

THE MORE AVID HISTORIAN? A COMPARISON BETWEEN KIM JONG IL'S AND KIM
JONG UN'S USES AND USAGE RATES OF THE KOREAN WAR AS A HEURISTIC IN
KOREAN CENTRAL NEWS AGENCY, 1998-2018

A Thesis
submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
of Georgetown University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of
Master of Arts
in Asian Studies

By

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Washington, D.C.
November 21, 2019

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: While many scholars have traced how the Kim regimes merged the Korean War into North Korea's national narrative, no one has conducted a systematic study of how the Kims subsequently wielded the civil war story to advance their policy objectives. The purpose of this paper is to compare how and how often Kim Jong Il and Kim Jong Un reference the Korean War between 1998 and 2018 in pursuit of their policy goals.

Design, Methodology, Approach: Drawing from the literature on availability and representative heuristics, this paper predicts that Kim Jong Un will reference the Korean War more often than Kim Jong Il will. To test that theory, this paper applies quantitative content analysis to KCNA articles between 1998 and 2018 to determine how often KCNA under both Kim Jong Il and Kim Jong Un cite the Korean War. Then, this paper applies Yuen Foon Khong's analytical framework (2009) to assess how the two Kims used the Korean War for diagnosis, advocacy, and justification in policy decisions.

Findings: The results confirm the author's theory on who uses the Korean War more often: KCNA under Kim Jong Un highlights the Korean War more frequently by a factor of 1.8 than the news outlet does under Kim Jong Il. In addition, the Kims combined wield the Korean War most often to advocate policy positions.

¹ This article was originally published in *North Korean Review*, Vol. 15, No. 2, Fall 2019 by McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers. The author submits this article (with minor modifications) to Georgetown University's Graduate School of Arts and Sciences.

Practical Implications: This study confirms the utility of the availability and representative heuristics in understanding how Kim Jong Un and Kim Jong Il perceive their environment. The study also provides support that the heuristics are useful for predicting how individuals might behave in the presence of certain conditions. Based on these findings, the study observes there are both troubling and useful implications for policymakers to leverage awareness of these operating heuristics in the mind of North Korean leaders.

Originality, Value: This paper makes an original contribution to the understanding of the frequency and use of the Korean War by North Korean leaders. Using a quantitative and qualitative approach, this paper provides a framework which can be applied to extract new insights into North Korea across wider periods and different topics. This paper also contributes to the literature of how policymakers use history as a tool to advance their objectives.

Keywords: Korean war, heuristics, historical analogies, Kim Jong Il, Kim Jong Un, KCNA

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author would like to thank Dr. Kristen Looney (Georgetown University) and his colleagues at Georgetown University in the spring 2019 thesis seminar of the Asian studies program for their valuable feedback at various stages of this article.

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I. INTRODUCTION

North Korea holds the United States and South Korea (“Republic of Korea” or “ROK”) responsible for the devastation that arose from the Korean War. In North Korea’s view, on June 25, 1950, US-ROK forces invaded North Korea, unleashing a country-wide aerial bombing campaign, a total war approach which inflicted mass civilian casualties and devastated the north’s industrial economy before Kim Il Sung brilliantly repelled the U.S.-led coalition back to the 38th parallel. That narrative of the war, while rejected by a majority of the world, persists in North Korea.

Scholars have studied the Korean War and its portrayal by North Korean leaders. Historians have provided detailed accounts of the battles from both North Korean and mainstream views.² Scholars have analyzed how the Korean War shaped North Korea’s national culture.³ Other academics have further pieced together the nexus between the Korean War and *juche* ideology, explaining how Kim Jong Il and his propaganda machine shaped the war narrative for ideological and political purposes.⁴ For example, BR Meyers, a leading analyst of North Korean propaganda, asserts the war both reinforced the North Korean people’s fears about the West but also strengthened the regime’s hand to maintain authoritarian rule.⁵ In Myers’s view, North Korea sees the United States as both the imperialist intervener controlling South

² For comprehensive studies on the Korean War, see Cumings, Bruce. *The Origins of the Korean War*. Princeton University Press, 1981, 1990., and Scalapino, Bob and Choong-sik Lee, *Communism in Korea*. University of California Press, 1973. For fascinating work done on materials released from the Soviet archives, see Weathersby, Kathryn. *Soviet Aims in Korea and the Origins of the Korea War, 1945-1950: New Evidence from Russian Archives*. Wilson Center, 1993. The most definitive, comprehensive English account of the Korean War that is published by North Korea is Ho, Jong Ho, et al., *U.S. Imperialists Started the War*. Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1993.

³ Koh, Byung Chul. *The Foreign Policy Systems of North and South Korea*. University of California Press, 1984.

⁴ See Scalapino and Lee, (1973). Martin, Bradley. *Under the Loving Care of the Fatherly Leader*. Martin’s Press, 2004, pp. 69-92; Cha, Victor. *The Impossible State: North Korea, Past and Future*. HarperCollins Publishers, 2013, p. 40.

⁵ Myers, Brian R. *The Cleanest Race: How North Koreans See Themselves—And Why It Matters*. Melville House, 2010.

Korea from afar, preventing a reunification of the Korean peninsula and a critical scapegoat whose removal from the peninsula would raise the public's expectations of a "drastic improvement in living standards, the immediate reunification of the peninsula, and everything else that Washington is now accused of preventing."⁶

Indeed, North Korea's use of the Korean War is commonplace in the national literature. One can find North Korean leaders directly condemning the United States and South Korea for starting the war and portraying the joint military exercises between U.S. and South Korean forces as a precursor to a second invasion. As Kim Jong Un himself put it:

"It is none other than the outside forces that divided our nation, and it is also none other than the United States and its followers that obstruct the reunification of our country.... The US and south Korean war maniacs have deployed legions of equipment for a nuclear war in and around the Korean peninsula and are going frantic in their military exercises for a nuclear war against the north... All the Korean people must not tolerate the manoeuvres for war and confrontation by the bellicose forces at home and abroad but stoutly resist and frustrate them."⁷

According to Myers, the massacre at Sinchon is displayed as the "Yankees' most heinous crime."⁸ The Sinchon Museum of American War Atrocities in North Korea depicts American soldiers with glee rounding up, shooting, and sawing North Korean civilians.⁹ North Korean

⁶ Ibid., p. 147.

⁷ Kim, Jong Un. 2016 New Year's Statement, January 1, 2016, <https://ncnk.org/node/1814>.

