature of the occupation because it gained strength from each of the invaders’ failings: an occupation with responsible central authority, a magnanimous approach to local

populations and party members, and a more comprehensive approach to persuasion and political re-education, would not have faced opposition in such scale.

III. Structures of Success: Authority, Safety, Magnanimity

The explanation offered by “many Americans” in the aftermath of the war, that the Korean Peninsula was inherently “ungovernable,” or that “Korean brutality” was responsible for the difficulties faced by U.S./UN forces, should be rejected outright.⁶⁵ These failures happened not because they were preordained by fate or by the machinations of the enemy, but because decision-makers on the allied side did not take appropriate precautions or make appropriate plans, even when they had the means and the opportunity to choose a wiser path.

3.1 Authority

Though it was perhaps too politically inconvenient for Americans to accept that the North Korean occupation of the South was less violent and better planned than their own, this conclusion is what the evidence suggests—U.S./UN forces could have learned important lessons about occupation government from their enemy. This is partially because, in the summer of 1950, at least, the attacking North Koreans—had no quarrelsome allies to share their occupation with, but it is certainly difficult to deny that the KPA demonstrated a clear chain of authority during their own brief period of rule in the South.⁶⁶ A CIA report detailing this occupation in July 1950 writes that triumphant proclamations in Seoul and thousands of printed pamphlets “announced the People’s Committee,” and established that its authority flowed from the lionized Chairman, Kim Il-sung.⁶⁷ A new paper named the “Seoul Daily News” began reporting North Korean propaganda, announcing “martial law in Seoul and South Korea,” administered by the KPA.⁶⁸ Citizens had little reason to doubt who was occupying them and for what reason. If U.S. forces had emulated the KPA by assuming a similarly dominant role in the governance of the North, prepared to bear responsibility for what they had caused, the occupation would have stood on stronger ground.⁶⁹ American administrators and advisors instead blamed the South Koreans for the lack of an “adequate Korean program.”⁷⁰

As part of their operations over the summer, the North Koreans rapidly carried out socialist-style elections for “People’s Committees” in the newly occupied cities, towns, and villages in two waves, first on July 25 and then later on September 13, the latter just two days before the Incheon Landing brought about the beginning of the end of their occupation of the South. Kim Dong-choon describes how 13,654 villages in the South elected People’s Committee members in large numbers: 3,878 at the county level, 22,314 at the town level, and 77,716 at the village level. In other words, the Northern invasion made communist officials of just over 100,000 Southerners, although presumably half of these individuals wore their titles for only a matter of days, and each of these individuals acted as a demonstration of immediate and palpable change in the territory occupied by the North Koreans.⁷¹

In contrast, the U.S./UN occupation was hamstrung by politically motivated constraints imposed by policymakers in Washington before it even began. As a post-mortem co-authored by a young Henry Kissinger put it in 1951:

The decision to treat the ROK government as sovereign, and to introduce UN agencies to the maximum extent possible imposed severe limitations on the civil affairs effort. It made difficult an integrated approach due to the number of agencies involved and their vague spheres of jurisdiction. It led to friction with ROK authorities who considered even an advisory relationship an infringement of their sovereignty. It enabled the indigenous government to play off the various agencies against each other. It handicapped the policy of obtaining maximum contribution to military operations and to rehabilitation of the indigenous economy, due to the low level of technical competence and the corruption of the Korean administration. These problems were compounded by the absence of both a comprehensive civil affairs directive from the DA as well as of a formal instrument defining the scope of civil affairs functions and the Army's role in their execution.⁷²

It was certainly not that the U.S., with all its combined intelligence and foreign policy experience in 1950, was incapable of handling an occupation.⁷³ Among the official guidelines for the occupation, approved by the highest levels of the political and military hierarchy, was a goal "to establish peace and security so that Koreans can solve their own problems under the guidance and assistance of the UN."⁷⁴ A distinctly hands-off approach was prioritized, as outlined by a description provided by "informed sources in Washington" told to the Daily Mail in September 1950, that "the U.S. has no desire for bases or special privileges in Korea" and that "methods for Korea's unification can best be devised by a strong UN Commission working in consultation with General MacArthur."⁷⁵ In short, the U.S. belief was that this was a Korean problem, to be solved by Koreans, with the help of the United Nations and with consultation with American figures only where necessary.⁷⁶ Herein lies the origin of the occupiers' most basic error: officials at the very highest levels of American government were willing to sanction the invasion of a minor communist power in order to make a move on the chessboard of the Cold War, but they were not willing to accept responsibility for the solving of what they simultaneously deemed to be exclusively Korean problems. Taken in combination with the limited resources offered to the United Nations and the Rhee regime, neither of whom were able to act with authority, this created an occupation which was set for failure before it even began. In order to create the kind of environment where Korean problems could be solved by Koreans, both the immediate problems caused by their invasion and deeper ones of a more historical origin had to be addressed in the short-term.

