

2. COLD WAR CRISIS (1950 – 1968)

KOREAN CRISIS

Key questions

Why did war in Korea begin?
Why were the United States, the Soviet Union and China so interested in developments in Korea.
How did the Korean conflict affect superpower relations?

How Korea was divided

For most of twentieth century, Korea had been the pawn in Great Power rivalries. In 1910 Korea was **annexed** by Japan and this proved a useful stepping stone in the Japanese conquest of China. In 1945, when Japan was defeated, the USSR and the United States occupied the North and South respectively and the 38th parallel became the dividing line between their two military administrations. It was intended that it is a permanent arrangement. Duplication of events in postwar Europe soon occurred in Korea, with Russia supporting local communist organisations and America giving encouragement to non-communist groups. In 1948 attempts were made to reunify Korea through nationwide elections, but this proved fruitless. By 1949 two separate Koreas existed. In the North, a communist system was established, with Kim II Sung as premier. In the South, Syngman Rhee proclaimed the Republic of Korea. Both these leaders were fervent patriots, each desiring a unified Korea under his own leadership. In 1949 America and Russia withdrew their troops, but still continued to exert a measure of influence over this troubled region.

The outbreak of war

Frequent squirmishes occurred near the border between North and South, but on June 25 1950 North Korea, fully equipped with Russian military hardware, launched a full-scale invasion of the South. On June 26 the **United Nation Security Council** ordered the North Koreans to retreat. Significantly the Russian delegate was deliberately absent from the Security Council in defiance of the United Nation's refusal to recognize Communist China. Thus Russia waived her power of **veto**. On June 27 the United Nation passed a resolution calling on all its members 'to furnish assistance to the Republic of Korea under the umbrella of the United Nations'.

Key Terms

PAWN: a political tool.

ANNEX: to take possession of a country.

UN SECURITY COUNCIL: made up of five permanent members (USA, USSR, UK, France and Nationalist China to 1971, Communist China since 1971) and 10 non-permanent members. Its main task is to prevent and resolve international crises.

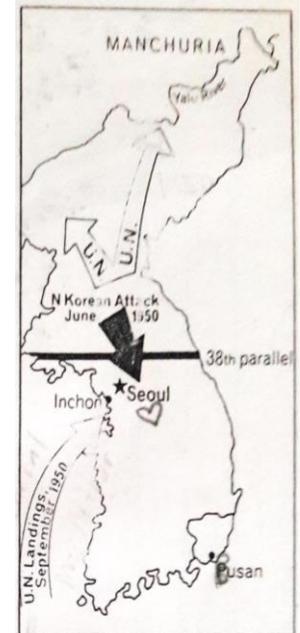
SEATO: South East Asia-Treaty Organisation; members include USA, Britain, France, Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, Pakistan and the Philippines; dubbed the Asian NATO.

CENTO: Central Treaty Organisation; members include Britain, Turkey, Iraq and Pakistan; designed to keep the Soviets out of the Middle East.

VETO – a constitutional right to reject a decision or proposal made by lawmaking body.

Action in Korea

1. September 1950. General MacArthur commanded the UN deployment (mainly composed of American and South Korean troops) which landed in Inchon. The US would have been prepared to 'go it alone' if the UN did not sanction action.
2. By October 1950, after much slaughter, the North Koreans were driven back over the 38th parallel. The UN objective had been reached, but having gained the initiative the Americans were not content with containment; they were determined to destroy the aggressor.
3. Truman ordered MacArthur to cross the 38th parallel. China regarded the extension of war into North Korea as a threat to her own security.
4. As the UN troops approached the Yalu River they were repulsed by Chinese 'volunteers'. The war now entered its most dangerous phase. What had begun as a dispute within a divided country was now becoming close to a third world war.



