

Fall 12-2017

The Forgotten Immigrants: Effects of the 1950s Quota System on Korean Immigration to the United States, 1950-1965

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THE FORGOTTEN IMMIGRANTS:

Effects of the 1950s Quota System on Korean Immigration to
the United States, 1950-1965

In 1931, Hyo-Kyoung Hahm was born in Japanese occupied Korea. The Korean peninsula was a Japanese colony until the end of World War II. During the occupation, the Japanese tried to convert Korea to a Japanese way of life. When Hyo-Kyoung started first grade, they could not use Korean in school. All of the instruction, such as the speaking, reading and writing, was conducted in Japanese. It was not until August 1945, when Korea gained its independence, that Hyo-Kyoung began using Korean in school. She was in 7th grade.

In less than a year, the Korean peninsula was split, with the northern half being occupied by the Soviet Union and the south being occupied by the United States. Between 1945-1950, the peninsula was very unstable. The combination of the two different governments and the institution of travel restrictions contributed to the instability. People were not able to cross the 38th parallel, the unofficial division of the Korean Peninsula.¹

In June 1950, the Korean War began when 75,000 Soviet supported, North Korean soldiers, crossed the 38th Parallel, the boundary between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK, or North Korea) and the pro-western Republic of Korea (ROK, or South Korea). This invasion became the first military action of the Cold War, which was a state of political hostility between the Soviet bloc countries and the United States-led Western powers. There was a growing fear of communism within the pro-western countries. The United States and its allies felt responsible to contain or eradicate it. Because of this foreign policy, American troops, under the support of the United Nations, entered the conflict in July 1951, backing the South Koreans.²

At this time, Hyo-Kyoung was one of two female college students studying physics at Yonsei University, in Seoul, South Korea. She remembers the North Korean army and tanks

¹ Hyo-Kyoung Seo in discussion with the author, December 2017.

² "Korean War", *History.com*, 2009, accessed October 2017, <http://history.com/koreanwar>.

suddenly entering Seoul. She said, “We didn’t know, maybe the government knew, but we didn’t know anything.”³ The Korean war would persist for three years and ninety days. During this time, Hyo-Kyoung felt that there was no stable government and that there was no resources for the general people. The only focus for the general population was survival. Since most of the Korean peninsula was a war zone, Hyo-Kyoung and her family moved to the countryside in the southern tip of the peninsula where it was safer.

The Korean War ended with the signing of an armistice in July of 1953, in a stalemate, leaving the Korean Peninsula divided at the 38th Parallel. The armistice allowed POWs to stay in whichever country they preferred, awarded the South Koreans an extra 1500 square miles, and created a demilitarized zone that still exists to this day.⁴ For Hyo-Kyoung, the end of the war meant that she could return to school. In 1954, she returned to Seoul and to Yonsei University. When she finished her degree in physics, she began to work at the Korean Science Research Center where she would complete research that would be published internationally in an American research journal. Also, this is where she met Woon-Young Seo, her eventual husband. Woon-Young was a member of the Korean Army.

In September 1962, Hyo-Kyoung and Woon-Young decided to immigrate to the United States. They chose to leave for a number of reasons. The two primary reasons were to further their education and the instability of the Korean government because of the constant threat of conflict between North and South Korea. By leaving South Korea, they hoped to escape the politically unstable society. They also felt that their future was uncertain, if they stayed in South Korea.

³ Hyo-Kyoung Seo in discussion with the author, December 2017.

⁴ “Korean War”, *History.com*, 2009, accessed October 2017, <http://history.com/koreanwar>.

They chose to come to the United States because it was the easiest way out of Korea. Also, because of their published research, they were offered scholarships and financial aid to attend university in the United States. As students, they were not subject to the quota system, which only allowed for one hundred immigrants from South Korea. Since they had a special circumstance, the visa process was much less cumbersome. There were four main steps in Hyo-Kyoung and Woon-Young obtaining their visas. First, they had to obtain Korean passports. Second, they had to take a written English proficiency exam. Third, they had to pass an interview. Lastly, they had to provide proof of admission to a university and a letter of financial aid. After completing all of these steps they were allowed to purchase an airplane ticket. Hyo-Kyoung came to America on an airplane. In contrast, Woon-Young came by boat a few months later. Hyo-Kyoung remembers that the entire plane was full of students. It is important to note that there may have been more than one hundred Koreans on the airplane with Hyo-Kyoung, even though the quota system limited the number of South Koreans to one hundred immigrants.

After arriving in the United States, Hyo-Kyoung and Woon-Young matriculated at the University of Alabama. They chose the University of Alabama because they had aspirations of working at NASA and to advance the United States in the space race. After spending time at the University of Alabama, Hyo-Kyoung stopped school to have a family and Woon-Young went to work for AT&T. They have lived in the United States for more than fifty years. In the late 1960`s, they moved to the Chicago area and are currently living in the Chicago suburbs. Hyo-Kyoung said that the most difficult part of assimilating to American culture was the language barrier since they did not learn how to speak English when they were in Korea. They also attend

a Korean church service every week so that they can be around other Koreans living in the same area.⁵

This essay examines the effects that the quota system, embedded within United States immigration policy until 1965, had on Korean Immigration between the Korean War and the end of the quota system, 1952-1965. The essay also evaluates the social and economic state of the United States that surrounded and impacted the immigration policy during this era. Finally, it examines, the effects that this policy had on Korean immigration to the United States immediately following the Korean War.

To do this work, a variety of primary and secondary sources were assessed. Primary sources include, the immigration legislation from 1953-1965, newspaper articles from *Stars and Stripes*, and the *Annual Immigration Quotas Under the 1924 Act* and the *Immigration and Nationality Act*. Secondary sources employed were dissertations, books, and journal articles.

