

Who Won the Korean War? The Conflict Between China and the United State

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ABSTRACT

Nowadays, the tension between China and the United States has been growing radically. Many scholars are conceiving of a possible limited war between these two superpowers. Looking back to the past, there is one “forgotten war” that is between China and the United States--The Korean War. The importance of this war has been underestimated, and in this presentation, the Korean War will be seen as a war conflict between China and the United States. I will examine the three important aspects of the war's results, economically, militarily, and politically. I will argue that China is the winner of the Korean war. Militarily China won because the Chinese army had successfully pushed the American army back to the 38th parallel in a short time with outdated equipment and almost no air-force support compared to the enemy's most advanced war machines. Economically, even though the United State gain control of South Korea, it's not essential for the States. While for China, the enthusiasm for production was fully stimulated because of the Korean war. The recovery of China's national economy was completed ahead of schedule and the Soviet Union support China with 50 key projects that are urgently needed to restore the Chinese economy. These are essential to China, the country gets what they need from the war, so they won. Politically, China won completely because it established an international prestige for military power as a newborn country over the United States. Overall, it's a complete victory for China. All the outcomes satisfy this country's needs. Further research on this topic would be to investigate the influence of the Sino-American relationship in the Cold War, and how this war has taught both countries to negotiate with each other in the future on trade and territorial conflict.

Keywords: *Korean War, Sino-American Relation, China, North Korea, South Korea*

1. INTRODUCTION TO THE BASIC HISTORY OF THE KOREAN PENINSULA

On the far eastern rim of Asia, between China and Japan, lies the Korean peninsula. On this land, Korea, an ancient nation with a history dating back 5000 years, has developed a consistent culture in ethnicity, language, and territory. Its unique culture diversifies the human world today, and it has already produced phenomenal products of fashion and entertainment, like the K-Pop and Korean TV Shows that influence millions of youngsters. This worldwide popularity could not be achieved without the consistent cultural development of Korea. Since the foundation of the Goryeo dynasty in 918 CE, the Korean peninsula had maintained a true national unification for about 1300 years. The name of this place, “Korea”, also comes from the word “Goryeo.” However, when we unveil the glamorous surface of the Korean peninsula's modern culture, we see a civilization that suffered the pain of modern war, the desperation of being a colony, and the

excruciation of internal division. In 1910, by signing the Japan–Korea Annexation Treaty, Korea was annexed by Japan's emperor after years of war and economic control. After Japan was defeated by the atomic bomb in WWI, The Korean peninsula, unexpectedly, was then split into North and South by two superpowers in August of 1945 by the 38th parallel without consulting the Korean government. The Soviet Union controlled the Northern part, where peasants and workers resided. The United States took over the southern part, attracting the middle and upper-class Korean citizens to settle. In 1948, a socialist state was established in the north under the communist leadership of Kim Il-sung and a capitalist state in the south under the anti-communist leadership of Syngman Rhee. Both countries announced that they had the legitimate leader of the Korean peninsula and refused to accept the 38th parallel as a permanent border. The seed of a unification war has been buried since then. By 1949, seeing the reduction of the U.S. and South Korea military action, the leader of North Korea, Kim Il-sung, decided to invade South Korea to unify the country. The Korean war

was officially declared by North Korea with a series of strong attacks on major cities of South Korea. This war is inevitable because both sides of the peninsula had shown signs to start a unification war, according to the historical record. After the declaration, North Korea's troops quickly pushed through the 38th parallel and then occupied almost the entire Korean peninsula with lightning speed. The United States soon helped his ally to fight back, pushing back the North Korean Army and almost gaining control of the whole Korean Peninsula. Dramatically, at this point, UN troops crossed the border between China and North Korea, which makes China think of the attack as a territory invasion, therefore sending out a volunteer army to fight back. Miraculously, China, a poor agricultural country with no industrial system at that time, successfully forced UN troops to go back to the 38th parallel. The war officially ends with the Korean Armistice Agreement signed by China and the United States, leaving the border the same as they start.

