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The Hidden Belligerent: Japan's Role in the Korean War

Abstract. This article aims to define the role that Japan played in the Korean War. Described by one American official as "indispensable," the U.S. arguably could not have successfully participated in this war without Japan's cooperation. Japan, then under U.S. occupation and prohibited from engaging in military activities by the terms of its surrender and by its postwar constitution, nonetheless carried out a vast array of military activities over the duration of the war. Behind their cooperation was the charge that the war, rather than simply a North Korean bid to reunite the Korean Peninsula, was a more ambitious assault by the Soviet Union on the free democratic nations in the Northeast Asian region. Japan thus justified its participation as necessary for its self-defense. The paper argues that the Korean War grew out of the shortcomings of the means to secure peace in concluding the Pacific War, thus linking the two wars. Japan's remilitarization at this time initiated a process that continues to this day.

Keywords: Korean War SCAP, U.S. occupation of Japan, remilitarization, U.S.-Soviet relations, Japanese constitution, war and peace.

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The 8 August 2023 evening edition of the *Asahi Shimbun* newspaper reminded its readers that on this day 78 years ago Soviet armies entered the Pacific War by "invading Manchuria" 満州侵略 *Manchū shinryaku*). The United States, which had inaugurated the atomic age just two days previous by dropping a nuclear bomb on Hiroshima, dropped a second bomb on Nagasaki the next day. The U.S. would justify these actions as necessary to secure Japan's surrender; using the bomb also saved as many as 500,000 (later revised to one million) American lives that would have been lost if it had carried out Operation Olympic, a planned invasion of Japan through Kyushu scheduled to commence on 1 November 1945. Many scholars also add that another, perhaps more important purpose of the bombs' dropping was to end the war quickly to contain Soviet advancement into Northeast Asia. The evening of 10 August, the United States offered a plan to do this just by proposing a dual occupation of the Korean Peninsula that would limit Soviet advancement to north of the 38th parallel (Cumings 1981, 120). This was necessary as, while the Soviets quickly advanced into northern Korea, the U.S. force that would eventually occupy southern Korea, the 24th Corps, was still in Okinawa, over two weeks sailing dis-

tance from Korea. U.S. officials expressed doubt that the Soviets would honor this proposal even after they had agreed to it; in the end they did.[1] This division of Korea, though originally viewed as a temporary necessity to accept Japan's surrender, from 1948 hardened into the formation of two separate Korean states, the Republic of Korea (ROK) in the south and the Democratic Republic of Korea (DPRK) in the north[2], thus providing the setting for a civil war should either of the Koreas attempt to reunify the Peninsula by force. Can the evening of 10—11 August thus be interpreted as the initial shot that engulfed the region in war a short five years later?

From at least around 1948, if not earlier, a second critical piece of the Korean War puzzle began to materialize across the waters in Japan. Sensing perhaps that war in the region was inevitable, the primary U.S. occupation policy in Japan shifted away from Japan's democratization and demilitarization, and towards the state's postwar economic recovery and its remilitarization from this time. Within a few years the Japanese would play an "indispensable"[3] role in the war, one that enabled the U.S.-led UN Command forces to act as a critical belligerent in this war. It is hardly an exaggeration to conclude that the U.S. could not have participated in this war to the extent that it did without Japan's assistance[4]. Yet, Japan being at the time under strict restrictions, set first by the terms of it surrender in 1945, and then by its postwar constitution in 1947, which prevented it from forming regular army and engaging in military activities, was in no legal position to indirectly help supply belligerents, much less directly engage in war, unless it could demonstrate that the war directly threatened its national sovereignty. Thus, much of the assistance that it did provide has remained, until recently, hidden from Korean War historiography. This paper is designed to describe this activity and to suggest that it acted for the Japanese as a springboard to assemble one of the world's strongest militaries at present[5].

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[1] The 24th Corps, eventually reached the port city of In'chŏn on 8 September 1945, and Seoul the following day. Meanwhile, by that time Soviet armies had already entered the Korean Peninsula and were quickly advancing south to the 38 parallel, the latitude that the U.S. had proposed as the dividing line. The Soviets apparently agreed to the division on 14 August 1945, just as they prepared to advance onto the Korean Peninsula. The armies crossed the parallel briefly at the city of Kaesŏng but quickly retreated to their side of the dividing line to honor this arrangement, to the great surprise of the U.S. which had suspected in the closing months of the European war that the Soviet aimed to eventually communize the entire Korean Peninsula.

