

The Korean War [Revision Cascade]

How did the Cold War help cause the Korean War?	Ideological differences	Capitalism & freedom of political expression versus Communism & restricted freedoms.
	Different strategic ambitions	Democracy and trade versus worldwide revolution and buffer zones.
	The USA saw Stalin as the aggressor and the danger	Truman Doctrine/ containment/NSC68/McCarthy Scare
	The USSR saw the USA as the aggressor and the danger	Churchill's Iron Curtain speech/ Marshall Aid/ neo-imperialism/ atomic bomb
	A proxy war	Korea was a civil war, but it was chosen by the superpowers as a point of confrontation.
How did the Truman Doctrine help provoke the Korean War?	Containment	To stop any further growth of Soviet power (the so-called 'Truman Doctrine').
	The rotten apple (Acheson)	Acheson described Communism as a rotten apple in the barrel.
	The Marshall Plan	Stalin regarded Marshall Aid as neo-colonial 'war plans'.
	Pacific Defensive Perimeter	Korea was OUTSIDE the US security cordon ... leading Stalin to believe the US would not intervene.
	The McCarthy Scare	In 1948, the 'Pumpkin Papers' revealed that Alger Hiss was a Soviet spy → panic about the growth of communism.
How did China turning communist in 1949 help cause the Korean War?	Emboldened communists	A major defeat for the US's policy of 'containment'.
	More aggressive communism	The Chinese wanted world revolution, whereas the USSR had settled for 'Socialism in one country'.
	30,000 guerrillas	In 1949 30,000 war-hardened Korean guerrillas who had fought with Mao Zedong returned to Korea.
	A sense of obligation	Mao felt obliged to help "the Korean people who have stood on our side during the past decades."
	Mao promised to help	In May 1950 Kim Il Sung visited Mao Zedong and secured a promise of support.
How did Korea came to be divided in two in 1945?	Cairo Conference, 1943	Declared that "in due course Korea shall become free and independent".
	10 August 1945 Soviet forces entered North Korea	Set up a Civil Administration under Gen Shtykov → brings in Kim Il Sung.
	8 Sept 1945 US forces entered South Korea	Set up a military government → bring in Syngman Rhee.
	US-USSR Joint Commission (1946-47)	Failed to agree a plan for unification
	UNCOK (1947-50) failed	Ignored by the Soviets/ fired on by the South Koreans.

How did the division of Korea help cause the War?	Left Korea in the hands of foreigners	Koreans on both sides of the 38 th parallel wanted nationalist unification.
	Kim Il Sung was a fervent nationalist	... but it had to result in a communist Korea.
	Soviet arms	USSR advisers trained the NKPA soldiers and airforce, and left Soviet WWII military equipment when they left in 1948.
	Syngman Rhee was a fervent nationalist	... but it had to result in a right-wing, capitalist Korea.
	US arms	KMAG trained the ROK soldiers and left \$110 million-worth of military equipment.
Why were the Americans disliked in Korea, 1945-50?	Left Korea in the hands of foreigners	South Koreans wanted nationalist unification → guerrilla terrorism/ Daegu uprising.
	Abolished the People's Committees	Replaced by a military government, using organisations set up under the Japanese Empire, influenced by Rhee & the rich.
	Maladministration & racism	American soldiers shot, assaulted and racially abused Koreans; looted, got drunk and opportuned young women – half South Koreans said they preferred the Japanese.
	Imposed Syngman Rhee	... a Christian and right-wing, who had been living in the United States since 1925.
	Daegu strike suppressed	The US Army put down the rebellion, leaving 611 people dead, and 2,609 arrested.
How did the development of North Korea 1945-50 make war more likely?	Dual Party Structure / repression of opposition	Communist Party had total control; opponents and former collaborators executed, imprisoned or re-educated.
	Fervent nationalism/ communism	Genuine socialist enthusiasm; Land reform, Labour Laws, education.
	Strong Army	The <i>immun gun</i> –150,000 thousand soldiers, with Soviet weaponry (including tanks and planes).
	Guerrilla Army	5,000 guerrillas in the South, led by Pak Hon-yong → uprisings in Jeju. Pak urged Kim to invade the South.
	Soviet support	USSR advisers trained the NKPA soldiers and airforce, and left Soviet WWII military equipment when they left in 1948. Ambassador Shtykov strongly supported Kim and invasion. Kim tried to persuade Stalin to authorise an invasion.

