20th Century: Colonial era and the Korean War

Early Protestantism

- Western Protestant missionaries, from Britain and America, began to be active in Korea from the late 1870s onwards.
- Western Protestants established the first modern hospitals and schools in Korea.

"Much of the success of the Protestant churches in the first twenty-five years after the arrival of the missionaries was due to the association of Christianity with the 'progressive' West, and to the emphasis which the first generation of missionaries placed on the responsibility of local [Korean] Christians for the growth and support of their churches." (Grayson 2002:158)

During the Japanese colonial era:

"There were many examples of churches being burned by Japanese troops, the execution of numbers of Christians, and in one spectacular incident the herding of villagers into the local church which was then set aflame. Missionaries were the first to smuggle out reports about these atrocities, and it was the mission boards at home which forced Western governments to condemn Japanese brutality. Events such as these showed that the Korean church was not an agent of imperialism, but had become linked in the minds of both Japanese and Koreans with Korean nationalism." (Grayson 2002:161)

- From the late 1930s onwards, Christians (together with all other Koreans) were compelled to worship at Japanese Shintō shrines set up throughout the country.

"Some two thousand [mostly Protestant] people were arrested for refusal to comply and between 1938 and 1945, there were at least fifty people who died as a result of incarceration and torture for refusing to comply with demands for attendance at State Shintō rites. Following Liberation from Japanese rule, a conflict arose about who had and who had not conceded to the Japanese authorities which continues to have a lasting impact on the Korean Protestant churches." (Grayson 2002:161)

- By contrast, Catholics did not so actively resist visiting Shintō shrines as, in 1936, the Vatican officially accepted the Japanese government's argument that Shintō rites were "patriotic" rather than idolatry (i.e. worshipping idols) and so allowed Korean Catholics to participate — arguably in order to protect them from further persecution.

Early 20th Century

1902

Jan  Britain and Japan conclude the Anglo-Japanese alliance (日英同盟 일영동맹 1902–c.1921) in which Britain recognizes Japan's "special interests" in Korea, political, commercial and industrial.

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1904

Feb 8  Japanese surprise attack on Russian fleet at Port Arthur on the Liaodong Peninsula triggers the Russo-Japanese War (露日戦争 노일전쟁) which Japan goes on to win.

1905

July 29 Informal and secret Taft-Katsura Agreement (가쓰라-태프트 密約) concluded between America Secretary of War, William Howard Taft, and Japanese prime minister Katsura Tarō.

- This recognized the American sphere of influence in the Philippines and Japan's in Korea. Japan blamed the Russo-Japanese War on Korea for maintaining independent relations with other foreign powers. Katsura claimed **Japan must be allowed to colonize Korea in order to prevent further wars.**

Sept 5  Treaty of Portsmouth signed in America, brokered by Theodore Roosevelt ending the Russo-Japanese War.

- Japan agreed to relinquish its gains in Manchuria, but retained control of the Korean peninsula.

PARTIAL ECLIPSE

1905

Nov 17  **Eulsa Treaty (乙巳條約 을사조약)** concluded making Korea a protectorate of Japan. Signed by five cabinet ministers for education, army, interior, foreign affairs and agriculture, commerce and industry. The treaty is not signed by Emperor Gojong and three cabinet ministers: the Prime Minister, Minister of Justice and Minister of Finance.

- Itō Hirobumi (伊藤博文 1841-1909) enters Gojong’s palace and seizes the Foreign Ministry’s seals.

Nov 30  Empress Min's nephew and former prime-minister Min Yeonghwan (閔泳煥 민영환 1862-1905), a man who had travelled around the world on behalf of the Korean government, commits suicide in protest at the Japanese takeover.

LAST EFFORTS: HOPE FADES

1906

Feb  Itō Hirobumi becomes the first resident-general of Korea.

- Emperor Gojong publicly opposes the Eulsa Treaty and sends letters, at least one handwritten, to all major foreign powers appealing for support. All are ignored.
1907

June  Emperor Gojong sends three Koreans (one is already in Russia) on a secret mission to the Second Hague Peace Convention. They travel via Vladivostok through Russia. With Japan's active involvement, the convention rules that Gojong no longer has authority over Korea's foreign relations and the envoy cannot participate. One of the three envoys, Yi Jun (李儁 이준 1859–1907) commits suicide at the convention.

June 22 In response, the Japanese force Emperor Gojong to abdicate and replace him with his mentally ill son Sunjong (純宗 순종 1874–1926) who is to become the last monarch of the Joseon dynasty. Gojong is confined to Deoksu-gung palace for the rest of his life until 1919.

