

# The Origins of the Korean War Kim Il-sung's Intention to Begin the War

Shin Bok-ryong

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This article starts from the hypothesis that the Korean War was a civil war. But it does not exonerate Kim Il-sung from responsibility. The attack on June 25, 1950 was definitely Kim Il-sung's decision. He tried to overcome the early conflicts during the stage of state building through war. But Kim Il-sung did not begin the war to occupy the whole of Korea with armed forces. He misjudged and thought that it would be possible to communize the whole of Korea through political negotiation with the occupation of Seoul and the detainment of South Korean political leaders. On the other hand, the United States had exact information about the invasion from North Korea and expected it. The Korean War provided a good opportunity to the warmongers, which used it for rearmament. In this respect, the United States is responsible for the strategy of burning everything to the ground in Korea. The primary responsibility for the Korean War must be attributed to Kim Il-sung. However, he needed a scapegoat for his defeat and chose Park Hun-young, his main political rival. The Korean War was not Park's responsibility, although he was not free from strategic failures and extreme leftist adventurism.

*Keywords : Korean War, Kim Il-sung's intention, civil war, occupation of Seoul, U.S. information, and strategy on the Korean War.*

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## Introduction

War is a tragic part of history. When the path of world history is traced, wars are encountered at almost every time and every place in the world. War is political homicide politics itself is war, but without actual homicide. What is more important than the actual outbreak of war is how the scars from it are overcome. The Korean War is no exception, and the Korean War is studied, not to reflect upon the tragedy itself, but to learn how a repetition of the tragedy can be prevented.

When we take a closer look at the Korean War, it is much more complex and subtle than it may at first have been thought. The Korean War involves some of

the biggest controversies, both for its causes and for who is responsible. Therefore even now, a half-century after the war, conservative scholars insist North Korea invaded South Korea, based on the documents of the US, while Communist scholars and revisionists insist South Korea invaded North Korea. Re-revisionists insist it was a civil war.

Based on the assumption that Kim Il-sung initiated the Korean War, this chapter aims to follow the situation of June 1950, keeping the following questions in mind: “Why did he decide to begin the war?” “What was his intention in initiating the war?” and “What did he get from the war?” Now, the question of “Who initiated war? North or South Korea?” may perhaps be too vague. If South Korea struck North Korea first, how could South Korea lose her capital city in three days (Volkogonov 1993: 375-376)? This paper aims to unveil the facts that have been kept secret or exaggerated under the rightist atmosphere in South Korea and that have been concealed or distorted under the rigid system of North Korea. A study of “Korean War as History” (Haruki 1995:337) must make an effort to erase ideological tints from the facts.

Bruce Cumings insisted, “Both South and North Korean official historiography on the Korean War is composed of half-truths, critical omissions, rank embellishment, and outright lies...Anyone who deviates from the line is suspect; saying the other side did not start the war gains a jail sentence” (Cumings 1990: 590). As John Merrill states, “The two Koreas have not been forthright in their versions of the origins of the war” (Merrill 1983). They say this as if the causes of the War are explicit, but there are, in fact, many untold stories in the Korean War (Goulden 1982). Since then, a half a century has elapsed, and the stout wall of the Cold War is no longer raised. Now, when there is a looming possibility of unification, we can freely speak of the truth. In this respect, it is necessary for us to study the intentions of Kim Il-sung, and why he began the war. This must be done for the sake of reconciling history. It is time to write about the Korean War as actual history, not as a war of lamentation and fragmented guesses.

We must reconsider the traditional standpoint, which has been consistently urged in the rightist era. This standpoint was an anti-Communist logic led by the U.S., and the domestic demand of tension in South Korea accorded with the U.S. interest. This resulted in a rationalization of American policy as an inevitable conclusion. “In the calm Sunday morning, when everybody slept... the puppet Kim Il-sung, who wallowed in the barbarous intention to attack South Korea, began the full-scale invasion ...”<sup>21</sup> This kind of explanation makes the war too superficial and is not elaborate enough to describe fully its real

aspects. The nature of the Korean War involves highly complex and subtle aspects that cannot be explained with anti-Communist propaganda.

## The Characteristics of the Korean War

This chapter was written on the basis that the Korean War was a civil war; refer to the following passages to discover the logical grounds for this basis:

- (1) Before the Korean War, Korea had been domestically ruptured.
- (2) War had already begun with the May Assault in 1949, and the Korean Peninsula had been involved in the limited warfare. Before June 25th, there were many battles along the 38th Parallel (Pang 1986: 38).<sup>2</sup> Therefore, before June 1950, both Koreas were in a state of hostility. In some cases, regiments with 2,000-3,000 soldiers clashed, through which more than 100,000 people became victims in South Korea before the War (Merrill 1988: 38).<sup>3</sup>
- (3) After the liberation, the newly emerged, independent countries attempted to use the process of internal war for political hegemony, regardless of any ideological conflicts between them. Some may argue that the Korean War was not a domestic war but an international one due to the entry of Chinese troops into the War at a later stage. However, considering that there is no internal war without the intervention of the Great Powers with which to compare, the intervention of the Powers cannot be a criterion used to classify the War as internal or international. The characteristics of

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1. *One-Year History of the Korean War: May 1, 1950-June 30, 1951* (Seoul: Compilation Committee of Military History, Ministry of National Defense, 1951), p. A14.

2. For a more detailed discussion of conflicts on the 38th Parallel before June 25, 1950, cf. Baik Sun-yup, 1989: 29; *Russian Documents on the Korean War*, 1996: 241-248. Three versions of *Russian Documents on the Korean War* were released to Korean scholars. The first version was donated by Boris Yeltsin, President of Russia, to Kim Young-sam, President of Korea (1996, *mimeo*). The second version is a summarized edition of the above the first version by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (July 20, 1994, *mimeo*). The third version was edited by *Seoul Newspaper* (1995, *mimeo*).

3. Official U.S. document insists that North Korea provoked the South 874 times from 1949 to June 25, 1950, and North Korean documents insist that South Korea provoked the North 432 times from January to September 1949 (Survey Committee, 1949: 319; Department of State, 1951: 19-20).

the Cold War in the Korean War cannot be denied, but it was a dependent variable. The domestic rupture was an independent variable of the Korean War.

- (4) Therefore, the date June 25th, 1950 was not a day of a new, full-scale war, but the end of guerrilla and localized war.

There are several stages in the process of war as follows (Mitchell 1970: 170).

First of all, when a newly-independent state is divided and is undergoing a state of chaos and disorder, the possibility of negotiation based on talks between the factions must be ruled out. In this case, the ruling classes (dominant parties) assume that they need to overcome this situation using small-scale violence (terror or guerrilla war). However, when they are deprived of possibilities for such action as guerrilla war, civil war becomes full-scale war. When the situations during the Liberation are studied, it would seem that the Manchuria guerrilla troops thought they could win the war by deploying guerrilla warfare.

Even though they were not the initiators of the Daegu Incident (1946), the South Korean Labor Party (SKLP), the April 3 Uprising in Jeju (1948), and the Military Insurrection in Yusoo-Soonchun (1948) in South Korea, it must be true that their hope to defeat South Korea through guerrilla warfare was frustrated. In actuality, guerrilla activities from 1948 to 1950 were rapidly decreasing in number (Suh 1996: 77). The lesser the possibility of success in guerrilla warfare, the higher the possibility of escalation towards civil war.

Those situations can be read in the memoir of Yoo Sung-chul, Commander of Operations Division, North Korean People's Army, as follows:

Military clashes between both Koreas, which I clearly remember, were battles on the Ongjin Peninsula and Songak Mountain in early 1950. On a certain day, I received an urgent report that the South Korean Army attacked two points on our posts, and advanced 800m-1km above the 38th Parallel. At that time, defense of the foremost line on the 38th Parallel was under the command of the National Constabulary Police in the Department of Domestic Affairs, and backed by a regular battalion of the [North Korean] People's Army [KPA]. I ordered the Yang Choon Battalion on the spot to make a counterattack, and I made an on-sight inspection of the front line in attendance with Choi Yong-gun, Minister of National Defense. When we arrived at the spot, the Yang Choon Battalion beat back the South Korean Army and advanced 1km below

the 38th Parallel (Yoo 1990a).

