

The Korean War

Understanding the Causes & Outcomes



**What do
you see?
What do
you think?
What do
you
wonder?**



The Korean War was the first major conflict during the Cold War.

- Following World War II, two countries, the United States and the Soviet Union, vied to be the leading Superpower.
- The United States promoted Capitalism – a system based on individual liberty, private business, and entrepreneurship. The Soviet Union promoted Communism – a system based on government control of business.

Background

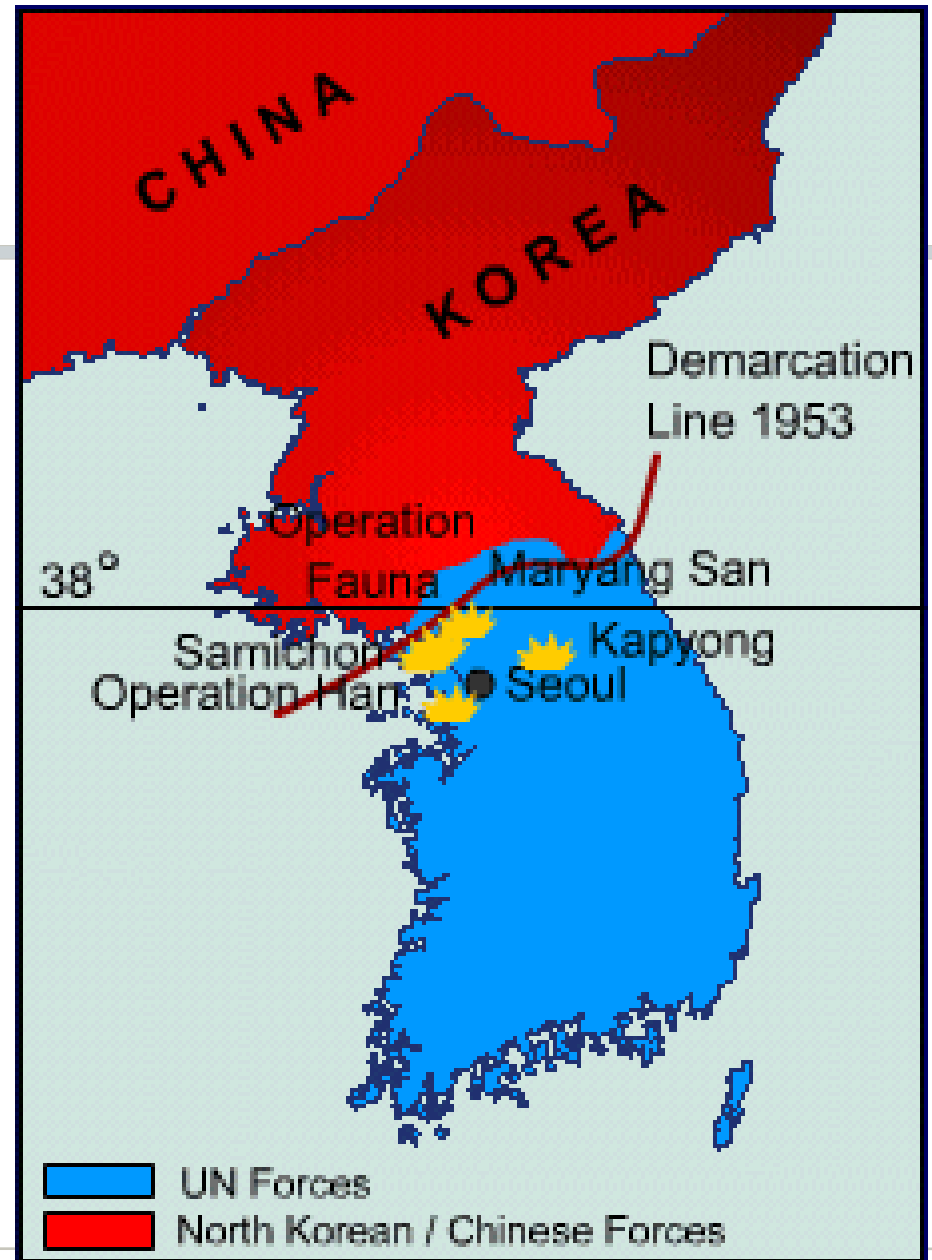
However, no physical war was ever fought between the United States and the Soviet Union; the Cold War was a war of ideologies, over whose system was the better one, and it emerged immediately after

Proxy war:
a conflict between two countries where neither directly engages the other.

- This does not mean the Cold War was peaceful; several proxy wars were fought where the United States and the Soviet Union stood in the shadows and secretly aided those who did fight.

