THE REMEMBERED WAR: THE KOREAN WAR IN AMERICAN CULTURE, 1953-1995

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ABSTRACT

After three years of bitter fighting, the Korean War ended on July 27, 1953. It profoundly shaped and directed American Cold War policy for the next four decades. Korea's place in American culture and memory, however, has seemingly been less profound. This dissertation reassesses the war's legacy from the armistice in 1953 through the construction of the Korean War Veterans Memorial in 1995. It argues that representations of the war have shifted over time in response to contemporary social concerns, emphasizing different aspects of the war that resonated with Americans at the time. Simultaneously, the image of Korea as the Forgotten War has also shaped the war's meaning and such a label, ironically, has had an important impact on how it has been remembered. Finally, the memory of Korea has been unable to escape the long shadows cast by other conflicts of the twentieth century, especially World War II and Vietnam. These wars have simultaneously limited and broadened the Korean War's legacy. Taking these factors into consideration, this dissertation reassesses the Korean War's place in American culture by tracing the various ways it has been remembered and represented.

DEDICATION

For Ann Marie Elizabeth Merritt

May she develop a love of history but not make a career out of it

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

No work of scholarship is created in isolation. And something that has taken this amount of time has certainly put me in the debt of many. I would first like to thank my adviser, Andrew Huebner, whose insight always helped point me in the right direction. His mentorship provided just the right balance of freedom and guidance throughout this process. I always left his office after a meeting with a boost of confidence and the feeling that I could write the entire dissertation in a day. (Spoiler alert: I didn't.) I would also like to thank the other members of my dissertation committee, Kari Frederickson, Edward Linenthal, Margaret Peacock, and Sarah Steinbock-Pratt, all of whom provided helpful commentary along the way and shaped this into a better project. Howard Jones also provided helpful direction on the possibilities of a dissertation about the Korean War. The staff at the Amelia Gayle Gorgas Library at the University of Alabama also provided invaluable assistance. Friends and fellow scholars, especially Blake Ball, Mark Folse, Patrick Cecil, and Matt Pritchett, either read sections of the dissertation or provided insight into the whole process. I would like to thank John P. Lucas, who shared information about his firm's role in the Korean War Veterans Memorial. I also thank my wonderful wife, Rachael, whose patience and willingness to tackle extra burdens along the way afforded me much-needed writing and editing time. She also took the time to read over segments of the dissertation and coaxed me along when I became discouraged. That she puts up with me alone is amazing and I consider myself beyond lucky to have someone so dedicated. Her love is without equal or parallel, and her belief in me completing this task is certainly proof of that. Finally, I thank our daughter, Ann Marie, in whose future I place my hopes. It is to her that I dedicate this dissertation.

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....ii

DEDICATION.....iii

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....iv

LIST OF FIGURES.....vi

INTRODUCTION A WAR NOT FORGOTTEN.....1

CHAPTER ONE THE AMBIVALENT WAR: THE KOREAN WAR IN AMERICAN CULTURE, 1953-1965…….....…….....21

CHAPTER TWO THE SUBVERSIVE WAR: PRISONERS OF THE KOREAN WAR IN AMERICAN CULTURE, 1953-1965…….....62

CHAPTER THREE THE INSTRUCTIVE WAR: THE LESSONS OF KOREA DURING THE VIETNAM ERA, 1965-1973.....l09

CHAPTER FOUR THE ALLEGORICAL WAR: *M*A*S*H* AND THE REMAKING OF KOREA, 1968-1983…….....152

CHAPTER FIVE THE CONTENTIOUS WAR: THE KOREAN WAR VETERANS MEMORIAL AND THE FIGHT FOR COMMEMORATION, 1981-1995.....186

CONCLUSION THE REMEMBERED WAR.....227

REFERENCES…….237

LIST OF FIGURES

1.1 *Fixed Bayonets!*, 1951....37

1.2 *All the Young Men*, 1960....48

1.3 *Meanwhile, Back at the Front,* 1961....51

1.4 *Pork Chop Hill*, 1959....55

2.1 *My Son John,* 1952....82

2.2 *Time Limit*, 1957....97

2.3 *The Manchurian Candidate*, 1962....106

3.1 The USS *Pueblo*....121

4.1 *M*A*S*H* (film), 1970....156

4.2 *M*A*S*H* (television series)....167

4.3 *M*A*S*H* (television series)....182

5.1 Original design for the Korean War Veterans Memorial by BL3....190

5.2 Final design of the Korean War Veterans Memorial by CL....218

INTRODUCTION
A WAR NOT FORGOTTEN

Nestled at the foot of the Lincoln Memorial and across from the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (VVM) on the National Mall stands the Korean War Veterans Memorial (KWVM), with its nineteen oversize statues of American servicemen. President Bill Clinton officially dedicated the memorial on July 27, 1995, exactly forty-two years after the armistice ended major combat operations in Korea. At the ceremony were thousands of veterans, many of whom had assumed they would never see such a monument in their lifetimes. Such pessimism was to some extent well placed. Getting to that hot July day was an arduous process, one that had seen more than a decade of congressional wrangling, bureaucratic in-fighting, and different architectural designs, all competing for a particular representation of why the Korean War mattered.

The debates that centered on the memorial exposed important questions about the war and its place in American history. How would the monument depict the nation's first limited war, one, some critics charged, the United States fought to a draw instead of a victory? What would the memorial say about the first conflict fought, in part, by an integrated military? Would it acknowledge the contributions of United Nations (UN) allies? The roles of women? How would the monument reconcile American action in a war with no direct national threat? These were but some of the questions that led to stark disagreements about the KWVM in the 1980s and '90s. They revealed, in other words, strikingly different interpretations about the war. With the intense jockeying by generals, politicians, bureaucrats, architects, and artists all claiming a stake in the war's legacy, it would be hard to consider the Korean War a conflict that had not been adequately

remembered and represented in American culture. Instead, the monument debate illustrates that the Korean War, rather than having been forgotten, has a contentious history of remembrance.

This dissertation joins a larger historiography of war remembrance and a smaller one that addresses the role of the Korean War in public consciousness and discourse.[1] The seminal works in the field of war remembrance have examined a variety of conflicts and generally conclude that one or at most a few prevailing myths have dominated public understanding of American wars. Typically, these works argue that public understanding has settled on one myth to the exclusion of others. Some scholarly works, however, especially Steven Trout's *On the Battlefield of Memory* and *The "Good War" in American Memory* by John Bodnar, argue that competing narratives have jockeyed for supremacy in the remembrance of war.[2]

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[1] For analyses of the Civil War and memory see Caroline Janney, *Remembering the Civil War: Reunion and the Limits of Reconciliation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016); Gary Gallagher, *Causes Won, Lost, and Forgotten: How Hollywood and Popular Art Shape What We Know about the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008); Tony Horowitz, *Confederates in the Attic: Dispatches from the Unfinished Civil War* (New York: Random Housing Publishing, 1998) and David Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001). For World War One and remembrance, see Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1975); Steven Trout, *On the Battlefield of Memory: The First World War and American Remembrance, 1919-1941* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2010) and Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). For cultural representations of World War Two, see John Bodnar, *The "Good War" in American History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010); Philip D. Beidler, *The Good War's Greatest Hits: World War II and American Remembering* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998); and Edward T. Linenthal, *Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America's Holocaust Museum* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001. For the Vietnam War, see Patrick Hogopian, *The Vietnam War in American Memory: Veterans, Memorials, and the Politics of Healing* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 2011) and Kristin Ann Hass, *Carried to the Wall: American Memory and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998). For general analyses of war and remembrance see Andrew J. Huebner, *The Warrior Image: Soldiers in American Culture from the Second World War to the Vietnam Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008); Edward T. Linenthal and Tom Englehardt, eds., *History Wars: The Enola Gay and other Battles for the American Past* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1996); G. Kurt Piehler, *Remembering War the American Way* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Books, 1995) and Tom Englehardt, *The End of Victory Culture: Cold War American and the Disillusioning of a Generation* (New York: Basic Books Publishing, 1995). For analyses of Korean War remembrance, see David R. McCann, "Our Forgotten War: The Korean War in Korean and American Popular Culture," in Philip West, Steven I. Levine, and Jackie Hiltz, eds., *America's Wars in Asia: A Cultural Approach to History and Memory* (New York: M.E. Sharp Publishers, 1997); Philip West and Suh Ji-Moon, eds., *Remembering the Forgotten War: The Korean War through Literature and Art* (New York: Routledge Publishers, 2015); Daniel J. Meador, ed., *The Korean War in Retrospect: Lessons for the Future* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1998) and James R. Kerin, "The Korean War and American Memory (PhD diss., The University of Pennsylvania, 1994).

[2] Both Trout and Bodnar make similar arguments about World War One and World War Two, respectively. Trout sees different narratives competing for space in creating a national myth about the Great War, with none dominating. Bodnar argues that traditional, critical, and humanitarian responses developed to explain American involvement in World War Two. Trout, *On the Battlefield of Memory*; Bodnar, *The "Good War" in American Memory*.

David Blight's examination of national reconciliation and postwar emancipation in Civil War memory, *Race and Reunion*, and Jay Winter's *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning*, which details European responses to the Great War, have examined the development of war memory and the ways different narratives have dominated war remembrance at different times. Not all examinations of war remembrance, however, concentrate on a single conflict. Several general works on the subject have also strongly influenced the development of this dissertation. Andrew J. Huebner's *The Warrior Image* reevaluates the character of the soldier's image in World War Two, Korea, and Vietnam, arguing that a sobriety about war was prevalent in the popular culture of each conflict. G. Kurt Piehler has traced the long history of remembering American wars from the Revolution to Vietnam in *Remembering War the American Way*. Piehler argues war is a central component of nationhood, with the federal government, national memorials, and commemorative celebrations integral to the process.[3]

Specific studies of Korean War remembrance, however, have been scant. The best assessments are James Kerin's dissertation from nearly a quarter century ago, "The Korean War and American Memory" and *To Acknowledge a War* by Paul M. Edwards.[4] Kerin, however, does not see much change over time in how popular culture has portrayed Korea. Moreover, his work is hampered by timing and is unable to fully evaluate the KWVM. Edwards is not interested generally in popular culture. Instead, he examines the major events of the war: who was at fault for starting it, General Douglas MacArthur's firing, and significant combat operations—and how those events have been remembered. In his estimation, like mine, historians have overlooked the nuances of the Korean War.[5]

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[3] Blight, *Race and Reunion*; Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning*; Huebner, *The Warrior Image*; Piehler, *Remembering War the American Way*.

[4] Kerin, "The Korean War and American Memory;" Paul M. Edwards, *To Acknowledge a War: The Korean War in American Memory* (West Port: Greenwood Press, 2000).

[5] Edwards and I differ, however, in focus. His critique of Korean War memory reaffirms the roles of generals, operations, belligerent nations, and critiques other historians' work on Korea in a chapter he titles "Revising the

Yet Kerin and Edwards are silent on some of the more striking issues of Korean War popular culture, particularly prisoners of war (POWs) and brainwashing. Analyses of Korean War POWs and fears of communist indoctrination have gained increasing historiographical visibility elsewhere, however. Susan L. Carruthers examines POWs in *Cold War Captives*, but places the Korean War in the context of the larger Cold War struggle. Matthew W. Dunne's *A Cold War State of Mind* investigates the larger connections between brainwashing, individualism, and national character.[6] His work, like Carruthers', frames the Korean War in a larger conversation about the Cold War. Dunne, in short, does not analyze other aspects of Korean War popular culture. Major works in memory studies have also emphasized how wars influence the decision-making process during other conflicts. Several decades ago, Ernest R. May's *"Lessons" of the Past* and Yuen Foong Khong's *Analogies at War* explored this theme.[7] May offers a more general history, surveying several examples in conflict analogies including the Cuban Missile Crisis and Vietnam. Khong's work is the more specific, detailing the ways the Korean War, the Munich Conference of 1938, and the French surrender at Dien Bien Phu influenced President Lyndon Johnson's 1965 decisions for war in Vietnam. Edward T. Linenthal's *Preserving Memory* and Kristin Ann Hass's *Sacrificing Soldiers on the National Mall* have also strongly influenced my understanding of the connections between memorialization, national identity, and monument locations.[8]

Revisionists." Edwards, *To Acknowledge a War*. Some scholars have explored the memory of the Korean War in Korea. See, for example, Philip West and Suh Ji-Moon, eds., *Remembering the Forgotten War: The Korean War Through Literature and Art* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 2001).

[6] Susan L. Carruthers, *Cold War Captives: Imprisonment, Escape, and Brainwashing* (Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2009); Matthew W. Dunne, *A Cold War State of Mind: Brainwashing and Postwar American Society* (Amherst & Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2013).

[7] Ernest R. May, *"Lessons" of the Past: The Use and Misuse of History in American Foreign Policy*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973) and Yuen Foon Khong, *Analogies at War: Korea, Munich, Dien Bien Phu, and the Vietnam Decisions of 1965* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

[8] Linenthal, *Preserving Memory;* Kristin Ann Hass, *Sacrificing Soldiers on the National Mall* (Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2013).

My own work has benefitted considerably from these analyses and many others, but typically scholars have not evaluated the Korean War's complex and changing popular representations. The most prevalent assumption in popular culture about Korea considers it the Forgotten War. Historians, moreover, have not seemed particularly interested in challenging that assumption. Indeed, just as designations have shaped how the public understands other wars, the "forgotten" moniker has strongly influenced American attitudes toward Korea. No historian, of course, would argue that the Korean War has literally been forgotten. Yet much of the historiography has reaffirmed the Forgotten War appellation while ignoring the many ways Korea has been remembered and represented in American culture. Military histories of the conflict, such as *This Kind of War* by T.R. Fehrenbach and, more recently, David Halberstam's *The Coldest Winter*, only hint at the effects of Korea on American society.[9] Other historians have examined the homefront during the conflict. Steven Casey's *Selling the Korean War* is a seminal recent examination of the propaganda and politics of Korea.[10] Several volumes, most notably W.D. Erhart and Philip K. Jason's *Retrieving Bones,* gather together the poetry and literature of Korean War veterans, while other works, such as *I Remember Korea* by Linda Granfield recount their memories of the war.[11] Stephen Whitfield's *The Culture of the Cold War*, Elaine Tyler May's *Homeward Bound*, and the edited volume *Rethinking Cold War Culture* by Peter J. Kuznick and James Gilbert remain strong examinations of the domestic Cold War, but none deal directly with Korea.[12] The historical scholarship thus has not thoroughly

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[9] T.R. Fehrenbach, *This Kind of War: The Classic Korean War History* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 1963); David Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter: America and the Korean War* (New York: Hyperion, 2007). Both works, separated by more than four decades, suggest an evaluation of the war's place in American culture (Fehrenbach's chapter entitled "Lessons" and Halberstam's subtitle), but give the issue scant attention at best.

[10] Steven Casey, *Selling the Korean War: Propaganda, Politics, and Public Opinion, 1950-1953* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

[11] W.D. Erhart and Philip K. Jason, eds., *Retrieving Bones: Stories and Poems of the Korean War* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1999); Linda Granfield, *I Remember Korea: Veterans Tell Their Stories of the Korean War, 1950-53* (New York: Clarion Books, 2003).

[12] Stephen J. Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991); Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books Publishing, 1988); Peter J. Kuznick and James Gilbert, eds., *Rethinking Cold War Culture* (Washington, D.C., Smithsonian Books, 2001).

analyzed the role of the Korean War in American culture and the ways it has resonated in the decades after the war. Historians, in other words, have not undertaken sustained explorations of the durable and dynamic importance of the so-called "Forgotten War."

This dissertation argues that the "Forgotten War" label, the effects of contemporary social concerns, and the memory of World War Two and Vietnam have shaped the memory of Korea. My first objective, therefore, is to scrutinize the different ways the "forgotten" motif percolated in Korean War memory in the second half of the twentieth century. By recurrently thinking of the war as forgotten, with some irony, Americans have recurrently remembered it. My second purpose is to illustrate how the major depictions of the war have changed over time with social and political currents of each passing period. Best articulated by Maurice Halbwachs, collective memory "is essentially a reconstruction of the past in the light of the present." Halbwachs pioneered the concept that remembrance of the past was a means to solve or comment upon present crises, and Americans have at different times looked to the Korean War in that regard.[13] Even amidst its enduring reputation as the Forgotten War, the changes in how Korea has been remembered are just as much responses to contemporary anxieties and reflect social concerns at a given time. Fears of national decline, domestic anticommunism, the Vietnam era, social upheavals of the 1970s, and identity politics in the 1990s each colored how the Korean War was remembered in American culture. Finally, the Korean War did not exist in a vacuum. My third objective, therefore, is to examine how other twentieth-century conflicts, especially World War Two and the Vietnam War, helped shape the legacy of Korea. Put another way, I suggest that the assumptions surrounding these other conflicts profoundly influenced collective memory of the Korean War, and circling back to my first point, helped strengthen the Forgotten War mythos.

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[13] Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, trans. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

Because of these factors, the Korean War has served various but equally vital functions in showing how a democratic society remembers war. Together, the chapters that follow show the diverse ways Korea has been represented in the second half of the twentieth century. Where applicable, each chapter strongly considers the Forgotten War mythos, the contemporary social context, and the influence of World War II and Vietnam on Korea's legacy.

Depictions of World War Two and the Vietnam War have inundated Americans for decades, with specific meanings attached to both conflicts. The Second World War was the subject of Studs Terkel's seminal oral history, *The Good War*, which captures the memories of both GIs and citizens. Terkel shows that even decades later, Americans continue to think of World War Two as a necessary and just conflict that affirms its legacy as the "Good War."[14] But as historian Andrew Huebner has shown, as early as summer 1942, the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York exhibited the photography collection entitled *Road to Victory*—at a time when the Allies' victory was anything but guaranteed. The gallery images were censored, ignoring photographic evidence of bloodshed and negative depictions that would have questioned soldiers' sacrifices.[15]

Depicting World War Two on film began almost immediately after Pearl Harbor, with films such as *Casablanca* (1942), *Wake Island* (1942), and *Guadalcanal Diary* (1943), along with dozens of others, appearing before war's end.[16] By the 1970s, James Kerin argues, Hollywood had created "a virtual film genre" centered on the Second World War.[17] Indeed, the myriad World War Two films

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[14] Terkel, ironically, suggests that an oral history of the war was needed because "the disremembrance of World War Two is as disturbingly profound as the forgettery of the Great Depression." He, of course, spends the remaining pages showing the opposite is true. Studs Terkel, *The Good War: An Oral History of World War II* (New York: The New Press, 1984), 3; Kerin, "The Korean War and American Memory," 26.

[15] Huebner, *The Warrior Image*, 15-16.

[16] *Casabalanca*, directed by Michael Curtis (Burbank: Warner Bros., 1942); *Wake Island*, directed by John Farrow (Hollywood: Paramount Pictures, 1942); *Guadalcanal Diary*, directed by Lewis Seiler (Los Angeles: Twentieth Century Fox, 1943).

[17] Kerin further suggests that World War II's "image, refined in progress by Hollywood as well as Washington, because of its outcome, and because of its projection of the U.S. into a position as the preeminent nation on the globe, the act of remembrance has never been a problem. Kerin, "The Korean War and American Memory," 26-27.

created in the decades after 1945 affirms such an assessment.[18] Further, Kerin argues that the literature that emerged from World War Two "has made a major contribution to modern American literature."[19]

As John Bodnar has shown, although World War Two has had a much more contested memory than historians and the public typically recognize, one of the most pervasive narratives of the war was one of worthwhile sacrifice and endurance.[20] G. Kurt Piehler sees a similar narrative in place in the postwar period, arguing that idealism, emotionalism, and vindication typified many responses to American action in Europe and Asia. In 1946, for example, President Harry S. Truman urged August 14 as "Victory Day," while two states, Arkansas and Rhode Island, made the day an official holiday, V-J Day.[21] Moreover, it was during and right after Korea that several monuments and memorials to World War II battles were erected. Officially titled the Marine Corps War Memorial and dedicated in 1954, Felix DeWeldon's Iwo Jima monument is a testament to one of the bloodiest battles of the Pacific.[22] And in 1962, the submerged USS *Arizona* was officially made a memorial for the 1,101 servicemen who did on the battleship in the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.[23]

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[18] See *Flying Leathernecks*, directed by Nicholas Ray (New York: RKO Radio Pictures, 1951); *The Bridge on the River Kwai*, directed by David Lean (Los Angeles: Columbia Pictures, 1957); *The Guns of Navarone*, directed by J. Lee Thompson (Los Angeles: Columbia Pictures, 1961); *The Longest Day*, directed by Ken Annakin, Andrew Marton, and Bernhard Wicki (Los Angeles: Twentieth Century Fox, 1962); *The Dirty Dozen*, directed by Robert Aldrich (Beverly Hills: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1967); *Patton*, directed by Frank J. Schaffner (Los Angeles: Twentieth Century Fox, 1970); *Tora! Tora! Tora!*, directed by Richard Fleischer, Toshio Masuda, Kenji Fukasaku (Los Angeles: Twentieth Century Fox, 1970); and *A Bridge Too Far* directed by Richard Attenborough (Beverly Hills: United Artists, 1977). For more recent adaptations, see *Saving Private Ryan*, directed by Steven Spielberg (Universal City: DreamWorks Pictures, 1998); *Enemy at the Gates*, directed by Jean-Jacques Annaud (Hollywood: Paramount Pictures, 2001); and *Flags of Our Fathers*, directed by Clint Eastwood (Universal City: DreamWorks Pictures, 2006).

[19] Kerin points to novels such as Norman Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead* (1948), *From Here to Eternity* (1951) by James Jones, Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* (1961), and Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.'s *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969). Nevertheless, these novels, he asserts, are "considerably less upbeat, less sentimental, less 'patriotic' than the popular image of the experience." Kerin, "The Korean War and American Memory," 30.

[20] Bodnar, *The "Good War" in American History*, 4-5.

[21] Piehler, *Remembering War the American Way*, 132-133.

[22] Piehler, *Remembering War the American Way*, 135.

[23] Pehler, *Remembering War the American Way*, 152.

Vietnam likewise has resonated in American culture, but for strikingly different reasons. Disaffection with the Vietnam War began with the movement against continued American involvement. Vietnam, of course, is often considered the first televised war, and certainly that medium brought the war into homes with an immediacy like never before. Journalists not only openly questioned military command and strategy, but went on to write memoirs and histories critical of American involvement.[24] Whereas one of the most profound reasons for World War II's enduring legacy as the "Good War" was the unconditional victory over the Axis, withdrawal from Vietnam has branded it the "Bad War." Journalists' criticism of American policy in Vietnam, however, is not the only reason such a view continues to resonate. Memoirs and novels abound that focus on American hubris and poor military decisions in Vietnam. Philip Caputo's *A Rumor of War* (1977) captures the personal conflict of a Marine lieutenant's idealism and the realities of Vietnam. So, too, does *Born on the Fourth of July* (1976) by Ron Kovic, who was paralyzed in Vietnam and later becomes active in the antiwar movement.[25] Films largely contribute as well to the "Vietnam-as-tragedy" motif. *The Deer Hunter* (1978), *Platoon* (1986), and *Full Metal Jacket* (1987) have all affirmed the image of an superfluous and inglorious war.[26] The Vietnam Veterans Memorial is perhaps the most edifying symbol of tragedy associated with the war. Seemingly rising out of the ground, the long, black marble wall lists the names of each American killed in the conflict. It its simplicity, "the Wall," according to one historian, "evidently performs a function and service of catharsis and comfort for those who served…as well as for the families and friends of those…who did not come

[24] See Neil Sheehan, *A Bright Shining Lie*: *John Paul Vann and America in Vietnam* (New York: Vintage Books, 1988); Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History* (New York: Penguin Group Publising, 1984); William Prochnau, *Once Upon a Distant War* (New York: Random House Publishing, 1995); Halberstam, *The Making of a Quagmire* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 1965).
[25] Philip Caputo, *A Rumor of War* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1977); Ron Kovic, *Born on the Fourth July* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976). Both Caputo and Kovic claim that President John F. Kennedy's inauguration speech inspired them to join the military.
[26] *The Deer Hunter*, directed by Michael Cimino (Universal City: Universal Pictures, 1978); *Platoon*, directed by Oliver Stone (Los Angeles: Orion Pictures, 1986); *Full Metal Jacket*, directed by Stanley Kubrick (Burbank: Warner Bros., 1987).

back alive."[27] The VVM has consistently proved to be the most popular memorial on the National Mall.

Despite the broad differences in how these wars have been remembered, each continues to evoke a strong consensus, despite the efforts of revisionist historians to critique the pervasive assumptions about either conflict.[28] The labeling of the Korean War as the Forgotten War, it too, evokes consensus.[29] To be sure, Korea has not resonated in public consciousness as have these other major conflicts. While it was fought, the war witnessed extreme deviations in public awareness. Initially, public attention was high, as support surged in 1950 for President Truman's call to defend South Korea. But as battle lines hardened along the 38th parallel, Americans went back to their daily lives. Abetted by the notion that Korea was a mere "police action" and not a full-scale war, daily attention waned and many ignored the war altogether.[30] All the while, veterans rotated home and merged back into society. When the bodies of dead servicemen came back, their graves did not initially contain any reference to Korea.[31] And yet, as historian Steven Casey has shown, the ensuing stalemate after Chinese intervention wreaked havoc on the Truman administration in the

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[27] Kerin argues that as "a controversial design commemorating a divisive and unhappy national experience to emerge as a completed project within a period of less than four years, funded entirely by private donations, is a triumph of remembrance indeed." Kerin, "The Korean War and American Culture," 37-38.

[28] Certainly critics of both wars have challenged prevailing assumptions of the nature of both World War Two and the Vietnam War. See, for example, Edgar L. Jones, "One War is Enough," *The Atlantic Monthly*, February, 1946 and "Reagan Gives Views on Vietnam War," *New York Times*, April 5, 1984. For revisionist histories of World War II as the "Good War," see Paul Fussell, *The Boys' Crusade* (New York: Random House Publishing, 2005); Michael C.C. Adams, *The Best War Ever* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994); John Bodnar, *The "Good War" in American Memory*. For the Vietnam War, see Mark Moyar, *Triumph Forsaken: The Vietnam War, 1954-1965* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Lewis Sorely, *A Better War: The Unexamined Victories and Final Tragedy of America's Last Years in Vietnam* (Orlando: Harvest Book Publishing, 1999); Michael Lind, *Vietnam: The Necessary War* (New York and London: The Free Press, 2002).

[29] According to Halberstam, Gen. Matthew B. Ridgway was the first to apply this phrase. Clay Blair also used as the title of his seminal 1987 work on the war. Halberstam, *The Fifties* (New York: Random House Publishing, 1993), 73; Clay Blair, *The Forgotten War: American in Korea, 1950-1953* New York: Crown Publishing, 1987); Kerin, "The Korean War and American Memory," 42-43.

[30] Some scholars and popular historians have reaffirmed this view of the Korean War. See Rosemary Foot, *The Wrong War: American Policy and the Dimensions of the Korean Conflict, 1950-1953* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985) and J. Lawton Collins, *War in Peacetime: The History and Lessons of Korea* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Publishing, 1969).

[31] Piehler, *Remembering the War the American Way*, 221.

1952 election, suggesting that Americans cared enough about Korea—and making peace—to turn out the Democratic Party from the White House for the first time in twenty years.[32]

Further, veterans in particular have criticized Korea as the "Forgotten War," pointing out that their service, especially when compared to the recognition of veterans of World War II and the Vietnam War, has not received the same national attention. But Korean War veterans have also used the Forgotten War label to do something about it. As Melinda L. Pash has shown, veterans have been at the forefront of Korean War memorialization and remembrance precisely because they have felt overlooked. Pash writes that "average Americans found themselves too busy to pay attention to the conflict raging thousands of miles away in Korea."[33] But it was not just the population that turned away from the war. "Quieted by the country's apathy," she argues, most Korean War GIs tried "to put the war behind them and forget that they were veterans at all."[34] The nation's attitude toward the war, she suggests, was "too tepid in the 1950s" to memorialize Korean War veterans' sacrifices.[35] But they pressed on. The Chosin Few and the Association of Airborne Ranger Companies of the Korean War both organized in 1983, and the Korean Veterans International followed three years later. The establishment of these organizations suggests that Korean War veterans became increasingly concerned about their place in American cultural memory

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[32] Casey believes that in promoting the war to the American public, the Truman administration teetered upon a delicate brink between nuclear war with the Soviet Union and not insisting upon a strong enough military response. Casey, *Selling the Korean War*, 5. Marilyn B. Young offers a slight critique on the "restrained" position Casey identifies. She sees instead the Korean War as a "hard sell" for the Truman administration, because the public "had serious doubts about the value of the war" and thus prosecuted the war in Korea despite strong public reservations. Marilyn B. Young, "Hard Sell: The Korean War," in Kenneth Osgood and Andrew K. Frank, eds., *Selling War in a Media Age*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2010), 113-114.

[33] Melinda Pash, *In the Shadow of the Greatest Generation: The Americans Who Fought the Korean War* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2012), 1.

[34] Pash, *In the Shadow of the Greatest Generation*, 219.

[35] Pash, however, acknowledges some memorialization in the 1950s, arguing that the official change of recognition of Armistice Day to Veterans Day on November 11, 1954 was due, in part, to recognizing Korean War veterans. The United Nations also dedicated on June 21, 1956, a plaque to those who fought and died in Korea. Pash, *In the Shadow of the Greatest Generation*, 219.

in midlife, decades after the war was over.[36] Yet surely the enormity of the American war effort marks Korea as a major conflict. More than six million Americans served in three years of conflict and around 54,000 Americans died.[37] Moreover, the war had immediate and long-standing consequences, ravaging the Korean peninsula, creating millions of refugees and exacting a lasting legacy of political and economic mistrust between North and South. Further, the United States has continued to bear the military and financial costs of defending South Korea against another potential attack from the North.

I have tended to investigate sources to which the public had considerable access. Therefore, I have paid close attention to the major periodicals of the day. In so doing, my goal is to illustrate the important role the Korean War played in public consciousness while showing the ways opinion-makers, political and military leaders, and other "experts" on the war framed the memory of Korea in specific ways. I suggest the nation's media, especially its newspapers such as the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and *Chicago Daily Tribune*, were vital in constructing the various strands of Korean War representation. On some occasions, I do examine less popular print media, such as the *Atlanta Daily World*, one of the nation's oldest black newspapers. But overall, my intention is to show how much coverage the Korean War received from the larger media outlets.

This dissertation relies as well on interpreting popular culture. I have defined "popular culture" primarily as television, film, and literature. I have done so largely because these were the media where the Korean War appeared most consistently. Further, these venues also had the potential to reach large audiences. Scholarly works such as Frank McAdams' *The American War Film* and Tony Shaw's *Hollywood's Cold War* proved invaluable secondary sources for analyzing themes

[36] Pash writes that it was reconnecting with other veterans that "provided the impetus for them to push for more outward recognition of their needs and rights as veterans." Pash, *In the Shadow of the Greatest Generation*, 222-226; Kerin, "The Korean War and American Memory," 55.
[37] Kerin, "The Korean War and American Memory," 3.

prevalent in such Korean War cinema.[38] Arne Axelsson's *Restrained Response*, which analyzes dozens of novels about the Korean War and the large Cold War, provides a compelling overview of the volume of literature on Korea.[39] When possible, I also examine public and media responses to popular culture. The *M*A*S*H* series, for example, engendered debates about the show's obligations to accurately depict the Korean War. It showed that journalists, veterans, and citizens had strong opinions about the issue. Furthermore, memoirs about film and television have provided critical analyses of how actors, producers, and directors helped forge the imagery of the Korean War. Especially valuable were memoirs from producer Larry Gelbart and actor Alan Alda, both of whom were implicated in *M*A*S*H*'s success.[40]

To show the relevance of the Korean War in American culture, it is necessary to show not only how it was remembered, but how it influenced other events. Most notably, this occurred within the context of the political debates surrounding the Vietnam War. Therefore I define as "political culture" the public, political, and military debates surrounding the memories of Korea as events in Vietnam spiraled toward war. The nation's military brass, policy planners, and print media were an integral part of this process. In many cases, the journals and newspapers of the day disseminated those opinions to the public at large.

When pertinent, I also examine the rhetoric of political and military leadership and social experts to show how they helped develop Korean War memory within a public framework. My interest here, however, is not the accuracy of their positions but rather how they argued for particular meanings of the war. In this regard, the nation's popular presses again provided for much

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[38] Frank McAdams, *The American War Film: History and Hollywood* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2002); Tony Shaw, *Hollywood's Cold War* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007).
[39] Arne Axelsson, *Restrained Response: American Novels of the Cold War and Korea, 1945-1962* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, Inc., 1990).
[40] Larry Gelbart, *Laughing Matters: On Writing M*A*S*H, Tootsie, Oh, God!, and a Few Other Funny Things* (New York: Random House, 1998); Alan Alda, *Never Have Your Dog Stuffed and Other Things I've Learned* (New York: Random House, 2005).

of my research, but so too did the rhetoric of figures such as President Richard Nixon and Gen. Richard Stilwell and the opinions of a wide variety of experts, such as psychiatrist Robert Jay Lifton and sociologist Albert D. Biderman.[41] The memoirs and case studies of experts from various fields, most notably Eugene Kinkead, Benjamin Spock, and Joost Meerloo, have strengthened my examination of Korean War prisoners.[42] The works of journalists and soldiers who served and fought in Korea have also benefitted my work.[43] Finally, this dissertation has also drawn from the records of architect John P. Lucas, one of the four professors from Pennsylvania State University who drafted the original model of the KWVM. I have expanded on the primary research from Lucas's collection with memoirs, especially William P. Lecky's *Designing for Remembrance*, which recounts his firm's role in constructing the KWVM, secondary sources such as Kristin Ann Hass's *Sacrificing Soldiers on the National Mall*, and media reports.[44]

As the following chapters will show, I have used both broad and narrow conceptions of "culture" to show the diverse ways Korea has been represented in the second half of the twentieth century. I do not imply that the Korean War has cast the same cultural shadow as the other major conflicts of the twentieth century. Instead, this works suggests the need for a nuanced reevaluation of the war's place in American culture and history. Each chapter's theme reflects a broader strand that characterized the war at a particular time.

The first chapters weave together three source types—journalism, films, and novels—to show their importance in characterizing popular responses to Korea in the postwar era, from 1953-

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[41] Robert Jay Lifton, *Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism*: *A Study of "Brainwashing" in China* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1961); Albert D. Biderman, *March to Calumny: The Story of American POW's in the Korean War* (New York: McMillian Publishers, 1963).
[42] Eugene Kinkead, *In Every War But One* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1959); Benjamin Spock, *Problems of Parents* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1962); Joost Meerloo, *The Rape of the Mind: The Psychology of Thought Control, Menticide, and Brainwashing* (Cleveland: World Publishing, 1956).
[43] See, for example, Marguerite Higgins, *War in Korea: The Report of a Woman Combat Correspondent* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1951); Bill Maudlin, *Bill Maudlin in Korea* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1952).
[44] William P. Lecky, *Designing for Remembrance: An Architectural Memoir* (Rumford: LDS Publishing, 2012); Hass, *Sacrificing Soldiers on the National Mall*.

1965. From the end of the war until the beginning of major operations in Vietnam, Korean War popular culture reached its peak. In Chapter One, comparisons to World War Two abound in these sources, as does frustration that the US did not prosecute the Korean War in the same manner. Those assumptions about World War Two merged with the attempts by American opinion-makers, particularly the nation's media, to makes sense of Korea's purpose, what the war had accomplished, and whether the armistice had purchased a worthwhile peace. Novelists and filmmakers also grappled with the war's meaning and made those same comparisons between the wars. It is here in the immediate postwar period where the power of the Forgotten War mythos is best illustrated. Characters in both novels and films condemn the lack of homefront support, the burden of fighting which so few carry, and the general apathy of politicians in Washington. I suggest that in employing the Forgotten War mythos, these criticisms questioned Korea's relevance to American national security, the efficacy of a limited-war strategy, and the logic of a stalemated armistice. These critiques helped engender the first major strand of popular representation of the Korean War: its ambivalent legacy.[45]

The same source types reveal in Chapter Two that while the nation struggled to make sense of the war's outcome, the second Red Scare helped perpetuate the simultaneous fear of communist subversion from the returning Korean War POWs. As journalists, directors, novelists, and others struggled to reconcile the war's purpose with its outcome, knowledge that repatriated American POWs had been subjected to so-called brainwashing created a national panic. The fear of subversive POWs is therefore the second strand of Korean War remembrance. In Hollywood, no

[45] For popular culture and the Korean War, see Kerin, "The Korean War and American Memory," and Axelsson, *Restrained Response*. Both works illustrate that the designation "Forgotten War" is a disservice to the war's memory, with Kerin suggesting that a better epithet would be the title of Jan Halliday and Bruce Cumings' book, *Korea: The Unknown War*. As this dissertation purports to show, however, such a label as "unknown" does not work either for the reasons examined in each chapter. Further, despite his near-exhaustive study of postwar culture, Kerin fails to examine the larger social trends that explain why the war's representations occur when they do. Axelssson's scope is similarly sweeping, but its limitations are the same as Kerin's.

film captured this fear of brainwashing and communist subversion like *The Manchurian Candidate* (1962), based on Richard Condon's 1959 novel.[46] Media reports joined Hollywood in hyperbolizing the matter. The issue reached unprecedented heights when the various military branches began formally charging former POWs with collaboration, which only fueled the paranoia. By that point experts from various parts of American life—Dr. Benjamin Spock, Betty Friedan, and "brainwashing experts"—believed that brainwashing was symptomatic of larger issues, especially the weakening of the nation's moral fiber.[47]

Chapter Three extends the definition of culture to political culture and foreign affairs, showing that the Korean War was an integral part of the public debates surrounding both intervention and withdrawal from Vietnam. These "lessons" of the Korean War provide a third strand of Korean War remembrance. In the mid-1960s, President Lyndon Johnson's administration believed that the Korean War was analogous to the war in Vietnam. As Johnson intensified the bombing campaign and introduced combat troops in 1965, with few exceptions members of his administration affirmed such assumptions. When Johnson's successor, Richard M. Nixon, assumed the presidency, his administration also made assumptions about the Korean War that affected the waging of war in Vietnam. Namely, Nixon was determined to find a two-state solution where South Vietnam remained a viable, independent nation like South Korea. Both Johnson and Nixon assumed that certain "truths" about the Korean War could be applied to Vietnam, and analogies

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[46] Richard Condon, *The Manchurian Candidate* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959); *The Manchurian Candidate*, directed by John Frankenheimer (Beverly Hills: United Artists, 1962).

[47] For more on POWs and the brainwashing hysteria, see Charles S. Young, *Name, Rank, and Serial Number: Exploiting Korean War POWs at Home and Abroad* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2014); Carruthers, *Cold War Captives*; and Dunne, *A Cold War State of Mind*. Each offers a detailed examination of the impact Korean War POWs had on American society. Moreover, each work contextualizes the POW crisis within the larger Cold War framework and shows the importance of the Korean War in promulgating that "Cold War state of mind." As Young states, "the Korean War was the key moment in the maturation of the national security state from innovation to institution. Through it, American globalism became entrenched, and foreign entanglements became status quo instead of a surprise, despite the fact that isolationism predominated before World War II, and showed signs of returning after. In consideration of this predilection for drawing inward, popular support for the Cold War is something in need of explanation, not an outcome so natural as to go without noting." Young, *Name, Rank, and Serial Number*, 11-12.

between the two wars guided them. Equally important, both presidents found a press and public engaged with and often critical of these "lessons" they drew from Korea.[48]

Chapter Four shifts back to popular culture and examines what is perhaps the most iconic representation of the Korean War—the *M*A*S*H* franchise. With the series, Korean War memory witnessed its strongest influence of contemporary social criticism. Indeed, scholars such as James H. Wittebols and David Scott Diffrient debate whether *M*A*S*H* is best understood as a Korean War series or a vessel to critique social issues of the 1970s.[49] Thus *M*A*S*H* best demonstrates the fourth strand of Korean War memory, the allegorical. The franchise began with the 1968 publication of former Korean War doctor Richard Hornberger's book *MASH: A Novel About Three Army Doctors.*[50] (Hornberger wrote it under the alias Richard Hooker, which he insisted came from his golf swing.) The novel did not find immediate success, but Hollywood believed the story would make a great film, and it debuted on the big screen in 1970. The film's antiwar, antiestablishment message resonated with audiences at the height of Vietnam War protests. Just two years later, *M*A*S*H* appeared on the small screen, where it would remain for eleven seasons. Producers Larry Gelbart and Burt Metcalfe and actor Alan Alda (who played protagonist Benjamin "Hawkeye" Pierce), initially followed the tone of the film. But *M*A*S*H* the series evolved from its antiwar sentiments of the early seasons to focus more on how the doctors of the 4077th endured the trauma of wartime circumstances. And the Korean War is integral to this message. By using Korea as an

[48] For analyses of how the Korean War influenced Vietnam policy, see Khong, *Analogies at War* and May, *"Lessons" of the Past*. Each explores the important role the Korean War had in shaping initial Vietnam policy, but neither considers the ramifications of Korea's lessons after the Vietnam War began.
[49] James H. Wittebols, *Watching M*A*S*H, Watching America: A Social History of the 1972-1983 Television Series* (Jefferson: McFarland Publishing, 2003); David Scott Diffrient, *M*A*S*H* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2008).
[50] The novel lacked asterisks between the letters.

analogy to express larger social messages, *M*A*S*H* demonstrated the merging of contemporary commentary of the 1970s and 1980s and the memory of Korea.[51]

The final thread examined is the war's contentious history, which is best embodied in the fight over the Korean War Veterans Memorial, the subject of Chapter Five. The drive for the monument illustrates the legacy of the Vietnam War, the influence of the Forgotten War mythos, and the significance of identity politics in the late twentieth century. One of the main impetuses for the monument was the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, which had been constructed less than a decade after that war had ended. In its wake, Korean War veterans clamored for a national monument, using the power of the Forgotten War imagery to condemn a nation that had forgotten them. Responding to President Ronald Reagan's creation of the Korean War Veterans Memorial Advisory Board (KWVMAB), Congress in the mid-1980s appropriated funding and a site on the National Mall for the memorial. Bureaucratic in-fighting, though, left the monument in planning stages for a decade. At issue was the message the monument would convey to millions of visitors each year. Members of the various committees involved—the Commission of Fine Arts (CFA), the American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC), and the KWVMAB—and even the architectural firms that would help build it—saw an opportunity to present their unique vision of the Korean War. But when the monument seemed destined for construction, questions of racial and ethnic identity yet again bogged down the process to a standstill. To some degree the KWVM, like the television series *M*A*S*H*, represented an equal concern with contemporary social issues—in this case identity politics—as it did with an accurate depiction of the Korean War. And like viewers of *M*A*S*H,* visitors to the monument would come away with a particularized understanding of what the war had been like. The final design is a composite of various perspectives, further suggesting that the

[51] *M*A*S*H* has been the subject of several popular histories and scholarly works. See Suzy Kalter, *The Complete Book of M*A*S*H* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 1988); Diffrient, *M*A*S*H*; Wittebols, *Watching M*A*S*H, Watching America*. Generally, these authors reach little consensus about *M*A*S*H*'s social significance.

differences between the designs would not have been as significant to visitors as they were to the creators.[52]

This work suggests the need for a reevaluation of the Korean War's place in American culture and history. In different capacities, historians have explored Korea's impact on American culture, but there has been little sustained attention paid to the war's shifting and ill-defined legacy in American history—the subject of this dissertation. Too often, the distinctions and collective means of representation have been lumped together under the umbrella term "Forgotten War." By tracing the major themes of the Korean War's representation, it is possible to reclaim some of the nuance that such a phrase denies. This work does not purport to be an exhaustive examination of how the war has lived on in American culture, but rather seeks to develop a few key ways Korea has cast its shadow on subsequent American life.

[52] For scholarship on the Korean War Veterans Memorial, see Piehler, *Remembering War the American Way* and Hass, *Sacrificing Soldiers on the National Mall*. Hass is interested most in how the construction of national monuments since the Vietnam Veterans Memorial reassess concepts of nationalism, patriotism, and American identity. She places the KWVM within a larger paradigm that investigates the Black Revolutionary War Patriots Memorial, the Military Service for America Memorial, the National Japanese American Memorial to Patriotism, and the National World War II Memorial. She is not as interested in placing the KWVM in a framework to explore what the monument says about the war's legacy. For scholarship on more general war commemoration, see Paul Williams, *Memorial Museums: The Global Rush to Commemorate Atrocities* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007) and Kirk Savage, *Monument Wars: Washington D.C., the National Mall, and the Transformation of the Memorial Landscape* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2009).

CHAPTER ONE
THE AMBIVALENT WAR: AMERICAN CULTURAL REPRESENTATIONS OF THE KOREAN WAR, 1953-1965

In October 1955, the *Chicago Daily Tribune* covered a tour that visited Arlington National Cemetery in Washington, D.C. Patrons could see "rows of tombstones over American dead from a United Nations police action in Korea." On the way out, however, they could view the graves of those who had fought in America's wars: the Civil War, the Spanish-American War and both World Wars. The contrast could not have been more jolting, and the graves of fallen servicemen from the Korean War bore out that distinction. Their final resting places initially included "only the name, rank, and dates of the deceased," with no reference to the war in Korea.[1] "Police action," as the article suggested, meant something less than war, something to be regarded as little more than security detail. Even two years after the armistice ended the Korean War, "police action" was already emblematic of Korea's ambivalent place in American history.

Without a declaration of war, President Harry S. Truman had described American action in 1950—under the banner of the United Nations (UN)—in such a manner.[2] While the war dragged on, GIs expressed their disdain for the "non-war." Writing to his wife in 1951, SSgt. Joe Sammarco openly mocked the notion that Korea was anything short of a war. "I don't know when I will be able to come home," Sammarco said, "but it should be in the next 3-4 months at the latest. Unless, of course, the 'Police Action' (HA! HA!) takes a turn for the worse, which it might easily do."[3] Such

[1] G. Kurt Piehler, *Remembering War the American Way* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995), 156-57.
[2] Steven Casey, *Selling the Korean War: Propaganda, Politics, and Public Opinion, 1950-1953* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 28.
[3] Joe Sammarco, letter to Bobbie Sammarco, April 21, 1951, in Andrew Carroll, ed., *War Letters: Extraordinary Correspondence from American Wars* (New York: Simon & Schuster Publishing, 2001), 347. This edited volume contains

cynicism represented an uncertainty of the war's significance and reflected the serviceman's understanding that back home, Americans did not know what to make of Korea.

After the war, veterans continued to express that uncertainty in a variety of ways. As one veteran declared, "Korea was a 'non-war,' a 'police action,' and 'Harry Ass Truman's War.'" Korea, another veteran proclaimed, "lacked all nobility and didn't settle a damn thing." Said a third: "I must say that we Korean veterans got neither respect nor disrespect. Except amid our immediate families, there was no reaction."[4] Such attitudes about the purpose of the conflict reflected the general confusion surrounding Korea. "Korean veterans did not come home and start throwing tantrums like many Viet[nam] vets did," one veteran later stated. "We simply faded back into civilian life—no monuments, and not even a doughnut wagon to meet the [troop ship] I came home on."[5] Others lamented that their war "was sandwiched between our great rise [World War II] and our great fall [Vietnam]. It was transitional, hence, somewhat transitory." Some scholars have even suggested that Korean War veterans feared being labeled subversive in an era of communist witch hunts if they criticized American action, even after the war was over.[6]

As these comments from veterans suggest, Korea was a different type of war for the country. The United States has fought limited wars since World War II, but in the 1950s, the concept was anathema to an American public that remembered the complete destruction of the Axis powers, Germany and Japan. In Korea, the nation did not lose its first military engagement with communism, but neither did it emerge triumphant. Communism had been contained above the 38th parallel, but Gen. Douglas MacArthur's attempt to unify the peninsula had dragged in Red China, and led to a retreat and two years of negotiations and stalemate.

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several letters from Sammarco to his wife. Each time he mentions Korea being a "police action," he adds a "HA! HA!" in parentheses.

[4] W.D. Ehrhart, "Soldier-Poets of the Korean War," *War, Literature & the Arts* 9, no. 2 (1997), 39-40.

[5] Ehrhart, "Soldier-Poets of the Korean War," 8-9.

[6] Ehrhart, "Soldier-Poets of the Korean War," 42.

Despite the uncertainty of Korea's place in American culture, the war had a profound effect on American Cold War policy. It had lasted three years, involved a US-led UN coalition in which nearly six million Americans served, while claiming the lives of over 54,000 and wounding more than 100,000.[7] Its implications were even broader, guiding American foreign policy for the next fifty years. The Korean War also reflected an anticommunist strategy that led the nation into another limited war in Vietnam less than a generation later.

But the war certainly has not had a similar impact on American culture as it had on Cold War policy. Compared to World War II or the Vietnam War, Korea occupies an uncertain position in the nation's collective consciousness. The most popular phrase associated with Korea, the "Forgotten War," should not suggest a literal forgetting or intentional disremembering. Instead the term serves as a shorthand for all the unsettling implications of America's first indecisive Cold War conflict: a limited war, a police action, a negotiated settlement, an armistice. As Paul M. Edwards argues, ignorance of the war and the "lack of a meaningful name" help explain this national "rejection" of Korea.[8] "Forgotten," he suggests, "is often self-fulfilling" for those who would reject the war's impact on American culture.[9]

To be sure, "Forgotten War" has served particular functions, even when the Korean War was ongoing. *U.S. News and World Report* labeled it the Forgotten War in 1951, most likely from Gen. Matthew Ridgway's phrase. "No effort is being made or planned," the article lamented, "to win a clear military victory." Instead, whatever the US learned in fighting the communists had cost considerable numbers of American lives.[10] The "forgotten" label, as the article suggested, had already connected the war's strategy to its potential outcome. And in the immediate postwar period,

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[7] James R. Kerin, "The Korean War and American Memory," (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1994), 2.
[8] Paul M. Edwards, *To Acknowledge a War: The Korean War in American Memory* (Westport and London: Greenwood Press, 2000), 11, 15.
[9] Edwards, *To Acknowledge a War*, 16.
[10] Quoted in "The Forgotten War," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, October 18, 1951.

for various groups of Americans, particularly veterans, filmmakers, authors, and journalists, Forgotten War was a means of understanding the war and its place in American history. One of the most pervasive criticisms of the Forgotten War mythos is that the politicians hampered the fighting man's ability to win in Korea. Immediately after the war, for example, some Americans, especially veterans, pointed to Gen. Mark W. Clark's remarks that the United States could have won outright "if we had massed the means—additional ground, air, and sea, to do so" as proof that the nation had not been allowed to win.[11] Popular culture often repeated such an assumption, as fictional soldiers and Marines insist they could win if allowed to fully engage the enemy.

"Not being allowed to win" was only part of the larger Forgotten War mythos in the postwar period. Foundational to the Forgotten War and Korea's place in American memory, was the ambivalence which characterized popular reactions to the war. When Korea was over, American opinion-makers, primarily those in the press and in popular culture, did not know what to make of it. Its presence, however, was certainly there: novels, films, and press accounts dealt with the war in a variety of ways, but showed a general uncertainty in how to wrestle with the war's objectives, significance, and outcome. These popular interpretations typically depicted Korea as a war unresolved, a conflict in which the strategy of limited war and the results of an unjust armistice had hamstrung GIs during the fight and bargained away American global credibility. These themes—fighting a limited war and the indecisive nature of the peace settlement—were pervasive throughout the popular depictions of Korea in the postwar period and formed the basis for the Forgotten War mythos.

The public mood already reflected this uncertainty before war's end. Sixty-five percent of Americans polled in October 1950 believed it had been a mistake to get involved in the war.[12] By

[11] "The Forgotten If," *Christian Science Monitor*, August 10, 1953.
[12] Alec M. Gallup, ed., *The Gallup Poll Cumulative Index*, *1935-1997* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1999), 942.

1951, half of all Americans believed the US was following a poor military policy in Asia.[13] An equal number said the US would not win if Korea turned into World War III.[14] Even though so many questioned the efficacy of American military strategy and thought intervention a mistake, fully two-thirds supported a total victory to unite Korea democratically. These polling data imply that the public had misgivings about the strategy of limited war even if they supported the cause.

With Chinese intervention in late 1950, American retreat across the 38th parallel in 1951, and the ensuing stalemate the following two years, uncertainty and doubt only hardened in public attitudes. The first period of the war, from July 1950 until Chinese involvement, first saw the North Korean Army's relentless assault down the peninsula toward Pusan, and then its rapid expulsion from the South—best exemplified by the amphibious assault at Inchon—and MacArthur's sweeping drive northward to unite the entire peninsula. The second phase, however, resulted in a seeming impasse after the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) routed American forces from the Chosin Reservoir region and pushed them back across the 38th parallel. The war would settle there for its remainder, with gridlock on the battlefield and at the negotiation table.[15]

These last 18 months witnessed a growing apathy among Americans who had thought intervention a mistake and now blamed communist obstinacy for dragging out cease-fire negotiations.[16] Nonetheless, the majority of Americans still supported any means necessary to end the hostilities, even if that meant granting some concessions to the communists.[17] For most Americans, including the architects of containment such as George F. Kennan, Korea had never been an important battleground in the Cold War, and most believed Europe should remain the

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[13] Gallup, *The Gallup Poll Cumulative Index*, 953.
[14] Gallup, *The Gallup Poll Cumulative Index,* 941.
[15] Edwards, *To Acknowledge a War*, 66-68; Max Hastings, *The Korean War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988), 121, 132; T.R. Fehrenbach, *This Kind of War: The Classic Korean War History* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2001), 344, 364.
[16] Fehrenbach, *This Kind of War*, 30-32, 52; Hastings, *The Korean War*, 336.
[17] Gallup, *The Gallup Poll Cumulative Index*, 1140.

primary focus of any American military commitment. Policymakers had further argued that the Cold War was a protracted conflict, one Americans must gird themselves to fight for decades, and Korea was but one component of that global struggle. Thus, the public received mixed messages about the war's significance. It is not surprising, therefore, that doubt about Korea's significance—a theme strongly illustrated in the films and novels following the war—is a major component of postwar ambivalence.

In addition to strategy and outcome, another factor helps explain the war's uncertain place in American culture in the postwar era: the seemingly unavoidable comparisons with the Good War. Korea's immediate legacy was much less certain than that of World War II. The stalemate engendered a general disillusionment over American military capability and whether or not a "police action" had been worth so many lives. Americans could perhaps rationalize the sacrifices required during the Second World War: Japan's sneak attack at Pearl Harbor and Hitler's march across Europe ensured a united front among Americans in a struggle to rid the world of fascism. That was the image of World War II, the Good War, by the 1950s: the United States had fought a virtuous war, based on a policy of unconditional surrender, and defeated the two greatest evils the world had ever known, all while enjoying social and political harmony at home.[18]

World War II also affected popular representations of Korea in other ways. In speculating why returning veterans did not discuss the war or write much about it, scholar Jeffrey Walsh has suggested that "it was perhaps because of its poor timing…The war occurred just when a flood of books and films covering World War II were coming out."[19] One veteran, using the rhetoric of America's early Cold War, was more direct. Veterans of Korea "went into that John Foster Dulles

[18] John Bodnar, *The "Good War" in American Memory* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 12.
[19] Jason Walsh quoted in Ehrhart, "Soldier-Poets of the Korean War," 43.

'cold war' freeze right after Korea and a 'massive-retaliation' mentality that helped shut down the sort of cultural churn that heats up the thought processes and gets books written."[20]

As Walsh suggests, in the 1950s Korea appeared confusing and unpopular in comparison to the Good War. Doubt lingered about the war's resolution; questions about its effectiveness in curtailing communism remained; fears persisted of the conflict reigniting. Equally unsettling, however, was that a peninsular war had tested America's position as a superpower, and that in response, the nation had refused to unleash its full military might. After all, only five years earlier, the United States had defeated the powerful Axis armies. And World War II had ended with the spectacular and awful decisiveness of the atomic blasts on Japan, the bloody culmination of a war of revenge that had ushered in the nuclear age.[21] In short, by the 1950s the Good War was celebrated in American popular culture, simplified into a story of good guys defeating bad guys in a total war that had determined the future of mankind.[22]

This representation of World War II, of course, ignores significant realities that would have undermined this larger narrative of American exceptionalism.[23] Comparisons between the two wars continued to influence cultural depictions of Korea well into the 1960s. In films and novels, soldiers and Marines lament that their fight is nothing like the "Big War," the "Good War," or the "Last

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[20] Ehrhart, "Soldier-Poets of the Korean War," 41.

[21] Campbell Craig and Frederik Logevall, *America's Cold War: The Politics of Insecurity*, (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2009), 51-53, 62.

