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*Az Egyesült Államok külpolitikájának hatása a koreai
immigrációra az Egyesült Államokba*

*The Influence of US Foreign Policy on Korean
Immigration to the United States*

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Introduction

Asian Americans have become the fastest growing minority in the United States. Between 2000 and 2015, their population grew from 11.9 million to 20.4 million, producing an exceptional 76% growth rate. The immigration history of particular ethnic groups in the Asian American minority are quite similar to some extent. However, circumstances unique to each ethnic group shaped their story in different ways. Koreans are the focus of this thesis and they are one of the top six largest ethnic groups within the Asian American minority (“Key Facts about”). In 2015, there were about 1.8 million Koreans living in the United States (“Korean Population”) and 78% of Korean Americans above the age of 18 were foreign-born (“Korean Americans”). The explanation for this high ratio of foreign-born adults lies in their relatively short immigration history.

It is important to note that in this thesis “Korea” refers to the entire peninsula prior to 1945 and to South Korea after 1945. Immigration from North Korea is not discussed because its volume is miniscule due to the dictatorship’s strict exit policies.

Korean immigrants arrived in the United States in several waves between 1903 and the 1990s. This thesis considers four separate waves of Korean immigration: the first, between 1902 and 1905, the second, between 1906 and 1945, the third, 1946-1964, and finally the fourth, from 1965 to the 1990s (H. Kim 13). All three are distinct in terms of reasons for emigrating from Korea, the number of immigrants entering the United States, and the composition of immigrants.

According to Melendy, the very first Korean people to arrive in the United States were three pro-Japanese liberals who failed to overturn the Korean monarchy in 1885. The arrival of a small number of students followed from 1890 until the formation of the Japanese protectorate

of Korea in 1905. These students emigrated to study in Christian mission schools and most of them returned home and joined the fight for Korean independence. However, the first considerable number of Korean immigrants migrated to Hawaiian sugar plantations as cheap workforce in 1903 (121). These immigrants proved to be favorable laborers, which encouraged the continuation of further recruitment up until a temporary halt of overseas immigration by the Korean Foreign Office and then a complete standstill of immigration due to Japan taking full control of Korea in November 1905. In this first wave of immigration, some 7,226 Koreans migrated to Hawaii: 6,048 men between the ages of 20 and 30, 637 women, and 541 children. As for their occupational background, most immigrants were unemployed workers, soldiers, home servants, miners, woodcutters, and policemen (Melendy 125). Korean immigrants had an exceptionally high literacy rate of 40%, especially in comparison with that of the Japanese and Chinese immigrants. Another characteristic that set Korean immigrants apart from the Japanese and the Chinese was their goal to settle down in the United States, rather than earning a huge sum of money and returning to Korea, since they did not have a stable country to return to (H. Kim 14).

The second wave of immigrants was heavily influenced by Japan's control over Korea and it mainly consisted of picture brides and students. Picture brides migrated to the United States between 1907 and 1924. Two factors allowed the continuous entry of Korean picture brides into the country: one was the passing of the Gentlemen's Agreement in 1907, an agreement between the United States and Japan that supported family reunifications, and the second one was Japan permitting Korean immigrant men to pursue picture brides since there was a huge imbalance in the sex ratio of Korean immigrants in the United State at the time. The migration of Korean picture brides stopped with the passing of the 1924 Immigration Act that denied entry to the United States for Japanese subjects, including Koreans (Melendy 126–27).

Another group of immigrants that migrated during the second wave was students. Students arrived during the first wave as well but the immigration was suspended for four years because the Japanese government expected that anti-Japanese leaders and agitators would emerge from the immigrants. However, in 1909, Japan decided to issue passports for students on two conditions: proof that the United States government would endorse them and available adequate financial support. Between 1910 and 1918, 541 young political refugees escaped Japanese oppression and traveled to the United States. They were categorized as “working student” immigrants, since they did not have passports or student visas, and they were exempted. Between 1921 and 1940, 289 students migrated to the United States, but they were carefully selected individuals and obligated to return to Korea upon stopping or finishing their studies. The immigration of students stopped in 1940 when the relationship between the United States and Japan had deteriorated (Melendy 128–29).

Korean immigration to the United States was heavily influenced by restrictive Japanese and American immigration policies for three decades. There has been no major legislative action taken explicitly against or to the advantage of Koreans, like in the case of the Chinese, Japanese, or Filipinos. Therefore, Korean immigration history can be interpreted in the context of the general immigration laws of the United States and the Korean peninsula’s history.

