

A Conflicted Narrative: Textbook and Monumental Representations of the Korean War in South  
Korea<sup>1</sup>

Sohee Ryuk

Colgate University

A Project Sponsored by the Lampert Institute for Civic and Global Affairs

---

<sup>1</sup> I wish to express gratitude to the Lampert Institute for Civic and Global Affairs for providing a generous stipend for my research my project. I would also like to thank Charles A. Dana Professor Andrew Rotter for providing helpful guidance and feedback for this research paper.

## Introduction

The year 2013 marked the sixtieth anniversary of the Korean War Armistice that effectively ended the Korean War in 1953. The Korean War, which occurred from June 25, 1950 until an armistice agreement was reached on July 27, 1953, wreaked havoc on the Korean peninsula. Casualties amounted to 900,000 Chinese soldiers, 520,000 North Korean soldiers, and 400,000 UN soldiers under UN command (of whom South Korean and US soldiers made up a majority) who were wounded or killed.<sup>2</sup> After three years of fighting and destruction of the peninsula, the Korean War ended where it began, as the Korean peninsula remained divided along the thirty-eighth parallel.

For South Koreans, memory of the Korean War has faded along with the years. South Korea today seems far removed from the war-torn land that it used to be sixty years ago: the majority of the population was born after the Korean War ended with the armistice. Yet, legacies of the Korean War remain. All physically able South Korean men head off to join the military for a mandatory 21-month service. The US Army Garrison in Yongsan is a strong presence that reminds South Koreans that they are for a reason. Threats of aggression occasionally make way from North Korea, a reminder that the war is not yet over. Such is the situation in which South Korea remembers the Korean conflict. As North Korea remains South Korea's main enemy, the nation has faced and still faces questions of how to interpret and remember the Korean War.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> David Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History* (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1997), 10.

<sup>3</sup> For the purposes of this paper, I have used North Korea to refer to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and South Korea to refer to the Republic of Korea. I have used Korea when referring to the Korean peninsula before their division or when referring to both nations collectively.

The Korean War proved central in marking South Korea's identity as a nation distinct from North Korea. After Korea's liberation from Japanese control after the Second World War, the Korean peninsula was divided in the midst of Cold War tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union who were responsible for liberating the nation. The two militaries respectively governed the southern and northern part of the divided peninsula. In 1948, separate governments were established with the backing of the respective powers: in the South, Syngman Rhee and in the North, Kim Il Sung rose to power.<sup>4</sup> It was the Korean War that solidified initial divisions that set the two nations on two separate paths. The two separate states developed accordingly. The division had been an arbitrary one, however; South Korea could define its identity only in comparison to their northern neighbor. Telltale differences can be seen in how the two nations call the conflict. In North Korea, the Korean War is called the "National Liberation War," emphasizing the nature of the war as a war of independence from foreign powers, referring to Japan and the US. In South Korea, the Korean War is commonly referred to as the "June 25 War," emphasizing the date of the North Korean invasion.<sup>5</sup>

This paper deals with South Korean remembrance of the Korean War. I begin my research with the premise that in order to study how an event is remembered, it is important to determine how that event is being kept in the collective memory. Collective memory is a shared memory among all people in a group: family, a group of friends, or even a nation. Although

---

<sup>4</sup> For the Romanization of Korean texts and names, I have used the McCune-Reischauer Romanization system. Exceptions to this are names such as Syngman Rhee that are well-known to English audiences, names of scholars who have published in English, and official names of places or sites that appear in English in tandem with Korean, such as Imjingak. Romanized Korean names are written with the family name coming first and the first name second.

<sup>5</sup> Kim Dong Choon in *The Unending Korean War: A Social History* (Larkspur, Calif: Tamal Vista Publications), 2002, observed that due to such labeling of the Korean War, the start date of the war is well known to the South Korean public. The date that signifies the end of the armistice, however, is not as familiar.

individuals remember the past on a personal level, memories and learning of the past occurs in a social setting. It is this social framework of memory in which remembering occurs that facilitates a shared collective memory.<sup>6</sup> For South Korea, memory of Korean War had to be crafted as South Korea was beginning to identify itself as a fledging nation separate from North Korea. The turbulent post-war years following the Korean War included rapidly changing administrations and government, revolts, coup d'états, military dictator regimes, social unrest, and constant threats of aggression from North Korea. Mirroring South Korea's political climate, South Korea's position regarding the war has evolved and the significance of the war constantly reinvented in the sixty years following the Korean War. In official records and writings, several aspects of the Korean War were highlighted, while others were overlooked. The military regimes of the sixties and seventies outlawed opinions critical of the government. These included criticisms of the actions of South Korean soldiers and United Nations soldiers during the Cold War. Such criticism was taken to negate the very premise of the South Korean government. Speaking out against the government, as well as speaking of a, by highlighting atrocities other than those committed by the North Koreans during the war, was attributed as North Korean propaganda and strictly forbidden.

Memories of the past, however, are not stagnant. They do not remain entrenched in the minds of the public but constantly shift according to conditions. We saw a shift to this paradigm with the end of the Cold War in 1992 and the election of a democratic government. These changes have seen more attempts to shed light on events and perspectives lost during the post-Korean War years. Accepting and publicizing civilian victims of American or South Korean armies has been an important part of such changes.

---

<sup>6</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, translated and edited by Lewis A. Coser, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992.

It is a nation's collective journey to discover the significance of the Korean War that I begin to trace in this paper. The first section analyzed history textbooks from 1953 until the present to examine how Korean War interpretations have changed over time. I have paid special attention to the development of the Korean War narrative that began soon after the armistice agreement. The second part of this paper looked at spaces, memorials, and monuments that commemorate the Korean War, with a focus on how the meanings of different memorials were reinvented over time. Examining the changing representations and memory of the Korean War will shed light on the complex nature of this conflict that remains unresolved.

The official version of the Korean War still remains a traditional one that places blame on North Korea and relatively neglects the actual experiences of people that suffered through war. Attempts to move past this and shed light to the atrocities of war have resulted in blanket emphasis of peace represented by peace memorials that emphasize peace. This is sometimes at odds with several traditional narratives that emphasize national security. Although movements toward peace had been an emerging trend, these narratives have not completely been reconciled with more traditional narratives. The result is a hodge-podge mix of peace and emphasis on national security, an eclectic mix of contending viewpoints that are sometimes contradictory. The often-conflicting narratives are firmly grounded in the origins of the Korean conflict.

### **Historiography**

In the past few decades, historians have placed an emphasis on the relationship between collective memory and history. At the forefront were issues dealing with the trauma and legacy of the Holocaust, gender studies, and identity politics. These studies focused on the role of

collective memory and collective trauma as an identity maker, a common force that binds together the experiences of a community.<sup>7</sup>

The trauma of the Korean War played a crucial role in forming the identity of South Koreans. The War had left a lasting mark on the Korean peninsula. Much of the land was war-torn and decimated, millions were killed, and cemeteries for the dead were created. In the midst of such destruction, the blame for the destruction and murder of so many people was attributed to North Korea. Many South Koreans emerged out of the Korean War with a shared antipathy to North Korea, North Korean soldiers, and communist ideology. These sentiments were passed one from one generation to the next through education that emphasized anti-communism and anti-North Korean sentiments.<sup>8</sup>

Maurice Halbwachs, a sociologist that wrote in the interwar period between World War I and World War II, argued that history and collective memory had several key distinctions. Collective memory is a continuation of the past, or rather, the continuation of the present. It views the past through present, and seeks to find a continuation of its identity in the past. Collective memory is actively kept in records and nurtured in memorials and commemorations. In the process of doing so, collective memory is constantly being restructured from the views of the present. This stands in contrast to history and historical memory, which attempts to consider and examine the past as a separate period from the present. Although the historian is based on the present, he or she seeks to examine the past by looking at the past in context of only the past. In addition, whereas different narratives of history strive to add to a universal historical memory, collective memories exist separately for each social group. By examining the past, collective

---

<sup>7</sup> Domick LaCapra, *History, Literature, Critical Theory*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), 94.

