**The Cold War**

**Korean War**


US Battleship during Korean War

The Korean War was fought between South Korea and communist North Korea. It was the first major conflict of the Cold War as the Soviet Union supported North Korea and the United States supported South Korea. The war ended with little resolution. The countries are still divided today and North Korea is still ruled by a communist regime.

**Dates:** June 25, 1950 to July 27, 1953

**Leaders:**

The leader and Prime Minister of North Korea was Kim Il-sung. North Korea's chief commander was Choi Yong-kun.

The President of South Korea was Syngman Rhee. The South Korean Army was led by Chung II-kwon. The United States Army and United Nations forces were led by General Douglas MacArthur. The US President at the start of the war was [Harry Truman](http://www.ducksters.com/biography/uspresidents/harrystruman.php). [Dwight D. Eisenhower](http://www.ducksters.com/biography/uspresidents/dwightdeisenhower.php) was president by the end of the war.

**Countries Involved**

Supporting North Korea was the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China (also Communist). Supporting South Korea was the United States, Great Britain, and the United Nations.

**Before the War**

Before World War II the Korean Peninsula had been a part of Japan. After the war it needed to be divided up. The Northern half went under the control of the Soviet Union and the Southern half under the control of the United States. The two sides were divided at the 38th parallel.

Eventually two separate states formed with North Korea forming a [communist](http://www.ducksters.com/history/cold_war/communism.php) government with Kim Il-sung as leader and South Korea forming a capitalist government under the rule of Syngman Rhee.

The two sides did not get along and there were constant skirmishes and battles along the border at the 38th parallel. Attempts were being made to negotiate a unified country, but they were going nowhere.

**North Korea Attacks**

On June 25, 1950 North Korea invaded South Korea. The South Korean Army fled and forces from the United Nations came to help out. The United States provided the majority of the United Nations forces. Soon the South Korea government only occupied a small part of Korea on the southern tip.

**The War**

At first the United Nations was only trying to defend South Korea, however, after the first summer of fighting, President Truman decided to go on the offensive. He said the war was now about liberating North Korea from communism.

**Battle of Inchon**

General George MacArthur led the UN forces on an attack at the Battle of Inchon. The Battle was a success and MacArthur was able to move in and route much of the North Korean army. He soon had retaken control of the city of Seoul as well as South Korea back up to the 38th parallel.

**China Enters the War**

MacArthur continued to be aggressive and pushed the North Koreans all the way to the northern border. However, the Chinese were not happy with this and sent their army to enter the war. At this point President Truman replaced MacArthur with General Matthew Ridgway.

**Back to the 38th Parallel**

Ridgway fortified the border just north of the 38th Parallel. Here the two sides would battle for the rest of the war. North Korea would attack the south at various points and the UN army would retaliate trying to prevent more attacks.

**End of the War**

Negotiations continued for much of the war, but President Truman did not want to appear weak. When Eisenhower became president, he was much more willing to offer concessions to end the war.

On July 17, 1953 a treaty was signed that ended the war. Few things had changed as a result of the war. Both countries would remain independent and the border would remain at the 38th parallel. However, between the two countries a 2 mile demilitarized zone was placed to act as a buffer in hopes to prevent future wars.