⁸ Sinchon was the site of a major atrocity during the Korean War. South Korean right-wing youth group members murdered approximately 35,000 people in the county, about a quarter of the total population, on the justification of real or alleged Communist ties. While historians have concluded that South Koreans were responsible for the massacre, North Koreans presumed the incident occurred under US command. Cumings, Bruce. *The Korean War: A History*. Modern Library Chronicles, 2010, pp. 197-199. Myers 136.

⁹ Jeppesen, Travis. *Inside North Korea's Shocking Museum of American War Atrocities*, June 11, 2018, <https://www.thedailybeast.com/inside-north-koreas-museum-of-american-war-atrocities>. Accessed May 10, 2019.

textbooks and statutes hail Kim Il Sung for his successful defense of the country, cementing his legitimacy and authority as the only capable and rightful ruler of the North Korean people.¹⁰

But while North Korea's general use of the Korean War is well documented, no study analyzes how North Korean leaders use that narrative with different frequency and for different purposes. The purpose of this study is to help address the gap in the literature and to further contribute to the understanding of the role of history in shaping the decisions by North Korean leaders. This article studies *how often* Kim Jong Il and Kim Jong Un referenced the Korean War between 1998 and 2018, and *how* Kim Jong Il and Kim Jong Un applied Korean War history as a heuristic towards policy objectives.

North Korea's narrative of the Korean War plays an important role, a role which deserves refinement because it is one of the primary historical lenses through which North Korea interprets U.S. and South Korean behavior. Whereas the United States and South Korea point to the Korean War as an example of solidarity (“an alliance forged in blood”) and a successful case of resisting North Korea and communist forces more broadly in Asia, North Korea views the Korean War as a reminder of U.S. aggression, cruelty, and weakness.

Using quantitative analysis of North Korean sources, this paper sheds insight into a country that is otherwise difficult to penetrate and where resource challenges are common. It shows how the Korean War is relevant to North Korea today—the frequency and purposes of its use reveal how important and how useful the Korean War narrative is to the two leaders as a policy tool. Finally, this study also contributes to the broader literature of how policymakers use history as a tool to advance their interests. With diplomatic efforts underway with North Korea,

¹⁰ This narrative belies western accounts: that Kim was a risky, ambitious inexperienced leader who failed to achieve military and political victory over the Korean peninsula while spilling tremendous blood and treasure. See Martin, Bradley. *Under the Loving Care of the Fatherly Leader*. St. Martin's Press, 2004.

U.S. policymakers must understand North Korea's view of the Korean War to be able to properly interpret their own behavior viewed through the lens of North Korea's leaders.

The article proceeds as follows. The next section lays out the research design. It introduces the literature on availability and representative heuristics drawn from cognitive psychology. Applying these concepts, the author predicts that Kim Jong Un is more likely to cite the Korean War than Kim Jong Il. The section then explains the methodology that allowed the author to map out the frequency with which Kim Jong Un and Kim Jong Il deploy references to the Korean War through the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), the main state news agency for North Korea. Drawing upon the literature on the use of historical analogies, that section further outlines how both Kims use the Korean War analogy in their annual main policy statements for the purposes of diagnosis, justification, and advocacy. The third section presents the results, which confirm the author's prediction that Kim Jong Un cites the Korean War more often than Kim Jong Il. Relatedly, it shows that both Kims use the Korean War analogy most often for advocacy, then diagnosis, and then justification. The fourth section discusses the findings within the literature on how North Korea views itself and the world. The last section provides concluding thoughts.

II. RESEARCH DESIGN

A. Who Uses the Korean War More Often—Kim Jong Il or Kim Jong Un?

Heuristics

When faced with a new situation, people often turn to rules of thumb to filter information and simplify decisions, especially under conditions of uncertainty. These rules of thumb are heuristics, defined by the founding father of the field Herbert Simon as “methods for arriving at

satisfactory solutions with modest amounts of computation.”¹¹ When it comes to retrieving memories, leading experts on judgmental heuristics Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman have identified two important factors that guide that process: availability and representativeness.¹²

According to Tversky and Kahneman, all things being equal, the availability heuristic means that a person estimates the probability of an event by the ease with which similar instances come to mind.¹³ As dramatic, personal, or recent events are more memorable, these memories lead to more available memories that make one think a similar future event is also more likely.¹⁴ Drawing from this literature, Jervis argues that the most important influence on future wars is the most recent war, which is more “available.”¹⁵ Resisting these potential availability biases, Kahneman states, is possible, but tiring.¹⁶ Not only is the temporal dimension important, one must also account for events that happened during “the coming of political age,” which Khong defines with the age-band between twenty to thirty-five years.¹⁷

A second component in selecting the apt analogy involves the representative heuristic: assessing the fit between the incoming stimuli and the cache of available analogies stored in memory. Relying on this representative heuristic allows people to generally determine the probability that an *A* is a *B*. Kahneman and Tversky do not elaborate on how people determine which analogy is the most representative of a case. But other scholars studying analogies have found that “surface commonalities” play a critical role in accessing analogies.¹⁸ Khong observes this in the case of U.S. policymakers who applied the Korean analogy instead of the Yugoslavian

¹¹ Simon, Herbert. *Invariants of Human Behavior*. Annual Review of Psychology 41: 1–19, 1990.

¹² Tversky and Kahneman. Yuen Foong Khong, Khong, Yuen Foong. *Analogies at War: Korea, Munich, Dien Bien Phu, and the Vietnam Decisions of 1965*. Princeton University Press, 1992., p. 35.

¹³ Kahneman, Daniel. *Thinking Fast and Slow*. Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 2013., p. 129.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Jervis, Robert. *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*. Princeton University Press, 1976., pp. 266-70.

¹⁶ Kahneman, p. 131.

¹⁷ Khong, p. 212.

¹⁸ Ibid.

analogy when assessing the situation in Vietnam. Despite the “surface commonalities,” the similarities shared by the situations of Vietnam and Korea – “geographical proximity to China, communist ideology, north-south divide, and a north bent on unifying the south by force”—made the Korean analogy a more likely choice. Though Yugoslavia’s Tito and Vietnam’s Ho Chi Minh shared deeper similarities, Khong continues, surface similarities seemed to play a more dominant role in accessing the analogy.¹⁹ Scholars have applied the study of heuristics in the decision-making frameworks across a number of other political decisions.²⁰ In sum, availability, recency, coming of political age, representativeness, and surface commonalities all factor into to the likelihood that a policymaker is likely to access that event and apply it to a new situation.

