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Korean War Coverage in High School History Textbooks

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Abstract

This content analysis investigated coverage of the Korean War in recent high school U.S. history textbooks. Open coding techniques applied to six textbooks yielded data for the following categories: background of the war, the outbreak of the war, the sequence of the war, the conclusion of the war, the devastation of war, the effects of the war, U.N. and U.S. politics, the Chinese intervention, General Douglas MacArthur, and African Americans in the military. Data from these categories were compared and scrutinized against historians' knowledge using axial coding techniques. This study's findings support past research on Korean War coverage in high school textbooks regarding casualties (Fleming & Kaufman, 1990; Herz, 1978; Lin et al., 2009; Y. Suh et al., 2008). Textbooks offer an unnuanced account of the Korean War which overutilizes American perspectives, minimizes the interwar period, avoids violence, omits racial issues, and ignores Korean history vital to understanding the conflict's origins. The Korean War is a topic of great potential through which topics like democracy and state-building may be explored in rich detail. Despite the Korean War's potential in social studies classrooms, textbooks do little to correct its reputation as the Forgotten War.

Keywords: Korean War, North Korea, South Korea, content analysis, U.S. history, high school textbooks

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Introduction

The Korean War is a subject of great potential in social studies classrooms. Regrettably, textbook publishers do not appear to recognize it as such. Although it was an exceptionally hot three year period at the dawn of the Cold War, the Korean War often receives a fraction of the space dedicated to other conflicts such as the Vietnam War (National Council for the Social Studies [NCSS] & World History Digital Education Foundation, 2018). Beyond the scope of the Cold War, the Korean War offers a unique opportunity to examine the development of two nations with a common history and culture, but incompatible political and economic ideologies (NCSS & World History Digital Education Foundation, 2018).

Nearly seven decades have passed since the armistice was signed between north and south. North Korea's mysterious regime and enigmatic supreme leader, Kim Jong-un, have become staples of national news outlets. South Korea has achieved global prominence as both a global economy and a country whose media has attained a sizeable international following. To neglect the Korean War in social studies classrooms is indefensible considering how important Korea has become in international dialogue. American students deserve to understand how America's hand shaped the state of the Korean peninsula and therefore the world.

Literature Review

The Korean War is also known as the Forgotten War for a reason. It was an event that once weighed heavily on the minds of many families whose sons were sent across the world to fight in a foreign land against an unfamiliar foe. Decades later, its significance seems to be lost as it is situated between World War II (WWII) and the Vietnam War. This is made clear when examining content analyses of textbooks' coverage of the Korean War. Such studies are few and

often only include a small number of American textbooks. Some of the content analyses on the Korean War in textbooks are international in scope, comparing the conflict's coverage in American and foreign textbooks. In general, content analyses on the Korean War only come into publication sporadically. Because of the distinct lack of studies on this topic, this literature review contains pieces written as far back as 1978. However, the lack of research presents an opportunity for those looking to contribute to academic discussions on the Korean War.

Historiography of the Korean War

Although Communist perspectives of the Korean War were once nearly inaccessible for western historians, the Iron Curtain was lifted nearly thirty years ago. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union in the 1990s, a trove of documents containing communications between Soviet, Chinese, and Korean leaders suddenly became available. These revelatory documents exposed many flaws in the traditional view of the conflict as a proxy war between the Soviet Union and the United States and the later revisionist view which blamed the Truman administration's policies for escalating what was an existing civil war (Brune, 1998; Campbell, 2014; Stueck, 2002). Unlike these past schools of thought, the post-revisionist view that has emerged portrays the political climate of Korea and the complex deliberations between the supreme leaders of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea), the People's Republic of China (China), and the Soviet Union (Brune, 1998; Stueck, 2002)

History of the Korean War

Immediately after the end of WWII in 1945, the fate of previously Japanese controlled Korea was in the hands of the victors. At first a lesser concern of the Allies, it seemed as though Korea might end up under Soviet oversight since the United States military had not made

landfall on the peninsula during the war (Campbell, 2014; Cummings, 1997, 2002a). Despite being a region of concern since the time of the tsar, Joseph Stalin accepted a proposal by the United States War Department to divide the peninsula between the Soviet Union and the United States at the 38th parallel (Campbell, 2014; Cummings, 1997, 2002a; Savada & Shaw, 1992; Stueck, 2002). This placed the historic capital, Seoul, under American control, but by accepting the proposal Stalin hoped to gain influence when it came time to discuss the occupation of Japan (Campbell, 2014; Cummings, 1997, 2002a; Stueck, 2002).

From the outset, the unification of the peninsula under one Korean government was hotly debated. Even though both the Soviet Union and the United States favored an independent, unified Korea under the leadership of a democratically elected government, the two parties differed on how exactly the elections should take place (Campbell, 2014; Cummings, 1997, 2002b; Stueck, 2002). Unification election deliberations collapsed in 1946 after the United States rejected the Soviets' proposal to exclude organizations on the right of the political spectrum (Campbell, 2014). Unsurprisingly, the two ideologically opposed superpowers had different visions of an ideal unified Korean government.

Due to disagreements on how elections should be conducted, they were stalled until a U.N. committee was able to conduct one in the south in May 1948 (Campbell, 2014; Cummings, 1997, 2002b; Stueck, 2002). However, the Soviet Union discouraged southern Communists from participating in these and jointly officiated a separate election north of the 38th parallel with Kim Il-sung, a former leader of communist, anti-Japanese guerilla operatives. (Campbell, 2014; Cummings, 1997, 2002a, 2002b, 2010; Shen & Xia, 2020; Stueck, 2002). Through Kim's military position in 1946 and 1947, he had worked to consolidate his control of the Korean

Workers' Party and effectively removed any northern anti-communist resistance (Campbell, 2014; Cummings, 2002a, 2002b, 2010; Savada & Shaw, 1992).

Subsequently, the Republic of Korea (South Korea) was formed under the leadership of nationalist Syngman Rhee in August 1948 (Cummings, 1997, 2002b, 2010; Savada & Shaw, 1992; Stueck, 2002). North Korea was established under the leadership of Kim Il-sung the following month (Campbell, 2014; Cummings, 1997, 2002b; Savada & Shaw, 1992; Stueck, 2002). By the summer of 1949, both Soviet and American troops had been called out of the Korean peninsula while advisors from both nations remained (Campbell, 2014; Cummings, 1997, 2002b; Savada & Shaw, 1992; Stueck, 2002).

Almost immediately after the creation of the two Korean states, Kim was planning to invade and conquer the south. Kim sought Stalin's approval for such a plan as early as April 1949 (Campbell, 2014; Shen & Xia, 2020). However, Stalin refused to consent to Kim's plan as he was actively seeking to improve the Soviet Union's relations with the west, offering instead to supply the Korean People's Army (KPA) with military equipment (Brune, 1998; Campbell, 2014). Kim persistently raised the issue and Stalin conditionally agreed to the plan in March 1950 (Brune, 1998). Kim was able to convince Stalin that victory would be achieved quickly and that the United States would not intervene (Brune, 1998). But, if Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Mao Zedong did not consent to the plan as well, Stalin would withdraw his support (Brune, 1998).

Fortunately for Kim, Mao had long planned to be supportive of him in the event of a war in Korea (Brune, 1998; Campbell, 2014; Sheng, 2014). Using many of the same arguments used to convince Stalin, Kim was able to secure the consent of Mao (Brune, 1998; Campbell, 2014;

Sheng, 2014). With the necessary approval from the Soviet Union and China, Kim declared war and the KPA invaded South Korea on June 25, 1950 (Armstrong, 2003; Campbell, 2014; Cummings, 1997, 2010; Ovodenko, 2007; Savada & Shaw, 1992; Shen & Xia, 2020; Stueck, 2002).

However, the three Communist leaders had been wrong to believe that the United States would not intervene in the war and within a week their predictions were disproven. Just two days after Kim's invasion, President Truman commanded the 7th Fleet of the United States Navy to be moved to the Taiwan Strait between Communist mainland China and nationalist Taiwan and authorized the intervention of American forces via U.N. mandate on June 30 (Cummings, 1997; Kim, 2016; Marolda, 2010; Sheng, 2014; Stueck, 2002). In the first week of July, American military forces arrived in the port city of Pusan in the southeast and General Douglas MacArthur was named commander of the overwhelmingly American U.N. forces (Kim, 2016; Marolda, 2010; Ovodenko, 2007). Although the United States was quick to respond to the invasion, the KPA's campaign was so successful that the entire peninsula—except Pusan and the surrounding area—was under North Korean control by August (Cummings, 1997, 2010; Kim, 2016; Marolda, 2010; Ovodenko, 2007; Savada & Shaw, 1992; Stueck, 2002). To the dismay of the United States and South Korea, it seemed as if a Communist victory was guaranteed and the frontline remained largely unchanged for weeks.

