



The Domestic Management and Media Coverage of Fallen Soldiers during the Korean War, 1950–1953

Sang-ho LEE

Abstract

The three years of the Korean War (1950–1953), which had more than three million victims, also resulted in significant military casualties over a short period of time. Despite these civilian and military fatalities, there was only scanty Korean media coverage of the fallen soldiers at the time. The Korean military, however, faced the war without experience or official guidelines regarding military honors for the dead or procedures for dealing with soldiers' corpses. This paper will investigate one inevitable result of war: fallen soldiers. Scholarship thus far has failed to sufficiently consider the question of how the remains of fallen soldiers were handled during military operations in the Korean War. In other words, the moving of the remains of killed soldiers directly to the National Cemetery without an understanding of the process for handling the dead on the battlefield distorts the general public's collective consciousness of the horrors of war. This study aims to analyze the military organization and media reports on the dead soldiers of the Korean War based on primary sources, which have received scant attention in the Korean War scholarship to date.

Keywords: The Korean War, fallen soldiers, Korean media coverage, Graves Registration Service, National Cemetery, spirit of war dead, funeral homes, The Forgotten War

Sang-ho LEE is a senior researcher at the Institute for Military History in Korea. E-mail: Kennan2@naver.com.

www.kci.go.kr

Introduction

The three years of the Korean War (1950–1953), which resulted in more than three million total victims, also created significant military casualties over a short period of time. Despite these large civilian and military fatalities, period Korean media had only scant coverage of the fallen soldiers. Even narrowing the scope of wartime fatalities to the military, the Korean War resulted in the death of more than 137,000 South Korean soldiers and 37,000 U.N. troops (MND 2014, 29–30). From July 8, 1950, the US military joined in the war and began to deal alongside the Korean military with the issue of war dead, including the creation of a cemetery for the 24th Infantry Division in Daejeon. The US military operated a company-sized quartermaster unit called the Graves Registration Service under the 8th Army until June 1953 (Park 2005, 104–110; NARA 1954, 3–5).¹ The British military also operated its own five-member recovery team (S. Kim 2013, 74–75). The Korean military, however, faced the war without any experience or official manuals on the military honors for the dead or procedures for dealing with soldiers' corpses. (Kang 2019, 27). It was only in September, three months after the Korean War broke out, that the Cemetery Registration Unit (Myoji deungnokdae) was established (Yukgun bonbu 1970, 614). However, there were many military deaths even prior to the outbreak of the Korean War due to the conflict between the two Koreas along the 38th parallel. When the Military Aid Bill was introduced to the Korean National Assembly on March 28, 1950, Rep. Kwon Tae-hee stated that the number of deaths as of March 20, 1950 stood at 1,948, indicating that about 2,000 South Korean soldiers had already been killed between the foundation of the South Korean government in 1948 and the outbreak of the war (B. Kim 2016, 479). A total of 137,899 South Korean soldiers were killed in the Korean War. Among these, 29,202 have been buried at National Cemeteries, while the remainder are missing in action (MIA), their remains unidentified to this day (H. Kim

1. National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), RG554, Military Historical Section, Headquarters of the USAFFE, "History of the Korean War," Vol. III, Part 16, Graves Registration Service in the Korean War, 1954.

2018, 32–34; N. Lee 2005, 3). Meanwhile, the number of US soldiers killed in the Korean War stands at about 33,000, of whom 7,600 have not yet been found, and of these, 5,300 are believed to be buried in North Korean territory and about 1,000 in the DMZ (Jeong 2019, 409).