Military clashes on 38th Parallel were so frequent that the Americans in Korea did not believe it when they received the news of the invasion on June 25th (Noble 1975: 13). Most of the citizens in Seoul did not believe the news either (Kim 1993: 54), but many in the Korean Army were not surprised (Lee 2001:1). At the time, large- and small-scale battles were always occurring at the vicinity of the 38th Parallel. Further, the political atmosphere was gloomy for establishing any single or co-aligned central government in South or North Korea. Both Koreas had long-since given up on the possibility of unification through talks and negotiations. The mutual distrust had grown almost into animosity. In this situation, the political activities in South Korea made Kim Il-sung impatient. At this time, Americans and South Korean reactionary forces launched active struggles against the South Korean Labor Party, which was the vanguard of all leftist parties and organizations. They were convinced that they should not create an anti-democratic government on the Korean Peninsula but saw that the leftists enjoyed a strong influence among the people. As a result of terror and persecution, the leftists were forced underground. Consequently, by the end of 1948, the South Korean Labor Party had lost many members, and its numbers were reduced from 900,000 members to 240,000 (Bajanov: 26). Nonetheless, the leftist organizations retained a capacity to act for special purposes.

Up to that time, there were guerrillas in South Korea who undertook more than two thousand operations in 1949. Kim Il-sung and Park Hun-young believed that it was impossible to unite their fatherland by peaceful means. Under these circumstances, they perhaps took into account the fact that if unification was not achieved now, at least by military means, then the question of unification would drag on for years. South Korean reactionary forces would manage to strangle the democratic movement and to defeat and destroy the leftist organizations in South Korea (Bajanov: 30; *Russian Documents on the Korean War* 1996: 28).

Second, a powerful state that has carefully observed the civil war status of a country starts to study whether intervening would suit their interest. During the Liberation period, Korea suited the U.S. as a bridgehead where they could easily protect Japan. The U.S. sought to stop the Soviet Union from directly or indirectly ruling over Korea. America wanted to implement democracy in Korea. On the other hand, the Soviet Union wanted to penetrate into the Pacific area and could not tolerate a capitalistic state in South Korea. These were the con-

flicting interests on the Korean Peninsula, and all the while, small- and large-sized battles were still on-going.

Both the U.S. and the USSR had their own logic for intervening in the civil war in Korea. That is, the U.S. could intervene in the Korean problem on the basis of the Korean-American Aid Agreement (December 10th, 1948) and the Korean-American Mutual Defense Agreement (January 29, 1950). Likewise, the USSR could do so based on the (North) Korean-USSR Military Agreement (March 17, 1949). On February 6, 1949, before the conclusion of the Treaty, the USSR had already supplied 2.3 million rifle bullets, 3.2 million TT munitions (a type of munitions), 15 thousand 82mm mines, 1.2 thousand IPSs, 100 heavy machine guns, and 40 trench mortars to Kim Il-sung (*Russian Documents on the Korean War* 1996: 249).

Third, the political leaders in both South and North Korea took their political power and security from their parent state. We will look at this more closely below, but Kim Il-sung visited Moscow to confer on the invasion of South Korea with J. Stalin. Rhee Syng-man sought help from the U.S. for unification by attacking North Korea. They never showed any hesitation for driving their country to war if they could demolish their opponent and solidify their regimes. On April 28, 1949, Kim requested 30 airplanes, 144 tanks, 25 million pieces of ammunition, 51 types of combat equipment, 30 pieces of military engineer equipment, 42 pieces of communication equipment, and other components. It seems that they were already preparing for war when the Soviet Union partially accepted this request (*Russian Documents on the Korean War* 1996: 255-267).

At an early stage of nation building in 1948, Kim Il-sung thought that the progressive force in South Korea was powerful, and the revolutionary atmosphere was ripening. Moreover, the North Korean People's Army captured and equipped themselves with the weapons of the defeated Japanese 34th Army and 58th Corps. According to a Soviet source, military assistance from Moscow to the North Korean People's Army in the late 1940s and 1950s exceeded that given to Mao's Peasant Labor Army (PLA) during the same period (Goncharov 1993: 133). No one among Kim's faction thought that the new battalion commander would believe in unification by peaceful means. He had not thought peaceful unification could be achieved even in his dreams for the country. He clung to the idea of armed unification only (Goncharov 1993: 131-132).

Fourth, neither the U.S. nor the Soviet Union had reason to avoid an internal war, as long as Korea could be united as they wished. As will be discussed later in this chapter, the U.S. was expecting that a war could take place in any part of

the world, but it is not easy to see how the Soviet Union viewed the Korean War. With relevant documents, which have been recently opened to the public, it can be noted that Kim Il-sung stayed in Moscow from March 30 to April 25, 1950 and discussed the Korean War with J. Stalin (Bajanov: 42-44; *Russian Documents on the Korean War* 1995: 1). The following is a brief summary of their talks.

- (1) The Korean War was initiated by Kim Il-sung with the consent of J. Stalin. However, at the beginning of the war, J. Stalin neither induced Kim to attack nor believed in the success of the war. Until September 1949, J. Stalin did not agree with Kim's plot (Weathersby 1995a: 6).
- (2) In early 1950, when Kim Il-sung visited Moscow to explain the assault plan, J. Stalin worried about the intervention of the United States. Therefore, in the early stage of consultation, J. Stalin asked Kim to be prudent in opening the war and asked to keep himself away from the military clash on the 38th Parallel (*Russian Documents on the Korean War* 1996: 70). Despite this, J. Stalin believed Kim's opinion that because the U.S. had withdrawn its army from Korea, they were not obliged to obey the regulation on the 38th Parallel. Furthermore, that if they could take victory on the first strike, the U.S. would have no time to intervene, ensuring Stalin and Kim would win the game (*Russian Documents on the Korean War* 1995: KO-4D 3, KO-6D 2-4, KO-8D 4). Mao Tse-tung's advice that "the Americans would not intervene to save *such a small country*" (Goncharov 1993: 137) [emphasis added] would contribute to the decision of Kim to begin the war. The fact that the United States did not support Chang Kai-shek in the Chinese civil war encouraged Kim's conviction that the U.S. would not intervene in the Korean War. It was perhaps around February 1950 when J. Stalin changed his hesitation about opening the war to endorse the rearmament and to grant loans to North Korea (Bajanov: 40).
- (3) In this meeting, Kim Il-sung, with support from Park Hun-young, assured that South Korea would collapse with the first gunshot from the 1,500~2,000 guerrillas and the 200,000 Party members in South Korea (Weathersby 1995b: 6; Bajanov: 22-24, 42-44; *Russian Documents on the Korean War* 1994: 13; Simmons, 1974: 148; Goncharov 1993: 144-145). It is true that Kim placed great hope in the guerrilla movement on Jiri Mountain (Goncharov 1993: 141). J. Stalin had no willingness to dis-

suade Kim, with the condition of Chinese support (Khrushchev 1971: 368-370).<sup>4</sup>

In sum, even though the communization of South Korea was desirable for the Russians, they were not willing to open a war with the Americans. Keeping this in mind, we will now look at the analysis of George F. Kennan.

Current Stalinist doctrine does not demand war. On the contrary, it also teaches that eventually capitalism will fall largely of its own weight, i.e., as a result of the inner contradiction, which the Communists believe it embodies. They see the role of communism as one of hastening the collapse of capitalism... There is nothing in Stalinist doctrine which would make it necessarily the main responsibility of the armed forces of the Soviet Union themselves to overthrow capitalism everywhere by direct military action... Russia has changed communism more than communism has changed Russia... In this case, Soviet imperialism bit off more than it could comfortably chew... For the Russians, that war was terribly wearing and destructive... They would not wish to endanger in any major way the security of the world citadel of communism, the USSR... It is hardly likely that the Russians are now charting an early military onslaught on the Western world (Kennan 1950: 267-268).