This thesis discusses how the correlation between American Cold War foreign policy concerns and immigration policy influenced Korean immigration to the United States. I also argue that Korean immigration to the United States fundamentally changed during and after the conclusion of the Korean War, both in terms of quantity and in the composition of immigrants, due to American presence on the Korean peninsula and several changes made in United States immigration policy after 1950. Chapter 1 is about the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, or otherwise known as the McCarran-Walter Act. Chapter 2 presents the story of war brides and war orphans of the Korean War and legislations that shaped their immigration opportunities.

Chapter 3 discusses the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 and its effects on Korean immigration, and finally, Chapter 4 provides a conclusion to this thesis.

Chapter 1: Korean Immigration under the McCarran-Walter Act

Asian immigration history in the United States was dominantly characterized by exclusion. Even though Asians were welcomed immigrants starting from the 1840s because they provided cheap labor, their growing numbers started to be perceived negatively in the following decades. Nativists and exclusionists most frequently justified their demands with the fear of decreasing wages and the unassimilable nature of immigrants from certain parts of the world (Hing 20-32). Congress passed several bills that aimed to exclude Asian immigrants in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. While Congress slowly started to reverse exclusionist pieces of legislation in the 1940s, the first real breakthrough was the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) of 1952, or the McCarran-Walter Act.

The McCarran-Walter Act and Its Background

The main goal of Congress with the McCarran-Walter Act was to create one comprehensive immigration and naturalization package (Bennett 128). Although it contained several new provisions, key ideas were borrowed from the Immigration Act of 1924. The 1924 Act established the national origins quota system that set the annual number of immigrants of a specific country at 2% of the people of their nationality residing in the United States in 1890. Despite originally aiming to limit southern and eastern European immigration, another provision of the act ultimately denied entry to all Asian nations¹ by excluding “aliens ineligible to citizenship”, since an 1870 statute prohibited the naturalization of Asians (Hing 33). Even if the Japanese did not possess the power to block Korean emigration, this Immigration Act would have still excluded them, resulting in virtually no immigrants between the 1920s and 1940s. This was the case also after the division of Korea in 1945; according to Hing, North Korean immigration was halted by their military government, but South Koreans were simply still

¹ The only exception were the Filipinos due to their status as US nationals.

subject to the Immigration Act of 1924, resulting in a total number of 128 Korean immigrants between 1948 and 1951 recorded by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) (67).

Even though there were pieces of legislation in the 1940s, like the Chinese Repealer that granted naturalization rights to the Chinese and later laws extended these rights to Filipinos and Indians, and thus it seemed to reflect a more positive American attitude towards Asian immigration, in reality it was not the case. All these pieces of legislation were politically driven by foreign policy concerns towards China, the Philippines, and India. However, Japan and the now independent Korea were still subject to the national origins quota system, since no foreign policy concerns warranted a change. The need for modification arose after World War II when the United States undertook the role of leading the United Nations and when the Cold War started (Hing 36–37). The United States adapted a containment policy during the Cold War, which aimed to prevent the spread of communism first in Europe and later in Asia. American attention fully turned to East Asia after the communist victory in the Chinese Civil War in 1949 since they interpreted this as the start of communism spreading in Asia. The NSC-68 was the product of an atmosphere of crisis that characterized 1949-50 in Asia, and among other provisions, it extended the policy of communism containment to East Asia (Herring 636–38). Immigration policy was increasingly perceived as a foreign policy tool to assist the fight against communism through calculated population movements (Szabó 232). Even though in the global strategy of the United States Japan established a greater role, Korea still had a special part in American foreign relations since it “became an important buffer against China and the Soviet Union and a market for Japanese exports” (Herring 640). Therefore, it was in the interest of the United States to both intervene on the peninsula after the invasion of Seoul by the North and to establish better relations with the South through less strict immigration policies.

Considering all of the above, the 1924 regulations became counterproductive to foreign policy concerns. The first steps towards an open Asian immigration policy were the

amendments in the McCarran-Walter Act. The main provision that the Immigration Act of 1924 provided for the new immigration law was the national origins quota system. The McCarran-Walter Act granted every country a quota that was one sixth of one percent of the particular nation's inhabitants in the contiguous United States in 1920, while the minimum number of quotas were set at 100 (Bennett 129). This showed a still prevalent preference for northern and eastern Europeans since countries in these regions received 80% of the total quotas. Furthermore, the McCarran-Walter Act established the Asia-Pacific Triangle which covered about 20 countries, including Korea, and these countries accommodated approximately half of the world's population. Prior to this Act, these countries did not possess any quotas and even their newly acquired quotas were substantially limited numerically. The McCarran-Walter Act determined the minimum 100 quotas for each country² (Bennett 131) with a total cap of 2,000 quotas annually for the entire Asia-Pacific Triangle, which was miniscule compared to Italy's 5,000 and Germany's 25,000 annual quotas³ (H. Kim 53). Nevertheless, by 1965 there was a fivefold increase in the Korean population from roughly 7,500 in 1950 to approximately 45,000 (Hing 67).