In this research paper, the Korean war will be seen as a war whose major purpose was to reunify the Korean peninsula, but gradually changed into a limited battle between the People's Republic of China and the United States. Even though several other countries were involved in the war, I will limit the discussion to the dynamic of China and the United States since these two countries are the major influencers of the war. I am not going to include the USSR in the major role because realistically, the USSR wasn't deeply involved militarily, only providing a small number of weapons to North Korea and China. I acknowledge that North and South Korea have a different objective than America and China in the War, but practically, these two countries were just two victims who have no power to overthrow the war. I will go into depth into the economic, militaristic, and political aspects of the war to argue that China is the actual winner of the war because they win in all three fields.

2. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE KOREAN WAR

However, why is the Korean war still relevant these days?

Firstly, "It changed the way the United States Fights Wars" [1], said Matthew B. Ridgway, the commander of the Eighth Army in Korea, who took over Douglas MacArthur's command of all UN forces in Korea when Douglas was relieved from command. In his autobiography, he pointed out some of the mistakes the American army has made during the Korean war, and it's from these mistakes that American armies changed the way they fight wars: One of the major mistakes was our tendency to try to base our strategy on a reading of enemy intentions while failing to give proper weight to what we knew of the enemy capabilities. MacArthur and those who supported him belittled the Chinese threat to intervene in Korea, even though they knew that Red China was perfectly capable of carrying out that threat promptly.

But we based our moves on the theory that "no commander in his right mind" would commit his forces south of the Yalu River, [which runs between North Korea and China,] at that time [1]. Ridgway's analysis of the strategic move of the American army is accurate and reasonable.

If General Douglas MacArthur was more careful about crossing the Yalu River, there might not be that many casualties. According to the data, "The countries involved in the three-year conflict suffered a total of more than four million casualties, of which at least two million were civilians, a higher percentage than in World War II or Vietnam. A total of 36,940 Americans lost their lives in the Korean Theater; South Korea sustained 1,312,836 casualties, including 415,004 dead. Estimated North Korean casualties numbered 2 million. An estimated 900,000 Chinese soldiers lost their lives in combat" [2].

The Korean war is perhaps the deadliest conflict of the Cold War era, wiping out nearly all the population on the Korean peninsula. This is another important reason to talk about this war: Our interconnected global environment cannot endure any other wars like this. Once a war is declared, no matter which continent it's on, the war will eventually affect every country in different degrees, and no one benefits from the chaos in war. Therefore, every country should learn a lesson from this disastrous war, just like what General Ridgway says: In the very ghastliness of this possible catastrophe should lie the hope that sanity and wisdom of the statesman will devise ways to prevent it. No group of nations has greater stakes at issue or stronger reasons--apart from the inherent moral imperative for attaining this objective than do the people of Western Europe and America Europe, because of its long history of death and devastation by war; America, because of the identity of its cultural and economic interests with those of Europe, and both together because of the extreme vulnerability of their highly developed social, economic, and cultural structures... [1].

The third reason is that the Korean war was practically the only military confrontation between China and the United States in modern history. Nowadays, China's growing military power has become a potential risk to the dominant country, the United States. The United States has changed China's position from the partner with defects to the major combatant. Many kinds of research are conducted to compare both countries' military power to find out who will win if they fight. And the best way to get the most accurate prediction is to analyze the experience. Although China did not enter the war in the first place, its army later became the core of North Korea's arm force. And it's in this war that the Chinese volunteer army reached a stalemate with the strongest army in the world American army. This war result has changed the western view of China and led the United States to reevaluate its far-east strategy since they

can't risk the economic and military control of East Asia. Wanting to control the growth of Red China, the United States places Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan as the primary country to limit China's behavior. For all these reasons, I certainly believe that by studying the Korean war, we will have a better prediction of the future world.

3. ANALYSIS OF DIFFERENT FIELDS IN THE KOREAN WAR

On July 27, 2013, on the 60th anniversary of the signing of the Korean Armistice Agreement, US President Barack Obama declared next to the Korean War Memorial on the national lawn in Washington, "We can say with confidence that the war was not a draw, and it was a victory. "[3]. This statement has changed the tradition of successive U.S. presidents to treat the Korean War as a draw, and it has attracted special attention. What's the reason? Obama claims: "50 million South Korean people live in a free and vibrant democracy. South Korea is one of the most dynamic economies in the world, in sharp contrast to oppression and poverty in the northern part of the Korean Peninsula. It is victory, and this is your legacy. "[3] This passage has aroused strong repercussions worldwide. But is the winner of the Korean War truly the United States?

