

“In Due Course”: The Strategic Ambiguity of Allied Neocolonialism

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At 4:00 a.m. on June 25, 1950, the first North Korean troops advanced past the 38th parallel, initiating a conflict that would go on to claim the lives of an estimated 3 to 4 million people, displace over 5 million, and permanently alter the future of the Korean Peninsula. However, the first steps toward the Korean War may have been taken not in 1950, but nearly seven years earlier, in a Cairo meeting room.

The Cairo Conference, held from November 22 to 26, 1943, brought together U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, and Chinese Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek to achieve two main goals: coordinating Allied war efforts against Japan and determining the postwar future of East Asia. Although Korea was initially a mere afterthought, included only at Chiang's insistence, it would soon emerge as a point of contention among the Allied leaders, each projecting their own interests onto the region.

The competing visions ultimately came to a head on November 25th, 1943, where a last-minute revision etched three words into history: “in due course.” These three words, although seemingly innocuous, shattered the illusion of Korean independence, creating in its place a political void to be vied over by eager foreign powers. December 1, 1943, was earmarked as the date for the formally signed pact to guarantee Korea's right to self-rule and bring an end to decades of imperial subjugation. Instead, the digression of responsibility from a stable and independent postwar Korea became a tool for the Allies' own geopolitical interests. The phrase offered the British a shield to preserve imperial control while the United States solidified its vision for a postwar order led by the “Four Policemen.” China was able to maintain its seat at the table, and the Soviet Union secured a protective buffer. The Cairo Declaration was not the product of benevolent intent or concern for Korean stability, but a means of transforming a moment of promised freedom into a protracted limbo for foreign actors to exploit, entrenching the status quo of the past thirty-three years.

The United States:

There are two prevailing interpretations for the United States' support of the Cairo Declaration's ambiguous phrasing. The first depicts Roosevelt as a Wilsonian idealist, operating out of concern for the long-term stability of Korea. Roosevelt had long believed that decolonisation was a gradual process, involving a long period of "benevolent guidance" in the form of trusteeship before self-governance was possible.¹ This philosophy found relevance in Korea's case, with a prominent narrative, advanced by the State Department and supported by Roosevelt himself, claiming that the Japanese occupation had "emasculated" Korea, and that a forty-year trusteeship was necessary to prepare the country for self-governance.² Japan's systematic exclusion of Koreans from education as well as important posts in trade and industry raised concerns of whether the Korean people were "sufficiently trained," to take over, reinforcing Roosevelt's advocacy for a trusteeship.³ There is substantial evidence to support this rationale, as Koreans did indeed face discrimination under Japanese cultural assimilation policies. Notably, The Second Chosen Educational Ordinance in 1922 institutionalised differentiated schooling tracks based on Japanese fluency, effectively segregating Korean and Japanese students. Schools for non-fluent students, attended primarily by Koreans, were critically underfunded and lacking in numbers, resulting in less than 20 percent of school-aged Korean children being enrolled by 1929.⁴ Economically, only 2.6 percent of Koreans worked in commerce and trade in comparison to the 16.6 percent of Japanese immigrants, and an estimated 92 percent of large-scale enterprises were Japanese owned.⁵ Representation was also limited in the government, where Koreans made up only 2.9 percent of the workforce, and most senior positions were filled by Japanese appointees.⁷ Roosevelt's doubts over Korea are evident in his handwritten revisions to the original draft of the Cairo agreement, which show that he hastily crossed out the phrase "at the earliest moment", referring to the timing of Korean independence, replacing it with the more cautious wording "at the proper moment."⁸ It is for this reason Krishnan argues that the U.S. aimed to simply "delink" Korea from Japan, with no intention to commit to immediate independence.⁹ Similarly, Cumings attributes the decision simply as the ambiguity of "in due course" phrase enabled a trusteeship as

¹ Kimball, Warren F. *Forged in war: Roosevelt, Churchill, and the Second World War*. New York, New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1997, p. 304.

² Weathersby, Kathryn. *Soviet aims in Korea and the origins of the Korean War, 1945-1950 : new evidence from Russian archives*. Washington, DC : Cold War International History Project, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 1993, p. 10.

³ Byrnes, James F. *Speaking frankly*. New York, New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1947, p.221.

⁴ Burton, Ayako Shinomiya. *Japanese language planning in Korea, 1905-1945*. Ann Arbor, Mich: UMI Dissertation Services, 1994, p.43.