Heuristics Applied to Kim Jong Il and Kim Jong Un

Applied to the case of Kim Jong Il and Kim Jong Un, which leader relies more often on the Korean War as a heuristic? This author argues that contrary to intuition, Kim Jong Un would use it more prevalently. In 1965, when 23-year-old Kim Jong Il took over as the head of the Propaganda and Agitation department, he was auditioning to become the supreme leader. He was in an intense competition with his uncle and his stepbrother. Yet he was able to harness the full powers of the propaganda department to elevate the man and mythology of his father Kim Il Sung by creating personal monuments, commissioning thousands of art pieces dedicated to the Generalissimo, and ordering movies highlighting the exploits of his father during the guerrilla warfare days against Japan and in the Korean War. In 1974, Kim Jong Il was formally anointed

¹⁹ Khong, p. 36.

²⁰ Kahneman, Daniel and Amos Tversky. “Subjective Probability: A Judgment of Representativeness.” *Cognitive Psychology* 3 (3), 1972., pp. 430–454; Tversky, Amos and Daniel Kahneman. “Availability: A Heuristic for Judging Frequency and Probability.” *Cognitive Psychology* 5 (2), 1973., pp. 207–232. Tversky, Amos and Daniel Kahneman. “Judgment Under Uncertainty: Heuristics and Biases.” *Science* 185(4157), 1974., pp. 1124–1131.; Weyland, Kurt. *Making Waves: Democratic Contention in Europe and Latin America since the Revolutions of 1848*. Cambridge University Press, 2014. Böhmelt, Tobias, Lawrence Ezrow, Roni Lehrer, et al. “Party Policy Diffusion.” *American Political Science Review*, 110 (2), 2016., pp. 1–14.

as “the Dear Leader,” twenty years before he would actually take power.²¹ In contrast, Kim Jong Un was raised in the West, is two generations separated from the Korean War, and did not spend nearly the same time saturating himself in the mythology of the Korean War as did Kim Jong Il.²² Such a comparison might lead one to think that Kim Jong Il would be a more frequent purveyor of the relevance of the Korean War.

Yet when one applies the availability and representative heuristics, Kim Jong Un is the more likely user. As there has not been an intervening war since 1953, the Korean War is the most recent war for both Kims. Though Kim Jong Il was alive during the Korean War, he experienced it between the ages of nine to twelve, outside of the formative “coming of political age” years, and did not directly participate in the war, two factors he and Kim Jong Un share.

On the matter of representative heuristic, surface commonalities play an important role. At the surface-level, Kim Jong Un faced more threats from the international community than Kim Jong Il faced during the timeline studied here. Between 1998 and 2011, North Korea under Kim Jong Il was engaged in a flurry of bilateral negotiations with the United States or South Korea that led to joint communiques and bilateral statements. At the multinational level, the DPRK was negotiating with a broader set of actors in nuclear discussions, which manifested itself into the Six Party Talks. Once Kim Jong Un came into power, tensions between the DPRK and the west spiked. Compared to the years 1998 to 2011 when the UN Security Council passed two resolutions condemning North Korean provocations, there were six passed between 2012-2018.²³ In 2014, a UN Commission of Inquiry investigating North Korea’s human rights violations produced a landmark report which led to actions both at the General Assembly and the

²¹ Cha, p. 78.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 96-109.

²³ U.N. Security Council. U.N. Security Council Resolutions 1718 (2006), 1874 (2009), 2087 (2013), 2094 (2013), 2270 (2016), 2371 (2017), 2375 (2017), and 2397 (2017).

Security Council pressuring North Korea on its lack of respect for human rights. North Korea tested a nuclear weapon in 2009 and continued to conduct tests in violation of international law, including ballistic missile launches, during Kim Jong Il's era. But the frequency of such provocative acts spiked between 2012-2018 under Kim Jong Un, invoking commensurate responses from countries and the United Nations.²⁴ Such threats coming from a U.S.-led coalition of states including South Korea and Japan share at a superficial level similarities with the U.S.-led coalition of states including South Korea and Japan that intervened to defend South Korea during the Korean War. Such comparison is unlikely to have been lost on Kim Jong Un.

Finally, at the domestic level, Kim Jong Un assumed the supreme leadership at a young age without much grooming into a Confucian society that respects age and experience. As a result, he had to consolidate power and eliminate enemies, removing any internal and external threats to his rule.²⁵ To do this, Kim Jong Un drew from Kim Jong Il's achievements and legacy. Like Kim Il Sung but unlike Kim Jong Il, Kim Jong Un regularly toured factories and was seen with large public crowds. He adopted his grandfather's rotund figure and hair style. And he drew legitimacy from the Generalissimo's accomplishments, regularly citing the elder Kim's success in defending North Korea, reminding the people of the exploits for which the people have a duty to be grateful for. As Kim Jong Un himself put it:

The dignified and glorious present of our people and the bright prosperous future of our country are ensured by the immortal nation-building exploits the *Generalissimo* performed while founding a genuine state of the people for the first time ... and by the great achievements the *President*

²⁴ Missile Defense Project. "Missiles of North Korea." *Missile Threat*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, June 14, 2018, <https://missilethreat.csis.org/country/dprk>. Accessed June 5, 2019.

²⁵ Fifield, Anna. *The Great Successor: The Divinely Perfect Destiny of Brilliant Comrade Kim Jong Un*. PublicAffairs, 2019.

made while leading the *Fatherland Liberation War* to brilliant victory on the strength of his outstanding strategy and tactics and wise leadership.²⁶ (emphases added)

These bureaucratic challenges that Kim Jong Un faces to his leadership share many surface commonalities to those of Kim Il Sung who similarly faced legitimacy and leadership vulnerabilities leading him to eliminate threats, popularize himself with the people, and increase his authority during and in the aftermath of reshaping the narrative of the Korean War. It is not a stretch of the imagination for Kim Jong Un to have drawn inspiration from such a paradigm. Thus, taken altogether, the availability and representative heuristics applied to this case suggest on balance that the Korean War would be more available and representative for the situations that Kim Jong Un faced between 2012-2018 than it would for Kim Jong Il.

Methodology

To test the argument above, this paper applied content analysis on all articles available in English from the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), the state's news agency, between 1998 and 2018 that mention the Korean War and its permutations.²⁷ KCNA publishes in both English and Korean to convey the government's views to domestic audiences and to foreign audiences in multiple languages. While there are a number of news agencies in North Korea, KCNA has the highest output of content and often reprints articles from other outlets that the regime deems important for broader circulation. An advantage of only using KCNA, instead of drawing from all available North Koreans sources, is that using a single source controls for variance by minimizing the fluctuations of new and closed news outlets as well as duplication of articles that

²⁶ "Generalissimo" and "President" refer to Kim Il Sung. See Kim, Jong Un. 2013 New Year's Statement, January 1, 2013, https://www.ncnk.org/sites/default/files/content/resources/publications/KJU_New_Years_2013.pdf.

