Adding Detail to the Anthropocene: David Halberstam, Korea and Narratives of War and Environment

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> "Our choice is over what kind of human-influenced earth we will have. We may lament this truth, but we no longer have the option to choose not to be geological change agents…How to do it right – that should be our concern."[1]

Had history taken another course the Korean peninsula could easily have had political and social contours that followed and expanded on the path set by its first state formations, lines that followed peninsula's special geography.[2] In this alternate world Korea – whatever political its form – would be defined the extent of its mountain ranges and food producing plains and river valleys.[3] Perhaps, like Switzerland it would be sub-divided into the equivalent of cantons. Further speculation may be amusing, but essentially profitless, as we will never know another Korean peninsula than the one our modern history as produced. The current demarcation line at the thirty eighth parallel of latitude – a line that follows no natural or log-standing historical division in the local landmass – is striking confirmation of humanity's capacity to shape the world according to the dictates of politics. Furthermore, the development (and non-development) that has taken place since the cease fires of 1953 is an equally striking demonstration of how intertwined considerations of war and environment are. In the world we have made, they are bound up together. We can only profit for seeking better ways to comprehend this intertwining.

Simultaneously, in their own ways, wider shifts in intellectual vocabulary and public consciousness reinforce the notion that the relationship be-

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1 Grinspoon, David (2016): Earth in Human Hands. New York. 243.

2 For Korea's early political history, see Hoare, James/Pares, Susan (1988): Korea: An Introduction. London.

3 On the distinctiveness of Korea's geography, see Kwon, Yongwoo/Lee, Jaeduk (eds.) (2010): The Geography of Korea: National Geographic Information Institute, Ministry of Land, Transport and Maritime Affairs. Seoul. Connor, Mary E. (2002): The Koreas: A Global Studies Handbook. Santa Barbara.

tween war and the environment is not simply one more item to think about, but is a subject that fuses some of our most pressing contemporary concerns – indeed, humanity's fate itself.[4] For instance, every year *Edge.Org*., a highly-regarded website devoted to the dissemination of the latest findings and trends in science asks a question of prominent thinkers. The goal is not simply to publicize research, but to sensibilities in the modern-day Republic of Letters. For 2017 the annual question was "What scientific term or concept ought to be more widely known?" The response provided by NYU Environmental Studies professor Jennifer Jacquet, was not only interesting and informative in its own right, but also serves as a helpful starting point for taking up an aspect of the subject of war and the environment that has no easy answer. This is the question of how an understanding of modern war's environmental impact can be disseminated to a popular audience, one which learns about wars primarily through first-hand accounts and journalistic narratives.

Jacquet chose a term that is certainly becoming more widely used among the educated public, namely the "Anthropocene," a human dominated (but not human controlled) period that replaced the Holocene, in which humans, at the start of the warming of the Holocene, when the Neolithic Revolution initiated the slow changes in the environment that eventually accelerated into the Anthropocene. Jacquet wrote:

> "The Holocene is outdated because it cannot explain the recent changes to the planet: the now 400 parts per million of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere from burning fossil fuels, the radioactive elements present in the Earth's strata from detonating nuclear weapons, or that one in five species in large ecosystems is considered invasive."[5]

The public must understand that these are not simply facts in a field of facts. They are signs that now the earth cannot be set back to a natural environment, even a dramatically changing environment. It should be noted that one of the three signs of the Anthropocene mentioned relates directly to war, and it fits that the scientists working to formalize the term's usage, the "Anthropocene Working Group" support a "mid-20th century start date, which corresponds to the advent of nuclear technology and a global

4 Two fairly recent works taking on the broad issue of irreversible threshold crossing are Rockström, Johan/Klum, Mattias (2015): Big World, Small Planet: Abundance within Planetary Boundaries. Stockholm. Dryzek, John/Norgaard, Richard/Schlosberg, David (2013): Climate Challenged Society. Oxford.

5 https://www.edge.org/response-detail/27096.

reach of industrialization." But herein lies the challenge for those who not only want to formalize a new term, but for all of us who want the implications of what it means to live in the Anthropocene to percolate into a broader public consciousness. How can we bring the public to tell themselves a narrative of the start of the Anthropocene?