Furthermore, George F. Kennan concluded that even though Soviet Russia had chances to be a more influential superpower in the world by exerting force, they would hesitate for a moment to apply that force against the U.S (Kennan 1967: 296). However, Kim Il-sung assured the Soviet Union that it was possible to communize South Korea; it truly seemed a feasible idea. From the viewpoint of Stalin, the conquest of South Korea would have enabled him to widen the buffer zone along his eastern frontier and to acquire political leverage against Japan or, perhaps, a springboard for an attack against it. In this way, the Soviet Union could test the Americans' commitment to this area, as well as U.S. capabilities.

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4. It was Dean Rusk who fiercely opposed the idea that the Korean War was initiated by Kim Il-sung with the consent of J. Stalin. Reminded that the Chinese had combed their armies in North China to find soldiers of Korean nationality or ancestry and had integrated them into North Korean units, he insisted that "Beijing was either a co-conspirator in or fully aware of the June 1950 attack"(Rusk 1990: 165, 173).



In addition, they could divert American power away from Europe (Goncharov 1993:139). In retrospect, J. Stalin made a mistake in believing Kim's miscalculation that the U.S. army would never intervene.

Mao Tse-tung also had doubts. By early 1950, Mao's negative response to Kim's proposals for war was due to the need to recover from the devastation of the Chinese civil war and also to liberate Taiwan (Goncharov 1993:140). Mao, at first, expressed considerable skepticism when Kim told him that Stalin had reassessed the North's potential for a successful assault on the South (Goncharov 1993:146).

What is worthy of notice here is that the Russian interests in the Korean War were not limited to political or strategic value. The USSR was calculating on the special demands for the reconstruction of North Korean industry after the War. For example, it is true that the USSR supported North Korea with weapons, but most of them were not free. In March 1950, just before the war, North Korea sent to Russia nine tons of gold (53,662,900 rubles), forty tons of silver (4,887,600 rubles), and 15,000 tons of monazite (79,500,000 rubles)--in all, a sum of 138,065,500 rubles was received for war commodities (Weathersby, ed. 1995d: 37; *Russian Documents on the Korean War* 1996: 288). Also, in connection with the agreement in 1950 of the USSR to allocate to North Korea a portion of the credit for 1951 to the amount of 70,700,000 rubles, the DPRK Government proposed to acquire arms, ammunition, and military-technical equipment for the People's Army (Weathersby, ed. 1995e: 37). For the Russians, the Korean War was not a bad business, if the U.S. was not engaged and it was not a total war.

In this respect, it is true that there were major powers behind the Korean War, and consequently, it escalated into an international war; however, the beginning of the War was rooted in internal affairs. The United States and Soviet Russia gave patronage, and those 'parent' countries had no reason to evade the war for hegemony in Korea. In the end, the Korean War was an explosion of Kim's intention to cause civil war because he had wanted to solve the political conflict in the era of Liberation by violence. He may have been inspired by the communization of Mainland China. From May 13 through May 16, especially, Kim relied upon the commitment to support North Korea from Mao Tse-tung, who, in a change from his previous mindset, believed the war in Korea *a fait accompli* (*Russian Documents on the Korean War* 1995: 2; 1994: 2, 6, 11, 20, 26). Kim could not be free from the temptation to 'liberate' South Korea in the same way that Mainland China had been liberated (Volkogonov 1993: 369).

## The Scope of the Korean War

While discussing the intention of Kim Il-sung on the outbreak of war, we must note that Kim wanted to communize the whole of South Korea by force. This became an undeniable truth for the rightist society in South Korea. However, when we look closer, it cannot be easily believed that Kim had planned for a full-scale war from the beginning. If we say that he had devised a full-scale war or wanted to communize the whole Korean Peninsula, we have to ask and answer following questions.

### 1. Why Did the North Korean Army Concentrate Its Forces to Attack Seoul?

The first problem in explaining Kim Il-sung's intention of the war as a means to communize the whole of South Korea is why he emphasized the seizure of Seoul. At the time, the 7th Division in Uijungbo and the 1st Division in Moonsan were protecting Seoul. Kim was aware of the fact that it might not be easy to seize Seoul. However, Kim set Seoul as the first target to occupy (Baik 1989: 44). Of course, it could be said that, since Seoul is the capital of South Korea, it was only natural for Kim to want Seoul first. However, Kim had more thoughts than this in mind. For this, an excerpt from the *Memoirs* of Choi Tae-hwan, who was a Lieutenant Colonel of the 6th Division stationed at Song-ak Mountain, must be noted.

On June 23, ten days after we had stationed on the ridge line of Song-ak Mountain, an order came from the Commanding Headquarters of the 6th Division to call the Battalion Commanders... Kim Doo-bong, Political Commissioner, began his speech, "Being obliged to open the war, we will occupy Seoul for only ten days. Seoul is heart of South Korea. Therefore, occupation of this heart is nothing but an occupation of the whole country. In Seoul, we will convene the National Assembly of South Korea where a new President will be elected and unification of both governments will be announced to the world. And then foreign countries can neither intervene nor attack us" (Choi, Park 1989: 110-113).

According to this memoir, the principal target of Kim Il-sung was limited to

Seoul. At least in the early stage, land below Suwon was not included in his occupation targets. As the testimony of Jung Sang-jin, General of North Korea, implies, "we thought that Rhee Syng-man would surrender" after the occupation of Seoul (Goncharov 1993: 155). It was not necessary for B. Napoleon or A. Hitler to occupy Habarovsk to rule the whole of Russia or the USSR as both believed.

North Korea's intention to occupy Seoul can be noted in its willingness to occupy Ongjin. Bruce Cumings pointed out, "Geographically speaking, the Ongjin Peninsula is hardly the place to start an invasion if you are heading southward; it is a *cul-de-sac*. But it is a good place to jump off if you are heading northward" (Cumings 1990: 571-572). He also suggests that the Korean War would have been provoked by South Korea. This is not true. Kim Il-sung asserted, "The Ongjin Peninsula is a larynx aiming at the seashore of South Korea. Therefore, if the People's Army could beat out two regiments of South Korea, they could take the Ongjin Peninsula in three days, and with a general attack, the People's Army could be in Seoul in several days" (Weathersby, ed. 1995c: 8). With the strike that Kim Il-sung devised, the South Korean Army would be demoralized, and the length of the battle-lines would be shortened to three quarters (*Russian Documents on the Korean War* 1995: 14-15).

Up to August 1949, Kim Il-sung had not decided to open a war. However, by this time, he had told Stalin that he would occupy the Ongjin Peninsula. Kim thought that the Ongjin Peninsula would serve as a springboard for further advance (Bajanov: 18). The USSR regarded this as a well-planned strategy, but a poorly-devised scheme in a political sense because North Korea would not be free from being blamed for fratricide, and this would make the U.S. intervene more deeply in Korean problems (Weathersby, ed. 1995a: 6; *Russian Documents on the Korean War* 1996: 277-278). In spite of Stalin's opposition, Kim recognized the importance of the Ongjin Peninsula the agenda at the meeting with J. Stalin in Moscow was the Ongjin Operation (*Russian Documents on the Korean War* 1994: 21). What is a vital spot for the enemy is also a vital spot for me. Similar to the importance of the Golan Heights in Middle Eastern politics to both Israel and Syria, the Ongjin Peninsula was important to both North Korea and South Korea.

There are many theories concerning the Ongjin issue. Revisionists emphasize that the land forces of South Korea's 17th Regiment [Lieutenant Commander Baik In-yup] went up to Haeju on June 24, 1950. Also, revisionists point out that major newspapers in South Korea, as well as The New York

Times, and the headquarters of Military Service had all reported that the 17th Regiment went up to the north. Concerning this claim, the 17th Regiment explained that they were stationed at Ongjin, lower than the 38th Parallel, but they could not return through the water; they made a slight detour north, only to return to the south. Moreover, some say that the family of Baik In-yup was somehow involved. There are some theories that are not yet academically proven. Recently, a counter-argument that this was only a false alarm, and that Colonel Kim Hyun-soo, the person who first mentioned this, lied about all this has been posited. Moreover, Kim Il-sung had personally denied this. These are some refutations for this issue (Park 1994: 119-131; Park 1996: 458).

