

# **A Brief History of the Korean War** *(aka, the longest war in modern history)*



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Pyongyang Falls, October 1950

# Timeline of Division and Korean War

- 1910-1945 Japanese occupation of Korea
- 1945
  - End of WWII
  - Division of Korea at the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel
- 1948
  - Establishment of ROK and DPRK
- 6/25/1950
  - Start of Korean War
  - 09/1950 Battle of Incheon
  - 10-12/1950 China enters the war
- 06/1951
  - Soviets call for armistice talks
- 7/27/1953
  - Armistice agreement is signed

## The Division of Korea

1945—38<sup>th</sup> parallel

1953 – Military Demarcation Line  
(location of the front line at the signing  
of the Armistice Agreement)

DMZ –bounded by the Northern Limit  
Line and Southern Limit Line, 2 km on  
either side of the MDL

Extends 155 miles across the width of  
the peninsula

The NLL or western maritime border in  
the Yellow Sea was never agreed upon  
and is still highly contested



AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF,  
UNITED NATIONS COMMAND, ON THE ONE HAND, AND  
THE SUPREME COMMANDER OF THE KOREAN PEOPLE'S  
ARMY AND THE COMMANDER OF THE CHINESE  
PEOPLE'S VOLUNTEERS, ON THE OTHER HAND,  
CONCERNING A MILITARY ARMISTICE IN KOREA

P R E A M B L E

The undersigned, the Commander-in-Chief, United Nations Command, on the one hand, and the Supreme Commander of the Korean People's Army and the Commander of the Chinese People's Volunteers, on the other hand, in the interest of stopping the Korean conflict, with its great toll of suffering and bloodshed on both sides, and with the objective of establishing an armistice which will insure a complete cessation of hostilities and of all acts of armed force in Korea until a final peaceful settlement is achieved, do individually, collectively, and mutually agree to accept and to be bound and governed by the conditions and terms of armistice set forth in the following Articles and Paragraphs, which said conditions and terms are intended to be purely military in character and to pertain solely to the belligerents in Korea.

# The Armistice Agreement

“AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF, UN COMMAND, ON THE ONE HAND, AND THE SUPREME COMMANDER OF THE KOREAN PEOPLE’S ARMY AND THE COMMANDER OF THE CHINESE PEOPLE’S VOLUNTEERS, ON THE OTHER HAND, CONCERNING A MILITARY ARMISTICE IN KOREA”

US/UN

DPRK

PRC

~~ROK~~

# Why No Peace Treaty?

- Armistice was signed with an intention to reconvene to sign a peace treaty –but the subsequent talks failed.
- Korean War is thus the longest war in modern history.
- UN resolution 3390B passed in 1975: “the real parties of the Armistice [must replace it] “with a peace agreement as a measure to ease tension and maintain and consolidate peace in Korea” (cited in Stephen Lee 2013) – requiring withdrawal of U.S. troops and dissolution of the UNC.
- 1976 JSA Axe Incident – nearly started another Korea War; utilized by U.S. to kill UN discussion of resolution 3390B and to paint NK as hostile and irrational.

# The Division System

- The division is a “system” that has become naturalized –it reproduces itself, state power, and U.S. empire\*
- The division system and the armistice have perpetuated the build-up of militarization, SK dependence on the U.S., and ROK and DPRK violence against their own citizens.
- The U.S. position has been that the armistice serves to prevent war and create stability in the region—this has proven to be **exactly the opposite**.
- There have been countless violations of the armistice on both sides since the establishment of the DMZ.
- A peace treaty is not “appeasement”; it is the only way to make forward progress and move toward true stability.
- \*See Paik Nak-chung, *The Division System In Crisis*, UC Press, 2011.

# South Korean Views

*To the South Korean government, which speaks only of a solution of dialogue and peace in this situation of sharp confrontation, the president of the United States has said, "They only understand one thing." It's an accurate comment. Koreans really do understand only one thing. We understand that any solution that is not peace is meaningless and that "victory" is just an empty slogan, absurd and impossible. People who absolutely do not want another proxy war are living, here and now, on the Korean Peninsula.*

Han Kang, "While the U.S. Talks of War, South Korea Shudders," *New York Times*, 10/7/2017