Existing secondary works are limited and focus broadly on Korean immigration to the United States such as *Korean Immigration in America: A Structural Analysis of Ethnic Confinement and Adhesive Adaptation*, by Won Moo Hurh and Kwang Chung Kim. This book is an analysis of contemporary immigration from Korea to the United States. Throughout the book, the authors provide background information on immigration, the process of adapting to new cultures and societies, and their struggles with other social issues that plague United States society. Additionally, the authors include a chapter that is solely focuses on the characteristics and demographics of Korean immigrants according to American records. It presents the demographics of Korean immigrants and the settlement patterns of Koreans in Los Angeles, California. A large population of Koreans settled in Los Angeles at three different time periods:

⁵ Hyo-Kyoung Seo in discussion with the author, December 2017.

1. the early labor immigration (1903-1905); 2. the interim or post-Korean War immigration (1951-1964); and 3. the new wave of “family immigration” since 1965. Hurh and Kim’s work provides a wide-ranging analysis of Korean assimilation into American culture.⁶ Another work, *The Good Immigrants: How the Yellow Peril Became the Model Minority* by Madeline Y. Hsu, examines the perspective of Chinese elites, intellectuals, students, and businessmen on immigration restrictions. These people would have entered the United States because of immigration exemptions. Throughout this book, Hsu investigates the characteristics that the American economy became more competitive, due to the characteristics that the American government screened for when evaluating the employable skills that Asian Americans would bring to the country if they immigrated. Although Hsu places Chinese immigration at the center, her broader examination of the changes in United States immigration policy and the perceptions of cultural traits that enabled Asian Americans to become productive members of American society provides important insights for this study.⁷

Moreover, dissertations, such as *The Political Economy of International Immigration Policy: A Comparative and Quantitative Study* by Eytan Meyers add important arguments regarding the background of immigration policy. Meyer’s dissertation discusses various theories on how governments decide how many immigrants to accept: whether or not to discriminate against certain racial and ethnic groups; whether or not to accept refugees; and whether or not to favor permanent immigrants or migrant workers. Meyers’ work is unique, when compared to other research, because it provides a theoretical approach to immigration policy, rather than

⁶ Won Moo Hurh and Kwang Chung Kim, *Korean Immigration in America* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickenson University Press, 1984.).

⁷ Hsu, Madeline Yuan-yin. *The good immigrants: how the yellow peril became the model minority*. (2015).

focusing on one particular country or time period. Meyers uses a variety of sources, such as *Immigration and Nationality Laws of the United States* by Thomas Alexander Aleinikoff and *Immigrant and Native Worker: Contrasts and Competition* by Thomas R. Bailey, focusing on migration policy making, using them to derive unique theories and to propose models in a way that not many scholars have previously acknowledged. Lastly, this work distinguishes itself from other works because it combines both domestic and international influences on government policy making, which clarifies the issues in both areas.⁸

The current historiography on Korean immigration is limited to two sections: a focus on war brides and orphans, or a focus on immigration following 1964. This research adds to the historiography because it provides an analysis on Korean immigration between 1952-1964, discusses the economic, political, and social motivations behind the creation of immigration policy during this time, and discusses the social effects that have come from Korean immigration to the United States.

The basis of Korean immigration during the period between the Korean War and the mid-1960s to the United States started with legislation that was passed in the mid-1920s. In 1924, the United States passed the Immigration Act of 1924 which limited the number of immigrants allowed to enter the United States through a quota system. The quota system offered visas to two percent of the total number of people of each nationality as of the 1890 national census. The Immigration Act also completely excluded Asians, who were not allowed to enter the United States, except for the occasional exemptions for students and skilled workers.

⁸ Eytan Meyers, "The political economy of international immigration policy: A comparative and quantitative study" PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1995.
<https://search.proquest.com/docview/304252884?accountid=26417>.

In 1952, Congress passed the Immigration and Nationality Act. This legislation reinforced the quota system, ended the exclusion of Asians from immigrating to the United States, and established a system of preferences and family reunification. Moreover, it revised the quota system of 1924, allowing visas to be extended to one-sixth of one-percent of each nationality's population in the United States as of 1920. Consequently, 85% of the 154,277 visas were allotted to individuals from western and Northern Europe.⁹

The 1952 legislation established figurative opportunities for Asian immigration, though in reality it continued to discriminate against Asians. The Act revoked the Asian exclusion from immigration, but it only allowed small quotas from Asia. For example, there were only 100 visas allowed each year from Korea. It also did away with laws that prevented Asians from becoming naturalized citizens, which began to improve United States relations with Asian countries. Though the law seemingly opened doors for people wishing to immigrate to the United States from Asia, it only allocated new Asian quotas based on ethnicity, not nationality. In other words, an individual with an Asian parent would be counted as an Asian under the quota system, no matter where they are born. The low quota numbers and an exclusively racial construction of classifying how to apply for a visa allowed the United States government to ensure that Asian immigration would continue to be limited following 1952 legislation.¹⁰

In 1965, the Immigration and Naturalization Act abolished the quota system, based on national origin, and it established a new immigration policy, focusing on reuniting families and attracting skilled labor to the United States. This new legislation opened the door for people from

⁹ "The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952," *Federation for American Immigration Reform*, 2017, Accessed November 2017, <https://fairus.org/legislation/reports-and-analysis/immigration-and-nationality-act-1952>.

¹⁰ "The immigration and Nationality Act of 1952," *The Office of the Historian*, Accessed September 21, 2017, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/immigration-act>.

Asia to enter the United States. To this end, the United States experienced a change in its demographic composition. There were fewer Europeans and more Asians entering the country following the implementation of the Immigration and Naturalization Act. The number of Korean immigrants coming to the United States more than tripled during the 1960s from 11,200 to 38,700 in 1960 and 1970, respectively.¹¹

According to “The Political Economy of International Immigration Policy: A Comparative and Quantitative Study,” immigration policy is based on five factors: economic cycles, large scale immigration of dissimilar composition, wars, considerations of foreign relations, and global ideological cycles. Governments develop immigration policy based upon these five factors, the structural characteristics of each country, and the composition of immigrants who the country accepts, whether permanent or transitory migrants. These factors are present in influencing the immigration policy in almost every country, in some way. This essay will use Meyers’ five factors and how it related to United States Immigration Policy during the 1950s, especially as it relates to the United States policy toward Korean immigration.¹²

In terms of economic cycles, Meyers hypothesizes that “economic downturns generate restrictions to immigration,” while economic prosperity leads to a more liberal immigration policy.¹³ The indicator used to determine the economic state of the nation is its level of unemployment. If the host country is in an economic recession, or downturn, the available jobs are going to be reserved for domestic workers rather than foreign immigrants. In contrast, when

¹¹ Jie Zong and Jeanne Batalova, “Korean Immigrants in the United States” *Migration Policy Institute*, November 3, 2014, Accessed November 2017, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/korean-immigrants-united-states-2>.

