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A CASE OF SEXUAL MISCONDUCT:
GENDER DYNAMICS, CULTURAL HEGEMONY, AND THE UNITED STATES
MILITARY IN THE PACIFIC 1945 – PRESENT

A Thesis Presented

by

Liam Edwards

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of

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Thesis Examination Committee:

Andrew Buchanan, Ph.D., Advisor
Melissa Willard-Foster, Ph.D., Chairperson
Felicha Kornbluh, Ph.D.
Cynthia J. Forehand, Ph.D., Dean of the Graduate College

Abstract

This research will focus on the sexual misconduct of the United States military following the end of the Second World War in the Korean peninsula, Japan, and the Philippines. In this research, I will argue that the United States military engaged in a system of widespread sexual misconduct in the Pacific following the conclusion of the Second World War. Its success in distancing the institution from this behavior in the historical record and historical memory has much to do with its place in the international system today. The hegemonic power that the United States represents on the world stage has allowed for, and contributes to, repeated and institutionalized efforts at controlling the bodies of women across the world in the latter half of the 20th century. The topic of United States military sexual misconduct is relevant today as the gender dynamics and the social, racial, and national hierarchies that were instrumental in the practice of sexual assault of local women in the post-war era are still present in the United States military.

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Introduction

In January of 1946, four armed American GIs boarded a train in Korea, and proceeded to enter one of the train compartments. Once there, they “raped three Korean female passengers ... while they threatened the lives of others.”¹

In a collection of memoirs that chronicled the 6th Marine Division and their occupation of Okinawa beginning in 1945, one marine recalled that one day, a group of marines came across a “filthy and ragged” Japanese woman “hiding in a cave.” These marines “took her to their tent, washed her private parts and held her [for sex] for several days. When they ‘got tired of her... they muddied her up... put her clothes back on’ and handed her over to their commanding officer, claiming that she was a nurse they had just rescued a few minutes earlier.”² Later, when giving testimony regarding the event, the marine claimed that he had been “misquoted.” The woman had not in fact been a nurse but was in fact a “comfort woman.”³

In another instance on April 4th, 1946 in mainland Japan, “At around 11:30” several trucks full of American soldiers arrived at Nakamura Hospital and at the “signal of a whistle,” they all ran at the building “breaking windows and doors.” Once they had entered, “They raped all 17 nurses on night duty, about 20 nursing assistants, and more than 40 female patients, including a woman who had just delivered a baby.”⁴

¹ “5 in Korea Sentenced for Rape,” *New York Times*, (New York, NY), March 6, 1946 in William Stueck, and Boram Yi, “‘An Alliance Forged in Blood’: The American Occupation of Korea, the Korean War, and the US-South Korean Alliance,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 33, no. 2 (2010): 194.

² Laura H. Lacey ed. *Stay off the Skyline: The Sixth Marine Division on Okinawa – An Oral History* (Washington, DC: Potomac, 2005) in Alastair A. McLauchlan, “War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity on Okinawa: Guilt on Both Sides,” *Journal of Military Ethics* 13, no. 4 (2014): 365.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Itsushima Tsutomu ed., op. cit., pp. 30-36., in Yuki Tanaka, *Japan's Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery and Prostitution during World War II and the US Occupation*. Asia's Transformations, (London; New York: Routledge, 2002.), 163, quoting “a testimony of one of the rape victims.”

In a letter to the editor from November 12, 1945, an anonymous US soldier remarked, "We too are an army of rapists."⁵

These instances of sexual violence and at the hands of American service members serve as sobering reminders that when treaties are signed and official hostilities cease, the underlying attitudes and motivations that lead to war crimes of sexual violence do not disappear. They are ingrained within armies and ingrained within their subculture. These examples are not isolated events but are representative of a widespread series of sexually violent crimes by the United States military in the Pacific Theater, specifically in Korea, Japan, and the Philippines following the conclusion of the Second World War. Persuasive evidence suggests that the United States government, "has suppressed important information about crime and punishment during the occupation: it has concealed the numbers of rapes and the identity of the perpetrators; it has concealed the prosecutions, arrests and executions for rape and other crimes," enough evidence to present a convincing and damning picture of the United States military's misconduct abroad.⁶ The research presented here supports the goal that historian Sarah Soh has expressed regarding the contentious and violent history of this time period and region, that "we may even realize collaborative commitment, at both the national and international levels, to combat sexual exploitation and violence against women in war and in peace."⁷

⁵ Anonymous Soldier, letter the editor, *Time Magazine*, November 12, 1945, in Terese Svoboda, "U.S. Courts-Martial in Occupation Japan: Rape, Race, and Censorship," *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, Vol 21 no.1, May 23, 2009.

⁶ Svoboda, "U.S. Courts-Martial," 7.

⁷ Sarah Soh, *The Comfort Women: Sexual Violence and Postcolonial Memory in Korea and Japan* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2008), 240.

The highly influential author and American business mogul, Henry Luce, once described his vision for the world in 1941 with the United States as the leading power, paving the way for a peaceful and prosperous relationship between nations, as one in which “we can make isolationism as dead an issue as slavery, and we can make a truly *American* internationalism something as natural to us as in our time as the airplane or the radio.”⁸ The presence of American forces, for many following the Second World War, did seem to hold the promise of these ideals. American forces brought with them K rations and a sense of relief. Thousands were liberated from concentration camps, prison cells, and forced labor camps. The Americans brought with them safety and stability, but what they also brought with them was the capacity for violence, on and off the battlefields. As historian Susan Carruthers poignantly notes in her work *The Good Occupation: American Soldiers and the Hazards of Peace*, women in occupied territories were one of the first commodities to be sampled and at the same time, “Nor did anything more speedily tarnish the image of America’s postwar occupations than the avidity with which U.S. servicemen of all ranks engaged in what was euphemistically termed ‘fraternization’ with defeated former foes.”⁹ The experiences of women in Allied occupied territories at the end of the war reflect the less morally appealing and far more contentious relationships between American service members and the local populace of foreign nations. In their cases, liberation did not necessarily mean freedom.

⁸ Henry Luce, “The American Century,” *Diplomatic History* 23, no. 2 (1999): 166.

⁹ Susan Carruthers, *The Good Occupation: American Soldiers and the Hazards of Peace* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2016), 111.

However, if one were to look at the films, books, and media produced about the Second World War in the past few decades, and even at popular understandings of the war itself, Americans would walk away feeling justified in their involvement in one of the few “good wars” in their history. Compared to the wars in Korea and Vietnam, the Second World War against the spread of fascism in Europe and Japan has proven a far easier conflict to historically present and justify to a broader American public. Unfortunately, the result of this oversimplification of the effects of the Second World War on populations abroad has succeeded in underrepresenting some of the less obvious, but far more harmful results of the conflict.

In 1939, the United States possessed and serviced 56 operational military bases overseas, all located on Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines. By 1945, the rate of construction for overseas military bases numbered 112 every *month*. By the conclusion of the Second World War, the United States was in control of a network of military bases that numbered over 2000.¹⁰ These bases were built and maintained in an effort to ensure international security and were justified by the immediate post-war rise of Soviet communism. Eventually, Chinese and North Korean communism further cemented the need for overseas presence in the Pacific in American eyes. The United States exerted influence and hegemonic power abroad following the Second World War with the construction of military bases. Weapons, threats of retaliation, and “boots on the ground” served to reaffirm visibly and viscerally, to enemies and allies alike, that the United States was in a position of power in the post-war global community. Just as important, however,

¹⁰ David Vine, “The United States Probably Has More Foreign Military Bases Than Any Other People, Nation, or Empire in History: And it’s doing us more harm than good,” *The Nation: National Security*, September 14, 2015. <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/the-united-states-probably-has-more-foreign-military-bases-than-any-other-people-nation-or-empire-in-history/>

were the more subtle expression of power through less direct means. One of these more subtle expressions of hegemonic power abroad that accompanied this global base network, among other damaging effects, was the issue of sexual assault at the hands of United States service members.

Viewed on a small scale, and on a case-by-case basis, crimes such as rape and sexual assault remain isolated and individualistic. But when viewed from a wider perspective, looking at instances across different geographies, these isolated instances of sexual assault appear to form a pattern rather than individualized cases. The presence of American military forces across the Pacific explicitly reminds the global community of American power abroad, just as the sexual assault and rape committed by such troops on local women *implicitly* reinforces the same message through different means. The topic of sexual relationships between United States service members and local women garners less attention than the more concrete examples of hegemonic power abroad such as the presence of nuclear weapons, aircraft carriers or jets stationed on foreign soil. Military sexual assault is often localized; “This multistranded topic so rarely is explored by mainstream investigators of international politics and only makes headlines when it erupts in to ‘scandal.’”¹¹ Viewed with a broader lens however, sex represents a fundamental exercise in power relations. When it is wielded without consent, it becomes both a transgression of physical and social standards. But when the individual involved in such a transgression is acting as a representative of the United States military, even if unintentionally, the act itself becomes political and reinforces the position of United States power abroad. In a global community, the personal becomes the political, and the local becomes the global, for better

¹¹ Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*, 2nd. Ed. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2014), 157.

or, in this case, for worse. The sexual violence perpetrated by American service members abroad constituted a pattern of behavior that began after 1945 and served to reflect the newly changed power relations between the United States and the global community that has lasted for decades.

The issue of sexual misconduct related to the American military remains an open secret in the global community at large. Not only is sexual misconduct by United States service members abroad a continuing and frequent problem for so called “host” countries, but it is also rampant within the United States military itself both historically and contemporarily.¹² The American military and its relationship to host populations following the Second World War greatly increased in the years following 1945. Americans did in fact follow the model that Luce suggested, taking a leading role in the post-world international order. The number of American military bases across the globe, directly related to the presence of American forces, and the effort to curb the all-consuming growth of communism in Europe and elsewhere across the world, necessitated, in America eyes, a robust military presence. These military bases, in some cases, acted as important military stations for resupply and re-armament during conflicts such as the Korean war, but this did not mean that they were constantly in states of emergency. They all contained supplementary service personnel, commanders, janitors, and everyone necessary to fulfill the logistical quandaries that came with leading armies and waging wars.