²⁷ While a number of different websites host KCNA, KCNA.co.jp is the most reliable and comprehensive. Typically, that website whose server is based in Japan is updated with fresh news 24 hours after the Korean website is updated. See KCNAWatch. "About the KCNA Databases." *KCNAWatch*, <https://kcna-watch.org/about-the-kcna-databases>. Accessed June 14, 2019.

are republished, which would skew the results. Of all the different websites that host KCNA articles, KCNA.co.jp is the most reliable and comprehensive. Typically, that website whose server is based in Japan is updated with fresh news 24 hours after the Korean website is updated.²⁸

Even KCNA.co.jp is known, however, to retroactively change the text in their articles or delete entire articles.²⁹ To draw from a more complete and robust data set, this paper accessed English-language material from KCNA.co.jp through KCNAWatch.com, a North Korean news watchdog that publishes unaltered record of official North Korean media output from KCNA dating back to 1997. The search was done exclusively in English due to the author's limited language abilities, and the list of articles is not simply an independent translation. While it is true that searches on KCNAWatch turn up different results in English and Korean, the terms searched below use clear key words and do not require much contextual reading between the lines. Further, while North Korea is known to publish different versions of text in Korean for domestic audiences and in English for foreigners, this article examines what is being directed towards a foreign, English-speaking audience and not necessarily what North Korea policymakers intends for domestic consumption.

While it is well recognized among North Korean watchers that KCNA publishes carefully doctored positions by the state, its advantage is that by virtue of being a fully state-controlled medium, KCNA reliably portrays the views of the North Korean government. When one reads

²⁸ See KCNAWatch. "About the KCNA Databases." *KCNAWatch*, <https://kcnawatch.org/about-the-kcna-databases>. Accessed June 14, 2019. Also, while there is a non-zero chance that there is simply more output in KCNA in some years compared to others, regardless of who is at the helm, there is no clear evidence of such a discrepancy through KCNA.co.jp.

²⁹ Ibid. See also FlorCruz, Michelle. "Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) Deletes Online Archive of News After Execution of Jang Song Thaek," *International Business Times*, December 16, 2013, <https://www.ibtimes.com/korean-central-news-agency-kcna-deletes-online-archive-news-after-execution-jang-song-thaek-1510758>. Accessed May 15, 2019. For a broader discussion on the challenges of reading North Korean media on the internet, see Weiser, Martin. "On Reading North Korean Media: The Curse of the Web." October 13, 2016, <https://sinonk.com/2016/10/31/on-reading-north-korean-media-the-curse-of-the-web>. Accessed May 10, 2019.

KCNA, she reads it not for the facts but to grasp the underlying intent that North Korea wishes to portray. Through KCNAWatch, the author searched for the following terms linked to the Korean War:³⁰

- Korean War
- Fatherland Liberation War (North Korea’s official name for the war)
- Sacred War³¹
- Another War
- Last War
- Sinchon (massacre at)

The author searched for each term in the KCNA.co.jp database through KCNAWatch. As KCNAWatch does not yet allow users to narrow their search by specific source and by year, KCNAWatch display all articles available using the search term within KCNA.co.jp since 1997. To refine the results by year, the author counted the number of articles listed in the search results by year and removed false positives from the total figure.³² If the article was published by a source other than KCNA (e.g., Rodong Shinmun) and then re-circulated through KCNA, the author included it in the final tally. The author included articles that KCNA republished from other outlets intended to signal boost or reinforce an idea already captured in a KCNA article. Though some might render this double counting on the same article, KCNA’s inclusion or exclusion of an article reflects the state media’s emphases on that message even if the article appears duplicative—that is precisely the point.

This paper counts the number of articles where the key term was used, both by the various outlets and by direct quote of either Kim Jong Il or Kim Jong Un. Whether the article contained one or five references to the Korean War, that article counted as one item. There may

³⁰ Those that did not make the cut: “war of liberation” and “civil war.” Both terms provided too many false positives that it was infeasible to distinguish between Korean War and non-Korean War references in a reasonable time.

³¹ “Sacred war” also produced a few false positives but not many.

³² This can be performed by searching for a specific year within the complete set of results, observing the total number of hits of that year, and then subtracting that total number by the false positives. False positives: if the year was included as part of the title or text of an article rather than being listed as the date of publication.

be concerns that not drawing only from direct quotes or attributable quotes may be not drawing from pure sources for the purposes of decision-making literature. These concerns are legitimate. Decision-making theory normally investigates how individuals use heuristics to reach decisions from a number of potential options. In the case of North Korea, however, North Korean leaders exercise authoritarian power over all forms of public state communication.³³ Even in eras where power was arguably more diffuse, or diverse opinions were endorsed or allowed by the Kims, one could not directly contradict the Dear Leader without meeting swift retribution. Thus, within existing resources, it is reasonable to conclude that all articles published through KCNA received the explicit or tacit endorsement—or at the very least received permission—from the Kims, leaving the line of authority behind these messages clear.

This paper applied the search terms to KCNAWatch for a 21-year period, between January 1, 1998 and December 31, 2018. KCNAWatch provides access to KCNA articles from 1997 onwards, though it is unclear if all the files begin on January 1, 1997. To ensure the scope of analysis covers all years with available data from KCNAWatch, the author began with January 1, 1998 and ended the search with December 31, 2018, the last full year to draw data from.

With 1998 as a starting point, the author demarcates Kim Jong Il's rule between 1998 and 2011 and Kim Jong Un's reign between 2012 to 2018. Kim Jong Il died on December 17, 2011. Thirteen days later on December 30, the Politburo passed a decree in accordance with Kim Jong Il's wishes formally transferring the position of supreme commander to Kim Jong Un.³⁴ While there were questions of whether Kim was in charge, in hindsight it is evident that he consolidated

³³ U.N. Human Rights Council. "Summary Report" *Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea*. U.N. Doc. A/HRC/25/63, Feb. 7, 2014.

