

**“Re-membling” South Korea’s Militarized
Landscapes in Pax Americana:
Post-Cold War US Military Camps, Camptowns,
and Former Camptown Women**

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Spring in Taech'u-ri: Introduction

The spring of 2007 in Taech'u-ri, an agricultural community in Kyōnggi Province, Republic of Korea (hereafter ROK, South Korea, or Korea), was eerily quiet. In what should have been a bustling planting season, fields stood unreachable behind razor-wire fence and police guards. The silence of this spring sharply contrasted with the confrontations of May 2006, when Taech'u-ri and the nearby Todu-ri became infamous for images of bloodied farmers and their supporters, numbering about a thousand, clashing with 16,000 Korean soldiers and policemen in riot gear.¹ Yet a year later on April 7, 2007, only about forty out of 535 households, or 150 out of 1,372 residents, and their supporters quietly gathered at the demolished local elementary school to mark the erasure of these villages on the national map (Figure 1 & 2).²

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1 “Koreans protest U.S. base plans,” *New York Times*, May 4, 2006; “Thousands stage anti-U.S. base protest,” *Korea Herald*, May 15, 2006.

These two farming communities shared the misfortune of being near Camp Humphreys, a United States military installation located in P’yöngt’aek, Kyönggi Province, designated as the new headquarters of the United States Forces in Korea (USFK) under the 2002 Land Partnership Plan and the 2004 Yongsan Relocation Plan. The crux of these two agreements was to consolidate the American military footprint on the peninsula by returning 57 out of 106 USFK sites to Korea, in exchange for two massive strategic-hubs in P’yöngt’aek and Tae-gu, both located south of the demilitarized zone (DMZ) and the capital, Seoul.³ The expansion of Camp Humphreys on the land that had once been Taech’u-ri and Todu-ri has made it “the largest overseas American military base in the world,” according to the US Army, having tripled in size to make it “roughly the size of central Washington, D.C.”⁴

This contemporary spatial reconfiguring, of both Camp Humphreys’ expansion and Taech’u-ri’s erasure on the map, is the latest redrawing of the contours of the American military landscape in South Korea that began with Korea’s colonial liberation from Japan in 1945. Foundations of many of the USFK installations, including Camp Humphreys, were former Japanese imperial military sites that were usurped during the American military occupation (1945-1948) or the Korean War (1950-1953) and then modified into “semi-permanent” American landscapes during the cold war decades.⁵ The concentrating of the American mili-

2 “kkünnaji annün taech’uri [Unfinished Taech’uri],” *Hankyoreh*, April 30, 2018.

3 R. Slade Walters, “U.S. Forces Korea Transformation Update,” U.S. Army, January 12, 2010, <https://www.army.mil/article/32794>; U.S. Department of Defense, *Base Structure Report FY 2007 Baseline*. http://www.defenselink.mil/pubs/BSR_2007_Baseline.pdf.

4 “USAG Humphrey: The Story behind America’s Biggest Overseas Base,” *Diplomat*, November 6, 2017.

5 What eventually became Camp Humphreys was first built in 1939 as a Japanese imperial fighter base. Then after the U.S. 417th Squadron constructed a new runway on the base during the Korean War, Camp Humphreys served as the main helicopter facility for the USFK in the postwar decades. D. Colt Denfeld, *American Military Camps in the Republic of Korea, 1866-1996* (Anchorage:

tary footprint reflects both Washington's post-cold war global strategic reposturing to increase the flexible mobility of its overseas forces as well as South Korean civil society's post-democracy activism.⁶ The protests in Taech'u-ri, thus, represents post-cold war, post-democracy changes to the intimate ROK-US cold war alliance; in contrast to the decades past, when South Korea's autocratic governments not only repressed any challenges to the stationing of foreign troops, but also demanded citizens' sacrifice in sustaining these militarized landscapes in the name of national development, anti-base Korean civic groups view the impacts of American military forces more in terms of their social costs than their strategic value.

This study reconnects these shifting contours of contemporary post-colonial landscapes of South Korea in Pax Americana, built atop Japanese imperial militarism, to their historical developments. In this historicizing of South Korea's postcoloniality – “the complex condition which attends the aftermath of colonial occupation” – the particular focus here is locating the “resistance to the mystifying amnesia,” which is a principle condition of postcoloniality.⁷ Homi Bhabha, the post-colonial critic, asserts that “the necessary and sometimes hazardous bridge” between the past and present “is a painful re-membering, a putting together of the dismembered past to make sense of the trauma of the present.”⁸ Bhabha's “re-membering” applied here, thus, connotes intersected meanings of *recalling* the marginalized histories as well as

Pacific Bases Research, 1997), 122. For American military camp transformations into semi-permanent sites during the cold war decades, see: Taejin Hwang, “Militarized Landscapes of Yongsan: From Japanese Imperial to Little Americas in Early Cold War Korea,” *Korea Journal* 58, no. 1 (spring 2018): 121-149.

6 Sheila A. Smith, *Shifting Terrain: The Domestic Politics of the U.S. Military Presence in Asia* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii East-West Center Special Report, 2006).

7 Leela Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction*, 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019), 4.

8 As quoted in Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory*, 9.

putting together the disjointed memories. It is an effort to actively resist the amnesia of postcoloniality by “revisiting, remembering and, crucially, interrogating the colonial past”⁹—that of the repressed histories of American military camps, camptowns, and the marginalized peoples of these militarized landscapes, mainly that of former camptown women.

Here, “militarized landscapes” denote both the *built environment* as well as the expressions of *social behavior and cultural values* affected by the militarization in the production of landscapes of human settlement.¹⁰ In the first section, the changing *built environments*—the spatial and its related social contours of American military camps and their camptowns—that reflect the shifting alliance toward more equal footings in the post-cold war today are examined. While camps like the expanded Camp Humphreys are becoming even more insulated Americanized spaces and the once marginalized camptowns are caught in a liminal stride toward landscapes of internationalism, this study examines how the legacies of these borderlands that had embodied Korea’s “coloniality”¹¹ are *re-membered*. The evolving *socio-cultural expressions* of these militarized landscapes are then discussed in the second section by assessing how former camptown women and civic organizations that constitute the “Camptown Women’s Human Rights Coalition (kijich'on yōsōng in'gwōn yōndae),” through their litigations against the South Korean state, have also begun to historicize South Korea’s postcoloniality. Through the subjectivity-formation and trans-

9 Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory*, 4

10 Rachel Woodward, “Military Landscapes: Agendas and Approaches for Future Research,” *Progress in Human Geography* 38.1: 40-61.

11 Korea’s coloniality, according to Paik Nak-Chung, has been sustained by this very “division system” that not only legitimizes “the continuing hegemonic role of the United States” but also reproduces coloniality in another form that reinforces “the ideologies of statism, nationalism, developmentalism and racism as well as sexism.” Paik Nak-Chung, “Coloniality in Korea and a South Korean Project for Overcoming Modernity,” *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, 2:1 (2000), 73-74.

border activism of the once silenced camptown women, they are no longer rendered voiceless victims sacrificed by the state, but rather the women themselves have become the main agents of their own historical integration. Their *re-membering*, moreover, contributes to bringing to the national center the marginalized history of Korea's militarized landscapes in Pax Americana, which in turn forces us to re-member our shared postcolonial trauma. And upon this constellation of re-membering and *praxis*, beginnings of overcoming South Korea's post-coloniality can also be imagined.



