



Whose History? An Analysis of the Korean War in History Textbooks from the United States, South Korea, Japan, and China

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Abstract:

This study examined how current history textbooks from the United States, Japan, China, and South Korea present the Korean War. The comparative analysis focused on four areas: the causes of the Korean War, American involvement in the war, Chinese involvement in the war, and result of the war. Analysis of the central story lines revealed that there exist some consistent statements about certain events in the Korean War, but inconsistencies and conflicting views seem to dominate the history textbooks in these countries.

Introduction

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), commonly known as North Korea, is the last Cold War frontier, which remained an isolated nation from the rest of the world until January, 2003 when North Korea declared that it had nuclear weapons, and that it would withdraw from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (Statement of the DPRK Government on Withdrawal from Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), 2003). The rest of the world was stunned and began to wonder what type of a nation North Korea is. Since the Korean War, which ended in an armistice in 1953, North Korea seems to have alienated itself from the world. In fact, North Koreans have very limited contact with the world outside of North Korea by mail, telephone, the Internet, or radio. This helps explain how, in 2001, when South Korea provided 500,000 tons of food aid, the North Korean government told its people that the food was provided as a form of tribute to their powerful country (Teaching with the News Online Resource, 2007). Such events make North Korea seem incomprehensible to most Americans and the rest of the world. Until the most recent rounds of the Six-Party Talks, very little had changed in North Korea's nuclear program (Zissis, 2007). This present day circumstance is substantially related to the conduct of the Korean War and the way in which it ended.

The Korean War, which lasted from 1950 to 1953, remained as the "Forgotten War" in the history of the United States (Blohm, 1999; Fleming & Kaufman, 1990; Lee, 1998; Milliken, 2001; Moon, 2002; Tucker, 2000). However, it had a profound impact on the six countries involved. For both North and South Koreans, the war brought catastrophic civilian and military casualties and resulted in the continued division of their country. For the Chinese, the war was the first military operation the communist government after the foundation of the People's Republic of China in 1949. The Chinese believed that they defended both North Korea and China against imperial aggressors (Chinese History, 2002). For Americans, the war found the United States being haunted by fears of Chinese military intervention based on misconceptions born in the Korean War of that nation's military power (Nichols, 2000; Tucker, 2000). The military conflicts stiffened the U.S. attitudes towards the People's Republic of China. For the former Soviet Union, the war was just another front, on which the former Soviet Union and the United States endured a high tension face-off (Lindaman & Ward, 2004). The Soviet Union supported North Korea by providing limited assistance in the form of combat advisors, weapons, and military pilots. For Japan, the war is a golden opportunity for it to emerge as a world

economic power. Technically, the Korean War continues today, as only an armistice agreement that halted the fighting in 1953. To maintain the uneasy armistice, some 37,500 U.S. troops are still stationed in South Korea (U.S. Department of State, 2007).

Across the international settings, history textbooks are the primary source for the young people to obtain knowledge about the history of their own country as well as the other parts of the world (Foster & Nicholls, 2005). Hein and Selden (2000) suggested that school history textbooks are central to the transmission of national values in most societies in that they present an “official” story highlighting narratives that shape contemporary patriotism. Foster and Crawford (2006) surmised that history textbooks “prove ideologically important” because “they seek to imbue in the young a shared set of values, a national ethos, and an incontrovertible sense of political orthodoxy” (p.1). Therefore, young people’s perspective of certain historical events can be strongly influenced by how these events are portrayed in their history textbooks because they tend to accept the statement in the textbook without questioning it. The Korean War, an unsolved past historical event, with a looming nuclear weapon threat, continues to remain mysterious not only to the countries involved but also to the rest of the world.

This paper offers a comparative textbook analysis approach to understanding the Korean War based on the textbooks used in public schools in the United States, South Korea, Japan, and China. Four out of the five researchers in this study were born and educated in their respective home countries (China, Japan and South Korea), but they all obtained their doctoral degrees in the United States. These researchers and instructors of teacher education programs in the United States and South Korea shared their knowledge and understanding about the Korean War and explored how the Korean War is treated in current history textbooks in these countries. The researchers believe that historical reasoning and thinking must be built upon an analysis and evaluation of multiple perspectives and multiple sources pertaining to the same historical event (Tucker, 2000; Zinn, 2005).

For this purpose, this paper aimed to explore the Korean War through comparative analysis of history textbooks used in four different countries that were once involved in the war region. More specifically, through comparative analysis of the history textbooks, the paper intends to explain why Korea was divided into two separate regions, identify the causes leading to the Korean War, and list reasons why the United States and China intervened in the Korean War. Our central research question is: What are the similarities and conflicting views and statements among various middle school level history textbooks’ accounts of the Korean War? We hope this study will help students and teachers integrate a variety of sources and textbooks from other countries to enhance their historical reasoning and thinking skills pertaining to some controversial historical events.

