

# **Learning to Forget: the Role of Education in Creating National Memory**

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## **Abstract**

Very few events resonate with the American psyche quite like the Vietnam War. Countless films and songs serve to keep the memory of the Vietnam experience alive, even in those who were not alive to witness it firsthand. It is often remembered as the only “real” war fought by the United States during the Cold War period, but this is not an accurate statement. The first “real” conflict of the Cold War began right as the battle-lines were drawn in 1950, when North Korea crossed the 38th parallel and invaded the South attempting to unify the peninsula on their terms. The Korean War represented the first physical clash between the two ideologies that would dominate the latter half of the 20th century, but its memory and media portrayal do not carry the same impact as that of Vietnam. The primary concern of this thesis is to explore the disparity in representation of the two wars through the medium of school textbooks, and what role the education system plays in emphasizing one over the other.

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## **Introduction: The Forgotten War**

In the United States, the Cold War is viewed largely as a period of competition against the Soviet Union for technological and ideological supremacy in the latter half of the 20th century. The idea of the “Cold” war arose because while the competition varied in intensity, it never truly “went hot”. The ever-present threat of nuclear annihilation meant open conflict between the two superpowers would be too destructive for either side to stomach, but the latter half of the 20th century was not a period of peace. Numerous wars were fought throughout Africa and Asia during this time, with each superpower preferring to fight through proxies as a means to test the resolve of the other (Molloy, 2001, 15). American involvement in Vietnam throughout the 1960’s is one of these “proxy wars”, and it dominates American memory of the entire Cold War period. While the Vietnam War was certainly the longest conflict the United States participated in, it was not the first time the ideological forces of democracy and communism clashed in East Asia.

American foreign policy at the beginning of the Cold War was based on the idea of “Containment”. Containment was the belief that Soviet influence, i.e. communism, must not be allowed to expand, and force was often applied in order to achieve this goal (Mayers, 2007, 289). Coups, authoritarian governments, and open warfare were common outcomes of this policy. The Vietnam War began due to “containment”, for fears that a Communist takeover of South Vietnam would lead to emboldening communist forces throughout Southeast Asia. The United States first attempted to use the authoritarian regime of Ngo Dinh Diem to “contain” communism to North Vietnam, but when that proved unsuccessful they turned to bombs and bullets as a means to halt the spread. Thus began the Vietnam War, whose presence within American memory remains strong. However, the United States fought in another war for similar reasons a decade before President Johnson escalated American involvement in Vietnam. A war which saw thousands of Americans give their lives in the first military clash between the forces of Communism and the West, and which shaped the rest of the Cold War. A war which never officially ended. A war which no one seems to remember. A “Forgotten War” (Park, 2015, 467).

The goal of this thesis is to explore the disparity in representation between both the Korean War and Vietnam War within American memory. There are multiple avenues one could use to answer this question: Perhaps the Korea-shaped hole in American memory is an unfortunate result of the war occurring too soon after the Second World War and just before Vietnam? Media representation offers a more satisfactory explanation. Vietnam has been referred to as “the Uncensored War” due to the graphic news reports beamed directly into American homes (Hallin, 1986, 105). Even after the war, the memory of Vietnam was shaped by media such as movies and music. Watching a movie or listening to a song about the war allows Americans the chance to experience, or “remember”, an event that ended well before they were born (de Carvalho, 2006, 951). The absence of media centering on the Korean War obviously plays a large role in transforming it into the “Forgotten War”, but remembrance of history is not based entirely on what one sees or hears, but what one learns as well.

The education system plays a massive role in how Americans view the world. What one learns as a child directly affects their world-view as an adult, so perhaps the education system plays a role in molding American perception of these wars. This thesis will use educational material as an avenue to approach concepts such as memory and identity; to explore how they are formed, and perhaps even offer an explanation as to why the Korean War has been forgotten. This may seem like a strange topic for a thesis regarding International Relations, but memory and identity transcend their fields of origin and can be integral in understanding actions taken by any actors on the international level. Knowing how a population views itself and its neighbors, and understanding how that view is created can offer insights to their future actions.

This thesis uses the Korean and Vietnam Wars, and their representations within American high-school textbooks, as examples to explore the role the education system has in regards to memory creation. This will be accomplished through analysis of several textbooks spanning the Cold War and beyond, with the analysis being divided into three sections:

The first section will cover textbooks used by school districts from the 1960's to the 1970's. This is a unique time for this analysis, for the Korean War had entered the realm of history but the Vietnam War was very much a current event. Representations of both wars are highly colored by the current events happening on the international sphere. The groundwork for 21st century remembrance of these two wars is laid here.

The next section will look at textbooks from the end of the Vietnam War to the end of the Cold War. The 1980's, while free from the "red scare" that was present in the late 1950's, was not entirely free from the threat of a global conflict. Events such as exercise Able Archer and the shootdown of KAL 007 in 1983 meant that a very tense decade lay ahead. Books published during this time could incorporate the lessons learned from the Vietnam War, and present a view quite different than that seen in earlier books.

The final section will see what representations of both wars will look like in a post-Cold War world. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 freed the world from the shadow cast by global communism, and the removal of America's arch-enemy led to a world where the United States was the sole hegemonic power. How will the Cold War period be represented in the absence of a great "Soviet Bear" acting as a counterweight to the United States?

Questions like these are fascinating, but they cannot begin to be answered without first understanding the core concepts underpinning this exploration. What exactly *are* "memory" and "identity", and how is analysis of educational material with these concepts in mind even possible? The coming sections will detail the historical background to these concepts, how they relate to International Relations, and how they can be applied to objects as mundane as high-school textbooks.

## Literature Review

Concepts such as “memory” and “identity” may seem to have little application outside the realm of psychology, but their importance to fields such as International Relations (IR) has been noted since the 1990’s. The “Constructivist Turn” in IR Theory advocated for a sociological approach to aid interpretation of international politics as a means to provide new insights (Checkel, 1998, 325). While perhaps more method than theory, Constructivism emphasizes the social dimension present in actions taken by states or other non-state actors, and associated literature examines the power that “social groups” wield to influence actions and policies in the international sphere (Finnemore, 1996, 35).

“Social groups” is a catch-all term that can describe any kind of community. Finnemore uses scientists and businesses as two social groups that forced an increase in scientific coordination across many states, but not all “social groups” are so specifically defined (Finnemore, 1996, 35). Language, culture, and geography can all be used to define a “social group” from the perspective of an outsider, but how a “social group” defines *itself* is where “memory” and “identity” come into play.

Much like International Relations, there is also a constructivist approach within psychology which focuses on the idea that “Memory is not a literal reproduction of the past but instead depends on constructive processes that are sometimes prone to errors, distortions, and illusions” (Schacter et al, 1998, 290). Recollection of memories by individuals are rooted in the events that created them and the emotional response caused by doing so. In doing this, a new version of that memory is created which overwrites the previous memory (Gerovitch, 2015, ix). This process of recall and replacement of memories allows individuals to construct a “narrative” that encompasses their entire life, and this personal timeline is what becomes an “identity” (Sacks, 1985, 110).

This specific understanding of how memory works creates the basis for the theoretical framework on which this thesis operates. There is a clear linkage in how individuals remember

the past and how they view themselves, but this process seems to occur only on a personal level. Individuals can construct their own memories of the Korean and Vietnam Wars, either by their physical presence in those conflicts or through conversations with others who were there, but the uneven representation within American memory regarding these two wars must mean this process can occur in a realm that supersedes the individual.

Applying this process, that individuals can create a framework to view the past to contextualize the present, to the national level may seem like an outlandish idea. However, memory has a sizable impact on the political sphere. Eric Langenbacher, in his 2010 book "*Power and the Past*", details numerous examples of state actions that are affected by national memory. Israel and Germany are some of the most prominent cases, for events that took place during the second World War directly inform actions taken by those states today. With Germany specifically, it can be argued that enthusiastic participation in organizations such as the EEC and NATO could be viewed as a tactic to distance the new Germany from the old. Japan is another example, with diplomatic strains with China and South Korea as a direct result of national remembrance of all Japanese war dead, which includes some war criminals, associated with the Yasukuni shrine (Langenbacher, 2010, 15). These examples show that memory has a place for discussion within International Relations, but how can memory be transformed from something personal to affecting an entire group?

This is a question that researchers have been thinking about for a long time. The 19th century saw attempts at explaining memory on the group level as something more biological than psychological (Matzel, 2002, 201). "Genetic" memory was a theory that posited memories were objects that could physically become part of the human genome. This physical form could persist throughout generations, allowing individuals to "remember" events that happened long before they were born. This view attempted to explain why different groups acted in certain ways, and was used in part to justify colonial expansion by the various European powers of the time. The racial slant inherent to "genetic" memory and lack of scientific proof led many 20th century psychologists to seek a more convincing theory on how groups choose to remember.



## **Collective Memory**

Group memory as we understand it today took shape in the middle of the 20th century, when French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs published “*La Memoire Collective*”, or “*The Collective Memory*”. It was quite a departure from the biological approach to memory present in the previous century. Instead of a biological explanation for how memories can be integrated into societies, Halbwachs proposed a sociological approach that views memory as a metaphysical object that shapes both the individual and the group. Halbwachs’ theory operates on the idea that there are two types of memory that must operate in unison for collective remembrance to occur.