Unlike the claim of B. Cumings that Ongjin was very important to South Korea, the U.S. did not value Ongjin all that much. This becomes more evident when the truce talks are examined. Unfortunately, America was not aware of its importance, even at the wartime conferences, when the U.S. first developed the idea of the separation of Korea (Gayn 1948: 378). After this, military leaders shared a consensus that they settle the truce at the Wyoming Line (present armistice line), if it turned out that they could not go beyond to the Pyeongyang-Wonsan line—the “waist of Korea”—that is located above the present-day Wyoming Line.

Therefore, at the time of the truce conference, the UN wanted to set up a truce line at a point lower than the Ongjin Peninsula (Hermes 1966: 114-115). If they had to break through the Wyoming Line, they would again see huge casualties. Furthermore, if they did go above the Wyoming Line, the west front would suddenly expand, and they would need more troops to defend the area. In June 1951, the UN favored a front line that was the shortest line to maintain while still covering Seoul and Incheon. As for North Korea, the defense for Pyeongyang would be harder if they lost Ongjin, Yunan, and Gaesung so their resistance became even fiercer (Schnabel 1966: 401-402).

One of the doubts that arises at this point is why North Korean soldiers valued the seizure of Suwon (placed south of Seoul) (Appleman 1961: 53; Yoo 1990c). Besides the idea that they wanted to immobilize the air forces of South Korea by occupying Osan Airport, it seems that they needed to intercept the retreat of high officials who were in Seoul at the time. The clue for this is what they did during the two- or three-day stay in Seoul when they were in charge of the city. It was the 9th Regiment of the 3rd Division that entered into Seoul first at 23: 00 on June 27. Before long, the 4th Division marched to Seoul. An American military historian interprets it thus: “After seizing Seoul, the 3rd and

4th Divisions of North Korea spent a day or two (June 27-28) searching the city for South Korean soldiers, police, and *national traitors*, most of whom they intended to execute” (Appleman 1961: 53).

The search for eminent politicians by North Korea was not aimed at their execution, as U.S. records say, but rather to use the captured prisoners as hidden cards on the table of future South/North Korean negotiations. For such purposes, in late June, the North Korean Army committed Kim Yong-moo, Won Se-hoon, Baik Sang-gyoo, Jang Gun-sang, Oh Se-chang, Kim Kyu-shik, Jo So-ang, Yoo Dong-yul, Jo Wan-goo, Ahn Jae-hong, and 48 members of Parliament who were in Seoul at that time to a camp and held a ceremony of surrender, in which they presented an announcement of support for North Korea. After that, they were sent to North Korea (Cumings 1990: 671).

## 2. Why Did the North Korean Army Stay in Seoul during the Critical Three Days at the Beginning of War?

The subtlest mystery in explaining the intention of Kim Il-sung for the war is why North Korea stayed in Seoul for three days when it was the most critical time of the war. Why did they not go further down south immediately after seizing Seoul? To answer this question, we must take into account the memoir of Choi Tae-hwan.

On this day (June 24), we were not supplied with a map below the Seoul area. We had a map of only 1/50,000, which included Pyeongtaek on the 37th Parallel. There was no political orientation for the clerks of the Internal Security Office in South Korea after the occupation. We wasted three days after the occupation of Seoul. Bang Ho-san, Commander of the 6th Division, ordered us to evade directly engaging the South Korean Army, if there were chances of encounters (Choi, Park 1989:110-113 ).

Why did the North Korean Army stay in Seoul for three days? It was because they did not plan to march below Suwon. Dean Rusk, Undersecretary of the U.S. State Department at that time, testified, “the North Koreans halted for about ten days, presumably to consult with Pyeongyang, Moscow, and perhaps Beijing on what to do next” (Rusk 1990: 163). However, the North Korean Army's war scheme was previously devised as a grand design; whether to occupy only Seoul or to go further down south was not decided while they were stay-

ing in Seoul. It is unreasonable to say that North Korea did not receive orders from the Soviet Union after occupying Seoul. The testimony of Lieutenant Colonel Stanikov, who was responsible for the Military Engineering Division of North Korea, lacks persuasive power. He said that it was an “inevitable three-day intermission due to an unavoidable vacuum in strategy,” that occurred by neglecting engineering and communication (Joo 1990: 304). The memoir of Yoo Sung-chul, head of Military Strategy in North Korea, clearly disputes the testimony of Stanikov.

In the morning of June 28, when I received a report saying that the 4th Division of the People’s Army with tanks at the head entered Seoul, I thought that now war was at an end... *Our plan called for us to occupy Seoul and to end the war in three days.* This concept of strategy does not mean that we had no intention of occupying the whole of South Korea. When the capital city fell, we misjudged that the whole of South Korea would fall into our hand... Throughout the world’s history, it has been usual to win a war after the occupation of a capital city. Additionally, we firmly believed Park Hun-young’s boasting that 200,000 underground members of the SKLP would rise in revolt when Seoul collapsed and turn the South Korean Government over to us... Headquarters in the Frontline, having received word that in spite of the fall of Seoul the Government of South Korea, led by President Rhee Syng-man, transferred to Daejun while the South Korean Army resisted continually, ordered Commander Kim Woong of the 1st Assistance Headquarters to march southward rapidly... If the North Korean Army had continued on southward without hesitation, the history of the Korean War would be an entirely different one (Yoo 1990c).

They anticipated three days for the Korean War, but it took three years. In other words, the North Koreans executed a war that had not been in their scenario, excepting the first three days. North Korea started south after three days in Seoul (July 1st), which means that the Korean War had now expanded from a limited war to a full-scale war (Yoo 1990d).

The testimony of Yoo Sung-chul means that the Korean War was a war of three days in the original plan. Kim Il-sung insisted that he would complete the occupation of Seoul in three days; this further supports the original scale of the war (*Russian Documents on the Korean War* 1995: 3). It also means that they

planned a short war. When the Military Advisory Group visited Beijing, Mao Tse-tung recommended that they had to carry out a short war (*Russian Documents on the Korean War* 1995: 1). Major General Vasiliev and Major General Postnikov, Russian Military Advisors in Pyeongyang, gave a recommendation to Kim, saying that it was inevitable to begin war in June, due to the rainy season of July. Kim agreed to this (*Russian Documents on the Korean War* 1995: 3 1994: 11, 14, 28). If they had been planning a longer war, they would not take into account the seasonal changes. Regarding this, U.S. Military Advisor James Hausman testified as following:

Anyway, after the occupation of Seoul, the North Korean Army did not carry out a strategy to drive tanks southward, and hesitated for three days. During these three days, new history was developing in South Korea. The UN decided to intervene in the war, and General MacArthur was observing the frontline of the Han River. It is arguable why the North Korean Army wasted three days in Seoul, but I think they were waiting for the surrender of South Korea. Seoul being captured, I guess, they judged that the South Korean Government and Army would give up their weapons and surrender (Hausman, Jung 1995: 208).

Another decisive reason for North Korea troops staying in Seoul for three days was to preclude U.S. participation in the war. Kim had worried that the U.S. would become involved with this war if the war were a full-scale one. U.S. participation in the war was an important issue also for J. Stalin. J. Stalin was unsure of the U.S.'s action in this war and was not inclined to support Kim's attack on South Korea. He advised Kim to take full precautions for this. For example, there is an important document that shows how J. Stalin viewed North Korea's invasion of South Korea. On March 7, 1949, when J. Stalin met Kim, Stalin's advice regarding Kim's plan to invade South Korea was:

You [Kim Il-sung] should not advance to the South. First of all, the North Korean People's Army does not have an overwhelming superiority over the troops of the South. Numerically, as I understand, you are even behind them. Second, in the South there are still American troops, which will interfere in hostilities. Third, you should not forget that the agreement between the USSR and the U.S. on the 38th Parallel is in effect. If the agreement is broken by our side, it is more of a reason to believe that

America will interfere (Bajanov: 20).