<sup>8</sup> Kim Dong Choon, in *The Unending Korean War*, states how “official memories of the and knowledge of the war have become pillars of both regimes and guarantors of their existence.

memory emphasizes connections to the past to find instances in which the identity of the group has remained the same.<sup>9</sup> History thus comes after the end of collective memory, or when social or collective memory ceases to have an active influence in people's lives.<sup>10</sup> If we appropriate Halbwach's argument, a historical memory of the Korean War (in terms of official narratives of history) is not possible in South Korea as long as memory of the war continues to have an active influence on its people. The legacy of the Korean War lives on in the minds of citizens and veterans that have lived through the tragedy, in the reality of a divided nation and the heavily guarded border with North Korea.

Historians have not been exempt from the constraints of memory. Indeed, historical research in South Korea had been heavily focused on who started the Korean War. Memory of the war dictated the topic of study, which resulted in a disproportionate emphasis on attributing blame for the Korean War.<sup>11</sup> Many scholars searched for the origin of the Korean War in various

---

<sup>9</sup> Halbwachs, "The Collective Memory", in *The Collective Memory Reader*, edited by Jeffrey K. Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Daneil Levy, 1142-147.

<sup>10</sup> Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*; Halbwachs, as cited in Nigel C. Hunt, *Memory, War and Trauma*, 169-176. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

<sup>11</sup> The debate on the correct version of history continues to this day. In 2013, following the sixtieth anniversary of the armistice agreement, a controversy regarding remembrance of the war broke forth in South Korea. The controversy began when the President of South Korea, Park Guen Hye claimed that many high school students did not know the true meaning of the war and its importance in Korean history. She cited a survey conducted by one national newspaper, which showed that 69% of Korean high school students believed that South Korean forces invaded North Korea to cause the Korean War. In response, Park promised to rectify education regarding the Korean War, stating that distortions of history or the truth in classrooms should not happen. The survey by *Seoul Shinmun*, published on June 18, 2013, claimed that high school students no longer knew about the causes and start of the war. Likewise, several conservatives pointed to the results of the survey that historical teachings Korean War have ceased to be effective. Critics of the survey, however, pointed out that the survey results stemmed from a misunderstanding caused by ambivalent language. In Korean, *namchim* (invasion of South Korea from the north) is the official term for the direct cause of the Korean War. The term does not specify the aggressor; instead, it emphasizes that South Korea was attacked. The problem is that the term is often confused with *bookchim* (invasion of North Korea from the south), as people may be confused whether the term denotes the aggressor or the place being attacked. They argued that students

archives, in order to establish the illegal and criminal nature of North Korea's invasion and politics in the Soviet Union, China, and North Korea's decision to invade South Korea.<sup>12</sup>

Establishing the start of the Korean War was thus focused on a short period of time preceding the June 25 invasion. In contrast to the multitudes of scholarly work on this period, relatively little work has been done on other aspects of the war.

In more recent decades, the historiography of the Korean War underwent major changes, owing to several new perspectives of the Korean conflict. Perhaps the most influential scholar on the Korean War, Bruce Cumings sparked much debate with his argument that looked for the origin of the Korean War in regional conflicts from 1945 onward. Cumings proposed the need to move past a framework that looked for the causes of the Korean War in the months immediately preceding June 25, 1950, instead looking for the causes in social structures and institutions in the post-World War II period.<sup>13</sup> Cumings's work especially spurred rebuttals from some Korean scholars who viewed his work as unfairly assigning the blame for the Korean War on both North and South Korea, resisting the "revisionist" view of the Korean War that called attention to the role of the US and South Korea that also led to the Korean War.<sup>14</sup> The work also resulted in many Korean historians that studied the origins of war, often with similar or different conclusions.<sup>15</sup> Other historians, such as William Stueck and Wada Haruki have focused on the

---

probably were confused about the meaning of the term, rather than actually believing that South Korea was responsible for starting the War.

<sup>12</sup> Kang Inchul, as cited in *Hankook jeonjang sajing'wa chip'hap ki'ok* [A study on the exhibition of Korean war photography at war memorial], *Han'gugŏnnonhakpo* 49, no.2 (April 2005).

<sup>13</sup> Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War: Liberation and the Creation of Separate Regimes, 1945-1947* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981).

<sup>14</sup> For a full account on the traditional resistance to revisionist views of the Korean War, look at Dong Choon Kim, 17-20.

<sup>15</sup> Myung Lim Park. *The Korean War: The Outbreak and Its Origins* (Seoul, Nanam Press, 2003).



Korean War as an international war. These perspectives have been valuable to understand and place the Korean in an international context and to complete a narrative that is not restricted to the Korean peninsula.<sup>16</sup> More recent decades also saw investigations into previously neglected aspects of the Korean War. Investigative journalists Charles Hanley, Sang-Hun Choe, and Martha Mendoza reported the massacre of South Korean refugees at No Gun Ri during the Korean War. Research on the Cheju-do, Yeosu and Suncheon uprising in the years leading up to the Korean War are a part of this trend.<sup>17</sup>

More recently, studies on the social impact of the Korean War began to address the lack of scholarly work in such areas. Dong Choon Kim studied how the Korean War affected the Koreans and continued have an effect even after its “end” in 1953. The complex nature of the armistice agreement that left the two states vying for legitimacy resulted in a continuation of Korean War politics and structures.<sup>18</sup> I have followed such a framework for viewing the Korean War in my research to determine the legacies of the conflict in Korea.

In terms of remembrance of the Korean War, Sheila Miyoshi Jager and Jiyul Kim, as well as Tessa Morris-Suzuki have incorporated aspects of memory with which to characterize perceptions of the Korean War.<sup>19</sup> In particular, Jager and Kim characterized memory of the Korean War in South Korea in two stages. First was the “continuous war” paradigm, a tactic that

---

<sup>16</sup> William Stueck, *The Korean War: An International History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); Wada Haruki, *The Korean War: an International History*, translated by Frank Baldwin (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014).

<sup>17</sup> Charles J. Hanley, Sang Hun Choe, and Martha Mendoza, *The Bridge at No Gun Ri: A Hidden Nightmare From the Korean War*; Hun Joon Kim, *The Massacres at Mt. Hala: Sixty Years of Truth Seeking in South Korea* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014).

<sup>18</sup> Dong Chon Kim, *The Unending Korean War*.

<sup>19</sup> Tessa Morris-Suzuki, "Remembering the Unfinished Conflict: Museums and the Contested Memory of the Korean War," *Asia-Pacific Journal* 29 (July 2009); Sheila Miyoshi Jager and Jiyul Kim, "The Korean War after the Cold War: Commemorating the Armistice Agreement in South Korea," in *Ruptured Histories: War, Memory, and the Post-Cold War Asia* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2007).

Korean leaders such as Park Chung Hee, the military dictator who ruled South Korea from 1961 through 1979, employed in order to convey a sense of urgency and threat posed by North Korea. The second was the “Post-Cold War” paradigm, born after the disintegration of the Soviet Union and amidst the democratization movements and riots in Korea during the 1980s. This narrative attempted to move past the previous characterizations and focused on reconciliation between the two Koreas, positioning the two Koreas as victims of far greater imperial powers.<sup>20</sup>

This is a useful distinction to make. Lacking is such distinctions, however, is an analysis of how such a sense of urgency was established and consolidated after the armistice agreement that ended the fighting. These distinctions have tended to focus almost exclusively on the differences between the regime of Park Chung Hee in the 1970s and the democratic regimes from the 1990s. In addition, recognizing the different narratives and viewpoints of the Korean War that often coexisted in Korean society would add greatly to a study in remembrance of the Korean War. How to classify Korean War remains a difficult issue even today, as the trauma and memory of the war still resides within the older members of the population: although the Korean War ended sixty years ago, many veterans and civilians who lived through the war kept with them their memories of the incident that are often consistent with traditional ideological narratives of the Korean War. In contrast, an equally strong force is recognition that some memories inconsistent with traditional narratives had been oppressed throughout history. Often championed by the younger generations, these factions are often critical of the regimes (South Korean or American) that had directly or tacitly allowed such oppressions.