Fig. 1. Closing Ceremony in Taech'u-ri on April 7, 2007.¹²

12 The peaceful ceremony on April 7, 2007, marked the end of years of protest against relocation of Taech'u-ri and the nearby Todu-ri residents. The mound of steel and cement debris, what remained of the demolished elementary school in Taech'u-ri, served as a backdrop to the symbolic ceremony held in the former schoolyard, attended by the last of the remaining villagers, their supporters, and reporters. Photograph by the author.



Fig. 2. Remaining protest signs and peace art in Taech'u-ri on April 7, 2007.¹³

Militarized Borderlands in Post-Cold War Korea: Camps and Camptowns

The built environments of official American military camps and their vernacular camptowns occupied the intersection of an “indispensable edge” of earning essential foreign currency for South Korea’s postwar economic development and the “dispensable edge” of containing marginalized people from the mainstream society.¹⁴ In the second half of the twentieth century, the United States built a worldwide network of military installations that by 1969, an estimated 1.5 million Americans in uniform served overseas in 70 to 80 countries, spread out over 429 major and 2,972 minor military bases.¹⁵ In South Korea, the ROK-US Mutual Defense Treaty signed in 1954 committed the two nations in a post-Korean War military alliance that granted the stationing of American troops. Annually some 60,000 American military personnel were stationed in South Korea from the mid-1950s, until troop reductions to around 45,000 in the early 1970s, as part of the cold war *détente* and “Asianization” policies of the United States. These numerical peak decades of the 1950s and the 1960s were also considered the “heyday” of American military in Korea due to the strong economic power of the US dollar. The stationing costs of these some 60,000 to 45,000 military personnel, housed in over a hundred large and small American military camps throughout the peninsula,¹⁶ generated crucial

13 What remained of protest signs and peace art produced by activists and artists in the abandoned streets of Taech'u-ri on April 7, 2007. Photograph by the author.

14 Taejin Hwang, “An Indispensable Edge: American Military Camptowns in Postwar Korea” in *Mobile Subjects: Boundaries and Identities in the Modern Korean Diaspora*, ed. Wen-hsin Yeh (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 2013), 88-122.

15 Harry Magdoff, “Militarism and Imperialism,” *The American Economic Review* 60, no.2 (May 1970): 240.

16 At the time of 2006-2007 protests in Taech'u-ri, the American military footprint

foreign currency earnings for Korea’s developing economy. The troop spending in the service economies of camptowns or *kijich'on*, clustered around American installations and that served as extensions of the military camps, also comprised a crucial source of the American dollar.

Upon South Korea’s integration into the capitalist regional order and as a frontline in the security hegemony in Pax Americana,¹⁷ the authoritarian state of Pak Chōnghūi relied on America’s military economy as a source of foreign currency earning for Korea’s developmentalism. The Pak government designated camptown bars and clubs “special tourism facilities businesses” that enjoyed tax-free alcohol under the Tourism Promotion Law, which then reciprocated by paying into the government coffers monthly.¹⁸ A year after outlawing prostitution in Korea, moreover, the Pak government established 104 “special districts” in 1962, including 32 military camptowns, with legalized sex industry.¹⁹ As a result, camptown economies contributed significantly to earning essential foreign exchange for the developmental states, especially during the “heyday” of the 1960s.²⁰ Along with camptown

in Korea consisted of 106 sites occupying some 219 million square meter of land, and with 8, 550 building and structures. US Department of Defense, *Base Structure Report FY 2007*, 6.

- 17 Bruce Cumings, “From Japanese Imperium to American Hegemony: Korean-Centrism and the Transformation of the International System,” in *Korea at the Center: Dynamics of Regionalism in Northeast Asia*, ed. Charles Armstrong, Gilbert Rozman, Sameul Kim, and Stephen Kotkin (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 2006), 75-91.
- 18 Lee Na Young, “The Construction of U.S. Camptown Prostitution in South Korea: Trans/Formation and Resistance (PhD diss., University of Maryland, 2006), 177.
- 19 Ji-Yeon Yuh, *Beyond the Shadow of Camptown: Korean Military Brides in America* (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 26.
- 20 In 1964, *kijich'on* economies earned almost US\$10 million, which accounted for approximately ten percent of that year’s foreign earnings, for instance, and in 1969, “approximately 46,000 Korean workers in camp towns earned US\$70 million.” Lee, “The Construction of U.S. Camptown Prostitution,” 125.

economies, Korean men deployed for America's war in Vietnam as, what Jin-Kyung Lee termed, "neocolonized surrogate force," that generated about one-billion-dollars in economic benefits is another well-known example of the Pak government utilizing the American cold war military economy for South Korea's developmentalism.²¹ In the post-cold war alliance of today, however, the once money-generating landscapes are transitioning into money-expending spaces for Korea. In the following sub-sections, changes of the built environments and their related social contours in post-cold war today are examined: first, how camps are becoming an ever more insulated little Americas, and then how camptowns are caught in a liminal state between attempts to either historically erase them or revamp them into landscapes of internationalism.

1) American Military Camps into Perfectly Insulated Little Americas

In a reversal of fortunes recently, the stationing of American forces has transitioned from a dollar-earning to a dollar-expending alliance for South Korea, as it became an economic powerhouse and subsequently a more "equal partner" with the United States. Around the time of the Taech'u-ri protests, General B.B. Bell, the then Commander of the USFK and the Korea-United States Combined Forces Command, testified before the US Senate Committee on Armed Services and situated the protests within the greater changes that South Korea and, in turn, the bilateral relations had undergone:

They have become a first-world country...with all the trappings of the most advanced nations in the world. And so

21 Jin-Kyung Lee, *Service Economies: Militarism, Sex Work, and Migrant Labor in South Korea* (University of Minnesota Press, 2010); Charles Armstrong, "America's Korea, Korea's Vietnam," *Critical Asian Studies* 33, no. 4 (2001): 533 (527-540).

they've been expressing a level of independence...This is a great success story for the United States of America and coming to the aid of an ally who was war-ravaged and helping them for the long haul to get on their feet and to become a major world power. So, in that regard, it is now time for us to turn over more and more of the security responsibility of the Republic of Korea to the Koreans...Part of that is...to move our forces...to south of Seoul, thus ensuring that the South Koreans are responsible for dealing directly with the threat along the DMZ.²²

No longer a hapless ally that needed American aid, Korea’s remarkable economic growth instigated changing the contours of the American military presence in Korea. The reduction of US military personnel deployed in Korea from around 37,000 to 28,500 in 2000, moving them away from the DMZ, and agreeing to transfer wartime operational control to the ROK military indicated the shifting role of the US military from that of a leading to a supporting one on the peninsula. But a more equal partnership has reciprocally meant greater responsibilities for Korea, namely in covering a growing portion of the stationing costs of American troops. The annual 50-50 split cost sharing in 2016 with the United States mounted to more than US\$800 million for the South Korean government and in February 2019, it agreed to contribute about US\$925 million, an 8.2 percent increase from the previous year.²³ This greater burden sharing comes in addition to paying for most of the expansion costs of Camp Humphreys. For what the US Army Public Affairs Office calls “our little piece of America,” the

22 Transcriptions of Senate Armed Services Committee, *US Military Command Authorization Requests for Fiscal Year 2008: Hearing before Committee on Armed Services*, 110th Cong., 1st sess., April 24, 2007.