[22] For analyses of World War Two as the Good War, see Bodnar, *The "Good War" in American Memory*; Michael C.C. Adams, *The Best War Ever: America and World War II* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994); Philip D. Beidler, *The Good War's Greatest Hits: World War II and American Remembering* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998). What scholar James Kerin has called "a virtual film genre" dedicated to the Good War mythos has long occupied Hollywood studios. For films contemporary to World War II see *Wake Island*, directed by John Farrow (Hollywood: Paramount Pictures, 1942) and *Bataan*, directed by Tay Garnett (Beverly Hills: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1943). For later films see *Patton*, directed by Franklin Schaffner (Los Angeles: Twentieth Century Fox, 1970). More recent depictions also affirm this certainty about the United States' role in World War II and helped spur a renewed cultural interest the war. See *Saving Private Ryan*, directed by Steven Spielberg (Universal City: DreamWorks Pictures, 1998). Kerin, "The Korean War and American Memory," 27.

[23] Bodnar, *The "Good War" in American Memory*, 1-4. Bodnar writes that "It should come as no surprise, moreover, to learn that the public remembering of World War II was seldom concerned with producing an objective account of what had taken place."

War." Instead, they are stuck in an inglorious and insignificant one. They complain that if they only had similar support from back home, the United States could bring to bear its full military power, instead of fighting with one hand behind its back.

Films of the period also affirmed the differences between World War II and Korea. The cynicism and skepticism so common in Korean War films is mostly absent from the World War II subgenre. The latter also downplayed racial, ethnic, and class differences back home, suggesting the "melting pot" of America could handle the challenges of Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan. Patriotism in general is one of the strongest motif in World War Two films such as *The Sands of Iwo Jima* (1949), in which Sgt. John Stryker (John Wayne) molds young recruits into battle-hardened veterans. Stryker's commitment to country and cause is so great he even sacrifices his relationship with his family.[24] Other World War II films of the postwar period affirmed the moral certitude of the Good War while strengthening its distinction between with Korea. *Battle Cry* (1955) shows young American men from different backgrounds forming bonds of comradeship under the tests of war, while *To Hell and Back* (1955) chronicles the life of the nation's most decorated soldier, Audie Murphy, who plays himself. In the final battle, Murphy singlehandedly defeats the German advance, holding the enemy at bay with machine-gun affixed a burning tank. The action earned the real Murphy the Medal of Honor.[25] Such valor, patriotism, and self-sacrifice were largely absent in Korean War films of the same era. Thus four factors—criticism of a limited war strategy, a seemingly worthless armistice, the belief in public indifference, and a selective memory of the Good War—merged to form ambivalent representations of Korea in American postwar culture. This

[24] Bodnar, *The "Good War" in American Memory*, 132-139; *The Sands of Iwo Jima*, directed by Allan Dwan (Los Angeles: Republic Pictures, 1949).
[25] Frank McAdams, *The American War Film: History and Hollywood* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2002), 148, 153. *Battle Cry*, directed by Raoul Walsh (Burbank: Warner Bros., 1995); *To Hell and Back*, directed by Jesse Hibbs (Universal City: Universal Studios, 1955).

uncertainty—of what Korea had *meant* and what it had *resolved*—was an important component of how Americans remembered the war well into the 1960s.

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The national media served a vital function in constructing this ambivalent narrative. Print media dominated coverage of the war, and as a result, news coming from Korea was slower than televised coverage in Vietnam, but criticized military operations in several important ways.[26] With no initial media censorship, early reports documented the war's inept leadership, poor strategy, and green troops. The most scathing denunciations, however, focused on inefficient weaponry and manpower shortages. Reporters blamed these problems on an administration caught off guard by North Korea's invasion. Correspondents offered unwavering support for the American GI, whom they argued was in a difficult circumstance he did not understand, alongside steady criticism of an ineffective policy that eventually ended in stalemate.[27]

Despite Gen. MacArthur's high praise for a free press as the cornerstone of American democracy, the military did not appreciate reports critical of its policies.[28] Marguerite Higgins faced expulsion when the Army issued a statement barring all women but nurses from the combat zone. Though clearly aimed at Higgins, the Army hid behind a chivalric code of honor. "This is just not

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[26] Andrew J. Huebner, *The Warrior Image: Soldiers in American Culture from World War II to the Vietnam Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 100. "Sandwiched between the heyday of radio and movies in the 1930s and 1940s and the dominance of television in the late 1950s," Huebner writes, "glossy magazines were king during the Korean War."

[27] Throughout the Vietnam War, media culture would struggle to grasp the "lessons" of Korea—and how best to represent to the American public what those lessons were. For more on the lessons of Korea, see Chapter Three.

[28] Huebner, *The Warrior Image*, 100. Despite criticism from Higgins and others, the media was complicit in creating an atmosphere of ambivalence in their reporting before the war was even over, because the efficacy of censorship is questionable. Scholar Steven Casey argues that the military had "relative ease" with implementing "a more rigid censorship code" for reporters in the warzone because of media's reliance on "objective journalism"—producing stories based on "official facts." But Susan D. Moeller suggests caution about suggesting full censorship in Korea. Instead, she sees the Korean War as residing between the outright partnership of the media and the military as in World War II and the antagonistic relationship between the two in Vietnam. According to Moeller, "the press vociferously disapproved of the official conduct of the war" in Korea, but continued to support the plight of the individual soldier. Casey, *Selling the Korean War*, 4, 13; Susan D. Moeller, *Shooting War: Photography and the American Experience of Combat* (New York: Basic Books Publishing, 1989), 6.

the type of war where women ought to be running around the front lines," an Army spokesman explained. When Higgins and her employer, the *New York Herald Tribune*, protested the exclusion as discriminatory, MacArthur reinstated her, along with two reporters who had printed soldiers' criticisms of the war.[29]

Media criticism continued to emphasize setbacks after MacArthur's successor, Gen. Matthew B. Ridgway, lifted censorship in late 1951. One report stated that the retreat from the Chosin Reservoir was a "sad history" for the Marines. The Corps had taken a "physical mauling" at the hands of the enemy. As one journalist put it, "how did the United States ever get in such a predicament as to let this happen to the Marines?" The press insisted that the major problem at the Chosin Reservoir was a lack of manpower.[30] Equally telling, as late as November 1951, Higgins reported that military problems were the direct result of a "half-way mobilization." Peace would not last, she lamented, because a truce allowed for another communist military build-up. It would be a result of misplaced idealism, "when America allows wishful thinking to delay our drive toward rearmament."[31]

From the beginning of the war, President Truman had faced what one historian has called a "hard sell" in justifying American action in Korea. It was a "confusing war" for the American people who did not understand why they needed to fight in the first place.[32] Scholar Marilyn B. Young further suggests that the Korean War "has been a hard sell ever since."[33] After the war ended, the *Wall Street Journal* contrasted Korea's striking and sudden eruption with its "end in a

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[29] Despite popular assumption, MacArthur had not issued the ban. His subordinate, Gen. Walton Walker, had. For more on the media controversy in Korea see Michael S. Sweeney, *The Military and the Press: An Uneasy Truce* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2006), 129. "Marguerite Higgins Told to Leave Korea," *New York Times*, July 18, 1950; "M'Arthur Lifts Ban to Permit Miss Higgins Return to Korea," *Washington Post*, July 19, 1950.
[30] "Korea Retreat is Called Sad Day for U.S. Marines," *Washington Post*, December 6, 1950.
[31] "Shortages in Korea," *Hartford Courant*, November 5, 1951.
[32] Marilyn B. Young, "Hard Sell: The Korean War," in Kenneth Osgood and Andrew K. Frank, eds., *Selling War in a Media Age: The Presidency and Public Opinion in the American Century* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2010), 113-114.
[33] Young, "Hard Sell," 114.

whimper." "In the strange quiet that follows the silenced guns," the paper continued "none of us feel great transport; we have too often been brought to hope only to meet disillusion. Rather, we feel a numbness."[34] In a similar tone, *Life* noted "that the end of fighting in Korea…did not promise either surcease from anxiety or lasting peace…Since there was no real victory, there was no occasion for celebration."[35]

Covered by the nation's papers and photographed in *Life* and other magazines, the Korean War appeared to end with no occasion for celebration. At least in its inception, the media reported, American policy, if unprepared, was justified. North Korea's rapid strike across the 38th parallel was reminiscent of the Blitzkrieg's surge across Europe during World War II.[36] After the war settled into a stalemate and peace negotiations dragged out interminably, the reasons for fighting a limited war were harder to justify. And with the war over, media accounts could not comprehend what the war had resolved.

After the armistice, many journalists remained critical of the price of peace. The press slammed American involvement in two major ways. First, the United States had deliberately waged a self-imposed war of restraint because it feared a direct confrontation with China and the Soviet Union. This caution had resulted in a truce that undermined the sacrifices of American servicemen. And both conservatives and liberals in the press criticized this policy of limited war. David J. Dallin of the *New Leader* maintained that the United States must not "repeat the great blunder of Korea" by losing another war before it was even fought. His more conservative colleague, William Henry Chamberlin, ridiculed a strategy that had left South Korea unarmed after World War II and then required American troops to remedy such an oversight. In his estimation, "our policy has been

[34] Young, "Hard Sell," 131.
[35] Young, "Hard Sell," 132.
[36] Young, "Hard Sell," 115.

weak, fumbling, and contradictory."[37] The second major media criticism contended that soldiers in Korea had been constrained by policies determined in Washington. Accordingly, President Truman had fired Douglas MacArthur not because of insubordination, but because MacArthur "insisted [limited warfare] was no way to fight a war."[38]

From the Truman-MacArthur controversy and the war's outcome stemmed a series of assumptions about the nature of military command in a democracy and the future of Cold War conflicts. Firing the general and signing the armistice had emboldened the Chinese to build up their long-range bombers in lieu of another attack on South Korea, and they were calling once again for the reunification of the peninsula under communist rule, some in the press claimed. Journalists pointed to reports coming from Peking: despite the recent truce, Chinese leaders promised an increased military build-up. The *Chicago Daily Tribune* reported in 1955 that all major military personnel (save Gen. Matthew Ridgway) "were united in the opinion that victory was within our grasp" but firing MacArthur and allowing Washington to dictate military policy had lost the war.[39]

The media also claimed that the armistice had emboldened the Soviet Union. Journalists had vocalized such assumptions since the war's beginning. In August 1950, for example, Daniel James of the *New Leader* believed that "Korea was the turning point" which had emboldened "the Kremlin [to] make its major move in the next few months, while we are still unprepared."[40] Press accounts after the war kept up such ominous tones and emphasized the uncertainty of knowing what the

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[37] Dane J. Cash, "The Forgotten Debate: American Political Opinion Journals and the Korean War, 1950-1953," (PhD diss., Boston University, 2012), 27.
[38] "If We Had It to Do All Over Again," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 11, 1953; "Unlearned Lesson," *Baltimore Sun*, July 23, 1958; "Korea and the Lessons of the Past," *Los Angeles Times*, June 26, 1960; "Korea Failure Was Disaster—MacArthur," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 6, 1961; "Negotiating Downhill Only Helps the Reds," *Los Angeles Times*, November 13, 1962. For more on the Truman-MacArthur controversy see John W. Spanier, *The Truman-MacArthur Controversy and the Korean War* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., Inc, 1965).
[39] See "China Reds Receive Distance Bombers," *Washington Post*, August 3, 1953; "Gen. MacArthur Puts Blame for Desertions on Truman," *Los Angeles Times*, January 11, 1953; "MacArthur's Firing Most Startling Incident of War," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 27, 1953; "Korea: A Tragedy of Errors," *Los Angeles Time*, June 9, 1953; "U.N. Should Have Won In Korea, Clark Says," *Atlanta Constitution*, April, 28, 1954; "Verdict on Korea," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 1, 1955.
[40] Cash, "The Forgotten Debate," 37.

Soviets planned. Some outlets insisted Russian pilots had made up half of the entire communist air force in Korea, and intercepted radio communications confirmed that Russians had engaged in combat. Such reporting claimed that not only had the US fought the wrong war, it had fought the wrong enemy. The Soviets, one article declared, were keeping "a kind of foreign legion of various nationalities" in Korea for no other purpose than to attack the South. They were also selecting Chinese hopefuls for submarine training. Amidst fervent anticommunist opinion in the 1950s, such charges resonated with those who believed communism anywhere emanated from the Kremlin.[41]

The perception amongst many news outlets was that a poor military strategy had led to a poor peace. Early in the war, a Gallup poll had shown that sixty-four percent of Americans favored absolute victory—not a truce. But Gallup had also found that a similar number believed the war would be over in less than a year. Over two years later, as the end of the war approached, an overwhelming majority of Americans polled, eighty-four percent, favored a settlement. These data suggest that during the war, Americans supported an unconditional military victory, but only if won quickly. When the war and negotiations dragged on, costing more Americans lives, leading to Chinese intervention, and highlighting the failure of American military strategy, public support for the war waned and never recovered.[42] Writing in the *Nation's Business* after the peace settlement, Edward T. Folliard summed up these criticisms of America's prosecution of the war and the humiliating peace:

> If there is puzzlement about Korea, it should not be surprising. Never in our history have we engaged in an enterprise anything like it. Our emotions have undergone gyroscopic changes…The way in which the fighting ended in Korea was entirely alien to our experience. Our minds had been conditioned by what we had read in school or by what had happened in our own time…We were a nation accustomed to fighting through to victory, to seeing a happy fade-out with old glory flying above the conquered land. The truce in Korea bears no resemblance to these experiences.[43]

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[41] "Truce Fails to Reduce Flow of Soviet Arms to Red China," *Washington Post*, August 8, 1953.
[42] Gallup, *The Gallup Poll Cumulative Index,* 942.
[43] "Washington Mood," *Nation's Business*, September 8, 1953.

Folliard's assessment—based partially on a misunderstanding of America's previous wars—reflected a growing belief among journalists that Korea had been a war poorly planned, halfheartedly executed, and given away in negotiations.

The nation's media also insisted the armistice had made possible another Korean War.[44] Having accepted the truce the American public was in no mood to fight another limited war, especially under the same constraints. More than half of all Americans polled in November 1953 believed the United States should not get involved if South Korea started the fighting again. The following month, Gallup found that one-third believed fighting would resume. This number remained relatively constant into 1954.[45] Journalists reflected such assumptions and reported American dissatisfaction with South Korean President Syngman Rhee, whose bluster seemed to threaten another war. Many news outlets had expressed less than admirable views of Rhee during the war. The *New Republic* believed Rhee was a "rotten" overseer of a "a corrupt police state."[46] The *Nation*, meanwhile, declared about Rhee's administration that "you cannot fight for democracy in alliance with undemocratic forces and regimes."[47] The end of the war did little to soften Rhee's image in the nation's media. According to one journalist who interviewed Rhee, the president believed Korea's partition to be a "temporary postponement" to reassure the American people that every peace measure had been exercised. But Rhee also insisted that the United States "would not fail" to support South Korea if he resumed the war. "I don't see how your country could do anything else," he stated.[48] Rhee was even sure that if war resumed the United States would help "to achieve our unification by other means."[49]

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[44] See "Renewal of War Pledged by Rhee," *New York Times*, February 11, 1954; "Molotov's Outlook…Western Threat Outlined," *Washington Post*, February 24,1954.
[45] Gallup, *The Gallup Poll Cumulative Index,* 1190.
[46] Cash, "The Forgotten Debate," 21.
[47] Cash, "The Forgotten Debate," 21-22.
[48] "Rhee Still A Problem," *Washington Post,* September 15, 1953.
[49] "Rhee Says Allies Would Aid in War," *New York Times*, August 11, 1954. He did not elaborate what he meant by "other means."

That vociferous disapproval only heightened in the wake of the war's end. To be sure, "objective" journalism standards of the 1950s and early 1960s hardly questioned the antagonistic nature of communism or the righteousness of democratic capitalism.[50] But the press led the way in questioning how effective the war had been in containing communism. Such questions continued in the postwar years, as numerous reporters who had been entrenched with soldiers wrote memoirs. Marguerite Higgins' *War in Korea* (1951) appeared before the conflict was even over, and initiated themes that were hallmarks of correspondents' criticism of the war in Korea: military unpreparedness, inept leadership, poor media communication, and the appeasement of communist aggression. Keyes Beech's *Tokyo and Points East* appeared in 1954, a year after the ceasefire. He, too, criticized American action, explaining that a "fluid" situation as described by command really meant "very little was known about what was happening but that whatever was happening wasn't good." Beech further complained that the administration and military had not explained to soldiers the reasons for fighting. And they remained ignorant of Korea and its people. There was, according to Beech, "much that the GI did not understand, or try to understand, about this inhospitable land in which an unkind fate had deposited him."[51] When the objectives had changed, the war had lost whatever remaining meaning it had for the GI: "There was no point to which he could go and say 'This is it. Now we've won. Now we can go home.' There was no Tokyo, Rome, or Berlin to shoot for. To the GI looking north from the endless ridge lines there was only the vast and forbidding continent of Asia, inhabited by a strange and hostile people who lived a way of life that was beyond the GI's comprehension."[52]

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[50] Nancy Bernhard, *U.S. Television News and Cold War Propaganda*, 1947-1960 (Cambridge and New York: University of Cambridge Press, 1999), 3-6.
[51] Kerin, "The Korean War and American Memory," 101; Keyes Beech, *Tokyo and Points East* (Tokyo: Charles E Tuttle Co., 1955), 135.
[52] Kerin, "The Korean War and American Memory," 102; Beech, *Tokyo and Points East*, 203-204. Beech had won the Pulitzer Prize in 1951 for his reporting in Korea, and afterward covered Vietnam. "Keyes Beech, 76, Correspondent in Asia for Five Decades, is Dead," *New York Times*, February 16, 1990. For a similar evaluation, see Earnest Hoberecht, *Asia is My Beat*, (Clarendon: C.E. Tuttle Co., 1961).

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Numerous writers and filmmakers joined journalists in struggling to make sense of the war's meaning. Their understanding of the war was equally uncertain, and belief in the Good War mythos was also integral in their depictions of the Korean War.[53] Nonetheless, subjective quality and relative quantity are the not criteria most important here; the Korean War experiences illustrated in literature and on film in the immediate postwar era suggest the Forgotten War description is an inaccurate description, but one that nonetheless embodies the ambivalence associated with the war. And certainly the period under review here, 1953-1965, saw a proliferation of Korean War stories in print and on screen. Indeed, the overwhelming majority of all Hollywood-produced films about the Korean War appeared by 1960.[54]

Korean War popular culture emphasized the ineffectiveness of military bureaucracy and the apathy of the American public. Postwar films in particular present a strikingly different tone than those produced during the war. *The Steel Helmet*, *Fixed Bayonets!* (both 1951), and *Retreat, Hell!* (1952) may be best described as typical of the combat genre: gung-ho Marines and soldiers are eventually victorious against a cruel and relentless enemy.[55] To be sure, some of these early Korean War films

[53] Critics poorly received much of the Korean War literary works of this period; according to several historians and literary scholars, they were not of the same quality as many World War II novels that came out in the same period, nor were there as prolific. Certainly, the aggregate number of personal memoirs, fictional accounts, and motion pictures of the Korean War did not match the numbers of World War II before it or Vietnam after—a salient fact that has contributed to the mythos of the Forgotten War. For more on responses to criticism of Korean War films and novels, see W.D. Erhart and Philip K. Jason, *Retrieving Bones: Stories and Poems of the Korean War* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1999) and Kerin, "The Korean War and American Memory," 276.

[54] Kerin, "The Korean War and American Memory," 288.

[55] *The Steel Helmet*, directed by Samuel Fuller (Los Angeles: Lippert Productions, 1951); *Fixed Bayonets!*, directed by Samuel Fuller (Los Angeles: Twentieth Century-Fox, 1951); *Retreat, Hell!,* directed by Joseph H. Lewis (Burbank: Warner Bros., 1952). Hollywood worked in cooperation with the government and military to make many of the era's war films, including those about Korea. For more on the connections between Hollywood and government, see Ronnie D. Lipschutz, *Cold War Fantasies: Film, Fiction, and Foreign Policy* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2001); McAdams, T*he American War Film*; Robert Eberwein, *The War Film* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2005); and Lawrence H. Suid, *Guts and Glory: Great American War Movies* (Reading: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company), 1978.

went beyond that generalization to explore the psychological impact of war and the specifics of combat in Korea, but many were uncannily pro-war, such as *I Want You* (1951).[56]



Figure 1.1 Original Movie Poster for Fixed Bayonets! *(1951)*

Many authors and directors used "gritty realism" to explore a variety of themes in Korean War fiction. They detail gruesome combat, GIs' coarse language, and the monotony of military life. Nonetheless, these media reaffirm the ambivalence associated with popular representation of the Korean War. In films and novels, America's fighting men question fighting a limited war, criticize an unsupportive public, and endure a frustrating stalemate. Other literary and film examples in the Korean War drama exhibit what some scholars term the absurdist tradition. In such works, the protagonist deals with insurmountable problems as in the gritty war drama, but his response is outlandish and hyperbolic. Often the war is tangential to the story, and authors of the absurdist school often focused on sex, alcohol, or the exploitation of the military for personal gain as major

[56] *I Want You*, directed by Mark Robson (New York: RKO Radio Pictures, 1951). Unlike postwar films, films produced during the war rarely criticized how or why the war was fought (and obviously no denunciation of the armistice).

themes. In dealing with the aforementioned themes, the principal characters of postwar films and novels—both gritty and absurdist—typically condemn American military intervention in Korea, are unclear on the war's objectives, and in most cases, deal with the psychological toll of the war without support from home. These perspectives—the gritty war drama and the absurdist narrative—were the primary representations of the Korean War in popular culture, and best illustrate the war's ambivalent legacy.[57]

Walt Sheldon's *Troubling of a Star* (1953) both condemns an unsympathetic Air Force bureaucracy and a nation equally indifferent to servicemen's sacrifices. The novel promises intense action, proclaiming that "from the B-girl joints of Japan to the bullet-strafed hills of Korea" this is "the bloody, lusty novel of the 66th Fighter-Bomber Wing!" To be sure, the novel is sexually suggestive, with adultery and sexism as major themes.[58] But it emphasizes the psychological impact killing has on Capt. Richard Tindle. He watches Chinese soldiers burn and scream in agony as he drops bombs from high above and sees their intestines protruding out "like red toothpaste."[59] These images haunt Tindle, who cannot shake the memories of children trying to wake dead parents. Command's orders make Tindle physically ill since he cannot see any greater good coming from them. By the end of the novel, Tindle is as ambivalent as ever, unable to believe that his actions have been worthwhile.[60]

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[57] For more on these literary genres, see Arne Axelsson, *Restrained Response: American Novels of the Cold War and Korea, 1945-1962* (Westport: Greenwood Press, Inc., 1990) and Wallis R. Sanborn, III, *The American Novel of War: A Critical Analysis and Classification System* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc. Publishers, 2012). Axelsson connotes absurdism with irony and comedy; Sanborn uses the term in a similar manner, but adds that absurdity can be found in depictions of tragedy. Although both scholars apply absurdism solely to novels, I find their definitions applicable to film.

[58] Walt Sheldon, *Troubling of a Star* (New York: Bantam Books, 1953), 49. One pilot's wife named Esther, for example, is a heavy drinker with "nymphomaniac tendencies" who lusts after protagonist Capt. Richard Tindle.

[59] Sheldon, *Troubling of a Star*, 19.

[60] The novel also criticizes military operations and military incompetence. A shortsighted Air Force has prepared for the wrong type of war, the narrator explains, employing long-range bombers when Korea required short-range assaults. Tindle chafes at the limitations imposed when flying near the Yalu River. Chinese pilots can fly south, but American pilots cannot engage past the border.

Troubling of a Star is also critical of an apathetic public—one of the most pervasive themes of Korean War literature—which does not consider Korea a war like World War II. Tindle complains that Korea is "not at all like it had been last time, even in the United States. Maybe that was because people still couldn't quite bring themselves to admit that this was a real war. They didn't go around this time waving the war bonds they had bought, reminding you that loose lips sank ships and telling you how they'd chiseled a tankful of gasoline without ration points the other day."[61] Tindle's comparison was typical of postwar commentary on the differences between Korea and the Good War.

Robert Eunson's novel *MIG Alley* (1959) centers on ambitious Capt. Homer (Mac) McCullough, who wants to be the top fighter pilot in Korea and a media sensation. That desire gets him grounded for risking an all-out assault with the Chinese, but reporter Domino D'Armand charms Gen. Mainwaring to get the captain back in the air. When the death of a fellow pilot weighs heavily on Mac, D'Armand promises him the cover of *International Magazine*. "If he's going to sit around feeling sorry for himself," she confesses, "he won't score for days."[62]

MiG Alley is rife with criticisms of fighting a limited war. As in *Troubling of a Star*, characters complain that military policy keeps Sabre pilots from engaging their MiG opponents. When asked why the US is unable to engage beyond the Yalu River, the narrator states, "it was explained at briefing sessions that…the U.S. was fighting as part of the United Nations and the Allies did not want to risk starting World War III."[63] Chinese pilots, however, have no such limitations. Their MiG-15s constantly sneak south and attack American planes. When engaged, they jetted across the border. The F-86 Sabre pilots were in a fight in which they alone acknowledged any rules: "the

[61] Sheldon, *Troubling of a Star*, 134-35.
[62] Robert Eunson, *MiG Alley* (New York: Ace Books, Inc., 1959), 79.
[63] Eunson, *MiG Alley*, 8.

orders came from Washington, 'Don't fly north of the Yalu…'"[64] Korean War fiction such as *MiG Alley* affirmed complaints that the US had fought a limited war under voluntary operational restrictions. Mac, however, refuses to lose a war because of political concerns. He consistently flies over the Yalu and engages Chinese pilots. He meets his end, flying once again across the border, looking for a downed fellow pilot.

Such aggressive exploits about MiG Alley are reminiscent of Capt. Joseph C. McConnell, the top ace in the Korean War. America's first triple ace (fifteen confirmed kills), Hollywood embellished McConnell's actions in the 1955 drama *The McConnell Story*, starring Alan Ladd and June Allyson.[65] A slow-moving narrative with little action, the film follows McConnell's life from an impatient young Army private who daydreams of action in World War II and Korea. Along the way, McConnell meets and marries Pearl "Butch" Brown, who does her best to keep his lofty idealism grounded. McConnell serves as a navigator on a B-29 during World War II, but he still dreams of being a pilot. With the outbreak of the Korean War, he learns the Air Force wants experienced men who can fly the newest jet, the F-86 Sabre.[66]

The McConnell Story criticizes a limited war policy that is unable to win the war. After his sixteenth kill, Washington orders McConnell return stateside to test a new generation of pilots. Like *MiG Alley*, the film suggests the military is not interested in victory if it willingly removes its best pilot from the combat zone. How can the pilots in Korea, as Maj. Ty demands of his aces, "slaughter" the enemy if those pilots are sent home? Back home, McConnell dies testing a new fighter jet at Edwards Air Force base. Although the major insists McConnell's work as a test pilot

[64] Eunson, *MiG Alley*, 8.
[65] *The McConnell Story*, directed by Gordon Douglas (Burbank: Warner Bros., 1955). Five confirmed kills denoted Ace status.
[66] *The McConnell Story*.

would be beneficial in the struggle against communism, *The McConnell Story* implies his death would not help bring victory in Korea.

Webb Beech's *Make War in Madness* (1965) presents perhaps the most cynical view of limited war of all the immediate postwar novels. Beech, an infantry sergeant during the Korean War, believes such a strategy is designed to avoid upsetting America's enemies. In the novel, a frustrated general of the Eighth Army is unable to use the nearly two hundred thousand men under his command for anything other than "sewing pockets and insignia on their work suits."[67] The State Department and the President had determined that the best policy was to "not make the Russians mad by fighting too hard."[68] And now, with word that a peace settlement is in the works, he must keep soldiers out of harm's way—no big attacks, no risks, no winning the war. But North Korean infiltration across the Main Line of Resistance (MLR) threatens what little hope the talks at Panmunjom carry. So when a daring plan to end this nuisance comes across his desk, the general taps 2nd Lt. Pinkerton (Pinky) Osburne Paige III to carry it out.

Pinky is typical of protagonists found in Korean War novels of the gritty realism style. A muscular but insecure loner, Pinky fears that he is "yellow." "The first time I hear a shot," he admits, "I am liable to crap in my drawers and bury my head in the sand."[69] Unlike the camaraderie standard in World War Two fiction, Pinky never fits in with his platoon and keeps his military pedigree (his father had been a West Pointer) a secret from men who are easily impressed by such things. But Pinky is a competent and effective soldier, and his task—destroying North Korean junkers that are infiltrating the South by river and sea—is really a springboard for Beech to disparage the inanity of military "procedure" and the ineffective limited war the United States had fought in Korea.

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[67] Webb Beech, *Make War in Madness*, (Greenwich: Gold Medal Books, 1965), 21.
[68] Beech, *Make War in Madness*, 21.
[69] Beech, *Make War in Madness*, 16.

"Some goddam war. Some crazy goddam war," says one of the characters in *The Ikon* (1961), Clayton C. Barbeau's grim novel about small-unit combat in Korea. "Police action, hell! I ain't got no billy club." When not complaining about the restrictions of this new type of war, soldiers suffer indiscriminate death in a war of stalemate. The focus on death—its ubiquity and randomness—is typical of the gritty war narrative. In print, the deaths of combatants are more gruesome and descriptive than on screen. Both media, however, show characters suffering and dying and illustrate the numbness with which soldiers experience death. In *The Ikon* one character responds to the death of an acquaintance, "No more apples for him."[70] But death haunts the company, and each character believes his own death in combat to be a certainty. Even the main character, Warren, feels his time will soon be up: "I may not live through tonight. Don't ask me how I know, I know…And if I live through tonight, I'll get it some other night."[71] Only divine intervention saves Warren from that inevitability. He begins to wear the ikon, a talisman of Madonna and child, when its original owner dies in combat. It later saves Warren's life when it blocks an enemy bullet.

Like Webb Beech's character Pinky, Warren joins a rifle squad to prove his mettle. When Warren seems a little too gung-ho to be in Korea, his fellow soldiers accuse him of being "glory happy" and having "gone army."[72] Such criticism of career soldiers is evident throughout the novel. Here, there was no glory to be found like in the Good War. "The smart ones," states the narrator, "want to serve the shortest possible time and get out.'"[73] Barbeau is also critical of how the war affects so few Americans, even those in the military. An infantryman during Korea, Barbeau denounces an armed forces "bursting at the seams with typists."[74] Disillusionment about the war

[70] Clayton Barbeau, *The Ikon* (San Francisco: Ikon Press, 1961), 195.
[71] Barbeau, *The Ikon*, 128.
[72] Barbeau, *The Ikon*, 20.
[73] Barbeau, *The Ikon*, 50.
[74] Barbeau, *The Ikon*, 173.

existed unlike in World War II, Barbeau insists, because even the fighting man was uncertain of the war's larger meaning.[75]

Many representations in Korean War literature and film strongly reflected the psychological ambivalence the war created. These fictional accounts tapped into a larger national uneasiness surrounding the outcome of the war. The novels and films mentioned above were not alone in suggesting the American fighting man was a cynical soldier ill-prepared for the mental anguish he found in Korea. Another significant motif captured in popular culture was the individual frustrated at having to serve in a war no one back home appreciated. Some examples reflected the public's uncertainty over fighting a war the United States was unwilling to win. The film *The Nun and the Sergeant* (1962) examines this theme, focusing on a group of soldiers unwilling to sacrifice when so little of the public cared. Sgt. McGrath (Robert Webber) wants "the pick of the sludge"—men he feels have yet to do their part—for a mission behind enemy lines.[76]

Marine Corps stories stand out as an integral part of the gritty war tradition.[77] This subgenre displays the *espirit de corps* of the Corps, with heroism, duty, and honor as typical components of these stories. But these works reflect the major criticisms found in other gritty war narratives, and typically denounce rear-echelon incompetence and the apathetic American public. Most important, despite the emphasis on heroism and duty, Marine Corps stories also portray an uncertainty over

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[75] Barbeau, *The Ikon*, 67-68, 203. Like other examples of realistic Korean War fiction, Barbeau also explores the psychological torture of combat through Duke, a young soldier who fears combat. When he learns of their next assignment, Duke hides and threatens to "'kill the guy who comes near me.'" Duke's fears followed a larger trend in Korean War literature (and to some extent films) to represent the terror GIs expressed in combat. The strains of war exacerbate the GIs' weaknesses: one lieutenant deals with rampant alcoholism, while other men worry about their wives' faithfulness. Enemy propaganda plays upon these fears when leaflets fall from the sky, depicting a leering man asking a bikini-clad young woman "And where is your husband, little darling?" She responds "Oh, he died in Korea, sweetheart." Depictions of combat in Korea, whether in film or in paperback, could be surprisingly candid about the mental toll it took on young men—an alternative to how Hollywood and authors depicted other wars, particularly World War II, in the 1950s and '60s

[76] *The Nun and the Sergeant*, directed by Franklin Adreon, (Beverly Hills: United Artists, 1962).

[77] For this assertion see Axelsson, *Restrained Response*, 96.

military strategy and political support. Ernest Frankel's *Band of Brothers* (1958) and William Crawford's *Give Me Tomorrow* (1962) are typical of realistic Marine Corps novels set in Korea.

Band of Brothers chronicles Able Company's fighting retreat from the Chosin Reservoir in late 1950.[78] Outnumbered and freezing, with no public support and a poor strategy, they are reminded of what it means to be a Marine. Frankel explores the tradition, character, and bravado of the Marine Corps, with Marines singing fighting songs: "For Marines all stand together/And shout their battle cry/Semper Fi! Semper Fi! Semper Fi!"[79] Despite their camaraderie, the Marines in Frankel's novel do not believe Korea to be a great crusade. The war seems purposeless since Washington's policies restrain them from fighting on to victory and because the people back home seem too busy to care. "You know what their trouble is?" asks one Marine. "They're soft. Stinking, pudgy, soft. They're looking for an easy way. An easy way to wash their dishes, clean their cars, or fight their wars." They had sent the youth of America to fight a war without adequate preparation. Frostbite ravaged the Marines; morphine supplies were exhausted; blood plasma was dangerously low. And they carried equal disdain for the pencil-pushers whose connections could keep them out of harm's way: "And if they've got a kid in service, drafted, of course, then Mama and Daddy'll be pissed off if the Army doesn't make sonny a cook or a radio repairman or a medical technician—anything but a soldier. That's what's wrong with us. Nobody wants to fight."[80]

Nobody, it seems, except the Marines. While the homefront and rearguard undergo intense scrutiny, Frankel has an obvious admiration for the Marines who fought in Korea. They stand and

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[78] See, for example, the following interpretation of the Battle of Chosin Reservoir: http://www.homeofheroes.com/brotherhood/chosin.html. (Accessed July 27, 2014.) "It is adversity that demands valor, trial that demonstrates the highest levels of brotherhood. The Marines at the Chanjin Reservoir, identified on Japanese maps as the CHOSIN Reservoir, pulled together to insure the success of the withdrawal. What many people Might have considered to be the darkest two weeks in Marine Corps history, may have in fact, become the Marine Corps' DEFINING MOMENT. With their backs to the wall, the men of the 1st Marine Division pulled together to accomplish the impossible. Their teamwork cemented a band of brothers who came to call themselves: 'THE FROZEN CHOSIN.'" Emphasis in original.

[79] Ernest Frankel, *Band of Brothers* (New York: Signet Books, 1960), 14, 61.

[80] Frankel, *Band of Brothers*, 142.

fight, not because of ideology or policy, but simply "because they're Marines. They don't care about the rest."[81] They continue to fight, even when bullets are gone and rifles are frozen.[82] *Band of Brothers* evokes the exclusivity and honor of the Marine Corps more than any novel in the period, while condemning public apathy and incompetent military policy.

The Corps' ethos also permeates *Give Me Tomorrow*. "[T]hey wore that mark of professionalism like another badge," Crawford writes. "Their nastiness would inspire no enlistments, nor would they want it so, for theirs was fierce pride born of knowledgeable dedication and they wanted no man needing inspiration—or a draft board—to get him to war."[83] Like *Band of Brothers*, *Give Me Tomorrow* condemns rear-echelon lackeys and an apathetic citizenry. It opens with Raymond Lawlor, a self-serving officer well out of harm's way who profits from the black market. "A three-dollar bottle [of whiskey]," the narrator explains, "was worth twenty to seventy in Korea."[84] A booze-filled night makes Lawlor miss a report scheduled for his superior officer and to save his own reputation, Lawlor suggests that a mission to capture a Chinese soldier will boost morale. With no concern for the Marines charged with carrying out his plan, Lawlor imagines his upcoming R&R in Japan.[85]

The novel equally condemns an unaware public. Protagonist Lt. David Martin's cousins write him about their dance parties back home but ask nothing of his experiences in Korea. Another character illustrates the Forgotten War mythos when, realizing he is out of ammo, remarks cynically that the homefront did not make enough bullets because they had forgotten about the war.[86] When one Marine makes a similar complaint, the captain excoriates him as part of the problem:

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[81] Frankel, *Band of Brothers*, 143.
[82] Frankel, *Band of Brothers*, 199.
[83] William Crawford, *Give Me Tomorrow* (New York: Putnam Books, 1962), 17.
[84] Crawford, *Give Me Tomorrow*, 5
[85] Crawford, *Give Me Tomorrow*, 11-12.
[86] Crawford, *Give Me Tomorrow*, 66.

> Why, you damned fool, this war was a year old before you got to it. The professionals were cleaning up the Pusan Perimeter and landing at Inchon and dying at Hagaru while you were still home with a wet pecker and tall drink…Like too many reservists, and most Americans, you demand all the privileges and rights handed you on a platter, but you want to reserve the right to pick and choose your duties and responsibilities, the convenient ones.[87]

Apathy had further developed because of World War II, further condemning Korea to being forgotten. No one wanted to serve again, and the public did not want to bear similar sacrifices. It was easier to forget about a "little war," a fellow Marine tells Martin, when comparing it to the "big war." Everyone back home seemed to have the attitude of "Piss on it! I did mine." The Marine insists that the one good thing about the last war was that the public had not forgotten the fighting men: "I'll tell you…it was better being in the Big War. At least the people back home were with us.""[88]

One of the more effective aspects of *Give Me Tomorrow* is its exploration of racism. Martin is half-Mexican, and has felt like an outsider his whole life. Even though he is an officer, Martin's race has made him a loner in the Marines. He had decided to enter the Corps to prove his worth as a man and patriot. Martin reflects on his childhood encounters with racism and the prejudice he encountered when dating a white woman. He believed joining the Marines would prove the naysayers wrong, but now found himself in a war they cared little about.[89]

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[87] Crawford, *Give Me Tomorrow*, 39.
[88] Crawford, *Give Me Tomorrow*, 74, 80, 92.
[89] Crawford, *Give Me Tomorrow*, 54. Minorities like the fictional Lt. Martin continued to face discrimination in the armed forces even after President Truman had issued Executive Order 9981, effectively ending military segregation in 1948. The President's decree could only go so far—especially when much of America questioned the combat prowess of black GIs. To counter such biases, black presses during the war insisted black soldiers displayed heroism and mental fortitude. After the war, these same newspapers pointed out that African Americans better withstood POW interrogations than their white counterparts. See, for example, "Here's How Negro P.O.W.'S Stood Against Brainwashing," *Atlanta Daily World*, June 28, 1956 and "George Schuyler Suggests A Book for Two Generals," *Pittsburgh Courier*, May 26,1956. For more on POWs, see Chapter Two.

Hollywood portrayed the military prowess of minorities in Korea as well. In *All the Young Men* (1960), Sidney Poitier stars as Eddie Towler, a black sergeant promoted by his dying lieutenant to commander of an all-white platoon.[90] Like Martin in *Give Me Tomorrow*, Towler knows that he must be an effective commander to gain the respect of his men. The platoon questions Towler's leadership, with most men choosing to follow the battle-hardened and recently demoted Pvt. Kincaid (Alan Ladd). But the greatest racial vitriol comes from Pvt. Bracken (Paul Richards), an openly hostile southerner who demands Towler call him "sir." The Marines await reinforcements in a farmhouse and repel several Chinese attacks under Towler's leadership. The sergeant's heroics and determination eventually win over the men, particularly after he and Kincaid destroy an enemy tank.[91] Here is proof of the military competency of black soldiers, the films suggests, if only the public paid attention.

One of the more compelling postwar novels, Van B. Philpot Jr.'s *Battalion Medics* (1955), also explores changing racial attitudes as a result of action in the Korean War. Through protagonist Clyde Hendricks, Philpot, himself a former medical officer in Korea, explores the impact Korean has on the racial attitudes of a southern-bred white medical officer who confronts his ignorance of racism at home and in the Army.[92] In Korea, Hendricks confronts racism he had previously ignored. His battalion is named after Confederate Gen. J.E.B. Stuart, whose picture hangs above headquarters. Hendricks also fears that the stereotype of cowardly black soldiers may be true.[93] But he promotes a black soldier over several equally qualified whites and recognizes later he had done so without

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[90] *All the Young Men*, directed by Hall Bartlett, (Culver City: Columbia Pictures, 1960).
[91] *All the Young Men.*
[92] Van B. Philpot, *Battalion Medics* (New York: Exposition Press,1955), 14. Before the war, protagonist Hendricks never thought about racism or segregation.
[93] Philpot, *Battalion Medics*, 23-24.

regard to skin color. After a black soldier dies fighting heroically, Hendricks vows to leave behind his racist past and lead a better life.

Racial problems the Korean War exposed was not the major point of gritty realism fiction. In some cases, the genre implied that an uncaring public missed the achievements made by minority soldiers.[94] But fictional accounts that focused on race, like other examples in this tradition, emphasized the uncertainty GIs faced in fighting the war. Many authors, some of whom were veterans of the war, castigated American policy in Korea through these novels. They especially attack the political limitations they believed held back the military from absolute victory. Films in this vein cast similar criticisms about the purpose of American military policy in Korea. The gritty realism of Korean War fiction, in other words, reflects the uncertainty about the war found in media accounts.



Figure 1.2 A scene from All the Young Men *(1960). Here, Sgt. Eddie Towler (Sidney Poitier) has taken command.*

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Like so many protagonists in Korean War fiction, Clyde Hendricks originally fears he is a coward, having missed World War II while in medical school. He is determined to

[94] In *Battalion Medics*, for example, Hendricks returns home only to encounter the attitudes of a careless public—both in regards to the war and the effectiveness of black soldiers. When Hendricks tries to explain the war and the abilities of black soldiers to his grandfather, he dismisses Hendricks, declaring, "nobody in this part of the country is interested in hearing about what the niggers did in Korea." Philpot, *Battalion Medics*, 98.

prove his resolve when war erupts in Korea, so he accepts a commission as a medical officer. Unlike Hendricks and other characters that appear in gritty war dramas, however, the central characters of Korean War absurdist fiction tend to be self-aggrandizers. They are driven by greed, lust, and opportunism. None has the inclination to risk his life in combat nor make a career in the military unless it abets his scheming. Although their actions may at first appear immoral, reprehensible, or exploitative, characters in absurdist fiction reflect many of the same themes of characters in gritty war fiction. The war is something to be survived; there is no glory in combat. Absurdist protagonists often do not understand or even care about the war's purpose. They watch as politicians and diplomats negotiate away American resolve and sacrifice the lives of so many for so little. The novels and films of the absurdist tradition were equally important in depicting the ambivalence that characterized Korean War popular culture.

Perhaps no work in the immediate postwar period better exemplifies the absurdist genre than Gene Coon's novel *Meanwhile, Back at the Front*.[95] In it, SSgt. Allan Riley operates a mobile whorehouse through the middle of Korean War battlefields. The enlisted men love him for it, but none of the officers can seem to figure out exactly who he is. Riley spends the novel avoiding both the battles and his superiors, especially Col. Moon, while Marine Corps honor keeps the roving prostitution ring an open secret—and always one step ahead of command. "Amazing," Moon says at one point. "An invisible six-by-six with three invisible Korean whores. It moves through a division of twenty-four thousand men and nobody ever sees it."[96]

[95] Gene L. Coon, *Meanwhile Back at the Front*, (New York: Paperback Library, Inc, 1961.).
[96] Coon, *Meanwhile Back at the Front*, 109.

The novel's most pervasive theme is its satirical take on rampant sexism among men in uniform. Korean women appear solely as prizes for sex-starved GIs. Their sexualization was, according to one scholar, part of the larger war effort that American and South Korean governments actively facilitated.[97] The presence of the only female correspondent, Lola Reynolds, presents all sorts of "problems" for the Marines and other newsmen. "Miss Reynolds, in Gen. Pusher's opinion, belonged in somebody's bed—anyplace but a battlefield," the narrator states. He was an old-fashioned man."[98] Lt. Col. Lacy screams at Lola that her sex appeal is a major distraction: "But how the hell can we [stop fantasizing about you] when you go gallivanting around our battlefield with your collar open all the way down to your navel?"[99]

But Riley has no problem with her presence or her navel, as he is too busy exercising his entrepreneurial and evasive skills. His antics include nearly running over Moon, pretending to be a German correspondent whose "poor" English helps him avoid MPs, and keeping a bright, unkempt red beard that leads Moon to believe Riley is a Greek soldier. And no one is willing to snitch on the sergeant because his services keep them satisfied. Riley sees himself not as an agent of impropriety, but as an entrepreneur of opportunity: "'Here I am, an American small businessman, doing my best for the economy of the country. I'm doing the troops a favor, I'm doing the girls a favor…Who the hell am I hurting?'"[100] When a journalist reminds Riley about how widespread gonorrhea is, he shrugs it off, certain the men would trade a few days in the sick bay for sex. "Maybe I save the

[97] Katharine H.S. Moon, *Sex Among Allies: Military Prostitution in U.S.-Korean Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 1-2.
[98] Coon, *Meanwhile Back at the Front*, 82
[99] Coon, *Meanwhile Back at the Front*, 68.
[100] Coon, *Meanwhile, Back at the Front,* 175

guy's life for him," Riley suggests. "A little clap is a lot easier to take than a burp gun between the horns."[101]

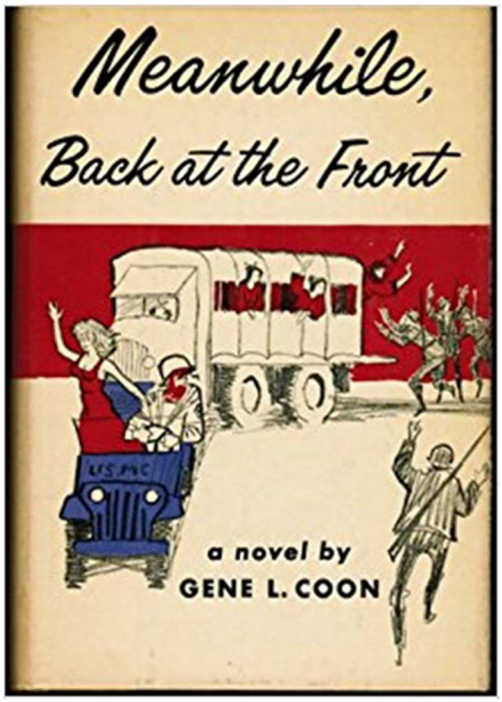


Figure 1.3 The cover of Meanwhile, Back at the Front *(1961) by Gene Coon.*

The overt sexual objectification in *Meanwhile, Back at the Front* is part and parcel of absurdist fiction. Richard Hooker's novel *MASH*, which launched the more popular film and television series, is equally explicit in its depictions of women.[102] "The Famous Curb Service Whorehouse" is a major attraction for American servicemen during the war, and is "advantageously placed…on the only major highway between Seoul and the frontlines…"[103] Like Coon, Hooker gives no consideration to the toll war and prostitution has taken on the lives of Korean women. They remain invisible characters whose sole purpose is to satisfy sex-craved GIs who fear they may die before they have sex again.[104]

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[101] Coon, *Meanwhile Back at the Front,* 176
[102] Sanborn points out that even the pseudonym of Richard Hornberger and W. C. Heinz, Richard Hooker, was a synonym for a prostitute. See Sanborn, *The American Novel of War*, 207. For more on *M*A*S*H*, see Chapter Four.
[103] Richard Hooker, *MASH: A Novel about Three Army Doctors* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1968), 13.
[104] See Sanborn, *The American Novel of War,* 207-209.

Objectification in the absurdist tradition also depicts women as "conquests" who easily fall for the sexual advances of male characters. When singer Gloria Gay comes to serenade the Marines in *Meanwhile Back at the Front*, Riley wastes no time trying to sleep with her.[105] Similarly, Maj. Jed Webbe, played by Humphrey Bogart, the chief surgeon in 8666 MASH unit, easily overcomes the objections of the much younger nurse, Lt. Ruth McGara (June Allyson) in *Battle Circus* (1953).[106] The other nurses openly discuss Webbe's womanizing and tell McGara to expect the same behavior. Even when Webbe invokes that Korea is forgotten back home, his complaints reflect sexual frustration: "What do the people back home know about war or us or what it's like over here…Slogging along in the mud and the rain. Surrounded by the enemy. Frostbites in the winter time. Mosquito bites in the summer time. No sleep, no peace, no hot meals…No women." But the film never explains why McGara has a sudden change of heart toward the heavy-drinking surgeon. War brings them together, but it also threatens to tear them apart.

Hollywood's take on absurdist themes was much more antiseptic than what appeared in print, and several films released in this time illustrate the elements of *Battle Circus*. Perhaps the best example was 1961's *Marines, Let's Go*, a comedy that followed the antics of three enlisted men on shore leave in Japan.[107] Pfc. McCaffrey (Tom Reese) is a hothead, described by another Marine as "a headache to the enemy but a real migraine to the MPs."[108] Their only endeavor is to find several Japanese women for a raucous weekend of sex and drinking. To that end, the three trick a Japanese hotel manager into giving them a free room by insisting they are on a secret mission codenamed Red Fox, which becomes the film's central

[105] Coon, *Meanwhile, Back at the Front*, 184, 188.
[106] *Battle Circus*, directed by Richard Brooks (Beverly Hills: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1953).
[107] *Marines, Let's Go*, directed by Raoul Walsh (Los Angeles: Twentieth Century Fox, 1961).
[108] *Marines, Let's Go*.

absurdist strain. With the Marines' antics, however, the film pushes the limits of credulity, which may account for its poor reviews.

Asian characters in absurdist literature typically appear as stereotypical or formulaic. They often act as pawns in the larger machinations of the antihero(s). Just as Sgt. Riley had an equally mendacious local helping him coordinate the prostitution ring in *Meanwhile, Back at the Front*, the entourage in *Marines, Let's Go* enlists the help of a Japanese soldier in its search for women. The hotel manager is also easily duped and accommodating, insisting that "Japanese people always cooperate with great hospitality. Japan very much love occupying Americans." The manager's comments may be taken as criticism of American occupation, but either way he ends up facilitating their actions. He even advances them $200—a loan the GIs have no intention of repaying.[109]

Sexual objectification is not the only theme explicit in the absurdist tradition.[110] Another major theme, futility, is also inherently part of the absurdist genre in Korean War popular culture. *Pork Chop Hill* (1959) captures the absurdity of fighting a limited war for political objectives instead of unconditional victory. Directed by Lewis Milestone and starring Gregory Peck as Lt. Joe Clemons, *Pork Chop Hill* presents a bleak and desolate Korean landscape destroyed by the war. A sense of futility pervades the film since Pork Chop has no real military, tactical, or geographical value. With war negotiations taking place only seventy miles away at Panmunjom, American commanders believe securing one more hill will grant them greater concessions at the diplomatic table.[111]

When asked why soldiers must risk their lives for a seemingly worthless hill, Clemon's explanation embodies the film's stark futility: "Pork Chop is just a chip in the big game at Panmunjom. Every time the Reds win a chip here, they raise the ante there. I guess we gotta

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[109] *Marines, Let's Go.*
[110] For more on tragedy as absurdism, see Sanborn, *The American Novel of War*, 210.
[111] *Pork Chop Hill*, directed by Lewis Milestone (Beverly Hills: United Artists, 1959).

convince 'em we're not about to give up any more chips."[112] Soldiers complain about impersonal and inefficient military policies, endure friendly fire and incompetent leadership (save for Clemons), and are terrified of dying in vain. Early on, for example, one private asks for Clemons's help to get home, based on the number of points the private has accumulated.[113] "Battalion can't add," the private states, suggesting that an inept Army bureaucracy has forced him to stay and possibly die in a pointless attack. Clemons suggests cynically that the man sue the Army. Once the attack begins, confusion and mismanagement reign: reports that surrounding barbed wire had been knocked flat prove false; machinegun fire and grenades rip into Clemons's King Company as it crosses the wire. Large spotlights from the command post give away the company's position. Clemons barks into his phone back to battalion headquarters: "You want to murder us?! Turn off those damn lights!"[114]

The film's take on absurdism is most apparent, however, in its striking juxtaposition of Pork Chop Hill's military worthlessness and its diplomatic significance. This creates numerous scenes where soldiers, officers, and diplomats recognize the magnitude of their predicament. After King Company takes the hill, soldiers learn they will not be reinforced nor withdrawn. Pork Chop's military insignificance means command will not waste more lives on a worthless hill; its diplomatic value means the men must hold it.[115]

Soldiers ask rhetorically if their sacrifice is worth it. Clemons has difficulty balancing his leadership with his frustration over a lack of supplies, mounting casualties, and no reinforcements. When asked if their objective is worth the costs, Clemons responds, "Worth what? It hasn't much

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[112] *Pork Chop Hill.*
[113] For a discussion of the points system, see Fehrenbach, *This Kind of War*, 347. The military awarded points for proximity to the fight. Each GI on the line received four points per month; soldiers in the more general area of combat received three; any man in Korea automatically received two. With thirty-six points accrued a soldier could rotate out of Korea. Much like the one-year tours in Vietnam, the points system had a significant problem: not many soldiers risked their lives after accruing a significant number.
[114] *Pork Chop Hill.*
[115] *Pork Chop Hill.*

military value. Doubt if any American would give you a dollar for it. Probably no Chinese would give you two bits. The value's changed, somehow, sometime. Maybe when the first man died."[116]



Figure 1.4 Soldiers under the command of Lt. Joe Clemons (Gregory Peck) prepare for the next assault in Pork Chop Hill *(1959).*

In a telling exchange, American representatives at Panmunjom discuss the absurdity of their strategy. "They know we're not going to reinforce Pork Chop," one negotiator says to another. "You can smell it. They're gonna keep us talkin' till they take it." The other asks, "Why? What do they gain if they do?" The first representative continues: "I'm beginning to think they picked [Pork Chop] because it's worth nothing. Its value is that it has no value. That makes it a test of strength, pure and simple. They're willing to spend lives for nothing or what seems nothing. That's what they want to know: Are we as willing to do what they are?" Their commentary and the film overall suggest is that a limited war creates futile conditions which weigh most heavily on the fighting men. If the objective in Korea had been victory, *Pork Chop Hill* implies, Clemons and his men would not have dealt with such a scenario: holding a hill with no value except that it was not valuable.[117]

[116] *Pork Chop Hill.*
[117] *Pork Chop Hill.*

Director Denis Sanders' *War Hunt* (1962) features Robert Redford (in his film debut) as the naïve Private Roy Loomis, a replacement sent to the MLR in the last year of the war. The film depicts the Korean War as equally gruesome and surreal, both violent and quiet. American soldiers, having accepted the futility of combat, are both helpless and apathetic toward its violence.[118]

Private Raymond Endore (John Saxon) is a somber man whose loner attitude contradicts Loomis' naiveté. With tacit approval from Capt. Pratt (Charles Aidman) and his fellow enlisted men, each night Endore sneaks behind enemy lines to kill enemy soldiers. For Endore, the killings are ritualistic affairs that satisfy a deep-seated psychological need to kill. On a night patrol, Loomis sees Endore ceremoniously drawing circles around a body in the dirt. No one else pays attention. Loomis later asks Endore how killing someone with a knife makes a man feel. Endore stares at him, emotionless, through his sunglasses. He puts his hand to Loomis' throat and gestures in a stabbing motion. "How do you feel?" Endore asks rhetorically. None of the surrounding soldiers says anything. They clearly do not want to know too much about Endore.