The 9,000 strong Korean army is ordered to disband. Commander of the First Infantry Guards Bak Seong-hwan (朴昇煥 박성환 1869–1907) commits suicide. Soldiers riot in Seoul, many subsequently join the uibyeong (義兵 'righteous army') guerrilla groups living in the mountains and borderlands of Manchuria.

Pro-Japanese Yi Wan-Yong (李完用 이완용 1858–1926) made prime minister, known as the greatest traitor in Korean history! His house is burnt down by an angry mob.

1908 Around 127,000 Japanese immigrants now living in Korea.

1909

Jan 28 The Oriental Development Company (東洋拓殖株式会社 동양척식주식회사) is established under the Japanese with the aim of developing agriculture.

Oct 26

❖ Itō Hirobumi is assassinated by An Junggeun (安重根 안중근 1879–1910) at the train station of Harbin city in Manchuria.
  o An was arrested and later tried and executed. For this act, An Junggeun remains the most celebrated hero and martyr of the 20th century.

Dec Failed assassination attempt made on Yi Wan-yong by Yi Jae-myeong (李在明 이재명 1890–1910) stabbing him with a sword through the lung. Yi Jae-myeong is tried and executed.

TOTAL ECLIPSE

1910

May General Terauchi Masatake (寺内正毅 1852–1919) becomes new resident-general and formulates the terms of Korea's complete annexation with Yi Wan-yong.
Aug 22  Yi Wan-yong signs the Treaty of Annexation (韓日倂合條約 한일병합조약) making Korea a part of Japan with Terauchi Masatake becoming the first Governor-General of Korea (朝鮮總督 조선총독).

Aug 29  Emperor Sunjong is forced to abdicate ending the Joseon dynasty.

Japanese Colonial Era 1910–1945

- Referred to today in Korean as the "Era of Forced Occupation [by] Imperial Japan" (日帝强占期 일제강점기).
- Japanese government in Korea was called the Government-General (朝鮮總督府 조선총독부 ちょうせんそうどくふ 부), headed by a Governor-General appointed by Tokyo.

1910–1919

- Was a period of harsh military rule; even schools teachers wore military uniforms and carried swords.
- National police spread across the country of whom up to half were locally employed Koreans.
- The Government-General concentrated on agricultural development.

1910  **Company Law** enacted restricting commercial investment in Korea with all companies having to be registered by the Japanese Government-General.

An 8 year **land survey** is initiated:

- All land owned by the Korean government and royal house was automatically confiscated.
- All other land not registered is also confiscated, but only yangban were able to prove their ownership of land, so illiterate farmers could not benefit and remained in poverty.

By the end of 1910, there were some 171,543 Japanese living in Korea representing just over 1% of the population.

1912

Jun 28  Korean Conspiracy Trial for alleged assassination attempt of Governor-General Terauchi six months earlier, begins with 123 defendants, mostly Christians and belonging to the patriotic **Sinminhoe society** (新民會 신민회 "new people's society" est. 1907, including Kim Ku), being tried. 105 are convicted but subsequently all but 6 are released in 1913 following international condemnation.

1915  Construction of the Government-General Building (朝鮮總督府廳舍 조선총독부 청사) begins, located directly in front of Gyeongbok-gung palace; Korean considered its location as intentionally chosen to obstruct the geomantic principles of Seoul by blocking the line between the palace and Nam-san southern mountain.
1919

Jan 21 **Former Emperor Gojong dies**: many Koreans are suspicious that he had been poisoned.

Feb 8 In Tokyo, writer Yi Kwangsu (李光洙 이광수 1892–1950) reads out a Declaration of Independence.

Feb 13 In Paris, at the ongoing Paris Peace Conference the Japanese submit a proposal for a racial equality clause; in April it wins a vote but is opposed by Britain on behalf of white Australia and overturned by racist American president Woodrow Wilson. This decision leads to the estrangement of Japan from Britain and America.

❖ **March 1st Movement** (三一運動 삼일운동 Sam'il-undong )

Mar 1 Following a secret meeting of Korean religious leaders, a Declaration of Independence is read out at a gathering of students at Pagoda Park (탑골공원) in central Seoul. The declaration has been signed by 33 religious leaders (16 Christian, 15 Cheondo-gyo and 2 Buddhist); it was drafted by writer Choe Namseon (최남선 1890–1957) but he does not sign it himself.

- Taken by surprise, the Japanese respond with force and arrest the 33 signatories.
- Despite this, popular demonstrations spread across the country until May leaving some 7,645 dead and 45,562 injured.
- Some who escape Korea, including future president Syngman Rhee, go on to form the Korean Provisional Government in Shanghai (大韓民國臨時政府 대한민국임시정부) which is not very effective.

