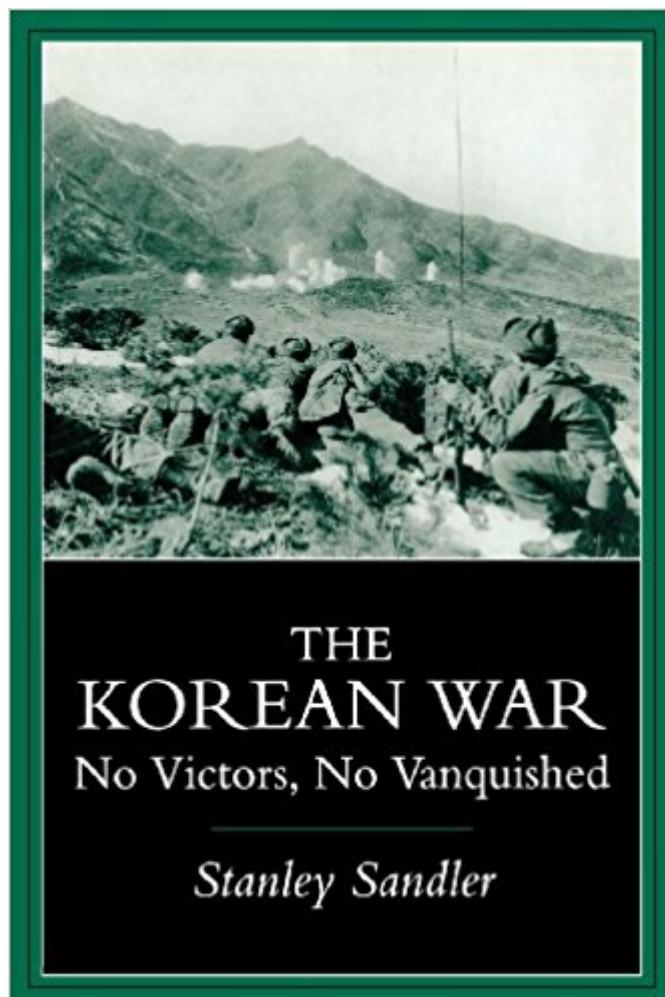


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# The Korean War: No Victors, No Vanquished



## **Synopsis**

The Korean War has been termed "The Forgotten War" or the "Unknown War." It is a conflict which never assumed the mythic character of the American Civil War or World War II. However, this book asserts, it would be impossible to understand the Cold War and indeed post 1945 global history without knowledge of the Korean War. Providing a history of the Korean peninsula before the war and including a detailed analysis of the fighting itself, The Korean War goes beyond the battlefield to deal with the war in the air, ground attack, and air evacuation. The study also evaluates the contributions of the UN naval forces, the impact of the war on various homefronts and issues such as defectors, opposition to the war, racial segregation and integration, POWs and the media. Recently-released Soviet documents are used to assess the role of China, the Soviet Union, North and South Korea and the allied forces in the conflict. This fascinating work offers a unique analysis of the Korean War and will be invaluable to students of twentieth-century history, particularly those concerned with American and Pacific history.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

The Korean War broke out almost 50 years ago, an unpleasant surprise to the American people and the occasion of a good deal of criticism of the American military. Chinese and Russian documents recently made public have shed new light on battlefield decisions. Benefiting from this newly declassified material as well as established sources, Sandler offers a timely new look at the war. A historian for the U.S. Army Special Operations Command and the editor of *The Korean War: An Encyclopedia* (LJ 2/1/96) and *Segregated Skies: The All-Black USAAF Units of World War II* (LJ 6/1/92), Sandler concentrates on a chronological narrative of the flow of events but rather

confusingly intersperses several chapters on special facets such as the air war and the home fronts. Still, with its up-to-date information and extensive bibliography, this book is highly recommended as a supplement to subject collections. AEdwin B. Burgess, U.S. Army Combined Arms Research Lib., Fort Leavenworth, KS Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Sandler's provocative monograph throws new light on many aspects of the Korean War and casts doubt on much conventional wisdom. His chronology may be stronger on the diplomatic background, including the history of Korea from the sixteenth century onward, than on military events--he scants such episodes as the rout of the U.S. 2d Infantry Division in late 1950. But, by using Communist documents recently made available, he demonstrates that the North Koreans unquestionably attacked first, that Stalin had serious reservations about aiding the Chinese, that the initial red MIG-15 pilots were Russians, and that the handling of POWs on both sides was disgraceful. Add to those items judicious assessments of all the UN troops (the Americans learned faster and the South Koreans fought better than tradition has it) and a comprehensive scholarly apparatus, and Sandler unquestionably and notably augments the literature on a conflict that decisively affected the ultimate outcome of the cold war and the fate of Korea. Roland Green --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

