

Korean War

The **Korean War**, from June 25, 1950 to cease-fire on July 27, 1953 (the war has not ended officially), was a conflict between North Korea and South Korea. At the time of the start of the Korean War, North and South Korea existed as provisional governments competing for control over the Korean peninsula due to the Division of Korea. Some consider this Cold War-era conflict to have been a proxy war between the United States and its allies and the Communist powers of the People's Republic of China and the Soviet Union. The principal combatants were North Korea, supported by People's Volunteer Army (PVA) of Communist China, and later Soviet combat advisors, aircraft pilots, and weapons; and South Korea, supported principally by the United States (U.S.), the United Kingdom (UK), and the Philippines, although many other nations sent troops under the aegis of the United Nations (UN).

In South Korea, it is often called "6·25" (the date of the start of the conflict), or, more formally, *Hanguk Jeonjaeng*

In the United States, the conflict was termed a police action, as the **Korean Conflict**, under the aegis of the United Nations rather than a war, largely in order to remove the necessity of a Congressional declaration of war.

Characteristics

Air War

The Korean War was the last major war where propeller-powered fighters such as the P-51 Mustang, F4U Corsair, A-1 Skyraider (though used with distinction in a ground-attack role in Vietnam), F4U-5N, and aircraft carrier-based Super-marine Seafire, Fairey Firefly, and Hawker Sea Fury, deployed by the British Royal Navy and Royal Australian Navy, were used, as jet fighters (US Air Force F-80s, and US Navy or US Marine Corps Grumman F9F Panthers, and McDonnell F2H Banshees) came to dominate the skies, overwhelming North Korea's propeller-driven Yakovlev Yak-9s and Lavochkin La-9s.

From 1950, North Korea introduced MiG-15 jet fighters, piloted by experienced Soviet Air Force pilots, a *casus belli* deliberately overlooked by the UN allied forces who were reluctant to engage in open war with the Soviet Union and China. At first UN jet fighters, which now included Royal Australian Air Force Gloster Meteor Mk.8s, had some success, but the superior quality of the MiGs soon held sway over the first generation jets used by the UN, leading to the loss of 3046 allied aircraft during the Korean war.

Even after the USAF introduced the more advanced F-86, its pilots often struggled against the Soviet jets, as the MiG-15 had an edge in ceiling, acceleration, rate of climb, and armament (3 cannons vs. 6 machine-guns), although overall speed and roll rate were slightly inferior. The U.N. gradually gained a numerical advantage, and their aggressiveness gave them an air superiority that lasted until the end of the war — a decisive factor in helping the U.N. first advance into the north, and then resist the Chinese invasion of South Korea. The Chinese also had jet power, but the American forces had superior training for their pilots.

Among other factors which helped tip the balance toward the U.N. jets were the F-86's better radar gun-sight, which led to installation of the first radar warning receiver on MiG fighters, better cockpit visibility, better stability and control at high speed and high altitudes, and the introduction of the first G-suits. U.S. pilots claimed to achieve impressive success (although probably exaggerated) with the F-86, stating to shoot down 792 MiG-15s and 108 additional aircraft for the loss of 78 Sabres, a ratio in excess of 10:1. Some post-war research has only able to confirm 379 victories, although the USAF continues to maintain its official credits. Direct comparison of Sabre and MiG losses seem irrelevant, as primary targets for MiGs were

heavy B-29 bombers, and primary targets for Sabres were MiG-15s. Recently exposed Soviet documentation claims that 345 Soviet MiG-15s were lost during the Korean war.

Soviet sources claimed at that time, however, about 1300 victories and 335 MiG losses. China's official losses were 231 planes shot down in air-to-air combat (mostly MiG-15) and 168 other losses. The number of losses of the North Korean Air Force was not revealed. It is estimated that it lost about 200 aircraft in the first stage of the war, and another 70 aircraft since Chinese intervention. Soviet's claims of 650 victories over F-86s and China's claims of another 211 F-86s in air combats are regarded as exaggerated by the USAF. A recent publication showed that the total number of USAF F-86s ever present in the Korean peninsula during the war was only 674 and the total F-86s losses due to all causes were about 230. With each side making their own claims it is difficult to conclude on the actual losses and kills of the air war.

Throughout the conflict, the United States maintained a policy of heavy bombing, especially using incendiary weapons, against any and all North Korean settlements. Although images of the civilian victims of the weapon were to be ingrained upon the memory of the world in Vietnam, significantly more napalm was dropped on North Korea, despite the relative short length of the conflict. Tens of thousands of gallons were dropped on targets in Korea each day.

In May and June of 1953, the United States Air Force undertook a mission to destroy several key irrigation and hydroelectric dams, in order to critically hamper agriculture and industry in the North. The Kusong, Töksan and Pujön River dams were all destroyed, severely flooding vast areas of land, drowning thousands and ultimately starving many more.

