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Contentious Histories and the Perception of Threat: China, the United States, and the Korean War—An Experimental Analysis

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Chinese and Korean protests over "revisionist" Japanese histories of World War II are well known. The impact of contested Chinese and US histories of the Korean War on US-China relations today has received less attention. More broadly, there has been little research seeking to systematically explore just how history textbook controversies matter for international relations. This article experimentally manipulates the impact of nation (US/China), of source (in-group/out-group textbooks), and of valence (positive/negative historical narratives) on measures of beliefs about the past, emotions, collective self-esteem, and threat perception in present-day US-China relations. A $2 \times 2 \times 2$ design exposed randomized groups of Chinese and US university students to fictional high school history textbook accounts of the Korean War. Findings reveal significant effects of nation, source, and valence and suggest that the "historical relevance" of a shared past to national identities in the present has a dramatic impact on how historical controversies affect threat perception.

KEYWORDS: Korean War, US-China relations, historical relevance, history textbooks, threat perception, anxiety, anger, pride

It is well known that historical disputes underlie much of the mutual suspicion and hostility that plagues northeast Asian international relations today. Whether it is Chinese and Koreans protesting "revisionist" Japanese histories of World War II (e.g., Rose 1998), or Koreans protesting Chinese claims that the Goguryo Kingdom was Chinese (e.g., Gries 2005), history appears to be an endless source of friction in the region. As Gerrit W. Gong (2001, 26) notes, "The Cold War's thaw

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brought not an end of history [à la Frances Fukuyama] but its resurgence. Conflicts about the past now shape the future. In East Asia . . . the battleground will be issues of 'remembering and forgetting.'" Indeed, Gong (2001, 32) goes so far as to argue that "strategic alignments" in East Asia "will increasingly turn on history."

Less attention, however, has been given to the role that historical conflicts play in US-China relations, arguably the most important bilateral relationship of the twenty-first century. A number of scholars have argued that Chinese nationalism today is closely tied up with narratives of China's past victimization at the hands of Western and Japanese imperialism, and that nationalism has an impact on China's foreign policies in general and US policy in particular (e.g., Fitzgerald 1999; Gries 2004; Callahan 2004). The circumstantial evidence is compelling. For instance, following the NATO bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade in 1999, the *People's Daily*, the official mouthpiece of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), published an editorial titled, "This is not 1899 China." It passionately declared,

> This is 1999, not 1899. This is not . . . the age when the Western powers plundered the Imperial Palace at will, destroyed the Old Summer Palace, and seized Hong Kong and Macao. . . . China is a China that has stood up; it is a China that defeated the Japanese fascists; it is a China that had a trial of strength and won victory over the United States on the Korean battleground. . . . U.S.-led NATO had better remember this.

The Belgrade bombing, in this Chinese view, was not an isolated event; it was, rather, the latest in a long series of Western, and especially US, aggressions against China.

The *People's Daily*'s reference to the "Korean battleground" is noteworthy. The CCP has long staked claim to nationalist legitimacy in part on the basis of a nationalist narrative in which the CCP led a righteous effort to aid the Korean people and expel the invading US forces from Chinese and Korean soil. Indeed, it has been argued (Gries 2004, 56–61) that in Chinese nationalist narratives, "victory" in Korea over the United States marks the end of the "Century of Humiliation" and thus remains central to both the collective self-esteem of many Chinese nationalists as well as the legitimacy of the CCP today. Indeed, during his 2000 televised speech marking the fiftieth anniversary of the onset of the "War to Resist America and Aid Korea," Jiang Zemin (2000) repeatedly referred to the United States as the "enemy" (*diren*). The Mu-

seum of the War to Resist America and Aid Korea, in the city of Dandong on the Chinese side of the border with North Korea, goes considerably further, accusing the United States of germ warfare (see Glionna 2008). Ongoing Chinese accusations of US biological warfare have their origins during the Korean War itself, when both China and the Soviet Union engaged in a massive international propaganda campaign to impugn the United States. British biochemist and Marxist Joseph Needham famously confirmed the Communist bloc's claims, despite a lack of physical evidence: "We accepted the word of the Chinese scientists" (Leitenberg 1998, 187). Evidence from the Soviet archives has since revealed that following Stalin's death, the Soviet Union's new leadership, fearing the embarrassment that exposure of the ruse would create, wrote Mao Tse-tung in May 1953 claiming that the "bacteriological weapons" accusations against the United States were "fictitious" and should cease (see Weathersby 1998, 183; Leitenberg 1998, 185).

Secretary of State Dean Acheson made the first official US denial of engaging in germ warfare on March 4, 1952: "I would . . . like to state categorically and unequivocally that these charges are entirely false" (Leitenberg 1998, 189). US denials and protests continue to this day. Stephen B. Wickman, the US consul general in Shenyang, wrote to Peter Gries in May 2009: "The last time I visited the Dandong museum—in 2007—several exhibits remained that are objectionable and that contain obvious fabrications or misstatements. Some concern the accusation of biological weapons use; some concern the alleged mistreatment of Chinese prisoners of war."

According to the Dandong municipal government, a million people visited the museum from the time of its opening in 1993, the fortieth anniversary of the armistice, through 2005. Given China's size, this is a relatively small number. Of greater consequence is the treatment of the Korean War in high school history textbooks. Current textbooks continue to refer to the United States as the "enemy" (*diren*), suggesting that the United States intervened in the "domestic affairs" of Korea without provocation. No mention is made of the North Korean invasion of South Korea. When MacArthur's armies headed toward the Yalu River, the Chinese People's Volunteers (CPV) drove the "invaders" (*qinluezhe*) back to the thirty-eighth parallel, where they were forced to sign the armistice. The CPV had "won" (*shengli*), and the United States had "lost" (*shibai*) (see, e.g., People's Education 2006).

By contrast, US history textbooks tend to treat Korea as the "Forgotten War." Compared to their much more extensive treatment of the "good war" against German and Japanese fascism during World War II,

US textbook treatment of the Korean War is brief. For instance, the 1991 eighth edition of the popular McGraw-Hill textbook *American History: A Survey* devotes thirty pages to World War II but just three to the Korean War. The account begins with the North Korean "invasion" of the South, followed by US intervention to "assist" the overwhelmed South Korean army against "communist forces." It concludes rather ambiguously with a "protracted stalemate" back at the thirty-eighth parallel where it had all started (see Brinkley et al. 1991, 844–846). There is no discussion of either victory or defeat.

Do such clashing Chinese and US history textbook treatments of the Korean War matter? Do they have any impact on US-China relations today? Do they generate anger, fear, or mutual mistrust? A substantial qualitative literature has explored the impact of "national myth-making" (e.g., He 2007, 2008) and historical apologies (e.g., Lind 2008, 2009) in East Asia. Large-n cross-national surveys have also revealed how individuals' representations of the past tend to privilege war, the in-group, and more recent events (Pennebaker et al. 2006; Liu, Goldstein-Hawes, and Hilton 2005; Liu and Hilton 2005). Survey work with Chinese, Japanese, and Korean students has revealed that beliefs about contentious shared pasts correlate with perceived threat in the present (Gries, Zhang, Masui, and Lee 2009). Yet there has been no quantitative research on how conflicting historical narratives affect the perception of threat in the present. Given the importance of threat perception in determining foreign policies, it seems both logical and prudent to more closely examine the effects of divergent historical accounts on threat perception.

The Perception of Threat

When it comes to international relations today, do differing history textbooks have an impact on people's beliefs, emotions, national identities, and threat perception?