[2] Richard D. Robinson, who served in the U. S. Army Military Government in Korea (USAMGIK), details how 38 parallel soon became a strict border that divided the Korean Peninsula rather than a point of division that encouraged U.S.-Soviet cooperation. A number of these transgressions, he notes, were due to mapping problems making it unclear just where the 38th parallel ran through the Korean Peninsula. His "Betrayal of a Nation," which to date never saw publication in English, is included in Hoffmann and Caprio, 2023.

[3] This term was used by the first postwar U.S. Ambassador to Japan, Robert D. Murphy, in his 1964 memoire, *Diplomat among Warriors*. [cited in Nishimura, 2019. p. 151]. The Ambassador had declared in June 1950 the war to have been "godsent" [Takemae, 2002, p. 485].

[4] From early on Japan has become to be described as a "base-state (基地国家, K. kiji kuka; J. kichi kokka). See Inomata, 1953; Nam, 2016.

[5] Richard J. Samuels (2007) explains Japan's postwar remilitarization. In 2021 it spent over $54 billion on its military, ranking it sixth among world nations. Macrotrends which procured data from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.

Japanese Remnants in a "Liberated" Southern Korea, 1945—1950

The Japanese empire fell in mid-August 1945 with the emperor's declaration of the country's decision to accept the surrender terms as issued at Potsdam the previous month. However, its influence lingered throughout the half-decade that separated the Pacific War from the Korean War. His recorded "Jewel Voice" (玉音, *gyokuon*) that was aired over the radio waves on 15 August 1945 cited the "new and most cruel bomb" as the primary reason for his decision; clearly a potentially bigger concern was that the Soviet Union's decision to enter the Pacific War[1]. His declaration by no means ended the fighting in East Asia, as demonstrated by Ronald H. Spector [2007]. The bomb did succeed in limiting Soviet advancement into the region; this would allow the revival of Japanese influence in its now former empire, particularly within the U.S. zone in Korea.

It was clear from early on that the U.S.-Japan postwar relationship would gradually return to the two country's relations in the 1920s: as allies rather than enemies. As early as mid-August, on a number of occasions, American and Japanese troops engaged in more cordial settings[2]. The Japanese learned in early September that it would be the U.S., rather than the Soviets, that would accept their surrender in southern Korea. From this time, the colonial government successfully made contact with the U.S. 24th Corps still in Okinawa to warn the Americans that "communists and independence agitators [were] among Koreans who are plotting to take advantage of this situation to disturb peace and order here". The United States replied in an unimaginable way: It instructed the Japanese to "maintain order and preserve the machinery of government in Korea south of 38 degrees north latitude until [U.S.] forces assume those responsibilities"[3]. John R. Hodge, who would serve as the U.S. commanding officer in southern Korea, then promised the Japanese, with whom his army had just battled, that he would have leaflets dropped over the Korean Peninsula to instruct the just-liberated Korean people that the Japanese were to maintain order until the Americans arrived.

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[1] Interestingly, in his speech the emperor cited the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as a reason for his decision to surrender. However, on 17 August 1945 he issued a second statement to the Japanese troops who remained on front lines across Asia titled "大東亜戦争終戦に際し陸海軍人に賜りたる勅語 Daitōa sensō shūsen ni saishite rikukaigunjin ni tamawaritaru chokugo" (Receipt Addressed to our Soldiers and Sailors Concerning Surrender) that cited the Soviet armies entering the war as the primary reason for his decision. This statement did not mention the atomic bomb as a factor.

[2] One occasion was in Seoul on 18 August when Americans, forced to spend a night in Yŏŭido which was then a Japanese airbase located in the city, held a beer and song-a-thon session with their erstwhile enemies [Caprio 2022]. Richard D. Robinson tells of a party that the advanced team of American soldiers held at the Chosŏn Hotel in Seoul with Japanese, but not Koreans who were prevented from participating. (Robinson, 2023).

[3] Over the first few days of September the Japanese and U.S. exchanged close to twenty radio messages each when the Japanese informed the U.S. of the situation in Korea and the U.S. issued surrender instructions in return. Printouts of these messages are found in the National Archives and Records Administration RG 554, Box 33, Folder: "Repatriation and Transfer of Control to US". See also Cumings 1981, 125—27.

