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TODAY'S ANALYSIS

(06 July 2024)

TOPICS TO BE COVERED

- THE KOREAN WAR
- ARCTIC WILDFIRES
- MCQs



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THE KOREAN WAR

The Korean War, which began on **June 25, 1950**, was a pivotal event in 20th-century history, as it **shaped the geopolitical landscape of East Asia and impacted global affairs**. It also resulted in a **massive loss of life**, with estimates suggesting around **2.5 million people (including civilians and military personnel) perished**.

WHEN DID THE WAR END?

Despite the cessation of active hostilities, **the war has never formally ended** – the reason it is also called the **“Forgotten War”** sometimes.

It **concluded with an armistice agreement on July 27, 1953**, rather than a peace treaty, leaving North and South Korea **technically still at war**.

WHAT LED TO THE DIVIDE OF THE KOREAN PENINSULA?

The war was a **result of Cold War tensions** and the rivalry for supremacy between **the communist Soviet Union and the liberal capitalist United States**. The two superpowers emerged after the second world war (1939 to 1945) and attempted to extend their influence over the Korean peninsula as it had just gained independence from colonial rule.

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KOREA BEFORE THE COLD WAR:

Several dynasties ruled Korea before that with some uniting the entire region, such as the Silla dynasty in the 7th century. Korea then came under Japanese colonial rule from 1910 to 1945 and it ended with Japan's surrender in WW2. However, Korea's liberation was quickly followed by division.

THE AFTERMATH OF WORLD WAR 2

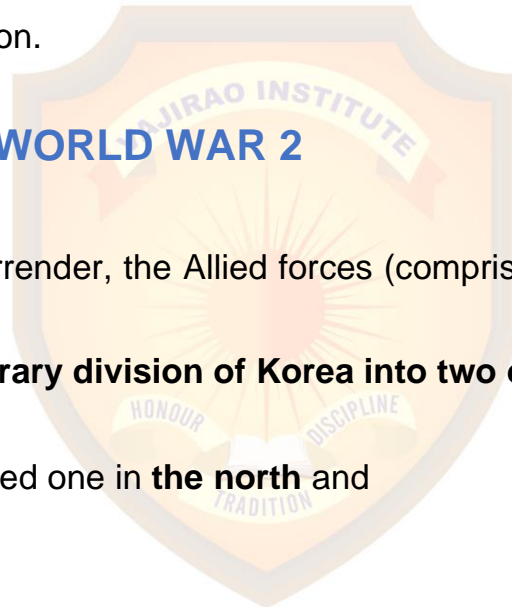
To manage the Japanese surrender, the Allied forces (comprising the US, the USSR, the UK & France) agreed to a temporary division of Korea into two occupation zones:

- The **Soviet Union**-controlled one in **the north** and
- **The US** one in **the south**.

US authorities decided the **38th parallel would be the dividing line**.

Today, a buffer zone called **the demilitarised zone (DMZ)** runs along the 38th parallel

to avoid border skirmishes. Army members of both countries guard it on either side.



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WHAT HAPPENED AFTER DRAWING THE 38TH PARALLEL?

In the **North, the Soviet Union helped establish a communist regime** led by **Kim Il-sung**, a former guerrilla fighter and Soviet-trained leader.

In the **South, the United States supported the creation of a capitalist state** under Syngman Rhee, an anti-communist leader who had spent many years in exile in the United States.

By 1948, two separate governments were officially established:

- The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) and
- The Republic of Korea (South Korea)

Each claiming legitimacy over the entire peninsula.

THE OUTBREAK

On **June 25, 1950**, North Korean forces, backed by the **Soviet Union and China**, **launched a surprise invasion of South Korea** by crossing the 38th parallel. The invasion began in the early morning and caught the South Korean Army and its American allies off guard.

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The **North Korean forces quickly advanced**, overwhelming the South Korean defences and capturing key areas — including the capital Seoul.

