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historical security council

H-UNSC

The Korean War Between 1950 and 1953

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1. Letters

1.1. Letter from the Secretary-General

Dear friends,

Welcome to ISTRTEMUN'25.
I won’t fill this letter with big, formal words—because at the end of the day, what matters to me is that you feel supported, seen, and heard throughout this conference.

As your Secretary-General, I’m not just someone who opens and closes sessions. I’m someone you can come to when things get confusing, stressful, or even just a little too much. I’ll be around—not just with my title, but with my heart and my time.

I truly hope this conference gives you something special. A moment of growth, a new friend, a good debate—whatever it is, may it stay with you after all of this is over.

I’ll be just around the corner. You don’t have to ask twice.

With all sincerity,
Hacı Ömer Gündoğdu
Secretary-General of ISTRTEMUN'25

1.2 - Letter from the Under Secretary General

Dear Esteemed Delegates of the Historical United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime,
As the Under Secretary General of this distinguished committee, it is both an honor and a privilege to address you on this momentous occasion of ISTRTEMUN'25. I extend my warmest greetings to each of you as we embark on this collaborative and diplomatic journey together. I am confident that our endeavors throughout this conference will further solidify the H-UNSC's standing as one of the most respected and dynamic committees.
You bring with you a wealth of knowledge, diverse perspectives, and unwavering determination as representatives of various nations and interests—key elements for meaningful and impactful discussions. Over the next three days, we will delve into the complexities about the Korean War and explore potential solutions that balance the concerns and aspirations of all involved parties. I truly hope that amidst the debates and negotiations, we not only find intellectual enrichment but also foster mutual respect and camaraderie.
The issues we aim to address are of critical importance, carrying significant

implications for global security and regional stability. I urge each of you to approach our deliberations with the highest level of engagement and commitment. Your ability to effectively represent your country’s stance, engage in constructive dialogue, and identify areas of consensus will be vital to our collective success. I am fully aware of the effort and dedication you have poured into preparing for this conference, and I want to express my deepest gratitude for your hard work. Rest assured, your contributions will be both recognized and impactful in the days ahead.

In closing, I would like to once again thank you all for your participation and express my sincere hope that this experience will be both rewarding and inspiring for everyone. Let us rise to the challenges before us, united as a team, and work toward a brighter, more peaceful future. Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out to me at any time before, during, or after the conference.

Sincerely,

Mehmed Emin İşçen
Under Secretary General
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2. Introduction to the Committee

Historical Security Council is the historical simulation of the Security Council, which is the strongest organ authorized to take legal measurements worldwide of the United Nations responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security. It is so organized as to be able to function continuously, and a representative of each of its members must be present including the permanent countries; United States of America, the French Republic, The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Russian Federation and the people’s Republic of China, at all times at the United Nations Headquarters.

A State, which is a Member of the United Nations but not of the Security Council, may participate, without a vote, in its discussions when the Council considers that that country's interests are affected. Both Members of the United Nations and non-members, if they are parties to a dispute being considered by the Council, are invited to take part, without a vote, in the Council's discussions; the Council sets the conditions for participation by a non-member State. The Presidency of the Council rotates monthly, according to the English alphabetical listing of its member States.

The Security Council takes the lead in determining the existence of a threat to the peace or act of aggression. It calls upon the parties to a dispute to settle it by peaceful means and recommends methods of adjustment or terms of settlement.

Function

The United Nations Security Council was created to primarily maintain international peace and security across the world. It is also entitled to accept new members to the United Nations and accept changes to the UN charter.

Powers

The UN Security Council has the power to establish peacekeeping operations and enforce international sanctions as well as authorize military actions through the resolutions it submits. It is also the only UN body that is authorized to issue binding resolutions to its member states, meaning that all countries have to abide by the passed resolutions of the Security Council.

Structure

The Security Council consists of fifteen members, including five permanent members and ten non-permanent members, elected on a regional basis to serve a term of two years. The five permanent members can veto resolutions and clauses without giving an explanation.

3. Introduction to the Agenda Item

After five years of simmering tensions on the Korean peninsula, the Korean War began on June 25, 1950, when the Northern Korean People's Army invaded South Korea in a coordinated general attack at several strategic points along the 38th parallel, the line dividing communist North Korea from the non-communist Republic of Korea in the south. North Korea aimed to militarily conquer South Korea and therefore unify Korea under the communist North Korean regime. Concerned that the Soviet Union and Communist China might have encouraged this invasion, President Harry S. Truman committed United States air, ground, and naval forces to the combined United Nations forces assisting the Republic of Korea in its defense. President Truman designated General Douglas MacArthur as Commanding General of the United Nations Command (UNC).

With her brother on her back a war weary Korean girl tiredly trudges by a stalled M-46 tank, at Haengju, Korea. Photographed by Maj. R.V. Spencer, UAF (Navy). U.S. Army Korea on June 9, 1951.

The first several months of the war were characterized by armies advancing and retreating up and down the Korean peninsula. The initial North Korean attack drove United Nations Command forces to a narrow perimeter around the port of Pusan in the southern tip of the peninsula. After the front stabilized at the Pusan perimeter, General MacArthur surprised the North Koreans in September 1950 with an amphibious landing at Inchon behind North Korean lines, forcing the North Koreans to retreat behind the 38th parallel.

In October, the United Nations, urged by the United States Government, approved the movement of UN forces across the 38th parallel into North Korea in an effort to unify the country under a non-communist government. In spite of warnings issued by the Chinese Government, the United Nations forces moved toward the Yalu River, marking the North Korean border with Manchuria. Discounting the significance of initial Chinese attacks in late October, MacArthur ordered the UNC to launch an offensive, taking the forces to the Yalu. In late November the Chinese attacked in full strength, pushing the UNC in disarray south of the 38th parallel with the communist forces seizing the South Korean capital, Seoul.
In early 1951 the Chinese offensive lost its momentum and the UNC, bolstered by the revitalized 8th U.S. Army led by General Matthew B. Ridgway, retook Seoul and advanced back to the 38th parallel. From July 1951, until the end of hostilities the battle lines remained relatively stable and the conflict became a stalemate. The Truman Administration abandoned plans to reunite North and South Korea and instead decided to pursue limited goals in order to avoid the possible escalation of the conflict into a third world war involving China and the Soviet Union. When General MacArthur publicly challenged the Truman Administration's conduct of the war, the President, "...concluded that...MacArthur is unable to give his wholehearted support to the policies of the United States Government..." and relieved him from command in April 1951, replacing him with General Ridgway. Acting on a campaign pledge, President-elect Dwight D. Eisenhower went to Korea on December 2, 1952. After visiting the troops, their commanders and South Korean leaders, and receiving briefings

on the military situation in Korea, Eisenhower concluded, "we could not stand forever on a static front and continue to accept casualties without any visible results. Small attacks on small hills would not end this war." President Eisenhower sought an end to hostilities in Korea through a combination of diplomacy and military muscle-flexing. On July 27, 1953, seven months after President Eisenhower's inauguration as the 34th President of the United States, an armistice was signed, ending organized combat operations and leaving the Korean Peninsula divided much as it had been since the close of World War II at the 38th parallel.
The Korean U.N. "police action" prevented North Korea from imposing its communist rule on South Korea. Also, the United States' actions in Korea demonstrated America's willingness to combat aggression, strengthened President Eisenhower's hand in Europe as he sought to organize European military defense under the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and insured that the United States would pursue its military buildup called for in the famous cold war document, National Security Council Policy Paper No. 68.

