

Korea and America

In April 2017 President Trump began to push at North Korea by sending an “armada” of Navy ships nearby, presumably to antagonize and even attack and/or retaliate for some behavior that America does not like. Unsurprisingly, some other nations like this while others dislike it.

But nowhere is the Korean War mentioned. My dad fought in the Korean War, perhaps that is why I have not forgotten it. That war began in 1950 when North Korea invaded South Korea. According to Wikipedia: the United Nations, with the United States as the principal force, came to the aid of South Korea shortly after its invasion by North Korea. China came to the aid of North Korea, with some assistance by the Soviet Union. Korea had been split in two in 1948 as a result of a cold war between the USA and USSR, but the two pieces each claimed to be the legitimate government of all Korea. The fighting ended in 1953, an armistice was begun in July 1953 and signed in 1954; initially the South Korean president refused to sign. No peace treaty has been signed, and the two Koreas are technically still at war.

Hostilities between North and South Korea resumed in 2013 with North Korea declaring it invalidated the 1953 armistice. A few days later they declared they had entered a state of war with South Korea. A few days after that the US Secretary of Defense, Chuck Hagel, informed the press that North Korea had "ratified" the potential use of a nuclear weapon against South Korea, Japan, and the United States of America, including Guam and Hawaii.

In 2015 North Korea approached the USA about conducting peace talks to formally end the war. Those talks foundered on North Korea's refusal to discuss nuclear weapons.

<https://gizmodo.com/what-time-is-the-new-korean-war-1794323131> has an 1998 video about the war. USA was plainly stupid. Inspired by the idea of fighting the Communists, the Americans erred over and over. Communism was the opponent. America got sucked into a local conflict in which their only concern was political, and that simply an extension of the Cold War — with its concomitant stupidity. They helped the South Koreans get killed. China was at that time also Communist, and not about to help the Americans. We intruded into a local conflict, strung along to support foreign interests. At our expense.

This is such a theme in American foreign wars. Will we ever learn?

Truman declared over the radio that “We are fighting in Korea for our own national security and survival. We have committed ourselves to a the cause of a just and peaceful world order through the United Nations. We stand by that commitment.” McArthur wanted to proceed against the Chinese on their mainland. Truman disagreed and relieved McArthur. By 1951 Americans realized no one could win the war. And yet bombing continued.

News in America was almost non-existent. The public was kept in the dark.

Throughout the war both sides committed horrible atrocities. There is no victory in war, it kills so many people and destroys so much. Russia saw it as a defeat because they could not impose the Socialist system on South Korea.

In the presidential election of 1952, Truman did not run (his popularity had declined because of the Korean War), Eisenhower did and won.

“The Manchurian Candidate” by Richard Condon (1959), was a novel of an American soldier who was captured in Korea and programmed by Chinese Communists to kill on command. Perhaps we should re-read it.

This business about going to war because of your political alliances was the cause of WW I. And what a disaster that was.