3.2 Safety

The North Korean occupation of the South involved substantially less extrajudicial violence than its Southern counterpart in the North. In July 1950, sporadic instances of violence and looting in Seoul were quickly brought under control by "the red police," who were recognized even in American military studies for their generally good conduct—a U.S. Air Force University study from 1951 records that they were described as "rather gentle and well behaved" by one South Korean civilian, and "courteous and reasonable" by another.⁷⁷ Even high-ranking "reactionaries," considered to be treasonous enemies of the people who were fully ingratiated within the Rhee regime, were imprisoned rather than killed in many cases.⁷⁸ Most extrajudicial killings were carried out by leftist youths in the last days of the occupation, an expression of desperation and the declining control of the KPA.⁷⁹ The key difference between the two Korean occupations of 1950 is that residents of territory conquered

by North Korean forces were less likely to be victims of summary violence: though they may be abducted and carried north, impressed into local militias, or imprisoned, extrajudicial killings were less prevalent, and this had a significant effect on the way North Korean forces were perceived by ordinary citizens.⁸⁰ According to one sympathetic Western journalist embedded in North Korea after the summer of 1951, the dogmatic hatred for communists expressed by ROK forces found little equivalent in the KPA.⁸¹

However, it is important to note that North Korean forces did conduct a purge of “pro-American elements” in the newly-occupied areas.⁸² These included “National Assembly members, provincial governors, police station chiefs, hostile police officers, judges or prosecutors, and heads of anti-communist groups.”⁸³ Christian children were prevented from attending school, and landlords were targeted, though on a rather more moderate basis than in the North.⁸⁴ In the North, the KWP expropriated territory from landlords who owned “more than five *chongbo*” (12.5 acres), but during their occupation of the South, reprisals were initiated only against landlords who owned more than 20 *chongbo*.⁸⁵ In their occupation of Seoul, North Korean officials identified and expropriated property of “enemies and traitors” in local districts, including from former collaborators with the Japanese puppet regime in Manchukuo.⁸⁶

3.3 *Magnanimity*

One of the more revealing differences between the respective Korean occupations of 1950 was the role of liberationist rhetoric and propaganda. Clearly, North Korea was far better prepared for Southern audiences than vice-versa. North Korean agents had been entering ROK villages near the 38th parallel with carefully-crafted messages for months before the outbreak of full hostilities, and the underground South Korean Workers’ Party, not to mention the ready-made organizations into which peasants and urban-dwellers could be funneled, gave the North a logistical edge when its troops arrived in the South.⁸⁷ Given the fact that the North Koreans had spent five years learning from developed Soviet propaganda techniques, and more importantly that the DPRK had started the war in the first place and was thus in a higher state of readiness and preparation, a marked imbalance in the quality of persuasion and propaganda should not be too surprising.⁸⁸

Hanson Baldwin covered the occupation of North Korea for the *New York Times*, traveling also to Taiwan and Vietnam in the autumn of 1950. As he wandered through a key corner of North Korea’s scientific infrastructure at Hamhung, Baldwin was alarmed to find a lack of interest by the occupation authorities in North Korean publications and information, which is indicative of a broader lack of preparation on the allied side for non-military matters:

there was a wealth of data to exploit after we had moved into North Korea. This correspondent drove and walked last week through miles of battered ruins at Hamhung of what had been the largest chemical plant in the Far East and one of the largest explosives plants. This was a place where Russians were supposed to have been experimenting with thorium production from monasite (sic) sands for use in atomic bombs. There were hundreds of pamphlets and many records of special machines of all kinds. Yet although the South Koreans had held Hungnam for a week when I got there, no technical intelligence experts had yet sifted through the mass of data.⁸⁹

Nonetheless, propaganda can only accomplish so much for an occupier—it is more significant that North Korean administrators almost immediately began a political transformation of the South, which gave their occupation substance from the outset. The People's Committees of the immediate postwar period, a form of nominally democratic local government quashed by the Rhee regime in the years before 1950, were quickly revived.⁹⁰ Land reform stood high on the North Korean agenda and was performed with the same alacrity seen north of the border after the Second World War.⁹¹ The structure of land reform in conquered South Korea was particularly extraordinary because it did not attempt to overturn the limited reforms performed by the Oriental Development Company in 1948; the North Korean effort co-opted existing structures that aligned with their interests and combined them with their own ideas, rather than attempting to demolish the ruling order and build entirely anew.⁹² In comparison, the American arrival in the eastern coastal cities of Wonsan and Hamhung brought promises of food and logistical support from General Edward Almond, but no attempts at systemic change:

[On October 24], General Almond held a conference with the city leaders of Wonsan. He made a welcoming speech through an interpreter, Mr. Ahn, and requested that the various representatives voice their concerns. He was besieged immediately with requests for lumber and oil to reconstruct the fishing industry, medical supplies, land reallocation, exchange of now-valueless “red money” for South Korean *won* currency and solution of the problems of refugees and missing residents. The representatives were treated to cigarettes and candy for attending, but soon discovered the superficiality of Almond's visits. He repeated the same speech and promises in Hamhung on October 31.⁹³

However, North Korean forces were not above simple populist bribery, either, offering basic necessities free to civilians and at a small price to former enemy combatants and their families.⁹⁴ In spite of Ambassador Muccio and Syngman Rhee's omnibus-style conversations about civil governance options, comparable ventures by U.S./UN forces in the North were hard to come by.⁹⁵ Though it is fair to acknowledge that U.S./UN forces could never have made major changes to their strategy based on events that took place only months before their own crossing of the parallel, the approaches discussed here are not novel or imaginative—that occupiers must court public support and enact genuine change is not a revolutionary concept, and it is one which Americans went to great lengths to implement in Japan only a few years prior.⁹⁶ Above all, North Korean occupation strategy excelled not because it was morally beneficent or strategically exemplary, but because it was a principally coherent effort, which stands in sharp contrast to the U.S./UN camp.⁹⁷

IV. Conclusion

The most fundamental problem with the U.S. approach to the occupation of North Korea is that it was considered to be only a military problem which required only a military solution. So much weight was placed on the conventional defeat of the KPA, particularly in the way the Incheon landing evoked nostalgia for D-Day, that all other complications were minimized.⁹⁸ It was as if decision-makers, both military and civil, expected North Korea to accept a change of government—a Western, democratic, capitalist government, no less—without incident, as soon as the fanatics of the NKWP and KPA were dispersed.⁹⁹ The U.S. government appeared to develop its interest in civil government in North Korea only after the occupation

had concluded, writing major studies in 1951–52 when the benefit of hindsight appears to have granted some useful perspective.¹⁰⁰ The anti-communist momentum of the early Cold War had also enveloped their closest ally, Britain, who had itself become enamored with the notion of a “rollback” strategy, of “kicking the Communists back over the Yalu.”¹⁰¹ Somewhere amidst this rhetoric of escalation, the motivation to understand Korea and the nature of the conflict there was irretrievably lost. A lack of understanding is perhaps the most significant failure of the entire U.S./UN effort in Korea, and the effects of this failure were felt most sharply during the occupation of North Korea in the autumn of 1950. When those in charge became sure that military victory in Korea was synonymous with political victory in Korea, they committed a fatal mistake which could only have been avoided by careful study of the nation they were defending and the nation they were invading. With that in mind, the implication is obvious: U.S./UN failure in North Korea was not inevitable, but it became inevitable when numerous opportunities to learn and commit more readily to a political solution were missed.

What has been discussed here is a series of plausible alternatives to the failures which destabilized the U.S./UN occupation of North Korea and ultimately led, in part, to the stalemate at the 38th parallel which has persisted for seventy years. This study has identified three areas in which the U.S./UN occupation failed most obviously and with the most serious consequences: it failed to secure authority over the conquered territory, it failed to prevent horrific war crimes, and it failed to win the support of the North Korean public. None of these failures were inevitable: a willingness to learn from Communist successes, a more serious political commitment to Korea, and a softening of anti-Communist rhetoric would have greatly narrowed the potential avenues of defeat. The U.S./UN occupation of North Korea was a failure, but not an inevitable failure.

Notes

1. Melvin B. Voorhees, *Korean Tales* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1953), p. 156.
2. Douglas MacArthur, “Message to the Commander-in-Chief, North Korean Forces,” *General MacArthur Speeches and Reports 1908–1964*, ed. by Edward Imparato (Nashville: Turner, 2000), pp. 159–160. For the October 9 leaflet and broadcast to Kim from MacArthur, see “Editorial Note,” October 9, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States, Korea, Volume VII*, accessed January 30, 2023, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1950v07/d646>.
3. U.S. State Department, *United States State Department Bulletin* 23(588) (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office), October 9, 1950. For MacArthur’s satisfaction with the effect of leaflet efforts on enemy forces, see Charles A. Willoughby and John Chamberlain, *MacArthur 1941–1951* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1954), p. 354.
4. Air Vice Marshal Cecil Bouchier, attached to Douglas MacArthur, assessed that “it is not possible to get any answer to the [leaflets] under 5–10 days, as I doubt whether North Koreans can give any answer without first consulting with Communist Chinese and ... Moscow,” Bouchier, UK Embassy Tokyo to Ministry of Defence Office, October 9, 1950, FO 371-84069. Kim’s response to the October 9, leaflet/broadcast is included in “Message from Mr. Bevin to Sir Oliver Franks Dated 11th October, 1950,” *Memorandum of Conversation, by the Ambassador at Large (Jessup)*, October 12, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States, Korea, Volume VII*, accessed January 30, 2023, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1950v07/d664>.
5. Jian Chen, *China’s Road to the Korean War: The Making of the Sino-American Confrontation* (New York: Columbia, 1994).
6. National Committee on North Korea, “Press Conference by President Trump Following June 12, 2018 Summit with Kim Jong Un,” accessed January 30, 2023, archived at https://www.ncnk.org/resources/publications/singapore_summit_press_conference.pdf/file_view.