³⁴ Gause, Ken. "Leadership Transition in North Korea," *Council on Foreign Relations*, January 13, 2012, <https://www.cfr.org/report/leadership-transition-north-korea>. Accessed April 28, 2019.

power by polishing his credentials with the development of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles, by improving the economy, and by removing potential adversaries.³⁵

B. How Do Kim Jong Il and Kim Jong Un Use the Korean War?

The New Year's Statement

To examine how the regime deploys the Korean War, the author applied content analysis to the New Year's statements (New Year's statement) between 1998 and 2018. The author used the full-text translations in English that are publicly available from open source material.³⁶

The New Year's statement is North Korea's most significant policy and propaganda tool for the year. The New Year's statement lays out the state's core policy goals, ideological imperatives, and directions to various policy institutions for the year. Kim Il Sung delivered a speech on New Year's Day every year from 1946 until his death. Kim Jong Il replaced the New Year's speech with a written statement, published across the state's three main newspapers: the party's mouthpiece *Rodong Sinmun*, the army's official newspaper *Choson Inmingun*, and the Youth League's *Chongyon Chonwi*. The first year after Kim Jong Il's death, Kim Jong Un continued his grandfather's tradition of delivering the new year's address as a public speech. In short, the New Year's statement is the best, most systematic indicator of the regime's strategic priorities.³⁷ If the Korean War is referenced in the New Year's statement, it will give us an important data point on how the regime chooses to depict the Korean War and to deploy it towards its strategic priorities.

³⁵ Lee, Joyce and Josh Smith. "Kim Jong Un Consolidates Power As North Korea Shuffles Leadership," April 11, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-northkorea-appointments/kim-jong-un-consolidates-power-as-north-korea-shuffles-leadership-idUSKCN1RN2YO>. Accessed March 10, 2019.

³⁶ BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific program. *BBC*, <https://monitoring.bbc.co.uk/login>. Accessed on August 11, 2019.

³⁷ McEachern, Patrick. *Inside the Red Box: North Korea's Post-Totalitarian Politics*. Columbia University Press, 2010.

Domestic and foreign audiences anticipate the New Year's statement and read it closely. Indeed, many scholars have turned to content analysis of the New Year's statement as one of the principal policy documents available to study coming from an otherwise opaque country. Using content analysis, scholars have discovered relevant findings: Malici and Malici use automated content analysis to find similarities and differences between the speeches of Kim Il Sung and Fidel Castro.³⁸ Hymans uses content analysis of the statements to identify nationalist tendencies.³⁹ McEachern uses automated content analysis of New Year's statements and articles across three main Korean papers to discover competing views by the three major policy organs inside North Korea and to trace their institutional positions. Yet none of these articles address how history is used as a policy tool in North Korea.

The author uses the same terms and time period as the author used for the KCNA search, mentioned above. One caveat: neither Kim can really claim "responsibility" for the 2012 New Year's statement. Kim Jong Il died in December of 2011 and it would have been considered disrespectful if Kim Jong Un had given a speech within a month of his father's death.⁴⁰ Thus in 2012, the three leading newspapers printed a joint editorial statement recounting the accomplishments of Kim Jong Il without any indication that this was authored by Kim Jong Un.

³⁸ Malici, Akan and Johnna Malici. *The Operational Codes of Fidel Castro and Kim Il Sung: The Last Cold Warriors?* Polit. Psychol. 26 (3), 2005., pp. 387-412.

³⁹ Hymans, Jacques E. C. *Assessing North Korean Nuclear Intentions and Capacities: A New Approach*, J. East Asian Stud. 8., 2008., pp. 259-292.

⁴⁰ Tertitskiy, Fyodor. "How To Interpret Kim Jong Un's New Year Address." NKNews, December 29, 2017, <https://www.nknews.org/2017/12/how-to-interpret-kim-jong-uns-new-years-address>. Accessed February 19, 2019.

Using History as an Analogy

When it comes to how policymakers “use history,” this article seeks to build on previous efforts to understand the role of history in international politics.⁴¹ Others have investigated the phenomenon of “learning from history.”⁴² Others highlighted the inclination of US decision-makers to use historical analogies as part of an American “national style.”⁴³ Ernest May documented examples of American policymakers relying on historical analogies, explained when analogies have been misleading, and suggested ways in which policymakers might learn to use history better.⁴⁴ Yuen Foong Khong developed a framework of understanding how policymakers use history as a diagnostic and prescriptive lens.⁴⁵ Generally, the idea that policymakers use historical analogies to analyze or make sense of their foreign policy dilemmas has been corroborated elsewhere.

To distinguish the ways that the North Korean regime could use a historical analogy, the author applies the analogical explanation framework (AE Framework) devised by Khong. The AE Framework suggests that analogies are cognitive devices that help policymakers perform six diagnostic tasks central to political decision-making. Analogies 1) help define the nature of the situation confronting the policymakers, 2) help assess the stakes, and 3) provide prescriptions. They also help evaluate alternative options by 4) predicting the chances of success, 5) evaluating the ethics, and 6) warning about dangers associated with the options. Admittedly, all six functions are not available when one is studying only public documents. For maximum effect,

⁴¹Tetlock, Philip. “Learning in U.S. and Soviet Foreign Policy: In Search of an Elusive Concept.” *Learning in U.S. and Soviet Foreign Policy*, ed., pp. 20-61.

⁴²Jervis, pp. 217-87.

⁴³Hoffman, Stanley. *Gulliver’s Troubles or the Setting of American Foreign Policy*. McGraw-Hill, 1968.

⁴⁴May, Ernest. *“Lessons” of the Past: Use and Misuse of History in American Foreign Policy*. Oxford University Press, 1975.

⁴⁵Khong, (1992).

public documents must be compared to recorded deliberations inside the policymaking circle.⁴⁶ Given the limited access to such internal documents, however, it is infeasible to offer insights into the decision-making process by individuals within the policy apparatus.⁴⁷ But public documents still have the virtue of revealing the analogic purpose they intend to serve when using the Korean War as an analogy.

This paper uses content analysis to demonstrate how the New Year's statement references the Korean War, coding each speech with the number of references to the Korean War. The author looked for the context surrounding the reference to the Korean War and for keywords that indicate how the reference was used. Through reading all mentions of the Korean War and inferring its underlying usage, the author refined the possible uses of the Korean War by North Korea into three categories: diagnosis, advocacy, or justification. To qualify as advocacy, the author looked for prescriptive language (e.g., should, must, ought to) in close association with the subject at hand. Thus, the author found references to the Korean War and looked for prescriptive words within the section of the New Year's statement where the war was referenced. That one is relatively straightforward.

Identifying the use of diagnosis and justification was more difficult. To be sure, the definitions are straightforward: diagnosis is an attempt to understand the important details of a particular situation while justification is an attempt to explain why a past decision, usually something controversial, was taken. Those two terms, however, do not lend themselves to being distilled into a few, searchable key terms, as it was in the case of advocacy. Thus, the author had

⁴⁶ For instance, see Khong's book comparing public and private uses by policymakers of history as an analogy.

⁴⁷ Defectors have given accounts of their interactions with the Kims. But these accounts, while illuminating, are not verified transcripts and often unavailable in English. See e.g., Jang Jin-sung, *Dear Leader: My Escape from North Korea*. For writings in Korean, see books by Hwang Jang Yop, the highest-ranking North Korean officer to defect from North Korea.

to dive into all the references in the text and could not simply rely on short-hand analysis. The section below elaborates how each term was assessed in the results section below.