This paper investigates one inevitable result of war: fallen soldiers. Scholarship thus far has failed to sufficiently consider the question of how the remains of fallen soldiers were dealt with during military operations in the Korean War. Not understanding the process of how the remains of fallen soldiers were handled on the battlefield distorts the general public's collective consciousness of the horrors of war. A true understanding of war necessitates the examination of an aspect of death that accompanies every armed conflict. Regardless of whether a war is won or lost, the nation bears the ultimate responsibility for ensuring it properly cares for the remains of its fallen soldiers who died in that war. The interpretation of how the nation honors and remembers those who sacrificed themselves is fundamental to construing what comprises national responsibility. Meanwhile, public support for the war is closely related to how the state deals with the occurrence of war deaths and its deliverance of this knowledge to its citizens. In his book *Wars, Presidents, and Public Opinion*, historian John Mueller argues that in regards to American public support for a war, there is a direct correlation between increasing casualties and decreasing support (Mueller 1973, 266–267). In the short term, ordinary citizens are unaware of the true extent of war casualties. This is in part due to a government's control over casualty reporting. Further, as with many other aspects of war, casualty numbers are likely subject to potential controversy or manipulation (Casey 2010, 130). Therefore, a close examination of media reports on soldier casualties provides certain indications of period perceptions on a war. This study aims to analyze the military organization and media reports on military deaths during the Korean War based on primary sources, which have received little scholarly scrutiny in the Korean War scholarship to date. Despite the substantial amount of research conducted on the Korean War in Korea, studies on media reports of war dead and the fallen are non-existent (N. Lee 2005; Park 2005; B. Kim 2016; Kang 2019). This may be due in part to data limitations, but it is also attributable to the media setting of the time,

where coverage was carried out in a uniform manner under government censorship (Jung 1990; Sang Chul Lee 1999). Though period newspapers and magazines are limited, a close examination of them reveals a constantly fluctuating public opinion surrounding news of the war dead. In particular, increase in soldier deaths in the highland areas in the later phase of the war had a huge impact on Korean public opinion regarding the war. Therefore, this paper first outlines how the war dead were perceived and recognized and then examines the organization and operation of the Korean military's handling of fallen soldiers' corpses during the Korean War. Finally, media reports on soldier deaths will be analyzed to gauge the Korean public's general perceptions of the war at that time. In conjunction with this, this paper actively utilizes primary sources such as general orders from the South Korean (ROK) Ministry of Defense and ROK Army Headquarters.

Recognition of Fallen Soldiers and the Cemetery Registration Unit's Organization and Operations during the Korean War

Recognition and Remembrance of the Dead

Within the widely used Korean phrase *hoguk yeongnyeong* (souls of those who died in defense of the nation), *yeongnyeong* (souls of the war dead) is used as a term of elevated reverence for the war dead, in contrast to the more common term *yeonghon* (spirit). The term *yeongnyeong* (*eirei* in Japanese) is used in Japan to describe the fallen soldiers enshrined in Yasukuni Shrine. In Japan, enshrining soldiers became common after the Russo-Japanese War (Takahashi 2008, 162). Tetsuya Takahashi (2008, 171) points out that the war dead are in a similar position to martyrs, highlighting that the object of martyrdom is the citizen's nation, and that soldiers who die in war earn eternal life through the nation as God. Certainly, this provided Japan the basis for further troop mobilization in World War II and the motivation for soldiers to fight on the frontlines. The heroicized remembrance and commemoration of fallen soldiers is a natural phenomenon. It serves the dual purpose of endowing meaning on the war dead on the one hand, while

brushing aside the atrocity of killing on the other (Takeshi 2011, 35). Such rituals for the dead began in Europe. According to George L. Mosse, the history of national rites, such as memorial services for the souls of fallen soldiers, dates back to the French Revolution and the campaigns of the German war of liberation against Napoleon (1813) (Mosse 2015, 44). The commemoration of fallen soldiers, which has developed since that time, has elevated the deaths of brothers, husbands, and friends to the level of sacrifice. During the Franco-Prussian War (1870–1871), the first military cemetery was established in Germany. Meanwhile, it was the United States that initiated the national cemetery system for fallen soldiers. A national cemetery was promoted by Congressional decree on July 17, 1862, amidst the American Civil War (1861–1865). Those who lost their lives while defending the Union were laid to rest in the new National Cemetery (Mosse 2015, 55–56). Undoubtedly, this applied mainly to the soldiers of the Northern states. This commemoration for dead soldiers peaked in European society during the period between World Wars I and II. According to Mosse, France enacted a law as early as 1914 creating military gravesites, and in December 1915, began to gather the scattered remains of its soldiers on the wartime battlefields for reburial in military cemeteries. Britain soon followed suit, and in Germany's case, it set up a permanent management system for the graves of its fallen on September 23, 1915 (Mosse 2015, 98). In the case of memorial rituals for soldiers in Korea, sociologist Kang In-cheol explains that it began with the US Army's Memorial Day event held on May 30, 1946. Subsequently, the remains of fallen soldiers were enshrined through the 2nd Combined Appeasement Service for the Military's War Deceased, held in Seoul Stadium on June 6, 1949 and then entombed at Jangchungsa Temple (Kang 2019, 346).