5. By January 1951 the combined communist forces' counter-offensive pushed UN troops beyond the 38th parallel.
6. February 6 1951. UN forces push the Chinese back to the dividing line.
7. MacArthur urged Truman to escalate the war into China. Truman dismissed this and MacArthur was relieved of his command.
8. The war dragged on, both sides establishing a maze of fortifications on either side of the 38th parallel. This 'static war' was fought until an armistice was signed on July 17 1953.
9. Today, Korea remains divided and bitter. Propaganda campaigns dominate the proceedings.

It is uncertain who ordered this violation of South Korean territory, thus provoking an international incident, and for what reasons such a move was undertaken. Was it a show of strength by Stalin towards the United States? In Soviet eyes they had suffered humiliation at the hands of America over Berlin. Or did Syngman Rhee deliberately provoke an attack to regain direct American protection? Some strategists suggest it was a show of Russian strength towards China, Stalin showing Mao that he would control communist action in Asia. Many historians hold the view that it was a North Korean assault, organised by Moscow with the blessing and support of the Chinese. According to Truman it was a Moscow-directed conspiracy aimed at the West, and he therefore responded accordingly.

Superpower relations in the fifties

The events in Korea intensified the already hostile atmosphere of the Cold War. The Western world was alerted to the threat of communist aggression and they knew that China would act if threatened. In response to this a programme of rearmament was adopted and before long America had encircled China and the Soviet Union with military bases and alliances (for example SEATO in 1954 and CENTO in 1959). Korea had forced America into a new role. She became the 'world policeman' determined to keep communist expansion in check.

DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

- a. According to Truman, whose decision was needed to authorize an invasion of China?

- b. Who does Truman identify as having the authority to use the atomic bomb?

- c. In your opinion, who possessed the most power in the Korean War – Truman, MacArthur or the United Nations? Give reasons for your answer.

- d. The United States did not yield to the temptation to use atomic warfare against China, but how close did they come?

Press conference given by President Truman on November 30 1950

Press: Would it require a United Nations decision to order an attack on China?

Truman: Yes entirely.

Press: In other words, if the UN resolution should authorise General MacArthur to go further than he has, he will...

Truman: (interrupting) We will take whatever steps are necessary to meet the military situation.

Press: Will that include the atomic bomb?

Truman: That includes every weapon we have.