4. MILITARY RESULT

Firstly, although some people think that China's sending out of the Korean War was a draw, an in-depth analysis of the specific situations of the two warring parties will lead to the conclusion that It's no doubt that the Chinese army won a great victory in the Korean War. The Korean War originated on the 38th line. After the armistice, the actual control line of the North and South regimes on the peninsula was delineated near the 38th line, which somehow indicates that no party benefits.

However, the result will be different if we see it from another perspective. The United States, they have two goals: The basic goal is to help South Korea gain independence from the invasion of North Korea. The final goal is to help South Korea unify the Korean Peninsula. And with its strong military power, the United States has almost achieved both goals. If they do not intentionally cross the borderline between China and North Korea, China won't have a good reason to fight back.

For China, its initial goal is to protect territory invasion from the United States. The second goal is to help North Korea regain its independence. Judging from the results, China has achieved two goals, while the United States only achieved its basic goal. These views have also been recognized by Wuzhan & Wujie: The textbook informs the reader that once the Chinese forces entered the war, they and the North Korean Army forced the American forces back to the thirty-eighth parallel

through a series of campaigns that consisted of "five battles and five victories." The ceasefire that ended the war was also a "huge victory" for the Chinese and North Koreans, while the Americans were compelled to sign it. The museum portrays the same victory. The Fifth Campaign, Peng Dehuai's regrets aside, is described as a victory for the Chinese forces that shifted north to strengthen the front along the thirty-eighth parallel. The final assessment of the war is that it was successful in defending the peace and security of China and North Korea and that a "peaceful solution to the Korea issue" through an armistice had been China's purpose from the beginning. Compared with the United States, the Chinese military's initial weapons and equipment were backward, and its economic strength was weak. As the main force of the "United Nations Army", the U.S. military has a modern force with the world's first-class weapons and equipment. However, the Chinese army that has just entered North Korea has only a small number of heavy weapons. With both air and sea power under the control of its opponents, China has relied entirely on the superiority of military decision-making and the bravery and stubbornness of the soldiers to win victory after the battle. Although the Chinese army was assisted by the Soviet Union in the later period of the war, it was still at an absolute disadvantage. Under such a situation of disparity in strength, after five battles, the Chinese army successfully pushed the "United Nations Army" that had been approaching the Yalu River back to the area south of the 37th line and reached a stalemate with the enemy's tug near the 38th line. Months later, the United States, which finally could not afford to fight again, offered to initiate truce negotiations. The Chinese army defeated the myth of invincibility of the U.S. army in one fell swoop. And this was a victory. From the perspective of the death of the soldiers, in August 1953, the Chinese Army and the Korean People's Army jointly announced that: *The results of the Korean War were 10.93 million enemies, of which 397,000 were the United States, 667,000 were the Korean Army, and other countries Forces 29,000. The United States and South Korea report even greater numbers of human losses. In October of the same year, the Associated Press announced the casualties of the "United Nations Army", including the South Korean Army, which lost more than 1.47 million people. The official loss of the U.S. military is 142,000, and the loss of South Korea is nearly 990,000. Judging from the results of the Chinese army alone, it has wiped out more than 700,000 enemies, including more than 290,000 U.S. troops, and its casualties are only over 366,000.*[4]

According to the data above, the relatively low casualty's percentage proves the Chinese victory.

5. ECONOMIC RESULT

Secondly, from an economic perspective, The Korean War may seem like a victory for the United States in the

