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Allan R. Millett, *The War for Korea, 1945–1950: A House Burning*. Lawrence: Univ. Press of Kansas, 2005, Pp. xviii, 348. ISBN 978–0–7006–1393–9.

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Wars begin with or without formal declarations and normally end with the signing of peace treaties. To the world, the Korean War began on 25 June 1950, when the armed forces of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (henceforth North Korea) crossed the 38th parallel and invaded the Republic of Korea (henceforth South Korea). Allan R. Millett demonstrates in this book that hostilities on the Korean peninsula actually began in 1945 when Japan's surrender ended World War II, and that their roots go back to Japan's occupation of Korea (1910–45).

A distinguished military historian (University of New Orleans¹) and author of several books on military history,² Millett plans this book to be the first volume of a trilogy on the Korean War.³ He has made extensive use of government archival resources, memoirs, and the unpublished papers of a long list of American leaders. He also consulted United Nations documents and British government papers pertaining to Korea, declassified South Korean documents, archival materials from the former Soviet Union, and the limited available Chinese sources. Needless to say, he had no access to North Korean materials. The resulting multifaceted, detailed, and well documented book untangles the roots of the continuing crises on the Korean peninsula. It includes an introduction, eight chapters, a concluding chapter titled "Epilogue and Prologue, June, 1950," extensive footnotes, an appendix on the Romanization of Korean and Chinese names and words, a detailed bibliographical essay, seven maps, and thirty-four photographs.

Chapter One, "The Years of Division, 1919–1945" (16–42), outlines Japan's brutal colonial rule in Korea. For example, Japanese forces quelled independence demonstrations in Seoul in 1919 by arresting twenty thousand people and executing many. Continuing suppression forestalled any viable independence movement. Over a million Koreans fled to China and Russia, whose governments gave them refuge. Korean Christians in the West rallied behind Syngman Rhee, a Christian who lived mostly in the United States. A Korean Communist Party formed in Russia in 1918, initially as a branch of the Russian Communist Party. Its members fought against Japanese forces that intervened in the Russian Civil War in Siberia, as anti-Japanese guerrillas in Korea, and as units in the Red Army during World War II. Kim Il-Sung, later leader of North Korea, cut his teeth as an anti-Japanese guerrilla fighter in Korea; he escaped to Siberia around 1941, where his precise activities remain a mystery. He spoke both Russian and Chinese. Among those who fled to China, one faction, led by Kim Ku, formed a government in exile in Shanghai in 1918. It moved to Chungking with the Chinese government after the Japanese invaded in 1937. Other Koreans in China joined forces with the Chinese Communist Party and moved to Yanan with it after the Long March. Korean contingents fought alongside both Chinese Nationalists and Communists during World War II. During the war, over 100,000 Korean women were forced to serve as sexual slaves (euphemistically called "comfort women") to Japanese soldiers, 365,000 men had to serve in war-related work, and 2.4 million were lured or forced to work in Japan in mines and factories under harsh conditions. Most of the rice harvested in Korea went to Japan, leaving two thirds of the Korean people malnourished in 1945.

1. Where he is Stephen E. Ambrose Professor of History and Director of the Eisenhower Center for American Studies.

2. See, e.g., *Their War for Korea: American, Asian, and European Combatants and Civilians, 1945–1953* (Dulles, VA: Potomac Books, 2002), (with P. Maslowski) *For the Common Defense: A Military History of the United States*, rev. ed. (NY: Free Press, 1994), and (with W. Murray) *A War To Be Won: Fighting the Second World War* (Cambridge: Harvard U Pr, 2000).

3. The second volume has now appeared: *The War for Korea, 1950–1951: They Came from the North* (Lawrence: U Pr of Kansas, 2010).

The following seven chapters deal with post-World War II events, up to late June 1950. Two wartime documents determined Korea's future. The 1943 Cairo Declaration by American, British, and Chinese leaders stipulated that Korea would regain its independence when Japan was defeated. The Yalta Agreement of 1945 between the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union endorsed the division of Korea along the 38th parallel, the northern portion to be under Soviet control and the southern under U.S. control, pending an agreement to create a united government.