If things were to change in favor of the United States, they would need to take drastic measures. Such a measure came in the form of Operation Chromite, the massive naval invasion of the western port city of Inchon on September 15 (Cummings, 1997, 2010; Kim, 2016; Marolda, 2010; Savada & Shaw, 1992; Stueck, 2002). In conjunction with Operation Chromite,

the American forces in Pusan launched an offensive the following day (Mansourov, 1995). The naval invasion was so successful that Seoul—situated very near to Inchon—had been recaptured by September 25 (Mansourov, 1995; Marolda, 2010).

Following the success of Operation Chromite, KPA forces were retreating across the 38th parallel, communication among KPA commanders had been effectively broken, and Seoul had been recaptured (Cummings, 1997, 2010; Kim, 2016; Mansourov, 1995; Marolda, 2010; Stueck, 2002). Now that the course of the war had shifted dramatically, any apprehensions about a possible Chinese intervention were abated so U.S. forces crossed the 38th parallel to topple the North Korean state on October 7 (Campbell, 2014; Cummings, 1997, 2010; D. Kim, 2016; Mansourov, 1995; Ovodenko, 2007; Stueck, 2002). Kim was now in a desperate situation and North Korea would surely be defeated without outside help.

Unbeknownst to the United Nations or Korea, Mao decided to shift future military plans from Taiwan to Korea on June 30, the same day the United States entered the Korean War. (Sheng, 2014). Mao saw the summer of 1950 as an ideal time to enter the war for several reasons. Mao was bolstered by the early success of the KPA and believed logistical constraints would hamper the Americans' ability to fight a prolonged war effectively (Sheng, 2014). However, Mao's confidence did not remain so high after Operation Chromite.

From the middle of September and into October, Mao called many meetings with the Politburo and often conferred with Soviet advisors while trying to decide on how to respond (Mansourov, 1995; Shen & Xia, 2020; Sheng, 2014). After the initial invasion, Mao weighed the decision more cautiously. Not eager to risk the destruction of his fledgling nation nor spark a new world war, Mao would commit to intervention only when measures which he considered

necessary such as support from the Soviet Union in the form of military aid and air support were met (Shen & Xia, 2020; Sheng, 2014). After much deliberation, Mao gave into pressure from Stalin and from Kim who told him the Korean Communists would be doomed otherwise (Shen & Xia, 2020; Sheng, 2014). In a move that changed the destiny of the peninsula, Mao ordered the creation of the Chinese People's Volunteers (CPV) on October 8, 1950 and assigned them to areas of northern Korea still under North Korean control on October 14 (Ovodenko, 2007; Sheng, 2014; Stueck, 2002).

Unaware of the Communists' plan, the advancing South Korean and U.S. forces were astonished to find the CPV forces and suffered great losses in late October and early November (Cummings, 1997, 2010; Sheng, 2014). Taking advantage of the momentum of their sudden entrance into the war, the CPV aggressively pushed U.S. forces back to the 38th parallel by the middle of December (Cummings, 1997; Sheng, 2014). On December 31, the CPV crossed the 38th parallel, recaptured Seoul, and then advanced as far as the 37th parallel until the United States launched a counterattack (Sheng, 2014). Eventually, in mid-February of 1951 the United States recaptured Seoul for the last time and pushed the Chinese lines back to the 38th parallel (Sheng, 2014). This effectively marked the end of the Chinese making any further gains in Korea.

By spring the war had come to a stalemate and the lengthiest part of the war, negotiations, had begun (Campbell, 2014; Cummings, 2010). Over the course of the next two years, the two sides negotiated over the exchange of prisoners and the final boundaries of the two Korean states were placed in largely the same locations as before the war (Campbell, 2014; Cummings, 1997, 2010; Stueck, 2002). Finally, on July 27, 1953 the two sides signed an

armistice which officially ended all hostilities (Cummings, 1997, 2010; Savada & Shaw, 1992; Stueck, 2002). To this day, a peace treaty has yet to be signed and Korea remains split between the Communist north and the capitalist south (Cummings, 1997, 2010; Savada & Shaw, 1992; Stueck, 2002).

The Korean War in content analyses 1978-2009

As textbooks are held in such high esteem as authoritative and reputable sources of truth and knowledge, it is paramount they be held to high standards of historical fidelity (Fitzgerald, 2009; Roberts, 2014). One way in which this is done is through content analyses. A pillar of social studies research, content analysis research usually seeks to make comparisons between how a sample of textbooks treat a topic (Chu, 2017; Roberts, 2014; Wade, 1993). Predictably, a good portion of content analyses focused on textbooks conclude that their research's focal topic receives far too little attention (Chu, 2017; Roberts, 2014; Wade, 1993). Regardless of any amount of attention given to it by textbook authors, the Korean War has been overlooked by social studies education researchers for decades so finding content analyses on its coverage in textbooks is a challenging feat. Relatively few have been published in the past fifty years.

Outbreak of the War

When examining content analyses focused on the Korean War, one can see a shift in textbooks from the traditional view to the revisionist. The earliest content analysis' findings are indicative of the fact that textbooks mostly took the traditional historical narrative of the war in which North Korea was a mere pawn of the Soviet Union (Herz, 1978). Understandably so, since the revisionist view of the war was just emerging in the 1970s and 1980s (Brune, 1998;

Campbell, 2014; Stueck, 2002). Only one textbook in the earliest content analysis paid special attention to American troops pursuing North Koreans past the 38th parallel, although it doesn't mention that this decision was contrary to containment (Herz, 1978). This is particularly noteworthy since it can be interpreted as textbook authors' reluctance to differ from the traditional narrative of quelling Communist encroachment (Brune, 1998).

Beginning in the 1990s one begins to see the shift toward historical revisionism. Authors reported that some textbooks took the traditional position and blamed the Soviet Union for initiating the war to further the nation's regional hegemony (Fleming & Kaufman, 1990). On the other hand, several textbooks took the revisionist position and blamed the 1950 speech by Secretary of State Dean Acheson in which he did not include Korea as a crucial place in securing American interests in the region (Fleming & Kaufman, 1990). This increased blame for the war on the policies of the American government and away from Soviet-North Korean aggression is a marked sign of revisionism (Brune, 1998; Campbell, 2014).

Although one may expect to see a continuation in the growth of revisionism in textbooks, later content analyses do not give strong indications one way or the other. One author concluded that American textbooks frame the causes of the Korean War within the context of the Cold War and all of them blamed the outbreak of the war on an invasion of South Korea by its northern neighbor (Lin et al., 2009). A different content analysis from around the same time stated that the textbooks did not provide a satisfactory account of the war's origins at all (Suh et al., 2008). Unfortunately, these findings are not enough to confirm whether the shift from the traditional to revisionism continued into the new millennium.

Outcome of the War

When discussing how textbooks have treated the outcome of the Korean War, content analyses have consistently indicated that they mostly claim neither Korean state gained much of anything (Fleming & Kaufman, 1990; Herz, 1978; Lin et al., 2009; Suh et al., 2008). Less commonly, textbooks attach a heroic tone to the stalemate conclusion by mentioning that the United States had helped prevent the spread of communism (Fleming & Kaufman, 1990; Lin et al., 2009). Albeit rare, some textbooks have differed from the stalemate position entirely and declared huge territorial gains for South Korea (Fleming & Kaufman, 1990). In reality, South Korea's territorial gains were slight (Campbell, 2014; Stueck, 2002). Although it is technically true that the final border between north and south extends past the 38th parallel at some points, the textbook authors may have exaggerated gains to make the war seem more worthwhile to American readers and to justify the losses.

Even though most content analyses show that textbooks largely agree that the war ended in a stalemate, explanations for how it was reached vary if they are even offered at all. Reasons for the war's conclusion range from Stalin's death in 1953, to General MacArthur's threats of striking China with nuclear weapons, to the 1953 election of President Eisenhower (Fleming & Kaufman, 1990; Lin et al., 2009). Multiple content analysis authors point out that some textbooks offer no clear explanation as to how the war ended at all (Fleming & Kaufman, 1990; Lin et al., 2009; Suh et al., 2008).

The Cost of War

As for the human cost of the war, content analyses demonstrate a clear prioritization of American losses, even though estimates are sometimes far-ranging. Researchers have shown that

when textbooks give casualty figures, they are almost always American and may not match official numbers from the Department of Defense (Fleming & Kaufman, 1990; Herz, 1978; Lin et al., 2009; Suh et al., 2008). It is even less common for non-American casualties to be listed at all (Fleming & Kaufman, 1990; Herz, 1978; Lin et al., 2009; Suh et al., 2008). Authors have stated that American textbooks prioritize the country's perspective of the war and hardly any of them accurately portray the devastation of the war (Lin et al, 2009).

Methods

This study uses only high school textbooks because they will present the Korean War at a higher level of detail since the topic is usually just being introduced at the middle level (Lin et al., 2009). This study excludes world history textbooks because narratives within them may be more likely to take an international perspective on conflicts over an American perspective. The data sample consists of the publishers' most recent textbooks to ensure the most modern and current coverages of the Korean War are used in this study. The data pool consists of six American history textbooks (Appleby et al., 2018a; Appleby et al., 2018b; Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2018a; Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2018b; Lapsansky-Werner et al., 2016a; Lapsansky-Werner et al., 2016b). Although districts around the country may choose different textbooks, there are a limited number of major publishers, therefore the small number of textbooks will be representative of most districts in the nation (Suh et al., 2008).

