

SPECIAL SECTION IN COMMEMORATION OF THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE KOREAN WAR

Abduction of civilians during the Korean War: analysis of abductee lists and armistice talks

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Since the preceding Roh Moo-hyun government, the move toward a new peace regime has become more evident. However, the question of the Korean War civilian abductees remains noticeably absent from any talks or agreement. In as much as the North Korean authorities deny any large-scale abduction of civilians, this research aims to prove North Korea's complicity in these abductions and also explain their purpose. Accordingly, this study analyzes the trends of the abductions by examining the number of abductees by region, the timing of the abductions, the abduction agents, the process of the abductions, the occupations of the abductees, and the expected value of the abductees. As a result, it can be proven that the civilian abductions were undertaken as an important and integral part of the North Korean war policy. Furthermore, this research points out the mistakes in policy and bargaining tactics committed by the UN side during the armistice talks. Finally, when considering the non-observance of the existing agreements, the key to resolving the issue of South Korean civilian abductions would seem to be political negotiation and an approach in line with other pending issues in inter-Korean relations.

Introduction

With the ending of the military armistice system between the two Koreas in the 1990s, the move toward a new peace regime has become evident. Nonetheless, none of the measures or agreements, including the September 19th Joint Statement of 2005 (from the fourth round of Six-Party Talks) and the October 4th South–North Joint Statement of 2007 (from the Second Inter-Korean Summit) includes any mention of the Korean War civilian abductees detained in North Korea. The South Korean government has consistently taken a lukewarm stance toward this issue, while the North Korean authorities still deny the existence of any such abductees.

Under these circumstances, the family members of the Korean War abductees organized themselves into an association and collected materials to prove the objective reality of North Korean abductions during the Korean War. As a result of the tireless efforts of the Korean War Abductees Family Union (KWAUFU) to attract the attention of the government as well as the general population, documentary evidence was discovered, including five lists of wartime abductees, proving the veracity of the claims,¹ and the National Assembly was finally persuaded to adopt a relevant Act in March 2010.²

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Therefore, this study analyzes the characteristics of the civilian abductions based on the Registration List of Displaced Persons prepared by the Korean National Red Cross (KNRC) in 1956, which contains the most detailed information on individual abductees. In addition, for a more general analysis and understanding of the situation, and for cross-confirmation, the present research also uses the individual particulars of 96,013 persons,³ which excludes any duplicated entries on the five lists secured by the Korean War Abduction Research Institute (KWARI) containing a total of 112,627 names.

Although the North Korean authorities continue to deny any large-scale abduction of civilians, the primary purpose of this research is to prove that the abduction of civilians was carried out in accordance with a comprehensive plan and was neither incidental nor local in nature. Plus, in addition to proving North Korea's complicity in these abductions, the intentions of the North Korean regime in pursuing these abductions will also be explained.

Scale and patterns of North Korean abductions

According to KWARI, a total of 96,013 civilians were abducted by the North during the Korean War, including a few who were taken immediately prior to the outbreak of the war. Classified by province, 23,664 were from Chungcheong province, 22,348 from Seoul, 18,270 from Gyeonggi province, 11,375 from Gangwon province, 10,853 from Jeolla province, and 9,503 from Gyeongsang province.⁴

Due to the absence of population statistics by province for the time period (except for the Seoul area), the exact percentages of abductees by province are unknown. However, some facts can still be inferred.

When considering the number of abductees by region, the following points were noticeable: 1) without exception, abductions occurred in every area occupied by the Communist troops, 2) the smallest number of abductions occurred in Gyeongsang province, which only experienced limited occupation by the Communist troops for a few weeks and in some cases for only one day, even though the province was considered to have had the highest population, and 3) a higher number of abductions occurred in Seoul, Gyeonggi, Gangwon, and Chungcheong provinces, all of which experienced earlier and longer occupation by the Communist troops.

Thus, it would appear that civilian abductions were undertaken as an important and integral part of the North Korean war policy. Furthermore, when classifying the abductions according to 1) the timing of the abductions, 2) the abduction agents, 3) the process of the abductions, 4) the occupations of the abductees, and 5) the expected value and purpose of the abductions, these abductions can be viewed from a different angle.

Changes in the North Korean plan to invade the South and its policy on abductions

Currently available statistical data shed very little light on why more civilians were abducted from Chungcheong province than other provinces with larger populations, although at that time the population of Chungcheong province was larger than that of Seoul (1.69 million as of the end of April 1950). Thus, an appropriate explanation requires an analysis of material related to the invasion route, the path of the advance, the advance points according to a timeline, and the method of abduction employed by the Communist forces.

