

KEY QUESTION: How successful was US Containment in Korea?

Contextual Background:

- After World War Two, Korea was divided at the 38th parallel into the Soviet-backed communist North Korea, led by **Kim Il Sung**, and non-communist, American-backed South Korea under the leadership of **Syngman Rhee**.
- In 1949 China became communist after the communists defeated the Nationalists (Mao Zedong was China's leader)
- Neither leader in Korea had been elected nor did either recognise the legitimacy of the other.
- Rhee was a corrupt and unpopular leader and did badly in the April 1950 elections when many in the south voted for reunification with the North.
- **In June 1950, with the support of China and the Soviet Union, North Korea launched an attack on South Korea across the 38th parallel.**

Why did the US get involved?

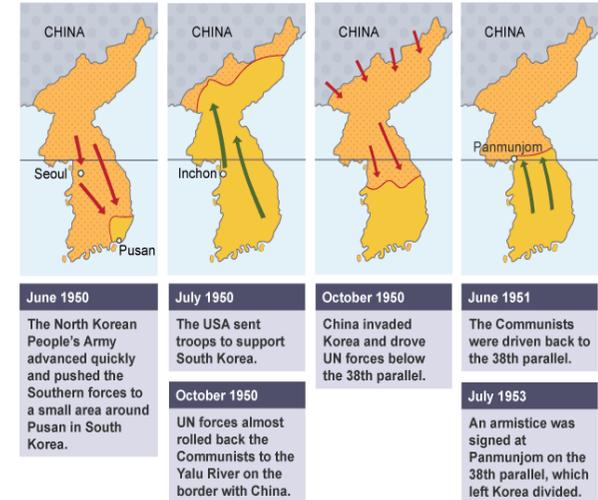
Factor 3: Appeasement

The invasion was a blatant act of aggression, similar to Hitler's invasion of Poland. Stalin was behind it and should not be allowed to get away – if the USA did nothing it would be appeasement all over again!

Why did the US get involved?

Factor 4: Political factors

The USA did not believe China would intervene and the USSR were boycotting the UN so the USA could get UN backing which would also be politically damaging for the USSR as they would look like the 'aggressors' in the 'world court'



Why did the US get involved?

Factor 1: The Containment Policy

This invasion was exactly what The Truman Doctrine was for - Many in America believed that they had a responsibility to act because of their commitment to the promise Truman had made to help countries who were threatened by communism.

Why did the US get involved?

Factor 2: The Domino Theory

America wanted not just to contain communism - they also wanted to prevent the domino effect. Truman was worried that if Korea fell, the next country to fall would be Japan, which was very important for American trade. This was probably the most important reason for America's involvement in the war.

KEY TERMS

Appeasement / Containment
Domino Theory / Proxy war / SEATO /

DISCUSSION Point

Was the death of 3 million Koreans + 1 million Chinese + 38,000 US troops worth it?

Why did China get involved?

China feared an American invasion and Mao did not want "rollback" to succeed. North Korea as a communist country provided a buffer zone for China.

The **Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance** with the USSR meant that, as their ally, China was under pressure from Stalin to help Korea.

Why did the USSR get involved?

It was consistent with Soviet ideology to spread communism which is what Kim Il Sung was trying to do / Stalin wanted to see communism expand as long as he did not get involved in a 'hot war' with the USA / A successful takeover of South Korea would increase the USSR's influence in Asia / The USSR was boycotting the UN and therefore could not use their boycott to prevent UN involvement in Korea so they gave support to Sung.

War Facts:

- China committed 1 million men to Korea
- Douglas MacArthur led the US / UN troops
- The USSR provided MiG Jets, T34 tanks and medical support
- The war lasted 3 years – 38,000 US lives were lost and 3 million Koreans + 1 million Chinese died.

Success for Containment?

- ✓ Militarily the Inchon landings were a 'masterpiece'
- ✓ South Korea was 'liberated' from communism
- ✓ Sent strong message globally that the US were committed to containment
- ✓ Chinese – Soviet relations got worse (Sino-Soviet split) Good for USA
- ✓ Leads to a new military Alliance SEATO in South East Asia - 'securing democracy' (1954)