This inquiry was based upon historical research and followed content analysis methods (Krippendorf, 2013). The first step in this research was to identify and read sections dedicated to the Korean War in the textbooks. This inductive analysis is known as open coding (Krippendorf, 2013). I found that each author's survey edition contained the same text as their reconstruction to

the present or modern times edition. To avoid redundancy, I only took data from the reconstruction to the present and modern times editions (Appleby et al, 2018b; Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2018b, Lapsansky-Werner et al., 2016b).

After a close reading of those sections dedicated to the Korean War, I read them again and coded for the following: background of the war, the outbreak of war, sequence of war, the conclusion of the war, the devastation of war, the effects of war, UN/US politics, the Chinese intervention, General Douglas MacArthur, and African Americans in the military (see Table A1 for coding definitions). Once the data collected from open coding had been reviewed, I began the axial coding stage. This form of deductive analysis began by analyzing how the Korean War was presented by examining the results and making connections between categories (Krippendorff, 2013). As results emerged, I thoroughly compared them to historians' interpretations thus allowing me to scrutinize textbook authors' narratives against outside experts' understandings (Cummings, 1997, 2002a, 2002b, 2010; Knauer, 2014; Savada & Shaw, 1992; Shen & Xia, 2020; Stueck, 2002).

Findings

The following subsections include significant findings on the coverage of the Korean War in high school history textbooks. Each subsection begins with a finding and is followed by a discussion of the particular topic. Such discussions may include detailed histories intended to illuminate the finding. Findings are presented in a fashion which attempts to loosely follow the chronology of the Korean War. The final finding does not fit neatly into that chronology, so it is presented last.

Background of the War and State-Building

Textbooks present Korea as a place with little self-determination. The fate of its governance and people are determined by foreign occupiers. When textbooks discuss the creation of the two Korean states the Korean people are not the ones doing the action. The Allies divided the Korean peninsula into two separate nations, not the Korean people themselves. From the year 1910, the Korean people are shown as a dominated people passed from one foreign master to another. While it is made abundantly clear who controlled northern and southern Korea following the Japanese defeat in WWII, the political will of the Korean people is omitted entirely.

Curiously, no textbook included in this study makes any explicit reference to the period from when the Korean peninsula was divided in 1945 to 1948 when South Korea and North Korea were formed (Campbell, 2014; Cummings, 1997; Stueck, 2002). Moreover, the Korean leaders Kim Il-sung and Syngman Rhee, leaders of North Korea and South Korea respectively, are mentioned by name in only one text (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2018a, 2018b). Even though the leaders are named and attributed to their respective countries in this text, the formation of the countries is not explicitly attributed to the Korean people. The use of passive voice obscures the identity of who formed South Korea. At the same time, the ethnicity and nationality of those who formed North Korea are unclear since the word “Communist” is descriptive of neither.

Although it may be controversial to suggest, the idea that the Korean people had little self-determination is supported by historical research, especially as far as South Korea is concerned (Armstrong, 2003; Campbell, 2014; Cummings, 1997, 2010; Stueck, 2002). Before

1945 there was no historical precedent for the division of the Korean peninsula at any location, let alone the 38th parallel which bisected the city of Kaesong and split many pre-existing roads and railroads between the two sides (Cummings, 1997, 2010; Stueck, 2002). The decision to separate the Korean peninsula was made in thirty minutes by Colonels Rusk and Bonesteel of the U.S. Army a few days before the Japanese surrender in 1945 (Cummings, 1997; Stueck, 2002). The Allies of WWII had been discussing trusteeship over Korea since 1943 and, simply put, the colonels chose the 38th parallel because it meant that Seoul would be in the American zone of control (Cummings, 1997; Stueck, 2002). Rusk and Bonesteel's proposal was accepted by the Soviet Union and at no point was there any consideration given to the thoughts of third parties, Korean or otherwise (Cummings, 1997; Stueck, 2002).

Although the textbooks included in this study were written for U.S. history courses, it is imperative American students are at least acquainted with the people whose interests the United States was supposed to be defending in the Korean War. Perhaps by reaching a greater understanding of the Korean people, American students could reach a greater understanding of their own country. To bring the Korean people to the forefront of the conversation, teachers should take care to provide their students with a more in-depth examination of the political situation on the Korean peninsula following the end of Japanese occupation. An understanding of the Korean political situation could lead to lively class discussions of whether the political alignment of the two newly formed Korean governments matched the political will of those they governed.

Unlike their neighbors to the south, textbooks' presentation of Koreans having little self-determination cannot be applied as easily to North Korea. While the Soviet Union certainly did

influence the development of North Korea through advisors in Pyongyang, the extent to which they did is far less than that of the United States in South Korea (Cummings, 1997, 2002b; Kim, 2013). Whereas the United States built a government in direct opposition of native governmental bodies, the Soviet Union's approach was to allow Koreans to form their own Communist government (Cummings, 1997). By examining the early history of both South Korea and North Korea, teachers may fill in the gap left by textbooks and reach a greater understanding of popular political opinions in Korea before the division of the peninsula.

South Korea 1945-1948

In September 1945 an indigenous Korean government known as The Korean People's Republic (KPR) was founded in Seoul, its capital (Cummings, 1997, 2010; Savada & Shaw, 1992). Led by Yo Un-hyong, the KPR governed through people's committees scattered throughout the entire peninsula (Cummings, 1997, 2010). Focuses of the KPR included building and maintaining an independent Korean state free of all foreign influence, ending the Japanese colonial structure in Korea, and redistributing most Korean land from a small number of landlords—many of whom had been Japanese collaborators—to the peasants (Cummings, 1997). The homegrown nature of the KPR along with its firm anti-Japanese stance made it widely popular among Koreans (Cummings, 1997).

Despite its huge popularity among the populace, the U.S. military occupation never recognized the KPR as a legitimate government (Cummings, 1997, 2002a; Savada & Shaw, 1992). Instead, the U.S. military formed the United States Army Government in Korea (USAMGIK) under the leadership of General John Reed Hodge that same month (Armstrong, 2003; Cummings, 1997, 2002a; Savada & Shaw, 1992). From its creation, the USAMGIK

heavily influenced Korean politics, challenged the legitimacy of the KPR, and worked to align the Korean populace to the United States (Armstrong, 2003; Cummings, 1997, 2002a; Savada & Shaw, 1992). By the end of September, the USAMGIK had overseen the creation of the Korean Democratic Party (KDP), the party which would later go on to control South Korea (Cummings, 1997, 2002a; Stueck, 2002). The KDP primarily consisted of returning conservative Korean exiles and former Japanese collaborators (Cummings, 1997, 2002a; Stueck, 2002).

Even though the KPR was completely separate from the regime being formed in the north, was not Communist, nor was Yo Un-hyong a Communist, the Americans labeled them both as such and outlawed the KPR in December 1945 (Cummings, 1997, 2002a; Savada & Shaw, 1992). The KPR's anti-Japanese stance and plans to nationalize industry—much of which was previously owned by Japanese colonizers—conflicted with the USAMGIK's plans to maintain much of the Japanese colonial structure (Cummings, 1997). From the American perspective, allowing the so-called Communists to control Korea would hinder them from effectively rebuilding the Japanese state, a main priority of the United States in the Pacific at that time (Cummings, 1997).

In the months following September 1945, the USAMGIK swiftly went about inviting exiled Korean leaders to return to the occupation zone, forming a Korean military to safeguard the border, instituting a national police force used to persecute political dissidents, and building ties with agreeable political parties (Cummings, 1997, 2002a). Lamentably for many Koreans, the military was led mostly by Korean veterans of the Japanese military and the Korean National Police (KNP) was in reality just a continuation of the despised Japanese colonial police with the majority of its members having served in the latter (Armstrong, 2003; Cummings, 1997, 2002b;

Stueck, 2002). The years 1946 and 1947 saw the USAMGIK force the KPR to declare itself a political party rather than a government, mass incarceration of labor union activists, peasant rebellions in support of people's committees, and the assassination of Yo Un-hyong which went ignored by the KNP (Cummings, 1997, 2002a; Savada & Shaw, 1992).

Finally, in May 1948 the National Election Committee—which consisted almost entirely of KDP members—held elections for the South Korean National Assembly despite the objections of the United Nations Temporary Commission on Korea (UNTCOK), a U.N. election oversight committee (Campbell, 2014; Cummings, 1997, 2002b; Savada & Shaw, 1992). UNTCOK members had concerns around the election taking place only south of the parallel and with it being dominated by the KDP (Cummings, 2002b). Peasants were coerced into voting by the KNP and various right-wing organizations by having the validity of their food ration cards tied to whether they voted (Cummings, 1997). Syngman Rhee, a former exile known for his virulent anti-communism, nationalism, and forty years spent in the United States, was later elected president by the National Assembly and South Korea was officially established on August 15, 1948.