Since it took a while for the Communist forces to occupy Chungcheong province following the start of the war, it is presumed that many of the abductees fell into a particular category related to the North's war policy. Thus, a higher number of young people (82.67 percent) were abducted from Chungcheong province compared to other provinces (61.19 percent in Seoul and a national average of 74.84 percent): ages 16–20 (6,303), 21–25 (8,927), and 26–30 (4,334). Meanwhile, a comparison by occupation reveals that farmers (19,566) were singled out for abduction from this province, which also supports the inference that the Communist forces needed to replenish their military personnel in the midst of their campaign, explaining why more people were abducted from this province.

The North Korean invasion of the South was initially carried out in three stages. The first stage involved breaking through the South Korean defensive line, annihilating the main forces of South Korea, occupying Seoul within three days, and advancing to the Seoul (Suwon)-Wonju-Samcheok line. The second stage involved expanding their military achievements, annihilating the reserve troops of South Korea, and advancing to the Gunsan-Daegu-Pohang line. The third stage involved a mopping-up operation and advancing to the southern coast of the Busan-Yeosu-Mokpo line.⁵

Here, it is worth noting that the target of the military operations in the first stage was not only occupying Seoul, but also enveloping and annihilating the main forces of the ROK army. Therefore, the goal of the second and third stages was advancing all the way to the south coast without any major resistance in the absence of the ROK army. The foregoing plan was based on the correct assumption that once the war started, the ROK army divisions stationed in the rear areas would be relocated for the defense of Seoul.

Thus, when the first corps of the North Korean army engaged the frontline divisions of the ROK army along the western axis, four divisions of the ROK army, the second, third, and fifth divisions, normally stationed in the rear of the country, and the Capital City Garrison, were all relocated to the area north of Seoul within three days.

If North Korea's second corps had then taken a circuitous route, from Chuncheon and Hongcheon, in the direction of Suwon, thereby cutting off the path of retreat for the ROK army, the ROK army could not have avoided annihilation. Under these circumstances, the Han River would have served more as an obstacle to the ROK forces by impeding their withdrawal, rather than as an impediment to the advance of the North Korean troops, resulting in further damage to the ROK army. Then, with the ROK army decimated, the North Korean troops would have occupied Seoul and been able to move south to reach the south coast, without much resistance. At this point, the North Korean forces would have had sufficient advantage to go in pursuit of the ROK army.

However, an examination of the frontline situation of the North Korean army as of June 28, 1950, reveals that their initial invasion plan did not go as planned, which means they were forced to alter their strategy.

First, the main attacking force of North Korea's first corps, the third and fourth divisions, occupied Euijeongbu on the evening of June 26 and approached the outskirts of Seoul on June 27. The two divisions marched swiftly into Seoul at five in the morning on June 28, successfully occupying the entire city by around 11:30 that same morning. The sixth division, an auxiliary division of the first corps, occupied Gaeseong on June 25, while the first division reached the northern shore of the Imjin

River via Gorangpo. The sixth division that had occupied Gaeseong now seized Gimpo-up on June 28 after crossing the Han River and advancing into the Gimpo peninsula. The North Korean army's first division that arrived at the Imjin River encountered resistance from the ROK army's first division and halted around Munsan, which meant it began to lag behind the other divisions. Meanwhile, the third and fourth divisions of the North Korean army that had occupied Seoul via the Euijeongbu passage kept advancing south without much resistance, making a bulge in the center, which was premature according to North Korea's plan to take Seoul.⁶

In contrast, the North Korean army's experience on the eastern front was quite different. Due to the tenacity and valor of the ROK army's sixth division, then in charge of defending the Chuncheon area, the North Korean army's second corps was not able to occupy Chuncheon until June 27, three days after the start of the war, instead of the day the war started, June 25. The North Korean army's second corps was still caught around Hongcheon on June 28, the day the first corps occupied Seoul. Similarly, the ROK army's eighth division delayed the advance of North Korea's fifth division, which was only able to occupy Gangneung on June 28.

Thus, by delaying the advance of North Korea's second corps, the ROK army's sixth division completely altered North Korea's initial plan of annihilating the ROK army by cutting off its retreat route south of the Han River. As a result, the ROK army was able to resist being surrounded by the enemy and form a new front.⁷ Therefore, under these revised circumstances, the North Korean army needed extensive replenishment of its combat personnel, which is presumably why more young men were abducted from areas south of Seoul than from Seoul itself and, in particular, why many more were abducted from Chungcheong province.