---

<sup>20</sup> Jager and Kim, 233-241.

### Teaching the Korean War, 1954-2014

Remembering the Korean War has been, and in many respects, still is an ideological battle. The meaning and perceptions of the conflict differed according to which administration was in power. Positions regarding North Korea were especially telling of the official perspective of the war. Administrations that emphasized North Korea as a threat adopted a more traditional position regarding the Korean War, whereas administrations favoring peaceful reconciliation with North Korea adopted a more liberal position regarding the Korean War.<sup>21</sup> By looking at textbooks, which were, to varying degrees, influenced by the government perspective, the emergence of the official national history of the Korean War can be traced back to the years directly preceding the Korean War and the years directly after.

South Korean history textbooks follow a national curriculum. Whether the history textbooks are completely national is a question that requires a complex explanation.<sup>22</sup> As of 2014, secondary school history textbooks in Korea are not fully national: different publishers can publish their own textbooks, provided that they follow certain guidelines according to the

---

<sup>21</sup> Likewise, that the North Korean regime became weaker remained an important distinction to make. Jager and Kim, 234-240.

<sup>22</sup> Since the South Korean government was established in 1948, the educational curriculum has undergone seven reforms. The curricular revisions correspond almost exactly to each regime of Korea. The first educational reform system lasted from 1954 until 1963. This encompasses the First Republic led under Rhee Syngman and the parliamentary Second Republic. The second reform lasted from 1963 to 1973, which corresponds to the Third Republic of Park Chung Hee. The third revision lasted from 1973 to 1981, corresponding to the post-Yushin Constitution Fourth Republic under Park; the fourth revision, from 1982 to 1987, to the Fifth Republic of Chun Doo Hwan; the fifth, from 1987 to 1992, to Roh Tae Woo administration's Sixth Republic. The sixth, from 1992 to 1998, corresponds to Kim Young Sam's presidency. Until the seventh educational reform of 1998, each reform featured major overhauls to the curriculum, affecting the content and organization of textbooks.

For information regarding the educational system in South Korea, I have looked at the website for the National Curriculum Information Center, < <http://ncic.kice.re.kr>>.

national curriculum and are approved by the Ministry of Education and the National Institute of Korean History (NIKH). This system in which textbooks need to be approved falls under the *gomjung* (government-approved) system. Another system, in which textbooks are compiled by and published by a government organization falls under the *gukjung* (government published system). From the mid-1950s to 1973, secondary school history textbooks fell under the *gomjung*, or government-approved system. In 1973, high school history textbooks were nationalized in that a government organization controlled the publishing and compilation of textbooks. The national system continued until 2003, when high school Korean history textbooks were divided into National History (*kuksa*) and (Modern Korean History) (*kŭnhyŏntaesa*). The former, a mandatory subject, was a national textbook; the latter, an elective subject, was a NIKH-approved one. In 2011, the two subjects of National History and Modern Korean were combined into Korean History (*hankuksa*). Textbooks for Korean history again fall under the government-approved system of *gomjung* textbooks.<sup>23</sup>

Even under the *gomjung* system, the various government-approved history textbooks need to adhere to and pass the approval of the Ministry of Education. Thus, secondary school textbooks in Korea reflect the official national version of history, or information or arguments the government deems appropriate for a school-aged population. They are especially telling of how the Korean War was taught and thus remembered over time.

---

<sup>23</sup> Roland Bleiker and Hoang Young-Ju, “On the Use and Abuse of Korea’s Past: An Inquiry into History Teaching and Reconciliation,” in *Teaching the Violent Past*, ed. Elizabeth A. Cole, 257; Kim Chinyŏng et. al, “Kyogwayongdosŏ guk kŏm injŏng gubun jun’gŏ mit chŏlch’ae gwanhan nyŏn-gu [A study on the Process of Categorization of Korean Authorized and National Textbooks],” Han’guk Kyogwasŏyŏn’gujaedan [Korean Institute for Textbook Research] publication (2010); Hŏ Kang et. al, “Hankukŭi kŏminchŏngkyokwasŏpyŏnch’ŏnsae kwanhan yŏnku [A Study on the Changes of Korean Authorized Textbooks]” Han’guk Kyogwasŏyŏn’gujaedan [Korean Institute for Textbook Research] publication (2003).

A study of textbooks is not without limitations. Textbooks have been criticized for being too slow to adopt new findings and show current academic trends and lag behind active academic debates. Nevertheless, the fact that history textbooks need government approval speaks to their value as a valid source of how the Korean War is characterized. A broad examination of textbooks shows how official memory of the Korean War was developed and consolidated.

**The Early Years (1954-1973) and the Formation of a Korean War Narrative.** The administration of Syngman Rhee, the first president of South Korea, should be traced back to the U.S. military rule. In 1945, Korea had recently been liberated from decades of Japanese colonial rule. In the southern part of the peninsula, the US military under General John R. Hodge was responsible for liberating Korea and overseeing the transition to a nation (in the northern part of Korea, a similar task was carried out by Soviet troops). There was no lack of political leadership during this period. Song Chun-u and Yo Un-hyong were among the leaders that the United States government approached in order to keep order in a recently liberated Korea. Many factions of society aligned themselves with regional political groups, such as the Korean People's Republic and the Committee for the Preparation of Korean Independence - organizations that advocated nationalism and national goals. However, it was the Korean Democratic Party, a group consisted mainly of wealthy conservatives with connections to pro-Japanese factions to whom the United States Military Government in Korea (USAMGIK) ultimately turned over the ruling of the nation. Backed by the USAMGIK, the South Korean assembly was established in May of 1948. The National Assembly then elected Syngman Rhee as president in August of the same year.<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup> Jang Jip Choi. "Political Cleavages in South Korea." In *State and Society in Contemporary Korea*, edited Hagen Koo (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 16-17; Bruce Cumings, 77-93; Frank Gibney, *Korea's Quiet Revolution: From Garrison State to Democracy*

Syngman Rhee's administration, which never had a wide base of support, became increasingly unpopular as years passed. Perhaps it was fortunate that the Korean War came at an opportune time for the Rhee administration. The Korean War solidified and strengthened South Korea's stance as a nation, united against North Korean aggressions. Anti-communist narratives helped fuel such divides.<sup>25</sup>

The first batch of textbooks were published shortly after the Korean War had ended; these textbooks contained limited information about the Korean War as perceptions on the Korea War were restricted to immediate legacies of the conflict. Even in these sources, however, it is possible to trace a narrative that placed blame on North Korea for the destruction that the war brought to the Korean peninsula and the perpetuated division of Korea.<sup>26</sup>

Several trends emerged from these initial textbooks. One trend was the strategic placement of the division of the peninsula with regards to the Japanese occupation of Korea. The story of the Korean War was told in a narrative that linked together Japanese colonial rule and Japan's defeat to the Allies, which ultimately resulted in Korea's independence. In such narratives, Korea changed hands from the much-hated Japan's colonial rule to the more benevolent rule under the US. Of course, the ideal and rightful choice would have been Korea's national independence. These textbooks cite the Cairo Declaration and the Potsdam Declaration as examples of broken promises of independence for the Korean people.<sup>27</sup> Immediate independence was not in the stars for Korea, as the peninsula was shortly divided along the

---

(New York: Walker Publishing Company), 27-31; Jager, Sheila M. Jager, *Brothers at War: the Unending Conflict in Korea* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2013), 36-51; Stueck, *The Korean War: An International History*, 19-27.