23 “USAG Humphrey,” *Diplomat*, November 6, 2017; “South Korea Resists U.S. Pressure to Improve Ties with Japan,” *New York Times*, November 15, 2019.

South Korean government paid “up to 93 percent of the \$10.7 billion cost of Humphreys” under the Special Measures Agreement.²⁴ The commander of USFK even acknowledged in 2016 that it was cheaper to keep US forces stationed in South Korea than in the United States, further claiming that Seoul’s willingness to pay so much for the US military presence was “a sign of the strength of our alliance,” adding, “we’re equal partners in it.”²⁵

This “equal” partnership is also reshaping the related social landscapes of American military personnel into more “normalized tours” with increased number of in-country family accompaniments. The USFK personnel are deployed on either accompanied or unaccompanied tours. In 2006-2007, of the approximately 28,500 US military personnel in Korea, about 2,800 were on command-sponsored, two-year tours that permit service members to bring their families on government expense and receive a full range of benefits.²⁶ Americans deployed to Korea on unaccompanied tours, however, can also choose to bring their families at their own expense and then receive financial subsidies while stationed in Korea.²⁷ And in 2008, for instance, General Bell disclosed that about 2,000 military families had set up independent living in Korea.²⁸ When both official and unofficial accompanied tours were counted, roughly 5,000 USFK personnel were deployed with their families in 2007-2008. And the USFK policy goal since the Camp

24 “USAG Humphrey,” *Diplomat*, November 6, 2017.

25 Ibid.

26 US Forces Korea, “US Forces Korea’s Welcome Guide for 2006-2007.” (last accessed in 2010) <http://www.usfk.mil/usfk/welcome/index.html>

27 They are authorized Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) and receive housing allowance allotted for their pay grade and dependency status. And as of October 2005, non-command sponsored families receive the Overseas Housing Allowance (OHA) at the with-dependent rate as well as the Cost of Living Allowance (COLA) at the without-dependent rate. Ibid

28 “Plan to Let U.S. Troops Bring Families to Korea,” *New York Times*, March 10, 2008.

Humphreys expansion agreement has been to steadily increase the percentage of normalized tours.²⁹ Although unaccompanied tours in Korea was historically lauded as a money-saving policy, troops have cited this as one of the foremost reasons for the unpopularity of deployment to Korea; studies over the years have also identified that families provided stability and well-being for the troops.³⁰ Moreover, the short, unaccompanied tours had meant young, often unmarried men on rapid thirteen-month rotations in Korea, a situation that even the “armed forces associated with problems of discipline, fraternization with locals, prostitution, and violence.”³¹ In order to accommodate the increasing number of family accompaniments while also decreasing the potential for camp-and-town conflicts,³² thus, the US military intends that this new hub will become an even more perfectly insulated American town.

Building self-contained American landscapes in a foreign land, considered the “key to keeping the troops and their families happy...[by letting] them feel like they’re still living in the States when they’re within the camp’s perimeter,”³³ draws from decades of developing “little Americas” in Korea.³⁴ In Camp Humphreys, “up to a dozen 12-story modern housing towers are being built, furnished and designed for maximum comfort and convenience” and like any ordinary American suburb, it has its own “K-12 schools, chapels, a library, a

29 “General Bell ‘Family Accompanied Tours to Expand for Entire USFK,’” *Yonhap News*, April 18, 2007; “USAG Humphrey,” *Diplomat*, November 6, 2017.

30 Hwang, “Militarized Landscapes of Yongsan,” 139.

31 Ibid.

32 “South Koreans want U.S. troops to bring families,” *Stars and Stripes Pacific edition*, December 12, 2006; “South Koreans in Pyeongtaek mixed on U.S. realignment plan; Poll shows 1 in 4 worried about influx of young GIs,” *Stars and Stripes Pacific edition*, December 12, 2006.

33 “USFK briefs contractors on housing bids / S. Koreans learn how to submit bids for build-to-lease projects,” *Stars and Stripes Pacific edition*, August 10, 2006.

34 Hwang, “Militarized Landscapes of Yongsan.”

big box store, dental and veterinary clinics and a spacious plaza where kids can skateboard and eat ice cream...”³⁵ Before Camp Humphreys, Yongsan, the headquarters of USFK for some seventy years, was the centrum of a transplanted American town in the middle of the capital city. The sprawling horizontal landscape of Yongsan Garrison not only resembled an American suburb, but was also governed by US military laws and regulations, supported their own education, transportation, and communication systems as well as medical, religious, retail, and financial services.³⁶ And even if not stationed in one of the large bases, US military buses link almost every installation on the peninsula,³⁷ which is further connected regionally with similar installations in the Pacific, like the Kadena Air Force Base in Okinawa.³⁸ The super-hubs like Kadena, former Yongsan, and now Humphreys constitute a constellation of little Americas in the Asia Pacific. Happily contained in these American spatial and cultural landscapes in middle of host nations, American military officials expressed their hopes that troops on family accompanied tours will also be “a stabilizing force to counter so-called ‘camptown’ problems like fighting, crime, sexual violence, and prostitution near bases.”³⁹ The recent efforts for increased normalized tours is, thus, also founded on decades of accumulated “so-called ‘camptown’ problems” that had spilled out of the contained, marginalized landscape and had symbolized for the greater Korean society evidence of American imperial violence enabled by the unequal bilateral relationship.

35 “USAG Humphrey,” *Diplomat*, November 6, 2017.

36 Sgt. Eric Foltz, ed., “2003 8th U.S. Army Welcome Guide” (Seoul: Eighth US Army Public Affairs Office, 2003), 15-27.

37 “US Forces Korea’s Welcome Guide for 2006-2007”

38 As the largest air base in the Pacific Command, 23,000 Americans live and work on Kadena and it had an estimated operations budget of \$1.45 billion in 1999, a figure higher than the annual city and county budget of Honolulu, Hawai’i. Sheila Smith, *Shifting Terrain*, 22.

39 “USAG Humphrey,” *Diplomat*, November 6, 2017.