North Korea 1945-1948

On October 14, 1945 Kim Il-sung was introduced as the leader of northern Korea in Pyongyang (Cummings, 1997, 2002a; Stueck, 2002). Although there were Soviet military personnel near Kim during the public introduction, Soviet authorities did not choose Kim for leadership; a group of his fellow Korean CCP members chose him to lead (Cummings, 1997, 2002b). By February 1946 a people's committee headed by Kim acted as the government of

North Korea and soon began carrying out policies such as “dispossessing landlords without compensation” (Cummings, 1997, p. 226).

Summer and fall of 1946 were eventful in that they saw the creation of the North Korean Worker’s Party (NKWP), state seizure of formerly Japanese industry, and the beginning of a military (Cummings, 1997, 2002a). Kim and his supporters quickly began consolidating power for him and the NKWP (Cummings, 1997; Savada & Shaw, 1992). NKWP membership was open to nearly everyone and joining could lead to careers in governing people’s committees or as propagandists (Cummings, 1997, 2002a, 2002b). While peasants were joining the NKWP in droves, other political parties such as the Christian Democratic Party (CDP) were allowed to exist, but they largely served the purposes of the NKWP and were headed by Kim’s trusted supporters, mostly former guerillas (Cummings, 1997, 2002b).

As time went on, Kim and the NKWP grew in power by taking complete control of newspapers by 1947, persecuting noncommunist churches by barring them from politics, and through the nationwide, locally managed groups in which members were encouraged to admit their failures to meet state expectations for behavior and how they might improve (Cummings, 1997, 2002b). Groups such as these were extremely common across the country and ironically resembled the groups organized during the colonial period in which Koreans met to discuss how they may better serve the country’s industrialization and modernization in their towns, cities, or workplaces (Cummings, 2002b; Kim, 2013).

While the NKWP grew stronger, they utilized the police—absent of any former Japanese colonial police officers—to maintain control of the populace (Cummings, 1997, 2002b). However, the police did so not through violence, but through participating in an immense web of

intelligence gathering which deeply permeated the people's committees (Cummings, 1997, 2002b). Certain groups like former landlords and former Japanese collaborators were held under the most scrutiny, but no one was exempt from being monitored (Cummings, 1997, 2002b). Everyday people could be reported for anything from stating opinions that went against government policy to having relatives south of the 38th parallel (Cummings, 1997, 2002b).

By the time the 1948 elections were taking place south of the 38th parallel, Kim and the NKWP had near-total control over the north (Cummings, 1997, 2002b). Out of distrust for the UNTCOK whose participants were chiefly from Australia, Canada, Nationalist China, and the Philippines, the Kim regime did not participate (Cummings, 1997, 2002b, 2010; Savada & Shaw, 1992; Stueck, 2002). Instead, a separate election was held in the north by the people's committees thus leading to the creation of North Korea under the rule of Premier Kim Il-sung on September 9, 1948 (Campbell, 2014; Cummings, 1997; Savada & Shaw, 1992).

Ideology in Korea

The Korean War is framed as a war against an ideology, communism, rather than a war in support of any ideology, concept, or people. North Korea is always clearly labeled as Communist while South Korea is ideologically ambiguous. Three texts offer three different descriptions of South Korea's style of governance while North Korea's government is unanimously called Communist. Two descriptions give no indication whatsoever as to South Korea's type of government and vaguely label it "noncommunist" (Lapsansky-Werner et al, 2016b, p. 407) or "American-backed" (Appleby et al., 2018b, p. 406) while only one text claims that South Korea was "democratic" (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2018b, p. 583).

However, the use of the word democratic could confuse readers since the same text features North Korea's official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Readers of this text may be left wondering why this word is used by the author to describe South Korea and in the official name of North Korea, especially since Kim Il-sung and Syngman Rhee "strongly disagreed about how the unified country should be governed" (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2018b, p. 586). Considering the language used across textbooks to describe South Korea, one can infer that it is more important the country be conveyed for what it isn't, Communist, than whatever it may have been at that time.

Democracy in South Korea

Since textbooks tend to avoid the topic of South Korea's style of governance, it may be beneficial for teachers to establish a meaning for democracy with their students and then briefly summarize the early government. This is especially true since none of the textbooks in this study offer definitions for "democracy" or "democratic". As democracies go, South Korea's was questionable from 1948 to 1953 and arguments can easily be made that sow doubt as to whether it was truly a democracy at that time.

As discussed previously, in 1945 the KPR governed Korea through a series of people's committees at local and provincial levels throughout the Korean peninsula (Cummings, 1997, 2002a, 2010; Savada & Shaw, 1992; Stueck, 2002). However, the goals of the KPR which largely represented the will of most Koreans at the time did not align with U.S. goals in the Pacific (Cummings, 1997). Instead, the United States declared the KPR illegal and facilitated the creation of South Korea which, although not a U.S. puppet regime, was much more in line with American interests (Cummings, 1997, 2002a).

Although South Korea was democratic in its inception in 1948, participation in the electoral process was not necessarily guaranteed to all Koreans. In Korea's cities, only the landed and those who paid taxes could vote, while in smaller towns the elderly were "voting for everyone else" in the country's first elections (Cummings, 2010, p. 113). UNTCOK members often pointed out problematic elements of the May 1948 elections such as it being controlled by the KDP and that Koreans seemed pressured to support Rhee for fear of being labeled a Communist which could have brought serious repercussions (Cummings, 2002b).

Known for its severe repression of political dissidents, the state that emerged from that May 1948 election appalled many foreign observers (Cummings, 1997, 2002b). Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, the South Korean army and the KNP ruthlessly killed their own soldiers and Korean citizens during the war and crushed peasant rebellions (Cummings, 1997, 2002b; Kim, 2004). Syngman Rhee, the autocratic president of South Korea until 1960, used absurd manipulation of mathematics to pass a vote extending his time in office past a second term, and occasionally had political opponents thrown in prison or even executed to preserve his power (Cummings, 1997).

Eventually, in 1960, Rhee resigned from office after massive protests against his authoritarianism resulting in South Korea's first of multiple regime changes, each with unique and broad consequences (Cummings, 1997; Savada & Shaw, 1992; Stueck, 2002). It was not until the late 1980s and early 1990s that the last of several military governments gave in to pressure from protests and the country held an election in which the people elected a new president, Kim Young Sam. Although there was still no freedom of speech like the kind in the

United States, South Korea was finally rid of military rule and had become a democracy (Cummings, 1997).

Once one scrutinizes the history of South Korea, one begins to see the problem textbook authors are confronted with when writing about the Korean War. How does a textbook author position South Korea as an acceptable alternative to the northern Communist regime? Textbook authors might be hesitant to criticize South Korea because the brutality of the regime or the health of its democracy may reflect poorly on the United States and students may begin to question American motives in Korea.

While South Korea was a democracy in 1948, it was a deeply flawed one. Perhaps to avoid the country's troubling history of early South Korea, two textbook publishers chose not to describe it at all beyond the fact that it was anti-communist and had the support of the United States (Appleby et al., 2018a, 2018b; Lapsansky-Werner et al, 2016a, 2016b). The one publisher that chose to call South Korea a democracy did nothing to explain how its government functioned or to differentiate it from the north (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2018a, 2018b). After all, the north had elections too and even has the word democratic in the country's name.

The Devastation of War

How the devastation of war is presented varies dramatically from text to text (e.g., see Table B1). Some tend to imply the devastation of war (Appleby et al., 2018a, 2018b). Others tend to present the cost of war to readers in explicit terms by using personal accounts from U.S. soldiers and numerical figures (Lapsansky-Werner et al., 2016a, 2016b). Apart from these differences, all textbooks tend to remove any hint of suffering from their narrative even when it is made explicitly clear that violence is taking place.

For example, the following quote describes Operation Chromite and demonstrates how devastation is implied: “The Inchon landing took the North Koreans by surprise. Within weeks they were in full retreat back across the 38th parallel” (Appleby et al., 2018b, p. 407). This quote conveys the impact of the event but does so without using any phrasing that could suggest anyone or anything was harmed. In contrast, the following quote describing the same event demonstrates how other texts portray devastation in explicit but still vague terms: “On the morning of September 15, 1950, U.S. Marines landed at Inchon and launched an attack on the rear guard of the North Koreans” (Lapsansky-Werner et al, 2016b, p. 408). This quote is representative of a trend among all texts in this study to remove suffering from the narrative. Readers are explicitly given a party that is committing violence—the U.S. Marine Corps—but the North Koreans do not suffer; they are simply a force that has been acted upon. Overall, destruction of property and loss of lives—especially civilian lives—in Korea is seldom described while personal accounts of the war focus on the hardship experienced by American troops.

Textbooks do very little to inform students of the sheer brutality and horrendously violent nature of the Korean War. Even when textbooks in this study offer statistics, they usually provide outdated or misleading figures for American fatalities only while omitting non-American casualties entirely (e.g., see Table C1). The textbooks which place American fatalities at 54,000 or 54,200 are using a figure which was corrected by the Department of Defense as long ago as the 1990s (Bialik, 2005). This figure refers to non-theater deaths, which includes all 54,246 U.S. military deaths that took place during the time of the Korean War (Bialik, 2005; Defense Casualty Analysis System, 2020). In-theater U.S. military deaths are much lower at 33,574 (Defense Casualty Analysis System, 2020). The textbooks which use the outdated figure do little

to inform students as to the monumental cost to human life and wellbeing. Not only do they offer a misleading figure for American fatalities, but they also do not offer figures for the number of non-mortally wounded American soldiers nor the casualties of any other nation. Furthermore, all textbooks included in this study offer casualty figures for the war which fall far short of expert estimates (Cummings, 2010; Institute for Military History, 2005a, 2005b).