¹² Lieutenant Colonel J.S. Lee, serving in the US Airforce, concluded in 2016 that “there is a demographic proclivity toward sexual violence in the DOD which is aggravated by the generational gap between senior leaders and those most at risk of assault. To address the challenge head-on, the military must view the problem as one that involves its culture.” Both the intergenerational nature of this issue, rooted in military culture, and exacerbated by isolated conditions abroad, makes sexual assault within the military a keenly felt issue that affects both individuals within the military and overseas. Peter J.S. Lee, “This Man’s Military: Masculine Culture’s Role in Sexual Violence,” *Drew Papers*, no. 26 (Alabama: Air University Press, Air Force Research Institute, Maxwell Air Force Base, August 2016) xiii.

These bases grew steadily in Europe and along with them came the problem of sexual misconduct. Indeed, there were several accounts of rape, sexual misconduct, and other sex-related crimes across the continent from 1944 and beyond.¹³ But whereas European experiences with American military sexual misconduct occurred, and occurred often, they lacked the racial dimensions that typified interactions in the Pacific theatre. Interactions between GIs and women were characterized by a power imbalance between conqueror and conquered, but they were, for the most part, relationships between white soldiers and white women. This was not always the case, as other authors have noted, and the role of black GIs and their relationships to white women in Europe has garnered a significant amount of scholarly attention. The persistent and ever-present lens of racial dimensions muddled the perceptions of commanders, soldiers, and all other U.S. service members in the Pacific Theater; this dynamic was not present throughout Europe and heavily influenced perceptions and actions related to sexual misconduct and broader policy handed down by American provisional military governments in the Pacific.¹⁴

Korea, Japan, and the Philippines have rich histories and cultures, yet they all have the shared experience of being subjected to the rule and conduct of American hegemonic

¹³ As Mary Louise Roberts relates, “Sexual fantasies about France did indeed motivate the GI to get off the boat and fight. But such fantasies also unleashed a veritable tsunami of male lust.” And “In general, rape was probably the most widespread war crime in the European theater of war.” Mary Louise Roberts, *What Soldiers Do: Sex and the American GI in World War II France* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013), 9 and 197.

¹⁴ This statement requires further clarification, however. Racial classifications and distinctions were certainly part of the dynamic of US soldiers and occupied populations within Europe – several works of current historiography focus on particularly on the role of black soldiers both in the Pacific and in Europe – but for the purposes of this research, the European theater did not have the same dynamics regarding Asian stereotypes and racial hierarchies. Furthermore, the role of same-sex romance, sexual misconduct, and rape is another area within the field of post-war occupation literature. It is necessary to acknowledge the importance and presence of these same-sex relationships both consensual and otherwise, but they are not however the focus of this particular research. For examples of work within occupation literature that looks more specifically at same-sex relations, see Emma Vickers, *Queen and Country: Same-Sex Desire in the British Armed Forces, 1939–1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Allan Bérubé, *Coming Out Under Fire* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000).

power through military presence and control immediately after the Second World War. The experiences of individuals in these countries following the end of the war varied in gender, race, social class, and in relationship to political goals by American diplomats and politicians. But particularly in relation to sexual relationships, historian Aida Santos poignantly notes, “In military prostitution, one sees the heightened integration of classism, racism, sexism, and imperialism.”¹⁵ Many women in countries “liberated” by American soldiers throughout the Second World War experienced sexual violence at the hands of American soldiers but their experiences and stories have not been told because of fear, trauma, suppression, or in some cases, intense cultural shame. The subject of sexual violence is inherently fraught with ambiguity. Perceptions of intent, action, and language all leave room for conflicting views for those seeking to apply traditional historical analyses to these intensely complex situations. These issues are compounded by layers of power differentials such as gender, language, class, occupation, and race.¹⁶

These convoluted and layered hierarchies are in full view when individuals attempt to utilize courts to address wrongdoing in the 21st century. The legal standards of sexual crimes are often incomparable to other violent crimes such as murder or assault, standards that survivors can find notoriously difficult to prove in a courtroom setting. The requirement that individuals adhere to the linguistic and legal standards that contemporary

¹⁵ Aida F. Santos “Gathering the Dust: The Bases Issue in the Philippines,” in *Let the Good Times Roll: Prostitution and the U.S. Military in Asia*, eds. Sandra Pollock Sturdevant and Brenda Stoltzfus (New York: The New Press, 1992), 40.

¹⁶ In this case, I intend to draw attention to the hierarchies of different languages across the globe, rather than specific words or phrases used in reference to an act of sexual violence. Linguists have pointed to the proliferation of the English language as becoming a global standard, and thus exerting power hierarchies implicit within its use over other “native” languages. See: Marlene McKay, “Language, Identity, Power Relations, and Discourse: A Cree Language Response to Linguistic Imperialism,” *Native Studies Review* 22, no.1 (2013): 27-53.

courts insist upon to bring assailants to justice, oftentimes can lead to situations where the trauma inflicted on survivors affects their presentation of events. In these instances, this trauma may not be neatly or assiduously presented because the ways in which individual or collective trauma is experienced, and how it can fundamentally shape and alter memory. In short, legal systems and standards are simply not prepared to assess instances of sexual assault that are anything less than glaringly obvious. Even cases where it is exceedingly clear that sexual violence has occurred, the way in which the survivor presents their experience may be enough to have the court case dismissed.

If survivors of instances of contemporary sexual violence face all these hurdles in the path to justice, survivors of historical sexual violence are presented with even more significant challenges. Societal pressures related to sexuality and the importance of chastity, though they differ geographically from culture to culture, all share a similar underlying thread of misogyny. This is manifested in many ways, but particularly in how any given society responds to allegations of sexual assault. Deeply ingrained societal expectations of women in Southeast Asia as well as in the inheritors of the “West,” i.e., the United States and Europe, make the issue of sexual assault, though involuntary on the part of the one assaulted, either met with doubt at the outset, or with shame in a women’s lack of chastity.¹⁷ Ruth Lawlor describes several instances where survivors of sexual misconduct at the hands of American service members were simply dismissed out of hand as unreliable, but even in some cases, that the women themselves were “certified insane.”¹⁸

¹⁷ For example, the shame that accompanied the routine and brutal instances of repeated sexual assaults and beatings by the Japanese military, and subsequent instances of sexual assault at the hands of US service members, led many of the Korean “Comfort Women” to not share their stories until close to their deaths.

¹⁸ Ruth Lawlor, “Contested Crimes: Race, Gender, and Nation in Histories of GI Sexual Violence, World War II.” *The Journal of Military History* 84, no. 2 (2020): 542.

Later reports corroborated the stories of these survivors, but this remained unconvincing to authorities.

Not only is the act of sexual assault tinged with ambiguity related to the intent of the individuals involved, the verbal or physical consent by both parties, but even in cases where there is no doubt that sexual assault occurred, women in the post-war period were left with little recourse or avenues for justice. Not only do these individuals have to contend with the visceral and traumatizing nature of the sexually violent act itself, but also with all the routine interpretive prisms that impact historical inquiries. These include a lack of documentation, biases, access to archives, and even statutes of limitation for sexual crimes. When the crime scene is part of a wartime scene, however, the challenges become even more pronounced.

All survivors of sexual assault in the historical record must contend with these questions, but the tales of survivors of sexual assault in wartime are oftentimes either highlighted or downplayed in politically expeditious ways, with their stories and experiences transformed by political or military organizations. Sexual violence has historically been featured in propaganda due to its morally and emotionally charged nature, resonating as a particularly heinous crime (e.g., the “Rape of Belgium” in the First World War exemplified both the innocent nature of Belgium’s populace while at the same time villainizing the invading Germans). Both Allied or Axis powers were guilty of wide-ranging instances of sexual assault by soldiers on the local populations of conquered nations and territories. The simple fact that the Allied forces won the war, however, colors the historical record in fundamental and troubling ways.

Unlike the treatment of the use of nuclear weapons by the American military in the Pacific, or the bombing of civilian cities in Germany and Japan, which were evaluated by the Allied powers themselves to be justified in the war effort and never brought to international courts, crimes of sexual assault were a different matter. The crimes that were discussed in the Nuremberg or Tokyo trials were not those of the Americans or the British. Sexual violence and sexual crime perpetrated by the victors did not make it onto the docket, and consideration of their impact soon took a back seat to other more immediate political and military concerns in the post-war era.

Despite the surrender of the Japanese being hailed as the conclusion of the Second World War, “the formal end to World War II brought no peace to much of Asia.”¹⁹ The United States found itself after 1945 quickly adopting the role of the new global superpower, with little incentive to placate any foreign outcry of political or military overstepping. The threat that the Soviet Union posed across the globe necessitated, in the eyes of American leaders, the presence of military forces across the globe, and sexual violence, if it were acknowledged at all, was a small price to pay in the larger context of the Cold War. In many cases, the stories, and experiences of sexual assault by the American military paled in comparison to the internal developments and financial infusions that Americans brought with them. For leaders such as Syngman Rhee or Park Chung-hee in South Korea, American safety and infrastructure simply outweighed the invasive control of the bodies of Korean women.²⁰ Both American forces and Korean politicians saw the cold calculus that these concessions were integral in strengthening their post-war political

¹⁹ Andrew Buchanan, *World War II in Global Perspective, 1931-1953: A Short History*, Wiley Short Histories (New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell, 2019) 2.