short term, but China's long-term economic gain is more significant. From the United States perspective, firstly, It gained the overall control of South Korea right after the war. It is because of this war that the United States is still stationing nearly 30,000 troops in South Korea. And more importantly, the United States gained economic benefits in the war: As can be seen in figure four, as in World War II, there is an increase in the growth of GDP, albeit smaller, for the 1950-53 time period. Investment and consumption flattened while the overall growth rate was driven by government spending. President Truman relied largely on taxation and a reduction in non-military outlays as opposed to borrowing from the public or money creation policies to finance the conflict. To facilitate this, the government enacted the Revenue Act of 1950 which reinstated the income tax rates of World War II, boosting taxes by an estimated 1.3% of GDP. 13 This was followed by further increases of individual and corporate taxes in 1951" [5]. On the contrary, China's instant economic reaction to the Korean war is disastrous. At that period, China was still an agriculture-based country with no complete industrial system: "China is one of the least developed countries in the socialist camp. The industrial output value in modern times only accounts for 12.3% of the total industrial and agricultural output value, and the production ratio of production materials accounts for only 5.5%. In addition to the war of more than ten years, industrial production has been severely damaged. By the early 1950s, such damage had reached 50% in the power industry and 90% in the iron and steel industry, while the Northeast region where the industry was concentrated was generally between 50-70%" [6]. Their annual national output cannot support them for war. Thus, by borrowing almost everything from the Soviet Union to support, China was in debt to the Soviet Union as high as 5.676 billion rubles. And the Korean War brought a lot of economic losses to China. As Dyson discusses:

Between 1950 and 1953, the Chinese government spent 33 to 43 percent of its total budget on defense, with a total of 6.2 billion yuan spent on the war. This expenditure placed a strain on China's domestic spending as the country struggled to rebuild an economy ravaged by decades of invasion and civil war. [7]

However, during the Korean War, the patriotism of the Chinese people was unprecedentedly high, and the enthusiasm for production was fully stimulated. The recovery of China's national economy was not delayed because of the war but instead completed ahead of schedule. While ensuring the needs of the Korean War, the Communist Party of China actively took measures to restore the national economy. Encouraged by frequent reports on the battlefield of the Chinese People's Volunteer Army, "The patriotism awareness of the people throughout the country has been greatly enhanced, and the national self-esteem and self-confidence have been greatly strengthened. As a result, the enthusiasm for consciously supporting the resistance to the United States

and North Korea has been raised... Workers and farmers are actively working to increase production. At the same time, we implemented a strict economy and provided more than 6 million tons of materials for the Korean War"[8]. It is because of the high production enthusiasm of people throughout the country that they fully supported the war against the United States. Although the original national economic recovery plan was adjusted due to the needs of the war, the recovery of the national economy did not stagnate, and the production progress even exceeded expectations. By October 1952, China's industrial and agricultural production capacity had all been restored to its highest level in history, and the restoration plan had been completed in advance. More importantly, it's because of the Korean war that The Soviet government promised to help China build 50 key projects in the coal, power, steel, non-ferrous metals, chemical, machinery, and military industries sectors that are urgently needed to restore the Chinese economy. These projects lay the foundation for the current industrial system in China, forming the so-called world factory. With both growths in national spirit, a recovery of the national economy, and advanced industrialization helped by other countries, China benefits the most from the Korean War economically.

6. POLITICAL RESULT

Thirdly, considering the political aspect, China has won completely. On the one hand, the great victory of resisting the United States and assisting North Korea established New China's status as a world power on the world stage. If China loses in the Korean war, not only will China face the pressure of America's territory expansion, but it will also be back to the same position as the government of the Republic of China, and the Soviet Union will lose confidence in China, turn to assist the Vietnamese Communist Party. After three years of bloody fighting against the United States, the Chinese volunteer soldiers defeated the arrogance of the world's strongest power and solemnly declared to the world: China is not a country without combat effectiveness. More importantly, the victory of resistance to the United States and aid of North Korea has greatly established the national pride and self-confidence of the Chinese people and has injected a strong spiritual force into the construction of China's socialist cause. China's previous individual wars against the invaders like the opium wars and the Anti-Japanese War all failed. This repeated defeat not only made the world power despise the "sick man in East Asia", but also caused many Chinese people to completely lose their pride and self-confidence. However, for the United States, it's unacceptable to lose a war to almost the poorest country in the world with the cheapest weapons. And this loss has led the U.S. Army to rethink its approach to the modern limited war. After the cease-fire in North Korea, tensions in Asia have begun to ease. Relevant remaining issues need to be negotiated.