1919–c.1931 Cultural Policy

Sep Admiral Saitō Makoto (斎藤実 1858–1936) replaced Terauchi as Governor-General.

- In response to the popular demonstrations, Saitō introduces a new "Cultural Policy" (문화정책) in place of the previous blatant militarism hoping to appease and win over disenfranchised Korean intellectuals.
- The Cultural Policy allows for Korean newspapers and societies to operate; as a result during the 1920s more than 5,500 different societies are formed.
- This period coincides with the more liberal era of the Taishō Democracy in Japan itself.

By 1919, 22% of rice being produced is exported to Japan while most Koreans survive on inferior millet, grown in the north and Manchuria. By 1928 the number has increased to 51.9%.

1920

Jan To counter the many patriotic Korean societies emerging, a pro-Japanese society, the Gungmin-hyeophoe (國民協會 국민협회 "citizens' society") is established by Min Wonsik (閔元植 민원식 1886–1921), espousing "new Japan-ism".

Mar **Chosun Ilbo** newspaper (朝鮮日報 조선일보) first published; remains the most popular conservative newspaper in South Korea today.
Apr  Dong-A Ilbo newspaper (동아일보) first published; remains a slightly less conservative newspaper in South Korea today.

Sisa-sinmun newspaper (시사신문) first published by the pro-Japanese Gungmin-hyeophoe.

Jun  Intellectual journal Gaebyeok (개벽 "Creation") first published by Cheondo-gyo religious organization (the successor to late 19th century Donghak). Carries articles by Yi Kwangsu and other prominent writers until being closed in 1926.

Oct  In spite of the Cultural Policy, the Japanese military begin a campaign against the uibyeong 'righteous army' guerrilla fighters on the Manchuria border. This is known as the Jiandao Incident (간도참변): around 3,100 Koreans are killed and 2,500 homes burnt down.

From a firsthand account:

"To the outside, one of the most repulsive features of the Japanese method of government of Korea is the wholesale torture of untried prisoners, particularly political prisoners... torture is employed in many [detention] centres and on thousands of people. The Imperial Japanese Government, while enacting paper regulations against the employment of torture, in effect condones it...

The forms of torture freely employed include, among others:

1. The stripping, beating, kicking, flogging, and outraging of schoolgirls and young women.

2. Flogging schoolboys to death.

3. Burning – the burning of young girls by pressing lighted cigarettes against their tender parts, and the burning of men, women and children by searing their bodies with hot irons.

4. Stringing men up by their thumbs, beating them with bamboos and iron rods until unconscious, restoring them and repeating the process, sometimes several times in one day, sometimes until death.

5. Contraction – tying men up in such fashion as to cause intense suffering.

6. Confinement for long periods under torturing conditions, as, e.g. where men and women are packed so tightly in a room that they cannot lie or sit down for days at a stretch."

"The Japanese make improvements," say the Koreans. "But they make them to benefit their own people, not us. They improve agriculture, and turn the Korean farmers out and replace them by Japanese. They pave and put sidewalks in a Seoul street, but the old Korean shopkeepers in that street have gone, and Japanese have come. They encourage commerce, Japanese commerce, but the Korean tradesman is hampered and tied down in many ways." Education has been wholly Japanese. That is to say the primary purpose of the schools is to teach Korean children to be good Japanese subjects. Teaching is mostly done in Japanese, by Japanese teachers. The whole ritual and routine is towards the glorification of Japan.

The Koreans complain, however, that, apart from this, the system of teaching established for Koreans in Korea is inferior to that established for Japanese there. Japanese and Korean children are taught in separate schools. The course of education for Koreans is four years, for Japanese
six. The number of schools provided for Japanese is proportionately very much larger than for Koreans, and a much larger sum of money is spent on them.' (McKenzie 1920:197-198)

1921

Feb  Pro-Japanese Min Wonsik (闵元植 闵元植 1886-1921) is assassinated by another Korean whilst in Tokyo to submit a proposal for the right for Koreans to vote.

Sep  Large industrial commission held to discuss ways of encouraging industry.

- A handful of Korean businessmen are invited as official participants: allowed to speak freely and suggest amendments to the Government-General's proposals.
- This results in Japanese subsidies and loans to support Kim Seongsu's (金性洙 金性洙 1891-1955, a 1914 Waseda University graduate, independence activist, politician, and later a Japanese collaborationist) Gyeongbang Textile Company (京城紡織株式會社 경성방직주식회사 1924-35).

Oct  The enormous Chōsen Jingū (朝鮮神宮 조선신궁) Shintō shrine complex is completed on the slopes of Nam-san mountain: like the Government-General building, this is seen as part of the spiritual attack on Korea, obstructing the geomantic principles of the capital (it is later demolished in 1953).