Organization and Operation of the Cemetery Registration Unit of the ROK Army

By 1950, two years after its founding in 1948, the fledgling South Korean military remained inadequately equipped in the areas of weaponry, organization, training, and discipline, and barely devoted any efforts to

combat preparations. In particular, it lacked the standards and organization for coping with the remains of ROK soldiers killed in the Korean War that erupted in June 1950. The following section will analyze the ROK military organization and how it was reorganized to handle the remains of fallen soldiers during the Korean War. As mentioned above, the number of combat deaths, to include both the national army and police, had already reached 2,000 as of March 1950, on the eve of the war, due to border clashes with the North and guerilla suppression operations in the South. With Army Headquarters General Order No. 59 of November 1, 1949, the Korean government had established a Cemetery Registration Department (Myoji deungnokbu) directly under ROK Army Headquarters (Yukgun bonbu 1970, 294). Lt. Col. Kim Deuk-su was appointed head of the unit, which included 14 officers and 137 enlisted soldiers. These personnel were attached to the Army Quartermaster. Upon completion of training, they were assigned to one of the eight divisions of the Cemetery Registration Department, with 6 officers and 9 enlisted soldiers assigned to headquarters, and 2 officers and 16 enlisted soldiers to the various other divisions. Ultimately, the total personnel number came to 159, with 22 officers and 137 enlisted soldiers. As the number of combat deaths escalated dramatically in the war's opening months, the ROK military set up temporary military cemeteries near combat sites or troop positions, while establishing a unit dedicated to managing the bodies of the fallen soldiers, and also set up *yeonghyeon bonganso* (funeral homes). On September 5, 1950, by Ministry of National Defense Headquarters General Order No. 62, the Cemetery Registration Unit (Myoji deungnokdae) was established at Busan, South Gyeongsang Province, and attached to the Army's military inspection team.² In order to lay to rest the remains of fallen soldiers, the government requested mortuaries be set up at Beomeosa and Myosimsa Temples in Busan, Taegosa Temple in Seoul, Haegwangsa Temple in Incheon, and Sudosa Temple in Pyeongtaek (Kang 2019, 379). According to the UN Secretariat's announcement of March 9, 1951, as of that date the number of ROK soldiers killed in action was 16,182, while the number of UN soldiers killed stood at 8,511 (MND 1951, D4).

2. "General Order 62," September 5, 1950, Institute for Military History, MND.

However, these figures had the potential to rise much higher, as 63,959 South Korean and 10,691 UN soldiers were then missing in action. On March 25, 1951, the Ministry of National Defense, by its General Order No. 63, renamed the 2201st Cemetery Registry Company to the 2201st Graves Registry Company under the 279th Military Quartermaster (Yukgun bonbu 1969, 60). During October–December 1951, the remains of ROK Army, Navy, and Air Force soldiers that had been enshrined at Beomeosa Temple, were handed over to bereaved family members (Kang 2019, 386). On March 10, 1952, the Korean Armed Forces Central Funeral Home was established. The Central Funeral Home was set up at Beomeosa Temple in Dongnaegu, Busan, with a three-fold mission. First, it concerned itself with matters regarding the enshrining of the remains of war dead; second, with the management of graves of the war dead; and third, with the transfer of the remains of the war dead. To meet these responsibilities, the Central Funeral Home was overseen by a director of the rank of major and had 3 sections (administrative, management, and remains transfer), with 3 officers and 30 enlisted soldiers as personnel.³ The duties of each section were as follows. The administrative section was in charge of the organization and overall administration of the war dead registry; the management section oversaw the management, burial, and security of the remains, as well as the remains