“Autobiographical” memory is the first of the two, and this category encompasses all memories contained within an individual. Events and experiences deemed important are placed within the framework of an individual’s own personality (Halbwachs, 1950, 50). This is the basis for the constructed view of memory discussed earlier, but autobiographical memory is not only limited to the individual. Halbwachs stressed that an individual’s “memory framework” varies based on the culture and environment one grows up in. Instead of an individual creating their own framework, reflections of cultural and societal norms directly influence what is important for emphasis. Autobiographical memory can not exist within a vacuum, for it needs some form of wider society to guide its creation. Halbwachs describes it as an “inward memory”, where events from the “outward” memory are drawn in and reconfigured into a form that fits an individual’s personal framework (Halbwachs, 1950, 52). This “outward” memory constitutes the second type of memory posited by Halbwach: the “historical” memory.

Historical memory appears to be the opposite of autobiographical memory. It is broad, and consists of many topics such as history, language, and culture. It cannot represent reality in the detailed way autobiographical memory does, for it offers a condensed view of the past shaped by a specific view of past events. In this sense it is the inverse of autobiographical memory, for the individual decides what parts of history are relevant for remembrance. Historical memory

consists of an amorphous cloud called “the past”, and is constantly affected by the personal frameworks of the individuals who all share it.

The two distinct halves of Halbwachs’ theory work together in unison to create a system where memories are not necessarily held by the individual. They are also the “products of symbols and narratives available publicly” (Olick, 1999, 335). These symbols and narratives can consist of many different things within society, from the historical dates and events from which Halbwachs named “Historical” memory, to more modern fixtures such as movies or television shows. It is up to the individual to process these outside factors and use them to recall previous events. This explanation of Collective Memory goes far to explain why the Vietnam War is remembered more vividly than the earlier Korean War. The advent of television and the live broadcasts directly from the warzone did much to sear the Vietnam experience into the American psyche. Even after the war ended, numerous songs and films created about the War served to push the memory of Vietnam well into the 21st century.

The original ideas behind Collective Memory focus on the relationship the individual has with the greater society they grew up in, and it is the individual’s responsibility to choose what aspects of society are worth remembering by placing them into their personal framework. However, this does not seem like a particularly convincing explanation for understanding how certain events become ingrained within a national psyche. How are symbols and emotions chosen to represent such things on a national level? It is unlikely Halbwachs’ historical memory can function to construct a national narrative without some driving force behind it. The ideas behind this ubiquitous collection of “symbols and narratives” are ones worth remembering in regards to this topic, but perhaps more recent research can provide a more compelling explanation for the construction of national narratives.

## **Social Representations Theory**

Another theory with roots in the mid-20th century may provide the insights required for a newer application of collective memory to the national level. Serge Moscovici, a French social psychologist who was fascinated by group psychology, conceptualized a theory that focused more on how groups construct narratives rather than narratives constructing groups. The core of this theory is based on the idea of “social objects”, and their purpose as designing how a community should behave and communicate. Elaborating on the purpose of a social object allows it to transform into a “social representation” (Moscovici, 1963, 251). Moscovici’s original idea for a social object was a “*scientific theory which inflects a society’s behavior, way of thinking, and language*” (Moscovici, 1963, 251). This idea is what became known as “Social Representation Theory” (SRT), but research into this topic has progressed quite far since 1963.

James Liu and Denis Hilton seek to take SRT further with the introduction of a “charter” that each group has. Charters represent a core part of group identity, for it contains an account of that group's origin and historical mission (Liu and Hilton, 2005, 538). The fascinating aspect of charters is that they can change over time in response to outside events, and can be used similarly to Halbwachs idea of autobiographical memory as a framework for which that group can contextualize its place in the world. The historical framework constructed by a group can then be used to accomplish a variety of goals, which Hirst, Yamashiro, and Coman identify as “three functions for social representations of history” (Hirst et al, 2018, 440)

The first of these functions allows a group to “*manage potential conflict by keeping track of their friends and enemies*” (Hirst et al, 2018, 440). This function is rather self-explanatory, and its application can be seen in the international sphere today. Certain groups refuse to cooperate based on historical events which placed them on opposite sides of an issue. Conversely, a historical sense of friendship and mutual cooperation allows certain actors to ally on many issues although their elected leaders may personally be at odds. It may also be used to construct new enemies by “remembering” and emphasizing certain aspects of prior interactions.

The second function is one of the more interesting ones. Its focus is on the construction of group identity by “*varying access to or altering the interpretation of past actions*” (Hirst et al, 2018, 440). This allows group leadership to emphasize or erase certain aspects of historical events to portray a very specific view of the past. This function offers a very granular usage of the historical framework, and allows whatever group is in power to portray reality in whatever way they see fit. This is an immensely powerful function, especially in regards to narrative formation. It’s difficult to fully understand why certain events transpired if one doesn’t receive the entire story and the rise of “Fake News” and “Alternative Facts” show the effects controlling or obfuscating information has in regards to perceiving events.

The final function focuses on “lessons from history” (Hirst et al, 2018, 440). The argument behind this is that a group can predict or avoid future events based on what happened in this past. This is not a new concept. The famous quote “*Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it*” originated in the early 20th century, but learning from past mistakes remains important to this day (Santayana, 1905, 257). This function can be seen in action when analyzing recent American foreign policy decisions, with ventures of dubious successes such as the 2003 invasion of Iraq showing that the United States has not taken the lessons learned in Vietnam to heart (Brigham, 2006, 165).

These three functions work in unison to continuously redefine a groups’ “charter” through constant construction and reconstruction of historical frameworks. Research on this topic has been done through analysis of the perception of colonialism, specifically Belgiums’ colonial past (Licata, 2010, 47). It appears that there is a generational divide on the subject, with older Belgians viewing their relationship with the Congolese as paternalistic, as in they were there to support the native Congolese the same way a father would support his son. These older Belgians grew up in a time where Belgium was a colonial power, and the natural resources of the Congo fueled economic growth and in return Belgium would “civilize” the territory to prepare it for self-governance. At least, that’s the rationale the government used to maintain the status quo of the time. However, the following generation of Belgians view the colonial period in a totally

opposite manner; it was a brutal period of repression that the Belgian state must repay in some way. This shift in perception of the colonial narrative was quite rapid, and this is due in part to the rapid reconfiguration of that groups' charter. The central issue of this thesis is how that charter is constructed in the first place, and hopes to use an oft-overlooked section of media studies to do so.

While they may not be as flashy as big-budget blockbuster movies, textbooks offer a different perspective into societies that other forms of media cannot. This is partly due to their role as educational material, but also because they are inherently political. The “legitimate knowledge” presented within textbooks are the result of complex power relations across many different levels of society resulting in particular constructions of reality (Apple, 1992, 5). Every fact published within them was selected for a reason, and understanding why they were chosen and how they are represented can illuminate the thought processes of those in power at the time. Understanding the three functions of historical SRT and their roles in creating a “charter” can provide a framework to analyze the way information on events is presented within educational texts, and how that presentation has changed. Children read textbooks as part of their educational curriculum, and absorb the social representations encoded within whether they realize it or not. Approaching the issue of Vietnam/Korean War representation within American identity and how it has changed from an educational perspective is certainly a unique one, but it also has its own set of challenges that must be overcome.

## **Research Design**

The first of these challenges is also the most obvious: what textbooks to analyze? This is not helped by the convoluted way the United States handles the selection and distribution of textbooks throughout the country. Each state handles this decision in their own way without the involvement of the federal government. Some states, like Pennsylvania and New York, prefer to leave the process of textbook selection to each individual school district within the state (Scudella, 2013, 2). Combine this with the multiple different publishing companies that school districts may decide to purchase from, and this creates a scenario where neighboring towns may

use vastly different materials for their curricula.

However, not all states use this process. Texas is one of the few states that has the state government compile a list of acceptable textbooks for their school districts to choose from. This presents an ideal environment to approach the central question from. The books on the Texas “Current Adoption” list of educational materials have been chosen for a reason *by* the state government itself, so the messages contained within must have been viewed as valid or important enough for students to understand. The government of Texas has been using this method of textbook selection throughout the 20th century and into the 21st, presenting a wealth of material that can potentially be accessed to gain a deeper understanding of these wars in one of America’s largest and most populous states.

This solution to the issue of textbook selection is far from perfect. Texas, while physically and demographically a sizable part of the United States, cannot represent the entire “American Psyche”. The remembrance of the Korean and Vietnam Wars, and their representation within educational material will certainly be different in each state. However, it appears there was not a great variety among American history textbooks designed for high-school before the 1980’s, for the textbooks analysed for this paper were used in school districts throughout the country (TCAT lists 1956, 1961, 1970) . That lack of variety is both a blessing and a curse, for while it made selecting textbooks quite easy it was difficult to actually find editions that had information pertinent for this thesis.