As it is undisputed that North Korea uses history as a means for propaganda to prescribe behavior based on an understanding of their past, the author also argues that it is likely that both Kims deploy the Korean War as an analogy most frequently for advocacy, rather than for the alternative tools of diagnosis or justification.

III. RESULTS

Applying the methodology to the data as described above, the author found the following conclusions:

- 1) Kim Jong Un deploys references to the Korean War more often than Kim Jong Il in KCNA between 1998 and 2018.
- 2) Both Kims used the Korean War in the New Year's statements most often for advocacy, then diagnosis and justification.

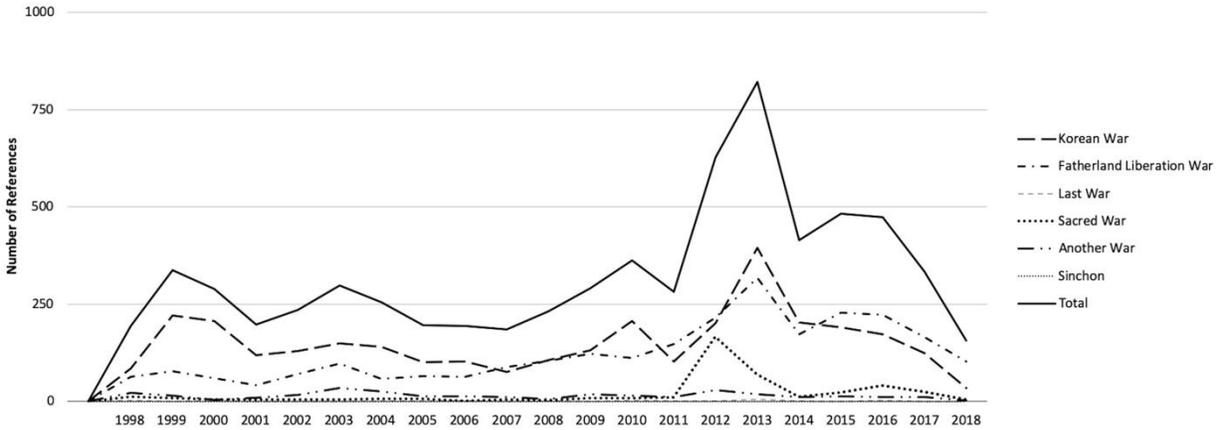
The data confirm the author's argument that Kim Jong Un uses the Korean War more often than Kim Jong Il across multiple dimensions (see **Chart 1**). On average, Kim Jong Un cited the Korean War 1.8 times as much as Kim Jong Il. While Kim Jong Il has a wider range, Kim Jong Un's peak use in 2013 registers 822 references, which is 2.3 times as much as Kim Jong Il's top figure. Kim Jong Un's median is also higher than Kim Jong Il's by a count of 104.

Chart 1: Comparing the frequency of articles referring to the Korean War during the eras of Kim Jong Il and Kim Jong Un

	Kim Jong Il	Kim Jong Un
Annual Mean	254	473
Mode	194	N/A
Median	269	473
Range	185-362	157-822

Note: figures are rounded to the nearest whole number.

Looking at the progression of references, the author observed a few other notable findings (see **Graph 1**): the valleys in Kim Jong Il's counts occur during 2001, a year after the DPRK signed communiques with both South Korea in June and the United States in October, which led to the easing of tensions between countries. The lowest dip occurs in 2005 and 2006, during the middle of the Six Party Talks, a six-way discussion to negotiate the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. The peak in Kim Jong Un's era occurs in 2013, during the culmination of North Korea testing a nuclear bomb, UN sanctions being passed as a result, increased rhetoric from North Korea, and the execution of Kim Jong Un's uncle Jang Song Thaek.



Graph 1: References to Korean War between January 1, 1998 to December 31, 2018, via KCNAWatch

The rise and fall of the curve on **Graph 1** are also consistent with the references to the Korean War in the New Year’s Statements (see **Chart 2**). While the New Year’s statements represent a significantly smaller sample size than all the KCNA publications, it is noteworthy that the New Year’s statements do not seem to contradict the trends found from the KCNA publications.

Chart 2: References to the Korean War in the New Year’s statement, 1998-2018

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
X	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0
		2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
X		0	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	1	2

Key: X = number of times a Korean War reference is used.

Note: For 2004, an extended excerpt, rather than the whole speech, was all that was publicly available to the author.

A. The Predominant Use of the Korean War Was for Advocacy, Then Diagnosis, Then Justification

Content analysis of the New Year’s statement between 1998 to 2018 reveals that both Kim Jong Il and Kim Jong Un used the Korean War primarily for advocacy, followed by diagnosis and justification (see **Chart 3**). Neither Kim used the Korean War more than three times in one New Year’s statement. That is not surprising given the range of issues, ideas, and messages to cover in a single speech. Kim Jong Il used it for advocacy three out of four times he referenced the Korean War. Kim Jong Un did so four out of seven times. To be sure, these examples are not representative of all the various ways the Kims linked the Korean War to a foreign or domestic effort outside of the New Year’s statement. But these samples reflect how the Korean War is represented at the highest levels of strategic messaging through the New Year’s statement.

Chart 3: How the Kims deployed references to the Korean War in the New Year’s statements, 1998-2018

Year	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
D	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
A	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1
J	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0

Key: D=Diagnosis; A=Advocacy; J=Justification

Note: For 2004, an extended excerpt, rather than the whole speech, was all that was publicly available to the author.

Kim Jong Il's Use of the Korean War

Kim Jong Il used the Korean War three times for advocacy and once for justification. The first time after 1998 that Kim Jong Un mentions the war is in 2000, when he advises his citizens to “not forget the lesson of the bloody land in Sinchon,” urging that they “*should* uncompromisingly and resolutely fight against the class enemies” and “*should* vigorously wage the struggle to stop the imperialists' ideological and cultural infiltration (emphases added). We should optimistically live and fight with confidence in victory at difficult times.” The vague references to fighting “imperialists' ideological and cultural infiltration” become clearer in the next few paragraphs when Kim Jong Il emphasizes the importance on the production of rifles: “Placing importance on rifles is a strategic line that we *should* constantly adhere to as long as imperialism exists and the revolution continues, and all the sectors should give top priority to the most important state affair (emphases added).” Kim Jong Il ties the reference to the war as inspiration to advocate for the mass production of rifles with which to combat the enemy.