According to social identity theory (SIT), all humans, as social animals, join groups, imbue them with positive value, and seek to both affirm their social identities and bolster their self-esteem through favorable social comparisons between their in-groups and relevant out-groups (Tajfel and Turner 1986). This process has both cognitive and affective dimensions. Appraisal theories of emotion (Frijda 1986) have linked events and personal identities to specific emotional outcomes. Intergroup emotion theory (IET) (Smith 1993) links SIT and appraisal theories of emotion, arguing that when our social identities are salient, we react

emotionally to events implicating our cherished in-groups. Furthermore, specific appraisals made during encounters with out-groups will lead to specific emotions and behavioral tendencies.

For example, US students who read about the US victory over the British during the Revolutionary War may experience a personal sense of pride. In this case, Americans' national identification (i.e., patriotism) allows them to benefit psychologically from their connection to a victorious in-group, despite the victory having nothing to do with them personally. Thus, from a SIT and IET perspective, historical accounts should impact people's affect, attitudes, and beliefs about the status of one's in-group relative to the out-group.

The current study empirically examines how the valence, source, and nation of historical accounts of the Korean War affect Chinese and US students' beliefs about this shared past, emotions, national self-esteem, and threat perception in the present. The purpose of this study is thus twofold, seeking to understand both the causes and effects of history controversies.

In terms of *causes*, what are the features of the historical excerpts that seem to matter the most? First, the impact of the valence and source of historical accounts has been studied before, but only separately. Two studies (Doosje, Branscombe, and Spears 1998; Zebel, Pennekamp, and van Zomeren 2007) manipulated the *valence* of the Dutch colonization of Indonesia and Surinam (Africa), respectively, and found that the valence of the account (positive/negative) significantly impacted participants' emotional responses (guilt, anger) and even action tendencies (reported willingness to support reparations).

Research on the *sources* of information suggests that group members are more likely to pay attention to and change their attitudes when the source of information is the (trusted) in-group rather than a (suspicious) out-group (Mackie, Worth, and Asuncion 1990; Mackie, Gastardo-Conaco, and Skelly 1992). More recently, Bertjan Doosje et al. (2006, study 1) found that Dutch students found fictional in-group (Dutch) histories of their past colonization of Indonesia more credible than a fictional out-group (US) history. Curiously, the out-group chosen for their study was a third party (the United States) rather than the out-group (Indonesia) that shares a colonial past with the Dutch. By contrast, we are interested in the impact of out-group views when it is views of the very out-group that the in-group actually shares a contentious past with.

More fundamentally, we are interested in the *interaction* of valence and source. For instance, do we always discredit out-group sources, as the research of Mackie and his colleagues suggests, or only when their

historical narratives challenge our own? Could we actually overvalue out-group sources when they flatter the in-group, confirming in-group positivity? And which angers more, a negative history perceived as written by an in-group or a negative history written by an out-group?

We suggest that the valence and source of historical narratives should interact. Exposure to in-group positive historical accounts should most clearly confirm the positivity of cherished social identities, bolstering collective self-esteem and increasing positive affect and cognition. By contrast, exposure to in-group negative historical texts should threaten in-group positivity, heightening negative emotions and cognitions. By challenging in-group positive narratives, exposure to out-group positive accounts of shared contentious histories could also challenge cherished in-group identities, generating anger and negative cognitions. But exposure to out-group negative accounts is more ambiguous. As social comparison, they could confirm in-group positivity and thus increase positive affect and perception. But they could also lead to feelings of collective guilt (see Branscombe and Doosje 2004) that could challenge in-group identity and heighten negative emotion and cognition.

Second, does *nation* matter? It is possible that people from different countries react to textbook accounts of shared pasts in different ways. The dominant and subordinate groups in historical encounters have been explored separately. Doosje et al. (1998) manipulated accounts of the Dutch colonization of Indonesia to explore feelings of group guilt among the former colonizers. Similarly, another study (Zebel, Pennekamp, and van Zomeren 2007) explored how Dutch students responded to their history of colonization in Africa. From the perspective of the subordinate, colonized group, yet another study (Pennekamp, Doosje, and Zebel 2007) examined how Surinamese in the Netherlands responded to that same history.

To our knowledge, however, there have been no studies *simultaneously* examining the reactions of both parties to controversies over a shared past. Might certain past events be more closely bound up with national identities in the present for the citizens of one nation than for those of another? We suggest that differing knowledge about (a product of education and socialization) and the varying importance of certain past events to present-day national identities creates differences in how the people of different nations respond to historical controversies involving their shared pasts.

To determine the extent to which participants' nation of origin and the valence and source of the historical narrative affected participants,

we employed various indicators to assess participants' reactions to the textbook account. Specifically, we constructed four dependent measures to tap the *effects* of textbook controversies: historical beliefs, emotions, patriotism, and threat perception. First, we examined whether exposure to differing history textbook accounts influenced *beliefs* about the Korean War. Does exposure to differing textbook accounts of the past actually impact our understandings of those past events? In other words, do we "buy" foreign or differentially valenced accounts of our shared histories? Just how malleable are our views of the past?

Second, how do we emotionally respond to differing historical accounts of our shared pasts? In particular, we are interested in the impact of various history texts on anxiety, anger, and pride (i.e., *emotions* that have consequential implications for foreign policy making). Security, a concept central to international relations, is often defined simply as the absence of *anxiety*. *Anger* can both inspire and sustain political mobilization (see Moore 1978). And *pride* is the very stuff of nationalism. The study of emotion is making a comeback in political science in general (e.g., Neuman et al. 2007) and international relations theory in particular (e.g., Crawford 2000; Mercer 1996), but the impact of intergroup emotions on threat perception has yet to be examined in detail.

Third, do differing historical accounts impact the ways that we *identify* with our nation? Do positive historical accounts lead us to "bask in the reflected glory" (BIRG) (Cialdini 1976) of our nations, enhancing our patriotism? If so, do negative narratives lead us to "cut off reflected failure" (CORF) (Snyder, Lassegard, and Ford 1986; Wann et al. 1995) by distancing ourselves from threatened national identities? Or, conversely, will threatening historical accounts lead us to "rally around the flag," heightening patriotism?

Fourth, and finally, does exposure to various history textbook accounts of past events influence the perception of out-group *threat* in the present? For instance, how might exposure to a textbook account at odds with one's previous beliefs about a shared past influence perceptions of threat from the relevant out-group?

Method

Participants and Design

A sample of 315 university students (197 female, 110 male, and 8 who did not indicate their gender) participated in the study on a voluntary basis

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in fall 2006:[1] 167 were US students at the University of Oklahoma and 148 were Chinese at Beijing University. Participants ranged in age from eighteen to forty-nine ($Md = 22$), and a t-test revealed that the Chinese students ($M = 23.07$, $SD = 2.48$) were slightly older than the US students ($M = 20.47$, $SD = 3.55$), $t = -7.49$, $p < .001$. A 2 (nation: US vs. Chinese students) × 2 (valence: positive vs. negative historical narratives) × 2 (source: in-group vs. out-group textbooks) design exposed randomized groups of students from each country to excerpts and pictures from fictional high school history textbook accounts of the Korean War, and then assessed students' beliefs about the Korean War, emotional responses, patriotism, and threat perception in present-day US-China relations. We also included control groups that received no "history textbook" manipulation, to provide a baseline against which to assess the impact of the manipulations on participant responses. There were, therefore, five randomized groups in each country, for a total of ten conditions, with an average sample size of 31.5 participants per condition.

Materials and Procedure

We tested the Chinese and US students in fifteen-minute sessions. Participants were told that the purpose of the study was to examine factors related to the recollection of history. After assuring participants that their responses would be kept anonymous, the experimenter administered survey packets. Participants filled out a series of questionnaires individually. The first page of the questionnaire contained individual difference measures, which are not reported here.