The original plan for this research project was to analyse a textbook from each decade throughout the cold war in order to gain a small glimpse into what textbooks the government of Texas thought were appropriate for their high-schools. However, a major issue arose in regards to the planned time-scale. Textbooks are slow to update and incorporate new information. Many books on the required lists for the early 1950’s had the most recent edition published in the late 1940’s. For a project interested in how the Korean and Vietnam Wars were represented within

academic materials, this was not ideal. As a result, the time-scale has been shifted 10 years from the 1960's to the early 1990's.

With the main issue of selection completed, the next challenge is figuring out how exactly to analyze them. Earlier sections of this thesis introduced the ideas behind “Social Representation Theory”, and how ideas such as charters and the three functions can operate to form historical narratives. While the basis of those was rather theoretical, a paper by Birgitte Höijer outlines a process that applies the methodologies behind SRT to media studies. She calls this process “anchoring”, and it utilizes language and imagery to transform the abstract social representation into reality.

Anchoring is a process which occurs whenever social representations are communicated. Meaning is attached to new social representations by contextualizing them through older representations (Höijer, 2011). This “anchors” new information with that already held by a group, and allows the group to incorporate new social representations quickly. The basis for Höijer's argument comes from Stuart Hall's 1973 piece “Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse” which touches upon aspects of SRT in regards to analysis of television programming. Höijer directly quotes Halls' research, for it encapsulates what anchoring is:

*“New, problematic or troubling things and events, which breach our expectancies and run counter [...] to our ‘taken for granted’ knowledge of social structures, must be assigned to their connotational domains before they can be said to ‘make sense’: and the most common way of ‘mapping them’ is to assign the new within [...] the existing ‘maps of problematic social reality’”*  
(Hall, 1973, 13).

This sounds like a simple process, but there is depth due to its ability to operate across a number of different levels. These levels range from the surface level of names to the deeper realms of emotions and ‘themes’. Höijer provides brief definitions of how anchoring works in these different areas, and her theories form the backbone of the actual analysis of the selected textbooks.

The quickest way to immediately contextualize new information or phenomena is done through “naming”. This is an explicit form of anchoring, for new social representations are given “names” that allow individuals within a group to understand them (Höijer, 2011). A breaking scandal may be difficult to explain or understand, but adding the suffix “-gate” to a noun central to the issue immediately defines the event as an illegal act that is grand in scale by contextualizing it in relation to the scandal that eventually saw the resignation of Richard Nixon from the American presidency. Höijer does provide limitations to this process, for it is all too easy for ‘naming’ to create stereotypes and perpetuate negative connotations associated with them. “Naming” something can transform an abstract issue into something recognizable by placing it within recognizable frames of references (Höijer, 2011, 8).

Diving deeper into the realm of anchoring provides a slightly more complex way for groups to incorporate new social representations by tapping into the emotional level. Höijer refers to this as “emotional anchoring”. Emotional anchoring is “a communicative process by which a new phenomenon is fastened to well-known emotions” (Höijer, 2011, 9). This process attaches new information to a desired emotional response, allowing the group to react accordingly and transforming the unknown into the known. Höijer cites her earlier work to describe how the media emotionally anchors climate change by using a “mixture of emotions such as fear, hope, guilt, compassion, and nostalgia” (Höijer, 2010, 727). In regards to this thesis, it can be assumed there will be similar emotional language used to contextualize both the Korean and Vietnam Wars so analyzing textbooks with this process in mind may lead to some interesting insight as to how portrayal of the wars was designed.

The next form of anchoring Höijer describes occurs at a very base level. “Thematic anchoring” ties social representations to a nebulous idea Moscovici called “theme”, by using metaphors or other underlying “categories of meaning” (Höijer, 2011, 9). “Themes” are rather difficult to describe, but Höijer cites work by Michael Billig and Teun van Dijk in the early 1990’s that emphasize the socially constructed nature of ideologies to compare those to Moscovici’s socially constructed “themes”. Examples of themes could be any closely-held ideal for a group.



Individualism, egalitarianism, and even nationalism are themes that new phenomena can be anchored to by using specific language. The implicit (or explicit) political bias present in textbooks provides a great environment for this type of anchoring to take place, so the analytical process will take note of what “themes” the authors desire to tap into. Why would certain themes be chosen, and if the thematic aspect will change the further away from both wars the textbooks get.

Anchoring operates primarily through language. How events are described and the wording used can tell much about how they were supposed to be interpreted. However, textbooks are not purely textual. Imagery can be used to great effect in contextualizing new information, and Höijer provides a similar process for imagery analysis. “Objectification” seeks to transform the abstract to the concrete, much like anchoring, but it is primarily concerned with imagery instead of text (Höijer, 2011, 12). The kind of imagery used in these textbooks can help tell a story not explicitly told in the text, so this secondary process is important to keep in mind throughout the analytical process.

These applications of SRT to media studies are invaluable to this project. Both the Korean and Vietnam Wars occurred in a time where the United States was thrust into a place of global leadership. This is a very different scenario compared to a few decades before, where many Americans felt it was not their place to fight in foreign wars (Leffler, 2017, 78). The stark contrast between the political isolationism of the 1930’s and the willingness by the American government to engage in various anticommunist arenas during the Cold War represents a new form of American identity shaped by the triumph of democracy in the second World War. The strategies of anchoring and objectification can be used to make sense of this new identity, for images and language present in textbooks were specifically chosen to construct certain narratives. Chronologically analyzing textbooks using the strategies outlined by Höijer can reveal how perception of the Korean and Vietnam wars changed, and could explore the reasoning as to why one has become so central to American identity and the other relegated to the footnotes of history.

## **Section I: Korea and Vietnam as battles of Good vs. Evil**

### **Rise of the American Nation**

The oldest textbook that was both readily available *and* relevant to the topic at hand is “*Rise of the American Nation*”, by Lewis Paul Todd. Originally published in 1930, this book was one of those recommended by the Texas Board of Education for use during the 1961 school year. This version of the book has been modernized from its original version, with a reprint in 1961 *and* an additional 1964 addendum. This year was incredibly important for American foreign policy, as it marked a massive surge in military support for South Vietnam, but portrayal of the Vietnam War is limited to the 1954 war fought between the Viet Minh and France (Lin, 2009, 35).

One can see thematic anchoring immediately by reading the title. “*Rise of the American Nation*” brings to mind the idea that the “rise” precipitated by victory in the second World War is not quite at its peak. The American people have risen to take their rightful place at the helm of the international system. This implicit view of the international system seems outdated by today’s standards, but the period in which this book was published saw the United States rapidly ascend to the forefront of global affairs. The responsibility for rebuilding post-war Europe and Asia fell to the United States, for no other state could handle this mighty task. The text within provides more explicit examples to substantiate this world-view, but the cover does much to prepare the reader for the kind of language used within.

Further examples of thematic anchoring occur within the chapter covering the Cold War. It is in this chapter that the Korean War is explored, but much of the context is given by analysis of Soviet-American competition in Europe immediately following the second World War. The idea that the United States acts as a “protector” or stabilizing force for the “free world” takes center-stage in this chapter. This mindset was popularized with President Roosevelt’s speech proclaiming the United States would act as an “Arsenal of Democracy”, and it manifested in the post-war years through programs such as the “Marshall Plan”(U.S. Department of State, 1983, 598). The language used throughout this section continually reinforces this ideal with statements

such as their “*generous response to the need for assistance*” and “*bitter objections to Soviet aggression*” (Todd & Curti, 1964, 783/784).

A protector is only necessary if there is something to be protected from. This book, and the others in this section, make it abundantly clear that the entire post-war system is in danger of collapse due to the actions by the agents of communism. Communists are represented as a monolithic force, who seek to undermine the United States at every turn. In “*Rise of the American Nation*”, the Soviet Union is represented as the root cause of all post-war issues and as a state that must be stopped at all costs. Naming is also used in a bizarre way to help American students understand the severity of the Soviet threat, by equating this new enemy with an old one. The Soviets are accused of sending “*their Moscow-trained Communists into nearly every country on the face of the Earth*”, and this strategy is used to define them as “*the heir to Nazi methods of expansion*” (Todd & Curti, 1964, 783/784).

Direct comparisons between the post-war Soviet Union and Nazi Germany are more common in textbooks of the mid-1960’s than one might have assumed. While these comparisons are not accurate, they do help contextualize the post-war world in a way that is easy for anyone to understand. Instead of trying to understand Communist ideology, and the issues they have with capitalist societies, a broad brush is used to paint the emerging Cold War not as a conflict between two different world-views, but as a struggle between “Good” and “Evil”. Anchoring the new threat faced by the United States directly to a previous threat is a textbook usage of naming, but it also removes much of the nuance present in those events seen during the 1950’s. Through naming, this book simplifies the entire early Cold War period into a binary scenario. Presenting communists as “Evil” implicitly presents those that fight against them as “Good”, which ties into the view perpetuated by this textbook that the United States is a selfless entity who *must* stand up to communism wherever it appears. This may also bring to mind the first function of historical SRT, where explicit definition of friends and enemies is used by groups to understand their position in the world.