Background

- The first of these proxy wars was the Korean War. North Korea (communists) invaded South Korea (capitalists) and the United States went to war to help the South Koreans and to stop the spread of communism.



Why get involved in Korea?

By V-E Day in May 1945, the Soviet Union had taken control of several countries in **EASTERN** Europe. The USSR changed from Ally to the Enemy.

The surrender of **Japan** meant the spread of Communism in Asia was President Truman's number one **concern**.



Why get involved in Korea?

- China adopted Communism in 1949. Truman believed that if one country fell to Communism, others would soon follow (falling down, like playing a game of dominoes).
- When Communism emerged in North Korea, Truman believed that if the Peninsula fell to the ideology, then Japan would be next, soon to be followed by the entire Eastern hemisphere.



The Domino Theory



“Asia is where the communist conspirators have decided to make their play for global conquest. If we lose this war, the fall of Europe is inevitable. There is no choice but victory.”

Douglas MacArthur
United States General
1950.

In your own words, summarize what General MacArthur and President Truman are saying...

“If we let Korea down, the Soviet[s] will keep right on going and swallow up one [place] after another.”

President Harry Truman
1950

What caused the Korean War?

- Prior to the end of World War II, Korea was part of Japan's empire. As terms of Japan and Germany's surrender, both agreed to cede certain territories that would be split among the West (United States, France, UK) and East (Soviet Union). The Germans lost control of Berlin while Japan lost control of the Korean Peninsula.

The northern part of Korea was given to the Soviet Union to manage.

In August 1945, Korea was divided along the 38th parallel

The US manages the southern part of Korea.



What caused the Korean War?

The Communist **dictator**, Kim Il Sung, was loved and well **supported** by



As expected (thanks to the Soviets), Communism took hold in North Korea while. . .

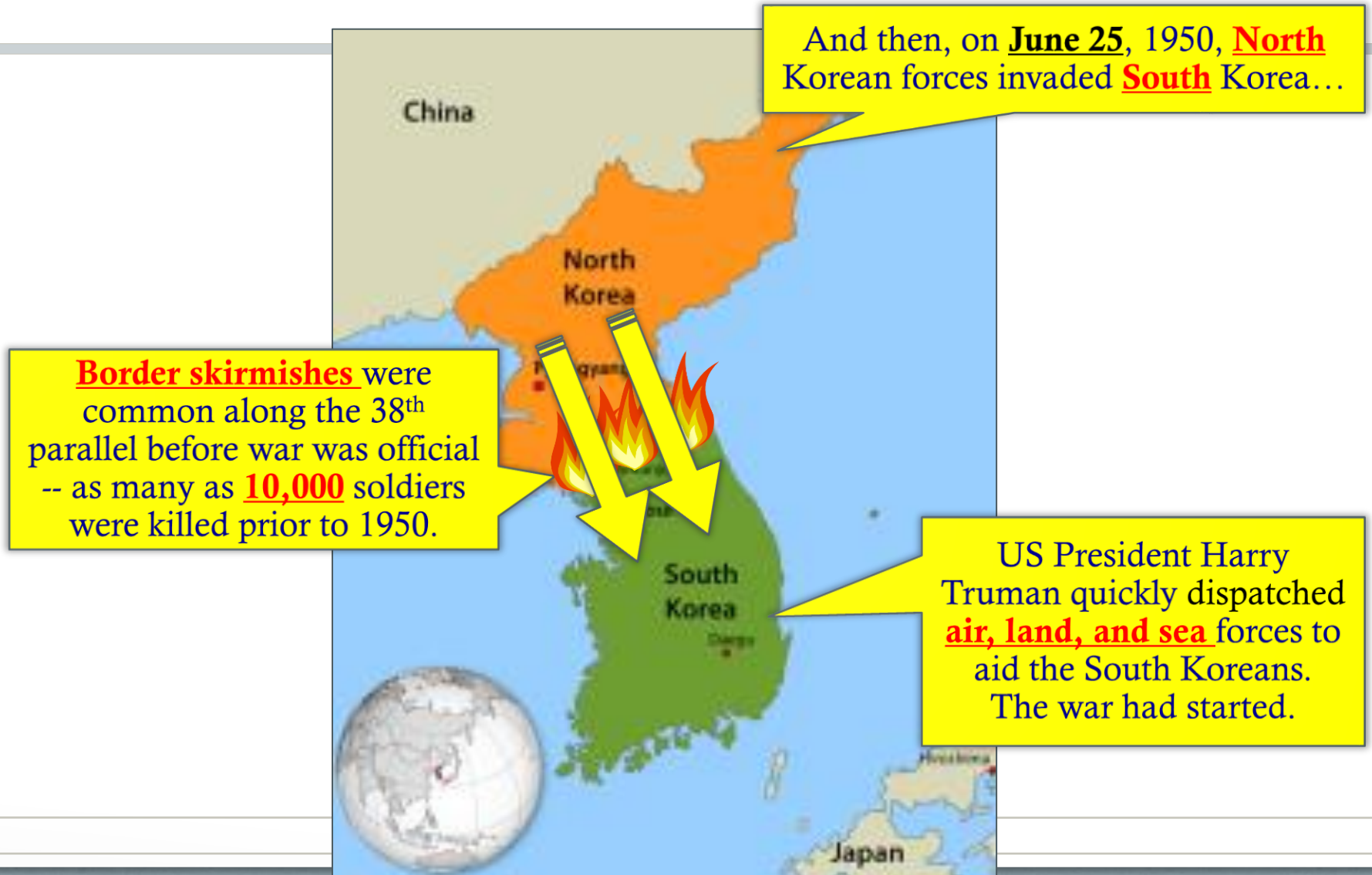
the United States supported Capitalism in South Korea.