In broaching this matter, we can focus on the topic of environment and war as a means to consider what changed at this "mid-20th century start date," and what is most pressing for the public to understand about this transition stage. But of course this "stage," if we must call it that, is a theater of politics, conflict and war. Put more plainly, the global topic of the Anthropocene's start flows into relatively smaller subject's like the Korean War's impact. The intersecting of war and environment causes them to flow together.

From this starting point I wish to lay out the subject and thesis of the essay that follows. It follows from all the has been said that history matters, not only the "big" history that large, nature-dominated eras, with our own, human dominated, time, but also links forged in people's minds; the understanding they have of how large and small fit together. However, there is no easy way to write about this matter because no one, no matter how perspicacious, can step outside themselves to comment with authority and full accuracy on how they represent a changing mentality. The best we can do is observe closely how others understand history and how they relate this understanding to others. This gives us some notion of how they portray the interplay between war and environment and how they find meaning in what they see. Hence, in my judgment, it is especially helpful to turn to the works of popular historians for they are in the business of conveying broad meaning to a wide audience.

This is why I want to turn to journalist and historian David Halberstam, especially his *The Coldest Winter: America and the Korean War*.[6] Halberstam (1934–2007), who first came to wide public notice as a New York Times reporter during the early stages of the Vietnam War, or, more accurately, during the early stages of the American phase of the twentieth-century's wars in Vietnam, made a life-long effort to provide a coherent narrative to the USA's military engagement with East Asia in the years follow-

6 Halberstam, David (2007): The Coldest Winter: America and the Korean War. New York.

ing the Second World War.[7] As such, this 700 page 2007 work on Korea is particularly important because it represents the culmination of Halberstam's prodigious output, while accounting for the war that in significant ways, served as a prototype for American efforts to use a combination of force and diplomacy to both reserve and redefine a world order. Hence, he must take some stand on the question of what happened to the Korean peninsula and people living there. This, in its own way, focuses our attention on the question of war and environment and fills in another empty space in the larger story of how the Anthropocene got going. Hence, apart from the intrinsic interest of this work – Halberstam is a good writer who can tell his story well – *The Coldest Winter* provides a glimpse of how a broader public awareness is formed.

To explain this last sentence: I am not claiming that is a hidden ecological narrative within *The Coldest Winter*. As we shall see, Halberstam's primary concern is with the interconnected politics and morality of US foreign policy. Yet, he does not have the luxury of writing in rarefied academic prose. I explaining the Korean War and discussing its meaning he must discuss bombing campaigns and military tactics in concrete detail. He cannot speak in abstractions. Likewise, in presenting this account to a popular audience, he remains true to his journalistic roots as aims to convey the story as others saw it. He presents and describes what they experienced. In doing so, he must say something about how they saw their environment being changed by war. In sum, Halberstam enables us to think more carefully about why Korea has taken its current form, a topic of no small importance in thinking about current configurations of human life.

A few more words about Halberstam's career fill out this claim. He received a Pulitzer Prize for his war reporting in 1964.[8] For the rest of his career his prolific writing kept him in the public eye, gaining him a status one of the US's most prominent journalists. Yet, perhaps because journalism is somehow derogated in academic eyes, Halberstam is little-studied. Apart from a few scholarly essays concerned US media and the Vietnam War,[9] to the best of my knowledge there is no academic work that analyses

7 See such works as Halberstam, David (1973): The Best and the Brightest. Greenwich. Halberstam, David (1986): The Reckoning. New York.

8 For US journalistic descriptions of Vietnam during the time of conflict, see Halberstam, David (1998): Reporting Vietnam. New York.

9 See Seyb, Ronald (2012): When Objectivity Works: David Halberstam's Vietnam Reporting. In: Media History Monographs. 1–24.

his achievement, or treats him as a thinker in his own right. This is a shame because Halberstam's writing is anything but a mere passing on of information. He has a story to tell, as a brief encyclopaedia entry on him intentionally or not reveals:

> While his reporting on Vietnam initially supported US involvement there, *The Making of a Quagmire* (1965) reflected a growing disillusionment with the war, and its title became a byword for intractable military operations.[10]