Literature Review

In recent decades, history scholars have been challenging the nature of knowledge presented in history textbooks by asking “Whose knowledge is of the most worth?” (Apple & Christian-Smith, 1991; Loewen, 1995). Textbook analysis has been used by scholars and classroom teachers to help students develop historical thinking (DeRose, 2007; Schramm-Pate, 2006; Gordy, Hogan, & Pritchard, 2004). Comparing international textbooks to examine how

past events involving the United States were viewed by other nations has become a desirable approach to help students analyze historical events from different points of views and identify bias in historical accounts in textbooks. (DeRose, 2007; Lindaman & Ward, 2004; Loewen, 1995).

To date, many historians, history and social studies education researchers, and comparative educators have pursued international research on school history textbooks. A variety of studies have examined different countries' textbooks, reviewed textbooks from a bilateral perspective, and analyzed other countries cultures and historical events to show the influence of textbooks on information that is taught in schools about other cultures. Many researchers around the world have critiqued textbooks for the last 30 years by assessing clarity of writing, the effectiveness of the format or design, and authors' biases or political perspectives in explaining historical actors or events. Examination of textbook content and selection processes offers intriguing and illuminating points of contrast that help critics better understand how history is used and portrayed in different national settings. In this global age, international textbook research has become more important than ever as a means of promoting increased cross-cultural and international understanding, and also as a means of constructing more tolerant and accurate versions of shared individual and institutional pasts (Altbach, 1991). Indeed, much textbook-related research has been carried out by or in collaboration with international organizations (e.g., UNESCO), research institutions, and academic foundations. Conferences, symposia, lectures, and events focusing on school history textbooks have been organized to encourage open exchange and dialogue among teachers, curriculum planners, and researchers from different nations in order to bring attention to the mechanisms that appear to perpetuate stereotyping and bias (Slater, 1995; Nicholls, 2006). In addition, international textbook studies provide opportunities to reflect critically on a wide range of issues that includes marketing, censorship, selection processes, political ideologies, national mandates and international relations (Altbach, 1991).

Methodology

Our central research question was: What are the consistent and conflicting views and statements among various history textbook excerpts about the Korean War? Our study is based on a content analysis of middle school history textbooks used in the United States, Japan, South Korea, and China. Our textbook analysis were conducted at four levels: first, we collected and identified the most commonly used textbooks in public middle schools in these countries; secondly, we translated the textbook excerpts about the Korean War and related topics in each textbook and then examined how this information was presented in the textbook in terms of its coverage and format; thirdly, we listed and analyzed each of the textbook excerpts based on the four research questions; and fourthly, using constant comparative analysis research methods (Glazer & Strauss, 1967), we examined the recurring themes generated from each of the textbook excerpts and then compared the themes across all the textbooks to identify the consistent and inconsistent statements and views about the Korean War.

Selection of Textbooks

The different educational systems in the United States, Japan, South Korea, and China made our selections of textbooks a challenging task. In the United States and Japan, where private sector entrepreneurs publish textbooks, there were many history textbooks to study. In the United States, local school districts often make textbook selection decisions. While we acknowledge that our sampling might not represent all history textbooks used across the United States, we reviewed the following textbooks published by the major publishers in the market. The ten textbooks we selected for this study are listed in Appendix I.

For this study, eight Japanese middle school textbooks were examined. The eight books we selected are listed in Appendix II. These textbooks were authorized and approved by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology of Japan in 2005. Students at grade eight across the country could be using one of these eight history textbooks, which are very similar, since the Japanese national curriculum prescribes the subject matter and demands that the textbook deliver the same content. Textbooks in Japan, particularly history textbooks, have been the theme of continued domestic as well as international controversy since the 1980s, due to the treatment of specific historical events. In many respects, Japanese textbooks seem to be more controversial than those of other countries because final authority to decide content remains with the Ministry of Education (Crawford, 2006; Foster & Nicholls, 2005). Additionally, there have been and remain attempts by politicians and pressure groups to remove, censor or marginalize accounts to promote a particular view of Japanese national identity (Crawford, 2006). Japanese textbooks seem to provide authoritative statements of national policy and ideology (Ogawa & Field, 2006).

The Chinese educational system is highly centralized. The National Education Commission prescribes curriculum for all subjects. Traditionally, the Elementary and Middle School Textbooks Review Committee meets to select officially approved history textbooks. In recent years, however, schools in different provinces and cities have had more options in selecting textbooks. Despite this new freedom, most schools tend to use the textbooks published by People Education Press and Beijing Normal University Press. For this study, we selected two history textbooks published by People Education Press and one textbook by Beijing Normal University Press. “*History of China*” published by People Education Press in 2002. Both are currently used by 8th graders following the traditional national curriculum standards. “*History and Society*” was published by People Education press in 2005 and is currently used by 8th graders in schools under the guidance of new curriculum standards. The new standards focus more on development of students’ initiative spirit, social practice skills and social responsibility and will be adopted by all Chinese schools by 2010. The 3rd selection was “*History of China*” published by Beijing Normal University in 2007 with a combination of these two sets of curriculum standards. The Chinese textbook reviewed in this study may be found in Appendix III.