4. Key Terms

Blair House

Normally the Vice President’s residence, Truman lived in Blair House because the White House was being renovated. It was in Blair House that Truman and his key advisors met to discuss the Korean War.

Demilitarized Zone

A buffer zone between North and South Korea created under the terms of the armistice signed on July 27, 1953 which ended the war. Though the zone was supposed to be free of both troops and weapons, in practice it is heavily militarized, with over 1 million North and South Korean troops facing off.

Formosa

Today called *Taiwan*, Formosa was the seat of Chiang Kai-Shek’s Chinese nationalist government-in-exile after it was defeated by Mao’s Communist forces.

Inchon

A port on the West Coast of Korea. On September 15, 1950, MacArthur made a surprise amphibious landing here which allowed his X Corps to retake Seoul and the rest of South Korea.

Iron Triangle

Area in North Korea is bounded by Pyonggang (not Pyongyang), Chorwon, and Kumhwa. The Iron Triangle was the Communists staging area for attacks into South Korea.

Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS)

High-ranking American military council, comprised of the chairman, the vice chairman, the chief of staff of the army, the chief of naval operations, the chief of staff of the air force, and the commandant of the Marine Corps.

Kwantung Army

Japanese Army that occupied Manchuria before and during World War II.

Manchuria

A valuable industrial and agricultural center, Manchuria lies to the north of Korea, and has variously belonged to Imperial China, Imperial Russia, the Soviet Union, Japan, and the People's Republic of China.

NSC-81/1

National Security Council document that gave a rationale by which the UN Commander (i.e., MacArthur) would cross the 38th Parallel and invade North Korea. NSC-81/1 stated that, if possible, the US should try and bring about complete unification of an anti-Communist Korean state. The document has been criticized for espousing faulty logic.

North Korean People’s Army (NKPA)

The official army of North Korea.

Open Door

An 1899-1900 foreign policy of the US in reference to China, under which all countries would have equal trade privileges in China.

5. General Overview

Revolution, division, and partisan warfare, 1945–50

The Korean War had its immediate origins in the collapse of the Japanese empire at the end of World War II in September 1945. Unlike China, Manchuria, and the former Western colonies seized by Japan in 1941–42, Korea, annexed to Japan since 1910, did not have a native government or a colonial regime waiting to return after hostilities ceased. Most claimants to power were harried exiles in China, Manchuria, Japan, the U.S.S.R., and the United States. They fell into two broad categories. The first was made up of committed Marxist revolutionaries who had fought the Japanese as part of the Chinese-dominated guerrilla armies in Manchuria and China. One of these exiles was a minor but successful guerrilla leader named Kim Il-sung, who had received some training in Russia and had been made a major in the Soviet army. The other Korean nationalist movement, no less revolutionary, drew its inspiration from the best of science, education, and industrialism in Europe, Japan, and America. These “ultranationalists” were split into rival factions, one of which centred on Syngman Rhee, educated in the United States and at one time the president of a dissident Korean Provisional Government in exile.

In their hurried effort to disarm the Japanese army and repatriate the Japanese population in Korea (estimated at 700,000), the United States and the Soviet Union agreed in August 1945 to divide the country for administrative purposes at the 38th parallel (latitude 38° N). At least from the American perspective, this geographic division was a temporary expedient; however, the Soviets began a short-lived reign of terror in northern Korea that quickly politicized the division by driving thousands of refugees south. The two sides could not agree on a formula that would produce a unified Korea, and in 1947 U.S. President Harry S. Truman persuaded the United Nations (UN) to assume responsibility for the country, though the U.S. military remained nominally in control of the South until 1948. Both the South Korean national police and the constabulary doubled in size, providing a southern security force of about 80,000 by 1947. In the meantime, Kim Il-sung strengthened his control over the Communist Party as well as the northern administrative structure and military forces. In 1948 the North Korean military and police numbered about 100,000, reinforced by a group of southern Korean guerrillas based at Haeju in western Korea.
The creation of an independent South Korea became UN policy in early 1948. Southern communists opposed this, and by autumn partisan warfare had engulfed parts of every Korean province below the 38th parallel. The fighting expanded into a limited border war between the South’s newly formed Republic of Korea Army (ROKA) and the North Korean border constabulary as well as the North’s

Korean People's Army (KPA). The North launched 10 cross-border guerrilla incursions in order to draw ROKA units away from their guerrilla-suppression campaign in the South.
In its larger purpose the partisan uprising failed: the Republic of Korea (ROK) was formed in August 1948, with Syngman Rhee as president. Nevertheless, almost 8,000 members of the South Korean security forces and at least 30,000 other Koreans lost their lives. Many of the victims were not security forces or armed guerrillas at all but simply people identified as "rightists" or "reds" by the belligerents. Small-scale atrocities became a way of life.

U.S. soldiers operating a machine gun during the Korean War, c. 1950.

The partisan war also delayed the training of the South Korean army. In early 1950, American advisers judged that fewer than half of the ROKA's infantry battalions were even marginally ready for war. U.S. military assistance consisted largely of surplus light weapons and supplies. Indeed, General Douglas MacArthur, commander of the United States' Far East Command (FECOM), argued that his Eighth Army, consisting of four weak divisions in Japan, required more support than the Koreans.

Invasion and counter invasion, 1950–51

South to Pusan

In early 1949 Kim Il-sung pressed his case with Soviet leader Joseph Stalin that the time had come for a conventional invasion of the South. Stalin refused, concerned about the relative unpreparedness of the North Korean armed forces and about possible U.S. involvement. In the course of the next year, the communist leadership built the KPA into a formidable offensive force modeled after a Soviet mechanized army. The Chinese released Korean veterans from the People's Liberation Army, while the Soviets provided armaments. By 1950 the North Koreans enjoyed substantial advantages over the South in every category of equipment. After another Kim visit to Moscow in March–April 1950, Stalin approved an invasion.
In the predawn hours of June 25, the North Koreans struck across the 38th parallel behind a thunderous artillery barrage. The principal offensive, conducted by the KPA I Corps (53,000 men), drove across the Imjin River toward Seoul. The II Corps (54,000 soldiers) attacked along two widely separated axes, one through the cities of Ch'unch'ŏn and Inje to Hongch'ŏn and the other down the east coast road toward Kangnŭng. The KPA entered Seoul in the afternoon of June 28, but the North

Koreans did not accomplish their goal of a quick surrender by the Rhee government and the disintegration of the South Korean army. Instead, remnants of the Seoul-area ROKA forces formed a defensive line south of the Han River, and on the east coast road ROKA units gave ground in good order. Still, if the South was to stave off collapse, it would need help—from the U.S. armed forces. Truman's initial response was to order MacArthur to transfer munitions to the ROKA and to use air cover to protect the evacuation of U.S. citizens. Instead of pressing for a congressional declaration of war, which he regarded as too alarmist and time-consuming when time was of the essence, Truman went to the United Nations for sanction. Under U.S. guidance, the UN called for the invasion to halt (June 25), then for the UN member states to provide military assistance to the ROK (June 27). By charter the Security Council considered and passed the resolutions, which could have been vetoed by a permanent member such as the Soviet Union. The Soviets, however, were boycotting the Council over the issue of admitting communist China to the UN. Congressional and public opinion in the United States, meanwhile, supported military intervention without significant dissent.

