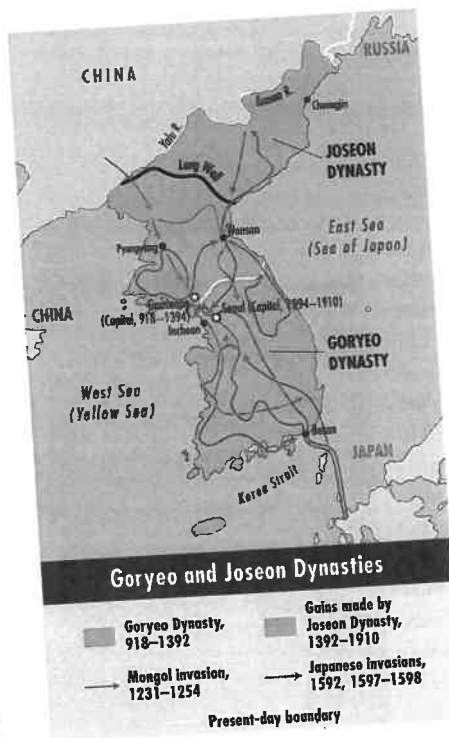


Mongols forced the Koreans to help with two failed attempts to invade Japan. By 1382, the Ming, a native Chinese dynasty (1368–1644), had overthrown the Mongol Yuans, and the Goryeo king had removed the Mongols from Korea.

Korea's social structure had fallen apart under the Mongols. Korean aristocrats had gained control of the farmland. Peasant farmers had become serfs or tenants. Artisans and other middle-class people had become slaves. Some of these people had been given in tribute to the Mongols along with ginseng, horses, gold, and silver.



### The Joseon Dynasty

With the Mongols gone and Korea in a state of decay, General Yi Seong-gye seized power in Gaeseong. In 1392, Yi was proclaimed king and established the Joseon Dynasty. He moved the capital to Seoul and began construction of a 10.5-mile (17-km) wall around the city. Yi replaced Buddhism with Confucianism as the state religion. Sons of aristocratic landowners attended Confucian schools to prepare for civil-service examinations

that would admit them to government positions. Yi placed all of Korea's land under his control and parceled it out to military leaders and government officials.

Yi's grandson, King Sejong (1397–1450), is regarded as Korea's greatest ruler. He extended the Korean border in the north to the Yalu and Tumen rivers. This is North Korea's northern border today. He encouraged inventions such as the rain gauge, the use of moveable type, and the creation of a Korean alphabet called hangeul. However, the Confucian system that Sejong and later Joseon kings promoted created a strict social system with little chance for advancement. It also discouraged the development of industry and trade.

In 1592, the Japanese began a campaign to attack Ming China by going through Korea. They landed at Busan and captured Seoul and most of the peninsula. The Ming Chinese united with armies of Korean landowners, peasants, and slaves to force the Japanese out. A second unsuccessful attack began in 1597. The attacks greatly weakened Korea and its government. Thousands of people died, land was destroyed, fewer crops grew, and taxes decreased.

After recovering from the Japanese invasions, Korea was invaded from the north by the Manchus of Manchuria in 1627



King Sejong the Great ruled during the Golden Age of Korea. This time was one of great cultural and educational advances.

### Turtle Ships

During the Japanese invasion in 1592, Admiral Yi Sun-sin (1545–1598), pictured below, developed the world's first ironclad ships. They were called turtle ships for their protective metal shell. The enemies' spears and arrows bounced off the ships. Yi's few ships intercepted and destroyed hundreds of Japanese supply ships in the Korea Strait. This helped save Korea. In 1597, the Japanese attacked again and once more Yi's navy defeated them. Yi was killed during one of the battles. Today, Yi Sun-sin is considered one of Korea's great heroes. A festival is held in his honor every spring.