Like China, South Korea’s Ministry of Education & Human Resource and Development prescribes a national curriculum of history. We analyzed the three pages of *Korean History*, published by National Institute of Korean History and National Institute of Textbook Compilation in 2006. Please see Appendix IV for the South Korean textbook reviewed in this study.

Coverage and Format

The ten textbooks of the United States we reviewed in this study presented the Korean War using text, maps, charts, maps, and questions. There are vast differences in the level/depth of treatment, with everything from less than a page of virtually empty generalizations to four or more pages that contain not only big ideas but supporting details. The topic of the Korean War is mostly likely to appear in the unit or chapter dedicated to the Cold War. Most textbooks have pictures, maps, and side bars for questions. All textbooks use narration approach rather than an inquiry approach to present the Korean War. The American's version of the war is told as though the South Koreans didn't even exist as an army; they are never mentioned by any text. The names of others who are not Americans are often excluded, the most notable exception being high level political figures of South and North Korea and China.

Each of the eight Japanese textbooks reviewed in this study has a section on the Korean War including textual passages, photographs, maps, and captions. References to the Korean War were found in forms of "Asia and Colonial Independence," "A New China and the Korean War," "the Korean War," and "Shifts in Occupation Policies and the Korean War." Unlike textbooks from other countries, references to the Korean and Japan and Japan-North Korea relations were found in all eight textbooks. Such topics were not found in other textbooks we reviewed.

The three textbooks in China all included the topic of Korean War in the unit of founding and strengthening of New China. However, the war was not known as "the Korean War." The war was uniquely named in Chinese history as "A War to Defend North Korea against the United States." The title of the chapter of Chinese history covering the Korean War (published by People Education Press) is called "The Most Beloved Persons," referring to the Chinese People's Volunteer Army Soldiers in the Korean War. The chapters pertaining to the Korean War in all three textbooks have two major topics: "Fighting against the United States to Aid North Korea and Defend Our Homeland" and "War Heroes Jiguang Huang and Shaoyun Qiu." The synopsis of the chapter could be summed up in two sentences. In the War against U.S. to Aid North Korea, China joined North Korea to fight against American aggressors to defend their homelands. Among the Chinese People's Volunteer Army, Jiguang Huang and Shaoyun Qiu are the household heroes who should always be commemorated for their sacrifice. The two versions of "*History of China*" gave the Korean War a coverage of 3-4 pages with maps, pictures, and questions while "*History and Society*" presented the Korean War briefly in one page.

The South Korean textbook has a chapter entitled "The Origin and the Consequences of the Korean War" with three subtopics such as background of the Korean War, North Korean invasion, and the consequences of the Korean War. The chapter begins with the situation in Korea after WWII. It clearly states that the North Korean communists such as Kim Il Sung supported by the Soviet troops started an authoritarian system in North Korea and established a communist government in North Korea in September, 1948. The chapter continues that the North Korean communist government signed secret military agreement with the Soviet Union building its military power and hurriedly prepared for an armed attack against South Korea. In contrast, at that time, South Korea was in political chaos when the government had to deal with insurgents and sabotages. The chapter in South Korean textbooks highlights the point that it was during the

time when South Korea was political unsafe with numerous conflicting political parties and civil societies that North Korea invaded South Korea.

Findings

Researchers focus their content analysis on four topics: 1) causes of the Korean War; 2) reasons why the United States got involved; 3) reasons why China got involved; and 4) how the war ceased in 1953 and who “won” the war. We explored each of these four topics based on our analysis of the similarities and differences in historical accounts available in the textbooks selected from the United States, Japan, South Korea, and China. A timeline of major events is available in Appendix V.

Causes of the Korean War

The U.S. textbooks provided background information on the Cold War before they started to give an account of the Korean War. The textbooks unanimously agreed that the Korean War broke out in 1950 when North Korea, a communist country, invaded South Korea, a noncommunist country. These textbooks pointed out that the communist North Korea was aided by the Soviet Union, which was at odds with the United States in the so-called Cold War. Therefore the United State supported South Korea in the United Nations-led forces in the Korean War.

The eight Japanese textbooks described that the Korean peninsula was occupied by Japan and that Japan’s defeat of World War II in August 1945 had liberated Korea from colonial rule. These textbooks assert that the Cold War era witnessed the increasing tension between the U.S.-backed South Korea and the Soviet Union-backed North Korea. During World War II the United States and the Soviet Union agreed to temporarily divide Korea at the 38th parallel in order to oversee the removal of Japanese forces. The textbooks, however, did not provide detailed reasons why Korea was divided into South and North. In addition, details about the Korean War were excluded from these textbooks. The textbooks unanimously agreed that in 1950, North Korea invaded South Korea by crossing the 38th Parallel to try to unify the whole peninsula. This marked the start of the Korean War.