Having demonstrated its political will, the Truman administration faced the unhappy truth that it did not have much effective military power to meet the invasion. MacArthur secured the commitment of three divisions from Japan, but U.S. ground forces only expanded the scope of defeat. For almost eight weeks, near Osan, along the Kum River, through Taejŏn, and south to Taegu, U.S. soldiers fought and died—and some fled. Weakened by inadequate weapons, limited numbers, and uncertain leadership, U.S. troops were frequently beset by streams of refugees fleeing south, which increased the threat of guerrilla infiltration. These conditions produced horrifying attacks on Korean civilians. From late June to mid-July, South Korean paramilitary forces massacred thousands of civilians at Taejŏn, a war crime that was attributed to the North Koreans by South Korean and U.S. authorities for half a century. During the last week in July, U.S. troops and aircraft fired on refugees at a railroad viaduct near the hamlet of Nogun-ri, west of the Naktong River, killing hundreds.
It was not until the first weeks of August that the United Nations Command, or UNC, as MacArthur's theatre forces had been redesignated, started to slow the North Koreans. The Eighth Army, commanded by Lieutenant General Walton H. Walker, one of the best corps commanders in Europe in 1944–45, and the ROKA, led by Major General Chung Il-kwon, rallied and fought back with more success. Supplies came through the port at Pusan, where the Eighth Army's logistics system depended on Korean and Japanese technicians and on thousands of Korean labourers. To stop the North Koreans' tanks and supporting artillery and infantry, Walker brought in Sherman and Pershing medium tanks, rocket launchers, artillery pieces, antiaircraft guns, and, most important of all, close-air-support aircraft. The Fifth Air Force attacked forward units of the KPA with World War II-era P-51 Mustangs, new jet-powered F-80s and F-84s, and even B-26 and B-29 bombers. U.S. Marine Corps squadrons, embarked on navy light carriers, were capable of flying anywhere along the front in quick response to requests from ground forces, and on the east coast the U.S. Navy's cruisers and destroyers became a seagoing heavy artillery for the ROK I Corps. Meanwhile, fresh U.S. Army and Marine Corps units began to arrive, supplemented by a British Commonwealth brigade. In the same period, the ROKA, which had shrunk to half its prewar strength through deaths, surrenders, a few defections, and substantial desertions, began to bring its ranks back up with reservists, student volunteers, and men impressed from cities' streets as the South Koreans fell back.

Concerned that the shift of combat power toward the UNC would continue into September, the field commander of the KPA, General Kim Chaek, ordered an advance against the Naktong River–Taegu–Yŏngdŏk line, soon to become famous as the "Pusan Perimeter." The major effort was a double envelopment of Taegu, supplemented by drives toward Masan and P'ohang, the southwestern and northeastern coastal anchors of the perimeter. None reached significant objectives. At the Battle

of Tabu-dong (August 18–26), the ROK 1st Division and the U.S. 27th Regimental Combat Team defeated the North Koreans' main armoured thrust toward Taegu. By September 12 the KPA, its two corps reduced to 60,000 men and its tank forces destroyed, had been driven back in most places west of the Naktong and well away from Taegu and P'ohang. At that moment the entire strategic balance of the war was shifted by the sudden appearance of the X Corps at Inch'ŏn.

North to the Yalu

MacArthur did not believe that he could win the war without an amphibious landing deep behind enemy lines, and he had started to think about a landing as early as July. For the core of his landing force, he and the Joint Chiefs of Staff selected the 1st Marine Division and the Eighth Army's remaining infantry division, the 7th. As the force developed, it also included South Korean marine and infantry units and an assortment of U.S. support troops. The entire force was designated X Corps and was commanded by Major General Edward M. Almond, MacArthur's chief of staff.

For the landing site, MacArthur himself fixed on Inch'ŏn, the port outlet of Seoul on Korea's west coast. A host of problems defied a landing there: wide tidal variance, mines, a crazy quilt of islands and shoal waters, and dangerous proximity to KPA reinforcements from Seoul. MacArthur brushed off all these concerns. After a naval gun and aerial bombardment on September 14, marines the next day assaulted a key harbour defense site, Wŏlmi Island, and then in the late afternoon took Inch'ŏn itself. The North Korean resistance was stubborn but spread thin, and the 1st Marine Division, accompanied by ROK and U.S. army units, entered Seoul on September 25. The bulk of the 7th Division advanced to Suwŏn, where it contacted the Eighth Army on the 26th. MacArthur and Syngman Rhee marched into the damaged capitol building and declared South Korea liberated.

As an organized field force, the KPA disintegrated, having lost 13,000 as prisoners and 50,000 as casualties in August and September. Nevertheless, about 25,000 of its best troops took to the mountains and marched home as cohesive units; another 10,000 remained in South Korea as partisans. As the communists headed north, they took thousands of South Koreans with them as hostages and enslaved labourers and left additional thousands executed in their wake. At Taejŏn more than 1,500 people, including civilians and U.S. and South Korean prisoners of war, were massacred, in apparent retaliation for the earlier mass killings by South Korean troops. The ROK army and national police, for their part, showed little sympathy to any southern communists they found or suspected, and U.S. aircraft attacked people and places with little restraint. As a result, the last two weeks of September saw atrocities rivaling those seen in Europe during the fratricidal Thirty Years' War of the 17th century.

Even before the Inch'ŏn landing, MacArthur had thought ahead to a campaign into North Korea, though his plans never went beyond establishing a line across the so-called waist of Korea, from P'yŏngyang in the west to Wŏnsan in the east. On September 27 the Joint Chiefs gave him final authority to conduct operations north of the 38th parallel; however, he was instructed to limit operations in the event of Russian or Chinese intervention. For the UNC the war aim was expanded. As announced by the UN General Assembly on October 7, it was to include the occupation of all of North Korea and the elimination of the KPA as a threat to the political reconstruction of Korea as one nation. To that end, ROKA units crossed the parallel on October 1, and U.S. Army units crossed on October 7. The ROK I Corps marched rapidly up the east coast highway, winning the race for

Wŏnsan; P’yŏngyang fell to the U.S. I Corps on October 19. The Kim Il-sung government, with the remnants of nine KPA divisions, fell back to the mountain town of Kanggye. Two other divisions, accompanied by Soviet advisers and air defense forces, struggled northwest toward the Yalu River and the Chinese border at Sinŭiju. The UNC assumed that the KPA had lost its will to fight. In reality, it was awaiting rescue.