2) Liminal Camptowns: from Militarized Peripheries into Centers of Internationalism

The vernacular landscapes of *kijich'on* not only served as extensions of the military camps that provided service economies for the foreign troops, but also as literal and symbolic buffers between the foreign military and the greater Korean society. Camptowns had constituted “borderlands,” geopolitical borders between the two nations as well as marginalized socio-cultural edge of Korean society.⁴⁰ And in this borderland, until the legal terms of agreement of stationing these troops, the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), came into effect in 1967, American military personnel had operated under wartime, extra-territorial jurisdiction and could not be held accountable for crimes they committed during their military service in Korea. Although high-profile camptown conflicts galvanized Korean demands for SOFA, the initial SOFA lacked substantive change, as it did little to eliminate the extraterritorial privileges of the United States; and even after 1967, camptowns were marginalized as wild and lawless borderlands, as violent sites of exploitations and clashes between Americans and Koreans.⁴¹

At the same time, camp-camptown conflicts have divided Korean communities between anti-base activists and those who seek oppor-

40 Taejin Hwang, “An Indispensable Edge: American Military Camptowns in Postwar Korea” in *Mobile Subjects: Boundaries and Identities in the Modern Korean Diaspora*, ed. Wen-hsin Yeh (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, Berkeley: 2013): 88-122; on the concept of borderlands, see: Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron, “Forum Essay: From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the Peoples in Between in North American History,” *American Historical Review* 104, no. 3 (June 1999): 816; Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987), 3.

41 Taejin Hwang, “Cold War brotherhood contested: KATUSAs, slicky boys, American G.I.s, and the Status of Forces Agreement in post-armistice South Korea, 1954-1966,” *Critical Asian Studies* 51 no.2 (2019): 253-273; ---, “An Indispensable Edge: American Military Camptowns in Postwar Korea.”

tunities in this landscape, rendering ambiguous the delineation of these spaces as neo-colonized. Case in point, P'yōngt'aek city, within which Camp Humphreys is located, anticipated an economic boon when the base expansion constructions began. P'yōngt'aek in 2008 was “in a state of excitement,” with land prices in the development district soaring and signs such as “Super P'yōngt'aek” and “International City P'yōngt'aek” fluttering throughout the city.⁴² As Bridget Martin's study indicates, by deregulating land usage and agreeing to provide 4.4 trillion won (US\$4.1 billion) in special subsidies to the city for new urban projects with the Special Act in Support of P'yōngt'aek, the central and local governments partnered to “spark significant, if checkered, growth in the city,” while also “quelling anti-base dissent” and recasting “militarization as a desirable form of ‘international city’ development.”⁴³ This certainly blurs the demarcations of these borderlands simply as “statistically imperialized and militarized spaces,” and as Martin contends, “scholars should reconsider how the very categories of empire, military and the city are shifting alongside each other in the current conjuncture.”⁴⁴

In this reconsidering, this latest state intervention can also be situated within the historical precedence of the postcolonial governments resignifying colonized spaces to promote nationalist projects. For instance, Syngman Rhee (I Sūngman) sought to revamp the Bando Hotel in downtown Seoul, built by Japanese colonial capital and then headquartered the US military occupation forces, into a symbolic center of his administration's ideological underpinnings—that of Free Asia anti-communism and cold war cosmopolitanism.⁴⁵ Todd Henry also illu-

42 "Eijūl suga ōpsō narūl kyōngmyōrhadōn ōmmaūi numbich'ūl [I can't forget the look in my mom's eyes that despised me]," *Hankyoreh* 21, January 24, 2008.

43 Bridget Martin, “From Camp Town to International City: US Military Base Expansion and Local Development in Pyeongtaek, South Korea,” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* (2018), 967, 969.

44 *Ibid.*, 983-4.

45 Taejin Hwang, “Seoul's Bando Hotel: A Postwar Space of Americanism and

minates how the early South Korean state redefined the Japanese colonized space of Ch’anggyōng Garden into a neocolonial space to promote anticommunist militarism and industrial development.⁴⁶ Henry does this by applying Frantz Fanon’s analysis of Third World nationalisms—the insidious process by which local postcolonial elites, through dictatorial politics, tended to resubordinate underclass citizens, while advancing “capitalist systems that reproduced the alienating conditions of foreign domination, thereby stunting popular forms of decolonization.”⁴⁷ This shifting terrain and blurring of spatial meanings, in other words, are also part of the long practice of postcolonial nationalism within which the new state acts as *the* neocolonial power.

Along with P’yōngt’aek city, the redevelopment wind also hit Anjōng-ri, a camptown situated directly across from the formal main gate of Camp Humphreys that had provided entertainment and service economies to the American military personnel for decades. The city wants to recast the dark image of a camptown into an international landscape, modeled after the successfully transformed Itaewon district in Seoul, another former camptown for the nearby Yongsan installation.⁴⁸ But unlike the more typical camptowns that primarily catered to American military personnel, Itaewon has occupied a unique socio-cultural centrum in the capital city, attracting a diverse mixture of foreign soldiers, diplomats, tourists, as well as local Koreans seeking “American culture.”⁴⁹ And although the infamous red-light district called “Hooker Hill” has also occupied the heart of Itaewon, due to the changes in the composition of the USFK as well as Korea’s increased regulation on

Cold War Internationalism,” *Korea Journal* 61, no.4 (winter 2021): 200-228.

46 Todd A. Henry, “Ch’anggyōng Garden as Neocolonial Space: Spectacles of Anticommunist Militarism and Industrial Development in Early South(ern) Korea,” *Journal of Korean Studies* 21, no.1 (Spring 2016), 7.

47 *Ibid.*, 8.

48 Martin, “From Camp Town to International City,” 983.

49 Choi Jongil, “A Study on ‘Americanization’ Expressed in Itaewon Space,” (master’s thesis, Seoul National University, 2002), 26-7.

the sex industry, Hooker Hill subsequently shrank to one street by 1995.⁵⁰ Ever since the announcement of the Yongsan Relocation Plan in 2004, moreover, Seoul city and Itaewon district governments vigorously promoted this area as a gentrified international entertainment zone, in a concerted effort to shed its past image as a militarized landscape dominated by PX goods, crime, and Hooker Hill. That Itaewon is also the center of Islamic mosques, LGBTQ+ establishments, as well as shops and residents of migrant laborers from Asia and Africa further accentuates its multicultural image.

Unlike the exceptional landscape of Itaewon, on the other hand, the more typical former camptowns near camp closures have mostly disappeared, subsumed and reintegrated into local communities. For local governments, especially along the DMZ, base closures have meant cleaning-up toxic chemicals and other environmental problems associated with the US military camps⁵¹ as well as addressing the impacts of closures on local businesses that had over-dependended on the American military economy for decades. In a July 2010 report, for instance, the once vibrant “Yankee Market” in Tongduch’ŏn, which had sold American PX goods to Koreans since the Korean War and witnessed its prosperous heyday in the 1960s and 1970s, was now “walking an enfeebled road.”⁵² Stores catering to American customers were also not faring any better. The Bosan-dong Special Tourist District, a camptown with about 350 businesses ranging from clubs and bars to clothing stores and restaurants for American soldiers, also faced a similar “downward path” as the Yankee Market. Mr. Heo, a clothing store owner in Bosan-dong, predicted gloomy prospects for

50 Ibid., 35-44.

51 “9 U.S. bases returned amid contamination,” *Korea Herald*, June 2, 2007; Smith, *Shifting Terrain*, 37.

