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*Guest Editor:* Steven Casey, London School of Economics

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## Articles

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William Stueck and Boram Yi. “‘An Alliance Forged in Blood’: The American Occupation of Korea, the Korean War, and the U.S.-South Korean Alliance.” 177-210. [Please note that this article is available this article is free and can be downloaded at the journal's website: <http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~db=all~content=g921638850> –ed.]

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Zhihua Shen. "China and the Dispatch of the Soviet Air Force: The Formation of the Chinese-Soviet-Korean Alliance in the Early Stage of the Korean War." 211-230.

Robert Barnes. "Branding an Aggressor: The Commonwealth, the United Nations and the Chinese Intervention in the Korean War." 231-254.

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Introduction by Michael Pearlman, United States Army Command and General Staff College, retired

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On the eve of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the outbreak of the Korean War, *The Journal of Strategic Studies* devoted its entire April 2010 to what has been called “the Forgotten War.” That sobriquet, unfortunately, seems valid. The article by Charles Young points out that the media dubbed Korea “the forgotten war” half way through the conflict which has never had the presence in the American psyche occupied by the Civil War, World War II, and now the War in Vietnam. This is understandable—up to a point. The Civil War was the most important event in United States history. World War II was arguably the most important military conflict in the history of mankind. Vietnam, however, was actually less intense and less important to the fate of the world. In Korea, America suffered some 131,000 casualties: killed and wounded, combat and non-combat in three years time. In ten years in Vietnam, the U.S. sustained some 211,000 casualties but spread over a ten year time period<sup>1</sup> True, a self-identified communist regime now governs all of Vietnam, but within 15 years of the communist conquest of Saigon, the United States won the Cold War. Apparently, when it comes to war, public consciousness may be independent of intensity of combat and political importance.

Nonetheless, “forgotten” to the public is not the same thing as “unknown” to serious students of a particular subject. Korea may never have the page count of the wars mentioned above. Still, there is now more than enough valuable material published by people like the authors and reviewers mentioned below to swamp people like me, those who don’t or won’t speed-read their way through the literature. I am going to summarize the reviews of the articles published in *Strategic Studies*. They, in turn, summarize the articles themselves: William Stueck and Boram Yi on United States-South Korean relations from the first days of the U.S. occupation through combined operations in the Korean War<sup>2</sup>; Zhihua Shen on Chinese-Soviet negotiations over communist deployment of combat air assets; Robert Barnes over tensions between United States policy and the British Commonwealth; Colin Jackson about a purported opportunity to break the stalemate in the ground war (Spring 1951); Steven Casey about military casualties and the U.S. public

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<sup>1</sup> Recently in Chicago to promote my book on Truman and MacArthur on C Span I ran into a man who had Korean War Veteran on his cap and a Marine Corp air wing designation on his shirt. I inquired about his specific experience and, after telling me that he managed the ground crew that supported John Glenn and Ted William (“Ted,” he said, “was not a very good pilot”) got out from his wallet the specific figures on casualties in Korea and Vietnam. He obviously resented being part of a “forgotten” war.

<sup>2</sup> [Please note that this article is available this article is free and can be downloaded at the journal’s website: <http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~db=all~content=g921638850> -ed.]

commitment; and Charles Young about POW policy and why the forgotten war became the forgotten war. I bear in mind the remarks of James Person that “there seems to be very little connecting [the articles in the collection] thematically and there is no introduction explaining their relation to one another.” This may be correct but may not be detrimental. If these articles had a unifying theme, they would cover the Korean War less extensively than they do. I nonetheless will try, as best I can, to treat the reviews as a body: comparing and contrasting each one to the others. This does not, however, do justice to the scope of their coverage.

Don Boose, the first reviewer, is a retired colonel and Northeast Asia FAO (foreign area officer) in the United States Army. Colonel Boose does not critique most of the articles. Instead, he summarizes complex arguments up to 15 pages long, no small achievement in itself. The great exception is his treatment of Colin Jackson’s contention that if the United Nations high command had executed the plans of army commanding General James Van Fleet to conduct an amphibious landing at Tongchon in Spring 1951, it could have ended the war on the Pyongyang - Wonsan line. North Korea, a nuclear threat today, would have become a rump, client state of China and the Korean War, ending in military triumph, and would not have lapsed into obscurity reserved for ties and stalemate. Americans seem to remember victory and defeat: they have written more books about Custer at the Little Big Horn than any battle excepting Gettysburg, a victory or defeat, depending where one resides.<sup>3</sup>

Colonel Boose certainly has the credentials to deal with Van Fleet’s proposal, having written a four hundred-page book on the very topic. He found the general—and now finds Professor Jackson—militarily “persuasive.”<sup>4</sup> James Matray takes a more critical stance, about Jackson’s article and the collection as a whole. This author of several important books and articles on the Korean War agrees with James Person, a specialist on North Korea. They take the journal to task for a decided emphasis on the international conflict between China, America, and Russia. Even the entry most concerned with Korean politics (Stueck and Yi, “An Alliance Forged in Blood”) focuses on South Korea’s position vis-à-vis

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<sup>3</sup> I recall a briefing I attended at Ft. Leavenworth in 1986 about a new training program for division commanders and staff. The briefer, a colonel, justified the program on the poor records American had in the first battles of their wars. “We lost,” he said, “the first battles of the Revolution and 1812. The Mexican War was OK but Bull Run was a disaster.” From the back of the room came a Southern drawl. “I thought we did just great at Manassas.”

<sup>4</sup> *Over the Beach: U.S. Army Amphibious Operations in the Korean War* (Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas: Combat Studies Press, 2008), p. 292.

the United States, rather than internal Korean political competition between pro and anti-communist factions.<sup>5</sup>

One might not expect William Stueck to agree with the Person and Matray proposition that the struggle for supremacy on the Korean peninsula was, at essence, a civil war, headquartered, respectively, in Pyongyang and Seoul. After all, he authored, among other studies *The Korean War: An International History* (Princeton University Press, 1995) and one can, at least in this case, tell a book by its title. Matray, however, holds that “if Koreans could invade Korea then one supposes that another land grab was ‘Sherman’s March to the Sea’,” not as preposterous as he might make it out to be. Southerners, in this case of white Georgians, long thought exactly this about the Yankee invasion of their sacred soil, although I guess I should defer to Professor Stueck on the validity of this analogy.

Matray, like Boose, pays special attention to Colin Jackson, “a breathtaking model of interpretive boldness.” (One thinks he really meant “recklessness” but was too polite to say so.) Boose, the retired colonel, is concerned with military feasibility. Matray, my fellow civilian, emphasizes political purpose. He holds Van Fleet guilty of what George Marshall used to call “localitis,” the inability to understand that one’s own responsibilities are not the political center of the world. East Asia was less important to Washington than was Continental Europe and hence not worth the military effort Van Fleet proposed. One might also add that both Jackson and Matray could have underscored the exact line of military contact, June 1951. Opponents were fighting along the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel, where the war began in June 1950. That seemed to ensure a quick end to the fighting since both sides could accept a status quo ante bellum without diplomats giving away at the peace table what soldiers won on the battlefield. No one in mid-1951 predicted that the war would last almost two more years.

Three factors kept the war going despite a battlefield stalemate reminiscent of trench warfare on the Western front, 1915-1917. Stalin hoped that dissension over Korea in the western camp (described by Robert Barnes in “Branding the Aggressor”) would fracture NATO. Mao used the war to shake down Stalin for more modern armaments than the Kremlin was disposed to give China. (See Zhihua Shen, “China and the Dispatch of the Soviet Air Force” for conflict within the communist camp.) Harry Truman latched on to voluntary repatriation of prisoners of war to score a victory in psychological warfare if and when thousands chose not to return to the communist regimes in Beijing and Pyongyang. Unfortunately, the issue prolonged the war and its prolongation ensured the decline of political support for the conflict, which is also the topic of the essay by the editor of this volume, Steven Casey, “Casualty Reporting and Domestic Support for the War.” Casey, points out that there is not a simple one-to-one correlation between casualties and war weariness. Battlefield progress can be a mitigating factor. Partisan criticism can exacerbate the issue, as occurred during the 1952 election campaign.

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<sup>5</sup> This article is free to download from the *Journal of Strategic Studies* website.

Matray calls Charles Young's essay on POWs the best article in the entire collection. Allan Millett, the author of two volumes of a trilogy that will almost certainly be the most authoritative history of the Korean War to appear in our lifetime<sup>6</sup>, has his own opinion: the "last and least" article in the collection; it is "far less valuable than the other pieces." He recommends that Professor Young consults two particular documents: Military Intelligence Section, G/S, Headquarters United Nations and Far East Command, "The Communist War in POW Camps," 28 January 1953 and Military History Office, AC/S G-3, Headquarters, United States Army Pacific, "The Handling of Prisoners of War during the Korean War," June, 1960.

In summary, "the forgotten war" is producing a lot of books and articles that should not be forgotten. One very good example is the April 2010 edition of *The Journal of Strategic Studies*.

### Participants:

Colonel (Retired) **Donald W. Boose, Jr.**, a graduate of Cornell University and hold an MA in Asian Studies from the University of Hawaii, is a contract faculty instructor at the U.S. Army War College. His books include *Over the Beach: Army Amphibious Operations in the Korean War*; *U.S. Army Forces in the Korean War*; *Great Battles of Antiquity*; and *Recalibrating the U.S.-Republic of Korea Alliance*. He is also a major contributor to the *Encyclopedia of the Korean War*.

**Steven Casey** is Reader in International History at the London School of Economics. He received his D.Phil. from the University of Oxford in 1999, and is the author of *Cautious Crusade: Franklin D. Roosevelt, American Public Opinion, and the War against Nazi Germany* (2001), and *Selling the Korean War: Propaganda, Politics, and Public Opinion* (2008), which won the 2010 Truman Book Award. His current research explores the relationship between the U.S. military and American war correspondents during the two world wars.

**James I. Matray** is professor of history at California State University, Chico, where he completed his final term as department chair in August 2008. He earned his doctoral degree in recent U.S. foreign relations with a specialty in East Asia in August 1977 at the University of Virginia, where he studied under Normal A. Graebner. Author of *The Reluctant Crusade: American Foreign Policy in Korea, 1941-1950* and *Japan's Emergence as a Global Power*, his most recent books are *Korea Divided: The 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel and the Demilitarized Zone* and *East Asia and the United States: An Encyclopedia of Relations Since 1784*. Matray currently is preparing a monograph on the Battles of Pork Chop Hill, which is

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<sup>6</sup> Allan R. Millett, *The War for Korea*, (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005 and 2010.) I have called it in a review the equivalent to Rick Atkinson's trilogy on the U.S. army World War II Europe and Douglas Southall Freeman's trilogy on the Army of Northern Virginia in the Civil War.

under contract with Indiana University Press for publication in its "Twentieth Century Battles" series.

After retiring from The Ohio State University after thirty-seven years of service as an endowed professor and founder of the OSU military history program, **Allan R. Millett** in 2006 became the Ambrose Professor of History and Director, Eisenhower Center for American Studies, the University of New Orleans. Since 1991 his research has focused on the Korean War. He has been a Fulbright Distinguished Visiting Professor at the Korean War College and Korea Foundation Fellow at the Korean Language Institute, Yonsei University. He has now written five books on the Korean War and co-edited two others. He will finish a trilogy on the war in 2013. He is the second winner (2008) of the Pritzker Award for lifetime achievement in military history writing in addition to receiving the Society of Military History's Samuel Eliot Morison Prize for his contributions to the study of military history.

