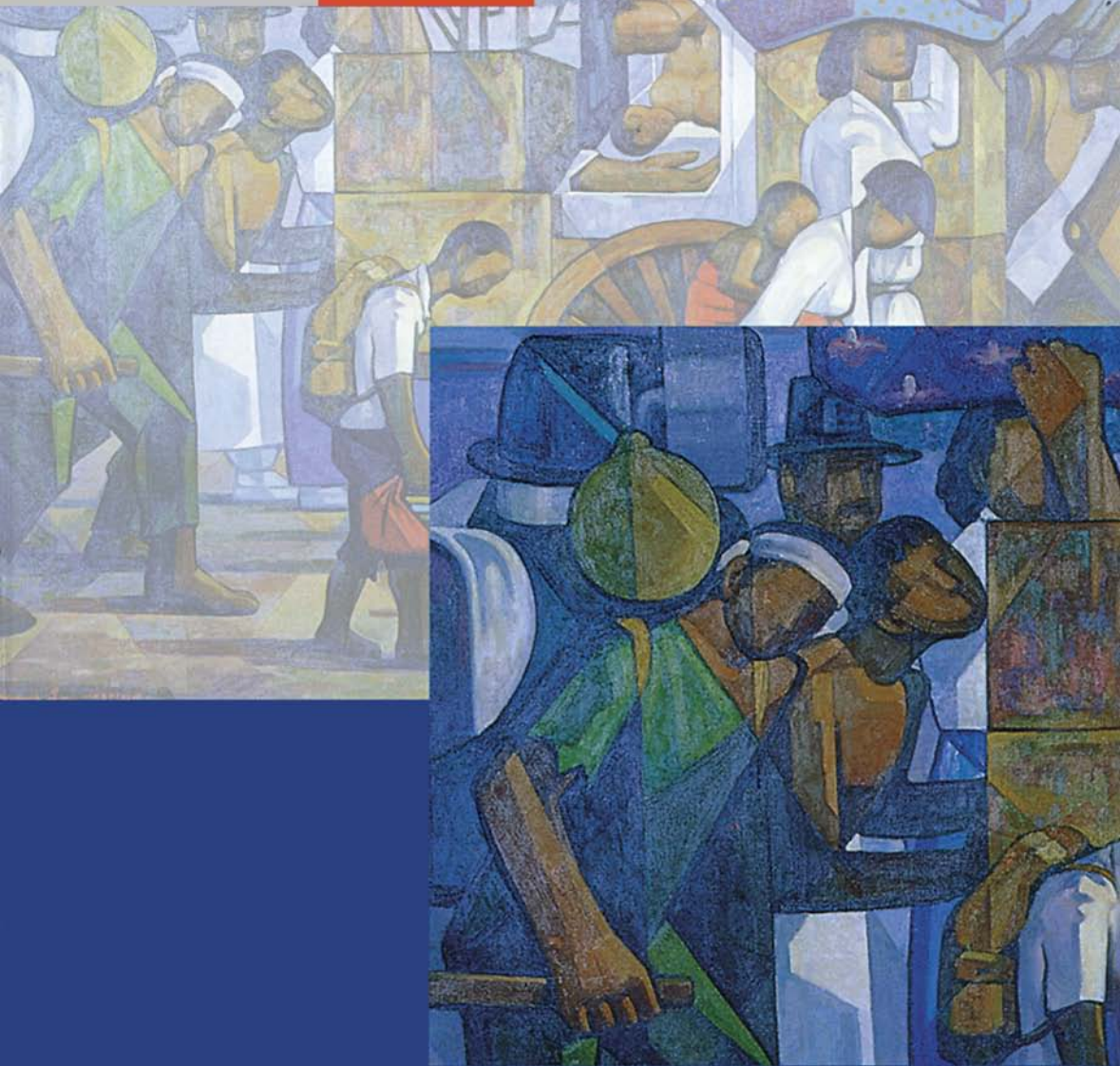


SEMINAR STUDIES

IN HISTORY



# The Korean War

Steven Hugh Lee

ROUTLEDGE



## The Korean War

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STEVEN HUGH LEE

First published 2001 by Pearson Education Limited

Published 2013 by Routledge

2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN  
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017, USA

*Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business*

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ISBN: 978-0-582-31988-2 (pbk)

*British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data*

A CIP catalogue record for this book can be obtained from the British Library

Typeset by 7 in 10/12 Sabon Roman

# CONTENTS

Introduction to the Series	vii
Note on Transliteration	viii
Note on Referencing System	viii
Preface	ix
Maps	x
Chronology	xiv
<b>PART ONE: THE BACKGROUND</b>	<b>1</b>
1. INTERPRETING THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT	3
History and Memory: The Korean War	3
Korean History and World History	4
Approaching Korea	8
The Ideological Origins of the Korean War	9
Syngman Rhee and the Great Powers before 1945	10
Wilsonian Liberalism and Korean Nationalism	12
The Russian Revolution and the Korean Communist Movement, 1917–45	14
The Great Powers and Korea during the Second World War	16
<b>PART TWO: CONFLICT IN KOREA</b>	<b>19</b>
2. THE GREAT POWERS AND THE TWO KOREAS, 1945–50	21
Koreans between the Superpowers	21
Syngman Rhee and the American Occupation	24
Soviet Occupation and the Emergence of Kim Il Sung	26
Korea's Cold War in Global Context, 1947–48	27
The Korean Conflict, 1948–50	31
Syngman Rhee and the Origins of the Korean War	32
Kim Il Sung and the Origins of the Korean War	34
<b>PART THREE: INTERNATIONAL WAR IN KOREA</b>	<b>37</b>
3. KOREA'S GLOBAL WAR, 1950–51	39
Kim Il Sung, Stalin, Mao and the Approach of War, 1949–50	40
Preparing for War: America and NSC 68	43
North Korean Offensive and US Response	44
The United Nations' Counter-offensive, June–August 1950	46
Rollback, American Style: September 1950	48
Pyongyang, Beijing and Moscow	51
Expanded War: October 1950–February 1951	52
Military Stalemate and the Downfall of MacArthur	57

4.	<b>SOLDIER, CIVILIAN: A SOCIAL HISTORY OF THE KOREAN WAR</b>	60
	War as Social History	60
	Wartime Korea, 1950	61
	Race and the Korean War: Fighting Jim Crow	65
	The British Commonwealth at War	68
	Disease in the Korean War	68
	Wartime Culture: UNC Troop Morale and Lifestyle beyond the Trenches	69
	Women and the Korean War	70
	Soldier, Civilian: The Two Koreas	71
	The Chinese Homefront	74
	The Red Scare and the Emergence of the US National Security State	75
	American Public Opinion and the Korean War	76
	POW Life: the UNC Prisoners	78
	Life and Death in UNC POW Camps	79
5.	<b>FIGHTING AND NEGOTIATING: THE WAR AND THE ARMISTICE, 1951–54</b>	82
	Kaesong and Panmunjom, July 1951–May 1952	82
	Delay and Deadlock: The POW Issue, Item 4	84
	The Bombing Campaign Escalates	87
	The Indian Resolution	88
	The Eisenhower Administration	89
	Stalin's Death	91
	Atomic Diplomacy	92
	The Guerrilla War, 1951–54	96
6.	<b>THE GLOBAL IMPACT OF THE KOREAN WAR</b>	98
	Implementing NSC 68: American and European Perspectives on Rearmament	98
	Guns against Butter	101
	Japanese Rearmament	102
	The ROK Armed Forces, 1951–53	104
	The Sino-Soviet Alliance and Sino-American Relations	105
	The Korean War and the Developing World	107
	The Political Impact of the War on the Two Koreas	108
7.	<b>THE GENEVA CONFERENCE, 1954</b>	111
	Prelude: The US–ROK Mutual Defense Treaty	111
	The Road to Geneva	112
	Europe and the Commonwealth Approach Geneva	113
	Communist Negotiating Strategy	114
	The United States and the Geneva Conference	115
	The Geneva Conference on Korea	116
	<b>PART FOUR: THE LEGACY</b>	<b>121</b>
8.	<b>REASSESSING 'THE LONG PEACE'</b>	<b>123</b>
	<b>PART FIVE: DOCUMENTS</b>	<b>129</b>
	Glossary	157
	Who's Who	160
	Guide to Further Reading	163
	Bibliography	172
	Index	175

## INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES

Such is the pace of historical enquiry in the modern world that there is an ever-widening gap between the specialist article or monograph, incorporating the results of current research, and general surveys, which inevitably become out of date. *Seminar Studies in History* is designed to bridge this gap. The series was founded by Patrick Richardson in 1966 and his aim was to cover major themes in British, European and World history. Between 1980 and 1996 Roger Lockyer continued his work, before handing the editorship over to Clive Emsley and Gordon Martel. Clive Emsley is Professor of History at the Open University, while Gordon Martel is Professor of International History at the University of Northern British Columbia, Canada, and Senior Research Fellow at De Montfort University.

All the books are written by experts in their field who are not only familiar with the latest research but have often contributed to it. They are frequently revised, in order to take account of new information and interpretations. They provide a selection of documents to illustrate major themes and provoke discussion, and also a guide to further reading. The aim of *Seminar Studies in History* is to clarify complex issues without over-simplifying them, and to stimulate readers into deepening their knowledge and understanding of major themes and topics.

## NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

Chinese names, with the exception of Chiang Kai-shek, are written in Pinyin. Chinese, Korean and Japanese names, except Syngman Rhee, are written with the last name first.

## NOTE ON REFERENCING SYSTEM

A number in square brackets preceded by *Doc.* [*Doc.* 5] refers readers to the corresponding item in the Documents section which follows the main text.