Only his possessiveness over Charlie (Tommy Matsuda), a young Korean orphan whose parents died in the American bombing on Pyongyang, matches Endore's behavior. Loomis tries to cultivate a relationship with the young boy, but it brings him into direct conflict with Endore. Concerned that Charlie has begun to emulate Endore's behavior, Loomis takes more time with the kid, playing catch and comforting him after a nightmare about his parents' deaths. After Loomis survives his first shelling from the Chinese, Endore returns the baseball Loomis had given Charlie, insisting that "He doesn't want it." Frustrated, Loomis challenges Endore, asking, "Why can't I do something nice for this kid? What are you afraid of?" The confrontation ends as abruptly as it began, with Endore suggesting that Loomis is not suited for combat.[119]

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[118] *War Hunt,* directed by Denis Sanders (Beverly Hills: United Artists, 1962).
[119] *War Hunt.*

A scene toward the end best criticizes the armistice and "fighting while negotiating." Upon hearing of the upcoming cease-fire, the company reacts with expected jubilation, with a GI shouting repeatedly "It's over!" But the peace is a fragile one: an enemy sniper shoots one soldier in the midst of the company's celebration. The ecstatic mood quickly turns somber as the men gather around their comrade. "God, I'm so scared," he says through shaking lips. He dies before the medic can get to him. The GIs fire back, but only out of frustration. The captain, angered at the soldier's death, promises that he will not write another letter to a dead soldier's parents. "We are still at war until 2200 hours," he reminds them. "Now protect yourselves but initiate no action!"[120]

With the cease-fire in effect, Endore again sneaks out to kill enemy soldiers. He has become a liability the captain can no longer control, a threat to the cease-fire and an end to the war. Three men, including Loomis and Capt. Pratt, disguised as a graves detail, find Endore in the demilitarized zone (DMZ), but Endore insists he will not leave. When they remind him that the war is over, he responds rhetorically, "Which war?" Unable to subdue him, they have no choice but to kill Endore.[121] Although *War Hunt* does not view the American military as unsympathetically as *Pork Chop Hill*, the film captures a similar bleakness.[122] Through the juxtaposition of Loomis and Endore's characters, the film suggests that only the psychologically depraved could endure a war like Korea. And the stalemate and armistice only embolden Loomis' murderous behavior.[123]

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120 *War Hunt*.
121 *War Hunt*.
122 Other films that present a similar view of the Korean War in this period include *Sniper's Ridge*, directed by John A. Bushleman, (Los Angeles: Twentieth Century Fox, 1961), *The Hook*, directed by George Seaton, (Beverly Hills: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1963), and *War is Hell*, directed by Burt Topper, (Los Angeles: Monogram Pictures, 1963). In *Sniper's Ridge*, soldiers face the continuous threat of a sharpshooter of the eve of the armistice. *The Hook* explores the dehumanizing effects of war when Americans are ordered to shoot a North Korean prisoner. Sgt. Garth (Baynes Barron) in *War is Hell* kills his commanding officer to keep a decoration for bravery he did not deserve. When Garth takes command of the platoon, he keeps news of the ceasefire from the other troops and leads them into a vicious attack on the enemy where they suffer extreme casualties.
123 *War Hunt*.

James A. Michener's novella *The Bridges at Toko-ri* (1953) carries a similar theme of despondency. Adapted to the screen the following year, it is one of the most grim and fatalistic films of the postwar period. Central to the plot is the certainty that Navy Lt. Harry Brubaker (William Holden) will not survive the war and that his wife Nancy (Grace Kelly) must come to grips with that reality. Indeed, Adm. George Tarrant (Frederic March) relates to Nancy the story of his daughter-in-law, who, unable to come terms with the death of her young husband in World War II, turned to a life of prostitution and attempted suicide. The film suggests that unless Nancy wants a similar fate, she must accept her husband's certain death and her own widowed future.[124]

Throughout the film, death is nearly inescapable for Brubaker. Indeed, it opens with the lieutenant having crash-landed in the ocean, saved by the eccentric Cpo. Mike Forney (Mickey Rooney). Brubaker, however, rejects the admiral's notion that he become a career naval officer. Here the film levels criticism at an apathetic public. "You know what I think of the navy, sir," Brubaker says, frustrated that he had been called up despite being on inactive duty. "I had to give up my home, my law practice, everything. Yes, I'm still bitter." And the memory of World War II makes Brubaker equally contemptuous. He is angry that in Korea, unlike the Good War, the sacrifices fall on so few. "You do a lot of thinking" in war, Brubaker states, "mostly about your friends back home leading perfectly normal lives." "I was one of the few," he continues, "at New Guinea, Leyte, Okinawa. Why does it have to be me again?" He had survived some of the biggest battles of the Pacific War, but now found himself in a war the public did not support.[125]

The impending attack on communist positions at Toko-ri, Adm. Tarrant explains, is to display American resolve. They are heavily fortified and any attack would be near-suicide. After reconnaissance, Brubaker is shaken by the impending attack.[126] The next morning, the airmen take

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[124] *The Bridges at Toko-ri*, directed by Mark Robson, (Hollywood: Paramount Pictures, 1954).
[125] *The Bridges at Toko-ri.*
[126] *The Bridges at Toko-ri.*

out several bridges with little resistance. But Brubaker takes fire and crash-lands, taking cover in a large drainage ditch. Enemy forces repeatedly assault Brubaker's position, while friendly aircraft strafe the area and protect him until his rescue arrives. Unable to hold back enemy troops any longer, Brubaker resigns himself to die for a cause he does not accept. "Wrong war in the wrong place," he states. "And that's the one you're stuck with." Forney dies from a grenade and Brubaker dies from a bullet.[127]

In both the film and novel, Brubaker struggles to reconcile his anger at being called up with public apathy and his own sense of duty and obligation to country. This struggle at reconciliation, however, is more ambivalent on film than in print. In Michener's novel, in the words of one scholar, Brubaker is "no longer resentful or scared, he thinks only of his love for his family, whereupon idealism and patriotism assert themselves and 'Harry Brubaker understood in some fragmentary way the purpose of his being in Korea.' Patriotism and idealism thus become the answers to Brubaker's dilemma."[128] On screen, however, when communist forces overrun Brubaker's tenuous position, he shows no signs of accepting his fate because of patriotism or idealism. Instead, there is no hint that Brubaker wants anything but to live. The film version strongly implies that Brubaker is frustrated that he dies in a war with an uncertain purpose.[129]

Absurdism in Korean War literature and film suggests that characters in this genre are as ambivalent about the war as the protagonists of gritty war stories. SSgt. Riley in *Meanwhile, Back at the Front* has no intentions of ever fighting; he sees an opportunity for financial gain and sexual favors. And although Maj. Webbe in *Battle Circus* may be a premier surgeon, his focus is also sexual, and his reputation precedes him among the nurses. The characters of *Marines, Let's Go* represent stereotypical and hypersexualized combatants on shore leave. Their antics are exaggerated for

[127] *The Bridges at Toko-ri.*
[128] Axelsson, *Restrained Response*, 81.
[129] *The Bridges at Toko-ri.*

comedic effect, but the film explains that these Marines were far from stalwart heroes in Korea. *Pork Chop Hill* best exemplifies the absurdity of fighting a futile war such as Korea. Clemons and his soldiers are asked to risk their lives for a worthless hill. His men question the necessity of taking Pork Chop Hill and, by extension, question the certainty of fighting a war they cannot win on the battlefield. Perhaps the most despondent and darkest of Korean War films, *War Hunt* considers how the stalemate and ceasefire embolden a murderous psychopath. Lt. Brubaker in *The Bridges at Toko-ri* never resolves his sense of duty with fighting the wrong war. His frustration with an unsupportive public and anger at the disproportionate responsibility placed on call-ups like him remain central to the character's identity, while invoking the memory of the Good War shows that Korea has been all but forgotten back home. Thus, the protagonists of absurdism show little certainty in the objectives of the "police action" their nation has committed them to fighting.

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In the first decade after the Korean War, popular accounts promoted a sense of ambivalence about America's first military engagement with communism. In newspapers, in novels, and on film, opinion-makers questioned the policy of limited war and suggested that a half-hearted commitment muddied the reasons for fighting for many Americans. Leading journalists across the country and characters in print and on screen also criticized an armistice that seemingly resolved so little. Ending the conflict in Korea had put America in an uncertain bind: perhaps the war had not been worth fighting, but with over 50,000 dead, certainly it should have produced more than a lackluster ceasefire.

Criticisms of an untenable peace also abounded in the nation's newspapers for years after the armistice. The fear was that Kim Il-Sung had tricked UN and American forces into a truce to restock Soviet weapons and again attack South Korea. Would American forces be required to return? Why had the United States, under the banner of the UN, refused to fight on to victory? And

characters in literature and film asked the same rhetorical questions. Whether in gritty war narratives or absurdist accounts, individuals denounced a war they are not allowed to win but were expected to sacrifice everything for, and to fight only to a draw. Thus popular culture exposed an important critique: Korea had been an ill-defined war with an uncertain outcome.

Opinion-makers also brought to light another important component of Korea's place in the public eye. It was not that popular culture refused to acknowledge the war or "forgot" it. Instead, well into the 1960s, representations of the war reflected a very real struggle to contextualize its place in American history. That the press reflected this ambivalence should not be taken as a sign of apathy, nor should the number or quality of books and films about other wars be the criteria used to measure Korea's legacy.[130] Instead, depicting Korea proved much more challenging, as it carried none of the ardor associated with victory in the Second World War, which continued to loom so heavily in the public's consciousness. But it would be equally wrong to propose that portrayals of Korea in the immediate postwar decade were defeatist. Instead, representations of Korea in the postwar era were already tapping into the notion of the Forgotten War by portraying a mood of ambivalence. The war may have had a purpose, but strategy and negotiations had squandered it, and the American public was unwilling to shoulder the burden necessary to win as it had during World War II. Popular culture captured this ambivalence into the Vietnam era. The war's meaning would be a source of continued uncertainty, particularly as the nation simultaneously wrestled with the fate of its prisoners of war.

[130] See Erhart and Jason, *Retrieving Bones*.

CHAPTER TWO
THE SUBVERSIVE WAR: PRISONERS OF THE KOREAN WAR IN AMERICAN CULTURE, 1953-1965

In Frank G. Slaughter's 1957 novel, *Sword and Scalpel*, protagonist Capt. Paul Scott faces court-martial in San Francisco, accused of collaborating with his communist captors during the Korean War.[1] Scott, an Army surgeon with a promising medical career, had signed a confession of germ warfare—an admission of American war crimes against North Korea.[2] How could Scott, his family, friends, and fiancé wanted to know, sign such an outrageous and clearly untrue confession? What had driven him over the edge to lie about his country's actions? As the trial progressed, Scott held on each night in quiet desperation, a prisoner once again, only now in a posh downtown hotel. The charges against him had shamed his family and stripped away his medical license. He had allegedly rescued the prison camp commandant from certain death, attempting to gain favor with the Chinese. Had they indoctrinated him? Was Scott another victim of communist brainwashing? The premise of *Sword and Scalpel* seemed plausible—newspapers and military officials had reported that hundreds, possibly thousands, of returning prisoners of war (POWs) were victims of mind control techniques the communists had perfected during the war.

By the time of its publication, *Sword and Scalpel* joined a growing literary and popular narrative that depicted the trauma of captured Americans during the Korean War. This story reflected a very real concern among Americans: something had happened in the Korean prison

[1] Frank G. Slaughter, *Sword and Scalpel* (New York: Doubleday & Co, Inc., 1957).
[2] For more on communist charges of germ warfare see Arthur H. Mitchell, *Understanding the Korean War: The Participants, the Tactics, and the Course of the Conflict* (Jefferson and London: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2013), 191-192.

camps that had resulted in the purported collaboration of America's fighting men. For contemporaries, it seemed unprecedented. Never before, they believed, had American prisoners of war disavowed their nation and joined the enemy in such numbers. This belief that Korean War POWs were a uniquely subversive part of America's military legacy led to nationwide soul-searching to explain extensive collaboration. This national self-examination vilified Korean War POWs as a selfish group, motivated by favoritism from their captors and unwilling to suffer the hardships their predecessors in other wars had endured. Most important, in popular discourse, this image of POWs increasingly gained acceptance, and their depiction as brainwashed dupes helped explain why the nation's armed forced had come unraveled in Korea. Collaboration, to believers in it, was the most shameful act America's fighting men perpetuated in a very shameful war.

In fiction, Slaughter explained Capt. Scott's life-saving operation on the commandant as an exchange for the lives of two fellow captives. Indeed, justification for collaboration is a prominent theme in Korean War POW literature and films. And Scott's disloyalty in *Sword and Scalpel* is typical of postwar fiction: motivations go beyond scoring a blanket or extra rations. He agrees to sign the confession to spare his friends. Nonetheless, popular depictions might have shown selfless reasons for collaboration, but popular opinions were seldom nuanced. The reasons for POWs' unacceptable wartime behavior would be debated into the 1960s. From these debates, one thing was certain: society had somehow failed those captured in Korea. That sense of failure carried with it ominous fears that the POWs were potentially dangerous brainwashed subversives.

The POW controversy and the hysteria surrounding brainwashed subversives was driven in paty by the virulent anticommunism of the Second Red Scare. The hunt for domestic subversives depended upon their believed susceptibility to overt pressures from communists. No one, of course, did more to strengthen the connection between American actions in Korea and the fear of subversives at home than Sen. Joseph McCarthy (R-WI). McCarthy's downfall came when with his

televised attacks upon the Army in 1954. The junior senator may have been censured and died only a few years later, but the forces that are still linked with his name predated and certainly outlasted the man.[3] The Red Scare unleashed a noxious anticommunism that almost immediately put the repatriated prisoners in question. According to anticommunists, the POWs had been subjected to the views of "radical politicians and teachers" before they went to war.[4] In Korea, the Chinese had only furthered that exposure to radicalism with reeducation programs and mental torture. Meanwhile, the nation's media, its policymakers and military leaders, and its popular culture, offered answers for collaboration and brainwashing. Popular culture and some brainwashing "experts" offered nuanced interpretations, but hyperbolic fears of brainwashed POWs proved most resilient. In the environment of McCarthyism and the Second Red Scare, these groups perpetuated fears of communist subversion and blamed POWs for the outcome of the war. Thus, the ambivalence that characterized responses toward the war's outcome found an equally powerful fear toward its surviving repatriates. As pundits and popular culture struggled to makes sense of the war's legacy, the simultaneous revelation of POW misconduct in the prison camps reaffirmed Korea's uncertain place in the national spotlight. In the end, the search for explanations in the apparent Korean debacle offered no easy answers, and what began as suspicion over POWs' resolve in the face of psychological torture turned to a broader sense of national paranoia.

Doubt began with repatriation in 1953. The press reported that numerous captive GIs had collaborated with the enemy. More appalling was the revelation that nearly two dozen more had disavowed their country and stayed with the enemy. Briefly, the public image of the Korean War POW was one of a misguided youth who deserved the sympathy and understanding of a nation now

[3] Thomas Doherty, *Cold War, Cool Medium: Television, McCarthyism, and American Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 15.
[4] Susan L. Carruthers, *Cold War Captives: Imprisonment, Escape, and Brainwashing* (Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2009), 212.

engaged in a new type of psychological warfare. But as charges mounted and the number of apparent collaborators grew in late 1953, that image of the wayward young soldier transformed into an outright collaborator, and society struggled to find the causes of "wholesale" treason. No other group of POWs in American history has undergone the scrutiny as have the captives of Korea. No other group's wartime actions have led to such national self-examination. By the late 1950s many Americans accepted that POWs' actions were symptomatic of much larger problems with the nation's moral fiber, and the environment of virulent anticommunism to which they returned only strengthened that perception.

Throughout this period, a growing number of so-called brainwashing experts, Hollywood directors, authors, and many of the repatriates presented various reasons for widespread collaboration. Their disparate voices, however, only further confused the matter. Expert opinion offered only misunderstanding, as no single explanation for collaboration held popular sway. And former POWs' opinions varied dramatically. Film and literature offered sympathy for the plight of the POW, but seldom did filmmakers or authors challenge the notion of endemic collaboration. Moreover, the nuance in these various interpretations offered little competition to exaggerated claims about brainwashing—that it had the power to alter minds and plant communist agents in the United States. Sensationalistic accounts like those of journalist Eugene Kinkead solidified the opinion that POWs from the Korean War had been ill-prepared to meet the mental toll of communist indoctrination. And despite Hollywood's general attempt to explain the POW dilemma, films such as *The Manchurian Candidate* (1962), which focused on the power of mind control in high levels of government, were more lurid (and more profitable) than others such as *The Rack* (1956), a

slow-moving courtroom drama that seems to blame POW's stifling parents and individual depression for collaboration.[5]

In the decade or so after the war, several factors to explain the tainted image of the POW in the nation's conscience. It is first important to recognize that prisoner's representation in American culture was linked inextricably to the war's outcome. Peace brought no sense of victory; instead, when reflecting on the war's meaning, the great majority of Americans viewed the armistice with strong feelings of cynicism and apprehension well into the 1960s.[6] The Second Red Scare and McCarthyism, as mentioned, only heightened In this period, as we have seen, Hollywood explored the futility of fighting a limited war in films such as *Pork Chop Hill* and the psychological effects of battle in *War Hunt*. Likewise, authors detailed similar themes in a variety of novels published after Korea. Many focused on the lone antihero, uncertain of his place or his nation's in a new world of perpetual war.[7] On the homefront, the pessimism that had manifested after Chinese intervention only grew as the conflict dragged on, and it remained decisive to popular opinion after the armistice and prisoner exchange.[8]

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Prisoner exchange was the most divisive issue of the Panmunjom negotiations.[9] In a show of goodwill, diplomats agreed to a small transfer of wounded before the cessation of hostilities.

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[5] *The Manchurian Candidate*, directed by John Frankenheimer (Beverly Hills: United Artists, 1962); *The Rack*, directed by Arnold Laven, (Beverly Hills: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1956). *The Rack* failed to recoup its budget of less than $1 million. *The Manchurian Candidate* made its budget 5 times over, raking in more than $10 million.

[6] Alec M. Gallup, Jr., ed. *The Gallup Poll Cumulative Index, 1935-1997* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1999), 1190-91, 1199. According to the Gallup Poll, one-third of Americans surveyed in December 1953 believed that fighting in Korea would begin again. A majority (fifty-six percent) did not want the United States to send troops again if the war resumed. Less than one-third believed the US had a responsibility to send troops again; thirteen percent had no opinion. Gallup asked the same questions again in 1954 and the percentages remained virtually identical.

[7] See Chapter One.

[8] David Seed, *Brainwashing: The Fictions of Mind Control—A Study of Novels and Films Since World War II* (Kent and London: Kent State University Press, 2004), 27.

[9] POW exchange was a contentious issue even among allies. South Korean President Syngman Rhee tried to sabotage the negotiations by allowing the release of thousands of North Korean POWs among the general population. Rhee wanted the complete unification of the Korean peninsula and believed the United States abandoned him at Panmunjom. Robert J. Dvorchak, *Battle for Korea: A History of the Korean Conflict* (Conshohocken: Combined Publishing, 2001), 273-274.

Thus, American POWs returned home in two distinct prisoner exchanges. Operation Little Switch occurred in April 1953 before the armistice (the transfer of wounded), and Big Switch took place in August and September.[10] More than 4,000 Americans returned from the prison camps in North Korea; but 3,000 never returned, a death rate of almost forty percent.[11] Prison conditions were deplorable. One prisoner described the bodies "stacked like cordwood…three to four feet high and often 30 or 40 yards long."[12] Another prisoner was punished with a freezing cold shower and lost both feet.[13] On at least two occasions, a Chinese soldier intervened when a North Korean was going to shoot POW Donald Elliott. Nearly all agreed, however, that as bad as the Chinese were, the North Korean guards were worse.[14]

Concern grew rapidly among politicians, military leadership, and the national media about communist indoctrination. But in the immediate weeks following repatriation, the vast majority of media reports remained positive, focusing on the mental and physical fortitude Americans had shown in North Korean and Chinese prison camps.[15] Stories emphasized heroic POWs, their barbaric captors, and the jubilant families who awaited their loved ones' return. Even when acknowledging the growing brainwashing hysteria, these early accounts assured readers that a return to everyday American life would provide the cure-all needed. "There's nothing to this brainwashing that a good steak and an ice-cream cone won't cure," one Army official said. Or, as Gen. Mark W. Clark put it, "There's nothing the matter with our minds that can't be cured by a beer, a blonde, and

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[10] Charles S. Young, "Name, Rank, and Serial Number: Korean War POWs and the Politics of Limited War, (PhD diss., The State University of Rutgers, 2003), 234. Several dozen POWs came home in Little Switch; over 4,000 were repatriated in Big Switch.
[11] Mitchell, *Understanding the Korean War*, 195. Statistics for other combatants are as follows: among UN forces, around a thousand British soldiers and 243 Turks were prisoners; South Korean captured numbers around 75,000; among communist forces, 140,000 North Korean and Chinese POWs were captured.
[12] Mitchell, *Understanding the Korean War*, 200.
[13] Mitchell, *Understanding the Korean War*, 200.
[14] Mitchell, *Understanding the Korean War*, 198.
[15] Matthew W. Dunne, *A Cold War State of Mind: Brainwashing and Postwar American Society* (Amherst & Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2013), 81.

a hometown newspaper."[16] Such a focus emphasized the resilience of the American GI in the face of horror.[17]

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But this image of the repatriated POWs in the national media was short-lived. By late 1953, stories of collaboration flooded newspapers throughout the nation.[18] In mere months, the image of the POW had changed drastically, from strong survivor to outright collaborator. The changing perspective was due in great part to government and military handling of claims that communist forces had acquired a psychological tool of mind control the press labeled brainwashing. Officials had little understanding of brainwashing, its efficacy, or any idea how to control public opinion once the term had entered the national lexicon. As more reporters weighed in on brainwashed POWs and experts offered their take, policymakers and military officials tried simultaneously to present brainwashing as an alarmist scare tactic and proof of communist chicanery. Thus official response

[16] Carruthers, *Cold War Captives*, 189. Those newspapers initially relayed the honors, awards, and ceremonies repatriates had received, both before and after capture. Accounts typically focused on a local soldier who, despite the brutal treatment he had received, survived imprisonment and happily espoused his strong belief in America and democracy. The *Washington Post*, for example, related the story of Pfc. Tully Cox, 20, who was captured in the Chosin Reservoir campaign in December 1950. Cox lost both legs because he did not receive medical attention from his captors until the following July. When he arrived at his final prison, Camp Changsung, Cox only had "stumps" for legs. The soldier had spent a total of 29 months as a prisoner of war. But Cox was happy to be home and was not letting his double amputation drag him down, according to the report. See "Medals Due 5 Marine Ex-POWs," *Washington Post*, Jan 9, 1954; "5 Marines Decorated for Valor as POWs," *Washington Post*, Jan 12, 1954; "POW of Reds Lost Both Feet; Calls Propaganda 'Stupid,'" *Washington Post*, May 7, 1953.

[17] Sgt. George J. Matta, who had been captured in February 1951, told a Senate panel the story of a North Korean nurse who cut off the frostbitten toes of a fellow prisoner "with a pair of shears 'like hedge clippers.'" She wrapped his bleeding feet in newspaper, but according to the paper, the POW showed Yankee intrepidness and made bandages from his bed covers. Another POW told how he ate dog meat to stay alive. See "Former Korea War Prisoner Calls Brainwashing 'Lot of Bull To Us,'" *Baltimore Sun*, December 4, 1953; "POWs Ate Dogs to Survive, Probers Told," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 5, 1953.

[18] Although Dunne contends that it was in late 1953 when the major shift in POW coverage occurred, this should not suggest that the change in coverage was absolute. Journalists continued to report "positive" stories of POWs—much as they had during Little and Big Switches—although the number of such articles declined significantly. The point is that coverage did shift, but Dunne draws perhaps too distinct a delineation. Dunne, *A Cold War State of Mind*, 81-82. For examples of "positive" POW stories in 1954, see "Ex-POW Reenlists After 3 Years in Prison Camp," *New Journal and Guide*, March 27, 1954; "4 Ex-GI POWs to Be Honored by Army Here," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 20, 1954; "Plan Citation for Ex-POW," *Chicago Defender*, October 2, 1954. Carruthers writes that public opinion "ebbed" by the end of 1954. Carruthers, *Cold War Captives*, 201.

did little to mitigate growing national concern over brainwashing; instead, government reaction only exacerbated it.[19]

With claims that national security was on the line, the Army took charge of all American POWs and began a program of intense scrutiny immediately after Big Switch. Each POW received "orientation pamphlets" and was required to sign an affidavit confirming his silence on any purported collaboration.[20] Under the guise of providing rest and quality meals, the Army transported repatriates home via a six-week sea trip from Japan, even though adequate air transportation was available. The extra time allowed Army psychiatrists to determine if subversives were among the returning men.

Once aboard the transports, however, the repatriates faced an evaluation program headed by Maj. Henry Segal, which included hours of testimony and dozens of pages of questionnaires.[21] In August 1953, the *New York Times* reported the program's findings: Segal believed his evaluations had uncovered "a large percentage" of brainwashed POWs.[22] As historian Matthew W. Dunne shows, the publication of these intensive Army examinations "gave the American public cause for concern by substantiating the assertions that a considerable number of POWs had succumbed to Communist brainwashing and collaborated with the enemy."[23]

The *Times* article was not alone. Scores of reports, some of which repeated unsubstantiated claims, perpetuated assumptions that the Army had discovered a brainwashing conspiracy. A

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[19] Dunne, *A Cold War State of Mind*, 28-30. Dunne writes the government "attempted to get ahead of the media narrative on brainwashing by presenting a unified front on the technique, simultaneously telling the public it was no 'miracle-weapon' but also employing it to further discredit the Communist enemy." The net result of this dual government message was continued uncertainty about POWs.
[20] Young, "Name, Rank, and Serial Number," 236.
[21] Young, "Name, Rank, and Serial Number," 238. Some soldiers' files were two feet thick. The military's scrutinizing resulted in a new universal military code of conduct that demanded prisoners adhere strictly to name, rank, and serial number if captured, the same policy that had ostensibly been in place from the beginning.
[22] Dunne, *A Cold War State of Mind,* 90.
[23] Dunne, *A Cold War State of* Mind, 89. Dunne argues that the Army's assessment of POW behavior further legitimized the notion that something was wrong with the "American character" among the former prisoners.

Washington Post piece declared the defense department was aware of brainwashed collaborators amongst Little Switch returnees. Although the Pentagon had initially expressed sympathy for collaborators, the *Post* concluded "that the psychological device called 'brain wash' [sic] probably was being used by the Reds on American prisoners." Readers now had a hyperbolized sense of the powers of brainwashing, which could replace a lifetime's thoughts immediately with communism.[24] In the midst of McCarthyism, such dire circumstances were hardly reassuring given the war's indecisive outcome.

Similar media reports continued unabated for years, with various numbers tossed around that purportedly identified the number of indoctrinated Americans. Journalist Eugene Kinkead and Capt. Bert Cumby, an "expert on brainwashing techniques" according to the Army, believed indoctrination had tainted one-third of POWs.[25] But fluctuating statistics only made the POWs' actions and even the terminology all the more confusing. By late 1953, collaboration appeared extensive, with the Pentagon branding hundreds as turncoats. In March of the following year, however, the *Chicago Daily Tribune* illustrated how contradictory the numbers could be: the Army was investigating 464 men for "complaints involving espionage, treason, or subversion." Of this number, 105 were POWs and twenty-five more Army doctors. The Army had already discharged 466 other soldiers and had another 101 "pending cases." Of these, 286 men and officers remained on active duty. In total, the Army had made 40,843 "investigations of loyalty" since January 1949.[26]

By the mid-fifties, the stigmatization of POWs was firmly entrenched in media accounts, but the precise numbers were still unknown. In some sense, the number was irrelevant. Just as Joe

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[24] "Defense Dept. Says Some Returning POWs May Appear to Have Accepted Communism," *Washington Post*, April 13, 1953. The initial defense department statement insisted that POWs "cannot be condemned for cooperating with the Communists…for the alternative may appear to be torture or death—or both."
[25] "Report Third of Yank POWs Tinged by Reds," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 20, 1956.
[26] "464 Army Men Suspected of Being Traitors," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 30, 1954. The *Tribune* also reflects the opinion of experts that collaboration was not an issue unique to the Korea War. Yet none of these numbers, the paper clarified, included the "drunkards, drug addicts, homosexuals, loose talkers, and others suspected of being security risks."

McCarthy had tossed around different numbers of purported communist collaborators in the state department, the supposed numbers of brainwashing subversives continued to vary. The *Washington Post* reported that indoctrination had tainted only a "handful" of prisoners, while the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, less than a week later, claimed both fifteen percent of POWs and one-third were collaborators.[27] Part of the reason for this continued misunderstanding was how government, military, and media officials used the terms "brainwashing," "collaboration," and "indoctrination." Few commentators attempted to make a distinction between them, the phrases were not grounded in scientific meanings, and commentators used them interchangeably.[28] Furthermore, what defined collaboration was equally complex. According to military code, prisoners in Korea should have only given their name, rank, and serial number in interrogation; a technicality, certainly, but one that allowed critics to assert that "there had been wholesale collaboration by the American prisoners" and this was therefore a unique circumstance in the nation's history. The confusion over fluctuating numbers and differing definitions only furthered the belief in a communist conspiracy.[29]

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The most damning evidence of indoctrination, however, was that twenty-three Americans refused repatriation and went to communist China after the war. Their decision made returning prisoners more suspect and helped "explain" the indecisive outcome in Korea. Had a small number acted so egregiously and anti-American and thousands more then stood accused of collaboration, the thinking went, then most GIs must have shown little resolve in fighting the enemy.[30] While negotiations had dragged on, prisoners became the subject of much attention, and afterward, that

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[27] "Some Ex-POWs Said to Be Spies," *Washington Post*, September 6, 1955; "Discover 15% of Korea POWs Collaborated," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 10, 1956; "Report Third Of Yank POWs Tinged By Reds," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 20, 1956.
[28] As we shall see, brainwashing was a term invented by Edward Hunter in 1950 from observations he made in China. It was not a word with immediate scientific grounding.
[29] Albert Biderman, *March to Calumny: The Story of American POW's in the Korean War* (New York: McMillian Publishers, 1963), 1, 37. Biderman states that Kinkead has "a tendency to equate prisoner misconduct with collaboration."
[30] Dunne, *A Cold War State of Mind*, 133.

focus remained unabated. Very few Korean War veterans came home to victory parades, but hundreds of repatriates did come home to find a public—following the path blazed by the Army and exacerbated by Cold War anticommunism—scrutinizing their behavior, searching for an explanation for stalemate.[31] Although two defectors, Claude Batchelor and Edward Dickenson, did return from China, it was no stretch to assume that indoctrination had affected the remaining 4000 repatriates. At the very least, an unknown number of subversive agents had slipped into the country. Amid the volatile political culture engendered by the Second Red Scare, the witch hunts of McCarthyism, and the Rosenberg trials, the United States had failed to win decisively in Korea.[32] And within a military that did not win, historian Charles Young argues, the POWs became "the most visible examples of failure to persevere."[33]

A closer examination of prisoners' motives, however, places their actions in a different light. Communication with the outside world, particularly with family, had meant many POWs signed communist petitions and sent pro-Chinese statements home.[34] Once home, these former POWs met critics who considered such action collaboration, in part because letters often contained the 'peace dove' of communist propaganda and were emblazoned with the return address label "c/o the Chinese People's Committee for World Peace and against American Aggression." Frequently, however, soldiers' letters contained subtle information that informed American readers of their steadfast loyalty. When his captors demanded a POW's family promote communism, one GI recommended his father look for recruits in Forest Lawn—the local cemetery.[35]

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[31] Young, "Name, Rank, and Serial Number," 8, 239. Anticommunism, led by Senator Joseph McCarthy, had reached its apex during the war, and the POW debacle perpetuated it after. Moreover, the United States had executed Julius and Ethel Rosenberg in June 1953 for treason.

[32] Carruthers, *Cold War Captives*, 21. Carruthers notes that for too long historians have "neglect[ed] the international contexts within which the man and his -ism flourished, treating the politics of the Red Scare and the blacklists as peculiarly introverted phenomena."

[33] Young, "Name, Rank, and Serial Number," 233.

[34] Biderman, *March to Calumny*, 45.

[35] William Lindsay White, *The Captives of Korea: An Unofficial White Paper on the Treatment of War Prisoners: Our Treatment of Theirs, Their Treatment of Ours* (New York: Scribner Publishing, 1957), 127.

Sometimes "collaboration" occurred out of more immediate needs. Food was always scarce. Prisoners noted a direct connection between their "acceptance" of communist doctrine and their caloric intake. Prison commanders often waited until POWs were near starvation to begin indoctrination, making men more "receptive" to daily lectures—especially if reciting a slogan meant more to eat. A promise to return home also led many prisoners to cooperate with their captors' demands. One prison camp commander told prisoners, "Study hard, Comrades, with open minds, and you will get home soon." That particular camp lost nearly a dozen men daily from starvation out of a prison of two thousand. Some prisoners promised they would do anything to get home—even pretend to believe communist propaganda.[36] At the same camp, prisoners developed a "Bird Dog" system of alert, and made sure that when guards came around, they were reading *China Monthly Review* or the *Shanghai News*—both English-language Communist papers.""[37]

But it was the elaborate informant networks that had purportedly existed in every prison camp which drew some of the harshest condemnation. Critics believed "progressives"—those who accepted communism completely—needed little encouragement to snitch on their fellow prisoners, especially those informants who possessed "a character trait making them receptive to helping the enemy from the beginning."[38] Others insisted that if a prisoner faked indoctrination, communist brainwashing was so elaborate a prisoner would still be forced to inform.[39]

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[36] White, *The Captives of Korea*, 105.
[37] White, *The Captives of Korea*, 108.
[38] Young, "Name, Rank, and Serial Number," 146.
[39] White, *The Captives of Korea*, 106; Callum A. MacDonald, *Korea: The War Before Vietnam* (Houndsmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire & London: MacMillan Press, 1986), 150; Young, "Name, Rank, and Serial Number," 9; Biderman, *March to Calumny*, 52. On closer inspection, however, it is apparent that snitching was no more universal than during other American wars, and the communists used the *perception* of an informant network to erode morale and discourage uprisings. The hope was that any man marked as an "informer" might become a real one. Biderman writes that "apparently, the creation of the general impression that informers were everywhere and that every man was a potential informer was a more effective measure than the workings of an informer net itself. Prisoner resistance was disrupted far more by fear of betrayal than by actual betrayals." The Chinese, in other words, created the impression of a broad cabal precisely because their efforts to recruit real informants had been mediocre.

To be sure, the twenty-one defectors fascinated contemporary Americans. The most prolific example of this titillation was Virginia Pasley's 1955 publication *21 Stayed*.[40] A biographical account of each man, Pasley's book carried a rare sympathetic tone that emphasized the hardships each man faced in his formative years. Traveling thousands of miles across the United States, she found that almost all of the men grew up impoverished, uneducated, or in broken homes.[41] Pasley also made the connection between the focus on POWs and the war's ignominious end, arguing that the stalemate after Chinese intervention divided Americans over Korea, and, as a result, "never has this country entered a war with such high hopes and ended it with such irritable disillusion."[42] As a result, Pasley suggests, the war divided the men fighting it and in particular the POWs. They "were hazy about why they had been in Korea in the first place and what the war was all about."[43]

Besides Pasley's work, public interest in the twenty-one remained high. Sociologist Joseph D. Lohman had been an official American representative in the prisoner exchange at war's end. Afterward, he spoke publicly about the reasons the twenty-one stayed.[44] American journalists also interviewed the defectors when possible. Their questions, not surprisingly, focused on the reasons for repudiating the United States. One defector, Richard Tenneson, insisted that the Army had lied to him about how the Chinese would treat him. They were supposed "to have shot, tortured and starved me to death," Tenneson said, but he found the Chinese to be friendly and hospitable.[45] In a letter to his mother, he swore his loyalty remained, but refused to come home.[46] In an interview with Shirley DuBois, the wife of W.E.B. DuBois, a black defector named Clarence Adams told her

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[40] Virginia Pasley, *21 Stayed: The Story of the American GI's Who Chose Communist China—Who They Were and Why They Stayed* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1955).
[41] Pasley, *21 Stayed*, 227.
[42] Pasley, *21 Stayed*, 6.
[43] Pasley, *21 Stayed*, 11.
[44] "Lohman Will Tell of 21 POWs Who Didn't Return," *Chicago Daily Tribune,* February 15, 1954.
[45] "Unrepatriated GI Says He is Loyal," *Baltimore Sun*, January 10, 1955.
[46] "Letters from Wayward Son Cheer Mother," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 10, 1954.

he had never heard of her famous husband until after his capture. Now in China, he could go to school, have health and dental care, and practice whatever trade or job he desired."[47]

Because of the similarity in the unrepatriated POWs interviews, critics averred that brainwashing had been successful. Other commentators insisted that none had been brainwashed, but were only afraid to face legal consequences should they come home—particularly when Dickenson and Batchelor faced charges of collaboration upon their return. The decision of the twenty-one to remain with the enemy had serious implications for Batchelor and Dickenson, who seemed to stand trial for the others *in abstentia*. These contradictory reactions to the POWs provided no certainties to a nation unsure of what had happened in North Korea in the first place.

Compounding the disgrace surrounding repatriates, the military began charging former POWs with collaboration in January 1954.[48] Given whom the military charged first, it appeared revenge was a determining factor. Corp. Edward Dickenson, one of the original twenty-three defectors, was the first arrested. Dickenson's homecoming had been short-lived; he had only returned home to Cracker's Neck, Virginia, two months earlier. The Army promised that the case against him was to be a judgment of his actions as a POW, not his decision to remain with his captors, but it seemed difficult to separate the two issues.[49] Dickenson would not stand trial, however, until April 1954.[50] As *New York Times* correspondent Hanson Baldwin told his readers, America must "learn to distinguish between villains and heroes."[51] And the Army was going to make sure no one ever confused Edward Dickenson for a hero.

After his arrest, media reports indicated the defense wanted brainwashing to be the focus of his trial—which suggests his counsel understood that the beliefs surrounding indoctrination would

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[47] "Ex-POW in China Tells Shirley: 'I know I'm Doing the Right Thing,'" *Pittsburgh Courier*, April 25, 1959.
[48] Raymond B. Lech, *Broken Soldiers* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 216; Carruthers, *Cold War Captives*, 202.
[49] Young, "Name, Rank, and Serial Number," 319.
[50] "Court Martial of Former POW Opens Today," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 19, 1954.
[51] Carruthers, *Cold War Captives*, 202.

be beneficial. Dickenson's fortune, one article pointed out, was "likely to hinge on the answer to this question: What does being imprisoned by the Communists do to a man's mind?"[52] The prosecution called several former POWs who all testified that Dickenson was a progressive and "squealer" who ratted out an attempted escapee that resulted in a man's beating.[53] The squealer label stuck, despite this particular charge being dropped.[54] It was Dickenson's only reprieve. His attorneys tried to focus the court toward what they argued was Dickenson's inherent susceptibility to brainwashing. One psychiatrist testified that the corporal "was the kind of a man who could be intimidated easily."[55] It was to no avail. The court sentenced Dickenson to ten years of hard labor.[56]

In short time, Claude Batchelor, the other former defector, followed Dickenson to trial. And the testimony of fellow POWs also proved decisive. Two swore that Batchelor had been "the spokesman for a progressive study group" and that he attended around 100 communist study sessions.[57] Other evidence proved more damning. Batchelor purportedly informed a guard that a fellow POW possessed a camera and had recommended the prisoner's execution.[58] The circumstantial evidence against him proved insurmountable. Batchelor's claim of having been brainwashed—just like Dickenson's—fell on deaf ears. His contention was that brainwashing made him believe his actions were in "the best interests" of his nation.[59] The defense's decision to plea temporary insanity seemed desperate (Batchelor had been a prisoner and with the Chinese for a total

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[52] "Court Martial of Former POW Opens Today," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 19, 1954.
[53] Carruthers, *Cold War Captives*, 20; "Army Charges Dickenson Cause POW Tortures," *Washington Post*, April 20, 1954; "2 Ex-POWs to Accuse Corpl. Dickenson At Court-Martial, Army Lawyer Says," *Washington Post,* January 29, 1954.
[54] "Ex-POW Testimony Helps Convict 'Squealer,'" *New Journal and Guide*, May 15, 1954.
[55] Carruthers argues that to suggest "Dickenson was 'easily led' was hardly the kind of mitigating factor liable to sway an army intent on disciplining deviance." Carruthers, *Cold War Captives*, 204; "Ex-POW Called Unstable By Psychiatrist," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 29, 1954. Dr. Morris Kleinerman added that Dickenson was "'emotionally unstable' and…his thinking was not rational in our sense of the word."
[56] Dunne, *A Cold War State of Mind*, 92; Carruthers, *Cold War Captives*, 204. Dickenson served 3½ years of that sentence.
[57] "Red Meetings in POW Camps Told By 2 GIs," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 2, 1954; "Ex-POW Says Batchelor Led Red Seminars," *Washington Post*, September 4, 1954.
[58] "Charge Ex-POW Backed Plan to Shoot GI," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 14, 1954; "Charges POW with Informing on Fellow GI," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 9, 1954.
[59] "Brainwash Pleas Lost By Ex-P.O.W.," *New York Times*, September 16, 1954.

of 38 months, so "temporary" was a stretch) and failed to sway judicial opinion.[60] The court initially sentenced him to life in prison, but in October 1954 Judge Gen. I.D. White shortened Batchelor's sentence to 20 years.[61]

That the military branches did not have a uniform response in charging repatriates only exacerbated the issue. Assistant Secretary of Defense John M. Hannah initially guaranteed that the armed forces would "clamp down" on all "progressive" POWs.[62] But that was far from the case. In May 1954, an Air Force board of 5 generals cleared 69 airmen from wrongdoing, even though some had falsely admitted to "germ warfare," the communist charge that pilots had dropped bacteriological bombs on North Korea. The board made its decision because brainwashing had manipulated the thoughts and accountability of its pilots—a charge that had been summarily dismissed in the Dickenson and Batchelor trials. "Sympathetic consideration was given by the Board," an Air Force press release stated, "to the fact that the mental and physical torture of prisoners of war by the Communists was something unprecedented in our military history."[63]

The uneven treatment did not go unnoticed, particularly among former POWs. Repatriates were among the first to criticize the military's handling of trials. One former prisoner, John R. Lynch, called for a soberer understanding of POW life in North Korea. "I have been convinced since I returned to the United States that the American people don't want to hear the truth," Lynch said. All prisoners, regardless of branch of service, collaborated, he insisted. But the Air Force "gave the impression that every airman was a hard-boiled heroic person who never thought of giving aid and comfort to the enemy…What a crime! I was there. I know."[64] Lynch's response is

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[60] Dunne, *A Cold War State of* Mind, 93.
[61] "Army Board Convicts GI of Aiding Reds," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 1, 1954; "Former POW's Life Sentence Cut to 20 Years," *Chicago Daily Tribune* October 29, 1954.
[62] "Crackdown Seen for More POWs," *Washington Post*, January 25, 1954.
[63] "AF Clears 69 POWs of Korea Misconduct," *Washington Post*, May 5, 1954; "Air Force Recommends Leniency for POWs," *Washington Post*, April 29, 1954.
[64] "Brainwashing Hearings," *Washington Post*, July 21, 1956.

typical of a great many of POWs who in the face of growing antipathy toward all POWs, tried distancing themselves from the so-called progressives. And testifying was an opportunity to contrast their actions with those of progressives. Eugene H. Tumbleston was one such former prisoner. He had been in the same camp as Batchelor and testified that fellow prisoners had "hated" the turncoat. Batchelor had "played along with the Chinese" and accused the United States of waging germ warfare. "It just gripes to have all this fuss made over Batchelor," he contended. Tumbleston believed Batchelor's guilt was so evident he could hardly believe a trial was necessary.[65]

The case of Marine Col. Frank H. Schwable, accused of signing a germ war confession, quickly cast doubt on the fairness of POWs trials and exposed the unequal military-judicial treatment of suspected collaborators.[66] Schwable was by all accounts a tough Marine. A graduate of the Naval Academy and a highly decorated officer, he was a career military man, and was looking for his next promotion when he arrived in Korea in spring 1952.[67] His commanding officer described Schwable as "one of the brightest, finest, most conscientious, and, during the war, one of the bravest officers" he knew.[68] The Chinese shot down his Beechcraft plane and took Schwable prisoner in July 1952.[69] He held out against interrogation for nearly 5 months, until his captors realized he was chief of staff of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, a fact he had repeatedly denied.[70] But the colonel's ruse was up. His punishment for lying was not immediate physical torture, but the communists had broken him nonetheless, he insisted on the stand. They isolated him for several weeks, a time which he said was like being "an animal in a cage [left] to think and think—to reflect—to become bitter at

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[65] "Ex-POW Assails 'Fuss' Over GI Who Quit Reds," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 10, 1954.
[66] One of the strongest communist accusations was that the United States had engaged in bacteriological warfare, directly targeting the civilian population of North Korea. See Mitchell, *Understanding the Korean War.*
[67] Lech, *Broken Soldiers,* 165-66.
[68] Lech, *Broken Soldiers*, 165-66.
[69] Lech, *Broken Soldiers*, 166-68.
[70] Lech, *Broken Soldiers*, 169. Lech blames the *New York Times* and other major American newspapers for making too much information available on Schwable. From the time of his capture the Chinese knew Schwable was a colonel, making him (at the time) their highest-ranking prisoner.

my own misfortunes…and to let my fears, worries and imagination run rampant."[71] And yet the colonel continued to hold out, giving his interrogators very little. But the Chinese began psychologically torturing him in earnest, insisting Schwable was a war criminal, and claiming that his confession would be a step toward peace. The long hours of solitude, interrupted only by prolonged bouts of questioning, both of which diarrhea and hunger aggravated, finally broke the colonel.[72]

After weeks of revising his confession, Schwable falsely admitted to waging germ warfare. It was, he suggested, "My words, their thoughts."[73] But why did he sign after holding out for so long? Could he not hold out for just a little longer? Schwable explained that his "inherent pride as a Marine officer was submerged, and with it my moral and spiritual outlook was contaminated." Schwable maintained that no man could resist the mental manipulation he had endured. Although he was never beaten, each tactic had been designed to break Schwable's will and obtain a confession. Brainwashing, he stated, was a "diabolical, methodical, unrelenting system of breaking down a human being to the point where he can no longer resist."[74]

The defense relied upon the same tactics as in the courts-martial of Batchelor and Dickenson. Schwable's attorneys called upon former POWs who swore that the colonel had seemed out of his mind. Six repatriates testified that Schwable had suffered greatly in the prison camps. Witnesses told of strange behavior: Schwable shadow boxing in a hut and, on another occasion, screaming that he was covered in oil.[75] But Schwable's case differed from others in one significant way: the colonel benefitted from the testimony of Maj. Dee E. Ezell and Gen. William F. Dean,

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[71] Lech, *Broken Soldiers*, 170.
[72] Lech, *Broken Soldiers*, 171, 173-75.
[73] Lech, *Broken Soldiers*, 177.
[74] "Schwable 'Confessed' to Tell U.S. of Torture, He Explained," *Washington Post*, February 18, 1954. Schwable's claim that after he only broke after months of psychological torture in order "to help expose by first-hand testimony one of the greatest hoaxes any nation has ever attempted to foist on the world" contradicts his earlier testimony that he gave in because of psychological torture. Had he signed because of the overt pressures of mind control or to expose the a hoax?
[75] "Ex-POWs Tell Strange Acts of Schwable," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 20, 1954; "3 Testify Germ War 'Confessor' Seemed to Be Not in Right Mind," *New York Times* February, 20, 1954; "Col. Schwable Brainwashing Ordeal Told," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 26, 1954.

both of whom had been POWs in Korea. Maj. Ezell's testimony established the brutality of the prison guards by focusing on his own torture. He warned that to "persecute a man who already has been persecuted would be playing into communist hands." Gen. Dean's word also carried significant weight. He believed he had received better treatment than enlisted POWs, but still found it impossible to adhere to name, rank, and serial number. Dean admitted that he "did not have the strength or intelligence" to limit himself in such a manner.[76] The general also elaborated on the mental effects of solitude: "One of the most difficult problems for a prisoner," the general stated, "is to maintain his judgment. A thought grows in your mind until you are sure it must be exceptionally clever. And sober reflection, which might show it up as being foolish rather than clever, just isn't possible under prison conditions."[77]

Defense attorney Col. Paul D. Sherman hoped the testimonies of both officers would prove decisive for his client. Gen. Dean's admission, Sherman believed, would show that Schwable was not the only officer to collaborate, and that the colonel had not received similar privileges. Such testimony helped spare Schwable from prison time or hard labor, but the colonel would never again enjoy the esteem of his fellow Marines. In fact, the Corps ostracized Schwable for the remainder of his career and he retired in mid-1959.[78]

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If the Pentagon hoped the arrest and conviction of these repatriates would put to bed the dishonor surrounding brainwashing, collaboration, and POWs, it was severely disappointed. The prosecution of Dickenson, Batchelor, Schwable, and others must be seen in the broader context of two developments in the 1950s: a broad fascination with possession (a model which brainwashing

[76] "Ex-POW Tells of Torture at Hands Of Reds," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 3, 1954; "Couldn't Stand Brainwashing, Gen. Dean Says," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 9, 1954.
[77] Lech, *Broken Soldiers*, 171.
[78] Lech, *Broken Soldiers*, 267.

fit) and the belief that the stalemate in Korea, and the actions of American POWs, were the results of the nation's weakening moral fiber. In this context, no rational or sane person could believe Marxism was superior to democracy, so only mind control explained prisoners' actions. When combined with the assumption that POWs in Korea had been a blight on an otherwise exemplary history of American POW conduct, the "national decline" thesis held sway.

Throughout the decade popular culture, infused with the anticommunism of the era, inundated Americans with images of a society besieged by traitors, spies, subversives, and communists.[79] Many of the films, television series, and novels of the decade focused on the informant—typically former communists working for the government and seeking redemption for their subversive activities. *I Was a Communist for the FBI* (1951), was a much-exaggerated film based upon the life of Matthew Cvetic, who infiltrated the Communist Party (CPUSA) as a spy for the FBI. Despite its loose interpretation of events, the film was nominated for the 1952 Academy Award for Best Documentary.[80] The producers of *I Led 3 Lives* (1953-56), based on the memoir of Herbert A. Philbrick, billed the television series as "the 'true story of a patriotic young American who led three lives in the service of our country: 1. Citizen! 2. 'Communist'! 3. Counterspy for the FBI!'"[81] It ran for three years in the mid-1950s, and comprised over 100 episodes. As Stephen Whitfield has pointed out, however, the show did little to explain the allure of communism.[82]

Tales of subversives, infiltrators, and traitors were as pervasive as those of reformed communists or FBI informants. *My Son John* (1952) illustrates the consequences of a doting mother and a communist girlfriend on an impressionable young man. When John (Robert Walker) visits home, he ridicules his father's patriotism and his mother's Christianity. By chance, she learns John

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[79] Ronnie D. Lipschutz, *Cold War Fantasies: Film, Fiction, and Foreign Policy* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2001), 37. Lipschutz suggests these types of films fit three models: film noir, monster films, and possession films.
[80] http://www.imdb.com/event/ev0000003/1952. (Accessed October 4, 2015).
[81] Thomas Doherty, *Cold War, Cool Medium: Television, McCarthyism, and American Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 140.
[82] Stephen J. Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 66.

has been brainwashed by his communist girlfriend and concludes that her son must also be a communist sleeper agent. His mother supports his arrest and punishment when John refuses to confess.[83] The film embraces a culture of informing, lifting the act of vigilance above the loyalty of family.[84]



Figure 2.1 Overbearing parents believe their son is a communist agent in My Son John *(1952).*

Invasion of the Body Snatchers (1956) epitomized the possession genre in the 1950s. In it, the people of Santa Mira seem possessed, devoid of humanity and personality, although their physical characteristics show no signs of alteration. But Dr. Miles Bennell (Kevin McCarthy) uncovers the truth: aliens have supplanted everyone in town with an identical copy—devoid of emotion, empathy, or concern. Dr. Bennell escapes to Los Angeles and warns the FBI of the invasion.[85] Brainwashing and subversion, the film implies, threw the nation's democratic foundations into further flux because it challenged the notion of free and engaging individuals exercising political autonomy. Just like the movie's imposters, the brainwashed POWs returned from Korea as ideological aliens, armed with an

[83] Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War*, 137.
[84] Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War*, 139.
[85] Lipschutz, *Cold War Fantasies*, 38.

agenda to stamp out individualism and replace it with collectivism. It was the fear of a nation unraveling. [86]

Literature, like film, suggested communist infiltration. Mickey Spillane's Mike Hammer series was the most ubiquitous and best-selling Cold War fiction of the decade. Six of the ten bestselling novels of the 1950s featured Spillane's cold warrior, and, as early as 1953, Americans had purchased seventeen million copies.[87] Spillane's novels commanded such popularity because of their explicit delineation between good and evil. When Hammer kills communists, there is no moral ambiguity or uncertainty. He personifies the purification of America, one violent death at a time. "I lived only to kill the scum and lice," the antihero insists.[88]

Fictional accounts such as the Mickey Spillane novels and movies such *My Son John* and *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, therefore, strengthened assumptions of communist infiltration at the same time real fears of subversion were ongoing. In addition to the popular imagery of a nation under siege, the notion that POWs were a product of declining morals gained increasing resilience.[89] But it seemed no one could agree on what caused this "national decline," only its symptoms. Although the military investigated hundreds of former POWs, only fourteen cases went to trial, with eleven convictions.[90] To the public, however, brainwashing offered explanation for collaboration and proof of its potency as a Cold War weapon.[91]

But how could *susceptibility* to mind control be explained? According to some critics, the POWs of Korea—and their loose tongues—were products of a decaying society, softened by New

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[86] Dunne, *A Cold War State of Mind*, 17.
[87] Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War*, 34-35.
[88] Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War*, 36-37.
[89] Richard Severo and Lewis Milford, *The Wages of War: When America's Soldiers Came Home —From Valley Forge to Vietnam* (New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1999), 317-319.
[90] Pasley, *21 Stayed*, 236. Young, "Name, Rank, and Serial Number," 320, 326.
[91] Dunne, *A Cold War State of Mind*, 4; Carruthers, *Cold War Captives*, 205. Carruthers writes that "By the late 1950s Americans of almost every political stripe had come to believe that their soldiers' record in captivity during the Korean War was uniquely shameful."

Deal liberalism and betrayed by declining morals.[92] Here was proof of the national deterioration pundits lamented. Here were the results of a society devoid of religious foundation and patriotic ardor.[93] Many Americans, Biderman contends, believed the "weaknesses in Army discipline, in the character of American youth, and in basic American social institutions" had softened the fighting men of Korea.[94] These claims only empowered the anticommunist witch hunts like those of Sen. Joe McCarthy's. "We can and must recapture our national honor," the junior senator from Wisconsin informed one audience.[95] For McCarthy and other red-baiters, the POWs and their susceptibility to brainwashing provided the perfect explanation of what was wrong with the nation. The breakdown of morale in prison camps, in other words, had been a forgone conclusion.[96]

Numerous experts offered their opinions on brainwashing and subversion. Reporters, journalists, psychiatrists, sociologists, military experts and even the POWs themselves attempted to shape public opinion about the subjects. These opinion-shapers, however, suggested little practical explanation and typically heightened claims of national decline and communist infiltration.[97] Indeed, few experts questioned the motivations behind claims that POWs suffered from mind control, how effective the process was, or if it even existed.

Proponents of brainwashing and subversion were plentiful. Edward Hunter, an American journalist and Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) aide, first introduced the phrase in a 1950 *Miami News* article. Hunter spent the decade helping block communist China from gaining membership to the UN and testified to the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) in 1958 about the

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[92] MacDonald, *Korea: The War Before Vietnam*, 255; Biderman, *March to Calumny*, 10-13.
[93] Biderman, *March to Calumny*, 256.
[94] Biderman, *March to Calumny*, 13.
[95] Severo and Milford, *The Wages of War*, 325, 328. McCarthy also used the POW crisis to castigate President Eisenhower as showing "weakness toward the Chinese Reds." "M'Carthy Asks Ike For Report On China POWs," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 13, 1955.
[96] Biderman, *March to Calumny*, 15-16.
[97] Mitchell, *Understanding the Korean War*, 212.

failures of the armed forces to prepare troops in Korea for mind control.[98] Hunter broadened his definition to fit public perception that all forms of reeducation were "brainwashing."[99] His book, *Brain-washing in Red China* (1951) became something of a bible for many anticommunists in government, military, and in popular culture.[100] In it, Hunter focused primarily on the effects of communist brainwashing among the peasant population of China in the wake of the 1949 revolution.[101] But his work carried dire warnings for Americans as well.

Brain-washing in Red China reinforced notions that the United States had not prepared GIs for to withstand psychological torture. There was some truth to these claims. During the war, Chinese interrogators were surprised to learn their American captives had no training against psychosomatic conditioning.[102] Brainwashing, Hunter writes, "is psychological warfare on a scale incalculably more immense than any militarist of the past has ever envisaged."[103] Subtlety was not part of Hunter's approach. His concepts of brainwashing resonated with a public eager to understand the POW ordeal.[104] Moreover, he conjured up the threat of an expansionist China, now armed with an unstoppable weapon that could defeat American from within.[105] The psychiatrist Joost Meerloo was another proponent of brainwashing—an idea he often referred to as "menticide" (a portmanteau of mental and genocide). His essay, "The Crime of Menticide" in the *American Journal of Psychiatry*

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[98] Seed, *Brainwashing,* 28, 31. Seed argues Hunter's term "entered the language during one of the most ideologically critical periods of the Cold War."
[99] Dunne, *A Cold War State of Mind*, 26.
[100] Dunne, *A Cold War State of Mind*, 3, 23-24, 26. Hunter did not invent the phrase brainwashing. He translated the Chinese phrase *hsi nao* which meant "cleansing the mind." As Dunne points out, its original meaning was more benign that its American counterpart.
[101] Hunter, *Brainwashing in Red China: The Calculated Destruction of Men's Minds* (New York: Vanguard Press, 1951), 4. He writes that "brain-washing became the principal activity on the Chinese mainland when the Communists took over."
[102] Mitchell, *Understanding the Korean War*, 210. The first year of war in Korea proved the efficacy of communist psychological warfare, Hunter claimed. Had American officials paid attention brainwashing methods used during the Chinese Civil War, he maintained, the use of POWs for propaganda purposes would not have been surprising.
[103] Hunter, *Brainwashing in Red China,* 1.
[104] Dunne, *A Cold War State of Mind*, 26. "But," Dunne writes, "Hunter could have hardly foreseen how little his brainwashing would resemble the popular understanding of the concept by the end of the Korean War only two years later."
[105] Seed, *Brainwashing*, 29. Hunter continued his claims of mind control some years later with *Brainwashing* (1956) and *The Black Book on Red China* (1961).