**Michael Pearlman** taught military history at the army staff college, Ft. Leavenworth until retiring as a full professor in October 2005. He has written three books and over a dozen articles, usually on how political factors influence military policy and strategy. One book, *Warmaking and American Democracy: The Struggle over Military Strategy, 1700 to the Present* (Kansas University Press, 1998) won the Henry Adams Prize for history of the federal government. Another, *Truman and MacArthur: Politics, Policy, and the Struggle for Honor and Renown* (Indiana University Press, 2008) won the Gold Medal/outstanding history book award of the Independent Book Publisher's Association and was a finalist, best nonfiction book of the year, 2009, *Foreword Magazine*. He is now writing a follow-up monograph about accusations that MacArthur wanted to bomb China with nuclear weapons and the place of CIA intercepts in the dismissal of the general.

**James F. Person** is currently completing his PhD in modern Korean history at the George Washington University. His dissertation is a diplomatic, political, and ideological history of North Korea from 1953-1967 and examines the origins and evolution of North Korea's governing Juche thought. Person is also Project Coordinator of the North Korea International Documentation Project at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington, DC.

**William Stueck** received a Ph.D. from Brown University in 1977 and is a Distinguished Research Professor at the University of Georgia. His publications have focused on the Korean War and include *Rethinking the Korean War* (Princeton University Press, 2002); *The Korean War: An International History* (Princeton University Press, 1995), and *The Road to Confrontation: United States Policy toward China and Korea, 1947-1950* (University of North Carolina Press, 1981).

The April 2010 issue of *The Journal of Strategic Studies* is devoted entirely to the Korean War. Each of the articles illuminates some facet of the war and each connects the historical events to current concerns. In “An Alliance Forged in Blood’: The American Occupation of Korea, the Korean War, and the US-South Korean Alliance,” William Stueck and Boram Yi examine a paradox. The 1945-1948 U.S. occupation of South Korea was marked by cultural misperception, antagonistic national interests, and actions and attitudes on the part of U.S. troops that should have permanently ruptured the relationship. Yet the 60-year-old alliance has proven to be firm, adaptable, and enduring. The authors examine in detail why the occupation was so troublesome and then briefly explain how the Korean War transformed the relationship.

In September 1945, an ill-prepared American occupation force took responsibility for the southern half of an arbitrarily-divided nation and a population seething with repressed nationalism and divided by ideological factionalism. American missteps, including initial retention of Japanese security forces, rejection of a provisional government that might have provided an interim administrative structure, and failure to maintain economic production, alienated many Koreans. The occupation commander, Lieutenant General John R. Hodge, was frustrated by the infighting among Korean nationalist leaders and what he saw as petty political squabbling and obstruction. American attitudes were also influenced by a sense that the Koreans had done little to defeat Japan or to earn their own independence. Inadequate preparation, poor language skills, and a superficial understanding of Korean culture and history impeded the U.S. military government. Ambitious officers avoided duty in the military backwater of Korea and the headquarters in Japan skimmed off the most competent and experienced of those assigned to the Far East Command, so the leadership of the American troops was of uneven quality. This affected the performance of American troops, some of whom -- repelled by the squalor, petty crime, and prostitution of a poverty-stricken country emerging from Japanese rule -- despised the Koreans and acted rudely, or even criminally, toward them.

After the government of Syngman Rhee (Yi Seung-man) came to power in South Korea in 1948, the U.S. military, frustrated by the behavior of Korean political elites and reacting to discontent among their troops, pushed for the withdrawal of U.S. forces from the peninsula. The last U.S. combat unit left in 1949. Given the experience of both sides with the occupation, it is almost certain that the Americans and South Koreans would have remained estranged had it not been for the 1950 North Korean invasion. The firm and immediate U.S. reaction to that attack may have been based on U.S. international interests rather than sympathy for the South Korean people and leaders, but the Americans nonetheless paid a huge human and economic price to defend the Republic of Korea (ROK) and its people. The South Koreans, fighting under their own sovereign government, also made enormous sacrifices on their own behalf. The war dramatically changed the perceptions of both parties and transformed South Korea into a strategically significant U.S. partner. Since then, a political, military, economic, and social convergence has increased Korean-American mutual understanding, and the responsibility for and burden of defense

have become more equally shared. While by no means untroubled, the U.S.-ROK security relationship has survived “the end of the Cold War, the ROK rapprochement with Russia and China, and the ROK’s rise as a regional power,” not to mention the coming of age of a fiercely proud and independent generation of Koreans with no personal memory of the war, recent U.S. and ROK “ham-fisted” leadership, and changes in U.S. global strategy and focus (177). Stueck and Yi argue that the “evolution of power and responsibility within the alliance since the 1960s inspires confidence that the changing psychological and cultural needs on both sides can be adjusted to accommodate the enduring if also changing strategic rationales for the alliance” (207).

The opposing Korean War alliance is the subject of Zhihua Shen’s “China and the Dispatch of the Soviet Air Force: The Formation of the Chinese-Soviet-Korean Alliance in the Early Stage of the Korean War.” Shen examines the impact on that three-way relationship of Stalin’s vacillation over support of Chinese intervention. He notes that as the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) prepared for war, the Soviet Union was very much the senior partner, providing military advice, weapons, and logistical support to North Korea while the Chinese were supportive, but not directly engaged. After the North Korean attack began and the United States entered the war, the Chinese made preparations to send in their own military forces with the assurance that the Soviets would provide substantial air cover. But as the likelihood of Chinese intervention increased, Stalin’s support faded. At the crucial moment, just as Chinese forces were preparing to enter Korea, the Soviet leader reneged on the offer of air support. Shen argues that Stalin’s actions were based on suspicion of Chinese intentions, concern about future Chinese influence in the region, and a desire to avoid direct confrontation with the United States. In the event, Mao Zedong made the decision to send troops into Korea without Soviet air cover. Shen sees this as the precondition for the Soviet Union finally to send in its air forces to protect the crucial Yalu River area and thus commence a Chinese-Soviet-North Korean wartime alliance. But the Soviet delay and the Chinese willingness to risk its own troops in combat also meant that China became the most influential partner in that alliance, with Moscow thereafter generally supporting China’s views and positions (228-229).

In “Branding an Aggressor: The Commonwealth, the United Nations and Chinese Intervention in the Korean War, November 1950 – January 1951,” Robert Barnes examines the role of the Commonwealth of Nations immediately following the Chinese intervention. He points out that by the time the war began, the Commonwealth included two sets of states: the “Old Commonwealth” nations (the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and South Africa), who had close cultural and historic ties to Britain, and the post-colonial “New Commonwealth” nations of India and Pakistan.<sup>1</sup> These nations had divergent

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<sup>1</sup> And Ceylon, which was not a member of the United Nations and, therefore, not a party to the debates that are the subject of Barnes’s article. The Irish Free State and Newfoundland had also been members of the original British Commonwealth established by the Statute of Westminster in 1931, but by 1950, Ireland had left the Commonwealth and Newfoundland had joined Canada. (232-233)

interests, but in the immediate aftermath of the Chinese intervention were united in opposition to U.S. policy. This strong, if temporary, unity was based on hopes that the belligerents could reach a negotiated settlement and the Commonwealth countries could maintain their existing economic relationships with China. To this end, the Commonwealth nations worked together to prevent the United States from demanding a United Nations General Assembly resolution branding China an aggressor and thereby triggering the collective security provisions of the UN Charter.

Acting as a unified body, the Commonwealth nations succeeded in persuading the United States to allow attempts to broker an armistice and thus delayed the “aggressor” resolution until China’s actions demonstrated conclusively that no acceptable armistice could be attained. Once this had been demonstrated, the “aggressor” resolution was passed with overwhelming support in the UN General Assembly. This moment of Commonwealth unity soon passed, but Barnes argues that “in the deeply polarized world at the height of the Cold War the Commonwealth mattered and its role in international affairs warrants further academic study” (252).

The Chinese offensive that prompted Commonwealth action pushed the UNC forces out of North Korea and well south of Seoul. But in January 1951, the UNC halted the Communist push and, under the command of a new ground force commander, Lieutenant General Matthew B. Ridgway, forced the Chinese and North Koreans back north. On 16 March 1951, the UNC reoccupied Seoul. Although the Chinese conducted further offensives, by May 1951, UNC ground forces, now under the command of Lieutenant General James Van Fleet, had halted these offensives and pushed the Communists north across the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel. In late May, with the Chinese forces in disarray, Van Fleet proposed an amphibious operation at Tongchon on the east coast to cut off their retreat and facilitate the UNC advance further north. Lieutenant General Edward M. Almond, the X Corps commander, and Major General Gerald C. Thomas, the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division Commander, enthusiastically supported the proposal, but Ridgway, who had recently replaced Douglas MacArthur as the commander-in-chief of the U.S. Far East Command and United Nations Command (CINCFE/CINCUNC), disapproved the operation, and soon thereafter the beginning of the truce talks halted the offensive.

Ridgway argued that, since the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) had established a northern limit for the UNC offensive, operations north of that line would require JCS approval. He was also concerned that removing the Marine division from the front line would risk a Chinese counterattack. And, since it seemed likely that armistice talks would soon begin, any ground gained by the offensive might soon be lost through negotiations. In “Lost Chance or Lost Horizon? Strategic Opportunity and Escalation Risk in the Korean War, April-July 1951,” Colin F. Jackson argues that Ridgway’s decision was militarily unjustified and was influenced by domestic political considerations, primarily the recent relief of General MacArthur. A principal reason for MacArthur’s relief had been his proposals to widen the war by attacking China, which was contrary to U.S. policy to seek an armistice based on the restoration of the pre-war 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel boundary. Jackson suggests that Ridgway conflated Van Fleet’s plan for a major, but limited, advance with MacArthur’s risky, problematical, and “grandiose” scheme. Had Ridgway permitted the Tongchon

amphibious operation to take place, Jackson believes it would probably have dislocated the Chinese line and allowed the UNC to advance to the narrow neck of Korea between Pyongyang and Wonsan without serious risk of widening the war. This would have put the UNC and the Republic of Korea in a far more advantageous position for the subsequent armistice negotiations. Even if the operation had failed, Jackson points out that the Chinese were so weak at that time (as verified by recently released Chinese and Russian records) that they would not have been able to exploit the situation. Jackson argues that Ridgway's decision was not only a lost opportunity to push the Communist forces further north and end the war on more favorable terms for the United Nations Command, but also affected the U.S. perception of limited war and later influenced American decision making in the Vietnam War.

This reviewer, having examined the evidence relating to the proposed Tongchon operation in the course of writing a book on Korean War amphibious operations, finds Jackson's argument regarding the feasibility of that operation to be persuasive, although it is not clear how accurate U.S. intelligence on the Chinese situation was at the time.<sup>2</sup> Jackson buttresses his argument by pointing out that not long after rejecting the Tongchon operation, Ridgway directed Van Fleet to plan for a similar amphibious operation. "If Van Fleet's ideas in May 1951 were so outlandish," Jackson asks, "why did they resurface only a month later, in July, at Ridgway's behest?" This is a good question, particularly since Ridgway did far more than just order Van Fleet to prepare for an amphibious operation. He directed Headquarters XVI Corps, based in Japan, to begin a large-scale amphibious training program and to be prepared to conduct a major amphibious operation if circumstances permitted. To this end, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Engineer Special Brigade, the Army's amphibious specialists, were withdrawn from port operations in Korea and returned to Japan to resume their amphibious focus, along with the 56<sup>th</sup> Amphibious Tank and Tractor Battalion, which had been converted to a light tank unit but which was now ordered to take its amphibious vehicles out of storage and return to its amphibious mission.<sup>3</sup> All of this supports Jackson's contention that Ridgway's veto of the Tongchon operation was a matter of the circumstances of the time, rather than an aversion to amphibious operations.