The day prior to the U.S. arrival, 7 September 1945, General Douglas MacArthur issued his Proclamation No. 1 which first stated that the U.S. were justified in occuping Korea by the "Instruments of [Japanese] surrender"; his decree then ordered the Japanese colonial bureaucracy, including Governor General Abe Nobuyuki, to remain at their positions until Koreans could be properly trained to replace them [U.S. Department of State, 1969, pp.1043—44]. This directive was soon amended to order the purge of top Japanese officials who were replaced within days. Other Japanese, along with the Koreans they had trained, remained at their posts. This most affected the occupation police force which contained a majority of colonial-era personnel ensuring that it, and the occupation, would remain heavily in favor of conservative elements over progressive leftist Koreans [See Robinson's and Gayn's entries in Hoffmann and Caprio, 2023]. This powerful conservative element in southern Korea that gained the U.S. support is as responsible as leftist elements in the north for disrupting efforts by both occupation administrations to reunify the Peninsula, a success that would have greatly reduced, but not eliminated, the violence that Korea and the region experienced in the coming years. Throughout the initial period of this occupation, and into the Korean War, the U.S. relied heavily on the Japanese for information and advice with Korea's former administrators issuing many reports to the occupation administration.

The U.S.'s actions in southern Korea and Japan were most likely being monitored carefully by the region's communist regimes, so much so that both Joseph Stalin and Mao Zedong felt it necessary to warn Kim Il Sung during the DPRK leader's 1949 visits to Moscow and Beijing of the possibility of a remilitarized Japan's intervening in a war in Korea on behalf of the ROK [Weathersby, 2002, p.12]. Stalin, however, did not expect the U.S. to intervene in a way that it did, as in doing so it risked igniting yet another world war. For that very reason he warned Kim that the Soviets could not openly assist him. Thus, he must first gain Mao's pledge of support prior to his initiating any military action again the ROK [Chen, 1994]. While the two leaders were most probably aware of Japan's economic struggles over the initial period that followed its 1945 defeat, they were no doubt more concerned with the potential of the U.S. helping the Japanese rebuild its military base and sending its cadre of military-trained population to the Peninsula.

They were also most likely aware of George Kennan's visit to Japan in 1947. The author of the famous long telegram in February 1946 that he sent from Moscow to introduce "containment" as a policy most viable in halting Soviet advancement, recommended a shift in the focus of U.S. occupation policy in Japan from democratization to economic recovery and towards remilitarization. This influenced an NSC 13/2 draft by the U.S. National Security Council which recommended that President Harry S. Truman approve a policy that would radically change the direction of U.S. administration in Japan, the core of this "great reversal" put Kennan's ideas into motion. This policy statement noted that since the purpose of the purge had been accomplished, it, along with the military tribunals, should be terminated. It also advocated Japan's economic recovery as a "primary objective" of the occupation. At the same time, it recommended that "Japan's economic war potential should be controlled by restrictions..." while limiting "Japan's industrial disarmament [...] to the manufacture of weapons of war and civil air-

craft..." [U.S. Department of State, 1948, pp. 858—62]. Over the next few months even these restrictions would be softened to allow the Japanese to produce war-related items for the battles that would commence in Korea. From 1949 the U.S. occupation administration also initiated a "red purge" that resulted in the dismissal of a large number of suspected left-wing teachers, politicians, journalists, and the like from their jobs [Takemae, 2002, 480—85].

U.S. Discussions over Utilizing Japan in a Korean War

Although from the time of Japan's surrender it might be a stretch to suggest that the United States envisioned a war evolving on the Korean Peninsula—although some did suggest that the Peninsula remaining divided could lend itself to violence in the future—war somewhere in the region remained a very real possibility. Rumors documented in the daily *G-2 Periodic Report* over the first six months of the U.S. presence in Korea contained excerpts of confiscated letters written by Koreans and Japanese that predicted World War III to be just around the corner, this time with the Japanese fighting alongside the U.S. against the Soviet Union. This *Report* also carried mentions of Japanese troops, predicting that their country's sun would soon rise again, squirreling away weapons in caves and even school houses in anticipation of future battles; others who refused to surrender formed gangs in an attempt to disrupt U.S. and Soviet occupation operations in Korea's urban centers, or harass people attempting to repatriate back to either Japan or Korea[1]. Violence spread throughout the Korean Peninsula as the Korean people fought ideological battles and then, after the two states were formed, across the 38th parallel. Bruce Cumings notes that many of the border battles, which lasted up to months, were initiated by the ROK [Cumings, 1990, pp. 388—98].