²⁰ Anouk Eigenraam, “Korea’s ‘patriotic prostitutes’ for US Soldiers Get Justice at Last,” *Asia Times*, March 3, 2018. <https://asiatimes.com/2018/03/koreas-patriotic-prostitutes-us-soldiers-get-justice-last/>.

alliance. A recent court ruling (2018) in South Korea confirmed that “the South Korean government ‘operated and managed’ military camp towns in order to ‘boost morale among foreign troops’ and keep ‘an essential military alliance for national security’ in place, ‘while mobilizing prostitutes’ to acquire hard foreign currency.”²¹

The sheer destruction of the first global “total war,” both in Europe and in the Pacific theater put Americans in the unique position as liberators and economic saviors. American soldiers and American occupation meant American money, but also luxuries and appetites, both corporeal and sexual. The role of the United States military in “liberated” or “conquered” areas (depending on one’s perspective), put American soldiers in the Second World War in direct contact with the local populations. From the perspective of military commanders and administrators, the inevitable contact between a military and civilian population, and the subsequent need to prevent disease necessitated control of both their soldier’s activities and by extension, the bodies of women in their zone of operations, whether it be in Reims, Naples, or Busan. The potential for outbreaks of debilitating venereal diseases among American service members, thus hindering their military readiness, served as the primary justification for often humiliating battery of STD tests and treatment, much of which happened without their consent.²²

The histories of American overseas activity in this era have most often focused on the Cold War rivalry with the Soviet Union, the number of proxy wars fought by their respective allies, and the competition for the hearts and minds of the non-aligned nations.

²¹ Ibid.

²² For example, as Na Young Lee points out, many Korean women, upon testing positive for and STD, would be imprisoned by the United States military until they had been treated and deemed uninfected. Na Young Lee, "The Construction of Military Prostitution in South Korea during the U.S. Military Rule, 1945-1948," *Feminist Studies* 33, no. 3 (2007): 464.

Rarely have they addressed the role of the American military in the ongoing sexual violence that was part of the experience of countries with a significant American presence in the post-war era.

Historiography and Methodology

The most obvious approach and methodology for understanding dynamics of sexuality, gender, and rape during any historical time period remains a feminist and gender analysis. In the case of a topic that spans decades within the 20th century and seeks to evaluate change at a national and region level within the Pacific about the United States military, it is useful to integrate international feminist perspectives and methodologies into the present research. However, though the content present in this research looks specifically at interactions and dynamics between men and women at the level of sexual relations, the presence and actions (or lack thereof) of the United States military in these interactions requires methodology beyond feminist and gender analysis.

In addition to a gendered reading of sources, Marxist approaches, specifically related to the formation of hegemonic power and the maintenance of that power in a given region, will be applied in tandem to gendered lenses throughout this work. The sexual misconduct of the United States military in the Pacific during the post-war period is both a reflection of power relations between men and women, but at the same time is instrumental in understanding power relations between countries themselves. It is because of the highly political nature of sexual crimes, and how they are treated by governments, armies, and the public, that warrants a methodological approach that incorporates feminist and Marxist perspectives.

From the perspective of gender analysis, the presence of societal norms has necessitated a regulation of sexual behavior that has imposed global patriarchal standards that have generally found solutions to limited access to sexual gratification in the form of prostitution. Colloquially referred to as “the oldest profession,” prostitution fulfills the

sexual desires of men, while at the same time providing economic incentives for women. For some, a last resort born from desperation, and for others a means of economic and personal freedom, the contemporary view on prostitution has drawn feminist scholars in support of the practice just as there are a sizeable portion of women who decry the exploitative nature of the practice.²³ But whether discussing historical or contemporary prostitution, there do exist consistencies across time.

Perhaps most obviously, the practice and institutions of prostitution hold the potential for abuse. Sexual gratification functions as an economic exchange which by its nature deals with exerting power. This exertion of power is rooted in a patriarchal world system that presents certain characteristics of masculinity as linked to sexual “success.” Masculinity, like patriarchy, is a generic term that is, more often than not, inappropriately brought to bear when discussing cultural or societal standards. Masculinity is not a term that should necessarily be used to describe a broader global system, but rather the distinct masculinities of a given culture or society. The ideal or masculine standard of what a man should look like, behave like, and operate like in a given society is entirely regionally dependent.

²³ Within feminist scholarship, and in American society more broadly, there remains an unresolved and continuing debate about whether the practice and profession of prostitution is inherently exploitive to women (or people of any gender that work in the profession), or if the practice presents an empowering dynamic regarding sex work. As is the case with any highly controversial subject, individual cases and contexts remain the best way to understand prostitution its effects on a woman and her life. What one woman may find degrading, for example the engagement in the field of sex work, another may feel a sense of economic and sexual empowerment. More generally, it is important to keep in mind however, that “at times prostitution has been viewed as one form of human flourishing and human value and that it does not inevitably reflect a demeaning attitude toward women.” Just as crimes of sexual violence are highly personal affairs, the profession of prostitution must also be seen in the personal context of one’s economic, social, and racial background. Debra Satz, review of *Moral Dilemmas of Feminism: Prostitution, Adultery and Abortion*, by Laurie Shrage, *Ethics* 106, no. 4 (1996): 864-66.

In an interview with feminist author Carol Cohen, one of the leading experts on the role of international gender politics, Cynthia Enloe described to her colleague the benefits of exploring the notions of patriarchy. She describes the term as follows:

It is not men-on top that makes something patriarchal. It's men who are recognized and claim a certain form of masculinity, for the sake of being more valued, more "serious," and "the protectors of/and controllers of those people who are less masculine" that makes any organization, any community, any society patriarchal. It's never automatic; it's rarely self-perpetuating. It takes daily tending. It takes decisions—even if those are masked as "tradition."

Within the realm of American military masculinity abroad, the historical and contemporary conditions that have resulted in the widespread construction and maintenance of foreign military bases are fertile ground for just the type of "daily tending" that Cynthia Enloe describes in this passage. The sexual misconduct of American service members abroad is part of a larger problem of sexual misconduct in American culture and particularly in the American military. The intersecting hierarchies that have, for decades, reinforced to American GIs abroad their social, cultural, and monetary superiority of local populations and women have succeeded in growing into the 21st century.²⁴

Though this research is centered around the United States and the United States' Army's relationship with sexual misconduct, it is still essential to understand the ways in which these nationalized elements and standards of masculinity present and manifest in host countries, as they additionally color the relationship of female prostitutes in those given regions to the newly arrived United States servicemen. Examining these societal and

²⁴ Furthermore, these hierarchies are even further complicated the fact that masculinity and culture are highly malleable forces across the globe, "Notions of masculinity are not identical across generational or across cultural boundaries." Enloe, *Beaches*, 31.

highly regional understandings of masculinity allows us to better understand the relationships between prostitutes in host countries to American GIs, but also how the host societies have understood and dealt with sexual misconduct in an institutional and political way.

These localized masculinities certainly color the relationships between both consensual and non-consensual relations between United States service members and local women, but although Korea, Japan, and the Philippines all have distinct cultural relationships to masculinity, the United States army is a different story. The United States has its own standards of masculinity, albeit with regional differences, but when these standards are packaged and shielded from criticism or redress within army bases both within the country and abroad, these masculine standards are continuously reinforced. The differentiated hierarchies *within* American culture and society have been transplanted across the ocean, and through them have created an insulated situation by which this sexual abuse on a widespread scale can occur. The constant, related to both sexual domination and a global patriarchal standard, centers on the desire to exert power. When this manifests itself in sexual relationships, the potential for violence is ever present. A failure to respect or grasp the degree to which global patriarchal systems or national standards of masculinity influence individual behavior and cause very real and tangible harm, simply makes the potential for future sexual misconduct more acceptable and likely to be repeated.

The environments and conditions in which American GIs were interacting with women in the Pacific following the Second World War were exactly those described above, as U.S. soldiers explicitly saw themselves as “the protectors of/and controllers of those people who are less masculine.” Not only were these people less masculine, but they were

similarly less sophisticated, less smart, and in need of tutelage and guidance. All of these perceptions fed into the overarching attitudes of United States service members in the Pacific, from the private, all the way to the commander, that they were caretakers of these Pacific countries. In Korea, Japan, and in the Philippines, there were delays in granting independence despite massive outcry because of American perceptions of locals that they were not “fit” or “ready” to govern themselves. These attitudes were fostered and grew with the presence of US military bases in the Pacific. What were they there for if not for protection?

Compounding these notions of protection, American GIs were additionally preconditioned to see and perceive women in the Pacific through an Orientalist gaze. These ideas, planted through a steady stream of domestic propaganda, prepared GIs to understand their positions in the Pacific both as protectors but also to see local women as sexually deviant. Racialized perceptions of women in the Pacific simultaneously cast them as subservient, sexualized, and in need of protection. When American GIs shipped off to the Pacific, they were sent with heads full of propaganda either from the military internally or from the general media.²⁵ In short, they were told what to expect and how to behave. They were certainly there to protect, but they were also there to witness and perhaps experience the “geisha” of the East too.

These historical conditions encouraged violations of sovereignty under the pretext of both racial and social notions of masculinized American authority in the Pacific. The standards allowed violence and exploitation to occur were and “are engineered both through explicitly performed and reinforced cultures of masculinity within the military,

²⁵ See, Ian Scott, "From Toscanini to Tennessee: Robert Riskin, the OWI and the Construction of American Propaganda in World War II," *Journal of American Studies* 40, no. 2 (2006): 347-66.

which include the presumption that local women are exotic recreational commodities to be consumed, and through the actions or inactions of occupying forces and local states, who either fail to sanction sexualized violence against women or actively encourage it.”²⁶ In terms of contemporary work that consider the topic of U.S Service members and their engagement with sexual assault in the postwar period, authors such as Mary Louise Roberts in her book *What Soldiers Do: Sex and the American GI in WW II France* (2013)²⁷, or Petra Goedde in *GIs and Germans: Culture, Gender, and Foreign Relations 1945-1949*, (2003)²⁸ have successfully analyzed the ways in which American soldiers interacted with local populations in both consensual and non-consensual relationships. Ruth Lawlor, in her recent article, “Contested Crimes: Race, Gender, and Nation in Histories of GI Sexual Violence, WW II” (2020)²⁹ finds that though the field considering sexual violence perpetrated by American GIs “is uneven, it is thriving.”

It is true that despite the growing attention being paid in historiography to the issue of wartime sexual misconduct by the United States military, a geographical imbalance remains. The literature focused on the experiences of GIs and women in Western Europe far outweighs discussions of soldiers in the Pacific theatre or in Northern Africa, for example. Germany, Britain, France, and Italy have received the largest amount of scholarly attention on this topic with country level analyses as well as country-level comparisons

²⁶ Bronwyn Winter, "Guns, Money and Justice." *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 13, no. 3 (2011): 375.