<sup>25</sup> Jang Jip Choi, 22; Gibney, 39.

<sup>26</sup> Hong Isöp, 180.

<sup>27</sup> Ch'oe Namsön (1957), 207; Yi Bŏng-do, *Kuksa*, (1956), 193-194; and Ch'oe Namsön, *Kuksa* (1960), 248.

thirty-eighth parallel. Although US military rule was not ideal, it was clearly the lesser of several evils. US military rule was decidedly better than the decades of Japanese occupation that had robbed the Koreans of a nation for several decades in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. It was also better than occupation by the communist Soviets. Tolerating a transitional military government was a price to pay for an independence brought by outside forces, in which the Korean people did not have agency in determining their future.

Another trend was the avoidance of the complicated issue of the military regimes and emphasis on anti-communist language:

The independence that [the Korean people] hoped for did not easily come. [The Korean] people and the peninsula were divided into North and South according to the unwarranted 38th parallel, as the United States and the Soviet Union militaries governed respectively governed the southern and northern parts of Korea. All the people of Korea hoped to quickly get out of such a state and bring forth unification and complete independence for the Korean people. However, communists, who were acting on behalf of the Soviet Union, approved of the trusteeship and rejected democracy, causing complications and confusion in the nation. However, our people's wishes were understood by freedom loving nations, and according to the United States' suggestions, the UN debated the Korean problem and agreed that a democratic election be held in Korea.<sup>28</sup>

By doing so, these textbooks reflected a decidedly Cold War paradigm in which the Korean War was used as a tool for anti-Communist teachings. Although Korea had been divided in half and occupied by two military governments, there was a clear good versus bad regarding the occupation – the United States, which symbolized freedom and democracy, was pitted against the communist Soviets who controlled the North. The decision to elect a South Korean government separate from the North was inevitable, as the “North Korean puppet government” rejected compromise.<sup>29</sup> It was North Korea, backed by communist rabble-rousers, that was

---

<sup>28</sup>Ch'oe Namsŏn, 208. A similar narrative is presented in Yi Bŏng-do (1956), 194; Hong Isŏp, 181; and Ch'oe Namsŏn, (1957), 207.

<sup>29</sup>Yi Bŏng-do, (1956), 195.

responsible for the disintegration and mistrust present in the Korean peninsula, which prevented a complete independence. The establishment of a separate South Korean regime was the natural result of such consequences.

These textbooks therefore highlighted North Korea's responsibility in causing the Korean conflict. South Korea, backed by the United Nations, was the legitimate government that represented the Korean people. The North Koreans, on the other hand, were responsible for disturbing peace and inciting rebellious movements within Korea. The unintentional division of the Korean peninsula and the invasion of South Korea by North Korean Communists are highlighted, pointing out a need for South Koreans to preserve and further the Korean culture and people.<sup>30</sup> Naturally, the date of invasion, June 25, was also well emphasized: these textbooks traced the beginning and causes of the Korean War back to this date.

Rhee's regime came to an end in 1960 due to a student revolution. The increasing corruption of Rhee's administration had fueled dissatisfaction among people. However, the Parliamentary government that ensued after the student revolution only lasted a year. In 1961, a military coup led by Park Chung Hee took over control of the state. Park's authoritarian state furthered the Korean War legacies that had begun under Rhee's administration. The platform of the Military Revolutionary Committee that organized the coup included anti-communism, strengthening ties with the United States, and respect for the UN Charter.<sup>31</sup>

Textbooks from 1960 and onward in this time period echoed and added to above trends regarding how the Korean War is told. In particular, these narratives called attention to an ulterior motive on behalf of the Soviet Union and their participation in the Korean War. A

---

<sup>30</sup> Hong Yi-söp, (1953), 181.

<sup>31</sup> Yong-Sup Han, "The May Sixteenth Military Coup," in *The Park Chung Hee Era: The Transformation of South Korea*, eds. Byung-Kook Kim and Ezra F. Vogel, 51.



history of Soviet (and Russian) interests in the Korean peninsula bolstered such claims. The North Korean puppet regime was a hidden ruse by the Soviets to gain control over Korea.<sup>32</sup> Likewise, the textbooks framed the war in terms of an imbalance of power. In contrast to a strong North Korean army backed by the Soviets, the South Korean army was portrayed as weak and vulnerable. It thus was the “freedom-loving” United Nations, at the urging of the United States, which stepped in to correct such an imbalance by intervening in the Korean War.<sup>33</sup> The narrative also maintained that the necessity of developing a strong state, citing the urgency of a war that has yet to end as “the enemy still [lay] north of the thirty-eighth parallel.”<sup>34</sup> These trends would later be solidified into a national narrative that was to be perpetuated for several decades.

### **The Solidification of the Korean War Narrative, 1972-1987**

In 1972, Park Chung Hee established the *Yushin* (Revitalizing Reforms) Constitution, which gave Park dictatorial power over the state; the abolishment of National Assembly and limits to the number of reelections consolidated power in Park’s hands. Park’s *Yushin* regime took away the freedom of press for national newspapers, appropriating the newspapers for its use.<sup>35</sup> The regime also fully nationalized textbooks: different publishers were no longer allowed to publish textbooks, as the Ministry of Culture and Education oversaw the writing and publishing of textbooks. A series of economic developments in Park’s pre-*Yushin* administration had catapulted South Korea’s economy and industry several years earlier. With the new developments in economy that soon overtook developments in North Korea, a narrative that had previously portrayed the nation as a pressing and urgent threat could be transformed to one that

---

<sup>32</sup> Sin Sökho (1965), 177.

<sup>33</sup> Sin Sökho (1965), 179; I Hongchik (1969), 243.

<sup>34</sup> Kim Sangki (1965), 250-251.

<sup>35</sup> Oberdorfer, 42-43.

painted North Korea as a desperate challenger of South Korea's proven supremacy.<sup>36</sup> Whereas the justifications for similar claims were based on a moral right or wrong in the past, South Korea's economic achievements could now be used to demonstrate economic and national superiority over North Korea.

National textbook published during this time reflected such changes and solidified the anti-communist narrative established in previous Korean history textbooks. Anti-communist themes had always been apparent: the Cheju, Yeosu and Sunchon incidents were all attributed to North Korean communist factions who wanted to disturb peace.<sup>37</sup> Highlighting the imminent demise of North Korea's regime further developed such narratives. Textbooks during this period explained that once the North Korean communist state was established in 1948, millions of people fled the North for the South. The implication of this was that the North Korean regime was not a viable government.<sup>38</sup>

Although Park's regime criticized the Rhee administration for being corrupt, it did not challenge founding Cold War ideologies and paradigms but rather upheld them. Park especially upheld pro-US sentiments. Although Park was personally not overly fond of US political influence in Korea (for example, he did not like that the US swooped in to save opposition leader Kim Dae Jung from being killed by the Korean Central Intelligence Agency), the public narrative Park employed was one that emphasized alliance and friendship with the United States. The United States, in contrast, tried to distance itself from the Park Chung Hee regime; being associated with a dictatorial regime was not a US foreign policy objective. The US thus established a position of disassociation, "refraining from arguing with the ROK in public [and

---

<sup>36</sup> Jager and Kim, 238-239.

<sup>37</sup> Munkyobu. *Ku-sa*, (1974), 230.

<sup>38</sup> Munkyobu. *Ku-sa*, (1974), 230.

advancing their] council privately only where necessary and appropriate.”<sup>39</sup> Interpreting this as tacit agreement, the Park’s regime maintained a stronghold of memory that was publicly pro-US. This narrative was carried on through the regime of Chun Doo Hwan, Park Chung Hee’s military successor.