This point could be put even more bluntly: Halberstam devoted his talents not simply to asserting, but to demonstrating why the US Vietnam intervention should be considered a quagmire. The ample details he provided made that notion viable in his readers' minds. Thus, if we now turn to his work on the Korean War we are prepared for his approach to describing warfare. Halberstam will provide telling details, both about the principal decision makers and about the actual experience of combat and diplomacy. By relating these details – and not by positioning himself with an ideological school or academic party – Halberstam's own point of view emerges. In the case of Korea, it is not exactly a quagmire, but something more relevant to our own wider theme. It is a war that was not under the control of those who claimed they were controlling it. As a consequence, the way it spread was particularly destructive and required an ongoing extension to new arenas and a more and more drastic reshaping of life on the peninsula as a whole. In describing one battle toward the start of the US intervention, Halberstam recounts the predicament of an American regiment that was ordered to cross a river (invariably dangerous in battle conditions of the time) in order to test North Korean strength, Halberstam recounts the experiences of a lieutenant named Lee Beahler who was "wary" of this plan "from the start."[11] In Halberstam's summary "The entire business had only confirmed something he had suspected almost since he arrived in country: that he was working with superiors who in all too many instances did not know as much as they were supposed to about combat."[12] As it turned out, several US soldiers were killed in their exposed position, leading to a series of recriminations among commanders "as the

10 Britannica Academic online, "David Halberstam."
11 Halberstam (2007), 272.
12 Halberstam (2007), 272.

top echelon of a large American unit experienced something akin to a nervous breakdown."[13]

Singling out this one point needs more explanation to clarify what is at stake in using Halberstam's work to think further about the relationship between war and environment. Castigating incompetence at the top is a commonplace in much war literature, especially in reportage on wars that are not remembered with a high degree of patriotic reverence. Yet, a look at the context in which Halberstam placed this story shows that he is not simply reproducing a familiar trope. He was describing a moment in the war in early September 1950, after US troops had been driven back by an energetic offensive to the south-east corner of the peninsula, and before MacArthur led an invasion at Inchon outflanked the North Koreans and drove them again above the thirty eighth parallel. During this period there some indecisive, but violent fighting occurred around an area known as the Naktong Bulge.[14] These battles could not be resolved without a further intensification of combat, and this, in its turn, required a "colder" logic, one that would require ever greater planning and the unleashing of more extensive violence. Yet, this accelerating rationalism, as it were, remain fully compatible with a world of illusion, blunders and what was called in the Vietnam context the "arrogance of power."

The contribution of a work like Halberstam's *The Coldest Winter* is that it provides the detail to make this realization vivid to a larger audience. The consequences of the Korean War are not the business of specialists alone. As historian Joshua B. Freeman reminds us, at the time of the armistice of July 27, 1953 "fifty-four thousand US troops had died in the fighting, and nearly twice that number had been wounded. For Koreans, the war took a staggering toll: nearly three million people – about 10 percent of the population – were killed, wounded or missing. Another five million became refugees."[15] While the exact statistics will require further examination, the extent that war fully changed this environment is enormous. Freeman's next comment is also germane:

> "The Korean War has not loomed large in American memory or culture, in spite of its heavy cost. Yet the war had a profound impact on the way the United States developed. It locked the country into an unprecedented mili-

13 Halberstam (2007), 273.

14 For a further account, see Catchpole, Brian (2000): The Korean War. London.

15 Freeman, Joshua B. (2012): American Empire: 1945–2000. The Rise of a Global Power, the Democratic Revolution at Home. New York. 79.

> tarism, which continued after the war and included the long-term deployment of troops in Europe and Asia."[16]

Yet, a consensus among historians is that the war began with, and was escalated by, ongoing political miscalculations. Indeed, a good case could be made that the miscalculations did not cease throughout a war which essentially ended at the same point it began. The Chinese offensive across the Yalu in October 1950 took the US command by surprise, and left them responding to events. Likewise, the dreams of Kim Il Sung and Mao Zedong that their military offensives would spark spreading popular uprisings in favour of the communists also revealed themselves to be products of wishful thinking. Thus, in the end, the Korean conflict culminated in a war of attrition that was settled not in a peace treaty, but in a patched-up return to the *status quo ante*, and a renewal of preparations for future conflicts.

To return to the main question, does this information belong in a discussion of the Anthropocene? Let us recall that, if we wish to think of ourselves as living in a new, "human dominated," natural era the start date typically given is the mid twentieth-century, corresponding with the historical era of the Korean War. Thus, the question could be rephrased as whether or not the details of the Korean War, including the record of miscalculations and blunders that comprise its record rise to the point that it should be incorporated into the larger, macro history of a transition to a new epoch in the organization of life on our planet. From this perspective, it is clear that we need to ascertain which details of the Korean War should be singled out for emphasis. Hence, we must return to writers like Halberstam and the choices they made in showing why the Korean War deserves a prominent place in our historical memory.