Manipulations. Fortunately, the Korean War is relatively amenable to experimental manipulation. For a manipulation to work, the respondent must find it credible. Because the Korean War ended where it began in a stalemate, and both sides can plausibly claim victory, it is possible to construct positive and negative Chinese and US accounts of the Korean War that respondents should find credible. The Holocaust, by contrast, would be much more difficult to manipulate.

The second page of the questionnaire was the fictional history textbook excerpt (except for the one-fifth of students randomly assigned to the two control groups who received no second page). The differences between the four manipulations were kept to a minimum to focus on two independent variables—source (in-group vs. out-group textbooks) and valence (positive vs. negative historical narratives).

To manipulate the *source* (in/out-group) of textbooks, the "out-group" status of texts was highlighted by including the "original" Chi-

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nese or English language text, followed by its in-group language "translation." The textbooks themselves, named *American History* and *Chinese History*, were said to be published in New York and Beijing, respectively. Thus, for Chinese students, the Chinese textbook would be an in-group source, and for US students the Chinese textbook serves as the out-group source, and vice versa.

All conditions began with identical text: "Over 50 years ago, from 1950 to 1953, China and the US fought in the Korean War. Prior to the War, the Korean Peninsula was divided into the communist People's Democratic Republic of Kim Il-sung to the north of the 38th parallel, and the capitalist Republic of Korea of Syngman Rhee to the south." They then diverged in minor ways, depending on their valence.

To manipulate the *valence* of the textbook account, participants read that the Korean War was either a victory or tragedy for the country from whose perspective the text was written. Thus, the "positive US" condition continued on to read: "In 1950, the US successfully repulsed the North Korean invasion of South Korea. In 1953, after three years of trench warfare along the 38th parallel, the Chinese were forced to sign the Korean Armistice. . . . Victory in Korea protected American security in the early days of the Cold War. It raised America's international stature as a heroic defender of freedom around the world." By contrast, the "positive China" manipulation read: "In 1950, China successfully repulsed the American advance to the Chinese border at the Yalu River. In 1953, after three years of trench warfare along the 38th parallel, the Americans were forced to sign the Korean Armistice. . . . Victory in Korea protected Chinese security in the early days of the Cold War. It raised China's international stature as a heroic leader of the anti-imperialist movement around the world." These differing versions of the events are largely consistent with accounts of the Korean War presented in high school history textbooks used in the United States and China today (e.g., People's Education 2006; Brinkley et al. 1991). To increase the potency of the manipulations, we also included pictures of heroic fighter pilots and symbols of national pride related to the Korean War from—depending on text source—either the US or Chinese perspective (see Appendix 1).

Meanwhile, both the "negative US" and "negative China" conditions concluded with a common tragic narrative: "The Korean War was a senseless tragedy: it ended where it had begun three years earlier, with neither side gaining a strategic advantage. But well over two million Koreans, Chinese, and Americans perished in the process. And the dead were not just soldiers; over a million innocent Korean civilians were killed as well. The War was far from heroic: there is extremely strong evidence to suggest that North and South Korean, Chinese, and

American troops at times targeted and slaughtered civilians and even POWs." These negative texts featured the same two pictures of dead soldiers whose nationality was not distinguishable (see Appendix 1). However, the captions differed by describing the scene as: "The frozen bodies of dead (American/Chinese) soldiers in Korea, 1952."

Measures. The manipulation page was followed by a third page that featured three dependent variables, an out-group *threat* scale, an *emotional* response battery, and a *beliefs* about the Korean War scale. All quantitative questions were on seven-point Likert scales. The four out-group threat items, listed in Appendix 2, tapped threat perception through positively (e.g., "China seeks to avoid military conflict with the US") and negatively (e.g., "China is a threat to the US") worded statements.

An eight-item *emotional* response battery, listed in Appendix 3, tapped feelings of worry, pride, hatred, fear, contempt, enthusiasm, anger, sadness, surprise, and happiness. The mean of "I feel worried" and "I feel afraid" constituted an anxiety score, while the mean of "I feel hatred" and "I feel contempt" constituted an anger score.

A six-item *beliefs* about the Korean War battery, listed in Appendix 4, sought to assess the extent to which the history manipulations actually influenced participants' views of the Korean War. It included items like "The US/China (out-group) won the Korean War" and "The Korean War was a heroic moment in US/China (in-group) history."

Finally, the last page included a patriotism scale and a number of demographic items, such as gender, age, and—in the case of the US sample—citizenship, ethnicity, and party affiliation. Patriotism was measured using a twelve-item national collective self-esteem (CSE) scale (adapted from Luhtanen and Crocker 1992), covering the three subscales of public CSE, private CSE, and importance to identity. The full scale is in Appendix 5.

After completing the packet, participants were thanked for their participation, debriefed (i.e., informed that the high school "history textbook" excerpt that they had read was fictional), and released.

Results

Although our design is a 2 (nation) × 2 (source) × 2 (valence), we chose to run our statistical analysis as a 2 (nation) × 5 (condition: source by valence plus control [2 × 2 + 1]). The primary reason for this methodological move is that it allows us to include the control condition, which

provides a vital reference point or baseline against which to assess whether the four manipulations/conditions (in-group positive, in-group negative, out-group positive, and out-group negative) increased or decreased levels of our dependent measures. A secondary reason is that while source and valence were purely experimental variables, assigned randomly to student participants, nation, as a naturally occurring group, is a quasi-experimental variable so it needed to be treated separately.

Beliefs About the Korean War

We wanted to assess both the content and malleability of participants' beliefs about the Korean War. To investigate the differences in US and Chinese students' preexisting beliefs, we submitted control condition participants' responses on our beliefs measure to a series of t-tests. In terms of the content of their views, the US students were much more likely than the Chinese to agree that the Korean War was a *tragedy* and that the *out-group won* the war. The Chinese, by contrast, scored higher on items that tapped *victory*, *winning*, and *heroism*, as well as an item on *suffering* (all *p*s < .05; see Table 1 and Figure 1).

That US students scored higher on tragedy where Chinese scored higher on suffering is likely attributable to a greater Chinese tendency to attribute deep meaning to the war, one that might be threatened by calling it a tragedy, but is not affected or perhaps even bolstered by recognizing the great sacrifices and suffering endured for the sake of victory.

With regard to the malleability of participants' beliefs about the Korean War (the extent to which their beliefs were influenced by our fictional history textbook manipulations), participants' responses to the items "The US/China (out-group) won the Korean War" and "The

Table 1 Historical Belief Items by Nation for the Two Control Groups

Question	US	Chinese
In-group Tragedy	4.55	2.58
Out-group Won	3.41	1.54
In-group Victory	3.61	4.80
In-group Heroic	3.38	4.74
In-group Suffered	5.00	5.80
In-group Won	4.02	4.96

Note: All means displayed yielded significant differences between US and Chinese respondents at $p < .05$.