Despite what the comparably low casualty figures may imply, Korean War history is replete with examples of egregious violence. Neither the Americans' use of scorched earth tactics nor civilian massacres are mentioned in the high school history textbooks included in this study. Textbooks also falsely present the stalemate which followed the Chinese intervention as a period in which little occurred, neglecting to mention devastating American bombing campaigns and Sino-Korean attempts to break the stalemate. Perhaps these aspects of the war are omitted from textbooks because of the uncomfortable truths they present.

While Communists did commit horrific acts of violence, the South Koreans and Americans massacred civilians much more frequently (Cummings, 2010; Kim, 2004). Many thousands of Korean civilians were the victims of mass murder at the hands of the KNP and the South Korean army (Cummings, 1997, 2010; Kim, 2004; Suh, 2010). Driven by extreme anti-communist sentiment, South Korean forces all over South Korea killed droves of civilians who may have done nothing more than maintain physical proximity to Communist guerilla groups (Cummings, 2010; Kim, 2004; Suh, 2010).

Indiscriminate destruction was rampant among American military forces as well (Cummings, 1997, 2010; Kim, 2004; Suh, 2010; Korean War Legacy Foundation [KWLF], 2015, 2016b). Following the North Korean invasion, many Koreans were displaced and became

refugees (Kim, 2004; Suh, 2010). As early as the first the month of the war, U.S. soldiers were given orders to treat refugees as enemies for fear that North Koreans could have been among the crowds despite there being no evidence that such a thing ever took place (Cummings, 1997, 2010; Kim, 2004; Suh, 2010). This led to dozens of atrocities—too many to mention in this manuscript—in which American troops randomly fired into defenseless groups of civilians and bombed bridges with scores of refugees on them (Cummings, 2010; Kim, 2004; Suh, 2010). The nature of the brutal, indiscriminate aggression shown to Korean refugees who posed absolutely no threat to U.S. soldiers is arguably genocidal (Kim, 2004). Including stories like these in textbooks may be controversial, but they could add much to discussions of whether the Korean War was truly a just one while reminding students that the war disrupted and ended the lives of millions of innocent people.

Soon after the Chinese intervention in Korea, the United States began a scorched earth campaign as they retreated from North Korea (Cummings, 1997, 2010). David Valley, a U.S. Army soldier sent to Pusan from Japan on July 19, 1950, stated in an interview that his regiment was ordered to evacuate whole villages and later wipe out all of the buildings so “the Chinese wouldn’t have a place to live in the wintertime” (KWLF, 2015, 20:11). However, As the U.S. military began to retake territory lost to the Chinese, stories of violence are sometimes more severe. However, stories of violence from when the U.S. military began to retake territory from the Chinese can be grotesque.

Anything that could have possibly been used to aid KPA or CPV forces from utilities to homes was seen as potential bombing targets (Cummings, 1997, 2010; Suh, 2010). The United States made wide use of a recent invention, napalm, to burn entire cities for fear of them

fostering Communist guerrillas (Cummings, 1997, 2010; Kim, 2004; Suh, 2010). The destruction was such that North Koreans resorted to living, working, and going to school in caves (Cummings, 1997, 2010). Amidst the destruction of villages at this time, the U.S. military was killing civilians on sight (Cummings, 1997). Carrying out and witnessing the aftermath of hellish acts weighed heavily on the consciences of U.S. and U.N. coalition soldiers.

There is no shortage of interviews in which Korean War veterans who have spoken on this topic at length. Lieutenant Edward Mastronardi, a Canadian veteran who arrived in Korea in 1951, remarked in an interview that he was angered by what he called the American soldiers' "reckless killing" (KWLF, 2016b, 28:12). Mastronardi remarked in the same interview that after witnessing a wounded woman trying to breastfeed her deceased infant in a broken hovel, he swore that his company would show more restraint than the Americans.

Such apocalyptic destruction was not constrained to the period before the stalemate. Despite what textbooks convey, the stalemate that eventually came about in Korea consisted of far more than "relatively small battles over hills and other local objectives" (Appleby et al., 2018b, p. 407). This quote may reference the two final Communist offensives which occurred in June and July, but the United States military dealt tremendous damage to North Korea at this time (Cummings, 1997, 2010; Stueck, 2002). Massive bombing campaigns against North Korea continued into the months leading up to the armistice in 1953. In the spring of that year, the United States destroyed a system of important dams that supplied water to three-fourths of North Korea's agricultural land (Cummings, 1997, 2010; Stueck, 2002). Although it is not known how many lost their lives as a result of this, the flash flood which followed the bombing of the dams

ruined thousands of acres of recently planted rice fields and obliterated many pieces of infrastructure.

General Douglas MacArthur

Across all three textbooks, General Douglas MacArthur is presented as a heroic and bold military genius, the single most important figure in Korean War history, but also a renegade who needed to be checked by the President of the United States. Although all the textbooks mention General MacArthur's desire to utilize atomic weapons, only one claims that this idea was completely rejected (Lapsansky-Werner et al., 2016a, 2016b). This publisher's claim that President Truman refused to consider using atomic weapons in the war can easily be refuted.

President Truman publicly stated on November 30, 1950 that use of nuclear bombs was being considered (Cummings, 1997; Stueck, 2002). Just over four months later on April 5, 1951 Truman, consented to the Joint Chiefs of Staffs' request for nuclear capabilities to use in the events that China either increased its number of soldiers in Korea or sent bombers from northwest China (Cummings, 2010; Stueck, 2002). The next day, President Truman approved nuclear weapons being deployed against the enemy, however, this never came to fruition due to the disorder following General MacArthur's dismissal on April 10. (Cummings, 2010).

To provide a more balanced view of General MacArthur, teachers may want to draw students' attention to how his leadership negatively affected the Americans' progress in the Korean War at times. MacArthur's disdain for viewpoints contrary to his own meant that he often surrounded himself with those who largely agreed with his vision, like General Edmond Almond, who sometimes tried to undermine other generals like General Walton Walker, commander of the 8th Army (Taaffe, 2016).

Even though MacArthur largely disapproved of General Walker and even doubted his ability to lead the 8th Army at the Pusan Perimeter, he never replaced him due to his utter distaste for relieving anyone from their post (Taaffe, 2016). Nevertheless, fear of being fired prevented General Walker from making decisions he thought MacArthur would disapprove of (Taaffe, 2016). General Walker was not alone in his reluctance to disagree with MacArthur. Following the Chinese intervention in the autumn of 1950, MacArthur continued to order troops to advance north where they succumbed to traps (Taaffe, 2016). If MacArthur's subordinates had not feared being fired, then they might have been able to dissuade MacArthur from advancing northward, thus avoiding traps like the disastrous Chosin Reservoir incident of November and December of 1950 (Robertson, 2011; Taaffe, 2016).

Communist Chinese in the Korean War

The Chinese are treated as a faceless, reactionary entity whose motives for acting are questionable. While all textbook publishers mention that the People's Republic of China—usually referred to in textbooks as Communist China—issued a warning to the American military not to go near its borders, only one mentions that it came from the country's foreign minister, Zhou Enlai (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2018a, 2018b). This same publisher is also the only one to state any strategic reasons for China joining the war: ensuring the survival of North Korea to maintain it as a buffer state between China and South Korea.

Moreover, the naval invasion of Inchon (Operation Chromite) and the Chinese intervention are framed as the two most important events in Korean War history. Both events dramatically altered the course of the war, however, the way they are described is quite different. Whereas the success of Operation Chromite is attributed to the bold strategy of military genius,

General MacArthur, the success of the Chinese invasion is attributed to numerical advantage alone, having nothing to do with planning, strategy, or leadership. The general omission of Chinese political and military figures as well as their motives prevents readers from constructing any sort of understanding of the Chinese perspective. Moreover, the omission of Chinese perspectives prevents students from understanding why General MacArthur assured President Truman that the Chinese would not intervene. For these reasons, it is critical to explore why General MacArthur was so confident in his decision.

For whatever reason, textbooks neglect to mention that General MacArthur was not alone in his confidence. The opinion that China would not intervene was supported by a wealth of intelligence coming from years of work at the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) (Cummings, 1997, 2010; Ovodenko, 2007; Sheng, 2014; Stueck, 2002). CIA intelligence reports from the time illustrate the massive undertaking that China was facing in regards to rebuilding the country's infrastructure following years of civil war (Central Intelligence Agency, 1949). To make matters worse, a severe drought in 1949 combined with CCP prioritization of the importation of industrial goods over food had led to peasant rebellions over food insecurity (Central Intelligence Agency, 1950). In addition to myriad domestic troubles, the CIA suspected that the CCP's desire to gain international recognition of China and admission to the United Nations was a major incentive to remain a bystander in the Korean War (Central Intelligence Agency, 1949).