### **The Democratic Era, 1988 and Onward: The Diversification of Korean War Narratives**

The Kwangju Uprising of 1980 and its aftermath fostered and fueled a democratic drive in the minds of the South Koreans. The killing of hundreds of demonstrators had made it clear that the government had overstepped the line. It thus represented a break from the Korean public’s tacit tolerance toward authoritarian regimes.<sup>40</sup> Such anti-authoritarian sentiments were coupled with changes outside of South Korea. The Soviet Union, with whom the South Korean government established diplomatic with the previous year, disintegrated in 1991. The Cold War had ended for the rest of the world. In addition, North Korea, who had suffered from a major famine, no longer seemed like a pressing threat it once was. These sentiments and wishes for democratization were realized when the Roh Tae Woo administration accepted demands for a direct presidential election. In 1993, Kim Young Sam, South Korea’s first civilian president, was elected.<sup>41</sup>

No longer fettered by authoritarian restrictions and dominance on memory, textbooks in this era diversified in terms of the range of events that they documented. Although the textbooks took time to distance themselves from traditional Cold War narratives, more recent textbooks

---

<sup>39</sup> Oberdorfer, 37-46.

<sup>40</sup> David R. McCann, “Our Forgotten War,” in *America’s Wars in Asia: The Korean War in Korean and American Popular Culture*, eds. Philip West, Steven I. Levine, and Jackie Hiltz, 65-68.

<sup>41</sup> Jager and Kim, 241-246.

incorporated research and incorporated different perspectives. For example, one textbook depicted the failure of US military rule in implementing land policies. Others shed light to civilian deaths caused by South Korean or US armed forces.<sup>42</sup> Other perspectives regarding the Korean War included explanations on how the North Korean regime was established and re-evaluations of the Cheju, Yeosu, and Sunchun resistance movements.

Recent textbooks also highlighted global factors that led up to the Korean War, focusing on the build-up of Cold War tensions. This was in contrast to earlier narratives that tended to group the Korean War with Japan's loss in the Pacific front of World War II. Rather than telling the story of the Korean War with regards to its independence from Japan, newer narratives mapped the Korean War within the larger story of the Cold War by placing Korean War within the shifting dynamics of post-World War II alliances.<sup>43</sup> Such a narratives represented a break from the limited geographic scope of teaching Korean history to an attempt to view Korean history in a global context.

Not all perspectives had changed, however. Some aspects of the Korean War narrative merely shifted focus or remained the same. Recent textbooks continued to reference to the Cairo Declaration and the Potsdam Declaration, in which autonomy was promised to Korea, perpetuated the victim narrative. In order to juggle Korea's position as a victim (initially of Japanese imperialism and later military occupation by the Soviet Union and the United States) while ultimately holding North Korea accountable for starting the Korean War, textbook narratives made the distinction from the average North Korean citizen from the North Korean government. Another shift was the increasing emphasis on the United Nations, rather than the

---

<sup>42</sup> *Modern Korean History*, Seoul: Kumkang publishing, 2003, 256-267; *Modern Korean History*, Seoul: Doosan publishing, 259-266; Chu Jin-oh et al. *Hankuksa*, 2011.

<sup>43</sup> *Modern Korean History*, Doosan publishing, (2003), 256-263.

United States, for the legitimacy of South Korea. The backing of the United Nations, as a coalition of free nations, was often cited to prove South Korea's legitimacy as a nation. These examples above, while representing attempts to break from the traditional narrative, highlight the difficulties of moving past the Cold War to a nation whose very founding ideals were based primarily in Cold War political ideology. The following section highlights similar historical complexities by examining Korean War memorials.

### **Memorial Representations of the Korean War**

The Korean War wreaked havoc all across the Korean peninsula. The numerous battle sites and remnants of the Korean War resulted in an abundance of sites at which the Korean War is remembered. Monuments and memorials are places in which memories of the past are retained in the collective memory of a group. This section will introduce several such sites at which active recollection of the past occurs: the UN First Battle Memorial, the No Gun Ri Peace Park, the Third Tunnel of Aggression, and the Imjingak Resort. These are sites that commemorate of different aspects Korean War. As is the nature of collective memory, the following section will highlight how the sites shifted in meaning with light of changing circumstances.

#### **The UN First Battle Memorial**

The UN First Battle Memorial commemorates the Osan battle of July 5, 1950. Located in Osan, the UN First Battle Memorial remembers the US army division under Captain Smith, who were the first US troops to engage in ground combat with North Korean forces.

The Osan battle was not a successful one for the US forces. Ordered to block the North Korean People's Army (NKPA) that had invaded South Korea ten days ago, Task Force Smith of the Twenty-Fourth Infantry Division faced the NKPA in Osan, about twenty-five miles south of

Seoul. It quickly became clear that the soldiers, who had been told that stopping NKPA's advance would be an easy task, were horribly unprepared. Task Force Smith suffered a casualty of 150 soldiers who died during the battle. In contrast, North Korea lost four tanks and suffered a casualty of 42 dead and 85 wounded.<sup>44</sup> For historians of the Korean War, the Osan battle marked a crucial point in the Korean War at which it became clear that the Americans were fighting against an underestimated enemy. Esteem had been high after World War II; many leaders were optimistic about a police action in Korea. Contrary to such assumptions, the Korean War would not be a war they were destined to win.<sup>45</sup>

In South Korea, the Osan battle carried quite a different significance. A few days earlier, a UN Resolution authorized sending of troops to South Korea on June 25, 1960. The Osan battle thus represented the first major United Nations action against a state that was out of line. While the efforts of Task Force Smith were undoubtedly acknowledged, it is their symbolic significance as part of the UN armed forces that was emphasized. Inconvenient details, such as Task Force Smith's failure to stop the NKPA from advancing, were not highlighted.

Located within UN Forces First Battle Memorial, built in 2013 by the city of Osan,<sup>46</sup> the UN First Battle Monument was built in two different stages and consists of two distinct spaces of memory. Both monuments are designated memorial facilities by South Korea's Ministry of Patriots and Veterans Affairs. The first is the Old Monument of UN Forces First Battle Memorial, built in July 5 1955 (the fifth anniversary of the Osan battle) by the soldiers of the US 24th Infantry Division. At first only a space of commemoration primarily for the twenty-fourth

---

<sup>44</sup> Jager, *Brothers at War*, 73-85.

<sup>45</sup> Jager, in *Brothers at War*, 73-85, cites the budget cuts from World War II days and the "soft" occupation of Japan to make a case that America was unprepared for a conventional war in Korea.

<sup>46</sup> Walter T. Ham IV, Eighth Army Public Affairs, "Osan opens memorial hall to honor Task Force Smith," News Front Page, 23 April 2013, <<http://www.army.mil/article/101672>>.

division, the legacy was sustained and shared by more people in 1964, when the monument was rebuilt with the combined efforts of the 24<sup>th</sup> Division, the Korean Army Comrades Association, and the Korean Veteran's Association. The Old Monument commemorated the 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division who “fought the initial action between United States Troops and the Communist Aggressors.”<sup>47</sup> Here, The battle was clearly one between the United States Troops and the North Korean People's Army. The Old Monument served as a site of annual ceremonies commemorating the event until its new replacement was built. The memorial would not commemorate the role of the UN until 1982.<sup>48</sup>



**Figure 1. The Old Monument for the UN First Battle Memorial. UN Forces First Battle Memorial, Osan, South Korea.**

---

<sup>47</sup> Plaque, “Old Monument for the UN First Battle,” Osan, South Korea, visited July 25, 2014.

<sup>48</sup> Plaque, “Old Monument for the UN First Battle,” Osan, South Korea, visited July 25, 2014; “6.25 ch'ös kyochön chönmol mikun osan chukmilyöngsö ch'utosik” [Remembrance ceremony held for US soldiers killed in the Osan Jukmiryeong battle], *Donga ilbo*, June 5, 1972.