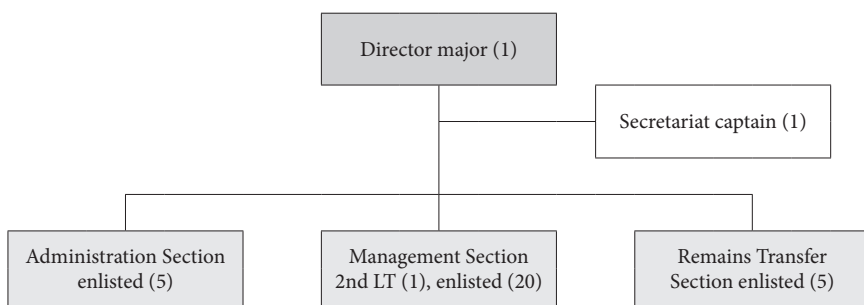


Figure 1. Organization of the Central Funeral Home, ROK Army
Source: General Order 76, April 30, 1952, Institute for Military History, MND.

3. “General Order 76,” April 30, 1952, Institute for Military History, MND.

of enemy soldiers; and the remains transfer section was in charge of the transfer of remains and their burial in South Korean military cemeteries. Following the establishment of the Central Funeral Home, and to ensure its smooth operations, the chiefs of the general staff of the ROK Army, Navy, and Air Force were required to hand over their remains to the head of the Central Funeral Home by March 25, 1952.

On April 30, 1952, UN Headquarters announced the total number of Korean armed forces KIA to be 29,494, while 16,928 UN forces had been killed. At that time, the number of missing in action was 105,672 South Korean soldiers and 12,532 UN forces. On September 27, 1952, the 179th Quartermaster Unit was renamed the 1st Quartermaster Detachment, the 279th Quartermaster Unit was redesignated the 2nd Quartermaster Detachment, and the 2201st Graves Registry Company became the 81st Quartermaster Graves Registry Company.⁴ The following day, September 28, a joint Army, Navy and Air Force memorial service was held in Dongnaegu, Busan to console the souls of the 42,031 soldiers who had thus far died in the Korean War (Yukgun bonbu 1969, 47). In February and March 1953, the 82nd Quartermaster Graves Registry Company and the 83rd Quartermaster Graves Registry Company were organized and assigned to the 1st Quartermaster Detachment (Yukgun bonbu 1969, 68–69).

Table 1. Installation of the ROK Army Graves Registry Companies in the Korean War

Unit name	Date organized	Jurisdictional area	Location
81st Co.	March 25, 1951	Nationwide	Busan
82nd Co.	February 20, 1953	Western	Seoul
83rd Co.	May 15, 1953	Eastern	Chuncheon

Source: Yukgun bonbu (1956, 157).

4. "General Order 138," September 23, 1952, Institute for Military History, MND.

The Cemetery Registration Unit operated in the following manner. Under ordinary circumstances, the body should be collected from that the dead soldier's unit, cremated, then transported to the Central Funeral Home, though in critical situations, the body could be cremated or buried with the support of a Graves Registry Company. This procedure was undertaken either when there was a withdrawal or advance, thus making available the battleground, or after hostilities had ended (Yukgun bonbu 1956, 157–158). Remains Transfer Teams would be assigned to the frontlines and tasked with dispatching the remains received from a unit to the Central Transfer Office. In addition, a receiving station was set up at the main administrative compound to receive the remains from each unit within that jurisdiction. The remains from Southern soldiers were transferred to the military funeral home in the relevant district by province, while North Korean and unidentified war dead were transferred to the Central Funeral Home (Jungang bonganso). Finally, it was stipulated that the Central Funeral Home would classify remains by region and transport them from the front or the military funeral home at the district level to the respective recruiting district command (Yukgun bonbu 1956, 158). However, the 31,057 war dead enshrined at Beomeosa Temple in Dongnae-gu, Busan, were transported from Busan to Daegu by the then chief of the Military Inspector General's office Lt. Col. Lee In-seop due to space shortage issues in Busan. In order to facilitate this, three freight cars were specially authorized and for seven days the remains were transported under the direction of the Army Chief of Staff (Yukgun bonbu 1969, 118). A total of 77,933 war dead remains were managed from the outbreak of the war to the ceasefire of July 27, 1953, to include 60,592 killed in action, 6,070 general casualties, and 11,291 miscellaneous deaths; combat deaths accounted for about 80 percent of the total (Yukgun bonbu 1994, 234). In accordance with Army Headquarters' Operation Order No. 49, the 1101st Field Engineer Unit began to construct a military cemetery in Dongjak-dong, Seoul, on March 1, 1954. Initially, it was intended to establish the military cemetery in the Gyeongju area, but Seoul's Dongjak-dong was decided upon after an inspection by President Syngman Rhee and the Eighth US Army commander (Gungnip myoji gwansiso 1988, 13–14). The establishment of the military cemetery meant