This mindset permeates the portrayal of the Korean War in *“Rise of the American Nation”*. The “unhappy situation” on the Korean peninsula is not a result of the post-war split on the 38th parallel but because of Soviet refusal to agree with the international community on the legitimate government of a unified Korea (Todd & Curti, 1964, 790). As a result, the North invaded the South in the effort to unify the country on their own terms. Emotional anchoring can be seen throughout this section, for the Soviet Union and North Korean are portrayed as bullies, and South Korea as too weak to defend itself. The South Korean army was “hopelessly outnumbered” by the invaders from the North, and they were unable to “*stand up against the enormous, heavily armored, soviet-made tanks of the North Korean Army*” (Todd & Curti, 1964, 790). The “major burden of defending South Korea” became the responsibility of the United States, and only cursory mention of the United Nations involvement in formulating a response to communist aggression is made. Glossing over U.N. involvement in the war may be a way the authors are unintentionally using the second function of SRT to portray the United States as the sole champion of democracy in the international system.

Thematic anchoring seems to be the main mechanism used throughout this chapter as a means to formulate a pro-American view on the Korean War. Metaphors were described by Höijer as an aspect of thematic anchoring, and there are a few used in this section. The repulsion of the initial invasion due to General MacArthur’s surprise landing at Inchon is described as “the tide turning” against North Korean forces (Todd & Curti, 1964, 790). Likewise, the intervention by Chinese “volunteers” as the U.N. forces approached the Yalu river showed the “tide turning” again. While these are apt descriptors for the “rubber band” nature of the War, they also imply the conflict as a cyclical event whose fluidity makes it difficult to end. Perhaps this is reading too much into a school textbook from 50 years ago, but it seems to subconsciously reinforce the idea that the war is almost a natural occurrence due to the incompatibility of democracy and communism and wars like it will happen whenever the two ideologies come into contact.

For all the anti-communist sentiment present in the first part of this chapter, it is quite surprising that this book views American efforts in Korea as a total failure. “*U.N. troops, mostly Americans,*

*continued to fight - and many to die- for a war in which there seemed to be no solution*” (Todd & Curti, 1964, 792). The anchoring used throughout this textbook is clearly designed to portray the United States as the sole protagonist against the antagonistic forces of communism, so a positive spin on the outcome of the Korean War was expected. Initially, it seemed like there would be: The Chinese ‘volunteers’ who “swarmed” over the Yalu river and “*hurled themselves against U.N. forces- only to be killed by the thousands*” does much to portray the Chinese army as a mindless force comparable to an ant colony (Todd & Curti, 1964, 792). Perhaps the lack of a clear victory to a force portrayed in this way is unacceptable to the authors of this book, because the title states the American people are “rising” and emphasizing a stalemate would do much to dent that ideal.

The final pages of the chapter contextualize the outcome of the war through the disagreement between President Truman and General MacArthur, where Truman wished to “contain” communism in North Korea and MacArthur wished to escalate the war by bombing mainland China. The events of the war conclude in a later chapter, with a brief section describing how Stalin’s death led to a Soviet Union that was “*more conciliatory to the United States, and the free world*” (Todd & Curti, 1964, 802).

Immediately following the section ending the Korean War is one labelled “Crisis in Indo-China”. The naming strategies of the previous chapter are in full force. With communism described as the single greatest threat faced by the international community during this time, the mere epithet of “Communist” is used to clearly describe who the villains are in any future scenario. The Viet Minh, an independence movement created to fight against imperialism, is simply described as a “communist group” (Todd & Curti, 1964, 803). This leads to a very inaccurate portrayal of the Indochina war, for if communism represents “evil” then whoever is fighting them is “good”. This textbook unabashedly takes this stance, by stating the Viet Minh were “*fighting to win control of the entire country from the French and their loyal, anti-communist allies, the Vietnamese*” (Todd & Curti, 1964, 803).

The first Indochina War was primarily a struggle for independence *against* French colonial rule, but this textbook seems to peddle a very binary view of the world. According to this book, any actor in the international system is either a communist, or a “free nation”. The idea of colonialism, and how morally reprehensible it *should* be to the “free world” is totally ignored. It is easier to say the Vietnamese were “loyal allies” of the French, instead of “subjects”, for the ardent support the United States gave a colonial power in stamping out an independence movement may be hard to explain to high-school students without contextualizing it in that “good-versus-evil” mindset. According to this textbook, American involvement in Vietnam began when “*it became clear that Communist China was actively aiding the Vietminh*” (Todd & Curti, 1964, 803), which follows the same pattern that started the Korean War; the Communists continually push the boundaries of acceptable behavior, and the United States must act to stop them.

Aside from a short mention of the 1960 election that saw John F. Kennedy ascend to the presidency, there is only that brief mention of American involvement in Vietnam seen on page 803. While the period commonly associated with memory of the War had not quite happened, the previous 10 years of American involvement was not explored. Perhaps it would be difficult for the authors to justify support of an imperial power in suppressing its people while simultaneously professing a love of self-determination.

### **History of a Free People**

The next book, “*History of a Free People*” by Bragdon, has much in common with “*Rise of the American Nation*” in regards to representation of the United States and its enemies. However, there are enough differences between the two to make discussion of this text worthwhile. This edition was published in 1969, 5 years after “*Rise of the American Nation*”, but earlier versions of the text date back to the 1950’s. As such, the strong anti-communist slant is still present, but recent developments such as the severe backlash against the escalation in Vietnam in 1964 allow this text to offer a viewpoint quite different than that seen previously.

While “Communism” is still presented as a faceless enemy that can strike anywhere, it was surprising to see some effort was spent to explain what exactly Communism is. It is described as a “*crusade against poverty and oppression*”, but further discussion on that point is absent (Bragdon, 1969, 703). If this is what communists truly stand for, then how can the United States, a beacon of freedom, fight *for* poverty and oppression? This line of thought might be too complex for a high school textbook, so familiar naming schemes can be seen in statements such as “*the new antagonist was in many ways more dangerous than the Axis*” and “*the Communists are probably more dangerous opponents than the Fascists*”, allowing for usage of the simple “Good” vs. “Evil” argument as seen previously (Bragdon, 1969, 703).

The textual representation of the Korean War is also quite similar to “*Rise of the American Nation*”. Seeking a “cheap victory”, the communists decided to unify Korea once the American forces withdrew in 1950 (Bragdon, 1969, 713). The start of the war is marked by “*Russian-trained North Korean armies invading South Korea without warning*”, again highlighting Soviet involvement in fomenting a new global crisis (Bragdon, 1969, 713). The solution to this crisis is not presented as the sole responsibility of the United States in this textbook, for the United Nations Security Council is portrayed as the force responsible for coordinating a multilateral response. Aside from these points, there is a surprising lack of information on the Korean War. Most of the chapter is devoted to describing the conflict between General MacArthur and President Truman, and their diverging views on how to end the War.

While the text may not offer much insight into the War, this book uses imagery as a means to contextualize the impact it had on both soldiers and civilians. A photograph depicting a Korean family on the side of the road (fig. 1), with all their worldly possessions on their backs, can be viewed as an attempt at emotional objectification. The caption to this image does much to strengthen the emotional connection to the Korean War.



Figure 1:  
"The Korean War brought great suffering to the inhabitants"  
History of a Free People, 1967, page 712



Figure 2  
"At its close, the fighting resembled that in France in World War I,  
as is suggested by this sketch of infantrymen coming back from the  
front as American artillery lays down a barrage."  
History of a Free People, 1967, page 712

A cartoon is also used to illustrate the conditions U.N. soldiers fought in (fig. 2), and its caption directly compares the fighting in Korea to that of the first World War. The high cost of offensive maneuvers led to both sides "digging-in", and very little territory would be exchanged. These two images serve to objectify the war in a way the text cannot, by highlighting the real affects the war had on those who had to participate in it. This provides a more nuanced representation of the war than the text alone. It was not a climactic battle between democracy and the forces of communism, it was a bloody, brutal war that saw hundreds of thousands of soldiers and civilians lose their lives (Hickey, 2011). The closest the text gets to this point is a brief sentence in the section covering the peace agreement, where the fighting was described as a "costly and frustrating struggle" (Bragdon, 1969, 727). However, the intervention by the United States "*accomplished its primary aim of stopping Communist Aggression*" (Bragdon, 1969, 727), which seems to be the authors attempting to place a positive spin on three years of war with no clear victor.

Much like the previous text, the paragraph concluding the Korean War is immediately followed by a section detailing the unrest in French Indochina. Unlike "*Rise of the American Nation*", the



conflict is described as a struggle for independence from France rather than another communist plot to overthrow the western world. Statements such as “*Japanese victories early in World War II destroyed the myth of European invincibility, and whetted the appetites of Asians for self-rule*” (Bragdon, 1969, 727) contextualize this conflict in a way not necessarily limited by the “Democracy vs. Communism” lens seen previously. Another change evident in this paragraph is the mention of Ho Chi Minh, who is named as the leader of a nationalist movement first and Communist second. However, he is still a Communist, so special mention is made of his training in Russia and China subtly insinuating this “independence struggle” may be another Communist plot to undermine the global system. This viewpoint may have been used to help explain Eisenhower’s “*Domino Theory*” within the text, for the background information for what would become the Vietnam War describes efforts by the United States to create an anti-communist front in Southeast Asia through organizations like SEATO and support for the “rather shaky regime” in South Vietnam (Bragdon, 1969, 728).

