

INTERPRETATIONS

What caused the Korean War?

This revision activity works best if you do it with a friend, and talk about it as you do it.

Cut out the 'what-to-blame' cards. Choose one and place it in the centre of the table.

Imagine you are an historian who supports this thesis. Cut out the 'event slips' and select all the events which seems to prove/evidence your thesis. Describe your choices to a friend, and explain how they fit the thesis and appear to prove the blame.

Repeat for the other theses. Which thesis best fits the facts?

WHAT-TO-BLAME THESIS - A:

The War was a 'Cold War' attack ordered by the Soviet Union

WHAT-TO-BLAME THESIS - B:

The War was a 'Cold War' conflict invited when the US showed weakness

WHAT-TO-BLAME THESIS - C:

The War was a 'Cold War' conflict provoked by America

WHAT-TO-BLAME THESIS - D:

The War was a Korean Civil War initiated by North Korea

WHAT-TO-BLAME THESIS - E:

The War was a Korean Civil War provoked by South Korea

Causes of the Korean War: A List of Events

10 Aug 1945	a. The USA and USSR agree to occupy Korea, dividing the country at the 38 th parallel.
Sept 1945	b. The USA sets up a Military Government in South Korea, and flies in Syngman Rhee, a right-wing nationalist, who will in time become leader of South Korea.
Sept 1945	c. The Soviets bring Kim Il Sung, a communist nationalist, to be leader of North Korea.
Dec 1945	d. The USA and USSR agree a 5-year period of 'trusteeship' for their zones.
Oct 1946	e. Anti-US uprising in Daegu, South Korea.
1946-47	f. The US-USSR Joint Commission tries to agree a plan for unification, but fails.
Mar 1947	g. Truman declares his 'Truman Doctrine' of 'containment'.
Nov 1947	h. The USA takes the issue of Korea to the United Nations, which passes a resolution to create a Temporary Commission on Korea.
May 1948	i. Sham elections install Rhee as President of South Korea. He sets about eliminating any opposition, using brutal internal security forces and the Hyangbodan.
Apr 1948	j. Anti-Rhee uprisings in Jeju and Yeosu-Suncheon are massacred (-May 1949).
Mar 1949	k. Kim Il Sung approaches Stalin for support to invade South Korea; he is told to wait, because it would cause a nuclear war.

May 1949	l. ROK Army units successfully attack into North Korea. General Kim Sok-won tells the UN that there ought to be a program to conquer North Korea.
June 1949	m. The US Army departs South Korea, leaves \$110m military equipment and 500 KMAG advisers, but not tanks or planes.
Aug 1949	n. ROK Army units are routed and driven out of North Korea.
Aug 1949	o. The USSR develops the atomic bomb.
Sep 1949	p. Kim Il Sung asks again Stalin for support to invade South Korea; again Stalin declines, but sends Kim large scale Russian deliveries of tanks, artillery, planes etc.
Oct 1949	q. Mao Zedong and the Communists conquer China. 30,000 hardened Communist Korean guerrillas who had been fighting with him return to North Korea.
1949-50	r. Rhee plans with US Supreme Commander General MacArthur to conquer the North; the ROK Army had balloons to 114,000 men. The NKPA reaches 150,000 men.
12 Jan 1950	s. US Secretary of State Acheson tells the newspapers that Korea was not part of the United States security cordon in the Far East.
April 1950	t. Stalin meet Kim Il Sung and agrees to support an invasion. A war plan is formed with help from Soviet General Antonov; NPKA army units begin to move into place.
May 1950	u. Rhee loses the 1950 elections; South Korea's government falls into chaos.
19 June 1950	v. US roving ambassador Dulles goes to South Korea, promises support, and visits the demilitarised zone with ROK ministers and generals.
25 June 1950	w. The NKPA invades South Korea.