52 “Dongducheon’s ‘Yankee Market’ Walking an Enfeebled Road; Bosandong Special Tourist District also on a downward path...Decrease of American soldiers and changing of an era,” *Yonhap News*, July 18, 2010.

store owners like himself. “But base relocation must happen speedily,” Mr. Heo explained, because “Tongduch’ön has already sacrificed too much.”⁵³ The past sacrifice that Mr. Heo referred to was the stigma of a *kijich'on* that has overshadowed Tongduch’ön. But along with re-integrating these former camptowns into local economies, some are fighting against complete historical erasures of these landscapes. Store owners and the municipal assembly of Tongduch’ön agreed to erect a large sign demarcating “Yankee Market” in December 2008, and when the new controversial sign came under criticism, a municipal assembly-person asked, “Why should Tongduch’ön hide the fact that it was a *ki-jich'on*?” and claimed, “We have to tell the truth of our city.”⁵⁴

Whether Anjŏng-ri will meet Bosan-dong’s fate or become another Itaewon is uncertain, but as local activists claim, “a genuine multi-cultural community is virtually impossible to achieve with a foreign military as its core constituent,”⁵⁵ not to mention the lingering shadows of the camptown past. Moreover, if Camp Humphreys does become the self-contained “piece of America” that it is intended to be, especially to serve the anticipated increased number of normalized tours with greater family accompaniments, it would render obsolete former camptown industries that had largely catered to unaccompanied male soldiers. Landscapes of former camptowns remain liminal, therefore, not quite included in this plan of, as Martin eloquently puts, “resignifying spaces of militarism as spaces of internationalism and cosmopolitanism.”⁵⁶ At the same time, the postcolonial amnesia is unable to completely erase past landscapes like the “Yankee Market” in

53 Ibid.

54 “yangk’ishijang, tongduch’ön=kijich'on koch'ak'wa nollan tongduch’önshi, 2ch’önmanwön türyö t’ryangk’ishijangt’ chohyöngmul sewö [Yankee Market, Dongducheon = Criticism of Its Adherence to Gijichon-ization],” *Gyungi Bokbu Shimin Shinmun*, December 22, 2008. http://www.simin24.com/?doc=news/read.htm&ns_id=10480

55 As quoted in Martin, “From Camp Town to International City,” 983.

56 Martin, “From Camp Town to International City,” 983.

Tongduch'ŏn under the banner of development, as some locals prevent its fade into obscurity. The re-membered place of these militarized landscapes in national history, thus, encompass its layered post-coloniality—that of American imperial violence as well as the post-colonial state's exploitation of this dispensable borderlands for developmentalism. But as will be elaborated in the following section, these marginalized militarized landscapes also came to symbolize and, in turn, catalyze bilateral political changes at the core by bringing to the fore this very coloniality of South Korea.

Articulating Postcoloniality Inscribed in Their Bodies: Post-national Subjectivity of Camptown Women

Tucked back in an ally at a small distance from the main street of Anjŏng-ri, or the “Ville” as Americans once referred to, is a sign for Sunlit Sister's Center (haetsal sahoe bokchiho). This center provides social services for “*kijich'on* grandmothers,” who used to work in the camptown economy and in their older ages had nowhere else to go.⁵⁷ The women gathered there every Tuesday at 2 p.m. and while watching the development fervor and the land prices of Anjŏng-ri rise, worried that they will be pushed out of their single-room rentals, the last bastion of their survival.⁵⁸ They did not have many options for leaving the camptown either. A member of the Sunlit Sister's Center stated that she had lived in Anjŏng-ri since she was nineteen years old and she had not “dared to leave this place” for over forty years because she feared that people would never accept her if they found out about her past.⁵⁹ While elder Korean women have limited opportunities to

57 “I can't forget the look in my mom's eyes that despised me,” *Hankyoreh* 21, January 24, 2008.

58 Ibid.

59 -- Sook, “chŏnŭn haetsal-sahoe-pokchi-hoe hoe-wŏn-ipnita [I'm a member of the

exit Anjŏng-ri, Filipino women have entered this landscape, recruited to replace Korean women in the *kijich'on* industries. According to An Chŏngae, a long time anti-base activist and an investigator of the Truth and Reconciliation Committee, “the exploitation of women by the triangular alliance between the state, the military, and patriarchy near the U.S. base continues.”⁶⁰

Although relegated to the peripheral-edge of national political landscape, clashes in these borderlands had, when necessary, symbolized Korea’s coloniality and used to catalyze changes in the greater bilateral relations, while the marginalized women of camptowns were constructed by the state into self-sacrificing patriots in this process. A series of high-profile American crimes and camp-camptown conflicts during the extraterritorial “heyday” of the 1950s and 1960s were utilized by the ROK state politically and in popular discourse to pressure the United States to negotiate the initial SOFA in 1966.⁶¹ Since South Korea’s democratization in the late 1980s, civil society organizations (CSOs) have played an instrumental role in bringing to the national attention, and in turn to the bilateral negotiation tables, the violence and grievances of the periphery. A major watershed moment was the horrific murder of Yun Kūmi in 1992 by a private, Keneth Lee Markel III, in Bosan-dong, a camptown in Tongduch’ŏn.⁶² Koreans galvanized

Sunlit Sister’s Place],” (Camptown Women’s Human Rights Coalition Symposium: Comfort Women of the US Military Camptowns in Korea, History and Meaning of Litigation, Seoul, May 28, 2018), 36.

60 “I can’t forget the look in my mom’s eyes that despised me,” *Hankyoreh* 21, January 24, 2008.

61 For discussions on high profile camp-camptown conflicts and their relations to SOFA negotiations, see Hwang, “Indispensable Edge” and “Cold War brotherhood contested.”

62 On October 28, 1992, Keneth Lee Markel assaulted, murdered, and then mutilated Yun’s body. Markle was sentenced to 15 years of imprisonment after a long trial that reached the Supreme Court, and was imprisoned in Chun-an Youth Prison in May of 1994. Lee Sohee, “Understanding the United States through the Crimes Committed by its Troops in Korea” (Seoul: Pamphlet by

by this particularly gruesome crime initially brought together in 1992 a coalition of 23 organizations, which then inaugurated “The National Campaign for Eradication of Crime by US Troops in Korea” (hereafter National Campaign) on October 26, 1993.⁶³ Building on this activism, the revised SOFA of 2001 expanded Korean jurisdiction, explicitly acknowledging the ROK government’s right to place the accused American military personnel under Korean custody upon arrest in some of the most egregious murder or rape cases and also upon indictment in other serious cases.⁶⁴ It took this high-profile murder of a camptown woman, who, as Katharine Moon contends, “posthumously became a nationalist symbol of South Korea’s powerlessness and ‘victimization’ by the United States,”⁶⁵ for an American military personnel to be finally tried under the Korean judicial system in 1992, some 25 years after the initial SOFA went into effect in 1967.