the reduced functionality of the central and jurisdictional funeral homes, which resulted in the transfer of 26,371 remains of war dead (*yeonghyeon*) from the Central Funeral Home to the respective district commands (Yukgun bonbu 1969, 133).

Domestic Korean Media Reporting on Fallen Soldiers

In his study, “Casualty Reporting and Domestic Support for War,” Steven Casey analyzed the impact of reporting war casualties on American domestic response to the Korean War. According to Casey, the disclosure of combat casualty numbers by the US military in the Korean War followed procedures and precedents established in World Wars I and II, as follows. First, the list of casualties was not released until the next of kin had been notified. Thus, during World War II, the first list of casualties was not released until eight months after the outbreak of the war. The monthly disclosure of the death toll was halted by March 1945 (Casey 2010, 134). The policy to first inform the family and then to release the list of casualties to the media set the precedent for the Korean War. During that conflict, the Casualty Section of the US Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense released a mourning message to the media after having delivered it to the families by letter or telegraph.⁵ However, the prompt reporting of such casualties underwent a change when Chinese communist forces entered the conflict in December 1950, and the war situation began to deteriorate. First, it was difficult to estimate losses at a time when the US military’s retreat and escape from the rapid advance of Chinese communist forces made it difficult to recover bodies, and almost impossible to record the number of casualties. At that time, the Pentagon did not announce the monthly death toll until six weeks after the battles with Chinese communist forces had taken place, and even then the casualties for December 1950 and January 1951 could not be accurately calculated (Casey 2010, 142). Eventually, in early

5. “Casualty Releases” (1950.8.19), NARA, RG 330, Records of the Office of the Secretary of Defense, 1921–2008, Entry 149A, Box 1, Press Branch.

1951, MacArthur's command introduced a strict censorship system when discrepancies emerged regarding casualty numbers, leading to a dispute between media reports and the official announcements by the Department of Defense (Sang-ho Lee 2012, 57–67). In other words, the military came to control journalists on the frontline as the war turned into an entrenched struggle for the Korean highlands from the spring of 1951 (Casey 2010, 145). On the other hand, a large proportion of Korean domestic media outlets only reported on general changes to the war situation, failing to provide any detailed information about the battlefield. North Korea's surprise invasion in June 1950 had led to the fall of the South Korean capital of Seoul within three days. Thus, media reports were bound to be weak, as many journalists had failed to take refuge and were captured by North Korean forces in the early phase of the war. Therefore, most of the central newspapers published in Seoul were discontinued, and at this early stage of the war only the *Pyeonghwa sinmun* (Peace Newspaper) was published in a temporary special issue format in Daejeon and Daegu from July 4, 1950 (Sang Chul Lee 1999, 12). The South Korean media adamantly refrained from reporting on the war dead. The first such report appeared only on July 7, with the death of ROK Air Force pilot Lee Keun-suk (*Nam Chosun Minbo*, July 7, 1950). Following this, media reports only covered the distinguished deaths of individual officers of the ROK Army and Air Force, such as Chief Chae Byung-duk, Park Beom-jip, and Seo Han-ho, with no appearance of Ministry of National Defense statistics on the total death toll (*Nam Chosun Minbo*, July 31, 1950; *Dong-a Ilbo*, November 30, 1950). During the war, public reports on the war dead centering on joint memorial services were occasionally made. The first joint service for fallen soldiers was observed at the 7169th Battalion in Daegu on March 30, 1951 (*Dong-a Ilbo*, March 30, 1951). Meanwhile, on April 6, 1951, the United States and Korea held joint memorial services for UN Forces at a special cemetery for the war dead on the outskirts of Busan. The hour-long memorial service was presided over by the chief US military chaplain and attended by President Syngman Rhee, all Cabinet members of the Korean government, foreign envoys, including US ambassador John J. Muccio, as well as US Eighth Army Commander Matthew B. Ridgway (*Dong-a Ilbo*, April 8, 1951). On September 28, 1951,