⁵ King, Betty L. "Japanese colonialism and Korean economic development, 1910-1945" *Asian Studies* 13, no. 3 (1975): 4.

⁶ Cyhn, Jin W. *Technology transfer and international production: The development of the electronic industry in Korea*. Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar Pub, 2002, p.78.

⁷ King, Betty L. "Japanese colonialism and Korean economic development, 1910-1945" *Asian Studies* 13, no. 3 (1975): 4.

⁸ U.S. Department of State, "American Draft of the Communiqué With Amendments by President Roosevelt." In *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, 1943, The Conferences at Cairo and Tehran*, ed. William M. Franklin. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1961, p. 459.

⁹ Krishnan, R. R. "Early History of U.S. Imperialism in Korea." *Social Scientist* 12, no. 11 (1984): 8. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3516875>.

necessary, reflecting Wilson's belief that "no colonial people fit to run their own affairs without a period of tutelage."¹⁰

A competing interpretation frames Roosevelt as a realist diplomat willing to deprioritise Korean independence for wartime unity and postwar collaboration. It can be argued that the United States' stance at the Cairo Conference was largely shaped by Roosevelt's vision for a postwar world patrolled by the "Four Policemen" – Britain, the U.S., China, and the USSR – which necessitated that the U.S. act as a mediator between the other participants.¹¹ From this perspective, the United States' support for the inclusion of the "in due course" phrase was not in pursuit of a specific agenda, but rather a means of appeasing future collaborators and their competing interests, a strategy Cumings likens to "skillfully juggling with balls of dynamite".¹² The use of ambiguous phrasing enabled the United States to address two major concerns. First, it enabled the U.S. to avoid conflict with Britain, who wished to avoid any concrete promises for Korean independence in light of growing discontent within its own colonies. Roosevelt was conscious of the precarious situation in India, acknowledging that Britain was "struggling mightily" to contain independence movements in the colony.¹³ He would therefore assuage Britain's colonial concerns by avoiding the possibility of further emboldening independence movements. This was especially significant in establishing a strong partnership given tensions between Roosevelt and Churchill over the broader question of trusteeship and decolonisation. Second, it allowed the U.S. to avoid potential conflict between China and the USSR. The United States, aware that Korea's unique position as a buffer state had historically placed it at the centre of a geopolitical "tug-or-war" between its neighbours, was keen to avoid "stir[ring] up old rivalries" surrounding the region.¹⁴ As such, an ambiguous deadline for Korean independence not only avoided an immediate discussion on sovereignty, but also introduced an opportunity for reconciliation. Roosevelt viewed a joint trusteeship of Korea as a means of ending China and the USSR's "old politics of spheres of influence" over the Korean peninsula.¹⁵

Building on this perspective, revisionists go as far as to argue that Roosevelt used international trusteeship as a facade to quietly concede influence over Korea to the USSR, who had historical claims on the region.¹⁶ Per this interpretation, Roosevelt anticipated the eventual occupation and division of Korea by the U.S. and the USSR, viewing it as an acceptable outcome that would preserve great-power cooperation and secure Soviet participation in the war against Japan. Evidence confirms that Roosevelt highly valued the prospect of Soviet involvement. Notably, the Declaration on Liberated Europe, signed at the Yalta Conference in February 1945, includes a number of territorial concessions which acknowledge the USSR's claims to southern Sakhalin, the Kuril Islands, Port Arthur, and the Manchurian railroads in exchange for entry into the war within 2 to 3 months of

¹⁰ Cumings, Bruce. *The origins of the Korean War*. Vol. 1. 2 vols. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990, p.106.

¹¹ Van Alstyne, Richard W. "The United States and Russia in World War II: Part I." *Current History* 19, no. 111 (1950): 260. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45307844>.

¹² Cumings, Bruce. *The origins of the Korean War*. Vol. 1. 2 vols. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990, p.107.

¹³ Park, Hong-Kyu. "From Pearl Harbor to Cairo: America's Korean Diplomacy, 1941–43." *Diplomatic History* 13, no. 3 (1989): 344. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24911749>.

¹⁴ Park, Hong-Kyu. "From Pearl Harbor to Cairo: America's Korean Diplomacy, 1941–43." *Diplomatic History* 13, no. 3 (1989): 344. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24911749>.

¹⁵ Smith, John. *The Partition of Korea After World War II*. Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 15.