²⁷ Mary Louise Roberts, *What Soldiers Do: Sex and the American GI in World War II France*, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2013).

²⁸ Petra Goedde, *GIs and Germans: Culture, Gender and Foreign Relations, 1945-1949* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).

²⁹ Ruth Lawlor, "Contested Crimes: Race, Gender, and Nation in Histories of GI Sexual Violence, World War II," *The Journal of Military History* 84, no. 2 (2020): 541-569.

among European countries.³⁰ One of the standard works that explores the role of American GIs in Europe following the end of the Second World War in Europe remains J. Robert Lilly, *Taken by Force: Rape and American GIs in Europe During World War II* (2007).³¹ One of the most important factors in works that consider American GIs sexual violence in Western Europe that appears in Lilly's work as well as many others that consider sexual misconduct in Europe is the role of race. These studies focus more particularly on the frequent and almost exclusive punishment of black American GIs accused of sexual misconduct in contrast to the reports and punishment of white soldiers.³² There also exists a substantial amount of research that skirts the edge of historical research with an eye to more contemporary political and logistical goals of reconstruction.³³

³⁰ For example, works that deal primarily with sexual assault of German women by American GIs can be seen in Maria Höhn, *GIs and Fräuleins: The German-American Encounter in 1950s West Germany* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Petra Goedde, *GIs and Germans: Culture, Gender and Foreign Relations, 1945-1949* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003); Anita Grossman, *Jews, Germans and Allies: Close Encounters in Occupied Germany* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007). These works focus primarily on American sexual misconduct, though there also exists a growing field of literature that focuses specifically on sexual crimes that were committed by German troops during the Second World War. Select works include: Maren Röger, "The Sexual Policies and Sexual Realities of the German Occupiers in Poland in the Second World War," *Contemporary European History* 23, no.1 (February 2014): 1–21; Birgit Beck, "Rape: The Military Trials of Sexual Crimes Committed by Soldiers in the Wehrmacht, 1939–1944," in *Home/Front: The Military, War, and Gender in Twentieth-Century Germany*, eds. Karen Hagemann and Stefanie Schüler-Springorum (New York: Berg, 2002); Na'ama Shi, "Sexual Abuse of Jewish Women in Auschwitz-Birkenau," in *Brutality and Desire: War and Sexuality in Europe's Twentieth Century*, ed. Dagmar Herzog (Basingstoke, U.K.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

³¹ J. Robert Lilly, *Taken by Force: Rape and American GIs in Europe During World War II*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

³² Others works that discuss European occupation with an emphasis on race relations and sexual assault of black GIs and the local populations are Mary Louise Roberts, *What Soldiers Do: Sex and the American GI in World War II France* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2013); Susan Carruthers, *The Good Occupation: American Soldiers and the Hazards of Peace* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2016) Miriam Gebhardt, *Die Vergewaltigung deutscher Frauen am Ende des Zweiten Weltkriegs* (Munich: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2015), published in English in 2017 as Miriam Gebhardt, *Crimes Unspoken: The Rape of German Women at the End of the Second World War*, trans. Nick Somers (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2017); J. Robert Lilly and J. Michael Thomson, "Executing US Soldiers in England, World War II," *British Journal of Criminology* 37, no. 2 (Spring 1997): 262–88.

³³ In particular, research regarding postwar reconstruction of countries and interactions of soldiers with local populations experienced a renaissance during the early 2000s when the Bush administration tackled the challenge of postwar reconstruction in Iraq. Some of these works included, James Dobbins, *America's Role in Nation Building: From Germany to Iraq* (Santa Monica: Rand, 2003); Francis Fukuyama, ed., *Nation Building: Beyond Afghanistan and Iraq* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2005).

Though there is substantially more research regarding reconstruction and relationships between American GIs in Europe during the postwar period in Europe, there exists a considerable amount of scholarship more specific to the Pacific. The best known of such works, that deals with Japan specifically, is John Dower's comprehensive study of postwar Japan, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II*.³⁴ In regard to race relations, there exists a preponderance of literature related to black American GIs in the Pacific and their experiences in host countries such as Japan, Korea, and the Philippines.³⁵ Furthermore, there exist regional studies that discuss the construction of military prostitution and sexual misconduct in Korea, Japan, and the Philippines, respectively.³⁶ In the case of works such as *Embracing Defeat*, the role of the United States military in the

³⁴ John Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company/The New Press, 1999). Other works that deal with sexual relations more generally in the Pacific include: Marilyn E. Hegarty, *Victory Girls, Khaki-Wackies, and Patriotutes: The Regulation of Female Sexuality during World War II* (New York: New York University Press, 2008).

³⁵ Examples of this literature include: Chris Dixon, *African Americans and the Pacific War, 1941–1945: Race, Nationality, and the Fight for Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); Michael Cullen Green, *Black Yanks in the Pacific: Race in the Making of American Military Empire After World War II* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2010); Yasuhiro Okada, "Gendering the 'Black Pacific': Race Consciousness, National Identity, and the Masculine/Feminine Empowerment among African Americans in Japan under U.S. Military Occupation, 1945–1952" (Ph.D. dissertation, Michigan State University, 2008); Kristin Roebuck, "Orphans by Design: 'Mixed-Blood' Children, Child Welfare, and Racial Nationalism in Postwar Japan," *Japanese Studies* 36, no. 2 (3 May, 2016).

³⁶ For works related to Japan, see: Holly Sanders, "Panpan: Streetwalking in Occupied Japan," *Pacific Historical Review* 81 (2012): 404-431; Michiko Takeuchi, "'Pan-Pan Girls': Performing and Resisting Neocolonialism(s) in the Pacific Theater: U.S. Military Prostitution in Occupied Japan, 1942-1952," in *Over There: Living with the U.S. Military Empire from World War Two to the Present*, ed. Maria Hohn and Seungsook Moon (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 78-108.; For works related to Korea, see: Katherine H.S. Moon, *Sex Among Allies: Military Prostitution in U.S.-Korea Relations*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); Na Young Lee, "The Construction of Military Prostitution in South Korea during the U.S. Military Rule, 1945-1948," *Feminist Studies* 33 (2007); Seungsook Moon, "Regulating Desire, Managing the Empire: U.S. Military Prostitution in South Korea, 1945-1970," in Hohn and Moon, *Over There*, 39-77.; For works related to the Philippines, see: Paul A. Kramer, "The Darkness that enters the home: The politics of Prostitution during the Philippine-American War," in *Haunted By Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History*, ed. Laura Ann Stoler (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 366-404.; Aida F. Santos, "Gathering the Dust: The Base Issue in the Philippines," in, eds. Sandra Pollock Sturdevant and Brenda Stoltzfus, *Let the Good Times Roll: Prostitution and the U.S. Military in Asia*, (New York: The New Press, 1992); François-Xavier Bonnet, "From Oripun to the Yapayuki-San: An Historical Outline of Prostitution in the Philippines," *Moussons (Marseille)* 29, no. 29 (2017): 41-64.

construction of prostitution and the engagement of soldiers with local women is considered as part of the broader process of postwar reconstruction of Japan. Furthermore, works such as Moon's *Regulating Desire, Managing the Empire: U.S. Military Prostitution in South Korea, 1945-1970* (2010), or Takeuchi's *'Pan-Pan Girls': Performing and Resisting Neocolonialism(s) in the Pacific Theater: U.S. Military Prostitution in Occupied Japan, 1942-1952* (2010), consider the development of prostitution and sexual misconduct in specific and detailed country level analyses.

This thesis, however, seeks to address the lack of scholarship regarding sexual violence at the hands of American service members in the Pacific theater in general, and the importance of viewing these instances in a multi-national context specifically. To this end I will build on the scholarship of several authors who have led the way for research in this area such as Yuki Tanaka, Sarah Soh, Susan Carruthers, and Mary Louise Roberts.³⁷ However, many of these authors have considered their research in either more specific and localized regional studies or in the extremely wide purview of American GI sexual misconduct globally in the post-war period. Both of these approaches have benefits, but the larger-scale studies such as *The Good Occupation* simply cannot contain the level of detail present in smaller works and likewise, the country-specific approaches to evaluating the role of the United States military sexual misconduct in host countries are unable to

³⁷ Principle works that I will draw on throughout this research include: Yuki Tanaka, *Japan's Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery and Prostitution during World War II and the US Occupation*. Asia's Transformations, (London; New York: Routledge, 2002.); Sarah Soh, *The Comfort Women: Sexual Violence and Postcolonial Memory in Korea and Japan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008.); Susan Carruthers, *The Good Occupation: American Soldiers and the Hazards of Peace* (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2016); Mary Louise Roberts, *What Soldiers Do: Sex and the American GI in World War II France*. (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2013); Katharine H. S. Moon, *Sex among Allies: Military Prostitution in U.S.-Korea Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); Saundra Pollock Sturdevant and Brenda Stoltzfus eds., *Let the Good times Roll: Prostitution and the U.S. Military in Asia* (New York: New Press, 1992).

adequately evaluate the importance of cultural and social standards that the United States military fosters in multiple regions and over time.

In this research, I will consider the American military's role in sexual violence throughout, and immediately following, World War II in Korea, Japan, and the Philippines. In this regard, I will be taking a middle tack compared to other authors by discussing and evaluating a region-specific response by the United States military. Looking at these nations in conjunction offers opportunities for the evaluation of both the American military's official administrative policy regarding its soldiers and their sexual relationships to local women, but also how GIs themselves saw differences or similarities between these three major postings in the Pacific. In addition, this regional focus in Asia further contributes to a growing body of research that focuses on the United States military and its actions abroad, but deviates from the generally Eurocentric tack of most of these regional studies.