¹² Eytan Meyers, “The political economy of international immigration policy: A comparative and quantitative study” PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1995.

<https://search.proquest.com/docview/304252884?accountid=26417>.

¹³ Meyers, 208

the economy is in the expansionary period, the country is more likely to accept immigrants to fill the increasing number of jobs. During the economic successes of the mid-1980s, President Ronald Reagan signed the Immigration Control and Reform Act of 1986, which provided amnesty for three million undocumented, illegal aliens.¹⁴ In contrast, during President George W. Bush's administration, which included the recession of 2008, border patrol funding was nearly tripled from \$4.8 billion to \$12.3 billion to "strengthen border security".¹⁵ In the case of the immigration restrictions of 1952, this hypothesis does not stand. There was a small rise in unemployment following the implementation of the legislation and a small dip in GDP growth¹⁶, but overall, the 1950s were an economically stable period, filled with economic growth and two periods of inflation, one immediately following World War II and the other at the onset of the Korean War.¹⁷

Economic stability and periods of growth should have led to an increase in acceptance of immigrants, though there was little change to the policy in 1952. One noticeable change was the implementation of preference of skilled workers and students to be admitted into the United States from countries that were affected by the quota system, such as South Korea.¹⁸ There is no

¹⁴ All Things Considered, "A Reagan Legacy: Amnesty for Illegal Immigrants", *Naitonal Public Radio*, July 4, 2010, <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=128303672>.

¹⁵ "Comprehensive Immigration Reform", *The White House: President George W. Bush*, February 2008, Accessed November 2017, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/infocus/immigration/>.

¹⁶ Kimberly Amadeo, "Unemployment Rate by Year Since 1929 Compared to Inflation and GDP", *The Balance*, October 18, 2017, Accessed November 2017, <https://www.thebalance.com/unemployment-rate-by-year-3305506>.

¹⁷ "1950s Economics", Accessed October 2017, <http://homepages.gac.edu/~jcullip/workexamples/mea.html#http://www.gac.edu/~jcullip/workexamples/mea.html#3>.

¹⁸ "The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952". *Federation for American Immigration Reform*. 2017. Accessed November 2017. <https://fairus.org/legislation/reports-and-analysis/immigration-and-nationality-act-1952>.

direct effect of economic growth on immigration policy towards Koreans; immigration during the decade 1951-1960 was the highest since the 1920s. Because there was economic stability and growth during the post-war era, it may be an indicator of why immigration policy was relaxed for people from the western hemisphere and the preference for skilled workers and students from the eastern hemisphere. Although, there was still discrimination between the two groups.

Meyers' second factor regarding immigration policy, large scale immigration of dissimilar composition than that of the host country, applies to the immigration policy of 1952. The deep-rooted history of Asian exclusion dates back to the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. This discriminatory policy extends through the number of people allowed to emigrate into the United States prior to 1965, when the quota system was revoked. For example, in 1952, there is no mention of Koreans entering the United States, but there is mention of the fact that "nonquota immigration from western hemisphere countries rose 38 percent since last year (1951) and was at its highest since 1930".¹⁹ Similarly, the table of *Annual Immigration Quota Under the 1924 and the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952* illustrates how the quota system discriminated against people who were not from either Southern or Eastern European countries, since eighty one percent of the quota is allocated to Southern and Eastern European countries.²⁰ There are limited data for 1953 and 1954, because there is no mention of immigrants from any Asian country in the Annual Report of the *Immigration and Naturalization Report* for those years. There is a strong focus on immigrants from Europe, again showing a dissimilar composition in representation and, probably, immigration. The *Immigration and Naturalization Report* of 1955

¹⁹ Department of Justice, "Annual Report of the Immigration and Naturalization Service", Washington D.C., 1952, pg 21.

²⁰ *Annual Immigration Quotas Under the 1924 Act and the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952*, Washington D.C.: 1952, Print, Accessed September 26, 2017.

is the first to provide data concerning Asian entrance into the United States and Naturalization. Koreans are only directly represented in the data under the section “Persons Naturalized, By Country or Region of Former Allegiance...” where 7,593 Koreans were granted citizenship in 1955, more than any other Asian country.²¹ These statistics depict the United States favoring the acceptance of European immigrants over Asian immigrants because there is already a large population of Europeans living in the United States at this time.

The 1957 *Immigration and Naturalization Report* is the first year to report explicit data for Korean entrance into the United States. It states that 1,931 Koreans arrived in the United States. This number is remarkably low compared to 211,066 Germans and 276,876 people from the United Kingdom who also entered the United States.²² The lack of visas extended to Koreans may be through geopolitical biases or racism. For example, the United States government may have perceived Koreans as a threat to democracy because of the results of the Korean War, which was a partial victory for the communist North Korea or purely because of overt racism.

It is also possible that the United States government thought they were being gracious by accepting 100 Koreans, post war, and giving preference to those who had family, such as war brides, in the United States and skilled workers. In 1953, Congressman Patrick J. Hillings of California went to Korea to discuss the then ongoing refugee and immigration problems and to have informal discussions concerning the 1953 Refugee Relief Act. This act provided entry for 214,000 refugees prior to 1956, including 100 refugees per year under the Immigration and Nationality Act. This trip was captured in an article in *Stars and Stripes*, by Cpl. Bob Jennings.