In sum, the reason why J. Stalin detained Kim Il-sung's assault on South Korea can be explained as follows:

- (1) There were possibilities of military intervention by the U.S. and Japan.
- (2) The advance of the People's Army to the south could give Americans a pretext to raise this issue at the UN session.
- (3) The North Korean military power was not absolutely superior to the South's, and its naval power in particular was inferior to the South's.
- (4) South Korean police and army forces were exceptionally valiant (Bajanov: 33-34; *Russian Documents on the Korean War* 1996: 3-4, 64; 1994: 1, 4, 12).

Kim Il-sung could not march below Suwon because he worried about the intervention of the U.S. Army. In 1964, regarding this problem, Marshall Rodin I. Malinovskii, Commander of the Far Eastern Theater, wrote in his memoirs the following:

When I saw that Kim Il-sung did not order the Army to march southward on the third day after the attack, I firmly believed that he had no possibility of victory in the war. Kim sat as a spectator when the main force-unit of South Korea broke through the siege (Korotkov 1992:55).

There are other important documents that show the reason why the North Korean Army vainly wasted three days in Seoul. On June 26, 1950, a day after the opening of the war, T. F. Shtykov, Ambassador to North Korea, reported on the war situation to Matvei Zakharov, the First Vice-chairman of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the USSR (Weathersby, ed. 1995f: 39-40), which was transferred to J. Stalin. J. Stalin sent a ciphered telegram to General Shtykov as follows:

You do not report anything about what kind of plans the Korean command has. Does it intend to push on? Or has it decided to stop the advance? In our opinion, the attack absolutely must continue, and the sooner South Korea is liberated, the less chance there is for intervention (Weathersby, ed. 1995g: 40; Bajanov: 64).



The implication of the telegram above is very significant several inferences can be drawn from the telegram. These are:

- (1) Even after the occupation of Seoul, J. Stalin did not know whether Kim Il-sung would march southward or stop. This means that, at the opening stage of the war, it had not been decided to march below Seoul.
- (2) Having hesitated to begin the war, J. Stalin expected to communize the whole of Korea when Seoul surrendered so easily to the North Korean forces.
- (3) J. Stalin had ultimately been reluctant to be involved in the war.

When the explanation of the Korean War as a war of three days is put forth, there are sure to be counter-arguments. As an example, refer to the following document from T. F Shtykov to J. Stalin on June 15, 1950.

First stage: After the beginning of the local war on the Ongjin Peninsula, to move the main attack line to the south along the west coast.

Second stage: To capture Seoul and the Han River, to invade Chuncheon and Gangneung, and to surround the main forces in Seoul and annihilate them.

Third stage: To liberate the other areas, to annihilate the remnants, and to occupy the densely-populated areas and harbors (*Russian Documents on the Korean War* 1995: 4).

Among the documents that were discovered by K. Weathersby, there is one that says, "The operational plan of the North Korean Army envisioned that their troops advance fifteen to twenty kilometers per day and would complete military activity within twenty-two to twenty-seven days" (Weathersby 1993a: 16; 1993b: 442; Bajanov: 62).

However, we need to take enormous caution in interpreting the implications of these two documents because the overall context could imply that the second phase is a war-advocate, and the third phase are the post-war procedures that come after the fall of South Korea (second phase), i.e., natural communization (liberation), which is not a warfare concept. Particularly, we must note the line that says, "surround the main forces in Seoul and annihilate them." However, when the second phase failed and the U.S. participated in the war, J. Stalin

ordered further invasion to the south, through the 8th Bureau of the General Office (*Russian Documents on the Korean War* 1995: 1). Considering the whole situation, it seems that the ultimate aim of the North Korean Army was scheduled to end after this occupation of Seoul. Neither Kim Il-sung nor J. Stalin considered a military occupation of the whole country. No internal war schemes were planned aiming to occupy the whole territory. Internal war is a tactic to initiate the political situation by the occupation of the capital city and the capturing of eminent political figures.

### 3. Why Didn't Kim Il-sung Value an Attack on the East Coast?

If Kim Il-sung really wanted to carry out full-scale war, he should have attacked the whole line of the 38th Parallel. Yet he did not give assent to smashing down the East Coast. In order to understand the situation accurately, it is necessary to analyze the manpower of each line that marched southward. The total number of soldiers in the North Korean Army at that time was 135,000. They were composed of seven combat divisions (1st-7th Divisions) with 77,800 troops, the 105th Armored Brigade with 6,000 troops, the Independent Infantry Unit with 3,000 troops, the 12th Motorcycle Regiment with 2,000 troops, three Reserve Divisions (10th, 13th, and 15th) with 23,000 troops, the Border Constabulary 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 5th, and 7th Brigades with 18,600 troops, the 1st and 2nd Corps Headquarters with 5,000 troops, and 3,000 Russian military experts who were operating behind them (Appleman 1961: 10-11).<sup>5</sup>

According to the operation program in the early stage, the attack on South Korea had been scheduled to be launched from two directions: The First Assistant Commanding Headquarters, commanded by Lieutenant General Kim Woong stationed in Geumchun was scheduled to attack Seoul directly from Haeju [3rd Brigade], Gaeseung [6th Division] and Yunchun [3rd and 4th Divisions], and the 2nd and 7th Divisions under the Second Assistant Commanding Headquarters commanded by Lieutenant General Moo Jung were scheduled to besiege below Seoul, from Suwon via Chuncheon and Hongcheon. On the East Coast, 3,000 soldiers of the 766th Independent Brigade were scheduled to attack Gangneung and Sokcho from the sea (Appleman 1961; Yoo

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5. The number of the Korean Army at that time was 64,700 (Appleman 1961: 15). According to the record of Baik Sun-yup, the number of the North Korean Army was 198,380, and South Korea, 105,752 (Baik 1989: 47).

1990b). The North Korean Navy landed on Samchuk using traditional junks, and the troops that landed on the coast that day acted as guerrillas rather than regular units (Sawyer 1988: 117). They were neither mentally nor physically equipped to confront the U.S. 7th Fleet along the entire Korean coast.

The advance to the Chuncheon area was slow, because the tank troops of North Korea had problems passing the mountainous area and the resistance of the 6th Division in South Korea was too strong. These are the established theories (Appleman 1961: 116-117). However, there are challenges to this argument. For example, according to Bruce Cumings, the attack on the Chuncheon area was not severe, and the attack on Gangneung was even insignificant. Gangneung did not fall until the 28th. Despite this, South Korea withdrew from Chuncheon not because of the fierce attack, but because Seoul fell under the hand of the enemy (Cumings 1990: 583). Unlike the claim of B. Cumings, the recently exposed documents seem to prove that the North Korean troops who advanced from the Eastern front to Suwon were not the crack contingent and that there was much confusion in strategy. According to the operational evaluation of the Soviet Politburo on September 7:

The battalions and regiments being sent to the Seoul front, separately and unprepared for fighting, could not be effective due to the lack of coordination and communication with headquarters. The Division, which had arrived from the southeast in disorganized fashion, was being put into action immediately in small units. Thus, the adversary was helped in beating it to pieces. Instead, as we had instructed you earlier, you had to deploy this Division for fighting in the area to the northeast and east from Seoul, had to put it there in order to give it at least a day's rest, ready it for the battle, and only after that, introduce it into action in an organized fashion (Bajanov: 72).

There arises another question here: If Kim Il-sung really wanted to occupy the whole territory of South Korea, the 2nd and 7th Divisions should not have advanced from Hongchun westward to Suwon, but, instead, they should have marched southward through Hoingsung-Wonjoo-Jechun-Danyang-Youngjoo to capture Daegu, the Moscow of Korea where Communists had a deep relationship with the people's uprising. At this point in time, the North Korean Army had 242 T34 tanks, 176 SU72mm self-propelled guns, and 54 armored cars. These vehicles moved at a velocity of 40km an hour, and their action radius was

350km (Hausman, Jung 1995: 249-250). The South Korean Army was seized with a morbid fear of tanks (Baik 1989: 32). Had the North Koreans kept coming, they would have driven UN troops off the peninsula (Rusk 1990: 163). But the 2nd and 7th Divisions did not march southward because they had planned to seize Suwon and Seoul to capture residents in Seoul in order to use those places and people as hostages for negotiations between South and North Korea.