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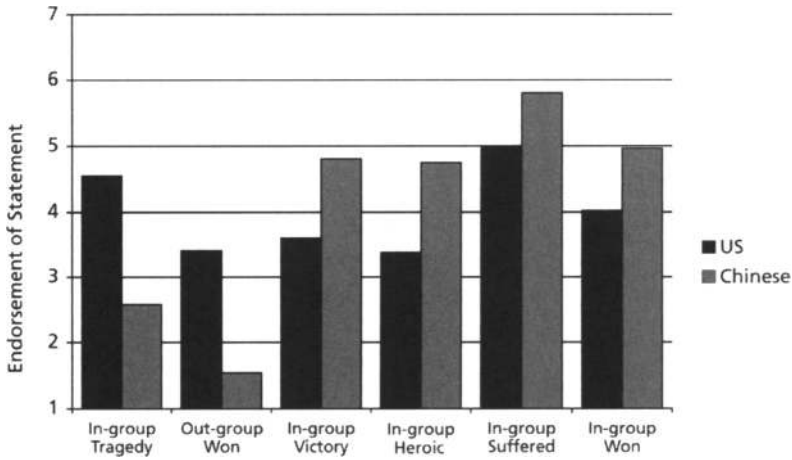
Figure 1 Control Participants' Beliefs About the Korean War by Nation



US/China (in-group) won the Korean War" are particularly noteworthy. Two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) procedures on both response items revealed significant effects of both nation and our manipulation of the historical account, all Fs > 3.08 and ps < .03, suggesting that both the nationality of the participant and the historical account affected participants' views on who won the Korean War. As seen in Table 2 and Figure 2, whereas US students who had not been exposed to any historical account of the Korean War are ambivalent about who won the war, Chinese in the control condition believe strongly that China won and disagree even more strongly that the United States won. However, for both US and Chinese students, exposure to any textbook manipulation about the Korean War impacted participants' views about who won the war. For example, both Chinese and US students who read what they thought was a textbook from their own country that insinuated that the Korean War was a great tragedy for their own country (in-group negative) were significantly less likely to report that they had won than their classmates who read accounts of their own country's victory or nothing about the war, ps < .01.

Despite the malleability of participants' reports of whether their own country won following negative accounts of the war, both US and Chinese students who read an in-group positive account of their own group's victory appeared strikingly similar to the control group in the extent to which they felt their own country had won. Perhaps this re-

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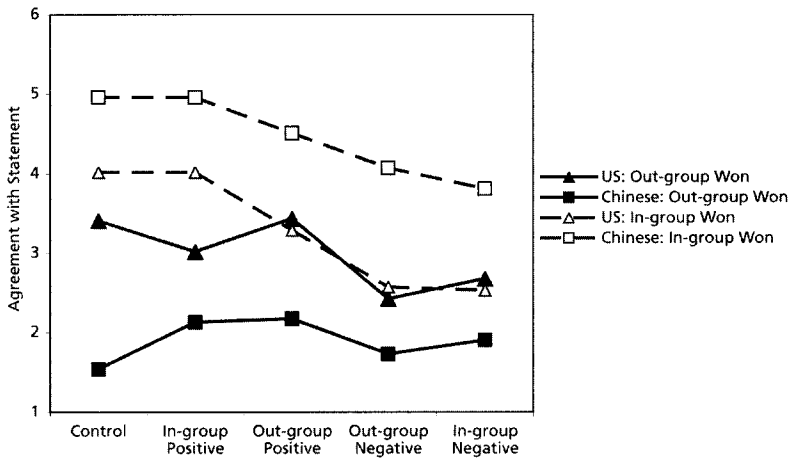
Table 2 Belief Items by Nation and Condition

		Positive		Negative	
	Control	In-group	Out-group	In-group	Out-group
Out-group Won					
US	3.41_{a}	3.02_{ab}	3.44_{a}	2.68_{bc}	2.42_{c}
Chinese	1.54_{a}	2.13_{a}	2.17_{ab}	1.73_{ab}	1.90_{ab}
Total	2.52_{ab}	2.61_{ab}	2.86_{a}	2.30_{ab}	2.12_{b}
In-group Won					
US	4.02_{a}	4.02_{a}	3.29_{ab}	2.57_{b}	2.53_{b}
Chinese	4.96_{a}	4.96_{a}	4.51_{ab}	4.07_{b}	3.81_{b}
Total	4.48_{a}	4.47_{a}	3.86_{ab}	3.17_{b}	3.24_{b}

Note: Means within a row whose subscripts differ indicate a significant difference at $\alpha = .05$.

Figure 2 Malleability of Beliefs About Who Won the Korean War by Nation and Condition



flects a bias in the content of many students' historical knowledge of the Korean War, stemming from the use of textbooks that revel in in-group glory and minimize historical tragedy.

Although the manipulations affected both US and Chinese respondents' beliefs about the Korean War, US students were more ambivalent about who won the Korean War, similarly agreeing with statements that China won and the United States won. This may simply suggest less American knowledge about the Forgotten War, which,

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as previously noted, does not receive much treatment in US high school history classes. However, it could also reflect a greater importance of Korean War victory to patriotism (national collective self-esteem) in the present for the Chinese participants, strengthening their views.

Emotional Response

There were notable similarities and differences in the emotional responses that Chinese and American students reported after reading our various "textbook" accounts of the war (see Table 3). In the following set of analyses, we analyzed the effects of nation and our textbook manipulations on participants' level of anxiety, anger, and pride. To create a measure of anxiety ($\alpha = .742$), we took the mean of participants' responses to the items "I feel worried" and "I feel afraid," and to create a measure of anger ($\alpha = .478$), we averaged participants' responses to the items "I feel hatred" and "I feel contempt." Participants' pride scores reflected their response to the single item "I feel proud."

A two-way factorial ANOVA on participants' anxiety scores revealed a main effect of nation, such that Chinese participants ($M = 3.86$, $SD = 1.87$) displayed more anxiety in general than US participants ($M = 2.78$, $SD = 1.43$), $F(1, 304) = 35.51$, $p < .001$. A significant main effect of the textbook condition also revealed that, regardless of their nationality, the version of the Korean War that participants read also influ-

Table 3 Emotional Response by Nation and Condition

		Positive		Negative	
	Control	In-group	Out-group	In-group	Out-group
Anxiety					
US	2.81	2.62	2.94	2.98	2.53
Chinese	3.66_{ab}	2.88_{a}	4.21_{b}	4.45_{b}	4.13_{b}
Total	3.22_{ab}	2.74_{a}	3.52_{ab}	3.72_{b}	3.24_{ab}
Anger					
US	2.74	2.47	2.34	2.80	2.91
Chinese	1.65_{a}	2.33_{b}	3.34_{c}	3.27_{c}	3.27_{c}
Total	2.22_{a}	2.41_{ab}	2.79_{ab}	3.03_{b}	3.07_{b}
Pride					
US	4.29	3.97	3.62	3.72	4.12
Chinese	4.77_{a}	5.23_{a}	2.14_{b}	2.31_{b}	2.42_{b}
Total	4.52_{a}	4.56_{a}	2.95_{b}	3.02_{b}	3.37_{b}

Note: Means within a row whose subscripts differ indicate a significant difference at $\alpha = .05$.

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enced their level of anxiety, F (4, 304) = 3.38, p = .01. The manipulations had a much greater impact on the Chinese than the US students, however. As Figure 3 reveals, Chinese students in the out-group positive (a US textbook claiming that the United States won the Korean War), in-group negative (we suffered), and out-group negative (they claim they suffered) conditions all reported relatively high levels of anxiety. Understandably, Chinese students in the in-group positive (we won) condition reported the lowest levels of anxiety. Those in the control condition (having read no textbook manipulation) reported a baseline level of anxiety between these two extremes. We can thus argue that the in-group positive manipulation lowered anxiety levels, while the out-group positive and two negative conditions heightened anxiety. Figure 3 also reveals that US self-reports of anxiety, by contrast, were relatively unaffected by the historical manipulations.