46 Korea

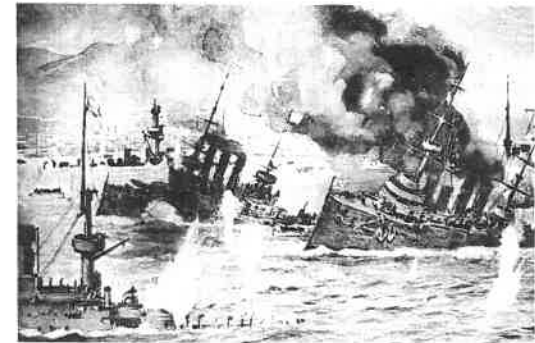
and 1636. The Joseon Dynasty surrendered to the Manchus after many Koreans were killed and much land was destroyed. Korea then sent tribute to the Manchus. In 1644, the Manchus overthrew the Ming Dynasty in China and set up the Qing Dynasty. In response to the Japanese and Manchu invasions, the Joseon Dynasty closed Korea off to all countries except China. The kings built a high wooden palisade fence across Korea's northern border. Korea became known as the Hermit Kingdom.

Between the 1640s and 1876, Korea remained isolated from the rest of the world. However, Korean officials met Western scholars in China during tribute missions. These officials brought back books about the Catholic religion and scientific discoveries, as well as inventions such as telescopes and alarm clocks. At the same time in Korea, a group of scholars were promoting *sihahk*, or "practical learning." These scholars were opposed to Confucian learning. Instead, they promoted social equality and the welfare of all people. They also worked on improvements for agriculture.

In 1876, Japan forced the Joseon Dynasty to open Korea's doors. In that year, Korea signed the Ganghwa Treaty, which opened the ports of Busan, Incheon, and Wonsan to Japanese trade. In 1882, the United States and Korea signed a treaty for trade and diplomatic relations. Within the next few years, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, and Russia also signed treaties with Korea. Government representatives, businesspeople, and religious missionaries from those countries came to Korea. Groups from Japan and the Western countries worked to make doing business easier in Korea. They built Korea's first railroads, which connected Busan to Seoul to Incheon. Telegraph and telephone lines also connected Korea's main cities. Missionaries built hospitals, schools, and universities.

By the end of the 1800s, the Joseon Dynasty was very weak. Korea's neighbors—China, Japan, and Russia—tried to gain control of the peninsula. From 1894 to 1895, Japan fought China for influence in Korea. Japan won and forced China to recognize Korea as an independent country. For the first time since 108 B.C. Korea no longer had to pay tribute to China. Then, in 1904 and 1905, Japan and Russia fought for control of Korea. Again, Japan won, and Russia recognized Japan's influence

In May 1905, Japan crushed the Russian fleet in the Korea Strait, asserting its power over Korea.



over Korea. Later in 1905, Japan made a treaty with King Kojong. Korea came under Japan's protection. In 1910, Japan forced the last Joseon king, Sungjong, to sign a treaty making Korea a colony of Japan. The king was forced to give up his throne and to move to Japan.

### Japan Rules Korea

From 1910 to 1945, Japan ruled Korea as a colony. This meant that Korea and its people existed for the benefit of Japan. Many Japanese farmers and fishers came to work in Korea. They were given Korean farmland and rights to fish in Korean waters. Japan divided the peninsula into a southern agricultural area and a northern industrial and mining area.

Japan wanted the Koreans to become Japanese. The Koreans could not become Japanese citizens, however. The Korean spoken and written language was replaced with Japanese. Korean language and history were no longer taught in the schools. Korean names were even replaced with Japanese ones. In reaction to these policies, thousands of Koreans left their homeland and immigrated to China, Russia, and the Hawaiian Islands.

On March 1, 1919, Korean nationalists signed a declaration of independence that was read in the streets of Seoul. For several weeks, thousands of people throughout Korea took part in peaceful demonstrations for independence from Japan. The Japanese put down the movement and killed about 7,000 Koreans. As a result, Korean nationalists fled to Shanghai, China, or to the newly formed Soviet Union, which had been known as Russia

until 1917. In Shanghai, the nationalists set up the Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea. Rhee Syngman (1875–1965) was elected president of this government in exile.