Back to the 38th parallel

As UNC troops crossed the 38th parallel, Chinese Communist Party Chairman Mao Zedong received a plea for direct military aid from Kim Il-sung. The chairman was willing to intervene, but he needed assurances of Soviet air power. Stalin promised to extend China’s air defenses (manned by Soviets) to a corridor above the Yalu, thus protecting air bases in Manchuria and hydroelectric plants on the river, and he also promised new Soviet weapons and armaments factories. After much debate, Mao ordered the Renmin Zhiyuanjun, or Chinese People’s Volunteers Force (CPVF), to cross into Korea. It was commanded by General Peng Dehuai, a veteran of 20 years of war against the Chinese Nationalists and the Japanese.

The Chinese First Offensive (October 25–November 6, 1950) had the limited objective of testing U.S.-ROK fighting qualities and slowing their advance. In the battle of Onjŏng-Unsan along the Ch’ŏngch’ŏn River, the Chinese ruined seven Korean and U.S. regiments—including the only Korean regiment to reach the Yalu, cut off in the vastness of the cold northern hills near Ch’osan. The Chinese suffered 10,000 casualties, but they were convinced that they had found a formula for fighting UNC forces: attack at night, cut off routes of supply and withdrawal, ambush counterattacking forces, and exploit all forms of concealment and cover. Stunned by the suddenness of the Chinese onslaught and almost 8,000 casualties (6,000 of them Koreans), the Eighth Army fell back to the south bank of the Ch’ŏngch’ŏn and tightened its overextended lines. With a harsh winter beginning and supplies in shortage, the pause was wise.

Another matter of concern to the UNC was the appearance of MiG-15 jet fighters above North Korea. Flown by Soviet pilots masquerading as Chinese and Koreans, the MiGs, in one week’s action (November 1–7), stopped most of the daytime raids on North Korea. The U.S. Air Force immediately dispatched a crack wing of F-86 Sabre jet interceptors to Japan, and thus a two-and-a-half year battle for air superiority was joined. Over the course of the war, the F-86s succeeded in allowing the Far East Air Forces (FEAF) to conduct offensive air operations anywhere in North Korea, and they also protected the Eighth Army from communist air attack. However, they were never able to provide perfect protection for B-29s flying daylight raids into “MiG Alley,” a corridor in northwestern Korea where MiGs based near An-tung, Manchuria (now Dandong, China), fiercely defended bridges and dams on the Yalu River.

The FEAF also turned its fury on all standing structures that might shield the Chinese from the cold; cities and towns all over North Korea went up in flames. But the air assault did not halt the buildup for the Chinese Second Offensive. This time Peng’s instructions to his army commanders stressed the necessity to lure the Americans and “puppet troops” out of their defensive positions between the Ch’ŏngch’ŏn and P’yŏngyang, giving the impression of weakness and confusion, while Peng would surround their forward elements with his much-enlarged force of 420,000 Chinese and North Korean

regulars. MacArthur, in what may have been his only real military mistake of the war, ordered the Eighth Army and X Corps northward into the trap on November 24, and from November 25 to December 14 the Chinese battered them back to South Korea. Falling upon the U.S. IX Corps and the ROK II Corps from the east, Peng's Thirteenth Army Group opened up a gap to the west and almost cut off the I Corps north of the Ch'ŏngch'ŏn. The I Corps managed to fight its way through Chinese ambushes back to P'yŏngyang. In the eastern sector the Chinese Ninth Army Group sent two armies against the 1st Marine Division near the Changjin Reservoir (known to the Americans by its Japanese name, Chosin). Under the worst possible weather conditions, the marines turned and fought their way south, destroying seven Chinese divisions before reaching sanctuary at the port of Hŭngnam on December 11.

At the height of the crisis, MacArthur conferred with Walker and Almond, and they agreed that their forces would try to establish enclaves in North Korea, thus preserving the option of holding the P'yŏngyang-Wŏnsan line. In reality, Walker had finally reached the limits of his disgust with MacArthur's meddling and posturing, and he started his men south. By December 6 the Eighth Army had destroyed everything it could not carry and had taken the road for Seoul. Walker's initiative may have saved his army, but it also meant that much of the rest of the war would be fought as a UNC effort to recapture ground surrendered with little effort in December 1950. Walker himself died in a traffic accident just north of Seoul on December 23 and was succeeded by Lieutenant General Matthew B. Ridgway.

Heartened by the ease with which the CPVF had driven the UNC out of North Korea, Mao Zedong expanded his war aims to demand that the Chinese army unify all of Korea and drive the Americans and puppets off the peninsula. His enthusiasm increased when the Chinese Third Offensive (December 31, 1950–January 5, 1951) retook Seoul. The Chinese attacks centred on ROKA divisions, which were showing signs of defeatism and ineptness. Ridgway, therefore, had to rely in the short term upon his U.S. divisions, many of which had now gained units from other UN participants. In addition to two British Commonwealth brigades, there were units from Turkey, France, Belgium, The Netherlands, Greece, Colombia, Thailand, Ethiopia, and the Philippines. Pulling his multinational force together, Ridgway pushed back to the Han River valley in January 1951.

The Chinese, now reinforced by a reborn North Korean army, launched their Fourth Offensive on February 11, 1951. Again the initial attacks struck ill-prepared South Korean divisions, and again the UNC gave ground. Again the Eighth Army fought back methodically, crossing the 38th parallel after two months. At that point Peng began the Fifth Offensive (First Phase) with 11 Chinese armies and two North Korean corps. The attacks came at an awkward moment for the Eighth Army. On April 11 Truman, having reached the opinion that MacArthur's independence amounted to insubordination, had relieved the general of all his commands and recalled him to the United States. The change elevated Ridgway to commander in chief, FECOM and UNC, and brought Lieutenant General James A. Van Fleet to command the Eighth Army. Like Ridgway, Van Fleet had earned wide respect as a division and corps commander against the Germans in 1944–45.

Before Van Fleet could re-form the ROK Army and redeploy his own divisions, the Chinese struck. At a low point in Korean military history, the battered ROKA II Corps gave way, and U.S. divisions peeled back to protect their flanks and rear until Van Fleet could commit five more U.S. and Korean divisions and a British brigade to halt the Chinese armies on April 28. Mao refused to accept Peng's report that the CPVF could no longer hold the initiative, and he ordered the Second Phase of the offensive, which began on May 16 and lasted another bloody week. Once again allied air power and heavy artillery stiffened the resistance, and once again the UNC crossed the 38th parallel in pursuit of a battered (but not beaten) Chinese expeditionary force.