²¹ Department of Justice, “Annual Report of the Immigration and Naturalization Service”, Washington D.C., 1955.

²² Department of Justice, “Annual Report of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, Washington D.C., 1957, pg 10.

In this article, William F. Price, Spokesman for Congressman Hillings stated, “I think it signifies the growing concern and desire of the people of the US to aid the peoples of the Far East fighting Communist aggression”.²³ This article also states that the Refugee Relief Act allows Asians into the United States for the first time since the Asiatic Exclusion Act was repealed.²⁴ This article gives the impression that Hillings, through Jennings, believe that the United States is helping people from Asian countries, including Korea, by admitting 100 individuals.²⁵ These ideas also contribute to the discrepancies in admittance between Koreans and people from European countries, though there is no surety because of the limited data provided by the *Immigration and Naturalization Reports* and the limited literature in this area.

The Meyers’ third factor is the impact that wars have on immigration policy. Meyers explains “wars have a dual impact on immigration policy: on one hand, they facilitate recruitment of temporary migrant workers...on the other hand, wars and external threats lead to an association of dissimilar origin, and sometimes the encouragement of immigration of similar origin.”²⁶ This effect can be seen in the immigration policy of 1952, which was enacted during the Korean War. There was an expansion of who was allowed into the United States. Preference was given to skilled workers. This provision would have significantly helped the United States economy because skilled immigrants would be able to directly contribute to the economy. The United States would therefore benefit from this change in immigration policy. In contrast, the Korean War may have affected the American perception of Koreans. In addition to fighting the Communists, North Koreans, and their allies, such as China and the USSR, the American public

²³ Cpl. Bob Jennings, *Stars and Stripes*, “legislator arrives in Korea to study refugee problems”, 1953.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Meyers, p. 10.

may have had a poor perception of Koreans because Korea underwent years of conflict: First through the Japanese occupation, then through World War II, and finally during the Korean War.

Since there was preference given to individuals with direct family currently living in the United States, this preference encourages immigration of people with similar origin. For example, in 1957, 276,876 people were admitted to the United States from the United Kingdom.²⁷ This policy gave strong preferences to those ethnicities who already had strong roots in the United States, as well as individuals from Korea who had ties in the United States, like war brides. War brides were women who married United States service men while they were stationed in Korea. Therefore, it was easier for individuals, from those countries, to obtain a visa. Another factor is the long history between these countries, such as the United Kingdom and the United States. For example, the United Kingdom is a trusted ally in past wars while also holding a similar political ideology. Therefore, there is less fear of people entering the United States from the United Kingdom. In contrast, the United States helped to defend democracy during the Korean War, but the Koreans were not, yet, perceived as an ally. There was also an inherent fear of the spread of communism, which led to a limitation of immigrants from communist countries, such as Korea.

Meyers' fourth factor, foreign relations can be observed primarily through the 1952 Immigration and Nationality Act and the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act. During the early 1950s, the immigration policy was liberalized by foreign relations, as seen by the 1952 immigration legislation. As the United States' foreign policy shifted towards global authority and the containment of Communism, they began to encourage immigrants and refugees from

²⁷ Department of Justice, "Annual Report of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, Washington D.C., 1957, pg 10.

Communist countries, deemed captive nations, such as those in Eastern Europe, Cuba, and South-East Asia.²⁸ This encouragement was seen as a symbol of the United States commitment to offering freedom to those people fleeing "captive nations" and to extend democracy and human rights. The Office of the United States Coordinator for Refugee Affairs, stated, "people who come from fallen allied democratic regimes or who served as support troops in conflicts to preserve Western values"²⁹ should be granted asylum in the United States. Unfortunately, South Korea was not considered a "fallen allied democratic nation" because it was considered a win/draw. Therefore, the general citizens would not be considered part of a regime that had shifted to Communism because the overall governmental structure of South Korea is pro-west. The change in immigration policy is reflected in the increased numbers from Eastern Europe and other parts of the Western Hemisphere because those country's governments were Communist based. Europeans were also given priority when applying for visa,s and the numbers of immigrants were not limited by the quota system. Unfortunately, this policy was not applied to other countries, especially South Korea.

For Koreans, they do not fit the previous statement because of their history and government alliances. Before 1952, especially before the conclusion of the Korean War, there would not have been a reason to extend preferential immigration status to Koreans. As mentioned previously, the Koreans would not benefit from the change in immigration policy. The greatest benefit to Koreans, seeking refugee status following the Korean War and other conflicts in the region, is the Immigration Act of 1965, which abolished the quota system for

²⁸ "The immigration and Nationality Act of 1952," *The Office of the Historian*, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/immigration-act>.

²⁹ Statement of Richard Feen, Special Consultant to the Office of the US coordinator for Refugee Affairs, quoted in Plender, *International Migration Law*, pg. 404.

everyone entering the United States.³⁰ The changes in immigration policy went into effect more than ten years after the end of the Korean War, during the height of the War in Vietnam and the Cold War. As in prior policies, the United States attempted to preserve democracy by extending assistance to those from Communist countries by providing asylum, especially those who were fighting against the North Vietnamese.

The fifth, and final, factor that Meyers discussed is global ideological cycles. This factor may play a major role in the immigration policy at this time. The main ideological factors that are present during this era are the American effort to spread democracy and contain communism. This factor can be seen through the United States' involvement in the wars in Vietnam and Korea. Stopping the spread of Communism within the United States also influenced internal American politics. The fear of Communism, as well as racism, may be reflected in the quota system. The quota system may have been enacted to limit entrance to people from post-colonial civil wars in Asia. The limitation of immigrants from this part of the world is a direct reflection on the idea that the United States government does not want people with Communist ideals to enter the United States and spread those ideals to the American public. Thus, immigration from Communist countries, such as Korea and China, was limited. On the other hand, one would think the United States would encourage the immigration from those nations of those who opposed communism and supported democratic movements.