Ridgway's decision to cancel the Tongchon operation will no doubt continue to be a matter of argument, but Jackson makes a strong case that Van Fleet's "intuitive feel for the military situation, its risks and opportunities, was superior to that of Ridgway and the JCS" (275). His arguments regarding the longer-term impact of that decision are more tentative, but are very much worth further study and debate.

The decision to halt the UNC offensive and to begin armistice negotiations was largely based on a belief that the Soviet Union constituted the main threat to the United States and its interests and that the resources diverted to combat in Korea should be limited. But

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<sup>2</sup> Donald W. Boose, Jr., *Over the Beach: US Army Amphibious Operations in the Korean War* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: CSI Press, 2008).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 314-317.

perceptions of the American people of the likelihood of success and of the value, risks, and definition of “victory” in Korea also played a role. In “Casualty Reporting and Domestic Support for War: The US Experience during the Korean War,” Steven Casey takes a look at the interrelationship between casualties and support for the war and demonstrates that the accurate reporting of American casualties to the public was by no means a simple matter. He traces the history of U.S. casualty reporting from the Civil War, when the government felt no responsibility to report casualties to families or the public and left the matter to fellow soldiers and to the press; through World War I, when the War Department developed a system for casualty reporting; to World War II, when the refinement of that system coupled with tight press controls allowed the government to make accurate, delayed public announcements after families had been officially informed of casualties.

During the early months of the Korean War, a total absence of command censorship and a confused military situation in which accurate assessments of casualties were impossible in spite of the efficient reporting system instituted during World War II led to a chaotic situation in which exaggerated rumors and media reports could be exploited politically. General MacArthur’s headquarters tried to soften the impact of casualties by emphasizing successful military actions and downplaying disasters. Public support for the war dipped during the first Chinese offensives and during the presidential political campaign in the autumn 1952. In both cases, there seems to have been a closer correlation between falling support for the war and political controversies *about* casualties than with the number of actual casualties, particularly since, as Casey points out, the public had no clear picture of the casualty numbers. Casey concludes that while casualties are an important factor in public support for a war, “the specific impact they have on the home front depends on the complex interplay between the military’s casualty reporting on the one hand and elite efforts to question the official narrative on the other” (314).

The issue of casualties is closely related to the treatment, accounting, and repatriation of prisoners of war (POWs). Charles S. Young looks at one aspect of this subject in “POWs: The Hidden Reason for Forgetting Korea.” He argues that Korea has been a forgotten war to Americans in large part because there was no satisfying victory to serve as a positive symbol of the war. He notes that the UNC achieved a significant victory when, after initial refusal, the Chinese and North Koreans finally accepted United Nations Command demands for voluntary repatriation of POWs, but the circumstances of that victory precluded its public celebration.

The previously accepted rule was that at the conclusion of hostilities all POWs would be repatriated to their home countries without regard for their personal desires. General Ridgway assumed this would be the case in Korea, but President Truman decided that prisoners should not be repatriated against their wishes. He was undoubtedly influenced in this by memories of the tragic post-World War II fate of millions of Soviet prisoners who had been forcibly repatriated, many subsequently suffering long imprisonment or death. The situation was further complicated by the presence among the prisoners held by the UNC of many former residents of South Korea who had been inducted into the North Korean army and many Chinese soldiers who had originally been in the Nationalist Chinese army and were likely to prefer to go to Taiwan rather than Communist China. In spite of

Ridgway's fears that a voluntary repatriation policy would delay an armistice and jeopardize UNC prisoners held by the Communists, Truman held firm to his convictions. His concern may have been humanitarian, but other US officials also foresaw a moral and propaganda victory if large numbers of Chinese and North Korean soldiers rejected communism. The ethical position of the UNC side was also compromised because ROK, Nationalist Chinese, and U.S. intelligence agents clandestinely entered the UNC-controlled POW camps to persuade and pressure prisoners to refuse repatriation (322-3, 326-7).

Young argues that the introduction of the voluntary repatriation issue was a conscious stratagem of the U.S. leadership – a psychological coup that, in the absence of battlefield success and the reunification of Korea, would be a “substitute for victory.”<sup>4</sup> After 1951, heavily-fortified front lines meant that neither side could obtain military victory at an acceptable price. Although both sides saw it in their interests to commence armistice negotiations, neither had been defeated, both had sizeable effective forces in the field, and neither was “so desperate for peace that they would swallow a poisonous truce” (325). With neither side in a position to dictate peace terms, every detail of the armistice was subject to negotiation. Both sides were adept at psychological operations and “shifting gears into political warfare was natural for both contenders” (325).

The Chinese and North Koreans might nonetheless have accepted the concept of voluntary repatriation if the majority of Chinese and North Korean prisoners had been willing to return. But on 19 April 1952, after a controversial and sometimes violent process of screening prisoners to determine their repatriation desires, the UNC advised that only 70,000 of more than 170,000 North Korean and Chinese prisoners desired repatriation. The Chinese negotiators refused to accept such a low figure as the basis for further discussion and the war continued for more than a year until the Chinese and North Koreans finally accepted voluntary repatriation with the addition of a face-saving neutral nations' repatriation mechanism. Young points out that this was a great psychological victory for the United States and its allies, but because voluntary repatriation was never a declared war aim, and since the right of some 50,000 Communist prisoners to refuse repatriation

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<sup>4</sup> The phrase is that of Rosemary Foote: *A Substitute for Victory: The Politics of Peacemaking at the Korean Armistice Talks* (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 1990).

was won at the cost of an extra year and a half of war and 125,000 UNC casualties, the United States was unable to take credit for, celebrate, or exploit that victory.<sup>5</sup>

The historian H.P. Willmott has argued that a historian should always strive to explain, rather than merely to describe.<sup>6</sup> Each of these articles provides thought-provoking explanations for key aspects of the Korean War, while also describing the events they recount. This issue of *The Journal of Strategic Studies* therefore constitutes a valuable addition to the literature and historical explanation of the war and can be recommended to the attention of anyone hoping to delve beneath the surface of those events.

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<sup>5</sup> Walter G. Hermes, *U.S. Army in the Korean War: Truce Tent and Fighting Front* (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, U.S. Army, 1966), p. 500. The 50,000 figure for nonrepatriates includes some 25,000 anti-communist North Korean POWs released by the ROK government on 18 June 1953 without coordination with the United States, *Ibid.*, 451. Due to the reclassification of a number of prisoners as civilian internees and other factors, the numbers at the time of the armistice were substantially different from those at the time of the 1952 count.

<sup>6</sup> Willmott has made this assertion frequently in his writings. See, for example, H.P. Willmott, *The Last Century of Sea Power, Volume One: From Port Arthur to Chanak, 1894-1922* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2009), pp. xii-xiv.

June 25, 2010 will mark the sixtieth anniversary of the start of the conventional phase of Korea's war. *The Journal of Strategic Studies* deserves praise for devoting an entire issue to commemoration of this important event. Regrettably, the articles in this compilation do not address the Korean War, but rather aspects of the conflict that the United States waged for eight years after 1945 to defeat the perceived threat of Soviet-inspired expansion into Asia. Despite the great value of the volume, this collection in fact obscures the fundamental starting point that the Korean War was the result of the desire of the Korean people to reunite their nation. Two authors provide a context for consideration of the war that is ethnocentric and ahistorical when they label the North Korean attack as "brazen" (235, 298), ignoring two years of violent border clashes at the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel that signaled the certainty of a conventional assault. More egregious is Colin F. Jackson's comment that the "US had blocked a Communist land grab" (256), seemingly equating North Korea's pursuit of reunification with Nazi Germany's invasion of Czechoslovakia. If Koreans could invade Korea then one supposes that another land grab was "Sherman's March to the Sea." All but one of these articles present valuable information and analysis, but as a collective, establish a skewed perspective that makes it impossible for readers to know the real meaning and lessons of the Korean War.

In the first essay titled "An Alliance Forged in Blood," William Stueck and Boram Yi are guilty of false advertising because their focus is not on the partnership between the United States and the Republic of Korea (ROK). Instead, they begin with a familiar description of Korea's division in August 1945 and then the Soviet-American occupation of the nation. Thereafter, they fulfill their promise "to reexamine the shaky nature of the relationship of the United States and Korea in the years between World War II and the Korean War" (178). New detailed information documents the criminal misbehavior of American soldiers that the authors claim was much worse than in Japan and Germany. A lack of good officers combined with primitive living conditions and cultural differences to establish widespread "indifference, impatience, contempt, and even hatred" (192) toward Koreans that poisoned the initial U.S. relationship with the ROK. Stueck and Yi argue that renewed U.S. occupation of Korea after North Korea's attack "proved more acceptable to both sides" (205), resulting in the creation of a strong alliance. The ROK's status as a sovereign nation explained its early success, but more important, Americans gained respect for South Koreans as effective fighters and builders of a modern nation where duty was no longer onerous. The authors contend that a process of convergence has narrowed the psychological and cultural distance between the two nations and led to the ROK assuming rising power and responsibility in an alliance likely to endure.

Stueck and Yi cite standard secondary works and primary sources, but rely as well on valuable fresh evidence from firsthand accounts, Korean language sources, and U.S. Army documents. But interviews with participants often result in presentation as fact of faulty recollections, such as one officer's claim that soldier complaints forced withdrawal from Korea. A more serious problem is a pattern of providing insufficient or inaccurate context. Although true that had U.S. occupation commander Lieutenant General John R. Hodge

“adopted as a more systematic and sustained policy of cooperation with the people’s committees, he would have greatly reduced the tasks of American forces,” (188-89), this statement contradicts the authors’ rightful emphasis on the priority that U.S. leaders placed on preventing Soviet expansion. “The trusteeship approach,” they write, “remained alive in Washington” (184) in the summer of 1945, when the Truman administration in fact had abandoned it in pursuit of unilateral occupation in April and did not reembrace it until October. Thereafter, Hodge worked against a trusteeship until he defended it in January 1947, a reversal left unexplained by the authors. And they conclude that “regional stability and the security of a small nation surrounded by giants surely provide the major impetus . . .” (207) for the alliance, but never mention North Korea. They ridicule George W. Bush and Roh Moo-hyun as “ham-handed leaders” (177), when in reality their actions exposed the sharp differences in outlook and interests between two nations joined in a shotgun marriage that likely will end in divorce after reunification.