On the anger measure, a two-way factorial ANOVA revealed a significant interaction of nation and the textbook manipulation, F (4, 304) = 5.20, $p < .001$. The textbook manipulation had little impact on the US students but had a significant impact on the Chinese students. As shown in Figure 4, Chinese students in the control condition, who received no history manipulation (thus serving as our baseline), reported much lower levels of anger than students who read our four fictional

Figure 3 Levels of Anxiety by Nation and Condition

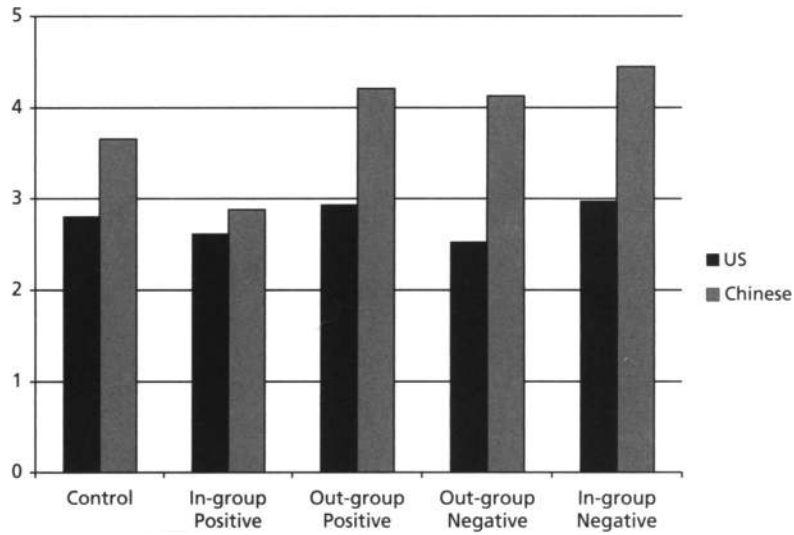

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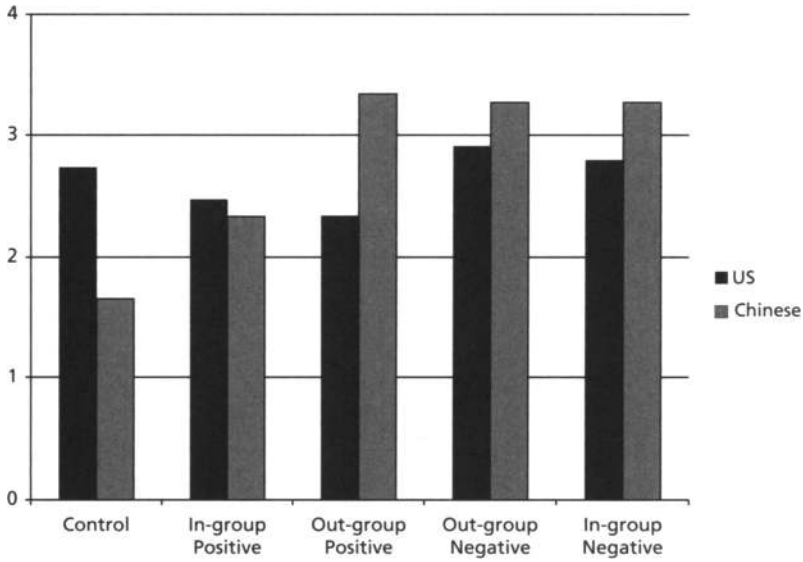
Figure 4 Levels of Anger by Nation and Condition



history textbook accounts. Interestingly, even students who read the in-group positive account ("We Chinese won the Korean War") reported a higher level of anger (M = 2.33) than the control group (M = 1.65). Thus, simply being reminded about the war—regardless of the valence or source—appears to have generated some hatred and contempt among our Chinese participants.

Similar to participants' experience of anger, a significant interaction revealed that our manipulation had little impact on US students' feelings of pride, yet produced a striking polarization of Chinese students' reported feelings of pride, F (4, 304) = 9.98, $p < .001$. As seen in Figure 5, Chinese students in the in-group positive condition (reading a fictional Chinese textbook claiming that Chinese won the Korean War), understandably reported much higher pride than students who read the three other manipulations. Given that the control students reported a comparably high level of pride, the in-group positive manipulation did not so much raise levels of pride, as the three other conditions lowered them. But perhaps it is the nonresult that is more interesting: US students reading an in-group positive—"we won"—account did not report higher levels of pride than their classmates in other conditions. Perhaps little pride could be gained from a Forgotten War.

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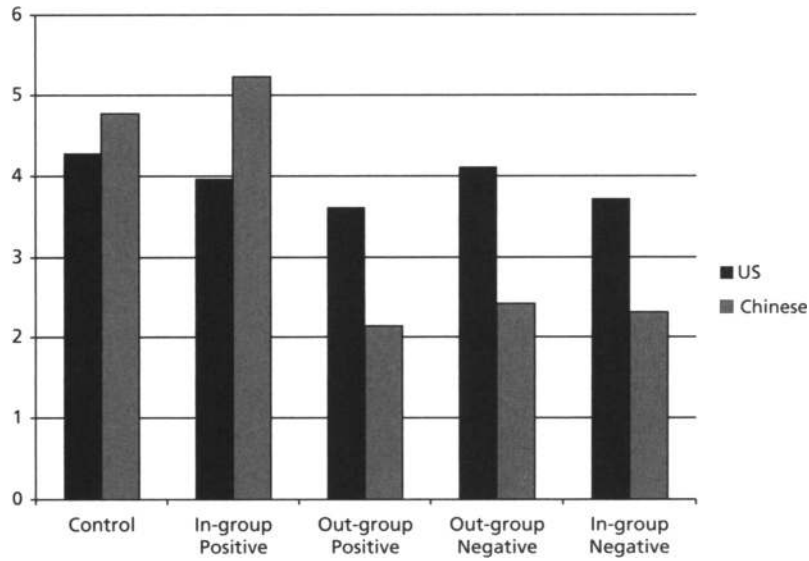
Figure 5 Levels of Pride by Nation and Condition



In general, the major difference between the Chinese and US students was that the Chinese students had much stronger and diverse emotional responses to the various history textbook manipulations. This likely reflected the greater importance that the Korean War plays in Chinese national identity than in US national identity today.

Patriotism (National Self-Esteem)

To investigate how participants' nationality and our manipulations affected participants' patriotism, we conducted a series of two-way ANOVAs on participants' overall national self-esteem (i.e., the mean of all twelve CSE items), as well as three four-item subscales identified by R. Luhtanen and J. Crocker (1992); see Table 4 and Appendix 5. In terms of overall national self-esteem, a main effect of nation revealed that, in general, Chinese students ($M = 5.61$, $SD = .73$) reported significantly higher national self-esteem than the US students ($M = 4.75$, $SD = 1.03$), F (1, 300) = 70.85, $p < .001$. The difference was particularly large for the "importance to identity" CSE subscale, which contained items like "Being American/Chinese is an important reflection of who I am" and "Being American/Chinese is an important part of my self-image." In the control condition, Chinese students ($M = 6.06$, $SD = .83$)

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Table 4 Levels of National Self-Esteem by Nation and Condition

		Positive		Negative	
	Control	In-group	Out-group	In-group	Out-group
Overall CSE					
US	4.63	4.65	4.67	5.03	4.80
Chinese	5.71_{ab}	5.62_{ab}	5.65_{ab}	5.29_{a}	5.84_{b}
Total	5.13	5.10	5.12	5.24	5.16
Private CSE					
US	5.73_{a}	5.83_{ab}	5.56_{a}	6.24_{b}	5.91_{ab}
Chinese	6.45_{a}	6.43_{a}	6.49_{a}	5.75_{b}	6.70_{a}
Total	6.07	6.11	6.00	6.00	6.24
Public CSE					
US	4.09	4.15	4.29	4.41	4.17
Chinese	4.61	4.54	4.88	4.50	4.69
Total	4.33	4.33	4.56	4.46	4.39
Importance to Identity					
US	4.06	3.96	4.29	4.45	4.31
Chinese	6.06	5.90	5.59	5.60	6.15
Total	5.00	4.85	4.89	5.08	5.02

Note: Means within a row whose subscripts differ indicate a significant difference at $\alpha = .05$.

scored a full two points higher than US students ($M = 4.06$, $SD = 1.77$) on the importance to identity CSE subscale, $p < .001$.