Another problem relating to this question is the timing of the opening of the war. Exactly at 04:00 on June 25 they began to advance southward from the Ongjin Peninsula. They did not make a full-scale raid on the overall front, but the sequence of attack progressed from west to east, with the earliest attack striking the Ongjin Peninsula at 04:00 (Appleman 1961: 21). There is no full-scale war launch that implements strategies at various times. North Korea did not concentrate its efforts on the Eastern Front at the beginning. In other words, their primary goal was having Seoul in their hand, not the whole nation. The order from J. Stalin that says “do not scatter the raid, but concentrate on the front [Ongjin-Seoul and Uijeongbu-Seoul]” explains this well (*Russian Documents on the Korean War* 1995: 5).

#### 4. Why Did North Korea Attach Importance to Light Equipment?

Going over the military equipment of South Korea can be an excellent source for explaining Kim Il-sung’s intention for war. For June 23rd, according to the orders sent to the 657th Unit of North Korea, the supply details were: One squad received a blanket, there was tableware for three people, emergency food, one pair of shoes, a washbasin, a spare foot wrapper and finely-shredded fodder for two days. These supply rules were strictly obeyed.<sup>6</sup> These are very lightly-supplied troops, and these supplies would be highly insufficient if they were to launch a full-scale war. As pointed out previously, finishing the war before the Monsoon period meant prompt timing. Kim Il-sung was fully aware that long-term war was only a disadvantage for him, and that he needed to finish the war in three days. As this was an irrationally short time in which to occupy a whole nation, he concentrated on Ongjin-Seoul (*Russian Documents on the Korean War* 1994: 14).

The transportation equipment was even coarser, and support for the rear

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6. “Order to 657th Unit of the North Korean People’s Army,” RG 242, SA2010 Item 1/52 (Suitland: NA)

troops was never considered from the beginning.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, the Vehicle Management Bureau of the 4th Division that occupied Seoul had to collect and send leftover vehicles of the South Korean Army and U.S. troops to the battlefield.<sup>8</sup> A look at firepower reveals that the infantrymen each received an Ashibo rifle and a 99-mode rifle, while Chinese soldiers had M-1 rifles that had been left by the U.S. Army during WW II. Four platoon troops received artillery, but as the shells ran short, the artillerymen were trained for infantry duty.<sup>9</sup> The Air Force was in an even worse situation than this.<sup>10</sup>

Also, rations for the occupation of the whole of South Korea had not been prepared and were virtually non-existent. North Korea had decided to begin war operations in June because it was the harvest season for barley, making self-subsistence possible.<sup>11</sup> There were no operational directions to advance below Seoul in Reconnaissance Order No. 1,<sup>12</sup> delivered by the General Staff of the People's Army to the Chief of Staff of the 4th Division, nor in Operation Order No. 1,<sup>13</sup> which was delivered by the Commander of the 4th Division, Lee Gwon-moo.<sup>14</sup> One reason why Kim Il-sung was focused on a short-term war would be related to his experiences in guerrilla warfare.

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7. Interview Records of the Surrendered North Korean Armies: Testimony of Major Ji Gi-chul, Artillery Battalion, 6th Division, North Korean People's Army (Seoul: Compilation Committee of the Military History, Department of National Defense, 1969), No. 0-21, p. 18.
  8. Interview Records of the Surrendered North Korean Armies: Testimony of Major Lee Sang-yun, Chief Manager of Automobiles, 6th Division, North Korean People's Army, p. 4.
  9. Interview Records of the Surrendered North Korean Armies: Testimony of Song Young-chan, gun-layer of 8th Artillery Regiment, North Korean People's Army, pp. 3-5.
  10. "Coded Message N 1713 Stalin to Mao" (May 23, 1951), Evgueny P. Bajanov (et al. eds.), *The Korean Conflict, 1950-1953*, p. 129; Testimony of Major Ji Gi-chul, p.19.
  11. Interview Records of the Surrendered North Korean Armies: Testimony of Major Lee Sang-yun, p. 3 and Major Kim Yoon-moon, Chief of Staff, Supreme Headquarter, North Korean People's Army, pp. 1-2.
  12. Operation Order No. 1 by Operations Section, 4th Infantry Division, North Korean Army, RG 407, Entry 429, Box 350, OTIS Issue No. 2 (NA). The English Text of this document is included in U.S. Department of State, *The Conflict in Korea: Events Prior to the Attack on June 25, 1950*, pp. 26-28.
  13. The North Korean Reconnaissance Order No. 1, by the General Staff of the North Korean Army, UN Security Council Document S/2179. English text of this material is printed on U.S. Department of State, *The Conflict in Korea: Events Prior to the Attack on June 25, 1950*, pp. 28-32.
  14. B. Cumings insists that considering geographical names in Japanese, 'the North Korean Reconnaissance Order No. 1 is forgery' (Cumings 1990: 588-590). However, in U.S. documents it was common to write the place name in Japanese letters.

Subsequently, another question arises: Why hadn't the North Korean Army prepared equipment for the crossing of the Han River? They had surveyed the width and depth of the Han River from Incheon to Seoul by espionage on June 18 (Pang 1986: 35). It was 02:15 on June 28 when the bridge on the Han River was blown up. Up till that time, the Korean Military Advisory Group (KMAG) and the Korean Army had agreed not to blow up the bridge. However, Colonel Choi Chang-shik, Commander of the Engineering Division, blew up it in accordance with an order from above.<sup>15</sup> The Han River Bridge blew up seven minutes after the KMAG officers crossed. According to an American officer's estimate, between 500 and 800 persons were killed or drowned in the blowing up of the bridge. Possibly there were as many as 4,000 people altogether on the bridge. The North Korean Army then captured weapons and equipment left by the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Divisions of South Korea (Appleman 1961: 33 Hausman, Jung 1995: 203). Yoo Sung-chul testifies about the situation as follows:

When they were advancing to Seoul by crossing the 38th Parallel, North Korean troops sent troops that were disguised as civilians to strategic bridges to prevent South Koreans from bombing the bridges. But they did not care for the Han River Bridge. We had no other choice but crossing the Han River and putting iron plates up so the tanks could move across the leftover Han River Bridge that was not bombed due to the mistake of the South Korean Army. At that time, North Korean troops were not properly equipped with river-crossing facilities, so preparation itself took a day (Yoo 1990c).

It was in the morning on July 30 when the North Korean Army began to cross Han River. The 8th Regiment of the 3rd Division tried to cross the River from Seobinggo in Yongsan. The river-crossing equipment was limited to a ferryboat and Russian rubber boats onto which they could not load the heavy artillery.<sup>16</sup> Some of the men crossed in wooden boats that were capable of carrying a 2.5-ton truck, or twenty to thirty men (Appleman 1961: 53). However, having

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15. The responsibility for the blasting operation of Han River Bridge is controversial. According to the U.S. document, Jang Gyung-geun, Vice-Minister of National Defense is responsible for it (Appleman 1961: 32-33). However, according to the Korean record, Army Chief of Staff, Chae Byung-duk ordered Colonel Choi Chang-shik to blast it (War Memorial Association 1992: 167).