7. *Ibid.*

8. See also Natasha Turak, “What U.S. Korean War Veterans Think of the Trump–Kim Summit,” *CNBC*, June 21, 2018, accessed January 30, 2023, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/06/21/what-us-korean-war-veterans-think-of-the-trump-kim-summit.html>. Kim Jong-un’s personal understanding of the Korean War can only be speculated about from his public comments and on-site inspections, but a number of new histories have appeared in North Korea since he took power; the University of Toronto Library has picked up three of them: 고상진 [Ko Sang-jin, editor], *조선 전쟁 시기 감행한 미제의 만행 / Chosŏn chŏnjaeng sigi kamhaeng han Mije ūi manhaeng* [Outrageous Atrocities of U.S. Imperialism in the Korean War / 朝鮮战争时美国帝国主义的暴行风险 (P’yŏngyang: Sahoe Kwahak Ch’ulp’ansa [Social Science Publishing House], 2013) p. 273; 김화명 [Kim Hwa-myŏng, editor], *미국의 세균전 만행을 고발한다 / Miguk ūi segyunjŏn manhaeng ūl kobal handa* [The Cruelty of United States Bacteriological War / 美国细菌战战争的残酷] (P’yŏngyang: P’yŏngyang Ch’ulp’ansa, 2015), p. 31; 필자 원영수, 윤금철, 김영범 [Wŏn Yŏng-su, Yun Kŭm-ch’ŏl, Kim Yŏng-bŏm, eds.], *침략과 범죄의 역사 / Ch’imnyak kwa pŏmjŏe ūi yŏksa* [Guilty History of Invasion / 侵略和罪行的历史] (P’yŏngyang: P’yŏngyang Ch’ulp’ansa, 2010), p. 406.

9. Su-kyong Hwang, “Speaking from Ground Zero: The Bombing of North Korea in 1950,” *Critical Asian Studies* 50(4) (2018), pp. 591–614 (p. 599).

10. On museums, see Sung-Hoon Han, “The Ongoing War at the Sinch’ŏn Museum in North Korea,” *Cross Currents* 14 (2015), pp. 152–177, and Suzy Kim, “Specters of War in Pyongyang: The Victorious Fatherland Liberation War Museum in North Korea,” *Cross Currents* 14 (2015), pp. 124–151. On Kim-centered nationalism in the wartime narrative, see Baik Bong, *Kim Il-Sung Biography, Vol. 2* (Tokyo: Miraisha, 1970), pp. 305–306, p. 311.

11. The “glut of Chinamen” quote is found in CIA file box 248, daily reports for November 27–December 16, 1950; Edward Almond Papers, “Korean War, Historical Commentary,” Edward Almond letters to H.E. Eastwood, December 27, 1950, and W.W. Gretakis, December 27, 1950, U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, cited in Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War, Volume 2: The Roaring of the Cataract, 1947–50* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 733. The centrality of the Chinese explanation for the failure of the occupation can be seen in Douglas MacArthur, *Reminiscences* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), pp. 327–396, and in the memoirs of one of MacArthur’s closest British military aides in Tokyo. See Cecil Bouchier, *Spitfires in Japan* (Folkestone: Global Oriental, 2005), pp. 296–331, <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004213814>.

12. “Waiting for the North Koreans: City in Turmoil of Retreat,” *The Manchester Guardian*, December 5, 1950, p. 5. See also Adams in Seoul to UK Foreign Office, December 6, 1950, FO371-84074, UK National Archives. For data from “refugees fleeing south from Pyongyang from 5–8 December 1950,” see U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, “Korean Public Opinion and Rumors Regarding the Seoul Situation,” February 27, 1951, CREST document CIA-RDP82-00457R006900610008-05. For the earlier North Korean evacuation from Pyongyang, see Roy Appleman, *South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu: The United States Army in the Korean War* (Washington D.C.: Center for Military History, 1961), p. 658.