¹⁶ Lee, Jongsoo. *The partition of Korea after World War II: A global history*. New York, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, p.15.

German surrender.¹⁷ Furthermore, the ambiguity of Roosevelt's trusteeship plan would eventually grant the USSR an advantage in establishing a sphere of influence in postwar Korea. The lack of a clear timeline for Korean trusteeship enabled the USSR to train communist leaders in the country as early as July 1945, giving rise to fears of a "Soviet dominated local government".¹⁸ These fears would later be confirmed when the USSR entered Korea immediately after its declaration of war against Japan in August 1945, prompting the U.S. to propose the 38th parallel which ultimately granted a Soviet sphere of influence in the region. Whether Roosevelt intended to concede Korea to Soviet influence remains a point of contention; however, the revisionist perspective certainly provides insight into the USSR's support for the ambiguity of the Cairo Declaration.

¹⁷ U.S. Department of State, "Agreement Regarding Entry of the Soviet Union Into the War Against Japan." In *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, Conferences at Malta and Yalta, 1945*, ed. William M. Franklin. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1955, p. 984.

¹⁸ U.S. Department of State, "The Secretary of War (Stimson) to the President." In *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, The Conference of Berlin (The Potsdam Conference), 1945*. Vol. 2. Edited by William M. Franklin. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1960, p.1224.

The Soviet Union:

The USSR, which had signed the Soviet-Japanese Neutrality Pact in 1941, did not participate in the Cairo Conference over concerns that Chiang Kai-shek's presence would anger the Japanese.¹⁹ However, Stalin would be briefed on the contents of the Declaration just two days later at the Tehran Conference, where he remarked that he "thoroughly approved the communiqué and all its contents."²⁰ It is clear that Soviet policy was shaped by its territorial aims. After all, the USSR exacted promises of territory lost to Japan in 1905 as a prerequisite for its participation in the Pacific War. However, historians claim that Stalin's ambitions in Korea were not of complete domination, but instead an extension of pre-1905 Tsarist policy which aimed to prevent any single power from controlling the peninsula.²¹ This is not to say the USSR had no strategic interests in Korea. Crucially, the region had historically acted as a buffer state, a role Stalin was eager to preserve. By 1943, the USSR had faced both the German and Japanese threat, suffering devastating losses due to Operation Barbarossa in 1941, and clashing with the Japanese at Khalkhin Gol in 1939. This led to a deep sense of insecurity and a desire to ensure neither Germany nor Japan could pose a threat to national security.²² Stalin would be "greatly flexible and opportunistic" in his methods to achieve this goal, as evident in the postwar Soviet occupation of Germany, where, despite lacking a clear settlement plan, the USSR would take the country for the purpose of preventing future aggression.^{23 24} It is likely that this opportunistic approach was reflected in Stalin's approval of the Cairo Declaration despite uncertainty he would benefit from it. Although the USSR was not yet at war with Japan, and would not be for another two years, the possibility of joint trusteeship, as enabled by the "in due course" phrase, presented itself as an appealing opportunity for establishing a Soviet sphere of influence in the region, ensuring Korea would not become a springboard for an attack on the USSR.²⁵

¹⁹ Van de Ven, Hans. *War and Nationalism in China: 1925-1945*. London: Routledge, 2012, p. 41.

²⁰ Bohlen, Charles E. "Bohlen Minutes, November 30, 1943, 1:30 p.m." In *The Conferences at Cairo and Tehran, 1943*, Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, 1943, 900. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961.

²¹ Weathersby, Kathryn. *Soviet aims in Korea and the origins of the Korean War, 1945-1950 : new evidence from Russian archives*. Washington, DC : Cold War International History Project, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 1993, p. 9.

²² Mastny, Vojtech. *The Cold War and Soviet insecurity: The Stalin Years*. New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.

²³ Smith, John. *The Partition of Korea After World War II*. Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 29.

²⁴ Naimark, Norman M. *The Russians in Germany: A history of the Soviet zone of occupation, 1945-1949*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1995.

²⁵ Djilas, Milovan. *Conversations with Stalin*. Translated by Michael B. Petrovich. New York, New York: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1962, p.114.