A significant interaction of nation and textbook condition for the "private" subscale of CSE (i.e., those items that tap personal feelings about one's national identity) revealed an even more interesting difference between Chinese and US students, $F(4, 299) = 4.89$, $p = .001$. As shown in Figure 6, Chinese and US students had polar opposite reactions to reading an in-group negative textbook account (i.e., an in-group textbook portraying the Korean War as a tragedy full of suffering). US students in that condition scored somewhat *higher* than their classmates in other conditions on private national self-esteem, a reaction that might be attributable to a "rally around the flag" effect, in which in-group suffering heightens in-group identification. (Think of the ubiquity of American flags across the United States following the 9/11 attacks in 2001: in-group tragedy heightened personal identification with the threatened in-group.) Chinese students in the in-group negative condition, by contrast, scored significantly *lower* on private national self-esteem than their classmates in other conditions. This may reflect a contrasting effort to disassociate themselves from a threatened social identity.

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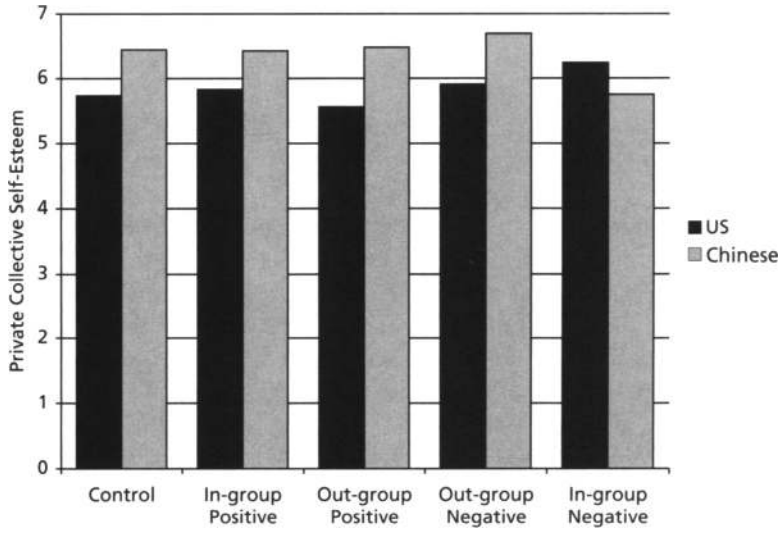
Figure 6 Private National Self-Esteem by Nation and Condition



Threat Perception

To obtain an indicator of overall threat, we reverse-coded two of the threat items and then collapsed across all four items to yield a measure for which higher scores indicate greater feelings of threat ($\alpha = .60$). We submitted these threat scores to a two-way factorial ANOVA. The main effect of nation on a composite of the four threat items suggested that, overall, Chinese participants ($M = 4.32$, $SD = 1.08$) felt more threat from the United States than US students ($M = 3.99$, $SD = .91$) felt from China, F (1, 305) = 8.34, $p < .01$. Given that this occurred across the full sample (regardless of the textbook condition), the findings from our composite threat indicator say little about the manipulation but instead likely reflect the threat that Chinese in 2006 perceived in a United States that, under the Bush administration, was not just the world's sole superpower but had also embraced both unilateral and militarist approaches to the resolution of international problems. As numerous global polls have shown, Chinese were certainly not alone in viewing the United States as threatening in 2006.

A closer look at the four threat items reveals additional interesting patterns. For the two rather direct items that had participants indicate

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their agreement that the out-group posed a threat (i.e., "*Out-group* is a threat to *in-group*" and "*In-group* should be suspicious of *out-group*'s intentions"), only the main effect of nation proved significant, $ps < .05$. However, the textbook accounts did affect participants' reactions to the two reverse-coded threat items ("*Out-group* seeks to avoid military conflict with *in-group*" and "*In-group* should adopt a friendlier foreign policy toward *out-group*"), perhaps suggesting that people are more willing to reveal feelings of insecurity via less agreement with indirect items suggesting an out-group is nonthreatening. Means for the two reverse-coded threat items are displayed in Table 5.

Chinese participants who read what they thought was a US (out-group) textbook describing the Korean War as a tragedy believed it less likely that the United States would try to avoid military conflict with China than their Chinese classmates who read other historical accounts or no historical account at all, $ps < .04$ (see Figure 7). These Chinese students may have projected a desire for revenge onto Americans imagined to believe that they suffered in Korea at Chinese hands. From this perspective, a vengeful United States would not likely seek to "avoid conflict with China."

Although Chinese in the out-group negative condition thought it less likely that the United States would seek to avoid military conflict with China, the same students also believed that China should adopt a friendlier foreign policy toward the United States, at least compared to their Chinese classmates who read other textbook accounts, $ps < .02$ (see Figure 8). Thus, for these Chinese participants, reading a US ac-

Table 5 Responses to Reverse-Coded Threat Items by Nation and Condition

		Positive		Negative	
	Control	In-group	Out-group	In-group	Out-group
Threat Item 1					
US	4.21	4.41	4.24	4.25	4.18
Chinese	4.97_{a}	5.27_{a}	4.83_{a}	4.63_{a}	3.73_{b}
Total	4.57_{ab}	4.81_{a}	4.51_{ab}	4.44_{ab}	3.98_{b}
Threat Item 4					
US	4.82	4.53	4.56	4.53	4.30
Chinese	3.77_{ab}	3.87_{ab}	3.38_{a}	3.28_{a}	4.27_{b}
Total	4.32^{a}	4.22^{a}	4.02^{a}	3.91^{a}	4.29^{a}

Notes: Means within a row whose subscripts differ indicate a significant difference at $\alpha = .05$.

Threat Item 1: "*Out-group* seeks to avoid military conflict with *in-group*."

Threat Item 4: "*In-group* should adopt a friendlier foreign policy toward *out-group*."

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Figure 7 Threat Item 1 by Nation and Condition

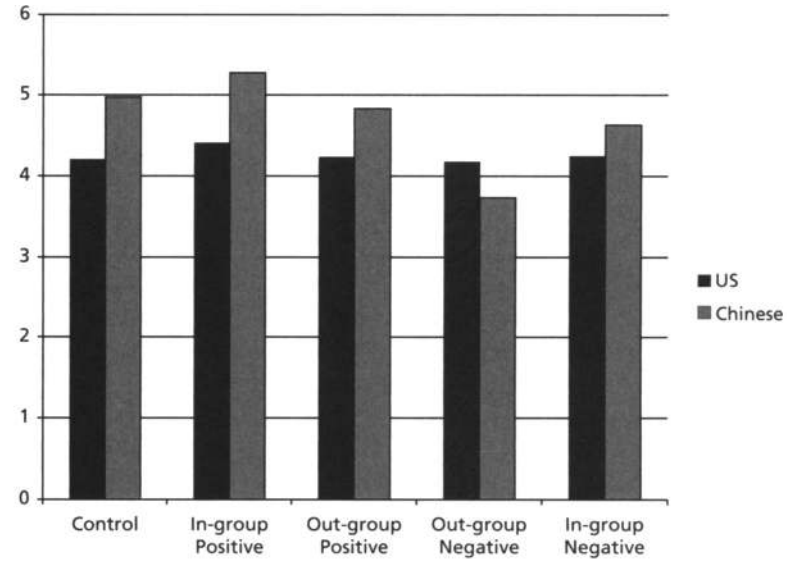
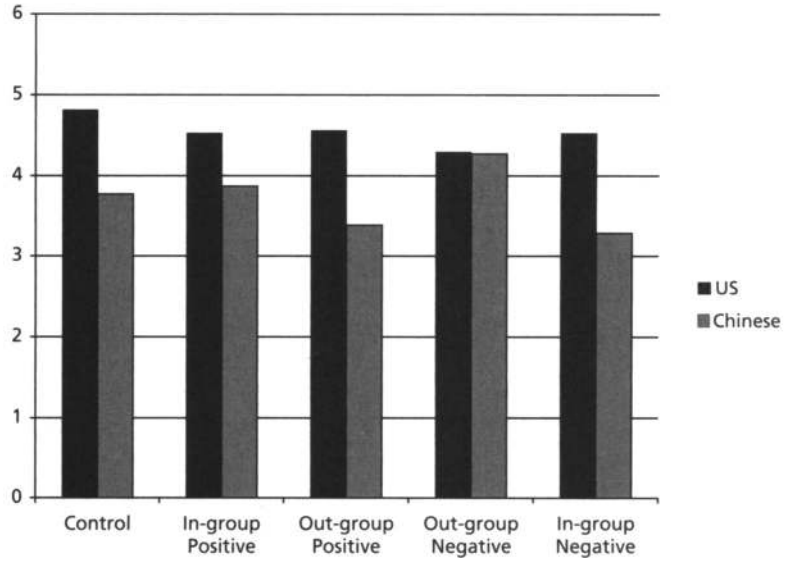