Just when the beginning of the Korean War is to be dated is contingent on one's definition of war and its origins in Korea. The official start of the war according to both DPRK and ROK historiography is the last weekend of June with the exact date varying according to when either side launched a counterattack to fend off the enemy's initial invasion[2]. Others have argued the origins of the war in broader terms. Soon after the war broke out the journalist I.F. Stone informed that the DPRK attack was anything but a surprise, as it was reported in June 1950 by the U.S. and ROK, that available information had warned that an attack was imminent much before this time [Stone, 1952]. Bruce Cuming, in his lengthy two-volume *Origins of the Korean War*, argues that fighting that began soon after liberation in the south, and continued as border disputes after the two states had been formed, should be considered as part of this war's history. Thus, whether

[1] Short summaries detailing many of these and other incidences can be found in the seven-volume set of *G-2 Daily Reports* compiled by Hallym Taehakkyo, Asia Munhwa Yŏnguso, 1988. See also Caprio [2021] for discussion on acts in the immediate post-war period by Japanese military personnel and the effect that they had on Korean repatriation from Japan to their homes in Korea.

[2] The ROK, for example, set the time on 25 June 1950 at 4:00 in the morning, when it alleges the DPRK forces crossed the parallel into ROK territory, and reminds its constituents of this time by naming the war the 6—25 war. The DPRK, on the other hand, argues that this was to counter an earlier ROK attack [Chōsen tsūshi ka 1996, 80]. There not being a third, neutral, party at the 38th parallel makes it difficult to ascertain which version of the war's origins is in fact true.

it was the ROK or the DPRK that fired the initial shot that set off a war between the two Koreas and their allies is immaterial: Both Syngman Rhee and Kim Il Sung displayed on numerous occasions a willingness to initiate fighting in order to unify the Peninsula by force in the months before and after June 1950[1].

Despite restrictions imposed on the Japanese forming a military, the possibility of it helping the U.S. fight a war was debated in talks held among the U.S. officials even before June 1950. Could the U.S. make use of battle-hardened or military-trained Japanese in the cases of war in the region? How might it utilize the Japanese archipelago in the case of war erupting in Korea or the region? Noted above is one important example in NSC 13/2. Discussions on how to practically implement its contents continued up through the Korean War. In February 1950, for example, U.S. Ambassador to the ROK John J. Muccio[2], Secretary of War Kenneth C. Royall, and ROK President Syngman Rhee gathered for such a discussion. In a summary of their discussion, Muccio noted that a "morale factor" prevented their consideration of using ex-Japanese soldiers on Korean battlefields in the case of war. Rather than evoking the restrictions placed on Japan, the discussants noted the disruption their presence would cause among Korean troops should they be forced to fight alongside their former colonial subjugators. This discussion also nixed the idea of Japanese fighting in separate units. Rhee felt that the Korean police were "well trained militarily and ... almost ready to supplement the army as soldiers" [U.S. Department of State, 1976, 957]. This conversation is revealing as it demonstrates the U.S. and the ROK considering war plans—Rhee here broached the topic of the U.S. arming the ROK military, a plea that he often made, one he repeated in Tokyo later that same month in discussions with General Douglas MacArthur—and it indicated that using Japanese human assets for military purposes was not an idea foreign to U.S. officials. In a discussion later that month, one that included Under Secretary of the Army, William H. Draper, but not President Rhee, the discussants discussed and dismissed the ROK president's idea of arming 20,000 ex-Japanese soldiers [Ibid, p. 959].

The United States returned to this discussion on how to utilize Japanese assets in July 1950, after all-out war had begun along the Korean Peninsula; after Japanese Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru had pledged his country's full cooperation for this war the previous month. At this time, the discussants, while recognizing the restrictions that the Allied forces had placed upon the defeated nation, sought "loopholes" to enable the Japanese to assist the forces battling the DPRK military. These "loopholes" depended first on the U.S. being able to demonstrate that it had been the DPRK that had initiated the fighting and that it had been the ROK that had been victimized, and second, that this invasion threatened Japan as well. Any assistance that Japan would provide could

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[1] Kim Il Sung's discussions with Joseph Stalin and Mao Zedong are documented by Kathrine Weathersby [1995/1996, 2002, as well as by Jian Chen [1994]. Syngman Rhee made frequent statements of his interest in starting a war north. One such statement appeared in the *Stars and Stripes* newspaper on 1 March 1950 where Rhee vowed to "Recover North Korea", a statement that the ROK president delivered at a March First commemoration held at Seoul Stadium on this day.