Relationship between advance/retreat of NK troops and times/places of abductions

Nationwide, 84,659 (88.2 percent) of the abductees were taken during the three months between July–September 1950, while only 2,299 were abducted between October–December 1950 and 3,172 abducted after 1951. The advance/retreat paths of the North Korean army show that most of the abductions took place during the early stages of the North Korean army's advance into the provinces concerned. Although abductions also occurred later, the abductees in this case were likely found hiding and arrested or enticed by various Communist tactics. Notwithstanding, the timing of most of the abductions indicates that the abduction plan was made in advance as part of the North Korean war plan (see Table 1).

As regards the locations of the abductions, 72.1 percent took place at the actual residences of the abductees and 8.2 percent nearby (totaling 80.3 percent), indicating that the North Korean regime had collected advance information and the abductees were targeted.

However, it is also worth noting that, while residential abductions were relatively low in Seoul (75.35 percent) and Gyeonggi (54.61 percent), which were occupied according to the original war plan, and Gyeongsang (76.34 percent), which was only occupied by the North Koreans for a short period of time and in limited areas, the provinces occupied after North Korea revised its invasion plan, such as Gangwon (97.70 percent), Chungcheong (92.58 percent), and Jeolla (91.85 percent), recorded a very high rate of residential abductions. This was because North Korea had to change its abduction plan following the revision of its overall operational wartime

Table 1. Distribution of abduction dates by region

Date abducted	Region						Total
	Seoul	Gyeonggi	Gangwon	Chungcheong	Gyeongsang	Jeolla	
Before 1950	47	49	22	32	30	257	437
June 1950	708	310	188	95	23	142	1,466
July 1950	8,623	5,833	2,813	6,122	690	517	24,598
Aug. 1950	8,559	7,492	5,393	10,795	3,739	4,302	40,280
Sept 1950	3,447	2,844	1,890	3,905	4,092	3,603	19,781
Oct.–Dec. 1950	39	455	348	169	175	1,113	2,299
After 1951	240	421	629	399	711	772	3,172
Unrecorded	685	866	92	2,147	43	147	3,980
Total	22,348	18,270	11,375	23,664	9,503	10,853	96,013

Source: Mi-il Yi (ed.), Collection of Historical Documents on Korean War Abductions 1, 1128.

plan. As things were not going their way, they had to replenish their manpower quickly in order to continue the war: more proof that the abductions were calculated.

Another fact that supports the theory that the abductions were carried out according to North Korea's political plan is that many individuals were abducted from their residential areas by North Korea's national police. In particular, 789 (0.82 percent) of the abductees were taken from their job sites after they had been ordered to report to work by their employers or superiors, as an apparently carefully orchestrated plan. In some cases, even friends of the abductees were used to expedite the process (see Table 2).

Ages of abductees and purpose of abduction

Among the total number of abductees, 19,079 (74.83 percent) were the age of potential combatants: 16–20 (20,409); 21–25 (32,357); or 26–30 (19,079). Plus, when adding the abductees aged 31–35, the rate would have been 84.61 percent. Therefore, most of the abductees (20,000–30,000) were aged 16–30, with much smaller numbers (9,395) in their early 30s (perhaps to be used as non-combatant laborers), 36–40

Table 2. Distribution of abduction areas by region

Date abducted	Region						Total
	Seoul	Gyeonggi	Gangwon	Chungcheong	Gyeongsang	Jeolla	
Own houses	16,417	9,145	9,612	18,643	6,109	9,256	69,182
Nearby own houses	422	832	1,501	3,266	1,146	707	7,874
Job sites	664	78	29	8	6	4	789
On streets	966	338	10	11	13	14	1,356
Others	1,104	5,896	179	410	514	113	8,216
Unrecorded	2,775	1,981	44	1,326	1,715	759	8,600
Total	22,348	18,270	11,375	23,664	9,503	10,853	96,013

Source: Mi-il Yi Collection of Historical Documents on Korean War Abductions 1, 1129.

(5,378), 41–45 (2,959), 46–50 (2,497), and 50 years and over (only 800). Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that the abductees were taken to provide strategic manpower. This assumption is also supported by Mr. Jo Cheol, who was abducted in August 1950 and spent 10 years in North Korea before fleeing to South Korea. According to Mr. Jo, around the end of August 1950, about 40,000 abductees were divided into groups of 800 and located on hills surrounding Seowon-ri of Byeokseong-gun, Bucheon-myeon of Jeryeong-gun, and Sincheon-gun and Pyeongsan-gun around Haeju city. They lived in huts built with rice straw and were mobilized for heavy labor, including digging air-raid shelters, repairing damaged bridges, and transporting grain. Meanwhile, the younger men were drafted into the North Korean army after checking their individual identities and ideology.⁸

