

Option B: 20th Century topic**THE KOREAN WAR – WAS THE UNITED NATIONS SIMPLY A TOOL OF THE USA?**

Study the Background Information and the sources carefully, and then answer **all** the questions.

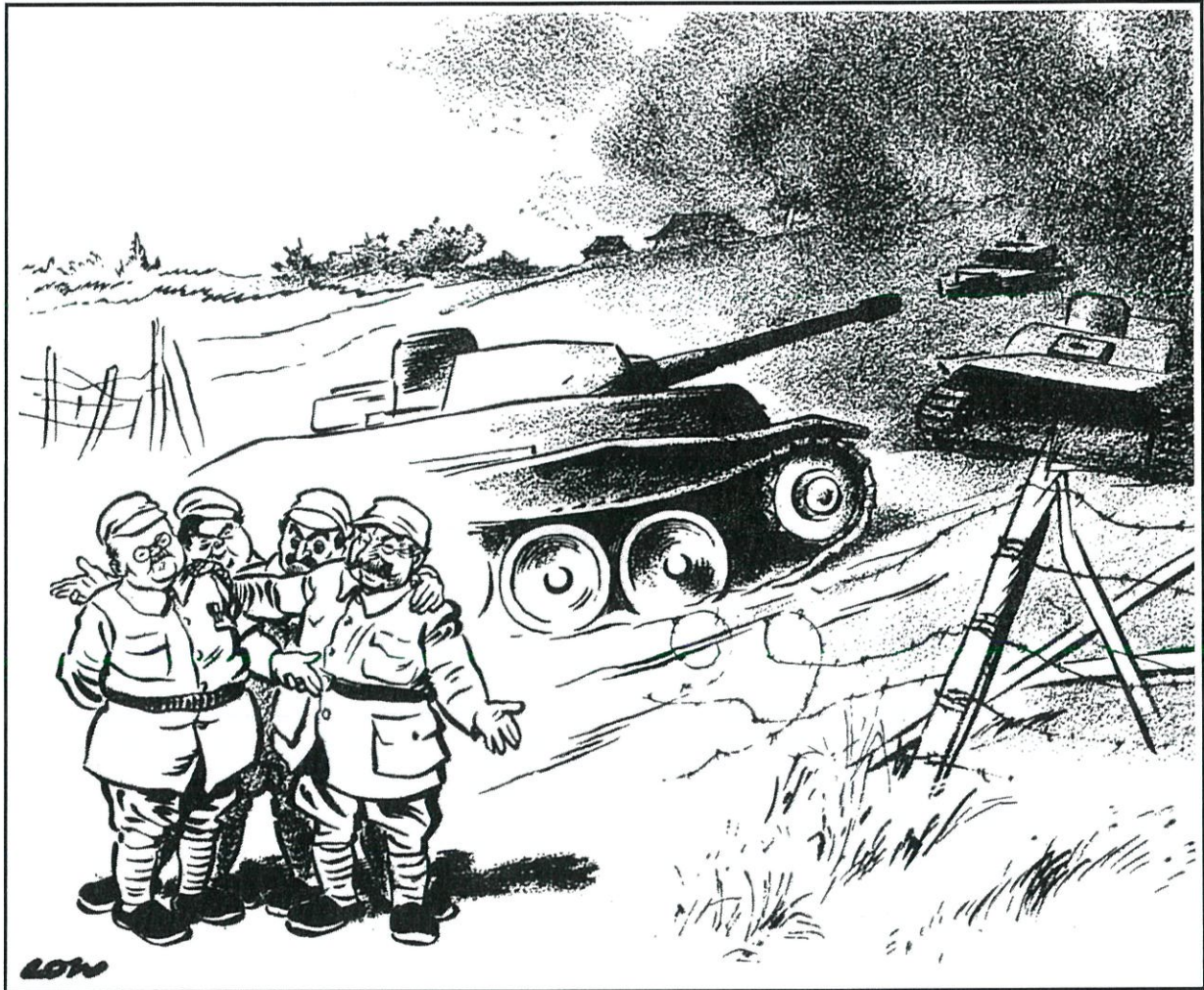
Background Information

When the Second World War ended the northern half of Korea was occupied by Soviet troops and the southern half by American troops. South of the 38th parallel the United States supported a government that was corrupt but anti-communist. In the North a communist government emerged. Both sides frequently announced their desire for national unity but in fact they grew further apart.

On 25 June 1950, troops from North Korea invaded the South and made rapid progress. On the same day, after pressure from the USA, a special session of the UN Security Council condemned the invasion and called for a withdrawal to the 38th parallel. When the North ignored this request the Security Council decided to take military action. Sixteen countries contributed to the UN force but it was overwhelmingly made up of American troops and was led by an American – General MacArthur.

Some historians have argued that the Korean War represents a good example of the UN resisting unprovoked aggression. Others however, have argued that the USA was simply using the UN in its Cold War struggle against communism. Was the UN really just a tool of the Americans in Korea?

SOURCE A

**“NOBODY HERE BUT US KOREANS”**

A British cartoon published on 28 June 1950. On the left, Stalin is shown talking to some of his friends.

SOURCE B

The American military intervention in Korea in the summer of 1950 made the already tense international situation even worse. The United States, having landed troops in Southern Korea after Japan's surrender in 1945, was seeking to gain control of the whole country.