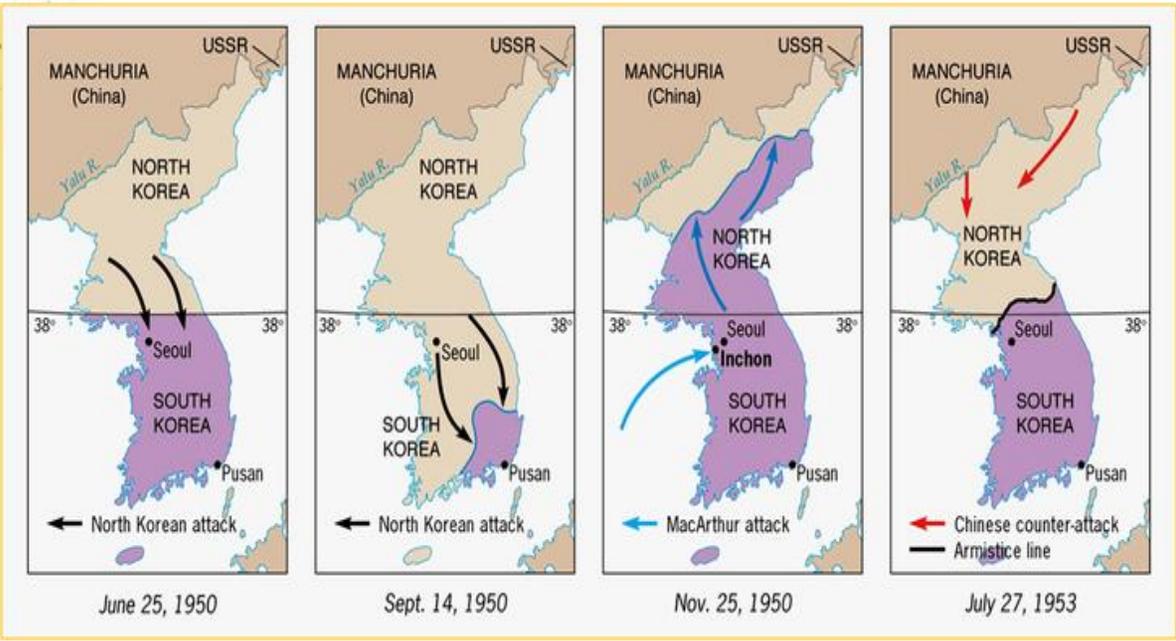
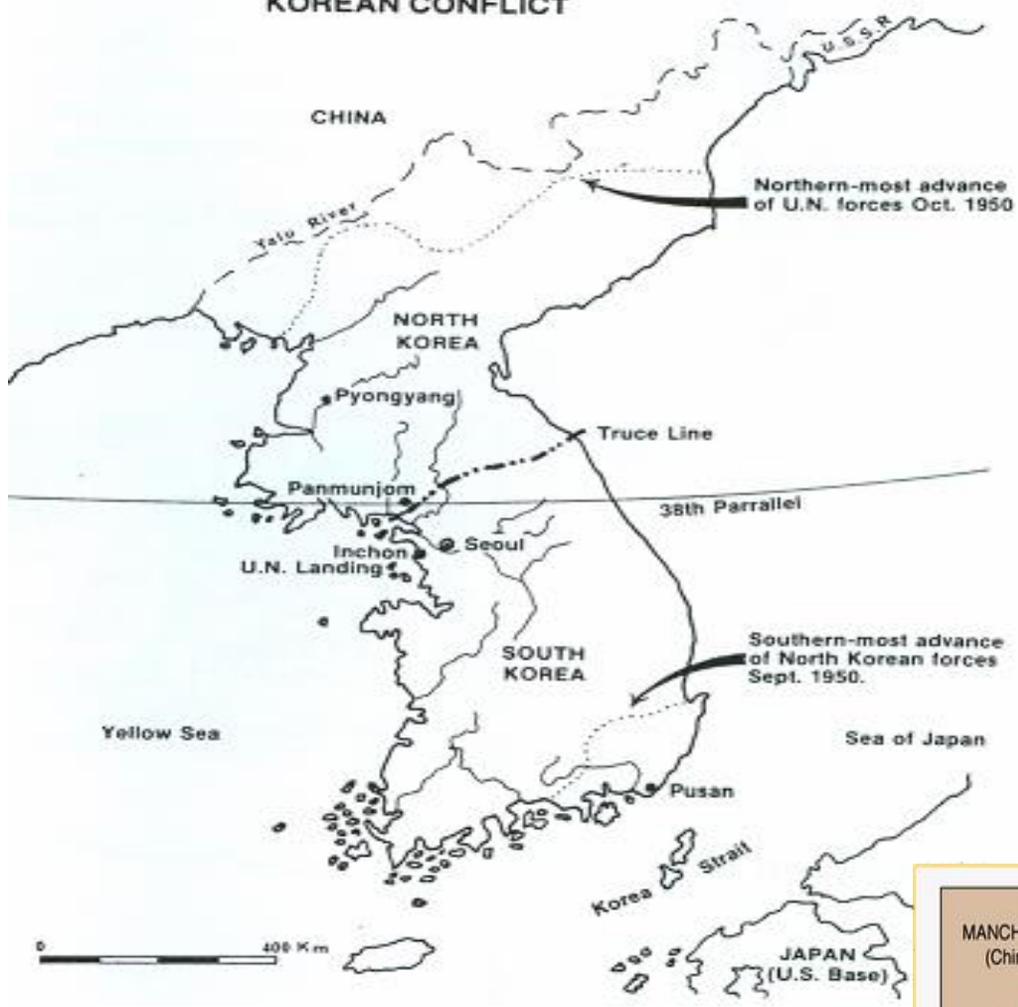
Press: Does that mean there is an active consideration of the use of the atomic bomb?