Another fact that supports the assumption that the abductees were taken to provide strategic manpower is that 11 percent of the prisoners of war (POWs) captured by UN troops were soldiers of South Korean origin.⁹ At the armistice meetings dealing with the issue of POWs, the UN side estimated that about 88,000 South Korean soldiers were missing, while the communist side only presented a list of 7,412 ROK POWs. Although the UN side demanded the return of all South Korean POWs (including those that had been forced into the North Korean army) and that POWs on both sides be given the opportunity to choose which side they wished to remain with, the North Koreans strongly objected, saying that all North Korean soldiers had voluntarily chosen to join the North Korean army and that the UN proposal was merely a plot to abduct more than 100,000 North Korean soldiers.¹⁰ Therefore, this could imply that more than 100,000 North Korean soldiers were from South Korea and that many of them were abductees.

A concrete case proving this can be found in the “Announcement by the Gyeongbuk Police Bureau Information Office” published by the *Daegu Maeil*, a daily newspaper, on May 1, 1951. In this announcement, the police bureau urged the family members of missing persons to contact the police stations in their areas to examine the lists of POWs originally from that province. Prepared by the bureau personnel at the Busan POW camp, the lists included POWs who had been forcibly taken by the North Koreans in occupied areas and then recaptured by the ROK army, police, or UN troops.¹¹

Occupations/professions of abductees and purposes of abduction

The occupations/professions of the abductees also provide a clue to the purposes of the abductions. Among the total 96,013 abductees, 61 percent (58,373) were farmers and it is thought that these abductees were for use as manual labor. Notwithstanding, when considering that 80 percent of the entire South Korean population were farmers at the time and there was only a small professional population, the North Korean agenda for abducting 2,919 administrative government employees, 190 lawyers, 111 professors, 752 school teachers, 368 medical doctors, 158 pharmacists, and 2,836 technicians and engineers was clearly for the purpose of “nation-building.” Meanwhile, the abduction of 879 social leaders, 106 political partisans, and 63 congressmen was to legitimize the actions of the North and use them in a united national front.

Political figures, such as Jo So-ang (Cho So-ang), were at the top of the priority list to reinforce North Korea’s legitimacy and form a united national front or

another bogus coalition.¹² Once again, this leads to the conclusion that the civilian abductions were carefully planned by North Korea while it strategized for war.

However, the reason for abducting clergymen (178 Christians and 39 others), members of right-wing action groups, and 54 civilians employed by the U.S. military, all targets of political oppression, is not clear. One explanation can be inferred from the case of the unification of Vietnam, where southern right-wing leaders were classified into three reactionary groups and sent to political prison camps, *Trai Cai Tao Lao Dong* for retraining through forced labor, or the new economic zones. Thus, it is possible that this group of abductees was taken for punishment and isolated detention. The clear intention behind these abductions can also be revealed by tracing the cases of abduction that occurred during the early stages of the war and those that occurred following the recovery of Seoul on September 28, 1950 when the Communist forces were being defeated.

An examination of the numbers of abductees by city/*gun* (county) in each province and the related percentages also reveals that these people were abducted rather than having voluntarily crossed-over to North Korea, as voluntary defection would not appear to have been so evenly spread over each region. In other words, there would be more volunteer defectors from areas of Communist uprisings, such as Daegu (October First Uprising of Daegu in 1946), Yeosu, and Suncheon (Yosu-Suncheon Uprising in 1948) and fewer volunteer defectors from other regions.

For a more accurate analysis, a more detailed study is needed of the population status and time and period of the Communist occupation. Nonetheless, the fact remains that, without exception, the areas occupied by the North Korean army showed a higher number of abductees, while the areas that avoided occupation or were only occupied for a short time had markedly fewer abductees, thereby supporting the theory of non-voluntary, forced abductions in the areas in question.

The gender breakdown of the abductees also contradicts North Korea's assertion of voluntary crossing-over to North Korea. Even though social participation by the female population was low at that time, the fact that only 1.96 women were abducted to every 100 men proves that the abductions were carried out to supply North Korea with its required wartime manpower. Significant differences in the sex ratio can also be seen between different regions. In the case of Seoul (100:2.64), the ratio of abducted women versus men was on average 1.4 times higher than in other regions. While one reason may have been the higher degree of social participation by the women in Seoul when compared to the women in other regions, the inference that North Korea's abduction policy changed along with its initial operational wartime plan must also be considered.