Despite the numerically limited quotas, the McCarran-Walter Act represented a milestone in Asian immigration history as it repealed previous discriminative statutes and made immigration and naturalization independent of racial origin (Bennett 130). Since this provision completely nullified the "ineligible for citizenship" condition for naturalization, the United States was able to improve its international relations in the Far East (Hing 37). It also allowed many Japanese and Koreans, who had been living in the United States for over four decades, to finally become citizens (H. Kim 53).

² Exceptions were made for Japan (185 quotas) and Chinese persons living outside of China (105 quotas).

³ Still, the quotas for the Triangle were exceptionally established, since the strict application of the national origins formula would have resulted in a total of 980 quotas for the 20 countries altogether.

Another important feature of the McCarran-Walter Act were the preferences it established for the immigrants under the quotas. Firstly, it reserved half of each quota for skilled workers because of the usefulness of their services and education. Parents of adult American citizens received the second preference, 30% of the quota, while 20% were given to the spouses and children of permanent resident aliens. Brothers, sisters, and adult children of United States citizens belonged to the fourth preference group, having 25% of each quota reserved for them. Lastly, the provisions of the McCarran-Walter Act concerning nonquota immigrants included the underage children of citizens of the United States or their spouses (Bennett 131).

The McCarran-Walter Act and Korean Immigration

Even though the McCarran-Walter Act was not created with Korean immigrants in mind, it facilitated their immigration to the United States compared to their status a few years before. According to Hing's table that compares Korean American population with immigration by decade and the immigration law in effect, 7,025 Koreans entered the United States in the 1950s while the McCarran-Walter Act was in effect. The exact increase in the number of immigrants compared to the decade prior cannot be determined, since the INS did not count Koreans separately before 1948. However, the population showed an approximately 4,000 increase in number compared to an increase of 1,000-2,000 in prior decades (66). The door that was opened by the McCarran-Walter Act was a huge opportunity for Koreans in a time of great need: they were increasingly interested in immigration due to "political unrest, social turmoil, and economic instability" following the Korean War, and the United States was an obvious choice of destination for them because of the strong connections made during and after the war (Hing 67).

The most important provisions relevant to Koreans, besides the 100 allocated quotas, were the right to naturalize and the quota preferences. The preference for skilled-laborers manifested between 1959 and 1963, when 6% of immigrants were categorized as professionals

and managers (Hing 69). The right to naturalize also enabled Koreans residing in the United States to apply for citizenship that could remove many legal restrictions they had faced before:

[P]rior to citizenship, Koreans were legally restricted in much that they could do. In eleven states, they could not buy, own, or lease land. Twenty-six states refused them old age pensions. New York's laws excluded them from twenty-seven different occupations. Fifteen states refused as late as 1950 to sanction marriages between Koreans and white persons. In California and several other states, Koreans had been classified as Mongolians, which prohibited them from securing marriage licenses. [...] From 1952 there was no longer any question about citizenship for Koreans residing in the United States. The only continuing legal bar that hampered their economic freedom was the restriction of professional licensing (Melendy 138).

The two provisions also impacted Korean immigration in a joined manner. As Bennett explains, Koreans, who had been residing in the United States and gained the right to naturalize, now held the power to bring their spouses and children to the United States outside of the restricted number of quotas given to Korea (132). Despite accounting for only a small number of immigrants who entered the United States between the end of the Korean War and 1965 (Daniels 366), this was a remarkable development in the rights and opportunities of Koreans wishing to migrate to the United States.

