

## LP<sup>2</sup> STUDY GROUP PROPOSAL FOR FALL 2022

### KOREA – THE FORGOTTEN WAR

**Coordinator:** John Becker

On June 25, 2020, an article appeared titled "70 Years Ago Today, the So-Called 'Forgotten War' Began in Korea." A *New York Times* article in the January 1, 2018 edition was titled "Korean War, a 'Forgotten' Conflict That Shaped the Modern World." In this study group, we examine the reasoning and the implications behind both headlines. We consider several aspects of the conflict, including how the Cold War explains many of the decisions of the Truman administration; what reasons specific to Korean history motivated the leaders of both North and South Korea to seek military confrontation; how US domestic politics led to certain decisions; why President Truman relieved General Douglas MacArthur of his command; and what effect the war had on US–China relations for many years. Finally, we consider the effect of the war on the National Security state that has persisted in the US into the 21st century.

**John Becker** has coordinated many study groups in history, literature and cinema.

**Type of Study Group:** Mostly discussion

**Readings and other Materials/Online Services:**

Coursepack (approximately \$25, provided by coordinator) which includes excerpts from:

*The Coldest Winter* by David Halberstam;

*The United States and the Origins of the Cold War* by John Lewis Gaddis;

*The Korean War* by Bruce Cumings;

*The Korean War* by Max Hastings;

*The Korean Conflict* by Burton I. Kaufman;

"Crossing the 38th" by Walter LaFeber, a chapter from *Reflections on the Cold War* edited by Lynn H. Miller and Ronald W. Pruessen;

*Drawing the Line* by Richard Whelan.

\*\*\*\*\* **SYLLABUS - A WORK IN PROGRESS** \*\*\*\*\*

**WEEK 1**

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**TOPIC:** Cold War context

**READING:** from Gaddis

**QUESTIONS:**

What was the attitude of the US toward Korea in the late 1940s? What events during the Cold War in the late 1940s affected US decision making once hostilities began in June 1950?

### WEEK 2

**TOPIC:** Korea as a civil war

**READING:** from Cumings

**QUESTIONS:**

Why can the Korean War be understood (at least partly) as a civil war that occurred because of decisions made by Korean leaders in the North and the South hoping to achieve goals that were specific to Korea? To what extent was the war fought over issues going back to Korea's colonial experience under Japanese rule from 1910 to 1945?

### WEEK 3

**TOPIC:** Washington goes to war

**READING:** from Halberstam

**QUESTIONS:**

For what reasons did President Truman and his foreign policy team decide that the North Korean invasion must be resisted with military force? Which decisions made by the Truman administration would have several long-term implications regarding US policies in Asia?

### WEEK 4

**TOPIC:** Military peril, military success

**READING:** from Halberstam

### WEEK 5

**TOPIC:** Expanding the war

**READING:** from LaFeber

### WEEK 6

**TOPIC:** China intervenes

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**READING:** from Kaufman

### WEEK 7

**TOPIC:** The Winter of Crisis

**READING:** from Hastings

### WEEK 8

**TOPIC:** The General and the President

**READING:** from Halberstam

### WEEK 9

**TOPIC:** Stalemate

**READING:** from Whelan

### WEEK 10

**TOPIC:** The pursuit of peace

**READING:** from Hastings

### WEEK 11

**TOPIC:** The consequences

**READING:** from Halberstam

### WEEK 12

**TOPIC:** Remaking the United States and the Cold War

**READING:** from Cumings