Figure 8 Threat Item 4 by Nation and Condition



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count of the Korean War as a tragedy for the United States led both to the belief in greater animosity from the United States and a desire to adopt a friendlier foreign policy toward the United States, perhaps as a way to make amends for lingering animosity from past suffering. Again, although the manipulation of the valence and source of the historical account affected Chinese participants' perceptions of threat, it had little effect on the US students.

Discussion

The most consistent finding of this study is the main effect of nation. The Chinese students reported higher overall levels of patriotism (especially on the "importance to identity" collective self-esteem subscale) and out-group threat perception than the US students. More interestingly, they also held stronger beliefs about the Korean War and had stronger reactions to the fictional Korean War history "textbook" accounts than the US students did. On dependent measure after dependent measure, while the US students were relatively unaffected by the four manipulations, the Chinese students responded in dramatically different ways to them, clearly demonstrating that the valence and source of the historical narratives mattered when it came to historical beliefs, emotion, patriotism, and threat perception.

What best explains this main effect of nation? Building on earlier work on "domain relevance" at the individual level, we would like to advance the idea of "historical relevance" at the group level: some shared pasts matter more for some members of some nations than for others, explaining their greater importance to present-day national identities. Domain relevance refers to the idea that people differ in the domains on which they base their identity and self-esteem. One study (Pennekamp, Doosje, and Zebel 2007, 43) illustrates the concept nicely using Dutch national identity: "Some high Dutch identifiers might derive pride from the national soccer team, whereas others might derive their pride from the paintings [of] the Dutch masters." Similarly, Pennekamp et al. found that the relevance of the slavery past to 138 people of Surinamese (African) descent living in the Netherlands predicted their anger and desire for reparations better than Surinamese identification itself. Domain relevance explained individual level variance in affect and action tendencies.

The relevance of a shared past thus varies among individuals; we suggest that it also varies between people from different countries. Fur-

thermore, the historical relevance of a particular shared past to a current national identity should predict the strength of emotional and cognitive responses to historical conflicts. Thus, while US students may not have responded strongly to our fictional historical accounts of the Forgotten War, we predict that they would respond more strongly to manipulations of events with greater historical relevance to US national identity today and about which they receive much more education and socialization, such as the War of Independence, World War II, and even September 11, 2001.

Conversely, this study empirically demonstrates that the "War to Resist America and Aid Korea" maintains its historical relevance among Chinese university students today. Zheng Wang (2008) has argued in *International Studies Quarterly* that "'China as victor' has slowly been replaced by 'China as victim' in nationalist discourse." Figure 1 clearly reveals, however, that narratives of defeating the United States in Korea remain central to twenty-first-century Chinese national identity. While victimization discourse may predominate in anti-Japanese nationalism and discussions of the "Century of Humiliation," the Maoist victor narrative appears to live on in unambiguous Chinese beliefs that the Korean War was a Chinese victory pure and simple.

There is thus an asymmetry in the historical relevance of the Korean War to US and Chinese national identities today. While most Americans have largely forgotten the war, many Chinese not only remember it but also draw both pride and strength from that memory. This fortuitous asymmetry of historical relevance mitigates the impact that contending Korean War histories have on US-China relations today. Instead, it is strong positive symmetries in historical relevance that should worry us. When both parties to a shared contentious past link that past to their self-understandings in the present, there is little room for compromise. This appears to be the case, for instance, in China's contested pasts with Japan and Korea. In such cases, history and identity become locked into a zero-sum game.

The data also largely confirmed our suspicion that the valence and source of our fictional historical narratives would interact. In other words, the combination of specific valences (e.g., "positive" or "negative") and specific sources (e.g., "in-group" or "out-group") would have distinct impacts on our dependent China measures. For instance, we found a main effect of our four conditions (in-group positive, in-group negative, out-group positive, out-group negative) on our dependent measure of anxiety even while collapsing across nation. The interactions were most apparent, however, when we looked narrowly at

the data from the Chinese participants for whom greater historical relevance of the Korean War led to stronger affective and cognitive responses to the manipulations. For instance, on our emotional response measures, Chinese students in the in-group positive condition reported lower levels of anxiety (Figure 3) and anger (Figure 4) and higher levels of pride (Figure 5) than their classmates in the three other experimental conditions. Relative to their classmates, they also reported high levels of patriotism and the highest level of agreement that "the US seeks to avoid military conflict with China." Reading a trusted in-group source claiming that China defeated the United States in Korea appears to have increased their patriotism as Chinese as well as their confidence that the United States would not dare to attack China again.

We thought that exposure to in-group negative historical texts would threaten in-group positivity, heightening negative emotions, cognitions, and policy prescriptions. Our suspicions were largely confirmed. Chinese participants in the in-group negative condition experienced high levels of anxiety and anger (Figures 3 and 4) and low levels of pride (Figure 5) relative to their classmates. They also experienced the most depressed levels of private collective self-esteem among all of their classmates, were relatively wary of US intentions, and less likely to advocate a friendlier policy toward the United States. The Chinese data thus confirmed our hypotheses. US students in the in-group negative condition, however, were more likely than their classmates to report high levels of private collective self-esteem, suggesting a "rally around the flag" effect in response to past tragedy. Perhaps the lower historical relevance of the Korean War to US national identity today made it easier for them to affirm, rather than flee from, their threatened national identity.

Because of their challenge to in-group positivity, exposure to out-group positive accounts of shared contentious histories was expected to generate negative affect and cognitions. This is largely what we found among Chinese students who read what they thought was a US history textbook claiming that the United States won the Korean War. Relative to their classmates in other conditions, they experienced high levels of anxiety and anger and low levels of pride (Figures 3–5). This expected impact on affect was not matched, however, on our other dependent measures. Their private collective self-esteem was not depressed, and their responses to the threat items were consistent with the majority of their classmates.

Finally, we were not quite sure what exposure to out-group negative accounts would entail. Would they confirm in-group positivity

and thus increase positive affect and perception? Or would they lead to feelings of collective guilt, challenging in-group positivity and heightening negative emotion and cognition? The results of our emotional response and collective self-esteem items were inconclusive, but there was a very interesting pattern on our two indirect threat items. Chinese students who read what they thought was a US history textbook discussing the Korean War as a tragedy scored lower than their classmates on "the US seeks to avoid military conflict with China," but higher on "China should adopt a friendlier foreign policy toward the US" (see Figures 7 and 8). As noted above, this could reflect the projection of a desire for revenge onto the United States and a calculated decision to appease the United States. Or it could reflect a projected desire for revenge coupled with a sympathetic desire to befriend a past enemy.