China:

If any advocacy for Korean independence was to be found at the Cairo Conference, it was with Chinese Premier Chiang Kai-shek. Throughout the Conference, Chiang made his support for Korean independence clear, and it was due to his insistence that Korea was mentioned in the final draft of the Cairo Declaration. Early into the negotiations, Alexander Cadogan, the British Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, would propose the complete removal of the 'Korea clause' following an unsuccessful attempt to weaken the wording used to discuss Korean independence.²⁶ The request would be subsequently denied by both the United States and China, with Chinese sources indicating that Chiang had convinced Roosevelt to side against Britain.²⁷ However, there was more to China's interest in promoting Korean independence than a mere continuation of the "beautiful tradition of solidarity (한중호조)" between the two countries.²⁸ In preparation for his attendance at the Cairo Conference, Chiang had commissioned position reports that, despite focusing primarily on former Chinese territories taken by Japan, would discuss other areas that China had competed against Japan for control over, one of which was Korea.²⁹ The need to support Korean independence would emerge as a focal point in both of the two reports Chiang received, compiled by the Junshi weiyuanhui canshishi [Office of the Secretary of the Military Affairs Committee] and the Guofang zuigao weiyuanhui mishuting [National Defense High Committee Private Secretary Agency], with the latter report placing particular emphasis on the issue.³⁰ For China, expressing support for Korean independence would significantly contribute to the establishment of a "pro-Chinese (親中政府)" Korean government, helping them achieve their aim of preventing the USSR from extending its influence into East Asia.³¹ Accordingly, the Chinese government, as part of its 'Wartime Political Cooperation Plan (戰時政治合作方案)', set a goal for the attendees at Cairo to "at once recognise Korean independence by joint or parallel actions, or issue a declaration

²⁶ Qin, Xiaoyi. 附一：政治問題會商經過 [Appendix I: Proceedings of Political Discussions]. Taipei, 1981, p.530.

²⁷ Dobbs, Charles M. *The Unwanted Symbol: American foreign policy, the Cold War, and Korea, 1945-1950*. Kent, Ohio: The Kent State University Press, 1981, p.13.

²⁸ Bae, Kyoung-han. "The Cairo Conference and the Sino-Korean Relationship -- the Response of Chongqing Korean Provisional Government and Chinese Nationalist Government to the Issues of International Trusteeship -." *Journal of Studies on Korean National Movement* 85 (December 30, 2015): 373. <https://doi.org/10.19162/knm.85.2015.12.09>.

²⁹ Caprio, Mark E. "(Mis)-Interpretations of the 1943 Cairo Conference: The Cairo Communiqué and Its Legacy among Koreans during and after World War II." *International Journal of Korean History* 27, no. 1 (February 28, 2022): 137–76. <https://doi.org/10.22372/ijkh.2022.27.1.137>.

³⁰ Bae, Kyoung-Han. "Chiang Kai-Shek and the Agenda of Korean Independence in the Cairo Conference of 1943." *The Korean Historical Review* 224 (December 31, 2014): 3. <https://doi.org/10.16912/khr.2014.12.224.305>.

³¹ Bae, Kyoung-han. "The Cairo Conference and the Sino-Korean Relationship -- the Response of Chongqing Korean Provisional Government and Chinese Nationalist Government to the Issues of International Trusteeship -." *Journal of Studies on Korean National Movement* 85 (December 30, 2015): 367. <https://doi.org/10.19162/knm.85.2015.12.09>.

guaranteeing Korean independence after the war.”^{32 33} Chiang Kai-shek would also include the issue of Korean independence as one of seven agenda points he planned to raise at the Conference.³⁴

The vast majority of discussion surrounding Korean independence at Cairo took place during a single dinner meeting between Chiang and Roosevelt, held on the 23rd of November, 8 p.m. While no official U.S. record of the dinner exists, a Chinese Summary Record indicates that Chiang expressed his support for Korean independence to the agreement of Roosevelt.³⁵ Although China would take a reduced role in drafting the Declaration following this meeting, Chiang Kai-shek and Wang Jingwei would accept the inclusion of the “in due course” phrase in their final review of the Declaration, showing that they were not in opposition to a trusteeship over Korea.³⁶ The main factor that contributed to China’s decision to accept the document’s ambiguous phrasing was an acknowledgment of its limited bargaining power, and a desire to maintain strong diplomatic relations. China was not only reliant on economic and military support from the United States to sustain its war effort, having received over \$200 million in lend-lease supplies by 1943, but also anticipated the need for further U.S. support in its postwar reconstruction.^{37 38} In addition, Chiang recognised that U.S. support was crucial in achieving China’s own aims for the return of territories such as Manchuria and Taiwan from Japan. Having already achieved a level of American support when envoy Averell Harriman affirmed that Japan’s stolen territories would “of course be returned to the Republic of China” despite British protests, Chiang was eager to maintain strong relations with the U.S.³⁹ It is also worth mentioning that the Cairo Conference was the first time during the Second World War that a Chinese leader was invited to a high-level Allied summit, marking the “apex of Sino-American good will”.⁴⁰ The significance of the moment was undoubtedly a factor that contributed to China’s reserved stance at the Conference. Chiang’s aversion to conflict is reflected in his preparations, which, anticipating a lack of support for Korean independence from the U.K. and USSR, outlined trusteeship as a less desirable,