1926  Keijō Imperial University (京城帝國大學 경성제국대학) is established: most staff and students are Japanese: in 1946, it becomes Seoul National University, widely considered South Korea's most prestigious university.

Jun 10  Funeral held for former Emperor Sunjong, the last monarch of Korea; the funeral is accompanied by mass demonstrations.

1927

Feb  A left-wing organization named Sin’gan-hoe (新幹會 신간회) is established: soon claims up to 35,000 members and continues until May 1931.

1929

Nov 3  Gwangju students movement (光州學生獨立運動 과충학생독립운동) student demonstrations and fighting break out in the southwestern city of Gwangju after three Korean schoolgirls are allegedly insulted by Japanese youths at Gwangju train station.

- Fighting spreads across local campuses with the left-wing Sin’gan-hoe involved.

1930  By 1930 around 527,000 Japanese are living in Korea whilst 6~800,000 Koreans are estimated to be living in Manchuria.

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1931–45 The Imperial Way

1931  Ugaki Kazushige (宇垣一成 1868–1956) becomes the new Governor-General, serving until 1936.

- Ugaki encourages the heavy industrialization of Korea to support expansion into China.

1932

Jan 8  In Tokyo, Yi Bongjang (李奉昌 1900–1932) throws a hand grenade at Japanese Emperor Hirohito but it fails to detonate – Kim Ku manages to escape.

Mar 1  Japan's puppet state of Manchukuo (満洲國 만주국) is established in Manchuria directly north of Korea; many Koreans participate in the colonization of Manchuria, both as businessmen and member of the brutal police force.


- From 1935 onwards, all Koreans are compelled to worship at Japanese Shintō shrines.

1936

Aug 26  Minami Jirō (南次郎 1874–1955) becomes the new Governor-General serving until 1942.

- Throughout 1937 large numbers of Koreans began to leave the agricultural provinces of the south and head north or abroad to Japan and Sakhalin for work in factories and mines.
- In the same year, Russian leader Stalin deported around 200,000 Koreans from the Soviet Far East to Central Asia on the grounds that they might harbour pro-Japanese elements.
- As a result of this there is still a significant ethnic Korean population living in Central Asian states.

1938 Naisen-Ittai (內鮮一體 내선일체 "Japan–Korea One Body")

- Promulgated at another industrial commission. Under the new policy:
  - Korea is no longer to be considered a colony but an integral part of Japan.
  - Koreans are given all the duties of Japanese citizens but still not the same political and social rights.
  - They are to be fully integrated into the Japanese kokutai (國體 국체 "national body") and, as imperial subjects, expected to worship the Japanese emperor.
  - Shintō shrines are established for war heroes and by the 1940s there are 58 large jingū shrines, 322 normal jinja shrines and 310 prayer halls across the country.

"Every morning at an established time the authorities set off a siren to engage the people in Shinto worship. A noon whistle announced the time for silent prayer on behalf of the military heroes who protected the country." (Caprio 2009:158)³

“Regardless of Koreans’ intentions, the Japanese forced most Koreans into entering the shrines simply by placing ration collection points on their grounds.” (Caprio 2009:161)

- Japanese national holidays are to be observed in Korea.
- The Japanese calendar and imperial reign names are to be used and martial arts encouraged for Koreans to learn the ‘Japanese spirit’.
- To try and authenticate claims of shared origins, specifically that Japan once ruled Korea in the distant past, museums and local history societies are established with research focusing on the relations between the kingdoms of Baekje, Silla and Gaya and the early Japanese state.

- Youth organisations are also established in the countryside for the indoctrination of children whilst all religions in Korea are expected to “conform” with the Japanese spirit.

"If one thing is clear from the transcripts of the industrial commission, it is that the Korean bourgeoisie wanted the implementation of the Naisen Ittai policy as much, if not more, than the Japanese authorities themselves...

Participation in the colonial industrialization process involved Korean capitalists not only in the economic exploitation of their own workers but ultimately in the Japanese attempt to eradicate a separate and distinct sense of national identity in the Korean people as a whole." (Eckert 1991:239,258)

On the failure of Japan's assimilation policy:

"While senior mistrust of junior subordinates infiltrated all parts of the Japanese military, evidence suggests that colonial recruits from the colonies were forced to endure this to a greater extent than their Japanese counterparts. One report described a Korean recruit who was bashed with a bat so brutally that even his "parents and siblings found it difficult to recognize him." Following the war's end a relatively high proportion of civilian and military Koreans and Taiwanese (7.2 percent) were convicted of war crimes than Japanese. This was mainly due to the nature of their duties: carrying out Japanese-issued punishments to allied prisoners of war. After the war the Japanese government made these POWs ineligible for benefits afforded to other Japanese POWs.” (Caprio 2009:167)