16. Testimony of Major Ji Gi-chul, p. 7.

judged that it was impossible to march southward with such rough equipment, they changed their plan to repair the destroyed railway bridge. Subsequently, they ordered the 3rd Battalion, 5th Regiment, 4th Division to cross from Mapo to Youngdeungpo at 04:00 on July 1. They began to march southward on that same day when the Charles B. Smith's Unit of the 24th Division of the U.S. Army landed at Pusan (Appleman 1961: 60-61). The North Koreans then occupied Youngdeungpo at 08:00 on July 3 with 227 deaths, 1,822 wounded, and 107 missing among the 4th Division. The first North Korean tanks of the 3rd Division crossed the Han River after one of the railroad bridges had been repaired and decked for tank traffic (Appleman 1961: 55).<sup>17</sup>

When we view these situations, it seems that, from the beginning, North Korea did not pay attention to crossing the Han River or bridge bombing. This does not mean that North Korea lacked any strategic reasoning it only means that they had neither planned for these, nor were they supplied with facilities for such purposes. According to the testimony of Joo Young-bok, Engineering Staff of the 2nd Corps, they were even deprived of river crossing equipment for the Soyang River (Joo 1990: 269, 286). There is testimony that North Korea stayed in Seoul for three days because they did not have river crossing facilities.<sup>18</sup> This means that North Korea did not furnish the equipment even though it had a desire for river crossing, or rather that they had no intention whatsoever to cross the river. It does not make sense to postulate that they had a desire for a full-scale war, but yet were deprived of the equipment for a standard river crossing.

## 5. Did Kim Not Really Anticipate the Intervention of the United States?

As cited before, J. Stalin and Kim Il-sung were worried about U.S. participation in the war. They expected that if they could finish the war in Seoul, the U.S. would not be involved, but if the war expanded, the U.S. would be involved. Following is the situation report at the outbreak of war on June 25th, which

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17. Even though a footbridge on Han River was blown up, a lane of the railway bridge on which North Korean Army drove the tanks was not destroyed (Hausman, Jung 1995: 208; Joo 1990: 304-305).

18. Author's Interview with General Baik Sun-yup (Retired, Commander of 1st Division at the time of war) at the International Conference on 'the Korean War Revisited on the Fortieth Anniversary' (Seoul: Hilton Hotel, June 25-27, 1990).

shows that North Korea did not expect U.S. participation in the war.

- (1) June 25th is a holiday (Sunday).
- (2) 25% of the enlisted men and officials on the front line are away on vacation.
- (3) The South Korean people are disaffected toward their government.<sup>19</sup>
- (4) The untrained armies in South Korea are defenseless.<sup>20</sup>

North Korea had to make the war a civil war, so as not to give the U.S. an excuse to participate; following this line of thought, North Korea then had not schemed for a full-scale war for the entire peninsula. Just before the opening of the war, J. Stalin withdrew the Russian military advisors from North Korea. When N. Khrushchev pointed out the danger of such action, J. Stalin answered, “We don’t want there to be evidence accusing us of taking part in this business” (Khrushchev 1971: 370). Furthermore, the observers who were stationed near the front line went back as soon as they made sure that North Korean soldiers had advanced to the 38th Parallel (Joo 1990: 268). It is possible that the Soviet Union thought that as long as they did not get involved, neither would the U.S.

From his memoir, Soviet Chief Advisor, Major General Igor Selivanov, who was responsible for medical measures for the North Korean soldiers, said “We never get captured alive, no matter what happens. Try to rescue Russian and Russian-made supplies or destroy them. Never let them fall into the hands of Americans.” This is because they were aware of J. Stalin’s order that Americans should not know that Russians had been involved with this war (Korotkov 1992: 68-69). The Russian soldiers came down to South Korea wearing uniforms and gadgets of the Chinese People’s Army.<sup>21</sup> This subterfuge tells us that the Soviet Union expected if the war expanded (going further south than Seoul), the U.S. would participate it was a fear for Russia. This also supports the idea that they had no intention of a full-scale war.

When we reach the final phase of the reasoning that North Korea had no intention to occupy the whole of South Korea, we encounter another basic ques-

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19. It is controversial to say whether the situation at that time was unfavorable for Rhee Syng-man, which encouraged Kim Il-sung to open the Korean War. For more detailed discussion of the situation, cf. Kim(1995: 301-335). Kim Il-young insists in his article that Rhee Syng-man was not in a state of crisis around the period of the election on May 30th, 1950.

20. Testimony of Major Ji Gi-chul, p. 4; Testimony of Major Kim Yoon-moon, p. 1.

21. “Testimony of General Nikolayev,” *ibid.*, pp. 69-70.



tion. Why did the war escalate? Regarding this problem, B. Cumings cited the testimony of Lee Bum-suk, Premier and Minister of National Defense at the time of the war, who said that North Korea had originally intended a limited campaign, but found out that further advancement to the south was so easy with the collapse of the 12th Regiment and the 7th and 2nd Divisions, they just kept on rolling (Cumings 1990: 617-618). However, what is more important than this is that unlike their previous misjudgment, there was no turning back of North Korean armies because America decided to participate. Therefore, North Korea changed its plot, regardless of its former intentions, only after June 30, when it became evident that the U.S. would deploy its ground troops. As Wada Haruki indicates, North Koreans expanded their occupation area because South Korea flatly withdrew its forces to Pusan (Haruki 1995: 86). They had not targeted Pusan at the beginning. Eventually there would be complications and a reversal of the situation because the North Korean troops had advanced too far in isolation without any concrete preparations, leaving their rear area vulnerable (Goncharov 1993: 163).

### **Outbreak of War by Kim Il-sung and the Response of the United States**

The most mysterious thing in the process of the Korean War is whether North Korea really fell into an American trap. Hagiwara Ryo, former correspondent of the Japanese *Akahata (Red Flag)* in Pyongyang, wrote a contemporary book that claims the trap theory. He explains that the Korean War was simply a case of Kim Il-sung's small conspiracy falling into the bigger conspiracy of General MacArthur (Ryo 1994). Despite these assertions, there is no evidence that the U.S. provoked the Korean War, a common claim of leftists. However, the U.S. was expecting an outbreak of war somewhere in the world, even though we cannot explicitly say that it was focused on Korea. Even though there is no proof that the U.S. welcomed the Korean War, thinking it was a second Sarajevo (Cumings 1990: 585), we can see that the U.S. certainly foresaw the possibility of war.

We can point out the following items to support the opinion that the U.S. was expecting a war to take place.

- (1) Having searched the political and military situation and returned home in

August 1947, Lieutenant General Albert C. Wedemeyer, the former U.S. Commander of the Asian Theater and Commander of the 6th Army at that time, presented a report that said “a possibility of a Soviet-inspired invasion of South Korea by troops of the North Korean People’s (Communist) Army exists” (Wedemeyer 1951: 24).

- (2) On April 11 and May 11th, 1949, Chang Myun (John M. Chang), Ambassador to the U.S., and Cho Byung-ok, special envoy of President Rhee Syng-man visited the Department of State and had a conversation with W. W. Butterworth, Director for Far Eastern Affairs and Niles Bond, Assistant Chief, Division of Northeast Asian Affairs, predicting the possibility of invasion from North Korea and, particularly, apprehending the tension on the West Coast (FRUS 1949: 984-986, 1019-1021).
- (3) The JCS had secured the information in June 1949 that North Korea would assault South Korea (JCS Records 1949).
- (4) On June 27th, 1949, Minister of the Army Frank Pace sent a secret letter to Secretary of State Dean Acheson, informing him of the possible full-scale invasion from North Korea. This letter was transferred to Niles Bond (FRUS 1949: 1046-1057).
- (5) On July 13th, 1949, J. J. Muccio, U.S. Ambassador to Korea, sent a memorandum to the Department of State, informing them there was proof of invasion (FRUS 1949: 1060-1061).
- (6) On July 21st, 1949, CINCPAC had planned secretly to move the Embassy in Korea to Japan (Noble 1975: 21).
- (7) Under this urgent circumstance, on December 14th, 1949, the U.S. Department of State dispatched Assistant Chief N. Bond, Division of Northeast Asian Affairs, to investigate the actual conditions in Korea. He stayed in Seoul until December 20th and collected information. Having met him, Ambassador Muccio and Shin Sung-mo, Minister of National Defense, informed him of the possibilities of full-scale invasion from North Korea (FRUS 1949: 1107).
- (8) CINCPAC secured information on March 10th, 1950, regarding the invasion from North Korea in June 1950.<sup>22</sup> Among the reports secured by CINCPAC, a report intimated that the war would break out on June 25th - 28th, but this was ignored.<sup>23</sup>

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22. “Acheson’s Testimony,” *Military Situation in the Far East (so-called MacArthur Hearings)* (Washington, D. C.: USGPO, 1951), p. 1991.