This alarmed the international community and prompted the United Nations to Intervene.

THE UN INTERVENTION & THE AFTERMATH

The **UN Security Council passed a resolution** condemning the invasion and calling for a withdrawal of North Korean forces from South Korea.

In another UNSC resolution on June 27, **it was declared that North Korean actions constituted a breach of peace. UN members were recommended to assist South Korea against the attack and “restore peace on the Korean Peninsula”.**

In response, **a coalition of UN forces primarily led by the United States** intervened. This marked the beginning of a bloody and protracted conflict that would last for three years and **result in millions of casualties.**

THE LEGACY CONTINUES

- It has had far-reaching implications for regional security, contributing to the militarisation of the Korean Peninsula and **ongoing tensions between the two Koreas and between North Korea and the West.**

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- It also solidified the alliance between the United States and South Korea. **The US established a lasting military presence** in South Korea by stationing American troops and **remains committed to defending it against any external aggression.**
- **China's entry into the war** demonstrated its commitment to **supporting communist regimes** and a willingness to confront US-led forces in the region. China and North Korea largely maintain a close strategic partnership, with China being a key economic and diplomatic ally of North Korea.



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ARCTIC WILDFIRES

Smoke from raging wildfires has once again **darkened the skies over the Arctic**. It is the **third time in the past five years** that high intensity fires have erupted in the region, Europe's **Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S)** said last week.

A majority of fires are in **Sakha, Russia**, where more than 160 wildfires charred Nearly **460,000 hectares of land** up until June 24, according to Russia state news agency Tass.

ARE WILDFIRES NATURAL IN ARCTIC REGION?

Wildfires **have been a natural part** of the Arctic's boreal forest or snow forest and tundra (treeless regions) ecosystems.

However, in recent years, **their frequency and scale in the regions have increased**, primarily **due to global warming**.

More worryingly, these **blazing wildfires are fueling the climate crisis**.

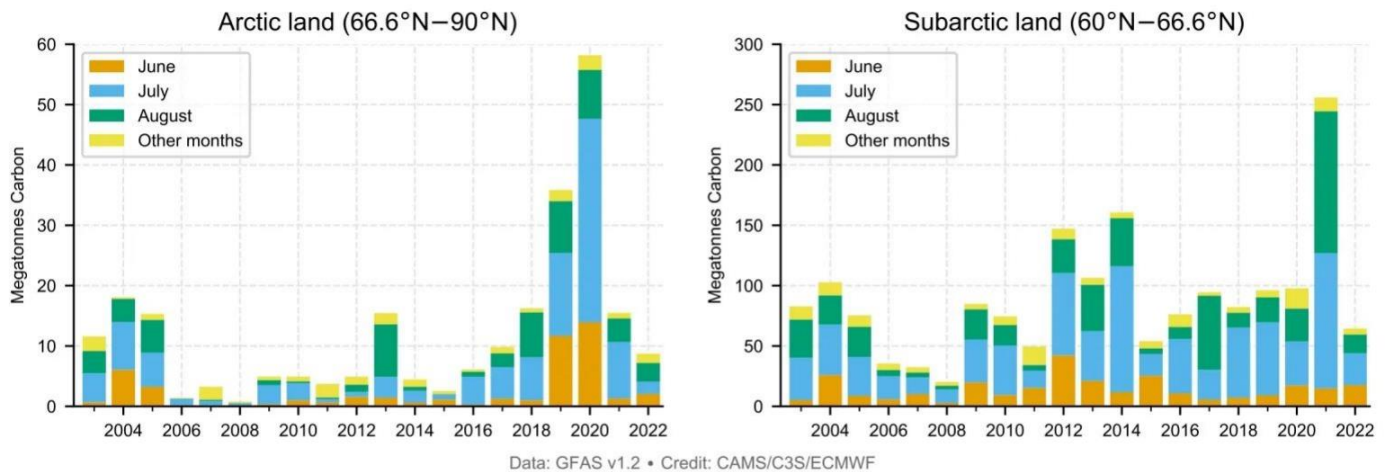
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CARBON EMISSIONS FOR HIGH LATITUDE WILDFIRES