On one hand, thus, even if camptowns disappear or successfully transform themselves into areas of internationalism, the historical impact of these borderlands on establishing and altering the bilateral agreement, SOFA, constitute an enduring legacy. On the other hand, however, as Insook Kwon argues, among the cold war state-constructed “self-sacrificing citizens,” camptown women’s marginalized social positions had rendered their national belonging ambiguous, except when they were used politically “to symbolize the entire nation suffering from foreign intrusion and as supportive evidence to imagine the enemy outside of the nation”; only at that moment, were sex work-

National Campaign for Eradication of Crimes by US Troops in Korea, 2004).

63 Ibid.

64 Ministry of National Defense, Republic of Korea, “*We Go Together*” (*Gatchi Gapshida*) *ROK-US Alliance and USFK* (Seoul: Ministry of National Defense, 2002), 67-8.

65 Katharine H.S. Moon, “South Korean Civil Society and Alliance Politics,” in *Strategy and Sentiment: South Korean Views of the United States and the U.S.-ROK Alliance*, ed. Derek J. Mitchell (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2004) 51.

ers “treated as participants inside the nation and their sacrifice for the Korean nation...emphasized.”⁶⁶ Kwon further argues, however, that the women “are totally voiceless and are not asked to articulate the structural problems” and as a result, “they symbolize not a sacrifice for a nation-state but instead are sacrificed...”⁶⁷

But what has been a remarkable turn recently has been that the former *kijich'on* women, by choosing to articulate the structural problems of “the state, the military, and patriarchy” and just how they were sacrificed by the authoritarian Korean state through the camptown system, have demonstrated that they are no longer just voiceless victims. More than 120 former camptown women with the consortium, “Camptown Women’s Human Rights Coalition (*kijich'on yösöng in'gwön yöndae*),” that formed in 2012 among NGOs and CSOs that have worked with camptown women for over three decades⁶⁸ filed a lawsuit in 2014, demanding an apology and compensation from the South Korean government for their involvement in maintaining the camptowns and responsibility for abuses that took place in these militarized borderlands.⁶⁹ Explicit and strategic in the very name of the lawsuit, “National

66 Insook Kwon, “A Feminist Exploration of Military Conscription: The Gendering of the Connections Between Nationalism, Militarism and Citizenship in South Korea,” *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 3, no.1, 37-39.

67 *Ibid.*, 39-40.

68 Proceedings from the Camptown Women’s Human Rights Coalition Symposium: Comfort Women of the US Military Camptowns in Korea, History and Meaning of Litigation, Seoul, May 28, 2018; organizations like the National Campaign along with Turebang (My Sister’s Place, established in 1986 in Tongdunch’ön next to Camp Stanley), Seumt’ö (Sprouting Land, established in 1996 with centers in Tongdunch’ön and P’yöngt’aek), and Sunlit Sister’s Center (established in Anjōng-ri in 2002) not only provide counseling services, education, and shelter for camp town women, but also draw attention to the impact of the foreign troop presence by documenting and reporting local women’s experiences with violent crimes, prostitution, and economic deprivation. Moon, “South Korean Civil Society and Alliance Politics,” 54.

69 “South Korea Illegally Held Prostitutes Who Catered to G.I.s Decades Ago, Court Says,” *New York Times*, January 20, 2017.

Compensation Claim for the Comfort Women of the US Military Camptowns (kijich'on migun wianbu kukka-baesang-ch'ōnggu-sosong),” are the interconnected colonialities inscribed in women’s bodies from the Japanese comfort women system to the American camptown system, with the South Korean developmental state’s willing collaboration. By “remembering the solidarity between the Japanese ‘comfort women’ victims and the American ‘comfort women’ victims,” Lee Na Young, sociologist and long-time activist, hopes that it will remind us of the forcibly forgotten histories of Korean society, East Asia, and the world.⁷⁰

One of the plaintiffs, Pak Yōngcha, broke the decades of “enforced silence”⁷¹ by the military governments and the postcolonial amnesia that Lee refers to by testifying in court on July 8, 2016. During the first trial, Pak Yōngcha described state responsibilities in the camptown system as follows:

Our country intervened to make camptowns, and there, we were used and faced only violence and extortion...It was said in the past that Pak Chōnghūi developed the economy, but it was us who earned a lot of dollars while being called “patriots” (by the government)...But, who earned all those dollars? It was all the women who earned it, but even when we were direly sick, not a single doctor was sent to the camptown and they only did STD check-ups. And the STD-checks were for the US military, not for us. Due to the indifference of the country, our bodies became sick,

70 Lee Na Young, “ migun kijich'on 'wianbu' undonggwa tangsaja 'chūngōn'ūi ūimi: p'osūt'ūshingmin sōbalt'ōnūi sahoejōk hyōlsanghwawa ch'ogukchōk yōsōng yōndaē [Meanings of the US Military Camp Town 'Comfort Women' Movement and Their Own 'Testimony': Social Formation of the Postcolonial Subaltern and Transnational Women's Solidarity],” (Camptown Women's Human Rights Coalition Symposium: Comfort Women of the US Military Camptowns in Korea, History and Meaning of Litigation, Seoul, May 28, 2018),83.

71 “South Korea Illegally Held Prostitutes,” *New York Times*, January 20, 2017.

unable to earn money, and were only used (by the state).⁷²

Pak Yǒngcha’s testimony on how Korean women were exploited within the camptown system for the maintenance of the bilateral alliance is well verified by Katharine Moon and others in their ground-breaking studies.⁷³ But it was not until the landmark 2017 ruling by the Central District Court in Seoul that the South Korean government acknowledged that it had illegally detained camptown women “for forced treatment for sexually transmitted disease,” and ordered it to pay the plaintiffs “compensation for physical and psychological damage.”⁷⁴ Although this significant verdict officially admitted for the first time that women in the camptowns had been subject to illegal medical treatment, the plaintiffs appealed the ruling, “seeking an official apology, greater compensation and a finding that the government was responsible for creating and running the camptowns.”⁷⁵

Plaintiff Pak Yǒngcha testified again on December 21, 2017, during the Appeals Court hearings, outlining how the state corroborated to keep the women in camptowns and intervened “to make the camptowns more active.”⁷⁶ Pak detailed how the police sent women who

72 Pak Yǒngcha, “kkok alligo shipta [I really want to let you know]: Plaintiff statement from first trial, July 8, 2016,” (Camptown Women’s Human Rights Coalition Symposium: Comfort Women of the US Military Camptowns in Korea, History and Meaning of Litigation, Seoul, May 28, 2018), 26-27.

73 Some of the earliest studies include, Katharine H.S. Moon, *Sex Among Allies: Military prostitution in U.S.-Korea Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); Sandra Pollack Sturdevant and Brenda Stoltzfus, *Let the Good Times Roll: Prostitution and the U.S. Military in Asia* (New York: New Press, 1992).

74 “South Korea Illegally Held Prostitutes,” *New York Times*, January 20, 2017.