Despite access to selected Soviet and Chinese primary sources, Shen Zhihua’s “China and the Dispatch of the Soviet Air Force” demonstrates that explaining Beijing’s decision to intervene in the Korean War remains contested terrain. The author proves that examining “the interconnections between these two threads reveals the complex relationships between” (212) the Soviet Union, the People’s Republic of China (PRC), and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK). Indeed, he traces how acute existing suspicion intensified in the first week of the war when Beijing offered to commit troops after U.S. intervention, but Soviet leader Joseph Stalin balked, fearing this “would expand China’s status and influence in Korea” (216). Kim Il Sung then pressed Stalin to approve his acceptance of Beijing’s offer in a maneuver to coerce his patron into committing Soviet air power, arguing that this was necessary to end punishing U.S. air attacks on North Korea. Shen also describes how Stalin became more cautious after U.S. planes shot down a Soviet bomber on 4 September, prompting him to withdraw Soviet trainers from China and reconsider his pledge of air support. His hesitation persisted after UN forces crossed the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, but, on 1 October, “Stalin finally gave the green light” (222) for China to prevent U.S. conquest of North Korea. Shen covers familiar ground in discussing the subsequent haggling between Mao Zedong and Stalin over air support, concluding that Chinese intervention made it “the main force of this alliance” (229).

Little in Shen’s article warrants criticism. He supports his persuasive description and analysis of events with reference not only to Soviet and Chinese primary sources that prior scholars have cited, but important new documents. Some readers may judge his depiction of a very restrained and uncertain Stalin as exaggerated, but this would be incorrect. Ironically, Shen’s only erroneous claim actually provides additional evidence to justify his characterization. Stalin, he reports, was “confident that the United States would not enter the war” (212), when in fact he had warned Kim Il Sung personally in April 1950 that a “quick and speedy” invasion was critical because the Americans must “not have time to come to their senses . . . to put up a strong resistance and to mobilize international

support.”<sup>1</sup> Mao certainly expected U.S. intervention, as well as anticipating the Inchon Landing. Shen provides valuable new insights on how Stalin’s opposition to China’s entry had as powerful an influence on Mao Zedong’s hesitation to intervene as his ally’s waffling on air support. But he passes over the willingness of both leaders to abandon the DPRK too quickly. China’s denunciation of U.S. protection of the exiled Nationalist regime on Taiwan meant that Mao could not provide a haven for the North Koreans in Manchuria. Fear of hypocrisy removed the final barrier to Mao’s decision on 18 October to order Chinese intervention. As for Stalin, Shen concludes that “not until 25 October, after, the first engagement” with UN forces, did he “truly believe that the [Chinese Communist Party] was not a nationalist or ‘pro-American element’” (227).

Robert Barnes argues that prior historians “have largely overlooked” (231) how after China intervened in the Korean War, “the Commonwealth not only challenged US hegemony at the world organisation but also directly influenced UN actions” (232). If this is true, his “Branding an Aggressor” makes a positive contribution to rectifying this oversight. Barnes proves his main thesis “that Commonwealth unity occurred when the risk of a global conflict was at its greatest, when key Commonwealth personalities were prepared to exercise their influence, when coincidence brought . . . members together, and when the US government was willing to bow to Commonwealth pressure” (232). The Commonwealth, he explains, originally was “a loosely-defined intergovernmental organisation of independent states united by a shared Head of State” (233). When the Korean War began, the four “old” members were Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and South Africa and the “new” members were India, Ceylon (not a UN member), and Pakistan. Barnes spotlights the division between the “old” members, who had little faith in the United Nations and “preferred to remain quiet and support the Anglo-American position,” and India who, “much to the irritation of the Americans, was convinced that the world organisation could be utilised to reconcile Cold War issues” (234-35). U.S. policy at the UN in response to North Korea’s attack exposed this divergence, resulting in the Commonwealth members working at cross-purposes at the outset of the war.

Referencing sources in British, Indian, and American archival collections, Barnes recapitulates well-known events at the United Nations during the brief period from early November 1950 until late January 1951. Chinese entry “brought all the Commonwealth members into play,” he explains. “But rather than meekly follow the US lead, as many had done in the summer, this time the Commonwealth swiftly united behind an effort to constrain the Truman administration and prevent the US Delegation from convincing the General Assembly to take precipitate action that might escalate the crisis” (237). Not all readers will agree with the author that a united Commonwealth deserves praise for forcing Washington “to make a number of significant concessions that created the delay necessary to expose China’s insincerity and bring about the overwhelming support of the UN

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<sup>1</sup> Central Committee report on the Visit of Kim Il Sung, n.d., in Kathryn Weathersby, “Should We Fear

This?: Stalin and the Korean War,” Conference on “Stalin and the Cold War,” Yale University, 23-26 September 1999, 12.

members for the aggressor resolution” (251). Moreover, it is doubtful whether “this episode demonstrated that the Commonwealth was more than a symbolic group of states bound by a common history” (252). A single act of courage hardly proves that “as a unit the Commonwealth wielded considerable moral authority” (232). The “old” members, to buy U.S aid and protection, let India stand alone against the hypocrisy of branding China an aggressor—poisoning U.S. and UN relations with Beijing for years—just as they had done when they helped the United States secure UN approval for the invasion of North Korea, a subject that attracts just five sentences in this article.

In sharp contrast to the analytical timidity of the Barnes essay, the Jackson article is a breathtaking model of interpretive boldness. An exercise in counter-factual history, its consistently flawed logic derives from a narrow militarist perspective divorced from a larger international context, reducing this essay to a flight of fancy. Jackson’s questionable conclusions are based upon fundamental misperceptions, requiring that this review devote more attention to assessing this article than the others in the volume. According to Jackson, his essay “re-examines the historical dispute [among American participants] surrounding the decisions to suspend [U.S.] offensive operations” (257) in May 1951. What the author covers on this specific issue makes a positive addition to the literature on the Korean War. But Jackson’s purpose is far more grandiose. His main argument holds that American “policymakers overestimated the risk of Soviet escalation and that the US forfeited an opportunity to secure additional bargaining power in the wake of the collapse of the Chinese offensives” (256). With the Chinese battered and exhausted, U.S. forces could have—and should have—launched a frontal counterattack combined with an amphibious landing at Tongchon on North Korea’s east coast to move the battle front northward to the Pyongyang-Wonsan line. General Matthew B. Ridgway, head of the United Nations Command, made the “unnecessary and costly” (256) decision, the author claims, not to implement this plan for “the final defeat of the enemy” (271).

Jackson is correct when he claims that scholars in recent years have not devoted a great amount of attention to reexamining the course of the Korean War from February and July 1951. But his belief is entirely mistaken, as the earlier Shen essay shows, that old “and heated debates over the origins of the war, Soviet complicity, and the motives behind Chinese intervention have been laid to rest by the documentary record” (258). His research in declassified Chinese and Soviet documents and U.S. primary sources has led Jackson to conclude that Lieutenant General James A. “Van Fleet’s proposals for an intensification of UN pursuit operations in June 1951 were militarily feasible and strategically sound” (257), thus justifying his “public charges, first in Senate hearings and later in two *Life Magazine* articles, that the US needlessly conceded opportunities to achieve breakthroughs in the Korean War” (260). This article presents persuasive evidence that the failed Spring Offensives of 1951 not only severely weakened Chinese forces, but exposed their inadequacies in firepower, mobility, and logistics. At the same time, UN forces displayed a significant military superiority in using airborne infantry, air support, and tanks that “surprised the Chinese and led to panic in some units” (264). According to Jackson, China was so intimidated that it never mounted another serious offensive for the balance of the war, ignoring the fact that Beijing, like the United States, developed plans for major operations, but were more committed to achieving a truce.

Timing, Jackson rightly emphasizes, is critical in substantiating—and refuting—his main thesis. Van Fleet, he explains, acted to exploit his success in blunting the Chinese second offensive with Operation Detonate, ordering all three UN Corps to attack enemy positions on 23 May. After three days clearing roadblocks, fatigued UN forces halted and Lieutenant General Edward Almond, commander of X Corps, was unable to report total success until 1 June. Meanwhile, on 28 May, Van Fleet had presented his plan to Ridgway. Jackson stresses that it would require no additional troops, but later explains that reinforcements were necessary to force the Chinese to retreat. The slow progress of Detonate alone justified rejecting the plan, but Ridgway had other reasons, including “recent murmurings on the terms of a possible ceasefire [that] seemed to make seizure of ‘real estate’ north of the 38th Parallel meaningless” (269). That Jackson does not describe the broader context to which Ridgway referred further damages his argument, as he fails to integrate the simultaneous State Department initiative through George F. Kennan to commence ceasefire negotiations. Oddly, Jackson seems to think that after UN seizure of half of North Korea, plus its capital, that the Communists still would have sought an armistice. Not only would there have been no truce talks, ROK President Syngman Rhee would have applied unwanted pressure on the United States for a push to the Yalu, acting unilaterally if necessary against presumably a beaten enemy.

Despite a clear and strong consensus in Washington during May 1951 supporting pursuit of an armistice, Jackson insists that U.S. policy on war aims was in flux, implying that Van Fleet’s plan awaited approval if Ridgway had just not stood in the way. Before summarizing his flimsy evidence, it warrants emphasis that the author depicts this as entirely a U.S. decision, since the United Nations has no role in his recreation. President Harry Truman also is absent, while Dean Acheson is just slightly less invisible. Jackson instead relies on the musings of Assistant Secretary of State Dean Rusk about possibly seeking victory at a 27 July meeting with the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), where hawkish Admiral Forrest Sherman, arguably the least influential chief, advocated an offensive to the Pyongyang-Wonsan line because it would allow the United States to “dictate terms in exchange for drawing back to the 38th Parallel” (278). More “proof” comes from a meeting two days later when presidential advisor Averell Harriman and Navy Secretary Francis Matthews both “appeared to accept Admiral Sherman’s contention that a limit of advance around the 39th Parallel would be tenable in political terms.” This claim, the author admits in an endnote, derives from inference, not explicit evidence. “This then was the ironic climax of the ‘lost chance’,” Jackson concludes “One day after Ridgway rejected the Tongchon operation on the grounds that it conflicted with JCS guidance, that same body, unaware of the Tongchon plan, was moving in the direction of agreement on a Wonsan–Pyongyang limit of advance” (281).

Jackson also misinterprets the meaning of exchanges between Stalin and Mao. “What emerges then from the Russian and Chinese sources is a sense of the enormity of the collapse of the Chinese spring offensives . . .” (274), backing his judgment that Van Fleet was correct in predicting an easy victory for an offensive northward. Mao was in fact minimizing his military capability to maximize Moscow’s shipment of war supplies. The author even references “Mao’s 24 June 1951 objection to the slow speed of Soviet

equipment transfers” (284), which reflected his consistent strategy from the outset of the Korean War. How several documents showing Beijing’s fears of a U.S. amphibious attack confirms China’s military bankruptcy remains a mystery. In one example, Peng Dehuai, commander of Chinese forces, reports to Mao his expectation “that the enemy will launch a frontal attack in the east coordinated by an amphibious landing on Wonsan or Tongchon, which would aim at controlling north of the 39th Parallel . . .” (281). An absence of surprise suggests that Van Fleet’s plan invited a military disaster. Jackson also argues that thinks Communist sources indicate that while “MacArthur’s plans held the plausible risk of Soviet intervention, it was unclear that an advance that stopped short of the Yalu posed any similar escalation risk” (280). If Stalin did not intervene in October 1950, he asks, why would he in June 1951? Left unmentioned is the Sino-Soviet Treaty that Moscow could not ignore without losing all credibility among its Communist allies.