A group of immigrants more substantial in size entering the United States in this period were students. Thousands of them entered the United States on student visas and most of them stayed, since they succeeded in changing their student visas to immigrant or long-term visitor visas (Daniels 366). The two largest groups of Korean immigrants that migrated to the United States between the Korean War and 1965 were war brides and war orphans. Both groups migrated because of their relations to American servicemen and upon arriving in the United States, neither had much interaction with local Korean American communities. The

circumstances and the history of their migration are quite unique and they are discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

Despite being a milestone in Asian American immigration history, the McCarran-Walter Act had few revolutionary and lasting provisions and much more severe shortcomings. The aim of the McCarran-Walter Act was to preserve the national origins quota system, however, by conferring too broad authority on the Attorney General and by including huge loopholes for nonquota immigration, it essentially destroyed itself. The Refugee Relief Act of 1953 was the first legislative action that violated the national origins quota system, and the consecutive refugee crises of the Cold War required several others to follow in the upcoming years. In the 13 years following the passage of the McCarran-Walter Act, the ratio of nonquota immigrants entering the United States reached two out of every three immigrants due to these shortcomings. Over the years leading up to 1965, Congress made several amendments to the McCarran-Walter Act, slowly discarding the national origins quota system, as well as removing the 2,000 cap on the Asia-Pacific Triangle quotas (Bennett 134–36).

The McCarran-Walter Act may be described as a transitional legislation between the exclusionist Immigration Act of 1924 and the inclusive Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965. While it retained some aspects of the 1924 act, like the national origins quota system, it also showcased some progressive provisions, such as making naturalization independent of racial origin. Despite numerical restrictions, substantial Korean immigration started to emerge as a result of the opportunities provided by the McCarran-Walter Act. The new immigration act was also the first substantial proof of foreign policy concerns influencing immigration policy.

Chapter 2: Korean War Brides and War Orphans

Korea gained its independence from Japan in 1945. However, as the Cold War unfolded, the Korean peninsula soon became the theatre for the first military conflict between the United States and the U.S.S.R in Asia. The decision of the United States to engage in a war on the Korean peninsula transformed Korean immigration to the United States: besides students, a large number of Korean war brides moved stateside, and an intercountry adoption system developed to help Korean war orphans. Also, these new immigrants ultimately helped reform Americans' perception of Asian immigrants.

The three-year war had grave consequences in South Korea: the war separated approximately 10 million families, it widowed 500,000 people, and orphaned tens of thousands of children (E. Kim 5). Referring to a 1955 U.S. Children's Bureau study, E. Kim claims that there is a link between American interventionist policies following the war "and its international welfare responsibilities", which means that had the American engagement and the ensuing military occupation on the Korean peninsula not occurred, Korean adoption in its present form would be non-existent (5-6). Similarly, the women who migrated to the United States as war brides did so because of the consequences of the war.

According to Yu, the number of Korean women who married American soldiers and migrated to the United States between 1950 and 1973 is approximately 20,000 (127). The arrival of the war brides also visibly impacted the sex ratio of the Korean population in the United States. While Korean immigrants before the war were dominantly male, Yu brings statistical data from 1970-73 that shows an imbalance of sex ratio in favor of Korean immigrant women: while in the overall population it is 61 males to 100 females, in the age group 20-29, it is 29 males to 100 females (126).

The American population was quite unwelcoming towards the war brides since many believed they were prostitutes who only married American men for immigration purposes (Oh 47). Yu also mentions adjustment problems that Korean war brides experienced after migrating to the United States (127). H. J. Kim interviewed seven war brides about their lives and most of them shared the following common features: coming from a poor financial background in hopes of a better life by marriage to an American soldier, the subsequent rejection by their Korean family because they married a foreigner, language problems that resulted in a solitary life at home, dependence on the husband, limited job opportunities, and discrimination by both white Americans and Asian Americans.

Besides war brides, the war that ravaged the Korean peninsula also produced a large number of orphans and needy children. Several specific circumstances in both the United States and South Korea determined the future lives of these children. The history of Korean adoptees began with the mixed-race children born to Korean women from American and UN soldiers. E. Kim argues that these mixed-race children created a social welfare problem for South Korea, as well as a publicity problem for the United States (6).

The mixed-race orphans were a social welfare issue for two main reasons. Firstly, at this point in history, South Korea had no domestic adoption laws in place. Secondly, their social welfare system was virtually non-existent: their contemporary system was actually developed with the help of Western humanitarian organizations following the Korean War (E. Kim 9). Another important factor that facilitated the creation of the intercountry adoption system was the exclusion of the mixed-race children from Korean society. President Syngman Rhee stated the following in a letter to one of his ambassadors: “We are most anxious to send as many of our orphans to the States as possible. In particular we desire to have adopted those children of Western fathers and Korean mothers who can never hope to make a place for themselves in

Korean society” (E. Kim 12). These children posed a threat to Rhee’s “one nation, one race” ideology, therefore they had to leave.