³² Liu, Xiaoyuan. “Sino-American Diplomacy over Korea during World War II.” *Journal of American-East Asian Relations* 1, no. 2 (1992): 252. <https://doi.org/10.1163/187656192x00159>.

³³ Bae, Kyoung-han. “The Cairo Conference and the Sino-Korean Relationship -- the Response of Chongqing Korean Provisional Government and Chinese Nationalist Government to the Issues of International Trusteeship -.” *Journal of Studies on Korean National Movement* 85 (December 30, 2015): 359. <https://doi.org/10.19162/knm.85.2015.12.09>.

³⁴ Chiang, Kai-shek. 蔣中正總統檔案: 事略稿本 55 [President Chiang Kai-shek’s Archives: Draft Historical Records 55]. Taipei, n.d, p.432-433.

³⁵ U.S. Department of State, “Chinese Summary Record.” In *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, 1943, The Conferences at Cairo and Tehran*, ed. William M. Franklin. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1961, p. 380.

³⁶ Bae, Kyoung-han. “The Cairo Conference and the Sino-Korean Relationship -- the Response of Chongqing Korean Provisional Government and Chinese Nationalist Government to the Issues of International Trusteeship -.” *Journal of Studies on Korean National Movement* 85 (December 30, 2015): 366. <https://doi.org/10.19162/knm.85.2015.12.09>.

³⁷ Roosevelt, Franklin D., and Foreign Economic Administration. *Fourteenth Report to Congress on Lend-Lease Operations: For the Period Ended December 31, 1943*. House Document. U.S. Congress, House. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1944, p. 41.

³⁸ U.S. Department of State, “Chinese Summary Record.” In *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, 1943, The Conferences at Cairo and Tehran*, ed. William M. Franklin. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1961, p. 380.

³⁹ 中華民國重要史料初編:戰時外交 [Compilation of Important Historical Materials of the Republic of China: Wartime Diplomacy]. Vol. 3. Taipei: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of China, 1967, p. 531.

⁴⁰ 祝少康. “The Cairo Conference: A Forgotten Summit.” *復興崗學報* [Fuhsing Kang Academic Journal], no. 81 (2004): 303.

yet still acceptable contingency.⁴¹ It is clear that China entered the Cairo Conference well aware of Roosevelt's position favouring international trusteeship, and thus, their acceptance of the "in due course" phrase can be attributed to an unwillingness to oppose an outcome they believed to be satisfactory.

⁴¹ 秦孝儀, ed., 「戰時政治合作方案」 ["Plan for Wartime Political Cooperation"], in 中華民國重要史料初編 : 戰時外交 [Compilation of Important Historical Materials of the Republic of China: Wartime Diplomacy], vol. 3. Taipei: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of China, 1967, pp. 504–505.

Great Britain:

Churchill, who “exploded in protest” at the mere mention of international trusteeship over colonial territories, would emerge as the most vocal opponent to explicit Korean independence.⁴² Churchill was adamant that he would not jeopardise the vast territorial possessions of the British Empire, as exemplified by a 1942 address at the Lord Mayor's luncheon, in which he proclaimed that he did not “become the King's First Minister in order to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire.”⁴³ British concerns over Korea revolved around the territory's potential role as a “model” for independence to the remaining Asian colonies, with India in particular being a cause of concern.⁴⁴ India was a major contributor to the British war effort, with 2.5 million Indians serving in the British Indian Army over the course of the Second World War.⁴⁵ Additionally, India devoted almost 100 percent of its production of shoes and textiles, and 75 percent of its steel without which, Herman argues, the defeat of the Japanese in Burma, Malaya, and China would have been impossible.⁴⁶ The issue of Indian independence had previously been a point of contention between the attendees of the Conference, with the United States perceiving the “closed economic systems” and “political repression” of colonialism as paths to future conflict.⁴⁷ By 1941, the U.S., having promised independence to the Philippines, pressured Britain to promise India independence and create a “timetable” for decolonisation.⁴⁸ Despite Churchill's violent rejection of the suggestion, Roosevelt persisted, believing that decolonisation was an inevitable process that he could expedite. In a further effort to persuade Churchill, Roosevelt “unleashed” Chiang Kai-shek on an Indian visit, during which he suggested that the promise of independence would encourage the Indians to fight “effectively against Japan”.⁴⁹ However, Roosevelt's efforts were to little avail as, though Churchill would send an envoy to negotiate an offer for postwar independence, talks would fail as a result of unrealistic solutions that divided the Hindu and Muslim populations. Britain similarly faced internal pressure from Indian independence groups such as the Quit India movement led by Mahatma Gandhi, which Viceroy Linlithgow labelled “by far the most serious rebellion since 1857”. It is for these reasons, historians argue, Britain was especially wary of promising a deadline for Korean independence. As Chu explains, the British would have appeared “hypocritical” if they promised Korean independence while “keeping India in fetters”.⁵⁰ Britain's caution was evident in the edits they proposed to the American draft of the Communiqué. Notably, Britain proposed that the phrase “free and independent country” be replaced with “freed from Japanese domination”, in what Jung describes as an effort to

⁴² Kimball, Warren F. *The most UNSORDID act lend-lease, 1939-1941*. Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2019, p.154.

⁴³ “From the Archive: Mr Churchill on Our One Aim.” *The Guardian*, November 11, 2009. [https://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2009/nov/11/churchill-blood-sweat-tears#:~:text=We%20have%20not%20entered%20this,\(Cheers.\)](https://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2009/nov/11/churchill-blood-sweat-tears#:~:text=We%20have%20not%20entered%20this,(Cheers.))

⁴⁴ Dobbs, Charles M. *The Unwanted Symbol: American foreign policy, the Cold War, and Korea, 1945-1950*. Kent, Ohio: The Kent State University Press, 1981, p.11.

⁴⁵ Sumner, Ian, and Mike Chappell. *The Indian Army, 1914-1947*. Oxford: Osprey Pub, 2001, p.25.

⁴⁶ Herman, Arthur. *Gandhi & Churchill: The epic rivalry that destroyed an empire and forged our age*. New York, New York: Bantam Books, 2009, p.515.

⁴⁷ Kimball, Warren F. *Forged in war: Roosevelt, Churchill, and the Second World War*. New York, New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1997, p.138.

⁴⁸ Kimball, Warren F. *Forged in war: Roosevelt, Churchill, and the Second World War*. New York, New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1997, p. 138.

⁴⁹ Kimball, Warren F. *Forged in war: Roosevelt, Churchill, and the Second World War*. New York, New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1997, p.300.

⁵⁰ 祝少康. “The Cairo Conference: A Forgotten Summit.” *復興崗學報* [Fuhsing Kang Academic Journal], no. 81 (2004): 334.

“effectively nullify” their commitment to Korean independence.⁵¹ When their attempt to modify the wording was rejected, Britain would go further, proposing the complete removal of the Korea clause.⁵² A later publication by Chang Ch'i-yun claimed that British Foreign Undersecretary Alexander Cadogan had opposed the inclusion of the Korean independence issue as a whole, raising numerous objections throughout the conference.⁵³ In spite of their failure to exclude the Korea clause, Britain continued to weaken the contents of the clause through a string of edits. At the hand of Churchill, the “treacherous enslavement” of the Korean people would become the “enslavement” of the Korean people; Korea would not be a “free and independent country” but merely “free and independent”; and in a crushing final blow, Korea would no longer be granted independence “after the downfall of Japan” but instead “in due course”.

⁵¹ Jung, Byung Joon. “United Kingdom’s Position at the Cairo Conference and Her Influence on Drafting Korea Provision of the Cairo Declaration.” *Critical Review of History* 145 (November 30, 2023): 393. <https://doi.org/10.38080/crh.2023.11.145.368>.

⁵² Qin, Xiaoyi. 附一：政治問題會商經過 [Appendix I: Proceedings of Political Discussions]. Taipei, 1981, p. 530.