Although an accurate explanation is not possible in the absence of abductees' testimonies or based on the dates and places of the abductions in the currently available statistics, it may be important to note the significantly lower average ratio of women abducted from Gangwon (100:0.22) and significantly higher than average ratio of women abducted from Jeolla (100:5.13). Meanwhile, there was not much difference in the gender ratio of abductees from Gyeongsang (100:1.24), where North Korea had difficulty in performing abductions as originally planned, and Chungcheong (100:1.55), where North Korea must have tried to secure the maximum combat manpower following its revised war plan. In addition, it may also be important to note the significant difference between the ratios of abducted women from Gyeonggi (100:2.64) and Gangwon, where North Korea's original abduction plan was

supposedly equally applied to the sexes according to the initial operational wartime plan.

The following trends were traced from a cross analysis of occupation/profession and the date of abduction. In general, abductions immediately followed occupation by the North Korean army. In the case of Seoul, most of the abductions occurred during the months of July (40.2 percent) and August (39.4 percent). According to profession, congressmen, members of political parties and social groups, government employees, policemen, judges, and prosecutors, all included in the category of “class enemy,” were mostly abducted in July. Plus, on June 28 following the fall of Seoul, five congressmen, two political party leaders, 22 social group leaders, 61 government employees, 57 police officers and four judges/prosecutors were all abducted, clearly indicating a premeditated plan of abduction before the start of the war.

Meanwhile, clergy, businessmen, and merchants were mostly abducted in August, leading to the assumption that those considered harmful to the North Korean socialist regime were immediately abducted while the North Korean forces were successfully marching toward the South and convinced of victory. In the case of Gyeonggi, which suffered a relatively early occupation, the abductions showed a similar pattern to those in Seoul, although drawing any meaningful conclusion is not really possible, as the number of abducted congressmen, political party leaders, and clergy was small.

In contrast, the abductees from Gyeongsang and Jeolla, the majority of whom were farmers and laborers, were mainly taken in August and September. When considering the time period of the entry and withdrawal of the North Korean army from these areas, it is clear that the civilian abductions were to secure wartime manpower. In Gangwon and Chungcheong, the abductions mainly took place in August. Plus, many abductions also occurred between Seoul/Gyeonggi and Gyeongsang/Jeolla in July and September. Thus, an obvious relationship can be established between the occupation/retreat of the North Korean army and the times of the abductions and professions of the abductees, leading to the conclusion that the abductions were certainly carried out in accordance with North Korea’s wartime policy.

Armistice talks and wartime civilian abductions

The Korean War differs from other wars, as it was both an inter-Korean as well as an international war, characterized by a strong ideological confrontation, and reached a conclusion that was neither a victory nor a defeat for either side. Therefore, North Korea was not bound to accept the accusations of having abducted civilians.

Although the justification of North Korea’s lawless and inhumane deeds is linked to their illogical Communist ideological struggle, it should not be overlooked that the outcomes of the Korean War were also a result of the uniqueness of this war, the way it was brought to an end, and the armistice talks themselves. When taken together, these factors made it very difficult to arrive at a good solution.

Three mistakes at armistice talks

Communists respect power as the Alpha and Omega, which also applies to negotiations. Thus, their main concept is “the correlation of forces;” in other words, the balance of power, which includes military, political, economic, and social

power.¹³ However, as a militaristic entity, North Korea regards a powerful military as being of the utmost importance, a fact that has been made apparent from the intermittent inter-Korean talks and is closely related to the changes in the balance of power on the Korean peninsula.¹⁴

Their respect for power is manifest at every level of negotiation. Therefore, they grasp “the operating point of power” in every negotiation in order to maximize their interests, which includes showing contempt for the weak and paranoia in terms of seeking superiority in an uncertain correlation of forces.¹⁵

At the armistice talks, the UN side raised the issue of civilian abductees based on two categories. The first consisted of foreign nationals, including missionaries and members of diplomatic missions, and when the North Korean representative, Lt. Gen. Lee Sang-jo, was confronted with a specific list of 55 names, he responded by saying that these individuals had been taken into custody by North Korea for their safety and that they would be released immediately when the armistice agreement became effective, thereby requiring no further discussion. To reconfirm this issue, USN Rear Adm R. E. Libby, the UN representative, then suggested that Gen. Lee’s statement be inserted in the final agreement.¹⁶

The second category concerned South Korean civilian abductees, yet in this case the UN negotiators (mainly Adm. Libby) were less confrontational in their approach, saying “We want to discuss under the agenda [agenda four: POW] the matter of some ROK civilians being *held* by you... Since you mentioned civilians, there is no reason why it cannot be discussed. In addition, there is no reason why ‘displaced civilians’ cannot be sent home during the cease fire. Let’s discuss this matter at the proper time.”¹⁷ However, Gen. Lee strongly objected, saying that the UN side was trying to delay the meeting.¹⁸