Although documents on Stalin's intentions for Korea have not been released, he clearly regarded the Korean peninsula as strategically important for the defense of the USSR's Far Eastern territories and fully intended to control North Korea. On 10 August 1945, five days before Japan surrendered, the Soviet army crossed into Korea, taking 400,000 Japanese and Korean prisoners of war and sending others (troops and civilians) in headlong flight southward. Only 95,000 Japanese prisoners of war were eventually repatriated. Kim Il-Sung returned to his native land with the Red Army, which installed him as head of the Korean Workers' Party, the official name of the Communist Party of Korea. The Red Army took \$1 billion of Japanese assets and machinery to the USSR and allowed peasants to seize land belonging to Japanese and Korean landlords. Over a million Japanese soldiers and civilians from Manchuria (which had been a Japanese puppet state called Manchukuo), along with Korean Christians and other refugees fled south, across the 38th parallel to U.S.-controlled South Korea.

The United States had little strategic interest in Korea during the war and, aside from missionaries, few Americans spoke Korean or knew anything about Korean culture. After Japan's surrender, South Korea came under the authority of Gen. Douglas MacArthur, Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers, headquartered in Japan. Two army divisions were to garrison South Korea. On 11 September 1945, U.S. general Archibald Arnold assumed power as military governor of South Korea. He faced the daunting challenge of feeding and resettling 400,000 refugees from North Korea and one million forced laborers repatriated from Japan. Although rich in farmland, South Korea depended on the North for fertilizer, coal, electricity, and industrial raw materials, which for political reasons the North's Soviet governors ceased to supply in May 1948. Acute food shortages ensued and the South Korean economy languished despite American shipments of coal, food, and other economic aid.

In South Korea, the U.S. military authorities confronted obstacles of inexperience, rampant corruption, and lack of training in creating a National Constabulary, the precursor of a regular army, and a competent police force. Moreover, many likely officers had collaborated with the hated Japanese, an emotionally charged situation. The U.S. military government welcomed returning Korean exiles to the political process, and parties and cliques headed by rival politicians proliferated. The most prominent such leaders—Syngman Rhee and Kim Ku—were both anti-Communist, but had no solutions for South Korea's "social chaos and economic beggary."

In the North, Soviet aid and advisors rebuilt factories and organized police, security forces, and an army that blended Soviet and Chinese Communist military cultures. Only Soviet-approved Communists and allied non-Communists could operate in North Korea.

In January 1946, a joint U.S.-Soviet Commission, convened to discuss the future of Korea, ended in deadlock because the Soviets rejected economic integration of the peninsula and refused to accept anyone who opposed Communism in a future Korean government. Facing these irreconcilable differences, the United States created an interim Legislative Assembly for South Korea. Preoccupied with (seemingly) more pressing problems in Europe, the Middle East, Latin America, and elsewhere in Asia, the Truman administration neglected Korea. In addition, Secretary of State George Marshall, having recently failed to mediate an end to the Chinese civil war between the Nationalists and Communists, regarded the Korean problem as intractable. Further, both President Truman and the U.S. Congress were reluctant to give South Korea massive military aid. When Kim Il-Sung announced the creation of a Korean People's Army of 150,000 men and a 40,000-member police force in February 1948, the U.S. War Department countered with plans for a South Korean military force of 50,000. Given such disproportionate forces, the Soviet Union felt comfortable proposing that all foreign military personnel leave Korea.

The United States now proposed empowering the U.N. General Assembly to find a political solution for Korea. In September 1947, the Assembly approved Resolution 112 (II), authorizing the United Nations to supervise elections in Korea. In late 1948, the South held elections: 7.8 of 8 million eligible voters registered to vote, and 77.5% of registered voters elected a National Assembly, which then elected Syngman Rhee chairman. The Republic of (South) Korea won the recognition of most U.N. member nations, apart from the Communist bloc.