Korea was freed as a Japanese colony, but it was subsequently occupied by the Soviet Union north of the 38th parallel and by the United States to the south. In 1948, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (North Korea) was established in the north and the Republic of Korea (South Korea) in the south. (Tokyo Shoseki’s *New Social Studies: History*, 2007, p.207)

The textbook published by Beijing Normal University Press provided some background information on how Korea was divided and administered by the Soviet Union and the United States after WWII. It claimed that Soviet Union-backed North Korea and the U.S.-backed South Korea went on different paths of development, which led to frequent military conflicts between the two along the 38th North Parallel. The two textbooks published by People Education Press described the Korean War as a civil war between North and South Korea. Nothing was mentioned about the background of the conflict between North and South Korea. All three

textbooks made it clear that the United States invaded North Korea by force and threatened the safety of China.

Unlike the textbooks from these three countries, the textbook used in South Korea started its chapter on the Korean War with very detailed background information about the Korean War. The narrative begins with the North Korean communist military advances before 1949 and the establishment of North Korea as a provisional government. The chapter continued on to provide an account of the North Korean government and its “secret military agreement plan with the Soviet Union to build up its military power” (Korean History, 2006). While North Korea was preparing for an attack against South Korea, South Korea was undergoing political instability due to insurgences and conflicts between numerous political parties and societies.

The South Korean textbook agreed with the U.S. and Japanese textbooks that North Korea attacked South Korea by crossing the 38th parallel on June 25, 1950. The South Korean troops had to respond to defend their freedom. The textbook explained this response as a necessary move because of the political crisis South Korea was experiencing and its weak military strength at the time of the attack.

Given this context, it is perhaps not unusual that the South Korean textbook particularly highlights that “young South Korean voluntary student soldiers bravely fought against the communist soldiers along with the South Korean forces, carrying guns instead of textbooks to protect their freedom and many youths volunteered to join the South Korean Army to protect their mother country” (Korean History, 2006, p.306.)

As far as causes of the Korean War are concerned, the four textbooks fall into two different views. At one side, the U.S., Japanese, and South Korean textbooks agreed that the communist North Korea invaded or attacked South Korea. At the other side, Chinese textbook provided a different account that North Korea was invaded by the South Korea troops backed up by the United States.

Reasons for the United States involvement

The next topic we explored is how textbooks in different countries explained the U.S. involvement in the Korean War. After WWII, communism was deeply feared by the United States and South Korea. With this anti-communist ideology as a context, the U.S. textbooks provided background information that after WWII, the United States practiced an anti-Soviet policy called “containment” to stop the Soviet Union from gaining influence outside its borders. Considering that the North Korean aggressive military action might be a communist expansion backed by the Soviet Union, the United States decided to back the South Korea. When the Korean War broke out, the UN forces, which were made up mainly of U.S. troops commanded by General D. MacArthur, drove the North Koreans out of the South and back into North Korea. Most textbooks in the United States implied that MacArthur's military prowess and strategy were deciding factors in the early phase of the war.

All eight Japanese textbooks excluded detailed reasons for the United States involvement in the war. After Japan's unconditional surrender to the Allied Powers in August 1945, the

United States made Japan a key part of its defensive strategy for East Asia. The United States, however, did not consider South Korea of vital interest and American forces, in fact, withdrew from the south in the late 1940s. When the North Korean army attacked the South in 1950, the U.S. military was returned. All Japanese textbooks noted that the United States entered the war with a United Nations' authorization.

The Cold War grew hot on the Korean Peninsula. In June 1950, North Korea sought to unite the peninsula by force with the aid of the Soviet Union and advanced southwards, starting the Korean War. The United Nations decided to impose sanctions on North Korea and mobilized an Allied force led by the United States (Kyouiku Shuppan's *Middle School Social Studies: History Looking Toward the Future*, 2007, p. 185).

With the Soviet Union absent, the United States Security Council passed a resolution calling North Korea an aggressor. The United Nations then sent a military force, dominated by the United States, into South Korea (Nihon Bunkyo Shuppan's *Middle School Social Studies: History Japan's Path and the World*, 2007, p. 202).

Only one of the three Chinese textbooks provided background information on why there were two Koreas after WWII, but all highlighted the fact that it was the United States who used forces to invade North Korea. The reasons why the United States invaded North Korea were not very clear. The chapters that covered the Korean War all noted that it was the United Nations' army, mainly composed of American soldiers and backed by the United States, that crossed the 38th Parallel and approached the borderline between North Korea and China.