The US supported **Syngman Rhee** to lead South Korea.



Rhee acted like an **authoritarian**, frequently **provoked** the North Koreans, and did little to help the war-torn South Koreans. So, why did the US stay with him? **He was an ardent anti-Communist!**

What caused the Korean War?



What were the major events of the war?

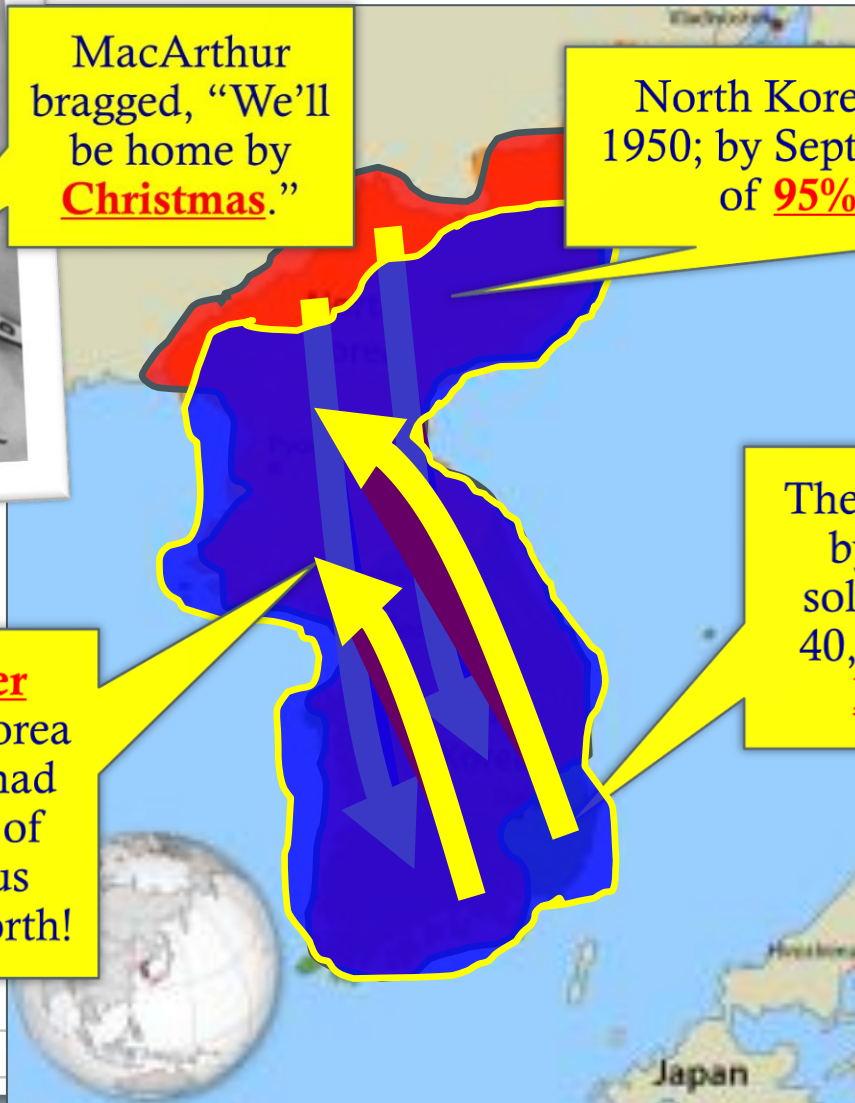


MacArthur bragged, "We'll be home by **Christmas.**"


North Korea invaded on June 25, 1950; by September, they had control of **95%** of the peninsula.