Furthermore, by evaluating how the United States military attempted to control the behavior of its soldiers in the Pacific and their relations to local women, one can more clearly see how such actions and responses by the United States military were part of a broader attempt to, either consciously or unconsciously, cultivate standards and expectations of cultural hegemony abroad. Country-specific studies, while valuable, do not allow for the scope necessary to point out and highlight large scale patterns of ideology formation that drive cultural hegemonic control. By contrast, global comparative studies, while useful in understanding perhaps the global processes by which this cultural hegemonic control is produced and recreated, are unable to appropriately dissect the regional specific qualities that typify this type of hegemonic culture-building. Aspects such

as race-relations or linguistic imperialism fundamentally change the ways in which the actions of United States service members can build ideologies and a status quo across geographic regions. The level of local resistance to these imposed ideological structures and status quo have much to do with the color of one's skin, the history of relations between peoples, and perceptions of culture. In this regard, the comparison of post-war experiences in Western Europe and the Pacific for example must be taken with a grain of academic salt, however tempting the similarities may appear.

In an effort to further the scholarship in this geographic region regarding GI sexual violence, comparative and transnational research will be used to examine how GIs understood racial hierarchies. These tensions were present in the European theatre, with some scholars honing in on the relationship between American racial policies and reactions to the presence of black British or French soldiers or citizens, but these remained the exception and not the norm. The focus on race within the Pacific theatre between Korea, Japan, and the Philippines presents the opportunity to trace similarities and differences in how soldiers and official policy affected nonconsensual sexual interactions between GIs and locals.

The base of sources that I will consider span monographs and academic articles, as mentioned above, but I also hope to draw from the voices of women and soldiers themselves. To this end, I will utilize the written and oral testimonies of women from Korea, Japan, and the Philippines whenever possible. Sources such as *Comfort Women Speak: Testimony by Sex Slaves of the Japanese Military*, offer chilling and explicit accounts of their experiences at the hands of Japanese and American service members that

ground this research in primary sources.³⁸ Furthermore, I will also draw from reports by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights that include testimonies and other legal documents regarding war crimes of sexual assault.

The research that is present within this thesis is situated in and presented from a position that agrees with the general conclusions of academic Marxist literature. More specifically, the historical developments referenced within this work are mediated and understood through the lens of cultural hegemony. The origins of such thought lie with Antonio Gramsci and his Marxist understanding of power relations between classes where self-reproducing aspects of the dominant ideology and culture are the driving forces in maintaining a global hegemony of power.³⁹ Though Gramsci's theory placed a high premium on the importance of dominant cultural ideology in the maintenance of the status quo in a global hegemon rather than the forces of "violence, coercion, or force," the evidence presented here both proves and disagrees with Gramsci's ultimate conclusions in this regard.

Gramsci's conception of hegemony and hegemonic power was contained in a fragmentary collection of his writings that were produced during his time in prison. These works detail how any given political institution creates and maintains power within its respective society. The more specific and convoluted details of these theories are not necessary to expound here in detail, but it is important, however, to have a general understanding of how Gramsci conceptualized and relayed his theory of hegemony. In his

³⁸ Sangmie Choi Schellstede ed., *Comfort Women Speak: Testimony by Sex Slaves of the Japanese Military* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 2000).

³⁹ Gramsci was an Italian historian and philosopher who lived from 1897 to 1937. He contributed greatly to the development of Marxist thought in Italy and was eventually imprisoned for his work as the leader of the communist party of Italy. When Benito Mussolini seized power at the head of the Italian fascist movement, Gramsci was imprisoned despite his parliamentary immunity and spent the remainder of his years in prison where he wrote most of his works related to Cultural Hegemony.

work, he points to two reciprocal relationships present within political systems, one “domination” where “coercion and force” are used to maintain authority and the other, hegemony, which “uses intellectual devices to infuse its ideas of morality to gain the support of those who resist or may be neutral, to retain the support of those who consent to its rule, and to establish alliances as widely as possible.”⁴⁰ Within Gramsci’s conception of hegemony as a method by which the state maintains control, intellectual individuals and organizations are embedded within a society and are actively “educating the people, developing their culture, and obtaining their consent to the rule of the state’s government.”⁴¹ These organizations or individuals work to create conditions where the people in a given society remain under hegemonic control and actively consent to be ruled, so that the state need not fall back on methods of “domination” (i.e. violence or coercion) in order to maintain power over a population.⁴²

If we are to accept the premise and definition of the state as outlined in Gramsci’s works, that the state is “the entire complex of practical and theoretical activities with which the ruling class not only justifies and maintains its dominance, but manages to win the active consent of those over whom it rules,” then we can just as easily apply this definition in relation to the activities of the United States and their role in maintaining a regional, if

⁴⁰ Donald V. Kurtz, “Hegemony and Anthropology: Gramsci, Exegeses, Reinterpretations,” *Critique of Anthropology* 16, no. 2 (June 1996): 106.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² A distinction is made within the Prison notebooks about the precise definitions of “traditional” and “organic” intellectuals and their role in hegemonic control. The presentation of Gramsci’s theories within this work are noticeably oversimplified in order to accommodate the scope of the present research. For a more detailed description of these nuances and Gramsci’s theories more generally, see Donald V. Kurtz “Hegemony and Anthropology: Gramsci, Exegeses, Reinterpretations.” *Critique of Anthropology* 16, no. 2 (June 1996): 103–35. See also Paola Merli’s “Creating the Cultures of the Future: Cultural Strategy, Policy and Institutions in Gramsci: Part I: Gramsci and cultural policy studies: some methodological reflections” *International Journal of Cultural Policy: CP* 19, no. 4 (2013): 399-420, as well as Parts II & III.

not global measure of hegemonic power in the Pacific.⁴³ Not only is a Gramscian model of analysis for the actions of the United States military in the Pacific useful for our understanding of how larger systems of global hegemonic control are constructed and maintained, but it further provides evidence for the larger conclusion that we must continually utilize global and transnational methodological approaches to understandings and dealing with issues that may appear specifically national in character if not in practice.

⁴³ Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, eds. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, (New York: International Publishers, 1972), 244. Hereto referred to as “Prison Notebooks.” It is important to take a moment to acknowledge that claims of American global hegemonic power in the 21st century are controversial within the historical and political academic communities. More general conclusions or statements can be made about which country or group retained a level of global hegemonic control beginning in the 18th century to around the 1960s. A rough timeline which I employ here, that can be and is, disputed depending on one’s perspective and argument, positions the British as the pervading global hegemonic force from around the mid to late 1800s, followed by a period of non-hegemonic control stretching from the late 1800s to the conclusion of the Second World War in 1945. Then, the period from 1945 to 1965 can be seen as a period of American global hegemonic control. From 1965 and beyond, authors speculate about the strength of American hegemonic control with the waning force during the Vietnam war and beyond. Furthermore, as time went on, China’s presence on the global stage both as a cultural and economic authority over vast areas of the globe have led some to posit that there are dueling hegemonic powers between the two countries, there are in fact no global hegemons, as there can only be one and the presence of another “power” that can test the hegemon in and of itself makes the state no long hegemonic, or that the United States is a waning global hegemon. For the purposes of this research, I will consider the United States still in a position of global hegemonic power or at least a hegemonic force that is capable of exerting power within a given region. As economic and militaristic forces continue to change, arguments for the presence of Chinese hegemonic power in the Pacific may grow to be more convincing, however.

Structure

This thesis will demonstrate how the United States military's relationship to local populations in regard to prostitution and sexual assault have differed historically but have and are ultimately contributing to the hegemonic projection of power by the United States historically and contemporarily. A traditional chronological approach of military sexual misconduct in the Pacific would likely begin with American involvement in the Philippines followed by Korea or Japan. Though the Philippines has indeed had the longest relationship to American imperialism, the Japanese colonial administration of Korea from 1910 to 1945 presents the one of the most explicit examples of the use of rape and sexual exploitation as both a pragmatic measure for military readiness, while at the same time, projecting racial and hegemonic power in the self-identified "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere."⁴⁴ This system of militarized sexual exploitation formed the basis for the American military government's policy in Korea, representing a departure from outright sexual slavery, to a more coercive method that involved coercion by both the United States military government and the elites in Korea. Systems of exploitation of women in Japan developed along similar vein, but without necessarily the same power differentials found in Korea.

In order to analyze the relationships between the American military and Korean, Japanese, and Filipino citizens during and immediately post-war, I will discuss each country individually, and then in conjunction, with a final conclusion. Each chapter will focus on historical context and the relationship between the country to militarized sexual

⁴⁴ This term was used in the first half of the 20th century by Japanese officials to describe their influence in the Pacific and to describe their efforts as part of a larger resistance to western imperialism. See Jeremy A. Yellen, *The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere: When Total Empire Met Total War* (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 2019).

violence. The second section in each chapter will discuss the post-war period, immediately after 1945, and the official policy of United States military forces and how they operated in relation to local women and GIs. This section will contrast the official policy stated and publicly presented by the military with what was eventually the outcome on the ground. The third section will discuss the inter-war period following the 1950s and the relationship of the American military to local populations that no longer were under provisional military governments. Finally, I will discuss the role of the United States military in instances of sexual misconduct in Korea, Japan, and the Philippines today.

Ultimately, this research serves a twofold purpose. By filling in an important and under-researched geographic region of WW II studies on sexual violence, this study will bring some light to the experiences and suffering that women of the Pacific who have often been silenced or ignored in a historical record that presents an uncritical and shining image of the United States and its military abroad. Furthermore, it underscores the economic and hegemonic relationships of southeast Asian countries to the United States and how sexual misconduct is both a byproduct, and a reinforcing force, of these hegemonic relationships. Such research can not speak for the women who experienced sexual assault by the American military (though their voices do find some expression in this work), but hopefully it can serve to encourage a higher level of accountability by Americans to what its military has done, and is doing, abroad.

Lessons Learned: The Comfort Women Model in Korea

That day you raced to a welcome rally, holding the Korean national flag and the Star-Spangled Banner that you had made all night long with all your heart after so much trial and error. Didn't you come back home that evening with your face distorted by despair and screaming weirdly like an animal? ... Disheveled hair, torn clothes, bloodshot, angry eyes, and blood-smeared trembling lips. ... How could our mom, or any human being be transformed so completely in half a day? ... Anyway, completely naked, you didn't eat or drink for days as a rumor spread that you were raped by an American soldier and had gone crazy.⁴⁵

The above quotation, from a novel written by Korean activist and anti-imperialist Nam Jung-hyun, encapsulates the complicated nature of the relationship of Korean women to American GIs in the post-war period. Instead of happily greeting American forces for their arrival in the peninsula, the mother of the protagonist Mansu experiences a subversion of expectations when she is sexually violated by an American soldier, someone who she was ready to greet with a hand-stitched American flag. For many Koreans, like Mansu's mother, experiencing the arrival of American troops and liberation from Japanese occupation remained a powerful and emotional moment after decades of Japanese imperialism. But at the same time, American forces could also represent the potential for another neo-colonial relationship where Korean sovereignty was threatened and deemed less important than broader American goals for supremacy in the Pacific.