(1951) and his book, *The Rape of the Mind* (1956) lent scientific credibility to Hunter's claims, despite Meerloo's even more hyperbolic and audacious assertions of what brainwashing could accomplish. Meerloo argued that "there is scarcely any hiding places from the constant and verbal assault on the mind" and that as if by command, a "powerful dictator can imprint his own opportunist thoughts upon the minds of those he plans to use and destroy."[106] It was "a delusion," Meerloo claimed, to believe the communists wanted anything less to destroy America from within.[107]

Such expert claim made the rounds through defense department and military circles, further substantiating claims of communist subversion. CIA director Allen Dulles invoked fears of brainwashing in a 1953 address on the "two worlds of the Cold War and the "battle for men's minds." The communists, Dulles claimed, wanted "individuals so conditioned [they] merely repeat thoughts which have been implanted in their minds by suggestion from outside."[108] Meerloo testified on behalf of Col. Frank Schwable, telling the court that death was the only escape from the torture of brainwashing. No man, Meerloo told the court of inquiry, could withstand the pressures that Col. Schwable had faced—an ominous warning if so many POWs had returned brainwashed.[109] Even more terrifying, Meerloo claimed, it was "impossible" to train a man to resist completely.[110]

Hunter and Meerloo's explanations of brainwashing explained *why* collaboration had occurred. In so doing, they promoted notions that resistance to brainwashing was ineffective and that large numbers of brainwashed repatriates were now in the United States. Although these experts shared the opinion with reporter Eugene Kinkead that Korean War POWs were an aberration unseen in America's military past, Kinkead was not about to absolve POWs from collaboration because of some claims of mind control.

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[106] Joost Meerloo, *The Rape of the Mind: The Psychology of Thought Control, Menticide, and Brainwashing* (Cleveland: World Publishing, 1956), 28-33.
[107] Meerloo, *The Rape of the Mind,* 69.
[108] Seed, *Brainwashing*, 31.
[109] "Psychiatrist Aids 'Germ' Confessor," *New York Times*, March 10, 1954.
[110] "Expert Tells Severity of Brainwashing," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 10, 1954.

Instead, his publication *In Every War But One* (1959), merged the various assumptions about widespread breakdown of morale in the prison camps and claimed appalling statistics on collaboration. Most important, Kinkead's book assumed *prima facie* that collaboration was pervasive in Korea and unprecedented in the nation's history. Kinkead disregarded motivations, degrees of collaboration, or the efficacy of physical and psychological torture. Most important, Kinkead promulgated that in other wars, especially the Good War, American collaboration had been nonexistent. Only in Korea, he insisted, had the conduct of American POWs been tainted. In every war the United States had fought "our men were grievously treated, and fell victims to starvation and disease…and a respectable number of prisoners managed, through ingenuity, daring, and plain good luck, to escape."[111] But in Korea one-third of American prisoners were guilty of "some sort of collaboration;" in Korea none had escaped and thirty-eight percent died as prisoners. This sad reality could not be explained by something as "simple" as brainwashing.[112] It simply had not occurred. Instead, Kinkead posited that

> the roots of the explanation go deep into diverse aspects of our culture—home training of children, education, physical fitness, religious adherence, and the privilege of existing under the highest standard of living in the world. In light of what happened in Korea, all of these facets of American life might profitably be re-examined by our leaders in government, education, and religion.[113]

Thus, Kinkead promulgated a "deficiency thesis" that combined all of the purported problems of society which had manifest amid the prisoners in Korea and contrasted their behavior with that of POWs from previous conflicts, especially World War II. Kinkead claimed that as a result of these deficiencies, Korean War POWs were easily indoctrinated—not brainwashed—and willingly gave radio broadcasts and false confessions. Indoctrination was a far cry from the

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[111] Eugene Kinkead, *In Every War But One* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1959), 15.
[112] Kinkead, *In Every War But One*, 16-17.
[113] Kinkead, *In Every War But One*, 18.

brainwashing.[114] Drawing on the Army's psychiatric evaluation of prisoners, Kinkead suggests that there existed "a low incidence of psychiatric disorders among them" and that the "majority" had collaborated. They were "burdened with guilt" because "they knew [collaboration] was wrong."[115]

Kinkead relied upon a veteran officer of both World War II and the Korean War whom he called "Col. Brown," a pseudonym.[116] Discipline, Col. Brown insisted, had failed because the American fighting man in Korea was not as loyal as his older brother who fought in World War II. Juvenile delinquency was a major problem, there were too many "confirmed adult-haters," and "the slum kids…know nothing but the dog-eat-dog rule."[117] And when such young men arrived in the Army, there was no discipline. It was a result, in Brown's opinion, of the acceptance of the Doolittle Board's recommendation decreasing distinctions between the enlisted and commissioned military ranks, "all with the laudable purpose of making the enlisted man happier with his lot." What resulted instead was a "great loss of military efficiency."[118] A democratized military that coddled delinquents had fought—and failed to win—in Korea. For Kinkead, the contrast between the Good War and the Korean War helped explain those results. Further, the large-scale capture of American prisoners, their ubiquitous collaboration, and the adamant refusal of twenty-one to return were the fruits of a society rotting from within.

Other popular experts' criticisms were echoed Kinkead's deficiency thesis. The breakdown in morale emphasized to some experts the need for strict gender delineations and the important roles of mothers in rearing boys. Mothers, they argued, had feminized their sons, which in turned had weakened their resistance to brainwashing. Betty Friedan suggested as much, claiming that

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[114] Kinkead, *In Every War But One*, 32.
[115] Kinkead, *In Every War But One*, 49, 165. Kinkead's deficiency thesis also relied upon a comparison between American and Turkish POWs. Of the 229 Turkish soldiers captured, none died in prisoner camps, a startling revelation, he maintains, since half were wounded when captured. The Turks had not betrayed one another, he observes; they continued to respect rank and helped their countrymen recover from wounds and illnesses.
[116] Kinkead, *In Every War But One*, 170.
[117] Kinkead, *In Every War But One*, 172.
[118] Kinkead, *In Every War But One*, 175.

"Momism," was the result of the doting, overprotective mother whose suburban, middle-class lifestyle had coddled her son to the point of affecting his development.[119] Dr. Benjamin Spock agreed with such an assessment, writing that "nothing has shaken thoughtful citizens as much as the behavior of many of the American soldiers taken prisoner in the Korean war [sic]."[120] Spock believed a comprehensive breakdown of morality, order, and discipline had occurred, a problem he addressed in his book *Problems of Parents* (1962).[121] Like Kinkead, he rejected the brainwashing thesis, arguing instead that after World War Two Americans had lost the "spirit of devotion to the common cause and their readiness to sacrifice for it."[122] That was primarily the result, Spock claimed, of overbearing and overpermissive parents.[123] And the result in Korea had been give-up-itis."

Where Dr. Spock's criticisms ended, others pointed to the downfall of the American education system. This contrasted with the intense re-education the POWs received through "voluntary" lectures on the wonders of communism.[124] Certainly Virginia Pasley in *21 Stayed* emphasized that nearly all of the turncoats had received little schooling. At the outset of her chapter biographies, Pasley insisted that the difficult upbringings the twenty-one had faced explained their decision to defect.[125]

For others, education meant teaching America's youth about the dangers of atheistic communism and the importance of Christianity. *Cleveland Universe-Bulletin* editor Joseph A. Breig insisted that an irreligious anticommunist was still susceptible to being "brainwashed by cynical Reds

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[119] Carruthers, *Cold War Captives*, 208; Dunne, *A Cold War State of Mind*, 130-131.
[120] Benjamin Spock, *Problems of Parents* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1962), 275.
[121] Many of his findings reiterated Eugene Kinkead's, whom he cites on numerous occasions, along with Army psychiatrist Dr. William Mayer.
[122] Spock, *Problems of Parents*, 279.
[123] Spock, *Problems of Parents*, 282-285.
[124] Pasley, *21 Stayed*, 20.
[125] Pasley, *21 Stayed*, 75-79. Cpl. Scott Leonard Rush, for example, never made it past 8th grade. He "was a 'slow learner' who had been considered in need of clinical help for his emotional difficulties at the special public school he attended." Otho G. Bell did not make it past 8th grade either. Pasley also listed him, like Rush, as having a "low I.Q."

and fellow-travelers." Only faith in God could avoid that pitfall. "Once a man knows why it is that he should be opposed to Communism," Breig stated, "then all the brainwashing in the world will not turn his will toward this devilish philosophy." God, in other words, was the answer to communism.[126]

But to some contemporaries, the problem was not something as amorphous as "national decline," "momism," or education. Rather, these observers suggested the problem was the military's failure to prepare troops to meet the ideological challenges of the Cold War. Rear Adm. Daniel V. Gallery believed the military leadership had not taken the threat of psychological warfare seriously, and had sent ill-prepared GIs to Korea.[127] A 1956 Senate subcommittee on brainwashing agreed, claiming that the military had failed in preparing troops for communist interrogation.[128] Despite more repatriates explaining the mental and physical torture they endured, the Army (which had been charged with re-incorporating all former POWs into society) continued to downplay the lack of torture training.[129]

Kinkead, Spock, Friedan, and others may not have supported the brainwashing thesis, but their claims were still critical. Either way, former POWs faced accusations that were difficult to disprove. These experts publicly questioned the loyalty of American repatriates and substantiated assumptions that many were communist agents. To an astute observer, the realization that the military had charged only about a dozen of the 4,428 repatriates may have suggested that experts and others, especially the press, had exaggerated fears of communist subversion and infiltration.

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126 "Truth Versus Brainwashing," *Atlanta Daily World*, September 19, 1957.
127 Seed, *Brainwashing: The Fictions of Mind Control*, 83.
128 "Rip Military for Cruelties to GIs By Reds," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 30, 1956.
129 Severo and Milford, *The Wages of War*, 324-25. In addition to the mental anguish of imprisonment, Lt. Col. Thomas Harrison described in detail the agony of physical torture, particularly waterboarding: "They would bend my head back, put a towel over my face and pour water over the towel…I could not breathe. That went on for hour after hour, day after day."

Nonetheless, these claims continued to gain momentum. In response, the defense department implemented two important policy changes. First, the Air Force in May 1954 initiated "torture schools," training around 150 pilots a month to resist communist interrogation and physical privation.[130] Tactics included life behind barbed-wire fences, violent interrogation, solitary confinement, and the "sweatbox," a 120-degree box that was too small for trainees to sit or stand. As the heat took its toll, guards would pound the wooden box with rifle butts.[131] A *Newsweek* story in late 1955 uncovered the program's harshness and the Pentagon announced it would make the program voluntary. The school had its supporters, particularly Gen. Matthew B. Ridgway, who maintained that "we must do everything we can psychologically to prepare our soldiers for the torments of these heathen Red foes."[132]

But continued opposition put the Air Force on the defensive. Officials admitted the course was "rugged," but insisted it "always stops short of degradation or torture." The goal, instructors said, "is to remove this pattern of fear."[133] Former defectors lambasted the "torture school" and reflected assumptions that educated was more important. Otho G. Bell criticized the program because there was no real threat of dying or even being denied a cigarette. His solution was to educate soldiers better, not provide simulated training. Former POW Lewis W. Griggs agreed: "The first real step is to teach democracy and our Constitution in the schools. Tell our students what the Communists actually are." William Cowart, another repatriate, said it was "the silliest thing I've heard of since I came back. Ask any soldier—even after he goes through the school—what

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130 "Air Force Trained to Bear Red Jails," *New York Times*, September 26, 1954.
131 Carruthers, *Cold War Captives*, 211; "AF Accused of Running School of 'Torture,'" *Washington Post*, September 8, 1955.
132 Carruthers, *Cold War Captives*, 210.
133 "Air Force Denies Brainwashing Tests Torture GI's," *Baltimore Sun*, September 9, 1955; "Beyond the Pale," *Christian Science Monitor*, September 14, 1995. The *Christian Science Monitor* was one of the strongest critics, arguing that the "hazards of mock 'brainwashing' are moral and psychological." This type of training could "swing back the gates to sadism and to grant gratuitous license to brutality."

communism is. He won't know.'"[134] In December 1955, the military conceded and closed the training school.[135]

Ironically, by creating the course at all, the military tacitly acknowledged it had not prepared GIs for communist torture. But contemporaries largely overlooked that concession, particularly when the military implemented a second post-Korea change: the introduction of a Code of Conduct for POWs in 1955. The language of the new code suggested that prisoners in Korea had *not* made every effort to resist. It also reflected continued anxieties of how to handle POW collaboration in future conflicts.[136] The code also reflected the continued assumption that the Korean War POWs were an aberration among Americans history of war. Although the committee that drafted the code, the Secretary of Defense's Advisory Committee on Prisoners of War, recognized "that most men only succumbed to interrogations after much increased pressure," and that military training had been insufficient, committee members agreed that "it was necessary to begin this indoctrination in the home, in the churches, in the schools and by patriotic organizations" to counter the effectiveness of communist indoctrination.[137]

Together, the Air Force "torture school" and the new Code of Conduct suggest that claims of brainwashing and infiltration had a reached a point where the military felt compelled to respond. Opponents of both, however, did not deny charges of collaboration and brainwashing. Instead, their criticisms claimed that these responses would be ineffective. Dr. James G. Miller of the Mental Health Research Institute at the University of Michigan proposed giving every soldier cyanide capsules in case of capture. Brainwashing was like anesthesia, the doctor stated, and was impossible

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[134] "Turncoats Scoff at Nevada Course," *Baltimore Sun* September 16, 1955.
[135] "The Air Force Suspends Its 'Brainwash' Course" *New York Times*, December 14, 1955.
[136] "Code Bids POWs Resist Brainwashes," *Washington Post*, August 18, 1955. When President Eisenhower signed the code, he insisted that each POW would be held to the "highest standards" and must not willingly surrender. But if captured, he should use all means available to avoid giving up information. The president promised "justice" for those who could not sustain those standards.
[137] "New Code Orders P.O.W.'s to Resist in 'Brainwashing,'" *New York Times*, August 18, 1955.

to resist. And with the availability of new drugs, communists could target a man's nervous system, making his compliance all the more certain. Miller believed suicide was a more acceptable alternative to mental torture.[138]

Frew critics challenged prevailing assumptions about Korean War POWs. Two, however, were psychiatrist Robert Jay Lifton and sociologist Albert D. Biderman. A nuanced evaluation, they argued, would put the POWs' actions into perspective. When these academic rebukes of brainwashing, menticide, and Kinkead's deficiency thesis did arrive, they made little impact on popular opinion or official thought. "Brainwashing" had become so deeply entrenched in popular vernacular by the end of the 1950s that it was synonymous for just about any unexplainable behavior.[139]

Nuanced responses also faced the problem of accessibility. Such research tended to be buried in academic journals or published to little fanfare—hardly the front page of the *New York Times*. Psychiatrist Robert Jay Lifton complained that "lurid mythology" was the basis of brainwashing fears and the postwar environment had created a "web of semantic confusion" about communist interrogation methods.[140] His work with POWs from Operation Big Switch partly formed his 1961 book, *Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism*. Lifton argues that brainwashing had come to describe "just about anything which the communists did anywhere" and now, in the United States, used by "anti-almost anything groups leveled against their real or fancied opponents."[141] In its ubiquity, "brainwashing" had lost all meaning, and "makes the word a rallying point for fear, resentment, urges toward submission, justification for failure, irresponsible

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[138] "GI Death Pills Urged to Foil Brainwashing," *Washington Post*, September 19, 1956.
[139] See, for example, "'Brainwashing' Laid to South," *Washington Post*, October 10, 1955; "Time Is at Hand," *Chicago Daily Defender*, April 11, 1956; "Calm Talmadge Calls School Rule 'Judicial Brainwashing,'" *Baltimore Sun,* June 7, 1954.
[140] "Brainwashing in Closeup, Review of Thought Reform and the Psychology of *Totalism: A Study of 'Brainwashing' in China,* by Robert Jay Lifton," *Washington Post*, January 15, 1961.
[141] Robert Jay Lifton, *Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism*: *A Study of "Brainwashing" in China* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1961), 3.

accusation, and for a wide gamut of emotional extremism."[142] Although Lifton acknowledged that collaboration had occurred, he maintained it was the result of interrogators applying "consistent pressures." Nevertheless, he rebuked Kinkead's claim that resistance had not occurred.[143]

Biderman's *March to Calumny* arrived two years later in 1963 and faced many of the same problems as Lifton's work. Biderman acknowledged that bombastic reports of communist mind control served political functions—namely that it strengthened anticommunism at home. But he also understood that his academic peers had been slow to challenge the brainwashing narrative. Biderman stated that the correctives "reached few people…when compared with the constantly reiterated accounts of POW misconduct and interpretations of this behavior as a sign of the moral decay of American society."[144] As a result, the "tendentious portrayals," he argues, had carried the day.[145] And no intellectual wanted "to produce a book of scholarly rebuttal to unscholarly writings on the topic."[146] Plus, government security made access to the necessary information hard to come by. So, while scholarly attempts to explain the POW issue waited, the sensationalistic reports had a decade to fester and be accepted as fact. Moreover, the hyperbole that had resonated so strongly with the public, was "propaganda by Americans, about Americans, directed to Americans." It had begun during the war, Biderman explains, and had been used then, as it was after the war, to justify anticommunism at home and the bittersweet end to an ignominious conflict abroad.[147]

One of the most damaging critiques was that extensive collaboration had never occurred in America's other wars. The title of Kinkead's book, *In Every War But One*, makes this his paramount charge. Biderman argues that in every American war witnessed unforeseen problems when POWs were captured. Biderman was one of the few voices to challenge this assumption about the Good

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[142] Lifton, *Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism*, 4.
[143] Lifton, *Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism*, 86, 107-112, 118, 131-133.
[144] Biderman, *March to Calumny*, 5.
[145] Biderman, *March to Calumny*, 3.
[146] Biderman, *March to Calumny*, 6.
[147] Biderman, *March to Calumny*, 1-2.

War. "Virtually all" American prisoners in World War II would have been collaborators by Kinkead's definition, Biderman argued, since they gave information beyond name, rank, and serial number.[148] Thus the notion that prisoner behavior in Korea was anomalous or unprecedented was preposterous.

Another major problem with the popular notion of collaboration was that it failed to account for complexity. A man was either a resister or a collaborator; no other option seemed to exist. In reality, Biderman found that a man could make a false confession one day and try to escape another. "Several of those who committed some of the more dramatic acts of collaboration," he writes, "were also those who had performed some of the most noteworthy acts of heroic resistance." Eighty percent of prisoners, Biderman claimed, were neither resistors nor collaborators.[149] Lifton and Biderman's academic approaches, however, had little broad appeal. As an attempt to dispel the magic and mania around brainwashing, it was primarily driven by methodological concerns that POWs were being unfairly stereotyped as traitors and weak-willed.

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From the end of the war well into the 1960s, literature and film also exemplified the Korean War POW experience. Unlike the larger national hysteria in the country, however, most popular works were sympathetic to the plight of the POW; like Biderman's analysis, many, but not all, authors and directors portrayed collaboration as the result of prison hardships, not character deficiencies. Only a few perpetuated the notion of mind control or brainwashing. Popular culture generally promoted a narrative that physical deprivation, interrogation and violence had led to collaboration.

[148] Biderman, *March to Calumny*, 23.
[149] Biderman, *March to Calumny*, 40-41.

Director Karl Malden's *Time Limit* (1957) stars Richard Basehart as Maj. Henry Cargill, a former POW who admission of collaboration shocks prosecutor Col. William Edwards (Richard Widmark).[150] Edwards, however, realizes that every POW he interviewed had a prepared response: deaths in the camps were from each man having an "acute case of dysentery." After an altercation between Maj. Cargill and his accuser, Lt. George Miller (Rip Torn), Miller admits the truth: he had killed Capt. Joe Connors (Yale Wexler) for revealing another POW's escape plans. All of the prisoners had agreed to kill Connors—all but Maj. Cargill. To save the men in his camp from further reprisals because of Connors' escape attempt, Cargill had signed a confession of germ warfare.

Miller's disclosure begins the most pivotal scene in *Time Limit* by questioning the assumption that men collaborated because they were subversive communists or brainwashed progressives. Moral concerns, not ideological ones, motivated Cargill's actions. He would not let his men die if any means, including collaboration, could spare them. He had endured alienation from other prisoners, hatred from his men, and torture from his captors. He suffered alone, never revealing that he had traded his dignity for their lives.[151]

Time Limit also challenges the assumption that only the feeble-minded succumbed to communist brainwashing. The film maintains that psychological and physical punishments communists employed could break any man. And Cargill cannot blame the men for submitting and turning on each other. They were all "good men, decent men" he explains who, after months or even years of resistance, finally cracked under pressure. "You can't ask a man to be a hero forever!," the major exclaims. "There ought to be a time limit!"[152] The film, in other words, challenged prevailing notions that returning POWs were collaborators. The vast majority resisted

[150] *Time Limit*, directed by Karl Malden (Beverly Hills: United Artists, 1957).
[151] *Time Limit*.
[152] *Time Limit*.

when possible, dodging enemy demands for intelligence and refusing to inform on their fellow prisoners. Only when their torment became unbearable did a small number of POWs aid the enemy.[153] Depending on circumstance, the same person could be both resistor and collaborator.[154]



Figure 2.2 In Time Limit *(1957), Col. Edwards (Richard Widmark) demands that Maj. Cargill (Richard Basehart) explain why he collaborated as a POW in North Korea.*

Toward the Unknown (1956) features another former POW with questionable loyalty. Maj. Lincoln "Link" Bond (William Holden) had been one of the Air Force's most talented pilots before his capture in Korea. With the fighting over, Bond yearns to begin again as a test pilot at Edwards Air Force Base. Aware that Bond had collaborated, Col. McKee (Charles McGraw) is hesitant to put him behind the cutting-edge jets of tomorrow. Bond clearly carries mental and physical wounds from Korea. Here, the film explicitly shows, is a man teetering on the verge of sanity.[155]

Bond's mental stability is the major subject of *Toward the Unknown*. Characters scrutinize his every action, looking for signs of indoctrination. McKee reluctantly vouches for Bond, admitting that "All right, so he signed a piece of paper. But not until he had held out for 14 months of

[153] Biderman, *March to Calumny*, 39.
[154] Biderman, *March to Calumny*, 40-41.
[155] *Toward the Unknown*, directed by Mervyn LeRoy, (Burbank: Warner Bros., 1956).

brainwashing."[156] He admits that Bond's attempted suicide was punishment enough. The film's message is unmistakable: Korean War POWs carry psychological scarring worse than any physical torture imaginable.[157] It is clear that after being a POW in Korea, even the best test pilot the Air Force had could not pick up where he had left off.

Like *Time Limit,* the film maintains that it was almost impossible for ordinary citizens to understand the psychological torture POWs in Korea endured. It was so powerful, so anathema to American values, so *different*, *Toward the Unknown* suggests, that its effects could not be explained. "Have you ever been in solitary confinement, general?" Bond responds to a question about communist methods. "Tortured mentally 24 hours a day? Physical torture is nothing compared to the things they've learned to do to a man's mind…If a man hasn't been through it, it's no use trying to explain it."[158]

Toward the Unknown further shows that Bond's talent ultimately restores the faith of generals and pilots alike. His ability and determination dispel any notion that the major is unworthy of flying again. No one questions Bond's character or his innate goodness; not once is he vilified or called "traitor." In so doing, the film asks not that POWs be given absolution for their false confessions or partaking in communist propaganda, but that their actions be understood as reasonable responses to the indoctrination and torture they experienced.[159]

Some films showed Hollywood was uncomfortable with inadvertently condoning outright collaboration. *The Rack* (1956) starred Paul Newman as Capt. Edward Hall, Jr., a young man who

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[156] *Toward the Unknown.*
[157] Bond's second-guessing leads to the film's climatic scene, when another pilot bullies him as "just one little 'ol Korean hero." At a bar, a drunken pilot attacks Bond, and another man holds Bond's arms from behind while Lee punches him. Bond is clearly having a flashback to his time as a POW. He escapes the man's clutches and starts pummeling Lee. His fury remains unabated; Bond does not recognize Connie, his love interest, when she tries to separate them. He finally comes to his senses, stating "They held me by arms!" His face shakes violently: "They shouldn't have held my arms!" *Toward the Unknown.*
[158] *Toward the Unknown.*
[159] *Toward the Unknown.*

cannot live up to the imposing standards of his father, a career colonel (Walter Pidgeon). Hall's tried for collaboration after spending two years in a POW camp in North Korea. When his father asks why he did not just die instead of living with the humiliation, the younger Hall yells back: "I sold my soul for a blanket that smelled of fish and urine and three lousy hours of uninterrupted sleep! You know what else, colonel?! At the time I thought I was getting one hell of a bargain!" Like Maj. Cargill in *Time Limit*, Capt. Hall had the best interests of his men in mind when he gave re-education lectures or signed propaganda confessions. And when the guards had claimed Hall was a progressive, it was the same as being one. On the stand, Hall breaks down when discussing his six months of solitary confinement, confessing that the Chinese had used the death of his mother when he was a boy and the death of his brother in Korea to finally break the captain.[160]

Besides the connection to "momism", *The Rack* dispels the notion that brainwashing explained POWs' behavior. "This gentlemen," Hall's attorney says while the young man weeps on the stand,

> is the new duress. It isn't brainwashing, it never was. No drugs were used. No attempt was made to eradicate the mind. But every device was used to make it suffer. In Capt. Hall we have a strong man whose combat record shows him capable of withstanding immense physical pain without giving an inch. Yet this same man had no chance when forced to undergo a program of confession and mental agony…First you create an atmosphere of terror and uncertainty. Then you take away the leaders, tear down health and morale, infiltrate the ranks with informers and when you can't get informers, spread the word that you've got them anyhow. Turn an Army into a nightmare school and the soldiers into small boys who depend on you for childish rewards and punishments. Make them all lonely and distrustful, then [he turns back to Hall on the stand still covering his face], pick out the loneliest and go to work on him.[161]

Under cross examination the next day, however, Hall admits he never really broke as a prisoner. The defense's closing arguments blames the nation for not teaching the young men who fought in Korea about democracy or why it was worth fighting for. They remained unaware of the

[160] *The Rack*.
[161] *The Rack*.

menace of communism. As a result, the nation had left them uneducated and ripe for indoctrination. Nevertheless, the military tribunal finds Hall guilty.[162]

Prisoner of War (1954) also explores the reasons for collaboration.[163] Capt. Web Sloane (Ronald Reagan) poses as a progressive to document allegations of torture.[164] The Chinese are sadistic and cruel—even killing the puppy of the main reactionary—and show all sorts of ingenuity when torturing prisoners. The surprise comes when the film reveals that the prison's main collaborator, Jesse Treadman (Dewey Martin), is also a secret operative. Upon realizing that the film would not conform to its view of collaborationists, the military "distanced itself from an 'unhelpful' production it had initially supported with gusto."[165] Stereotypical portrayals of Chinese guards, coupled with little understanding of the nuance of communist torture techniques, were hardly convincing.[166] Unlike *The Rack* or *Time Limit*, *Prisoner of War* offered no analysis of collaboration or the effects of brainwashing. In other words, the film failed to anticipate what audiences wanted: an explanation for why American GIs would cooperate with their communist captors.[167]

These themes appear in most of the literary works of the postwar decade. Like the Paul Newman film *The Rack*, William Forrest's *Stigma* (1957) is a court drama that explores how the typical American would have reacted under communist interrogation. It also suggests, like *Time Limit*, that each man has a breaking point which, despite being able to hold out for months or even years, can be broken by brainwashing and torture. The protagonist of *Stigma*, medical officer Sgt.

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[162] *The Rack*.
[163] *Prisoner of War*, directed by Andrew Marton (Beverly Hills: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1954).
[164] Edward Dickenson claimed a similar purpose: that he had stayed behind with the Chinese to gather evidence of their wrongdoing. What worked for Capt. Sloane fell flat for Corp. Dickenson. The court did not buy his story. I am not the first to make this connection between *Prisoner of War* and the Dickenson case. See Carruthers, *Cold War Captives*, 202.
[165] Carruthers, *Cold War Captives*, 198.
[166] Carruthers, *Cold War Captives*, 198, 201. According to Carruthers, the military had another reason to distance itself from the film: it "threatened to confirm Chinese charges that uniformed Americans were all spies, and since the People's Republic continued to detain several U.S. airmen this wasn't an inconsequential matter."
[167] *The Bamboo Prison* (1955) has an almost identical plot as *Prisoner of War*. *The Bamboo Prison* directed by Lewis Seiler (Los Angeles: Columbia Pictures, 1955).

Able Bliss, stands accused of desertion, prisoner misconduct, and murder.[168] In a flashback, Bliss recounts his capture by a wounded Chinese soldier named Chang, who insisted he was a friend. Before Chang succumbed to his wounds, he passed to Bliss secret plans for communist domination of the world, while foreshadowing Bliss's future: ""To deliver this message, you may have to do things that will make you wish, over and over, that all you had done was die.[169]

North Koreans, however, captured Bliss three days later. When his medical training kicked in and Bliss saved a drowning guard, he was awarded with extra food and better treatment. But his secret information remained hidden as a suppository; it became his one motivation for survival, even when other prisoners branded him a progressive. Bliss finally made it back home with the secret plans. Despite delivering them , Bliss is convicted, dishonorably discharged, and sentenced to life at hard labor for collaboration. He is shot when making a failed escape attempt.

Forrest's novel reflects the broader dilemma real POWs faced. While none carried vital information about communist strategy, *Stigma*, like so many other works in this period, suggests that prisoners' collaboration often had a higher purpose or helped them survive inhumane conditions. Although hyperbolic, the novel's MacGuffin, the "secret information" represents the desire to survive. Like real prisoners, Bliss returns home to find a public calling for punishment, unwilling to see the complexity reality of camp life. Forrest's larger point is that vilification of POWs occurred because all forms of collaboration counted as treason. When Bliss is killed in his escape attempt, Forrest suggests that the treatment POWs faced when they returned was excessive considering the horrors they had left in Korea.

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[168] William Forrest, *Stigma* (Greenwich: Fawcett Publications, 1957), 10.
[169] Forrest, Stigma, 59. Forrest never explains what this information is, but certainly affirms the popular notion of a global communist indoctrination conspiracy through massive brainwashing that Edward Hunter, Joost Meerloo, and others had perpetuated.

A Ride to Panmunjom (1956), written by former Korean War prisoner Duane Thorin, denounces POW collaboration. Thorin condemns collaboration as work of the opportunistic, greedy, and weak-willed. In this sense, his novel stands out among POW fiction in the postwar period.[170] The book—and certainly his status as a former POW—made Thorin a brief celebrity. He received an honorable mention for *A Ride to Panmunjom* from the Friends of American Writers in March 1957 and took part in several speaking opportunities.[171] But Thorin's work is best viewed as a diatribe against the hysteria surrounding brainwashing, an alarmist concept he believes hides the real reason for POW behavior: a weakening of the national character in the wake of the discipline and rigor of the military and homefront in the Good War. After World War II, the military had become too democratic: "Brought about by do-gooders and doting mothers who couldn't bear the thought of their sons being subjected to the 'vile influence' of some rough-talking drill sergeant," Thorin writes, "the 'kid-glove' treatment had been ordered."[172] It was the "pseudo-prosperity of World War II" that had allowed parents to ignore their children's needs and focus on their material status, all while allowing welfare and social agencies to raise their children. They were "too fearful of losing these 'benefits'…to see how easily they might become enslaved to them."[173]

This breakdown in moral authority had led to collaboration, false confessions, and even the humiliating results in Korea, where "there was just enough time to put a rifle in a young man's hands and show him which was the business end of it. A few fundamentals, and before you knew it you

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[170] Duane Thorin, *A Ride to Panmunjom* (Washington, D.C.: H. Regnery Co., 1956), 6, 13. Soap, Thorin reminds readers, was a luxury. Lt. Ruck, is typical of the greedy self-aggrandizers Thorin lambasts. Ruck was a college graduate, officer, and a "selfish bastard," whose "petty gripes" demoralized the camp.
[171] "Among the Authors," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March, 31, 1957; "Duane Thorin to Talk at Kiwanis Luncheon," *Washington Post*, March 7, 1957.
[172] Thorin, *A Ride to Panmunjom*, 36, 105-106. When the character Bender confesses to germ warfare, a charge he believes carries no import because "nobody of any importance would believe that stuff anyway," Thorin proclaims "communist victories in the battle for the minds of men depends on the weakness of the opposition, rather than the strength of communism. So we had to admit the presence of the Benders in our American society."
[173] Thorin, *A Ride to Panmunjom*, 114.

had to send him up on the line."[174] And the result, according to several characters, was a limited war like Korea, a war not worth the effort. As one character puts it, "I think the main reason it wasn't settled long ago is just pig-headedness on the part of our negotiators."[175] Still another complains that disheartened POWs and poor fighting were the result "when the people who are supposed to be working your corner tie your hands to your feet and put horseshoes in the other guys' gloves."[176] But it the press who was equally at fault the brainwashing hysteria, which worked just as the communists had hoped. It was the "order of disorder" of the communist plan when the press proclaimed "Our poor boys have all been brainwashed!"[177] Thorin best expressed his views in a letter to the editor of the *Washington Post* in September 1956. In it, he describes brainwashing as a pseudoscience pushed on the public by a "short-sighted, irreligious element" of so-called experts who condone the "irresponsible and opportunistic Americans who collaborated in such alarming numbers in Korea."[178]

But Thorin's novel, like so many examples of POWs in popular culture, shows that far from the motivations Kinkead and others ascribed to prisoners, the men who purportedly collaborated wholesale were often crafty in their interaction with guards and interrogators. The motivation for their actions was equally important. As one POW put it, "We usually agreed the Russians had it made. Agreement meant our rations weren't cut." Or another who discussed communist education strategies: "We'd put one guy on watch and then we'd talk about anything *but* communism."[179]

Not all POW films and novels rejected the notion that brainwashing had powerful effects. In fact, the most popular ones resonated largely because they reinforced the hysteria surrounding mind control. The best example, *The Manchurian Candidate* (1962), based on Richard Condon's 1959

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[174] Thorin, *A Ride to Panmunjom*, 37.
[175] Thorin, *A Ride to Panmunjom*, 51.
[176] Thorin, *A Ride to Panmunjom*, 138.
[177] Thorin, *A Ride to Panmunjom*, 94.
[178] "Brainwashing Antidote," *Washington Post*, September 26, 1956.
[179] Mitchell, *Understanding the Korean War*, 210.

book, was an incredibly popular film and novel.[180] In it, a highly-decorated Korean War veteran, Sgt. Raymond Shaw (Laurence Harvey) comes home to great fanfare put on by his mother, Eleanor Iselin (Angela Lansbury). Eleanor hopes to use Shaw's celebrity to help reelect her husband, the buffoonish Sen. Johnny Iselin (James Gregory), a very transparent caricature of Sen. Joe McCarthy. By the time *The Manchurian Candidate* was released, McCarthyism was over, but audiences (like readers of the book) would have clearly identified the man responsible for driving the fear of communist subversion. Maj. Bennett Marco (Frank Sinatra), who had served with Shaw in Korea and recommended him for the Medal of Honor, has a recurring dream that the sergeant had murdered two soldiers from their platoon. Marco's investigation uncovers a sinister communist plot that has brainwashed the entire platoon into reciting the false narrative of Shaw's heroics. In reality, the communists had conditioned Shaw to be a sleeper agent who, with the aid of his communist contact, his mother, would kill the president and give the communists control of the free world.[181]

The Manchurian Candidate reflected concerns about brainwashing programs and domestic subversion. Only weeks after the armistice, the CIA reported that POWs from North Korea via the Soviet Union "apparently had a blank period or period of disorientation while passing through a special zone in Manchuria." Moreover, indoctrination camps in Manchuria were known for their "particularly intensive" reeducation programs.[182] Kinkead also dramatized the fear of real Manchurian candidates, stating the U.S. Army had found numerous agents in the US and then they disappeared. George Estabrooks, a hypnosis expert in Army Intelligence, made similar charges about the power of sleeper assassins in the country. Estabrooks had co-written a novel similar to *The Manchurian Candidate* in 1945, entitled *Death of the Mind.* During World War II, Estabrooks had taken part in hypnotic training of couriers who would divulge the secret information only when

[180] Richard Condon, *The Manchurian Candidate* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959).
[181] *The Manchurian Candidate.*
[182] Seed, *Brainwashing*, 106.

prompted by appropriate triggers.[183] Surveying the results of mind control efforts in Korea, Estabrooks wrote that "we have definite ideas as to how these ends are attained and undoubtedly could do just as well in this matter of brainwashing as our communist friends, if we so wished."[184]

The Manchurian Candidate combined brainwashing fears with a renewed yellow peril and the belief in an eroding national character—in this case, the American family.[185] Shaw's cook, for example, is actually a North Korean spy who keeps a close eye on the brainwashed sergeant. The major indoctrinator is the Chinese Dr. Yen Lo (Khigh Dheigh).[186] Shaw's family life is controlled by his doting mother, who is secretly Shaw's puppet master. His stepfather, Johnny Iselin, is an incompetent senator seeking the vice presidency on trumped up charges of communist subversion, unaware that his own wife is a real sleeper agent. Eleanor, the power-hungry manipulator, reduces her husband to a baffling mouthpiece, controlling his actions and emasculating the senator.[187] In the book, she forces Shaw into an incestuous relationship to maintain his control (the film only implies such behavior)—the ultimate instance of "momism."

The Manchurian Candidate fitted well with other possession and alien narratives that were thin facades for communism of the era. But no other work was as explicit in directly connecting the fears of communist subversion, brainwashing, and McCarthyism with Cold War realities. In a letter, Condon acknowledged the growing fears of brainwashing, stating that it had become normalized because "people act against their own best interests every day."[188] Both as book and film, *The Manchurian Candidate* was incredibly successful—mirroring larger fears about the totality of communist indoctrination. But perhaps it all hit a little too close to home. The year following the

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[183] Seed, *Brainwashing*, 106-107.
[184] Seed, *Brainwashing*, 108.
[185] Seed, *Brainwashing*, 109; Frank McAdams, *The American War Film: History and Hollywood* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2002), 175.
[186] James R. Kerin, "The Korean War and American Memory," (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1994), 292.
[187] McAdams, *The American War Film*, 175. Lansbury won the Academy Award for Best Actress for her portrayal of Eleanor Iselin.
[188] Seed, *Brainwashing*, 112.

movie's release, Lee Harvey Oswald assassinated President John F. Kennedy. Frank Sinatra, who owned the film rights, removed it from view for a decade.[189]



Figure 2.3 A communist doctor subjects American soldiers to brainwashing in The Manchurian Candidate *(1962).*

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A decade after the armistice ended fighting in Korea, the war was anything but forgotten. Instead, to many opinion makers, the war and its repatriates had revealed grave deficiencies in the American character. Their increasing visibility in American culture comported to fears of the era about perpetuated by the Second Red Scar, fears of communist subversion, and the belief that brainwashing was a weapon of mind control. The defense department, journalists, authors, Hollywood, psychologists, sociologists, and former POWs offered explanations and suggested counter-narratives for POW collaboration. Only novelists and Hollywood directors seemed to offer any sympathy for the POWs' struggles. Even then, the most popular example of the era, *The Manchurian Candidate*, reinforced those fears. POWs faced a cacophony of accusations, both real and

[189] McAdams, *The American War Film*, 176.

imagined, which gained increasing resilience after the war and branded them dubious traitors, brainwashed dupes, or communist subversives. That twenty-one Americans stayed with their captors heightened and strengthened these perceptions. Media accounts sensationalized the POW story, fueling misconceptions about collaboration and the effectiveness of mind control. Biased explanations blamed prisoners for the war's inconclusive result while simultaneously portraying them as victims of circumstance and pawns for communist ideology. The few accounts that moderated such overstatement appeared mostly in academic circles.

Popular culture also featured a decidedly mixed interpretation of the POW story. Few novels or films depicted American POWs as strong or courageous. Instead, books and films often "justified" collaboration instead of denying it, and authors and Hollywood reinforced the notion that prisoners of Korea were more susceptible to brainwashing or coercion than the combatants of America's previous conflicts, particularly the Second World War. Indeed, as one historian has pointed out, all World War II POW films released between 1953 and 1965 "revolved around or featured escape attempts," putting them at odds with similar films set in Korea, where prisoners purportedly never attempted to escape.[190] The World War II film *Stalag 17* (1953), for example, contrasted the bewildered Korean War POW who suffered from "give-up-itis" and the American POW of the Good War, who is brave, openly defies guards, and attempts to escape repeatedly.[191] By contrast, a typical Korean War POW book or film revealed a deeply disturbed protagonist, who may have had good intentions for collaborating, but was nonetheless weakened by brainwashing and unable to inculcate himself back into society. Some "experts," such as Eugene Kinkead, reinforced this distinction between Korea and the Good War with hyperbolic claims that no other American conflict had witnessed POW collaboration. Thus, Americans of the 1950s received almost a singular

[190] Dunne, *A Cold War State of Mind*, 108.
[191] *Stalag 17*, directed by Billy Wilder (Hollywood: Paramount Pictures, 1953).

message about the captives of Korea—that they were a uniquely shameful group whose subversive actions threated the nation. Such attitudes remained unabated well into the 1960s, even as Cold War policy moved on from Korea and toward another small nation in Asia. In many ways, it was the war in Vietnam that would finally change American attitudes to the Korean War POWs. The Vietnam War brought POWs' problems to the forefront of society and saw organizations develop to deal with POW and Missing in Action (MIA) issues.[192]

As US interests increasingly focused on Vietnam in the early 1960s, neither policymakers nor pundits had forgotten Korea. They believed it held various lessons for the next Cold War conflict. What those lessons were and how they were to be applied, however, remained to be determined.

[192] For more on connections between Vietnam and Korean War POWs, see Robert C. Doyle, *Voices from Captivity: Interpreting the American POW Narrative* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1994.)

CHAPTER THREE
THE INSTRUCTIVE WAR: THE LESSONS OF KOREA DURING THE VIETNAM ERA, 1965-1973

Writing to his local newspaper in April 1965, veterinarian Francis T. Pallotti of Hartford, Connecticut, expressed frustration with President Lyndon Johnson's Vietnam policy. Underlying assumptions about the nature and results of the Korean War informed Pallotti's criticisms, and the animal doctor could not help but believe American action in Vietnam would be equally fruitless. "History has a way of repeating itself," Pallotti warned, "and mankind doesn't seem to be able to profit by the lesson. There is a close parallel between the war in Korea and that in South Viet Nam from a political standpoint. In Korea we fought a war and suffered over 150,000 casualties to provide another 'bastion of democracy' and to keep the communists out. In South Viet Nam we seem to be doing the same thing."

Pallotti noted that the South Koreans "are now living under a military dictatorship and this, after the war was terminated 12 years ago. The prospects of a democratic form of government are just as vague as they were then." Even if the United States succeeded in sustaining a noncommunist nation in South Vietnam, the result, he feared, would be "another military junta such as exists in South Korea." Johnson was committing American power and prestige to propping up another dictatorship in Asia, and the results would be strikingly similar. "We have delegated powers to ourself [sic] in South Asia," the doctor warned, "but none of the responsibilities that go with it."[1]

[1] "South Vietnam is Another Korea," *Hartford Courant*, April 26, 1965.

Pallotti's predictions on Vietnam were prescient, particularly considering U.S. Marines had landed at Da Nang only seven weeks prior. Throughout the Vietnam era, policymakers, the media, and many of the military's top brass cited Korea as the most important analogue to determine the course of action in Vietnam. Members of the Johnson administration believed the Korean War was a model for prosecuting a limited war that would avoid a showdown of the big powers. For the media, however, the Korean parallel mostly offered ominous warnings which, if left unheeded, would end with American defeat in Vietnam. Over a decade after its ending, therefore, the war in Korea was anything but forgotten, and profoundly informed, shaped, and dictated American policy and attitudes during the Vietnam era.[2]

By 1965, the Korean War in many ways had faded from popular culture. Hollywood released fewer films about the war and only a trickle of novels tackled the subject. Moreover, by Vietnam, hysteria about indoctrinated POWs was over. Nevertheless, memory of the Korean War found new life as the Johnson administration surveyed options for military action in Vietnam and turned to the previous war for guidance. Increasingly, members of the public, press, and political and military leadership weighed in on the president's options. Although some supported the ways Johnson intervened in and prosecuted the war, the president also faced vehement opposition. His successor, Richard Nixon, also looked to the Korean War for lessons to withdraw from Vietnam and establish a lasting "peace with honor." And like Johnson, Nixon faced extreme polarization in

[2] Certainly President John F. Kennedy's administration bears some responsibility for the direction of American policy in Vietnam. As scholars Ernest R. May and Yuen Foon Khong have argued, it is not that Kennedy ignored the Korea analogy. May contends that "Probably, the President and most of his advisers refrained from invoking the alleged lessons of Korea because, in the first place, they regarded them as too well understood to require mention…Even so, the Korean example undoubtedly remained at the back of their minds, warning against a war in Vietnam." Ernest R. May, *"Lessons" of the Past: The Use and Misuse of History in American Foreign Policy*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), 97. I have chosen to focus on the Vietnam years after Kennedy's administration because this is the time period when the Korean analogue was most invoked publicly. Many of Kennedy's top policymakers helped direct Vietnam action in the Johnson administration and had no problem publicly and privately raising the image of Korea. Khong comes to a similar conclusion when surveying the Vietnam debates in the Johnson administration. Yuen Foon Khong, *Analogies at War: Korea, Munich, Dien Bien Phu, and the Vietnam Decisions of 1965* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 100.

relying on the Korean War analogy. In this sense, the Korean War remained a usable part of the political culture surrounding intervention in Vietnam and then, under Nixon, withdrawal.

The Korea analogy directed discussions over Vietnam during the Johnson years in several important ways. Johnson and his top advisers saw Korea as a model of how to fight a successful limited war. But the memory of Chinese intervention, which had greatly expanded the war in Korea, proved to be the most salient lesson. Korea had divided public opinion, cost almost 54,000 American lives, and stalemated for two additional years after the initial objective of repelling the North Koreans and securing the South's autonomy had been accomplished. Most in the Johnson administration believed there were significant successes in Korea they could emulate in Vietnam, whether it was the swift initial victories over the North Koreans or the fact that South Korea remained noncommunist. Finally, policymakers took away an equally important lesson from Korea: skeptical of the benefits of "fighting while negotiating," Johnson and his top advisors on Vietnam wanted to avoid a similar circumstance that could hamper wartime decisions and drag out the conflict indefinitely.[3] Despite Chinese intervention, the Johnson administration believed Korea had been an effective limited war that had achieved significant objectives. If the White House could avoid a similar intervention, Vietnam would be another successful limited war.[4]

An internally circulated state department white paper in 1965 revealed the ways the Johnson administration believed Vietnam mirrored Korea. It was not a homegrown insurgency facilitated by external communist support; rather, the state department insisted, North Vietnam was directing an invasion of the South akin to North Korea in 1950. "North Vietnam's commitment to seize control of the South," the memorandum read, "is no less total than was the commitment of the regime in North Korea in 1950…Above all, the war in Vietnam is not a spontaneous and local rebellion

[3] May, *"Lessons" of the Past*, 47-48. Johnson wrote to Truman to let him know he was "grateful for his courage."
[4] Khong, *Analogies at War*, 102.

against the established government."[5] By reading Vietnam through the Korean lens, officials applied the makings of international communist aggression to what was primarily a local insurgency against the American-backed Saigon regime.[6] President Johnson saw it this way. He insisted that leaving South Korea in 1949 had compelled the communist invasion. "I could never forget the withdrawal of our forces from South Korea," Johnson later wrote, "and then our immediate reaction to the Communist aggression of June 1950."[7] To abandon South Vietnam, therefore, would open it to a full-scale invasion from the North like in Korea. Secretary of State Dean Rusk interpreted events in Korea similarly. Like Pyongyang, Hanoi had violated its southern neighbor's independence, only with a gradual invasion. Rusk remarked publicly that it did not matter if the demarcation line between the two Vietnams was temporary, because those "demarcation lines between North and South Korea and East and West Germany are temporary. But it did not make the North Korean invasion of South Korea a permissible use of force."[8] In other words, using Korea as their guide, both Johnson and Rusk saw Vietnam as a war of external aggression across the 17th parallel. If the administration failed to support Saigon, it would embolden North Vietnam and invite a larger invasion of the South.

In many ways, those in the upper echelons of policy planning agreed on the Korea parallel. Only Undersecretary of State George Ball dissented. Ball later would state that "practically everybody" believed Korea and Vietnam were the same.[9] Ball's disagreement with the lessons of Korea rested upon his belief that the Vietnam War was a guerrilla campaign aided by the North, not an external invasion. In policy meetings on July 21 and 22, 1965, Ball repeatedly critiqued the

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[5] Khong, *Analogies at War*, 100.
[6] For more on the Vietnam War as an internal struggle, see Frederik Logevall, *Embers of War: The Fall of an Empire and the Making of America's Vietnam* (New York: Random House Publishing, 2013) and George C. Herring, *America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975* (Boston: McGraw-Hill Publishing, 2002).
[7] Lyndon Baines Johnson, *The Vantage Point: Perspectives of the Presidency, 1963-1969* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), 152.
[8] Khong, *Analogies at War*, 112.
[9] Khong, *Analogies at War*, 110.

assumptions others had made on Vietnam, based largely on their interpretation of the Korean analogue. In both meetings, Rusk and Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara staunchly defended their recommendations to escalate. Ball, however, bluntly told Johnson, "'we cannot win, Mr. President. This war will be long and protracted…The Korean experience was a galling one. The correlation between Korean casualties and public opinion showed support stabilized at fifty percent. As casualties increase, the pressure to strike at the very jugular of North Vietnam will become very great."[10] Ball equally criticized his boss's reliance on the Korean War comparison. Ball later stated that Rusk "was enormously impressed by the analogy of Korea because he had been deeply engaged himself in the Korean War" and that he "has never gotten over the view that this was like the Korean War."[11]

The lessons of the Korean War did not remain confined to policy planners within the administration. In fact, the previous war shaped much of the public debate over Vietnam, even before passage of the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution in August 1964. "The least we should have from the Administration," the *Hartford Courant* demanded in February of that year, "is a full and frank statement of what is going on, both in Vietnam and in Washington. But let us not forget how difficult it was to extricate ourselves from that dirty and dreary and bloody war in Korea. The last thing we need is another war like that."[12] By the end of 1964, that piece's author, David Lawrence, still demanded greater transparency from the administration, believing that a clear and stated policy would avoid the mistakes of the last war. Korea had "lasted three years, and…might have been prevented by an unequivocal expression of policy as a substitute for the ambiguity about our intentions…If American policy is fuzzy once more, a non-nuclear war could emerge in the next four years out of the situation in…Vietnam." In other words, unlike Johnson and most of his staff,

[10] Khong, *Analogies at War*, 126.
[11] Khong, *Analogies at War*, 111.
[12] "Let's Not Have Another Korea," *Hartford Courant*, February 25, 1964.

Lawrence was unsure a limited war would achieve American objectives. He believed such a policy would pull the United States into an unwinnable war, costing thousands of American lives and dragging on interminably.[13]

Writing in the *Nation* in November 1966, Sanford Gottlieb, director of the antiwar group SANE, noted that citizens remained apprehensive on Vietnam, unsure if the president was lying to them, uncertain what GIs were doing in Vietnam, and unclear how to fight communism. However, once casualties rose and domestic programs suffered from underfunding, "America will tend to polarize as it did during Korea." Once the situation worsened in Vietnam, as it had in Korea, Gottlieb was certain more Americans would be outraged.[14] Other activists criticized the analogy early in the Vietnam War. Theologian Reinhold Niebuhr publicly disparaged the continued reliance on the Korea analogy. Niebuhr had initially supported intervention in Korea, but rebuked the the analogy as "misleading" for Vietnam. Dragging out the conflict would only hurt the United States. Rather, Niebuhr believed, Johnson should follow President Dwight D. Eisenhower's example, who ended the Korean War by threatening a nuclear attack.[15]

Members of the Johnson administration also saw how the Korea analogy dictated public opinion on Vietnam. In a letter to the president in early 1965, Vice President Hubert Humphrey warned that public support rested upon a solid justification for the reasons to fight. "In Korea we were moving under United Nations (UN) auspices to defend South Korea against dramatic, across-the-border, conventional aggression," Humphrey declared. "Yet even with those advantages, we could not sustain American political support…" And, Humphrey added presciently, even "if…we find ourselves leading from frustration to escalation and end up short of a war with China but

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[13] "How to Avoid War Is the Bedrock Problem," *Los Angeles Times*, October 25, 1964. For a similar assessment, see "Our Policy on Vietnam: Hold on and Hope," *Los Angeles Times*, March 29, 1964.
[14] Sanford Gottlieb, "Too Soon for Peace," *The Nation* 203, no. 18 (November 1966): 575-578.
[15] Reinhold Niebuhr, "Reinhold Niebuhr Discusses the War in Vietnam," *The New Republic* 154, no. 5 (January 1966): 15-16.

embroiled deeper in fighting in Vietnam…political opposition will steadily mount."[16] Humphrey insisted that the Democrats had lost the election in 1952 because public support for Truman's Korea policy collapsed.[17] President Johnson also knew public support for the former president and the war had declined without a declaration of war and strong congressional support. These oversights, Johnson believed, had turned the American people away from the Democrats and brought on charges of Korea being "Mr. Truman's War."[18]

Johnson hoped that a credible government would emerge in Saigon, Hanoi would halt its support of the Vietcong, and that Vietnam would remain partitioned, as he put it, "for the long term, side by side, *a la* Korea."[19] Most public pronouncements, however, were not as optimistic. In late 1965, the *Los Angeles Times* quoted Gen. Harold K. Johnson, who had been commander of the 5th and 8th Cavalry Divisions during Korea and then served as Army Chief of Staff, as saying that the Korean War showed American involvement in Vietnam "could be prolonged." "Communists," the general said, "historically have been too intransigent, too insidious and too intent on victory at our expense." Gen. Johnson noted that the nation had spent $18 billion and suffered another nine thousand combat deaths as negotiations "'dragged on'" in Korea.[20]

As one private citizen, Robert J. Koblitz, put it to the *New York Times*, the time and circumstances of the war in Vietnam were similar to Korea—"mounting costs, casualties, frustration, illusive victory—when McCarthyism became a virulent attack upon the health and sanity

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[16] Richard E. Neustadt and Ernest R. May, *Thinking In Time: The Uses of History For Decision Makers* (New York: The Free Press, 1986), 87.
[17] Neustadt and May, *Thinking In Time*, 87.
[18] Johnson, *The Vantage Point*, 31, 115, 530.
[19] Neustadt and May, *Thinking In Time*, 83.
[20] "Hopes for Quick Viet Withdrawal Seen Dim," *Los Angeles Times*, October 27, 1965. To be sure, Gen. Johnson did not think it was a completely dismal situation facing the United States in Vietnam: "the Army is in better shape today to handle the expansion than Korea or World War II," the general stated. "Today, 75% of the Army's soldiers are high school graduates, contrasted with 48% in 1952, and 75% of our officers have college degrees, contrasted with 44% in 1952."

of the country."[21] Amitai Etzioni, a research associate at Columbia University's Institute of War and Peace Studies, reached similar conclusions, arguing that unilateral escalation on the part of the United States would only embolden the communists to dig in. "It is an open secret," Etzioni contended, "that the Pentagon 'learned the lesson of the Korean War.'" The military was "reluctant to commit American troops to combat in the jungles of Asia" for fear of another major land war. If Hanoi, Peking, or even Moscow matched American escalation, he cautioned, the United States would be forced between two undesirable options: retreat or nuclear warfare. Faced with such undesirable options, it would be well to remember "that in the Korean War the field commander was demanding the use of such weapons."[22] As early as June 1965, Erwin D. Canham of the *Christian Science Monitor* noted that the Republican leadership, "scenting an opening," demanded a more hardline approach to Hanoi. It was the same argument the political opposition had made during Korea, the paper declared, when "the United States refused to use strong enough measures against Communist China and hence stalemated the war.[23]

The talk of nuclear weaponry and stalemate in Vietnam generally coincided with another lesson Korea purportedly showed: a negotiated ceasefire had bargained away America's prestige and emboldened its enemies. Media raised similar concerns about a potential "giveaway" at the negotiation table in Vietnam. The Johnson administration believed the lesson of the armistice was that in agreeing to a ceasefire, the United States had allowed communist forces to strengthen fortifications and reinforce troops, and the *Los Angeles Times* certainly agreed with this assessment. "Still seared in the Pentagon's minds," the *Times* informed readers, "is the Korean example." "Because the Communists' position grew steadily better, their negotiators were able to stall and eventually wring more concessions secure in the realization that the United Nations would weigh

[21] "Part of Patriotism," *New York Times*, October 22, 1965.
[22] "Program for Vietnam," *New York Times*, June 28, 1965.
[23] "Korea and Vietnam," *Christian Science Monitor*, June 29, 1965.

each new concession against the potential cost of renewing attacks against positions growing constantly stronger." In Vietnam, a similar situation would develop, because a "cease-fire would benefit the Communists proportionately more than it would benefit the United States and the Communists would negotiate with the same sureness that as they negotiated, they grew stronger daily." In a 1965 letter to the *New York Times*, Arthur H. Dean, former Special Ambassador to South Korea during the armistice talks, criticized Senator J. William Fulbright (D-AK) and Ambassador John Kenneth Galbraith for suggesting that a bombing halt would strengthen negotiations with the North Vietnamese. "Since our intention is to start to negotiate a settlement," Dean argued, "it would be well to remember the lessons of the Korean War, where every time we held back our assaults after negotiations started in 1951, the Chinese Communists and North Koreans upgraded and increased their attacks."[24]

Over the course of the late 1960s, this "Panmunjom syndrome," was a major part of the public debate over a negotiated settlement in Vietnam. *Time* magazine made the connection clearly at the end of 1967. Arguing that the Vietcong were on the brink of negotiations because of the large numbers of casualties they had sustained in recent campaigns, the piece nevertheless erred on the side of caution, advising that the lessons of the Korean War implied that negotiations could be distant or fruitless. "This does not necessarily mean that negotiations will come soon, or that the shooting will stop as soon as talks start," *Time* warned. "In the Korean War, the fighting continued while truce talks dragged on for two years at Panmunjom, and the U.S. suffered 62,200 casualties during the negotiations. In Viet Nam, there are four primary belligerents, and nobody can agree on who will talk about what to whom." In some ways, however, *Time* acknowledged points that the administration still refused to recognize publicly or privately. The South Korean government had not faced an insurgency as did Nguyen Van Thieu and Nguyen Cao Ky's government in Saigon,

[24] "Lessons of Korean Negotiations Cited," *New York Times*, May 16, 1965.