the first memorial service for ROK Army, Navy, and Air Force members was held at the Dongnae Infantry School's training camp in Busan in time for the one year celebration of Seoul's recapture. President Rhee attended alongside other government Cabinet members and foreign envoys (*Dong-a Ilbo*, September 29, 1951). But a year and three months after the outbreak of the war, there was still no public knowledge on governmental measures and plans for personal support regarding fallen soldiers. News of an enlisted soldier's death was first reported in the *Dong-a Ilbo* in September 1951. It describes the heroics of Private Kim Sung-keun as follows:

In the last ○○ highland offensive, PFC Kim Sung-keun, a member of 2nd Company, 1st Battalion, 7125st Unit, was calmly communicating with the company commander amid an artillery barrage, when unfortunately a bullet hit the radio and caused multiple injuries throughout his entire body. He dragged his helpless body and threw countless grenades at the enemy Tochka to destroy it. Injured in several places, he rose up vigorously, exclaimed, "Long live the Republic of Korea!" and died a heroic death. (*Dong-a Ilbo*, September 13, 1951)

Undoubtedly, this newspaper account was based on military reports. Exaggerations are found in its various expressions, and the article overemphasized the patriotic acts surrounding the warrior rather than the details of the dead. These types of articles frequently appeared in 1952, when the front was moving toward a stalemate and the struggle in the highlands was raging. One noteworthy piece of reporting eulogized the death of almost an entire family, headlining them as "Honorary Family—More than 3 Sons to the Front" (*Dong-a Ilbo*, March 28–29, April 1–4, 1951). The *Dong-a Ilbo* newspaper reported this as a special feature that was serialized over six issues. The first article in the series reasons the coverage as the following:

Despite the critical crisis the country now faces, there are the privileged who roam across Busan Bridge in luxury cars. Some senseless people tend to make dark leaps so that they do not get called up. At this time, the exemplary families that have put three or more men on the frontline since

the outbreak of the Korean War, what would they want and how are they living after sending off their beloved sons? In introducing such a glorious family, the reporter decided to visit several families in Gyeongsangnam-do, to show the patriotic movement burning in the rear. (*Dong-a Ilbo*, March 28, 1952)

Following this description, the special issue reported on a total of six families, one family each day. Let us now examine two of those families. The first case is the family of Kwon Kye-soon (aged 53 at the time) from Changpo-dong, Masan. From this household, four sons became army captains and fought in the Korean War:

The family has five sons, Mun Yu-sang (34), Ko-sang (31), Wang-sang (28), Jong-sang (25), and Gyeong-sang (23), and two daughters. The third and fifth, Wang-sang and Gyeong-sang are members of the eighth class of the Korea Military Academy. The second and fourth sons, Ko-sang and Jong-sang, were cadets of the ninth class and have been commissioned, and thus all four brothers became soldiers. Around the Korean War, the fifth son, Gyeong-sang, was sent to the east-central front, the second, Ko-sang, to a unit in Uijeongbu, the fourth assigned to the 9th Regiment, 7th Infantry Division, and the third stationed on the western front. Unaware whether they were alive or dead, the mother blamed herself for having sons in the military and was worried about her family starving.... The news from the third son, Wang-sang, came nearly a year after the war broke out, informing her the fourth son Jong-sang had killed himself with a pistol while fighting in the enemy camp as part of an organized death squad. The mother of warriors is flooded with tears as she speaks.... The reporter asked the mother whether she had any intention of bringing her sons home since they had been deliberately leading a frontline life for almost five years. The gracious mother of warriors, however, denies her affection for her sons, defies their return until unification of the country is achieved. (*Dong-a Ilbo*, March 29, 1952)