Apart from dire conditions in the interior of mainland China, the American intelligence community seems to have misunderstood the power dynamics between the Soviet Union and China. The CIA correctly assumed that the Soviet Union would not interfere in the Korean War

for fear of sparking a world war and it was thought that China would not either because it was perceived to be servile to the former like the Communist bloc of Eastern Europe (Cummings, 2010). Although the textbooks included in this study generally do not attempt to frame the Soviets as the masterminds behind the Korean War, that is largely how Americans of past decades saw the event (Brune, 1998; Stueck, 2002). Since high school students in the 21st century may be unfamiliar with how Americans in the 1950s perceived the Soviet Union, it may be necessary to remind them of the perceived relationship between the Soviet Union and China so they can make sense of the war through the lens of Americans contemporary to that time.

After considering the poor social and economic conditions in China and American perceptions of the relationships between Communist nations, one can see why General MacArthur was confident in believing China would not intervene in the Korean War. However, this does not explain why the Chinese decided to do so after all. To understand this, one must be familiar with Mao Zedong himself and the history of Korean Communist guerillas in China.

Besides keeping North Korea as a buffer between China and South Korea, Mao felt that China was beholden to Kim Il-sung and the many other Korean Communist guerillas who fought in the Chinese civil war and against the Japanese in WWII (Cummings, 1997, 2010; Shen & Xia, 2020). Ethnic Koreans were highly influential in 1930s Manchuria—then a Japanese colony known as Manchukuo—where they represented the biggest number of anti-Japanese resisters and even CCP members (Cummings, 2010; Shen & Xia, 2020). Kim Il-sung, a proficient Chinese speaker himself, was at this time becoming famous among Chinese and Koreans for his leadership and tenacity, commanding Korean and Chinese guerillas alike in anti-Japanese attacks and raids (Cummings, 2010; Shen & Xia, 2020). Among the Japanese, who called him Tiger,

Kim Il-sung's reputation as a guerilla leader in Manchuria was such that the Imperial Army of Japan dedicated a Special Kim Detachment whose exclusive goal was to capture and kill him (Cummings, 1997, 2010). In short, Kim and the guerillas he commanded, many of whom went on to hold positions of power in the North Korean government, were highly respected among Communist Chinese leaders and influential in anti-Japanese struggles in China (Cummings, 2010; Shen & Xia, 2020).

As well as this blood debt, Mao Zedong may have had personal reasons for intervening in the Korean War. Mao wished to be seen as the Vladimir Lenin of the east (Shen & Xia, 2020; Sheng, 2014). This desire to be seen as the preeminent revolutionary in Asia could explain what could be seen as overpromising on his part in 1949 when he pledged military support to Kim Il-sung despite still dealing with a civil war in his own country (Sheng, 2014). To leave his promise to Kim Il-sung unfulfilled when called upon would be to risk his position as the revolutionary leader of communism in Asia (Shen & Xia, 2020; Sheng, 2014).

More importantly than making sense of what students may see as General MacArthur's great mistake, including background information on why he believed China would not intervene in the Korean War will help students see the misjudgment as more than the blunder of one man. In reality, his opinion was informed by and shared widely among the U.S. intelligence community. After hearing of the dire circumstances in China, students may have questions about why the country joined the war after all. Therefore, teachers must then be prepared to explain the relationships and commitments made between Chinese, North Korean, and Soviet leaders. Besides providing students with an insight into the perspective of a major foreign combatant in the war, it could also be used to understand the perspective of American wartime leaders.

The Conclusion of the War

Textbooks do not attribute one single event to ending the Korean War. Explanations of how and why the Korean War was concluded vary. One publisher claims Dwight D. Eisenhower threatening to use nuclear weapons brought the war to an end (Appleby et al., 2018a, 2018b). Another publisher cites this threat in combination with the death of Joseph Stalin in 1953 as the deciding factor in ending the war (Lapsansky-Werner et al., 2016a, 2016b). Another frames the war as concluding when the Soviet Union, who is not named as a war participant, inexplicably suggested a ceasefire in 1951 which was followed by two years' worth of negotiations (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2018a, 2018b).

While explanations for the war's conclusion vary, the way the outcome of the Korean War is presented uniformly suggests that it was unideal for the United States. One publisher does not comment on whether the Korean War ended in a stalemate or victory for one side or another (Appleby et al., 2018a, 2018b). Others state that in the long term there was no victor in the Korean War since the pre-war division of the Korean peninsula stayed largely the same (Lapsansky-Werner et al., 2016a, 2016b). Yet, others state the war was a stalemate, but one in which communism had been prevented from spreading to South Korea and nuclear war had been avoided (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2018a, 2018b).

More explanation is needed for all of the textbooks' claims. The inexplicable call for a ceasefire by the Soviet advisor in June 1951 doesn't explain why the armistice wasn't signed until 1953. To explain this gap of nearly two years, one must connect Soviet advisor Adam Malik's suggestion with the goals of Soviet leadership. Although the primary Communist actors in the Korean War were North Korea and China, the Soviets did play a role in advising them

during negotiations (Campbell, 2014; Cummings, 2010; Stueck, 2002). This advisory role is at the root of why the death of Stalin in March 1953 was significant.

Throughout the negotiations, Soviet advisors seem to have intentionally prolonged the negotiations. They did so by continually urging the Chinese and North Koreans, who wanted the dividing line between the two Korean states to once again be the 38th parallel, to instead “accept the frontline for the ceasefire” (Campbell, 2014, p. 20). These urgings against the Chinese and North Korean’s desires reflect Stalin’s ulterior motives in the negotiations.

At this time, Stalin was preoccupied with developing eastern Europe (Petrov, 1994; Stueck, 2002). Upon learning that North Korea may be destroyed following the naval invasion of Inchon in 1950, Stalin said, “So what? Let the United States of America be our neighbors in the Far East. They will come there, but we shall not fight them now. We are not ready to fight” (Mansourov, 1995, p. 100). Rather than serving the role of guardian, Stalin’s motives in prolonging the ceasefire negotiations served another purpose. By extending the negotiations, Stalin’s goal was simply to force the United States to expend more time and resources in the Far East (Campbell, 2014). Following his death, Soviet leadership wished to better relations between the Soviet Union and western countries. Because of this desire, Soviet leadership insisted that Chinese and North Korean negotiators participate in talks on dealing with POWs.

Beyond the death of Stalin and Malik’s suggestion, other simplistic claims such as nuclear threats intimidating the Communists into submission hold little weight. This claim may be more of an assumption than anything else since there is not much documentation to support it (Campbell, 2014; Cummings, 2010; Stueck, 2002). Rather than encouraging such speculation, teachers may want to rely on what is known instead.

When the armistice was signed on July 27, 1953, neither side could make any more progress despite their efforts. Having already devastated most of North Korea's cities in bombing campaigns, the United States destroyed dams that were critical to North Korean agriculture (Cummings, 1997, 2010; Stueck, 2002). In the sixty days leading up to the armistice, the Communists launched two last fruitless offensives (Cummings, 2010; Stueck, 2002). In addition to this, the most contentious issue of the armistice negotiations—how to return POWs—had been finalized on June 8 (Cummings, 2010).

Long-Term Effects of the Korean War

As one might expect, textbooks present the long-term effects of the Korean War as they relate to the United States. Beyond the continuation of the pre-war division of the Korean peninsula, little information is given as to how the war affected the trajectory of North Korea and South Korea. For the most part, the war is cited as having heightened anti-communist sentiments in the United States and as the inspiration for the creation of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), a defensive alliance between the United States, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Australia, France, Thailand, and the Philippines whose goal was to hinder the expansion of communism.

As for the textbooks' claims regarding the United States, they are largely accurate. The long-term effects of the Korean War on the United States are immense in scope and still felt today. Claims that the Korean War led to drastically increasing military spending, increasing the number of U.S. soldiers in the country's global system of military bases, validating the president's authority to bypass congressional permission to send troops to war, and furthering

U.S. commitment to the containment of communism are all corroborated by historians (Cummings, 2010). The Korean War even affected how the U.S. fought wars that followed.

When teachers approach wars like the Vietnam War or the First Gulf War, they may want to reconnect to the Korean War to explain American decision making. For instance, neither the Vietnam War nor The Gulf War was a declared war; American involvement in these conflicts was also decided largely by the President of the United States (Brands, 2004; Logevall, 2004). Moreover, teachers may want to point out that the U.S. government chose not to invade northern Vietnam or to replace the regime in Baghdad (Cummings, 2010). This is in stark contrast to the decision to invade North Korea in 1950.

African Americans in the Korean War

African American soldiers are represented in only two of three texts (Appleby et al., 2018b; Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2018b). These two texts include photographs of African American soldiers but do not draw attention to their ethnicity or its significance in the history of civil rights. One text includes neither photographs of African American servicemen nor any mention of the civil rights movement behind the desegregation of the U.S. military (Lapsansky-Werner et al., 2016b).

