Korea

# Korea Background + Split

## Joseon Dynasty

* Yi ha-eung (1863-1874) (Heungseon Daewongun) ruled as regent for his son, King Gojong
* (1897) King Gojong is the last king and emperor 🡪 Emperor Gojong
  + Makes Gwangmu reforms: to modernize Korea’s government, military, and society to strengthen national sovereignty amid rising foreign threats. Ends with annexation of Korea
* (1897-1910) Empire of the Great Han (AKA Korea – Japan renames Han as Korea)
* (August 1910) Annexation of Korea by Japan

## Feudal System in Japan

## Timeline

* End of Tokugawa Shogunate, Meiji period (1868-1912): Starting point for Japan's rapid modernization, helping it become a military and imperial power
* Russo Japanese War (1904-1905): Japan wins
* Battle of Tsushima Strait (1905 May 27-28)
* Eulsa Treaty (Forged 1905 Protectorate 🡨 national day of disgrace): deprived Korea of its diplomatic sovereignty and made it a Japanese protectorate. Was signed without emperor’s consent
* Hague 1907: Emperor Gojong forced to abdicate
  + The **Hague Secret Emissary Affair** of **1907** involved **Emperor Gojong** secretly sending three Korean envoys to the **Second Hague Peace Conference** in the Netherlands to protest **Japan’s growing control over Korea** and to appeal for international support — but the envoys were **denied participation**, and the mission failed diplomatically, leading to **Gojong's forced abdication** by Japan.
  + His son, Sunjong ascends the throne as a result of abdication. He is young and easy to influence, paving the path for annexation of Korea.
* Righteous Party (1907): Try to fight Japanese themselves, “Freedom Fighters”
* Annexation of Korea (Aug 1910). Japan moves in and sets up government (Aug 29).
  + Land seizure protestors are executed, strict rule over Korea by Japan
* (Mar 1 1919) Gojong Funeral, Independence Day
  + March 1 movement: 2 million students marched for Korean Independence
  + Seodaemun Prison in Seoul is where a lot of protestors went
  + Choe Nam-seon: drafted declaration of independence
* (1920) Cultural Rule: assimilation to Japanese
* (1937) Declaration of War: against China, full Japanization of Korea was more enforced
* (1943) Cairo Conference: what will happen to Japan after WW2? (this was after attack on pearl harbor)
  + U.S. wanted to make Korea free and independent
* (1945 Aug 6) Hiroshima dropped in Japan
* (1945 Aug 9) Soviets declare war on Japan and attack Manchuria
* (1945 Aug 10) 38th parallel line drawn
  + Charles Bonesteel 3rd and Dean Rusk were responsible for deciding what to do with Japanese territory
  + Soviets get sphere of influence of the North (NOT LAND), U.S. gets South
  + Was never meant to split the land in two
* (1945 Aug 15) Day of light – Victory day: “Korea is ours!”

## Syngman Rhee (Yi Seung-man) 1875-1965

* (1919-1939) President of Korean Provisional Government in Shanghai (lead the Korean provisional government abroad - Returned to Korea after WW2)
* Formed people’s committees
* (1945 Sep 6) makes and is head of Korean People’s Republic

## Southern Development

* (1947) UN ordered assembly elections for a unified Korea. Communists don’t participate.
* (1948) Rhee elected as PRESIDENT of South
  + Constituent Assembly elected. Nation is recognized by U.S.
  + U.S. and Allies remove troops 🡪 Rhee declared DICTATORIAL power. Purges opposition and competition parties
* Rhee is “re-elected” 1952, 1956, 1960
* War years created downward mobility

But THEN… **Soviet troops move in**

* KIM IL-SUNG is installed by the soviets (1912-1994): creates Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) (AKA North Korea)
* Pyongyang (Sep 9 1948) is the capital of N. Korea. We now have 2 governments in Korea (Seoul being the capital of S. Korea)

Jeju Massacre (1948–1949): S. Korean gov. against communist uprisings

Yeosu Rebellion (October 1948): S. Korean soldiers who refused to suppress uprisings rebelled against the government (and failed)

Purge Trials and Executions in the North

# South Korea

## Korean War (1950-1953)

* (June 25 1950) N. Korea marches South and conquer it within weeks (Kim wants to unify Korea under communism)
  + Syngman Rhee fled South
  + Urban war, innocents vulnerable ☹
  + A LOT of bombing, all infrastructure is gravel
* Armistice (July 27 1953) signed in Panmunjom. NOT a peace treaty…
* Recovery (of the South):
  + 1950s wigs are fashionable, manufacturers set up in Seoul
  + Wig merchants bought people’s hair right off the street for USD
  + 1960s: 10% of S. Korean experts are WIGS
  + 1970s: 3rd most exported product