How did the development of South Korea 1945-50 make war more likely?	Sham democracy / repression of opposition	Rhee acted as a dictator – suppressed opposition using the internal security force (led by his right-hand man, Kim Chang-ryong) and the Hyangbodan → atrocities at Jeju and Mungyeong.
	Fervent nationalism/ anti-communism	Rhee genuinely wanted Korean unification (had been President of the Provisional Government-in-exile).
	Strong Army	The ROK army by 1949 numbered 114,000 men, armed with modern American rifles and trained by US advisers.
	1949 border attacks	In May 1949, the six infantry battalions of the ROK Army launched a four-day invasion of the Kaesong area of North Vietnam, killing 400 NKPA soldiers and 100 civilians.
	US support	Rhee tried to persuade MacArthur to support an invasion; Dulles in June 1950 pledged US support in the fight against communism and visited the 38 th parallel.
Why did Stalin forbid war before 1950?	He did not want to risk America intervening	He knew he could not win a war against America – he did not have the atomic bomb until 1949.
	An invasion needed Chinese support	Unwilling to provide direct support, Stalin told Kim that he would need to get Chinese support.
	He did not see Kim Il Sung as a serious partner	Stalin did not have a good opinion of Kim, whom he saw as young, inexperienced, overambitious and too independent.
	He wanted to focus on Europe	Stalin's main worry was Europe – West Germany, the 'Iron Curtain' buffer and the Berlin Blockade (1948-49).
	The USSR was militarily weak in the Far East	Perhaps 200,000 troops, and stationed mainly in Siberia and eastern USSR; few airfields; Pacific Navy still decimated after WWII.
Why did Stalin support war in 1950?	Kim Il Sung kept pestering him	Visits in Mar 1949, Sep 1949, Apr 1950 and numerous telegrams. Kim was also supported by Soviet Ambassador Shtykov.
	Kim promised victory in 3 days	Kim assured Stalin that he would have defeated the ROK army before the US could get ready to intervene.
	Kim promised the communist in the South would rise up	Pak Hon-yong, leader of the guerrillas in the South, assured Kim that the South would rise up to support an invasion.
	Mao promised to help	May 1950: Kim Il Sung visited Mao Zedong and secured a promise of support.
	Acheson's admission	In January 1950, US Secretary of State Dean Acheson told the newspapers that Korea was not part of the United States security cordon in the Far East ... leading Stalin to believe the US would not intervene.

North Korean plans: Key events	Mar 1949: Kim Il Sung meets Stalin	Kim approached Stalin for support to invade South Korea; he was told to wait, because it would cause a nuclear war.
	Sep 1949: Kim asks again – gets weaponry	Kim asked again Stalin for support to invade South Korea; again Stalin declined, but sent Russian tanks, artillery, planes etc.
	Jan 1950: Acheson's admission	In January 1950, US Secretary of State Dean Acheson told the newspapers that Korea was not part of the United States security cordon in the Far East ... leading Stalin to believe the US would not intervene.
	June 1950: Dulles's visit	US roving ambassador John F Dulles pledged US support in the fight against communism and visited the 38 th parallel – this was seen as a preparation for invasion by the South.
	Apr 1950: Stalin agrees to support an invasion.	Stalin met Kim Il Sung and agreed to support an invasion. A war plan was formed with help from Soviet General Antonov; NPKA army units began to move into place.
How did Kim Il Sung cause war in 1950?	Fervent nationalist – communist	He had fought the Japanese as a guerrilla 1935-45, when he went to become a Captain in the Soviet Army.
	Built up strong army	The <i>immun gun</i> –150,000 thousand soldiers, with Soviet weaponry (including tanks and planes).
	May 1950: got Mao's support	Kim visited Mao Zedong and secured a promise of support.
	April 1950: got Stalin's go-ahead	Kim met Stalin, who agreed to support an invasion. A war plan was formed with help from Soviet General Antonov; NPKA army units began to move into place.
	25 June 1950: set the date	It was Kim who insisted on the date – when daylight time was at a maximum; just before the summer monsoon rains; on a Sunday when many ROK and KMAG soldiers and officers would be on weekend leave; and 50 days before Korea's official Liberation Day..
How did Syngman Rhee help provoke war in 1950?	Fervent nationalist – anti-communist	Rhee suppressed the communist guerrillas using the internal security force (le by Kim Chang-ryong) and the Hyangbodan → atrocities at Jeju and Mungyeong.
	Builds strong army	The ROK army by 1949 numbered 114,000 men, armed with modern American rifles and trained by US advisers.
	Constant attempts to get US support for an invasion	Rhee tried to persuade MacArthur to support an invasion; Dulles in June 1950 pledged US support in the fight against communism and visited the 38 th parallel.
	May 1949: invasion	In May 1949, the six infantry battalions of the ROK Army launched a four-day invasion of the Kaesong area of North Vietnam, killing 400 NKPA soldiers and 100 civilians.
	May 1950: loses election	This reduced his government to chaos = an opportunity for the NKPA. Also, to distract from internal unrest, Rhee made speeches and statements in the press about a 'northern expedition' for a 'hot war' to liberate North Korea.