Atrocities

De-classified U.S. document: *"The army has requested we strafe all civilian refugee parties approaching our positions. To date, we have complied with the army request in this respect"*. The document goes on to say that these actions are not right.

Civilians massacred by retreating Communist forces during the Korean War are packed into trenches in Daejeon, South Korea, October 1950.

North Korean troops, South Koreans, Chinese and United States personnel targeted civilians and/or mistreated POWs in some cases. Specifically, there is extremely strong evidence to suggest:

North Korean and Communist Chinese troops repeatedly violated the Geneva Convention through reported mistreatment of prisoners of war.

American troops were under orders to consider any Korean civilian on the battlefield approaching their position as hostile and to neutralize them. The reason for these orders were rumours being spread at the time that Communist infiltrators had blended in among fleeing refugees. This led to unfounded fears among American forces of a "fifth column," and to the indiscriminate killings of hundreds of South Korean civilians by the U.S. military during the war at places like (No Gun Ri), where several hundred defenceless refugees -- most of whom were women, children and old men -- were machine gunned by the U.S. Army and strafed by the U.S. Air Force. (The U.S. admitted having a policy of strafing civilians.)

Communist forces routinely rounded up and forcibly conscripted South Korean males of all ages in their area of operations. Regardless of whether they refused or not, thousands of them never returned home.

South Korean military and police executed without trial tens of thousands of alleged "Communist sympathizers" during the Daejeon Massacre and the Jeju Massacre, among others.

Legacy

The Korean War was the first armed confrontation of the Cold War, and it set a model for many later conflicts. It created the idea of a limited war, where the two superpowers would fight without descending to an all out war that could involve nuclear weapons. It also expanded the Cold War, which to that point had mostly been concerned with Europe.

Korea

600,000 Korean soldiers died in the conflict according to US estimates. The total, including all civilians and military soldiers from UN Nations and China, was over 2 million deaths. More than a million South Koreans were killed, 85% of them civilians. According to figures published in the Soviet Union, 11.1% of the total population of North Korea perished, which indicates that 1,130,000 people were killed. In sum, about 2,500,000 people were killed, including North and South together. More than 80% of the industrial and public facilities and transportation works, three-quarters of the government offices, and one-half of the houses were destroyed.

The war left the peninsula permanently divided with a garrisoned pro-Soviet, totalitarian Communist state in North Korea and a pro-American dictatorial republic (democratised in the late 1980s) in the South. American troops remain in Korea as part of the still-functioning United Nations Command, which commands all allied military forces in the ROK - American Air Forces, Korea, the Eighth U.S. Army, and the entire ROK military. The DMZ remains the most heavily-defended border in the world.

The United States of America

The first American war dead were brought home aboard the *USS Randall*, shown here departing Yokohama on March 23, 1953

There has been some confusion over the previously reported number of 54,246 Korean War deaths. That number was divided by the Defence Department in 1993 into 33,686 battle deaths, 2830 non-battle deaths, and 17,730 deaths of Defence Department personnel outside the Korean theatre. There were also 8,142 US personnel listed as Missing In Action (MIA) during the war. US casualties in Korean war are fewer than in the Vietnam War, but they occurred over 3 years as opposed to 13 years (1960-1973) in Vietnam. However, advances in medical services such as the Mobile Army Surgical Hospital and the use of rapid transport of the wounded to them such as with helicopters enabled the death rate for UN forces to be much lower than in previous wars. For service during the Korean War, the United States military was issued the Korean Service Medal.

Later neglect of remembrance of this war, in favour of the Vietnam War, World War I and II, has caused the Korean War to be called the **Forgotten War** or the **Unknown War**. A memorial called the Korean War Veterans Memorial was built in Washington, D.C. and dedicated to veterans of the war on July 27, 1995.

The U.S. military had been caught ill-prepared for the war. Accordingly, after the war, the American defence budget was boosted to \$50 billion, the Army was doubled in

size, as was the number of Air Groups, and they were deployed beyond American soil in Europe, the Middle East and elsewhere in Asia.

The war also changed America's view of the Third World, most notably in Indochina. Before 1950 the Americans had been very critical of French endeavours to re-establish its presence there against local resistance; after Korea they began to heavily support the French against the Viet Minh and other nationalist-communist local parties, paying for up to 80% of the French military budget in Vietnam.

The Korean War also saw the beginning of racial integration efforts in the US military service, where African Americans fought in integrated units. President Truman signed Executive Order 9981 on July 26, 1948, calling on the armed forces to provide equal treatment and opportunity for black servicemen. The extent by which Truman's 1948 orders were carried out varied among the branches of the military, with segregated units still in deployment at the start of the conflict, and eventually integrating towards the end of the war. The last large segregated operational unit was the U.S. 24th Infantry Regiment. It was deactivated on October 1, 1951.