The section on the Vietnam War is a major surprise. There are two entire pages dedicated to American involvement in the conflict, which makes sense due to the massive increase in troop levels started in 1964. The content of these pages, not the length, show the war was already viewed *very* differently from previous Cold War conflicts. The “black-and-white” mindset that so easily explained the 1950’s does not seem to apply in the world of the 60’s. A quote near the beginning of the section details exactly how the authors choose to present this ongoing war:

*“To pour money, material, and even men into the jungles of Indochina would be dangerously futile and self-destructive... I am frankly of the belief that no amount of American military assistance can conquer an enemy which is everywhere, and at the same time nowhere, and enemy of the people which has the sympathy and covert support of the people”*  
- Senator John F. Kennedy, 1954 (Bragdon, 1969, 761)

This text views the Korean War as a necessary reaction to defend South Korea from Communist aggression, but the escalating war in Vietnam is portrayed as a fool’s errand from the start. In the Korean War, “*The United States fought as an agent of the United Nations; and the South Koreans fought well to defend themselves*” (Bragdon, 1969, 761). This is a stark contrast to the

situation in Vietnam, presented both as a civil war *and* an anti-communist intervention, where victory would be impossible.

The actual fighting was described as “*a dirty, ruthless, wandering war*” (765), and the choice of words used in this section offers hints of a balanced view between both sides of the conflict . The Vietcong are described as “*using revolting terrorism against civilians*” , but the Americans are not described as protectors of freedom and democracy (Bragdon, 1969, 765). The sentence “*American bombs and napalm dropped on villages supposedly held by the Vietcong took the lives of thousands of noncombatants*” is proof of this, and begins to dig deeper into some of the complex themes associated with the Vietnam War (Bragdon, 1969, 763) .



Figure 3:  
“*Three U.S. Marines carry a wounded fellow soldier from the ruins of Huế, South Vietnam.*”  
History of a Free People, 1967, page 761

A sense of hopelessness pervades all aspects of this section. There is one singular image used to represent the entire section (fig. 3). The bombed ruins of Hue, more closely resembling the lunar surface than a city, and three American Marines carrying their wounded comrade to safety. The caption states the contents of the image matter-of-factly, with no attempt to contextualize it in regards to current or past events. This image, coupled with statements describing the war as “*carrying on in a hopeless position and suffering eventual defeat*” and “*The Vietnam war*

*dragged on with no near prospect of victory*” provide a very depressed look at the War well before it would finally end in 1975 (Bragdon, 1969, 761/764).

### **The Free and the Brave: the Story of the American People**

The third and final book in this section is *“The Free and the Brave: the Story of the American People”* by Henry Graff, and published in 1970. This textbook follows the trend set by the two texts that came before, but there is a new emphasis on the role of the U.N. in response to North Korean aggression. However, the same binary world-view seen before is still present. Like before, communism is presented as a global threat. *“The goal of Communists has always been to control the world”* by *“destroying the freedom of the people”* (Graff, 1970, 675). This seems to be following in the same track as previous texts, but aside from that brief section offering a bizarre definition of the ideology there are rarely any negative references or uses of the term throughout the entire chapter. Important events in the post-war years, such as the Communist victory in China and Korean War, are viewed rather clinically. There are no references to *“soviet-trained”* agents seeking to undermine American influence in the name of global Communism in this book. North Korea did not *“swarm over the border with their horde of soviet-made tanks”*, but simply *“invaded South Korea hoping to gain control of the whole country”* (Graff, 1970, 679).

*“For the first time in history, the strength of many nations was being drawn together to put an end to aggression.”*

Graff, 1970, 679

Previous texts placed much emphasis on MacArthur’s landing at Inchon as the first strike in defense against North Korean aggression, but this book views the most important act in the early days of the war as the first time the UN cooperated to solve a global crisis. The term *“UN Forces”* is used throughout this section to describe the soldiers serving in Korea, except for a single paragraph near the end. The naval landing and subsequent push towards the Yalu river were due to the effort of UN forces, and not only attributed to one man.

Previous texts placed great emphasis on General MacArthur. It was he who “swept” the North Koreans out of the South and rolled up towards the Yalu, where the “tide turned” against him when the Chinese launched their counteroffensive. In this book, the U.N. forces “easily retook” Seoul (Graff, 1970, 679) and *their* advance was only stopped when Chinese Communists, no mention of ‘volunteers’, entered the fighting. This newfound emphasis on the United Nations does not “cover up” American involvement, for statements such as “*most of the soldiers proved to be Americans*” and “*the move, skillfully conducted by the United States Navy and Marines*” makes it clear that the United States was responsible for much of the fighting, and dying, done by the U.N. troops (Graff, 1970, 679). After the Chinese entered the war, the book no longer mentions UN troops fighting in Korea. “*American troops [...] under-went a fierce attack in bitter-cold weather*”. “*Our men retreated, suffering as few Americans have ever suffered in battle*” (Graff, 1970, 680). Out of all the soldiers fighting in Korea, the book emphasizes that the fighting faced by the Americans was incredibly difficult and no other nation suffered as greatly as the US. The winter of 1950-51 is mentioned, with “*Weapons and food froze, and there were terrible casualties from frostbite*” helping to further contextualize just how awful the fighting was (Graff, 1970, 680).

Like the other books in this section, the ongoing crisis in Vietnam is only briefly mentioned. The “Nasty War in Vietnam” is described as a direct result of Sino-Soviet infighting, and Chinese desire to spread their influence in Southeast Asia drew the United States into “*large-scale fighting in South Vietnam*” (Graff, 1970, 689). Although American soldiers had been deeply engaged in the conflict for several years at the time this book was published, there is little mention of what exactly was happening in Vietnam at the time. The book ends on a positive note, for the peace talks of 1968/69 are described as hopefully leading to a brighter future.

## Section II: The folly of the “Imperial Presidency”

### An American History

The first book covered in this section is “*An American History Volume II: From 1865 to the Present*” by Rebecca Gruver. A major difference is immediately evident from the previous textbooks, in that the title does not reference the words “nation”, “people”, or “free” in any way. The lack of nationalistic flair in the title translates into the body of text as well, with the fiery rhetoric used to describe the Soviet Union as an actor seeking to upend the international system is absent. Communism in this text is used simply as an adjective to describe the governments of various international actors, like China and North Korea, and not to describe the faceless force seeking to undermine the United States at every turn.

This more balanced view of the international sphere during the 1950’s allows for the Korean War to be portrayed quite differently from those books of the previous section. The initial invasion by the North is portrayed as a result of posturing by both sides of the 38th parallel, for “*Both North and South Korea sought control of the entire nation*” (Gruver, 1985, 820). A conflict between the two is made to seem inevitable because “*both governments developed large armies equipped with weapons supplied by their respective backers*” , it just so happened the North decided to strike first (Gruver, 1985, 820).

Another major difference from previous texts is that there is conscious effort by the authors to distance Soviet involvement in the conflict. “*Although the Russians were probably aware of the invasion plan, it is unlikely they were directly responsible*” and “*Russia gave little aid to Korea or to China during the conflict*” provide opposite views to those seen prior, for they go against the “*Soviet-made*” and “*Soviet trained*” adjectives used in the past (Gruver, 1985, 820).

This is the first time, in the textbooks analyzed so far, that the Korean War label is a bit of a misnomer. Although American soldiers made up the majority of the U.N. forces, Congress never formally declared war on North Korea. “Police action” is the terminology used by President

Truman describing the response by the international community on this matter. Although there is special mention of this, the textbook uses “War” to describe the events on the Korean peninsula. This set the stage for a “limited war”, with the original goal to push the North Korean army back across the 38th parallel with both halves of Korea left intact.

The entire section on the Korean War is not necessarily about the war itself. Events in Korea are portrayed as an extension of the disagreement President Truman and General MacArthur had during this time. Originally Truman and MacArthur were in agreement as to how the war would be handled. Truman disagreed with the assessment that “*Korea was non-vital to American security*”, and after deliberation in the U.N. sent General MacArthur to head the defense of South Korea (Gruver, 1985, 820). As the war went on, there appeared to be a divergence in their approaches to the war. The textbook portrays General MacArthur as brash, with special mention of him carrying the war into North Korea and him convincing Truman that “*Chinese threats were only a bluff*” (Gruver, 1985, 821). This portrayal of the two feeds into the discussion surrounding MacArthur’s firing in 1951 which has been seen throughout the previous texts.

With all the focus on MacArthur and Truman, there is little space for describing the conditions suffered by the soldiers who served in Korea. There is no mention of casualty numbers, or money spent on the war, with the entire war wrapped up with one sentence. “*In June 1951 a cease-fire ended the heaviest fighting*” (Gruver, 1985, 823). A polite way to say the war ended with no clear victor, and they describe the following 2 years of the war as “*peace talks, accompanied by sporadic raids, dragged on until July 1953*” (Gruver, 1985, 823).