The UN did not use the word “abductees” to describe the missing civilians, and even employed different words when describing the missing foreign nationals and missing South Koreans. At the meeting on December 30, 1951, it was mentioned that “When your army entered Seoul, a few days later it took into custody, as prisoners, numbers of the foreign diplomatic corps, foreign...”¹⁹ However, when referring to the South Korean civilian abductees, the words “held” and “displaced civilians” were used. At the meeting on January 1, 1952, the UN said, “Many of these civilians were swept northward in what might be termed the backwash of war.”²⁰

With such a weak stance from the UN side, no positive response could be expected from the North Korean side. Moreover, the North Korean side also declared that the North Korean civilians who fled south during the war were actually abducted by South Korea, thereby thwarting the UN’s proposal to discuss the matter of South Korean civilians abducted by North Korea. Thus, at the meeting on January 1, 1952, when Adm. Libby attempted to discuss the release of civilians (note “abducted civilians” was not used), Gen. Lee countered by saying, “Then by that do you mean you are going to release over 500,000 civilians your side took away from us?”²¹ This defiant approach is a typical communist negotiation tactic.

Thus, even though the North Korean civilians who fled south clearly acted of their own volition, the North Korean negotiator brazenly raised this issue to decrease the “level of aspiration” on the UN side, as the “first offer” is critical to create the setting within which the game is to be played. The initial offer is thus a means to influence the perception of the bargaining set on the part of the opponent. Thus, a

low offer with a high demand is intended to decrease the level of aspiration on the other side, and usually brings a high yield, if agreed upon at all.²²

A close examination of the bargaining process reveals that the UN, in reality the United States, had a fairly good knowledge of and assessment of the intentions, bargaining tactics, and behavioral features of North Korea regarding the wartime civilian abductees, as well as a precise prediction of the result. Nonetheless, the unsatisfactory bargaining on the part of the UN is attributable to the United States, not as an 'error' but as a 'fault.'

The first mistake by the United States regarding the wartime civilian abductees was made at the meeting on January 6, 1952 when it abandoned its original proposal for a "1:1 exchange," where the number of POWs held by the North would be supplemented with civilian abductees.²³

At the meeting, the United States changed its position from a one-for-one exchange to an all-for-all exchange based on voluntary decisions, explaining that it was not resolute that all POWs be asked through the Red Cross whether or not they wanted to be repatriated, since the Communist side did not want this to be done to the North Korean POWs.²⁴ This then enabled North Korea to deny the existence of South Korean civilian abductees and distort the number of abductees to "only a small number of civilians."

Meanwhile, the second mistake was a failure to install a means of enforcing the release of the South Korean civilian abductees, even though the United States anticipated that North Korea had no intention of fulfilling their pledge based on their opposition to the exchange of POWs for civilians in the meeting on January 10, 1952. Namely, the United States concluded that North Korea was opposed to returning South Korean civilians for fear that the Red Cross interviews of civilians of South Korean origin would result in tens of thousands choosing to return to South Korea, thereby revealing that they had been taken forcibly by North Korea for economic and military purposes, and diminishing the military potential of North Korea.²⁵

However, the third and most serious mistake was that the U.S. failed to secure the appointment of the Red Cross International Committee representative as the "Chairman 'without voting rights'" of the Civilian Repatriation Committee and failed to create Neutral Inspection Teams to pursue the matters of "displaced civilians" following the conclusion of the Armistice Agreement, which resulted in the failure to abide by the content stipulated in the same Agreement.

Three mistakes in bargaining techniques

Repeating their demands until they get what they want is a commonly used tactic by the North Koreans at the bargaining table. Simply repeating the same demand over and over, even a seemingly illogical demand, eventually generates impatience and anger on the other side. In some ways, it is a form of brainwashing and intended to exhaust the other side in order to achieve a small victory: little strokes fell great oaks. During the armistice conferences, this repetitive tactic was used for "making the 38th parallel the armistice line," "choosing Gaeseong as the meeting place," and "the repatriation of POWs and abductees." The North Koreans knew full well that they were not likely to succeed with each individual issue; therefore, they used the same tactic to bore their opponents into submission for subsequent issues. Thus, although the UN succeeded in rejecting the persistent suggestion of "setting the armistice line

on the 38th parallel,” they made a mistake by fixing the installation of the armistice line prior to settling other important matters. Likewise, the United States also succeeded in the tedious POW matter, yet conceded to the North Koreans on the issue of banning construction of military airstrips and aerial reconnaissance.²⁶ Thus, the North Koreans were successful in either marginalizing the UN’s primary concerns or pushing the policymakers to the limits of their patience, thereby effectively making them give up.