[2] Since the creation of the ROK, Muccio had held various discussions with ROK President Rhee, some of which resulted in Rhee's strongly requesting U.S. assistance in helping him advance north. One such discussion that transpired on 8 February 1949 [Department of State, 1976, p. 957].

thus be justified as the Japanese protecting their self-defense. In a memorandum marked "confidential" authored by Marshall Green, the Officer in Charge of Japanese Affairs, to John M. Allison, the Director of the Office of Northeast Asian Affairs, Green first described the circumstances that curtailed Japan's military participation:

> You will note that the limitations imposed by FEC decisions on Japanese rearmament are sweeping. The Japanese cannot have a *gendarmerie* or para-military organizations and cannot have any weapons except the use of small arms by the police. The Japanese cannot develop, manufacture, import or export arms, ammunition and implements of war. The construction or conversion of any vessel for military purposes is prohibited.

Green continued by suggesting a way to circumvent these circumstances to justify Japan's participation in this war: the ability of the Supreme Commander (MacArthur) "to exempt temporarily from the provisions of this paper particular primary war facilities, secondary war facilities and facilities in war-supporting industries, insofar as the facilities are required to meet the needs of the Occupation," as well as a Far Eastern Commission (FEC) restriction that states that it shall not make "recommendations with regard to the conduct of military operations nor with regard to territorial adjustments." This would allow the Japanese to provide "civilian type items" for the defense of the ROK.

A second concern, outlined in FEC-017/20, a report commissioned by the FEC in February 1948, prohibited Japan's "exportation of materials intended for military use". Green advised that this restriction could also be circumvented should the U.S. demonstrate that Japan was under "immediate threat" by the DPRK invaders who, U.S. officials claimed, acted under Soviet instructions. These two "loopholes" would give MacArthur the green light to employ the Japanese industrial output towards military needs. The memorandum then cautioned that understanding should be sought among most of the FEC member governments before using Japanese industry as a source for non-military items for use in regions other than Korea, which was already receiving such shipments. It further advised that these points should be brought before the FEC before the Soviet representative, who was then boycotting these meetings along with those of the UN Security Council in protest over these bodies refusing to allow a representative of the People's Republic of China to replace that of the Republic of China (Taiwan) in the UN Security Council, returned to utilize his veto power [U.S. Department of State, 1976, pp. 1244—46].

The irony of particularly the latter report penned by Marshall Green was that even before it was issued, the United States had already begun programs in Japan that went against the spirit of its surrender terms and the 1947 constitution. Takemae Eiji notes that from late 1948 the U.S. drafted NSC-13/2 which, among other points, "called for a 150,000 strong national police force" and argued that Japan should be "capable of providinge "some degree of military assistance to the United States..." From this point forward, Takemae reflects, the U.S. intervened to "raise a de facto Japanese army" [Takemae 2002, 468]. This continued once war broke out in Korea. Perhaps no greater legacy of this policy was its effort to restart Japan's naval capacity to allow it to dispatch minesweepers manned by Japanese (approximately 8,000 men), to clear harbors along the Ko-

rean Peninsula. The most important mission was their work in In'chŏn Harbor in advance of MacArthur's September 1950 landing that within three months temporarily changed the course of the war in favor of the U.S. These Japanese ships also followed U.S. troops north of the 38th parallel, when the battles continued into DPRK territory, to conduct minesweeping activities in DPRK harbors such as Wonsan Harbor. The Japanese also manned the U.S. military bases in Japan which increased in number and size during the war. Japan also offered U.S. and UN troops the use of their transportation and communication infrastructures, their hospitals, as well as their entertainment facilities for use of the troops during their Rest and Recuperation (R & R) breaks from the war. As we shall see, the Japanese engaged in these activities rather willingly as the financial benefits they reaped helped revive an economy that remained depressed from the Pacific War; many also were convinced by Yoshida's stated concern that the war would cross over to their islands if they did not cooperate: this war, rather than as a civil dispute aiming to reunite the Korean Peninsula, as one that threatened the "free democratic world".

Japan's Reactions to the Korean Disturbance

One might argue that from June 1950 Japan, then still under U.S. occupation, had no choice but to support the U.S. efforts. To some degree, particularly regarding the U.S.'s use of military bases, this was probably so. Japan was not in a position to refuse the U.S. at this time. Regardless, however, the U.S. still found among the Japanese a positive ambition to participate. As mentioned above, Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru, on multiple occasions pledged Japanese support soon after the two Koreas began fighting in June 1950 as necessary for Japan's self-defense[1]. Yoshida, who originally had opposed the new direction in Japan's remilitarization advanced by the U.S. from the late 1940s, famously termed the war a "gift from the gods" [Takemae, 2002, p. 485]. By June 1950, the prime minister had "by and large, [...], acquiesced in the inevitable" [Ibid., 469].

