

The Cold War in Asia and the Middle East

While seeking to prevent Communist ideology from gaining further adherents in Europe, the United States also responded to challenges elsewhere. In China, Americans worried about the advances of Mao Zedong and his Communist Party. During World War II, the Nationalist government under Chiang Kai-shek and the Communist forces waged a civil war even as they fought the Japanese. Chiang had been a war-time ally, but his government was hopelessly inefficient and corrupt. American policy makers had little hope of saving his regime and considered Europe vastly more important.

With most American aid moving across the Atlantic, Mao's forces seized power in 1949. Chiang's government fled to the island of Taiwan. When China's new ruler announced that he would support the Soviet Union against the "imperialist" United States, it appeared that Communism was spreading out of control, at least in Asia.

1. Who gained control of China in 1949?

- a. Chiang Kai-shek
- b. Emperor Puyi
- c. Joseph Stalin
- d. Mao Zedong

The Korean War brought armed conflict between the United States and China. The United States and the Soviet Union had divided Korea along the 38th parallel after liberating it from Japan at the end of World War II. Originally a matter of military convenience, the dividing line became more rigid as both major powers set up governments in their respective occupation zones and continued to support them even after departing.

2. The U.S. and U.S.S.R. divided what country along the 38th parallel following World War II?

- a. China
- b. Japan
- c. Korea
- d. Philippines

In June 1950, after consultations with and having obtained the assent of the Soviet Union, North Korean leader Kim Il-sung dispatched his Soviet-supplied army across the 38th parallel and attacked southward, overrunning Seoul. Truman, perceiving the North Koreans as Soviet pawns in the global struggle, readied American forces and ordered World War II hero General Douglas MacArthur to Korea. Meanwhile,

the United States was able to secure a U.N. resolution branding North Korea as an aggressor. (The Soviet Union, which could have vetoed any action had it been occupying its seat on the Security Council, was boycotting the United Nations to protest a decision not to admit Mao's new Chinese regime.)

3. Who served as president of North Korea during the Korean War?

4. What American general was sent to Korea in 1950?

The war seesawed back and forth. U.S. and Korean forces were initially pushed into an enclave far to the south around the city of Pusan. A daring amphibious landing at Inchon, the port for the city of Seoul, drove the North Koreans back and threatened to occupy the entire peninsula. In November, China entered the war, sending massive forces across the Yalu River. U.N. forces, largely American, retreated once again in bitter fighting. Commanded by General Matthew B. Ridgway, they stopped the overextended Chinese, and slowly fought their way back to the 38th parallel.

MacArthur meanwhile challenged Truman's authority by attempting to orchestrate public support for bombing China and assisting an invasion of the mainland by Chiang Kai-shek's forces. In

April 1951, Truman relieved him of his duties and replaced him with Ridgway.

5. Why did President Truman replace MacArthur with Ridgway?

The Cold War stakes were high. Mindful of the European priority, the U.S. government decided against sending more troops to Korea and was ready to settle for the prewar status quo. The result was frustration among many Americans who could not understand the need for restraint. Truman's popularity plunged to a 24-percent approval rating, the lowest to that time of any president since pollsters had begun to measure presidential popularity. Truce talks began in July 1951. The two sides finally reached an agreement in July 1953, during the first term of Truman's successor, Dwight Eisenhower.

6. Who succeeded Harry Truman as president of the United States?

- a. Douglas MacArthur
- b. Dwight D. Eisenhower
- c. John Kennedy
- d. Matthew Ridgway

Cold War struggles also occurred in the Middle East. The region's strategic

importance as a supplier of oil had provided much of the impetus for pushing the Soviets out of Iran in 1946. But two years later, the United States officially recognized the new state of Israel 15 minutes after it was proclaimed - a decision Truman made over strong resistance from Marshall and the State Department. The result was an enduring dilemma - how to maintain ties with Israel while keeping good relations with bitterly anti-Israeli (and oil-rich) Arab states.

7. What newly formed Middle Eastern country was officially recognized by the United States in 1948?

8. Do you agree with Truman's decision to return the Korean peninsula to the prewar status quo? Why or why not?

9. Given America's economic interests in the Middle East, do you agree with the decision to quickly recognize the newly declared state of Israel? Why or why not?



10. List the four countries that border Israel.