This book, like every other book on the Korean War, implies that the conflict fizzled out in Jul 1953. While the author highlights the Battle of Pork Chop Hill and indicates the Chinese conducted a series of offensives in Jun, Sandler makes no mention of the Battle of Kumsong in July 1953, which was the fiercest of the Chinese offensives since 1951. This book, supposedly about the "Forgotten War," helps keep the memory of the most "Forgotten Battle" of the War, forgotten by history.

Stanley Sandler provides the reader with an in-depth look at a very broad range of topics on the Korean War in his work "The Korean War: No Victors, No Vanquished." Sandler covers some new topics I had not seen before, but for what he offers in breadth, he sacrificed the depth of coverage. For a 270-page book, it was a very effective trade-off. Sandler offers insight into the modern history of Korea through the end of World War II, and the series of strategic miscalculations that led to Kim II Sung's invasion of South Korea. The discussion of the ebb and flow of battle was at the Corps level, with Sandler making examples of units of interest. There are far too many to mention, but two of these examples are the US Marines 'attack in a different direction' to leave the Chosin Reservoir, and one of the allied contributions, "The Immortal Glousters", whose exploits are highlighted in the

outstanding book "The Edge of the Sword", by Sir Anthony Farrar-Hockley. From an airpower perspective, his brief discussions on the USAF are both accurate, but not all encompassing. Sandler mentioned that USAF budgetary position, pursued the acquisition of a strategic nuclear bomber force (i.e. the B-36) at the sacrifice of some of the fighter skills learned during World War II. Once the first MiGs were deployed to Korea, Sandler briefly mentions the deployment of the 4th Fighter Interceptor Wing and the latter approval to send 75 more F-86 Sabres. What Sandler omitted from this discussion on Airpower was the overall worldwide strategic context at the time. The USA was still convinced Korea was a feint to draw American forces into Korea, leaving Western Europe without a major contributor to repel a Soviet invasion of Western Europe. With this mindset in place, the USAF was reserving the "front line" F-86 aircraft for service in Germany, not Korea. He mentions this strategy elsewhere, but he failed to include this analysis in his discussion on the aviation contributions. Sandler does provide a very comprehensive discussion on all the contributions of all the United Nations who deployed forces to Korea. He also provides insight into many other sociological issues such as racial integration of American forces, and the situation on the homefront. Sandler also discusses some of the technological innovations (helicopter, medical facilities) that took place during the war. It is by no means a comprehensive book, but overall it is a very good survey book providing the reader with a very broad introduction to the Korean War.

Stanley Sandler writes a concise and seemingly standard history of the Korean War. This is a well-rounded account, including perspectives on the political issues, negotiations, and reactions on the home fronts. Of course, full accounts of the progressive military campaigns fill out the rest of the book. Sandler does a good job of encapsulating this in 270 pages. He is at times supportive and at times critical of the U.S. and U.N. effort in Korea. The same can be said of the personalities involved on all sides, except for both Kim Il Sung and Syngman Rhee who were determined to pursue the war to disasterous ends. But, like the conflict itself, this book is not inspiring. Not that the author or his writing lack inspiration. The book does what it sets out to do. It provides a detailed account of the contentious and uncertain time. Yet, Sandler didn't seem to offer much new information in his text besides some perspective on Stalin's motivations from now-available Soviet documents. But, this was relatively minor. The opening of records in P'yongyang one day will provide much new information. In the mean time, Stanly Sandler's offering is a good place to start. And the impressive bibliography points to many good sources for future reference.