Domestic influences also limited admitting immigrants who were potential Communists. During the early 1950s, the prevailing philosophy was the clash over McCarthyism. In short, McCarthyism was the accusation, without appropriate due process, of treason to certain

³⁰ "The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952". *Federation for American Immigration Reform*. 2017. Accessed November 2017. <https://fairus.org/legislation/reports-and-analysis/immigration-and-nationality-act-1952>.

individuals based on their beliefs, especially their belief of Communism.³¹ During the McCarthyism era, certain politicians were able to use the prevailing political climate to push a more conservative agenda, including restrictions on social welfare, children's rights, and women's rights. In addition to a more conservative stance on overall human rights, these politicians were also able to alter immigration to favor Europeans, who were viewed as persecuted by the Communists, and against Asian, who were somehow viewed differently.

All in all, the main influences in the creation and implementation of immigration policy in the United States in the early 1950s are based on the combination of political, economic and social status of the country. Many of these factors can be seen directly through the impact that immigration policy had on European immigrants. In contrast, many of these factors do not affect Asian immigration, especially those from Korea. These differences were primarily caused by the quota system, which was in place until 1965. There was a small change of policy in 1952, when Asians were again allowed to immigrate to the United States, but the legislation disproportionately restricted their quota. Those granted preferential treatment included skilled workers, students, and those with family members already residing in the United States. The dominant national security objective of containing communism, especially in the era of McCarthyism, also played a role in the limitations of Koreans admitted until 1965.

Because of the drastic limitations set by the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, people who wanted to immigrate from South Korea to the United States, had to find alternative methods to enter the country. The main means that individual Koreans who did not have family in the United States were able to immigrate to the United States was as a skilled worker or as a

³¹ United States Department of State, "McCarthyism and the Cold War: Diplomatic Security in the 1950s", Accessed November 2017, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/176702.pdf>.

graduate student. Both categories were exempt from the quota system and were given preference when applying for visas. Other groups that were considered non-quota immigrants, as stated by the Immigration Restriction Act of 1924, include natives of Western Hemisphere countries, with their families; wives and unmarried children under twenty-one years old; parents; and those who are skilled in agriculture, with their wives and dependent children under sixteen years old.³²

Since these groups of people were not subject to the quota of 100 Koreans admitted to the United States, being classified within one of these groups would have made it easier to obtain a visa and to immigrate to the United States.

The low quotas resulted in a great deal of competition for visas. Many people wanted to come to the United States for a variety of reasons. The factors that made Koreans want to leave Korea following the Korean War, include the destruction caused by the war and family reunification. For Koreans, the Korean War was a total war, meaning that all human and material resources were employed, leaving much of the infrastructure destroyed. The physical destruction and loss of life was felt by both sides, but is most prevalent in the North because of the “American saturation bombing and the scorched-earth policy of retreating UN forces”.³³ It is estimated that North Korea’s destruction was greater than that of Japan in World War II. Through saturation bombings, the Americas leveled sixty-four major cities, leaving only two modern buildings in Pyongyang, now the capital of North Korea, or DPRK. During the war, the United States dropped 635,000 tons of bombs and used 32,577 tons of napalm. This amount is

³² “Immigration Restriction Act of 1924”, *Digital History*, 2016, Accessed November 2017, http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtID=3&psid=1116.

³³ Charles K. Armstrong, “The Destruction and Reconstruction of North Korea, 1950 – 1960”, *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, March 16, 2009, <http://apjff.org/-Charles-K.-Armstrong/3460/article.html>.

compared to 503,000 tons of bombs dropped in the entire Pacific theater during World War II.³⁴ The dramatic devastation from the American air war, left Korea, especially what is now North Korea, a desolate, unlivable landscape, forcing people to relocate, with many seeking refuge in other countries, such as the United States. Another factor that caused individuals to want to immigrate to the United States is familial ties. The United Nations Refugee Agency, better known as the UNHCR, states that one of their priorities is family reunification,³⁵ and the 1952 immigration policy gave preference to individuals that had direct familial ties in the United States. Since there is a priority placed on family reunification, it was one of the driving factors that influenced Korean's decisions to immigrate to the United States.

The main reasons that Koreans chose to come to the United States are: the strong military and economic ties that Korea had with the United States following the Korean War; the abolition of Asian exclusion; and graduate students' exemption from the quota system. Since the division of the Korean peninsula in 1948, the United States has been involved in supporting the Democratic government in South Korea. Because the Korean War was the first full scale ideological conflict of the Cold War, the support remained throughout and after the Korean War. The Korean War can also be viewed as a proxy war between the United States and the Soviet Union. Since the Korean War, the United States has remained militarily, politically, and economically involved in South Korea.³⁶ In 2017, there are greater than 20,000 United States troops stationed in South Korea. In 1957, the United States Force Korea (USFK) was established. The USFK mission is to "deter aggression and, if necessary, defend the Republic of

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ "US Family Reunification", *UNHCR*, 2001, Accessed October 2017, <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/us-family-reunification.html>.

³⁶ Pyong Gap Min, *Koreans' Immigration to the U.S.: History and Contemporary Trends*, January 27, 2011. Accessed October 2017.

Korea.”³⁷ The strong links between South Korea and the United States led to a steady increase in Korean immigrants from 1950-1964, as shown in a table produced by Baringer and others. (see Table 1).³⁸ There is a greater than 20-times increase in Korean immigrants to the United States: 107 Korean immigrants between 1946-1950 to 2,362 Korean immigrants admitted in 1964.

Another factor that would have brought Koreans to the United States is the elimination of Asian exclusion from immigrating and applying for citizenship under the Refugee Relief Act of 1953.³⁹ Though they were still confined by the quota system, Koreans were now able to enter the United States without any special provisions. In addition, Koreans were able to apply for citizenship, which would have made the United States more attractive than other destinations especially because they would not be eligible for citizenship. Lastly, graduate students were not subject to the quota system, which lead to an influx of Korean students into American universities.