When he raises the Korean War again in 2003, Kim highlights the victory in “the great fatherland liberation war in protecting our republic from US imperialists” “that displayed the heroic mettle of our army and people.” He builds on that momentum to justify the existing military first policy: “This year's struggle to brilliantly adorn the 55th founding anniversary of the DPRK is a *worthwhile struggle to comprehensively realize the military-first politics* and line of *juche* in all fields of politics, economy, and culture (emphases added).”

He continues in 2003 to reference the “revolution's victory with the 1950's spirit of death-defyingly defending the Fatherland, with which we fought and were victorious over the US imperialists by inheriting the anti-Japanese tradition” to explain why in the “previous generations' heroic spirit of struggle, which was exercised in the anti-imperialist and anti-US

sacred war, the *youth should fulfil the heavy mission of the time as the supreme commander's reserve combat unit*" (emphases added). Kim Jong Il is seeking to energize his young troops. In each of the three uses of the Korean War for advocacy, Kim Jong Il clearly uses prescriptive language (i.e., should).

Kim Jong Un's Use of the Korean War

Kim Jong Un used the Korean war four times for advocacy, twice for diagnosis, once for justification. In 2013, Kim Jong Un celebrates the 60th anniversary by highlighting the "victory in the great Fatherland Liberation War." He lifts up his grandfather Kim Il Sung, eternal President, lending credibility to his grandfather's authority, and therefore lending credibility to his own:

The dignified and glorious present of our people and the bright prosperous future of our country are ensured by the immortal nation-building exploits the Generalissimos performed while founding a genuine state of the people for the first time in the 5000-year-long history of our nation and developing it into a powerful socialist country that is independent, self-sufficient and self-reliant in national defense and *by the great achievements the President made while leading the Fatherland Liberation War to brilliant victory* on the strength of his outstanding strategy and tactics and wise leadership.

In this significant year we *should add brilliance* to the immortal achievements of the great Generalissimos and *make persevering efforts* to build a thriving socialist country and *carry out the cause of reunifying the country* (emphases added).

In two paragraphs, Kim Jong Un both justifies his grandfather's rightful reign as the President for protecting the country and advocates for continuing the socialist system that was constructed under the grandfather's watch. Kim Jong Un also slips in a prescription to "carry out the cause of

reunifying the country,” using the watch word that indicates the increasingly unlikely dream to fulfill the Grandfather’s dream of integrating South Korea with the north.

Kim Jong Un uses the Korean War in close reference to a domestic matter in 2014. Following the celebration of the 60th anniversary of the Korean War, Kim Jong Un describes “the resolute measure of removing the factionalists lurking in the Party,” a reference to the execution of senior leader and Kim Jong Un’s uncle, Jang. Kim Jong Un justifies his decision to execute Jang, explaining “As our Party detected and purged the anti-Party, counterrevolutionary factionalists at an opportune time and with a correct decision, the Party and revolutionary ranks were further consolidated, and our single-hearted unity was solidified to the maximum. Through this struggle our Party affirmed that as a party that serves the people, it will fully discharge the honorable mission it has assumed for the times and history and devote its all to the good of the people by enhancing its militant functions and role.”

In another example of Kim Jong Un using the Korean War for advocacy, in 2017 he connects production efforts to the Korean War with the prescriptive language attached at the end:

“Officials, scientists and workers in the defense industry, burning their hearts with the ‘Yongil bomb spirit’ of the days of the anti-Japanese struggle and the revolutionary spirit of the workers of Kunja-ri of the days of the *Fatherland Liberation War*, *should develop and produce larger quantities of powerful military hardware of our own style*. By doing so, they can build up the arsenal of Songun revolution.” (emphases added)

Finally, in 2018, Kim Jong Un advocates for increased economic production invoking the code term applied to double the labor without the commensurate technology required to maintain average levels of production after the war:

All officials, Party members and other working people *should* launch an all-people general offensive to frustrate the challenges of the hostile forces who are making last-ditch efforts and raise the overall strength of our Republic to a new stage of development as they brought about a

great upsurge in socialist construction overcoming all difficulties through the great Chollima upswing after the war (emphasis added).

Further down, Kim Jong Un diagnoses U.S. behavior, playing down interpretations that the United States under President Trump will launch a second Korean War:

Even though the United States is wielding the nuclear stick and going wild for another war, it will not dare to invade us because we currently have a powerful nuclear deterrent. And when the north and the south are determined, they can surely prevent the outbreak of war and ease tension on the Korean peninsula.

IV. DISCUSSION

The results confirm the author's arguments that 1) the Korean War would be cited more often under the Kim Jong Un era than the Kim Jong Il era and 2) that both Kim Jong Un and Kim Jong Il would principally use the Korean War for advocacy. Drawing from the KCNA output between 1998 to 2018, Kim Jong Un referenced the Korean War by a factor of 1.8 more times than Kim Jong Il. Of the eleven times Kim Jong Un and Kim Jong Il cited the Korean War in the New Year's statement, they did it seven times to advocate for policy prescriptions. The Kims' allusion to the Korean War was followed by prescriptive language directing targeted audience members to complete a task that was viewed as a continuation of the fulfillment of the Korean War.

The availability and representative heuristics were useful tools for anticipating how often Kim Jong Un and Kim Jong Il would reference the Korean War compared with each other. But it is important to note that these heuristics work best in concert with each other. In other words, if one were to apply only the availability heuristic, one might reach the opposite conclusion that Kim Jong Il, because of his general proximity to the war and increased interaction in crafting the narrative of the Korean War, would be more likely to use the Korean War as an analogy

throughout his life. It was only when the availability and representative heuristics were taken as a whole that on balance, tips the prediction in favor of Kim Jong Un as the preferred tradesman of history. Kim Jong Un's predilection for using the Korean War as an analogy was corroborated by the ratio between Kim Jong Il's and Kim Jong Un's use of the Korean War in the New Year's statement. Kim Jong Il cited the Korean War in the New Year's statement four times over fourteen year while Kim Jong Un cited the Korean War in the New Year's statement seven times over seven years.

Further, availability and representative heuristics seem useful in trying to grasp what situations an individual might turn to when faced with new situations. This could prove a useful policy tool. When imagining how Kim Jong Un might response to future stimuli, it is a useful exercise to see from their point of view drawing from analogies that might be available and recent to him and have occurred during coming to political age moments with surface-level commonalities. Such exercise could help policymakers elicit a list of analogies that Kim Jong Un might draw from when diagnosing a situation and choosing a policy option.