In the 1930s, Japan used Korea as a staging area for its invasion of Manchuria and then China. Korean crops were used to feed the Japanese army. Korean boys and men were forced to serve in the army. Other Koreans were taken to Japan to work on farms or in factories. Only in recent years has it come to light that about 200,000 Korean women were forced to be prostitutes for the Japanese army.

In 1939, World War II broke out in Europe. Before the war started, Japan had formed an alliance with Germany and Italy. These countries were known as the Axis Powers. Great Britain, France, and the Soviet Union, known as the Allies, opposed the Axis Powers. In 1941, the United States joined the Allies when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor in the U.S.-controlled Hawaiian Islands. During World War II, life became even harder for the Korean people under Japanese rule. At this time, Kim Il-sung rose as a leader of the Korean communist nationalists. He led many raids against the Japanese from bases in China and the Soviet Union.

After the United States dropped atomic bombs on Japan, the Japanese surrendered and World War II ended in August 1945. The Allies had agreed to divide the Korean Peninsula at the 38th



Rhee Syngman, president of Korea's government in exile

Koreans cheer as U.S. troops march through Seoul in 1945.



parallel temporarily and to govern it as a trusteeship. Soviet troops marched into northern Korea and accepted the surrender of Japanese troops there. The United States accepted the surrender of Japanese troops in southern Korea.

### A Divided Korea and the Korean War

The Soviet Union immediately closed off Korea at the 38th parallel and placed Korean communists in positions of power. Kim Il-sung was elected secretary of the North Korean Communist Party and became chairman of the provisional government. In the south, the government was run by the U.S. military. In 1946, the Representative Democratic Council was set up with Rhee Syngman as the chairman. In 1948,

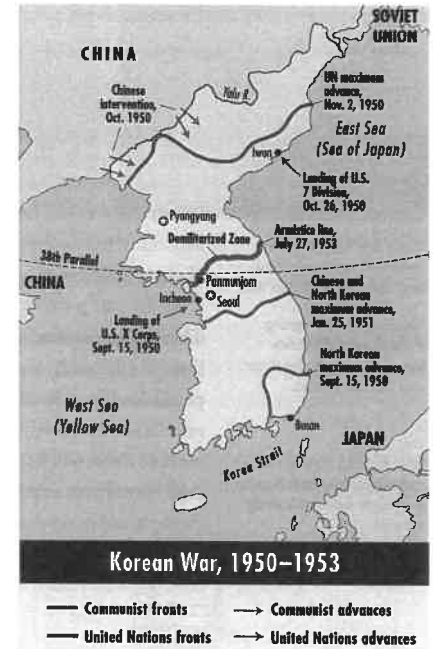
Below left: Koreans set up a portrait of Soviet Union leader Josef Stalin in preparation for a parade in Soviet-dominated North Korea.

Below right: A young Kim Il-sung became North Korea's first premier



United Nations-supervised elections were to take place in the north and the south. The result was to be an elected National Assembly for a united Korea. The Soviets refused to allow the UN into the north. In the south, elections were held in May 1948, and a National Assembly was elected. The National Assembly wrote a constitution and formed a government. Rhee Syngman was elected president of South Korea in July 1948, and in August the Republic of Korea was proclaimed. In the north, the Supreme People's Assembly was formed, and Kim Il-sung was appointed as premier. In September 1948, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was established in the north. In 1949, the Soviet Union and the United States withdrew their troops from the Korean Peninsula.

In June 1950, Kim Il-sung began an invasion of South Korea. Kim's goal was to reunify Korea under his control. The United States responded by having the UN organize troops from several countries. Within a few months, the troops had pushed the North Korean army as far as the Yalu River. Then





Above left: UN troops fire shells into communist positions during the Korean War.



Above right: The signing of the Korean Armistice Agreement ended the three-year Korean conflict.