The provisions of the quota system, as previously listed, would have helped to advance American society. If there was a lack of farmers with in the United States, allowing selective entrance of those that are skilled agricultural workers would help to supplement the nation’s needs. In turn, the nation’s economy would prosper and would make the United States a more productive society. In a similar way, the admittance of graduate students, advanced American society. An influx of international graduate students, many of whom may eventually enter the Unites States workforce as a highly educated workforce helped advance American society and

³⁷ Oliver Holmes, “What is the US Military Presence Near North Korea”, *The Guardian*, August 9, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/aug/09/what-is-the-us-militarys-presence-in-south-east-asia>.

³⁸ Pyong Gap Min, *Koreans’ Immigration to the U.S.: History and Contemporary Trends*, January 27, 2011. Accessed October 2017.

³⁹ United States Senate. *Armaments on the Acts of 1953*. 2045. Washington D.C.: United States Congress, 1953. Print, (Accessed September 21, 2017).

advanced productivity, through their hard work and innovation. It is estimated that approximately 6,000 Korean students entered the United States between 1950-1964.⁴⁰ Most of the students were men. The vast majority were able to find professional occupations, especially as college professors, following their graduate education.⁴¹ The increased workforce supplemented the American labor force that led to an increase in productivity. The increased productivity then led to economic growth, which ultimately benefits American society. Such economic benefits align with Meyers hypothesis and explain why certain groups, such as students and skilled workers would be given preferential admittance to the United States between 1952-1965.

Since Koreans, similar to many other ethnic groups who travelled to the United States, like to surround themselves with like-minded people and people who share the same language and culture, Koreans began to settle in areas where there were already large populations of Koreans, such as Los Angeles, Honolulu, and New York City. Another reason for the creation of Korea-towns is that Koreans are not accepting of people of other races and nationalities. For this reason, it has been difficult for Koreans to assimilate to American society. Koreans, like other immigrants had trouble adjusting to American culture, because of the language barrier and a difference in the structure of society. For example, Koreans have “an enduring adherence to the long-standing traditions of a Korean class system”⁴² and other cultural traditions that made it more comfortable for people to live together. This cultural adherence is intact because Koreans

⁴⁰ Warren Kim, 1971. *Koreans in America*, Seoul: Po Chin Chai.

⁴¹ Pyong Gap Min, *Koreans' Immigration to the U.S.: History and Contemporary Trends*, January 27, 2011. Accessed October 2017.

⁴² “For Koreans, the Issue if Assimilation, not Immigration, *AA News for Books*, July 1, 2010, accessed October 2017, <http://aapress.com/arts/books/for-koreans-the-issue-is-assimilation-not-immigration/>.

tend to keep to themselves once coming to America. This fear of other groups may stem from widespread racism in their homeland. In Korean society, there are no formal anti-discrimination laws, so Korean immigrants are paid less than minimum wage, degraded, and can even be physically abused.⁴³ This deep-rooted racism may be the reason that Koreans have such a difficult time adjusting to American society. This racism stems from a long period of occupation by the Chinese and Japanese that dates back to 108 BCE, when Korea was a Chinese Commandery or prefecture in the north and a part of the Samhan Federation in the south. Following the Chinese occupation, there was a period of Korean independence. Korea was then occupied by the Mongols, from 1231-1336 CE. The last major occupation, and most relevant to immigrants coming to the United States, is the Japanese occupation from 1910-1945.⁴⁴ During the Japanese occupation, the colonial rule was harsh. For example, any Korean dissent was mercilessly crushed. The Japanese were often oppressive. Koreans were encouraged to change their names to Japanese names. As stated previously, school books and business was conducted in Japanese rather than Korean. It is possible that these long periods of oppressive colonial rule caused Koreans to develop a deep-rooted animosity towards outsiders.

The creation of these large scale “Korea-towns” have effects on the modern economy and society. Since the 1960s there has been a dramatic increase in Korean immigrants to the United States (Figure 1).⁴⁵ The Korean American community can be characterized as a group who has achieved a high level of economic achievement, entrepreneurial activity, and upward

⁴³ Keumjae Park, “Foreigners or multicultural citizens?” *Press media's construction of immigrants in South Korea*, Accessed November 2017.

⁴⁴ “A Timeline of Korean History”, *Asian Education*, 2009, Accessed October 2017, http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/timelines/korea_timeline.htm.

⁴⁵ United States Census 1952.

social mobility.⁴⁶ Korean immigrants create businesses at a rate that is approximately 70% higher than the rates of the general population and maintains a wealth that is double the national average. In addition, Korean immigrants exhibit high rates of educational achievement. They also record incomes that are 40% higher than the national average. These statistics lead to the idea that if the Korean immigrant population were doubled, the per capita income growth of the United States would be doubled from 0.1 to 0.2 percent. These advances have most likely come to pass since Korean immigration peaked in 1987 and has been declining.⁴⁷

There are a variety of reasons that Koreans wanted to come to America. Their entrance into the country led to an assortment of social and economic effects that stem from the implementation of immigration legislation in the 1950s and first half of the 1960s. The economic, political, and social status of the United States influenced the creation of the immigration policy in 1952 and 1956. An influx of immigrants from Korea would raise the number of people in the labor force, therefore lowering wages for American citizens. Additionally, there was steady economic growth at this time with two periods of inflation. Due to these factors, the United States government would not want to increase the workforce. As a result it may be a possible reason they barred large numbers of workers from entering the United States. The political and social issues that plagued the United States at this time revolved around Communism. Since the United States feared the spread of Communism, they were reluctant to allow people from Communist countries, such as Korea, from entering the United States. These factors, as well as a deep rooted sentiment of Asian exclusion, influenced the immigration policy of the 1950s and early 1960s.