As a result, this method of negotiating scared the UN side into believing that bringing up the subject of civilian abductees might lead to a stalemate in the negotiations. Therefore, in a way, the UN had given up from the beginning.

When examined using the general theory of bargaining and the North Korean way of bargaining, the following problems were identified as regards the issue of the repatriation of civilian abductees:

- a. It was not at the top of the negotiation list. Since the United States played the main role in the negotiations, while the South Korean government was more opposed to the armistice negotiations, the matter of repatriating civilian abductees did not receive much attention.
- b. Even though abductee lists were prepared by both the South Korean government and the UN at the time of the negotiations, they were never used as the basis for the UN’s assertions. In 1952, the South Korean government published a list of 82,959 abductees, plus another list was also supposedly delivered early that same year to the Headquarters of the UN forces by the U.S. Ambassador, which recorded 126,325 missing South Koreans, including 36,472 abductees and 73,613 forcibly recruited to the North Korean army or youth army.²⁷ Yet, to precipitate the armistice talks with the North Koreans who were obstinately refusing to recognize any mass abduction of South Korean civilians, these abductee lists were never officially discussed.
- c. As a bargaining issue, the UN side did not assign any specific importance to the repatriation of South Korean abductees, and thus avoided a firm commitment to the issue and discounted the use of leverage to persuade the North Korean side.

When examining Clause 59 of the Korean War Armistice Agreement, it is apparent that a systematic apparatus for the repatriation of abducted South Korean civilians was indeed provided for following the ceasefire in the Korean War. Yet, when the North Koreans did not abide by the agreement, the UN side merely raised objections. When even the important issue of the return of more than 50,000 ROK POWs was not resolved, why would the North Koreans have been expected to allow the repatriation of South Korean civilian abductees after the cease-fire? Essentially, the limited effect of the armistice agreement was because neither side had been able to overpower the other, meaning that the cause for war was still in effect.

Conclusion

Despite initial overtures by the Lee Myung-bak administration on introducing a bill to investigate the issue of abductions during the Korean War, a real solution remains based on inter-Korean relations. However, nothing has yet been disclosed by the

South Korean government or the United States on the issue of wartime civilian abductees in relation to the so-called “declaration of the end of the war.” Thus, the probability of South Korean civilian abductees becoming a high priority would seem remote when there are other inter-Korean matters considered to be more urgent.

Even if the present Lee Myung-bak government intends to continue the track of the preceding Roh Moo-hyun government in terms of technically ending the war and building a constant peace regime, as agreed at the 2007 inter-Korean Summit Talks, it would still be difficult to include the issue of South Korean civilian abductees on the agenda, if concrete results are to be expected from the negotiations. Although not patently obvious, the relentless doggedness of the North Koreans to take the lead, regardless of the venue or type of negotiations, has seemed to produce the desired results, as the issue of South Korean civilian abductees has never been raised in any serious manner at any of the inter-Korean conferences over the past 10 years and South Korean delegates continue to hesitate to bring up the inter-Korean basic agreement (“Agreement on Reconciliation, Nonaggression, and Exchange and Cooperation between the South and the North”).

Building a peace regime on the Korean peninsula requires more than simply replacing the Armistice Agreement with a peace agreement, which would only force South Korea into the formal logic of North Korea and hinder any real peace settlement.

In particular, any attempt at an inter-Korean agreement has been subject to arbitrary observance or abandonment by either side, due to the continued antagonistic relationship over the past half century. Therefore, the main point for the development of an inter-Korean relationship should rather be the continued observance of existing agreements for institutional settlement. Institutional solutions to the issue of the wartime abduction of civilians are already provided for in paragraph 59 of the Armistice Agreement and articles 17 and 18 of the inter-Korean basic agreement. They just need to be implemented.

Thus, the best way to convert the current cease-fire system into a peace regime would be to ensure the successful implementation and enforcement of the inter-Korean basic agreement based on declaration by both sides converting the Armistice Agreement system into a basic agreement system.

As with the subject of North Korean human rights, the key to resolving the question of wartime civilian abductees is political negotiation, as the issue is not the absence of international standards or inter-Korean agreements, but rather that they are not being observed. In this context, an approach in line with questions pending between the South and North might produce more bargaining power. Plus, a case-by-case approach could offer a gradual progression to a more general settlement with binding force.