To the negotiating table

By June 1951 the Korean War had reached another critical point. The Chinese–North Korean armies, despite having suffered some 500,000 casualties since November, had grown to 1,200,000 soldiers. United Nations Command had taken its share of casualties—more than 100,000 since the Chinese intervention—but by May 1951 U.S. ground troops numbered 256,000, the ROKA 500,000, and other allied contingents 28,000. The U.S. FEAF had grown from fewer than 700 aircraft in July 1950 to more than 1,400 in February 1951.

These developments obliged the leaders of both coalitions to consider that peace could not be imposed by either side through military victory—at least at acceptable cost. Truman and the UN, in particular, had lost their ardour for anything more than a return to status quo ante bellum and were sympathetic to the idea of a negotiated settlement. On May 17, 1951, the U.S. National Security Council adopted a new policy that committed the United States to support a unified, democratic Korea, but not necessarily one unified by military action and the overthrow of Kim Il-sung.

The communist road to a negotiated peace started in Beijing, where Mao, who had no desire to end the war, approved an approach suggested by Peng and others: hold the ground in Korea and conduct a campaign of attrition, attempting to win limited victories against small allied units through violent night attacks and infantry infiltration. Protection from UNC aircraft and artillery would be provided by caves and bunkers dug into the Korean mountains. Meanwhile, negotiations would be managed by the Chinese, an unparalleled chance to appear an equal of the United States in Asia and a slap at the hated Japanese. The Koreans were not a factor for either side.

After secret meetings between U.S. and Soviet diplomats, the Soviet Union announced that it would not block a negotiated settlement to the Korean War. The Truman administration had already alerted Ridgway to the prospect of truce talks, and on June 30 he issued a public statement that he had been authorized to participate in “a meeting to discuss an armistice providing for the cessation of hostilities.” On July 2 the Chinese and North Koreans issued a joint statement that they would discuss arrangements for a meeting, but only at their place of choice: the city of Kaesŏng, an ancient Korean capital, once part of the ROK but now occupied by the communists at the very edge of the front lines. The Chinese had just fired the first salvo of a new war, one in which talking and fighting for advantage might someday end the conflict.

Map showing North Korean advances in the Korean War in June–August 1950.

Talking and fighting, 1951–53

Battling for position

From the time the liaison officers of both coalitions met on July 8, 1951, until the armistice agreement was signed on July 27, 1953, the Korean War continued as a “stalemate.” This characterization is appropriate in only two ways: both sides had given up trying to unify Korea by force; and (2) the movement of armies on the ground never again matched the fluidity of the war’s first year. Otherwise, the word stalemate has no meaning, for the political-geographic stakes in Korea remained high.

As the negotiations at Kaesŏng developed, neither Ridgway nor Van Fleet believed that the talks would produce anything without more UNC offensives beyond the 38th parallel. Ridgway was particularly convinced that UNC forces should take the “Iron Triangle,” a key area between the headwaters of the Imjin River and the highest eastern mountain ranges that was anchored on the cities of Ch’ŏrwŏn (west), P’yŏnggang (north), and Kimhwa (east). Communist planners were equally convinced that control of this terrain offered advantages for defending North Korea or for continuing the war with offensives to the south and east.
Ground actions never actually ceased in 1951, but none matched the ferocity and frustration of the Eighth Army’s Autumn Offensive (August 31–November 12). Van Fleet’s general concept envisioned operations by the I Corps (five divisions) in the west and the X Corps (five divisions) in the central-eastern sector. In the I Corps sector, the ROK 1st Division and the British Commonwealth Division made notable advances beyond the Imjin valley, while other U.S. and ROK divisions advanced past Ch’ŏrwŏn and then stalled in heavy fighting. The X Corps, fighting a crack Chinese army and two North Korean corps, pushed northward through the mountains and succeeded only in making “Bloody Ridge,” “Heartbreak Ridge,” “The Punchbowl,” and Kanmubong Ridge bad

memories for thousands of army and marine veterans. The KPA I, III, and VI Corps, holding the eastern mountains, proved especially difficult to dislodge, for Kim Il-sung had issued a “stand or die” order to his much-enlarged and improved armed forces. The most surprising advance occurred in the X Corps sector, where two U.S. and two ROK divisions pushed the Chinese back 15 km (almost 10 miles) from Kimhwa to Kŭmsong, pushing the front line out in a salient that exposed their flanks but also establishing a strong position to advance west to P’yŏnggang. The cost of the campaign troubled Van Fleet and Ridgway: 60,000 casualties, 22,000 of them American.

The campaign did not discourage the Chinese leadership, since in their eyes the strategy of “active defense” had worked. The UNC gave up major offensive operations in November, and the Chinese actually struck back in places with some success. Communist losses of some 100,000–150,000 were significant but not crippling—certainly not enough to drive the Chinese to end the war, only to talk some more about it.

In late October 1951 the communists agreed to move the truce negotiations to a more secure area, a village named P’anmunjŏm. Within two months they accepted the current line of contact between the armies as the military demarcation line; they also accepted related measures for the creation of a demilitarized zone (DMZ). The UNC accepted that there would be no verification activities outside of the DMZ, and both sides agreed to work on a regime for enforcement of the armistice after the shooting stopped. Much work on these items remained to be done, but the outline of an agreement was becoming apparent as the year ended—with one major exception: the handling of prisoners of war.

Battling over POWs

As another bitterly cold Korean winter congealed operations on the ground, repatriation of prisoners of war (POWs) became the most intractable issue at P’anmunjŏm. The initial assumption by the negotiators was that they would follow the revised Geneva Convention of 1949, which required any “detaining authority” that held POWs to return all of them to their homelands as rapidly as possible when a war ended. This “all for all” policy of a complete—even forced—exchange of prisoners was certainly favoured by the U.S. military, which was alarmed by early reports from Korea of atrocities against allied POWs. The South Korean government, on the other hand, was adamantly opposed to complete and involuntary repatriation, since it knew that thousands of detainees in the South were actually South Korean citizens who had been forced to fight with the KPA. Indeed, the North Koreans knew that they had much to answer for regarding their impressment, murder, and kidnapping of South Koreans. The Chinese army leaders, meanwhile, knew that some of their soldiers, impressed from the ranks of the Nationalist army, would refuse repatriation if it was not made mandatory.

Both sides agreed to exchange the names of POWs and the numbers held in various categories. The results of the tally shocked all the participants. The U.S. armed forces were carrying 11,500 men as missing in action (MIA), but the communists reported only 3,198 Americans in their custody (as well as 1,219 other UNC POWs, mostly Britons and Turks). The accounting for the South Koreans was even worse: of an estimated 88,000 MIAs, only 7,142 names were listed. The numbers fed the fears of the allies that the murder rate of POWs had been even worse than they suspected. In truth, most of the MIAs had died in battle, but perhaps 15,000 (all but 2,000 of them South Koreans) had died in communist hands from torture, execution, starvation, and medical mistreatment.