Time reminded readers. The war in South Vietnam was both an insurgency and an infiltration from the North. The problem, as this article rightly pointed out, was the Korea analogy was an imperfect one.[25]

David Lawrence and Joseph Alsop were two of the harshest press critics of Johnson's Vietnam policy, believing the administration was applying the wrong lessons from the 1953 armistice. Lawrence thought a negotiated Korea-style settlement in Vietnam was unobtainable. In 1966, he estimated that an armistice would soon be signed "after which peace negotiations will drag on interminably." Nonetheless, just like in Korea, "the issues…will probably never be settled." The lesson policymakers had learned from the Korean armistice, he felt, was that fighting a limited war alongside negotiation was preferable than total war with its financial drain and mounting casualties.[26] In Lawrence's estimation, the Johnson administration ignored Vietnam's significance in the larger Cold War. Events could unfold like the truce in Korea, which had represented "a readiness to compromise with aggressors and to sanction their continued hold on many millions more people who are to become enslaved."[27]

Writing in the wake of the 1968 Tet Offensive, Alsop supported a diplomatic end to the Vietnam War. But settling for negotiations "at almost any price," he believed, was a grave mistake. The Panmunjom talks had "all but brought the allied effort to a standstill" and the communists then "immediately regrouped and reinforced." American casualties nearly doubled in the negotiation period, and North Korea and China then embarked on their largest offensive of the war only a month before signing the armistice. It had been "standard Communist operating procedure" to use military retrenchment to achieve greater concessions at Panmunjom—an assumption that ignored similar American action in Korea. What really pushed the Korean armistice to fruition, Alsop

[25] "What Negotiations in Viet Nam Might Mean," *Time*, December 22, 1967.
[26] "Armistice in Vietnam?" *Hartford Courant*, February 3, 1966.
[27] "In Vietnam We Repeat the Mistakes of 1954," *Hartford Courant*, July 10, 1965.

believed, was President Dwight Eisenhower and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles' intimation through Indian liaisons that they were willing to use nuclear weapons, a "main factor" in ending the war. Policy planners were applying the wrong lessons from Korea, and the results could be disastrous.[28]

The *Los Angeles Times* was equally critical of "talk-fight" negotiations, noting that such a policy "is intricate in theme and torturous in practice." Based on Korean experience, Americans were "neither comfortable with nor adjusted to the 'talk-fight' process." The country was "uneasy about fighting a war while simultaneously trying to negotiate its end."[29] At Panmunjom Americans learned how willingly the communists sacrificed soldiers to gain a better standing at the conference table. This argument was in keeping with the general consensus on the lessons of the armistice talks during the Vietnam era: a "talk-fight" approach would always favor the communists because they were willing to accept large numbers of casualties while stalling discussions. American negotiators would do well to remember that a patient yet firm approach had finally worked at Panmunjom. The worst lesson to take away from Panmunjom, however, was to allow the communists to dictate the direction of negotiations.[30]

By mid-1967 Secretary of State Rusk came around to this position. He feared repeating the mistakes of the Korean armistice, and he pushed the president to take a harder stance on negotiations. In Korea, as the *Washington Post* stated in August 1967, "allied commanders felt inhibited lest their military moves [brought] about deaths on the eve of peace." Rusk was the leading voice in the administration that demanded the American military not be restrained by negotiations if the enemy began strengthening its position.[31]

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[28] "Korean Analogy False in Vietnam," *Hartford Courant*, March 12, 1968.
[29] This is consistent with Gallup Poll data about the public's opinion that the Korean War would restart after the signing of the armistice.
[30] "'Talk-Fight' Lessons of Korea Aid U.S. Negotiators in Paris," *Los Angeles Times*, February 2, 1969.
[31] "Panmunjom Syndrome," *Washington Post*, August 13, 1967.

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National Security Advisor Walt Rostow initially hesitated to wake the president at such a hour, but decided he could wait no longer. A short time earlier, on January 23, 1968, the North Koreans had captured the American intelligence ship USS *Pueblo* and taken its crew hostage, sparking an international ordeal that would last nearly a year and incite fears of another Korean War. During his remaining time in office, the American public demanded a forceful response from the president and military analysts insisted the ship's seizure was linked to communist activity in Vietnam. But the Johnson administration looked for peaceful solutions to the catastrophe. At no point since the surprise attack across the 38th parallel in June 1950 had the United States faced such a serious crisis on the Korean peninsula. Now, at the height of the Vietnam War, it appeared that North Korean leader Kim Il-Sung had renewed the war for communist unification of Korea.

Less than two weeks into its intelligence-gathering mission in the Sea of Japan, the *Pueblo* encountered hostility from several North Korean PT boats and two MiGs. Capt. Lloyd M. Bucher found the North Korean ships too fast to outrun. Gunfire from the PT boats burst across the bow and injured several crewmembers. Outgunned and quickly surrounded, Bucher refused to man the two .50 caliber machine guns on board, fearing, he stated later, such an action would lead to more bloodshed. But since the *Pueblo* contained highly classified material, along with the latest intelligence-gathering equipment, Bucher wanted to delay the North Koreans from boarding so his crew could destroy as much intelligence as possible.[32]

[32] Ed Brandt, *The Last Voyage of USS Pueblo* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1969), 40-43. Brandt also points out that the *Pueblo* carried the codes for all the intelligence equipment on board, giving a potential enemy access to use the cryptographic machines: "One without the other wasn't of great use to a foreign power. Together, they were of immense value."



Figure 3.1 The USS Pueblo*, an intelligence ship, was captured by the North Koreans in early 1968.*

The *Pueblo*, however, needed days when it had minutes to destroy all of the classified material and equipment. The Navy believed North Korea posed no threat to the ship, and had refused to outfit the *Pueblo* with a means of intelligence destruction.[33] In the inquiry that followed, the Navy denied the ship had been ill-prepared for a military confrontation or for the destruction of valuable information. According to Adm. Frank L. Johnson, the ship "was in a satisfactory state of readiness and could carry out her assigned mission." Admiral John Hyland, the Commander in Chief of the Pacific Fleet, was even more direct, insisting the capture of the Pueblo was "the responsibility and fault of one guy, and that was Bucher."[34]

The seizure of the crew and President Johnson's handling of the incident brought out strong sentiments from Americans, many of whom denounced the president for his cautious diplomacy. A

[33] Mitchell B. Lerner, *The Pueblo Incident: A Spy Ship and the Failure of American Foreign Policy* (Lawrence: The University of Kansas Press, 2002), 30, 79. Lerner notes that the Pueblo "carried two slow paper-shredding machines in the forward electronics room, each with the capacity to shred only three or four sheets of paper at a time." The incinerator aboard was also too small to be effective on such short notice. Brandt, *The Last Voyage of USS Pueblo*, 44. Out of desperation, the crew burned papers in wastebaskets and trying to destroy machines with sledge hammers. Burning material was slow considering how much paper had to be destroyed and the hammers were not effective because metal encasings protected the equipment.

[34] Lerner, *The Pueblo Incident*, 44, 50. Hyland did not see things differently decades later, arguing that "It was absolutely inexcusable not to have done something about it."

February 1968 Gallup Poll found that by a margin of two to one, Americans favored a military response.[35] "Drop the atomic bomb like Harry Truman did," one letter writer insisted. "Our government handling of the *Pueblo* seizure is the most gutless unpatriotic act this government has ever perpetrated," read another letter to the White House. A telegram from New Jersey called the president a single word: "coward."[36] Reverend Paul Lindstrom, who founded the National Remember the *Pueblo* Committee, insisted the United States would "only get the olive branch of peace by using the sword of power." Three hundred days into the standoff, the White House received a petition with more than a thousand signatures, including that of Capt. Bucher's wife, Rose, to get back the prisoners by whatever means necessary.[37] Rose Bucher had demanded stronger action against the North Koreans since they seized the *Pueblo*, appearing on television, urging letter-writing campaigns, and holding press conferences. She had received little contact from the White House, however, and only one direct letter from the president.[38] Despite the outcry, President Johnson insisted that a peaceful resolution was the right course of action. And this was the public relations message from the White House. Indeed, when the television networks ABC and NBC ran footage of Secretary Rusk agreeing that North Korea's actions constituted an act of war, the president admonished his staff to keep such opinions to themselves.[39]

Top policymakers and the national press never doubted the *Pueblo* capture was part of a global communist conspiracy linked directly to the war in Vietnam. Quoting Senator Richard Russell (D-GA), chair of the Senate Armed Services Committee, the *Hartford Courant* agreed that the seizure was "a diversionary action" by the communists to hurt the United States in Vietnam.[40] In

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[35] Lerner, *The Pueblo Incident*, 127.
[36] Jack Cheevers, *Act of War: Lyndon Johnson, North Korea, and the Capture of the Spy Ship Pueblo* (New York: Penguin Group Publishing, 2013), 109.
[37] Lerner, *The Pueblo Incident*, 209.
[38] Lerner, *The Pueblo Incident*, 198.
[39] Cheevers, *Act of War*, 112.
[40] "Pueblo Seizure May Be Diversion," *Hartford Courant*, January 26, 1968.

early February 1968, Senator Harry F. Byrd, Jr. (D-VA) made a similar connection, believing the American "policy of restraint" in Vietnam had emboldened communists elsewhere and "may have led to the seizure of the…*Pueblo* by North Korea last month."[41] North Korea's action "appears to be part of a continuing two-fold Communist policy," suggested the *Los Angeles Times*: "carrying out subversion in South Korea, and seeking to create a diversionary threat in that area to draw U.S. and South Korean resources away from Vietnam."[42] Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara feared that a weak response to North Korea would "prolong the Vietnam War substantially."[43] Even Vice President Hubert Humphrey suggested the United States make the *Pueblo* part of the negotiations with the North Vietnamese.[44] The Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Richard Helms, believed Moscow and Pyongyang had planned the ship's capture to weaken Washington's position in Vietnam.[45] The *New York Times* praised President Johnson for his "properly cautious handling," of the incident but noted the "only surprise in North Korea's effort to aid the Vietnamese Communists through a military diversion is that it was so long delayed."[46]

Increased North Korean incursions across the demilitarized zone (DMZ) and the attempted assassination of South Korean President Park Chung-Hee in January 1968 cemented the perception of the *Pueblo* seizure as part of a North Korean plan to reignite the Korean War. Now, with the United States occupied and increasingly bogged down in Vietnam, it could do little to halt increased North Korean assaults on the South. The proof seemed to be in the statistics. In 1966, troops of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) had violated the Military Armistice Line fifty times; the following year witnessed a near eleven-fold increase to 543 violations. By late 1967 the DPRK had also increased its attacks against South Korean and American troops. In January 1968

[41] "Byrd Links War, Pueblo Seizure," *Washington Post*, February 10, 1968.
[42] "Challenge by North Korea," *Los Angeles Times*, January 24, 1968.
[43] Cheevers, *Act of War*, 112.
[44] Lerner, *The Pueblo Incident*, 195.
[45] Cheevers, *Act of War*, 109.
[46] "Vietnam's Korean Front," *New York Times,* February 3, 1968.

alone, the same month North Korea captured the *Pueblo* and the Vietcong launched the Tet Offensive, DPRK personnel took part in more than forty military excursions along the DMZ.[47]

What was the reason for this belligerence from the North? The North Korean attacks illustrated the unsettled results of the 1953 armistice, not a direct connection to the seizure of the *Pueblo*, particularly since skirmishes were increasing well *before* January 1968. There were more than a million soldiers from both sides along the DMZ, the *Washington Post* noted in early 1966, and the zone was the sight of "small patrols that frequently clash." By then, the Korean War armistice was nearly thirteen years old, and the UN command had "documented more than 3,000 separate Communist violations of the truce agreement."[48] "South Korea is still in a state of war," the *Christian Science Monitor* told readers in July 1967, with American and South Korean troops "confronted by perpetual harassment" from North Korea.[49] "Border incidents," the *New York Times* pointed out that same month, "are now almost daily affairs…There is no forgetting that the Korean war [sic] ended in an armistice, not in a peace treaty."[50] In August 1967, North Koreans killed three American soldiers while injuring sixteen more in two separate attacks, increasing the number of American dead to fifteen in 110 attacks across the DMZ since November 1966.[51]

But this was the lesson that policymakers and opinion shapers failed to heed from the war in Korea. It was the uneasy truce, the belief that unification could occur by means other than outright invasion, which spurred Kim Il Sung to act.[52] To be sure, with American military might directed at Vietnam, Kim's timing was not coincidental. But it was not a replaying of the Korean War for Kim; rather, it was a continuation. The top U.S. commander in Korea, Gen. Dwight E. Beach, said as much about the unsettled results of the Korean War in a 1965 interview with the *New York Times*.

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[47] Lerner, *The Pueblo Incident*, 59.
[48] "Korean War Goes On in Neutral Zone," *Washington Post*, March 12, 1966
[49] "'Cold' War Smolders in Korea," *Christian Science Monitor*, July 22, 1967.
[50] "Unsettled Korea," *New York Times*, July 13, 1967.
[51] "3 U.S. Soldiers Killed in N. Korean Ambush," *Los Angeles Times*, August 11, 1967.
[52] Lerner, *The Pueblo Incident*, 136-138.

"There has been no peace treaty," he said. "It is still an armistice. We would lose terrifically if we pulled troops out." But Beach interpreted the need for American vigilance in Korea through the lens of monolithic communism more than a perpetual war: "With the situation in Vietnam as it is, we cannot afford to weaken the northern anchor. If we weaken somewhere, that is where the Communists are likely to hit."[53]

Policymakers and the press seemed to miss the larger lesson of the Korean War when applied to the *Pueblo* seizure and the DMZ attacks. Secretary of Defense Clark Clifford remarked years later that Johnson was convinced the capture of the *Pueblo* "was part of a worldwide challenge to him and to the nation, a coordinated communist plan to smash our will and stretch our resources to the breaking point."[54] Johnson's remarks to the *New York Times* were equally telling: "Practically every expert I have talked to on Korea and North Vietnam and the Communist operation…all of them, I think without exception, believe there is a definite connection."[55] But the DPRK's actions were not part of an international communist scheme to support North Vietnam and the Vietcong. They were, rather, a perpetuation of the Korean War by other means. Unification had remained Kim's goal despite the armistice, which he had made clear in 1967, claiming that "we must accomplish the South Korean revolution and reunify the fatherland in our generation." Internal pressures also weighed heavily on Kim. At a time when South Korea's economy grew steadily, North Korea failed to meet the quotas of its Seven-Year Plan (1960-1967). Kim then decided to continue the war in Korea through infiltration and guerrilla attacks, and his concerns were much closer to home than an international war for communism.[56]

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[53] "U.S. Military Men Warn Against Cutback in Forces in Korea," *New York Times*, July 7, 1965.
[54] Lerner, *The Pueblo Incident*, 137-138.
[55] Lerner, *The Pueblo Incident*, 141.
[56] "A New Belligerence," *Time*, February 2, 1968.

The ideological commitment to what Kim called *juche* motivated the attack upon the *Pueblo* and the kidnapping of its crew. This policy of "self-reliance" demanded North Koreans worship Kim and expressed an ideological commitment to Korean identity and international communism.[57] *Juche* demanded that North Korea boldly stake out its political, economic, and military independence. But in advancing North Korea's autonomy and national identity, Kim was often at odds with communist ideology and other communist nations.[58] As North Korea's economic problems worsened in the mid-1960s, a fact so widespread that Kim admitted it publicly, its relationship with the Soviet Union and China also faced setbacks. In the Sino-Soviet split, Kim initially allied Pyongyang with Peking, but the resulting loss of financial aid from Moscow exacerbated North Korea's economic crisis and Kim sought reconciliation. Thus by mid-decade, Kim found it necessary to display *juche* in the international arena to counter the appearance of a weakened socialist state at home.[59] The increased border incursions, the assassination attempt of South Korea's Park Chung-Hee, and the *Pueblo* incident were manifestations of this policy.

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The memory of Chinese intervention during the Korean War was the most decisive warning the Johnson administration considered as policymakers wrestled with escalating American involvement in Vietnam. For all members of the president's inner circle, the failure to anticipate China's entry into Korea heavily influenced the key decisions on Vietnam in 1964 and 1965 and the course of the war thereafter. The Korea model directed not just policy decisions on intervention but the nature of the war's expansion. To not intervene at all, officials believed, exposed South Vietnam to take over from what the Johnson White House believed to be external North Vietnamese aggression. Expand the war too quickly, they felt, and China would act. Thus the memory of

[57] Lerner, *The Pueblo Incident*, 106.
[58] Lerner, *The Pueblo Incident*, 109.
[59] Lerner, *The Pueblo Incident*, 111-117.

Chinese intervention in the Korean War dictated perhaps the most important parallel for policymakers on Vietnam and how to prosecute a "successful" limited war.

There were several reasons the lesson of Chinese intervention resonated so strongly throughout the administration. The fear of Chinese intervention loomed so large because Johnson and most of his staff believed the war in Vietnam was an outright invasion by the North—the same motivations behind North Korea's invasion in 1950. Hanoi's invasion may have been slower, but most of Johnson's inner circle rejected Vietnam as a civil war or internal insurgency. To drive home the point, Allen S. Whiting, head of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research at the state department, wrote *China Crosses the Yalu*, published in 1963.[60] In it, Whiting warned that a "major political consequence of Peking's entry into the Korean War was the undisputed establishment of 'new China' as a force to be reckoned with in Asia…the outcome of events proved to all Asia, if not all the world, that the government of Mao Tse-Tung was both willing and able to defend its interests against direct U.S. opposition."[61] In the Johnson White House, Whiting kept alive the prospect of Chinese intervention by "calling the attention of his colleagues to every signal even faintly resembling one heard in the autumn of 1950."[62] This fear of the Chinese compelled nearly all members of Johnson's staff to remain cautious, to advocate for a gradual, "slow squeeze" approach in Vietnam. As William Bundy put it, "as we saw in Korea, an 'in-between' course of action will always arouse a school of thought that believes things should be tackled quickly and conclusively."[63] That in-between course would keep alive the South Vietnamese government and avoid a Chinese invasion. It was the repeated insistence that Korea and Vietnam were similar that drove the

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[60] May, *"Lessons" of the Past*, 105.
[61] Allen S. Whiting, *China Crosses the Yalu: The Decision to Enter the Korean War* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1968), 166.
[62] May, *"Lessons" of the Past*, 105.
[63] May, *"Lessons" of the Past*, 106.

administration to ignore the perhaps more useful analogy of what the French had faced at Dienbienphu in 1954. But Ball's mention of that comparison to McNamara went nowhere.[64]

On October 8, 1950, in response to Gen. Douglas MacArthur's successful amphibious landing at Inchon, Chinese Communist Chairman Mao Tse-Tung had issued a formal order for the Chinese People's Volunteers "to resist the attacks of U.S. imperialism and its running dogs, thereby safeguarding the interests of the people of Korea."[65] Mao and Ambassador Zhou Enlai were convinced that MacArthur would carry his war into Chinese territory.[66] On October 26, members of the Chinese People's Volunteer Army crossed the Yalu. But in a week, the Chinese "volunteers" pulled back. Then in November, after MacArthur began an offensive toward China, the first of 400,000 Chinese soldiers crossed the Yalu, and engaged a beleaguered American enemy. The Chinese "volunteers" had retaken the South Korean capital of Seoul in a matter of weeks. By March 1951, UN forces had fought back to the 38th parallel, where the war settled into a stalemate for over two years while negotiations dragged on in Panmunjom.[67]

More than anyone in his administration, Johnson was keenly aware of these "lessons" from Korea. The president believed Truman had disregarded continued threats from Mao as nothing more than grandstanding because of assurances from MacArthur. Johnson was sharply sensitive to his reputation, and was certain similar miscalculations would be his political undoing. Writing in his memoirs later, Johnson noted that "international challenges—particularly in Korea—had been horrors for [President Truman] politically, bringing his popularity down from a high of 87 per cent

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[64] May, *"Lessons" of the Past*, 105.
[65] Sergei N. Goncharov, John W. Lewis, and Xue Litai, *Uncertain Partners: Stalin, Mao, and the Korean War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 185.
[66] Goncharov, Lewis, and Litai, *Uncertain Partners*, 194.
[67] Howard Jones, *Crucible of Power: A History of American Foreign Relations from 1897* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 2001), 274-276.

to a low of 23 per cent."[68] Johnson wanted to avoid an all-out offensive that would bring China into Vietnam and compromise his presidency.

To the president, the Korea analogy showed that limited wars could be successful, but it also guided what path intervention should take. Unlike in Korea, Johnson would not risk an amphibious landing akin to Inchon to cut off enemy and supply lines moving into South Vietnam. There would be sorties close to the border between North Vietnam and China, but care would be taken not to provoke China. On the rare occasion when American pilots violated Chinese airspace, the White House apologized. "In short," as journalist Chalmers M. Roberts put it bluntly, "the rule is to do nothing that the Chinese could interpret as threatening their vital interests."[69] Dean Rusk and Robert McNamara agreed that a gradual escalation would guarantee an independent South Vietnam and not provoke China's ire. During the Korean War, Rusk had served as assistant secretary of state for Far Eastern affairs, and had been adamant that the United States carry the war into North Korea. "The real failure [in Korea]," Rusk admitted candidly, "was in our assessment of Chinese intentions and of our ability to handle Chinese forces if they actually intervened. On this one MacArthur and the rest of us were all wrong."[70] To avoid the same mistake, Johnson, McNamara, and Rusk strongly supported a gradual intensification of the bombing campaign against North Vietnam. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) reached similar conclusions. The United States could sustain a bombing campaign against North Vietnam and avoid what the CIA considered a similar "Yalu debacle" by ensuring that American ground troops would not go above the 17th parallel. By keeping the war against Hanoi focused on the bombing of

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[68] Johnson, *The Vantage Point*, 31.
[69] "Predicting China: Korean Precedent," *Washington Post*, September 9, 1967. Chalmers M. Roberts writes that "it is the Korean parallel, and the steps taken by President Johnson and [Secretary of State Dean] Rusk to avoid a repetition of the Korean errors, that provides the basis of confidence in Washington that China will not enter the war." Johnson and Rusk may have exuded that confidence publicly, but privately their doubts about Chinese intentions remained.
[70] Khong, *Analogies at War*, 116.

key military and industrial targets, the CIA expected China would "probably not" intervene.[71] The Joint Chiefs had expressed a similar, if more hawkish, sentiment in November 1964, arguing that the nuclear option was a means to check Chinese intervention: "no responsible person proposes to go about such a war [a ground campaign against the Chinese], if it should occur, on a basis remotely resembling Korea. Possibly even the use of nuclear weapons at some point is of course why we spend billions to have them."[72]

Equally important, the lesson of Chinese intervention dictated how the president, his top advisors and Asia experts, and the media relayed their strategy to the American people.[73] As early as 1964, some members of the Johnson administration recognized that escalation in Vietnam would be costly, lengthy, and unpopular, thereby making justification for American action comprehensible to an audience that had previously engaged a communist enemy in Asia.[74] The message for war in Vietnam rested firmly upon the model of Korea, and China's actions in 1950 dictated the Johnson administration's strategy. The president, for example, responded to warnings from China in 1965 by increasing military aid and men to South Vietnam, but insisting that diplomatic talks with North Vietnam were still on the table. Congressional sources close to the president claimed that he had developed "contingency plans" in the event of Chinese involvement.[75]

But from its inception, the president believed his Vietnam policy was in a media-relations quandary, and felt the continued reporting on Chinese threats had two significant implications. First, Johnson thought that if China did enter the war as it had done in Korea, it would expand the conflict from one based on a strategy of containment to an all-out war. Second, he assumed the continued media emphasis on China's position could potentially strengthen the antiwar opposition.

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[71] Khong, *Analogies at War*, 146.
[72] Khong, *Analogies at War*, 109.
[73] See "Some Experts Say China Will Enter Vietnam War," *Los Angeles Times*, June 27, 1965.
[74] Khong, *Analogies at War*, 49. George Ball was particularly pessimistic about American options in Vietnam.
[75] "U.S. Plans Step-Up in Troops and Aid for Vietnam War," *New York Times*, April 3, 1965.

So Johnson's policy was in a bind: try and win too decisively and the Chinese would make good on the blustering his administration took seriously. But continuing with a graduated bombing campaign could drag out the war and alienate domestic support. It was, Johnson believed, an untenable position politically.[76]

The fear of Chinese involvement remained strong from Johnson's first year in office until at least the Tet Offensive in 1968. In 1964, the *Christian Science Monitor* could point out that war with China was a significant possibility, bringing to Vietnam a similar "flattening" of the peninsula like what had happened in Korea. That same year David Halberstam of the *New York Times* could talk of the fears of Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor, who believed anything more than "limited air strikes" would force China's hand. The last real threat came in 1970, when the *Los Angeles Times* quoted a Peking decree that the Chinese would not be caught "standing idly by" as the United States continued its war of conquest in Southeast Asia. That same phrase, the paper recalled, had been used to justify Peking's intervention in Korea.[77]

Thus between these years, at the height of American involvement in Vietnam, the threat of Chinese intervention guided and limited policymakers' actions. Significantly, this was not a message kept secret at the upper levels of policy planning, but rather the China threat—almost always detailed with an analogy to the war in Korea—loomed ominously in national press and media coverage. Far from forgotten, this lesson from the Korean War determined how officials prosecuted the war in Vietnam, and how the media presented it to the American people. Typically, press reports repeated Chinese threats and warnings that an American ground war in North Vietnam would be a mistake. In February 1965, for example, the *New York Times* printed a warning from the

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[76] By 1967, support for the Vietnam War had dropped in similar ways to the Korean War. In October 1950, twenty percent of Americans believed military action was a mistake. After Chinese intervention, that number was nearly half. In August 1965, twenty-four percent felt Vietnam was a mistake; two years later that number had risen to forty-one percent. "LBJ's Ratings Drop Typifies American Attitudes to Wars," *Hartford Courant*, October 8, 1967.

[77] "The War in Asia," *Christian Science Monitor*, November 11, 1964; "Taylor Expected to Ask Expansion of Vietnam War, *New York Times*, November 23, 1964; "The Widening of the War," *Los Angeles Times*, April 6, 1970.

Chinese state newspaper, *Ta Kung Pao*, that American officials needed to "remember the 38th parallel when crossing the 17th parallel." The same paper had already quoted Chinese Premier Chou En-lai telling the United States it must remove its "forces of aggression" from Vietnam.[78]

Chinese warnings were most numerous as Operation Rolling Thunder began bombing North Vietnam in March 1965. The bombing campaign reflected the leadership's belief that the war in Vietnam was not a homegrown insurgency of the National Liberation Front (NLF) or Vietcong (VC) against the Saigon regime, but part of a larger international communist cabal organized in Hanoi and even Peking and Moscow, just as Kim Sung-Il had received "permission" from his communist overlords to attack South Korea. And this was certainly the message the American public received as well. Only weeks before Rolling Thunder began, China's own allusions to the Korean War reverberated in papers across the United States. According to one quoted Chinese official, the American people "have been taught a lesson on this score [Chinese military power] in the Korean war [sic]. Do you want to have that same lesson repeated in Indochina?"[79] That same month, February, the *Washington Post* reported on two clear communications from Mao's government that implied at "a Korea-style intervention" in Vietnam was a possibility. In a direct allusion to the human wave assaults of Chinese soldiers in Korea, the Peking threat promised, "'you will become utterly helpless when the people…dare to fight, defy difficulties and advance wave upon wave.'"[80]

China's tone, said journalist Seymour Topping, was "increasingly ominous" as the Vietnam War expanded in 1966. Despite Hanoi's alleged reluctance to accept Chinese help (the North Vietnamese had not forgotten "a thousand years of Chinese domination") Topping strongly

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[78] "Chinese Intervention Seen," *New York Times*, February 16, 1965; "Vietnam Puzzle," *New York Times*, March 1, 1964.
[79] "Chinese Recall War Role in Korea—Say North Vietnam Can Attack," *New York Times*, February 14, 1965.
[80] "Red China Hints Joining Hanoi in Korea-Like War," *Washington Post*, February 14, 1965. For similar threats from official Chinese propaganda, see "China Hints at 'Volunteers' To Help in Vietnam," *Baltimore Sun*, February 14, 1965. The *People's Daily*, the official communist paper in China, promised that "many former 'Chinese People's Volunteers from Korea' were taking part in demonstrations in solidarity with 'the heroic Vietnamese people.'"

suggested the Chinese would enter the war—regardless of how their southern communist neighbors felt—because the war against the United States was "vital to their program of world revolution."[81] Similarly dire warnings appeared in American news reports throughout 1966, almost all of which acknowledged how China's actions in Korea fundamentally changed the nature of that war. Writing for the *Washington Post* in February of that year, Chalmers M. Roberts argued that "memories of the Korean War in which hundreds of thousands of Chinese 'volunteers' took part, has created a sense of concern in and out of Congress." Dean Rusk's defense of the administration's policy, the reporter argued, rested upon the Korean War model, which in Rusk's words to the Senate, the United States had fought "to sustain 'the principle that the Communist world should not be permitted to expand.'" Roberts also recognized that a limited war akin to Korea had put the president in a dilemma. "But what would China do if the American-South Vietnamese armies cracked the Communist hard-core units? Would China stand by? Or would Peking…enter the war even at the risk of an American counterattack against China itself...The imponderables are numerous," Roberts recognized, "and the stakes are immense."[82]

Eminent historian Arthur Schlesinger offered a dim view that same year, and China's actions in Korea informed it. "As for the assurances that China will not enter [the Vietnam War]," Schlesinger wrote in the *New York Times* in September, "these will be less than totally satisfying to those whose memory stretches back to the Korean War." And Korea offered another lesson, Schlesinger believed, one the Johnson White House should consider since the graduated bombing campaign had done little to halt Hanoi's support for the Viet Cong: "The Korean war, as Gen. Mathew B. Ridgway has said, 'taught that it is impossible to interdict the supply route of an Asian army by airpower alone. We had complete air mastery over North Korea, and we clobbered Chinese

[81] "China Tone on Vietnam Increasingly Ominous," *New York Times*, January 29, 1966.
[82] "Are We Containing or Goading China?," *Washington Post*, February 27, 1966.

supply columns unmercifully…But we did not halt their offensive nor materially diminish its strength.'" Air superiority in Korea had not proved decisive, Schlesinger insisted, and it would not make a difference against "guerrillas threading their way through the hills and jungles of Vietnam." Other academics weighed in with public prognostications on the China threat. Testifying before a Senate committee on China, Dr. Hans J. Morgenthau believed the policy of containment had forced China into an untenable position, and the war in Vietnam "will lead to a Sino-American war." Dr. Robert A. Scalapino's testimony to the same committee highlighted the need for absolute victory in Vietnam, or else "'Maoist' communism…would promote extremism in Peking and present the United States with 'the awful choice between retreat everywhere and World War III.'" Their differences in opinion highlighted the Johnson's administration's dilemma.[83]

In similarly strong language, Ross Terrill wrote in a lengthy October 1966 *New Republic* article that it was not China that had "gone whoring across the seas to seek out the US. Indeed, her entire Army, one of the three biggest in the world, is within her own borders." The United States, according to the article, had around one million troops encircling and menacing the communist nation. China's "links" to North Vietnam were greater in 1966 than they were to North Korea in 1950, Terrill believed, and "Peking is incomparably better placed to fight than she was in 1950, when the revolution was a mere infant of less than one year." And the American nuclear arsenal intimidated the Chinese leadership very little. "[I]t did not stop them entering the Korean war [sic], and now, unlike in 1950, Moscow has a nuclear capacity that is considered sufficient, by most analysts, to deter Washington from using nuclear weapons in most conceivable situations." Peking had yet to intervene, according to Terrill, simply because the Viet Cong and North Vietnam were doing so well. He reminded readers that China saw the wars on its periphery as vital to its own

[83] "Schlesinger Suggests that We Recover Our Cool and Follow a Middle Way Out of Vietnam," *New York Times*, September 18, 1966.

national security: "To save our neighbor is to save ourselves," was the official policy of Peking. He ended with an ominous warning: "Should Hanoi's resistance falter, or should China be attacked—her airfields, or even the merest fringe of her territory as in the case of Korea—we must expect Chinese military intervention." The lesson was, very clearly, American actions in Vietnam carried a perceivable threat to Peking, as they had in Korea.[84]

Over the course of 1967 official statements on China decreased, in part because the administration needed to sell Operation Rolling Thunder to an increasingly apprehensive public.[85] Privately, Johnson and his administration harbored continued uncertainties, and press reports continued to push a "crossing the Yalu" possibility in Vietnam.[86] The public opinion seemed to mirror Johnson's private concerns. According to a Gallup Poll, only thirty-eight percent of Americans in June 1966 felt China would rescue North Vietnam if it were about to lose. By December 1967, forty-nine percent felt it a real possibility. The number who believed China would avoid war stayed consistent, at around thirty-five percent. But significantly, the number of Americans with no opinion had diminished from twenty-seven percent to fifteen percent in that time period. A full forty-four percent of Americans also opposed extending the ground war into North Vietnam, although thirty-nine percent still favored the option. Altogether, this data indicate that Americans were aware of the possibility of Chinese intervention and wary of it. Commenting on his institution's findings, George Gallup suggested that concern over China "undoubtedly plays a part in the opinion of people…who oppose extending the ground war into North Vietnam." These opinions, he suggested, "likely arise in part from memories of the Korean War."[87]

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[84] Ross Terrill, "China and Vietnam," *New Republic*, Vol 155, Issue 1816 (October 29, 1966), 16-20.
[85] See for example "Korea-Type Error Scouted by Harriman," *Washington Post*, May 22, 1967 and "Gen. Wheeler Doubts China Will Join War," *Baltimore Sun*, January 17, 1967. Only "a direct American threat or attack would bring China into the war in Southeast Asia," Wheeler argued. Ambassador-at-Large W. Averell Harriman reached a similar conclusion, arguing that an American invasion of North Vietnam "would probably bring China in," but President Johnson "thoroughly understands the risks."
[86] For more on Johnson's personal doubts, see Khong, *Analogies at War*.
[87] "Fears Grow Over Threat of Red China," *Los Angeles Times*, December 10, 1967.

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During the Nixon years, support for the war continued to plummet, reaching lows even among the most stalwart defenders of Cold War interventionism. Partly in response to this very vocal antiwar movement, Nixon sought to wind down American involvement but maintain an independent, noncommunist South Vietnam.[88] That process, Vietnamization, became the focus of Nixon's two terms as president. It constituted two parts that historians have given attention: the withdrawal of American troops from South Vietnam and secret meetings between National Security Adviser (later Secretary of State) Henry Kissinger and his North Vietnamese counterpart, Le Duc Tho. But Nixon's policy of Vietnamization also rested upon lessons of the Korean War and its armistice in several important ways. Despite the continued troop withdrawals, the president envisioned a contingent of American troops deployed to defend South Vietnamese independence. In reviewing this proposal, the *New York Times* called the Korea analogy the "essential ingredient" in Vietnamization. In addition, after the war in Vietnam ended, South Korean forces would also remain in South Vietnam, something South Korean President Park Chung-Hee approved only after Nixon guaranteed not to withdraw more American forces from the Korean peninsula. In 1965 Park had agreed to send 38,000 troops to South Vietnam—the largest foreign contingency in the country behind the United States—to keep the American presence along the 38th parallel, when President Johnson intimated that they may be withdrawn.[89] The agreement between Park and Nixon reasserted the permanence of the American presence in Korea. Significantly, policymaking now linked the two wars and further committed American military might to the defense of both nations. In short, Nixon's Vietnamization policy—his "Korea Solution"—tied the fates of both Asian nations

[88] For more on the antiwar movement, see Melvin Small, *Antiwarriors: The Vietnam War and the Battle for America's Hearts and Minds* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002.)

[89] Winthrop G. Brown, who served as ambassador to South Korea from 1964-1967, vehemently denied that any such agreement took place in the Johnson administration. See "No Deal on Korean Troops," *New York Times*, February 1, 1972.

together under an umbrella American policy. The *Times*, however, noted that this was no real solution, that it "neither ends the war nor the American involvement, but continues both indefinitely."[90]

The settlement in Korea affected Vietnamization in another significant way. As president during the Korean War, Dwight Eisenhower had intimated that bombing, including nuclear attacks, were on the table if armistice talks failed. Then-Vice President Nixon supported this hardline approach to ending the war. Before officially announcing his candidacy in 1968, Nixon had made similarly strong points about bombing North Vietnam. "We should not stop bombing if they start talking," he said. "We should only stop bombing if they stop fighting."[91] Once on the campaign trail, Nixon consistently reminded audiences that he was part of the administration that had ended the Korean War.[92] When he accepted the Republican nomination in August 1968, Nixon evoked comparisons between Vietnam and Korea, directly or indirectly, on three occasions.[93]

The comparisons with the earlier war did not end there. Nixon the presidential candidate had mostly avoided any specific details about ending the war in Vietnam. That reticence was part of his strategy to woo both hawks and doves—and a position reminiscent of Eisenhower's homily "I shall go to Korea," which Nixon invoked directly on the campaign trail.[94] But as the election intensified, Nixon invoked Eisenhower to tell the North Vietnamese that failure to reach a peace settlement could induce the nuclear option if he were elected. "The apparent success of the 1953

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[90] "Vietnam's 'Korean Solution,'" *New York Times*, December 10, 1971. The media spoke frequently of a "Korean Solution" to describe the Nixon administration's belief in a Korea-style settlement for Vietnam. I have adopted the phrase to describe the basis for Vietnamization. See also Frank Baldwin, "A 'Korean Solution' for Vietnam?" *The New Republic*, 163 no. 3 (July 18, 1970): 19-21; "Nixon and Vietnam: Winds of Change," *Christian Science Monitor*, March 17, 1971; "Vietnam's 'Korea Solution,'" *New York Times*, February 15, 1970; "Consent of the Governed," *New York Times*, April 27, 1971; and "Mansfield vs. Nixon," *New York Times*, June 24, 1971.
[91] "Nixon Cite Korean Lesson," *Hartford Courant*, January 19, 1968.
[92] "Nixon on Vietnam," *Baltimore Sun*, March 7, 1968. The suggestion, of course, was that he was willing to do the same in Vietnam.
[93] "Address Accepting the Presidential Nomination at the Republican National Convention in Miami Beach, Florida, August 8, 1968." http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=25968. (Accessed July 28, 2016).
[94] Robert Dallek, *Nixon and Kissinger: Partners in Power* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2007), 68.

tactics," the *Los Angeles Times* reported, "has been much on his mind." But the *Times* questioned the efficacy of a renewed threat of massive retaliation, especially considering the public demands for withdrawal.[95]

Candidate Nixon had applied the lesson of Korean negotiations to Vietnam. In January 1968 he insisted that the United States "must never forget that most of the American casualties in Korea occurred after talks began…We talked and they [the communists] continued to fight…We must not make the same mistake in South Vietnam."[96] Clearly, Nixon believed that before Eisenhower threatened nuclear war, the Panmunjom negotiations had favored the communists.

Once in the White House, Nixon envisioned a similarly strong stance to force Hanoi toward a negotiated settlement. The new president also made clear that he did not feel hamstrung by Johnson's policy of limited war. Nor did he believe that a diminution in bombing North Vietnam had gained diplomatic concessions. Nixon could only conceive of troops withdrawals—an integral part of Vietnamization—with an increased reliance on air power and the promise of American forces to defend an invasion from the North. A central aspect of Vietnamization was that Nixon believed that the threat of massive retaliation had been the decisive factor at Panmunjom.[97] Nixon's first real threat of massive retaliation was Operation Duck Hook, a nuclear plan to bomb military and economic targets around Hanoi. The president even had a speech prepared to announce the nuclear option to force an end to the war. Nixon, according to one biographer, had the Korean War and Eisenhower's nuclear threat in mind when considering Duck Hook in 1969. Nixon abandoned the plan, however, when the Joint Chiefs expressed doubts that it would curb Hanoi's support of the Vietcong.[98] But to sell Vietnamization, the president reiterated in his address to the nation on April

[95] "Nixon on Vietnam: Dewey or Eisenhower Tactics?," *Lost Angeles Times*, July 7, 1968.
[96] "Nixon Cites Korean Lesson," *Hartford Courant*, January 19, 1968.
[97] "Korean War Rerun," *Washington Post*, December 23, 1970.
[98] Dallek, *Nixon and Kissinger*, 155-156.

26, 1972, that he had ordered additional "attacks on enemy military targets in both North and South Vietnam by the air and naval forces of the United States" and the South Vietnamese Army would increasingly bear the burden of ground combat. The president continued:

> And finally, I have ordered that our air and naval attacks on military installations in North Vietnam be continued until the North Vietnamese stop their offensive in South Vietnam. I have flatly rejected the proposal that we stop the bombing of North Vietnam as a condition for returning to the negotiating table. They sold that package to the United States once before, in 1968. And we're not going to buy it again in 1972.[99]

Writing in *Military Affairs*, Roger Hamburg, professor of economics and public policy at Indiana University, criticized the White House's reliance on the Korean model and particularly, new forms of brinksmanship and massive retaliation, which he warned could have serious Cold War repercussions. Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird had clearly stated the administration's policy to Congress, affirming that the "threat of escalation to strategic nuclear war remains a part of successful deterrence at this level." This was but simple window dressing on the Eisenhower idea. Moreover, the Eisenhower plan, Hamburg insisted, "reasserted a doctrine that had been gathering widespread currency in the wake of frustrations in Korea: either abstain from involvement or fight an all-out war,"—something the Nixon administration, having inherited such a conflict, seemed to agree with completely.[100]

The president panned Johnson's policy of gradual escalation, stating

> I believe that we used our military power ineffectively by applying it gradually rather than effectively…Our massive military superiority has been wasted, our options frittered away, by applying power so gradually as to be ineffective…The swift, overwhelming blow that would have been decisive two or three years ago is no longer possible today. Instead, we find that we have been locked into a massive, grinding war of attrition.[101]

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[99] Richard Nixon, "The Situation in Vietnam: Troop Withdrawals," *Vital Speeches of the Day,* XXXVIII No. 15 (May 15, 1972), 450.
[100] Roger Hamburg, "Massive Retaliation Revisited," *Military Affairs*, 38 no. 1 (February 1974): 17-23.
[101] Hamburg, "Massive Retaliation Revisited," 17-23.

His criticism of limited war and gradual escalation did not end on the campaign trail. Johnson, Nixon said, had put the enemy on warning by gradual escalation, a "step by step" process that had allowed the enemy to match American strength.[102]

But the new administration—like Johnson's—had retrofitted Korea to fit preconceived notions about Vietnam and how to achieve a lasting peace. Both the president and Republicans on Capitol Hill continued to push for a Korea Solution for Vietnam, regardless of Johnson's inability to fit the war to that model. The Nixon administration, like Johnsons' before it, let the veneer of the previous war dictate how to achieve a postwar settlement in Vietnam.[103]

The criticisms of the Korea Solution—the administration's plan to defend a postwar independent South Vietnam—were widespread in the press. Frank Baldwin of the *New Republic* excoriated the analogy as "Bad History and Worse Policy," arguing that the Korean War could never serve as a lesson for the present one. Any comparison he noted, "suggests more dissimilarity than analogy."[104] The real lesson of the Korean War was, rather, that the United States would continue to shoulder the financial and military burdens in a postwar South Vietnam. The slightest deviation from such a policy—as the Korea analogy really showed, Baldwin believed—was hostility by the host government and demands for more assistance. From the end of the Korean War until 1970, the United States had provided over $8 billion in aid to South Korea and had kept a troop contingency of 50,000 along the DMZ. When President Nixon announced the withdrawal of some American troops—the loss of which would be offset by $1 billion in military aid to South Korea—President Park Chung-Hee lambasted the measure as "a breach of international faith." In the short term, American support for South Korea had shown promise; long term, however, costs were

[102] Hamburg, "Massive Retaliation Revisited," 17-23.
[103] Baldwin, "A 'Korean Solution' for Vietnam?,"19-21.
[104] Baldwin, "A 'Korean Solution' for Vietnam?," 19-21.

questionable, Baldwin believed. According to Pentagon estimates, keeping two American divisions in South Korea since 1953 had cost $22 billion. Additional support troops, the loss of the *Pueblo* and its equipment (to say nothing of the intelligence lost), and Air Forces units had made that figure considerably more. "The cruelest deception of a 'Korea Solution for Vietnam,' Baldwin asserted, "is that the 'Korea Problem' itself was resolved. The 'Korea Solution' was no solution for Korea and will not be one for Vietnam."[105]

One American military adviser in Vietnam told the *Chicago Tribune* a similar story about sponsor-state dependence. "When we're here, they'll do just about anything because they know they'll get the support," Lt. James Smith told *Tribune* correspondent Samuel Jameson. As the reporter noted, the lieutenant's subconscious question was "What happens when the Americans are no longer here?" The answer, Jameson argued, was the American "military aid commitment would continue…as it has in South Korea." Even more telling, Vietnamization focused on the withdrawal of "combat troops," while 200,000 troops did not meet that classification. Jameson recognized the reality of a Vietnamization policy based upon the Korea Solution: it would only work if the US maintained a military commitment to South Vietnam as it had to South Korea.[106]

Jameson was not grasping at straws. Secretary of Defense Laird told reporters at the Pentagon that "several thousand military men" would remain as a residual force to train and advise the South Vietnamese Army long after the war was over. But Laird intimated that a larger force may be necessary as well, though he insisted all options remained "negotiable" within the administration.[107] Senator Hugh Scott (R-PA) testified to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee about the same idea. Scott did not believe the president would re-escalate, but thought it was possible American forces would remain after the war was over. Scott justified this residual force just

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[105] Baldwin, "A 'Korean Solution' for Vietnam?," 19-21.
[106] "U.S. Finds Vietnamizing War is a Difficult Undertaking," *Chicago Daily Tribune,* December 12, 1969.
[107] "A Residual Force in Vietnam Hinted*, New York Times*, October 17, 1969.

as Laird had—that the American people had accepted a similar situation after the Korean War.[108] A few months later, Scott was back in front of the committee, reiterating the same point and the lessons of Korea again to justify a postwar troop commitment in Vietnam. This time, however, Scott was adamant that American soldiers would remain in South Vietnam for years, long after "Vietnamization" would turn over military responsibilities to the South Vietnamese. The Korea analogy again drove home his point: despite "the hysteria of a limited number of critics," the public would support such a long-term endeavor, because they had accepted the same circumstance in Korea.[109]

Criticisms of a Korea Solution grew in the press in 1971, particularly as the administration seemed reluctant to accelerate troop withdrawals. Writing in the *New York Times*, former state department official Daniel Ellsberg claimed that Nixon's Korea Solution satisfied hawks' demands to win the war and doves' desires for lower casualties. For the president, the Korea Solution would help his reelection campaign in 1972. Nevertheless, Ellsberg believed a postwar American presence in Vietnam "could mean permanent war."[110] Columnist Tom Wicker of the *New York Times* suggested that Vietnamization was Nixon's way of ensuring that he did not get saddled with losing a war. The slow pace of troop withdrawals, Wicker insisted, kept Thieu mollified and left a postwar Korea Solution on the table. Either alternative, a total or immediate troop withdrawal, "would probably be a political disaster" for Thieu and would give "recurring nightmares" to the Nixon White House.[111] But by 1971, Thieu's doubts about American intentions and Vietnamization were well known in the administration. In the wake of Vietnamization, his nation was in a position similar to South Korea: relying on an ally that was looking for a negotiated settlement and a way to

[108] "Scott Doubts Nixon Would Re-escalate War," *Los Angeles Times*, February 5, 1970.
[109] Baldwin, "A 'Korean Solution' for Vietnam?," 19-21.
[110] "The Nixon 'Logic' Behind Widening the War: Reinforcing Motives," *Washington Post*, March 7, 1971.
[111] "Consent of the Governed," *New York Times*, April 27, 1971; "New Vietnam Dilemma," *New York Times*, July 6, 1971.

end major combat operations. When Nixon had first entered the White House, Thieu met him at Midway. Thieu did not want to be left empty-handed and understood the Nixon administration could dictate policy. "I know that you are going to go," Thieu told Nixon, "but before you go, you have to leave something for us as friends. Leave something to help me out."[112]

Worse, much of the press argued that if Vietnamization were judged by "Koreanization," the American commitment in South Vietnam after the war would be interminable. The continued prodding of the DMZ by the North Koreans had required an American presence in South Korea, a nation constantly on war footing. American aid also had poured into South Korea since the end of the war. By the early 1970s, South Korea had experienced significant military and economic improvements. But as media outlets pointed out, Koreanization had taken two decades, and the costs to Americans showed no signs of diminishing. Any sort of "lesson" to be applied to Vietnam would require at maintaining the political division of Vietnam like Korea. That, of course, was no certainty in the early 1970s, with war protests demanding the immediate withdrawal of American combat troops. Nonetheless, despite the success of Koreanization, its 600,000-strong Army, 2.5 million-man militia, and increased American air support, President Park strongly resisted any decrease in American troop commitments during the Nixon years.[113] The pitfalls of propping up an ally was certainly a lesson the president needed to consider when betting on a Korea Solution. Would the same commitment—of time, resources, and manpower—be required in a postwar Vietnam?

Clark Clifford, the former defense secretary under Johnson, criticized Nixon's Korea Solution and Vietnamization in the *Washington Post*. The policy was a sham, Clifford insisted, and

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[112] Larry Berman, *No Peace, No Honor: Nixon, Kissinger, and Betrayal in Vietnam* (New York: The Free Press, 2001), 52.
[113] "Koreanization Getting on Feet After 18 Years," *Hartford Courant*, April 18, 1971; Chung-in Moon, "Influencing Washington: An Analysis of the South Korean Lobby in the United States" in Manwoo Lee, Ronald D. McLaurin, Chung-in Moon, eds., *Alliance Under Tension: The Evolution of South Korean-U.S. Relations* (Boulder: Westview Press, Inc., 1988), 111.

represented "an indefinite American presence in Indochina." Vietnamization, like post-armistice Korea, would keep Americans in harm's way along a contentious DMZ. Nixon's plan would defend temporarily the Saigon regime, but it would not be enough to forestall communist takeover. Thieu's government relied upon the continued American presence and the costs were exorbitant: $50 billion more in aid and 20 thousand more American deaths since Nixon took office. In short, anything less than outright withdrawal—including Vietnamization—would result in a widened war, unmitigated costs, and increased bloodshed.[114]

But not all coverage of the Korea Solution was critical of the president or his plan. A February 1971 *Washington Post* article reiterated the successes of Eisenhower's hard approach in Korea in 1953. The president had "put an end to the Korean War on terms that seemed to justify all the blood and treasure that America had spent on its prosecution." Nixon, the *Post* believed, was in a similar position in Vietnam. Ending the Korean War was Eisenhower's "great achievement," and now an "infectious optimism" pervaded the Nixon White House, which was on the brink of ending the Vietnam War along similar lines. A partitioned Vietnam like Korea, however, relied upon external operations—namely against North Vietnamese sanctuaries in Laos and Cambodia. In effect, the *Post* argued, the optimism regarding the Korea Solution and Vietnamization was a replay of Eisenhower's plan of helping "'good Asians' to fight 'bad Asians'" once the armistice had been settled. But the article hinted at a subtle shift occurring in the administration's Korea Solution: the American political atmosphere had become so volatile that American air power would be the primary deterrent in a partitioned Vietnam—not a lasting troop commitment.[115]

Strong support for Vietnamization also came from military experts. Writing in the *Baltimore Sun* in late 1969, Herman Kahn, founder of the policy research organization the Hudson Institute

[114] "Clark Clifford on Vietnam," *Washington Post*, May 21, 1972.
[115] "Mr. Nixon is Playing to Win in Asia," *Washington Post*, February 28, 1971.

and author of *Can We Win in Vietnam?* (1968), believed the program had shown remarkable success in preparing the South Vietnamese army. Incremental changes in prosecuting the war could mollify the political criticisms Nixon faced, and Vietnamization certainly fit the bill. And the war in Korea again provided the necessary example. Then, when Gen. Matthew Ridgway had encountered the similarly "hopeless" situation of imposed manpower limitations, he made "key changes in strategy and tactics" that helped him fight the Chinese. Kahn believed that parallel action in Vietnam "could produce analogous results."[116]

Retired Gen. Mark W. Clark, who had signed the Korean Armistice, also offered public support for Nixon's Korea Solution on several occasions. In February 1970, Clark wrote in the *New York Times* that Korea was a loss in some senses because a negotiated settlement had emboldened the communists. And Clark was adamant that Vietnam was the result of failing to win in Korea. The militarily expedient option was to intensify the war, something his lessons in Korea had proved. "I know that in Korea," Clark maintained, "when I was finally given permission to break off negotiations at Panmunjom and politically imposed restrictions were removed, I then attacked every worthwhile enemy target in North Korea and the war turned in our favor…Soon the armistice was agreed upon and the fighting stopped." But given the antiwar opposition Nixon faced, military escalation was not a feasible option. That left either immediate withdrawal, which Clark believed was an abandonment of Southeast Asia to the communists, and the policy of Vietnamization. While UN commander in Korea from 1952-1953, Clark had suggested the French begin a military training program for the South Vietnamese, "similar to the successful one we were using for Koreans," but his urgings fell on deaf ears. Now, it was the only right policy the United States could follow. It would require sacrifice and a long-term American commitment, and Clark reminded readers of the 50,000 soldiers along the DMZ in Korea. "The same situation will no doubt occur in Vietnam," he

[116] "The President's Speech and How We Can Win in Vietnam," *Baltimore Sun*, November 30, 1969.

admitted, "where some ground forces will be required, along with air, naval and logistics units, for a long time to come."[117]

Almost a year to the day later, Clark expressed a similar message again in the *Times*. "We so successfully Koreanized the situation in that country," he stated, "that we now have a very stanch ally." And once again, Clark reiterated that the armistice had been the result of a fruitless policy. "I felt then and I still do that in our first test of arms with the Communists we should have defeated them," Clark said. "Had we done so, we would not be involved as we are in Vietnam." The lesson was clear: failure to route the enemy in the first engagement had only strengthened the communists' resolve and led to another war in Vietnam. But in Vietnam the American people had lost the will to fight on to victory, and Vietnamization, like Koreanization, provided a worthwhile alternative. It relied on a patient policy that would not be influenced by "political pressure to bring our forces home too rapidly." Given time, Vietnamization would bear fruit, just as a similar policy had in Korea. "Remember that in Korea," Clark told readers, "we still have over fifty thousand of our men on duty, and what a morale boost they have given the Koreans." A similar result, Clark believed, could occur in Vietnam if only the public trusted in its military and political leadership.[118]

But the administration spent considerable time on the Korea Solution and Vietnamization while negotiations continued between the United States and North Vietnam. National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger's Paris talks with Representative Le Duc Tho rested upon the assumption that Hanoi would break any peace treaty in a short time. When that occurred, both Kissinger and Nixon assumed American bombing would be required to rescue the Saigon government. As Kissinger told South Vietnam's ambassadors: "Do you think I believe Le Duc Tho? Of course they will cheat…The key is whether the American people know they have achieved something. No one

[117] "Topics: Vietnam Options—One General's Viewpoint," *New York Times*, February 21, 1970.
[118] "No Retreat in Southeast Asia," *New York Times*, February 24, 1971.

knows what the Korean Armistice Agreement says. But the people know they have achieved something and if the North Koreans violate it, the President can defend it…The major use of the agreement to you is it links us legally to you on a long-term basis for an indefinite period."[119]

But by 1972, the Korea Solution was an increasingly harder sell—to the American people, the media, and, most important, to the North Vietnamese. Kissinger's meetings with Tho were unproductive; the North Vietnamese remained adamant that they would settle for nothing less than absolute American withdrawal. In a meeting between Tho and Chinese Premier Chou Enlai the two surmised that Nixon's bombing campaign from the previous year was unsuccessful. North Vietnam's objective of unification remained; anything less would be a loss. Despite Nixon's overwhelming victory in the previous November elections, he still faced considerable criticism at home—a point Chou raised to Tho. Moreover, there were 150,000 North Vietnamese troops in South Vietnam aiding their Vietcong allies, and the Saigon government would collapse once American support was gone.[120]

Kissinger and Tho had first conferred in 1970, and the administration's initial optimism tended to fade with each ensuing meeting. Kissinger would later tell journalist Stanley Karnow that "it was our misfortune that Le Duc Tho's assignment was to break the spirit of the American people for the war, and that he was engaged in a campaign of psychological warfare, so what he attempted to do to us was extremely painful." Tho repeatedly insisted that Vietnamization would never lead to victory and instead was an extension of the war. More important, as one historian has noted, "Not a meeting would pass in which Tho did not offer his opinion on U.S. public opinion, dissent, or congressional actions aimed at curtailing the war effort. The antiwar movement was one of his strongest allies, and he knew it."[121]

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[119] Berman, *No Peace, No Honor*, 211.
[120] Berman, *No Peace, No Honor*, 1-2.
[121] Berman, *No Peace, No Honor*, 67.