The United States still maintains a heavy military presence in Korea, as part of the effort to uphold the armistice between South and North Korea. A special service decoration, known as the Korea Defence Service Medal is authorized for U.S. service members who serve a tour of duty in Korea.

The People's Republic of China

From official Chinese sources, PVA casualties during the Korean War were 390,000. This breaks down as follows: 110,400 KIA; 21,600 died of wounds; 13,000 died of sickness; 25,600 MIA/POW; and 260,000 more WIA. However various Western and Eastern sources estimate that about 500,000 to 1 million Chinese soldiers were either killed in action or died of disease, starvation, exposure, and accidents. Overall total Chinese killed, wounded and missing equal to about less than 1 million. Mao Zedong only healthy son, Mao Anying, was also killed as a PVA during the war.

As the PVA rotated about 2 million troops during the war the casualties figure of most western sources would seem to be too high. If the PVA had suffered 500,000 casualties (1/4 of all troops rotated) or 1,000,000 casualties (1/2 of all troops rotated) the PVA would almost certainly have been so weakened that they would not have been able to defend the line let alone mount any meaningful offensive. However, as the battle line hardly moved from 1951 to 1953 the high casualty figures should be regarded with some scepticism.

It also contributed to the decline of Sino-Soviet relations. Although Chinese had their own reasons to enter the war (i.e. a strategic buffer zone in the Korean peninsula), the view that the Soviets had used them as proxies was shared in the Western bloc. China had to use the Soviet loan, which had been originally intended to rebuild their destroyed economy, to pay for the Soviet arms. However, the fact that Chinese forces held their own against American forces in this war heralded that China was once again becoming a major world power. By many Chinese the war is generally seen as an honour in the People's Republic of China history as it was the first time in a century a Chinese army was able to withstand a Western army in a major conflict, in spite of China's heavy losses.

The Republic of China

After the war was over, 14,000 of the Chinese prisoners of war hostile to Communists of the People's Republic of China defected to the Republic of China (in contrast, only 7,110 Chinese POWs opted to return to China). The defectors arrived in Taiwan on Jan 23, 1954 and were referred to as "Anti-Communist volunteers" . Each year Jan 23 is named World Freedom Day in their honour in Taiwan.

The Korean War also led to other long lasting effects. Until the conflict in Korea, the United States had largely abandoned the government of Chiang Kai-Shek, which had retreated to Taiwan, and had no plans to intervene the Chinese civil war. The start of the Korean War rendered untenable any policy that would have caused Taiwan to fall under Communist control and Truman's decision to send American forces into the Taiwan straits saved the Kuomintang's government from defeat and ended any immediate hopes of conquering that island for the Communist Party of China. The anti-Communist atmosphere in the West in response to the Korean War contributed to the unwillingness to diplomatically recognize the People's Republic of China by the West until the 1970s.

Japan

Japan was politically disturbed both from the security threat to Japan because of the initial defeat of South Korea and from left-wing activities in support of North Korea and aiming to bring about a revolution in Japan. Additionally, as American occupation armies were dispatched to Korean peninsula, Japan's security became problematic. Under United States' guidance Japan established Reserved Police, later developed to the Japan Self-Defence Forces . The signing of the Treaty of Peace with Japan (popularly known as the Treaty of San Francisco) was also hastened to return Japan back into international communities. In the eyes of some American policy makers, the non-belligerency clause in the constitution was already being considered a "mistake" by 1953.

Economically, Japan was able to benefit from the war. American material requirements were organized through a Special Procurements system, which allowed for local purchasing without the complex Pentagon procurement system. Over \$3.5 billion was spent with Japanese companies, peaking at \$809 million in 1953. The zaibatsu went from being distrusted to being encouraged — Mitsui , Mitsubishi , and Sumitomo were amongst the zaibatsu that thrived, not only on orders from the military but through American industrial experts, including W. Edwards Deming. Japanese manufacturing grew by 50% between March 1950 and 1951. By 1952, pre-war standards of living were regained and output was twice the level of 1949. Becoming an independent country due to the Treaty of San Francisco also saved Japan from the burden of expense of the occupation forces.

Europe

The outbreak of the Korean War convinced Western leaders of the growing threat of international communism. The United States began to encourage Western European countries, West Germany included, to contribute to their own defence. German rearmament, however, was perceived as a threat by its neighbours, especially France. As the Korean War continued, however, opposition to rearmament lessened and China's entry in the war caused France to revise its position towards German rearmament. To contain a newly-armed Germany, French officials proposed the creation of the European Defence Community (EDC), a supranational organisation, under the aegis of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO).

The end of the Korean War reduced the perceived Communist threat, and thus it reduced the necessity of such an organisation. The French Parliament postponed the ratification of the EDC Treaty *sine die* (i.e. without a clear date). This rejection in the French Parliament was caused by Gaullist fears that the creation of the EDC threatened France's national sovereignty. The EDC was never ratified, and the initiative collapsed in August, 1954