Figure 4

*"Like other wars that were to follow, the Korean War produced thousands of refugees"*

An American History, 1985, page 821

Much effort was spent to provide a more balanced approach to the first armed conflict of the Cold War, but discussion of how it actually affected both soldiers and civilians is nonexistent. There is one image which offers a glimpse of how the war actually was (fig. 4). The emphasis on refugees in the caption, coupled with the image of Koreans fleeing the fighting with only what they could carry shows the War was much more than background to a debate between Truman and MacArthur.

This textbook, like others before it, also takes a positive stance on the outcome of the war. However, the aspects it chooses to focus on are a bit strange. Rather than highlighting this as the first time the international community had unified to face a common threat, this book details the "rapid expansion of the American military" immediately following the war (Gruver, 1985, 823). Increased budgets and personnel levels allowed the United States to increase global efforts to "guarantee American security throughout the world" (Gruver, 1985, 823). The final paragraph of the section on the Korean War is devoted to describing the various mutual defense pacts the United States signed with various states both in Europe and the Pacific, perhaps to provide a comforting note that the United States will not have to face the communist threat alone.

The introduction to the Vietnam War is handled similarly to the portrayal of the Korean War. The focus is not necessarily on communist aggression, but rather the need for a unified front for global stability. The crisis in Indochina is described as “a war for independence”, although a special note is made of Ho Chi Minh as a communist who “received aid from the Soviet Union” (Gruver, 1985, 849). “*Despite its avowed commitment to self-determination, the United States feared that opposition to French colonialism would alienate France and damage the NATO alliance*” describes the quandary faced by the United States in 1954 in regards to this situation which would eventually expand into the Vietnam War. While the authors of this book regard this line of thinking as wrong, it is interesting to note that there is no mention of the United States rejecting the Geneva agreement and the promised elections in 1956 to unify Vietnam. Only Ngo Dinh Diem, the “conservative anticommunist” who ruled South Vietnam, is named as rejecting the outcome of the peace conference to end the war in Indochina (Gruver, 1985, 849) .

Further background information on the Vietnam War is presented in the context of “domino theory”, although there is mention that “Kennedy felt that the United States should not become too deeply involved in this area” (Gruver, 1985, 868). While communism is definitely portrayed as a force that must be stopped, further American involvement in Southeast Asia is reluctant at best. There is an entire paragraph that emphasizes the terrible policies of Ngo Dinh Diem, who is described as “*a corrupt, autocratic ruler who undermined self-government in rural areas and ignored American pressure for political and economic reforms*” (Gruver, 1985, 868). This book places the blame of the entire Vietnam War on Diem and his policies, for “*much of the problem stemmed from Diem’s inability to win the support of his people*”. However, that did not stop the United States from contributing substantial economic aid for South Vietnam was viewed as a crucial lynchpin in containing the spread of communism. Ultimately, Diem was unhelpful to American interests in Vietnam and “*American policymakers [...] had come to favor his removal*” (Gruver, 1985, 869). The Kennedy years of the Vietnam War ended with the coup that saw Diem assassinated with tacit support from the CIA, and the country was “*plunged into deeper trouble*” with over 600 Americans killed by 1963 (Gruver, 1985, 869).



There is a break in the text covering the assassination of President Kennedy and a brief overview of the policies promoted by the new Johnson administration. With Johnson in power, 1964 saw a massive increase in American involvement to aid the fragile South Vietnamese government. While fighting a war is rarely the responsibility of one man, Lyndon Johnson is portrayed as the sole force promoting an escalation of the war. It was President Johnson who “*helped the South Vietnamese carry out spy missions, sabotage, and naval bombardments of North Vietnamese coastal installations*”, and after the Tonkin Incident which saw an American destroyer fired upon by North Vietnamese torpedo boats, used that to “*justify increased American participation in the conflict*” (Gruver, 1985, 874). That justification was given legal precedent with Congress passing a resolution that “*Empowered the president ‘to repel any armed attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression’*”. However, President Johnson was not forthcoming with his true intentions for seeking this resolution. This act created what the textbook calls the “credibility gap”, which publicly acknowledges that “*reports on American progress, purpose, and involvement in Vietnam were inaccurate and deceptive*”.

Chronologically, the war had not even reached its highest intensity but the textbook is already viewing it as a massive failure of American foreign policy. The fact that increased American involvement is portrayed as built on a lie is evidence enough. By placing the majority of blame for the war on President Johnson, the textbook subconsciously absolves the United States as a whole for the terrible events that took place during the War. The American people can still maintain their charter as a global protector by placing all the faults of U.S. foreign policy on one man.

This textbook does not shy away from highlighting the “grimmer reality” of the war (Gruver, 1985, 875). Racial prejudice against the Vietnamese, on account of the impossibility of knowing “*which Asians were members of the Viet Cong and which were not*” (Gruver, 1985, 875), is explicitly mentioned and used as a stepping stone to describe the horrors some American soldiers perpetrated on the local population. While the textbook attempts to rationalize some acts of

barbarity by emphasizing the inexperience of the raw recruits “*sent to fight in the Asian jungles*” who “*lived in fear of treachery, and often struck out blindly against that fear*”, the explicit description of the massacre at Son My by a soldier who participated in it offers a sobering look at the brutality present in the Vietnam War. The inability of the United States to force a settlement with the North Vietnamese, despite the heavy bombing campaign and horrific weapons like Napalm and chemical defoliants, is placed solely in Johnson’s lap. He “*stubbornly refused to de-escalate the conflict*”, and the effect his stubbornness had on his domestic policies coupled with the severe North Vietnamese attacks on the South during the Tet lunar holiday led “*many Americans fear that [...] the United States had made a tragic mistake*”.

The following section on the Vietnam War highlights the effects it had at home in the United States, by emphasizing the “Peace Movement” and other forms of protest against the War. This type of section was not present in previous books. In regards to Vietnam it makes sense, for the majority of the public backlash occurred after the books had been published. For the Korean War, the absence of a section such as this further cements the idea that there was no public opposition to the U.N. intervention which was certainly not the case. Soldiers returning from Korea were frequently called “baby-killers” or even “brainwashed” as a result of their imprisonment by the Chinese (Lee et al, 2017, 227). The erasure of this response to the Korean War further cements the idea of a “Forgotten War”, and the failure of the education system to teach students about both good and bad aspects of this war is a major reason no one seems to care about it.

The next section portrays the war during the Nixon years, and his preoccupation with achieving “peace with honor” (Gruver, 1985, 892). This “peace” began with an American invasion of neutral Cambodia, and public knowledge of this act coupled with news of massacres at My Lai and Son My brought antiwar protests to a fever pitch. Escalating the bombing of North Vietnam in the attempt to force a ceasefire was but one of the unsuccessful strategies Nixon and his military advisors tried during this period. The United States finally exited the war in 1973, and they left behind a broken country and welcomed home broken Americans.

The final section examines the impact the Vietnam War had both in Vietnam and the United States. Casualty numbers for both sides are present, and Vietnamese society was as broken as the countryside scarred by American bombs. The backlash against returning GI's is mentioned, as well as the increase in drug abuse as a means to cope with the events they saw in Vietnam. Arguments on the morality of the war, and the destruction of American idealism on their position in the global system is evident. Most importantly, the clash between communism and democracy has faded into the background in this textbook's portrayal of the war. The focus is now on the amount of power the Government, and more specifically the President, has when declaring war. The Vietnam War emphasized the weaknesses of "containment" and "domino theory", and allowed a culture of strong "*cynicism regarding American military adventures*" to grow (Gruver, 1985, 898). According to this textbook, that is Vietnam's legacy. However, one could argue this was the lesson that should have been learned in 1953.

### **America: A History of the United States**

The next textbook is "*America: A history of the United States*" by Norman Risjord from 1988. It has been over 10 years since the Vietnam War ended, and as such provides a more balanced view of the Cold War than seen previously. While the Soviet Union is clearly portrayed as America's rival, the stark worldview cultivated through bizarre comparisons to the Third Reich is thankfully absent. Instead, both sides are described as seeking to exploit post-war Asia. The Soviets had the easier time, with the victory of Mao's forces leading a powerful communist ally in the region. "The Fall of China", as the textbook describes the Chinese Civil War, is presented as having a massive psychological impact on the American people largely due to the view China was "lost" to the forces of Communism (Risjord, 1988, 327). The fear of losing South Korea in a similar way led the United States to push for a strong response to North Korean aggression.

While the Soviet Union is described as staying out of the Chinese Civil War due to Stalin's mistrust of a "*communist movement he did not control*", the textbook makes an effort to tie the Soviet Union to the actions of the North Korean government (Risjord, 1988, 327). The

assumption that the Soviet Union aided the North Koreans in some way is the perspective the textbook wishes to enforce. North Korea was effectively a client state of the Soviet Union “*so it is unlikely that they proceeded altogether on their own*” (Risjord, 1988, 327). Stalin himself had “*much to gain and little to lose*” with a quick North Korean victory over the “corrupt and inept” government of Syngman Rhee for another new Communist state in Asia would show both China and the United States that the Soviet Union sought to extend its influence far outside Europe (Risjord, 1988, 327).