"A fatal flaw with Japan's policy [of complete assimilation] was that, despite efforts to unify school systems and personal names, its administration refused to allow Koreans to forget that they were indeed Korean, and not Japanese. Its bureaucracy stamped "Korean" over Japanized names on official documents. Its police devised tests that focused on telltale characteristics of Koreans." (Caprio 2009:197)

"Japanese law prevented Korean males married to Japanese females from forming a family register in Japan, but allowed Korean wives to be included on their Japanese husband's register." This law was not amended until 1985! (Caprio 2009:190)

Feb Korean volunteer soldiers are accepted to serve in the Japanese Imperial Army: from 1943 onwards compulsory conscription is introduced.

Mar Japanese language is made compulsory for all young Koreans.

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Jul  The Korean League for the General Mobilization of the National Spirit is established with a membership of more than 30,000. Founding members include the founders of Chosen Ilbo and Dong-A Ilbo newspapers.

- Former activist writers including Yi Kwangsu and Choe Namseon contribute to its cause, encouraging the voluntary enlistment of men into the army and women - who are coerced into sexual slavery as "comfort women" (慰安婦 위안부).
- Up to 200,000 women were made 'comfort women' by the Japanese army, of whom 80–90% are estimated to have been Korean.
- Between 1938–43 around 17,500 Koreans volunteer for the Japanese Imperial Army.

1939

Jun 4 Kim Il Sung (金日成 김일성 born Kim Seongju, 1912–1994), future leader of North Korea, leads around 170 guerrilla fighters across the border from Manchuria and occupies Bocheonbo (普天堡 보천보) agricultural station inside Korea for a few hours.

- This small battle is widely celebrated in modern North Korean historiography.

Nov  Koreans are forced to adopt Japanese names:
All remaining Korean newspapers are closed down and censorship is strictly imposed.

1945 Gwangbok liberation (光復 광복 "light restored")

1945

Aug 10 Americans in Washington draw a line across a map of Korea at the 38th parallel.

- At least 10,000 Korean labourers are amongst those killed by the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki ending the war.

Sep 6 Yeo Unhyeong (呂運亨 여운형 1886–1947) proclaims the Korean People's Republic; it is accepted by the Soviet Union but rejected by America.

Sep 8 Lieutenant-General Hodge (1893–1963) and the first American soldiers arrive off Incheon from Okinawa; within three weeks there are some 25,000 American troops in the southern half of the peninsula.

"...the United States saw the "People's Republic" as part of a Soviet master plan to dominate all of Korea. Radical activity, such as the ousting of landlords and attacks on Koreans in the colonial police, was usually a matter of settling scores left over from the colonial period, or of demands by Koreans to run their own affairs. But it immediately became wrapped up with Soviet–American rivalry, such that the Cold War arrived in Korea in the last months of 1945." (Cumings 2005:191)

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5 Some sources, including Cumings (2005), have this established in 1937.
South Korea

Sep 16  The Korean Democratic Party is established and subsequently receives American support; the party is composed of mostly conservative landlords who have collaborated with the Japanese and have no popular support base.

Oct 16  Syngman Rhee (李承晩 이승만 1875–1965) in his 70s, returns from America to southern Korea on a plane arranged by General McArthur (head of American forces in Japan and East Asia).

Nov  An office of “national defense” is established by Hodge, anticipating the creation of the South Korean army in 1948.

Dec  The American military government establishes an English language school for potential officers which becomes the Korean Military Academy from which future president–dictator Park Chung Hee (朴正熙 박정희 1917–79), as well as his assassin Kim Jaegyu (金載圭 김재규 1926–80) both graduate as members of the second class in autumn 1948.

“As they straggled back to Korea from various directions in the months after the surrender, the Korean graduates of the MMA (Manchurian Military Academy) and JMA (Japanese Military Academy) discovered a country very different from the one they had left. Unlike Park Chung Hee {born in Daegu}, most of the former cadets had family roots in the northern half of a now divided peninsula, and the occupying Soviet forces, together with their Korean communist allies, were quick to arrest and imprison Korean officers who had served the Japanese Imperial Army either in Manchuria or elsewhere, regardless of their personal motivations or intentions.

In the southern half of the peninsula, however, in an irony only history can muster, these men would find a welcoming presence in the American occupation forces, who were more concerned with building up a native force for maintaining order and, later, for containing a potent communist political threat than with arresting or punishing men who had served a now utterly defeated enemy that was also rapidly turning into a key Cold War ally. In what would eventually become the Republic of Korea Army, many of the former graduates of the MMA and JMA thus found a home.” (Eckert 2016:322)

A joint declaration issued at the Moscow Conference aims to establish a joint US–Soviet commission which would administer Korea together with Britain and nationalist China for a period of five years.