On the other hand, Korean war orphans were a publicity issue for the United States because “these ‘GI babies’ or ‘UN babies’ presented a possible weapon that North Korea could seize upon in the ideological battle to discredit the U.S. and its Cold War expansionism” (E. Kim 6). This idea also connects to Oh’s argument of Christian Americanism being the driving force behind the adoption movement. She defines Christian Americanism as a blending of “Cold War patriotism and vaguely Christian values” that advocated the adoption of Korean children to average Americans as a missionary opportunity to help the American government demonstrate racial liberalism that juxtaposed the Soviet propaganda. Supporters of Korean adoption justified their arguments with Christian American values when petitioning Congress for orphan laws that would enable Korean adoption (Oh 35–36).

In the beginning, American citizens “adopted” Korean orphans through different sponsorship programs, like the Christian Children’s Fund and the Foster Parents’ Plan (Oh 35). The Refugee Relief Act (RRA) of 1953 presented American couples with the first real opportunity to systematically adopt Korean children and bring them to the United States (Oh 38). The RRA “allowed for 4,000 orphans, younger than 10 years old, from any country with oversubscribed quotas, to be adopted in the United States by American citizens” (E. Kim 9).

Even though the act was passed to aid victims of Communism in Europe, the RRA also enabled Korean orphans to bypass the racially discriminative immigration laws in place at the time. According to the RRA, the status of orphans was above race or nationality. The annual immigrant quota for South Korea was 100, however, the RRA provided visas for 460 Korean children in 1953. The RRA was to expire at the end of 1956, however, the 4,000 visas had already been issued by September 1956. This resulted in American adoptive parents petitioning Congress for further orphan laws (Oh 38–39).

The 1957 Refugee-Escapee Act included previous provisions from the RRA concerning orphans but it also expanded on some of them. The maximum age limit of orphans was raised to 14 years and adoptees of United States citizens were allowed into the country in unlimited numbers in the following two years. This was also a turning point in terms of the way the American government regarded intercountry adoption: it was no longer a refugee issue, nor a child welfare issue. By transferring the orphan program under the purview of the Attorney General from that of the State Department, intercountry adoption became an immigration issue. After it expired, Congress kept extending orphan laws every year until the enactment of the Act of 1961. The Act amended the INA to “make nonquota visas permanently available for foreign-born adopted children,” thus institutionalizing intercountry adoption and labeling foreign-born adopted children as “immediate relatives” instead of “eligible orphans” (Oh 40–41). American couples adopted some 4,190 Korean children between 1955 and 1961, which constitutes a considerable portion of the 7,025 Korean immigrants of the late 1950s (Oh 41).

It is important to note that these Refugee Relief Acts also had political motivation behind them. While the war orphans were their greatest beneficiaries from the perspective of Korea, the implementation of these laws was driven more dominantly by foreign policy concerns of discrediting communist regimes by accepting people fleeing their countries, while overshadowing the humanitarian aspect of refugee relief at the same time (Szabó 234).

Still, with the help of intercountry adoption, the more frequent decision of Korean mothers to keep their babies, and the normalized perception of mixed-race children in the proximity of military bases resulted in no mixed-race children living in South Korean orphanages by 1962. However, American citizens still had a high demand for adoptable children. At the same time, South Korea was facing child abandonment issues: as the number of mixed-race children decreased in the late 1950s because of intercountry adoption, the instances of child abandonment were increasing. While in 1955 there were 750 cases of

abandonment, in 1964 the number increased to 11,000, and by 1968 it reached 70,000. In 1965, 70% of adopted children were full Korean. The early 1960s saw a shift in Korean adoption from “mixed-race war orphans to full-Korean social and economic orphans”. Post-Korean War, the South Korean government chiefly focused on national defense, spending 40% of its budget on it, while social welfare programs only received 2%. This meant that the main source of income for these programs were the sponsorships of orphanages (E. Kim 17–18). This shows the duality of Korean adoption: on the one hand, it saved many innocent children from suffering and growing up without a family, on the other hand, they were tools in both countries’ political agendas. Korean war orphans helped improve the international image of the United States as the egalitarian leader of the free world, as well as provide income for Korean social welfare programs.

Nonetheless, the migration of the war brides and the war orphans were crucial to the transformation of the Asian minority in the United States in the 1950s and 1960s. Firstly, the image of war brides and war orphans was more attractive than that of the male Oriental laborer. Secondly, after World War II, the common goal of the United States government and the Asian American communities was to refigure the previous “unassimilable Chinese and Japanese” alien image of Asian Americans into “model citizens”. World War II, the Cold War, and the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s all contributed to the transformation of racial thinking in the United States. In the midst of this change, Asian Americans became a model minority of “hard-working, family- and education-oriented, [and] capitalist” people, the most ideal type to be Americanized (Oh 46–47). Oh also quotes the State Department’s statement on orphans making “the best possible immigrants from the standpoint of their youth, flexibility, and lack of ties to any other cultures” (48). These characteristics of orphans facilitated their assimilation into American culture, thus making them desirable immigrants.

