



## India's Role in the Korean War

**For Prelims:** Korean War, Second World War, USSR, UN, Non-Alignment Movement, Russia and Ukraine.

**For Mains:** India's Role in the Korean War.

### Why in News?

During its [G20 Presidency Year 2023](#), India is recalling its diplomatic role in the [Korean War](#) **seven decades ago**.

- India's role in the Korean War was partially successful, yet India is counted among the countries that **contributed to bringing the war to a close**.

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## What is the Timeline of the Korean War?

### ▪ Background:

- The root of the conflict lies in the **Japanese occupation of Korea** between 1910- 1945.
- When Japan was defeated in the **Second World War**, the Allied forces agreed to establish a “four-power trusteeship over Korea” at the Yalta Conference (1945).
- However, the **USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics)** invaded Korea and took control of the north while the south remained under the rest of the allies, mainly the USA.
  - The division of the two regions was along the 38th parallel north, which still continues to be the official border dividing the two Koreas.
- In 1948, the **Republic of Korea (South Korea)** and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (North Korea) were established.
  - As both tried to enhance their reach, territorially and ideologically, the Korean Conflict emerged between the two nations.

### ▪ Timeline of the War:

- **In 1950**, North Korea, backed by the USSR, launched an attack on South Korea and **occupied most of the country.**
  - In response, the United Nations force led by the US retaliated.
- **In 1951**, the US forces led by Douglas MacArthur crossed the 38th parallel and triggered the **entry of China in support of North Korea.**
  - To prevent further escalation, peace **talks began later in 1951.**
- India was actively involved in negotiating peace in the Korean peninsula by engaging all the major stakeholders – **US, USSR and China.**
  - **In 1952, the Indian resolution on Korea was adopted at the United Nations (UN).**
- In 1953, the **Korean Armistice Agreement** was signed between the UN Command, the Korean People's Army and the Chinese People's Volunteer Army.
  - It led to an official **ceasefire without a Peace treaty.** Thus, the war officially never ended.
  - This also led to the establishment of the **Korean Demilitarised Zone (DMZ)** – a strip of land running across the Korean Peninsula to serve as a buffer zone between North Korea and South Korea.
- **In December 1991**, North and South Korea signed a pact agreeing to **refrain from aggression.**

## What was India's Role in the Korean War?

- In 1950 Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru made a **huge diplomatic push to prevent an escalation into another world war**, and for the **parties to arrive at a quick ceasefire.**
- A couple of attempts by India to bring about a ceasefire ended in failure. However, its 1952 proposals for the exchange of prisoners **enabled the July 1953 armistice agreement**, which marks 70 years this year.
- India proposed a **commission to resolve the issue of prisoners of war (PoWs)** during talks between the UN and communist sides in 1952, but the proposal was initially shelved. However, when negotiations **resumed in 1953, India was selected to chair the Neutral Nations Repatriation Committee**, which successfully held PoWs for 90 days and eventually signed the Armistice Agreement on July 27, 1953.
  - India has consistently voiced its opposition to North Korean nuclear and missile tests. However, it has maintained a neutral stance regarding sanctions.
- India also sent the **60<sup>th</sup> Parachute Field Ambulance, which did outstanding work treating more than 200,000 people between 1950 and 1954.**

## How has been India's Relations with North and South Korea?

- In May 2015, the bilateral relationship with South Korea was **upgraded to ‘special strategic partnership’.**
  - India has a major role to play in South Korea’s Southern Policy under which the latter is looking at expanding relations beyond its immediate region.

- Similarly, South Korea is a major player in [India's Act East Policy](#) under which India aims to promote economic cooperation, cultural ties and develop strategic relationships with countries in the Asia-Pacific.
- India has had diplomatic relations with North Korea for over 47 years, which reflects the legacy of India's commitment to the [Non-Alignment Movement](#).

## Way Forward

- With the **post-Covid geopolitical order undergoing major changes** and global economic conditions deteriorating, North Korea will want to focus on strengthening its already weak economy, especially when the country has been hit hard by the pandemic.
- Furthermore, at some point, dialogue between North Korea, the United States, South Korea, Japan and other stakeholders on the Korean Peninsula will reopen.
  - At that juncture, **India would be poised to play a constructive role in promoting peace and security** on the Korean Peninsula.
  - Continuing India's engagement with North Korean leadership may pay off in these foreseeable situations.
- In the Current Scenario of War between [Russia and Ukraine](#) Indian Prime Minister's message that "This is not the era of war" has given rise to expectations that India, which often **casts itself in the role of "Vishwaguru", can mediate** between Russia and Ukraine to bring the war to an end.

[Source: IE](#)

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