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# The Korean War

The Korean War is often referred to as the “forgotten war.” Why is that? Well, it was overshadowed by World War II that preceded it and the Vietnam War that came after. But is it really “forgotten” if its effects are still felt today?

In order to understand the full scope of the Korean War, it’s important to know that the Korean peninsula wasn’t always divided into the North and South we know today. In 1910, the Japanese Empire forcibly annexed Korea. But when Japan surrendered to the Allies in World War II in 1945, it was forced to give up all of its colonies, including Korea.

Korea was liberated after 35 years of Japanese rule, but they still weren’t fully independent. The United States and the Soviet Union agreed to divide Korea along the 38th parallel, with the USSR occupying the north and the US occupying the south. This was only meant to be temporary, but with the beginning of the Cold War and the increasing struggle between the US and the USSR for power and ideological influence around the world, reunification of Korea became more difficult. The division resulted in the US establishing an anti-communist government in South Korea led by Syngman Rhee, and the USSR responding with a communist government in North Korea under Kim Il Sung.

Despite the growing tensions between the two Koreas, the USSR and the US withdrew their troops from North and South Korea in 1948 and 1949, respectively, with hopes that each government would be able to stand on its own. But peace didn’t last: On June 25, 1950, North Korean troops advanced past the 38th parallel to invade South Korea, marking the beginning of the Korean War. North Korea, backed by the USSR and China, had a goal to unify the Korean peninsula under a communist regime. The US viewed this attack as a threat and an attempt to spread communism and, with the help of the United Nations, decided to intervene and support South Korea.

North Korea occupied most of South Korea, including its capital, Seoul, during the first three months of the war. North Korean forces pushed most of the South Korean and US forces into the southeast corner of the

country at the Pusan Perimeter. But on September 15, 1950, US forces landed at Incheon, recapturing Seoul and breaking the North Korean troops' supply lines into South Korea.

With the help of UN troops, South Korean and US forces proceeded to advance into North Korea, capturing the North Korean capital, Pyongyang, and pushing North Korean forces toward the Chinese border. But China felt threatened by forces so close to their border, so they retaliated by entering the war, supporting North Korea, in October 1950.

By July 1951, multiple battles had taken place, and both sides had many successes and failures. The Korean War reached a stalemate at the 38th parallel. With over three million casualties, most of them civilian, and the immense amount of destruction, it became clear that it would be extremely difficult for either side to claim victory.

Peace negotiations began on July 10, 1951 in Kaesong, North Korea. Both sides had different terms for the repatriation of prisoners of war and establishing a demilitarized zone, so negotiations were slow. It wasn't until two years later that an armistice was signed at Panmunjeom, a demilitarized zone between North and South Korea, by military commanders from the US, North Korea, and China, ending the three-year-long war.

North and South Korea remain divided to this day, and they're still technically at war. The armistice served as a military ceasefire in order to reach a peace agreement. But a formal peace treaty has not been signed. It's been decades since the Korean War ended in an armistice. But the 38th parallel that separated many families and divides North and South Korea still serves as a vivid reminder of the war's legacy to this day.