To his credit, Jackson recognizes that government leaders in the United States and Western Europe thought the risk of Soviet intervention was real, identifying this as one of the reasons why the Truman administration, if aware of Van Fleet’s plan, would have rejected it. Dominating Washington’s wartime decision-making after China’s entry, he explains, was a grand strategy focusing “the defense buildup in Europe, the problem of allied unity, and the design of an exit strategy from Korea” (276). U.S. rearmament was underway, promising eventual creation of a credible deterrent to the Soviet threat to Japan and Europe, but this required limiting commitment of resources in areas not vital to national security. Jackson notes that U.S. allies agreed, but is silent about the impact of this on the wisdom of Van Fleet’s plan. At least he concedes that these three factors pushed U.S. “policymakers away from any options that smacked of a reinforcement of Korea” (277). Moreover, U.S. leaders in public statements and in testimony at the MacArthur Hearings made plain that they wanted an early end to the fighting, a position that Washington’s closest allies shared. “Had Ridgway chosen to bring the Van Fleet proposals to the JCS on 28 May,” Jackson observes, “his proposal would have placed an already taxed JCS in the awkward position of reversing their previous guidance, and opening the administration to new charges of hypocrisy” (283). Van Fleet seemingly was blind to these larger factors of strategic and political importance and developed his plan in a militarist vacuum, just as this essay does in advocating its implementation.

Ultimately, this essay has value if it is true that “Van Fleet’s intuitive feel for the military situation, its risks and opportunities, was superior to that of Ridgway and the JCS” and failure to act on his plan was “a missed opportunity to shift the line 60 miles north and fundamentally alter the pre-armistice strategic setting” (275). The central question is whether possible gains outweighed the risks. The Pyongyang-Wonsan line, Jackson claims, would have been shorter and easier to defend, even though this would have brought the front closer to China. He also asserts that this would have reduced significantly the huge UN losses sustained after July 1951. Compelled, as elsewhere in this comment, to combat wild speculation with just speculation, it is more likely that the Communists would fight tenaciously to restore the prewar status quo, inflicting greater casualties on UN forces now facing perpetual occupation of half of North Korea and an indigenous population waging a guerrilla war to force their departure. If the “possession of the northern line would have given the Americans a potent card in the armistice talks” (284), one wonders what

concessions they would have sought. After all, the United States achieved all its major goals in the truce agreement, except for a ban on airfield rehabilitation. Jackson's benefit of moving North Korean artillery out of range of Seoul, however, would negate this bargaining chip. Readers can decide if Jackson is right that acting on Van Fleet's plan might have caused a chastened Stalin to limit his aggressive behavior and "accelerated the Sino-Soviet split" (286). But one point is crystal clear: Van Fleet's offensive would not have brought "a speedy end to the war" (286).

Steven Casey explains in his article how the Korean conflict disproves the theory that mounting casualties result in decreasing popular support for waging war, not least because "the public is often unaware of the true cost of the war" (292). Furthermore, as in previous wars, Korea demonstrated how "the government does not stand idly by while domestic support wanes, but tries instead to 'remobilize' the home front, devising more eye-catching goals that turn the war into some sort of crusade for basic American values" (292). His thorough research in government documents, as well as citation of contemporary newspaper and magazine reports on the Korean War, firmly establishes the credibility and persuasiveness of this excellent essay. Casey's brief coverage of the early history of U.S. casualty reporting has special value because in response to North Korea's attack, the U.S. military quickly "turned to the procedures and precedents it had developed during the two world wars" (298). Amid early defeats and chaotic retreats, accurate casualty counting was impossible, causing the U.S. Army to refuse to release any numbers. Casey then traces "the efforts by some senior officers to try to influence how the home front perceived the war's cost" (301), with General Douglas MacArthur not surprisingly maximizing enemy losses and minimizing his own. More interesting, we learn that the Mobile Army Surgical Hospital was "born at a very early stage, the product of a particular propaganda urge to mute the public's response to casualties" (302).

"Casualty Reporting and Domestic Support for War" contributes most importantly to writings on the Korean War with its description and analysis of "the complex interplay between the military's casualty reporting on the one hand and elite efforts to question the official narrative on the other" (314). Chinese military intervention in late 1950, Casey explains, set the stage for sharp controversy about the war's real costs. January 1951 marked the first of two critical moments when "domestic support for the Korean War suddenly dipped" (310), at that time in response to mounting losses during the retreat southward. Until censorship stopped journalists from filing exaggerated casualty reports, instances of draft evasion rose, despite widespread support for the draft. But by spring, Casey asserts, opposition "became less a product of vivid firsthand reporting from the Korean battlefield and more a manifestation of intensifying partisan bickering inside Washington DC" (307), especially after recall of MacArthur. Republican efforts to exploit the general's charges that limited war wasted American lives fizzled, resulting in public support for the conflict remaining "relatively robust for the next 18 months . . ." (312). In the 1952 presidential campaign, Dwight D. Eisenhower's regular references to high casualties in Korea, Casey writes, brought a second drop in popular support for the war. His assessment concludes that the number of casualties have an impact on public support when scoop-seeking journalists and ambitious politicians make it so.

Saving the best for last, Charles S. Young's "POWs" is the most interesting and insightful article in the volume, exposing as promised the hidden reason for forgetting Korea. "At least by the fall of 1951," he explains, "the media had already dubbed it 'the forgotten war'" (319), but amnesia grew among both historians and the general public thereafter because Americans did "not like to dwell on unpleasant memories, especially when they go unredeemed by later triumph" (318). Young contends, however, that, after China blocked the worthy wartime success of uniting Korea, the United States won a substitute for victory that "was just that: victorious. The enemy kicked and screamed for 18 months, but in the end, accepted an armistice that did not return all its prisoners . . ." (328). This triumph in Korea never became public knowledge, Young writes, because the U.S. government refused to identify voluntary repatriation as a war aim, leaving Americans without a satisfying answer to the question of why their soldiers fought. Rather, the Truman administration attributed the absence of an armistice to the "wicked ways the Communists prevented peace" through "a bewildering snarl of petty bickering, inscrutable 'Oriental' stubbornness, and senseless desire to keep killing" (328), intentionally obscuring the real reason which was that U.S. leaders now defined victory as securing asylum for enemy prisoners. Fear that being honest would prompt public demands to accept forcible repatriation and end the war also explained why the U.S. government did not publicize Communist wartime abuse of American POWs.

Young's essay nevertheless suffers from some notable shortcomings, including a primary reliance on secondary sources. His coverage of the emergence of stalemate on the battlefield and at the negotiating table is quite general, as Young fails to integrate specific developments into the overall analytical development of his main argument. In addition, there are factual errors. "General Douglas MacArthur's successful amphibious attack at Inchon with X Corps was, in baseball terms," he writes mistakenly, "like a full-court basket at the buzzer" (318). Later, the author erroneously informs readers that the "Chinese offensive in spring 1951 progressed for a time, even rere-taking Seoul" (324). And two interpretive arguments are flawed. First, according to Young, "never in Korea was the complete annihilation of the enemy—Communism—contemplated." The objective, he continues, "was containment, and that was achieved" (321). The U.S. attempt to destroy the first Communist regime discredits both of these assertions, but so too does the inflexible U.S. demand for voluntary repatriation. The ultimate goal in both cases was not to contain, but to start the collapse of the Soviet empire. Second, Young never mentions the centrality of race in explaining the U.S. government's failure to state publicly that saving Chinese and Koreans from alleged Communist enslavement was a war aim. This would have added a critical element of analytical depth to his powerful conclusion that President Dwight D. "Eisenhower could not proclaim victory on voluntary repatriation because no one knew that was what they were fighting for" (330)

Constant repetition that the Korean War was about Korea eventually may cause forgetful Americans to remember the true meaning of this conflict, but this is improbable. Providing reason for pessimism, Jackson defines Korea's significance as contributing to the U.S. failure in Vietnam because its main lesson "overstates the utility of restraint in limited war" (257). Closer to the mark, Young writes that "Korea was monumentally important, yet few [American?] people on the street would answer 'Korea' if asked 'what was the most far-

reaching episode of the Cold War?” (318). Koreans certainly know the meaning of their war because they continue to live with the unhappy consequences of how outside powers divided their nation in 1945 and then intervened twice to prevent reunification after the North Korean attack in June 1950. These events verify the truth of the old Swahili saying that when two elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers. It is unfortunate that these essays provide very few insights about the issues relevant to the people that the Korean War most adversely affected. Koreans can understand Grace M. Cho’s poignant remark in *Haunting the Korean Diaspora* that their war was “the first and last conflict of the Cold War, whose beginning is uncertain and whose end has not yet arrived” (54). To be fair, the authors in this special issue deserve credit for adding to existing understanding of the U.S. war in Korea, especially Young’s explanation of its meaning for Americans. “When a nation is moved to fight by existential threat, but the war is pursued according to expediency and empire,” he concludes perceptively, “the memory becomes unmanageable, and it may be better to just forget” (330-31).

For the past twenty years the Korean War has shed its “forgotten” status in the United States and even in Europe. Of course, the war is acutely remembered in China and both Koreas. No longer forgotten does not mean understood, but that, too, is changing. The six essays in the *Journal of Strategic Studies* (April, 2010) are a welcome contribution to our continuing search for the real Korean War. The essayists themselves are not the usual suspects for such anthologies. Only Prof. William Stueck (University of Georgia) has written more than one book on the war, and only one other author, Steven Casey, has an important book to his credit. Nevertheless, all but one of the authors demonstrates some mastery of the subject matter and adds to the reborn interest in the war. My only broad criticism is that the authors are not yet so informed by archival research that they should generalize with confidence. The result is that their omissions are more serious than what they write.

I might also add that none of the authors except the two Asian participants (Boram Yi and Zhihua Shen) work in a foreign language. My view is that Anglophone authors should have Korean or Russian partners or have access to friendly translators unless they are working on a subject that allows a single, focused national perspective as Professor Casey provides in his essay.

The lead essay by Stueck and Yi focuses on the American military occupation of Korea, 1945-1948. In a sense Stueck returns to the subject of his first book, postwar American-Asian policy, but he now probes more deeply into Korean internal politics. The central thesis is that Korean-American tension at the local level, meaning GIs and Korean citizens in disputes, hurried the occupation to its conclusion and encouraged the Communist insurgency (1948-1950) and international war (1950-1953) that followed. This assessment is supportable, but in my judgment not a determinative factor in the departure of American troops. The critical issue is the withdrawal of the last U.S. Army tactical unit, the 5<sup>th</sup> Regimental Combat Team, in 1949. Its departure was one of Stalin’s preconditions for supporting Kim Il-sung’s plan for unification-by-invasion. The State Department wanted the 5<sup>th</sup> RCT (roughly 3,000 soldiers) to stay on the northern approaches to Seoul, but the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) won the argument for withdrawal on strategic (war plans) and economic grounds. Dwight D. Eisenhower as a JCS advisor influenced the decision, which he overlooked in the 1952 presidential campaign.

Stueck and Yi then argue that the “big war” restored U.S.-Korean relations enough to make a mutual security pact possible in 1953. While this conclusion is self evident, it does not account for the fact that military assistance to Korea before and after 1950 was held hostage by Congress to the extension of military aid to the Chinese Nationalists on Taiwan. An added dimension of the war that also reshaped U.S.-ROK relations is the peace treaty with Japan and the creation of permanent U.S. bases in Japan and Okinawa. As many Korean commentators have noted, it is U.S. policy toward China and Japan that drives relations with the two Koreas, a reality Koreans resent.

