

**LIFE AND WAR IN KOREA:
PHOTOGRAPHIC PORTRAYALS OF THE KOREAN WAR
IN *LIFE* MAGAZINE, JULY 1950 - AUGUST 1953**

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the visual portrayal of the Korean War, as presented in *Life* magazine from July 1950 through August 1953, by adopting the theoretical framework of framing and cultural studies and by combining two methodologies: content analysis and ideological analysis. In light of recent international situations such as the end of the Cold War and the Iraq War, and the nuclear crisis of North Korea, it is this intention of this study to provide a new, balanced view of the Korean War. By recovering American history's "forgotten war", this study attempts an interpretative examination of the visual construction of news events and features.

Content analysis results show that *Life's* coverage was U.S.-centered and that the magazine published a reasonable number of combat photographs, but almost no photographs taken of Korean civilian casualties or of the country's destruction. Ideological analysis shows that *Life's* photographs followed several mythical themes: Victory in the air, Defeat on the ground, Unready/ Unpopular war, MacArthur as a hero, Good versus evil, Paternalism/Humanitarianism, and Tragedy of Korea.

Results and analysis suggest that although *Life* presented the Korean War as America's military tragedy and their disillusionment with war, Cold War politics still defined it as a just war, meant to save South Korea from the evils of Communism.