In 1982, a newer monument replaced the Old Monument in commemorating the Osan battle. Built by the Gyeonggi Municipal government, the new memorial was aptly named the New Memorial of UN Forces First Battle.<sup>49</sup> The rebuilding of the monument represented a shift in importance of the Osan battle. The Osan monument was no longer exclusive about Task Force Smith and the United States. Although Task Force Smith continued to be recognized, the wider significance of the battle for South Korea was highlighted. The significance of United Nations' decision to participate in the Korean War is overtly shown in the new memorial: flags of United Nations member nations that sent soldiers or military assistance for South Korea frame the entrance to the memorial. It was thus the collective effort of the United Nations that was primarily emphasized in the New Monument.



**Figure 2. Flags of UN Member Nations that participated in the Korean War in front of the New Monument. UN Forces First Battle Memorial, Osan, South Korea.**

---

<sup>49</sup> “UN kun ch'ochŏn kinyŏmpi osan chukmilyŏngsŏ chemak” [UN First Battle Monument dedicated in Osan Jukmiryeong], *Han'gyŏre*, April 8, 1982





**Figure 3. The New Monument for the UN First Battle. UN Forces First Battle Memorial, Osan, South Korea.**

### **The Third Tunnel of Aggression**

The entrance to the Third Tunnel of aggression is located beyond the Civilian Control Zone, 4 kilometers south the Joint Security Area of Panmunjum, where the Armistice was signed. At the time of discovery, the tunnel was two meters (6.5 feet) high, two meters wide, and 1.6 kilometers (1 mile) long. The tunnel, discovered on October 17, 1978, was the third of its kind at the time of discovery. The other two tunnels, located in Koryangp'o and Ch'örwŏn, were discovered in 1974 and 1975. It was reported that the North Korean army, after a brief hiatus from digging in 1974, had resumed digging the following year before the tunnel was found.<sup>50</sup>

---

<sup>50</sup> “UN Kunsä Palp'yo Pukkoëüi P'anmunjŏm Che 3 Ttanggul Palgyŏn.” [UN Military reports of discovery of the third tunnel by the North Korean puppet regime], *Tonga Ilbo* October 27, 1978.

The third tunnel is not a Korean War site in the strict sense of the word. The tunnel was not in existence during the conflict in the 1950s but discovered much later, in the 1970s. However, the aggressions that led to the tunnel and the later interpretations of the tunnel stem from the unresolved nature of the Korean War. Therefore, in the broader sense of the word, the Third Tunnel is a Korean War site in that that it carries forward dialogues and memory of the conflict. The tunnel is now a popular DMZ tourist spot; over six million visitors visited the area in 2009.<sup>51</sup> Visitors can walk or ride the elevator down and walk partway through the tunnel. The third tunnel was opened to the public in 2002, appropriating the site as a memorial of the Korean War. According to the dedication, the tunnel was an effort to transform North Korea's act of aggression into a symbol of peace.<sup>52</sup> Despite what the dedication plaque claims, peace is secondary to national security in the Third Tunnel.

---

<sup>51</sup> Paju Municipal Government, as cited in Timothy Jeongyeol Kim and Eun-Jung Kang, "Living with War: The Korean Truce," in *Tourism and War* eds. Richard Butler and Wantanee Suntikul.

<sup>52</sup> "Plaque of Dedication," The Third Tunnel of Aggression, visited July 27, 2014.



**Figure 4. North Korean soldiers shown digging the infiltration tunnel. The Third Tunnel of Aggression, Paju,**

A small media center within the premises plays a reel about the Korean War at scheduled times in Chinese, English, and Korean. After viewing the film, visitors walk through the adjacent museum. Once inside, the two-room museum features a physical representation of the DMZ and the demarcation lines. Various glass displays display relevant materials: one display shows a life-sized figures of North Korean soldiers digging the infiltration tunnel. Across from the wall displays, wall plaques summarize statistics about the infiltration tunnels that had since been discovered. The theme of national security continues in the adjacent room, which features an impressive timeline of North Korean aggressions. The aggressions are in ordered starting from 1953, when the armistice agreement was signed, and end well into the 2000s. The timeline includes several infiltration attempts by North Korean spies to South Korea territory in the 1960s and the 1970s, assassination attempts toward Park Chung Hee, and the hijacking on Korean Air airplane. In addition to aggressions toward the South Korean government and people, attacks on

US armies stationed in South are also highlighted.<sup>53</sup> The timeline links the present with the Korean War in terms of continued North Korean aggressions. In this narrative, South Korea and the US are both victims allied against North Korea. The Third Tunnel thus presents a theme of national security. It informs visitors that threats from North Korea continue even today; the threats are part of a continuing trend of aggressions and emphasize that the war is not yet over.

### **The No Gun Ri Peace Park**

Located in Yongdong Province, the No Gun Ri Peace Park commemorates the infamous No Gun Ri incident (also referred to as the No Gun Ri massacre) of July 1950. The No Gun Ri Peace Park was built in 2008 and completed in 2011 by the Chungbuk providential and Yongdong municipal governments.<sup>54</sup> The park remembers the civilians that were killed in this incident. The park, located near the two tunnels where the No Gun Ri incident occurred, consists of a memorial that commemorates the victims who were killed during this incident and a small museum.

The No gun ri (Nogun-ri) incident took place when the American troops told civilians in Imgye-ri and Jugok-ri villages to evacuate and move south, and led them to the railway in No gun ri. A little while later, American planes bombed and fired on the civilians, and continued to fire on the civilians when they evacuated under the railway and inside the two tunnels.<sup>55</sup> First disclosed to the public in 1999 through the work of investigative journalists Charles J. Hanley,

---

<sup>53</sup> Museum plaque, “Incidents of Aggression from the Ceasefire,” the Third Infiltration Tunnel, Paju, South Korea, visited July 27, 2014.

<sup>54</sup> “Yōngtong nokūnli yōksakongwōn ch'akkong,” [History park at No Gun Ri to be built] *Chosun ilbo*, June 11, 2008.

<sup>55</sup> Hanley, Choe, and Mendoza, 104-113; Plaque, “Summary of the No Gun Ri Incident,” No Gun Ri Peace Park, Nogun-ri, Yeongdong, visited July 20, 2014.

Sang-hun Choe and Martha Mendoza, the No Gun Ri incident was attributed to an order by the US 8th Army that allowed the shooting of refugees.<sup>56</sup> The incident, due to political pressures discouraging any negative information regarding the US during the military years, had remained untold for forty years.

The narrative of peace the No Gun Ri Peace Park seems to convey is one of reconciliation. The museum chooses to not explicitly point any fingers or explain why the incident happened. Instead, the park chooses to emphasize the innocent lives of civilians as victims of war. One wall describes in detail the plight of the innocent villagers:

Defeated in the Daejeon Battle, the US Army had to retreat toward Yeong Dong on July 21, 1950. Since the collapse of the Yeong Dong defense line meant the rapid advance of the North Korean People's Army into Busan, the Imgye-ri in Yeongdong-eup were totally unaware of the war situation. Despite the sound of gunshots occasionally heard, they still remained busy with weeding the field, hoping for a good harvest.<sup>57</sup>

The description in the above plaque describes the circumstances under which the US forces came to be in Yeong Dong. Although the battle and fighting occurred close to the villagers, they remained oblivious to the fighting around them. The exhibit then leads visitors through a realistic tunnel, complete with uneven ground tiles, which was supposed to stimulate the experience for visitors. The exhibit ends with a statistic: the incident resulted in 226 acknowledged casualties out of 243 reported.<sup>58</sup>

The narrative that the Yeong Dong Peace Park present is a conflicting one. On the one hand, the park emphasizes a narrative of peace. It brings to light the unfortunate plight of victims in the No Gun Ri incident. The emphasis is solely on the victims, the innocent people that were

---

<sup>56</sup> Hanley, Choe, and Mendoza, 121.

<sup>57</sup> Plaque, "Innocent Villagers Unaware of War," in the No Gun Ri Peace Park museum, No Gun Ri, South Korea, visited July 14, 2014.