The description of the Korean War is actually quite different from other texts. Instead of a focus on ‘containment’ or how the international community was able to unify in response, the precedent Truman set for American foreign intervention appears to be the central point of this portrayal of the Korean War. “The Imperial Presidency” began when Truman stated “it was American policy to simply restore the original border” and did not consult with any other government organs or international allies when making this decision (Risjord, 1988, 328). After the landing at Inchon, Truman “*broadened the conflict into a war for liberation*” while simultaneously ignoring Chinese warnings not to advance to the Yalu river (Risjord, 1988, 329). MacArthur proved a willing tool for Truman’s new desire to end the War on American terms. This textbook describes him as “*full of missionary zeal and given to bombast*” who foresaw a quick American victory that would “*have his men ‘home by Christmas’*” (Risjord, 1988, 329). However, the entrance of the Chinese in November of 1950 would force Truman to reconsider his war goals. Rather than seeking a unified Korea, he switched back to the original goal of re-establishing an independent South Korea without conquering the North. The conflict this caused between Truman and MacArthur is briefly mentioned.

The final section on the Korean War takes a similar stance as “*An American History Volume II*”. There is no mention of a “stalemate” or other negative descriptors that have been seen previously. The end of the Korean War is viewed very positively:

*“Truman increased the army by half. Doubled the air force, and obtained air bases in Spain, Morocco, Libya, and Saudi Arabia. He provided financial and military aid to the Philippines and the French in Vietnam, both of whom were fighting communist insurrections. In Europe, he added Greece and Turkey to Nato and began the rearming of West Germany. At home, the government produced the first hydrogen bomb, the B-52 jet bomber, and the first guided missiles.”*

America: a History of the United States, page 330

The book seeks to tie these listed accomplishments and technological advancements to American involvement in Korea, as a means to portray the fighting as positive for global stability and to maintain American primacy within the international system. The only cost to these achievements was not the suffering of U.N. soldiers during a brutal stalemate, but *“a huge and seemingly permanent military establishment and a marriage between government and corporate giants”* (331). Very little of the actual War is described in this textbook, and no images exist that show the human cost of this period.

The issues surrounding the start of the Vietnam War are contextualized similarly to those texts seen prior. “Domino Theory”, again presented as an expansion of Truman’s “Containment”, is used to justify American aid given to strengthen a colonial regime. Such an act would go against the closely-held belief of self-determination which makes up a large part of American Identity, but events in the early Cold War meant that morality took a back seat to the government’s desire to stamp out communism worldwide. Responsibility for this action is placed with President Eisenhower, who *“might have let the French simmer in the colonial stew they themselves had created”*, but framed the conflict as another war between the forces of communism and the forces of freedom (332).

The early years of the Vietnam War are portrayed as a “mess” (379). A civil war brought about due to the policies of Diem’s “increasingly unpopular” government in South Vietnam threatened stability of the entire region, and the United States was determined to support them both

financially and militarily (379). This support mainly came in the form of military advisors who would train the South Vietnamese military in counterinsurgency tactics, but any further military involvement was off the table due to Kennedy's realization that "*the United States could not win the war for the Vietnamese*" (380).

The section detailing Lyndon Johnson's approach to the Vietnam War seems to be constructed in reverse when compared to the other texts. It uses the "Freedom Summer" of 1964 to highlight the immense social unrest present in American society, and the escalation of the Vietnam War is examined through the lens of protest. This provides a strong anti-war slant to the coverage of the issue, with President Johnson portrayed as a foolish man who "*accepted without question the Cold War postulates that dictated American foreign policy since the Truman years*" (386).

*"He considered himself in a global confrontation with international communism in which any breach in the line of containment, whether by aggression or subversion, warranted an American response"*

Risjord, 1988, 386

It is in this section where there is a return to the classic "good vs. evil" archetype seen before. In an attempt to legitimize his viewpoint on the spread of communism, President Johnson makes a direct comparison between this current enemy and that of the second World War. "*We learned from Hitler in Munich that success only feeds the appetite for aggression*" was the argument President Johnson used to justify a massive increase in American involvement, implying that a North Vietnamese victory would lead to further communist assaults worldwide (Risjord, 1988, 387). The textbook does not offer a solid position on whether this line of thought was right or wrong, but the authors sought to show it brought the United States deeper into a scenario with no clear exit.

While disapproval of President Johnson's handling of the situation is nothing necessarily new, the following segment is quite different. Rather than a clinical overview of different presidential

approaches to the expanding conflict, this book devotes two entire pages to excerpts from a book called *“Rumors of War”*, which detailed the in-country experiences of Lieutenant Philip Caputo when he served during the war. These stories add a human element to the representation of the Vietnam War that has not been present in previous texts. These excerpts do not portray the War in a positive light, for they focus on how it affected the American soldiers who fought in it. Confidence, purpose, values, and even humanity are some of the things US soldiers lost during the war

The common thread running through the books of this decade is a preoccupation with the “Imperial Presidency”. President Truman set a dangerous precedent by sidestepping congress and sending Americans to war without their approval, and the quagmire in Vietnam is represented as a direct result of his actions. This “arrogance of power” is used to define the early Cold War period, and serves to blend the identity of the Korean War into that of Vietnam by using Truman’s actions to further contextualize the events in Vietnam. The Korean War was never viewed as its own event, even in textbooks from the 1960s, but erosion of that identity to justify the outcome of Vietnam is a trend that hopefully stops in future decades.

### **Section III: New Voices for a New Century**

The only book in this section is *“American Voices: A History of the United States”* published by ScottForesman in 1992. The use of “voices” in the title hints at a more inclusive look at American history than offered before. The verbiage used in textbooks seen in the 1960’s is absent, with references to “the nation” or “free people” as very “20th century”. The books in this chapter are clearly looking forward to the 21st century, for the dissolution of the Soviet Union left the United States without a clear rival in the international system and paved the way for a period unlike any other in modern history.

Contextual information pertaining to the Korean War is not so “black-and-white” in this textbook as seen before. The Soviet Union, not global communism, is named as a “rival” to the

United States (Berkin et al, 1992, (686). This is an important distinction, for this way the actions of the two superpowers can be described as purely self-motivated to increase their standing in the international system. Previous naming schemes comparing the Soviet Union to Nazi Germany invoked a sense that Stalin sought to destroy the existing world order, but usage of rivalry instead helps to contextualize Soviet actions as trying increase their own influence, and not necessarily at the expense of the United States. Usage of rivalry still allows the textbook to tap into the first function of historical SRT by clearly delineating the “protagonists” and “antagonists” in the story it seeks to tell, but not in the context of a clash between “good” and “evil” as seen in earlier texts.

The Korean War is still presented as a crisis perpetuated by the Soviet Union, but the reasoning for doing so fits with the “rivalry” angle presented by the text. The power vacuum on the peninsula created by the withdrawal of the Americans and Soviets in 1949 created an environment the Soviet Union wished to exploit. A Korea unified on the Soviet’s terms “*would be a blow to Chinese prestige and create a potential enemy on China’s flank*”, for the text makes it clear that “*there was a deep animosity between Stalin and Mao*” (Berkin et al, 1992, 687). The “powerful army” trained by the Soviet Union would be the tool for reunification and cement the U.S.S.R as the dominant communist movement (Berkin et al, 1992, 687). There is no mention of the Soviets seeking a fight with the United States to damage American influence in the region, and the representation of global communism as a movement split between China and the Soviet Union is a viewpoint different than the monolithic, faceless force seen before.

The basic structure of the section on the Korean War is nothing new. The initial invasion by the North Korean Army up to the Chinese intervention once the U.N. reached the Yalu is all covered in one page of text. Discussions seen in previous textbooks are present as well, such as the implications of President Truman declaring the response to the “clear-cut case of Soviet-inspired Aggression” as a “police action” (Berkin et al, 1992, 687). The change in goal, from defending



South Korea to conquering the entire peninsula is also discussed, and this leads into the exploration of why Truman fired MacArthur which has been seen in every previous text.

However, this chapter is not entirely devoid of surprise. There is a brief paragraph that describes the events following the Chinese intervention, and even a map that shows troop movements at the battle of the Chosin Reservoir (fig. 5). The language used in this paragraph leaves little to the imagination as to what American soldiers had to go through during their retreat from the Yalu river:

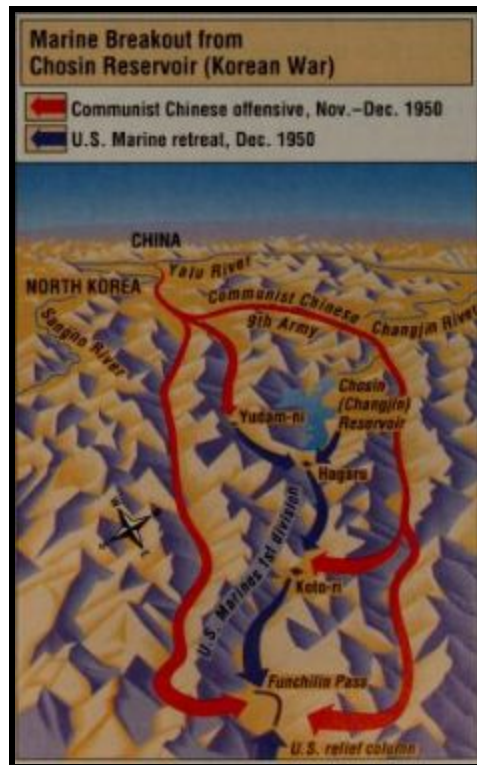


Figure 5

*"A surprise attack of 120,000 communist Chinese forces trapped 20,000 American marines at Chosin Reservoir."*

American Voices, 1992, page 689

*"The 1st Marine Division bore the brunt of the assault by 120,000 Chinese at Chosin Reservoir in bitter winter weather. The Americans fought their way 78 miles down a winding mountain road in a 30-degree-below-zero blizzard. One company lost four commanding officers in an hour. It was so cold that a medic dipped his fingers in blood to keep them warm."*

Berkin et al, 1992, 689

The explicit detail present in this section serves to emotionally anchor the severity of the Korean War in reality. Previous texts have either used one sentence to gloss over the actual fighting, or kept descriptions totally absent. This text makes it quite clear that the Korean War was much more than a mere “police action”; It was a war.