On January 27, 1973, representatives of both sides signed in Paris the Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam. According to the agreement, American naval and air operations would end, and within sixty days all American military presence would be withdrawn from South Vietnam. Further, the US agreed not to resupply the South with new armaments and to destroy all military bases. The United States, in short, "was prohibited from intervening in the internal affairs of South Vietnam." Nonetheless, the Nixon administration assured Thieu's government that it would provide assistance if the enemy violated the terms of the agreement. Almost immediately, communist forces in the South renewed their assault on the Saigon government. By February 1973, the North Vietnamese resumed major offensive operations.[122] By then, however, the administration wanted only to ensure the return of American POWs and had no intentions of aiding the Saigon government.[123] South Vietnamese Vice President Cao Ky best summed up the American position: "the Paris agreement gave the world an entirely wrong impression. Though it was the end of the war for America, it was never regarded as the end of the war by Hanoi…The North Vietnamese seized on one fact: that the U.S. was not really concerned with peace at all; it was only concerned with getting out of Vietnam."[124] In the end, the Nixon administration abandoned the Korea Solution that had formed the Vietnamization program and would have paved the way for a continued American presence in a postwar Vietnam. The diplomatic concessions gained from bombing were too low and the political costs of continued negotiations too high.

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[122] Berman, *No Peace, No Honor*, 240-243.
[123] Berman, *No Peace, No Honor*, 255. Berman argues that Nixon and Kissinger used the Watergate scandal as justification to avoid aiding Thieu's regime, insisting it tied their hands politically and militarily.
[124] Berman, *No Peace, No Honor*, 247.

The middle-of-the road approach in Vietnam was partly the result of lessons the Johnson administration took from the Korean War. Nearly all involved at the upper echelons of policy planning believed Vietnam to be another Korea. They ignored not only cultural and historical differences between the two wars and the nations engaged in them, but assumed Ho Chi Minh's regime was a ward state to China as Kim Il Sung's had been. In believing in and articulating the Korea connection so forcefully in both public and private, policymakers overlooked the long history of mistrust and resentment between Vietnam and China.[125] Full-scale conflict in Asia was not a one-size-fits-all application despite how much Johnson and later Nixon, and their allies tried to shoehorn Vietnam into the Korean paradigm.

Another lesson the Johnson White House took from Korea was that any communist nation's actions, best exemplified by the *Pueblo* crisis and the DMZ attacks, was connected somehow to the larger Cold War. Korea had taught that communist nations would collaborate to frustrate, embarrass, and ultimately try and defeat the West. From Korea, the architects of America's Vietnam policy learned that communist obstinacy and intransigence were just means of prolonging the war. They took from the previous conflict a notion that Vietnam was a single theater in a pan-Asian or even global showdown with communism. To ignore the connections between the *Pueblo*, the increased attacks on American and South Korean forces defending the DMZ, and the war in Vietnam, they assumed, was to miss the larger connections in the Cold War.

The Johnson administration also justified limiting the ground war to below the 17th parallel because it feared Chinese intervention. In late 1950, Chinese intervention had dragged the Korean War into a stalemate. This fear of China weighed heavily on the administration and showed no signs of abating as the war continued. Equally important, journalists also assumed that a similar "Yalu-

[125] Qiang Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 3.

crossing" in Vietnam was a very real possibility. Their criticisms were an integral part of a public dialogue on available policies in Vietnam.

Like his predecessor, Richard Nixon assumed Vietnam fitted into a Korea-style Cold War paradigm. When the president addressed the nation in November 1969, he noted that an immediate withdrawal from Vietnam "would have been a popular and easy course to follow."[126] But Nixon's explanation for American involvement betrayed an understanding of the conflict only in Cold War, superpower terms: North Vietnam, aided by the Soviet Union and Communist China, had launched an aggressive war of conquest in South Vietnam. Thus, since communist nations supported the North, it fell to the United States to continue aiding the South; a "precipitate withdrawal" would see history repeat itself. Therefore, the administration adopted the policy of Vietnamization, a gradual withdrawal of American combat troops as South Vietnamese forces improved. But Nixon's initial plans for Vietnamization rested upon lessons he perceived from the Korean War; namely, that the threat of massive retaliation had ended the war, and that South Vietnam's independence would require a continued American military presence, just like in South Korea. Mounting criticism at home and obstinacy from North Vietnam forced the administration to abandon these prerequisites for Vietnamization.

Nixon's "Korea Solution" was part of a very public dialogue surrounding options for ending hostilities in Vietnam. Some opinion makers supported the administration's rationale, believing South Korea stood as a testament to what an independent, postwar South Vietnam might become. But most found it an ill-advised extension of the war. If Vietnamization required an indefinite American commitment, how effective of a policy could it be? That question, of course, was never answered, as the increasing public call to end the war took precedence and negotiations with the North Vietnamese increasingly proved fruitless. The Nixon administration believed Eisenhower's

[126] Nixon, "Vietnam Plan," *Vital Speeches of the Day,* Vol. XXXVI, No. 3 (November 1969), 66.

aggressive approach and nuclear threat had brought about the armistice at Panmunjom. Vietnamization rested upon such assumptions. But in the end, Nixon and Kissinger abandoned the Korea Solution because the very lessons the administration had relied on—intensive bombing and a postwar American presence—proved incompatible with antiwar sentiment. Further, North Vietnam rejected any peace plan that would have left American troops in South Vietnam. These are the reasons the Korea Solution failed in Vietnam.

Thus, the Korean War was an integral part of the nation's discourse on the options available in fighting and ending the war in Vietnam. It helped rationalize Johnson administration's deepening commitment to South Vietnam, and it also guided Nixon's options for extrication.

CHAPTER FOUR
THE ALLEGORICAL WAR: *M*A*S*H* AND THE REMAKING OF KOREA, 1968-1983

Few media franchises surpass the critical and commercial success of *M*A*S*H,* the television phenomenon that developed a mass following over eleven seasons (1972-1983). Such a long-running series is certain to experience dramatic changes, particularly as producers, directors, and actors come and go. But *M*A*S*H* breaks with conventional situational comedies in ways vital to representation of the Korean War. To be sure, the series incorporated dramatic elements into a comedy and overtly criticized the American military. But it also sought to accurately depict the war in Korea, with the show's producers incorporating real events into scripts. Certainly the show is not *about* the Korean War in that it rarely analyzes or explains the politico-military reasons for fighting, the nature of combat, or the war's domestic implications. The producers and stars of the series, however, saw *M*A*S*H* and the Korean War as an allegorical critique of war, the military, and contemporary sociopolitical problems. Setting the war in Korea was a crucial component of that criticism. Film scholar David Scott Diffrient has argued that *M*A*S*H* "transcended the generic and stylistic boundaries of the standard sitcom formula to expose...racial injustices, gender biases, bureaucratic mishandling, military snafus, and other pressing sociopolitical concerns of the day."[1] Nevertheless, the series functions within a literal context as well. *M*A*S*H* conceptualized and inscribed within American culture more about the Korean War than any other popular creation since the war.[2] Together, these two factors—the allegorical context of *M*A*S*H* and its imagining

[1] David Scott Diffrient, *M*A*S*H* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2008), 1.
[2] Diffrient, *M*A*S*H,* 104.

of the Korean War for American audiences—illustrate the ability of a television series to transcend simple entertainment and profoundly reflect changing cultural attitudes.

*M*A*S*H* deviated from conventional television series, particularly comedies, in its depiction of promiscuity, alcohol use, and especially its criticisms of militarism and war. How and why the show was popular remained a subject of scholarly debate for years. Some scholars, most notably James H. Wittebols, have argued that *M*A*S*H*'s success came from its willingness to tackle the socially controversial subjects of the 1970s, especially racism, homophobia, alcoholism, and, at least later in the series, misogyny.[3] Some pundits at the time agreed with such an assessment. Stephen Rosenfeld of the *Washington Post* believed that the target audience best illustrated *M*A*S*H*'s contemporary social consciousness. "*M*A*S*H* floated for its 11 years in a haze over which war it was about," he wrote as the series wound down. "Ostensibly, it was set in Korea, where a war was fought from 1950 to 1953, one little known to most of the series' audience except perhaps as history."[4] Producers of the show certainly weighed in on the contemporary connections of the show. Speaking in 1983, Burt Metcalfe admitted, "We tapped into an attitude and constituency in this country."[5]

Other scholars and contemporaries of the show differed. As the series concluded, journalism professor Edwin Diamond saw little connection between social criticism and the show's popularity. Likewise, professor of communications Lawrence Lichty evaluated reasons the public watched the show. Social commentary ranked "far down" on his list.[6] What explains the dramatically different interpretations of the series' connections to contemporary social concerns?

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[3] James H. Wittebols, *Watching M*A*S*H, Watching America*: *A Social History of the 1972-1983 Television Series* (Jefferson: McFarland Publishing, 2003).
[4] "Mish-'M*A*S*H'" *Washington Post*, March 4, 1983.
[5] "M*A*S*H Packs It In: Why We Loved the Gang from the 4077th," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 28, 1983.
[6] "M*A*S*H Packs It In: Why We Loved the Gang from the 4077th," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 28, 1983.

Part of that answer comes from the explanations from its actors and producers. Television series creator Larry Gelbart always insisted that historical accuracy was his primary concern. But he, like series actors Alan Alda and Mike Farrell, saw the show as an opportunity to raise awareness of contemporary concerns. *M*A*S*H*, in other words, used the Korean War to drive commentary on the social issues of the day. The producers and stars of *M*A*S*H*, no doubt, embraced the heady social subjects of their era.

Despite its popularity, the cultural phenomenon of the *MASH* franchise did not begin with greatness.[7] The story of the madcap MASH (Mobile Army Surgical Hospital) doctors who sip martinis and chase nurses began in modest obscurity. Dr. Richard Hornberger, MASH surgeon and Korean War veteran, published *MASH: A Novel About Three Doctors* in 1968 under the pseudonym Richard Hooker. He based characters in the novel on real people from the war, but Hornberger hyperbolized many of the scenarios and made up others entirely

In the words of one scholar, James Kerin, *MASH* the novel "is set squarely in the middle of the [Korean] war in both time and place."[8] Korea is important to the novel in terms of the novel's setting. References abound to war-specific events: battles on Kelly Hill, Old Baldy, and Pork Chop Hill; the belligerent countries of the United Nations (UN); the communist states of North Korea and Red China; and, of course, the effects of the war on Korea, best illustrated by displaced civilians. The military first deployed MASHs in Korea along with helicopters for transporting injured GIs. All of these connections ground *MASH* within the context of the war in Korea. Yet Hornberger's focus is on how the war affects the doctors charged with stitching together the wounded, and how those surgeons endure the trauma of a war they are powerless to stop. Hornberger writes in the Foreword that doctors in Korea "were exposed to hard work, leisure, tension, boredom, heat, cold,

[7] The original novel did not contain asterisks.
[8] James R. Kerin, "The Korean War and American Memory," (PhD diss., The University of Pennsylvania, 1994), 331.

satisfaction and frustration that most of them had never faced before."[9] Certainly, as Kerin has posited, the book's setting makes possible the historically grounded—if embellished—story.

MASH initially suffered rejection from fifteen publishers. But after publication, it was successful largely by word of mouth until film producer Otto Preminger, Jr. saw an opportunity.[10] Preminger pitched the idea of a *MASH* film, yet found little initial success. Fifteen directors turned down the project until Robert Altman agreed. With the film release of *M*A*S*H* (1970), interest in the franchise increased and the popularity of Hornberger's novel gained momentum.[11] Perhaps the best example of the book's newfound status was a blurb on a reissued version that suggested erroneously the film had led to the publication of the book.[12]

Like the television series, a consistent analysis of the film's meaning has eluded critics and scholars alike. Was it an antiwar statement? Was it antiauthoritarian, antiestablishment? Was it about keeping sane when surrounding by madness? Was the misogyny satirical? The observation that stuck the most, however, was that *M*A*S*H* protested the Vietnam War. To be sure, the book and film are much closer in tone and content than either is to the series. *M*A*S*H* the film has the same episodic quality of *MASH* the book, yet the film abandons the war-centric focus and pushes forth an even more incoherent narrative focused on the antiwar attitudes of its central protagonists, played by Donald Sutherland (Hawkeye), Elliot Gould (Trapper John) and Tom Skerritt (Duke Forest—a role cut from the television series). Certainly the timing of the film's release alone would necessitate comparisons with the ongoing war in Southeast Asia. And *M*A*S*H* also appeared at the height of the counterculture and Vietnam opposition movements. The film arrived, in effect,

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[9] Ricard Hooker, *MASH: A Novel About Three Army Doctors* (New York: HarperCollins Publishing, 1968), 5.
[10] Diffrient, *M*A*S*H*, 16; Carl Freedman, "History, Fiction, Film, Television, Myth: The Ideology of *M*A*S*H*." *The Southern Review* 26, no. 1 (January 1990), 93.
[11] A note on stylistic choices: *MASH* (without the asterisks) refers solely to the novel. In the film's initial production, it contained no asterisks. However, asterisks were added in the film's marketing campaign, and therefore I have chosen to use asterisks to reference the film and, of course, the television series. When necessary, I will make specific references to *M*A*S*H* the film or *M*A*S*H* the movie for the reader's sake.
[12] Kerin, "The Korean War and American Memory," 330.

with a readymade audience eager to celebrate the irreverent attitudes its characters projected on screen.[13] Here was slapstick comedy at its most biting; here was denunciation of American Cold War policy; here, in other words, was a movie made for the antiwar effort.[14]



Figure 4.1 Hawkeye (Donald Sutherland) and Trapper (Elliot Gould) find out they must operate on a congressman's son in the film M*A*S*H *(1970).*

But *M*A*S*H* the film, for all of its projected antiauthoritarianism and its penchant for displaying military incompetence, indulges many apolitical moments. Excessive drinking, extramarital affairs, religious mockery, long hair and mustaches, ignoring the military police: the attitudes of the Swampmen, the nickname of the three protagonists, make them antiestablishment. Their bohemianism, however, is confined within an overly bureaucratic Army which demands and receives their service. The Swampmen, in other words, are still cogs in the military wheel.[15] The operating rooms scenes, replete with gushing arteries, blood-stained bodies, and the nihilistic

[13] Freedman, "History, Fiction, Film, Television, Myth," 101.
[14] Freedman, "History, Fiction, Film, Television, Myth," 101-111. As Freedman writes, "In the absence of a coherent political stance beyond the negative one of opposition to the war, any artifact which could be plausibly constructed as registering such opposition could be canonized despite its general conservatism."
[15] Freedman, "History, Fiction, Film, Television, Myth," 91; Andrew J. Huebner, *The Warrior Image: Soldiers in American Culture from the Second World War to the Vietnam Era* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 247.

commentary of the surgeons, perhaps best illustrate this phenomenon. *M*A*S*H*'s war is ironic in other ways, notably juxtaposing Douglas MacArthur's "Old Soldiers Never Die" speech at the film's beginning with the blatant hedonism of the Swampmen. The war, however, is off-stage; its only manifestations are the wounded and mangled bodies that need mending. *M*A*S*H* suggests that the only way surgeons could survive such a macabre world is to indulge in their own pleasure-seeking.[16] Film critic Carl Freedman has called it a "powerful statement against the Vietnam War and as a celebration of emancipatory values generally…*M*A*S*H* was one of the films by which the generation of the sixties, especially its male half, helped to define itself." But, in his words it was a film that "leaves the essential conservatism of *MASH* [the novel] intact."[17]

The film achieved remarkable commercial and critical success. Released in January 1970, it made over $36 million in domestic profits on a budget of $3.5 million, and fourteen million people saw it in theaters.[18] *M*A*S*H* also won the highly coveted Palm d'Or award at the Cannes film festival, received five Academy Award nominations (winning for Best Screenplay), and won a Golden Globe for Best Musical or Comedy.[19] Reviews celebrated the film's unabashed irreverence. Robert Greenspun of the *New York Times* said it was "the first major American movie…to ridicule belief in God" and blended "humor with more operating room gore than I have ever seen in any movie from any place."[20] That extreme gore was Altman's point, however, and as another review pointed out, the operating scenes were so graphic that "every laugh ends anesthetized by shock."[21] The Swampmen are such "cool, hip, gifted surgeons," the reviewer notes, however they "start wearing their compassion on the sleeves of their fatigues." It was a "shocking" film, full of blood

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[16] David Gerard Plecki, "The Films of Robert Altman," (PhD diss., University of Illinois-Champaign, 1979), 21.
[17] Freedman, "History, Fiction, Film, Television, Myth, 91-93.
[18] http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=mash.html. (Accessed on February 11, 2016); Wittebols, *Watching M*A*S*H, Watching America*, 15.
[19] http://www.festival-cannes.com/en/archives/ficheFilm/id/7985CA28-52B9-4A6F-9548-3FCEBC925819/year/1970.html. (Accessed on January 31, 2016).
[20] "*M*A*S*H* Film Blends Atheism, Gore, Humor," *New York Times*, January 26, 1970.
[21] "Blood, Blasphemy and Laughs," *New York Times*, February 1, 1970.

and visual detail, but one that essentially found safety in a standard humor formula.[22] The antimilitarism of *MASH* was a major point reviewers noted, with the *Atlanta Constitution* acknowledging it would be "Hollywood's second anti-war service comedy" after *Dr. Strangelove*.[23] One review that excoriated *MASH* suggested the film's antiwar elements were so prevalent that critics of the film were seen as "humorless, uptight, and prowar." The reviewer, Richard Corliss, considered the Swampmen "bully boys," whose "coolness…is torpedoed by the ruthlessness they show in imposing their style on the recalcitrant uncool." Instead, he suggested that what made *MASH* unbearable was it tortured the uncool "in such a smug pseudomoralistic way." Their actions in turn make each prank an "atrocity," even as the Swampmen are too busy being cool to care.[24]

The film's success was great enough to warrant a television series, something almost unheard of at the time in Hollywood. As series producer Larry Gelbart has noted, it was not typical to "put a movie still in distribution into play as a potential TV series."[25] Nonetheless, Gelbart and fellow producer Gene Reynolds moved forward, determined to retain the film's antiwar tone and bohemian characters, but invest *M*A*S*H* the series with contemporary social issues—and accurately depict the Korean War.[26] It was a tall order, and the television show was poorly received in its first season. CBS executives shuffled the weekly lineup, and, as a result, it initially had trouble maintaining high viewership. Some executives even pondered canceling *M*A*S*H*. As several scholars have pointed out, however, the series came about at a crucial juncture in television history. What James Wittebols calls the "convergence of 'troubled times'—racism, war, and mass movements for social change" certainly made their impact on the direction of the show.[27]

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[22] "Blood, Blasphemy and Laughs," *New York Times*, February 1, 1970.
[23] "*MASH* is Fascinating," *Atlanta Constitution*, February 28, 1970.
[24] "I Admit It, I Didn't Like *MASH*," *New York Times*, March 22, 1970.
[25] Larry Gelbart, *Laughing Matters: On Writing M*A*S*H, Tootsie, Oh, God! and a Few Other Funny Things* (New York: Random House Publishing, 1998), 30.
[26] Gelbart, *Laughing Matters*, 30-31.
[27] Wittebols, *Watching M*A*S*H, Watching America*, 8-9; Diffrient, *M*A*S*H*, 4-8.

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The producers and stars of *M*A*S*H* did much to ensure the show accurately depicted the Korean War. Attention to detail was paramount. CBS wanted *M*A*S*H* to portray medical knowledge and operating procedures as they were in 1950s Korea. Series consultant Dr. Walter Dishell ensured the accuracy of operating scenes and medical know-how. The network only insisted that surgery not be too bloody.[28] Alan Alda, who played Hawkeye, reaffirmed this dedication: "We certainly tried to be as accurate as possible about the Korean War and the state of medicine at the time." Interviews, notes, transcripts, and more provided authentic situations that MASH units confronted in the real war.[29] But this dedication to accuracy extended beyond the operating scenes. Producers and writers incorporated real situations from the Korean War to provide the backdrop for most episodes. Executive Producer Larry Gelbart and Assistant Producer Gene Reynolds studied the war meticulously, combing through 1950s articles about Korea in *Time* magazine and interviewing doctors who had served in MASH units. A research trip in 1974 ensured more accurate storytelling. Gelbart stated, "if, indeed, the stories got better in Year Three, it's because of this trip…We talked to everybody and came back with twenty-two hours of taped conversations—nurses, doctors, chopper pilots…It was an enormous recharge for us to go, to be able to do this research, to come back with these notes."[30]

The emphasis on accuracy confined *M*A*S*H* temporally and spatially to the Korean War. James Kerin has observed, "from its inception the series was firmly grounded in the Korean experience." In some cases, the producers rejected scripts that were anachronistic or covered events that were only later exposed. As associate producer (later executive producer after Gelbart and

[28] Suzy Kalter, *The Complete Book of M*A*S*H* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 1988), 29. The film, of course, contained gory surgery scenes.
[29] Alan Alda, *Never Have Your Dog Stuffed and Other Things I've Learned* (New York: Random House Publishing, 2005), 157-158.
[30] Kalter, *The Complete Book of M*A*S*H*, 65.

Reynolds both parted) Burt Metcalfe stated, "We're very scrupulous in our history. We've had to pass up some wonderful stories. We've wanted to do a brainwashing episode, but that didn't come up until 1954. The same thing with Marilyn Monroe's visit."[31] One of Reynolds' sources was William L. White's *Back Down the Ridge*, which chronicles the war and medical operations in Korea.[32] Metcalfe estimated that he interviewed more than 250 medical staff members to better depict surgery as it would have been in Korea. When he visited a reunion of doctors from the war, he recorded their conversations.[33] To ensure *M*A*S*H* accurately showed the war's end, Metcalfe made another trip to Korea in the final years, and after Season Ten, he interviewed Korean War correspondents.[34] Doctors who had served in Korea received $250 in compensation for storylines. In the end, this process resulted in about sixty percent of *M*A*S*H*'s plots.[35] Speaking about the final seasons, writers Thad Mumford and Dan Wilcox added that "we were locked in the Korean War with a certain amount of flexibility, but not a whole lot. We tried to be faithful to the history of the war and, in so doing, we were sort of limited to what we could embellish."[36]

The episode that perhaps best exemplifies this dedication to portraying the Korean War is "The Interview." The broadcaster and star of *See It Now*, Edward R. Murrow, had traveled to Korea in 1952 for a series of interviews with enlisted men. Gelbart used Murrow's "Christmas in Korea" special as the basis for "The Interview."[37] He had Clete Roberts, another correspondent from the Korean War, interview the cast off camera and asked them questions just as Murrow had done. Their answers formed the basis for the episode's script. When it premiered, "The Interview" cast Roberts as a Murrow-esque reporter, who has come to Korea to interview the doctors of the 4077th

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[31] "After 10 Years, Has *M*A*S*H* Had It?," *Boston Globe*, January 25, 1982.
[32] Kerin, "The Korean War and American Memory," 341-342.
[33] Kalter, *The Complete Book of M*A*S*H*, 32.
[34] Kalter, *The Complete Book of M*A*S*H*, 32, 217.
[35] Kalter, *The Complete Book of M*A*S*H*, 31.
[36] Kalter, *The Complete Book of M*A*S*H*, 199.
[37] Diffrient, *M*A*S*H*, 65-66.

for his own television show.[38] Years later, Gelbart confirmed that Murrow's "Christmas in Korea" was the basis for "The Interview."[39]

That dedication to accuracy, however, is only part of the *M*A*S*H* story. For its writers, producers, actors, and even critics and audience, the series was an allegorical one that used the Korean War to address many socially volatile issues, including the war in Vietnam, militarism more broadly, the social crises of the 1960s and '70s, and, in latter seasons, the ascendant conservatism of the 1980s.[40] Film scholars David Scott Diffrient and Hye Seung Chung have argued that *M*A*S*H* was unprecedented for a major network television series because of the "creators' willingness to tackle serious topics, such as warfare, sexism, racism, xenophobia, homophobia, generational polarization, and alcoholism."[41] And over its eleven years, *M*A*S*H* evolved as a series to address the changing social and political issues of the day.

In the early seasons, Korea provided a means to critique the socially and politically divisive issues surrounding Vietnam, many of which would have perhaps been "too close to home" had *M*A*S*H* not been set in Korea.[42] These first seasons reflected a toned-down version of the slapstick irreverence of the feature film, relying on thinly veiled criticisms of the Vietnam War for what amounts to low-brow humor.[43] As the actor McLean Stevenson (Col. Henry Blake) noted, "we felt strongly about the war in Vietnam."[44] And the war was certainly on the minds of the producers as they pitched the pilot to CBS. "Gene and I were keenly aware," Gelbart writes in his memoirs, "that given the ongoing American involvement in Vietnam, it would be a terrible affront to the nation's sensibilities merely to turn out just another bunch of wacky people in uniform, to come up

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[38] Wittebols, *Watching M*A*S*H, Watching America*, 191.
[39] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KK-fAXqQRM0. (Accessed on January 14, 2016).
[40] Wittebols, *Watching M*A*S*H, Watching America*, 1-2, 21; Freedman, "History, Fiction, Film, Television, Myth," 92-95.
[41] David Scott Diffrient and Hye Seung Chung, "TV Hybridity: Genre Mixing and Narrative Complexity in *M*A*S*H*," *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 29 no. 4 (October 2012), 285.
[42] Wittebols, *Watching M*A*S*H, Watching America*, 21.
[43] Kerin, "The Korean War and American Memory," 340.
[44] "MASH Different from the Movie," *Atlanta Constitution*, June 10, 1973.

with another *Hogan's Heroes* or *McHales's Navy* or…even a *Phil Silvers Show* with Sgt. Bilko."[45] In his review of the series finale, columnist Stephen Rosenfeld articulated how this consciousness of Vietnam in the early years made the *M*A*S*H* allegory work, stating "the series drew its currency and impact from its viewers' awareness of Vietnam, a war they were viewing simultaneously as daily news or holding in recent memory."[46] At least one earlier reviewer believed the allegory between the two wars to be so obvious it needed little explanation. The September 1972 issue of *Variety* magazine stated that "CBS is to be commended for its courage in bringing viewers the lighter side of the long-running Southeast Asian conflict." Nevertheless, the writer believed that *M*A*S*H*'s allegorical focus on the Vietnam War would prove to be an entertainment mistake.[47]

Others weighed in on the reasons for the show's success, and many believed the Vietnam allegory was a significant factor. Dr. George Gerbner, dean of the Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Pennsylvania, thought *M*A*S*H*'s metaphor for Vietnam was an indispensable reason for the series' success. *M*A*S*H*'s popularity, Gerbner pointed out, coincided with the height of anti-Vietnam sentiment in the nation. The show's social consciousness, therefore, found a "sympathetic audience."[48] One fan was surprised that anyone could take *M*A*S*H* literally, explaining that "in historical perspective, *M*A*S*H* is a metaphor that dramatized our national consciousness of guilt and shame about conducting a war thought to have been immoral." That war, of course, was Vietnam, and in her estimation, *M*A*S*H* was black humor for a nation that had lost its way but desperately wanted to reclaim it. "In the future," she believed, "*M*A*S*H* will be 'read' as a metaphor, a satiric comedy that heavy-handedly caricatures

[45] Larry Gelbart, *Laughing Matters*, 30-31.
[46] "Mish-*M*A*S*H*," *Washington Post*, March 4, 1983.
[47] "Television Review: *MASH*" *Variety*, 268 no. 6 (Sep 20, 1972), 28.
[48] "*M*A*S*H* Packs it In: Why We Loved the Gang from the 4077th," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 28, 1983.

the good and the ugly in an attempt to exorcise the demons of a national nightmare in our struggle toward self-knowledge after Vietnam."[49]

Some opinion-makers believed *M*A*S*H* made the Korean War more than "heavy-handed satire" and was instead an escape for a nation enduring the trauma and political divisiveness caused by Vietnam. Journalist Joel Swerdlow articulated such a view in 1980, noting that *M*A*S*H* not only had fought the Korean War, it had "earned the additional distinction of helping America laugh about its Vietnam trauma." Korea was a war similar enough in the popular mindset and thus *M*A*S*H* could be critical of American military action in an Asian land war. A show directly about the horrors in Vietnam would have been unsettling when television news had already covered the war continuously.[50] Swerdlow put it succinctly: "you can't be funny about Vietnam."[51] Producer Burt Metcalfe echoed this sentiment, claiming that the anti-Vietnam message in part helped explain *M*A*S*H*'s popularity. "We're writing about Korea," he said, "but some people see it as Vietnam. It would still be too difficult to do a series about Vietnam. It's still too close and painful."[52] "Vietnam was like a plague," said TV writer Howard Rodman. "If anyone touched it, your arm would rot away."[53]

Certainly these assessments about the Vietnam allegory carry added weight when measured against CBS's financial commitments and comments from producers and stars of *M*A*S*H*. Television is, by and large, a fiscally conservative industry, whose focus on social criticisms will typically follow popular opinion. Networks will not risk the potential financial fallout by being too

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[49] "*M*A*S*H*: A Comic Satire on Warfare," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 7, 1983.
[50] Mike Budd and Clay Steinman, "*M*A*S*H* Mystified: Capitalization, Dematerialization, Idealization," *Cultural Critique* 10 (Autumn 1988), 68. "Like a traumatized patient," Budd and Steinman write, "the culture industry was drawn to the subject it feared, so inescapable had Vietnam become. It needed an alibi to exploit the enormous, seemingly unexploitable emotions the war had generated. Korea was the perfect mechanism of disavowal; for opponents of the war the resemblance to Vietnam was obvious, while for supporters of the war the differences would be crucial."
[51] "*M*A*S*H*: The Staggering Success Story of Those Zany Cut-Ups from the 4077," *Washington Post*, April 27, 1980.
[52] "It's a High-Intensity Farewell When M*A*S*H Folds its Tents," *The Globe and Mail*, February 26, 1983.
[53] Tom Engelhardt, *The End of Victory Culture: Cold War America and the Disillusioning of a Generation* (New York: BasicBooks, 1995), 237-238.

far removed from public sentiment or jeopardize viewership with too strong a focus on socially divisive contemporary issues.[54] As scholar Brian Danielson has argued, however, had the series ignored Vietnam entirely, it would have insulted viewers' sensibilities. Television accounts followed public opinion in turning against the war, and in the early 1970s the American people would not have accepted a sanitized situation comedy about war in Asia with no allusions to Vietnam.[55] A focus on Korea, a war similar to Vietnam in popular memory, remedied this seeming conundrum between fiscal concerns and social criticisms. Moreover, the Korean War gives depth and history to the anti-Vietnam sentiments of the 1970s—making them palpable to audiences without risking commercial failure.[56] As Gelbart later put it, "the then current, real-life war in Vietnam was terribly divisive. The people of the Four-O-Double-Seven were able to articulate many of the sentiments that the increasingly antiwar public felt about being trapped in a place and a situation from which they could not honorably extricate themselves."[57] Film expert Tony Shaw has argued a similar point, noting that the absence of Vietnam in movies and on television in the early 1970s is best explained because "Vietnam was after all the world's first full-scale 'television war,'" and "America's purposes were too vague…its methods too questionable."[58]

But in Seasons Three and Four *M*A*S*H* evolved into a show that dealt more with war's universal impact on individuals and less on metaphorical criticisms of Vietnam. By these middle seasons, sexism and alcoholism—issues that had garnered increased public attention—had been toned down considerably, replaced with themes that showed the war's effect on the characters. Alda

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[54] Budd and Steinman, "*M*A*S*H* Mystified," 65. Budd and Steinman argue that commercial television must deliver an audience to advertisers. "This brutal economic fact," they write, "while not wholly determining cultural/ideological forms, nevertheless sets narrow limits within which capitalist television operates."
[55] Brian Danielson, "(Re)Membering Dissent: Framing Anti-war Sentiment in Public Memory and Popular Culture Through *M*A*S*H*," (Master's Thesis, California State University, Long Beach, 2008), 64-65; Daniel C. Hallin, *The Uncensored War: The Media and the Vietnam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 162-163.
[56] Danielson, "(Re)Membering Dissent," 65.
[57] Gelbart, *Laughing Matters*, 55.
[58] Tony Shaw, *Hollywood's Cold War* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007), 208.

was again the driving force behind these changes, best exemplified by the episode "Crisis."[59] In it, the crew of the 4077th bundle together to keep warm in a single tent when the enemy has cut off fuel supplies, even burning furniture in the midst of a harsh winter. Despite assurances to the contrary, wounded flood the hospital while the crew battles restrictive conditions that lower electrical output and force the rationing of blood. "Crisis" was typical of episodes that showed the impact of war on the unit, and in a very cold, Korean setting.[60]

*M*A*S*H*'s strongest use of the Korean War as allegory, however, was criticism of the psychological demands war placed upon individuals. Alda believed in that message more than anyone connected to the show. What he describes as the "emotional demands" *M*A*S*H* required of its actors lent the series the dramatic effects he believed were inherently present in wartime circumstances. Often episodes would begin with a humorous scene and end with tragedy; sometimes the reverse was true. Either way, *M*A*S*H* explored the many ways regular people—doctors, nurses, soldiers—survived the horrors of war.[61] Alda's father, Robert Alda, appeared in two episodes as Maj. Anthony Borelli, a surgeon with a debilitating drinking problem developed in while serving in both World Wars and Korea. The message of one of those episodes, "The Consultant," is that the stress of war has turned Borelli into an alcoholic. It culminates in a scene where Hawkeye confronts the aging surgeon. "I wanted to get into the game," Borelli explains in his drunken state, "but I'd forgotten how rough the game can be." After two world wars he lacks the fortitude to face another. "I wish you luck on your third war," Borelli remarks to Hawkeye, suggesting that he restrain his criticism of the doctor's drinking.

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[59] Wittebols, *Watching M*A*S*H, Watching America*, 144-145.
[60] Wittebols, *Watching M*A*S*H, Watching America*, 42. As Wittebols points out, the episode resonated with a public worried "about the loss of formerly abundant fuel and energy sources" because of shortages caused by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC).
[61] Alda, *Never Have Your Dog Stuffed and Other Things I've Learned*, 158.

Another episode, "Abyssinia, Henry," featured the death of camp commander Henry Blake. Producers wanted Blake's tragic end to capture the shock and reality of war, its brutality and randomness. It is with a heavy heart that Radar informs the surgeons in the midst of operating that Blake died when his plane was shot down. With tears in their eyes, Hawkeye and Trapper John continue operating. Producers kept the end of the show from the cast to elicit real shock from the actors.[62] "Abyssinia, Henry," also created controversy among viewers. Thousands of phone calls and letters poured in to producers, most of which expressed dismay at Blake's untimely death, especially since the character was rotating out of the warzone. Gelbart took the time to send a handwritten letter to each fan who had written in about Blake's death. He stated that the producers "were trying to make his [Blake's] departure one that would be apt, as well as memorable."[63] On the *M*A*S*H* 30th Anniversary Special, Gelbart further elaborated, noting that "not everybody, not every kid, gets to go back to Bloomington, Illinois. Fifty thousand—we left fifty thousand boys in Korea—and we realized it [Blake's death] was right for the show, because the premise of our show was the wastefulness of the war."[64] As James Wittebols argues, the doctors of the 4077th were in a "no-win proposition," as the war around them continued to ravage bodies and minds, something the episode captured. "The doctors," he states, "really were no match for the destruction, and the audience came to ally with the doctors in this despairing situation."[65]

[62] Wittebols, *Watching M*A*S*H, Watching America*, 183.
[63] "*M*A*S*H* Viewers Upset," *The Atlanta Constitution*, March 25, 1975; Gelbart, *Laughing Matters*, 55.
[64] Gelbart, *Laughing Matters*, 54.
[65] Wittebols, *Watching M*A*S*H, Watching America*, 146.



Figure 4.2 The original cast of M*A*S*H *before the departure of McLean Stevenson and Wayne Rogers in 1975.*

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Why, then, is the Korean War significant in this allegorical context? One reason, of course, is that *M*A*S*H* depicted a previous Cold War conflict in Asia with Vietnam ongoing. But timing alone does not explain the correlation in the popular mindset. Several scholars have written that the similarity between the wars in Korea and Vietnam in the public consciousness made for an easy analogy.[66] Carl Freedman, for example, argues that *M*A*S*H* tapped into popular depictions of monolithic communism, where the past enemy—North Korea—easily stood in for present one—North Vietnam. Most important, these seemingly analogous Cold War conflicts found a cultural resonance in *M*A*S*H*, which functioned as something of a remedy for the turbulence of the contemporary era. The Vietnam debacle had not just destroyed American prestige abroad; at home it had wrecked the postwar anticommunist consensus that had guided American action in Korea.[67] It collapsed in Vietnam, as more Americans accepted the maxim that it was a costly misapplication

[66] Freedman, "History, Fiction, Film, Television, Myth," 92-95, 107; Wittebols, *Watching M*A*S*H, Watching America*, 40-47, 52.
[67] Christian G. Appy, *American Reckoning: The Vietnam War and Our National Identity* (London: Penguin Books, 2016), xv, 13-15.

of anticommunism and containment.[68] By the show's first season (1972), events in Vietnam were winding down in a manner similar to the Korean War: an unpopular war had been fought in a divided Asian nation against a communist enemy; a long negotiation process teetered on the brink of conclusion; thousands of Americans lives, millions of Asian lives, and billions of dollars had been lost to ensure the survival of a noncommunist southern regime.[69] In the words of Wittebols, the "hyperpatriotism, military machismo, and the commie-under-every-bed world view," that *M*A*S*H* presented about the Korean War resonated with an audience now familiar—and often critical—of such a consensus.[70] What *M*A*S*H* did, therefore, was build a critique of the Cold War consensus that had led the United States into Korea and Vietnam. The series' specific anti-Vietnam implications, though, were largely diluted by Season Four and more or less absent after Season Six. Thus, taken as a whole eleven-season series, *M*A*S*H* leveled universal critiques of American Cold War policy and the horrors of war—critiques relevant to Korean and Vietnam alike.

Thus the Korean War setting transported viewers to a place where producers and stars determined what was to be criticized, lampooned, and ultimately remembered. Viewers would have easily recognized stalwart defenders of Cold War interventionism such as Maj. Frank Burns (Larry Linville), whose hypocrisy, prejudice, and arrogance are hyperbolized almost to the point of buffoonery. Major characters ridicule Burns' militarism as blind acceptance to military protocol. In early seasons, the series also lambasts Maj. Margaret "Hot Lips" Houlihan (Loretta Swit) for similar militancy. The war in Korea also allowed criticisms of racial prejudice without weighing directly in on contemporary matters. In "38 Across," Burns insists that "it's a waste of time, saving these slant eyes" when injured Chinese soldiers arrive at the 4077th. But Col. Potter (Harry Morgan) shuts him

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[68] Howard Jones, *Crucible of Power: A History of American Foreign Relations from 1987* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 2001), 412-414. Jones writes that "placed within the context of the Cold War, Vietnam had assumed a perceived importance far beyond reason."
[69] Freedman, "History, Fiction, Film, Television, Myth," 99-104.
[70] Wittebols, *Watching M*A*S*H, Watching America*, 52.

down. "The General Flipped at Dawn" perhaps best connects racial prejudice to the overzealous militarism of the 1950s. Gen. Steele (also played by Morgan before being cast as Potter) arrives at camp for a military review. When Hawkeye uses the only available helicopter to evacuate a wounded soldier, he strands Steele, who declares Hawkeye insubordinate. Military rank and protocol clearly matter more to the general than saving injured GIs. Steele hastily convenes a tribunal against Hawkeye, but demands that the lone witness, a black helicopter pilot, dance before testifying. The entire crew, except Maj. Burns, is disgusted by Steele's racial stereotyping. Another episode, "Dear Dad…Three," portrays a GI who requests "white" blood. "Racism," James Wittebols states, "is clearly portrayed as ignorant and unacceptable."[71] The show's setting, 1950s Korea, allowed producers and actors to suggest such sexism and racism were no longer acceptable in 1970s America.

Some elements may have reminded viewers of Vietnam but figured heavily in the real and imagined Korean War as well. Episodes that dealt with instances of napalm and friendly fire were issues very immediate in popular discourse because of Vietnam, but *M*A*S*H* showed that such matters were prevalent also in the earlier war. Some episodes also dealt with mixed-race children—an issue *M*A*S*H* showed again was not exclusive to Vietnam.[72] The series dealt with the rampant displacement of Korean civilians throughout its eleven seasons. The series finale, "Goodbye, Farewell and Amen," perhaps best illustrates the chaos of war's end as South Koreans search franticly for family members.[73]

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[71] Wittebols, *Watching M*A*S*H, Watching America*, 55.
[72] Wittebols, *Watching M*A*S*H, Watching America*, 147. Wittebols directly connects the episodes about these children to issue of Vietnamese immigrants seeking asylum in the United States. Such children, however, were also a very real issue during the Korean War.
[73] Wittebols, *Watching M*A*S*H, Watching America*, 47. In other ways the issue of displaced civilians echoed between the two wars. In April 1975, only weeks before "Abyssinia, Henry" aired, a plane carrying 243 Vietnamese orphans crashed, killing 150 on board. The United States at the time was embroiled in a political debate over the thousands of Vietnamese-American children left in a traditional Asian society that shunned mixed-race offspring. Some Americans wanted to adopt these children; internationally, the Vatican led charges that such adoptions amounted to kidnapping if the parents were still somewhere in war-ravaged Vietnam.

Over its middle and later seasons, however, *M*A*S*H* developed into a much more socially conscious show. This was in large part a consequence of the wishes of its lead actor, Alan Alda, and new cast members such as Mike Farrell (B.J. Hunnicutt). As the *Boston Globe* noted in 1983, there was "something about *M*A*S*H* that either attracts socially-conscious actors to begin with, or brings out the best in those who've spent any time on the show."[74] Both Alda and Farrell, for example, campaigned for the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA).[75] War refugees, world hunger, and immigrant workers particularly concerned Farrell, and he attributed his off-screen successes to the on-screen social consciousness of *M*A*S*H*: "I feel awfully good about what this show has done," Farrell told reporters towards the end of the series. "I've gotten reactions about the significant effect *M*A*S*H* has had on people's lives—people with alcohol or drug problems, with various personal problems, who have found something in our show that gave them the strength to something that was destroying them…If all we ever did on the show is make the statement that people are valuable, it's worth everything we've ever done." Farrell also credited *M*A*S*H* with the morally uplifting effects television could have on society. He believed that if television taught "negative, sexist, racist, ugly, pointless, anti-human values" people would adopt them. But television had the ability to teach humanity, and that, according to Farrell, "has been the case with *M*A*S*H*."[76]

Alda actively promoted the show's social message as well. He would be at the helm of this message, writing nineteen episodes, rewriting others, and even directing some.[77] Early on Alda made much of the series' socially charged atmosphere. "People should know the bias of the

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[74] "B.J.: A Part Made for Mike Farrell, The Compassionate Doctor of *M*A*S*H* Fights for Human Rights," *Boston Globe*, January 23, 1983.
[75] "*M*A*S*H* Bids Farewell to Cameras," *New York Times*, January 15, 1983.
[76] "B.J.: A Part Made for Mike Farrell, The Compassionate Doctor of *M*A*S*H* Fights for Human Rights," *Boston Globe*, January 23, 1983.
[77] Alda, *Never Have Your Dog Stuffed and Other Things I've Learned*, 155-156.

characters by now and how they feel about killing," the actor said in 1973.[78] "Certainly in terms of liberal political correctness," the *New York Times* noted when *M*A*S*H* was in syndication, "the series…was at least a decade ahead of its time."[79] *M*A*S*H*, in other words, incorporated the very real concerns of its very visible stars.

The Korean War setting allowed these changes to occur in a time, circumstance, and place where they appear more distinctive to contemporary viewers.[80] Margaret evolved to a respected peer, shedding away any remnants of the one-dimensional "Hot Lips" persona. No longer the stereotypical sex object of the film and the early seasons of the television series, she gains the admiration of her male colleagues while developing into a multi-dimensional character. Alda's Hawkeye sees an almost equally pronounced evolution. The rowdy, sex-fueled character of early years gives way to a more compassionate, decent doctor who respects female colleagues and, on occasion, shows them deference.[81] Character replacements see similar role changes. Charles Winchester (David Ogden Stiers), the series antagonist after Linville departed, is a more formidable and arrogant adversary than Burns, while also more sympathetic and cultured. Similarly, Sherman Potter replaced Henry Blake as colonel of the 4077th in Season Four. And like Winchester, the character of Sherman Potter was no stand-in for his predecessor; not only is he more of a "grandfatherly" character in who others confide, Potter is also regular army, and a veteran of both World Wars. In so many ways these character changes—and the evolution of others—represented a change toward more traditional and stereotypical roles, especially ones dealing with gender. Winchester's intelligence, arrogance, and emotional control are typically masculine, while previous antagonist, Frank Burns, had little control over his emotions, was sexually powerless around

[78] "*M*A*S*H*: Madness On and Off of the Camera," *Los Angeles Times*, January 31, 1973.
[79] "Hawkeye and Company in a *M*A*S*H* Salute, *New York Times*, November 25, 1991.
[80] Wittebols, *Watching M*A*S*H, Watching America*, 151.
[81] Wittebols, *Watching M*A*S*H, Watching America*, 144.

Houlihan, and largely incompetent.[82] The character of Max Klinger (Jammie Farr) also undergoes a dramatic transformation, evolving into a typical soldier, and giving up cross dressing and his attempts at a Section Eight discharge.[83] Hawkeye's transformation also included masculinization; not only does he control his sexism, but he also curtails alcohol use.

These changes—and the increasingly socially aware characters who reflected the values of the actors playing them—were not always welcome. Television critic Tom Shales believed that *M*A*S*H* deteriorated over the years, especially after Wayne Rogers (Trapper John) left in 1975. Farrell's Hunnicutt "was too much a mirror-image of Alda's Hawkeye, a character that grew less amusing as Alda himself Got Religion, of the ERA strain, off-camera."[84] Nevertheless, the characters of *M*A*S*H* evolved as contemporary circumstances and the show's message changed.

*M*A*S*H*, therefore, did not remain a static counterculture show—or even one "about" Vietnam—set during the Korean War. The series always critiqued "mainstream" values, and its critique of these conventional standards is perhaps best illustrated in the later seasons when *M*A*S*H* became a more generic situation comedy.[85] *M*A*S*H* had never overtly challenged the necessity of war; its popularity in early seasons resulted from placing its criticisms against Vietnam while suggesting that the war was ineptly managed. Thus the most consistent message audiences received over eleven seasons was that "war is hell." But with the Vietnam War receding in public consciousness, *M*A*S*H* became more abstract and generic in its antiwar themes.[86] Looking back on the series, Gelbart was among those who recognized this phenomenon. "I would almost hope that there would be a way to be even blacker about what war does to people, rather than just to say—and I'm afraid it does, as it always did…that listen: Given the right buddies, and the right CO,

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[82] Budd and Steinman, "*M*A*S*H* Mystified," 70-71.
[83] Wittebols, *Watching M*A*S*H, Watching America*, 69, 147.
[84] "A Farewell to M*A*S*H," *Washington Post*, February 28, 1983.
[85] Wittebols, *Watching M*A*S*H, Watching America*, 160.
[86] Budd and Steinman, "*M*A*S*H* Mystified," 69.

and the right kind of sense of humor, you can muddle through."[87] Had they hoped, as Gelbart had, to make war appear darker, viewers did not always pick up on the message. Mike Farrell recalled letters that said "you guys make war look like fun," while Gelbart recalled one letter writer that was joining the Army because of the show. Commercials for *M*A*S*H* toys celebrated a militaristic interpretation of the show. One Tonka commercial, for example, had a young boy saluting a military official. *M*A*S*H**-themed puzzles and games, T-shirts, and dog tags were incredibly popular throughout the series' original run.[88] The show may have tried to de-romanticize war, but it was not always successful.

What one scholar has called the "moral militarism" present in *M*A*S*H* best explains how the series uses the Korean War to reaffirm broad American values.[89] American collective identity fragmented because of the Vietnam War, argues Brian Danielson, and *M*A*S*H*'s Korean War helped critique the Cold War political consensus that had led the nation into both wars.[90] The show vilified a monolithic communist enemy, promoted liberal theories on progress and modernization, and contrasted between American civilization with Asian otherness. So while *M*A*S*H* certainly leveled allegorical criticisms at the war in Vietnam (in its initial seasons), by vaulting backwards in time over Vietnam to the Korean War, it promoted critiques of a broader Cold War policy environment.[91]

The cast and crew of *M*A*S*H* were always hesitant to call the show antiwar, even when the series made its most pronounced criticisms of American policy. And its later seasons reflect largely a "family ideal," with characters coming together in the midst of the war for personal

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[87] Budd and Steinman, "*M*A*S*H* Mystified," 70.
[88] Budd and Steinman, "*M*A*S*H* Mystified," 70; Gelbart, *Laughing Matters*, 56; Diffrient, *M*A*S*H*, 4-5.
[89] Danielson, "(Re)Membering Dissent," 84-86.
[90] Budd and Steinman, "*M*A*S*H* Mystified," 68. Budd and Steinman see *M*A*S*H* in a similar light to Danielson, arguing that the country was "polarized and traumatized" by Vietnam, and the setting of Korea allowed relevant criticism of the war because Vietnam was "not commercial."
[91] Danielson, "(Re)Membering Dissent," 86-88, 97.

growth.[92] Alda, Farrell, and others wanted their characters to reconstruct humanity in a time of war with contemporary implications. "I hated it when they called us a sitcom," Alda stated. When cast as Hawkeye, Alda expressed concern that the show may end up being "high jinks" and that given the pressure to make it funny, *M*A*S*H* "might make war look like a fun place to be."[93] His fears were quickly assuaged when he met Gelbart and Reynolds, both of whom insisted the show have a serious message about the resilient nature of humanity. Alda always believed the message of *M*A*S*H* was better regarded as "pro-life" than antiwar.[94]

The horrors of war, or the "war is hell" motif, certainly found resonance whatever the producers' intentions. As one reviewer put it, *M*A*S*H* is "the first TV military comedy to be fully award of the horrors of war." Another analysis said, *M*A*S*H* "made Korea as familiar as your backyard," and was a show that was "less comedy than a savagely on-target indictment of warfare and the political military idiocy that feeds it."[95]

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*M*A*S*H*'s allegorical war, its focus on contemporary social criticism, and even its presentation of the war in Korea, however, alienated some viewers. Despite its critical acclaim, despite its popular appeal, and despite the social consciousness of its cast and crew, some critics charged that *M*A*S*H* did not accurately depict the war in Korea. Much of the criticism leveled at the television series attacked its supposed liberal slant—and its seeming condemnation of the United States' role in the war. Some detractors argued that *M*A*S*H*'s allegorical focus on Vietnam misinformed viewers about the real war in Korea. Some believed that the show ignored the

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[92] Budd and Steinman, "*M*A*S*H* Mystified," 71.
[93] Alda, *Never Have Your Dog Stuffed and Other Things I've Learned*, 149.
[94] Alda, *Never Have Your Dog Stuffed and Other Things I've Learned*, 157; "PBS Give *M*A*S*H* Crew Snappy Salute," *Hartford Courant*, January 21, 1981.
[95] "*M*A*S*H* Different from Movie," *Atlanta Constitution*, June 10, 1972; "Single Girl Comedy for Washington," *Baltimore Sun*, January 5, 1975.

outcomes of American action in the Korean War to make larger criticisms of contemporary issues. In short, they believed *M*A*S*H* denied the good that had been done in Korea. Mark Carroll of the *Philadelphia Inquirer* argued this just before the series finale aired in February 1983. "In *M*A*S*H*," he explained, "the griping usually takes the form of blaming the United States for the war. 'More casualties—courtesy of Uncle Sam.'" The show presented the Korean War as if it were "pointless," he insisted, and that "someone whose knowledge of the Korean War began and ended with *M*A*S*H* episodes might think America started the war just for the hell of it." Whether war was the right choice in 1950 or not, Carroll believed that certainly "there was a purpose—a very good and moral purpose—to our involvement in Korea: the deterrence of unprovoked aggression." Instead, *M*A*S*H* characters completely ignored those reasons.[96] Less than a week later, another article criticized *M*A*S*H*'s presentation of Korea. The *Washington Post* was unclear why the series had never shown that American casualties were "incurred in the course of repelling a clear communist aggression" and that the objective of the war—preventing communist takeover of the entire Korean peninsula—was absent in eleven years of episodes. Another fact that *M*A*S*H* never explained, the article insisted, was that the war was a just one, fought for moral reasons, and clearly won.[97]

Others lambasted *M*A*S*H* for sending the wrong messages about the Korean War. "I do not agree that *M*A*S*H* made a statement about war being awful," said Korean War veteran and journalist Bill Stokes. "I think it did just the opposite." Stokes recounted the time he saw a pile of body bags in a MASH unit in Korea. "Whenever *M*A*S*H* flickered on the TV set," Stokes recalled, "that body bag scene came to mind. And the…jokes were never funny enough to make me forget it." In his opinion, the show trivialized the real horror and death of the Korean War. And

[96] "False Picture of *M*A*S*H*," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 28, 1983.
[97] "Mish-*M*A*S*H*," *Washington Post*, March 4, 1983.

*M*A*S*H*'s success made it "practically the only thing…people know about the Korean War. I just have difficulty handling that," he stated.[98] One scholar has criticized *M*A*S*H* similarly, stating that although the show "dealt with men traumatized in battle, too often they were cured in a half-hour format, while such trauma in the real world required months or years of recovery."[99] And the trauma of the war was felt by those who lost loved ones in Korea. Writing in to the popular column "Dear Abby," a widow who lost her husband in Korea pleaded that readers donate money to support a Korean War memorial. "There has been much publicity about the Vietnam Memorial," she wrote, "but the military personnel who fought to secure the freedom of South Korea have only the TV series *M*A*S*H* to remind people that we were there."[100] J. Markel Furniss complained in the *Hartford Courant* that even the word "Korea" was "inherently displeasing to the modern American ear" because all Americans associated with it was the television show *M*A*S*H*.[101] And like Stokes' criticism, some surgical staff who had been in Korea felt similarly. After the show's end, one nurse believed that "there was nothing funny about the evacuation hospitals [in Korea]." "The series," she explained "was an insult to the patients, doctors, and nurses who had experiences in evacuation hospitals."[102]

Korean Americans in particular criticized *M*A*S*H* for stock Asian portrayals, especially when producers cast Vietnamese or other Asian actors as Koreans. Too Soo Chung, a student at the University of California, Los Angeles, in the early 1980s, decried *M*A*S*H* as "woefully deficient and insensitive in its portrayal of the Korean people and culture."[103] The Director of the New York Korean Cultural Service, Tae-Wan Yu, was glad to see *M*A*S*H* end. Yu criticized the series for "building a wrong image of Korea and its people in the mind of the American public." It

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[98] "One Last Word as *M*A*S*H* Fades: The Killing War Wasn't Funny," *Chicago Tribune*, March 8, 1983.
[99] Wittebols, *Watching M*A*S*H, Watching America*, 148.
[100] "Korean War Vets Earned Memorial," *Chicago Tribune*, November 11, 1988.
[101] "Bicycling in High, Beautiful Korea: Far Away from *M*A*S*H* Country," *Hartford Courant*, November 8, 1981.
[102] "*M*A*S*H* Insensitivity," *Chicago Tribune*, March 18, 1983.
[103] "Koreans: The People That 'MASH' Forgot?" *Los Angeles Times*, February 6, 1983.

seemed the *M*A*S*H* phenomenon continued to perpetuate stereotypical images of Korea and Koreans, and the *Christian Science Monitor* believed the same. When the last real MASH deactivated in South Korea in 1997, several of the show's actors were on hand to witness the event. The military band played the series theme song, "Suicide is Painless," but many Koreans present castigated the show for its portrayal of their culture and nation. A reporter on hand agreed that *M*A*S*H* depicted Koreans during the war negatively, stating that "to Koreans, the show is a demeaning portrayal that makes them look poor and cultureless." The show, according to sociologist Lew Seok-choon, was "funny," but a disservice to the nation's image.