- The declaration is treated with suspicion from all sides whilst Koreans demand immediate independence leading to mass demonstrations, likely organized by nationalist Kim Ku who assassinates the head of the American sponsored Korean Democratic Party, Song Jin-u (1890–1945).

"The assassination was the most important event since the liberation among the non-leftist groups, for it revealed that the political fault line was not right versus left, but patriot versus collaborator. Song Chin-u, like his lifelong friend Kim Sŏng-su, was a wealthy man who made many unfortunate compromises in the colonial period." (Cumings 2005:198)

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Hodge begins a campaign against the Korean People's Republic and threatens to kill Kim Ku if he challenges him again.

1946

Sep 23 A general strike begins across Southern Korea; it is declared "Communist in nature" by the American Military Government and **violently suppressed by the former Korean national police**, one member of whom is Park Chung Hee.

"Roy Roberts of the Associated Press wrote in August 1947 that U.S. intelligence got an average of five police reports a day, "telling of fights in villages, fights between villages, beatings of rightists, beatings of leftists, burning of granaries, attacks on village officials, attacks on police, stoning of political meetings." (Cumings 2005:218)

1947 Future LG conglomerate, Nakhui (樂喜 낙희 "Lucky") Chemical Industrial Corporation, producing soap and toiletries is established by wealthy land owner, Koo In-Hwoi (구인회 1907–69).

1948

**Jeju-do massacre (濟州四三事件 제주사삼사건)**

Apr 3 Popular uprisings begin to escalate on Jeju-do island climaxing in May.

- The governor of Jeju-do Island, Yu Haejin (柳海眞 유해진), is an extreme rightist from the mainland with connections to far right youth groups. Yu Haejin fills national police positions on the island with ultra rightists from the mainland and northern Korea.
- The Jeju-do uprisings erupt when, following demonstrations against elections on the mainland Jeju-do police arrest around 2,500 local youths and subsequently one is found in a river having been tortured to death. On top of this the ultra right Northwest Youth Corps (西北靑年會서북청년회 from northern Korea) who have largely infiltrated the local police force bring a reign of terror on the local population.
- A people's army of around 3,000 to 4,000 begins to fight back taking advantage of the extensive cave system and small caches of weapons left by the Japanese on the island. By early June most inland villages are controlled by the local rebels and fighting continues until the end of the year.
- In the subsequent military crackdown around 30,000 peasants are massacred, representing one third of the island's population, and more than 160 villages burned down.
- From 1948, following the enactment of the National Traitors Act, it becomes a crime to mention the Jeju-do massacre and thus remains heavily censored until the late 1990s.
- Following the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950 at least 20,000 arrested on Jeju-do, held in prisons across the country, were executed.
- In 1992 President Roh Tae Woo's government sealed up a cave on Halla-san mountain where the remains of massacre victims had recently been discovered.

May 10 First ever "democratic" elections are held in South Korea: 323 people are killed whilst thousands of alleged leftists are arrested; many opposition leaders, including Kim Ku, boycott the election. Syngman Rhee’s Independence Party wins 54 seats, independents take 83 seats and 100 seats are left vacant for North Korea.
Aug 15  **Syngman Rhee is proclaimed president of the Republic of Korea** (aka South Korea).

Republic of Korea Army is formed and staffed exclusively by former Japanese army officers.

**Yeouido Rebellion**

Oct 18 Soldiers mutiny in Yeosu, on the central southern coast, following dispatch orders to participate in the Jeju-do massacre.

- Around 2,000 soldiers occupy Yeosu restoring people's committees and people's courts to execute captured policemen, landlords and other rightists.
- They call for the return of the short lived Korean People's Republic.
- The mutiny spreads to nearby Suncheon and lasts a week before being crushed by army units sent from Gwangju.
- **Park Chung Hee** is among the rebels but quickly turns informer upon being captured.
- Surviving rebels escape to nearby Jiri-san mountain where they join with other local guerrilla fighters.
- Guerrilla fighting continues across the southern provinces with regular attacks on police stations where records of leftist families are kept.

‘There was little evidence of Soviet or North Korean support for the southern guerrillas. In April 1950 the Americans found that the North Koreans had supported guerrillas in Gangwon and the upper coast of North Gyeongsang with weapons and supplies, but that "almost 100 percent of the guerrillas in the [southern] Cholla and Kyongsang Provinces had been recruited locally." No Soviet weapons had ever been authenticated in South Korea, except near the parallel; most guerrillas had Japanese and American arms. Another report found that the guerrillas "apparently receive little more than moral support from North Korea." ’ (Cumings 2005:245)

- Syngman Rhee establishes "guidance camps" which are essentially political prison camps holding up to 70,000 prisoners (estimated by the US Embassy).

