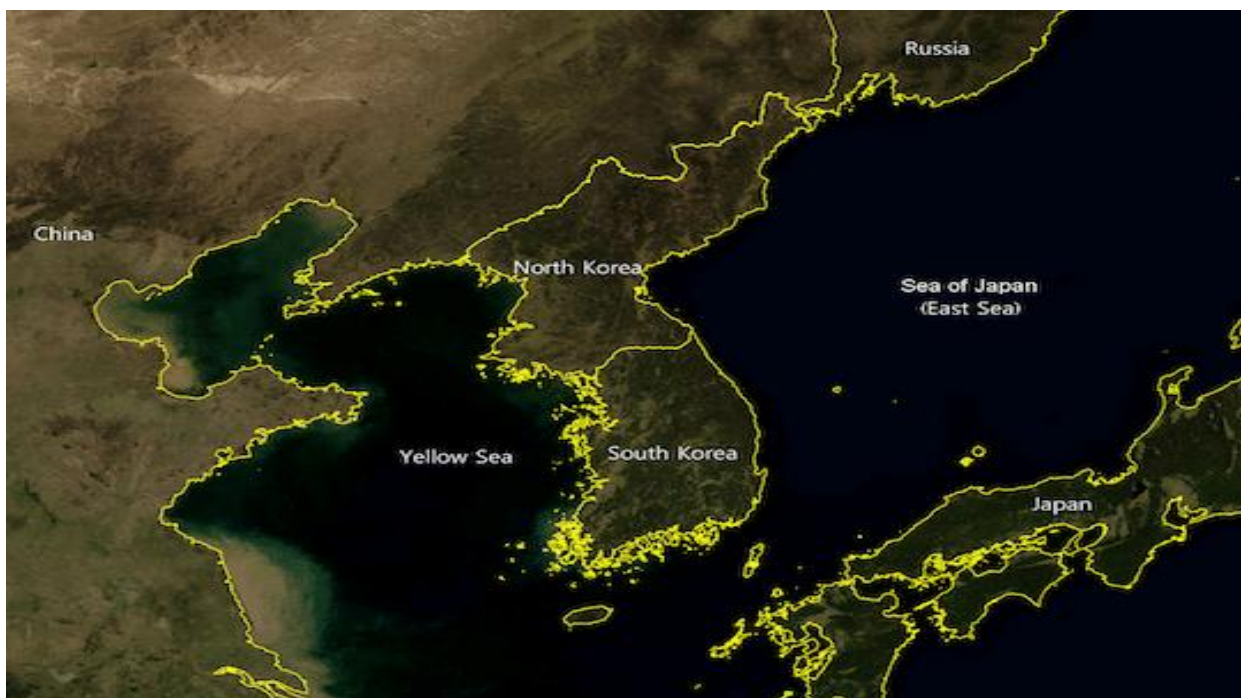


Korean Wars-North & South Korea

Korean Conflict – North Korea, South Korea, USA, and China

In today's world, there are mainly three ongoing conflicts which possess the capacity to escalate into a nuclear conflict. These are Israel-Palestine, **India-Pakistan** and the **Korean conflict**. Of these three, the most unpredictable and volatile is the Korean conflict; attributed to the megalomaniacal character of the North Korean ruler. In this article, we would cover all the aspects of the Korean Conflict that you must know.



Modern Korea – History from Genesis to the conflict

- The present-day political conflicts in Korea has strong roots in its history – the earlier Chinese and Japanese influence and the later USSR and USA influence.
- The **Joseon Dynasty** ruled most of the Korean peninsula from **1392-1897** (for more than 5 centuries).
- Joseon was the last dynasty of Korea and its longest-ruling neo-Confucian dynasty.
- The philosophy of **neo-Confucian** professed by the Joseon is the strongest linking factor of the Korean peninsula.
- China had considerable influence on the Joseon Dynasty. It was a vassal of Qing dynasty of China. It even leads to a period where Korea was open to trade only with the China. **This explains the historical link between China and Korea.**

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- In 1895, Treaty of Shimonoseki was signed between Japan and China after the former defeated China in **Sino-Japanese war (1894-95)**.
- As the result of the treaty, Joseon was removed from the China's vassalage.
- **In 1897, the Joseon was renamed as KOREAN EMPIRE.**
- From 1897-1905 Korea witnessed a strong autocratic rule under Emperor Gojong. He embarked on a journey to strengthen military and market structure of Korea. He was helped by Russia, which had much influence on Korea during the period.
- The **Russo-Japanese war (1905)** ended Russia's influence and with the **1905 Protectorate Treaty**, Korean became a Japanese protectorate.
- **1905-1910** was a period of political turbulence in Korea. It ended with the **1910 annexation of Korea by Japan.**
- **1910- 1945**, Korea was effectively under the **rule of the Japanese**. It was after the fall of Japan in **World War-II** when seeds of Korean conflict were sown.