## 2nd Republic of S. Korea

* 1960 Syngman Rhee steps down
* Yun Bo-seon elected with new parliamentary system (2ND REPUBLIC)
* 1961 Military coup puts General Park Chung-Hee in power
  + Proclaims 3RD REPUBLIC

## General Park (and the 3rd Republic of S. K.)

* 1960s-1990s S. Korea rapidly industrializes
  + Move from rural to urban areas
  + Advances in standard of living
  + Amibition = better lives
  + Even Korean dramas use the “we used to all be poor together” narratives’
  + Steel, concrete, automobiles
* Dedication to education, industrial development
* Suppresses dissent
* Creation of CHAEBOLS: family owned companies supported by state
  + Involved in basically everything: schools, manufacturing, production
  + “Warrior workers”
  + Samsung, LG, Hyundai are examples; Hyundai 294 mile freeways built under 3 years with all state contracts… 9 million workers day and night… 1/10 cost of those in Japan… they made cars for the freeway afterwards)

## 4th Republic of S. K.

* 1972: Park increases powers with new YUSHIN CONSTITUTION & martial law
* 1979: Assassinated by Korean CIA who is also his friend ☹
* Civilian ACTING PRESIDENT: Choi Kyu-hah
* (1979 Dec 2) General Chun Doo-Hwan seizes power (also through a coup)
* 1980 Gwangju Massacre
  + Students protest martial law
  + Army (that is trained to fight N. Koreans) is sent- 700 paratroopers are TOO violent…
  + Residents join, additional 3K paratroopers beat indiscriminately ☹

## 5th Republic of S. K.

* New constitution limits presidential terms to 7 years
* (1980) Chun elected by National Conference for Unifications
  + Shift towards computer and high tech industry
  + They basically legitimize his presidency
* (1981) Chun re-elected under new constitution
  + Last dictator, “Butcher of Gwangju”
* (1987) Constitutional reforms restores civil rights 😊
  + Presidential term reduced to 5 years
  + Direct popular election of president

## 6th Republic of S. K. (Current!)

* (1988) General Roh Tae-Woo elected PRESIDENT in democratic election
  + First peaceful transition of power lol
  + Launches anti corruption drive
  + Grants greater degree of political liberalization
* 1988 Olympic games in Seoul
* Northern Diplomacy policy established diplomatic ties with Soviet Bloc countries: Soviet union (1990) and China (1992)

## Modern S. K.

* From Sheffle’s trip: Kpop, cool baseball games with cheerleaders, people are silent on busses, someone goes from blue house to live in a military compound, 101 beds + and prostrations
* (2022) Yoon Suk Yeol President
  + Campaign: abolish ministry of Gender Equality (he didn’t do it yet though!)
  + played a significant role in the legal proceedings that led to Park Geun-hye's (former PRESIDENT) impeachment due to abuse of power
  + indicated top aide of president Moon Jae-in for bribery
  + no former political experience
  + moved from BLUE HOUSE to military compound
  + threatens pre-emptive strike with US missile system to counter North
* 2024
  + Dec 3- declares martial laws. Calls for emergency parliamentary vote, soldiers arrive
  + Dec 4- 190 vote anonymously and he lifts martial law. Now theres a motion for impeachment
  + Dec 7- rumors of another martial law again, members of ruling party walk out
  + Dec 14- National Assembly passes motion to impeach
  + Dec 31- arrest warrant issued, joint investigation for insurrection and abuse of power
* 2025
  + Jan 3- security standoff
  + Jan 15- taken into police custody, he refused answers
  + Jan 26- formally indicted
  + April 4- constitutional court upholds impeachment, he is removed from office
  + June 3- snap election. Liberal leader: LEE JAE-MYUNG
* 9 presidents since 1980, 2 impeached, 4 convicted of criminal charges ending in prison, 1 suicide while under criminal investigation