In conclusion, the Korean War produced two groups of immigrants that migrated to the United States because of connections forged between the two countries thanks to America pursuing an interventionist policy in the war. These new immigrants had a great impact on the Korean American minority. The arrival of the war brides changed the previously male dominant sex ratio of the Korean minority in the US. However, they experienced a challenging assimilation due to their perception as prostitutes by Americans, language difficulties, and discrimination. A more ideal immigrant was the Korean war orphan because of their easy assimilation into American society. Their journey began as one of refugees which, in the course of a few years, transformed into the status of immigrants.

Chapter 3: The Immigration Act of 1965

As discussed in Chapter 1, the McCarran-Walter Act was technically abandoned by the end of the 1950s owing to several pieces of legislation concerning refugees made by the Attorney General. The need for a new immigration policy was apparent by the early 1960s mainly because the racist national origins quota system was an embarrassment in the more frequent dealings with non-white nations during the Cold War (Herring 758), thus the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 was born. Hing argues that the main motivation behind the way Congress reformed the previous immigration law was a desire to be perceived as an egalitarian nation by the rest of the world (79). The new egalitarian law changed immigration patterns radically and facilitated a positive shift in Asian immigration. However, the goal of legislators in 1965 was different: they expected that immigration numbers would increase moderately and that the change in the composition of source-countries would happen gradually (Hatton 348). Hing explains that post-1965 Asian immigration surprised the United States because legislators neither understood the influence of the political, economic, and social dynamics of Asian countries on immigration, nor did they know much about Asian American communities, Asian countries, and about the relationship of the two. He also argues that a more thorough analysis would have revealed the factors that enabled such a shift in Asian immigration, and that the new immigration patterns of the 1970s and 1980s originated in the few years prior to 1965 (79–80).

Changes in Immigration Law and the Push and Pull Factors

The number of Asian immigrants entering the United States increased sharply after the 1965 Immigration Act came into effect. While people born in Asian countries comprised only 8% of United States immigrants in 1961, this number had risen to 31% by 1972. The source-

countries that sent the majority of these immigrants were China,⁴ India, Japan, Korea, and the Philippines (Boyd 507). The provision that facilitated this growth was the abolition of the national origins quota system, along with the Asia-Pacific Triangle. To replace the old quota system, the 1965 Immigration Act allocated 170,000 quotas for the Eastern Hemisphere annually and it established a 20,000 cap for each country within the Eastern Hemisphere. Another important change was the modifications done to the preference system. Under the McCarran-Walter Act, there were five preference categories, the modified 1965 system included eight (Hatton 350). Half of the categories regulated the immigration of relatives of United States citizens and permanent resident aliens, one category was established for refugees, two categories had provisions for occupational preferences for different levels of skill, and the remaining category was the nonpreference one. Another interesting addition to the preference system was the requirement of certification from the U. S. Department of Labor for occupational category immigrants. Lastly, the category of exemptions was also extended to include not only the spouses and unmarried minor children of United States citizens but also their parents (Daniels 342). These few changes to immigration law encouraged a huge influx of immigrants from Asia, including Korea. During the fiscal years of 1966, 1967, and 1968 the numbers of estimated immigrants were 2,492, 3,956, and 3,811 respectively. There was a sharp increase in 1968, when the number of immigrants almost doubled compared to the previous year (Koo and Yu 4). This was due to the transition phase between December 1, 1965 and June 30, 1968, when the new preference groups were already in effect but quotas were maintained for each country with a general pool for unused visas (Keely 159). After the entire Immigration Act was in effect, the number of immigrants kept rising: over 14,000 immigrants entered in 1971 and by 1976 their numbers reached an estimated 30,803 (Koo and Yu 4).

⁴ Including Taiwan and Hong Kong.