The Korean Conflict/Seeds of the Conflict: By USSR and USA

- The Allied forces of the Second World War at **Yalta Conference (1945)**, agreed to establish a **“four-power trusteeship over Korea”**.
- Before a concrete plan could be formulated, the USSR invaded Korea and within a week Japan surrendered. This led to a condition where the north of Korea was under USSR and the south under rest of allied, mainly USA. (the two regions are divided by the **38th parallel**)



December 1945 at **Moscow Conference**, joint **Soviet-American** commission was established to work on Trusteeship issue of Korea.

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- The fear of the spread of communism and the mutual distrust between USSR and USA led to the failure of the trusteeship plan.
- The advent of cold-war the end to the hope of united Korea.
- In **1948** the United Nations proposed free elections across all of Korea. USSR rejected this plan. But an election took place in the American protectorate resulting in the establishment of **the Republic of Korea (South Korea)**.
- The next month the northern part was declared as **Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea)**.
- Both halves tried to enhance their reach, territorially and ideologically, which gave birth to the Korean Conflict.

Escalation of the conflict – The Korean Wars



- In 1950, North Korea, supplied by USSR, launched an attack on South Korea occupying most of the country.
- As a response to the attack, in September (1950) United Nations force led by the US retaliated with brutal force and changed the dynamics of the war.
- 1950-51 period was the most turbulent one.
- The US forces led by Douglas MacArthur wished to use the opportunity to capture the north and hence crossed the 38th parallel. But their aggression led to the entry of China to support North Korea.
- Sensing escalation of the crisis, US president removed Douglas MacArthur in 1951 and peace talks began in 1951.
- Mid 1951 to 1953 saw a period of relative calm despite acts of hostilities from both the sides.
- After the death of Stalin, in **1953**, USSR brokered an **armistice agreement**. It lead to (1) An official ceasefire without a Peace treaty. So, in a sense, the war never ended. (2) Exchange of Prisoners of war (PoWs). (3) Establishment of **Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ)** – 2.5 miles wide and approximately 150-mile long areas with no military presence. Though its surrounding makes the most fortified border in the world.

The Weapon Race by North Korea

- Under **Kim Jong il** (the second leader of North Korea and father of present leader **Kim Jong-un**) North Korea accelerated their nuclear programme and supposedly developed nuclear capabilities (probably with help of China).

- It withdrew from the **Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)** in 2003. (North Korea is not a member of Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) too)
- Thereafter it tested nuclear explosives in 2006, 2009, 2013, and 2016. Also, it has demonstrated Uranium enrichment capability and possesses weapon grade Plutonium.
- For **denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula**, the **Six-Party Talks** between North Korea, South Korea, Japan, China, Russia, and the United States **began in 2003**. Though, these are in suspension since 2009.
- There are suspicions that it possesses large chemical weapon arsenal. (North Korea is not a member of Chemical Weapon Convention (CWC))
- In December 2015, Kim Jong Un also claimed to have **thermonuclear capabilities** (the veracity of the claim is, however, a matter of debate).

Start of the current standoff?

- On **12th April 2017**, reports began circulating that North Korea was poised to carry out an **underground nuclear weapon test**.
- On **15th April**, North Korea held a huge military parade to celebrate the “Day of the Sun.”
- The spectacle featured among other things, large canisters that analysts said could be carrying **new types of intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs)** that could one day be capable of hitting the United States.
- Kim said, "If the United States wages reckless provocation against us, our revolutionary power will instantly counter with annihilating strike, and we will respond to full-out war with full-out war and to nuclear war with our style of nuclear strike warfare."
- The chest-pounding threat was somewhat undercut a few hours later when the North Korean military attempted a missile launch — only to see it blow up "almost immediately," according to US military officials.
- What was intended to be a strong, defiant show of force quickly became an **international embarrassment**.
- Similarly, the US military announced in early March that it had officially begun the deployment of the **THAAD anti-ballistic missile defence system** in South Korea.
- THAAD, which stands for **Terminal High Altitude Area Defence**, is a system that's already deployed in Guam on an “expeditionary” basis, and is now being deployed in South Korea to protect against any incoming missiles from the North.