Dec 12  **National Security Law** (國家保安法 국가보안법) enacted.

- Widely used and abused by Syngman Rhee and nearly all following South Korean leaders – and still today – to suppress any form of political opposition in the name of anti-Communism and national security.

**Birth of North Korea (Democratic People's Republic of Korea)**

- In 1945 Communism in the north of the country was weak as Pyongyang had long been a center of Protestant Christianity and the region was more under the influence of right-wing nationalists; meanwhile the Korean Communist Party (朝鮮共産党 조선공산당 Joseon Gongsan-dang), recently reestablished following the Japanese withdrawal (first existed 1925–28), was based in Seoul (headed by Bak Heon-yeong 朴憲永 박헌영 1900–56).
1945
13 Oct **North Korean Bureau of the Korean Communist Party** is established during a secret meeting in Pyongyang and made public a week later; this represents the birth of the (North) **Korean Workers’ Party** (조선로동당) which became fully established around April of 1946.

1946
1 Mar A grenade is thrown at Kim Il Sung during a mass rally by a South Korean agent, but it is caught by Soviet Russian Ya. T. Novichenko thus saving Kim Il Sung.

5 Mar **Land Reform law published.** Authored by two Russian experts on agricultural economics.

"The law envisaged the confiscation and redistribution of land which belonged to Japanese legal entities and individuals, as well as to those who rented it out, but most importantly, it applied to all land estates exceeding five chongbo (1 chongbo = 0.99 ha), regardless of the landlord's nationality [i.e. confiscated rich Koreans’ land too]. The confiscated land had to be distributed among the poor peasants." (Lankov 2002:32)

Aug **Nationalisation of industry** begins:

"..in colonial Korea the absolute majority of large and medium-sized enterprises had been forced to collaborate with the Japanese authorities; hence all large and almost all medium-sized industries were nationalised." (Lankov 2002:33)

Oct Establishment of Kim Il Sung University.

3 Nov Elections held for regional, provincial and city people’s committees where in each case there was only a single candidate and to vote against them meant placing the ballot paper in a separate box (whilst being watched).

1947
Dec Separate **North Korean currency introduced.**

1948
8 Feb Korean People's Army (조선인민군) officially created; unofficially it had existed as a "police force" and "railway defense" since early 1946.

"Many lower-ranking Korean officers were trained in China and the Soviet Union, while generals were mainly former guerrilla fighters or, more often, officers of the Chinese Communist army." (Lankov 2002:37)

9 Sep **North Korean Constitution promulgated, marking the establishment of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea.**

The drafting of the constitution had taken around a year and been directly supervised by Moscow and Stalin himself.

"..it was clear that neither the North Korean authorities nor their Soviet supervisors wanted to present the DPRK as a separate state (to the south). On the contrary, they went to great lengths to present
it as the only legitimate power on the whole Korean peninsula. There was no ambiguity regarding this matter in the DPRK Constitution, according to which even the capital of the DPRK was not Pyongyang but Seoul – a slightly bizarre situation which was to last until 1972." (Lankov 2002:45)

"According to Soviet estimates.. out of 1,034 small and medium-sized enterprises then existing in the territory of North Korea, 1,015 were destroyed by the retreating Japanese." (Lankov 2002:5)

"Before 1956 the country had been a typical 'people's democracy', in many respects not unlike the regimes of Soviet-dominated Eastern Europe, but after 1956 it began to transform itself into a much more idiosyncratic Communist state: thoroughly controlled, extremely militarised, devoted to a fanatical personality cult and a particular type of ideology, and far removed from 'orthodox' Marxism–Leninism. The very term for this ideology, 'chuch’e' [주체] was coined on the eve of the 1956 crisis, in December 1955." (Lankov 2002:193)

The Korean War (1950–53)

"..the planning of the attack on the South began in 1947, but... the final decision was only taken after a meeting of Kim Il Sung with Stalin in the spring of 1950... the North Korean leadership at first believed that one strike would be enough to provoke a general uprising against Syngman Rhee in the South, bringing the war to a swift conclusion." (Lankov 2002:147)

- The Korean War is referred to in South Korea by the date on which the full-scale invasion of the South began – 25 Jun (1950), yuk–i–o (육이오 6.25)

"In a situation of mutual non-recognition, a war between the North and the South seemed to both states a legitimate and fully constitutional action, hardly more than a large-scale police operation aimed at establishing order and restoring legitimate power on the territory occupied by a handful of traitors supported by foreign powers." (Lankov 2002:44)

"Thus the 1950 logic for both sides was to see who would be stupid enough to move first, with Kim [Il Sung] itching to invade and hoping for a clear southern provocation, and hotheads in the South hoping to provoke an "unprovoked" assault, in order to get American help – for that was the only way the South could hope to win." (Cumings 2005:251)

1949

May 4 Border battle at Gaeseong city intiated by the South.