However, the new, egalitarian immigration law was not the sole cause for the increase in Korean immigration. The cooperation of several push and pull factors contributed to Korean people's leaving their home country and choosing the United States as their destination. Push factors were both economic and social in nature and most of them were closely connected to the Korean War. Firstly, a population explosion followed the war in Korea, which paired with a fast paced urbanization that subjected Korean people to American culture through American soldiers stationing in their country (H. Kim 20). Secondly, the plan to repair the Korean economy damaged by the war made it foreign exports-, raw materials-, and capital investment-dependent. The two biggest foreign export markets of Korea were Japan and the United States (Hing 95). This foreign export dependency also induced a frantic industrialization to support it. Thirdly, the export of Korean workforce was encouraged by the government's labor policy and the training for immigration purposes offered by the education system. The last push factor was the political and military unrest that had plagued the peninsula since the 1945 American occupation. As for the pull factors, they were mainly changes in United States immigration law and policy. The 1965 Immigration Act and American labor policy facilitated the skilled-workforce drain out of Korea. The new family preference categories of the immigration law also allowed the entry of the relatives of Korean war brides with citizenship (H. Kim 20).

The 1965 Immigration Act and the above mentioned social and economic conditions did not change Korean immigration only in numerical terms but in its composition as well. While retaining a fairly young age structure that supported high birth rates, the ratio of immigrants over the age of 20 increased after 1965. Furthermore, the sex ratio of immigrants changed from predominantly female to a balanced ratio by the 1970s. Moreover, while mainly students, war brides, and war orphans, i.e. nonquota immigrants, comprised the previous wave of immigration, after the 1965 Immigration Act, the majority of Koreans entered through the preference categories as quota immigrants. The influx of skilled-labor sharply increased after

the enactment of the 1965 law, however, the emphasis shifted to family reunification as time passed.

Age, Sex Ratio, and Preference Categories

A dominant characteristic of immigrants and immigrant populations within a country is their young age. Korean immigration displays this characteristic as well. During the years just preceding 1965, 41% of males and 64% of females were 20 years old or over. This ratio had risen to 64% and 74% respectively during the years following the 1965 Act and stayed consistent even at the beginning of the 1970s (Boyd 514). The 1970 census showed that 55% of females and 45% of males were between the ages of 20 and 44 in the Korean American population, while the ratio for the whole population of the United States was 31% for both sexes (Yu 121). The young age structure of the Korean American population is also caused by an underrepresentation of the elderly. When comparing the proportion of the elderly over the age of 50, the general population of the United States showed 25.6% in 1976 compared to the Korean population's 12% in 1975 (Koo and Yu 6). Such a high ratio of people of reproductive age produces a relatively high natural birth rate in the given population. This, paired with the young age structure, and huge numbers of adoptions of Korean children by American families resulted in a population with a rather high proportion of children. The 1970 census revealed that 74% of Korean Americans younger than 20 years old were born in the United States (Yu 125). Furthermore, 17% of all Korean immigrants in 1973 and 1977 were younger than 5 years old (Koo and Yu 6).

The matter of sex ratio in the Korean American community is somewhat complex. Ever since the Korean War, immigrants had been predominantly female because of the wives of American soldiers migrating to the United States. Even though the sex ratio kept steadily rising in the 1970s, it was still imbalanced, especially in the 20-29 age group (Koo and Yu 4). Koo and Yu argue that the imbalance of the 1970s was mainly due to the wives of Korean-Americans

entering the country (4). Even though a considerable improvement showed in the sex ratio in Korean immigrants, the number rising from 29 in 1961-1965 to 55 in 1969-1972, another factor must be considered. According to Boyd, 30% of all Korean-born immigrants were wives of United States citizens who were non-chargeable immigrants. This proportion is extremely high compared to Chinese (7%), Indian (1%), or Filipino (17%) immigrants. Boyd argues that post-1965 immigration of Koreans is composed of two separate streams: non-chargeable immigration which is dominated by wives of United States citizens and immigration based on preference categories, dominated by skilled-laborers (515).

As mentioned before, the number of preference categories expanded to eight, compared to the McCarran-Walter Act. Half of the categories concerned relatives of citizens and permanent alien residents, and two of them were occupational categories that differentiated levels of skill. A large proportion of immigrants entered through occupational categories during the transition phase of the 1965 Immigration Act, however, family chain migration gradually became predominant.

According to Koo and Yu, between 1966 and 1968, 73% of Korean immigrants entered the United States under occupational preference categories (7-8). At the same time, relative preference categories were only applied to 26% of the immigrants. Koreans could not substantially utilize the relative preference categories because they lacked a sizable immigrant community in the United States to initiate considerable chain migration, unlike the Chinese and Japanese. This essentially meant a shift in the source-country of manpower for the United States. Previously Chinese and Japanese unskilled-laborers were admitted into the country in large numbers, now Korea provided high-skilled professionals (Boyd 512-13).