Vanquished Reaching back into the memories of childhood, and inevitably sifting through the archival collections in my ever-expanding filing cabinet of a brain, I can honestly say that I draw a blank when thinking about the Korean War. Ask me about any other war in American history, and I can undoubtedly recall what the issues were and what actually happened. Not Korea. In fact, I cannot recall any time, at any point in any of the years of elementary school up having studied the Korean War in any depth. That is, the brief overviews of the Korean War only offered that there was a dispute over borders, and not much more. The Korean War, for whatever reason, has been dubbed such names as the "Unknown War," or the "Forgotten War," and seems to go down in history as something that shouldn't be discussed. Maybe this is because American forces suffered humiliating losses on and off the battlefield, and failed to win decisively, instead settling for an armistice peace treaty that left no victors. However, this armistice proved to show that the United States was not invincible, and seemed to put its ignorance in check. Or, maybe the Korean War failed to reach the esteem of other wars, such as World War II or the Vietnam War, because there were no heroic figures such as MacArthur, there were no battles of Iwo Jima, and there were no major controversies such as Vietnam. All these seem to be plausible theories on why the Korean War has remained such a mystery to most Americans. Rather than being studied in great detail, such as wars like World War II and the Vietnam War, the Korean War has been shuffled to the side, and has remained, even in classrooms, a hushed issue. That is why Stanley Sandler, in *The Korean War, No Victors, No Vanquished*, has, in my opinion, done such a good job in bringing to the public a work that examines the Korean War from all aspects and all viewpoints. Sandler brings to light the relevance and enormity of this war that went far beyond a simple border dispute between North Korea and South Korea. The implications of this war reached far beyond what any course throughout my career has taught me. Sandler, in his book, is largely responsible for this. Sandler methodically and analytically works through the book from the beginning of Korea's history until the end of the war. Opening up the book, he starts off with an account of the causes of the war, and the implications behind it as well. He examines the advantages to all parties concerned about entering the war, and explained that the United States did not actually want to engage in a war with North Korea. Along with other Western powers, the United States couldn't be bothered with Korea, and didn't have much interest in waging war with Kim Il Sung. However, with the Cold War in full swing, the threat of Soviet domination was reason enough to go to war. Sandler acknowledges the fact that the Korean War had not reached the esteem of other wars, yet seems convinced, and with solid evidence, that this third costliest war should be ranked much higher than it has been. The Korean War, he argues, would have never even begun had the Cold War not been such a terrible threat to

the American people. The extreme fear that the American people lived with back then was more than ample enough to justify a war with an enemy that most could not even point out on a map. With the causes and implications behind the justification for the war out of the way, Sandler than goes on to examine the actual history of the war, and everything that goes on in war. From pre-diplomatic discussions to all the actors involved in the war, including the Chinese, Japanese and Soviets, Sandler does a thorough and complete examination of the Korean War. While offering a general overview of the history and background of the Korean War, Sandler than gets more specific and detail-oriented in breaking down into subcategories the various elements of the war itself. He examines the major offensives and retreats that marked significant and proved to be of vital importance. While some may see this book as biased towards Americans and their doings in Korea, it is necessary to look beyond that and realize that what he is writing about is factual information. Although the factual information does not make a book noteworthy or necessarily important, what does make it noteworthy is the fact that Sandler wrote this book and offered various different perspectives other than the traditional American viewpoint. While he did discuss America's roles, beliefs and ideologies in the war, he also touched upon the ideologies of other groups as well. This, in my opinion, is the strongest point of the book. Different chapters are designated to the role in which each actor played a part in. For example, Sandler discusses in length the involvement of the Chinese and how they affected not only the outcome of the war, but how that affected the international political system as well. He shows the enormous effect that they had on the way war was waged after their involvement and how they were such a pivotal force in the Korean War. Additionally, along with the US perspective, he examines the role the United Nations, along with member states, played in this highly involved war. While discussing their involvement in the war, and the significant effect they had on the ability to sustain the war with North Korea, Sandler also discusses their ultimate short-comings and attributes the outcome of the war somewhat to the UN. This, to me, is very important in providing a detailed and thorough sketch of a war that most people know little about. That point raises one issue of criticism on behalf of this book. For all its good qualities, the book, in my opinion, is somewhat long-winded and wordy. That is, it seems difficult for me to imagine this book capturing an audience and making them want to continue reading. While it is of high historical value, the complexity and detailed nature of this book would seem to be a turnoff from those who are not being forced to read it. Rather than concentrating so much on detailed accounts and factual data and statistics, a more illustrative and animated book would, in my opinion, make it a much appealing and interesting book. While the book may tend to be dry at times, and lengthy in point, the fact remains that nevertheless, this book is crucial in shedding light on a subject

that has been forgotten by so many. While people of all ages are readily familiar with other wars such as the Vietnam War, it is crucial for more writers to designate an appropriate chapter in history to bring into perspective a war that meant so much to the history of its peoples. Like stated above, this war had enormous implications, with the Cold War raging, yet didn't have the magnificent dimensions of heroism and scandal that accompanied so many other wars. That, however, is not justification for abandoning a crucial and significant chunk of American history. This book, overall, does a fantastic job of re-examining the Korean War.

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