In June, 1950, the war between North Korea and South Korea broke out. The United States undauntedly invaded North Korea with its forces. The so-called "United Nation's Troops" with the U.S. troops as its mainstay crossed the 38th parallel and charged towards Yalu River at the Chinese border. American military airplanes invaded Chinese territory, bombing and shooting the bordering cities in Northeast China. The U.S. 7th Fleet invaded the Taiwan Straits of China to prevent the Chinese People's Liberation Army from liberating Taiwan. The invasion of the United States gravely threatened the security of China. (History of China, 2002, p. 7)

The South Korean textbook explained the involvement of the UN and the United States by stating that the South Korea at that time was not politically stable and it was weak in military power. Facing such an unexpected attack from North Korea, South Korea had to seek aid from others. The South Korean textbook emphasizes that, to respond to the North Korean invasion, the South Korean and UN forces launched counterattack and recaptured the capital city of Seoul on September 28, 1950 after a successful landing on Incheon. In the hope of reuniting both Koreas, the South Korean and the United States troops advanced into North Korea. They pushed all the way to the Yalu River until they were forced to retreat due to the Chinese intervention.

The explanation of how the Americans got involved in the war implies that the weakened South Korea solicited U.S. military assistance when facing North Korean attack. U.S. troops stepped in mainly because they wanted to prevent the expansion of communist countries led by

the Soviet Union. Neither Chinese nor Japanese textbooks offered reasons for American involvement. Textbooks in these countries recognized the involvement of the United Nations mainly made up by the U.S. troops.

Reasons for Chinese Involvement

The U.S. textbooks we reviewed mentioned Chinese involvement in the Korean War with no more than two sentences. One version mentioned that the UN forces, backed by the United States under the command of General D. MacArthur, sent soldiers to push the invaders, out of South Korea. This moved China into action, and Chinese troops were sent to help the North Koreans. The other version provided a detailed explanation about China's entry into the conflict.

Communist China saw the movement of UN forces into North Korea as a threat to China's security. Chinese leaders warned that a further advance would force them to enter the war. Ignoring this warning, UN forces pushed on toward the Yalu River. On November 25, 1950, hundreds of thousands of Chinese Communist troops attacked in human waves across the Yalu River into North Korea. They drove UN troops back to South Korea (Creating America: A history of the United States, 2002, p.796.)

Most of the Japanese textbooks agreed that China's People's Volunteer Army supported the North Korea troops during the war, but didn't elaborate on the reasons for Chinese intervention. Only one text, however, discussed the reason of China entering the war because the United Nations forces approached the Chinese border.

When the UN forces approached the Chinese border, China sent volunteer soldiers into North Korea (Nihon Bunkyo Shuppan's *Middle School Social Studies: History Japan's Path and the World*, 2007, p. 202).

The South Korean textbook described that the Chinese government assembled an army of volunteer troops and drove down into South Korea. The textbook continued with an account of how South Korea, with the help of regrouped allied forces recovered the capital city of Seoul after they lost it to the North Korean and Chinese troops. The textbook made a point that the combined U.S. and South Korean troops succeeded in pushing the North Korean and Chinese army back up to near the 38th parallel.

Expecting the reunification of both Koreas, the allied forces drove up to the Yalu River. However, they were forced to retreat due to the Chinese intervention. Employing human wave tactics, the Chinese army assembled a number of troops and drove down into South Korea. As a result, South Korea was forced to give up Seoul again. However, the regrouped allied forces recovered the capital city once again and drove the communist forces back up to near the 38th parallel. In the middle of severe attacks and counterattacks between North and UN-South Korean forces, the UN made a truce with North Korea in July, 1953. (Korean History, 2006, p.305)

Chinese textbooks used several sentences or even paragraphs explaining the reasons for Chinese involvement in the war. The textbooks presented that Chinese army got involved in October 1950 for two reasons. One major reason is that the United Nation allied troops, mainly composed of U.S. soldiers, crossed the 38th Parallel and charged towards Yalu River at the Chinese border despite Chinese government warnings. Chinese textbooks laid special emphasis on how the U.S.-led army threatened China's border and even invaded China's territory integrity, which forced China to take action to at once assist North Korean and defend China's own security.

American military airplanes invaded the Chinese territory, bombing and shooting the bordering cities in Northeast China. The U.S. 7th Fleet invaded the Taiwan Straits of China to prevent the Chinese People's Liberation Army from liberating Taiwan. The invasion of the United States gravely threatened the security of China. On October 25, 1950, China sent an army of volunteers to assist the Koreans who were resisting America and to defend North Korea (Chinese History, 2002, p. 7).

All three Chinese textbooks mentioned explicitly the second reason for Chinese involvement, that is, the North Korea government asked for Chinese military assistance.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea requested Chinese government to send troops to aid them. In order to fight against the United States in a response to the North Korean request to aid and to defend and protect homeland from being invaded, in October 1950, the Chinese People's Volunteer Troops, domestically known as Chinese People's Volunteers, under the leadership of Peng Dehuai as the Commander-in-chief, arrived in the frontlines of North Korea and fought against the U.S. aggressors with people and army from North Korea.

The Chinese used the United States involvement to justify their participation in the war. In other words, the Chinese regarded their participation in the war as a defensive practice to aid the North Koreans and its own homeland, in opposition to the invading American forces. The side bar in the textbook (History of China, 2002) featured Chairman Mao, the Chinese leader at the time, arguing that without the intervention of the Chinese army and power, supplies in Northeast China would have been fallen under the control of the United States. When the textbooks mentioned that joint Chinese and North Korean army pushed the U.S. aggressors back to south of the 38th Parallel, there was not any explanation about how the 38th Parallel was drawn and why it played an important role in political and military situations.