⁵³ Zhang, Qiyun. 開羅會議紀實 [The Cairo Conference: A Factual Account]. Taipei: Zhonghua Cultural Publishing Committee, 1953, p. 6.

Korea:

Following its annexation in 1910, Korea would remain under Japanese colonial rule for 35 years until Japan's surrender to the Allied Powers in August 1945. During this period, independence activists established the Korean Provincial Government (KPG), a government-in-exile, in Chongqing, China. Of course, there was no Korean representation at the Cairo Conference itself. Nonetheless, the KPG would serve as the primary advocate of Korean voices on the matter. In fact, the Provincial Government became aware of discussions surrounding Korean trusteeship through media reports as early as 1942, with an estimated 199 public and private organisations in the U.S. discussing the issue by March of that year.⁵⁴ The KPG would organise resistance efforts promptly, with the first official action taking the form of a press statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Cho So-ang to various Chongqing-based newspapers. In his statement, Cho renounced the idea of a trusteeship, highlighting Korea's readiness for independence, and warning that the Korean people would continue to resist foreign domination as they had against Japan.⁵⁵ Reports of a March 1943 meeting between Roosevelt and British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden, during which the parties agreed to an international trusteeship of Korea, catalysed the Provincial Government into initiating a broader, more active campaign.⁵⁶ This was done in line with a four-point action plan that stated that:

1. An inquiry would be made to China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs to confirm the accuracy of the reports and officially express opposition
2. Opposition would be communicated to the heads of the U.S., Britain, and the Soviet Union, and China would be asked to publicly express opposition
3. Rebuttals and opposition statements would be published through domestic and foreign platforms
4. Leaders of all political, governmental, and military organisations would assemble to report and strategise on the issue.⁵⁷

The KPG saw notable domestic success, with prominent Chinese figures such as members of the National Political Council expressing their support for the campaign.⁵⁸ It also found success with the Korean diaspora, holding the Conference of Free Koreans in China, attended by over 300 representatives from various independence groups.⁵⁹

When the Provincial Government learned of the upcoming Cairo Conference, it requested and held a meeting with Chiang Kai Shek on July 26, 1943, attended by five leading members of the KPG

⁵⁴ 대한민국임시정부공보 [Korean Provisional Government Bulletin], no. 78 (August 4, 1943), reprinted in 대한민국임시정부자료집 1 [Collected Materials on the Korean Provisional Government, vol. 1]. Seoul: National Institute of Korean History, 2005, p. 290.

⁵⁵ 한시준 [Han See Jun], “카이로선언과 대한민국 임시정부” [“The Cairo Declaration and the Korean Provisional Government”], 한국근현대사연구 [Korean Contemporary and Modern History Studies], no. 71 (2014): 132.

⁵⁶ 구대열 [Koo Dae-Yeol], 한국 국제관계사 연구 2 [Studies in the History of Korea's International Relations, vol. 2], 역사비평사, 1995, p. 257.

⁵⁷ 대한민국임시정부공보 [Korean Provisional Government Bulletin], no. 78 (August 4, 1943), reprinted in 대한민국임시정부자료집 1 [Collected Materials on the Korean Provisional Government, vol. 1]. Seoul: National Institute of Korean History, 2005, p. 291.

⁵⁸ 독립신문 [The Independent], June 1, 1943, 「中韓文化協會 戰後 韓國獨立問題 座談會 開催」 [“The Sino-Korean Cultural Association Holds a Discussion on the Postwar Korean Independence Issue”].

⁵⁹ 독립신문 [The Independent], June 1, 1943, 「在中國自由韓人大會」 [“Conference of Free Koreans in China”].

including President Kim Gu and Foreign Minister Cho So-ang. During the meeting, Kim and Cho would request that China oppose U.S. and British calls for a trusteeship, instead supporting Korean independence. Chiang's response was generally positive, with the premier reaffirming his commitment to Korean independence. However, he would refrain from making commitments regarding the trusteeship issue, going only as far as to acknowledge that it would be a topic of contention between the participants of the Conference.^{60 61} Chiang's noncommittal attitude is perhaps best represented by his diary entry for the day, in which he recounted: "I encouraged them to remain united and expressed our government's commitment to supporting Korean independence."⁶²