75 Ibid.

76 Pak Yǒngcha, “Plaintiff Pak Yǒngcha’s Final Court Statement at the Appeals Court Trial, December 21, 2017” (Camptown Women’s Human Rights Coalition Symposium: Comfort Women of the US Military Camptowns in Korea, History and Meaning of Litigation, Seoul, May 28, 2018), 28.

had run away back to their pimps as well as how the state-run local health centers subjugated them to painful and humiliating STD-check-ups twice a week and injected them with penicillin without consent. She also elaborated on how the state perpetuated the camptown system by neglecting the abuses that took place within it: “The country that praised us as patriots did not punish the frequent US military violence and vicious pimps in the camptowns, and many women were sold to the camptowns because it did not crack down on job placement agencies, which was a window for human trafficking.”⁷⁷ The second verdict by the Appeals Court in February 2018 not only expanded the scope of compensation from the first ruling, but also acknowledged greater government responsibility, including that the state “actively promoted or justified the sex industry while operating and managing US camptowns for ‘military alliance and foreign currency acquisition.’”⁷⁸ It further ruled that the state violated its obligation to respect the right to self-determination and overall human rights of the “comfort women” and instead used them as “a means to achieve national purposes.”⁷⁹ And in the final ruling on September 9, 2022, eight years after the litigation first began in 2014, and after 24 out of the 120 plaintiffs had passed away, the Supreme Court confirmed the previous rulings that acknowledged the “state’s responsibility in operating the US military camptowns and recognized that the women were victims of state violence.”⁸⁰

The South Korean state had called kijich'on women “foreign cur-

77 Ibid.

78 ““kukkaga migun kijich'on sŏngmaemae chojang” ch'ŏt p'an'gyŏl paesang bŏmwi hwaktae [‘State Promoted Prostitution in US Camp Towns’: Scope of compensation of the first ruling expanded],” *Hankyoreh*, February 8, 2018.

79 Ibid.

80 “mikun wianpu, kukka-ka chochang-haessta” 8nyŏn kitalin taepŏpwŏn p'ankyŏl, namŭn kwache-nŭn [“The State Encouraged the ‘Comfort Women’ of the US Military Camptown, Eight Years Awaited Supreme Court Ruling, Tasks Remain”],” *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, September 30, 2022.

rency earning patriots (*oehwa-lŭl pŏlŏtŭli-nŭn aekuk-cha*),” demanding their sacrifices for the national economic development and the appeasing of American allies. This historical ruling acknowledged not only the sacrificial patriotism demanded of the former camptown women by the authoritarian state, but that the nation sacrificed the “dispensable” women in the name of nationalism. As global critical race feminist scholars point out that women “may be simultaneously dominated in the context of imperialism, neocolonialism, or occupation as well as local patriarchy, culture, and customs,”⁸¹ the bodies of camptown women were inscribed with not only unresolved Japanese colonial and American imperial violence, but also local state abuses guised as nationalistic developmentalism. But the crucial difference of this remarkable court success was that the former camptown women were no longer rendered voiceless victims sacrificed by the state, but rather that the women themselves were the main agents of change and their own historical integration; the women of these borderlands, the living witnesses of Korea’s postcoloniality, actively resisted “the mystifying amnesia” with their *praxis* of “revisiting, remembering and, crucially, interrogating the colonial past.”⁸² This latest triumph, thus, contributes to bringing to the national center the marginalized history of Korea’s militarized landscapes in Pax Americana, and their active postcolonial re-membering forces us to re-member our “collective amnesia and historical distortions.”⁸³

Finally, essential to this postcolonial reckoning is the transborder solidarity with other impacted countries, cooperating with organizations that too must address issues surrounding the US military bases, espe-

81 Adrien Katherine Wing, “Introduction: Global Critical Feminism for the Twenty-First Century,” in Adrien Katherine Wing, ed., *Global Critical Race Feminism: An International Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 12.

82 Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory*, 4

83 Lee, “Meanings of the US Military Camptown ‘Comfort Women’ Movement,” 77-8.

cially around the core three movements of women's rights, peace/anti-militarism, and the environment.⁸⁴ This transnational collaboration is even more relevant in the contemporary current of camptowns, with women from economically weaker nations replacing local women in military sex industries of Okinawa and Korea. Reflecting on the decades of strategies of women's organizations of first collecting camptown women's testimonies, then connecting their stories to intersections of Japanese colonial legacies, militarized masculinity, Korean government's neoliberal developmentalism, and American empire of bases, Margo Okazawa-Rey, co-founder of the International Women's Network against Militarism, argues that the third part of the struggle requires "feminist *praxis*."⁸⁵ Following the success in the ROK courts, the next step, thus, "must be for US activists to bring similar lawsuit to US courts for the US role in the creation and maintenance of militarized prostitution and violence against the women," contends Okazawa-Rey.⁸⁶ And precisely, "American CSO have played a key role in bringing disparate individuals and national issues together and helping to 'cross-fertilize' them," according to Katharine Moon, while "helping foreign activists 'navigate' the landscape of American politics, especially

84 Katharine H.S. Moon, *Protesting America: Democracy and the U.S.-Korea Alliance* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2012), 165.

85 Margo Okazawa-Rey, "From Shinsaetaryoung to Critical Consciousness to Feminist *Praxis*: Justice for Kijichon Women," (Camptown Women's Human Rights Coalition Symposium: Comfort Women of the US Military Camptowns in Korea, History and Meaning of Litigation, Seoul, May 28, 2018), 15. The network first began in 1997 in Okinawa, when women from South Korea, the Philippines, Okinawa, Japan, and the United States gathered to form solidarity against US militarism. The network has since expanded to include Puerto Rico, Guam and Hawai'i. International Women's Network Against Militarism (9th international conference, "Challenging Militarism and Creating a Sustainable Future" Okinawa, June 22-26, 2017), 89.

86 Okazawa-Rey, "From Shinsaetaryoung to Critical Consciousness to Feminist *Praxis*."

Washington, DC.”⁸⁷ These transborder coalitions and cross-currents based on common experiences and production of transnational agendas⁸⁸ have helped to recast the issue of the overseas US military bases in transnational politics.⁸⁹ This activism across borders is reshaping policies regarding how American troops are stationed in impacted countries by not only changing the complexion of anti-base sentiments in these societies, but also by efforts to bring about titanic shifts at the empire’s metropole. These “post-national solidarities,” as Neela Gandhi describes, are facilitating the emergence of Edward Said’s concept of “enlightened postnationalism”⁹⁰ that are essential to decolonization.

Changing Landscapes of the Post-Cold War Alliance: Conclusion

The year 2020 marked the seventieth anniversary of the outbreak of the Korean War, and although often referred to as America’s “Forgotten War,” it is certainly not forgotten in Korea. The continued stationing of the American military and its consequences, such as the massive candlelight vigils protesting the death of two middle-school students crushed by an American military vehicle in 2002 and the pitched clash over Taech’u-ri and Todu-ri in 2006, remind Koreans that they live among legacies of the unforgotten war. And although both sides have attempted to concentrate the militarized landscapes of the USFK, those critical of this continued foreign military presence ques-

87 Moon, *Protesting America*, 149.

88 Vasuki Nesiah, “Toward a Feminist Internationality: A Critique of U.S. Feminist Legal Scholarship,” in Adrien Katherine Wing, ed., *Global Critical Race Feminism: An International Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 45.