<sup>58</sup> The numbers may be misleading; as the investigation into the victims of the incident occurred decades after the actual event, it was hard to track down those who were lost.

killed during the incident. There is no mention of the perpetrators or the conditions of war that ultimately led to such actions. On the other, as much as the exhibit emphasizes the innocence of these victims, the park is relatively silent on the perpetrators. Despite archival evidence that US soldiers fired under order, the absence of descriptions of the perpetrator seems especially conspicuous.



**Figure 5. The Site of the No Gun Ri Incident.**

### **Imjingak**

Imjingak Resort is located just 4.3 miles from the DMZ and along the Imjin River, long considered a gateway between the northern and southern parts of the peninsula. Despite its close proximity to the DMZ and North Korea, Imjingak chooses not to highlight North Korean aggression. The visitor's center features an exhibit regarding the DMZ: instead of the usual history of the DMZ in terms of its Korean War origins, the center points out the geographic

features and ecological systems of the narrow area. The media center plays a continuous reel on how the narrow strip of land came to symbolize ecological peace despite its Cold War beginnings.

Imjingak encompasses several different areas of the park that were built at different periods in time. The original building of Imjingak was first built in 1972 after the North-South Joint Talks. Imjingak was a place where South Koreans originally from North Korea would gather during traditional holidays to pay their respects to their ancestors.<sup>59</sup> The building offered consolation for citizens originally from North Korea who yearned for their family and homes on the other side of the border.<sup>60</sup> Although the North-South dialogues faltered after their initial beginnings, the talks represented small concessions by both governments in their attempts to redefine their relationship in the midst of a rapidly changing world order.<sup>61</sup> The establishment of Imjingak (which recognized the need for reconciliation) undoubtedly followed such minor respites in antagonistic policy developments. To further acknowledge Imjingak's significance in this regard, the Mangbaedan Memorial Altar was constructed in 1985 to facilitate traditional religious services.<sup>62</sup> The Imjingak and Mangbaedan symbolized the sad realities of a divided nation.

---

<sup>59</sup> It is a tradition in Korean culture for people to pay respect their ancestors on the day of their death and on traditional holidays. On these days, families visit the place where their ancestors are buried for traditional ceremonies. For people from places now located in North Korea, the altar is a place where they go to make up for the fact that they cannot physically visit for these rites.

<sup>60</sup> "Puknyök' külinün manghyangüi chip," [A haven for those longing for the North] *KyungHyang Shinmun*, 28 July 1972.

<sup>61</sup> Oberdorfer, 44-46; Jager and Kim, 238-240.

<sup>62</sup> Designed by Han Toryong, the Mangbaedan consists of an altar and an incense burner to facilitate traditional religious *jesa* services. "Silhyangmin mangpaetan wankong"[Mangbaedan for Displaced Peoples Completed]. *Kyönghyangsinmun* 24 September 1985.



**Figure 6. Korean War Monument to the US Forces. Imjingak , South Korea.**

Next door to the Imjingak building stands the Korean War Monument to the US Forces. Dedicated in 1975, the eighty-centimeter memorial stele is surrounded by four triangles that symbolize the Army, Navy, Air Force, and the Marine Corps, which are united at the top. The triangles symbolize the Army, Navy, Air force and Marine Corps. Fifty flagpoles, for the fifty states of the US, surround the structure.<sup>63</sup> Commissioned by the Department of Defense, the memorial was a national memorial commissioned under the Park Chung Hee administration. The statue continues its role as a place where veterans and visitors actively pay their respects.

Not all memories in Imjingak are actively remembered. The Harry S. Truman statue stands adjacent Korean War Monument. The Truman statue, similar to a statue of MacArthur in

---

<sup>63</sup> Plaque, “Korean War Monument to the U.S. Forces”



Incheon, is a statue that expresses gratitude toward US participation in the Korean War.<sup>64</sup> Built in 1975, the 8-foot statue shows Truman holding a compilation of papers in his left and pointing his right finger to the sky. Below the statue is an inscription, “Statue of Harry S. Truman,” shown in former South Korean president and dictator Park Chung Hee’s original calligraphy.<sup>65</sup> Despite being commissioned by the Department of Defense and constructed around the same time as the above US Memorial, the Truman statue is not mentioned any of Imjingak’s brochure nor is it listed as one of the Ministry of Veteran’s Affairs as a Korean War monument. Truman’s statue, along with its apparent connections to Park Chung Hee, remains hidden within the confines of Imjingak.



**Figure 7. "Statue of Harry S. Truman." Imjingak, South Korea.**

---

<sup>64</sup> John L. Linantud, “War Memorials and Memories: Comparing the Philippines and South Korea,” *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 14 no. 4 (July 2008) 352-355. Linantud used the statue of MacArthur in South Korea as an example of the “pro-American” narrative.

<sup>65</sup> Memorial plaque, “Statue of Harry S. Truman” Imjingak Memorial Peace Park; and Cho Yŏngtal, “40 nyŏn sewŏl imchinkak chik’yŏdon mi dttaet’onglyŏng [US president who has stood in Imjingak for 40 years], *DongA Ilbo*, 23 Dec 2012, <http://news.donga.com/3/all/20121224/51799725/1>.

In 2005, more than thirty years after the original Imjingak building was built, Imjingak underwent a major renovation that overhauled the original building and the surrounding area. The project was proposed in preparation for the Global Peace festival, which was to take place from August to September of 2005. By 2002, Gyeonggi provincial government's plans for the festival were well underway. The renovation, as one major part of the festival, was a joint project by the Gyeonggi Municipal government and the Gyeonggi Tourism Agency. The director of the Tourism Agency who oversaw the renovation referred to the project as one that would transform Imjingak from "a space that highlights the division of the peninsula to one that signifies peace."<sup>66</sup> The Global Peace festival effectively changed the significance of the Imjingak area. Several highlights of the twenty million dollar renovation included *Windy Hill*, a grass-covered hill covered in windmills that map out the world, and *Unification Pond* in the shape of a united Korean peninsula.<sup>67</sup>

More recent additions to the Park contributed to a diversification of memories regarding the Korean War. The statue *Las Palomas* (the Doves) in the Children's Memorial is one such addition. Commissioned by George Drake, former professor veteran of the Korean War, and built by the Mexican sculptor Sebastian, *Las Palomas* is dedicated to the Korean War orphans children and anyone who had helped these orphans. The plight of the children whose lives were uprooted during the Korean War had left a lasting impression on Drake during his time in Korea. Feeling the need for a space that commemorates the children affected by war, Drake

---

<sup>66</sup> "Hwŏnhaechin imchinkak sae tanchanghae naetal chunking," [The new and brighter Imjingak set to complete construction next month] *Chosun Ilbo*, June 28, 2005.

<sup>67</sup> "2005 nyŏn sekyep'yŏnghwach'ukche chunpi ponkyŏkhwa" [Preparations underway for 2005 Global Peace Festival], *Han'gyŏre*, August 31, 2003.

commissioned the statue and donated the statue to South Korea, where the Ministry of Patriots and Veterans Affairs placed the statue in Imjingak Peace Park in September of 2010.<sup>68</sup>



**Figure 8. “Las Palomas.” In the Children's Memorial. Imjingak, South Korea.**

---

<sup>68</sup> Drake had also established a Korean War Children’s Memorial in Bellingham, Washington. Kim Suhye, "Chönchaengt'öe p'in 'pyöngsawa koatülüi uchöng' kilipnita" [Awaiting the “Friendship among Soldiers and Orphans” during the War], *Chosun Ilbo*, Sep 1, 2010; Walter T. Ham IV, Eighth Army Public Affairs, “Korean War veteran tells story of littlest survivors,” *News Front Page*, 9 July 2013. “Pizza in Seoul, South Korea with SEBASTIAN,” December 1, 2013, *David Marshall Sculptor*, <<http://www.davidmarshallsculptor.com>>.