The reporter's coverage seems to have passed the censors with its underlying call toward national sacrifice until unification is achieved. The article in the

April 2 issue contained an even more heartbreaking story about a family whose sons had died, and whose daughters were now sent into military service:

When the reporter, curious to hear that a woman's three sons were in the military and that her daughter was also a soldier, entered the home of Jeong Gye-oh (63 years old) in the second district of Daeseong-dong, Gimhae-eup early Friday morning, it was time to show off her children. When her eldest son, Jeong Jae-gon, 34, said he wanted to become a soldier not just another country bumpkin, she opposed him because he was the eldest son. But she allowed his son's strong will to prevail and had once heard of his hard efforts on the frontline, where he won a medal, but she had not heard from him since. Soon after, her second son joined the army, following his brother. Her third son, Yeong-geun, also left home to find the whereabouts of his brothers, and there came news that he had seen them on the front. Later, she was told that her eldest son was killed in August 1951 in Gangwon Province and the second at the Battle of Hamyang in June 1950... The 18-year-old daughter, Lim Soo, is working at the Army's Women's Militia trying to confirm her third brother's survival, but she has still not heard word of him. (*Dong-a Ilbo*, April 2, 1951)

As such, by 1952, the media actively introduced the status of fallen families in order to encourage participation in the war. After September 1952, articles dealing with the sending-off rituals for fallen soldiers began to appear. In particular, six articles were published on the send-off ceremony for fallen between September 7 and 28, 1952. This, of course, was a series of reports intended to publicize the huge send-off ceremony on September 11.

The Ministry of National Defense plans to hold a send-off ritual for fallen soldiers from throughout the country who fought on the frontlines to protect their country and people upon the outbreak of the Korean War, and sadly became the god protectors of their country. The ceremony commences at 1400 on the 11th of this month, on Busan Station No. 2 platform. Many are expected to attend and pray for the souls of the dead. (*Chosun Ilbo*, September 7, 1952)

The total number of the fallen souls who were transported to their respective home provinces was 1,013, with 97 of those arriving in and enshrined at Taegosa Temple in Seoul on Wednesday after a ceremony at Beomeosa Temple in Dongnae-gu, Busan. (*Chosun Ilbo*, September 13, 1952)

On September 28, 1952, the second joint memorial service for the Army, Navy and Air Force was held strictly at the Ordnance Academy in Dongnae-gu, Busan:

The second joint memorial service for fallen soldiers who were killed or went missing while fighting in their respective battle zones during the period July 1, 1951 to June 30, 1952, will be held. (*Chosun Ilbo*, September 28, 1952)

The media continued to report the news of such joint memorial services for the Army, Navy, and Air Force, stressing in editorials for the need for the people's commitment to reunification at such memorial services. In other words, it was an argument that all Koreans should pledge unification to the souls of the war dead (*Chosun Ilbo*, September 28, 1952).

On October 16, 1953, a few months after hostilities had ended with a truce, the ROK Army, Navy, and Air Force conducted a joint three-branch memorial ceremony at Seoul Stadium. Defense Minister Sohn Won-il's consolatory remarks to the bereaved families of the fallen soldiers also ended with a call for unification:

What hardships have you endured awaiting the reunification of your country? I believe that your continued efforts toward the unification of your country will before long bring about the glory of such unification. I firmly believe that your family will shine forever as you know that the soldier who fought bravely and loyally on the front is blood-tied to you as we sadly honor the souls of these fallen soldiers and their great achievements. May your family be blessed with glory and happiness, and to continue your efforts to realize your country's successful unification. (*Chosun Ilbo*, October 14, 1952)