Similarly, to Indians and Filipinos, many future Korean immigrants started adjusting their education to fit the requirements of occupational preference categories of the 1965 Immigration law. Such a high demand for specialized education developed in Korea that

schools and companies were founded exclusively to satisfy the needs of Koreans. They predominantly trained medical professionals: doctors, nurses, and pharmacists. The number of hired medical professionals in the United States reached 13,000 by 1977 (Hing 98). Koo and Yu argue that the reason for such huge numbers of Koreans migrating to the United States (76% of 317,746 emigrants between 1962 and 1979) was because of this newly developed education system. Both this education system and other institutional practices had been instilled by American influence since 1945. The social and economic issue created by these institutional practices was that Korea was training professionals whose skills and goals in their careers could not be incorporated into Korean society, thus inducing emigration to the society that could (19–21).

The shift from occupational immigrants to relative immigrants was a cause-and-effect phenomenon. The large numbers of occupational immigrants established enough familial connections that family chain migration turned into the primary source of Korean immigrants to the United States. Between 1969 and 1972, relative immigrants comprised 36% of total immigrants, while the proportion of occupational immigrants dropped from 73% to 25% (Boyd 511). Hing contributes the shift to two further reasons as well: a long recession of the United States in the 1970s and changes in immigration laws. American professionals felt threatened by the specifically trained medical professionals from Korea and through lobbying they achieved an amendment to the immigration law to limit the number of foreign-trained medical professionals. All the above mentioned circumstances resulted in 90% of Korean immigrants entering the United States under relative preference categories by the 1990s (99).

The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 reshaped the Korean American minority of the United States. Wishing to be seen as an egalitarian country in the international scene when dealings with non-white nations became more frequent during the Cold War, with the 1965 Act, the American government abolished the national quotas and established a wider range

of preference categories. This also facilitated and encouraged Korean immigration without specifically intending to. Immigration established an exceptionally young age structure of the Korean population of the United States, however, it also preserved the imbalanced sex ratio due to the immigration of non-chargeable wives of United States citizens. The initial predominantly occupational immigration shifted towards family chain migration by the end of the 1960s, facilitating Korean immigration to the United States even further.

Conclusion

This thesis discussed Korean immigration to the United States during and after the Korean War, while also considering the effect of Cold War interventionist and containment policies of the United States. While both wars created circumstances that encouraged emigration from Korea to the United States, the volume and composition of Korean immigration was also largely influenced by the changing immigration laws of the United States.

Chapter 1 analyzed the McCarran-Walter Act of 1952 and its influence on Korean immigration. It was the first considerable immigration law that not only served foreign policy purposes but also benefited Korean immigrants. The Act retained the previously established national origins quota system and created the Asia-Pacific triangle, both of which very much limited Korean immigration. A major change was making naturalization independent of racial origins, thus allowing Koreans already residing in the United States to become citizens and bring in their close relatives under the newly established preference categories. The 1952 Act had several shortcomings that produced an imbalance towards nonquota immigration, however it also facilitated the entry of war brides and war orphans.

Chapter 2 discussed the journey of war brides and war orphans, as well as how American legislation facilitated it. American intervention on the Korean peninsula was part of its foreign policy of fighting the spread of communism. This intervention created a strong connection between the United States and South Korea that enabled war brides and war orphans to seek refuge stateside. The arrival of the war brides was impactful because it changed the previously male dominant sex ratio to female. However, they faced a challenging assimilation due to discrimination and language difficulties. Korean war orphans arrived in the United States as refugees first but their status slowly changed to immigrant. An intercountry adoption system, a product of the Korean and Cold War, helped their journey to the United States. These two

groups of immigrants also encouraged a positive shift in the perception of the Asian minority in the United States.

Chapter 3 described the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 and the ways it shaped Korean immigration. The new, egalitarian immigration law aimed to improve relations with non-white nations. By abolishing the national origins quota system and the Asia-Pacific Triangle, the new immigration law allowed a larger influx of Asian immigrants to enter the United States. Immigration law pulled Korean immigrants to America and the consequences of the Korean War pushed Koreans to migrate. At first, highly skilled professionals dominated immigration but later predominance shifted towards family chain migration.

While the Cold War created a sufficient environment for American foreign policy to dictate the direction of immigration policy, the Korean War produced immigrants in the form of war brides and war orphans and it also influenced South Korea in ways that still affected immigration patterns even a decade later. American intervention on the Korean peninsula interlocked South Korea and the United States in many intricate ways, and immigration is one of them.

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