Lest it be objected that the link between this war and the dawn of the Anthropocene is too far-flung or abstract, consider that nature was irreversibly altered by the conflict on the Korean Peninsula. Two military decisions should be kept in mind. First, the North Korean invasion that began the war was done with the aid of Soviet tanks, particularly the T-34, which Halberstam noted "had an unusually wide tread that kept it from getting stalled in mud and ice, and possessed an unusually large fuel tank od one hundred gallons that allowed it to go up to 150 miles without refuelling."[17] A war deploying increasing numbers of these tanks cannot leave

16 Freeman (2012), 80.
17 Halberstam (2007), 85.

land-use patterns the same. Second, and more devastatingly, was also an air war, one that cannot be described as limited, even though US worries about an escalation of the war with China and the Soviet Union inhibited even more extreme bombing. Still, the American command's belief in the "vital necessity of destruction of North Korean objectives north of the 38th parallel,"[18] resulted in a massive bombardment campaign whose destructive impact is so large as to be incalculable. We can only rely on general estimations. Thus, the US Air Force's Far East Bomber Command:

> "calculated the destruction of North Korean cities in these percentages: Manp'ochin, 95 percent; Kointong, 90 percent; Sakchu, 75 percent; Ch'osan, 85 percent; Sinæichu, 60 percent; Kanggye, 75 percent; Hæich'ýn, 75 percent; Namsi, 90 percent; Æichu, 20 percent; and Hoeryýng, 90 percent."[19]

In sum, we must keep in mind the connection between these political and military decisions, and the permanent reshaping of Korean life. Halberstam's analysis indeed provides a link between this micro and macro picture, and we should turn to the ways that he stitches together his overall narrative. Most prominently, Halberstam "cuts" between portraits of political leaders and tales told by average people, ones who bear witness to the consequences of these decisions. To this journalistic method Halberstam adds a focus on American power, and a conviction – one which remains implicit that it must be exercised in the proper way. For instance, in his account of what he called the "terrible days" of America's initial defeats, he noted that:

> "Of the many American illusions that dies in the first few weeks of the Korean War, perhaps the most important was the belief in the atomic bomb as the ultimate weapon, in effect the only weapon we needed."[20]

The "we" in this sentence is genuine. Halberstam was writing as an American, and explaining to a broader public in the twenty-first century, when felt should have been realized by political elites in the years 1945–50, namely that the

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18 Kim, Taewoo (2012): Limited War, Unlimited Targets. In: Critical Asian Studies 44. 467–492. 474.

19 Kim, Taewoo (2012), 483.

20 Freeman, Joshua B. (2012): American Empire. 1945–2000: The Rise of a Global Power, the Democratic Revolution at Home. New York. 79.
Freeman (2012), 80.
Halberstam (2007), 149.

> "Early American monopoly of it [atomic bomb], the quick instantaneous way it had seemed to end the Pacific War, had created an illusion when it came to America's defense budget: that it could develop a military arsenal on the cheap, with only one kind of arrow in it. If the bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki had seemed to inaugurate a brand new chapter in the history of human warfare, supposedly making all other weapons obsolete and creating a world where military power rested only with the richest, most technologically advanced nations, then the Korean battlefield defeats of early July 1950 shattered that belief."[21]

Though perhaps not so directly, another belief that was shattered was that US predominance could be maintained without engaging in such *messy* ground wars, or devoting considerable resources to military build-up and deployment. Therefore, the accounts Halberstam provides of Korean War battles demonstrate in detail how significant an effort governments made in fighting this war, and why its impact could not be temporary or minor.

Such considerations give Halberstam a critical distance on US foreign policy as a whole. His principal target is those who refuse to acknowledge the fact that the world-wide the USA entered were neither simple to understand, nor easy to resolve. A primary example, and a point he elaborated at length in his *The Best and the Brightest* were those who maintained that Vietnamese communists were entirely directed by Moscow, and that the fighting in Vietnam had no roots in an anti-colonial struggle. In the case of Korea, he devotes meticulous attention to showing how political groups within the US, particularly elements within the Republican Party gained political power for themselves by using the communist victory in China in 1949 to accuse the Democrats of weakness. As he described it, this not only goaded the Truman administration into taking a more hard-line stance in East Asia, but it made US politicians across the board afraid of dissenting on foreign policy for fear of appearing "soft."[22] This is not a hypothetical issue. If US politicians had not been so wary of being charged with some form of softness on communism than MacArthur from bringing US troops up to the Yalu River on the Chinese border. It was Mao's offensive there that led to even more bloody fighting, prolonging the war for another two years, and intensifying the air war and bombing campaigns.