13. Richard Hughes, “Chinese Take Key City in North Korea,” *The Sunday Times of London*, 17 December 1950.

14. Though Cumings is the most influential critic of the occupation, his work is ably supplemented by Max Hastings, *The Korean War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987), pp. 134–172; and Peter Lowe, *The Origins of the Korean War* (Oxford: Taylor & Francis, 1997), pp. 197–229.

15. Cumings, *Origins of the Korean War, Volume 2*, pp. 718–722. See also Jon Halliday, “Anti-Communism in the Korean War (1950–1953),” *The Socialist Register*, 1984, pp. 130–163 for an earlier consideration.

16. Cumings, *Origins of the Korean War, Volume 2*, p. 716.

17. Jong-yil Ra, “Governing North Korea: Some Afterthoughts on the Autumn of 1950,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 40(3) (2005), p. 546, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022009405054570>.

18. Allan R. Millett, *The War for Korea, 1950–1951: They Came from the North* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005), pp. 276–279.

19. Suh Hee-kyung, “Atrocities Before and During the Korean War: Mass Civilian Killings by South Korean and U.S. Forces,” *Critical Asian Studies* 42(4) (2010), pp. 553–588 (p. 567), <https://doi.org/10.1080/14672715.2010.515388>; Kim Dong-choon, “Forgotten War, Forgotten Massacres—The Korean War (1950–1953) as Licensed Mass Killings,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 6(4) (2004), pp. 523–544 (p. 539), <https://doi.org/10.1080/1462352042000320592>. Cumings, *Kim Il-Sung Biography*, p. 719.

20. Seung-joon Paik and Soul Park, “Draining the Sea with Discretion: Force Integration and Civilian Displacement During South Korean Counter-Insurgency Operations, 1948–1953,” *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 2020, pp. 1–30. See also Jinwung Kim, “Participating in Nation-Building: The Role of the ‘Military

- Government Police' in South Korean Politics, 1946–1948," *Journal of American-East Asian Relations* 17 (2010), pp. 174–198, <https://doi.org/10.1163/187656110X531989>.
21. Kim, Eun-Jeong, "North Korea's Response to U.S. Army Propaganda Leaflets During the Korean War," *War & Society* 35(4) (2016), pp. 298–314, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07292473.2016.1244931>.
22. Kim, *Forgotten War, Forgotten Massacres*, pp. 529–531. See also Sahr Conway-Lanz, "The Struggle to Fight a Humane War: The United States, the Korean War, and the 1949 Geneva Conventions," *Do the Geneva Conventions Matter?* Matthew Evangelista and Nina Tannenwald, eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 1–38. See also Sahr Conway-Lanz, "Beyond No Gun Ri: Refugees and the United States Military in the Korean War," *Diplomatic History* 29(1) (January 2005), pp. 49–81 (p. 70), <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7709.2005.00459.x>.
23. See Edwin Reischauer, *The United States and Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1950) for an early traditional view of the U.S. occupation of Japan. In early hagiography, as exemplified by John Gunther, *The Riddle of MacArthur* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1950), the "seeming debacle in Korea" could only be posed as a question rather than an indictment of America's position in Japan. For a more modern treatment of the U.S. occupation of Japan, see John Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1999).
24. Kornel Chang, "Independence Without Liberation: Democratization as Decolonization Management in U.S.-Occupied Korea, 1945–1948," *Journal of American History* 107(1) (June 2020), pp. 77–106, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jahist/jaaa009>.
25. Cumings, *Origins of the Korean War, Volume 2*, pp. 745–47.
26. Captain R.F. Dickson to Lieutenant Colonel S.D. Cocheu, October 17, 1950, U.S. Army 24th Infantry Division, Records of the Quartermaster-General, National Archives Records Group—RG-407 (obtained from Joint Pacific POW/MIA Accounting Command at Hickam AFB, Pearl Harbor, Hawaii), via the Korean War Project. To view the file, go to <https://www.koreanwar.org/html/2018-jpac-24div.html> (accessed January 30, 2023), and download the PDF for "24th Infantry Division—G-1 Journal—September–October–1950."
27. Lieutenant Colonel Lawrence H. Walker, Jr., "G1 Summary," 29 September 1950–31 October 1950, 24th Infantry Division War Diary," via Korean War Project. To view the file, go to <https://www.koreanwar.org/html/2018-jpac-24div.html> (accessed January 30, 2023), and download the PDF for "24th Infantry Division—G-1 Journal—September–October–1950."
28. Harry Truman, "The President's News Conference," June 29, 1950, accessed January 30, 2023, archived at <https://www.trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/index.php?pid=806>.
29. Ra, "Governing North Korea. Some Afterthoughts on the Autumn of 1950," p. 523. See also Allan R. Millett, *The War for Korea*, pp. 121–122; and Michael Hickey, *The Korean War: The West Confronts Communism, 1950–1953* (London: John Murray, 1999), p. 38. A North Korean perspective on UN dysfunction in this period can be found in Choe Jung Chol and Won Chung Guk, *Korea's Division and Its Truth* (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 2014), p. 65.
30. Ra, "Governing North Korea: Some Afterthoughts on the Autumn of 1950," p. 524.
31. "Rhee Again Calls for March North: Tells Korean Independence Rally He Hopes for Allied Help But Will Act Alone," *New York Times*, March 1, 1954, p. 5; and Cecil Bouchier, "Bouchier Reports to MoD, FO371-84069," October 7, 1950. See also Yeji Kim, "Old Narratives in New Times: Representations of North Korea and Unification in South Korean Social Studies Textbooks," *Compare* 50(8) (2019), pp. 1104–1121, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2019.1579636>.
32. FO 301-84179, Correspondence of November 21, 1950, UK National Archives. See also Voorhees, *Korean Tales*, p. 156.
33. Marguerite Higgins, *War in Korea: The Report of a Woman Combat Correspondent* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1951), p. 165; Office of National Estimates, Central Intelligence Agency, "Consequences of a UN Military Take-Over [of] the South Korean Government," July 3, 1952, CIA CREST, CIA-RDP79T00937A000200010065-9, p. 3.
34. United States Mission to the United Nations, 7th Report, United Nations Command, Operations in Korea for the period October 1–15, 1950, November 3, 1950, contained in United Nations Security Council document S-1883.
35. FO 301-84180, Foreign Office to Korea, December 19, 1950, UK National Archives. British observers were also concerned that descriptions of "barbarities" and "crimes of ... President Syngman Rhee's police and military authorities" would undermine faith in Pakistan in the new United Nations. See FO 301-84178, UK High Commissioner in Pakistan to Commonwealth Relations Office, Far Eastern Department, December 20, 1950.