Once the war broke out the Japanese population began to voice their concern and their willingness to allow Japan's participation. Among the many letters they sent to General Douglas MacArthur were those urging the general to allow Japan to rearm and the Japanese to fight in Korea [Sodei, 2001, pp. 230—40]. The right-wing linked Japan's participation to its overall remilitarization and, in some cases to their country's return to its pre-war situation[2]. Newspaper polls conducted by Japan's major newspapers at different intervals of the war gradually uncovered that the Japanese people were supportive of their country's cooperating with the U.S. and UN Command. A Yomiuri Shimbun poll conducted just after war broke out found the majority of people polled unsupportive of Japan's involvement (30.8 % for; 56.8 % against), with a hatred for war being noted as the most prominent reason [Nam, 2016, p. 406]. However, a *Mainichi Shimbun* poll

[1] See, for example, the *Asahi Shimbun* coverage of Yoshida in its 17 June 1950 and 15 July 1950 editions.

[2] To some this even included Japan forming an Asian bloc independent of the eastern (Soviet) bloc and the western (U.S.) bloc [Nam 2016, p. 272].

conducted a few months later found the majority of those asked (58.7 %) favoring Japan's remilitarization. They were also narrowly against (31.1 % for, 40.4 % against) providing the U.S. with land for military bases [Ibid., 407]. In November 1950 the *Asahi Shimbun* conducted a similar poll that found 59 % for and 29 % against Japan's remilitarization [Ibid., p. 408]. This result was matched by the *Yomiuri Shimbun* a year later (56.9 % for, 23.8 % against). Reasons given for this opinion included Japan's need for self-defense and the importance of sovereign nations fielding a military [Ibid., pp. 416—17]. Remilitarization would, of course, require rethinking the nation's constitution, an effort that the *Yomiuri Shimbun* found the Japanese in favor of, but significantly less at 42.2 % (17.1 % against), with 40.7 % of those polls admitting their ignorance either way [Ibid., p. 418].

With the outbreak of war, the government also extended the anti-leftist activities that started a few years previous by suspending the operations of pro-Communist periodicals and purging still more left-minded individuals. Wada Haruki [2014, p. 91] reports that by the end of 1950 roughly 13,000 leftist Japanese had lost their positions. Additionally, the government quickly suspended publication of the primary Communist newspaper, *Akahata*. Japanese historian John Dower describes this effort as follows:

> On June 26th, the day after the Korean War began, *Akahata* was ordered to cease publishing (for thirty days initially, but this was later amended to indefinite suspension). Within three weeks, some seven hundred Communist and left-wing papers had been shut down, and by October 1950 such indefinite suspensions had been extended to 1,387 publications by the official SCAP account (approximately 1,700 by another calculation) [....] Since the media were immediately placed under immense pressure to follow the official U.S. position regarding the conflict in Korea, the parallel to imperial Japan's enforcement of a single voice for the "hundred million" seemed all the more apt [Dower,1999, pp. 437—38].

Additionally, the Japanese transportation industry initiated its support. The Japanese national railroad, for example, added 245 special trains to transport soldiers and equipment to ports to be shipped to the Korean Peninsula [Nishimura, 2019, p. 154]. Soon after the war erupted, the Japanese Maritime Safety Force placed all regional districts on alert and four districts (Otaru [Hokkaido], Moji [Kyushu], Maizuru [Kyoto], and Niigata) on a higher level to watch for efforts of sabotage [Wada, 2014, p. 91]. One critical city, Sasebo in Kyushu, had to overturn a decision made by its residents in January 1950 to make the city a "Peace Industry Harbor City" (平和産業港湾 Heiwa sangyō kōwan). The Harbor's close proximity to the Korean Peninsula made it indispensable to the war efforts [Nishimura, 2019, p. 151]. With the start of the war many ships bound for the Korean Peninsula carrying soldiers and military supplies sailed from Sasebo.

The benefit that is most often cited in research on Japan's participation in the Korean War is the immediate economic windfalls that it provided the country and its people with. The possibility of the war doing so was soon recognized by the Japanese. Toyota Motor Company CEO Kamiya Shōtarō, for example, declared the war to be his company's "salvation." By the end of the first full month of the war, the U.S. had ordered 1,000 trucks; by the following April it had ordered another 3,679, allowing the com-

pany to turn close to $240 million in profits over this quarter [Ibid., 198][1]. This is but one of many sectors that profited from the war, industries also benefited from Japan's underused resources (both human and material), its close proximity to the battlefields, and the experiences it had gained from the wars completed just five years previous. The conservative anti-left disposition that many Japanese had displayed from the early decades of the 20th century and the fear instilled within them of a possible Communist takeover of their islands, too, provided Japan with a strong incentive to support U.S. efforts.