# North Korea

## Kim IL-SUNG (#1)

* Joined underground Marxist organization; jailed for months
* (1931) Affiliated with CCP; part of violent uprising in E. Manchuria, resisting Japanese aggression
* Major in Soviet Red Army (military experience + loyal)
* (1948 Aug) Parliamentary Elections
  + Deputies elected from N. and S.
  + Korean Workers Party (KWP) won majority
  + Kim Il-Sung gets appointed by Soviets as Premier (head of gov.)
* Cult of personality:
  + “the Great Leader”
  + Statues all over N. Korea
* Determined to unite all of Korea under communism, launches invasion of S. Korea (Korean war)
* Post-war: purged pro-Chinese, and then pro-soviet
* (1964) Collectivizes farming
* **JUCHE**
  + Made independent party line (AKA state ideology) called Juche
    - Autonomy in ideology
    - Independence in politics
    - Self-sufficiency in economy
    - Self-reliance in defense
  + (1960s) strengthens armed forced
    - More airfields + underground hangars
    - Large standing army and militia maintained
  + Economic development plans make gains
    - Aided from USSR, China, E. Europe
    - Cultural revolution and Stalin’s Reign Of Terror causes decline in aid
    - Economic plans fail to meet goals because of heavy expenses in defense. There’s now low standards of living and food shortages (1953-93)
  + (1972) He reconstructs the constitution to replace the title of **Premier** with **President**, giving him more power
  + He appoints son to powerful party posts (his heir is apparent…)
  + (1994) DIES but has cool titles:
    - Great Leader
    - Sun of the Nation
    - Ever-Victorious Brilliant Commander
  + (1994) “president” written out of constitution

## Kim JONG-IL (#2)

* The Kim Dynasty BEGINSSSSS
  + born under a double rainbow, with a new star appearing in the sky….
* Slowly consolidates power 🡪 1997 head of KWP
* Chairman of National Defense Commission (highest office)
* (2009) constitution adds title “Supreme Leader”
* Titles:
  + Dear Leader
  + Glorious General Who Descended from Heaven
  + Guiding star of the 21st Century
* 1st Inter-Korean Summit
  + (1998) S. Korean president Kim Dae-Jung pursues “sunshine policy”: offers unconditional aid to N. K.
  + (2000 June) Pyongyang Summit: N. stops propaganda against S.
  + (2000 Aug) Border liaison offices reopen at truce village Panmunjom so that 100 N. Koreans meet relatives in S., and 35K prisoners of S. Korea are pardoned
* 2nd Inter-Korean Summit
  + (2007 June) Joint Declaration to resolve nuclear issue on Korean peninsula and economic cooperation projects
  + (2007 Oct) Pyongyang: S. Korean President Roh Moo-hyun met Kim Jong-il; they discussed ending hostile activities, working towards reducing nukes and the possibility of a peace treaty, but no formal treaty was signed.
* Died Dec 17, 2011 as “Eternal Leader”

## Kim JONG-UN (#3)

* New supreme leader! (not eldest son, he was the 3rd eldest)
* First N. Korean president to enter South to meet president
* 3rd and 4th Inter-Korean Summits
* (2018 Sep) 5th Inter-Korean Summits: Pyongyang: to ensure mutual benefit and prosperity
* (2021) S. and N. Korea, China and US agree “in principle” for end to Korean War
  + N. Korea objects to present-day “US Hostility” (precondition for formal peace talks)
  + N. Korea fires multiple short range missiles over previous year, has successfully tested long range
* (2023)
  + U.S. and S. Korean fighter jets and carriers in military exercised off S. Korean coast.
  + N. K. test fires 5 missiles during “nuclear counterstrike tactical training”
  + Joint S. K./U.S. military simulation in S. China Sea
  + N. Korea test fires 2 more ballistic missiles
* First N. K pres to enter S and meet their president

N. Korean soldiers fight against Ukraine, but they haven’t seen real combat so they are often in the frontlines as unexperienced soldiers.

Pyongyang is where the 100 travel visa visitors are brought

# Summary

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Supreme Leaders | Term In Office | Titles |
| Kin Il-Sung | 1948-1994 | * The Great Leader * Sun of the Nation * Ever-Victorious Brilliant Commander * Eternal President (after death) |
| Kim Jong-Il | 1994-2011 | * Dear Leader * Glorious General Who Descended from Heaven * Guiding Star of the 21st Century * Eternal Leader (after death) * (star and sky related themes) |
| Kim Jong-Un | 2011-NOW |  |

**Korea Background & Division**

* **Joseon Dynasty** ends with Emperor Gojong (last king/emperor) initiating Gwangmu reforms (1897-1910) to modernize Korea but ultimately leads to Japanese annexation (1910).
* **Japanese colonization** (1910-1945) imposed harsh rule, suppressing Korean sovereignty, leading to uprisings like the March 1 Movement (1919) and resistance groups (Righteous Party).
* **WWII aftermath**: Korea liberated in 1945; 38th parallel drawn dividing Korea into Soviet-backed North and U.S.-backed South (not intended as permanent).