It is a relief to see Stueck and Yi depart from the Bruce Cumings 'School of Inept Occupation,' but I still believe that using "Right" for the anti-Communist Korean political factions oversimplifies the complexities faced by the U.S. Army Military Government in Korea (USAMGIK). Certainly the factions shared a common elitism and authoritarianism, but "the Right" can be the entrepreneurial, educated, westernized Democratic Party or it can be the populist, quasi-fascist Independence Party or it can be Syngman Rhee's fusionist National Society for the Rapid Realization of Korean Independence or it can be the street toughs of the displaced refugees in the Northwest Youth Association or it can be the leaderships of the Korean National Police. Varied Korean political leaders of the period found their inspiration in Chiang Kai-shek, Benito Mussolini, and Oliver Cromwell with a dose of secret admiration for the Japanese military-industrial elite. Stueck and Yi do give USAMGIK some credit for at least good intentions.

Whether troop behavior amounted to more than an irritation depends on the past record of U.S.-Korean relations, to which the authors barely refer. Of all the foreign powers that intervened in Korean national life, the United States seemed the most helpful and altruistic when it signed the Treaty of Amity and Commerce in 1882. Even though Theodore Roosevelt cast aside official protection in the Portsmouth Treaty (1905) and subsequent arrangements with Japan, Americans ranked with the British and Canadians as Korea's favorite missionaries, teachers, and doctors. Americans represented hope and modernization; in Korean an American is a miguk saram or person from the land of dreams. The best source on historic American-Korean relations is Donald N. Clark, *Living Dangerously: The Western Experience in Korea, 1900-1950* and the books of the late Donald Macdonald.<sup>1</sup>

Professor Zhihua Shen's essay on Chinese-Soviet military relations covers much of the same material that can be found in doctoral dissertations by Mark O'Neill and Alexandre Mansourov and in Zhang Xiomeng, *Red Wings over the Yalu: China, the Soviet Union and the*

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<sup>1</sup> Donald N. Clark, *Living Dangerously: The Western Experience in Korea, 1900-1950* (Norwalk, CT: East Bridge Press, 2003); Donald Stone MacDonald, *The Koreans: Contemporary Politics and Society* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1988) and *U.S.-Korean Relations from Liberation to Self-Reliance: The Twenty-Year Record: An Interpretive Summary of the Archives of the U.S. Department of State* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992).

*Air War in Korea* (Texas A&M University Press, 2002).<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, any essay based on Chinese sources is a contribution to Korean War history. Fortunately, some of Professor Shen's documentary sources have been translated and published in the *Bulletin* of the Cold War International History Project. At the center of Shen's essay is his assertion that Josef Stalin made a commitment to commit Soviet air units to offensive strikes in Korea to cover the Chinese People's Volunteers Force. This conclusion is still open to debate, and the sources available to non-PRC, non-RFS historians are inconclusive. I tend to lean to the "did not" school of interpretation. The open sources are clear enough on Stalin's willingness to defend the Yalu River air space on both sides of the border, and Soviet ground-based air defense units went as far south as Pyongyang for a short time in 1950 and for the rest of the war in 1951. I don't believe the evidence, however, will support Shen's assertion that "Stalin clearly promised" (JSS, p. 214) air support much south of the Yalu. Even Mao's correspondence suggests the primacy of defending Manchurian cities, just as the Soviets had begun to defend Beijing and Shanghai from Chinese Nationalist bombers in 1949. I'm sure we will all profit from following Professor Shen's argument if and when his *Mao Zedong, Sidalin yu Chaoxian Zhanzheng* [*Mao, Stalin and the Korean War*]<sup>3</sup> is published in English as it should be.

One must be cautious about some of Shen's accounts of US-USSR-PRC aerial contacts. He asserts that a USN carrier aircraft shot down a "Soviet bomber on a training run at Lushun [Port Arthur] naval base." (JSS, p. 220) A shoot-down definitely occurred on September 4, but the IL-4 was in international waters overflying a blockading naval group in the West Sea. The USN combat air patrol warned off the bomber several times. As it broke off, the Soviet aircraft opened fire, and the Corsairs shot it down. I suspect a Russian pilot was hot-dogging by buzzing the ships and died for his fun. I was again struck by the critical role of Zhou Enlai in PRC-USSR relations and how much Stalin and Mao depended upon him as negotiator and interpreter. Just whose interests Zhou represented is sometimes difficult to assess. One might make a case that he helped Stalin withhold air support since he thought Mao's commitment to save the DPRK was utter folly. Stalin was not the only slippery fellow

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<sup>2</sup> Mark O'Neill, "The Other Side of the Yalu: Soviet Pilots in the Korean War - Phase One, 1 November 1950-12 April 1951," Ph.D. Dissertation, Florida State University, 1996; Alexandre Mansourov, "Communist War Coalition Formation and the Origins of the Korean War," Ph.D. Dissertation, Columbia University, 1997; Zhang Xioming, *Red Wings over the Yalu: China, the Soviet Union and the Air War in Korea* (College Station, TX: Texas A & M University Press, 2002).

<sup>3</sup> Shen Zhihua, *Mao Zedong, Sidalin yu Chaoxian Zhanzheng*. (Guangzhou: Guangdong Renmin Chubanshe, 2003).

in the room. On the other hand, Professor Shen still leans too far to the traditional (since 1989) Chinese view that Stalin duped Mao Zedong into the intervention. It is hard to see Mao as a naïve romantic driven by revolutionary purity to confront the United States. It is easier to see him waging a preemptive war to disrupt a growing US-ROC-Japan alliance to reverse the Chinese revolution.

In his essay on Commonwealth relations with the United States and the United Nations, Robert Barnes extends the work of Rosemary Foot and Sydney Bailey by focusing on the issue of condemning China for its military intervention<sup>4</sup>. Great Britain sought to form a cohesive block of “Old” (meaning European) Commonwealth nations of which Australia and Canada emerged as co-leaders. On the issue of curbing American aggressiveness, the Big Seven (Great Britain and six Dominions) sought to add India as a de facto member, but India took a different course as spokesman for the post-colonial world and friend of the People’s Republic of China. Using Cabinet papers, UN records, and the U.S. *Foreign Relations* series, Barnes draws a detailed and persuasive picture of the Commonwealth coalition’s lobbying for a measured declaratory response, which insured actually doing almost nothing to punish China. On supporting a General Assembly resolution condemning China as an aggressor, the “Old” Commonwealth members supported the U.S. language for fear of displeasing their principal ally. However, the Big Seven and India managed to commit the UN to taking a leading role in arranging eventual peace talks.

Although Professor Barnes with good reason gives full attention to the prime ministers and diplomats, he does not examine two other significant Big Seven-U.S. relationships, those of the intelligence agencies and armed forces’ general staffs. Inter-allied cooperation with the U.S. was much more collaborative than the civilians probably appreciated. MI-6 operations in Beijing and Hong Kong made the CIA look smarter than it was. Australia and New Zealand looked to the United States as its strategic patron, their military leaders fed up with British penury and urge to dominate. If Canada’s Lester Pearson wanted to be a great global adjudicator, the Canadian military leaders valued NATO and the North American air defense alliance. And Great Britain still shared a “special relationship” in the development of nuclear weapons. The Chinese mission of observation at the UN could read the signs: the U.S. could placate the Commonwealth nations and surrender little of value. Actually, the U.S. spent more time appeasing India, which the Chinese sought to cultivate by making it the PRC’s UN surrogate. The Big Seven could not hold together under their distinct national interests.

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<sup>4</sup> Rosemary Foot, *The Wrong War: American Policy and the Dimensions of the Korean Conflict* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985) and *A Substitute for Victory: The Politics of Peacemaking at the Korean Armistice Talks* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990); Sydney D. Bailey, *The Korean Armistice* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1992).

Colin Jackson's "Lost Chance or Lost Horizon? Strategic Opportunity and Escalation Risk in the Korean War, April-June 1951" focuses on a true turning point of the Korean War, probably the only one of consequence from December, 1950 until the armistice negotiations after Stalin's death in March, 1953. Jackson's essay is too long and too dependent on the documents in the *Foreign Relations* series and not General James Van Fleet's papers at the Marshall Library, General Matthew B. Ridgway's papers at the U.S. Army Military History Institute, and the Far East Command and JCS records in the National Archives. Nevertheless, Jackson has the story right: Van Fleet wanted to wage an offensive into North Korea and to establish a new border for South Korea along the Pyongyang-Wonsan line. The major opponent to this plan was Ridgway, the theater commander after April, 1951.

Although he spends too much time sorting out the self-serving postwar memoirs of the principals, Jackson shares Van Fleet's assessment that the CPVF and KPA had shot their bolt in the Fifth Offensive – Phase Two (not, the "Sixth Offensive") and had switched to Phase Three, a strategic defense that Peng Dehuai eagerly sought to reorganize his battered coalition army. In truth, the CPVF was not in desperate shape for manpower, but it was short of munitions and artillery. Only one Chinese division had been surrounded, and half of it exfiltrated to safety. Jackson's grasp of Korean operations is uncertain; his summary of the Fourth Offensive (February, 1951) omits the battle of Wonju and lauds the victory at Chipyeong-ni, which the Chinese attacked in desultory fashion as a diversion. In all, there is too much background and too little comprehensive analysis of the strategic debate in Far East Command in May and June, 1951. Such is the tarpit of secondary source reliance.

The planning factor that both Van Fleet and Jackson undervalue is timing. Given the muddle of the X Corps's backload in October, 1950, one can wonder (as Ridgway did) how X Corps would extract itself from the "Punchbowl" area in the east-central mountains and embark on the Pacific Fleet amphibious force. Van Fleet, never considered a serious thinker by his peers, had made one landing (Utah Beach, D-Day) as a regimental commander. Lt. Gen. Edward M. Almond, X Corps commander, at least had made Inchon and the Hungnam backload, and his corps staff had the requisite experience as did Maj. Gen. Gerald C. Thomas, USMC, and the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division staff. Ridgway, however, had reasonable doubts on the operation's feasibility, and the JCS did nothing to encourage adventurous planning. Van Fleet's plan went down in a tidal wave of strategic debate while the CPVF-KPA recovered.

Jackson goes on to review the postwar recriminations about the landing not taken, which shifted to a speculative debate on how to impose a settlement of a limited war rather than survive the ordeal of negotiations. He clearly believes that UNC forfeited its only chance to end the war on American terms. To his credit, Jackson admits that the United States had other priorities. And so the war continued, but not because Van Fleet's plan would not work, but because reembracing Korean reunification threatened more important strategic goals. Like MacArthur, Van Fleet had terminal "theateritis."

As one member of the JCS observed in a NSC meeting during the Korean War, the American public cared nothing about Chinese or Korean casualties, but Americans cared a great deal

about GI deaths in battle. Professor Steven Casey tackles the casualty problem as a component of his large study of the war and domestic politics, the subject of his excellent book, *Selling the Korean War: Propaganda, Politics, and Public Opinion, 1950-1953* (Oxford University Press, 2003).<sup>5</sup> Casey knows the literature on death, politics, and memorialization from Peter Feaver to Drew Gilpin Faust. He needs to know the work of Sheila Miyoshi Jager, the expert on Korean War dying.<sup>6</sup> Professor Casey reviews in detail the American armed forces history of casualty reporting, individual and collective. He also tries to match casualty reporting with deepening American disillusionment with the Korean commitment.