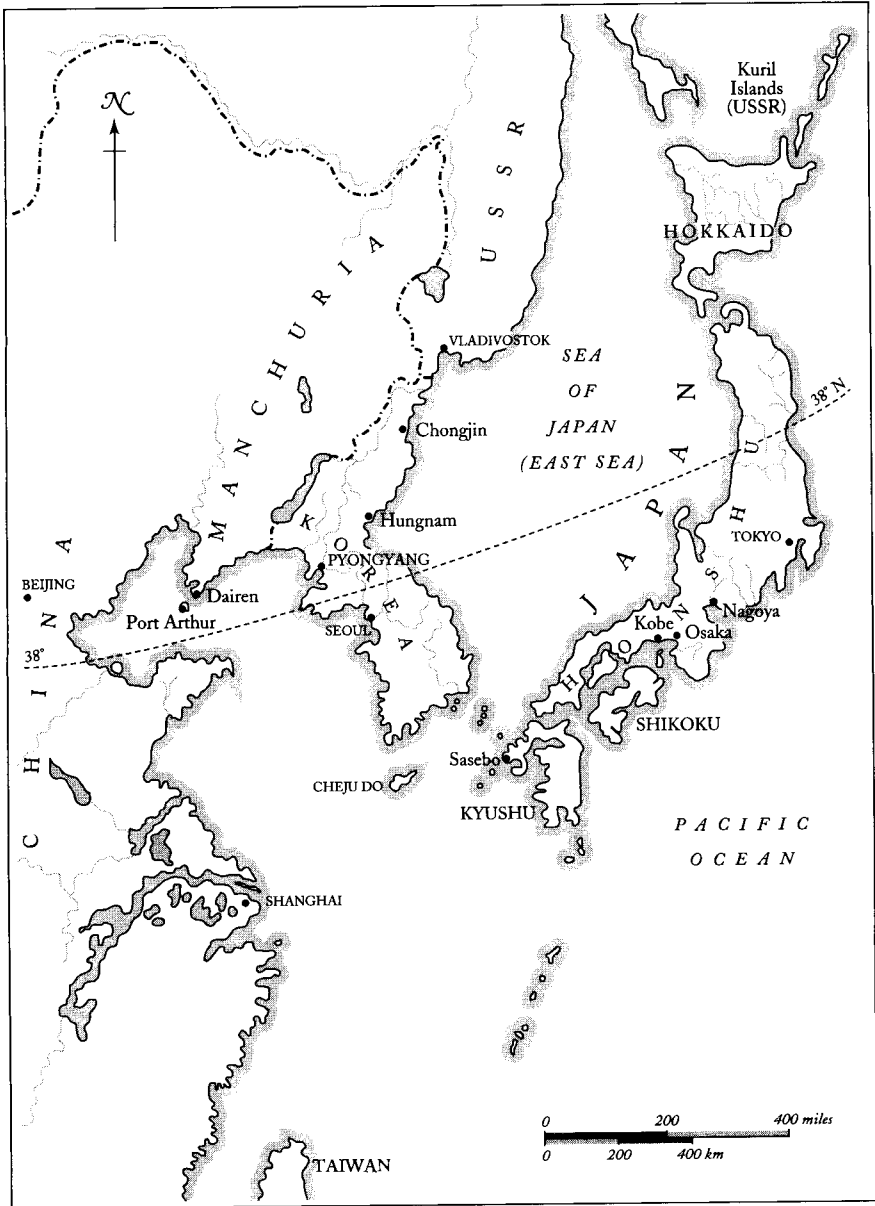
## PREFACE

This book is meant for teachers and students interested in a concise international history of the Korean War. It differs from traditional studies of the war in several significant ways. The analysis traces the origins and dynamics of the war to the interplay between modern Korean history and twentieth-century world history. The narrative also examines the social history of the conflict, an important theme which is neglected in many surveys of the fighting. Most accounts of the war end their discussions in 1953, with the signing of the armistice. This study carries the story through 1954, with an examination of the often-forgotten Geneva Conference on Korea. The meetings in Switzerland that spring were the last major international effort before recent years to negotiate a permanent peace for the Korean peninsula. A selection of primary material has also been included to highlight the analysis and to add depth to students' understanding of the events.

I would like to thank a number of people who helped me write this monograph. At the University of British Columbia, Don Baker, Yunshik Chang, George Egerton and Chris Friedrichs read the manuscript and offered excellent suggestions for its improvement. My stimulating discussions with them over the years are reflected in the book's pages. Insun Lee has been a strong source of support and encouragement. Emeritus Professor Ivan Avacumovic imparted his many years of learned experience and knowledge about Soviet foreign policy and the Cold War. Two readers outside the university – Michael Hunt of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Peter Lowe of the University of Manchester – made very valuable contributions to the final product. In Korea, I would like to thank Professor Lew Young Ick and Lee Myoung-Soon for their support. The editor of the Longman Seminar Study series, Gordon Martel, responded promptly and professionally to queries and suggestions. Sarah Bury copy-edited the manuscript with a delicate and precise hand. A number of granting agencies were also instrumental in getting the project completed. Language study in Seoul was made possible by a grant from the Korea Foundation. This book has been published with the support of grants from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the Centre for Korean Research, UBC. It is dedicated to my parents, whose love made it possible.



Map 1 China and Korea







Map 4 The Korean War, 1950-53

## CHRONOLOGY

- 1875 Syngman Rhee born.
- 1876 Korea's first modern (unequal) treaty signed with Japan.
- 1879 Joseph Stalin born.
- 1884 Harry Truman born.
- 1890 Dwight D. Eisenhower born.
- 1893 Mao Zedong born.
- 1894–95 First Sino-Japanese war ends in Japanese victory.
- 1896–98 Nationalist activities of the Korean Independence Club.
- 1902 Anglo-Japanese Alliance formed.
- 1904–5 Russo-Japanese War ends in Japanese victory.
- 1905 Korea becomes a protectorate of the Japanese Empire.
- 1910 Korea becomes a formal Japanese colony.
- 1912 Kim Il Sung born.
- 1914–18 First World War.
- 1917 Russian Revolution.
- 1918 Wilson's Fourteen-Point Speech to the US Congress.
- 1919 March First Movement: nationwide protests in Korea against Japanese colonial rule.
- 1922 Anglo-Japanese alliance is replaced by a series of naval arms limitations and great power agreements.
- 1931 Japan invades Manchuria.
- 1934–35 Long March of Chinese communists.
- 1936–41 Northeast Anti-Japanese United Army active in Manchuria.
- 1937–45 Second Sino-Japanese War.
- 
- 1941
- August Atlantic Charter drawn up by President Franklin Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston Churchill.
- December American entry into the Pacific War.
- 
- 1943 Cairo Declaration: Korea to receive independence 'in due course'.