Larry Gelbart, however, defended his interpretation of war-torn Korea. "People were destitute," he said. "You could sell your daughter…The first time I came here [as part of Bob Hope's Korean Tour] there were wrecked tanks in the street and the buildings were leveled." In 1997, Gelbart said, South Korea was "magic." And that "magic" was now piercing American misunderstanding, the *Christian Science Monitor* concluded, with Korean brands such as Hyundai and Samsung inundating American markets. Nevertheless, as one American tourist in South Korea proclaimed, *M*A*S*H* "is the only kind of exposure I had to anything Korean."[104] The ubiquity of the show in the popular consciousness made it difficult for some Americans to recognize the realities of postwar South Korea.

Original *MASH* author Richard Hornberger was one of the harshest critics of the television series. Larry Gelbart suggested that the series "took too liberal a turn for him."[105] But Hornberger's disapproval went beyond ideological differences. He disliked the television version because his time in Korea made the show's inaccuracies stand out. On one occasion he stated that the series "sometimes tramples on my memories."[106] "While most critics see an increasingly mature dramatic

[104] "Koreans Don't Cry as Real *M*A*S*H* Folds," *Christian Science Monitor*, June 6, 1997.
[105] "The Anywar Sitcom," *Washington Post*, November 24, 1991.
[106] "The Real Hawkeye Pierce," *Newsweek*, February 28, 1983.

vessel," according to the *Atlanta Constitution*, Hornberger sees "only a fourth-generation Xerox and an attitude that had more to do with the political sensibilities of Hollywood than the bloody realities of Seoul—the war according to Alda." Hornberger was more to the point: "I know more about war than a bunch of undereducated actors who go around blithering those sanctimonious self-righteous noises." Hornberger's tirade did not stop there. "My wife and I were in a hotel room in New Zealand one time and had the choice of watching *The Dukes of Hazzard*, *M*A*S*H*, or an educational program on the artificial insemination of cows," he stated when asked about how much he liked the series. "I chose to watch the cow show."[107]

"I have absolutely no feeling about how it is," Robert Altman, who directed the film, said as the first season of *M*A*S*H* ended. He was not interested in ever seeing the series, since he believed it only diminished the antiwar message of the original film. "To continue it [the *M*A*S*H* franchise] is to diminish the positive effect of the film as an antiwar statement," he said. The television series, Altman believed, promoted a certain "apathy about war. It becomes the same thing as watching the Vietnam war [sic] on television." Altman added years later after apparently watching some of the show that "I abhor it…It's like saying we're going to be in an Asian war every Saturday night."[108]

Even years later, criticism remained that *M*A*S*H* distorted the legacy of the Korean War. On the fiftieth anniversary of the war's beginning, the *Wall Street Journal* wondered "what can we say of a culture where people probably think the Korean War ended with the final episode of *M*A*S*H*?" Although acknowledging the liberal and anti-Vietnam elements of both the film and television show, the newspaper rebuked the stereotypical portrayal of South Koreans—something it compared to the humiliation black Americans faced from minstrel shows. The article ended with a

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[107] "*M*A*S*H* Bows Out: An Atlanta Surgeon Recalls His Days in the Original 'Swamp,'" *The Atlanta Constitution*, February 28, 1983.
[108] "*M*A*S*H*—Scoring a Direct Hit on Some Old Taboos on the Tube," *Washington Post*, January 5, 1975.

rhetorical question, asking if Korean War veterans did not deserve a better legacy than that of a television series that made for poor history.[109]

Certainly the stars of *M*A*S*H* did little off screen to deflect such opinions. Alan Alda was perhaps the most vocal critic of war. Speaking in 1973 of his short stint as an Army officer at the reserve school at Fort Benning, Georgia, Alda said that he was there "mainly learning how to kill people…learning all these rotten things." The actor went on, saying "I still get physically sick at the idea of teaching people how to use a mortar, a machine gun, how to kill people by the hundreds." But Alda insisted that on *M*A*S*H* "we simply show the way things are," a stance that skeptics charged ignored the complexity of the Korean War.

A few years after the show's conclusion, Loretta Swit, who played Margaret Houlihan, hosted a Korean War documentary and found the experience surreal. "There were moments when I was having déjà vu," the actress stated. "It was so similar. The producers of *M*A*S*H* really took care to keep it true. I recognized things. The association was very strong." "Up until this documentary," she continued, "*M*A*S*H* was the only sort of knowledge the people in our country had about Korea." "I recall giving interviews where people would say things about Vietnam and I would have to remind them that this was Korea, but in the final analysis, it doesn't matter much. It could be any war." Swit made the comments while promoting "The Korean War: The Untold Story," a documentary she hosted in 1988, which told the story of four veterans injured during the war. When asked if the war and their sacrifice was worth it, all four concurred, and only Swit disagreed.[110] It was the very sort of viewpoint that frustrated critics of the show.

These commentators expected a show that faithfully portrayed the war and American morality, and found *M*A*S*H* wanting. But such critics missed the show's establishment of virtue

[109] "The Forgotten War," *Wall Street Journal*, June 23, 2000.
[110] "The Korean War Without Comedy," *Chicago Tribune*, May 24, 1988.

and heroism among American servicemen.[111] Despite their personal attitudes against the war, the surgeons of the 4077th operate on those who need medical attention most—friend or enemy, suggesting a great moralism.[112] In "Rainbow Bridge," Hawkeye demands that gravely injured Chinese soldiers receive treatment ahead of only slightly wounded Americans. That same episode presents the Chinese as the stereotypical "Yellow Horde," which Frank shouts repeatedly, but implicitly critiques such racialized language. In another episode, "The Korean Surgeon," North Koreans break into the 4077th to steal medical supplies. The overt paternalism of American saviors aiding helpless Asians is best exemplified in "Private Finance," where Hawkeye tries to save a young girl from prostitution and "B.J. Papa San," where B.J. helps reunite lost family members. In "Bug Out," Hawkeye clearly embodies American pluck and determination, as he stays behind to operate on a wounded soldier despite the encroaching enemy. The new hospital location turns out to be a Korean brothel, and Potter convinces Klinger to give his dress collection to the prostitutes. In "Tuttle," Hawkeye and Trapper John invent a captain, Jonathan Tuttle, to expedite supplies for a children's orphanage. As Brian Danielson argues, "by doing good deeds…the violence inflicted on the front lines of the war by the soldiers the 4077th patches up is justified."[113] In eleven seasons, however, what best exemplifies the morality of the American cause is the ability of the 4077th surgeons to perform in terrible of conditions while retaining their humanity—a concept that serves as the overarching theme of the entire series. "Deluge" best represents this perspective, where the beleaguered surgeons operate on a constant stream of injured personnel—while continuing to joke with each other throughout surgery.

In other cases, CBS acted as something of check on plots that could have potentially been labeled anti-American or offensive. Producers wanted to use the true story of MASH members who

[111] Danielson, "(Re)Membering Dissent," 90-91.
[112] Danielson, "(Re)Membering Dissent," 92-93.
[113] Danielson, "(Re)Membering Dissent," 93.

deliberately tried to get medical discharges by staying outside in the cold weather. Network executives, however, believed the plotline to be "unpatriotic."[114] In short, criticism that *M*A*S*H* poorly represented the United States and its involvement in the Korean War was not always on firm footing; in many episodes, images of American exceptionalism were pervasive, whether by design or by network executives censoring scripts.

Nor should criticism of *M*A*S*H* imply that all reactions were negative. The finale, "Goodbye, Farewell and Amen," which aired February 28, 1983, engendered especially strong reactions. The episode itself was a landmark television achievement, with a larger television audience than either the Super Bowl or the miniseries *Roots*. Viewership reached 125 million, with a Nielsen rating of just over sixty percent, and the episode made over $13 million.[115] Thirty-second commercials sold for nearly half-a-million dollars.[116] "*M*A*S*H*-BASHs," writes Suzy Kalter, "were held in almost every major city to watch the final episode; fans gathered in bars in their old Army fatigues; numerous cities ran blood bank drives concurrent with the last show." Students at several colleges and universities took part in the *M*A*S*H* mania as well. At Yeshiva College, for example, they attended classes in military and surgical garb. A New Jersey college started three courses on *M*A*S*H* to help build interest in history.[117] A high school in Boca Raton, Florida, cancelled homework assignments so student could watch the finale. Across town, a history teacher used the show to teach the Korean War while another assigned the last episode for students to watch.[118] And in Iowa, the Democratic Party rescheduled year-end meetings because too many people were planning to watch the finale. "Everyone is going to be watching *M*A*S*H*," said the

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[114] Wittebols, *Watching* M*A*S*H, *Watching America*, 18.
[115] Wittebols, *Watching M*A*S*H, Watching America*, 138. Over its eleven seasons, *M*A*S*H* made CBS $340 million. Budd and Steinman, "*M*A*S*H* Mystified," 59-60.
[116] Kalter, *The Complete Book of M*A*S*H*, 34.
[117] Budd and Steinman, "*M*A*S*H* Mystified," 60.
[118] Budd and Steinman, "*M*A*S*H* Mystified," 60.

party's state executive director.[119] *M*A*S*H*'s two-and-a-half-hour final episode, in other words, was a cultural phenomenon.[120]



Figure 4.3 The final episode of M*A*S*H *was a cultural phenomenon. Here, Hawkeye (Alan Alda) leaves an endearing message for BJ (Mike Farrell) as his helicopter takes off.*

One of the best testaments to *M*A*S*H*'s enduring success and rootedness in the 1950s was how it rekindled interest in the Korean War among medical personnel who had served there. Taken as a whole (Richard Hornberger notwithstanding) there was little criticism from veterans on how the show portrayed the war. Dr. Henry Holleman, the inspiration for Henry Blake (McLean Stevenson) stated the television series "compares very favorably" with what MASH units were like in Korea.[121] The show and its finale generated a renewed interest in the original MASH unit, the 8055th, that was the basis for the 4077th. But *M*A*S*H*'s success encouraged members of the unit to reconnect long before the series ended in 1983. A decade earlier, at the end of Season Two, Dr. Dale Drake, whose wife had been a nurse in Korea, organized a reunion of the 8055th in Evansville, Indiana. The group reminisced over slideshows from their time in Korea. The memories they shared encouraged more reunions, and members credited their renewed interest about their time in

[119] "M*A*S*H Packs it in Marking the End of a Social Occasion," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 28, 1983.
[120] Kalter, *The Complete Book of M*A*S*H*, 34.
[121] "Real-life 'Col. Blake' of *M*A*S*H* Wasn't a Very Military Type Either," *Atlanta Constitution*, February 27, 1983.

Korea to the success of the series.[122] And the 8055th stayed in contact. Eugene Hesse, who had been a doctor in the unit, organized a reunion in August 1988.[123] Toward the series' end, producer Burt Metcalfe attended a Chicago reunion of other Korean War doctors. "Listening to them tell stories about…the old unit," Metcalfe said, "made me feel that someday we have to have a reunion of the 4077th."[124] Thomas Patrick, a physician in Ann Arbor, Michigan and MASH veteran of the Korean War, coordinated a finale party for other Korean War veterans in his hometown.[125] Chief of the Veterans Administration (VA) and Korean War veteran, Harry N. Miller, enjoyed the show so much he made the fictitious 4077th honorary staff of the VA.[126] In one instance, a former Korean War doctor used interest in the show to advocate for more trauma centers in in Los Angeles, since increased crime had brought in so many gunshot victims.[127]

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*M*A*S*H* portrayed the Korean War for eleven years on television. Yet it was not a simple stand-in for Vietnam. Certainly *M*A*S*H* used the Korean War for particular functions, yet it is important to recognize that the allegorical criticisms of Vietnam were only one component of a socially conscious and very successful television series. *M*A*S*H* retained its popularity over the long run because of the universality of many of its themes: the horrors of war and the triumph of the human spirit foremost among them. Yet the series also resonated with audiences because it adapted to changing times and circumstances. Its initial seasons consciously borrowed much of the anti-Vietnam sentiment of the feature film, yet over time the series incorporated other real-world contexts into 1950s Korea. *M*A*S*H* focused less on the overt sexuality and alcoholism of its lead

[122] "MASH for Real," *Chicago Tribune*, December 2, 1973.
[123] Untitled, *Chicago Sun-Times*, July 18, 1988.
[124] For *M*A*S*H*-aholics, A PBS Documentary," *Los Angeles Times*, Jan 21, 1981.
[125] "The Real Hawkeye Pierce," *Newsweek*, February 28, 1983.
[126] "M*A*S*H Packs it in Marking the End of a Social Occasion," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 28, 1983.
[127] "Former Member of MASH Unit: Doctor Urges County Trauma Centers," *Los Angeles Times*, November 3, 1979.

surgeons and came to rebuke such behavior. These changes illustrate *M*A*S*H*'s evolution within the framework of changing social mores. As the scholar Hal Himmelstein has suggested, *M*A*S*H* was the type of television series that was "a crying out for human improvement," and that such a show "thrives during troubled times when it is possible for both the artist and the spectator to note the contradictions and value conflicts of society."[128] What is more, they reflect the growing liberal consciousness of its cast and crew—particularly the star Alan Alda. By the middle seasons, *M*A*S*H's* criticisms had settled into a generic portrayal of how its protagonists survived seemingly impossible situations brought on by war. And toward the series' end, *M*A*S*H*'s evolution into a more straight-laced military show was perhaps best reflected in new (or evolving) cast members.

The finale was a national phenomenon, and brought much evaluation of why the show was successful. This appraisal reflected in many ways the dichotomy of the series: a Korean War franchise filmed during the Vietnam era that increasingly peddled social consciousness. But the series' portrayal upset some of *M*A*S*H*'s viewership. There were elements of disapproval from diverse sources: some Korean Americans and veterans of the war in particular condemned *M*A*S*H* for being poor history; others more closely associated with the franchise, especially creator Richard Hornberger, slammed the show for its representations of Korea and liberal political leanings. Nevertheless, others involved with the war praised *M*A*S*H*'s depiction of Korea. Despite its many uses and meanings, the series became the primary means for better or worse by which Americans of the era knew about the Korean War.

*M*A*S*H* the series evolved from the antiwar stance of the film and the comic hijinks of the novel. Both had glorified the irreverent attitudes of the lead protagonists, and although the movie's release certainly resonated with the antiwar movement, the book is locked in time in the Korean War. On television, the show too is bound by the war; series producers insisted that

[128] Wittebols, *Watching M*A*S*H, Watching America*, 8.

*M*A*S*H* retain the war's features, an accomplishment they more or less achieved over eleven years and through multiple changes of cast and crew. Nonetheless, as Larry Gelbart and others have stated, it was a conscious decision to incorporate more contemporary concerns. *M*A*S*H* projected a particular view of the Korean War into public consciousness while interjecting present social issues. In both regards these were conscious efforts by the cast and crew and as such, *M*A*S*H* made an indelible impact on American television and Korean War history while using both to project a contemporary social consciousness.

CHAPTER FIVE
THE CONTENTIOUS WAR: THE KOREAN WAR VETERANS MEMORIAL AND THE FIGHT FOR COMMEMORATION, 1981-1995

On July 27, 1995, President Bill Clinton dedicated the Korean War Veterans Memorial (KWVM) in Washington, D.C., exactly forty-two years after the war ended and nearly a decade after a congressional bill authorized its construction. "We honor you today because you did answer the call to defend a country you never knew and a people you never met," the president proclaimed directly to veterans in attendance. "And the world is better because of you."[1] But commemorating a war that many veterans believed the nation had forgotten had been a long and contentious process. In October 1986, soon after *M*A*S*H* ended its run, Congress enacted Public Law 99-572, authorizing the construction of a national monument "to honor members of the Armed Forces of the United States who served in the Korea war."[2] The law created a Korean War Veterans Memorial Advisory Board (KWVMAB), made up of Korean War veterans and headed by Korean War veteran Gen. Richard Stilwell. The board's responsibilities included holding a design competition and raising money for construction.[3]

Congress had rejected a Korean War memorial in both 1982 and 1983. The first bill did not get enough support and the second added a stipulation about making the proposed memorial an "allied forces" monument.[4] Designing the monument—determining how it would commemorate the Korean War—sparked a fight. This debate represented larger questions about how the nation

[1] "Korean War Memorial Unveiled," July 27, 1995 transcript of ABC News with Peter Jennings.
[2] Korean War Veterans Memorial. Public Law 99-572, October 28, 1986.
[3] "House Approves Monument," *Miami Herald*, October 15, 1986.
[4] Kristin Ann Hass, *Sacrificing Soldiers on the National Mall* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2013), 35.

should remember a divisive conflict that cemented a global Cold War policy, but a war that nonetheless was ambiguous to most Americans. Wrestling with that meaning also exposed an increasing impatience by Korean War veterans, who, in the wake of Vietnam, believed their recognition was long overdue. They appropriated the Forgotten War mythos to push for the construction of a monument, pointing to the recently completed Vietnam Veterans Memorial (VVM) to denounce the nation's apathy toward its veterans of Korea.

Finally, the monument fight laid bare a fight to control history. The Korean War Veterans Memorial would deliver a message to future generations about the war and the nation that fought it. The various agencies, committee members, and private architectural firms involved in the memorialization process would jockey to control that message, prolonging the building of the memorial and frustrating each other. In short, remembering Korea was not the problem; agreeing on *what* to remember and *how* to remember it proved difficult.

One of the largest obstacles to the monument's completion was the clutter of government agencies involved with it. The Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) had been established in 1910 to provide expert opinion on public works of art and architecture in the nation's capital.[5] The CFA would advise on the designs put forth for the KWVM. In 1923, Congress had authorized a new agency, the American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC), to spearhead construction of military cemeteries and monuments overseas. In this way, the ABMC monopolized the construction of national monuments in Europe and, once it began operating at home, limited private monuments from being built.[6] The ABMC had wanted to build a Korean War monument in South Korea since the mid-1950s, but Congress withheld funding. Instead, the agency turned the proposed World War

[5] G. Kurt Piehler, *Remembering War the American Way* (Washington, D.C., Smithsonian Books, 1995), 84. "Although it had little legal power," writes G. Kurt Piehler, "[the CFA] played a central role in shaping the development of Washington D.C., and the national memorials built there in the twentieth century."
[6] Piehler, *Remembering War the American Way*, 98-101.

II Punch Bowl Military Cemetery in Hawaii into a commemoration of both wars.[7] The ABMC would, in theory, be responsible for the development of a Korean War memorial from planning to completion. Congress sanctioned it to find an appropriate place in the nation's capital for the memorial. The Army Corps of Engineers was also involved in the process, and oversaw the competition for architectural designs.[8]

Into this already crowded field of agencies came the Korean War Veterans Memorial Advisory Board, whose major task was to approve the design. But to make matters worse, in 1986 Congress passed the Commemorative Works Act (CWA), which made consensus mandatory among the various agencies involved in monument planning in the capital. The act further required a twenty-five-year moratorium to memorialize any event or individual on the National Mall. And it stipulated that "military monuments and memorials may only commemorate a war or similar major military conflict…Monuments and memorials commemorating lesser conflicts…are not permitted."[9] The confusion between the advisory board's stated objective of design approval and the need for unanimous agreement was but one major problem. The organizations often acted independently of one another because of disputes over location on the National Mall and often dealt separately with the various artists and architects who would design the KWVM. Moreover, their goals for the design of the monument sometimes contradicted one another and further dragged out its construction. The differences in potential designs were often subtle but the agencies believed them profound. In the end, the CWA of 1986, the lack of a verifiable chain of command between these agencies, unclear jurisdictional supremacy, and the personalities of some board members dragged the memorialization into a bureaucratic nightmare.

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[7] Piehler, *Remembering War the American Way*, 157.
[8] http://www.nab.usace.army.mil/Missions/Military-Programs/Korean-War-Veterans-Memorial/. (Accessed February 13, 2017).
[9] Hass, *Sacrificing Soldiers*, 39. It seems the chief concern in passing the CWA was fear of an overabundance of monuments on the National Mall.

The biggest problem facing the completion of the memorial, however, was the vehement disagreement between the agencies and artists involved in how the memorial would commemorate the Korean War. Over the years, the committees would review three major designs from the two architectural firms involved, Penn State architectural professors Burns-Lucas, Leon, and Lucas (BL3) and the Washington D.C. firm Cooper-Lecky (CL). BL3 won the KWVMAB design out of a competition of 543 entrants. Its design called for 38 statues of American servicemen (symbolic of the 38th parallel that separated the two Koreas and the 38 months the war lasted) to be moving in an "elusive" and "dreamlike state" toward an American flag, which represented "home."[10] Here the faces of forward-moving combatants would be "alert with caution and strong with resolve." Visitors, BL3 insisted, would experience the timeline—soldiers moving through war and toward peace—"completing the ritual journey of commemoration."[11]

The KWVM, however, became a product of its own contemporary political milieu. Just as larger fears of communist subversion influenced the POW crisis of the 1950s and the social concerns of the 1970s shaped the *M*A*S*H* series, the monument reflected the growing debate of Americans in the late 1980s and 1990s about the importance of racial and ethnic identity. The construction of the KWVM, in short, was as much a reflection of its own era as it was the era it purported to represent. As historian Kristin Ann Hass has shown, just as the building process overcame its seemingly larger obstacle of how it would represent the Korean War, the various agencies involved bogged down over disagreement about the potential racial composition of the nineteen statues.[12] This became the sticking point that blocked the construction of the monument

[10] "Korean War Memorial Depicts 38 Weary GIs," *Wisconsin State Journal*, June 15, 1989.
[11] Veronica Burns Lucas, Don Leon, John Lucas, and Elizabeth Pennypacker Oberholtzer, "Design Statement of the Korean War Veterans Memorial," undated. Author's Possession.
[12] Hass, 46-53.

in its final stages. Committee members wrestled with how to "divide up" the statues racially in a way that would best depict the service, sacrifice, and heterogeneous makeup of the nation.

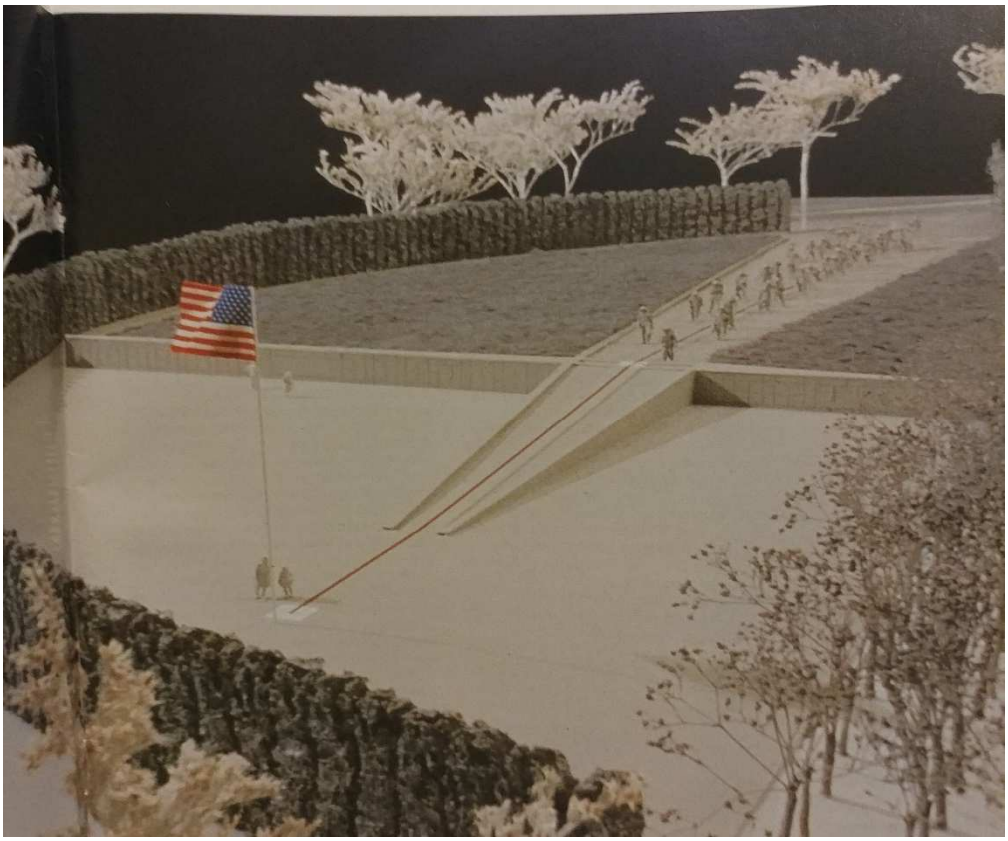


Figure 5.1 A model of the original design for the Korean War Veterans Memorial by BL3.

The CFA, which had first review of the winning design, chose the BL3 design because the agency felt that a line of soldiers was a strong basis for a final design. Of course, this meant the CFA did not view the winning entry as *the* final design, only a starting point.[13] Disagreement over with BL3 over monument changes led to the appointment of another design team, Cooper-Lecky, to overhaul the original proposal. The first major submission from CL, the Delta Scheme, was much more action-orientated, something critics, especially BL3, likened to a battle scene on the National Mall. In this version, soldiers respond to unseen enemy fire, with several tossing grenades and one

[13] Hass, *Sacrificing Soldiers*, 45.

soldier lying wounded.[14] CL's second major overhaul actually brought the design much closer to BL3's original proposal and would be the third and final design. The agencies agreed to cut the number of statues to nineteen because of spatial restrictions, and added a Mural Wall and Reflecting Pool. When President Clinton dedicated the monument in 1995, it was almost a decade after President Ronald Reagan had appointed the memorial board.

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For a war fought more than three decades prior, why did the demand for a Korean War memorial grow so strongly in the 1980s? Part of that answer involves how Americans have typically commemorated wars. National recognition and memorialization of American conflicts reached an apex in the decades after the Civil War. The building frenzy associated with the Civil War essentially bore two distinct visions: the Lost Cause mythos of the defeated South and the nationalist view of reconciliation. Further, that reconciliation relied upon an extensively racialized view of the Civil War built around the imagery of the white male soldier.[15] Commemoration of the Civil War reached its zenith by the turn of the twentieth century and culminated during the Progressive era, which saw a refutation of tributes to generals and wars and focused instead on "living" memorials (bridges, libraries, and parks) that had utilitarian as well as commemorative functions. The ABMC, meanwhile, was actively building monuments to the Great War—in Europe. Despite federal appropriations dwindling during the Great Depression, Congress funded the Gold Star pilgrimages for mothers and widows whose loved ones were interred in Europe.[16] There was little effort after World War II to commemorate it on the national level. Instead, as G. Kurt Piehler has argued, it

[14] Hass, *Sacrificing Soldiers*, 48.
[15] For more on post-Civil War commemoration, see David Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001).
[16] Piehler, *Remembering War the American Way*, 102, 105, 108

was non-traditional monuments: "newspaper photographs, newsreels, motion pictures, and, eventually, television" that memorialized the "Good War."[17]

Thus, in the decades immediately before and after the Korean War, war monuments were largely absent on the national level, relegated instead to local commemoration that acknowledged local sacrifices. But an important change in war memorialization occurred by the early 1980s, spurred by the tumult of the Vietnam War and its memorial. The VVM, erected in 1982, had, according to many conservatives, solidified in stone a stain on an otherwise impeccable national military record. Some congressional members and the Department of the Interior resisted building the monument near the Lincoln Memorial. The Reagan administration openly opposed its construction, and forced the addition of a flag and a "traditional" trio of soldiers. Funded by businessman Ross Perot and sculpted by Frederick Hart, *The Three Fightingmen* (black, white, and Latino) went up in 1984.[18]

According to Gen. Stilwell and other commission members involved with the KWVM, monuments to "victories" could reconcile nationalism they felt destroyed by the divisiveness of Vietnam while telling the "right" story about American military action in the twentieth century. Stilwell especially found the design of the VVM grating. A more traditional Korean War monument that emphasized American military supremacy could reassert national confidence still recuperating from the war in Vietnam.[19] The Korean War, despite its complexity, multilateralism, and unpopularity at home, could be refashioned as a war fought by a united nation with a singular purpose. Equally important, that the VVM was erected so quickly after the end of the war pushed Korean War veterans to seek their own monument. After the construction of the VVM, Korean

[17] Piehler, *Remembering War the American Way*, 135.
[18] Piehler, *Remembering War the American Way*, 172; Andrew J. Huebner, *The Warrior Image: Soldiers in American Culture from the Second World War to the Vietnam Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 273.
[19] Hass, *Sacrificing Soldiers*, 28, 30-33.

War veterans increasingly expressed frustration that their war had been ignored. All this spurred a push by veterans for a monument to the Korean War that offered solutions for conservatives, bureaucrats, and former soldiers. Although veterans wanted a monument to remember their war, Stilwell and his supporters saw the monument to Korea as an opportunity to reclaim American triumphalism.

Veterans' activism in the memorial process is probably best dated to 1981. That year, a Korean American, Chayon Kim, organized the National Committee for the Korean War Memorial (NCKWM). Though Kim was not a veteran, American troops saved her during the war, an act of kindness she was determined one day to repay. Further encouragement came from a meeting with Gen. Douglas MacArthur's widow years later. Kim's organization pushed for private citizens to fund a memorial and made significant inroads with veterans. Her efforts ended, however, when the committee removed her and then fell on financial hardships.[20]

The Reagan White House insisted that the advisory board be made up solely of veterans. Comprised of five CEOs, four colonels, and three generals, the president's appointees were hardly typical veterans. Like Reagan, they saw the proposed monument as an opportunity to undo the "defeatist" style of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.[21] At its dedication in 1982, the NCKWM had handed out questionnaires to GIs about interest in a Korean War memorial. The queries returned a definitive answer: veterans of the war should have strong input on the direction of a Korean War monument. That message resonated up the chain of command all the way to President Reagan, who appointed a board made up entirely of veterans.

[20] Hass, *Sacrificing Soldiers*, 32. One member absconded with more money ($650,000) than the organization had raised ($600,000). By 1984, the NCKWM dissolved, but it provided an impetus for many veterans to see a monument erected.
[21] Piehler, *Remembering War the American Way*, 175. President Reagan believed that radical elements of the left had undermined America's "noble cause" in Vietnam.

With the VVM finished, its stark granite wall seemingly encouraging a sense of national mourning, the resignation of Korean War veterans turned to impatience.[22] As one veteran bluntly told columnist Clark DeLeon, "I think I speak for a great number of your readers when I say we are getting increasingly weary of your columns glorifying Vietnam vets and excluding all other veterans who fought and died for their country. It is particularly grating to a Korean [War] veteran, such as myself…What we're asking for is equal time."[23] His criticisms, like those of so many Korean War veterans, reflected a frustration that in the wake of the Vietnam War and its memorial, the Korean War had truly been forgotten. Much of that indignation reflected a comparison between the two wars, particularly in the number of deaths.[24] Comparing the dead in Korea (54,000) to Vietnam (58,000) provoked calls for a comparable act of remembrance. A national monument would also ensure Korea was remembered in a particular way: as a war, not a "police action," "conflict," or other euphemism.

Congress took note in 1985 of the increased drive among various veterans' associations for a national monument. Korean War veteran and representative Gerald Solomon (R-NY) believed a monument would help justify Korea as a war, not just a "police action." "To the men who fought and died there," he stated, "it was a war plain and simple."[25] A veteran of Lakeland, Florida, Jack Stewart echoed that sentiment. "It's about time someone noticed that Korea was a war," he stated.[26] Another veteran wrote to the editors of the *Syracuse Herald-Journal* that "we deserve a monument for the veterans of the forgotten war. We never had the media coverage that the Vietnam War did because it was so close after WWII."[27]

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[22] Hass, *Sacrificing Soldiers*, 33.
[23] "The Memorial: The Korean Veteran's Lament," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 19, 1987.
[24] "Korean War Memorial," *Orlando Sentinel*, November 11, 1986; "Korean Car Firm to Donate $1 Million to War Memorial," *Philadelphia Inquirer,* November 11, 1986; "Many Readers Remember 'Forgotten War' in Korea," *Miami Herald*, December 19, 1987.
[25] "Korean War Memorial Approved," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 15, 1986.
[26] "Many Readers Remember 'Forgotten' War in Korea," *Miami Herald*, December 19, 1987.
[27] "Letter to the Editor," *Syracuse Herald-Journal*, September 29, 1987.

But the monument would serve other functions besides recognizing Korea's status as a war. A memorial would make up for years of perceived indifference. Columnist and veteran Bob Swift believed an overdue memorial was better than no memorial at all, especially considering the nation's apathy when the war ended. Many Korean War veterans suggested they had come back to a society that had barely noticed they left. "When I went home," Swift recalled, "a citizen saw me on the street and said, 'Hi, Bob, still working at the paper?'" In short, Swift wrote, Korean War veterans had blended back into society and were forgotten.[28] Another veteran stated that people "have done an excellent job of [forgetting], aided by media types who continue to pretend Korea never happened." All the focus on Vietnam veterans in the past few years had yet again ignored Korean War veterans, the writer believed, but the memorial would change that.[29] It was "a vacuum" that Korean War veterans existed in, according Dr. Richard McCormick, who claimed that "our generation got lost between World War II and Vietnam."[30]

But veterans did not wait around, lamenting their forgotten war and its purported lost place in the nation's consciousness. They took an increasingly active role in advocating for a memorial, sometimes independent of any existing organizations. In 1983, for example, Bill Temple had organized the Veterans for a National Korean War Memorial (VNKWM). Over the next three years, his organization lobbied Congress repeatedly, urging representatives to appropriate funds for a monument. Pete Stumberger, a disabled Korean War veteran from Boca Raton, Florida, had fought a similar battle for commemoration for over five years. Col. William Weber lost an arm and leg in combat. He, too, had pressed for a monument since the late 1970s.[31] One veteran put it simply: "All we want is acknowledgment of our deeds." *M*A*S*H*, he insisted, had made the war in Korea

[28] "Honoring Those Who Fell in Another Forgotten War," *Miami Herald*, November 10, 1987.
[29] "The Memorial: The Korean War Veteran's Lament," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 19, 1987.
[30] "Many Readers Remember 'Forgotten' War in Korea," *Miami Herald*, December 19, 1987.
[31] "Korean War Memorial Unveiled," Transcript of ABC News with Peter Jennings, July 27, 1995.

look like a joke, but a monument would correct that picture. "We never stood up for recognition before," he stated, "but we are on a roll now."[32] These veterans helped push other Korean War veterans in Congress to advocate for a memorial.

In Washington, repeated attempts to pass a Korean War memorial bill had floundered, precisely because of how the monument would memorialize the war. A 1982 bill introduced by Rep. John Hammerschmidt (R-AK) and another by Claude Pepper (D-FL) the following year failed because the language of the bills recognized the Korean War as an allied effort under the United Nations (UN) banner.[33] Congressional opposition believed commemoration would need to focus solely on the American war effort. Spurred by congressional action and the efforts of veterans, in October 1986, President Ronald Reagan signed into law the bill authorizing the construction of a Korean War memorial.[34] The following month, the U.S. subsidiary of South Korean car manufacturer Hyundai Motor Company donated $1 million to the project.[35] ABMC Chair Gen. Andrew Goodpaster said the donation could "speed up the construction process six months to two years."[36] With the passage of the Korean War memorial law in 1986 and the outpouring of such support, veterans saw their efforts come to fruition.

Or so they thought. The act provoked further controversy. Representative Bill Frenzel (R-MN) believed it set a "dangerous precedent" by appropriating taxpayer funds for a public monument. As Frenzel pointed out, the recently completed Vietnam Veteran's Memorial had been built entirely by private donations.[37] Chayon Kim's organization, the National Committee for the Korean War Memorial, had echoed Frenzel's complaint, although for different reasons. Michael Panayotopoulos, a legal consultant for the organization, claimed the ABMC and Congress both

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[32] "Letter to the Editor," *Syracuse Herald-Journal*, September 29, 1987.
[33] Hass, *Sacrificing Soldiers,* 35. The United States, of course, comprised the bulk of UN troops.
[34] "Now It's Law," *Charlotte Observer*, October 29, 1986.
[35] "Korean War Memorial," *Orlando Sentinel*, November 11, 1986.
[36] "Korean Car Firm to Donate $1 Million to War Memorial," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 11, 1986.
[37] "Korean War Memorial Authorized," *San Jose Mercury News*, October 15, 1986.

knew of the group's desire to build a monument through private donations. Panayotopoulos said the ABMC plan was "an affront, to say the least." At that point, the KWVMAB had already raised $400,000, but congressional representatives and the ABMC believed the government funding would spur the monument's development. As one member of the ABMC put it, the monument "should not be the subject of controversy."[38] But criticism continued. One outspoken Korean War veteran panned the building of a monument altogether, stating that he believed the money would be better spent improving the lives of the poor and handicapped. "After all," he asked rhetorically, "isn't that the reason why we fought wars—to make this world a better place to live?"[39] There was also disagreement on where the memorial would be built. The ABMC wanted to build it near the Jefferson Memorial, in the so-called "monument corridor." The Vietnam Veterans Memorial had been built there, but now Congress strongly resisted the location for fear of overcrowding.[40] Secretary of the Interior Donald Hodel, whose department oversaw the ABMC, asked Congress for an exemption on the ruling.[41] Congressional backers, especially Reps. Montgomery and Florio, considered inclusion in the area a "fitting tribute" to Korean War veterans.[42] It took Congress until March 1988 to approve the location on the Washington Mall, almost a year and half after the president had signed the memorial act into law.

The biggest controversy surrounding the memorial, however—and one that would consistently defer its completion for the next nine years—was its character. Veterans wanted to ensure Korea's rightful place with other conflicts of the century. For them, the proposed monument would correct the indifference they perceived from the American public. For the KWVMAB, it would rectify the defeatist imagery of the American military in the wake of the

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[38] "Panel Pushes for Korean War Memorial," *Mobile Register*, April 20, 1984.
[39] "We Could Honor the Dead More by Improving Lives of the Living," *Seattle Times*, November 19, 1986.
[40] "Korean Car Firm to Donate $1 Million to War Memorial," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 11, 1986.
[41] "Memorial Proposals for Korea, Blacks Advance," *Houston Chronicle*, November 11, 1987.
[42] "Overdue Salute to 'Silent Veterans': Congressmen Urge Korean War Memorial in Washington," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, December 9, 1987.

Vietnam War and its memorial. At this point, the Penn State professors won the open contest the advisory board held and legally organized themselves as BL3.[43]

The Penn State professors insisted their design "stages the experience of moving through war, of release from war into the embrace of peace, and of reflection upon war." Furthermore, the specific nature of the design "embodies shared knowledge of the War and expresses the shared gratitude of the American people." The sources of inspiration were many, the architects stated, from "highly personal recordings of the war experience" to "moving accounts" by veterans. Photojournalist David Douglas Duncan's book *This Is War!* (1951) provided additional inspiration, and BL3 believed he had captured the movement of troops, the Korean landscape, and the "human faces full of courage, commitment, and hope."[44] BL3 believed the transition from war to peace to be the most important characteristic of the monument and firmly resisted criticism from the KWVMAB and Gen. Stilwell, who called their proposal "boring," but approved it nonetheless, because each agency believed the winning design to be a starting point and not the final design.[45]

These varying perspectives could reach no common ground; the commissioners saw the war's significance in strikingly different terms than BL3. The language of the design competition best illustrates how the KWVMAB wanted the monument to express and honor American military action: "The memorial will express the enduring gratitude of the American people for all who took part in that conflict under our flag. It will honor those who survived no less than those who have given their lives, and will project in a most positive fashion, the spirit of service, the willingness to sacrifice and the dedication to the cause of freedom that characterized all participants." Further, the monument must "radiate a message that is at once inspirational in content and timeless in meaning."

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[43] William P. Lecky, *Designing for Remembrance: An Architectural Memoir* (Rumford: LDS Publishing, 2012), 33.
[44] Veronica Burns Lucas, Don Leon, John Lucas, and Elizabeth Pennypacker Oberholtzer "Design Statement of the Korean War Veterans Memorial,", undated. Author's Possession.
[45] Untitled, *New Haven Register*, October 25, 1990.

In the end, the Korean War Veterans Memorial had to promote "hope, honor, and service." In such a view, dedication to a national cause—even one that had ended in stalemate—was honorable. The memorial would show that sacrifice was a necessary component of ensuring that freedom endured. The designers would further need to avoid abstract interpretations of war like the VVM. If that message was not completely clear, the KWVMAB insisted that "Any design which has inherent in it an essence of grief is not acceptable." Regardless of the realities of the Korean War—its brutal combat, stalemated armistice, and tenuous peace—this was to be a monument to American military strength.[46]

Clearly, the advisory board had chosen a winning design that it believed had potential but did not meet all of its requirements. Stilwell demanded changes BL3 believed were overly militaristic and romantic. That disagreement would form the basis for a political, legal, and media controversy between the two sides for years. The contentious battle over the Korean War Veterans Memorial was a reckoning with the war's meaning, what it had achieved, and how it would be represented and memorialized on the national landscape.

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On Flag Day, June 14, 1989, President George Bush unveiled the winning design for the Korean War Veterans Memorial developed by Burns Lucas, Leon, Lucas and Pennypacker Oberholtzer.[47] "Until recently," the president told members of the press and dignitaries in the Rose Garden, "the Korean War was not formally remembered. And today, we say no more; it's time to remember." Bush's dedication speech focused on the need to remember the major achievement of the war: creating a lasting peace on the Korean peninsula. Calling the Korean War "too little appreciated and too seldom understood," he insisted that American action helped "halt aggression"

[46] Hass, *Sacrificing Soldiers*, 39-40.
[47] Pennypacker Oberholtzer soon became pregnant and withdrew from the competition. The remaining three organized themselves legally as BL3. Lecky, *Designing for Remembrance*, 33.

from totalitarian communism. According to the president, the memorial would not only recognize veterans' contributions, but, equally important, what the war had accomplished. President Bush then personally thanked the Penn State architects, calling their design an example of what home must have represented while fighting in Korea.[48]

After the public unveiling of BL3's winning design, the organizations involved in constructing the memorial, particularly Gen. Stilwell's advisory board, began demanding changes to the monument to make it more action-orientated, changes BL3 resisted and repeatedly claimed "glorified war."[49] Those modifications, the Penn State architects believed, would alter the meaning of their monument. BL3 claimed that by July 1989 "rumors" reached them that they would be disqualified from further consultation if the firm did not agree to all proposed changes. Meetings with the involved committees were indefinitely postponed; word came from John Vogle of the ABMC that no one took BL3 seriously—they were "four professors who did the design over a weekend."[50] In October, the KWVMAB formally brought on Cooper-Lecky as the primary firm of record, and allowed BL3 to stay on in an advisory role. The first round of changes CL presented would be known as the Delta Scheme. According to John Lucas, one of the Penn State architects, there was never an announcement to BL3 nor an opportunity for them to present their case.[51]

In the coming years, Cooper-Lecky proposed changes that would alter the BL3 design in several ways. Most significantly, the number of statues would be cut in half because of space constraints. The soldiers would also be given ponchos to signify the harsh winters of Korea. The firm's design would initially remove the American flag and then add it again, but never again as a

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[48] "Remarks of President George Bush at Ceremony for Winning Design for Korean War Veterans Memorial," Transcript from Federal News Service, June 14, 1989. Bush also thanked numerous people for making the memorial possible. Gen. Raymond Davis, recipient of the Medal of Honor in Korea; KWVMAB Chair Gen. Stilwell; and even the readers of "Dear Abby," who had raised more than $330,000 for the memorial.
[49] "The Korean Conflict—Memorial Raises a Ruckus," *Orlando Sentinel*, April 1, 1991; Hass, *Sacrificing Soldiers*, 46.
[50] Veronica Burns Lucas, Don Leon, John Lucas, letter to Arthur Kornblut, July 25, 1990. Author's Possession.
[51] Veronica Burns Lucas, Don Leon, John Lucas, letter to Arthur Kornblut, July 25, 1990. Author's Possession.

symbolic objective for the statues to reach. The inclusion of a mural wall would present the faces of more than 2,400 military personnel, signifying a striking contradiction with the wall of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, which listed the names of military victims. As the mural wall suggests, above all else, the Cooper-Lecky design sought to avoid the somber imagery and "victimhood" Stilwell and the advisory board associated with the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

BL3 claimed that in the ensuing months, Cooper-Lecky intentionally pushed them out of their advisory role in planning the monument. By mid-1990, John Lucas charged that CL had begun designing the monument without consulting the Penn State architects and that he was refused an opportunity to help select a sculptor.[52] CL allowed BL3 to "observe" the sculptor meeting if "we keep our mouths shut."[53] Meanwhile, BL3 insisted it could still make these changes the commissions considered vital to make the monument work: a wider walkway, details on the statues, and more areas with lawn. But Cooper-Lecky went forward with these proposed changes without consulting the Penn State architects. BL3 believed that if they were permitted to address the commissions' concerns, they could keep the original idea without redesigning the entire monument. Cooper-Lecky, Lucas claimed, assigned BL3 "homework" of identifying the "essential" parts of the monument while planning to redesign it regardless.[54]

The hesitancy by Cooper-Lecky to involve BL3; the numerous cancelled meetings; the proposed changes; the beginning of construction presentations without consulting BL3: to Burns-Lucas, Leon, and Lucas, these moves were all designed to wrest control of the monument from them. In a hand-written note to fellow architect Arthur Kornblut, Lucas insisted "we have continued to try to reason (and pressure) CL to return to the original design development.

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[52] William Lecky refutes this statement—claiming that he and partner Kent Cooper "were somewhat surprised" that BL3 had never selected a sculptor for their design, especially since the soldiers would be the "a major, if not the primary, element in their design." Lecky, *Designing for Remembrance*, 39.
[53] Veronica Burns Lucas, Don Leon, John Lucas, letter to Arthur Kornblut, July 25, 1990. Author's Possession.
[54] Veronica Burns Lucas, Don Leon, John Lucas, letter to Arthur Kornblut, July 25, 1990. Author's Possession.

However, they continued to move in a direction away from the competition-winning design and proceed without our input."[55]

What that direction meant, according to BL3, was a complete reimagining of the Korean War and how it should be commemorated. The first Cooper-Lecky revision, the Delta Scheme, had thirty-seven soldiers engaged in combat-ready positions, returning fire and tossing grenades at an (unseen) enemy. The thirty-eighth soldier lay wounded on the ground. Kent Cooper described the GIs as being "subject to hostile action…They are alert." The Delta Scheme captured Stilwell's desire for a "heroic" monument, where American soldiers fought off the enemy. When that proposal reached the press, however, the *New Haven Register* called it a "GI Joe battle scene," which honored war instead of Korean War veterans.[56] Similarly, the focus on a scene of violence frozen in time was too much for the CFA, which called it a "battle scene on the hallowed Washington Mall" and claimed it had "too many elements." The CFA insisted Cooper-Lecky tone down the action.[57]

The "GI Joe" design of the Delta Scheme was anathema to the original BL3 proposal, which imagined the transition from war to peace as the most important characteristic of the monument. BL3 refused to work with CL in incorporating the proposed changes and were dismissed from the project. In response to the termination of their contract, BL3 organized a public relations and legal firestorm. The professors arranged a letter-writing campaign from supportive architects and members of Congress that decried the commissions' actions and took their case to the media and to the courts. What is most significant about BL3's challenge to these proposed changes is how the

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[55] Veronica Burns Lucas, Don Leon, John Lucas, letter to Arthur Kornblut, July 25, 1990. Author's Possession.
[56] Untitled, *New Haven Register*, October 25, 1990.
[57]Hass, *Sacrificing Soldiers*, 48; "War Memorial Change Approved," *Press of Atlantic City*, February 22, 1991; "Panel Rejects Korean War Memorial Design," *Tulsa World*, June 29, 1991. William Lecky later stated that CL would work from that point forward to make the troops "more impressionistic." That decision, of course, brought the statues more in line with BL3's original proposal. The CFA rejection frustrated the ABMC and the KWVMAB, leaving them unsure how to approach the design for a third time. Col. William Ryanof the ABMC in mid-1991 even suggested that it might be necessary to begin again with the second-place design by Ronald Mims. "We are disappointed," Ryan stated, "because time is of the essence."

architects argued their position. In letter after letter, appeal after appeal, they claimed that the agencies who opposed them were legally, ethically, and artistically wrong to alter their original design.

But most striking, however, was *how* they framed their petition: to modify the original concept was to rewrite history, to remake the Korean War into a glorious conflict offensive to the true reasons veterans had fought, which was to survive and come home. In a December 1990 press conference, BL3 explained that their monument adhered to the competition guidelines "to express the enduring gratitude of the American people" for the veterans who both gave their lives and survived the war and the "patriotic values" of service, sacrifice, and the cause of freedom. Further, there was no indication that the winning design would be a simple "starting point" or that it was a concept solicited to be altered by others. At best the original design competition would "determine the design for a memorial to honor the achievements of the American Veterans of the Korean War." The ABMC would "retain ownership and right to use" the winning proposal, but the competition also allowed the original designer to remain consultants for the final designers. BL3 had been offered that position, but felt it necessary to sever ties when CL suggested drastic changes. To reiterate the strong support elicited for their design, BL3 quoted a letter in their possession from Gen. Stilwell to Gen. Goodpaster, then-Chair of ABMC, which reflected Stilwell's initial support for their design. The BL3 design, he stated, "best reflected the foregoing imperatives and, thus, best conformed to the [board members'] visualization of the Korean War Veterans Memorial to be ultimately constructed on the historic Mall."[58]

BL3 told press members that "a small group of very powerful people" were intentionally changing the concept of their proposal to alter the meaning of the memorial. This new vision would

[58] Veronica Burns Lucas, Don Leon, John Lucas, letter to Arthur Kornblut, July 25, 1990. Author's Possession. Stilwell's initial comments about the BL3 design, of course, were in comparison to the other original submissions, not CL's design changes.

"glamorize and romanticize" in a way they believed Korean War veterans did not want. "The truth of the War, the truth of the national competition, and a truthful democratic process have all been dismissed," they told reporters. BL3 stated their only recourse was to bring a lawsuit against the boards involved. To be sure, however, BL3's criticism of the Cooper-Lecky design lacked specific substance. BL3's accusations were not fully substantiated, since Cooper-Lecky had yet to finalize their design.[59]

Nevertheless, BL3 pursued legal recourse. In December 1990, they filed suit against AMBC, the KWVMAB, the Corps of Engineers, and Cooper-Lecky, claiming, as Don Leon put it, that from "behind closed doors, they surreptitiously developed another design and they have managed to slip before the public, in recent days, their own ideas for the memorial -- ideas that glamorize and romanticize the act of war." The suit sought an immediate injunction against Cooper-Lecky and $250,000 in damages. Without specifying how or what changes "glamorized and romanticized" the war, BL3 resorted to reaffirming the merits of its design. They believed the memorial should show the effects of the war on the individual and how the promise of home helped him endure it. BL3 had intentionally avoided the larger geopolitical questions of the Cold War; nor did their design refer to the North Korean or Chinese enemies. Their design would not valorize a war that had ended in stalemate and had settled along an uneasy truce line American soldiers continued to safeguard.[60]

BL3 received support from many architectural firms and organizations that echoed their accusations against CL. Frederick S. Osborne, Jr., Director of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, for example, wrote to Gen. Stilwell on behalf of BL3 in early 1991. Osborne criticized the proposed changes as appearing "strung together," and that CL's changes "glorified and

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[59] John F.C. Kenny, Jr., letter to Neil H. Porterfield, December 31, 1990. Author's possession.

[60] Hass sees this difference of designs best exemplified by John Lucas, who stated "patriotism is the primary narrative theme of the memorial…We hope that visitors will be stimulated by the symbolism to think about the nature of the war itself." This ordering—patriotism and then the nature of the war—show their primary concern was explaining what the war was like for individual soldiers, or "*this is what the war felt like.*" Hass, *Sacrificing Soldiers*, 44.

romanticized war." CL "did not address the solemnity" of what a Korean War memorial should embody. Cooper-Lecky had proposed such radical changes to the monument Osborne felt the "true success" of remembering Korea correctly was at stake, and he had a "professional responsibility to say so."[61] Other architects pleaded for BL3's vision of the Korean War Veterans Memorial. Atlanta Chapter President of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) Richard Rothman put the full weight of the 1200 members of his chapter behind the Penn State group, telling the Department of the Army that BL3 "has been denied a voice in the detailed development of its design."[62] Individual members of the AIA also affirmed their support for BL3.[63]

BL3 also petitioned representatives on Capitol Hill. Congressman and Korean War veteran William F. Clinger, Jr. (R-PA) was perhaps the architects' staunchest ally on Capitol Hill. Clinger affirmed his support for the Pennsylvania architects to the Chairman of the Commission of Fine

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[61] Former president and current fellow of the American Society of Landscape Architects William G. Swain also advocated for BL3. In December 1990, Swain contacted all major bureaucracies associated with the KWVM and insisted that reneging on the Penn State design was a blow to the monument's meaning, design competitions, and the very nature of democracy. "That done," he warned, "kiss our magnificent Federal City and a lot more, goodbye." Frederick S. Osborne Jr., letter to Don A. Leon, January 22, 1991; Note on American Battle Monuments Commission; National Park Service; National Capital Planning Commission; National Park Service; U.S. Commission of Fine Arts; U.S. Department of the Army (Corps of Engineers) RE: Memorial: Veterans of the Korean Conflict, undated. William G. Swain, Fellow and Past President, American Society of Landscape Architects. Author's Possession.

[62] Rothman recommended all AIA presidents of the South Atlantic Region contact the Department of the Army, the Army Corps of Engineers, and the Korean Veterans Association in solidarity with BL3. Richard Rothman, letter to Murray Geyer, August 2, 1991; Richard Rothman, letter to Chapter Presidents in the South Atlantic Region, August 2, 1991. Author's Possession.

[63] Stephen Robinson, letter to John Lucas, August 19, 1991; Peter Huberman, letter to William Taylor, August 6, 1991; Peter Hand, letter to James Lawler, July 15, 1991; Alexander Carter, letter to Sam Nunn, August [?] 1991; Alexander Carter, letter to Ben Jones, August [?], 1991; Alexander Carter, letter to Wyche Fowler, August 1991. Author's Possession. One supporter, Stephen Robinson, was "amazed at the bastardization" of BL3's design. He told John Lucas in August 1991 that the monument would be "a part of our national identity" seen by much of the public. Although he felt the AIA could do very little as an organization, Robinson reiterated his support for BL3 in "what must be a very difficult process." Robinson also sent letters of advocacy to AIA President James Lawler and Congressional Representative John Lewis (D-GA). Backing came from the AIA in North Carolina as well. In 1991 local chapter President Jeffrey Huberman lent his support to BL3 and its vision of the monument. AIA member Rob Miller contacted Senator Wyche Fowler (D-GA) that same year also to voice support for BL3. Peter Hand suggested to national AIA President James Lawler that the organization file an *amicus curie* brief over the dispute. Alexander Carter of the architectural firm Nichols, Carter, Grant contacted several members of Congress for BL3, sending out copies of a letter that John Lucas had approved. In 1992, BL3 continued to attack, sending out another 150 or so letters, asking that members of the architectural community send them out in a show of solidarity to political representatives and others in the architectural profession. Other contacts included the Dean of the College of Architecture at the University of Florida; the National Organization of Minority Architects; the American Society of Landscape Architects; the American Institute of Architects for the second time; and the Nordhammer Foundry. The group even contacted the original designer of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Maya Lin.