Despite his unfamiliarity with the recent research on Korean War military operations, Professor Casey does us a service in pointing out that body-counting is not a positive way to judge policy, but it is an inevitable issue. I have argued for almost forty years that the American public will accept almost any military operation as long as the deaths are below twenty a week and do not include draftees. The Korean War did not meet this standard.

Professor Casey describes all the Defense Department efforts to publicize improved medical care (true) and related issues that reflected the Eighth Army's battles, 1951-1953. He sinks into the morass of Washington charges and countercharges without engaging the central issue: equity in the exposure to combat. The issue is simple if perplexing: why did the Defense Department send combat veterans of World War II to Korea when it might have sent hundreds of thousands of Army Reserve members and National Guardsmen who had been drawing drill pay and who had not been shot at? There is an answer: because the Eighth Army needed combat veterans in 1950 as replacements. This answer, however, avoids the fact that fewer than half the Army veterans of World War II sent to Korea had combat arms Military Occupational Specialties. Moreover, only a third of those who served in 1950-1953 even got to Far East Command, let alone combat. Measured against the World War II experience, Korean War-era service seemed unjust, not just potentially fatal.

While Casey faithfully reports much of the nonsense that passed for journalism in 1950s, he is not clear about which casualty figures are credible and which are pure yellow journalism. One *Washington Post* story called Tarawa the bloodiest Marine battle of World War II, which may be true if analyzed by days of combat and size of the engaged force, but otherwise Iwo Jima and Okinawa win this honor hands down.<sup>7</sup> Despite recent memories of World War II, the non-veteran American public still could not grasp the intricacies of military operations. The efforts like the Army's "Big Picture" movie and TV series could

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<sup>5</sup> Steven Casey, *Selling the Korean War: Propaganda, Politics, and Public Opinion, 1950-1953* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

<sup>6</sup> Sheila Miyoshi Jager, *Narratives of Nation Building in Korea: A Genealogy of Patriotism* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2003).

<sup>7</sup> "Marine Losses Heavier Than Tarawa," *Washington Post*, 11 Dec. 1950.

only do so much to enlighten the public, spoiled by World War II victories it could understand.

Casey's unfamiliarity with the war's operational history shows. He credits MacArthur with censorship when it was Ridgway's decision and applied only to Eighth Army. By 1951 the experienced war correspondents had left Korea, and their successors were refugees from the sports pages and tabloids. Their inexpert reporting helped fuel Republican campaign attacks in 1952.

As Casey finally concludes, casualty sensitivity did not emerge until the presidential campaign of 1952. Casey mentions the battle of White Horse Mountain (October, 1952) and its awful casualties. True, but the dead and wounded were ROK soldiers of the 9<sup>th</sup> Division, not GIs. I'm not sure Casey knows this fact, and his evidence suggests the public didn't know either. The good news, not reported, is that a ROK division with U.S. Army artillery could defeat four times its numbers of Chinese. Casey's final insight that casualties affect public opinion is self-evident. Why this reshapes strategy is less clear. Many scholars who write about the Korean War seem to contract "MASH syndrome" and thus write about Korea with another war in mind.

Professor Charles Young's essay is last and least, far less valuable than the other pieces. In a breezy analysis of how the POW exchange issue delayed the armistice, Young argues that public dismay over POW repatriation arguments made the war "forgettable." In an essay riddled by assertion and speculation, Young cannot settle on just which POWs upset the American public. Bad behavior on the part of United Nations soldiers did not become public knowledge until the war had almost stopped. The "every war but one" thesis on brainwashing and betrayal did not take root until 1954. Young argues in indirect fashion that the United Nations might have made more of its championship of the concept that no POW should be forced to "go home" to the tender mercies of the claiming power. Yet Young's treatment of the Communist POW issue, based on secondary sources, shows little understanding of the problems UNC faced in handling Chinese and Korean POWs and civilian detainees in UNC-ROK custody.

Had the author shown any familiarity with the Army's detailed internal histories, he might have at least understood why so many Chinese and Koreans refused repatriation. That there was murder, mutilation, coercion, and mayhem behind the wire from early June, 1951 until the last POWs left detention is undeniable. What Young does not explain is that UNC had in custody southern Koreans who had been Communist guerillas and supporters, southern Koreans who had been dragooned into the Korean People's Army, southern Koreans who had truly joined the KPA as volunteers, and northern Koreans who had joined the KPA to escape labor camps or worse, many of them Christians. Real KPA diehard Communists were few in number, most of them officers and NCOs who were party members. The captive Koreans may have numbered as many as 180,000 at one time or another. About half eventually choose to go north in 1953. The other half had been screened and released in 1952 and 1953. The group of 27,000 who "escaped" in June 1953 did so with ROK army assistance in order to avoid the threat of repatriation. Of the 7,900 Koreans in custody who refused final repatriation, 7,604 settled in South Korea.

The Chinese POWs proved a greater embarrassment because two-thirds of the 20,000 POWs wanted to seek asylum on Taiwan or immigrate elsewhere. Who were these apostates? The majority of the Chinese POWs refused repatriation (14,704 of 21,374). They were disillusioned common soldiers, veterans of the Nationalist Army, and Christians. Apart from political officers, CCP members as line officers, and dedicated Communists, the Chinese who chose to go home did so for family reasons. None of the ex-POWs (with some few exceptions) received a welcome anywhere. Professor Young's forthcoming book on the POW issue may bring more clarity to this critical issue. In the meantime I recommend Military Intelligence Section, G/S, Headquarters United Nations and Far East Command, "The Communist War in POW Camps," 28 January 1953 and Military History Office, AC/S G-3, Headquarters, United States Army Pacific, "The Handling of Prisoners of War during the Korean War," June, 1960, both based on official reports and POW interrogations.

Whatever my minor reservations about these Korean War essays, JSS has reminded us that research and analysis of this war remains an open field for future scholars who are willing to accept the challenge of studying a difficult and elusive war.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> For a more comprehensive description and analysis of Korean War scholarship, see Allan R. Millett, *The Korean War: The Essential Bibliography* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2007).

Review by James F. Person, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars

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Sixty years after North Korean troops streamed across the 38th Parallel on June 25, 1950 in a bid to reunify the divided Korean peninsula, the two Koreas remain bitter rivals and are officially still at war with each other. Over the six decades since the outbreak of the Korean War, a significant body of literature has emerged on what is still commonly, if incorrectly, referred to as the “Forgotten War,” setting its status as a defining event not only in Korean and American history, but in the history of the global Cold War. A fierce historiographical debate has ensued in the decades since the war, and shows no sign of diminishing as a veritable flood of documentation emerges from all sides of the conflict, North Korea included.<sup>1</sup> As Allan Millet noted in a historiographical essay on the conflict, “[j]ust which Korean War one reads about depends on what lessons the author intends to communicate, for the history of the war reeks with almost as much didacticism as blood.”<sup>2</sup>

To commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Korean War's outbreak, the editor of this special issue of the *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Steven Casey of the London School of Economics and Political Science, assembled a collection of six articles that address a variety of important subjects pertaining to the conflict. Although most of the articles present new and provocative research on understudied aspects of the war, the collection does not do justice to, or reflect the fierce historiographical debate on the origins of the conflict. Though the individual authors skillfully address specific topics, there is little cohesion to the collection. The role of the editor is vital in contextualizing the articles in this collection, yet, there seems to be very little connecting them thematically and there is no introduction explaining their relation to one another. The topics run the gamut, from U.S.-Korean relations from 1945-1948 to a missed opportunity to terminate the war in the spring of 1951, though, coincidentally perhaps, they do lend themselves to being organized chronologically.

In a commemorative issue of a journal, one might expect the inclusion of a state of the field essay exploring the development of the principal interpretive issues in Korean War historiography. How has our understanding of the Korean War changed over the last six

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<sup>1</sup> The National Archives and Records Administration houses over 1.6 million pages of North Korean documents captured during the occupation of Pyongyang in Record Group 242. The North Korea International Documentation Project at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington, DC is scheduled to release approximately 500 pages of newly translated Russian and Polish documents on the Korean War in June 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Allan Millet, “A Reader’s Guide to the Korean War”, *Joint Force Quarterly* (Spring 1995): 119.

decades through our improved perspective and access to new archival materials from all sides of the conflict? Sadly, this broader question is not answered in this collection. This is not to detract from the value of the authors' contributions. The individual articles are welcomed additions to the Korean War historiography, giving us incredible insight into a number of understudied questions related to the conflict.

William Stueck and Boram Yi's essay explores a period in U.S.-Korean relations that has long deserved more treatment. In recent years, a number of books have been published examining the role of Soviet troops and the Soviet Civil Administration in the formation of the North Korean party-state from 1945-1948.<sup>3</sup> With the notable exception of Bruce Cumings' monumental study of the U.S. and Soviet zones of occupation,<sup>4</sup> less has been written on what Stueck and Yi term the "volatile interaction between Americans and Koreans" during the U.S. occupation of Korea from 1945-1948 (p. 177). As the authors convincingly demonstrate, by the time the bulk of U.S. troops were withdrawn from Korea, (save for a handful of advisors), U.S. officials deeply resented the Korean government and U.S. soldiers who served on the peninsula did not hold the Korean people in high esteem. Why then did the U.S. government, which didn't even take the necessary measures to deter an outside attack on the ROK (page 204) almost immediately come to Korea's aid following the North Korean invasion and rescue the autocratic regime it so despised? The authors' response to this question; that the decision had more to do with America's worldwide reputation than with any "sympathy for ROK leaders or the Korean people" (p. 205) could be further examined. In doing so, the article would fit better into what is supposed to be a commemorative edition of a journal on the Korean War.

Interestingly, many parallels can be drawn between the unsuccessful U.S. administration of its zone, and the Soviet occupation of Korea north of the 38th parallel. Russian documents only recently obtained suggest that despite certain advantages, such as a native population half the size of that in the U.S. zone, Soviet occupation forces were just as unprepared and fumbled just as badly in administering northern Korea. Moreover, troop discipline was difficult to maintain as Soviet officers themselves often engaged in larceny and other forms of misconduct. As one Soviet report from December 1950 noted:

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<sup>3</sup> See for example Erik Van Ree, *Socialism in One Zone: Stalin's Policy in Korea, 1945-1947* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989) and Charles K. Armstrong, *The North Korean Revolution, 1945-1950* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003).

<sup>4</sup> Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War, Volume I: Liberation and the Emergence of Separate Regimes, 1945-1947* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981).

“The illegal actions of Colonel Dmitriev, the commander of the 258th Rifle Division, who ordered the chairman of the provincial People's Committee out of his apartment, or the removal of furniture he selected, accompanying his actions with the words, "The Koreans were slaves for 35 years, let them be so a little longer", cannot fail to exert a corrupting influence on the officers and enlisted men of this division. General Morozov, the commander of the 39th Corps, recently took 10 vehicles from Korea with property he had personally seized, including property of a local museum.”<sup>5</sup>

As Stueck and Yi suggest, despite the difficulties in U.S.-ROK relations following the withdrawal of U.S. troops in 1948, America's commitment to defending South Korea starting on June 25, 1950 helped transform the alliance. By contrast, as documents from the archive of North Korea's former communist allies suggest, strains in Soviet-DPRK relations that existed before 1948 were only compounded during the war as a result of Soviet leader Joseph Stalin's reluctance to commit the Soviet Air Force to provide cover for North Korean and Chinese troops. As Chinese scholar Zhihua Shen suggests, this also created tensions in the Sino-Soviet alliance.