The international situation after the Second World War has entered a new stage. The pattern of international relations is undergoing changes and adjustments. The issue between North Korea and Indochina is two sensitive but critical issues. The War to Resist US Aggression and Aid Korea and China's earlier struggle to aid Vietnam and France have given China a say in North Korea and Indochina. And the Geneva Conference became an opportunity for New China to enter the international arena. With this opportunity, Zhou Enlai could stand at the conference, show the diplomatic style of New China, and promote the solution of the Indochina issue. These diplomatic achievements are inseparable from the war against Korea. The Korean War also strengthened the alliance between China and the Soviet Union to some extent. As Dyson puts it:

However, the war hardly improved Sino-American relations. The Korean War instead pushed China closer to the Soviet Union. After the Korean War, the alliance between China and the USSR entered its strongest period. However, the war also exacerbated the two countries' differences over ideology and weakened Chinese leaders' respect for their Moscow counterparts. [7] In addition, the Korean War removed China from Soviet control. The victory of the resistance to the United States and the DPRK led Stalin to believe that the Northeast, which was within the sphere of influence of the Soviet Union, would be transferred to China, but unlike the Yugoslav incident, such a result appeared under Stalin's "invitation". It is conceivable that the geopolitical changes from Yugoslavia in the Balkans to Northeast China that broke away from Soviet control were very difficult for Stalin. However, the development and growth of China's power will certainly strengthen the strength of the Sino-Soviet Union. Therefore, China again wins politically.

7. CONCLUSIONS

From the above analysis, the conclusion is clear: China is the actual winner of the Korean war in all concerning aspects, and the benefits they acquired from this war have helped this country to develop till now. And for the United States, it's a serious loss, which gives reasons for the white house to change the foreign policy about China.

Right after the Korean war, the United States has greatly strengthened its policy of containment and isolation to China. In May 1951, the Fifth Session of the UN General Assembly passed a resolution to impose an embargo on China and North Korea, with the Soviet Union and other countries refusing to vote and India and other countries abstaining from voting. China's trade with capitalist countries has fallen sharply. The Korean War convinced American policymakers that China is a more dangerous enemy than the Soviet Union, and the most immediate threat to American security is not Europe. The main manifestations of the strong hardening of the U.S.

policy toward China are severe economic blockade; continued isolation of China politically; and the establishment of a military system in the Asia-Pacific region, including South Korea, the Philippines, Japan, Thailand, Australia, New Zealand, and Taiwan. China's crescent shape surrounds the situation. After the end of the Korean War, the U.S. strategy to contain communism specifically contained China in the Far East. This is the main goal of the U.S. Far East strategy. It became a basic U.S. policy toward China, and the pattern of Sino-U.S. Confrontation continued for almost 20 years.

After knowing the knowledge and facts about the Korean war from today's perspective, people should rethink the current global political situation. China is undeniably growing more influential now than in the Korean war period, and the world should take it seriously. A profound reshaping of the global governance system will take place in the following decade and the world is moving toward multi-polarity and greater economic globalization amid setbacks. Geopolitical hotspots keep emerging, and the dark shadow of terrorism and armed conflicts still haunts us. We are witnessing major changes unfolding in our world, something unseen in a century. This is a world of both opportunities and challenges for us emerging markets and developing countries. With the experience of the Korean war, world power should realize that the growth of China is an opportunity to promote each other rather than a potential risk. Every country should seize the development opportunities, jointly meet challenges, and play a constructive role in building a new type of international relations and a community with a shared future for mankind.

We must agree with the fact that historical memory itself influences international behavior. Zheng Wang pointed out in his "Unforgettable National Disgrace" that China's historical memory has deeply influenced China's politics and international relations. [9]. As the Korean War cannot be ignored in the long history of China and the United States, we can firmly believe that the memory of the Korean War can also play a role. A group of scholars surveyed Chinese and American college students about their views on national pride and Sino-US relations after explaining different Korean wars. The results show that Chinese students are sensitive to how to portray war and the story process. The more negative views of the war, the more anxious students will be about the relationship between the two countries. Compared to the control group, they also increased their anger in any description of the war. In addition, the different accounts they read affect whether they think the United States will avoid conflict with China and what foreign policy they adopt. Although the Korean War ended 60 years ago, its memory still has the potential to shape diplomatic relations.

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