**1945**

- February Stalin and Roosevelt agree to four-power trusteeship for Korea.
- August United States proposes 38th parallel as temporary dividing line between Soviet and American armies in Korea.  
Local people's committees established across Korea.
- September Korean People's Republic established.
- December Moscow Conference between the United States and Soviet Union establishes a Joint Soviet-American Commission to oversee process leading to Korean independence.

**1946**

- February Conservative-dominated Representative Democratic Council established in Seoul (chaired by Syngman Rhee); Interim People's Committee established in northern Korea, led by Kim Il Sung.
- June Civil war begins in China.
- July North Korean Workers' Party established.
- October Elections for South Korean Interim Assembly held.

**1947**

- March Truman Doctrine announced by the President.
- June George Marshall launches a plan for the economic rehabilitation of Europe.
- September George Marshall tells the UN General Assembly of his intention to discuss the issue of the independence of Korea at the United Nations.
- November United Nations Temporary Commission On Korea (UNTCOK) established to oversee elections in all of Korea.

**1948**

- 8 February North Korean People's Army (KPA) established.
- 1 March US Occupation Commander John Hodge announces elections for South Korea by early May.
- 10 May South Korean elections.
- 15 August Republic of Korea (ROK) established with Syngman Rhee as President.
- 9 September Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) established.
- 19 October Yosu Rebellion begins.

**1949**

- 3–5 March Kim Il Sung visits Moscow and meets Stalin for the first time.
- 4 April 1949 NATO Treaty signed in Washington.
- 1 October People's Republic of China established.

**1950**

- 12 January Secretary of State Dean Acheson's Press Club speech.
- 28 January First indication that Stalin was ready to help Kim Il Sung prepare an offensive against South Korea.
- 14 February Sino-Soviet Treaty Alliance signed in Moscow.
- March–April Kim Il Sung visits Moscow and obtains Stalin's formal support for an offensive.
- 12 April Harry Truman informally approves draft of NSC 68.
- 13–16 May Kim Il Sung visits Beijing to obtain Mao's support.
- 25 June North Korean offensive begins.
- 30 June Harry Truman orders US ground troops stationed in Japan to South Korea.
- 7 July General Douglas MacArthur becomes UN Commander.
- 15 September X Corps lands at Inchon.
- 30 September ROK troops cross the 38th parallel.  
President Truman formally approves NSC 68.
- 1 October MacArthur issues final ultimatum to the DPRK to surrender.
- 7 October US troops cross 38th parallel.  
Mao informs Stalin of his decision to send nine divisions of troops to Korea after 'some time' has passed.
- 25 October First UN Command (UNC) military engagement with PRC 'Volunteers'.
- 26 November Major Chinese offensive against UN troops begins.
- 4–8 December Truman–Attlee meetings in Washington.
- 16 December President Truman declares a state of national emergency.
- 19 December Truman appoints General Dwight D. Eisenhower Supreme Commander of NATO troops in Europe.

**1951**

- 1 February UN General Assembly adopts a resolution declaring that China is engaging in aggression.
- 7 March Seoul changes hands for the last time during the war.
- 11 April President Truman relieves MacArthur of his command.
- 10 July Armistice negotiations begin at Kaesong.
- 28 July First Commonwealth Division created.

- 25 October After a two-month period when the armistice negotiations were suspended, they resume again in Panmunjom.
- 26 November The communist side accepts the UNC proposal that the cease-fire line would be along the existing battle line.
- 27 November Both sides agree to a four-kilometer-wide demilitarized zone.