To review the reasons for Chinese involvement, we can see that all four nations, textbooks recognized the fact that UN forces approached Chinese border, which was considered as a security threat by the Chinese government, and as a result Chinese sent voluntary troops to join North Korean army. Chinese textbooks made it clear that China got involved in the war to defend its homeland because UN forces not only threatened the security of Northeast China but also invaded Chinese territory. Besides, the North Korean government asked military aid from Chinese government as South Korea sought help from the United States.

How the war ceased in 1953 and who won the war

There is little talk of valor or glory in the U.S. textbooks. The war is described thinly if at all and the nature of the combat engagement is relegated to a few quotes from first hand accounts. There is only one mention of surrender by either side. Retreat is mentioned in both directions when troops are outnumbered. The aftermath of the war is, however, neglected in about 50% of the books reviewed in the United States. One version of the textbooks in the United States acknowledged that the war ended in stalemate. Presidential election ended with a new U.S. President in 1953 – General Dwight D. Eisenhower, who agreed to compromise to end the war during truce talks with the North Koreans and Chinese.

A cease fire ended the fighting in July 1953. The two Koreas were left more or less where they had been in 1950 with a border near the 38th parallel. Communism has been contained in Korea (Creating America: A history of the United States, 2002).

Another version confirmed that the national boundaries of the two Koreas had changed very little. But the tone of this textbook implies that the United States had shown that the free world had fought against and would fight Communist aggression. Therefore the temporary ending of the Korean War fanned the flames of the “red scare” in the United States in the 1950s.

Japanese textbooks stated that the war continued with regional battles from 1951 until July 1953 when a cease-fire agreement was reached. An alternative word used to describe the result of the Korean War is “armistice.” None of these textbooks declared a side that actually won the war, but from an economic perspective the war was very good for Japan. In fact, Japan experienced an economic boom and its post-World War II reconstruction speeded up during the Korean War.

When the Korean War started in 1950, the U.S. used its military bases in the Japanese mainland and Okinawa and procured massive amount of military supplies from Japan. The Japanese economy enjoyed an economic boom from the special demand (the special procurement boom), and economic reconstruction accelerated (Tokyo Shoseki’s *New Social Studies: History*, 2007, p.208)

Unlike U.S. and Japanese textbooks, Chinese textbooks hailed their victory in the war of Defending China and North Korea against the United States. All the textbooks gave a special account of how Chinese army fought bravely against American army in October 1952 at Shangganlin, an important battlefield, where both sides suffered heavy losses of lives in this 40-day long cruel fighting. The textbooks described the casualties of American army but not Chinese casualties. All Chinese textbooks accredited the signing of the cease-fire to the joint efforts and patriotic spirits of Chinese People’s Volunteer Army and the North Korean Army. They declared that China and North Korea won the war against aggressors. The whole chapter about the war ended with how Chinese People’s Volunteer Army returned to their homeland in victory.

The Chinese People’s Volunteer Troops were known as “most beloved persons” thanks to their selfless patriotism and revolutionary heroism in the war against the United States to aid North Korea. The undaunted fights by the Chinese People’s

Volunteers and the North Korean army and civilians led to an armistice signed by the United States in July 1953. The Chinese and North Korean people celebrated their victory in their war against aggressors. The Chinese People's Volunteer Army took turns to return to their homelands in victory. (Chinese History, 2002, pp. 9-10).

One version of the Chinese textbooks claimed that the victory of “the War of Defending North Korea against the United States” maintained the peace of the Asian countries and the rest of the world, improved the international reputation of New China, and won a relatively stable and peaceful environment. China is the only country among these four that stressed its victory in this war. The other three countries all indicated that the war ceased because of the armistice agreement.

The South Korean textbook depicted the end of the war with a truce signed by UN-South Korean forces and North Korea in July, 1953. The textbook came to a conclusion regarding the Korean War that “the war, caused by North Korea, was a tragedy and a challenge to freedom and peace.” This is the only textbook among all the textbooks we reviewed that went on to talk about the war casualties and damage.