The Japanese were also attracted to the war effort in a variety of other ways. In addition to those who participated in the minesweeping activities mentioned above, the Japanese also found relatively high-paying jobs on U.S. bases, many of which had existed previously, but a large number of which that were formed after the war had begun. These bases absorbed much of Japan's unemployment. One contemporary researcher of this period, Fujiwara Kazuki, estimates that their salaries were double that which were paid to Japanese civil servants at the time. [Fujiwara, 2020, p. 269]. These Japanese found employment at these bases as houseboys, cooks, and translators, as well as in jobs that directly contributed to the war effort at military bases situated in Japan and along its coasts. This included laborers working on the docks to load and unload ships going to and coming from the battlefields. In addition, the war helped increase employment in factories and other facilities that produced war-related goods, including weapons, but also other mundane necessities such as food and clothing.

A small number of Japanese followed U.S. military units across the seas to Korea, initially as auxiliary personnel only to later play a combative role. A number of Japanese were given weapons to use during times of heavy assault by the enemy, such as in Taejŏn in the early months of the war. Among these Japanese were those who killed, were killed, crossed over into DPRK territory, and even captured as POWs. While their numbers were low—perhaps a little over 70—the fact that even one Japanese was working for the war, much less fighting on the Peninsula, was a clear violation of Japan's surrender terms and its constitution[2]. Their doing so was to be kept secret. Fujiwara Kazuki contains in his manuscript a picture of a funeral held for 22 Japanese who died in Korean waters while clearing mines. The urns displayed on an altar at their memorial service (慰霊祭 *ireisai*) were empty as no bodies had been recovered, and no family members were allowed to attend, much less even informed of, the event [Fujiwara, 2020, p. 205].

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[1] The economic boost that Japan received from the war is well publicized and appears in school textbooks both in Japan and the ROK [Nishio, 2000; Kim, 2014]. Mentioned far less often was the valuable income accumulated by the "water industry" (the bars, brothels, and other forms of entertainment that the Japanese offered servicemen on leave from the war. By the last year of the war, these enterprises had collected as much as $322 million from servicemen who paid for these services in much-needed hard (U.S. dollar) currency [Norma, 2020, p. 370]. For a critical discussion on the "Iron Law of War," which examines that benefits of war on a country's economy, see Poast 2005.

[2] The number of Japanese who directly entered the Korean Peninsula may have been small, but when combined with the estimated 8,000 men who manned the minesweeping ships during the war it comprised more than 11 of the 16 countries that sent military forces as part of the UN Command. Figures from each country can be found on the "Korean War Educator: UN Involvement website at http://www.koreanwar-educator.org/topics/united_nations/p_un_involve.htm (accessed: 31.08.2023).

Fujiwara also includes stories of individual Japanese who had crossed over to Korea. One was of a Katō Keiji, who perished in the LT 636 mine sweeping accident at sea. At 58, Katō had already survived similar boat sinking scares and air attacks during Japan's previous fifteen years of war. After the Pacific War he found employment on a U.S. naval vessel [Ibid., pp. 210—13]. He also included excerpts of interviews conducted with the Japanese at the time of their repatriation to Japan. Takatsu Kensan, who found employment at various U.S. bases in Hokkaido after the Pacific War to escape unemployment, He was but 19-years old when the Korean War erupted in Korea and he crossed over to the peninsula with his American unit. He was in Korea for about three months, during which time he crossed the thirty-eighth parallel and into the DPRK. There his unit confronted the Chinese at the Chosin Reservoir, the site of one of the bloodiest battles of the war. He describes his experiences here as follows:

> I don't remember the name of the place, but I think it was on 25 November, when we first encountered Chinese troops. It started at four or five in the morning. The command headquarters and the battalion came under attack. The headquarters started to relocate from around three that afternoon and headed for the battle area. I don't remember the area but this continued for the next four days.... The Chinese attacked every night. A large number of men were shot and killed. We lost most of the trucks. I helped load those shot onto trucks [Ibid.: 45].

Takatsu was then ordered to get into a truck and leave, which he did. But he could not escape the battles. He soon encountered more fighting; this time he was given a carbine rifle and began shooting. Then he, too, sustained injury. He was finally able to escape with a Korean unit, his hands and feet frostbitten from cold and snow that he had to trample through to do so [Ibid, pp. 26—53]. Other Japanese who crossed over to Korea during the war also included nurses working for the Red Cross, ladies whose duties and location remained secretive [Nam, 2022, pp. 207—11; Suzuki, 1985, pp. 86—88].