The Cairo Declaration, published on December 1, 1943 was initially met with "overwhelming joy" by the Korean Provincial Government, with Kim Gu issuing a formal statement thanking the three Allied leaders for their support.^{63 64} However, the celebrations were short-lived as growing concerns emerged over the Declaration's ambiguous phrasing, particularly "in due course." Ironically enough, it was Kim Gu himself who, less than a week later, issued another statement, this time openly criticising the political implications of the phrase to an audience of international journalists. Reusing much of the case he had championed prior to the Cairo Conference, Kim reiterated his staunch opposition to any form of trusteeship, calling for Korea to be granted immediate independence.⁶⁵ Alarmed Chongqing-based independence activists who had participated in earlier anti-trusteeship campaigns joined Kim, including members of the Korean Independence Party and the Korean National Revolutionary Party, who, in a notable incident visited the U.S. Ambassador to China Clarence E. Gauss to directly question him about the meaning of the phrase.⁶⁶ These concerns would reach Korean communities abroad, and the Declaration became a new "driving force" in the Korean independence movement, rallying previously fragmented factions around the Korean Provincial Government and the Hawaii-based United Korean Committee.⁶⁷ Despite this renewed unity, efforts to secure Korean independence proved futile as the United States simply refused to recognise the Korean Provincial Government – underscoring the limited agency Korean nationalists held in determining their country's postwar fate.

⁶⁰ 대한민국임시정부자료집 22 (대중국 외교활동) [Collected Materials on the Korean Provisional Government, vol. 22, Diplomatic Activities Toward China], National Institute of Korean History, 2005, pp. 238–239.

⁶¹ 대한매일신보사, 白凡金九全集 5 [The Collected Works of Kim Gu, vol. 5], 1999, pp. 251–252.

⁶² 이상철 [Lee Sang-cheol], 「장개석일기에 나타난 한국독립운동 관계 사료」 [“Historical Sources on the Korean Independence Movement Found in Chiang Kai-shek's Diary”] 월간조선 [Monthly Chosun], November 2010, p. 537.

⁶³ 한시준 [Han See Jun], “카이로선언과 대한민국 임시정부” [“The Cairo Declaration and the Korean Provisional Government”], 한국근현대사연구 [Korean Contemporary and Modern History Studies], no. 71 (2014): 148.

⁶⁴ 대한민국임시정부공보 호외 [Korean Provisional Government Bulletin, Extra Edition], December 2, 1943, reprinted in 대한민국임시정부자료집 1 [Collected Materials on the Korean Provisional Government, vol. 1], National Institute of Korean History, 2005, p. 299.

⁶⁵ 한국독립과 세계평화의 불가분성에 관한 邵力子の 강연 [“Shao Lizi's Lecture on the Inseparability of Korean Independence and World Peace”], December 13, 1943, p. 187.

⁶⁶ 고정휴 [Go Jeong-hyu], 「태평양전쟁기 미국의 대한민국임시정부에 대한 인식과 불승인정책」 [“U.S. Perceptions of the Korean Provisional Government and the Policy of Nonrecognition During the Pacific War”], 대사연구 25 (2003), p. 505.

⁶⁷ 윤종문 [Yoon Jong-moon], 「1943년 카이로선언의 방점 찾기와 한국 독립운동가들의 대응」 [“Locating the Emphasis of the 1943 Cairo Declaration and the Response of Korean Independence Activists”], 한국민족운동사연구 113 (2022): 180, <http://dx.doi.org/10.19162/KNM.113.2022.12.03>.

The Cairo Declaration was a veiled calculated decision that altered the course of the Korean peninsula. The clear promise of independence was reduced to an ambiguous policy that allowed global powers to manipulate Korea's sovereignty to establish strategic interests. Roosevelt's vision of trusteeship and geopolitical aspirations clashed with the British desperation to maintain its colonial capacity. Churchill and company weakened the language of independence by utilising the Soviet Union's hesitancy to join as a measure to implement future potential influence. Even the sole semi-advocate conceded to the diluted correspondence in order to gain a seat at the table. The reverberations of the consequences within these diplomatic discussions delayed the establishment of Korean sovereignty and pushed the foreign powers into a vacuum to influence competing ideologies. This led to occupation, division, and ultimately, a civil war started by the Allies. The Korean people transferred from a victim of Japanese rule to an entrapment in an entirely new cycle of external control. With the battleground of Cold War rivalries set, it created a new discourse in Northeast Asia. The minor "in due course" edit in the Cairo Communiqué, proved to be one of the most consequential diplomatic decisions in the 20th century that shaped the geopolitical landscape far beyond the end of the Second World War.

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