**Korean War**

**Intro**

What do do with Korea was one of those decisions which the Big Three postponed at Yalta and Potsdam

Korea was strategically important because of its position *vis a vis* China and Japan

When the Soviets declared war on Japan in 1945, they entered Manchuria and Korea

38th parallel was accepted as the partition line - Communist North, Anti-communist south

To stem communist influence in the south Truman accepted virulently anticommunists regime in the south (some who had collaborated with the Japanese) - Syngman Rhee

The Soviets installed a satellite state under Kim Il Sung

In 1947 the UN wanted to sponsor country wide elections but Soviets would not permit supervision in the North

Elections happened in the south after which the US withdrew its occupation troops

The victory of the communist Chinese in 1949 increased the strategic importance of Korea

Soviets boycotted the UN in 1949-50 over its refusal to recognize the Communist gov’t

**North Korean Attack**

North Korean attack in June 1950 was a surprise to everyone - including the USSR & China

North gambled that the west would not intervene - Acheson had not included Korea in the Containment perimeter

Truman asked the UN Security council to condemn the attack and authorise military countermeasures

USSR boycott meant they could not exercise its veto

The North Korean army quickly pushed the Southern army further and further south

Soviets quickly supplied military material to the North and denounced American intervention

American believed the attack was the brain-child of the Soviets - probing the containment perimeter for weakness

Without a formal declaration of war, Truman authorised US combat troops to operate in Korea - Police Action - under General MacArthur

In summer fighting the UN forces were almost pushed into the sea - Pusan Perimeter

MacArthur broke the siege by landing at Inchon

The UN then moved rapidly north - threatening the Chinese border - Yalu river

The Chinese then entered the war (Oct 1950) with over a million men - pushed the UN forces back below the 38th parallel by mid November 1950

UN nations grew concerned that the war could escalate ≈into a global nuclear war

MacArthur advocated a blockade of Chinese ports, bombing of Chinese cites, and military support for an attack by Chinese nationalists in Taiwan - began thinking about nuclear weapons

Truman believed this would cause a world war and dismissed MacArthur

**Ceasefire and Peace**

July 1951 cease fire declared

Negotiations were long and painful - repatriation of prisoners

Finally a peace settlement was reached in July 1953 reestablishing the 38th parallel as the border

* North Korea became a full Soviet ally
* The South would never be fully democratic
* The south developed a thriving capitalist economy
* The North became a closed country - still is

**Evaluation**

The US spent $15 billion dollars on the war

This need for military material quickened the economic recovery of both Germany and Japan as well as contributing to the rearmament of Germany

Although 15 UN countries sent troops, half the ground forces and nearly all the naval and air forces were American

In terms of stopping communist expansion, the action was seen as a success by the US and reinforced its belief that decisive military force could stop the communists anywhere - vote of confidence for containment

After 1953 the US became deeply involved in Asia

* US financed 3/4 of French war in Indochina by 1954
* SEATO
* ANZUS
* Support for South Vietnam
* Combat troops in Vietnam - 1965

The Korean war sped up the “rehabilitation of Japan”

The 38th parallel is the last great Cold War frontier

**Historiography**

Stoessinger:

* Outbreak was either a probing action initiated by Stalin - war end after he died or a way to pressure China - Sino-Soviet relations were not even cordial
* Truman genuinely believed that his actions were in the interest of collective security as set out by the UN Charter - not using UN as a tool of American foreign policy
* After Inchon Truman was swayed by the possibility reuniting Korea & began to use the UN as an instrument of US foreign policy
* MacArthur’s hubris caused him to underestimate the Chinese and thus caused the widening of the war
* Chinese intervention proved that China was a power to be reckoned with and thus helped achieve more of a balance of power, which in the end contributed to better relations with the west. As a result the Chinese threat was viewed with extreme caution in the Vietnam War
* Because the UN had essentially taken sides in the conflict it lost its ability to be a mediator. This contributed to the politicization of he institution for 40 years.

Kissinger:

* The ambiguity of American Containment policy *vis a vis* Korea emboldened the communists
* Numerous American leaders had publicly placed Korea outside the boundaries of containment - the North Koreans had no reason to believe the US would stand and fight
* Much of US thinking was in terms of a global war rather than a regional war
* US Japanese policy would have been undermined by a communist Korea
* Truman cast the struggle in terms of Wilsonian ideals and painted it as an assault on the free world
* By making it a war of principles as opposed to a matter of power politics, war aims and goals became difficult to define (when would the war be over?) - the US had formed its war policy previously in terms of unconditional surrender
* Balance restoring the status quo and punishment for aggression
* Containment Theory led Truman to believe Korea was part of a plan of global communism and thus justified “rolling back” communism in Asia - move north of he 38th parallel
* Mao saw American aggression in the same terms - the beginning of an attempt to turn around the 1949 Chinese communist victory
* Mao also saw the associated aid to the French in Indochina, and Nationalist Chinese in Taiwan as capitalist encirclement
* American operations have always separated strategic and diplomatic activities - first the military achieves the desired outcome and then the diplomats take over - this doesn’t work in a limited war. Diplomacy and strategy must be coordinated to determine when the war is over.
* If the military dominates the line between limited war and all out war is blurred
* If the diplomats dominate, you are fighting for negotiation strength and a stalemate is likely
* The US fell into both of these traps
* The best decision would have been to advance to within 100 miles of the Yalu River - major political success without challenging China
* Stalin encouraged the Chinese to enter the war to increase their dependence on Moscow
* In the end Truman had to choose between all-out war and stalemate - it cÏhose stalemate
* “the US dared not wine and could not afford to loose”
* The most important outcome of the war was to establish the role of collective action in the post WWII world
* Fundamental difference between Vietnam and Korea was that in Korea the critics of the gov’t were advocating victory at all costs whereas in Vietnam 15 years later they were urging acceptance of defeat
* Kissinger believes that
* America was the winner in Korea - communism had been halted (at some cost)
* Chinese success was mixed - showed her force, but learned the dangers of confronting the US material
* USSR was the looser - the war had boosted US defense expenditure (X3), turned Atlantic alliance into a fighting force, set the stage for the rearmament of Germany