

## FOREWORD

As we approach the 70th anniversary of the outbreak of the Korean War this year, the history of the United Kingdom's involvement in the Korean Peninsula can be understood in relation to its traditional role as balancer. In the early twentieth century, the United Kingdom's policy in Korea involved allying with the United States and Japan to deter Russian expansion southward, while also establishing inroads into the power of the Joseon dynasty (1392–1910) by securing harbours between China and Japan. The Anglo-Japanese Alliance from 1902 to 1903 aimed to secure the UK and Japan's interests in China and Korea, respectively; however, the UK's strategic interest in this alliance was to deter Russian expansionism, culminating in the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905). Great Britain was keenly aware of the geostrategic importance of the Korean Peninsula, mainly in the context of the rivalries among China, Japan and Russia in their tug-of-war over the declining Joseon dynasty.

Although first contact between Britain and Korea left few clear records, it is chronicled that Captain William Broughton of the HMS *Providence* was ordered to disembark at Busan in 1797. Eighty-six years later, the countries signed a treaty for the two-year British naval occupation of Geomundo, a small island south of the Peninsula. Before the Korean War in 1950, Britain's interests in Korea were 'distant but nonetheless an obligation' in the words of then prime minister Clement Atlee.

Despite Korea's relatively low priority for the UK, Great Britain committed the second largest military to the Korean War, second only to the United States' 1.79 million. From 1950 to 1957, Great Britain committed over 100,000 soldiers. During the actual war period from 30 June 1950 to 27 July 1953, about 60,000 British served, 746 were killed, 2,533 were wounded and 1,157 were missing in action, with 977 prisoners of war. British Commonwealth Forces Korea (BCFK), which included the first deployment of Australian military as part of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force in Japan after World War II, numbered over 100,000. With such commitment of Great Britain as a UN Security Council member and an ally to the United States, its bilateral relationship with Korea turned a corner, ushering in a new era, mainly due to changing views of Korea among British soldiers, with increasing admiration for Korea's simultaneous achievement of economic rebirth and democratic development.

In the Korean War veterans digital archive of the Korean War Legacy Foundation ([www.koreanwarlegacy.org](http://www.koreanwarlegacy.org)), constructed with the unwavering support of Korea's Ministry of Patriots and Veterans Affairs (MPVA), about 50 Korean War veterans from the United Kingdom witness their first impressions of modern Korea: most knew little about Korea and found it very foreign, primitive and extremely poor. Even in the mid-twentieth century, Korea's place in the minds of British soldiers was unclear. When they left Korea in the middle of war, they had no idea that Korea would ever rise from the ashes. British veterans, when asked if they could ever have imagined that Korea would become the 11th largest economy in the world and most substantive democracy in Asia, almost unanimously shook their heads. There was no way to foresee a Korean nation when nothing had been left standing. When they returned to the Republic of Korea through the MPVA's 'Revisit Korea', programme, veterans often spoke of finding a sense of closure for unresolved memories they had long hoped to put behind them.

Korea has not just become a power of industry and technology; it has also attracted global attention among young generations through cultural phenomena like K-pop and English Premier star players like Ji-sung Park and Heung-min Son. In 2030, Korea is projected to become the seventh largest economic power in the world, directly behind the United Kingdom and ahead of France, as mutual interdependence and Korea–UK exchanges have deepened to an unprecedented level since their first encounter in the eighteenth century. Korea now has a place in the history of Great Britain, as well as in the minds of those who honourably served and sacrificed: a source of pride for 100,000 British and Commonwealth soldiers and gratitude from Koreans for their contribution to the success that Korea has become.

Having gathered oral histories from Korean War veterans from the 22 countries that participated in the war, as well as about 1,600 in-depth interviews, with thousands of artefacts, the Korean War Legacy and World History Digital Education Foundations published in 2019 the first K-12 curriculum book, containing analyses of more than 1,000 interviews of American Korean War veterans by America's largest social studies organisation, the National Council for Social Studies. We are now giving birth to the second curriculum book, reflecting the last 70 years of British involvement in Korean history. These valuable educational resources breathe life into the honour and sacrifices of our heroes, continuing their legacy onward.

It was in the summer of 2017 that I first met Melanie Jones, Educational Director of the Historical Association (HA), to discuss collaborating on a series of interviews with Korean War veterans in the UK. In 2018, Executive Director Joseph Karb and I drafted specific plans to produce this book while participating in the HA's annual conference in Stratford-upon-Avon. Ben Walsh has led eight history teachers from the UK to reflect on the changed place of the Korean War in British history curricula, bringing us a step closer to publishing curricular resources for the 22 countries that participated in the Korean War. Thank you, Ben and Mel.

I want to thank the Historical Association and the entire staff, including Maheema Chanrai, for making such a strong professional effort and commitment. Foremost, Joseph Karb's action plans have played a vital role in transforming our veterans' oral histories into resources that educators can easily use in classes on the changing place of Korea in the world history curriculums.

I also want to acknowledge the support of veterans from all 22 countries in helping teachers to change attitudes towards and understanding of Korea. Ultimately this work can only be done 'by the teachers for the teachers' – my foundation's most important catchphrase. My sincere appreciation goes to our UK teachers, who have done such superb jobs in writing this publication.

Ultimately, my sincerest gratitude goes to the Korean Foundation, which has never wavered in its gracious support of this book. Alongside the Korea Foundation, my foundation will arduously march for the continued success of the 'Global K-12 Korean Studies Project'.

In honour of our heroes' precious sacrifice,

**Dr Jongwoo Han**

President,

Korean War Legacy Foundation ([www.koreanwarlegacy.org](http://www.koreanwarlegacy.org))

World History Digital Education Foundation ([www.worldhistoryde.org](http://www.worldhistoryde.org))