### 1952

- 2 January Admiral C. Turner Joy of the UNC informs the communist side that only those POWs who wanted to be repatriated would be sent home.
- 19 February Agreement is reached at Panmunjom to hold a political conference within 90 days of signing an armistice.
- 19 April The UNC informs the communists that only 70,000 of 132,000 POWs want to be repatriated.
- 2 May Both sides agree to appoint four representatives to a Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission which would oversee the implementation of an armistice.
- 7 May The UNC and communist negotiators admit that they have been unable to reach agreement on the POW repatriation issue.
- May–July Political crisis in Seoul between the Korean National Assembly and President Rhee.
- 23 June UNC launches bombing raids against hydroelectric power dams along the Yalu river.
- 24 October Republican Nominee for President, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, makes a speech saying he would go to Korea if elected President.
- 3 December The ‘Indian Resolution’ passes in the General Assembly. It is rejected by the communist side.

### 1953

- 2 February President Eisenhower announces that the Seventh Fleet will no longer protect the mainland, implying that there might be an escalation of Nationalist raids against the People’s Republic of China.
- 5 March Stalin dies in Moscow.
- 30 March Chinese Foreign Minister Zhou Enlai announces that he wants to act on an earlier UNC proposal to exchange sick and wounded POWs.
- 7 May General Nam Il tables an eight-point compromise proposal to resolve the POW deadlock.
- 13 May The UNC makes a counter-proposal which demands the release of all North Korean non-repatriates once an armistice is signed.

- 20 May US National Security Council agrees that an expansion of the war would require the use of atomic weapons. They agree to expand the war beyond Korea 'if conditions arise requiring more positive action'.
- 25 May The UNC presents its final negotiating terms.
- 4 June The communist side accepts UNC terms.
- 17 June President Rhee releases the North Korean non-repatriates.
- 27 July The armistice agreement is signed.
- 1 October US–ROK Mutual Defense Treaty is signed in Washington.

**1954**

- 26 January Senate ratification of the US–ROK Mutual Defense Treaty, with additional understanding that the United States would only come to the aid of the ROK if it came under attack.
- 18 February Big powers agree to convene two conferences, one for Korea and another for Indochina, to discuss a peaceful settlement of the East Asian conflicts.
- 26 April Geneva Conference on Korea begins.
- 15 June Geneva Conference on Korea concludes without reaching agreement.

PART ONE

THE BACKGROUND

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# INTERPRETING THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

### HISTORY AND MEMORY: THE KOREAN WAR

Historical memory is a powerful source of state legitimacy. Over the past five decades the two Koreas have vigorously debated the events associated with the Korean War. Both sides continue to shape the public memory of the conflict as a means of legitimizing their respective world views. North and South Koreans may interpret the war differently, but all agree that it was a formative event in their recent past. Simply put, the struggle is central to the way Koreans define themselves in the contemporary world. By contrast, other nations which sent troops to Korea have retained little historical memory of the conflict. In the West, for example, relatively limited attention is paid to the Korean War compared to the sustained popular interest in the two twentieth-century world wars.

The reasons for public and official ignorance about the Korean War are partly a function of cultural orientation, original intentions, and the war's outcome. United Nations troops were sent to fight in Korea not so much to defeat Korean communism *per se* as to provide tangible support for foreign policies designed to contain Soviet influence around the world and to get the Western public to support a vast expansion of the military power of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The Korean conflict also ended in stalemate, without a victory for either side; this has made the war an ambiguous and painful event to remember. Those in the West and in South Korea who fervently believed in the righteousness of the moral crusade against communism were not appeased by the tenuous peace that emerged from the fighting. But after 1953 the United States was not prepared to continue the battle against North Korea and the People's Republic of China. A thaw in the Cold War in the mid-1950s was welcomed by American liberals who sought to forget the repressive period of history linked with the rise of McCarthyism. A decade later, the Vietnam conflict overshadowed the earlier struggle over Korea. By the 1970s the Korean War came to be associated with the television series 'MASH'. Ostensibly set during the Korean armistice negotiations, 'MASH' reflected