36. Millett, *They Came from the North*, p. 277.
37. Suh, "Atrocities Before and During the Korean War," p. 536.
38. Callum MacDonald, *Britain and the Korean War* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), p. 34.
39. Pak Han Yong, "Cablegram Dated 27 November 1950 from the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Korean People's Democratic Republic to the President of the Security Council Concerning the Complaint of Aggression Against the Republic of Korea," United Nations Security Council, doc. no. S/1918 (original: Russian), November 28, 1950.
40. Suh, "Atrocities Before and During the Korean War," pp. 566–573.
41. MacDonald, *Britain and the Korean War*, pp. 30–35.
42. Cumings, *Origins of the Korean War, Volume 2*, pp. 720–1. For an earlier example of this trope, see Jin-yeon Kang, "Colonial Legacies and the Struggle for Social Membership in a National Community: The 1946 People's Uprisings in Korea," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 24(3) (September 2011), pp. 321–354 (p. 343).
43. Suh, "Atrocities Before and During the Korean War," pp. 566–573.
44. Kim Dong-choon, *The Unending Korean War: A Social History*, translated by Sung-ok Kim (Larkspur, CA: Tamal Vista Publications, 2009).
45. James Cameron, *Point of Departure* (London: Granta Books, 2006), p. 111. Voorhees, *Korean Tales*, pp. 74–79, offers a powerful critique of the racialized aspects of American killing of Asians in the Korean War, notes the "Meegooks" (Americans) on p. 147. However, his work also defaults into stereotypes and writes of "the parasitic prostitutes of Korea, than which there are none filthier," on p. 186.
46. Kim, "Forgotten War, Forgotten Massacres," p. 527.
47. Hanson Baldwin, "Guerrillas a Tough Problem in Korea as Mop Up Begins," *New York Times*, October 29, 1950, pp. 1, 4. See also Veterans of Foreign Wars, *Pictorial History of the Korean War* (Veterans Historical Book Service Inc., 1951), p. 261; Jon Halliday and Bruce Cumings, *Korea: The Unknown War* (London: Penguin, 1990), pp. 146–152; and T.R. Fehrenbach, *This Kind of War* (Washington D.C.: Potomac Books, 1963), pp. 388–389. See also Walter E. Grunden, "Hungnam Revisited: The 'Secret' Nuclear History of a North Korean City," *Intelligence and National Security* 31(5) (2016), pp. 715–728, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02684527.2015.1088690>.
48. Kim, "Forgotten War, Forgotten Massacres," pp. 523–4.
49. Kim, "Forgotten War, Forgotten Massacres," pp. 529–32. Millett (2010, p. 271) notes a lack of Korean People's Army planning for guerrilla war, and Baik Bong (Vol. II, 1970, 312 and 314), reading the October 11, 1950, radio address, says Kim Il-Sung "submitted militant tasks ... for the people in enemy-ruled districts to unfold vigorous guerrilla struggles."
50. Charles J. Hanley, Sang-Hun Choe and Martha Mendoza, *The Bridge at No Gun Ri* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 2001), pp. 262–265, 269–281.
51. S.L.A. Marshall, "A Censor Releases a Report on Korea," *New York Times*, November 16, 1952 (book review), p. 3.
52. Voorhees, *Korean Tales*, pp. 148–149.
53. *Ibid.*, pp. 45–47.
54. United States Mission to the United Nations, 6th Report of the United Nations Command Operations in Korea for the period 15 to 30 September 1950, enclosed in United Nations Security Council document number S-1860, October 21, 1950.
55. Voorhees, *Korean Tales*, pp. 189–190.
56. Cumings, *Kim Il-Sung Biography*, p. 721.
57. Almond Papers, General Files, X Corps, "Appendix 3 Counterintelligence," November 25, 1950; William V Quinn Papers, box 3, X Corps periodic intelligence report dated November 11, 1950, cited in Cumings, *Origins of the Korean War, Volume 2*, pp. 722–723.
58. Cumings, *Origins of the Korean War, Volume 2*, p. 722. On "indications that North Korean Military and Political HQ may have fled to Manchuria," see FO 371-84069 UK Embassy in Tokyo to the War Office, October 21, 1950.
59. Ra, "Governing North Korea: Some Afterthoughts on the Autumn of 1950," p. 527.
60. Cecil Bouchier, Daily Telegraphic Situation Reports to Ministry of Defence in London, FO 371-84069, "Report of 6 October [1950]," p. 2.
61. Cumings, *Origins of the Korean War, Volume 2*, p. 730.
62. *Ibid.*, p. 725 and p. 910. See also the sources cited in note 44 for varying statistical assessments.
63. *Ibid.*, pp. 729–33.
64. CIA CREST, *North Korean Guerrilla Activities, North Korean Government of Occupied Areas*, dated September 6, 1950, released April 11, 2002, CIA-RDP82-00457R005700540003-4.