The communists, too, found little comfort in the numbers. Early unofficial estimates of POWs in UNC custody had been either too low, around 90,000, or too high, around 170,000. Now the official list produced 95,531 North Koreans, 20,700 Chinese, and 16,243 South Koreans, for a total of 132,474.

The UNC reported that the 40,000 “missing” men were South Koreans who had already passed loyalty investigations and would not be counted as potential repatriates. Against this background, Truman ruled in January 1952 that no POW in UNC custody would be forced to return to North Korea or China against his will. Koreans choosing to go north would be exchanged on a “one for one” formula until all 12,000 allied POWs had been returned. Such a process, however, would require extensive screening of individuals about their preferences, a condition that soon created open warfare in the camps.
The communists had taken steps in 1951 to infiltrate political officers into the UNC POW camps, and now orders came from P’yŏngyang to obstruct the screening process without regard for loss of life. The goal was to make the POWs so obnoxious that the UNC would use force if necessary to send every one of them back to communist control. And so, beginning in December 1951, a series of revolts broke out “inside the wire,” culminating in pitched battles between armed prisoners and entire guard battalions in which hundreds of POWs and a small number of UNC troops lost their lives. Finally, in May 1952, General Mark W. Clark, who had just replaced Ridgway as UNC commander, ordered the execution of Operation BREAKUP, which over the following months crushed the revolt with tanks, gas, and bullets. By the end of the year, all the Chinese had been sent to Cheju Island, repatriate and nonrepatriate POWs segregated, refugees resettled, some of the communist intelligence network disrupted, and camp administration improved. Vigilantism and gang warfare never ceased entirely, however.

Guerrilla warfare

The POW revolt was only one aspect of the “other war” raging behind UNC lines. Another was waged by communist partisans and stay-behind units of the KPA, who, based in South Korea’s mountainous southern provinces, plagued the UNC lines of communication, rear-area camps, and Korean towns. In the autumn of 1951 Van Fleet ordered Major General Paik Sun-yup, one of the ROKA’s most effective officers, to break the back of guerrilla activity. From December 1951 to March 1952, ROK security forces killed 11,090 partisans and sympathizers and captured 9,916 more—a ratio suggesting something close to a “scorched earth, no-quarter” policy. Previous ROKA counterguerrilla operations had resulted in the war’s worst atrocity by a UNC unit, the execution of 800 to 1,000 villagers at Kŏch’ang in February 1951.

Air warfare

Air power gave the UNC its greatest hope to offset Chinese manpower and increasing firepower. The FEAF clearly won the battle for air superiority, pitting fewer than 100 F-86s against far more numerous Soviet, Chinese, and North Korean MiG-15s. Pilots from all the U.S. armed forces downed at least 500 MiGs at a loss of 78 F-86s. The Soviets rotated squadrons of their air defense force to Korea, losing more than 200 pilots.
Strategic bombing was at first limited by policy to attacks on North Korean cities and military installations—a campaign pursued until P’yŏngyang resembled Hiroshima or Tokyo in 1945. In 1952 the bombing of power plants and dams along the Yalu was authorized, and the following year approval was given to attack dams and supporting irrigation systems in North Korea. The bombing

caused great suffering for the North Koreans, but they had to follow the Chinese and Russians in the war's strategic direction, and the Chinese and Russians were hurt very little.
Throughout the war U.S. political and military leaders studied the possible use of nuclear weapons, and upon four separate occasions they gave this study serious attention. The answer was always the same: existing atomic bombs, carried by modified B-29s, would have little effect except for leveling cities. The one time that Truman suggested (in December 1950) that he was considering the nuclear option, the British led the allied charge to stop such talk.
Without question the UNC air campaign hurt the communists, and in retaliation the Chinese and North Koreans (with Soviet collusion) treated captured pilots with special brutality. Air crewmen made up the largest single group of U.S. POWs who truly disappeared, presumably dying under interrogation in Manchuria, elsewhere in China, and possibly in Russia. The communists also claimed that FEAF bombers were spreading epidemic diseases among the civilian population, and they tortured captured American pilots until they extracted incriminating statements of terror bombing and germ warfare.

Strengthening the ROK

U.S. air power might have held the communists at bay in the near term, but the long-term security of the ROK depended on (1) the enlargement and improvement of its own armed forces and (2) the stability of its government. The first requirement was accomplished by the United States' Korean Military Advisory Group, which modernized the ROKA and also organized an effective training program. In the political arena, however, the UNC had to deal with the aging Syngman Rhee, who was convinced that he had an unfinished divine mission to save Korea. In 1952 Rhee forced the National Assembly to make the election of the president a matter of popular vote, immediately calling an election and winning a second term with five million of the six million votes cast. Rhee's political coup had a ripple effect that spread to the armistice negotiations, as his dogmatic opposition to a cease-fire increased in scope and vigour. Essentially, Rhee could not believe that a likely new Republican administration in Washington, led by two other venerable Cold Warriors, Dwight D. Eisenhower and John Foster Dulles, would be satisfied to have U.S. soldiers "die for a tie." Neither could the Russians, Chinese, and North Koreans.

The final push

From September to November 1952, the Chinese expeditionary force staged its sixth major offensive of the war, this time to force the allies back to the 38th parallel and to inflict unacceptable casualties on them. Raging from the valley of the Imjin through the Iron Triangle to the eastern mountains, the ground war followed the same dismal pattern. The Chinese infiltrated allied outposts at night, then attacked under the support of short, intense artillery barrages. Submachine guns and hand grenades ruled the trenches, and flamethrowers and demolitions became standard weapons for assault units. Obscure hills acquired memorable names: White Horse Mountain, Bunker Hill, Old Baldy, Sniper Ridge, Capitol Hill, Triangle Hill, Pike's Peak, Jackson Heights, and Jane Russell Hill. By the time fighting faded in mid-November, the Eighth Army had lost 10,000 men, the Chinese 15,000. Chinese

commanders hoped that they had persuaded president-elect Eisenhower to abandon any ambitious plans for a major offensive in 1953.
The Chinese need not have worried, for both Eisenhower and secretary of state-designate Dulles viewed continuation of the Korean War as incompatible with U.S. national security interests. In their view the People's Republic of China was indeed the enemy in Asia, but Korea was only one theatre in the struggle. They also knew that the voting public's support for the war had thinned throughout 1952 as the talking and fighting continued abroad and the talking and taxing continued at home. As for the negotiations, Dulles conceded the communists' point that voluntary repatriation should involve screening by an international agency, not just U.S.-ROK teams. When the UN and the International Committee of the Red Cross called for an exchange of sick and disabled POWs as a goodwill gesture, Eisenhower approved.
The plan proved a good test of communist intentions—by sheer chance. On March 5, 1953, Joseph Stalin died, and within weeks the Politburo of the Soviet Communist Party voted that the war in Korea should be ended. Mao Zedong received the news with dismay, but he knew that his army could not continue the war without Soviet assistance. With a speed that amazed the negotiating teams on both sides, the Chinese accepted voluntary repatriation. POWs who wanted to return to their homelands would be released immediately, and those who chose to stay would go into the custody of a neutral international agency for noncoercive screening. The Chinese and North Koreans also agreed to the exchange of sick and disabled POWs, which took place between April 20 and May 3.
Peace was not yet at hand, however. Rhee had never publicly surrendered his "march north and unify" position, and in private he hinted that he might "accept" an armistice only in return for serious commitments by the United States, including an unambiguous mutual security alliance and $1 billion in economic aid. The Chinese, meanwhile, saw but one way to win concessions and territory in a peace agreement: on the battlefield. Their seventh and final offensive opened in the Imjin River sector in May against U.S. and Commonwealth divisions, then shifted to the South Koreans, who were driven back 30 km (about 19 miles) from the Kŭmsong salient.