Truman: There has always been consideration of its use. I don't want to see it used. It is a terrible weapon, and it should not be used on innocent men, women and children.

Press: Mr. President, you said this would depend on UN action. Does that mean that we wouldn't use the bomb except on UN authorisation?

Truman: No, it doesn't mean that at all. The action against Communist China depends on the action of the UN. The military commander in the field will have charge of the use of weapons, as he always has.

KOREAN CONFLICT



I. Describe the origin of the Korean Crisis in relation to its being divided in 1945

- The defeated of Japan in WW2 gave way to USSR and USA to occupy North and South Korea who had been annexed by Japan in 1910.
- The **38th latitude/parallel** became the dividing line between their two military administrations.
- It was not intended to be a permanent arrangement
- This left Korea invulnerable which resulted in the split of this country along the 38th parallel
- The Americans controlled the South of the line and the Russians started a communist government in the North, China later joined with the Russians in the North, within hours they applied thousands of refugees to the South, these two sides could not agree on anything that would unified Korea even with the UN having responsibility over Korea.

However, with their ideological differences, Russia gave support to local communist organizations and America gave encouragement to non-communist groups.

- **1948** - An attempt to reunify them thru nationwide elections but this proved fruitless.
- **1949** - Two separate Korea existed

North Korea- communist system was established with *Kim Il Sung* as premier

South Korea- republic of Korea (democratic) with *Syngman Rhee*



Kim Il Sung

Syngman Rhee

1949- USA and Russia withdrew their troops but still continued to exert a measure of influence over this troubled region

II. Explain reasons for Soviet, Chinese and American interest in the developments of Korea.

For most of the 20th century, Korea had been the '**pawn**' (political tool) in Great power rivalries.

Soviet interest- spread communism and be sure that it is established in Korea

Chinese interest- Korea's geographical location is so close to them and will threaten its existence as a newly communist country.

American interest- Its rival (Russia) tried to establish a communist government in Korea which was not favored by them.

III. Discuss how the Korean conflict affects superpower relations.

- This event intensified the already hostile atmosphere of the Cold War
- Western World was alerted to the threat of communist aggression
- Programme of rearmament was adopted
- America had encircled China and the Soviet Union with military bases and alliances

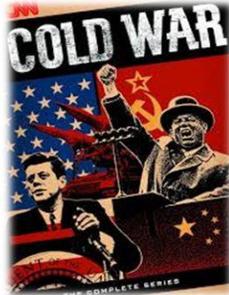
For example- SEATO in 1954- South East Asia Treaty organization
(US,Bri,Fra,Aust,NZ,Thai,Pakis,Phill)

CENTO in 1959-Central Treaty Organization
(Bri,Tur,Iraq,Pakis) designed to keep the Soviet out of the Middle East.

- America became a 'world policeman' in determining to keep communist expansion in check.

Effects on the Cold War

- ▶ The Korean War effectively **globalised the Cold War**. It was no longer just a European conflict but a global conflict which would also affect other parts of the developing world.
- ▶ It also led to **increasing militarisation**. Both sides increased their military budgets, with the USA's military budget reaching **10% of GNP** in the 1950s.
- ▶ The USSR increased the size of the Red Army from **2.8 million troops to 5.8 million!**



"If we let Korea down," President [Harry Truman](#) (1884-1972) said, "the Soviet will keep right on going and swallow up one [place] after another." The fight on the Korean peninsula was a symbol of the global struggle between east and west, good and evil. As the North Korean army pushed into Seoul, the South Korean capital, the United States readied its troops for a war against communism itself

1. Describe Harry Truman's view towards USSR's occupation of North Korea?
2. Discuss why is it called in the Resource that the fight in Korea was between the East and the West, good and evil?

1. According to the Resource, describe how the Korean War affected the Cold War?

2. Explain with example how the Cold War was globalized by the War in Korea?

3. Explain how this crisis influenced the relationship of USA and USSR?