Jun 26 Heavy fighting on the Ongjin peninsula northwest of Seoul.
THE CLOUDS BURST

1950

25 Jun Fighting breaks out again on the Ongjin peninsula around 3 or 4am. However, by 6am North Korean troops have attacked all the way along the 38th parallel marking the official outbreak of the Korean War.

Seoul is taken by the North within two days. The Soviet Union is quick to pull back all ships and submarines from near Korea and withdraws its advisors from the Korean People's Army. It sends no military supplies to the North.

27 Jun America announces its intervention as the UN Security Council passes a resolution to support South Korea; noticeably the Soviet Union does not attend the meeting where it could have vetoed the decision had it chosen to.

- Over a period of several days starting from 6 July up to 7,000 civilians and prisoners held in Rhee's camps (many from the Yeosu rebellion) are allegedly transported and executed near Daejeon city by South Korean troops.

No Gun Ri civilian massacre (老斤里良民虐殺事件 노근리양민학살사건)

- Between 26 and 29 July up to 400 Korean refugees are allegedly killed by the U.S. 7th Cavalry Regiment at No'geun-ri (No Gun Ri) in South Chungcheong province.

RETREAT: CONTAINMENT: ROLLBACK

- In the wake of 70,000 advancing North Korean troops, American (47,000) and South Korean (45,000) troops retreat to the southeastern city of Busan.
- Many local guerrillas join with the North Korean army and people's committees are reestablished in occupied territory with land reforms carried out (which subsequently made it easier for further land reform in the South after the war).

1st Aug UN troops destroy the last bridges over the Nakdong river in the southeast corner of Korea creating the "Busan perimeter" against the North.

28 Aug North Korean general Bang Hosan orders a renewed offensive against the Busan perimeter and takes the towns of Pohang and Jinju.

- Around 2,000 British troops arrive at Busan from Hong Kong; they are the first foreign contingent other than America to enter the war. America has around 83,000 troops deployed or available.

15 Sep An American flotilla of 261 ships enables 80,000 American troops to successfully land at Incheon, the port city directly west of Seoul – this is known as the Incheon Landings.

16 Sep General MacArthur receives the go ahead for a "rollback" campaign allowing Southern forces to cross the 38th parallel. By 28 September American troops have retaken Seoul and on 1 October South Korean troops cross the 38th parallel.
2 Oct  Chairman Mao informs Stalin that China will enter the war.

19 Oct  **American troops capture Pyongyang.**
- South Korean troops and military police including elements from ultra-right-wing youth groups unleash *revenge attacks on the local population* of the occupied Northern territory.

26 Oct  Fresh Sino–Korean troops enter the fighting. In total around 200,000 Chinese troops are estimated to have been involved.
- By November 55,909 suspected communists have been arrested in the North and many are subsequently executed when Southern troops are forced to retreat again.

24 Nov  American troops begin a renewed offensive however on 27 November Sino–Korean forces begin their own large attacks pushing American and Southern forces into retreat.

30 Nov  **President Truman threatens the use of atomic bombs** at a news conference.
- British prime minister Clement Attlee immediately leaves for Washington and works hard to dissuade Washington against such a move. On 6 December Pyongyang is retaken by Sino–Korean forces.

24 Dec  General MacArthur requests discretionary power over the use of atomic bombs: he suggests the use of 34 bombs to defeat China and create a radioactive belt across Manchuria.

1951

4 Jan  **Seoul is re–occupied by Sino–Korean forces.**
- In March Soviet bombers are stationed in Manchuria, the closest the Soviet Union comes to entering the war.

6 Apr  President Truman signs an order for the readying of nine nuclear bombs.

11 Apr  General MacArthur is relieved of command and replaced by General Matthew Ridgway.
- In the confusion the American nuclear bombs are not transferred.

12 Jun  Kim Il Sung visits Moscow where Stalin agrees to the North entering armistice talks.
- In December a heavy bombing campaign of North Korea begins including the *regular use of napalm*.

1952

May  **Syngman Rhee declares martial law** arresting twelve assemblymen and censoring the press.

1953

Jul  Syngman Rhee, wishing the war to continue, works to obstruct armistice negotiations, and even releases anticommmunist prisoners in a bid to further the disorder.
- In spite of this, on 27 July an armistice is signed, officially ending the fighting.