65. Cumings, *Origins of the Korean War, Volume 2*, p. 721.
66. Wilfred Burchett, *This Monstrous War* (Melbourne: Joseph Walters, 1953), pp. 125–129.
67. CIA CREST, *Political and Economic Activities in Areas Occupied by North Korean Troops*, dated July 31, 1950, released February 1, 2001, CIA-RDP82-00457R005400570004-0.
68. *Ibid.*
69. C. Darwin Stolzenbach and Henry A. Kissinger, *Civil Affairs in Korea, 1950–1951*, Operations Research Office, Department of the Army, August 1952, accessed January 30, 2023, <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/citations/AD0896871>.
70. Voorhees, *Korean Tales*, p. 147.
71. Kim, *The Unending Korean War*, p. 97.
72. Stolzenbach and Kissinger, *Civil Affairs in Korea, 1950–1951*.
73. Donald W. Boose, Jr., “Portentous Sideshow: The Korean Occupation Decision,” *U.S. Army War College Quarterly: Parameters* 25(1) (1995), article 13, <https://doi.org/10.55540/0031-1723.1734>.
74. U.S. General Records of the Department of State, *Administration Plan for North Korea*, Washington to Seoul, October 28, 1950, Foreign Command, Control 6277, U.S. National Archives, Record Group 388. Quoted in Ra, “Governing North Korea: Some Afterthoughts on the Autumn of 1950,” p. 523.
75. “MacA Can Cross the 38th,” *The Daily Mail*, September 29, 1950, p. 1.
76. Ra, “Governing North Korea: Some Afterthoughts on the Autumn of 1950,” p. 522.
77. U.S. Air Force Air University, “A Preliminary Study of the impact of Communism on Korea,” circa 1951, quoted in Cumings, *Kim Il-Sung Biography*, p. 670. Cumings describes in *Origins of the Korean War, Volume 2*, p. 898, how this study was placed and served as the basis for a propaganda text during the Cold War. See also Ron Theodore Robin, *The Making of the Cold War Enemy: Culture and Politics in the Military and Intellectual Complex* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), pp. 77–85.
78. Cumings, *Kim Il-Sung Biography*, p. 669.
79. *Ibid.*, p. 671.
80. “War Crimes: Atrocities Committed by North Korean and Chinese Communist Forces Against the UN POWs,” November 2, 1953, WO 208/4005, UK National Archives. Rudolph Rummell suggests the KPA massacred approximately 130,000 South Korean civilians during the war, but provides little referencing to back up the point and his figure may have ballooned include Seoul’s postwar claim of more than 84,000 North Korean abductions of South Korean citizens. Rudolph J. Rummel, *Statistics of Democide: Genocided and Mass Murder Since 1900* (Muenster: Lit Verlag, 1998), pp. 182–186. The authors wish to thank Ellis Peacey of the University of Leeds for his assistance with these figures and sources. See also Cumings *Origins of the Korean War, Vol. 2*.
81. Burchett, *This Monstrous War*, pp. 127–128.
82. Kim, *The Unending Korean War*, p. 97.
83. *Ibid.*
84. According to Kim, *The Unending Korean War*, p. 101, the North Korean revolution in southern Korea “more closely resembled the Chinese revolutions ... than those of the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe.”
85. *Ibid.*, pp. 104–106.
86. Central Intelligence Agency, “Incidents of the First North Korean Occupation of Seoul,” April 5, 1951, CIA-CREST doc. no. CIA-REDP82-00457R007100650002-4.
87. Kim, *The Unending Korean War*, pp. 95–96.
88. Suzy Kim, *Everyday Life in the North Korean Revolution* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013).
89. Hanson Baldwin, “Korea Shows Need for U.S. Policy Unity; Liaison Between Foreign and Military Courses Is Stressed as Major Lesson of War; Asian Mind Held a Puzzle; Recent Misunderstandings Need for Experts in Oriental Psychology,” *New York Times*, October 31, 1950, p. 4. Ultimately, the U.S. would absorb a massive tranche of North Korean documents which are now known as Record Group 242. For more information, see Benjamin Young, “Yongusil 22: Record Group 242,” *SinoNK.com*, December 18, 2018, accessed January 30, 2023, <https://sinonk.com/2013/12/18/yongusil-22-record-group-242/>.
90. Cumings, *Origins of the Korean War, Volume 2*, p. 675.
91. Chong-sik Lee, “Land Reform, Collectivisation and the Peasants in North Korea,” *China Quarterly* (1962), pp. 65–81, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305741000021020>; and Chong-Sik Lee, “Political Change, Revolution and the Dialogue in the Two Koreas,” *Asian Survey* 29(11) (1989), pp. 1033–1042, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2644727>. See also Kornel Chang, “Independence Without Liberation,” *The Journal of American History* 107(1) (2020), pp. 77–106, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jahist/jaaa009>.