The war brought about countless deaths and property damage. The total number of casualties suffered by South Korea alone amounted to about 1,500,000 causing a great number of war orphans and displaced families. Both North and South Korea were wasted by the war. Their economic facilities, such as factories, power plants, buildings, bridges, and railroads were severely damaged or destroyed. The war caused not only heavy casualties but also huge mental damage. Hatred between North and South Korea escalated due to the war. That has resulted in the national tragedy of confrontation rather than peaceful reunification. (Korean History, 2006, p.305)

Discussion

We examined how different textbooks portray the Korean War in four topics: causes, U.S. involvement, Chinese involvement, and consequences. It is significant to notice that another theme came up from our textbook analysis. The relationship between Japan and the Korean War becomes an interesting theme. Japan plays an important role in the post-war decades with its strong economic recovery. Our analysis shows that Japanese textbooks provided some information of how Japan became an important base for the U.S. military activities during the Korean War. Those textbooks discussed how Japan cooperated in the war on the U.S. side. Throughout the war, the United States used its military bases on the main islands of Japan and Okinawa and U.S. bombers from Japan flew ceaseless bombing raids on North Korean towns, dams, and other facilities. Japan, however, officially did not decide to provide this support in accordance with any decision by its government. As defeated and occupied country, Japan was unconditionally obliged to obey the orders of the occupation forces. Although the Japanese people therefore have no sense or memory of having participated in the war, North Korea considers Japan as a belligerent country that provided full support for the United States and South Korea. Thus, Japan still has no diplomatic relations with North Korea.

The Korean War accelerated the United States attempts to restore Japan to a respected international position, and make that country a prosperous ally of the United States. The 1951 Treaty of San Francisco ended the state of war between Japan and 47 of the Allies (most nations allied with the Soviet Union refused to sign), concluded the American Occupation, and excused the Japanese from reparations for the war. On the same day of the Treaty of San Francisco, Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Yoshida signed the United States-Japanese Security Treaty, which allowed the United States to station troops in Japan, and made the Japanese islands into an important facet of America's global containment structure. The growing concern over Japanese security related directly to war in Korea. In 1950, the United States had the Japanese government establish the National Police Reserve in order to maintain public order in Japan. This organization was subsequently strengthened, and in 1954 it was turned into the Japan Self-Defense Forces.

The analysis of textbook treatments of the Korean War in these four countries shows that each nation's textbooks stresses its own perspective and largely ignores the horrors of war. Self-identified victors could claim that they won the war, but other combatants seemingly ignore such claims. Middle school level history textbooks almost universally overlook the casualties and damage the wars had inflicted upon individual civilians and the nations as a whole. The Korean War, triggered by North Korea's invasion of South Korea, was a fratricidal tragedy and a challenge to freedom and peace. The war brought about countless deaths and immense property damage. The total number of casualties suffered by South Korea alone amounted to about 1,500,000 causing a great number of war orphans and displaced families. Virtually all of the U.S. history textbooks put the U.S. death figure at 50,000 soldiers. Only a few U.S. textbooks mentioned the casualties of South Korea and none gave estimates of the death toll of the Chinese soldiers. The Chinese textbooks did not mention anything about the number of Chinese soldiers killed in the Korean War.

Both North and South Korea were wasted by the war. Their economic facilities, such as factories, power plants, buildings, bridges, and railroads were severely damaged or destroyed. The war caused not only heavy casualties but also huge mental damage. Hatred between North and South Korea escalated due to the war. The war may have strengthened the relationship between U.S. and Japan, U.S. and South Korea, but the war certainly worsened the already tense relationship between U.S. and China, U.S. and the Soviet Union, China and South Korea in the long run. As educators, we propose that we help students understand that resolving conflicts could have taken other approaches if not war.

History textbooks in most countries tend to present their past for nationalist ideologies and patriotic sentiments (Foner, 2002). The analysis of textbook treatments of the Korean War in these countries supported Zinn's argument that history is always taught from the perspective of the victor and national history is always taught "to keep the citizenry docile, domesticated, and historically ignorant, even though this ignorance is never innocent." (Zinn & Macedo, 2005, p.11). In fact, such historical amnesia should not add to the national pride and citizenship. We resonated with what the ex-premier Helmut Schmidt of Germany said, "Our national integrity is not damaged even though we admit our past misbehavior."

History textbooks in most countries remain the most powerful means to provide their young people with understanding of their own history as well as the world. As history textbooks incorporate attitudes and ways of looking at the world, often defined and determined by textbook authors, publishers or even the government, it is not hard to imagine that history textbooks play a critical role in shaping young people's mind. It is widely acknowledged that the contents and perspectives presented in history textbooks are not neutral, as McLaren argues, "Knowledge acquired in school-or anywhere, for that matter-is never neutral or objective but is ordered and structured in particular ways" (1989, 169)." Because of this, having students exposed to multiple historical perspectives is fundamental to good history teaching (Romanowski, 1996). However, it is not enough if teachers simply present students with multiple perspectives without actually engaging them in thoughtful evaluation of the perspectives or the information (Bardige, 1988; Tunnell & Ammon, 1996). Most primary and secondary school history textbooks tend to present history from a single perspective with few conflicting ideas" (Tunnell & Ammon, 1996, p. 212); therefore, the presentation of the Korea War in the textbooks from four countries can help students better understand how people in different countries perceive and interpret this historical event. Reviewing the similar and conflicting interpretations of the war gives students a unique opportunity to develop their critical thinking ability and reasoning skills. The textbooks in the United States unanimously blamed the Japanese for their pre-WWII aggression into Korea, while at the same time, the U.S. and Soviets are held relatively blameless for their failure to help unite Korea at the end of the war. Without such an in-depth discussion and analysis, students would get lost and would not be able to critically think about and evaluate the multiple perspectives involved in reviewing the Korean War.