The short-lived experience of the independent provisional government in Korea in 1945 before the Americans arrived, the "People's Republic of Korea," seemed to confirm that expectations of what Americans would bring to the peninsula were not always realized. These expectations were subverted from the amount of authority new governments would

⁴⁵ Nam Jung-hyun, *Land of Excrement*, trans. Jeon Seung-hee (South Korea: Asia Publishers, 2013), 49-53.

garner from American authorities, to how soldiers treated local populations. In terms of sexual misconduct, American authorities did represent a departure from the system of sexual slavery instituted by the Japanese military, but they also did not always live up to the liberator commanding moral and ethical authority. Organized prostitution became one of the consistent vices that American GIs engaged in during the occupation period in the peninsula and became tightly wound with the presence of American forces. Wherever the army went, prostitution, and oftentimes, sexual misconduct followed.

To understand how American forces came to be so engaged with prostitution and sexual misconduct in Korea, it is also necessary to understand the relationship of Korean history and culture and prostitution. In 1881, the first licensed prostitution system began in Korea in the Japanese settlement of Pusan, and the seeds were sown for the beginning of a licensed and institutionalized system of prostitution.⁴⁶ Pusan became ground zero for the proliferation of further institutionalized organization of prostitution in the Korean peninsula following the annexation of the entire peninsula in 1910 by Japan.

Though authors note that it is nearly impossible to precisely indicate when and where the use of “comfort stations” by the Japanese military began, there is nonetheless a strong indication that military planners and officials began discussing the need for such a system in the wake of the “Nanking Massacre.”⁴⁷ In 1937, Japan organized a full-scale invasion of mainland China and the army was met with great military success. But one of the by-products that Japanese army officials were quick to note was that after particularly

⁴⁶ Soh, *Comfort Women*, 8. It was the 1876 treaty of Kanghwa with Japan that opened Korean borders and began this system in the country. It is interesting to highlight that it was the imposition of an imperialist power that drove the beginning of a system of institutionalized prostitution in the peninsula.

⁴⁷ The inability for scholars to precisely date the beginning of the system of “Comfort Stations” has much to do with the lack of access to sealed Japanese government documents. Historian Yuki Tanaka expands on this point in the introduction to his own research on the origin of the Comfort Women system. See “Tanaka” in bibliography. The Nanking Massacre is alternatively referred to as “The Rape of Nanking.”

difficult or strenuous battles, the local populations of cities were often subjected to widespread brutality including rape, murder, looting, and arson. From the perspective of the military, the origins of comfort women stations did not come out of any kind of altruistic notion to save occupied civilians from the brutality of “total war,” but rather from an exercise in pragmatism. Lieutenant-General Okabe Naozaburo sent an instruction to each of his unit commanders in 1938 that stated “rape is fermenting expectedly serious anti-Japanese sentiment ... frequent occurrence of rape in various places is not just a matter of criminal law. It is nothing but high treason ... that harms the strategic activities of our entire forces.”⁴⁸

For military leaders, the need to address the widespread rape of local civilian populations had less to do with concern for the experiences or lives of the occupied population and much more with the practical realities of a hostile populace that had the potential to “[harm] the strategic activities” of the army. Lieutenant-General Naozaburo continues in his instructions that “it is of vital importance ... [that] facilities for sexual pleasure be established promptly, in order to prevent our men from inadvertently breaking the law due to the lack of such facilities.”⁴⁹ The campaign throughout eastern China and the massacre at Nanking provided the impetus for the Japanese military to magnify the already existing structure for institutionalized prostitution even further.

Over the course of five years between 1940 and 1945, the Japanese instituted a concerted and organized effort to procure women from their colony in Korea as well as women from the Philippines, the Dutch East Indies, and Manchuria through kidnapping, coercion, or with promises of well-paying jobs. These women were sequestered in

⁴⁸ Tanaka, *Japan's Comfort Women*, 16.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

“cubicles” where they were constantly and continually sexually abused, raped, and beaten. The service of the women in the “Comfort Women Corps,” as the Japanese military referred to its structured system of sexual slavery, came to an end in 1945 with the surrender of Japan in the Second World War and the takeover of the provisional peacetime government of the American Army. Moon Ok-ju, a Korean woman who was taken by the Japanese recalled that “No one told us when the war ended” but when they heard the playing of the Korean national anthem, which had been banned by the Japanese, over the speakers, “we all cried, overcome with emotion.”

For the millions of people in Korea, the end of the Second World War marked the end of the colonial status of their nation, which had begun with the Japanese invasion of 1910. When allied troops took over the Korean peninsula and mainland Japan in 1945, many saw this as a day of liberation. But just as this day represented freedom from the colonial atrocities of the Japanese government and military, at the same time, it also represented the beginning of another tragedy. Moon Ok-ju went on to discuss her life after liberation from the “Comfort Corps,” remarking that “The Allied troops opened the military warehouses and took out the Japanese military uniforms for their own use.”⁵⁰ Moon Ok-ju’s life did change after the Americans arrived, but although the Japanese regime was defeated, a change in management did not necessarily mean liberation. She went on to discuss her life after 1945 and how she could not break away from a life “entertaining” for a living, “I stayed home for a while and thought about my future. I had no formal education, no experience in anything, and I was beyond a marriageable age. I

⁵⁰ Choi, *Comfort Women Speak*, 57.

had to find something to support myself. ... So I became a 'ki-saeng,' similar to a geisha ... I earned a living by entertaining customers ... in private houses."⁵¹

The subject of this research, however, is not the widespread system of sexual slavery implemented by the Japanese, but rather the deliberate adoption of a strikingly similar system by the United States military between the years of 1945 and 1948. After formally ending the previous system of sexual slavery in 1948, the United States military-maintained elements of this institutionalized prostitution corps throughout the 1950s and Korean War. For decades following the end of the Korean War, struggles for widespread South Korean democratization movements occupied headlines in Korean news. These struggles for democracy coupled with the immense cultural shame that many of these women felt in the aftermath of repeated and violent sexual assaults meant that few spoke of their experiences. Only at the end of their lives, when all three of the women referenced above were interviewed in the 70s, did they finally speak out of the horrors of the War that they were subjected to during the captivity. Massive outcries from human rights organizations across the globe implored countries to take notice of the crimes committed against the "Korean Comfort Women," and as a result, international courts took up cases regarding war crimes of sexual slavery.⁵²

Understandably, the bulk of the blame was laid at the feet of the Japanese for the creation and continued use of the system of sexual slavery during the Second World War. But one nation, namely the United States, remained conspicuously absent from any contemporary international discussion of war-time culpability. In fact, the United States

⁵¹ Choi, *Comfort Women*, 59.

⁵² George L. Hicks, *The Comfort Women: Japan's Brutal Regime of Enforced Prostitution in the Second World War*, 1st American ed. (New York: W.W. Norton &, 1995.), 187.

was one of the major powers involved in brokering a modern-day peace deal between Korea and Japan over responsibility and reparation of these war crimes. The United States Military Government in Korea saw obvious benefits in utilizing elements – both in logistics and in personnel – of the previously established “Comfort Corps” under the Japanese military, for its own soldiers. Many women who were former sex slaves of the Japanese military were left with little economic recourse after 1945 and being socially ostracized for their lack of chastity, had few options for their futures. In Korea, the United States military did not manufacture a system of sexual control and abuse, but rather, much like the experience relayed by Moon Ok-ju, they readily adopted these “Japanese military uniforms for their own use.” As Na Young Lee relates, “U.S. Army policy took over the foundation laid by the Japanese but modified the system to achieve the dual goals of satisfying soldiers' sexual desires and controlling STDs during the period of U.S. military government rule.”⁵³ The foundation that Young Lee speaks of may have been Japanese in conception, but in execution, it was uniquely American and Korean.

Because of orientalist attitudes regarding the people of southeast Asia's cleanliness, both at an institutional and at a corporeal level, the control of sexually transmitted diseases was of the utmost importance for many military commanders. “Upon arrival in Korea, the U.S. armed forces were firmly convinced that “the Orient was ridden with exotic and terrible diseases” because of “an absence of any conception of cleanliness and sanitation” and that the health of U.S. soldiers was in jeopardy.”⁵⁴ The ability to combat and control the spread of sexually transmitted diseases necessitated a degree of control both over the soldiers and over the women they were having sex with. This control came in the form of

⁵³ Lee, “The Construction of Military Prostitution,” 456.

⁵⁴ Young Lee, “The Construction of Military Prostitution,” 461.

consistently testing women for venereal disease and standardizing how sexual meetings took place. All of these requirements meant that what developed both in Korean came to be remarkably similar to the system of the Japanese Comfort Corps years prior to the American arrival.

In 2017, a ruling by the High Court of South Korea acknowledged the role of Park Chung-hee's administration in the regulation of prostitution specifically for American soldiers throughout the 1970s that included illegally registering girls as young as 14 for involuntary sexual services, involuntary penicillin shots to prevent venereal disease, and consistent beatings. The court concluded with a statement that remarked that the proliferation of these practices of illegal prostitution and human rights violations were "not solely the responsibility of the South Korean government but the responsibility of the US government as well ... the US must answer for these crimes."⁵⁵ For one of the first times ever, a Korean court publicly acknowledged the role of the United States military in the proliferation of sexual abuse in Korea. But rather than accepting the responsibility for these actions, "A US Embassy official declined to comment on the court's judgment, saying that it is an 'ongoing case.'"⁵⁶ Despite this ruling, neither the South Korean government nor the United States government has apologized or acknowledged the invasive role of both of their governments in the systems of sexual abuse on the peninsula.