Armistice

The battle of the Kŭmsong salient ended the shooting war. On May 25 the P'anmunjŏm negotiators had worked out the details of the POW exchange, making provisions for "neutral nation" management of the repatriation process. They began to plan for an armistice signing. Then, on June 18–19, Syngman Rhee arranged for his military police to allow 27,000 Korean internees in their custody to "escape." Enraged, the Chinese ordered further attacks on the ROKA. The Americans shared their fury but, in the interest of compromise, convinced Rhee that the United States would meet all his preconditions for an armistice. On July 9 Rhee agreed to accept the armistice, though no representative of the ROK ever signed it. On July 27 Mark W. Clark for the UNC, Peng Dehuai for the Chinese, and Kim Il-sung for the North Koreans signed the agreement. That same day the shooting stopped (more or less), and the armies began the awkward process of disengagement across what became a 4-km- (2.5-mile-) wide DMZ.
Supervision of the armistice actions fell to a Military Armistice Commission (10 officers representing the belligerents), a Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission (Sweden, Switzerland, Poland, and Czechoslovakia), and a Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission (the same four states, plus India as the custodian of the POWs). From August 5 to September 6, a total of 75,823 communist soldiers and civilians (all but 5,640 of them

Koreans) returned to their most-favoured regime, and 7,862 ROK soldiers, 3,597 U.S. servicemen, and 1,377 persons of other nationalities (including some civilians) returned to UNC control. The swap became a media event of potent possibilities: the communist POWs stripped off their hated capitalist prison uniforms and marched off singing party-approved songs.
The handling of those who refused repatriation turned into a nightmare, as agents among the communist POWs and interrogators made life miserable for the Indians. By the time the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission gave up the screening process in February 1954, only 628 Chinese and Koreans had changed their minds and gone north, and 21,839 had returned to UNC control. Most of the non repatriates were eventually settled in South Korea and Taiwan.
As provided for in the armistice agreement, the United States organized an international conference in Geneva for all the belligerents to discuss the political future of Korea. The actual meetings produced no agreement. The Korean peninsula would continue to be caught in the coils of Cold War rivalry, but the survival of the Republic of Korea kept alive the hope of civil liberties, democracy, economic development, and eventual unification—even if their fulfillment might require another 50 years or more.

6. Timeline and Key Events

September 1945 - One of the penalties imposed on Japan at the end of World War II was the loss of Korea. A precursor of the causes of this mid-century Korean War was the decision to divide (rather than unify) Korea along the 38th parallel. Soviet Union controlled the north as a result of entering the war against Japan during the last days of World War II and the United States the southern half of the peninsula
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1 October 1949 – Mao Ze Dung and his communists People's Republic of China was established after Chiang Kai-shek evacuated from the mainland to the island of Taiwan.

13 January 1950 - Jacob Malik, the Soviet representative to the United Nations, storms out of a meeting of the UN Security Council after the Security Council votes down to replace Chaing Kai Chek's Nationalists Chinese representatives with Representatives of Mao Ze Dung's Peoples Republic of China. This event began a Soviet Boycott of the United Nations Security Council.

25 June 1950 - United Nations Security Council called into emergency session. Soviet Union boycotts session due to permanent seating of Taiwan representing China instead of Communist mainland government. In Soviet absence and their veto power not in effect, Council Resolution 82 passed demanding that North Korea end the invasion. This legitimized United Nations actions and the most dramatic of the early events in the pantheon of Korean War facts.

27 June 1950 - UN passes Resolution 83 finding North Korea violated the peace and demanded that their forces return to north of the 38th parallel. Soviets absent for the vote so cannot block it in the Security Council.

30 June 1950 – President Truman commits American Military Forces to South Korea as the majority military force along with other countries in a coalition military.

7 July 1950 - UN passes Resolution 84 requesting member nations to supply troops to join a military action under a U.S. commander. 16 nations comply with a mission known as a "police action". General Douglas McArthur takes command on the following day.

4 August – 18 September 1950 - North Korean troops drove U.S. and ROK forces to southeastern corner of South Korea and established a defensive position about the port of Pusan and known as the Pusan perimeter.

15 September 1950 - General McArthur constructed a daring plan to rescue the defenders of Pusan and cut N. Korean supply lines.
His U.S. Marine troops made an amphibious landing at the port of Inchon, drove inland creating a pincer movement with a counter attacking Pusan force that destroyed the North Korean army.

29-30 September 1950 - UN forces recapture Seoul and drive north. Washington authorizes General McArthur to cross northward over the 38th parallel. Chinese premier Zhou Enlai warns Washington that China will intervene in the event UN forces cross the 38th parallel.

7 October 1950 - UN forces cross 38th parallel.

14-15 October 1950 - Chinese troops respond to UN crossing 38th parallel and enter North Korea crossing international boundary,Yalu River. Chinese refer to their soldiers as "volunteers". Almost simultaneously with Chinese crossing into N. Korea, General McArthur met with President Truman on Wake Island to report on the progress of the war and assured Truman that Chinese would not intervene. There appeared to be a meeting of the minds which would unravel by April.

24 November 1950 - McArthur orders a bold offense intending UN troops to drive to the Yalu River and tells his troops they will be, "home for Christmas". Chinese troops effect an ambush and drive is a disaster including surrounding thousands and US Marines and Soldiers near the Chosin Reservoir. Over the next three weeks US Marines and Soldiers would first defend their positions and then conduct offensive actions to retreat out of the area toward escape to the sea which would be go into the legends of military history, especially within the Marine Corps.

Jan 1951 - Chinese capture Seoul. Ultimately retaken by the UN March 18. The offensives undertaken by the belligerents underscore a stalemate which was, nevertheless, deadly in terms of casualties.

11 April 1951 - McArthur increasingly at odds with Truman over strategies. The general publicly declaring a desire to blockade Chinese coast and bomb their mainland. Truman feared that this would invite Soviet entry into the war. A potential prelude to World War III. Truman recalls and removes McArthur from command and asserts civilian control over the military. Appoints General Matthew Ridgeway as replacement.