North Korean invasion: Key events	25 June: invasion begins	Throwing the ROK army into fleeing chaos.
	26 June: failed ROK counter-attack/ fall of Uijongbu	Leaving the way to Seoul open.
	28 June: fall of Seoul	And march south
	6 July: US 34 th defeated at Pyongtaek	Followed by a disaster (3,600 casualties and 3,000 captured) to the 24 th Division at Taejon.
	Sept: assault on Pusan perimeter	After a pause, the NKP began again to drive back the UN forces.
Why was Operation Pokpung so successful?	Surprise	Only one ROK unit fully in place; many ROK and KMAG officers and soldiers on leave.
	Soviet MiG planes	Although the NKPA planes were propeller-driven WWI fighter, they controlled the skies because the ROK Army had no planes.
	T-34 tanks	The ROK army had no tanks or weapons powerful enough to pierce the T-34 tanks' armour.
	Fatty Chae's incompetence	Against the advice of his generals, he ordered a pincer attack by General Yu (division exhausted) and General Lee (division not yet arrived) → fall of Uijongbu.
	Han bridge	Panicking, ROK engineers blew the Han River bridge early, not only killing 1,000 people on it, but trapping 44,000 ROK troops, all of whom would die or disappear.
How did the Korean War become an international crisis?	US intervention	Made Korea part of its Cold War containment policy.
	UN Security Council Resolution 83	Involved the Security Council (10 countries)
	UN General Assembly Resolution 384	Involved the UN General Assembly (60 countries).
	Chinese intervention	Turned it into an international proxy war.
	Soviet support	Made it confrontation of superpowers.
Korean War: Key events	NKPA invasion	... and move south to Pusan perimeter (June-Sept 1950).
	Inchon landing	... and flanking, defeat and driving back the NKPA (15 Sept-7 Oct), then invasion of North Korea (9 Oct-25 Nov 1950).
	Chinese invasion	... driving back the UN into South Korea (25 Nov 1950-25 Jan 1951), then being driven back into North Korea (25 Jan-22 Apr 1951).
	Stalemate at 'Wyoming Line'	Established by Operation Dauntless, after which both the Chinese Fifth Phase and the 8 th Army's attempt to 'tidy up' the front line ended in a bloody stalemate (1951-53)..
	Ceasefire	Ceasefire negotiations at Panmunjom eventually resulted on a ceasefire (27 July 1953).

Why did the USA enter the Korean War?	Cold War context	The US regarded communism as an existential threat. During the war, the US goal moved from 'containment' (Truman) to roll-back (MacArthur) then to containment (Truman/Eisenhower).
	US interests	Saw Korea as strategically vital, notably for Pacific trade route and the safety of Japan and Taiwan. Acheson saw it as vital for US prestige and allies.
	NKPA atrocities	Fuelled public outrage.
	Cultural Psychology	1950s society was naturally more aggressive/ bellicose/ racist.
	UN cloak	Resolution 83 meant that the US could defend its interests under a UN cloak
Why did the UN enter the Korean War?	Trygve Lie	Saw North Korea as the aggressor, and the UN's role to defend the attacked.
	UNCOK	The UN had taken responsibility for Korea in 1950, declared the ROK the rightful government in 1948, and believed that unification was the ultimate goal.
	Resolution 82 was ignored	When North Korea ignored Resolution 82 (to stop fighting and withdraw), the only option for the UN was Resolution 83 (to intervene).
	USSR was boycotting the UN	This prevented the USSR using its veto and allowed Resolution 83 to pass.
	US pressure	The US placed pressure on Lie and their allies in the UN to vote with US interests.
How could the UN drive the NKPA back in September 1950?	Bigger army	The UN had 385,000 troops (>100,000 NKPA), five times as many tanks, superior artillery, excellent reconnaissance, 270 ships and control of the air.
	Inchon inadequacies	Although warned by China and Russia, Kim had left Inchon defended with only 2,000 troops, and had not mined the harbour.
	Admiral Arthur Struble	... the US Navy's amphibious expert, organised the landing to a two-hour window at high tide.
	NKPA flanked	Kim had concentrated his army at the Pusan perimeter; the Inchon operation flanked and trapped them.
	NKPA exhausted	Planned as a 50-day operation to be over by mid-August, but September the NKPS was exhausted.
Why did the UN invade North Korea in October 1950?	Destroy NKPA capacity	... and prevent a future invasion.
	Punish North Korea	For deaths and atrocities (eg Taejon) during the fighting.
	Roll-back	With military success, the US's goal moved from 'containment' to roll-back.
	MacArthur	... assured Truman that the Chinese would not support Kim militarily ... and, if they did, that US airpower would easily defeat them.
	Resolution 376	Both the UN & Syngman Rhee were committed to unification as an end-goal; UN General Assembly Resolution 376 authorised 'all appropriate steps' to achieve unification.