Remarkably the United States has managed to shirk all responsibility for its military's perpetuation and continued use of an institutionalized system of sexual abuse for years following the Second World War. T.J. Ward notes that, "In the USA, which has largely escaped scrutiny for its military's sexual misconduct in Asia, mayors, city councils,

⁵⁵ Eigenraam, "Korea's 'patriotic prostitutes.'"

⁵⁶ Ibid.

county officials, members of the US Congress, and even top federal officials have joined with Korea in attributing exclusive responsibility to Japan.”⁵⁷

Where preserved written primary sources provide invaluable information for historians, oftentimes forgotten is the profound role that silence plays in the historical record. In many instances, the omission of materials is just as valuable, if not more so, in better understanding historical processes. Historical discussions of sexual violence are often fraught with the multilayered issues of any discussion of contemporary sexual violence, particularly the ambiguous nature of language, intent, and legal ramifications, but in the case of the Comfort Women and others, decades of silence have distorted these stories even further.⁵⁸ Furthermore, as historian Ruth Lawlor highlights, the ways in which even academic or political discussions of sexual violence are presented, represent far more than an exploration of historical events – the recounting and presentation itself becomes a political act because of the politically charged nature of sexual violence. Rape itself is an engagement in relations of power and an assertion of hierarchies that are physical, social, political, and racial. Thus, the ways in which widespread sexual violence in the historical record are approached is both simultaneously fraught with difficult historical challenges, but also contemporary political ramifications. Lawlor reminds us that in these

⁵⁷ T.J. Ward and W.D. Lay “The Comfort Women Controversy: Not Over Yet.” *East Asia (Piscataway, N.J.)* 33, no. 4 (2016): 256.

⁵⁸ The distortion of meaning that occurs when individuals must translate concepts across languages or the linguistic standards that legal proceedings demand from all participants is difficult enough on its own, but in many cases, the recounting of incredibly personal and sexually violent episodes renders such an endeavor almost impossible. For examples of discussions on legal testimony, linguistic imperialism, and presentation of truth dealing with sexual violence, see: Hans Carlson, “A Watershed of Words: Litigating and Negotiating Nature in Eastern James Bay, 1971-75” *Canadian Historical Review* 85 no.1 (2004): 63-84.; Marlene McKay, “Language, Identity, Power Relations, and Discourse: A Cree Language Response to Linguistic Imperialism,” *Native Studies Review* 22 no.1 (2013): 27-53.; Nora Strejilevich, “Testimony: Beyond the Language of Truth” *Human Rights Quarterly* 28, no. 3 (2006): 701-13.; LaCapra, D., *Representing the Holocaust: History, theory, trauma*. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. 1994).

circumstances, “rape is always a political question, a battleground where soldiers, civilians, and the state compete to frame questions of race, gender, and class in politically expedient ways.”⁵⁹

The silence presented in the historical record regarding the Comfort Women fits in to a broader and more comprehensive historical investigation into sexual violence by occupying armies in the latter half of the 20th century, and particularly the role of the United States military in these interactions. The United States has certainly managed to reframe the narrative of its military’s involvement in sexual violence in Korea, Japan and the Philippines in “politically expedient ways,” both to the detriment of historical accuracy, and to the legacy of women abused by the United States military.⁶⁰

Within the discussion of US military sexual misconduct, there exists a key difference between the systems of sexual abuses that developed in Korea, Japan, and the Philippines and those of Europe following the end of the War. It had everything to do with what sociologist Jacques Novikow first described in his 1897 essay, "Le Péril Jaune."⁶¹ French women may have been sexually promiscuous and morally lacking, but they were still, in the eyes of American GIs, white and western. American fears about the

⁵⁹ Lawlor, “Contested Crimes,” 548.

⁶⁰ Some authors that have begun to address the role of the United States military in sexual misconduct, in Japan specifically, include: Brian Walsh, “Sexual Violence during the Occupation of Japan,” *Journal of Military History* 82 (October 2018): 1199–1230; Sarah Kovner, *Occupying Power: Sex Workers and Servicemen in Postwar Japan* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2012); Sabine Frühstück, “Sexuality and Sexual Violence,” in *The Cambridge History of the Second World War, vol. 3*; Michael Geyer and Adam Tooze eds., *Total War: Economy, Society and Culture*, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015). For a more general overview of the sexual misconduct of the United States Military during the Second World War and the immediate post-war period, see J. Robert Lilly, *Taken by Force: Rape and American GIs in Europe During World War II* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

⁶¹ The concept of “The Yellow Peril” mixed anxieties of sex, race, and orientalist attitudes with a foreboding fear that the overwhelming numbers of Asian peoples would take over the Western white world. A work of recent scholarship that successfully traces the origin and evolution of this concept to the modern day is: John Kuo Wei Tchen and Dylan Yeats eds. *Yellow Peril!: An Archive of Anti-Asian Fear* (London: Verso, 2014).

“Yellow Peril” that began at the turn of the 20th century were tangled up in various elements of racial superiority, fear, but also, as Edward Said importantly reminds us, sexuality. The Russo-Japanese War remains one of the most important conflicts of the 20th century as it was perceived by the Western world as the first time an Asian country had defeated a white and Western empire.⁶² Though the majority of western powers saw the success of the Japanese in a positive light, as it diminished the prestige of a key opponent in the European theater, it also highlighted how easily depictions and perceptions of Asian countries could change from one decade to the next. Western countries may have been satisfied with the war’s results, but this did little to curb Darwinian fears of Asian domination.

Following the Russo-Japanese war, conflicts such as the First World War proved the mutability of these perceptions when Britain passed the “Defense of the Realm” act in 1914, targeting opium users as morally depraved and liable for deportation, as well as the American Immigration Act of 1917 forbidding Asian immigration to certain states. Images of the Japanese people as savage, morally bankrupt, and subhuman men intent on sexually violating and killing indiscriminately were produced by Washington’s PR department during the Second World War during their campaign in the Pacific.⁶³ Racial fears from the beginning of the 20th century stemming from the success of the Japanese in the Russo-Japanese war were heightened by Japanese imperial activities in the Pacific and were given

⁶² Aydin C., “A Global Anti-Western Moment? The Russo-Japanese War, Decolonization, and Asian Modernity,” in Conrad S. and Sachsenmaier D. eds. *Competing Visions of World Order: Global Moments and Movements, 1880s-1930s*, Palgrave Macmillan Transnational History Series, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

⁶³ These images produced by American individuals, companies, and the United States military depicted the Japanese as sub-human and overemphasized highly racist stereotypes of Asian peoples for the purposes of wartime propaganda. Film was also an effective means of reinforcing these stereotypes, the most famous film being excerpts of the film *Know Your Enemy: Japan*, directed by Frank Capra in the 1940s as part of the larger series, *Know Your Enemy*, commissioned by the US War Department. See, Erin E. Sapre, “Wartime Propaganda: Enemies Defined by Race.” *West Virginia University Philological Papers* 51 (2004): 91.

new life with the outbreak of the Second World War. These pieces of propaganda emphasized the sub-human aspects of Japanese men and women and were integral in shaping the post-war image of not just the Japanese, but of all Asian people, and particularly of women. Though generalizations regarding the various and disparate peoples and cultures in Asia had been a feature of European and American perceptions of the East for quite some time, the negative depiction of the Japanese by American propagandists following Pearl Harbor soon stood in for a negative perception of *all* Asian peoples in American eyes. The dehumanization that accompanied thoughts of the Japanese soon extended to all peoples of Asia, including Korean and Filipino people who were generally the victims of Japanese imperialism and domination for years. The distinctions between the Japanese, Korean, and Filipino peoples were far less pronounced for American soldiers and if there were racial or social distinctions that were noticed, they generally fell along the lines of which country constituted the worse posting rather than fine understanding of their distinct cultures and societies.

The women that American GIs in Japan and Korea interacted with were subject to all the pre-conceived ideological views of a conqueror on the conquered, replete with disgust, sexual and moral frailty, but also the Orientalizing gaze that made them sexually desirable and paradoxically sub-human. Indeed, as Susan Carruthers notes in her work regarding post-war military occupations, the emotions of disgust and contempt played an integral role in the ways in which Americans internally perceived their own positions at the top of political and social hierarchies in conquered countries: “Disgust and desire—focused on others’ laxly guarded orifices—were not always mutually exclusive.”⁶⁴ With

⁶⁴ Susan Carruthers, "Latrines as the Measure of Men: American Soldiers and the Politics of Disgust in Occupied Europe and Asia." *Diplomatic History* 42, no. 1 (2018): 117.

the constantly reinforced notion of racial superiority steadily imbibed through American propaganda materials and the destitute nature of many of the women from war-ravaged Pacific, occupying American soldiers had no trouble internally establishing hierarchies that allowed them to justify any amount of sexual abuse and objectification during the occupation.

These attitudes and layers of power differentials between American GIs and Asian women in conquered territory did much to contribute to the perpetuation of the previous system of comfort stations across the Korean peninsula and Japan. For over 35 years Koreans had been subjected to a highly racist Japanese society that perceived itself as culturally and socially superior to Koreans and ruled over them in a colonial capacity. One cannot forget the impact that a foreign force of white Americans coming to Korea and ousting the colonizers must have had on the local Korean populace. If the Japanese represented the most pressing and ideologically oppressive social group in the region, the new power structure and relations of power to an American military that had used nuclear weapons to show their might in the Pacific against the Japanese, would have been exceedingly apparent to local Korean populations.

The implicit threat presented by the United States military in the region as “saviors” from the previous regime also carried with it the unspoken connotation that the military held the entirety of power in the new regime. Without a doubt, this perception of superiority was so deeply embedded in the American military psyche that in 1947, General John Hodge, Korea’s then military governor sent out a missive to his troops stating that, “I get the impression from Koreans in all walks of life [that]... American officers and men ... are

incurring disfavor ... because of poor behavior and because of their 'superior attitude.'"⁶⁵ In this instance, Hodge was more concerned about the image of the United States military abroad, rather than addressing the fundamental cultural issues that nurtured this sense of superiority of soldiers in Korea. Newer recruits tended to "[lack] the training and discipline of their predecessors in the Army while possessing all the provincialism and sense of superiority of their older comrades" and despite the token or truly genuine desire of Hodge to affect change in this arena, "There is no reason to believe that the behavior of American troops improved dramatically as a result of General Hodge's efforts."⁶⁶ This then begs the question, if Koreans from "all walks of life" were feeling disaffected by the "superior attitude" of the American military, how then did impoverished Korean prostitutes perceive their liberators? ⁶⁷ Though many Korean women actively opted to be prostitutes for American service members, a departure from the Japanese instituted level of sexual slavery, these women often had little economic recourse which drove them, literally and figuratively, into the arms of Americans GIs.