By **November** 1950, South Korea (and the US) had **reclaimed** all of the South plus most of the North!

The United States responded by sending over **260,000** soldiers (plus an additional 40,000 UN soldiers) led by **Douglas MacArthur.**



Battles push back and forth...



The map shows the Korean Peninsula with North Korea in red and South Korea in blue. Yellow arrows point from text boxes to the 38th parallel and the border between North Korea and China. A yellow box on the left contains a portrait of General MacArthur. A red flag with a yellow star is labeled 'China', and a red flag with a yellow hammer and sickle is labeled 'Russia'.

China

Russia

South Korea

Japan

MacArthur

“There is no substitute for victory against Communism.”

the Chinese and North Korean soldiers are supplied weapons from **Soviets.**

By early 1951, 500,000 more Chinese soldiers enter the war and push US back.

MacArthur publicly criticizes the U.S. President and is fired, the war reaches a stalemate, and peace talks begin in July 1951.

MacArthur reclaims land to the 38th parallel and wants to go further, even to declare war on China. President Harry Truman does not wish to escalate war with China.

What was the war like?

Over 100F
degrees in
summer!

Constant rain,
mud, and heavy
downpours ...

Many lost fingers,
toes, hands, and
feet to frostbite...

“If the best minds in the world had set
out to find us the worst possible location
in the world to fight this d*** war, the
unanimous choice would have been
Korea.”

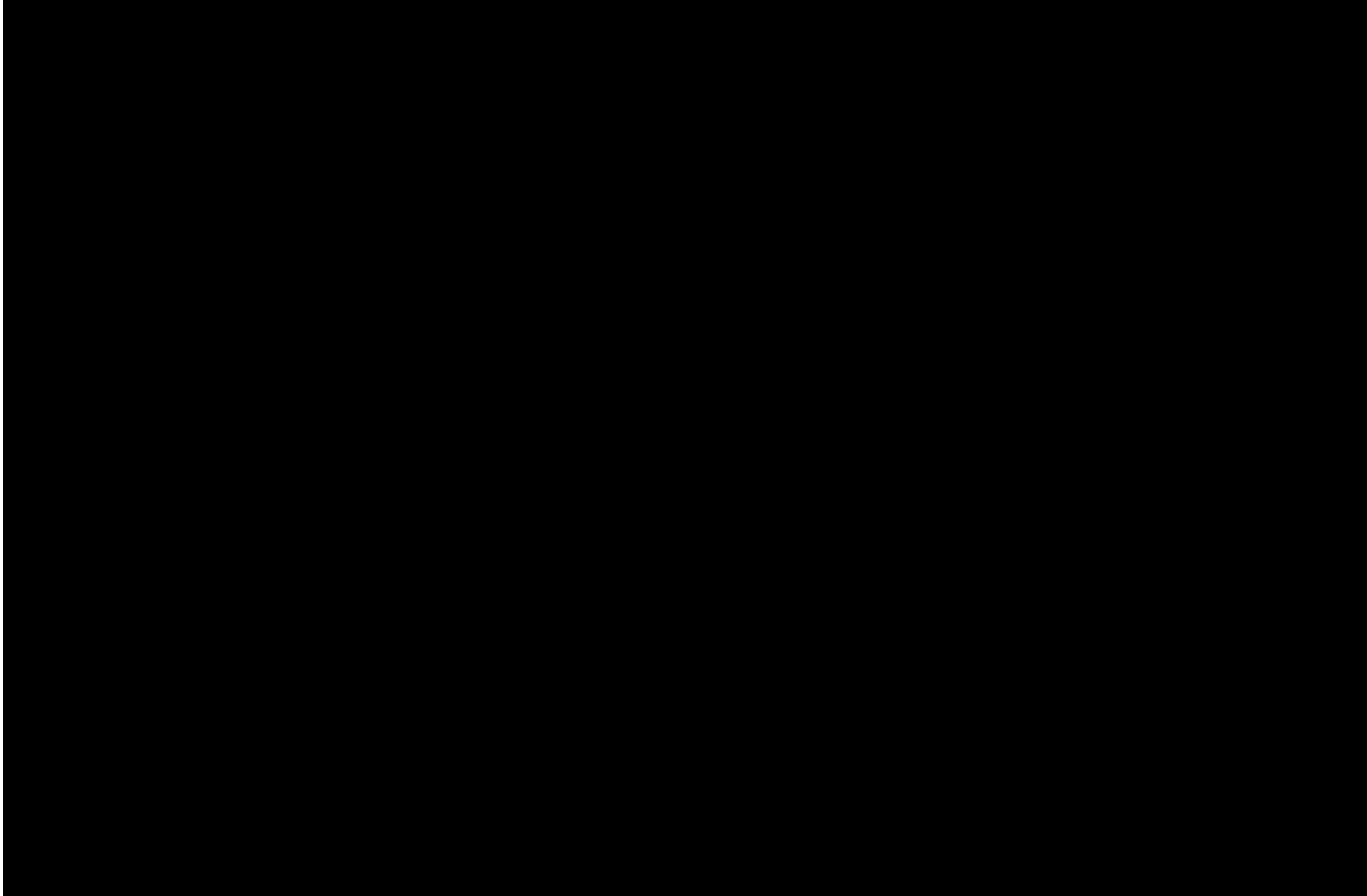
Temperatures
as low as -
40F degrees!