Comparing international history textbooks creates a perfect opportunity for us to see the complexity and controversy of history interpretation. While history textbooks from different countries come to some agreement on dates or other details about the Korean War, the causes of the war, reasons of the involvement of the countries, and the consequences of the war are often missing or construed from a simplistic, single perspective. Teachers may face a daunting task when teaching a discredited and controversial war (Hein & Selden, 2000), but students in classroom would not be able to be exposed to this truthful nature of history and develop historical thinking unless teachers adopt such a comparative textbook analysis approach to bringing "new" secondary sources into the picture.

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- History of our world. 2005. Prentice Hall/Pearson. Needham, Massachusetts. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey.
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- Middle School Social Studies: History Looking Toward the Future. 2007. Kyouiku Shuppan.
- New Middle School History: Japanese History and the World. 2007. Shimizu Shoin.

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Appendix I A List of the Ten U.S. Textbooks Reviewed in This Study

| BOOK TITLE | PUBLISHER | COPYRIGHT |
|--|--------------------------------|------------------|
| World History: The Human Experience | Glencoe/McGraw-Hill | 1999 |
| The Americans: Reconstruction to the 21st Century | McDougal Littell | 2005 |
| Pathways to the Present: Modern American History | Pearson Prentice Hall | 2005 |
| The American Nation | Pearson Prentice Hall | 2005 |
| History of Our World | Pearson Prentice Hall | 2005 |
| Creating America: A History of the United States | McDougal Littell | 2002 |
| History Alive! The United States | Teachers' Curriculum Institute | 2002 |
| Creating America: A History of the United States | McDougal Littell | 2005 |
| The American Journey | Glencoe/McGraw-Hill | 2007 |
| The American Journey Reconstruction to the Present | Glencoe/McGraw-Hill | 2005 |

Appendix II A List of Eight Japanese Textbooks Reviewed in This Study

| BOOK TITLE | PUBLISHER | COPYRIGHT |
|--|-----------------------|------------------|
| New Social Studies: History | Tokyo Shoseki | 2007 |
| Middle School social Studies: history | Osaka Shoseki | 2007 |
| Social Studies: History for Middle School Students | Tikoku Shoin | 2007 |
| Middle School Social Studies: History Looking Toward the Future | Kyouiku Shuppan | 2007 |
| New Social Studies: History: Japanese History and the World | Shimizu Shoin | 2007 |
| Our Middle School Social Studies: The Historical Field | Nihon shoseki Shinsha | 2007 |
| Middle School Social Studies: History Japan's Path and the World | Nihon Bunkyo Shuppan | 2007 |
| The New History Textbook | Fushosha | 2006 |

Appendix III A list of Chinese Textbooks Reviewed in This Study

| BOOK TITLE | PUBLISHER | COPYRIGHT |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------|
| Zhongguo Lishi (Chinese History) | People's Education Press. | 2002 |
| Zhouguo Lishi (Chinese History) | Beijing Normal University Press | 2007 |
| History and Society | People's Education press | 2005 |

Appendix IV The South Korean Textbook Reviewed in This Study

| BOOK TITLE | PUBLISHER | COPYRIGHT |
|-------------------|---|------------------|
| Korean History | National Institute of Korean History National Institute of Textbook Compilation Ministry of Education & Human Resources Development | 2006 |

Appendix V Timeline of Major Events of the Korean War

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| June 25, 1950 | With the 38 th Parallel Crossing, North Korea invaded South Korea |
| June 28, 1950 | Seoul, the capital city of South Korea, was captured by the Communist forces. The U.S. and South Korean forces retreat southward. |
| September 15-16, 1950 | U.S. forces land in Incheon |
| September 16-22 | UN forces break the Pusan Perimeter, attack the North, and recaptured Seoul |
| November 25, 1950 | Chinese army enters North Korea, pushes the UN forces back from the Yalu River |
| November 27-28, 1950 | The UN forces were surrounded at the Changjin (Chosin) Reservoir |
| December 9-24, 1950 | Evacuation of UN forces from port city of Hungnam |
| January-April, 1951 | Chinese army forces UN forces back across the 38 th Parallel and recaptures Seoul |
| May, 1951 | UN counterattack frees Seoul. Fighting stalls around the 38 th Parallel |
| June, 1951 – July 1953 | UN and Communist forces fight sporadic battles for the control of territory around the 38 th Parallel. |
| July 10, 1953 | Peace talks begin at Kaesong and eventually continue in Panmunjom |
| July 27, 1953 | Armistice temporarily ends fighting. A permanent peace treaty is never signed. |

Source:

Blohm, C. G. 1999. The forgotten war. *Cobberstone*. <http://korea50.army.mil/cobblestone/2.html> (accessed September 1, 2007).