Total annual carbon emissions from high-latitude wildfires



FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR WILDFIRES IN ARCTIC

There are three major factors which are responsible for wildfires in the Arctic:

- The Arctic has been **warming roughly four times as fast as the world.**
- While the global average temperature has increased by at least 1.1 degree Celsius above the pre-industrial levels, **the Arctic has become on average around 3 degree warmer than it was in 1980.**

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- This fast paced warming has led to **more frequent lightning** in the Arctic, which has further increased the likelihood of wildfires — lightning-sparked fires have more than doubled in Alaska and the Northwest Territories since 1975, according to a 2017 study.
- **Soaring temperatures have also slowed down the polar jet stream** — responsible for **circulating air between the mid and northern latitudes** — due to less of a **temperature difference** between the Arctic and lower latitudes.
 - As a result, the polar jet stream often **gets “stuck” in one place**, bringing unseasonably warm weather to the region.
 - It also **blocks out low-pressure systems**, which bring clouds and rainfall, possibly leading to **intense heat waves**, which can cause more wildfires.

HOW ARCTIC WILDFIRES CAN EXACERBATE GLOBAL WARMING?

When wildfires ignite, **they burn vegetation and organic matter, releasing the heat trapping greenhouse gases (GhGs) such as carbon dioxide (CO₂)** into the atmosphere.

That is why the rising frequency of wildfires around the globe is a Matter of concern as they contribute to climate change.

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However, **in the case of Arctic wildfires**, such **GHG emissions are not the biggest worry.**

It is rather the **carbon stored underneath the region's permafrost** (any ground that stays frozen for at least two years straight.)

Scientists estimate that **Arctic permafrost holds around 1,700 billion metric tons of carbon, including methane and CO2.** That's roughly **51 times the amount of carbon the world released as fossil fuel emissions in 2019.**

THE CONSEQUENCES

- This can cause ancient organic materials such as **dead animals and plants to decompose** and release carbon into the atmosphere.
- In case a large-scale thawing of Arctic permafrost is triggered, **it would be impossible to stop the release of carbon.**
- This would mean that the **world will not be able to limit global warming within the 1.5 degree Celsius threshold.**
- Breaching the limit will result in **catastrophic and irreversible consequences** for the planet including **spread of pandemic diseases.**

“What happens in the Arctic doesn't stay there — Arctic change amplifies risks Globally for all of us. These fires are a warning cry for urgent action,”

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MCQs

1. Consider the following statements and mark the correct one:
 1. The Korean war was primarily due to the Cold War rivalry.
 2. USA intervened directly in the War to militarily help South Korea.

(A) Only 1

(B) Only 2

(C) Both 1 & 2

(D) Neither 1 nor 2



Ans. (C)

2. Which line divides North & South Korea?
 - (A) 36th Parallel
 - (B) 38th Parallel
 - (C) 39th Parallel
 - (D) None of the above

Ans. (B)

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3. Consider the following statements and mark the correct one:

1. Wildfires in Arctic are not a natural phenomena.
2. Wildfires in Arctic have started to occur more frequently in the last 5 years.

- (A) Only 1
(B) Only 2
(C) Both 1 & 2
(D) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans. (B)

4. Which among the following is/are the factors responsible for Arctic wildfires?

1. Heatwaves in the Arctic region.
2. Frequent Lightning.

- (A) Only 1
(B) Only 2
(C) Both 1 & 2
(D) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans. (C)

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5. Which of the following can be a consequence of Arctic Wildfires?

1. Global Warming.
2. Increased methane Emissions.
3. More Pandemics.

(A) Only 2 & 3

(B) Only 1 & 3

(C) Only 3

(D) All of the above

Ans. (D)



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