In North Korea, barred to election commissioners, 99.97% of the electorate supposedly voted for Kim Il-Sung's (communist) Korean Workers Party (142–54). On 9 September 1948, Kim officially declared the establishment of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and soon formed the Democratic Front for the Unification of the Fatherland to direct partisan warfare against the South. Millett believes Stalin encouraged Kim to subvert the government of South Korea because a united Communist Korea would be a stronger ally for both the People's Republic of China and the Soviet Far East. But Stalin rejected Kim's request for rapid rearmament and escalation of border conflicts, fearing the United States would dramatically increase its aid to South Korea and postpone the withdrawal of its forces. Stalin also worried that the newly victorious communist government in China could not adequately support North Korea were the United States to intervene in force.

In contrast to Kim Il-Sung's communist North Korea, the South's divided leadership faced both subversion and insurgency. In September 1946, the Autumn Harvest Uprising, triggered by police corruption, inflation, and poverty was masterminded by the Korean Communist Party and its auxiliary, the Young Men's Alliance. From Tokyo, "General MacArthur found the revolt more ominous, perhaps the beginning of a joint Soviet-North Korean strategy of forced unification" (87). An American emergency shipment of 150,000 tons of rice tamped down the uprising but addressed neither the systemic causes of the South's economic problems nor the political frustrations of its populace.

In April 1948, Communist-led partisans orchestrated another rebellion, which Millett calls the first shot of the Korean War. It lasted for six months, but sporadic fighting continued across South Korea for two years, causing over 7,000 military deaths and an estimated 30,000–100,000 other deaths. The rebellion revealed extensive Communist infiltration of the Constabulary and the power of the pro-Communist South Korean Labor Party. Nonetheless, the Communists and their sympathizers failed to win the 1948 U.N.-supervised national election in South Korea. The National Assembly produced by the election wrote a constitution and elected Syngman Rhee president of the Republic. Then began a transfer of power from the U.S. military to the State Department and the Economic Cooperation Administration. The withdrawal of two skeleton divisions would, when completed, leave only U.S. military advisors and trainers in South Korea.

In 1948–49, the Yossu Rebellion, a mutiny of an army unit infiltrated by Communists, threatened South Korea. U.S. army intercepts proved that the rebels were being directed from the North Korean capital, Pyongyang. Hostilities along the 38th parallel (the "Parallel War") led the South to seek more U.S. aid and the North to try to show the Soviet Union that it could crush the Southern forces.

By early 1950, Syngman Rhee's government had survived mutinies, partisan insurrections backed by North Korea and the South Korean Labor Party, and the Parallel War. Kim Ku, his strongest anti-Communist opponent, had been assassinated (probably by Rhee's supporters). South Korea's military was showing improvement but needed better training and arms. However, Rhee's calls for huge U.S. military and economic aid were undercut by his ill-advised threats to "liberate" North Korea, which provoked unease in the United States, where South Korea was regarded as having "little strategic value" (216).

On the other hand, by January 1950, Stalin was less averse to an invasion of the South. Military preparations were clearly afoot and by May 1950 the North Korean Army had grown to 180,000 men. Kim Il-Sung again visited the Soviet Union and reportedly assured Stalin that he could conquer South Korea in one week. Stalin told Kim that China would have to intervene if the North failed because the USSR could not risk war with the United States: in other words, Mao Zedong could veto Kim's plans.

Although Mao warned the Koreans [in May 1950] that the People's Liberation Army had unfinished business on Taiwan, he conceded that he could send an expeditionary force to Korea if the Americans intervened with their own troops or sent a new Japanese army into the fray. The Koreans heard *would*, not *could*, and Kim stubbornly insisted that the Americans would not intervene or would come too late to save the South Koreans. By May 15, Kim Il-Sung believed that the Chinese had agreed to his planned campaign, and Stalin encouraged that optimism with his approval of a Chinese-Korean alliance after the Communist victory (244).

President Truman appointed John Foster Dulles ambassador-at-large to rescue his Far Eastern policy, which centered on the peace treaty with Japan and reassuring South Korea that the United States would not abandon it. These final moves paved the way for the Korean War.

Allan Millett recounts and analyzes in detail the five vital years that led to the Korean War, a conflict whose unfinished business bedevils U.S. foreign policy to this day. He clarifies the politics of the Korean peninsula, the Kim family's unending reign in the North, and the political and economic transformation of the South into a prosperous democracy.