Of course, readers may object to the overprescribing the value of these heuristics when only applied to public statements. This is a legitimate concern. This test was applied only to two individuals for a limited span. Surely applying these heuristics to other sample sizes would elicit interesting results: seeing Kim Jong Il's use of the Korean War through his whole reign, especially during the years of famine and political diffusion in the 1990s; comparing Kim Jong Un's and Kim Jong Il's use of the Korean War to Kim Il Sung's; doing a more in-depth study of one year of anyone's reign and testing if there is any correlative and causative effect between the use of the Korean War analogy and both internal and external tensions. As shown in this study, however, applying the heuristics to just two individuals but with a 21-year sample size is enough

to help Korean watchers better understand the perspectives of Kim Jong Un and Kim Jong Il. As the research from Amos, Tversky, and Khong has shown, it is often the surface-level similarities that people use that yield the most insight into how that person might be thinking.

The findings in this study also support the mainstream views of North Korea's use of the Korean War for propaganda. The results show that the leaders primarily used it for advocacy. The frequency of the Korean War in North Korean news shows its ongoing salience and prominence in the minds of both Kim Jong Il, Kim Jong Un, and the North Korean people, who have few outlets to lawfully access news outside of official channels. The continuing use of the Korean War for diagnosis, justification, and advocacy more than sixty-five years later also indicates its utility as an important propaganda tool for North Korean leaders to shape and project how North Koreans view themselves and the world.

Yet these explanations that account for how the Korean War all rely on documented media statements used in the public sphere. They do not explain the private deliberations of individuals nor the internal decision-making process within the North Korean regime's inner circle. These are legitimate concerns and reflect the limited data from North Korea accessible and available in English. As such, the author was limited from pursuing a number of interesting questions---do North Korean policymakers use references to the Korean War as often and in similar ways in private as they do in public pronouncements? How consistent are the DPRK decisionmakers between internal deliberations and external positioning? To what extent do policymakers use history as a diagnostic tool that allows them to reach conclusions compared to coming to a conclusion first and then backfilling the historical analogy as a rhetorical tool? Do they even believe their version of the Korean War? It has been reported that Kim Il Sung often let it slip to select audiences that North Korea started the war—are Kim Jong Un and Kim Jong Il

similarly aware? How persuasive are arguments relying on history as a heuristic among North Korean policymakers? With Kim Jong Un? With access to private deliberations, journals, meeting notes, and more one day, perhaps North Korean watchers will be able to investigate these questions in greater detail. Despite the shortcomings of the data, this article pursues a first effort into new territory leveraging the tools from cognitive psychology to shed new light into the machinations of the North Korean state.

V. CONCLUSION

This article set out to contribute to the discussion on the influence of the Korean War to North Korean decision-making. The literature on this topic recognizes the influence of the Korean War in the national narrative, in history, in the media. But no one had dug deeper to do a study to see how often and how the Korean War was used by Kim Jong Un and Kim Jong Il. Applying quantitative analysis, this article argued that Kim Jong Un would use the Korean War more often and that both Kim Jong Un and Kim Jong Il would use the Korean War most often for advocacy. The data support both positions.

In terms of policy implications, these results have troubling conclusions. By seeking to deter North Korea from another assault on South Korea, the US-ROK forces through their joint military exercises, sanctions, and pressure campaign on North Korea may be triggering in the minds of North Korean leaders the analogy of the Korean War. While most of the world including the United States and South Korea reject North Korea's narrative of the Korean War, it is the case that their version is available, remains the most recent war, and shares surface-level commonalities with a united campaign to assault North Korea as during the Korean War. Thus, similar to the security dilemma drawn from international relations theory, it seems that this could spark a history dilemma, where two sides in order to prevent a repeat of their version of history

end up creating conditions which make it more likely for history to repeat itself. Or perhaps that both sides simply remain entrenched in their positions that they cannot move their relationship beyond the frozen, competing narratives of the Korean War. By no means is this a recommendation for the United States and its allies to abandon the requisite measures to secure their safety, but it appears that the history dilemma is an unfortunate consequence of a more than 65-year unresolved war where two countries have minimal interactions, including among policymakers, average citizens, and historians.

On the other hand, the results of this study could provide insights into new opportunities for policymakers. If policymakers can anticipate what analogies North Korean leaders will draw upon, perhaps policymakers can create the conditions which would trigger certain analogies that are favorable towards their desired end. For instance, if the purpose is to create better conditions for diplomacy, policymakers could recreate conditions for secret or groundbreaking summits between the leaders of the United States and North Korea similar to what Nixon did with Mao.⁴⁸ On the other hand, if the purpose is to pressure Kim, policymakers could circulate stories inside North Korea of Kim Il Sung's responsibility for initiating a costly, bloody war which he ultimately lost, exposing North Korea's sensitivity to that historical narrative and creating great consternation within North Korean leadership.

The conflicting historical narratives raise a larger question: does a conflicting version of history limit the options available to a policymaker? For example, are there instances where North Korean leaders would have made different decisions but for their understanding of the Korean War? North Koreans believe the United States invaded the north and are by nature inhumane and that Kim Il Sung successfully defended the homeland—that story serves as a

⁴⁸ It seems the current U.S. president is capitalizing on this opportunity, whether or not he is aware of applying a historical analogy.

useful tool of a propaganda, but it also restricts North Korea's ability to make accurate diagnoses and ensuing wise decisions. For example, in 1971, when Nixon announced his visit to Beijing, Kim Il Sung interpreted the visit as a sign of capitulation – “a trip of the defeated [that] fully reflects the declining fate of US imperialism.”⁴⁹ As readers know, Nixon went to China for a number of reasons but it was not to capitulate to China. If Kim Il Sung's misdiagnosis stemmed from his understanding of the Korean War and U.S. intentions, it seems that such limited views could have wider spread effects across North Korea's decision-making abilities curtailing their ability to make accurate diagnoses in foreign policy and offering effective prescriptions. If a misunderstanding of the Korean War is a limiting reagent for North Korean policymakers, they could be missing obvious opportunities to improve relations, increase economic cooperation, and strengthen its diplomatic position with the United States and its allies without spending so much capital on its military.

As the United States, as well as its partners and allies in Asia, seek to engage with North Korea, this article underscores it is critical to understand how another nation views its history, which forms the framework through which all subsequent actions are interpreted. Diplomats seeking to negotiate with tough nations otherwise start with a handicap. If policymakers are seeking better relations in the future with North Korea, engaging on history issues might be a good place to start.

⁴⁹ Koh, p. 28, citing an article in the *Pyongyang Times*, August 14, 1971. See also Buzo, Adrian. *The Guerilla Dynasty: Politics and Leadership in North Korea*. Perseus Books Group, 1999, pp. 92-93.

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