The 21-foot sculpture consists of interlocking triangle “doves” that seem to be in mid-flight to somewhere afar, carrying a message of peace. The children’s memorial adds much to the commemoration of the Korean War. Although the statue was not a government-commissioned one, it highlighted an important aspect that Korea seems to be heading into. Much like the No Gun Ri Peace Park commemorates its victims, the Children’s Memorial at Imjingak commemorates also the victims of the Korean War. The statue does not place an emphasis on who was to blame for the orphans’ plight. The commemoration and remembrance of general victims, not just victims of North Korean aggression, is a much-neglected area that the statue begins to address.

The spaces of memory of the UN First Battle Monuments, Third Tunnel of Aggression, No Gun Ri Peace Park, and Imjingak highlight the complex ways in which the Korean War is remembered in South Korea. They represent the complex and often contradictory representations of the Korean War.

In addition, shifts in representation of the Korean War occurred in all the spaces I examined in this paper. The UN First Battle Memorial encompasses the changed significance of the Osan battle; the Third Tunnel of Aggression turned a site of aggression into a site that emphasizes national security; the No Gun Ri Peace Park remembers violence against civilians that had long been forgotten; and the Imjingak resort holds various monuments that represent contending memories.

## **Conclusion**

Through the examination of textbooks and memorials, it becomes clear that the term post-Cold War does not apply to Korea, in the original sense of the word. Post-Cold War implies having moved past Cold War tensions and ideologies. Although the Cold War may have ended decades ago on a global scale, the division of the Korean peninsula still serves as one of the last remnants of such tensions. As the conflict between the two Koreas still stands, telltale remnants of Cold War tensions remain in textbook and monumental representations of the Korean War. For South Korea, several strands of a Cold War narrative that emerged and solidified following the armistice agreement still remain even today. The continued emphasis on June 25 is testament to the continuation of Cold War ideologies central to South Korea's identity as a nation.

However, both North and South Korea have diverged far from their initial Cold War origins. As seen from how the Korean War has been taught in South Korea, perspectives regarding the Korean War continued to change and evolve throughout its history. No longer is the Korean War taught using overtly anti-communist rhetoric; newer textbooks told the story of the conflict Cold War tensions and told the long-neglected story of victims whose stories had been forgotten in the authoritarian regimes. In addition, memorials such as the No Gun Ri Peace Park and the Children's Memorial brought attention to previously-neglected stories of the Korean War.

Just as they have changed in the past, collective memory of the Korean War will continue to shift and change in the future. Meanwhile, representation and memory of the Korean War sheds light on the complex problems and contending narratives associated with remembering an unfinished conflict.

## Works Cited

## Primary Sources - Textbooks

- Hong Isöp. *Ulinala munhwasa* [Our nation's cultural history]. Seoul: Chöngümsa, 1953.
- I Pyöngto. *Kuksa* [National history]. Seoul: Ilchogak, 1956.
- Choi Nam-sun. *Kuksa* [National history]. Seoul: Minjungsagwan, 1960.
- Kim Sangki. *Kodüng kuksa* [Secondary school national history]. Seoul: Changwangsa, 1965
- Sin Sökho. *Kuk sa* [National history]. Seoul: Dongguk munwhasa, 1965.
- I Pyöngto. *Kuk sa* [National history]. Seoul: Iljogak, 1966.
- Ch'oe Namsön. *Ko-düng-guk-sa* [National history for high school]. Seoul: Minjüngsögwan, 1967.
- Yu Hongryöl. *Han-'guk-sa* [Korean history]. Seoul: Tamgudang, 1967.
- I Sangok and Ch'a Munsöp. *Kuk-sa* [National history]. Seoul: Munhosa, 1968.
- I Hongchik. *Kuksa* [National history]. Seoul: Tong-a-ch'ul-p'an-sa, 1969.
- Han Yukon. *Kuksa* [National history]. Seoul: Ulyumunwhasa, 1970.
- Munkyobu. *Ku-sa*, 1971
- Yi Won-sun. *Kuk-sa* [National history]. K'yohaksa, 1971.
- Munkyobu [Ministry of Culture and Education]. *Kuksa*, 1974
- Han'gukkyoyukkaebarwön [Ministry of Culture and Education], *Kuksa*, 1982.
- Ministry of Education, *Kuksa* [National history]. 1989
- Ministry of Education, *Kuksa* [National history]. 1992
- Modern Korean History*, Seoul: Kumkang publishing, 2003
- Chu Jin-oh et al. *Hankuksa* [Korean history], 2011.
- Chung Chaejong. *Hankuksa* [Korean history], 2011.

## Secondary Sources

- Bleiker, Roland and Hoang Young-Ju. "On the Use and Abuse of Korea's Past: An Inquiry into History Teaching and Reconciliation." In *Teaching the Violent Past*, ed. Elizabeth A. Cole, 249-274. Lanham: Rowman & Little Publishers, 2007.
- Choi, Jang Jip. "Political Cleavages in South Korea." In *State and Society in Contemporary Korea*, edited Hagen Koo, 13-50. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993.
- Cumings, Bruce. *The Origins of the Korean War: Liberation and the Creation of Separate Regimes, 1945-1947*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981.
- Gibney, Frank. *Korea's Quiet Revolution: From Garrison State to Democracy*. New York: Walker Publishing Company, 1992.
- Halbwachs, "The Collective Memory." In *The Collective Memory Reader*, edited by Jeffrey K. Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Daneil Levy, 139-149. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Hanley, Charles J, Sang-Hun Choe, and Martha Mendoza. *The Bridge at No Gun Ri: A Hidden Nightmare from the Korean War*. New York: Henry Holt Press, 2001.
- Hunt, Nigel C. *Memory, War and Trauma*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Jager, Sheila M., and Jiyul Kim." The Korean War After the Cold War." In *Ruptured Histories: War, Memory, and the Post-Cold War in Asia*, edited by Sheila M. Jager, 233-265. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007.
- Jager, Sheila M. *Brothers at War: the Unending Conflict in Korea*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2013.
- LaCapra, Domick. *History, Literature, Critical Theory*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013.

- Linantud, John L. "War Memorials and Memories: Comparing the Philippines and South Korea." *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 14 no. 4 (July 2008): 347-361.
- Kim, Dong-Choon. *The Unending Korean War: A Social History*. Translated by Sung-ok Kim. Larkspur: Tamal Vista Publications, 2009.
- Kim, Hun Joon. *The Massacres at Mt. Hala: Sixty Years of Truth Seeking in South Korea*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014.
- Kim, Timothy Jeongyeol and Eun-Jung Kang. "Living with War: The Korean Truce." In *Tourism and War*, edited by Richard Butler and Wantanee Suntikul, 2012. New York: Routledge.
- McCann, David R. "Our Forgotten War." In *America's Wars in Asia: The Korean War in Korean and American Popular Culture*, eds. Philip West, Steven I. Levine, and Jackie Hiltz, 65-82. Armonk, N.Y: M.E. Sharpe, 1998.
- Morris-Suzuki, Tessa. "Remembering the Unfinished Conflict: Museums and the Contested Memory of the Korean War." *Asia-Pacific Journal* 29 (July 2009).
- Oberdorfer, Don. *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History*. Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley, 1997.
- Park, Myung Lim. *The Korean War: The Outbreak and Its Origins*. Seoul, Nanam Press, 2003.
- Roland Bleiker and Young-Ju Hoang. "Remembering and Forgetting the Korean War: From Trauma to Recollection." In *Memory, Trauma and World Politics: Reflections on the Relationship between Past and Present*, edited by Duncan Bell, 2006. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Stueck, William. *The Korean War: An International History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997.



Wada, Haruki. *The Korean War: an International History*. Translated by Frank Baldwin.

Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014.

Yong-Sup Han, "The May Sixteenth Military Coup." In *The Park Chung Hee Era: The Transformation of South Korea*, edited by Byung-Kook Kim and Ezra F. Vogel, 51.