**Key Figures and Governments**

**South Korea (Republic of Korea):**

* **Syngman Rhee**: Led Provisional Government (1919-1939); first president of South Korea (1948), later became authoritarian.
* Post-war South Korea: Rapid industrialization under military leaders like **Park Chung-Hee** (1961 coup), with economic development driven by chaebols (Samsung, Hyundai).
* Political turmoil: Assassinations, military coups, Gwangju Massacre (1980), democratization in late 1980s.
* Recent presidents: 9 since 1980; 2 impeached (including Park Geun-hye), multiple convicted or investigated.
* **Yoon Suk Yeol** (2022): Current president, former prosecutor, involved in political scandals, faced impeachment efforts (2024-2025).

**North Korea (DPRK):**

* **Kim Il-Sung** (1948-1994): Installed by Soviets, established Juche ideology (self-reliance), centralized power, cult of personality, launched Korean War (1950-1953).
* **Kim Jong-Il** (1994-2011): Consolidated power, led during Sunshine Policy era (2000 inter-Korean summits), intensified military-first policies.
* **Kim Jong-Un** (2011-present): Expanded nuclear program, involved in multiple inter-Korean summits, ongoing missile tests, and tense military standoffs.

**Major Historical Events**

* **Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905)**: Japan emerges as imperial power, sets stage for Korea annexation.
* **March 1 Movement (1919)**: Massive Korean independence protests.
* **Korean War (1950-1953)**: North invades South; armistice signed but no peace treaty.
* **Jeju Massacre & Yeosu Rebellion (1948)**: South suppresses communist uprisings.
* **Gwangju Massacre (1980)**: South Korean government brutally suppresses protests.
* **Inter-Korean Summits**:
  + 1st (2000): Kim Dae-Jung and Kim Jong-Il meet.
  + 2nd (2007): Roh Moo-hyun meets Kim Jong-Il, discuss peace but no treaty.
  + 3rd & 4th: Under Kim Jong-Un.
  + 5th (2018): Pyongyang summit for mutual cooperation.
* **Recent Military Tensions (2021-2023)**: Missile tests by North Korea, joint US-South Korea exercises.

**Ideology & Political Structure**

**North Korea’s Juche:**

* Self-reliance in politics, economy, and defense.
* Transition from Premier to President title for Kim Il-Sung in 1972, later “Eternal President” after his death.
* Strong military buildup, cult of personality around Kim family.

## Key People & Roles

* **Emperor Gojong**: Last king/emperor of Joseon; led Gwangmu reforms (1897-1910).
* **Syngman Rhee**: First president of South Korea, led Provisional Gov’t in exile (1919-1939), authoritarian post-WWII.
* **Kim Il-Sung**: First Supreme Leader of North Korea (1948-1994), creator of Juche ideology.
* **Kim Jong-Il**: Successor to Kim Il-Sung, led during Sunshine Policy, “Dear Leader.”
* **Kim Jong-Un**: Current North Korean leader, expanded nuclear program, met South Korean presidents.
* **Park Chung-Hee**: Military dictator of South Korea (1961 coup), industrialized S. Korea, created chaebols.
* **Chun Doo-Hwan**: South Korean dictator, responsible for Gwangju Massacre (1980).
* **Yoon Suk Yeol**: Current South Korean president (2022), faced impeachment motions.

## Dates & Events

* **1897**: Gwangmu reforms begin under Emperor Gojong.
* **1910**: Japan annexes Korea (August).
* **1904-1905**: Russo-Japanese War (Japan defeats Russia).
* **1905**: Eulsa Treaty makes Korea Japanese protectorate (national day of disgrace).
* **1919**: March 1 Movement — mass independence protests.
* **1945**: Korea liberated; 38th parallel divides Korea.
* **1948**: Separate governments formed: South Korea (Seoul), North Korea (Pyongyang).
* **1950-1953**: Korean War begins with North’s invasion; armistice signed 1953 (Panmunjom).
* **1961**: Park Chung-Hee’s military coup in South Korea.
* **1980**: Gwangju Massacre (protests violently suppressed).
* **1988**: Seoul hosts Olympics; democratization underway.
* **2000**: 1st Inter-Korean Summit (Sunshine Policy).
* **2018**: 5th Inter-Korean Summit in Pyongyang.

## Concepts & Terms

* **Juche**: North Korea’s ideology of self-reliance in politics, economy, defense.
* **Chaebols**: Large South Korean family-owned conglomerates (Samsung, Hyundai, LG).
* **March 1 Movement**: 1919 independence protests against Japan.
* **Eulsa Treaty (1905)**: Japan forced Korea into protectorate status, without emperor’s consent.
* **Hague Secret Emissary Affair (1907)**: Failed Korean diplomatic protest against Japan.
* **38th Parallel**: Dividing line between North and South Korea after WWII.
* **Sunshine Policy**: South Korean policy offering aid and diplomacy toward North Korea.
* **Gwangju Massacre (1980)**: South Korean military crackdown on pro-democracy protesters.