Even though two of the three texts analyzed in this study include photographs of white and African American soldiers serving alongside each other, none of them draw attention to the significance of desegregation nor how it came to be. To present African American and white soldiers serving together in such a way does nothing for students who may not realize how deeply controversial and prevalent racial segregation was in the United States at that time. After all, Jim Crow style racial segregation has long been a thing of the past so a high school student in

the 2020s may think nothing of African Americans and white soldiers serving together in photographs from 1950. With some states now adopting culturally responsive teaching standards, it is crucial that teachers be able to evaluate and discuss how historically marginalized peoples are portrayed in textbooks (Ill. Admin. Code, 2021).

Thought to be inferior to white servicemen, *negro troops*, to use the now-offensive terminology of the time, were relegated to non-combat positions in all branches of the U.S. military more often than not (Black, 2016; Knauer, 2014). Varying degrees of white supremacist beliefs caused many white Americans to believe that Black men made worse soldiers than whites (Knauer, 2014). Black men were seen to be less trustworthy in combat, morally deficient, barbarous, and thus a danger to white troops and civilians (Knauer, 2014). Military traditions of racial segregation typically meant that Black troops served in all-Black units which were relegated to “service positions” where they carried out logistical tasks that were undoubtedly important but not typically seen as glorious (Knauer, 2014, p. 18).

Even though Black newspapers were quick to indicate similarities between the persecution of minorities in Nazi Germany and the United States, these comparisons did not keep them from stressing the importance of African American men serving in the military while civil rights activists continued pressuring the government to desegregate the military (Knauer, 2014). The African American press deemed Black participation in the military as necessary for the civil rights movement (Knauer, 2014). This belief was embodied by the Double V campaign started by the *Pittsburgh Courier* (Knauer, 2014). The crux of the Double V campaign was that victory over fascism abroad and fascism at home were inextricably linked (Black, 2016; Knauer, 2014). Thus, in WWII it became critically important that Black men serve in the military—especially in

combat positions—to disrupt the white supremacist belief that African American men were an inferior, corrupting presence and further the image of Black patriotism despite being grossly mistreated by their white countrymen (Knauer, 2014).

Despite the efforts of the Black press to present African American service in the military as crucial to the war effort, the Double V campaign was ultimately not successful in WWII. The military remained almost entirely segregated throughout the war and the success of the few all-Black combat forces was constantly contested by the mainstream press and military authorities (Black, 2016; Knauer, 2014). A famous example of this is the 92nd Infantry Division which served in fascist Italy. The mainstream press was quick to blame its failures on the soldiers' race and claim that the Black press exaggerated the division's successes (Knauer, 2014).

After WWII, there was more diversity in popular movements surrounding desegregation in the military. During the war, the prevailing belief was that African American men should serve in the military to demonstrate their equality to white men and also point out the hypocrisy in claiming to fight for democracy in a foreign country when it is not shared by all Americans (Knauer, 2014). However, in the interwar period there emerged an alternative to this strategy. An outspoken labor activist named Philip A. Randolph led a civil disobedience campaign in which Black men were urged to refuse military service and the draft for a military which denied them equality (Knauer, 2014). Randolph's campaign ran parallel to the NAACP's efforts which more closely followed the rhetoric of the WWII era Double V campaign (Knauer, 2014). Even though Randolph's approach was less popular, the NAACP was able to capitalize on it to place pressure on politicians to desegregate (Knauer, 2014).

With desegregation campaigns becoming more radical under leaders like Randolph, President Truman signed Executive Order 9981 on July 26, 1948 (Knauer, 2014). In Executive Order 9981, President Truman mandated “The equality of treatment and opportunity for all persons in the Armed Services without regard to race, color, religion, or national origin” (Knauer, 2014, p. 112). Curiously, the executive order was seen simultaneously as a victory for civil rights activists yet came far short from explicitly demanding desegregation in the military. Because the order did not contain dates, a plan of action, nor penalties for inaction, the military branches responded at varying speeds with the U.S. Army being the slowest and most obstinate (Black, 2016; Knauer, 2014).

By the outbreak of the Korean War, the U.S. Army was still almost entirely segregated (Black, 2016; Knauer, 2014). Many of the reasons for maintaining segregation given during the Korean War were much the same as those given during WWII (Knauer, 2014). The hypocrisy of military segregation and segregation in general remained a regular topic in the Black press and also a powerful propaganda weapon for North Korea and China (Black, 2016; Cummings, 2010; Hong, 2018; Knauer, 2014). The U.S. Army’s extremely poor view of African American soldiers is demonstrated by the fact that South Korean soldiers, who were not even American citizens, were integrated into white units on a large scale before African Americans were (Knauer, 2014).

Immediately following the Chinese invasion of Korea in October 1950, the U.S. military found itself in the humiliating position of being beaten by a poorly equipped army whose soldiers were thought to be racially inferior (Knauer, 2014). After this point in the war all-Black Army units—typically ordered to the most dangerous places on the front—continued to be scapegoated for the Army’s failures (Knauer, 2014). Finally, the Army relented to pressure from

civil rights activists as well as its less than ideal position on the battlefield and began to desegregate in the spring and summer of 1951 (Black, 2016; Knauer, 2014). However, desegregation did not come about as a sign of the Army acknowledging the equality of African Americans, rather the opposite is true (Knauer, 2014). Army leaders' position was that African Americans served better under whites making desegregation bittersweet for proponents of the cause (Knauer, 2014). Although the cause had been achieved, the reasons behind this achievement were less than ideal and did not amount to any significant progress in civil rights in the United States making the Double V campaign of the Korean War era an unfortunate failure (Knauer, 2014).

Discussion

In this section, implications of the above findings are discussed in detail. Only findings with the broadest implications are included. Teachers may be interested to read how the implications of this study's findings may be addressed.

Omission of Controversial Acts of Violence

The omission of controversial acts of violence in the Korean War could be a result of textbook publisher's common practice of self-censorship through which they avoid controversy so as not to offend (Matusevich, 2006). This practice runs contrary to research that shows the utility of controversy in high school social studies classrooms in facilitating transformative experiences and cognitive change, building students' critical thinking skills, and raising students' motivation (Alongi et al., 2016; Barton & McCully, 2007).

Distorting the number of casualties of the Korean War could be an attempt to preserve one of the most important goals of history textbooks: to sculpt students into patriots (Lachmann

& Mitchell, 2014; Loewen, 2007). Including just one of the countless records of U.S. soldiers murdering Korean non-combatants or raping women in full view of their family does little to that effect and may crack the foundation of how the Korean War is remembered in the United States. The dedication stone at the Korean War Memorial in Washington, D.C. reads, “Our nation honors her sons and daughters who answered the call to defend a country they never knew and a people they never met” (Department of Defense, 2020). Presenting students with stories of massacres and massive bombing campaigns against vital agricultural infrastructure is incompatible with the way the U.S. government has memorialized the Korean War.

Findings confirm research from past decades regarding casualty figures (Fleming & Kaufman, 1990; Herz, 1978; Lin et al., 2009; Y. Suh et al., 2008). Clear prioritization of American casualties is shown when textbooks entirely omit non-American casualties. Despite this, casualty figures for the U.S. military are often misleading or outdated. Moreover, textbooks often only include figures for U.S. fatalities and omit figures for non-mortally wounded casualties entirely. Textbooks that do offer more complete and up to date figures for U.S. casualties also include figures for international casualties, albeit they are misleadingly low.

Overreliance on the American Perspective

Most authors of content analyses seem to agree that U.S. history textbooks focus on American perspectives of wars and do not go into much detail on the perspectives of other nations involved (Lachman & Mitchell, 2014; Lin et al., 2009; Suh et al., 2008). This phenomenon is evident in textbooks’ coverage of the Korean War. Relying on American perspectives alone is problematic for two main reasons: the Korean War bears little weight in the American consciousness and

overreliance on American perspectives obscures those of the people the U.S. military was supposedly sent to defend.

The Korean War has been described as existing in the American consciousness as, “a thunderclap that burst in the summer of 1950, a sudden hot war in a distant and unexpected place amid a cold war focused on Europe” (Cummings, 2002a, p. xxix). Everyday Americans may have heard the thunder, but they did not see the lightning. Nearly as soon as it began, the Korean War left the American conscience. American veterans of the Korean War often speak of returning home from the theater to be met with indifference from their countrymen, who sometimes had forgotten about the war entirely (KWLF, 2014, 2015, 2016a). The American public’s memory of the Korean War has not shown any great improvements over time. In 2011, China was correctly selected as the principal ally of North Korea by less than one-fourth of high school seniors (KWLF, 2020). The tendency of Americans past and present to forget the war indicates that it may be inappropriate to rely on the American perspective alone.

Rather than relying on the textbooks’ use of the perspective of a nation to whom the war meant so little even when it was happening, teachers would do well to include the perspectives of North Korea, South Korea, and China. However, textbooks usually do not even include the names of the two country’s heads of state, Kim Il-sung of North Korea and Syngman Rhee of South Korea. This places the responsibility on teachers themselves to supplement their lessons with further background information on China and the Korean peninsula, its people, and their leaders.