92. Cumings, *Origins of the Korean War, Volume 2*, p. 677.
93. Shelby L. Stanton, *America's Tenth Legion: X Corps in Korea, 1950* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1989), p. 151. On the same page, Stanton notes that Almond had been "imprinted with the misery caused his Virginian ancestors by Union food thefts (during the U.S. Civil War) he considered cash payments for Korean farmers the basis of a sound recovery policy for the entire nation."
94. Central Intelligence Agency, "Political and Economic Activities in Areas Occupied by North Korean Troops," July 31, 1950, CIA CREST, doc. no. CIA-RDP82-00457R005400570004-0.
95. The Chargé in Korea (Drumright) to the Secretary of State, October 26, 1950, accessed January 30, 2023, *Foreign Relations of the United States, Volume VII, Korea*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1950v07/d711>.
96. Reischauer, *The United States and Japan*.
97. More work could be done on the interagency debates over the direction and the bureaucratic placement of the occupation within the U.S. government, as well as the UN/U.S. dialogue over these issues, as well as UNCURK's contributions on its own merits. Cumings, Ra, and other scholarship cited in this essay have provided a solid foundation, but unanswered questions remain. Some of the research directions the authors intend to further develop following this paper include: more focused discussions of the UK government's approach to discussing and counteracting South Korean war crimes, the role of marginal but significant politicians such as Tom Driberg and James Plimsoll, and unpacking the propaganda and better documenting the facts of the Sinchon Massacre.
98. MacDonald, *Britain and the Korean War*, p. 30. One contemporary analyst said the Incheon operation "was essentially a demonstration of World War II techniques ... we took no precautions at Incheon against the atomic bomb," See Hanson Baldwin, "Korea Supporting Concepts of Navy," *New York Times*, November 4, 1950, p. 3.
99. On the apparent paradox of seeing the North Koreans as simultaneously fanatic, competent, and yet moldable, see Hanson Baldwin, "Korea Shows Need of U.S. Policy Unity."
100. Stolzenbach and Kissinger, *Civil Affairs in Korea, 1950–1951*, p. 17.
101. Quoted in MacDonald, *Britain and the Korean War*, p. 31. See also Alexander Shaw, "We have just about had it': Jack Slessor, the Foreign Office, and the Anglo-American Strategic Debate Over the Escalation of the Korean War, 1950–51," *The Yonsei Journal of International Studies* 6(2) (2014), pp. 292–315.

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