Arts (CFA), J. Carter Brown. "As a Korean War veteran," Clinger told the chairman, "I was especially proud that this memorial was to be based upon a powerful proposal submitted by constituents of mine."[64] But Brown and the CFA had no plans to support the Penn State design, which he described to Gen. Paul Kelly, head of the American Battle Monuments Commission, only a week earlier as "less than the sum of its parts." The decision of the CFA was "difficult," Brown explained to Clinger, but unanimous. The CFA would ensure that the Korean War Veterans Memorial was a "dignified" monument worthy of those who had fought in Korea.[65] Clinger found the agencies just as obstinate as did the Penn State architects. Again, they could stall because of the confusing structure of monument planning. Edward Dickey, the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works, laid blame with the American Battle Monuments Commission, not the Army Corps of Engineers.[66] In only a technical sense was he was correct, because the ABMC had been the superior agency in monument planning.[67] But his response exposed the murkiness of the entire approval process: the ABMC had a say, but the KWVMAB would get the final approval.[68]

BL3 and Clinger seemed to be going in a loop. Maj. Gen. A.J. Adams of the ABMC told Clinger that "it is the norm rather than the exception for changes, sometime[s] significant, to be made to an original design in order for it to satisfy all reservations and requirements of the approving authorities." Thanks to Cooper-Lecky, Gen. Adams believed "we are well on the road to

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[64] William F. Clinger, Jr., letter to J. Carter Brown, July 17, 1991. Author's Possession. Representative Clinger gained the support of Senators Arlen Specter (R-PA) and John Heinz (R-PA), and Secretary of the Interior Manual Lujan among others to aid the BL3 cause.

[65] J. Carter Brown, letter to Paul X. Kelly, July 12, 1991. Author's Possession; J. Carter Brown to William F. Clinger, November 21, 1990. Author's Possession. In a letter to Congressman Clinger only a few months earlier, Brown had promised that the Penn State architects would "have an opportunity to address the current situation." Brown also suggested that his agency was not responsible for the final decision on the memorial, and that Clinger should direct his complaint to the American Battle Monuments Commission.

[66] Edward Dickey, letter to William F. Clinger, November 20, 1990. Author's Possession.

[67] Kirk Savage, *Monument Wars: Washington, D.C., the National Mall, and the Transformation of the Memorial Landscape* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2009), 281.

[68] John H. Sununu, letter to William F. Clinger, November 16, 1990. Author's Possession. BL3 and its supporters tried to lean on the other commissions to pressure Gen. Stilwell and the KWVMAB. Finding no support, they turned to the White House, but it was reluctant to intervene in the dispute. Chief of Staff John Sununu promised "to run [Rep. Clinger's] letter by some folks here for their input," but nothing came of it.

an approved design that the Korean War veterans can embrace with considerable pride." Gen. Stilwell stated that the evolution of the design was in complete accordance with the law and the expectations of the ABMC and Korean War veterans. The changes suggested by CL, Stilwell maintained, would better "define and elaborate the concept" put forth by BL3, although those changes had yet to be approved by all committees. Nevertheless, the general suggested that Congressman Clinger go to the Cooper-Lecky firm and view the model in person.[69]

The very public and protracted debate over the monument caused considerable consternation for those involved. Bill McSweeny, member of the advisory board, told Stilwell that it had turned into "the very worst of all public relations" because "the Memorial is becoming less the Korean War Veterans Memorial and more that it is Gen. Stilwell vs. the architects." The board had to get back on track, because it was "losing that battle [in the press]," McSweeny bluntly told the general. He feared that support for *any* design would dissipate if the board did not get a handle on media coverage. "If we continue to create great controversy without properly answering BL3," he warned, "we are likely doomed with the very public whose funds we need." McSweeny believed that the Penn State Architects were winning in the court of public opinion and that Stilwell's obstinacy was hurting the completion of the monument.[70] There was merit in McSweeny's fears—the original estimate of $6 million to build the monument had swelled to almost $15 million, with less than half

[69] Glen T. Urquhart, letter to William F. Clinger, November 14, 1990; A.J. Adams, letter to William F. Clinger, November 19, 1990; Richard Stilwell, letter to William F. Clinger, November 27, 1990. One bright spot seemed to be former KWVMAB member Col. John F.C. Kenney, Jr., who insisted CL's changes were an affront to the legacy of the war. He expressed dismay at the "the potential trivializing of what started out to be a powerful, compelling Memorial design." The most contentious design change Cooper-Lecky advocated was removing the American flag toward which the statues would be walking. For Kenney (and BL3), this proposal was non-negotiable. As he put it, "the most critical, and emotional, feature of the design was encompassed in idea that both the walking figures and visitors to the Memorial could share the impact of seeing the flag…'rise' higher and higher into view as they ascended the slope." Objectors had politicized the inclusion of the flag, Kenney insisted, when instead it was to be a symbol of what soldiers fought for in Korea: to make it home after serving their country honorably. The monument to Korea's soldiers would, in short, lose its "precious dignity" under the CL design. John F.C. Kenney, Jr., letter to Neil H. Porterfield, December 31, 1990. Author's Possession.

[70] Bill McSweeny, letter to Richard Stilwell, November 21, 1990. Author's Possession.

raised by 1991. The American Battle Monuments Commission predicted the memorial would not be completed until 1993.[71]

National coverage bore out McSweeny's concerns, often repeating BL3's insistence that the new CL proposal "glorified" the war. The bureaucratization of the monument was the main problem according the *Columbus Dispatch*, which complained that there were too many "oars in the water" on the project. "An uneasy peace fell on Korea years ago," the paper noted. "How sad and foolish that—a generation later—a war of words still rages in Washington."[72] The *Harrisburg Patriot-News* was also critical of the proposed changes, stating, "we share the concern of the Penn Staters whose design for a Korean War memorial in Washington has been revised to take on a 'radically different character [that] glorifies war." It was rapidly becoming a monument to "bureaucratic arrogance" instead of a fitting tribute to GIs of the Korean War.[73] That same assessment colored the perspective of the *New Haven Register*, which insisted that the bureaucrats "should keep their hands off." The big brass and politicians were trying to "sabotage" a monument that veterans had chosen and replace it with one that "glorifies war instead of honoring the Americans who answered the call to defend the freedom of the Korean people."[74] And media sources throughout the nation continued to cover the commemoration in such a way, quoting Burns Lucas, Leon, and Lucas that the problem was the politicization of the memorial and that Cooper-Lecky's changes would provoke a radical reimagining of the war.[75]

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[71] Untitled, *New Haven Register*, October 25, 1990.
[72] The *Torrance* (CA) *Daily News*, agreed, stating that the problem was "bureaucratic in-fighting and bungling." There was a perfectly good monument ready to be built, but in the hands of politicians and special interests, it had been "designed to death." And with the CFA having rejected the original model, the costs would increase and veterans would wait even longer. "Design Flap—Korean War Memorial Still in Dispute," *Columbus Dispatch*, November 11, 1990; "Korean War Memorial Losing Ground," *Torrance Daily Breeze*, February 11, 1991.
[73] Weeks later the same paper criticized the time wasted in building the monument and quoted BL3's attorney, Robert Sokolove, who said the original monument had been "virtually obliterated" by bureaucratic wrangling. "Monument to Bureaucratic Arrogance," *Harrisburg Patriot-News*, October 28, 1990; "U.S. Refuses to Salute State Firm's War-Memorial Design," *Harrisburg Patriot-News*, January 18, 1991.
[74] "Korean War Memorial Sabotaged," *New Haven Register*, October 26, 1990.
[75] "Korean War Memorial Design OK'd," *Tulsa World*, November 10, 1990; "Controversial Korean War Memorial Ok'd," *San Jose Mercury News*, November 9, 1990; "Korean War Memorial Altered," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, November

Of course, in framing it in such a manner, this type of editorialization presented the memorial debate in stark, David-and-Goliath terms—a few architectural professors against the "bureaucrats and retired colonels and generals in Washington." It was "the little firm" that "Washington critics" had vilified as those "temperamental, elitist, inflexible…academics."[76] Korean War veterans had the right to choose the design of their monument, another article insisted, "not those who do their fighting from behind desks in Washington."[77]

The article addressed another bigger problem: Stilwell's advisory board continued to raise money for the monument using illustrations of the original design, something BL3 vehemently opposed.[78] John Lucas maintained that BL3 would never have entered the contest had they known their consent would be taken away and that the image of their design would be used to support an entirely different monument.[79] Col. William Ryan of the American Battle Monuments Commission insisted that the original images were used because they were all that were available. He also added that the new proposal was so much better than BL3's original that "it's unbelievable."[80]

It was always more than a simple disagreement over architecture, John Lucas insisted. Cooper-Lecky was proposing "Disney World on the Mall, a temporal theme park and a rewrite of history." It was a difference over what type of conflict the Korean War was and how it would be commemorated. Don Leon claimed CL's revisions transformed Korea into a victory that it never was. "In our understanding of it," he stated, "it couldn't be called a victory or a defeat." Media

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9, 1990. The press never fully explained its position that the BL3 proposal best reflected the wishes of the war's veterans. I would suggest that in speaking for Korean War veterans, the media wanted to see a monument go up as soon as possible, and the original model would have been built the soonest.

[76] "The Korean Conflict—Memorial Raises a Ruckus," *Orlando Sentinel*, April 1, 1991.

[77] Untitled, *New Haven Register*, October 25, 1990.

[78] "Korean War Memorial Sabotaged," *New Haven Register*, October 26, 1990.

[79] "Memorial's Designers Angry Over Bureaucracy Meddling," *Akron Beacon Journal*, October 25, 1990.

[80] The memorial conflict had taken a personal toll on BL3. "This controversy has taken years off our lives," John Lucas insisted. They had spent significantly more than the $20,000 awarded for the winning design in a legal and media fight against the monument changes and were now heavily in debt. "Memorial's Designers Angry Over Bureaucracy Meddling," *Akron Beacon Journal*, October 25, 1990; "Korean War Memorial Sabotaged," *New Haven Register*, October 26, 1990; "The Korean Conflict—Memorial Raises a Ruckus," *Orlando Sentinel*, April 1, 1991.

outlets typically agreed—the debate over the monument regarded how to interpret the war's meaning. Said the *Orlando Sentinel*: "The two sides can agree neither on what happened in Korea nor on what constitutes an appropriate memorial."[81]

BL3 insisted that Gen. Stilwell was the major detractor—that he wanted a monument to glorify Korea as a victorious war. In the original design, to be sure, there would be no "action" poses by the 38 sculptures who instead would walk "solemnly" toward the American flag. In the estimation of BL3, Stilwell had insisted that the statues be remade in bronze "as realistic soldiers dressed in full gear and poised for battle." In short, BL3 believed Stilwell's vision had nothing to do with somber reflection on the war's meaning and everything to do with reimagining Korea as a heroic war. Don Leon recalled Stilwell's obstinacy in a meeting with a potential sculptor, Lawrence Ludtke, whose unkempt figures enraged the general. They were disheveled, with open collars and slack appearances. When Ludtke informed Stilwell that he was a Korean War veteran and "this is what it looked like," the general replied, "That may be what it looked like but that is not how we are going to remember it."[82]

That brought the various agencies to the next major criticism of the original design. "Inclusivity" had always been important to both the CFA and the KWVMAB.[83] Both J. Carter Brown and Gen. Stilwell had insisted that CL give the statues distinctive racial and ethnic features to represent the broad diversity of America's fighting forces—an idea that had first emerged under the Delta Scheme. Revisions had added support troops depicted in a two-dimensional mural, with combat troops still in three-dimensional statues. Critics noted that such a design could offend some veterans since combatants were given preference over support troops and that despite desegregation late in the war, most black troops had been in supporting roles. Would the proposed mural wall

[81] "The Korean Conflict—Memorial Raises a Ruckus," *Orlando Sentinel*, April 1, 1991.
[82] "The Korean Conflict—Memorial Raises a Ruckus," *Orlando Sentinel*, April 1, 1991; Hass, *Sacrificing Soldiers*, 46.
[83] Hass, *Sacrificing Soldiers*, 45.

suggest that their service was somehow less valuable? BL3 had intentionally avoided any racial features to "universalize" the experience for all veterans. The CFA initially had agreed: "as soon as you become specific in depicting racial and ethnic features, you become more exclusionary," said CFA secretary Charles Atherton. "It's inevitable you'll leave somebody out." The KWVMAB disagreed, insisting that "realistic sculptures are essential."[84]

Save for some members of the CFA, each commission wanted the monument to commemorate Korea as the first war fought by a desegregated American military. But this question of how to represent the various races came to focus on a quota system. Cooper-Lecky suggested the following: four statues to represent soldiers of the Korean Augmented units (KATUSAs), nineteen whites, six Hispanics, five blacks, two American Indians, and two Asian Americans. But even this racial breakdown posed problems. Further compromise reduced the number of Hispanics to five so there were not more Hispanics than blacks and because some committee members did not consider Puerto Ricans full citizens.[85] As one historian has pointed out, the memorialization of nonwhite soldiers has a "complicated history" that the Korean War memorial reopened and only partially resolved. Both BL3 and CL wanted to be as inclusive as possible—but approached the issue in dramatically different ways—and the agencies' intent was the same.[86] Nevertheless, these disagreements on racial quotas still left out women service members. Gen. Stilwell adamantly refused to have women portrayed, and CFA chair Brown felt that the focus on gender provoked an unnecessary distraction that obscured the real purpose of the monument: to remember Korean War veterans.[87]

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[84] Hass, *Sacrificing Soldiers*, 46.
[85] Hass, *Sacrificing Soldiers*, 46.
[86] Hass, *Sacrificing Soldiers*, 47.
[87]"Korean War Memorial Nearer with Arts Panel Ok on Design," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, February 22, 1991; "The Korean Conflict—Memorial Raises a Ruckus," *Orlando Sentinel*, April 1, 1991; Hass, *Sacrificing Soldiers*, 47.

By the start of 1992, progress remained stalled over the issue of racial composition. CFA Chair J. Carter Brown was disappointed but believed the monument was headed in the right direction. It was likely, he thought, that another revision would be the final one. John Lucas, however, continued to charge that the agencies and CL had breached their contract. Had the agencies not "obliterated" BL3's original design through bureaucratic in-fighting, Lucas maintained, the original design would have already been under construction. The Korean War Veterans Memorial Advisory Board vehemently disagreed, insisting the problem was that too many agencies had the power to veto the design under the Commemorative Works Act of 1986.[88] Despite all agencies agreeing the Korean War deserved a memorial, no one involved would relent.[89]

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Korean War veterans were impatient to see the monument completed in their lifetimes. "We're not going to be around forever," said one veteran. "You have to wonder how long this will take." Estimates put seven percent of Korean War veterans dying annually.[90] One Marine veteran was so frustrated that South Korea had built a memorial to American GIs but his own country had not that he told fellow Marines that "we already have our memorial. It has been built by those who appreciate our sacrifices far more than do our own countrymen. Our memorial is South Korea itself." Should the US ever build a Korean War memorial, the "tardy recognition so grudgingly given will have debased the value of any commemoration."[91] The consensus at a 23rd Infantry reunion was "this is just a conspiracy to submerge the Korean War Memorial. It's their gut reaction…A lot of the fellows now say they don't care—don't expect anything and you won't be

[88] Hass, *Sacrificing Soldiers*, 39.
[89] "Korean War Memorial Lost in Red Tape, Vets Fear," *Harrisburg Patriot-News*, November 10, 1991; Korean War Memorial Design Rejected Again," *Austin American-Statesman*, October 25, 1991; Hass, *Sacrificing Soldiers*, 39.
[90] "Korean War Memorial Lost in Red Tape, Vets Fear," *Harrisburg Patriot-News*, November 10, 1991.
[91] "The Real Korean Memorial," *Daily News of Los Angeles*, February 8, 1991.

disappointed. A lot are unhappy and believe the money is just being thrown away." The eighty-four veterans contacted President Bush with a petition that read, in part,

> We fought on the Naktong, at Kunu-ri, at Chipyong-ni, the Punchbowl, Bloody Ridge, Heartbreak Ridge, Old Baldy, Porkchop Hill, T-Bone, Arrowhead and thousand nameless ridges in a country unknown to us. We were young men…We saw life slip away from other young men, and we have not forgotten…We cannot forget…We ask simply that a just and fitting Korean War Veterans Memorial be built…with no more delay, or excuse.[92]

The inter-organizational fighting profoundly offended Korean War veterans—they simply wanted a monument to their war and a scene of national remembrance. The Korean War Veterans Association (KWVA) typified this indifference toward design. Its newspaper, *The Greybeards*, focused more on fundraising than what the monument would look like. But when the organization demanded more financial accountability and quicker progress, Gen. Stilwell rebuked it.[93]

But the board still needed to find the remaining money necessary to build the memorial. The final monument design would cost $14.9 million, and by 1991, only half of that amount had been raised. In response, the US Mint introduced a very limited run of one million silver dollar Korean War Memorial Coins, with proof copies selling for $28 each and uncirculated ones selling for $23. As Director Donna Pope explained, the limited run would entice collectors and create a sense of urgency. The low minting would help "recognize the importance of a memorial for these brave men and women," she stated in April of that year.[94] But only one quarter of the sales would go toward building the monument, meaning the cost of the monument required selling all of the commemorative coins.[95] But by June, that seemed likely, with the US Mint having sold more than half (515,311) in a month, even though the final version of the monument had yet to be approved.

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[92] "Korea Vets Let Down –Again," *Baltimore Sun*, July 28, 1991.
[93] Hass, *Sacrificing Soldiers*, 37.
[94] "Korean War Memorial Coin Minted," *Columbus Dispatch*, April 21, 1991.
[95] "U.S. Mint Offers Korean War Dollar," *Press of Atlantic City*, May 7, 1991.

The US Mint increased the price of both coins by $3 to collect more money after July. Nevertheless, even the Korean War commemoration dollar drew ridicule, with the CFA complaining that its design was "mediocre."[96]

Meanwhile, despite strong pleas to the public, the media, colleagues, and congress, BL3 lost its suits against the various agencies and Cooper-Lecky. From the beginning, Gen. Stilwell and CL publicly claimed the suit lacked merit. BL3, Stilwell insisted, was ignoring the will of Congress, the American people, and Korean War veterans.[97] According to Cooper-Lecky, the Penn State professors believed that President Bush's approval of the monument had guaranteed the acceptance of their design, forgetting that the president had appointed members of the KWVMAB to approve the design, along with the other agencies responsible for the monument in the nation and the capital. William Lecky years later insisted that the agencies' consensus was that BL3's design was too complex, and that visitors would miss or ignore most of their symbolism. BL3's design was always supposed to be a starting point, not the final design.[98] Nor had the Penn State design addressed the issues of ethnic diversity, the loss of life, or the support personnel that the agencies insisted upon.[99] Lecky later suggested that an "inordinate amount of time and money" was wasted by the BL3 litigation that could have been spent on monument planning. In effect, his agency blamed the Penn State architects for slowing down the memorialization process.[100]

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[96] "Coining Publicity: Commemorative Coins Find Exposure Hard to Come By," *Austin-American Stateman*, June 15, 1991.
[97] "Architects Sue Over Revised Korean War Memorial," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, December 19, 1990.
[98] Lecky, *Designing for Remembrance*, 35
[99] Lecky, *Designing for Remembrance*, 37-38. It should be recalled that BL3 stated these modifications were only insisted upon after presenting their original design. Lecky claims that his firm initially tried to keep BL3 in the loop and on board as a support firm. He insisted that "they could still play a major role in the design process," adding, "we made every effort to be as positive and supportive as possible, given the current situation [that the advisory board wanted prominent changes]. BL3, however, rejected any alterations, and insisted that their original design be the one presented to Stilwell's board. It was BL3 that was reticent, Lecky claims, not his firm. After a meeting in College Station, PA, with CL, BL3 filed their lawsuit.
[100] Lecky, *Designing for Remembrance*, 38.

Once Cooper-Lecky became the firm of record, its position was never in jeopardy because it was willing to address whatever changes the various agencies demanded. After the rebuke by the CFA, CL began working on the what would become the final design in late 1991. The "toning down" that the CFA insisted upon brought the third and final major design closer to the original plan. The firm chose sculptor Frank Gaylord from three finalists to sculpt the thirty-eight figures for a final design in cast metal, instead of granite or marble. Those media would not support the complexity of military equipment the statues would carry. Gaylord had little experience working with the number of statues required nor had he dealt with sculpting such large figures. Cooper-Lecky chose him, however, because of his vision of the Korean War soldier. He presented clay mock-ups to the firm that captured the "intense emotions…fear, anger, determination" inspired by photographs from the war.[101]

By late 1991, the ABMC and CFA were at a crossroads over the number of statues. Thirty-eight simply took up too much room on the Mall. That August, the ABMC fired off a stern letter to CFA Chair Brown offering a solution: to cut the number in half or else sacrifice the progress made on this third design attempt. The advisory board, meanwhile, had always believed the statues would be too close together. Stilwell's board insisted that fifteen to twenty feet was typical spacing between troops in combat, and the space allotted for the memorial was too small for thirty-eight statues spread out that far. The advisory board also supported cutting the number in half. The symbolism of thirty-eight soldiers would remain when the figures' shadows were taken into consideration.[102]

Gaylord wanted the column of soldiers to be representative of, in Lecky's words, "the mental state of men in combat," a vision reminiscent of BL3's design. Several soldiers would be

[101] Lecky, *Designing for Remembrance*, 40.
[102] Lecky, *Designing for Remembrance*, 47-53.

praying, another dying, and still another would be celebrating in victory. These various scenes would occur while the front soldiers marched forward with terrified looks on their faces.[103] Cooper-Lecky and Stilwell rejected the idea, and Gaylord withdrew his opinion. Since coming on board the project, Gaylord had envisioned the statues as a singular unit, but wanted each soldier to respond to the war in a variety of ways. The various commissions had devolved into disagreements that were, in his opinion, petty, such as disagreeing on the thickness of the statues' lips and the broadness of their noses.[104] Gaylord—like each designer and agency—pushed forth a specific vision of the monument he believed best exemplified the Korean War.[105]

From Gaylord's design, Tallix Foundries in New York cast the nineteen statues in stainless steel. They arrived in Washington by flatbed truck after a stopping in several cities for ceremonies organized by various Korean War veterans' associations. When they arrived in the nation's capital, more veterans showed up to praise the occasion. In the final design, the statues would represent servicemen from all branches that took part in the Korean War. They would represent the diversity of America's combatants, with twelve whites, three blacks, two Hispanics, one Asian American, and one American Indian represented by the larger-than-life statues.[106] The KWVM stands at the foot of the Lincoln Memorial, with the servicemen spread out in the triangular Field of Service. Their facial features are overly emphasized, creating the impression of blank, empty stares. They march in windblown ponchos through rugged terrain, illustrated by juniper bushes, while granite strips at their

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[103] Lecky, *Designing for Remembrance*, 47-53. The statues, however, presented another problem Cooper-Lecky had not envisioned. The CFA approved a second CL change: the addition of ponchos. This decision would hide some of the weaponry on each statue while emphasizing the harsh winter combat of Korea.
[104] Hass, *Sacrificing Soldiers*, 54.
[105] Lecky, *Designing for Remembrance*, 51.
[106] Hass, *Sacrificing Soldiers*, 50-52. Contention remained, however, whether the statues were racially inclusive or not. Certainly, the ABMC map chart denotes racial identity to the statues (along with military branch and weaponry). But Kent Cooper described them as only having "traces of race." Lecky insisted that the statues remained an amalgamation between the demands of the commissions and the artists' desire for more abstraction, a process he referred to as "impressionistic styling." Kristin Ann Hass sees all 19 soldiers as possibly becoming "white by default." At most, she contends, it affords "the figures the luxury of racial mobility."

feet indicate the obstacles the soldiers have overcome. There is no indication that the soldiers are engaging (or are soon to be engaged) in a firefight; rather, their pace appears steady and methodical, as if they are marching toward the American flag at the top point of the patrol.[107]

This final design of the statues, along with the other components of the monument, reflect different visions of the war. To the right of the Field of Service is the Mural Wall, designed by graphic artist Louis Nelson and his assistant, Jennifer Stoller, who used more than 2,400 photographs of the war.[108] William Lecky described the wall as "a panoramic view of distant, snow-capped mountains, an appropriate image for the troops in the coldest of wars."[109] Unlike the final design of the nineteen servicemen, which conveys fear, uncertainty, and grief, the wall is the positive affirmation of war the KWVMAB had intended. It is the antithesis to the Vietnam "Wall," whose focus is on loss and death. Here, figures are alive and have avoided tragedies common in war.[110] The northern side of the monument has inscribed on the curb all 22 United Nations members who took part in the war.[111] At the front of the statues stands an American flag, reminiscent of BL3's design. Finally, the Pool of Remembrance suggests a moment of reflection on the sacrifice Americans made for freedom during the war. Inscribed here is the phrase, "Freedom is not Free," a necessarily ambiguous expression—whose freedom has been fought for? The South Koreans—who otherwise have no place in the monument? Americans—whose freedom was not directly threatened by the war? The wording, of course, avoids any specificity about the war, America's commitment in the larger Cold War, the reasons for fighting, or how the Korean War ended. The language is

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[107] Hass, *Sacrificing Soldiers*, 24; Huebner, *The Warrior Image*, 274. There is no indication that BL3 reacted positively to these changes that, in effect, brought the final design much closer to their original concept. BL3 believed that Cooper-Lecky's intent was not simply to change the design, but to push the Penn State professors completely out of the way. The KWVM would be then a springboard for larger and more lucrative projects. In a letter to the author, John Lucas stated that BL3 "challenged an authority. It did not appreciate it." Cooper-Lecky got involved "perhaps to finally get top-billing on something noteworthy." John Lucas, letter to Author, October 28, 2013. Author's Possession.
[108] https://www.abmc.gov/about-us/history/korean-war-memorial. (Accessed November 29, 2016).
[109] Lecky, *Designing for Remembrance*,42.
[110] Hass, *Sacrificing Soldiers*, 25.
[111] https://www.abmc.gov/about-us/history/korean-war-memorial. (Accessed November 20, 2016).

generic. A specific recollection of the war—police action, stalemate, armistice—might undermine the success the phrase is meant to evoke.[112]



Figure 5.2 The nineteen servicemen who are part of the final design of the Korean War Veterans Memorial.

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Reactions to the monument were generally positive, especially among veterans. Charles Carifano, who fought in both World War II and Korea, called the monument's dedication "an emotional event." He attended, he said, to honor those comrades who did not make it home. Richard Kewer walked quietly around the new memorial, to "reflect" on the war and its purpose. It brought back many "sad memories" but was necessary so that visitors would never forget.[113] Another veteran—who had survived cancer to see the monument—had long feared that once his generation died, no one would remember the war. Now, with the memorial built, "it will be there as long as the Capitol is."[114]

"Overdue" and "emotional"—or similar variations—were perhaps the most common words used by veterans to describe the monument. "It was long overdue to recognize those who really

[112] Hass, *Sacrificing Soldiers*, 25-26.
[113] "Aging Veterans Gather to Keep Memories Alive," *Salt Lake Tribune*, May 28, 1996.
[114] "War Memorial is a Victory for Vet," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, September 13, 1998.

gave their lives," said veteran Clyde Prier. "It's something to remind people for generations to come that there really was a Korean War."[115] Many found their visit to the monument to be a time to reflect on those with whom they had served and those they had lost. Some veterans further believed the monument opened doors for more opportunities to recognize the sacrifices of Korean War veterans. Massachusetts state senator and Korean War veteran Robert Wetmore called the monument "striking" not only because it brought attention to the more than 54,000 Americans who had been killed but because it raised awareness of the 8,000 still missing.[116] Twenty-two Navajo veterans attended the ceremony together and took part in a veterans' march in front of a crowd of more than 250,000 people. The group found the monument so moving they formed the Navajo Korean War Veterans organization.[117]

It is difficult, however, to reconcile the contentious fight the memorial evoked with the subtle differences between the original and final designs. Soldiers remain in formation headed toward an American flag. In neither version are there overt symbols of militarism or violence; in fact, the ABMC had rejected such imagery. Shrubbery (and the addition of stone bars) still denote the rough Korean terrain and the endurance of the American GI. Despite that "endurance," it is still difficult to suggest that these statues portray overt heroism. As several historians have shown, the nineteen figures carry pain, confusion, and sorrow on their faces.[118] Their final design, just like the original BL3 proposal, hardly glorifies war. A major distinction between the final version and the original is that BL3 avoided racializing the statues; Cooper-Lecky did not. Surely the majority of Americans would have been unaware of the differences between the statues in the competing proposals, and it would be difficult to believe a typical visitor would even notice them. If anything,

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[115] "Unknown Soldiers No Longer: Women, Blacks, and Korean War Veterans are Being Recognized for Their Service to the Country," *Sarasota Herald Tribune*, May 27, 1996.
[116] "Local Veterans Moved by Monument," *Telegram & Gazette*, August 8, 1995.
[117] "'Forgotten War' Veterans Honored in Nation's Capital," *Navajo Times*, Vol. XXXIV, no. 33, August 17, 1995.
[118] Huebner, *The Warrior Image*, 274; Hass, *Sacrificing Soldiers*, 54.

the hulking statues seem to embrace the ambivalence the Korean War had initially engendered in the aftermath of the conflict. Here are unquestionably loyal and duty-bound soldiers whose faces impart the exhaustion, confusion, and fear their real-world predecessors must have felt. That juxtaposition of fear and determination—that ambivalence—seems to be the most profound legacy of the Korean War Veterans Memorial.

Public responses also noted this ambivalence. As one reporter for the *Wall Street Journal*, Hong-Choo Hyun noted, "The statues' expressions tell it all. Gazing at this powerful scene, one is gripped by the strong emotions sketched on their faces. The most striking sense is that of bewilderment." The statues further captured the "pain and hardships" soldiers must have experienced, climbing hill after hill, isolated in a land far from home. As Hyun noted, the statues captured the contradictions of the Korean War. Accordingly, the monument held lessons for future wars, Hyun believed: "never let your nation feel bewildered and never leave your soldiers unprepared."[119] One sculptor from Tennessee, Ellen McGowan, agreed with the *Journal*'s assessment about the ambivalence the monument engendered. Korean War veterans were right to feel "justified pride" in finally having a monument to their war, and sculptor Frank Gaylord had "vividly caught the pain, hardship and isolation in those 19 grim-faced GIs."[120] A few years after the dedication, another veteran, commenting on the monument as "a work of art garnering world renown," agreed that Gaylord's statues perfectly captured "the pain, suffering, hunger, fear, anxiety, and hardships" GIs had faced.[121]

Some criticisms remained that the monument glorified war. One commenter, Dave Fletcher, asked, "Why must this country celebrate war? Why is it so important? How can we profess to loathe war and simultaneously exalt it? Maybe it's right that people return from war without

[119] "Korea's Heroes Come Home," *Wall Street Journal, Eastern Edition*, July 31, 1995.
[120] "Letters to the Editor: But What About The Sculptor?," *Wall Street Journal, Eastern Edition*, August 21, 1995.
[121] "The Korean War Memorial," *Washington Post*, September 23, 1998.

fanfare, ceremony or monument. If the concept of war really was revolting and loathsome, maybe the next time someone gave one nobody would come." Fletcher professed that soldiers did not need monuments; rather, they needed to be studied to figure out why so many are willing to die in wars when the politicians who send them rarely fight or die. The "incredible waste of it all," was unbelievable.[122] John Wiebenson argued the memorial did not capture the harsh, rugged topography and battles of the real Korean War. Instead, the monument suggests the war and soldiers who fought it were "delicate," seeming "to serve their country in a little garden, not in a brutal war." The pictures and phrases written on the walls were nearly "ineligible." And now, only three years later (1998), the memorial needed an estimated $2 million in repairs. Wiebenson suggested that an entirely new monument be built that would not "trivialize the pain of war with delicate shrubs and copycat wall."[123]

James Reston of the *New York Times* believed that the KWVM was just another memorial in the recent "monument glut" sweeping the nation's capital. "Every war," he complained, "now has to have its own triumphal memorial." It was a response, he rightly believed, to the popularity of the Vietnam Wall. Other wars, it would seem, were "envious of Vietnam." And now, with the Korean memorial up after over thirteen "tortuous years" of competing designs and congressional wrangling, the KWVM had spurred the development of more monuments. A Black Revolutionary War Patriots memorial was planned; so too, was a Women's Vietnam War memorial. The KWVM, in other words, was a monument to political correctness. What was next, Reston asked rhetorically, a monument to the War of 1812 or to the Spanish-American War? Would enough acreage be left in the city to compensate all of the proposed monuments?[124]

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[122] "Martinez on War Memorial," *Los Angeles Times*, August 11, 1995.
[123] "Build a New Korean War Memorial," *Washington Post*, September 8, 1998.
[124] "The Monument Glut," *New York Times*, September 10, 1995.

Reston's criticisms did reveal an understanding of the politics behind the KWVM and the important role the Vietnam Veterans Memorial had played in its development. Through the ABMC, the military brass had regained control of the national debate surrounding America's wars. They had done so to the detriment of artists and sculptors who had exposed the raw emotions surrounding the Vietnam Wall, which remained the most popular monument on the National Mall. "The Vietnam memorial," Reston insisted, "had challenged the principles of obedience, of unquestioning service, of the nobility of the supreme sacrifice." After 1982, when the VVM went up, the ABMC was determined to regain that control for the military brass. It had done so with the KWVM and, according to Reston, would continue to succeed with additional monuments.[125]

Wresting that control away from the artists had resulted in the dismissal of BL3. It had led to revisions by Cooper-Lecky and rejections to Frank Gaylord's proposed changes. It had resulted in a monument, Reston believed, that was "traditional," and relied upon "old-fashioned, pre-Vietnam patriotism." Now with the construction of the nation's war monuments firmly in the hands of the ABMC, the Korean War Veterans Memorial was proof that the organization was committed to "glorifying past American military conflicts."[126] But here Reston's description contradicts his own read on the memorial. The nineteen poncho-clad figures suggest "harsh conditions," he writes, their faces alert but "grim, full of tension and fear." Yet they carry on, undeterred by that fear, "unquestioning" figures on an undefined mission who carry on because of "duty and country." It made for a contradictory assessment of the KWVM. Probably more than he

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[125] "The Monument Glut," *New York Times*, September 10, 1995. Reston's belief in the "success" of the ABMC regaining control of monument building in the wake of VVM ignores his own portrayal of the KWVM further down in the article. By his own description, the nineteen statues are a far cry from a monument to national triumph and patriotism.

[126] "The Monument Glut," *New York Times*, September 10, 1995. "As the soul of the nation, the nation's capital should reflect the breadth of the society's achievements. But coming to Washington," Reston lamented, "is turning into a martial experience: a contemplation of wars won, lost and stalemated." Reston believed the nation had squandered many opportunities to laud other types of American heroes (scientists, civil rights leaders) in its worship of the American soldier.

recognized, Reston had acknowledged the contentiousness surrounding the monument—and the ambiguity of the Korean War itself.[127]

Perhaps the most enduring impact of the KWVM is how it spurred local commemorative efforts. On the same day the president dedicated the national monument, Texas Governor George W. Bush honored Korean War veterans in Austin and promised the development of a state monument. Many of the veterans who could not make it to Washington, D.C. were in attendance.[128] A few weeks later, with a strong push by the Central New York Korean War Veterans Association, New York Governor George Pataki followed suit, renaming Interstate 690 the Korean War Veterans Memorial Highway. The governor dedicated it to the more than 268,000 New Yorkers who had served in the war.[129] In the state's capital, Albany, thirty Korean War veterans and supporters pushed for a monument to be built near city hall that would depict a Korean War soldier standing at attention. Around the eight-foot tall statue would be three flags honoring American GIs.[130] And in nearby Westchester County, another Korean War Memorial went up in mid-1996. Like the renaming of the interstate memorial highway, another veterans organization, the Westchester Korean War Veterans Association, was integral in getting the monument erected. As the *New York Times* noted, the dedication of the national monument had made possible the Westchester one.[131] At Virginia Beach, Korean War veterans finally received the welcome that was long overdue. Organized as the Korean War Veterans Reunion, t-shirts, ballcaps, and other souvenirs marked the occasion.[132]

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127 "The Monument Glut," *New York Times*, September 10, 1995.
128 "Korean War Veterans to be Honored with National, State Memorials," *Austin American Stateman*, July 26, 1995; "Korea Veterans to be Recognized—DC Memorial's Dedication, Austin Ceremony Set for Today," *Dallas Morning News*, July 27, 1995.
129 "It's All in a Name for Korean War Veterans," *Syracuse Herald Journal*, August 11, 1995; "Korean War Veterans Honored by Renaming," *Syracuse Post-Standard*, December 7, 1995.
130 "County Honors Korean War Dead," *Albany Times Union*, October 22, 1995.
131 "Belated Remembrance of the Forgotten War in Korea: Without a Memorial, 'No One Will Remember Us,'" *New York Times*, May 26, 1996.
132 "'Forgotten' Warriors Get Their Day in the Sun," *Virginian Pilot*, October 22, 1995.

By the turn of the century, more Korean War monuments were built or were being planned: in Jersey City, New Jersey; Providence, Rhode Island; Charleston, West Virginia; Lebanon, Pennsylvania; Roseville, California; and Leroy, Indiana, among others. Like the national memorial, these local monuments brought a sense of closure to veterans. "The details are perfect," said one veteran, speaking of the West Virginia memorial, "right down to the boot buckle." "Every time I look at the figures it looks like people I know," he continued, "I get emotional…but my happiness has overcome my sadness because we're being recognized."[133]

The monument President Clinton dedicated on July 27, 1995, represents an amalgamated vision of the war put forth by various committee members and artists involved in the decade-long process to create the Korean War Veterans Memorial. The players in the KWVM fight tried in various and often contradictory ways to rectify the ambiguity long associated with Korea. For all parties involved: veterans of the war, the Penn State architects, Cooper-Lecky, the KWVMAB, and the myriad other agencies, memorialization was a chance to project their vision of the war's meaning. In the wake of Vietnam, national decline and lowered military morale concerned many members of the agencies involved in the commemoration process. Many of those members believed a strong, militaristic vision of the war would help serve as a corrective to the "Vietnam syndrome," just as the recent and rapid victory in Operation Desert Storm purportedly had. A triumphalist message centered on victorious American combatants would further counter the stark, drab granite of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, which to many involved with the KWVM was a monument to defeat located in the nation's capital.[134] Perhaps it should come as no surprise that

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[133] "Remembering Korea: Hudson Veterans Finish Monument to Fallen Comrades," *The Record* (Bergen County, NJ), December 1, 2002; "A Memorable Day for Korean War Vets," *The Record* (Bergen County, NJ), November 14, 2000; "Veterans Hail Plan for Korean War Memorial," *Providence Journal-Bulletin*, August 8, 1997; "Group Seeks Memorial for Korean War Vets," *Charleston* (WV) *Gazette*; January 6, 2000; "No Longer 'Forgotten': 300 in Lebanon Honor Korea Vets," *Harrisburg Patriot-News*, June 19, 2000; "'Forgotten War' to be Memorialized in Roseville," *Sacramento Bee*, October 1, 1998: "Korean War Memorial Dedicated," *Gary Post-Tribune*, November 9, 2002.

[134] Piehler, *Remembering War the American Way*, 2. Conservatives were harsh critics of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, but liberal critics denounced the monument for ignoring the brutality inflicted on the Vietnamese people.

worries about the imagery of the KWVM focused on racial inclusivity. The KWVM offered an opportunity to recast the nation's military as inclusive of minorities, instead of, as Kristin Ann Hass has argued, having racially nondescript statues be white by default.[135] For both architectural firms involved, BL3 and Cooper-Lecky, it was an opportunity to work on an important part of American commemoration. It would be easy to suggest their interest in the process was limited to the recognition that would come with working on a national memorial. But as members of the firms testified, the monument fight embodied the contentious meaning of the war and a chance to say something about it. It was veterans of the Korean War who had no major part in the monument process. They generally concluded that any monument was better than none—especially after the VVM went up.

In many ways, the battle to commemorate Korea laid bare the features long associated with the war's memory. The monument fight reflected the ambivalence of the war's purpose, its achievements, and its place in American history. But the monument became embroiled in the political debates of the era regarding racial identity. When the various agencies had finally agreed on all considerations, the question of the statues' racial makeup threatened to scuttle the whole project. In that way, the KWVM reflected the time and circumstance of the era in which it was built. Like in previous instances, it would seem the Korean War could not shake the present in order to remember the past. But the monument also exposed questions about what military service meant in a nation still adjusting to limited wars. It showed as well that although the war in Korea was fought a generation earlier under different circumstances, the Vietnam War made an indelible imprint on the legacy of Korea, simultaneously overshadowing its place in American history and spurring a revival of its memory. Finally, the KWVM suggests an opportunity to reconsider the war's meaning. Millions of visitors would tour the monument annually, providing what was for some a corrective to

[135] Hass, *Sacrificing Soldiers*, 46-47, 50-52.

the image of a forgotten war. This would be the enduring testament of the memorial's legacy: what exactly would it tell generation after generation about a war fought so far away and so long ago? The answer, it would seem, depended in large part on how one viewed the war itself. In the end, the contentious fight for the KWVM brought full circle the most lasting representation of the war: its uncertain and ambivalent legacy.

CONCLUSION
THE REMEMBERED WAR

In Operation Desert Storm, the United States' first major conflict since Vietnam, the administration of George H.W. Bush typified the attitude of American military leadership since 1975: avoid a costly mistake like Vietnam while appropriating the imagery and rhetoric of World War II to garner support for martial actions. At the start of military operations, Vice President Dan Quayle insisted that the Iraq conflict would not resemble the Vietnam War in any way. American forces, the vice president meaningfully proclaimed, "will not be asked to fight with one arm tied behind their backs."[1] After the end of combat a few weeks later, Bush emphatically stated, "By God, we've kicked the Vietnam syndrome once and for all."[2] Like the vice president's comment, the president's pronouncement assumed that the loss in Vietnam was an aberration upon an otherwise stellar American military record.

As Quayle and Bush tried to break from the "Vietnam syndrome," the administration simultaneously compared the conflict to World War II, likening Saddam Hussein to Adolf Hitler and the Iraqi Army's rapid incursion into Kuwait to Germany's 1938 seizure of the Sudetenland. Bush even said the Iraqis had employed a "blitzkrieg" campaign against their neighbor.[3] In similar language, President George W. Bush in 2002 described an "axis of evil" that consisted of North Korea, Iraq, and Iran.[4] September 11, 2001, had already been proclaimed as the Pearl Harbor for a

[1] "Ghosts of Vietnam," *New York Times*, January 26, 1991.
[2] "After the War," *New York Times*, March 2, 1991.
[3] Ann Reilly Dowd, "How Bush Decided," *Fortune Magazine*, February 11, 1991.
[4] "In Bush's 'Axis of Evil,' Why Iraq Stands Out, *New York Times*, September 9, 2002.

new century, and the second Bush invoked the Normandy invasion and the battle of Iwo Jima when he landed on the US5S *Abraham Lincoln* on May 1, 2003, to declare an end to major combat operations in Iraq. In between the Bush presidencies, President Bill Clinton made similar comparisons between Somali dictators and Hitler before the disastrous battle of Mogadishu in October 1993.[5]

These presidents, along with other American political leaders, have found it both necessary and beneficial to invoke the triumphalist narrative of the "Good War," World War II, while insisting that they could avoid the problems of the "Bad War," Vietnam. They have understood that media support, public approval, and quick victories are requisite components for this strategy to remain powerful. They have also learned bitter lessons when military operations do not conform to the prescribed narrative they have set, as when the Second Iraq War dragged into guerrilla warfare and sectarian violence.

Where, then, does the Korean War fit in this appropriation of twentieth-century conflicts? Quite simply, nowhere. Surely, historians and much of the public can ascribe some of the following characteristics to Korea: the first undeclared war; the initial conflict of the Cold War; a military stalemate. Other profound events that shaped the war are certainly part of national memory: the Inchon landing; President Harry Truman's firing of Gen. Douglas MacArthur; the Chosin Reservoir campaign. And certainly the resulting armistice that continues to divide North and South Korea dates back to the war. Despite these factors, the Korean War does not fit into a neat category of either "good" or "bad," limiting the opportunity for presidents or policymakers to invoke the war to justify other military actions.[6]

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[5] Marilyn B. Young, "Still Stuck in the Big Muddy," in Ellen Schrecker, ed., *Cold War Triumphalism: The Misuse of History After the Fall of Communism* (New York and London: The New Press, 2004), 268, 270.

[6] As Chapter Three shows, when policymakers did invoke Korea, they made sweeping generalizations about the nature of the conflict and any analogue it held with Vietnam. To some degree, therefore, the one major use of Korea as a war of lessons led to the "Bad War" of Vietnam.

What the preceding chapters have tried to illustrate is that the Korean War has resonated in American culture in different ways at different times. As I have attempted to show, the memory of the war been shaped in important ways as much by contemporary circumstances as by an accurate retelling of the war. But because its representation has been diverse and diffuse, popular depictions have maintained that the most striking feature of the Korean War is its absence from the national spotlight. As such, Korea is consistently present because of this absence. Put another way, the Forgotten War label so strongly associated with the Korean War has kept its memory alive. The drive to construct a Korean War monument perhaps best illustrates this connection between the "forgotten" and the "remembered." Nevertheless, "remembering" the war as only being forgotten has often overshadowed the very real ways it has been represented.

Initial commentary in the immediate aftermath of the war focused on the complexity of the conflict and what it had resolved. Some veterans wrote about the unsettling nature of the war, but most came home and resumed their lives. It was thus left to journalists, directors, and authors to ascribe meaning to Korea. Their collective conclusion was that the Korean War was an aberration in American history, a conflict that lacked precedent. And the comparisons to the most recent American conflict, World War Two, only confirmed Korea's peculiarity. It had started as a "police action," an undeclared war that many Americans, swayed by limited-war propaganda that it was less that a major war, chose to ignore.[7] Then, the United States practiced a policy of self-restraint and limited warfare that had disallowed a total victory akin to the unconditional surrender demands of the Second World War. Worse, after Chinese intervention, the war settled into a stalemate where it had begun along the 38th parallel. As American negotiators fought for a diplomatic solution, more American GIs died. Finally, the war ended in status quo antebellum, with the North Korean

[7] Steven Casey, *Selling the Korean War: Propaganda, Politics, and Public Opinion, 1950-1953* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 76, 129.

invasion repulsed and the peninsula divided. In their general agreement on the Korean War, the shapers of public opinion helped foster an ambivalent understanding of the war that pervaded American society. Media was integral to this process, but so, too, was popular culture. Films and novels about the war communicated this ambivalence through realistic war narratives and absurdist war stories. Both genres tried to make sense of the war's purpose and its results, but nevertheless revealed its ambivalent place in American culture.

Simultaneously, as the shapers of public opinion tried to make sense of the war, another major part of the war's legacy was taking hold. During the war thousands of Americans had been taken hostage by North Korea and communist China, most in the winter of 1950-1951. They endured intense deprivation and when the Chinese took control of all enemy prisoners, extreme indoctrination efforts. About forty percent of the 7,000 captured Americans died in the prison camps, and those who returned home faced intense scrutiny over the "reeducation" and "brainwashing" programs. Many were branded collaborationists. The most damning evidence was the mistaken belief that Korean War POWs were the only Americans ever to collaborate with the enemy. Journalist Eugene Kinkead led the charges that in no other war had such widespread collaboration occurred. The criticisms Korean War POWs faced, however, were not only about their supposed weakness and the "softness" of American society, but a result of the domestic environment anticommunism and the Second Red Scare had created. As such, the repatriates faced an unsettling dilemma: either they were weak and enfeebled men, whose actions in the war illustrated the breakdown of moral order, or the power of brainwashing was so absolute that they had been duped into becoming subversive communist agents. Despite some efforts in popular media to salvage the image of the POW—or at least explain why so many Americans had collaborated—the shame and dishonor of alleged collaboration would dictate American attitudes toward both the repatriates and the war. Further, American opinion-makers could not—or would

not—reconcile the war's ambivalent end with the POW's collective actions. In the POWs, the nation had found the perfect scapegoat.

By the mid-1960s, fears of brainwashed POWs were all but gone as national attention increasingly focused on the war in Vietnam. Certainly, the dishonor the captives of Korea had brought to the nation remained. To be sure, the soldiers of Korea and Vietnam fought with the same initial patriotic zeal, and they would later have similar misgivings about what their mission was. When they returned home, they found a nation more than willing to assign blame to American POWs for an outcome short of victory.[8]

But the Korean War had a important impact on shaping the political culture of the Vietnam War. Official attitudes about the options for intervening and withdrawing from Vietnam reflected particular ways of remembering the Korean War by both the Johnson and Nixon administrations. When Johnson decided in 1965 to escalate in Vietnam, the Korean War compelled him toward that decision, its "lessons" suggesting that the president could fight a successful limited war while avoiding Chinese intervention. The president believed that keeping the ground war contained to South Vietnam while carrying out a bombing campaign of the Ho Chi Minh trail would do just that. Johnson saw in Korea not a bitter stalemate and a constantly defended armistice line, but instructions for victory. The election of Richard Nixon promised a change of course in Vietnam, and it seemed the nation was prepared to do that through a policy of "Vietnamizing" the war. Although troop withdrawals remained gradual, Nixon was not about to abandon South Vietnam to communist takeover. And like Johnson, Nixon found in the Korea analogy lessons on how to avoid defeat in Vietnam, regardless of troop withdrawals. As president, Dwight D. Eisenhower had informed the communists through secret channels to make peace or face nuclear war, a position

[8] Richard Severo & Lewis Milford, *The Wages of War: When America's Soldiers Came Home—from Valley Forge to Vietnam* (New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1989), 344, 347.

Nixon had supported as vice president. Now, faced with his own war, Nixon hoped a similar hardline approach would work through continuous bombing of North Vietnam. Simultaneously, Nixon committed the United States to the protection of an independent South Vietnam, which would remain as a two-state solution when the North Vietnamese halted their war in the south.

What I call the "Korea Solution" would retain the status quo antebellum in Vietnam and continue the withdrawal of the majority of American ground forces while the United States defended in perpetuity a demilitarized zone between the two Vietnams, just as it did in Korea. North Vietnam, however, refused to surrender under the bombing campaigns and political opinions at home turned sharply against the president. The lessons that both Presidents Johnson and Nixon took from the Korean War and applied to Vietnam relied upon several points, particularly that the Vietnam War was conventional conflict like Korea and that the North Vietnamese controlled the Viet Cong insurrection in South Vietnam. But the Johnson and Nixon White Houses were not alone in recalling the lessons of Korea. Although both presidents enjoyed support for their actions in Vietnam, critics remembered the war in Korea as a costly mistake and implored the administrations to seek alternative solutions. Support or opposition, in short, depended in great degree on what opinion-makers believed about the Korean War, on whether it was an example of a successful limited war or an indefinite commitment to a weaker ally that need constant propping up.

The Vietnam era witnessed as well what is perhaps the most enduring cultural representation of the Korean War. Once a week, televisions viewers across the nation tuned in to watch Hawkeye Pierce and Trapper John save lives and woo nurses while criticizing the inept political and military bureaucracy that had involved the United States in the Korean War. But like the war itself, *M*A*S*H* was difficult to define. The imagery of martini-sipping, skirt-chasing doctors only lasted the first few seasons. Wayne Rogers, who played Trapper John, left the series between seasons three and four (along with McLean Stevenson, who starred as Col. Henry Blake). After those initial

seasons, *M*A*S*H* explored social trends that were more a part of the 1970s America than the 1950s Korean War. Thus *M*A*S*H* embodied the strongest blending of Korean War memory and contemporary social concerns. Following social trends, the show was increasingly critical of alcoholism, sexism, and racism. Public consciousness of these issues had gained momentum in the nation, and the show's stars, especially Alan Alda (Hawkeye) and Mike Farrell (B.J. Hunnicutt), openly embraced liberal social positions incorporated into the show. Years later, President Barack Obama would tell Farrell that *M*A*S*H* had taught him "many of my values."[9] And yet the show avoided being preachy, in part because it also focused on the trauma of war and how individuals coped with those horrors. After eleven seasons, *M*A*S*H*'s 1983 series finale drew the largest crowd up to that point in television history to say "goodbye, farewell and amen" to a cast many Americans may have regarded like family.

The show committed to an accurate depiction of the Korean War, down to the types of helicopters that delivered the mangled bodies Hawkeye and others mended. But *M*A*S*H*'s depiction of Korea is equally important in that it showed what the war had been like to millions of viewers. To be sure, anachronisms abound in the series, but the Korean War is integral to the stories *M*A*S*H* tells. Its themes may have been universal—an appraisal of basic human dignity and an acknowledgement of the horror of war—but Korea was vital to the criticisms *M*A*S*H* leveled at military and bureaucratic incompetence and the horrors of war.

*M*A*S*H* remained the most popular visual memorial to Korea until 1995, when the Korean War Veterans Memorial (KWVM) finally opened on the National Mall right across from the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (VVM). Bureaucratic obstinacy and questions about artistic license had mired the monument in limbo for more than a decade. Design changes that a layperson might

[9] http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4228892/Obama-learned-values-M-S-H-writer-says.html. (Accessed February 17, 2017.)

regard as trivial were viewed by the various agencies and architectural firms as crucial to representing the Korean War. But both its final obstacles and completed design illustrated, like *M*A*S*H,* the environment in which it was created. After changing architectural firms, revamping the original design, and rejecting the overt militarism of others, the agencies involved could not agree on the racial composition of the nineteen statues. The final version, however, typically pleased the war's veterans, who after decades of silence on their place in American history, insisted the nation acknowledge their service in a national memorial. Those veterans and their supporters had appropriated the rhetoric and language of the Forgotten War to spur the development of the KWVM. That so many veterans had been silent so long and then, almost in unison, cried out for a monument shows the important role the VVM played in spurring on the development of the Korean monument. Moreover, the various committees involved in the memorialization process insisted the monument avoid the pessimistic imagery of the VVM and present a triumphalist message about American military engagements. The final design of the KWVM, however, is a sum of the various parts from different designs. It is hardly a heroic image of American military power. The nineteen statues that represent the various military branches are especially grim. Their "thousand yard stares" suggest uncertainty, doubt, and hesitation. But the memorial also avoids the somber imagery of the VVM, with its long black wall inscribed with the names of the dead. The KWVM, with its multiple, almost competing parts, is an ambivalent monument to an equally ambivalent war.

In surveying its changing place in the nation's history, the "Forgotten War" may not be an appropriate title for Korea, but it has been a functional one. There is no doubt that the Korean War has had a smaller social, cultural, and political impact on the nation than World War II or the Vietnam War. But that is not the same as being forgotten. Nor do negative or even inaccurate depictions of the war make it a Forgotten War. In some cases, misunderstandings and inaccuracies

abound in the understanding and depiction of the war. The twenty-one American POWs who refused repatriation blighted the record of the remaining GIs, making thousands of other prisoners suspect, even though the majority of them served admirably. This was the unfortunate reality of returning home under a cloud of mistrust fostered by the fear of brainwashing and communist subversion. Policymakers in both the Johnson and Nixon administrations at best misunderstood important parts of the Korean War and, at worst, misapplied those lessons in Vietnam. Equally telling, some critics of *M*A*S*H* accused the show of inaccurately depicting the real Korean War. Because of its popularity, the series had an obligation to accurately represent the conflict, they contended. Korean Americans and some veterans were particularly incensed at how the show depicted Korea and the war.

What emerges, then, from the previous chapters is a war with an ill-defined legacy and a constantly shifting place in American culture and history. Historians have not taken the "forgotten" label literally, but nonetheless have been slow to examine the many ways it has been remembered and why such a categorization has had profound cultural resonance. In their unwillingness to challenge preconceived assumptions about Korea's impact on American culture, scholars have reaffirmed that Korea's most important impact has been its relative absence. On the occasions when historians have acknowledged the war's impact on American culture, they have been reticent to examine the various ways popular culture has remembered Korea or how that memory changed in the second half of the twentieth century. Moreover, the phrase so long associated with the Korean War rests upon assumptions about what the appropriate way to remember a war should be. But Korea never fitted into easily relatable categories like "Good" and "Bad." It is difficult for Hollywood, the media, or policymakers to elicit strong reactions to a war that is not easily defined. Because of its unsettling and imprecise definition, "Forgotten War" became a highly evocative phrase, especially for Korea's veterans, and has even remained so in the historical scholarship.

The Remembered War I have had tried to illustrate has had many different strands, some of which have served here as chapter topics. These threads sometimes have overlapped chronologically, such as the ambivalence and subversiveness which characterized the war and its repatriates until the Vietnam era. Often, the strands stand alone, and were relevant in how policymakers interpreted war, which was best illustrated by the "instructions" the Korean War suggested to the Johnson and Nixon White Houses. The allegories of the *M*A*S*H* franchise best show how the Korean War was repurposed for contemporary social criticism yet kept alive in popular culture. And in the case of the ambivalent legacy evoked by the contentious fight over KVWM, the strands come full circle in depicting the war. This work, of course, does not purport to be an exhaustive examination of all the ways the Korean War has been represented in American culture. Instead, I have followed the ebb and flow of its legacy, as it has shifted with cultural and political changes. In each circumstance, the use of the Remembered War has addressed larger changes in American society, whether that be Cold War hysteria, another stalemated conflict, or interest in commemoration. The Remembered War, in other words, has been adapted for different functions. It has no distinct or easily definable place in American history. Instead, it is a function of the time and circumstance of those who choose to recall it.

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