Other groups of people living on the Japanese archipelago also contributed to the war efforts. Most critical was that of Japan's *zainichi* Korean population. Not considered Japanese citizens, they were exempt from the restrictions of Japan's post-war constitution. Soon after the war began the conservative Korean Residents Union (在日本大韓民国民団, *Zainihon Daikan minkoku mindan* or simply the *Mindan*) in Japan sought from among these ethnic Koreans patriotic volunteers to form a unit to fight in Korea. Just shy of 650 members of this population volunteered and were sent to Korea to fight. Of these, 135 were killed in action, and just 265 were able to return to Japan, the remainder facing difficulties in returning as Japan strengthened it foreign residence requirements [Kim, 2007]. Okinawans, no doubt, faced a similar situation. While little has been researched regarding Okinawa and the Korean War, save perhaps of that regarding U.S. bases on these islands, one might assume that the population from this territory not technically being considered Japanese—the U.S. still maintained direct control over these islands not returning them to Japan until 1972—would have also been exploited by the U.S. during the war.

A third group, the few Japanese who joined the Chinese armies during their civil war, has also received minimal attention to date. A very small number of these Japanese briefly entered the Korean Peninsula to fight the ROK and U.S, armies from October 1950. One such individual was Yamaguchi Matsufumi who had been sent to Manchuria

at the age of sixteen to serve in the Manchuria-Mongolia Development Youth Volunteer Corps (満蒙開拓青少年義勇軍 Manmō kaitaku shōnen giyūgun) in the closing months of the war. He tells a story of being captured by the advancing Soviet armies only to escape to China where he was captured and sentenced to death, but pardoned. He joined the Chinese Communist Army and, was sent to Korea along with other Chinese "volunteers." However, he was soon pulled out along with the small number of other Japanese, perhaps just before the Soviets were set to accuse the United States at the United Nations of using Japanese in this war [Yamaguchi, 2006, pp. 218—24].

Actions involving the Korean War in Japan were not always supportive of the Japanese participation in the Korean War. Japanese and *zainichi* Koreans were arrested for simply handing out anti-war fliers on the street, as described by Ono Shinji in his prison diary [Ono, 2018]. Koreans and Japanese students in the Osaka area commemorated the second anniversary of the war in June 1952 by sabotaging Japanese factories that were engaged in producing munitions for the war in what became known as the Suita Incident [Nishimura 2019]. Similar acts took place that year in Tokyo on "Bloody May Day", and in the Osukannon region of Nagoya [Ibid., p. 24]. These protests also drew on Japanese objections to the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty signed as an extension of the peace treaty that Japan and the U.S. forged in September 1951 in San Francisco. Japanese and Korean Communists also joined efforts in an attempt to use the war as a means of promoting revolution in Japan [Nam, 2016, p. 328]. Finally, various women's groups organized peace movements to protest against the breach of peace and their country's role in it [Onnatachi no genzai wo tou kaigi eds., 1986].

Conclusion

When a war begins and ends is generally decided in its aftermath by the victors in coordination with their national narrative. The United States could date the beginning and the end of the Pacific War by bombings: The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941 that began the war and the U.S. atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki that ended the war. Japan used the emperor's speech as a bookmark to end its fifteen years of war. However, this paper has challenged this interpretation of the Asia Pacific wars to suggest that the August 1945 "conclusion" of the Pacific War sowed seeds that linked it with the beginnings of the Korean War. The atomic bombings succeeded in limiting the advancement of the Soviet armies which delivered division to the Korean Peninsula. The failure of the Soviets and the U.S. to reunite the two Koreas[1], and the extremist ideologies that the two rival superpowers introduced and nurtured, set in motion a division whose only hope for reunification lay in violent means. The failure of either military to reunite the Peninsula through the Korean War left a Korea divided by a DMZ line—one slightly altered from the 38th parallel set in 1945—that lingers to this day. In the foreground is Japan whose Prime Minister vows to double an already ex-

[1] The United States and the Soviet Union from 1946 formed a Joint Commission as ordered by the December 1945 Moscow Agreement to negotiate with Korean democratic political parties and organize a process that was to create a unified Korean government. Differences between the two powers prevented the Commission from achieving success.

pensive military budget within the next few years[1] in part to contain the DPRK nuclear threat, a legacy of a United States and Japan threats that date back to the August 1945 division of the Korean Peninsula.

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[1] According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute in 2022 Japan budgeted $46 for defense, 10th among all nations. This same institute reported that for 2023 Japan proposed a budget of $52 billion, a 26 % increase from 2022.

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