Freezing
winters with
heavy snow...

Dean Acheson
U
Constant trekking
of hills,
mountains!

Advancements in Medicine

Trauma Care – M*A*S*H



A Change of Presidents

- The election of 1948 confirmed that Americans were solidly behind President Harry S. Truman. But after his firing of General MacArthur, Truman's ratings plummeted.
- The 1952 Election brought a World War II hero to the Presidency – Dwight D. Eisenhower.
- “I will go to Korea...”
- Eisenhower demanded that North Korea come to the peace table or suffer the same way as Hiroshima and Nagasaki. They returned to the negotiations.

What was the outcome?



So why fight? The US government believed the war was necessary to prevent **World War III**, which was inevitable if Communism was permitted to spread.

How did the American people respond to the Peace Agreement?

They did not like it. Period.

- Americans were used to winning (after WWII), and Korea ended **the same** as it was before the war started. **Was it a “win?”**
- The goal was never to have a total victory, like in WWII. It was simply to protect South Korea through Containment of Communism. Preventing it from spreading to other Asian countries became U.S. policy. The threat of Nuclear War between the U.S. and USSR was reduced by “Mutually Assured Destruction,” an arms race that some called the “**balance of Terror.**”
- This was new, and begged the question “Was it worth it?”

How is the war remembered today?

The Korean War **Memorial**, located in Washington D.C., was dedicated in **1995** to honor the 5.8 million Americans who **served**.



The troops are wearing **ponchos** to show the miserable weather conditions...

19 soldiers, each roughly 7-foot-tall, represent the diverse **ethnic** makeup of the soldiers who gave their lives.

14 are from the **Army**, 3 **Marines**, 1 each from the **Navy** and **Air Force**!

How is the war remembered today?

There are more! The mural goes for quite a bit further...

If you look closely, you can see the reflection of the 19 soldier statues...

This is symbolic because...

The 19 soldier statues + the 19 reflections = 38

The boundary between North and South Korea was established at the 38th parallel.

On the side of the memorial is a mural where pictures taken from the war were etched into marble. The mural honors the service personnel who supported the soldiers (nurses, surgeons, etc).

What is Korea like today?

North Korea is still Communist and has few **international** friends (Russia and Bulgaria).

China is still considered a "**friend**" but in 2015 North Korea angered the Chinese with their **nuclear** program.

We still have troops stationed in South Korea along the 155.3 mile long **DMZ Zone** (Demilitarized Zone)



Kim Il Sung
(1948-1994)



Kim Jong-Il
(1994-2011)



Kim Jong-un
(2011-)

There are no **elections** and one family has had **complete** control since the country was split following WWII.

Despite calling themselves the "Democratic People's Republic of Korea," they are anything but that!

North Korea operates more like a Communist Totalitarian state.



What is Korea like today?



South Korea has maintained Capitalism since WWII. It has grown from one of the **poorest** to one of the **wealthiest** countries in the world.

Major tech companies such as **Samsung** and LG, as well as auto giants **Hyundai** and Kia Motors are headquartered here.

Elections are similar to other **democratic** countries; local elections take place every 4 years and presidential elections every 5.

Unlike in North Korea, in South Korea...

- Citizens do not need **permission** to leave the country
- Foreign **tourists** are free to visit
- People have access to information via the **internet**

Korean War BrainPop

[Click to start](#)

Korean War Map Activity

Create a map of Korea during the war...

Create a Color code in your Key...

Color the Map so you can Identify locations

1. Label the physical features and cities...
2. Label the Countries and their borders...
3. Name Battles and dates they were fought
4. Answer the Questions about the war