⁴⁶ Marcus Noland, *The Impact of Korean Immigration on the Economy*, Institute for International Economics.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

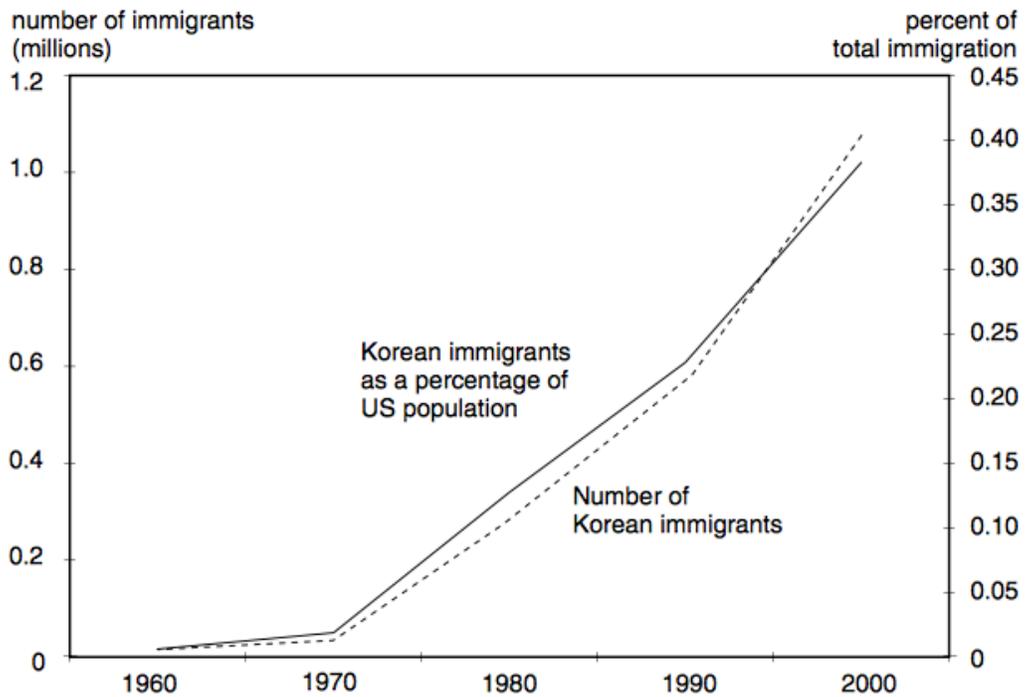
All in all, the immigration policy in the early 1950s and 1960s had major effects on American society. Though there was a quota system, there were ways for individuals, such as skilled workers and students, to immigrate to the United States without being limited by the quota system. Following 1965, there were major social and economic contributions from Korean immigrants on American society when the quota system was lifted, and Koreans could freely apply for immigration status to the United States.

Figures and Tables

Table 1: Number of Korean Immigrants (by Country of Birth) to the U.S, 1946-1964

Year	Number of Immigrants
1946-1950	107
1951-1955	581
1956	703
1957	648
1958	1,604
1959	1,720
1960	1,507
1961	1,534
1962	1,538
1963	2,580
1964	2,362
Total	14,884

Figure 1: Korean Immigrants living in the United States, 1960-2000



Source: US Census Bureau.

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- “Immigration Restriction Act of 1924”. *Digital History*. 2016. Accessed November 2017. http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtID=3&psid=1116.
- “Korean War.” *History.com*. 2009. Accessed October 2017. <http://history.com/koreanwar>.
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- All Things Considered. “A Reagan Legacy: Amnesty for Illegal Immigrants”. *National Public Radio*. July 4, 2010, <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=128303672>.
- Armstrong, Charles K.. “The Destruction and Reconstruction of North Korea. 1950 – 1960”. *The Asia-Pacific Journal*. March 16, 2009. <http://apjpf.org/-Charles-K.-Armstrong/3460/article.html>.
- Eytan Meyers, “The political economy of international immigration policy: A comparative and quantitative study” PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1995. <https://search.proquest.com/docview/304252884?accountid=26417>.

This dissertation discusses various theories on how governments decide how many immigrants to accept, whether or not to discriminate against certain racial and ethnic groups, and whether or not to accept refugees, and whether or not to favor permanent immigrants or migrant workers. The author, Eytan Meyers, was a Philosophy student at the University of Chicago perusing a doctorate. Even though this is an old publication it stands apart from other literature because it provides a theoretical approach to immigration policy, rather than focusing on one particular country or time period. In order to do this Meyers uses a variety of sources, focusing on migration policy making and uses them to derive unique theories and to propose models in a way that not many scholars have done before. Lastly, this work distinguishes itself from other works because it combines both domestic and international influences on government policy

making, which clarifies the issues in both areas. The primary sources used throughout this dissertation include Journal articles from a variety of scholarly journals including the *European Journal of Political Research*, and a variety of other sources such as books. Primary sources that are used include country reports from around the world and a variety of newspaper articles.

This dissertation will be used as a basis for me to try to determine how the United States government decided to create the immigration policy that was used between 1952 and 1965. I will also use this paper to gain background information on immigration policy, and political economics. I have a basic understanding of these subject areas, but this essay provides an in-depth background that will help further my essay.

Holmes, Oliver. "What is the US Military Presence Near North Korea". *The Guardian*. August 9, 2017. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/aug/09/what-is-the-us-militarys-presence-in-south-east-asia>.

Hsu, Madeline Yuan-yin. *The good immigrants: how the yellow peril became the model minority*. (2015).

<http://aapress.com/arts/books/for-koreans-the-issue-is-assimilation-not-immigration/>.

Hurh, Won Moo and Kwang Chung Kim. *Korean Immigrants in America: A Structural Analysis of Ethnic Confinement and Adhesive Adaptation*. Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickenson University Press, 1984.

This book is an analysis of contemporary immigration from Korea to the United States. Throughout the book, the authors give background information on immigration, the process of adapting to new cultures and societies, and other social issues that plague our society. Additionally, the authors include a chapter that is solely focused on the characteristics and demographics of Korean immigrants according to US records. This chapter will be the most useful and will be used to corroborate information found from other government agencies. Primary sources that are used include data from the US Department of Commerce, Health, and Labor.

This book provides a plethora of background information on Korean immigration and assimilation into American culture and society that will be necessary for my essay. Also, it gives in depth background information on migration patterns that will be useful for my essay.

Kim, Warren. 1971. *Koreans in America*. Seoul: Po Chin Chai.