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21 Halberstam (2007), 149.
22 Halberstam (2007), 149.

This last example can be fleshed out further. Halberstam proposed that the politically motivated willingness to remain allied with Chiang Kai-shek even after the consequences for future relations with the People's Republic of China became clear. In Halberstam's words:

> "Did we really owe more to a fallen leader who had systematically failed his own people, treated American military, political and economic advice with contempt, and served as the major source of weapons for his sworn opponents? Was it worth taking the risk of driving this formidable nation, obviously an ascending power and a potentially dangerous one, and surely one day a great power, into the arms of a sworn enemy? Was it worth reinforcing Mao Zedong in his belief that the United States was but the newest imperial power with designs on his country?...There were the real questions of the moment, and the answers to all of them were almost all surely no. But they were also national security questions that were muffled at the time, outweighed as they were by domestic political forces and emotions."[23]

It can be said that, despite Halberstam's certainty, one can still debate these questions of the moment. The Taiwan issue is complex and it is part of a larger and even more difficult matter of the meaning of the Cold War in general. But Halberstam's wider claim is that the fact that Taiwan policy could not be debated fairly and rationally in the US political establishment contributed to the hardening of the antagonism between the USA and the PRC and fanned the flames of the Korean War even further. Thus, we return to the point that to understand any question of war and environment in relationship to Korea – for instance, the use of napalm in bombing campaigns, or the targeting of irrigation canals – requires a familiarity with the kind of story that Halberstam tells.

This point can be spelled out in more detail if we reflect on the long-term consequences of the Korean War. Historian Michael J. Seth spells out a series of significant changes introduced by the war. One of them is so evident that it sometimes escapes attention; its very ubiquity giving it an air of normality. This is the militarization of the peninsula. Speaking of South Korea, Seth writes that, "The three-year conflict created a huge military force, which grew from 100,000 troops on the eve of the conflict to 600,000 at the end. After the war, the military forces were kept at this level, well-equipped by the United States and increasingly well-trained. In was, in fact, one of the ten largest armed forces in the world."[24] Today,

23 Halberstam (2007), 318–19.

24 Seth, Michael J. (2011): A History of Korea: From Antiquity to the Present. Lanham. 332.

even a cursory glance at maps of the Republic of Korea show significantly land and resource use is shaped by military deployment, and the publically available information is certainly incomplete. If we add to this the even more extreme impact of militarization and mass mobilization in North Korea, we begin to appreciate the extent that the Korean environment is made by war.

Beyond this, Seth points out how intertwined the Korean War was with the subsequent globalization of some parts of East Asia, saying that the "emergence of an effectively independent, prosperous and democratic Taiwan and the ongoing two-Chinas issue was very much a product of the Korean War."[25] Moreover:

> "The United States responded to the war by building a defensive wall around the country, with military bases in South Korea, Taiwan, Japan, The Philippines, and Thailand, and with the ships of the Seventh Fleet of the coast. This led to isolation and a siege mentality that contributed to the path of China's development for more than a quarter century."[26]

The environmental implications of the last statement can be stated more strongly. The attitude toward nature taken by the Mao's regime, especially the aggressive disregard for questions of natural balance and long-term stewardship of land, air and water resources, emerged from the same political isolation that followed the Korean War. In addition, the globalization of East Asian economies began with US war-related investment in Japan. Speaking of the large orders placed with Japanese companies, Seth quotes, the president of Toyota saying "These orders were Toyota's salvation, I felt a mighty joy for my company and a sense of guilt that I was rejoicing over another country's war."[27] In the wake of the Korean War, South Korea followed Japan's lead, and the peninsula's environment diverged ever further. The 1950–53 war in Korea was a launching pad for the globalized world we have today. This includes the natural environment shaped by globalization.

