



## Korea: One State or Two?

**Description:** In this lesson, students will identify the challenges of defining sovereign states, using Korea as a case study. Students will use online resources such as the World Historical Gazetteer and Getty Thesaurus of Geographic Names as part of this lesson. They will also be introduced to political geography and encouraged to think about how geography can affect the ways people define and think about sovereign states.

**Subject(s):** AP Human Geography

**Grade Level(s):** 9-12

**Key Word(s):**

Political Geography

State

Sovereignty

Autonomous

Semi-autonomous

**Essential Questions:** How has the political organization of space resulted from historical and current processes, events, and ideas?

**Region(s):** East Asia and Africa

**Rationale/Objectives:** The rationale for this lesson is for students to be able to explain why it is difficult to determine whether some territories are sovereign states.

**State Standards:** 8.4.9.A Compare the role groups and individuals played in the social, political, cultural, and economic development throughout world history &. 8.4.9.D Analyze how conflict and cooperation among groups and organizations have influenced the history and development of the world

**Prerequisite knowledge:** There are different areas of the world where the definition of the term “sovereignty” is tested. Examples to include are China-Taiwan: One State or Two, Senkaku/Diaoyu/Diaoyutai Islands, and Sahrawi Republic/Western Sahara.

## Procedures:

### Warm Up: TRIVIA! Words may need clarification & Brief Video

1. What are the five biggest states in the world? Depends on what you mean? Land area or population?
2. What is the smallest state in the world? Vatican City (by area & population)
3. How many states are there in the world? Depends on who you ask...  
[How Many Countries Are There? \(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4AivEQmfPpk\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4AivEQmfPpk)

**Slides Presentation or Pear Deck:** Students will be given a brief overview of different areas of the world where the definition of the term “sovereignty” is tested. Examples to include are China-Taiwan: One State or Two, Senkaku/Diaoyu/Diaoyutai Islands, and Sahrawi Republic/Western Sahara. The class will then be given the “Korea: One State or Two?” case study for an in depth example that tests the definition of sovereignty.

### Case Study: Korea: One State or Two?

**Background:** Visit [History Channel](https://www.history.com/news/north-south-korea-divided-reasons-facts) to read the background information on how the country of Korea became divided. Use this source to answer the following questions. (Website: <https://www.history.com/news/north-south-korea-divided-reasons-facts>)

1. What was the “cold war?”
2. How did the rise of communism play a role in the division of Korea?
3. Explain what is meant by the following quote from the History Channel article. “Starting in 1948, there are two established state organizations run by Koreans, each claiming to be the legitimate leaders of the people of the whole nation,” Robinson says. “And frankly, nothing’s changed since then.”

**DMZ:** The DMZ was established around the 38th parallel of latitude, when troops from both sides agreed to retreat 1000 meters (3281 feet). Because of the ongoing ceasefire and tensions between the governments of the two Koreas, the border between North and South Korea is one of the most guarded borders in the world.

[Watch this video from American tourists who visited the DMZ \(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LqNYwjFxFU0w&t=31s\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LqNYwjFxFU0w&t=31s)

Answer the following questions:

1. Why do you think this border is so heavily guarded?
2. Why do you think intimidation is so important to both sides of the border patrol?

**History through Toponyms:** Go to [the World History Gazetteer](https://whgazetteer.org/) (WHG) (<https://whgazetteer.org/>) and choose the search function. Type in the name of the capital of South Korea to do your first search. Clicking on the one result for Seoul will reveal three cards with the name from different resources. Click on the linked record (tgn:7002223) for the card that says Getty TGN (partial). Be sure to read the note about the city in on the Getty webpage. Go back to the WHG and type in the name of North Korea's capital. Click on the linked record (tgn:7001329) for the card that says Getty TGN (partial) and check the note on the Getty webpage for that city.

1. What is Getty TGN?
2. What information does Getty TGN provide about places?
3. What did you find in your search of South Korea's capital?
2. What did you find in your search for North Korea's capital?
3. So what is the "true" capital of Korea?

### **Bridge of No Return: Physical Geography**



Source: *Bridge of no return*, Wikipedia:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bridge\\_of\\_No\\_Return#/media/File:Bridge\\_of\\_no\\_return.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bridge_of_No_Return#/media/File:Bridge_of_no_return.jpg)

This is a photo of the Bridge of No Return, named for the fact that prisoners were exchanged here and never seen again. It is near the Joint Security Area between North and South Korea.

1. Look at the physical environment. Why do you think they chose this location as a joint security area?

**Different Perspective:** Now take a look at the division of North and South Korea from a different perspective. Answer the questions that follow.

[Divided Koreas See Day of Reunions](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TrvrDTPtqg4) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TrvrDTPtqg4>)

1. Why have these families been separated for so long?
2. How has the separation of Korea impacted families?
3. Do you believe that the governments should change this policy? Explain your answer and offer a solution to this separation.

### **Extended Activities:**

- This case study could be assigned prior to the lesson for a flipped classroom.
- Other case studies could be created
- Student independent research on other areas where sovereignty is being tested
- Use the WHG to investigate other disputed areas