Min, Pyong Gap. *Koreans' Immigration to the U.S.: History and Contemporary Trends*. January 27, 2011. Accessed October 2017.

This dissertation is one of the few sources that references the vast number of students that

entered the United States between 1950-1965. There is very limited research and data in this field, so this dissertation is an important addition to the historiography on this topic. Since there is limited data and research in this field, it is difficult to corroborate the information given in this dissertation.

Noland, Marcus. *The Impact of Korean Immigration on the Economy*, Institute for International Economics.

This article separates its self from the others because it shows the effects that Korean Immigration had on the United States economy, both historically and discusses how those effects have persisted to the modern-day economy. It provides an in-depth analysis of how the economy has been helped by the advances that Koreans have brought to the American economy. The author is currently the Vice President at the Peterson Institute for International Economics and has a focus in studying Korea. Because of his background a research areas he seems like an appropriate and reliable author for a document on this caliber.

Park, Keumjae. "Foreigners or multicultural citizens?". *Press media's construction of immigrants in South Korea*. Accessed November 2017.

United States Department of State. "McCarthyism and the Cold War: Diplomatic Security in the 1950s". Accessed November 2017.

<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/176702.pdf>.

Yuh, Ji-Yeon. *Beyond the Shadow of Camptown: Korean Military Brides in America*. New York: New York University Press, 2004.

This source is not directly related to the argument presented in the essay, but it provides necessary historiographical information about the large number of immigrants that entered the United States as war brides. These were not the first Koreans to enter the United States but they are the focus of much of the literature regarding Korean immigration. It provides an essential addition to the historiography when discussing Korean Immigration to the United States.

Zong, Jie and Jeanne Batalova, "Korean Immigrants in the United States" *Migration Policy Institute*, November 3, 2014, Accessed November 2017,

<https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/korean-immigrants-united-states-2>.

Primary Sources

“1950s Economics”. Accessed October 2017.

<http://homepages.gac.edu/~jcullip/workexamples/mea.html#http://www.gac.edu/~jcullip/workexamples/mea.html#3>.

The economics at the time directly before and directly after the implementation policy can give hints to the creation and effects that the immigration policy had on the economy. This overview of the state of the economy in the 1950s gives insight to how the immigration policy effected economy and if there were any economic insights that could have led to the creation of the 1952 immigration policy.

“The immigration and Nationality Act of 1952,” *The Office of the Historian*, Accessed September 21, 2017, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/immigration-act>.

“The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952”. *Federation for American Immigration Reform*. 2017. Accessed November 2017. <https://fairus.org/legislation/reports-and-analysis/immigration-and-nationality-act-1952>.

This website synthesizes the difficult text that is presented in the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, and other immigration policies. It presents the information in a clear, concise, and easy to read manner. It provides a large amount of information regarding the details of the INA of 1952. Since this information is provided from the Federation of American Immigration Reform, it is a reliable source.

Amadeo, Kimberly, “Unemployment Rate by Year Since 1929 Compared to Inflation and GDP”. *The Balance*. October 18, 2017. Accessed November 2017.

<https://www.thebalance.com/unemployment-rate-by-year-3305506>.

Annual Immigration Quotas Under the 1924 Act and the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952. Washington D.C.: 1952. Print (Accessed September 26, 2017).

I selected this source because it shows a lack of interest in the number of Asian people aloud into the country. This is significant because there is a reference to European people, but there is not a reference to Asian people following the war. There is a lack of acceptance because of the long term and deep-rooted discrimination against Asian people. One would think that there would be a greater acceptance of refugees and displaced people following the war, but this was not true, as shown through this source. The economics at the time directly before and directly after the implementation policy can give hints to the creation and effects that the immigration policy had on the economy. This overview of the state of the economy in the 1950s gives insight to how the immigration policy effected economy and if there were any economic insights that could have led to the creation of the 1952 immigration policy.

This source is a record of the quota system and how many people were allowed into the United States following the implementation of the 1952 Immigration and Nationality Act. The source makes reference to how the quota system discriminates against people from Southern and Eastern European countries, since 81 percent of the of the quota is allocated to Southern and Eastern European Countries. There is no reference to the limitation of people from Asian countries, though there is a severe limitation of people that are allowed into America from these countries.

Cpl. Bob Jennings, “Legislator Arrives in Korea to Study Refugee Problems” *Stars and Stripes*, (1953).

Department of Justice, “Annual Report of the Immigration and Naturalization Service”.
Washington D.C., 1952.

The reports from the Immigration and Naturalization Service provide census information about the amount of people that immigrated to the United States from a variety of countries. It gives information on age, occupation, and where immigration settled when arriving in the United States. It is valuable information that helps to distinguish between the millions of people who immigrated to the United States between 1952-1964. It helps to distinguish between those who came from Europe and those who came from Korea.

Department of Justice, “Annual Report of the Immigration and Naturalization Service”.
Washington D.C., 1957, p. 10.

The reports from the Immigration and Naturalization Service provide census information about the amount of people that immigrated to the United States from a variety of countries. It gives information on age, occupation, and where immigration settled when arriving in the United States. It is valuable information that helps to distinguish between the millions of people who immigrated to the United States between 1952-1964. It helps to distinguish between those who came from Europe and those who came from Korea.

Department of Justice, “Annual Report of the Immigration and Naturalization Service”.
Washington D.C., 1955.

Feen, Richard. quoted in Plender, *International Migration Law*, pg. 404.

Hyo-Kyoung Seo, interview by Dominique Seo, December 3, 2017.

“Immigration Restriction act of 1924”. *Digital History* 2016. Accessed November 2017.

http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/dispatch_textbook.cfm?smtID=3&psid=1116

This website provides direct text from the 1952 Immigration legislation and the 1924 immigration policy. This text plays an important role in the background and analysis of the social and economic effects that were brought on by the policy stated in these pieces

of legislation. This is also a key primary source to my argument. It helps provide the necessary information on Immigration policy at this time, specifically on the quota system and who was qualified as a non-quota immigrant.

United States Census 1952.