



ASA resolution calling for a decolonizing peace and a formal end to the Korean War

Whereas the Korean War broke out in the same early Cold War moment that the American Studies Association (ASA) formed as a scholarly organization dedicated to the interdisciplinary study of U.S. history, culture, and politics, thus entailing critical reflection on how the Cold War conditioned knowledge production within the U.S. academy about the massive deployment of U.S. war and police power;

Whereas the ASA, especially in the wake of 9/11, has taken powerful and principled stances against imperialism, the militarization of U.S. universities, and academic collusion with the national security state, emerging as a vital arena for scholarship on and activist organizing against past, present, and ongoing forms of racial and colonial violence:

Whereas 2020 marked the seventieth year of the unresolved Korean War, an asymmetrical war of U.S. aggression precipitated by the 1945 U.S. decision to divide Korea at the 38th parallel without consulting the Korean people and undermining the Korean people's long struggle against Japanese colonial rule and historic efforts to realize democratic self-governance;

Whereas the United States, the primary Korean War belligerent and the world's greatest nuclear proliferator and detonator, has refused to sign onto a permanent peaceful settlement, despite the temporary July 1953 armistice recommendation that the major signatories--the United States, North Korea, and China--negotiate peace terms within three months' time, in contrast to North Korea's numerous requests to end the Korean War;

Whereas without a peace agreement, war can resume at any time in Korea, which stands to destroy the lives of 80 million people on the peninsula in addition to many other Asian and Pacific Islander peoples, and in this era of a nuclear-armed North Korea to inflict catastrophe within the United States and on a planetary scale;

Whereas the ongoing state of war and division in Korea has exacted a massive human toll by keeping millions of families separated, including roughly 100,000 Korean Americans, by legitimating an exploitative system of international adoption, by authorizing a punitive and unrelenting regime of U.S.-driven sanctions that predictably harms North Korean public health and human security, by subjecting the peoples of Korea and the region to the constant threat of nuclear war, and by perpetuating an arms race that diverts resources from human needs and justifies the proliferation of garrison states;

Whereas U.S. military empire in Asia and the Pacific exploits the pretext of a menacing North Korea and the sub-imperial complicity of regional client-states, as in the South Korean deployment of over 300,000 soldiers to fight alongside U.S. forces in the U.S. war in Vietnam and in the strategic

incorporation of sites like Diego Garcia, Guam, the Marshall Islands, Hawai'i, and Okinawa into its "forward-deployed" posture against North Korea;

Whereas the Korean War, as a structure of permanent war, exacts an imperial toll, justifying monstrous trillion-dollar "defense" budgets--in 2015, 54% of the federal discretionary budget--enabling the United States to wage endless wars and maintain troops abroad, the contamination, resource exploitation, and seizure of Indigenous lands, and the militarization of poor, non-white peoples within its army, correlating to unemployment, austerity programs that deny access to decent education, healthcare, and housing, and the militarization of the police;

Whereas the Korean War, the longest-running U.S. conflict, enabled the United States to consolidate its global military-imperial dominance, inaugurating the U.S. military-industrial complex and justifying its base expansion, while continually justifying U.S. power projection in the region, its encirclement of China, and the ever-expanding U.S. military budget;

Whereas contrary to U.S. government and corporate media claims, U.S. joint military exercises with South Korea continue, rehearsing the collapse, invasion, and occupation of--as well as nuclear first strikes against--North Korea, according to the Pentagon's operation plans;

Whereas the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula must be understood as imposing a commensurate obligation on the United States, given its history of repeatedly threatening North Korea with nuclear decimation and in violation of the 1953 Armistice deploying nuclear warheads to South Korea from 1958 to 1991, thereby requiring the elimination of *all* nuclear threats to the peninsula;

Whereas only a genuine peace agreement among the main parties to the Korean War, reflective of the Korean people's struggle for decolonization, self-determination, liberation, and reunification, can reduce the risk of nuclear and conventional war in Korea;

Whereas the leaders of North and South Korea at the historic summit at Panmunjom on April 27, 2018 "solemnly declared before the 80 million Korean people and the whole world that there will be no more war on the Korean Peninsula and thus a new era of peace has begun," and pledged to work together for independent unification, and in September 2018, signed an historic military agreement to cease all hostile acts and have taken concrete steps to transform the so-called demilitarized zone (DMZ) into an actual peace zone;

Whereas, since the historic 2018 summit between North Korea and the United States, diplomacy has stalled, escalating threats of war, intensifying the possibility that North Korea will cease its self-imposed moratorium on nuclear weapons testing and full-scale U.S.-South Korea war exercises will resume;

Be it resolved that the ASA:

- Supports the Korean people who have long fought for peace and the self-determined unification of the Korean peninsula and considers ending the Korean War a necessary step in the decolonization of South Korea;

- Enacts solidarity with the peoples of Asia, the Pacific, and North America who have long waged anti-militarism struggles against the projection of U.S. war power in and militarized expropriation of their homelands;
- Calls on the United States to abolish its seven-decade policy of hostility and sweeping sanctions that isolate North Korea and aim to inflict widespread humanitarian catastrophe on its people, formally end the Korean War, and replace the 1953 Armistice Agreement with a permanent peace agreement;
- Demands that the United States to stop all military exercises that deploy or introduce its strategic assets on the Korean peninsula, abolish its nuclear umbrella over South Korea, Asia, and the Pacific, and meet its own obligations to create a nuclear-free world;
- Initiates critical reflection on and collective action regarding the complicity of U.S. universities within the military-industrial complex and our role as socially engaged scholars to analyze the structural moorings of our own conditions of possibility; and
- Encourages students and scholars to engage in a research and teaching initiative, commenced Fall 2020, that emphasizes critical approaches to and collective inquiry about the Korean War, with a focus on the racial, sexual, colonial, and sub-imperial violence of U.S. war power as well as peoples' struggles for decolonization.

Resources:

[The Korea Policy Institute](#) (Teaching Initiative page under construction)

[The Unending Korean War](#) (2015 special issue of *positions: asia critique*)

[Jeremy Kuzmarov, "The Korean War: Barbarism Unleashed," United States Foreign Policy History and Resource Guide, 2016](#)

[Social Text/Periscope: Korea and Demilitarized Peace, December 2018](#)

[Korea Policy Institute Readers](#) (2019, 2020)

[제국의 제재: Sanctions of Empire](#) (Nodutdol zine, 2020)

[White Terror, "Red" Island: A People's Archive of the Jeju 4.3 Uprising and Massacre](#)

Historical Documents:

[The Cairo Declaration, November 26, 1953](#)

[John Muccio letter to Dean Rusk, July 26, 1950; see also, Sahr Conway-Lanz, "Beyond No Gun Ri: Refugees and the U.S. Military in the Korean War," *Diplomatic History* \(January 2005\)](#)

[The Korean War Armistice Agreement, July 27, 1953](#)

[Mutual Defense Treaty, October 1, 1953](#)

[Status of Forces Agreements \(1966, 1991, 2001\)](#)

[Barack Obama, "Remarks by the President at 60th Anniversary of the Korean War Armistice," July 27, 2013](#)