Notes

1. Except for several personal names, the system of Romanizing the Korean alphabet is consistent with the July 7, 2000 notice of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Korea. Korean names in this article are all written with the family name first, followed by the given name. These five lists are: 1) List of Seoul Area Victims, Office of Public Information (OPI), December 1, 1950; 2) List of Korean War Abductees, Korean War Abductees Family Association (KWFA), 1951; 3) List of Korean War Abductees,

- ROK government, March 1952, 4) List of Abductees, National Police Headquarters, 1954; 5) Registration List of Displaced Persons, Korean National Red Cross (KNRC), 1956.
2. The South Korean National Assembly adopted on March 2, 2010 a “Bill for the Examination of the Circumstances Surrounding Abductions During the Korean War and Redeeming the Impaired Reputations of the Victims,” which came into effect in September 2010.
 3. This number also includes abductees who were taken as prisoners of war by the UN forces and then interned in the Geogje POW camps for a certain period of time before being released and returned, as they had been assigned to the North Korean forces, either as combatants or noncombatants, and placed on the frontline after being abducted. With the help of the author’s assistants, who went through the comparative analysis, the results of which were confirmed by KWARI, the author was able to arrive at the fact that 413 persons out of 96,013 wartime abductees were released from the Geogje POW camp. However, there were quite a few cases that involved identical names leaving doubts as to whether they were different people with the same names or really the same person listed twice. The author has, however, decided to stick to the number 96,013 in order to reflect the types and scale of the abductions by the North, as while those released after being abducted influence the number interned in North Korea, it does not change the total number of abductees.
 4. Yi, Mi-il (ed.), Collection of Historical Documents on Korean War Abductions 1 (in Korean) (Seoul: KWARI, September 2006), 1118.
 5. Lt. Col. Jeon, Jeong-sun, the Republic of Korea Army College (KAC) Faculty, The mystery of the North Korean army’s three-day delay in Seoul (in Korean), <http://cafe.naver.com/nuke928/77061>, accessed April 20, 2008.
 6. Ibid.
 7. Kim Il-sung, at the Byeolo-ri Meeting (December 21–23, 1950), pointed out that, while the key to victory in a war lies in the annihilation of the enemy resources, the enemy was given time to disperse, escape and rebuild its units.
 8. Jo, Cheol, Deadly Times (in Korean) (Seongbonggak, 1964), 41–2.
 9. Heo, Man-ho, “Les prisonniers de guerre sud-coréens retenus en Corée du Nord, Les hommes dans l’histoire,” in *La Corée, le peuple et ses valeurs culturelles: d’hier à aujourd’hui*, ed. Yim, Sung-sook, (Montréal: Les Presses de l’Université de Montréal, 2000), 36.
 10. Ibid.
 11. Abductees of Gyeongbuk Origin under Protection at the Pusan Camp (in Korean) *Daegu Maeil*, May 1, 1951.
 12. For the concept of “Bogus Coalition,” the second phase of the three-phased formation of a pro-Soviet government (“baggage-train government”) in Soviet Russian occupied countries after the Second World War, see Hugh Seton-Watson, *The East European Revolution* (New York: Praeger, 1961).
 13. Library of Congress, *Soviet Diplomacy and Negotiating Behavior: An Emerging New Context For U.S. Diplomacy*, Study Prepared by the Senior Specialists Division, Congressional Research Service (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1979), 521–2.
 14. Heo, Man-ho, “The Characteristics of North Korean Negotiating Behavior: A theoretical deviation or Pseudo-negotiation?” *Korea and World Affairs* 22, no.3 (Fall 1998): 416.
 15. Ibid.
 16. National Institute of Korean History (NIKH), Collection of Historical Documents on Inter-Korean Relations (in Korean), Book 5, Transcript of Proceedings, Military Armistice Conferences Vol. 5: Agenda Item 4 on 1st–71st Comte Mraning meetings, 303–5.
 17. Ibid., 307–8.
 18. Ibid., 308.
 19. Ibid., 303.
 20. Ibid., 331–2.
 21. Ibid., 332.
 22. Christopher Dupont and Guy-Olivier Faure, “The Negotiation Process,” in *International Negotiation*, ed. Victor A. Kremenjuk (Oxford: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1991), 46.

23. Adm. Libby stated: "contrary to your apparent belief, the essence and the whole basis of our proposal is not a one-for-one exchange . . . It is an all-for-all exchange conditioned only by the voluntary consideration." NIKH, Collection of Historical Documents on Inter-Korean Relations, 411.
24. Ibid., 410.
25. Ibid., January 10, 1952 meeting, 491–2.
26. Heo Man-ho, "The Characteristics of North Korean Negotiating Behavior," 401–2.
27. See Telegram sent to Cincunc Advance by U.S. Ambassador Muccio on January 4, 1952, in Collection of Historical Documents on Korean War Abductions 2 ed. Yi, Mi-il, (Seoul: KWARI, September 2009), 984.

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