10 July 1951 - Belligerents' forces face each other over the 38th parallel and first truce talks at Kaesong, N. Korea, a city located on the 38th parallel. Talks fail although they agree on an agenda.

23 September 1951 - UN forces advance several miles north of 38th parallel and engage North Korean forces over a 3 week period and take “Heartbreak Ridge” and Start of Operation Summit (First Helicopter Deployment).

27 Nov 1951 - April 1952 - New truce talks commence in tents at Panmunjom, North Korea. Parties agreed on a truce line, 38th parallel, but could not agree on the nature of prisoner exchange. Both sides were relatively inactive during heavy winter weather, and casualties commensurately reduced.

June-July 1952 - Both sides had utilized the prior relative winter calm to strengthen their positions and engaged in fierce artillery battles and limited outpost skirmishes.

August-Sept 1952 - The battle for hills and ridges began a new aspect to the war. The control of the mountainous redoubts was considered a first line of defense for each side. Battles were inconclusive with control changing hands constantly. Although limited in scope, casualties weighed heavily on American leaders. Major battles include Battle of Bunker Hill and Hill 122 which saw the first Major Marine Combat in Western Korea, and on 29 August the UN launched the war’s largest air raid of over 1,4000 Sorties flown.

14 Oct 1952 - In an effort to convince the Chinese of their intentions to prosecute the war, Americans mounted a large offensive to take Triangle Hill, but were unsuccessful after heavy casualties on both sides. Thereafter, the sides retired to their winter positions and repeated the 1951 scenario.

Jan 1953 - Dwight Eisenhower elected president after campaigning to conclude the war. Nevertheless, communist leaders were fearful that this election might signal a hard line to continue the war.

March 1953 - Joseph Stalin dies shifting the Soviet's position on the war.

26 April 1953 - Negotiators return to Panmunjom and Communists agree to voluntary repatriation.

May 1953 - Communist forces commence new attacks hoping that additional territorial gains would strengthen their positions in the final armistice terms.

June 1953 - While the negotiators hammered out details of the agreement, Communist forces commenced a new offensive attaining several miles of new territory. Historians look at this Korean War fact and believe these last “minute” actions were meant to bolster a history of communist victories. In response the Navy and Marine Corps aircraft flew 910 Sorties (Highest single day total on June 15) and the air forces destroyed 16 MIG's (Largest single day total on June 26th).

6 July 1953 - A last communist successful offensive to dislodge Americans from a hill outpost called “Old Baldy”.

27 July 1953 - Signing of Armistice (US, Korea and China) ending the Korean War (No treaty signed between North and South Korea).

7. Major Parties and Forces

Due to the ideological differences between the leaders of the peninsula, it had been split into North Korea and South Korea with a temporary border separating the two nations. The leaders in both countries of Korea claimed that they were the legitimate leaders of the entire region and did not recognize the border as official. Before the war officially began, there had been some conflict between the armies of the two Koreas along their shared border. The conflict between the two Koreas escalated, and in 1950, the North Korean leaders sent their troops over the border. Apart from the nations on the Korean peninsula, other nations were also involved in the war in various capacities such as the US, Thailand, and Russia that aided the fighting the nations directly and Denmark, Bulgaria, and Sweden that provided medical support. The international military response to the Korean War consisted of 21 nations.

North Korea

In 1950, the leaders of North Korea, with the backing of the Soviet Union and China, sent their forces across the border to invade South Korea. The North Korean government claimed that the South Korean army had attacked first. The North Korean military also claimed that it launched the offensive in search of a defector, Syngman Rhee. The initial North Korean invasion force was exceptionally well prepared as it had both artillery and tanks. Due to the extensive preparation that the North Korean army had put in place, they were able to take control of Seoul easily.

South Korea

At the time of the invasion, the South Korean army was unprepared for a large-scale military offensive from South Korea. The South Korean army lacked weapons to counter the tanks and artillery that the North Koreans were using. Another challenge that the South Korean army initially faced was that their army was not correctly positioned to battle the oncoming North Koreans. The military leadership of South Korea at the time was also insufficiently prepared, and it resulted in disastrous decisions such as the destruction of the Hangang Bridge which resulted in some South Korean Military divisions being at the mercy of the North Korean army.

International Intervention

The Korean War further split the world along ideological lines with some nations such as China and the Soviet Union supporting the North's communist regime while other countries such as the US and Australia supported the South's capitalist government. The ideological differences were most visible at the UN where the Chinese representative openly stated that the nation was willing to intervene in the conflict if the US got involved. The UN sent forces to the Korean War to aid the South Koreans. However, the UN forces were forced to retreat after the Chinese troops crossed the border and began playing a more active role in the war.

8. Relevant UN Treaties,Resolutions and Events

UN Security Council Resolution 82 (June 25, 1950)

It was passed on the same day when North Korean troops invaded South Korea. The invasion was denounced by the UN Security Council as an act of violation of international peace and called for an end to hostilities immediately and the withdrawal of North Korean forces behind the 38th parallel. It was the first official international condemnation of North Korea as the aggressor. The Soviet Union boycotted the UN then in protest of China's representation, which allowed the resolution to be passed by a vote since the Soviet Union could not veto it.

UN Security Council Resolution 83 (27 June 1950)

Apart from the condemnation of North Korea, this resolution urged that the UN member states dispatch military supplies to South Korea. It pragmatically demanded the formation of a multi-national army with the UN flag to repel the aggressors. This was the turning point when direct United Nations-sponsored armed action started for the first time.

UN Security Council Resolution 84 (July 7, 1950)

This resolution legally created the United Nations Command (UNC) and put it under U.S. command. It also authorized use of the UN flag in combat operations in Korea. It validated the involvement of a number of countries contributing troops and support, all under a unified command arrangement but symbolically representative of the will of the international community.

UN General Assembly Resolution 377(V) – "Uniting for Peace" (3 November 1950)

The resolution, also referred to as the "Uniting for Peace" resolution, was passed to ensure that the General Assembly could act where the Security Council was blocked, especially by vetoes. Although not unique to Korea, it was influenced significantly by the context of the Korean War and concerns that the Soviet veto would freeze additional collective security actions. It set a precedent for UN intervention in the future in cases where the Security Council was incapacitated.

UN General Assembly Resolution 498 (February 1, 1951)

This resolution officially denounced the People's Republic of China as an aggressor for intervening in the war on North Korea's behalf militarily. After Chinese troops entered the conflict late in 1950, the fighting rose significantly. This resolution reflected the growing worldwide concern regarding China's intervention and the expansion of the war into a wider Cold War conflict.

Formation of the United Nations Command (July 1950)

The United Nations Command (UNC) came into being directly because of Security Council Resolution 84. Based in Seoul, it oversaw the multinational military intervention and continues to exist to this day, although in much smaller capacity. It was the only time in UN history as a single combatant command working under UN command.

9. Further Reading

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