Why did the Chinese intervene in November 1950?	Anti-imperialists	The Chinese were ideologically determined to drive out the capitalist imperialist foreign rulers who had exploited them for centuries.
	Border	China did not want an aggressive Korea led by Rhee and supported by the USA on its Manchurian border.
	Obligation	Mao felt obliged to help “the Korean people who have stood on our side during the past decades.” In May 1950 he had promised to support Kim Il Sung, and Kim was now begging for help
	Prestige	Resisting (and defeating) the USA raised the PRC’s prestige internationally, especially amongst communist countries.
	Volunteers	By calling itself the ‘People’s <i>Volunteer Army</i> ’, the Chinese Army lessened the chance of a direct war with America.
Why were the PVA able to drive back the UN?	Lured into a trap	MacArthur was overconfident, and allowed his armies to advance separately and separated; the NKPS later claimed they lured him into trap.
	Failure of reconnaissance	UN reconnaissance failed to notice 200,000 troops marching at night/hiding during the day, as they marched down the mountains between the two armies.
	PVA soldiers	The PVA were hardened veterans of a forty-year guerrilla war, disciplined, fit and prepared to die, with leaders who were graduates of military academies.
	PVA tactics	Guerrilla warfare: the PVA allowed the US infantry to advance into a V-shaped trap, then closed the arms of the V behind them.
	Weather	The weather froze the US equipment, and favoured the Chinese, used to such winters.
Why did the UN invade North Korea a second time in April 1951?	Exploit NKPA/PVA retreat	To drive the PVA/NKPA back as far as possible while they were retreating.
	Stalemate/Defendable front	The (imaginary) 38th parallel was undefensible; the Wyoming Line was strategically more defendable.
	Iron Triangle	To overlook/menace the ‘Iron Triangle’ – the key region in North Korea.
	Ceasefire negotiations	To secure as strong a position as possible before the politicians made them stop.
	MacArthur disobeyed Truman	MacArthur, as UN Commander, publicly disagreed with Truman, US President.
Why did Truman sack MacArthur in April 1951?	Invasion of 1950 failure	MacArthur had promised Truman the Chinese would not intervene.
	Invasion of 1951	MacArthur’s orders were NOT to engage with the Chinese.
	Wake Island meeting	Having to go to Wake Island to meet MacArthur had been a huge insult to the President’s authority.
	Nuclear weapons	MacArthur was talking about using nuclear weapons – which Truman was desperate to avoid.
	Public disagreement	MacArthur was disagreeing in public, challenging the President’s authority.

Why had the War become a stalemate by the end of 1951?	PVA Fifth Phase Offensive	A disaster, with 100,000 casualties – the Chinese could not defeat the UN forces on the open plains.
	‘Lean on’ failure	Very costly in casualties (Bloody Hill/ Heartbreak Ridge) -- to dislodge the NKPA from the hills would involve huge loss-of-life.
	USAF bombing	... could not find any more targets left to destroy.
	Washington	... made it clear that the loss of life was politically unsustainable.
	UN resolution 384	... sought a ceasefire, reneging on Resolution 376 (‘all appropriate steps’).
Atrocities in the Korean War.	Taejon	Advancing NKPA killed thousands of PoWs and civilians – inc.5,000 civilians, at Taejon (July 1950).
	US Army Report 1954	... found captured soldiers were “beaten, wounded, starved, and tortured; molested, displayed, and humiliated”/ forced marches.
	Bodo League	ROK soldiers killed 30,0000 political prisoners.
	No Gun Ri	July 1950: US planes and ground troops fired on fleeing civilians, mainly women, children and old men, killing at least 150.
	Pyongyang	1952: US saturation bombing – 10,000 litres napalm/ 697 tons bombs → deaths of 8,000 people.
Ceasefire: Key events	Jul 1951: Kaesong	... used by the PVA as a breathing-space/ soon broke down.
	Nov 1951: Panmunjom	4-mile wide DMZ agreed along the line of combat.
	Apr 1953: Little Switch	Exchange of sick & wounded = breakthrough in the impasse of PoWs.
	June 1953: Little Truce Talks	... in which the USA persuaded Syngman Rhee not to wreck the ceasefire deal.
	27 July 1953: Ceasefire	NB NOT a peace – war still, technically, continues.
Why did the USA seek a ceasefire in July 1951?	Casualties	At c.1,000 KIA and c.3,000 wounded per month, the US was losing fewer casualties than the PVA, but it was politically unacceptable in Washington.
	Political decision	MacArthur had wanted to conquer North Korea and defeat China (roll-back), but he had been sacked in April and Washington had reverted to ‘containment’. Forcing the Army to fight but not to win made it pointless continuing.
	POWs	Perhaps 4,500 US PoWs were being held in appalling conditions; the US wanted to bring them home.
	UN	UN resolution 384 (Dec 1950) sought a ceasefire, reneging on Resolution 376 (Oct 1950: ‘all appropriate steps’).
	Eisenhower	Had taken office in March 1951, elected on a promise to get Korea sorted.