We conclude with a few thoughts on limitations and the strengths and weaknesses of our research design. One limitation of this study is that it is based on just one sample of Chinese and one sample of US students. Replication is a fundamental principle of the scientific method. Further samples are needed to replicate and refine the findings presented in this study.

One strength of this research design is its experimental nature. As Rose McDermott (2006, 356) has argued, "Experiments offer a unique opportunity to make a clear causal argument . . . which is why it has been differentially adopted by the hard sciences, psychology, and behavioral economics as the gold standard method of choice." We believe that experiments should be more widely adopted in a political science that seeks to explain the causes of human behavior. Due to the random assignment of our US and Chinese subjects to our experimental and control conditions, and the very minimal differences between the fictional history textbooks we created, we feel confident that the results we did obtain in our experiment were caused by the three independent variables we manipulated, a claim that is more difficult to make in correlational designs.

By manipulating the Korean War, an actual historical event, but doing so with a student sample, our design situated itself in a space between a pure minimal in-group laboratory setting and the real world. It thus suffers from many of the same limitations as both pure minimal in-group work (e.g., external validity issues) and natural setting real-world work (e.g., internal validity issues). In our opinion, however, this middle ground is ideal for initial exploratory analyses. On the external validity issue, our student samples, while certainly

not representative of all Chinese and Americans, do illustrate underlying psychological processes that are largely relative, not absolute, in nature. Whether or not our findings are generalizable to broader populations is an empirical question to be addressed in future research.

One clear limitation of this research design is the use of self-reports of dependent measures like affect and threat perception, which are notoriously difficult to measure. People are not always honest, even with themselves, about their actual emotions. Through "impression management" or "self-presentation" techniques, we often seek to orchestrate the images we present to ourselves and the world (Goffman 1959). We are working on more indirect measures of threat that will be more sensitive to the possibility of presentation effects. With sufficient funding, future research could also use physiological techniques, such as measuring blood pressure and galvanic skin conductance as indicators of threat, to confirm or disconfirm these findings.

Given that it is no longer safe to assume that all psychological dynamics are universal (see Nisbett 2003), the use of a cross-national sample is arguably another strength of this design. If the political psychology of international relations is to be genuinely international, it cannot simply foist Western theories onto Eastern realities, but must instead empirically test when they travel well and when they do not. This theoretic point has real-world consequences. When diplomats and scholars project their own modes of reasoning onto foreign policy decisionmakers in other nations, they increase the risk of misunderstanding, heightening tensions and increasing the odds of conflict. This dynamic was present during the April 2001 spy plane collision near Hainan Island, when both Chinese and US diplomats and mass publics projected their own reasoning styles onto the other side, generating misunderstandings and anger that aggravated an already difficult situation (see Gries and Peng 2002).

Visiting the Dandong Museum to Resist America and Aid Korea in December 2008, *Los Angeles Times* reporter John Glionna (2008) interviewed several Chinese visitors to the museum. Looking at a display of pictures of centipedes, crickets, and snakes that were alleged to be part of a US germ warfare campaign, twenty-three-year-old teacher Wang Binyan told Glionna, "This museum is not biased. This is evidence from history. . . . In this place, Americans are the enemy." Our experiments provide empirical support for what this anecdote

only suggests: that the stories that we are told about our pasts, whether in textbooks, museums, movies, or elsewhere, can and do have an impact on our beliefs about that past, and on our emotions and threat perceptions in the present. Thus, while the United States and China are fortunate that there is an asymmetry in the historical relevance of the Korean War to US and Chinese national identities today, the stories that we tell about our shared past do matter, undermining mutual trust. US-China relations are arguably the most important bilateral relationship of the twenty-first century. We hope that this article will contribute to a better understanding of how historical narratives contribute to threat perception and mistrust in US-China relations.

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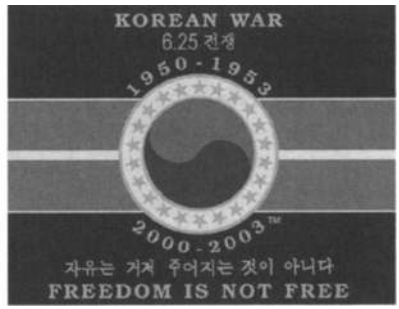
Qingmin Zhang is professor with the School of International Studies, Peking University. His teaching and research include Chinese foreign policy, diplomatic studies, and theory of foreign policy analysis. He is the author of *U.S. Arms Sales Policy Toward Taiwan: A Decision-Making Perspective* (2006), *China's Foreign Relations* (2003), and dozens of academic journal articles, and he is coeditor and contributor to several other books.

Appendix 1 Images and Captions Used in Korean War "Textbook" Manipulations



Left: Fighter pilot. Fifth Air Force, Korea, December 1952. Pilots flying "Old 620" during the past year have shot down six and one-half MIG-15s, probably destroyed three, and damaged a number of others, of which Capt. Borders has credit for one-half destroyed and two damaged. Right: Freedom Is Not Free. The 50th anniversary of the Korean War Commemoration Flag is symbolic of the unified effort of the United States, the Republic of Korea, and our allies to stop communist aggression on the Korean peninsula 50 years ago. The words "Freedom Is Not Free" were added by US veterans who, more than anyone else, know the great price of liberty.

Left: Shenglu Sun, who died heroically in battle, has been called the "sky ace." He was a first-class military hero of the People's Volunteers air force, with six kills and one hit. Right: [An old Korean woman] reluctant to part with [a Chinese People's Volunteer].

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The frozen bodies of dead American/Chinese soldiers in Korea, 1952.

Appendix 2 Out-group Threat Items (*reverse-coded items in italics*)

1. *China seeks to avoid military conflict with the US.*
2. China is a threat to the US.
3. The US should be suspicious of China's intentions.
4. *The US should adopt a friendlier foreign policy toward China.*

Appendix 3 Emotional Response Battery

1. I feel worried.
2. I feel proud.
3. I feel hatred.
4. I feel afraid.
5. I feel contempt.
6. I feel angry.
7. I feel sad.
8. I feel happy.

Appendix 4 Beliefs About the Korean War Items

1. The Korean War was a tragedy for the US.
2. The Korean War was a great victory for the US.
3. China won the Korean War.
4. The Korean War was a heroic moment in US history.
5. The US suffered great losses during the Korean War.
6. The US won the Korean War.

Appendix 5 Patriotism/National Collective Self-Esteem (CSE) Scale (adapted from Luhtanen and Crocker 1992), Twelve Items, Three Subscales (*reverse-coded items in italics*)

Public CSE

1. Being American is considered good by others.
2. *Most people consider Americans to be more ineffective than other national groups.*
3. Others respect Americans.
4. *Others think that Americans are unworthy.*

Private CSE

1. I'm glad to be American.
2. *I often feel that being American is not worthwhile.*
3. I feel good about being American.
4. *I often regret that I am American.*

Importance to identity

1. *Being American has very little to do with how I feel about myself.*
2. Being American is an important reflection of who I am.
3. *Being American is unimportant to my sense of what kind of a person I am.*
4. Being American is an important part of my self-image.

(A Chinese language version of these appendix items is available at www.ou.edu/uschina/lab/KoreanWar.html.)

Note

1. Fall 2006 was a period of relative stability in US-China relations. Hu Jintao had visited George W. Bush in Washington the previous spring, and the appointment of Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson was leading to a deepening of bilateral economic dialogue. One would not, therefore, expect there to be any major temporal effects on our data. More significantly, temporal effects are most important when one is interested in polling absolute levels of opinion. Our interest, by contrast, is not in the *absolute* levels of any of our dependent measures, but rather in the *relative* levels of the means of students randomly assigned to each of our experimental conditions.

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