89 Smith, *Shifting Terrain*, 3.

90 Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory*, 122-4.

tion whether the costs of the alliance are worth its strategic benefits. While Korean society remains deeply divided on the stationing of the USFK, what has changed is that the critical voices are no longer silenced or suppressed; despite all the recent rhetoric about equal alliance, it remains unequal and its critics argue that “the biggest cost of the alliance has been the erosion of South Korea’s sovereign spirit.”⁹¹ The US military refusing to take responsibility for the decades of environmental degradation and toxins left on its bases or that despite the massive candlelight vigils in 2002, American soldiers responsible for the deaths of two Korean students went unpunished⁹² are the extra-territorial privileges, its critics remind us, still enjoyed by the USFK. These living legacies of the unequal alliance are only the latest manifestations of postcoloniality that are interconnected to years of heavy sacrifices demanded of Koreans, such as the hitherto discussed exploitative campdown system that demanded women’s sacrificial “patriotism.”

Despite these heavy social costs, both Washington and Seoul continue to describe the alliance in fraternal terms like “blood brothers through hot and cold wars” and now as “core partners,” who will continue to “go together” into the post-cold war world.⁹³ This rhetoric that reconfirmed the cold war brotherhood in the post-cold war today, however, also suggests the anxiety over recent policy rifts in the security alliance. For instance, South Korea abandoned the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) in 2019 and rejected an American request to continue sharing military intelligence with Japan, with whom it was “locked in festering disputes over trade and history.”⁹⁴ South Korea’s decision to quit the agreement came after

91 Se-Woong Koo, “Op-Ed Contributor: Is South Korea’s Alliance with the United States Worth It?” *New York Times*, November 6, 2017.

92 Ibid.

93 Ministry of National Defense, ROK, *“We Go Together”*; Derek Mitchell, ed., *Strategy and Sentiment: South Korean Views of the United States and the U.S.-ROK Alliance* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2004).

Japan imposed a series of restrictions on security-related products exported to South Korea following South Korea’s Supreme Court ruling that Japanese companies should pay reparations to South Koreans for forced labor during the colonial era.⁹⁵ The recent GSOMIA conflict is but one rupture of the unresolved postcolonial wound from the stunted decolonizing project further entangled by the triangular cold war alliance in Pax Americana. To disentangle this layered colonialities and as a crucial movement in the decolonizing project, the living legacies of the intimate cold war cannot be lost in collective amnesia, but rather must be “re-membered” in transborder currents and dynamics. Re-membering is a crucial step toward imagining and then putting into *praxis* this overcoming of South Korea’s postcoloniality.

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94 GSOMIA took effect in 2016 when Washington persuaded its two key East Asian allies, Japan and South Korea, “to set aside their mutual enmity in order to counter” China and North Korea. “South Korea Resists U.S. Pressure to Improve Ties with Japan,” *New York Times*, November 15, 2019.

95 Ibid.

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〈Abstract〉

**“Re-membering” South Korea’s Militarized
Landscapes in Pax Americana: Post-Cold War US
Military Camps, Camptowns,
and Former Camptown Women**

Taejin Hwang

The continued US military presence for nearly eighty years in South Korea has produced militarized landscapes of postcoloniality in South Korea. Here, militarized landscapes denote both official American military camps and their vernacular camptowns (*kijich'on*) as well as social-cultural expressions affected by this spatial militarization, such as the former camptown women’s experiences. As the contours of these militarized borderlands are shifting today with the consolidating of the American military footprint in South Korea, this study seeks to connect these contemporary manifestations with their historical developments. In so doing, it hopes to contribute to what Homi Bhabha conceptualizes as “re-membering”— “a putting together of the dismembered past to make sense of the trauma of the present.” While camps are becoming even more insulated Americanized spaces and the once marginalized camptowns are caught in a liminal stride toward internationalism, this study examines how these borderlands, which had not only embodied Korea’s coloniality but also catalyzed changes in the greater bilateral relations, are “re-membered.” It then discusses how former *kijich'on* women and civic organizations that constitute the “Camptown Women’s Human Rights Coalition” are at the forefront of this postcolonial “re-membering.” Through the subjectivity-formation

and trans-border activism of those once rendered voiceless victims sacrificed by the state, the former camptown women themselves have demonstrated how they are the main agents of their own historical integration. Their re-membering, moreover, contributes to bringing to the national center the marginalized history of Korea’s militarized landscapes in Pax Americana, which in turn forces us to re-member our shared postcolonial trauma.

Keywords: South Korea’s postcoloniality, militarized landscapes, American military camps, “Comfort Women” of the US Military Camptowns, post-Cold War ROK-US relations

〈국문초록〉

팍스아메리카나 시대 한국의 군사화된 경관의 “재기억”: 탈-냉전 시기의 주한미군 기지, 기지촌, 그리고 전 기지촌 여성들

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80년에 가까운 시간 동안 주한미군이 주둔하면서 한국의 포스트식민주의는 군사화된 경관을 가지게 되었다. 여기서, 군사화 된 경관은 공식적인 미군 기지와 비공식적인 기지촌을 의미하며, 이러한 군사화 된 공간의 영향을 받은 사회적 행동과 문화적 가치도 나타난다. 주한미군의 거주영역이 통합됨에 따라 오늘날 이런 군사화 된 지역의 경계가 변화하고 있으므로, 이 연구는 현재의 표식을 그 역사적 발전과정과 연결하고 이를 통해 포스트식민주의 경관의 “재기억”에 기여하고자 한다. 호미 바바가 개념화한 “재기억하기”에 의하면 “현재의 트라우마를 이해하기 위해 분할된 식민지 시기의 기억을 조합하는 것”을 의미한다. 오늘날 미군기지는 더 고립된 미국화 된 공간으로 되어가고 있으며, 반면 소외되었던 기지촌은 국제화된 경관으로 개조되고 있다. 본 연구는 한국의 식민지성을 상징했을 뿐만 아니라 한미 상호관계의 거시적 변화에 촉매제 역할을 했던 이 경계지대가 어떻게 “재기억”되는지 탐색한다. 또한, '기지촌 여성인권연합'을 구성하는 전 기지촌 여성들과 시민 단체들이 포스트 식민주의적 “재기억” 과정의 선두에 서게 되는 과정을 살펴볼 것이다. 한때 국가에 의해 희생된, 목소리를 낼 수 없는 희생자로 여겨졌던 전 기지촌 여성들은 주체성 형성과정과 탈경계적 활동을 통해, 스스로가 자신의 역사를 통합하는 중요 행위자라는 것을 증명하였다. 더욱이 그들의 “재기억하기”는 팍스 아메리카나 아래 형성된 한국의 군사화 된 경계지대라는 주변화된 역사를 민족의 중심부에서 재조명하는데 기여하며, 그것은 이제 우리가 공유하고 있는 포스트 식민주의적 트라우마를 “재기억” 하도록 요구한다.

주제어: 남한의 포스트식민주의, 군사화된 경관, 주한미군 기지, 미군 기지촌 ‘위안부’, 탈-냉전 한미 관계