By unleashing a civil war in June 1950 the South Koreans, backed by the United States, turned Korea into a place of fierce international conflict but in the end failed to achieve the aims of their Washington masters. Soviet and Chinese assistance to the People's Democratic Republic of Korea frustrated the plan to take over North Korea.

From a Soviet history book published in 1984.

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SOURCE C

In South Korea the government forces were attacked by invading forces from North Korea. The UN Security Council called on the invading troops to cease hostilities and to withdraw to the 38th parallel. This they have not done, on the contrary they have continued the attack. The Security Council called on all members of the United Nations to give assistance. I have ordered US air and sea forces to give Korean government troops cover and support.

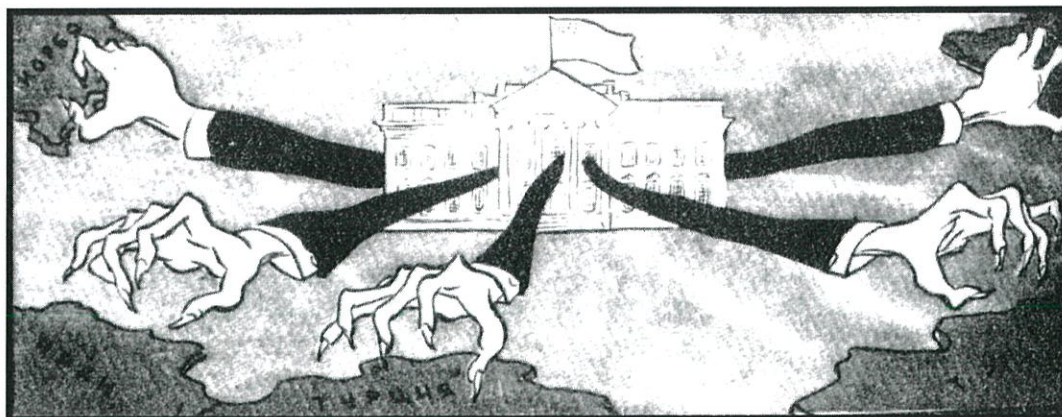
The attack upon Korea makes it plain that communism will now use armed invasion and war. A return to the rule of force in international affairs would have far-reaching effects. The United States will continue to uphold the rule of law.

An announcement to the American people by President Truman on 27 June 1950.

SOURCE D



A cartoon published in Britain on 30 June 1950. The figure with the United Nations is President Truman.

SOURCE E

A Soviet cartoon published in 1950. The building represents the White House where the American President lives and works.

SOURCE F

We are not at war. The Republic of Korea was unlawfully attacked by a bunch of bandits from North Korea. The United Nations held a meeting and asked the members to go to the relief of the Korean Republic, and the members of the United Nations are going to the relief of the Korean Republic, to suppress a bandit raid on the Republic of Korea. That is all there is to it.

President Truman speaking at a press conference in June 1950. He was replying to a reporter who asked him whether it was correct to call events in Korea merely a policing action under the United Nations.

SOURCE G

In the final analysis I did this for the United Nations. I believed in the League of Nations. It failed. Lots of people thought it failed because we were not in it to support it. OK, now we started the UN. It was our idea, and in its first big test we just couldn't let it down.

President Truman writing in his memoirs in 1956.

SOURCE H

Clearly the invasion of South Korea was an open, undisguised challenge to America's internationally accepted position as the protector of South Korea, an area of great importance to the security of American-occupied Japan. To back away from this challenge, in view of the power of the USA, would be highly destructive of our strength and reputation.

From Dean Acheson's memoirs written in 1969. Acheson was a leading member of Truman's government and was in charge of American foreign policy during the Korean War.

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SOURCE I

A photograph of UN soldiers in the Korean War. The soldiers include an American, an Australian, an Englishman, and two South Koreans.

SOURCE J

Even in 1950 it was only the accident of the Soviet boycott that made the UN vote to intervene in Korea possible. The relatively small number of countries which then belonged to the UN, most of them sympathetic to the US, accepted American leadership in going to war for Korea. But only sixteen members provided military support. The way in which the war was fought made the presence of the UN flag seem to many to be a mockery. One British soldier said, 'Though we called ourselves the UN, there were so few of us. I felt very much an observer of an American show.' Other nations were less likely to rally to the UN flag again, because of the widespread view that this was used in Korea in the interests of the United States.

From a British history book published in 1987.

Now answer **all** the following questions. You may use any of the sources to help you answer the questions, in addition to those sources which you are told to use. In answering the questions you should use your knowledge of the topic to help you interpret and evaluate the sources.

1 Study Source A.

What is the message of this cartoon? Explain your answer using details of the source and your knowledge. [6]

2 Study Sources B and C.

Why do these two sources disagree? Explain your answer using details of the sources and your knowledge. [7]

3 Study Sources D and E.

How far do these two sources share the same view of American foreign policy? Explain your answer using details of the sources and your knowledge. [8]

4 Study Sources F, G and H.

How far do Sources G and H help you to decide if Truman was telling the truth in Source F? Explain your answer using details of the sources and your knowledge. [9]

5 Study Source I.

How useful is this photograph as evidence to an historian studying UN involvement in the Korean War? Explain your answer using details of the source and your knowledge. [8]

6 Study **all** the sources.

Do these sources provide convincing evidence that in Korea the UN was simply a tool of the USA? Use the sources to explain your answer. [12]