The second function of historical SRT can also be invoked in this section, for figure 5 is labelled “Marine Breakout from Chosin Reservoir”. “Breakout” is an accurate description for the actions of the 1st marine division, but it conjures mental imagery that is perhaps more heroic than if a similar descriptor like “retreat” or “withdrawal” would. Access to historical fact is not limited here, for the battle is not represented as an American victory, but the textual portrayal seems more positive than the reality which saw over 50,000 men perish on both sides. For all the implied positivity in this section, the overall view of the war is that of a pointless exercise that “cost more than 54,000 american lives, and perhaps as many as 2 million Chinese and Korean casualties” and achieved little (Berkin et al, 1992, 716).

This is the first textbook where an entire chapter is devoted to the Vietnam War. Previous texts had split up the events of the war according to their chronological occurrence, and tied them to sections highlighting presidential policies of the time. The timeline from 1954 to 1975 is covered in 40 pages, which include everything from descriptions of historical events to massive page-sized stories from individuals involved in the war.

The chapter starts like every other textual portrayal of the war: by discussing the war in Indochina. This text frames it entirely as a war for Vietnamese independence from France, and mention of Ho Chi Minh as a communist is only used to justify the lack of aid given to his movement by the United States. There is even explicit mention of Ho Chi Minh “*looking to the United States for help in 1945*”, but no aid was forthcoming due to the insignificance of his nation to American leaders and his “*communist convictions that were unacceptable to the architects of the Cold War*” (Berkin et al, 1992, 822). There is some mention of “domino theory” as a means to explain American interest in Vietnam at the time, but the United States refused to

intervene to aid the French for “*such effort would be too costly and difficult*” (Berkin et al, 1992, 822).

By the time the United States did intervene in support of the Diem regime, it was clear the task would still be costly and difficult. Diem’s policies are described as “harsh” and “brutal” towards South Vietnam’s majority Buddhist population, and the famous image of Thich Quang Duc’s self-immolation serves to emotionally objectify this contentious period in the mind of American school students. This focus on Diem and his policies helps justify the implicit American support for regime change, but the coup and subsequent execution of Diem is described as “shocking” to President Kennedy (Berkin et al, 1992, 825). The subsequent government is described as “unstable” and “*even less likely [...] to bring order to South Vietnam*” , implying that it will fall to the United States to stop the chaos (Berkin et al, 1992, 825).

The portrayal of the Johnson years are devoid of any reference to a “credibility gap” or “imperial presidency” as seen in prior texts. The incident in the Gulf of Tonkin and subsequent congressional resolution are explained as the inciting events that formed a legal basis for the war to continue, and increased American involvement in the region. The escalation of the war in 1964 is presented as a no-win scenario. Either the United States allows South Vietnam to fall to North Vietnamese communists, or they get drawn further into a conflict in support of a deeply unpopular and unstable regime in South Vietnam.

History has shown that the United States chose to support the South Vietnamese government, and this textbook does not shy away from describing the methods used to do so:

*“American forces, in the course of their search-and-destroy missions, used bulldozers and flame throwers to flatten or burn villages they considered communist sanctuaries.”*

*“American planes and helicopters dropped napalm [...] to kill the thick jungle vegetation that helped the Viet Cong hide. Many innocent civilians were killed or horribly burned in the process.”*

Berkin et al, 1992, 828

These descriptions offer a very different look at the role of the United States than seen in the section covering the Korean War. There is no attempt at positivity when examining the actions taken by the United States in this book. The emphasis on indiscriminate bombings and civilian casualties, and the inability of those tactics to defeat an enemy that many in the south empathized with, shows that there were difficult lessons for the United States to learn about their position in the international system.

The frustration felt by many Americans fighting in Vietnam is summarized in the aptly titled section “U.S. soldiers found Vietnam an intensely frustrating experience” (Berkin et al, 1992, 821). This section serves as a “break” from the chronological recitation of events by highlighting personal anecdotes from an American soldier in similar fashion to *“America: A History of the United States”*. However, unlike the previous text this section also serves to emphasize the efforts of African-Americans who fought in the War, which is a departure from previous texts while simultaneously fitting with the inclusive outlook this book views history with. Themes such as death, race, and cowardice are discussed in this section, which offers an additional dimension to this representation of the Vietnam War. The pressures associated with these themes can cause individuals to do terrible things, which this book also delves into great detail.



Figure 6  
*"A wounded marine reaches out to comfort a more seriously injured buddy moments after enemy soldiers had lobbed grenades into their camp. Twenty marines lost their lives in the successful defense of the hill"*

American Voices, 1992, page 831

The impact the war had on American soldiers is described in ways no other textbook read for this paper does. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is discussed, but not explicitly named, as a reaction many soldiers had to the events of the war. A war which this book portrays as incredibly bleak. An overview of the massacre at My Lai is used to illustrate what happens when young soldiers get pushed to their breaking point. Other actions previously thought unthinkable for Americans to do such as "Fragging", when a soldier willfully kills his own commanding officer, are noted within the text. Description of these actions, coupled with imagery such as Figure 5, transforms the war into something more than a historical event. It becomes a fully-realized representation of the lowest point in modern American identity.

## **Conclusion: Shifting and Stagnant Frameworks**

There are definite parallels between American memory of the Cold War, and how the conflicts within that period are represented here. Portrayal of the Korean War in these textbooks remained largely stagnant with little effort made to explore the realities of that short but brutal conflict. Occasional imagery would help objectify the conflict in the mind of the reader, but the text would often have little to do with the themes portrayed by these images. A page with a large image of Korean refugees would more often contain information about General MacArthur and his bold strategy to take the War to China. This mismatch in what a student sees and reads helps cement the idea that the Korean War lacks its own identity.

Representational trends of the Vietnam War run opposite to that of Korea. The further away a textbook was from the conflict, the stronger representation of the Vietnam War became. What early textbooks had as a few pages ballooned into full chapters exploring both the historical background and the effects the War had on Americans both in Vietnam and back home. The framework constructed by these textbooks shifted with each new book, allowing a multi-dimensional understanding of the conflict to grow. Representation of the Vietnam War may have started as another fight to halt communist aggression, but over time it became a civil war that the United States should never have gotten involved in with disastrous results.

It was surprising to see that representation of the Korean War did not change like that of Vietnam. Later textbooks made an effort to incorporate the third function of historical SRT by exploring the lessons learned during the Vietnam War, but no effort was made to offer a similar treatment to the Korean War. Mention of the ceasefire is almost always separate from the main section on the War, usually in the section covering the Eisenhower years, subconsciously reinforcing that there was no proper “ending” to the American intervention. Portrayal like this, even in 1964, allowed the Korean War to fade into memory without paying heed to any of the lessons it had to offer. Lessons such as the danger of interventionism and “mission creep” would be interesting points for discussion. Perhaps the military disasters of the Vietnam War could

have been avoided if those lessons were understood, and to help understand why the Korean War ended the way it did. The research undertaken for this thesis proves again and again that the Korean War truly is “forgotten”. It is not due to its unfortunate chronological position between the two largest wars in modern American history, nor is it because it was technically a “U.N. action”. It is because Americans never learned about it in the first place.

Perhaps there is hope for the future. Recent events on the Korean peninsula in the past few years have shined a spotlight on the tense situation between North Korea and many others in the international system. Perhaps the children of today are learning more about the Korean War than their grandparents did, for the ceasefire that solidified the division on the 38th parallel continues to influence current events. Much of the 21st century world can be understood through a historical lens, so effort must be made to glean as many lessons from the past as possible. The Korean War offers many lessons, and while it will never be as central to modern American identity as the Vietnam War does, there are still aspects of it that are worth incorporating into “American Memory”. It represented the first time the International Community rose to face a crisis together which is an incredible feat considering the mass destruction wrought on the world just 5 years prior. However, constructing a narrative that emphasizes the “good” aspects does a disservice to all the soldiers who served during the War. The “bad” should be understood as well, to learn why it happened so that it never happens again. All the pain and the suffering caused to families throughout Korea, China, the United States, and every other country who sent soldiers to fight in this war is not something that should be celebrated, but should be remembered.

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