On April 23, 1954, the fourth joint memorial service for the ROK Army, Navy and Air Force was held at the Armed Forces Cemetery (Yukgun bonbu 1969, 139). The exchange of bodies between the UN and communist forces was scheduled to take place over two months, from September 1 to October 30, 1954 (*Dong-a Ilbo*, September 1, 1954). There were the remains of 4,011 UN and ROK soldiers to come to the South and 14,069 communist ones to go North. From 9:20 a.m. on the first day, September 1, the UN Command and the communist side began exchanging remains at the designated exchange site near Jangdan Station in Dongjang-ri. At that time, the UN Command retrieved the remains of 193 American soldiers and seven unidentified ones, while 500 North Korean and 100 Chinese soldiers were handed over to the communist forces (*Kyunghyang Sinmun*, September 2, 1954). An editorial dated April 21, 1955, reported on a joint memorial service in April 1955 to bury 79,021 soldiers killed from the foundation of the ROK military until the end of 1954 at the Armed Forces Cemetery (*Kyunghyang Sinmun*, April 21, 1955). In 1965, the Armed Forces Cemetery was reorganized as a national cemetery, while the National Cemetery in Dongjak-dong was established, in Ha Sang-bok's expression, as a "divine space of aesthetics" where the performance of politicians' conversations with the dead created a basis for their patriotism (Ha 2014, 446).

Conclusion

Jeong Yeon Sun (2019, 19) has noted, "All wars are fought twice, once on the battlefield and again in memory." The annual tribute to fallen soldiers takes place precisely in such battle over the memory of war. Furthermore, projects to excavate soldier remains are undertaken by various countries in order to remember their fallen soldiers. In April 2000, a project to excavate soldier remains, which was temporarily carried out under the supervision of the ROK Army Headquarters, was launched on the Dabu-dong battlefield, north of Daegu, as part of a project to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Korean War. Since then, in January 2007, the Ministry of National Defense's Agency for KIA Recovery & Identification was established and

has been operating continuously since then. Some 10,602 South Korean and UN soldiers have been identified in South Korea as of December 31, 2011, along with the remains of 734 North Korean and 774 Chinese soldiers. The remains of Chinese soldiers have been repatriated to China from 2014.⁶ It is true that in academic circles, the study of the war dead has been largely neglected. In the success and failure of war, the dead are just numbers or statistics. In the novel, *War Trash* (2004), Ha Jin harshly criticized how “the bigger the victory, the more the people are turned into numbers. This is a war crime. War reduces real human beings to abstract numbers” (Jin 2008, 291). Frequently, American academia calls the Korean War the “forgotten war.” In fact, this phrase was first used in the article, “Korea: The Forgotten War,” published in the October 5, 1951 issue of *U.S. News and World Report*, when the war was stalemated on the central front with the two sides continuing a tedious trench warfare. As Jeong Yeon-sun, professor at the Korea Military Academy, points out, the Korean War was already forgotten even before it had ended (Jeong 2019, 105). However, it is an “unforgettable war” for South Koreans, who suffered 3 million dead and massive property damage, and turned national division into a condition of permanency (Sang-ho Lee 2009, 30). In his *Nation and Sacrifice* (2005), Tetsuya Takahashi is critical of referring to the memory of the fallen soldiers and their sacrifice as *sacred*, which serves to wipe out people’s consciousness by covering up or disguising the realities of war (Takahashi 2008, 67). Further, by praising the death of soldiers as a *great achievement* for the country, it calls on the obligation of future generations to sacrifice their lives for their country (Takahashi 2008, 255). On the other hand, Kang In-cheol points out in his book *War and Sacrifice* (2019) that one of the most important functions of the National Cemetery is as national shrine (Kang 2019, 21). He views Korea’s national cemetery system as an unusual example of the combination of a high degree of *nationalization* and low degree of *democratization* of

6. Gukbangbu (Ministry of National Defense), “Agency for KIA Recovery & Identification,” accessed January 10, 2020, http://www.withcountry.mil.kr/user/boardList.action?command=view&page=1&boardId=I_340199&boardSeq=I_7568156&siteId=withcountry&id=withcountry_060600000000.

death (Kang 2019, 42). However, to what extent can we term the differences in the size of the tomb based on military rank to be an indicator of a society's democratization?

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