This point, if stated in broad terms, is uncontroversial. It has become a commonplace to start indices of this take off toward a human-transformed world at the mid-twentieth century. For instance, when in 2011 the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* debated the question, *The An-*

25 Seth (2011), 335.
26 Seth (2011), 335.
27 Seth (2011), 335.

thropocene: A New Epoch of Geological Time?[28] they chose the year 1950 to mark start of sharp, sometimes exponential, increases in all manner of significant indicators, ranging from terrestrial biosphere degradation to fertilizer consumption. Does the fact that the Korean War also started in 1950 mean much in this context? Is this too small a detail to include in such a macro history?

A look at the kind of history that Halberstam relates gives us reason to think that the knowing the story of the Korean War is helpful for thinking about the larger questions more carefully. In particular, Halberstam's narrative can explain why decision makers locked themselves into a full-scale conflict, and why such a conflict would result in both the massive devastation of the environment, as well as the post-war reconstruction in East Asia apart from North Korea that led to our current world economy. Although this story is indeed known, particularly among Cold War specialists, it is not typically integrated into a wider account of the creation of the Anthropocene. Yet, this wider discussion of how current human activity shapes the earth's stratigraphy would only gain from particular knowledge of the wars that literally set the boundaries for where this activity would take place. Consider a few lines from a passage quoted by journalist Thomas Friedman about a geological definition on the Anthropocene:

> "Recent anthropogenic deposits contain new minerals and rock types, reflecting rapid global dissemination of novel materials including elemental aluminium, concrete and plastics that form abundant, rapidly evolving *techno fossils*. Fossil fuel combustion has disseminated black carbon, inorganic ask spheres, and spherical carbonaceous particles worldwide, with a near synchronous increase around 1950."[29]

This increase describes a world shaped by the wars of the twentieth-century, particularly the ones that laid the foundation for the East-West division that dominated the world until 1989. Understanding what happened in East Asia is a central part of this, and hence, histories like the one Halberstam recounts are necessary to show how inextricably this world-changing transformation was bound up with war. At the same time, books like *The Coldest Winter* are incomplete if they are only thought of as a war story.

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28 See the charts listed in Steffen W./Broadgate, W./Deutsch, L./Ludwig C. (2015): The Trajectory of the Anthropocene: The Great Acceleration. In: The Anthropocene Review, 2,1, following a 2011 version of the paper by Steffen, et. al. This is reprinted in Grinspoon (2016), 131–32.

29 Quoted in Friedman, Thomas (2016): *Thank you for Being Late. London. 173.*

We need to place it in the context of an ecological transformation. This leads to a final consideration: a recurring motif in Halberstam's is the power of the military to transform. More often than not these transformations are negative, such as the hubris first of MacArthur then of Mao and Peng Dehuai as they moved their *human wave* campaigns south of the thirty-eighth parallel. Yet, despite Halberstam's well-grounded scepticism of military self-promotion and bombast, militaries can change things This is his description of the effect of good leadership on battle troops:

> "Commanders were first and foremost in the fear-suppression business; great ones could take the undertow of fear, the knowledge that it was always there, and make it an asset; weaker commanders tended to let it fester. The very same men who will fight bravely under one commander will cut and run under another who projects his own fear. Great commanders are not just men gifted in making wise tactical moves, they are men who give out a sense of confidence, that it can be done, that it is their duty and their privilege to fight on that given day. Thus does the strength of any unit ideally feed down, from top to bottom. The commander generates strength in the officers immediately underneath him, and it works all the way down the chain of command."[30]

As a consequence, *The Coldest Winter* shows that troops in the Korean War could sometimes fight with great effectiveness, overcoming severe obstacles. At other times, the opposite took place and much of the macro story of the war's impact depended on the nature of these everyday exercises in organization.

To be sure, in dealing with the enormous transformation of the start of the Anthropocene, with all the severe challenges inherent in it, it may seem like this story is too small or somehow too conventional for inclusion in this larger narrative. However, the historiography of the new *human determined* age in which we are living is intertwined with the story of war. This means we need authors who make vivid the details of war, while allowing us to use these details to add coherence to the larger story. Specifically, a general intuition that life on planet earth began a fundamental transformation circa 1950 has more explanatory power and intellectual gravity if we grasp the full nature and impact of the wars of the period, especially a fateful one like the Korean War. For this reason, it is worthwhile to renew the attention paid to a careful writer like David Halberstam's. His is not *mere* journalism. It is the detailed account we need to

30 Halberstam (2007), 422.

begin showing why the story of the environment and that of war are one and the same.

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