Shen's article, the only one in the collection that examines the Korean War from the perspective of Communist countries, seeks to demonstrate how Stalin's indecisiveness weakened the nascent Sino-Soviet-DPRK triangular alliance. Using documents released by the Russian archives in the early 1990s, and a select few that have surfaced more recently from private collections, such as those of the late Soviet diplomat turned scholar Andrei M. Ledovskii, Shen, a professor at East China Normal University, focuses primarily on the tensions in the Sino-Soviet relationship. Almost absent from Shen's article is an analysis of the Soviet-DPRK or Sino-DPRK relationship. Still, Shen's article admirably demonstrates the profound sense of mistrust at the roots of the Sino-Soviet alliance a decade before the split. While his use of Russian documents adds nuance and detail to the history of the alliance, Shen uses only a limited number of Chinese materials, leaving one to wonder how Chinese archival documents treat the subject, and if documents on the Korean War have been released by the increasingly transparent Chinese archives.

Colin Jackson's article uses both U.S. and Soviet documents to re-visit a much debated Korean War counterfactual; if the UN forces continued to pursue the Chinese armies after their failed offensive in the spring of 1951, what difference might it have made on the terms and timing of the armistice? Following a very detailed description of how U.S. 8th

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<sup>5</sup> Central Archive of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation (TsAMO RF), copy in the archive of the North Korean International Documentation Project (NKIDP), Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington, DC.

Army commander James Van Fleet's plan to launch an amphibious attack at Tongchon was denied, Jackson uses the cable traffic between Moscow and Beijing to demonstrate that the Chinese Peoples' Volunteers were in fact vulnerable, and that Mao Zedong explicitly warned Peng Dehau about the possibility of an amphibious landing behind Chinese lines. While the limited number of documents available to us from the "other side" Jackson uses seem to support his thesis, there are still thousands of pages of additional documents from Soviet and Chinese archives that remain un-translated.

Robert Barnes' analysis of the Commonwealth's ability to reach a consensus, if only for a short time, and restrain the United States in the UN in the wake of the Chinese intervention is a welcomed addition to the Korean War literature, though I don't see how one could describe a topic as understudied when the footnote listing works on the subject take up nearly half a page. Editor Steven Casey's provocative description of how the method of reporting casualties had changed after the Second World War, and that the method used during the Korean war can help explain the war's unpopularity in the United States is an important addition to Korean War literature. Finally, Charles Young of Southern Arkansas University weaves a discussion of prisoners of war through a lengthy chronology of the war, making a compelling argument that the war is often forgotten because it ended without victor or vanquished. What may have been touted as a victory for the U.S., the voluntary repatriation of POWs from North Korea and China, was never a major war aim. This is a very compelling argument. More evidence on the activities of Taiwanese and South Korean agents in camps for Chinese and North Korean POW camps would have increased the value of the article.

Despite the lack of cohesion to the collection as a whole, the contributions of the authors make this edition of the Journal of Strategic Studies an important addition to Korean War historiography. Yet, many important elements and perspectives were left out. First, the editor did not include articles on the creation of, or activities of the Korean People's Army and the ROK Army. Although the war was fought in Korea, and was initiated by the North Koreans, there is very little sense from the selected articles that either North or South Korea were anything but marginally involved.

Another welcomed addition would have been an analysis of political developments in North and South Korea in the later stages of the war. Specifically, the period 1952-1953 is often overlooked in the literature as the period between the beginning of armistice talks in July 1951 and the actual signing of the armistice agreement in July 1953. Yet, there were many important political developments in both North and South Korea during this period. Russian and Polish reports from Pyongyang describe in rich detail North Korean party affairs as well as efforts to restore industry and increase agricultural output at the same time UN forces enjoyed air superiority over much of the territory of the DPRK.

The absence of contributions from South Korean scholars is lamentable. A number of groundbreaking works have been written in Korean in recent years, most notably Myunglim Park's 1996 tome "The Outbreak and Origins of the Korean War."

Finally, while several articles in the collection have skillfully integrated documents from

the Russian archives obtained and translated by the Wilson Center's Cold War International History Project and North Korea International Documentation Project, a very important collection of documents has barely made a dent in the historiography. The

1.6 million pages of captured North Korean documents housed at the National Archives in College Park, Maryland are a veritable treasure trove for researchers, offering direct access to the North Korean decision-making process at the outset of the war. It is imperative that scholars integrate the materials now available to us from all sides of the conflict, particularly those from North Korea, to advance the historiography.

These shortcomings notwithstanding, Editor Steven Casey should be commended for assembling such a valuable, if diverse, collection of articles on the Korean War, the conflict that set the character of international relations on the Korean Peninsula to this day, and worldwide through the end of the global Cold War.

I t like to begin by thanking Tom Maddux for organizing this roundtable, Mike Pearlman for his enjoyable introduction, and Professors Boose, Matray, Millett, and Person for their careful, detailed, and engaging reviews. I also welcome the broadly favourable comments about both the various articles and the special issue as a whole.

The sixtieth anniversary of “the conventional phase of Korea’s war,” as Matray aptly puts it, is an ideal time to explore its history from a variety of perspectives. The aim of this special issue is not to provide a comprehensive overview of the entire war, or to present a new synthesis of the existing literature. It is, rather, to showcase the work currently being undertaken by a series of scholars from a range of perspectives. An effort was made to recruit historians working on different countries (the United States, China, South Korea, and the Commonwealth), on different angles (alliance diplomacy, military policy, domestic politics, culture, and memory), and at different stages of their careers (so that, as Millett points out, the essayists are certainly not, for the most part, the “usual suspects”).

If the result is, as at least one reviewer maintains, a somewhat diverse mix, then the reviews themselves are also markedly eclectic. Particularly striking are the very different responses to the essays by Jackson and Young. On the former, which explores whether UN forces could have advanced north to the Korean “neck” between May and July 1951, Boose and Millett believe that Jackson “makes a strong case” for saying “yes,” or that he “has the story right,” while Matray, in sharp contradiction, condemns what he considers Jackson’s “consistently flawed logic,” which, he maintains, reduces Jackson’s argument “to a flight of fancy.” On the latter, which looks at why Americans soon forgot about the war, Millett thinks Young’s contribution “far less valuable than the other pieces,” while Matray considers it “the most interesting and insightful in the volume.” Clearly, even sixty years after the event, Korea is a war that continues to excite enormous controversy. And these two essays, on relatively neglected subjects, will hopefully form the starting point for a series of new debates.

I will let the individual authors respond to such specific criticisms about their own essays. Here, I would like to address some of the issues raised by my own contribution.

My article is essentially about perception: about how the U.S. home front perceives the human cost of war (in terms of American battlefield deaths), both in the context of the U.S. government’s casualty reporting techniques and in light of how opposition politicians and the media tried to challenge the official narrative. The point I am trying to make revolves *not* around what we now know about Korean War military history, but how these events were understood at the time, as they passed through the often-distorting lens of official announcements, media reporting, and political controversy. Thus, for instance, I stress the use of Tarawa in press headlines because this was a particularly inflammatory analogy for the media to use in the context of Marine losses in December 1950, although perhaps I should have made more of how this battle was remembered seven years after the event. Likewise, the striking thing about the media’s reporting of the battles of October 1952 was

the fact that it tended not to make the distinction raised in Millett's review between South Korean and American losses. Rather, newspapers and magazines often reported that, as one *Time* article put it, U.S. casualties "were sharply up," adding a vivid portrayal of the plight of the American wounded for good measure.<sup>1</sup>

Millett says that I could be clearer about which of the media reports were credible and which were "pure yellow journalism." I think there is certainly scope to match this contemporaneous reporting against the actual casualty numbers that were confirmed afterwards. But it is also important to note that these journalistic estimates were not always just sensationalist "nonsense." Reporters from all newspapers, regardless of their political leanings or the whether they aspired to be a quality or a tabloid, had an obvious interest in seeking to establish the cost of big battles, especially major defeats such as those following China's intervention in the war. When the government was slow in producing firm data, a few journalists speculated, but others tried to find innovative ways of writing the story (such as tabulating the amount of blood the Pentagon was trying to collect), and most used off-the-record or clumsy official announcements to frame their reports. Although many of the resulting stories tended to magnify the sense of disaster, they were mostly written under the prevailing norms of "objective journalism," which prioritized the use of official U.S. government sources.

At one stage, I briefly refer to the fact that MacArthur's command introduced formal censorship in 1951. Millett uses this statement to charge a broader "unfamiliarity with the war's operational history," on the basis that censorship "was Ridgway's decision and applied only to Eighth Army." I would be the first to concede that the institution of censorship was an enormously complex process, which my brief statement in this article does not do full justice to. As my recent book, *Selling the Korean War*, demonstrates, Ridgway's Eighth Army did indeed play the leading role in censoring reporters' copy in the first months of 1951. But MacArthur's command had paved the way for this change on 22 December 1950, before Ridgway even arrived in the Far East to command Eighth Army. MacArthur and his close advisers then kept a careful eye on the operation of censorship in the next few months, and ultimately announced on 16 March 1951 that all stories emanating from the Korean front would have to be cleared both by Ridgway's Eighth Army and by MacArthur's United Nations Command in Tokyo.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Then He Was Dead," and "Bloodshed in the Hills," *Time*, 6 and 27 October 1952

<sup>2</sup> Steven Casey, *Selling the Korean War: Propaganda, Politics, and Public Opinion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 157-72.

I long ago reached the conclusion that responding to criticism of my publications was a bad idea, so I will refrain from the temptation to do so now. However, I cannot resist responding to a couple of statements made by my long-time friend Jim Matray that do not deal directly with the recent essay I co-authored with Boram Yi in *The Journal of Strategic Studies*.

The first is in the following sentence from the first paragraph of Matray's review: "Two authors provide a context for consideration of the war that is ethnocentric and ahistorical when they label the North Korean attack as 'brazen' (235, 298), ignoring two years of violent border clashes at the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel that signaled the certainty of a conventional assault."

The second Matray comment comes in the first sentence of the last paragraph: "Constant repetition that the Korean War was about Korea eventually may cause forgetful Americans to remember the true meaning of this conflict, but this is improbable."

In the first case I would contend that Matray's claim is itself ahistorical as the North Korean attack was widely considered "brazen" by people at the time outside the Communist world. How can we possibly understand the reaction of the United States and Western Europe to the event unless we recognize that political elites in those places regarded it as "brazen." Whether they should have so regarded it is a different question entirely, and Matray is welcome to his own view on that matter. But in this case his targets are innocent and he himself is guilty.

The charge of ethnocentrism is misplaced as well. Many South Koreans viewed the attack as "brazen," so contemporary perceptions were not solely dependent on nationality. True, there had been border skirmishes, infiltration from the north across the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, and considerable unrest in the South for over two years, but those activities were widely considered as very different from the large-scale conventional offensive that began on 25 June 1950. And Soviet leader Joseph Stalin's hesitation to give North Korea the wherewithal to launch that offensive, and the reasons he finally did, suggest that it was far from a "certainty."

In the second case, Matray's comments on "the true meaning of this conflict" are condescending and unwarranted. The war *was* about Korea, to be sure, but it was about much else as well, especially the global credibility of the United States, relations among Communist governments, and the resurgence of China. Wishing that the war was about Korea alone does not make it so, as historians well know.

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