African Americans in the Military

It remains unclear as to why textbook publishers chose not to mention the civil rights campaigns of the interwar and Korean War eras. Perhaps it is excluded from the text to shield high school students from the knowledge that before the 1960s, African American civil rights movements were met with strong resistance from white politicians and leaders in the highest echelons of government and the military as well as everyday people; such strong resistance, that movements like the Double V campaigns sometimes failed. Or perhaps it is because including a history of desegregation in the Korean War would call into question the photographs included in the texts.

Although two texts both include a photo of desegregated troops, they are both cropped versions of the same original (Appleby et al., 2018a, 2018b; Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2016a, 2016b). *American Soldiers in the Korean War* by Cox (1950) is a famous photograph featuring a machine gun crew made up of two Black and two white U.S. Army soldiers. In the original photograph, Sergeant First Class (Sfc). Major Cleveland, an African American man, can be seen gesturing toward North Korean forces for his racially diverse crew to focus on. Without explanation, the significance of this photograph is completely lost on readers. Not only were many white Americans—civilian or otherwise—loath to the idea of a Black man leading white soldiers, but the photograph was also taken on November 20, 1950, months before the U.S. Army began to dissolve all-Black units (Knauer, 2014).

Most likely to make the photograph fit in the allotted space, one publisher cropped out the most profound part of the image, Sfc. Cleveland leading the troops (Appleby et al., 2018a, 2018b). The other retained Sfc. Cleveland's image in the photo (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt,

2018a, 2018b). If the latter had included a serious discussion of military segregation in the text which included widespread white supremacy in the U.S. Army, *American Soldiers in the Korean War* may be perceived very differently. No longer perceived as a simple depiction of American racial unity, the photo would become much more complicated. *American Soldiers in the Korean War* would become a photo depicting multiracial cooperation between Black and white soldiers, although perhaps coerced through military hierarchies. Students may wonder whether the white soldiers resented being under the charge of Sfc. Cleveland.

Overall, textbook publishers completely missed an opportunity to explore progressive social movements of the interwar and Korean War years. Omitting discussions on racial prejudice does not mean that it never existed. Racism may be an unsavory topic, but it does students no good for teachers to ignore it. By doing so not only do teachers run the risk of allowing their students to think the issue of race was exaggerated when it was at one of its worst points in the United States, but they may also never know just how unpopular the idea of desegregation was in the most powerful institutions of the state. In summary, including photographs of African American soldiers without explaining the barriers between them and full equality in the U.S. Army is a lot like Truman's Executive Order 9981. It does just enough not to cause an uproar. It satisfies those who wish to see racial diversity in our school textbooks but does not draw attention to the hypocrisy of supposedly fighting a war in the name of democracy in Korea when a large swath of those fighting the war could not participate in it at home.

Long-Term Effects of the Korean War on the United States

Even though textbooks focus on the long-term effects of the war on the United States almost exclusively, it is fair that the textbook publishers made this choice. After all, the

textbooks are geared for U.S. history courses. Expanding on the long-term effects on North Korea and South Korea might be interesting, but its relevance to furthering student knowledge of U.S. history is low. Should teachers choose to discuss current American-Korean relationships, they may want to expand upon the textbooks by exploring the relationship between South Korea and the United States from 1945 to the present (NCSS & KWLF, 2019, Chapter 14). As for North Korea, teachers may also want to include a discussion of the country's controversial nuclear program although this topic is arguably leaving the realm of U.S. history and entering current events (NCSS & KWLF, 2019, Chapter 15).

Historiography

It is not possible to claim with any sense of real conclusiveness that any text in this study follows either a traditional, revisionist, or post-revisionist narrative of the Korean War. The texts themselves do not take obvious positions in this regard nor do they offer enough for readers to extrapolate one fully. Although, since no text in this study offers anything resembling a nuanced account of the pre-war deliberations between Joseph Stalin, Mao Zedong, and Kim Il-sung, post-revisionism can be said to be absent (Brune, 1998). As for traditional or revisionist accounts of the Korean War, texts sometimes include statements that could hint towards one of the two positions. Take the following quote for example:

As the Cold War began, talks to reunify Korea broke down. A Communist Korean government was organized in the north, while an American-backed government controlled the south. Both governments claimed authority over Korea, and border clashes were common. The Soviets provided military aid to the North Koreans, who quickly built an army. (Appleby et al., 2018b, p. 406)

It could be possible that by referencing pre-war border clashes the authors were attempting to frame the Korean War as a civil war as per revisionist thought, however, one quotation is not enough to draw such a conclusion (Brune, 1998; Campbell, 2014). Likewise, any parallels drawn between the texts and traditional historiography would be similarly loose. Whether the authors were prevented from taking firm stances by the small amount of space dedicated to the Korean War in high school history textbooks or if they actively avoided taking positions is unclear.

Conclusion

Despite the magnitude of the United States' involvement in the Korean War and the creation of South Korea itself, the Korean War continues to be overlooked in high school U.S. history textbooks. Where there could be rich discussions of nation-building, civil rights campaigns, and explorations of American motives in Korea, textbooks offer short narratives devoid of any nuance. One must wonder why authors reduce the Korean War to a mere mention when it has the potential to be presented as so much more.

The Korean War might be left underexplored in textbooks intentionally. It is perhaps too recent to eliminate entirely from the American history presented in textbooks but too embarrassing to the nation to expound upon in detail. It is difficult to allow the United States to save face when discussing the Korean War or the interwar period with any degree of nuance. The brutal repression of the Korean populace and the installation of a despot in an ostensibly democratic nation shatter any myth of the United States as a champion of democracy or altruistic force of good in the international sphere.

Moreover, it might be in the national interest of the United States that its populace enter adulthood knowing as little as possible about the war in case of future military action on the Korean peninsula. Potential soldiers may be more willing to enlist in a hypothetical fight against North Korea if they simply believe the country to be the outpost of a raving mad dictator whose lone goal is to cause global destruction and havoc. Through a more nuanced approach to the Korean War, students may come to understand how North Korea became what it is today.

What then should students know about the Korean War and what greater function could it serve in education? Most importantly, through studying the Korean War students may realize that the actions of the United States do not always match its stated intentions. The cognitive dissonance students experience when weighing America's popular image with its actions in Korea may cause them to realize the hypocrisy of fighting for a nation's freedom while gunning down its people as they shelter in caves.

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Appendix A

Table A1

Codebook

Term	Definition
Background of war	Any sentence, phrase, paragraph, or picture that portrays the status of the Korean peninsula or the Korean people prior to or leading up to the Korean War
Outbreak of war	Any sentence, phrase, paragraph, or picture that gives cause to an event or blames a person or party for initiating the Korean War
Sequence of war	Any sentence, phrase, paragraph, or picture that narrates one or more event, action, or development of the war itself
Conclusion of war	Any sentence, phrase, paragraph, or picture that offers a conclusion for the war
Devastation of war	Any sentence, phrase, picture, or graph that depicts or alludes to human suffering, destruction of property, violence, or death
Effects of the war	Any sentence, phrase, picture, or graph that explains the consequences of the war since its conclusion on all parties involved or otherwise
U.N. and U.S. Politics	Any sentence, phrase, paragraph, or picture that narrates the political circumstances in the United Nations and in the United States that allowed for and followed their intervention in the Korean War
Chinese Intervention	Any sentence, phrase, paragraph, or picture that describes Chinese motives for intervening in the Korean War

Term	Definition
General Douglas MacArthur	Any sentence, phrase, paragraph, or picture describing or alluding to General Douglas MacArthur, his military strategy, his communication with U.S. government officials, or his popularity among the American public
African Americans in the Military	Any sentence, phrase, paragraph, or picture which describes, depicts, or quotes African Americans in the U.S. military

Appendix B

Table B1*Implicit and Explicit Depictions of the Devastation of War*

Text	Depictions of Violence				
	Implicit	Explicit	Total	Percent Implicit	Percent Explicit
(Lapsansky-Werner et al., 2016a, 2016b)	5	12	17	35.3%	64.7%
(Appleby et al., 2018a, 2018b)	8	2	9	80%	20%
(Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2018a, 2018b)	16	14	30	53.3%	46.7%
All texts	29	28	57	50.9%	49.1%

Note. A depiction refers to both textual and visual depictions.

Appendix C

Table C1

Korean War Casualties

Text	Casualties							Total
	U.S. (Fatalities)	U.S. (Wounded)	Other U.N.	South Korean	North Korean	Chinese	Civilian	
(Lapsansky- Werner et al., 2016a, 2016b)	37,000	103,000	–	217,000	406,000	600,000	1,600,000	2,963,000
(Appleby et al., 2018a, 2018b)	54,200	–	–	–	–	–	–	54,200
(Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2018a, 2018b)	54,000	–	–	–	–	–	–	54,000
(Defense Casualty Analysis System, 2020)	36,574	103,284	–	–	–	–	–	139,858
(Institute for Military History, 2005a, 2005b)	36,940	100,310	17,631	621,479	607,396	972,000	2,490,968	4,848,724

Note. A casualty is any person killed or injured as a result of the Korean War. U.S. casualties are separated into fatalities and injured for the sake of providing nuance. Civilian refers to citizen non-combatants of both Korean states.