Why did the Chinese agree to a ceasefire?	US nuclear weapons	In May 1953, the US had developed the M65 280mm atomic cannon, capable of firing tactical nuclear weapons on the battlefield.
	Death of Stalin	Mar 1953: reduced the Soviet politburo to infighting/ riots in Poland – the USSR slowly developed the policy of ‘peaceful coexistence’ = Soviet support uncertain.
	Eisenhower	Had taken office in March 1951, elected on a promise to get Korea sorted ... but what did that mean? He was a General, and talked about using nuclear weapons.
	Problems in China	By 1953, China had suffered >400,000 KIA, and was facing a poor rice harvest, and infighting between the Army and those who wanted to grow the economy instead.
	International pressure	The war had raised China’s prestige – but growing anger at its delay in making peace was eroding it
Why did Rhee accept the ceasefire?	Little Truce talks	June 1953: massive pressure from the US to accept the ceasefire.
	Mutual Security Treaty	... to expand the ROK Army, at US expense
	Long-term economic aid	... to rebuild infrastructure (esp. transport), develop the economy (inc. advisers).
	Immediate aid	... of \$200 million and 5,000 tons of food
	ROK dependency on the USA	South Korea could not continue the war or survive as an independent country without the US.
Results of the Korean War: for the Cold War	Global conflict	It turned the Cold War from a standoff in Europe to a global standoff.
	Proxy wars	It set the pattern of the superpowers avoiding direct conflict by means of ‘proxy wars’ (eg Vietnam, Cuba, Afghanistan).
	US interventionism	It set the pattern of the USA intervening everywhere it felt its interests were threatened, and farming that as a defence against communism (eg Vietnam).
	NATO/SEATO v Warsaw Pact	The world divided into hostile blocs.
	Arms Race	... speeded up (esp. nuclear weapons).
Results of the Korean War: for the UN	Prestige	Intervention convinced the world that the UN was a more effective body for world peace than the League of Nations had been.
	Resolution 377	Gave the ordinary member states the power to overrule the Security Council when they felt it was not acting in the interests of peace.
	USSR veto	The USSR returned to the UN in August 1950, and used its veto 21 times in the next ten years..
	Trygve Lie	... was accused by the USSR of favouring the USA and exceeding his authority, and was forced to resign.
	Reduced USA influence	Especially as more countries were admitted, the influence of the USA at the UN was reduced.

Results of the Korean War: for North Korea	Huge losses	1 million killed or missing; 1.5 million wounded, EVERYTHING bombed to destruction.
	Aid from Communist countries	Communist countries cancelled North Korea's debts, sent economic aid, and advisers/workers to help rebuild the country.
	Kim Il Sung	... established a Stalinist hereditary dictatorship based on a cult of personality. North Korea has the worst human right records in the world.
	Military state	Present-day North Korea has the highest number of soldiers/reservists in the world (7.7 million/ 30% of its population) with the fourth largest army in the world (1.28 million).
	Poverty	DPRK remains desperately poor, suffering famine, disease and malnutrition.
Results of the Korean War: for South Korea	Losses	1.2 million killed or missing; 430,000 wounded and massive destruction.
	April Revolution	Rhee established a repressive, corrupt regime, which was toppled in 1960.
	Economic miracle	Helped by massive economic aid (USAID), South Korea experienced an 'economic miracle' which made it one of the world's fastest-growing economies.
	UN Command	... remained to protect against attack → US military bases → an economic boost and 'GI babies'.
	Legacies	Mandatory military conscription and a growing number of defectors from North Korea.