Bitter fighting between UN troops and the North Korean army demolished this street in Seoul.



### The Two Koreas Since 1953

At first, North Korea's economy pulled quickly ahead of South Korea's. The north had most of the peninsula's mineral deposits and had been highly industrialized before the war. The peninsula's only hydroelectric power plant was in the North. In addition, North Korea received aid from China and the Soviet Union. Kim Il-sung's one-man rule was able to accomplish much very quickly. His government built schools, hospitals, parks, and other facilities that improved the daily life of most North Koreans.

Kim instituted his *juche* philosophy of self-reliance as the north's only political belief. This meant that the North Koreans were to be politically, militarily, and economically self-supporting. The people were to obey the Supreme Leader (Kim) no matter what. Before Kim's death in 1994, he had prepared his son Kim Jong-il to succeed him in power. This was in keeping with previous Korean dynasties. However, it was the first and only time in a communist country that a son had followed his father as the country's leader. Today, Kim Jong-il holds more power over his people than any other leader in the world. As a lasting tribute, Kim Il-sung was proclaimed "eternal president" in 1998. That ended the office of president in North Korea. No one else can hold that title.

In the late 1980s, North Korea's economy began to decline as trade with China and the Soviet Union decreased. Then, a series of floods followed by droughts hit the country in the 1990s. This brought about years of famine from which the country is still trying to recover. During these economic troubles,



President Park Chung-hee led South Korea's economic boom but abused his political power.

North Korea's government continued to build its military and arsenal of weapons, including nuclear weapons.

Until 1960, Rhee Syngman led South Korea's governments. These governments were weak and corrupt, and Rhee's time in office was marked by many student demonstrations. Few improvements had been made to the economy since 1953. In 1960, Rhee stepped down and elections were held for a new government. Economic problems continued, however. In May 1961, a military coup led by Park Chung-hee overthrew the government. In 1963, Park was elected president by the electoral college. Park began a series of five-year plans, and South Korea's economy boomed. Multi-lane highways and railroads were built to connect major cities. Emphasis was placed on building steel mills and cement plants and on encouraging shipbuilding and the new auto industry. By the late 1970s, South Korea was known as the "Miracle on the Han." President Park used his power to suppress dissent by jailing many of his opponents. He rewrote the constitution so that he could be re-elected any number of times and hold unlimited power. Finally, members of his own government had had enough. In 1979, the head of the National Security Force assassinated Park.

Park was followed as president by Choi Kyu-hah. When the government delayed constitutional reforms, such as direct election of the president, many South Koreans took part in demonstrations. This resulted in the military taking control of the government. The most violent demonstrations took place in the city of Gwangju. There, the military killed hundreds of demonstrators in what is known as the Gwangju Massacre.

This incident caused Choi to resign. He was followed as president by Chun Doo-hwan, who was actually responsible for the massacre. Although the economy continued to improve, students demonstrated for a more democratic constitution. Finally, in October 1987, a new constitution that allowed direct election of the president was approved. In December, the first direct election of a South Korean president was held. Every five years since then, a new president has been elected.

In December 2002, Roh Moo-hyun, a political outsider, was overwhelmingly voted into office as president. When he took office in February 2003, Roh established three goals for his government: democracy for the people, a society of balanced development, and an era of peace and prosperity in Northeast Asia. Within a few months, however, his administration was rocked by a campaign fundraising scandal. Roh's campaign had accepted \$9.7 million in illegal contributions. Roh almost resigned from office over this matter. Then, in March 2004, the National Assembly impeached Roh and suspended him from office for violating election laws. Roh had openly supported a political party during the campaign for the April 15, 2004, elections to the National Assembly. South Korea's president is supposed to remain neutral during National Assembly campaigns. In May 2004, the Constitutional Court overturned Roh's impeachment and completely reinstated him as president.

In 2004, Roh Moo-hyun's political status was strengthened when he was reinstated as president after being impeached.