- (9) In the spring of 1950, President H. S. Truman received a report informing him that Korea was imperiled by war. Recognizing the menace in Korea, Truman reminded Congress of this in his message on June 1st, 1950, which was testified as relevant by O. Bradley, Chairman of JC.<sup>24</sup>
- (10) On April 14th, 1950, the National Security Council composed NSC-68, one of the most crucial documents from this point in modern history (Chomsky 1987: 15). This was a report by warmongers to urge the necessity of rearmament of the U.S.
- (11) From June 17th to 22nd, 1950, J. F. Dulles, an advisor in the Department of State, visited Korea to confirm the political situation and front line on the 38th Parallel. On his way home, he stopped by SCAP in Tokyo to see General D. MacArthur, at which point J. F. Dulles reported to General MacArthur the military weakness and possibility of armed clash. General MacArthur did not take this information seriously (FRUS 1950: 237-238).
- (12) Before Trygve Lie, Secretary-General of the United Nations, convened an emergency meeting of the Security Council of the UN on June 25th, 14:00 (New York Time) for passing a UN Resolution on the Korean War, the U.S. Representatives to the UN had already composed the draft manuscript of the UN Security Resolution accusing North Korea of being the aggressor and announcing the collective response against the invasion of North Korea.<sup>25</sup>
- (13) In early 1950, the main source of information for the KMAG was Korean Liaison Office (KLO) agents dispatched to North Korea. Having been supported by them, the U.S. Army secured information on

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23. "Donald Nicols' Memoir," *Korean Contemporary History Written with New Materials* (Seoul: Institute of Contemporary History at JoongAng Ilbo Co., 1996), pp. 314-315.

24. "Bradley's Testimony," *MacArthur Hearings*, p. 1052; H. S. Truman, *Memoirs*: Vol. II, *Years of Trial and Hope, 1946-1952* (Garden City: Doubleday & Co., 1956), pp. 331-332.

25. Here is the brief summary of Gross's, *The Reminiscences* (New York: The Oral History Research Office at Columbia University, 1966, mimeo). When we examine it closer, we cannot conclude that E. Gross had prepared the resolution for the Security Council in advance. However, there are still a few doubts. One of the most important and serious doubts is the activity of David W. Wainhouse, who was sent from the Office of UN Political and Security Affairs, Department of State. Nobody knows the exact hour when he left Washington, D.C., but it is undeniable that the draft version of the UN Resolution was already written at this time. Unless he had written it from 3:00 am to 4:00 a.m. at his house (25th), he could not have arrived at his residence (2-hour driving distance) in New York. U.S. Eastern time 3:00 a.m. to 4:00 on the 25th is 16:00pm to 17:00 on the 25th in Seoul, 12 hours after the outbreak of the

June 23rd that war would come within several days (Pang 1990: 43-44).

Under these circumstances, President Truman, who was staying at his residence in Missouri, received the report on the Korean War in the afternoon of June 24th (NYT). He returned to Washington, D.C. and summoned the heads of the Department of State and the Department of Defense at 21:26 on June 25th. He sent out an order to General MacArthur as follows.

- (1) MacArthur should evacuate the Americans from Korea, and in order to do so, should keep open Kimpo and other airports. In doing this, his Air Forces should stay south of the 38th Parallel.
- (2) MacArthur should supply ammunition and supplies to the Korean Army by airdrop and other means.
- (3) The 7th Fleet should be ordered into the Formosa Strait to prevent the conflict from spreading to that area. The fleet would repel any attack on Formosa, and no attacks should be made from Formosa to the mainland (Truman 1956: 334).

During the night of June 27th, the UN Security Council passed a second momentous resolution calling upon member nations to give military aid to South Korea in repelling the North Korean attack (Appleman 1961: 38). During this period, in the morning of June 28th, General MacArthur was on an airplane heading to Suwon, where he patrolled the southern front of Han River; he then concluded that it was necessary to bring in American troops. Therefore, in the morning of the 30th, President Truman ordered two divisions of ground armies that were stationed in Japan at that time to be sent out. He also decided to blockade the coastlines of North Korea (MacArthur 1964: 332-333; Appleman 1961: 47 Rusk 1990: 162-163 Hausman, Jung 1995: 208-209). The U.S. responded to the Korean War so rapidly and resolutely not only because they believed that this war was the test of all the talk of the last five years of collective security (Thompson 1981: 180), but also because, if the U.S. did not push its allies along

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war. When we consider that it was a holiday (Sunday), it is almost certain that the draft version was nothing like a draft, but rather a perfectly and logically developed and created version. Furthermore, there is additional doubt due to the fact that the UN Security Council meeting was already scheduled for the 27th, but the emergency meeting was promptly held at 15:00 on the 25th to pass the UN resolution.

rather rapidly, there was a concern that the alliance would disintegrate because their main preoccupation was the defense of Europe against Russia (Gross 1966: 706).

Considering all the circumstances, North Korea was preparing for the war and United States was expecting the war. This means that the U.S., at the time, needed a war in a certain place. However, this logic should not be interpreted as provocation theory or trap theory. The Korean War was neither “a reluctant crusade” (Matray 1985.), as J. Matray stated, nor “a surprised or an unexpected war” (Noble 1975: 21, 37; Sawyer 1988: 114; Rusk 1990: 161), as stated in official U.S. documents. For the United States, the Korean War was, as Dean Acheson confessed, “a thankful and anticipated war” (Cumings 1983: 49).

## Conclusion

[1] The Korean War was a civil war, and “only a phase in a much longer conflict” (Chomsky 1987: 99). Even though this chapter is based on the theory of internal war, it does not exonerate Kim Il-sung from the responsibility of the war. Just as no one cares anymore that the American South fired first on Fort Sumter, no one asks who started the Vietnamese War (Cumings 1990: 571, 619), nor is it productive to debate who began the Korean War. Even after Kim Il-sung's death, it was not possible to find any legal document about the attack. Sources will say it was a “counter-offensive to the American provocation” (Goncharov 1993: 150). It would be meaningless at this point to establish who was responsible for firing first. Nevertheless, it can be postulated that Kim should have worried more about opening war and should have ignored the temptation of victory and expanded command.

[2] The attack on June 25, 1950 was definitely decided by Kim Il-sung. He tried to overcome early conflicts in the stage of state building through war.<sup>26</sup> For him, “war is the ultimate process of politics.”<sup>27</sup> Kim is responsible for delaying unification for sixty years, whether from the viewpoint of national history the war was internal or civil, an attempt and desire to communize the whole of Korea, or a war of liberation.

[3] Kim Il-sung did not begin the war to occupy the whole of Korea with his

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26. For a more detailed discussion, cf. Suh (1996: 56-57).

27. “MacArthur's Testimony,” *MacArthur Hearings*, p. 45.

armed forces. He misjudged that it would be possible to communize the whole of Korea by means of political negotiation through the occupation of Seoul and the detainment of South Korean political leaders.

[4] The United States had exact information of the invasion from North Korea and anticipated it. The Korean War provided a good opportunity to war-mongers, which used it for rearmament. In this respect, the United States is responsible for the strategy of burning everything to the ground in Korea.

[5] The primary responsibility for the Korean War must be attributed to Kim Il-sung. To avoid this, he needed a scapegoat for his defeat and chose Park Hun-young, his arch political rival.

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**Shin Bok-ryong** is Professor of Political Science at Konkuk University. He received his Ph. D. from Konkuk University, and he was a visiting scholar at Georgetown University while he conducted research at the U.S. National Archives in Washington, D.C. and Suitland (1985-1986). He is the author of *Political History of Korea*, *History of Korean Political Thoughts*, *Biography of Jun Bong-joon*, and *The Politics of Separation of the Korean Peninsular*, for which he received an academic award from the Korean Political Science Association (2001). He was also Chairman of the Korean Association for Political and Diplomatic History (1999-2000).