In Europe, Mary Louise Roberts notes that there was a pervading moral authority of American soldiers in their gendered relationships with French women because of the failure of French men to keep them safe through Hitler's conquest of Europe. She notes that in France, "the GIs also expressed their moral condescension, relaying the message that it was hardly necessary to behave in a civil manner toward the French." French men might have fought valiantly against the Germans in 1940, but ultimately their army was defeated, and their country seized. In this sense, American soldiers justified their role as

⁶⁵ Stueck and Yi, "An Alliance Forged in Blood," 196.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Roberts, *What Soldiers Do*, 3.

the savior and sexual successor in the conquered country. In the eyes of American soldiers, French men were unable to protect their own country from the Germans, so how could they possibly defend their own women? Similar attitudes pervaded during the occupation of Korea where American soldiers internalized these ideas and their interactions with local women.

An uncritical and simplified perception of racial understanding in the Pacific would see the United States and white imperialist powers, such as the British or the French, as the domineering imperialist powers within the region. Just as the Nazis had a sophisticated and convoluted understanding of their own racial makeup and place within an Aryan racial ladder where other white races such as the French, British, American, Scandinavian, Italian, and Slavic peoples, so did different national groups within the Pacific. It is impossible to understand the relationship of the American military, which is white and imperialistic within the context of the postwar period, but one must also understand the interrelated racial hierarchies and understanding of nations within the Pacific itself. Koreans had long been placed in a subservient position to the kingdoms of China and Japan the hundreds of years prior to the Japanese colonial period. The fostering of the relationship between the Korean people and the Chinese had led many to hold Confucian philosophical ideas and cultural standards. As others have described, Korea was popularly seen in the 1800s and prior, to be the “little brother” of China, despite the armed conflicts that occurred within the peninsula, most notably the series of Sino-Japanese wars that devastated the peninsula.

But a byproduct of Japanese ascendancy in the Pacific was also a standardizing influence of culture where the Japanese saw their own culture and societal standards and

norms to be of the highest quality. The extent of Japanese imperialism prior to the Second World War had aggressively extended from the island itself to the Korean peninsula in 1910 and in Manchuria (then rebranded as an independent puppet state under Japanese rule as the territory of Manchukuo) and the wider area of the Pacific. We see then an imposition of racial superiority by the Japanese to their conquered provinces and people, where, for the purposes of this study, were keenly and viciously felt in Korea, but never extended into the Philippines until 1942 when the Japanese invaded the Archipelago. Though the Japanese clearly had imperialist intentions and saw themselves as racially superior to the inhabitants of their conquered provinces (administered either directly or through puppet regimes), they significantly did so under the auspices of championing the cause of Pan-Asian resistance to Western imperialism. Of course, this was a false premise, but was necessary within the international community to rhetorically cloak their own naked imperial ambitions.

These racial hierarchies and standards of beauty, conduct, and society were all exported from Japan to their annexed territory, and significantly, remained in place in these areas *after* their armies had left. The legacies of Japanese colonialism are still felt in the Pacific today and range from changes to central bureaucratic institutions, economic structures, and even to intergenerational effects of “name change” orders experienced under Japanese colonial rule.⁶⁸ The issue of Comfort Women, however, remains a flashpoint in international discussions of wartime reparations for many affected by this

⁶⁸ Descriptions of more specific aspects of how Japanese colonialism has affected countries in the Pacific, particularly in Taiwan and Korea, contemporarily can be found in Andres Aviles, “Impacts of Japanese Colonialism on State and Economic Development in Korea and Taiwan, and its Implications for Democracy,” MA the., (Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California, 2009), 10. See also, Bruce Cumings, “The Legacy of Japanese Colonialism in Korea,” in *The Japanese Colonial Empire, 1895-1945*, eds. Ramon H. Myers and Mark R. Peattie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 487.

wartime sexual violence. A simplified understanding of racial categories in the Pacific as “white imperialists” and “Asian locals” both undervalues the fervent anti-Japanese sentiment across the Pacific today, but also leads to an unsophisticated understanding of the future developments of sexual relationships between American service members and Korean, Japanese, and Filipino women. These relationships between local women and the militarized clientele that they serviced, willingly or unwillingly, began in institutionalized settings prior to the arrival of the United States military, but they were not replaced, but simply retrofitted. In this context, the development of different systems of institutionalized prostitution related to American provisional governments following the end of the Second World War must be seen as an outgrowth of pre-existing racial antagonisms within Pacific societies and among Asian countries. There certainly were dynamics of white imperialism at play within these sexual exchanges, but it is important to note that they were not the *only* dynamics. The individuals in the Pacific during the middle of the 20th century had their own agency, but they possessed their own discriminations too.

Just as these legacies of Japanese colonialism in Korean culture in turn dictated interactions between Korean prostitutes and American GIs, the historical and cultural relationship of Koreans to sexuality itself was similarly important in dictating behavior. In the case of Korea, there has been a strong and distinct historical link to ideologies of Confucianism dating back to the Chosen dynasty (founded 1392). Confucianism permeated into every aspect of Korean life, including gender relations and the relationships of Korean men and women to sexuality. As Young Hee-Shim relates in *Feminism and the Discourse of Sexuality in Korea: Continuities and Changes*, “The core content of neo-Confucianism is represented by three social principles: the faithful minister, the filial son, and the chaste

woman.”⁶⁹ This is part of the reason why women in Korea particularly have found difficulty in relaying their experiences of sexual assault both by the Japanese military as well as the continued sexual assaults of United States service members. Of course, the compulsion to feel guilt or remorse for being sexually assaulted is present in a global sense, it is particularly pronounced in Korea due to the societal and cultural link to neo-Confucian ideals of chastity.

Further compounding the shame related to being sexually impure, there was and remains another layer of racial discrimination related to Korean women who were and are sexually assaulted by American GIs. As Katherine H.S. Moon relates in her monograph, *Sex Among Allies: Military Prostitution in U.S.-Korean Relations*, “The fact that they [Korean women] have mingled flesh and blood with foreigners in a society that has been racially and culturally homogenous to for thousands of years makes them pariahs, a disgrace to themselves and their people, Korean by birth but no longer Korean in body and spirit.”⁷⁰ Whether deliberately choosing to engage in prostitution, relationships, or other sexual relations with American service members, these prejudices still persist. In the case of sexual assault, these prejudices regarding chastity and the mingling of a homogenous racial makeup persist, regardless of the presence of consent or not.

Adding further dimensions to the interactions between Korean women and American GIs was the role of collaboration of local Koreans themselves. A major theme that is seen throughout all three separately grown systems of institutionalized position linked to the United States military in the Pacific, remains the necessity of local support

⁶⁹ Young-Hee Shim, "Feminism and the Discourse of Sexuality in Korea: Continuities and Changes," *Human Studies* 24, no. 1-2 (2001): 133-48.

⁷⁰ Moon, *Sex Among Allies*, 3.

and approval for these institutions to flourish. These systems of institutionalized prostitution between the locals and the US military never would have flourished to the degree to which they did without the support of influential local politicians and higher-class individuals.

One aspect that needs to be addressed, both in any discussion of Korean history and the role of the United States military in the perpetuation of prostitution on the peninsula, is the collaborative role of upper-class Koreans. Stretching as far back as the beginning of the Japanese colonial period beginning in 1910, there have consistently been high-ranking, educated, and wealthy Koreans who were instrumental in the implementation of the Japanese colonial administration. The effects of the colonial period had much to do with one's gender, social class, and political situation, but the stark reality was that "Many Koreans earned their livelihoods or otherwise benefitted from the colonial system."⁷¹ Many of the individuals who were able to find success in the Japanese colonial structure similarly reaped the benefits of a newly introduced peacetime government under the American military. In fact, there was so much fear from Japanese colonial officials in Korea for the potential for widespread unrest in the weeks before the arrival of American troops, that the Japanese Governor General's secretary for political affairs, Endo Ryusaku, met with a nationalist leader, Lyuh Woon-hyung, in order to establish a provisional government to limit this possibility.⁷² Many of these same political and business leaders were instrumental in the establishment of Korea's unique brand of military-linked prostitution.

⁷¹ Kyung Moon Hwang, Kyung, *A History of Korea An Episodic Narrative* (London: Palgrave, 2017), 161.

⁷² Hakjoon Kim, "The American Military Government in South Korea, 1945-1948: Its Formation, Policies, and Legacies," *Asian Perspective* 12, no. 1 (1988) 60.

The inability or more accurately, the refusal, of both the international community and sections of the Korean population to acknowledge the role of Koreans themselves in perpetuating the exploitation of lower-class women for the sex trade in the decades following 1945 remains an unfronted issue in international politics today. Sarah Soh concisely summarizes how South Koreans have continued to uncritically engage with the issue of sexual exploitation in an effort to circumvent a stark discussion of internally ingrained historical legacies of sexual exploitation: “Rather than dealing with the messy and unpleasant complications of the historical record, Korean public discourse has simply elevated the survivors to heroic symbols of national suffering under colonialism.”⁷³ The acknowledgement that Korean elites participated in furnishing young women for the sexual use of US service members in no way detracts from the culpability of the Japanese army in the creation of institutionalized systems of sexual slavery, but to ignore or downplay the role of Koreans in the continuation of elements of these systems is both a disservice to the historical record, and prevents any level of fundamental social change to address the comprehensive issues of modern day sex trafficking in Korea today.

The control of disease remained the main motivating factor in the regulation and administration of prostitution in Korea and to this end, the United States military exerted greater and greater participation and control in prostitution and abuse. Not only did these systems manage to not control the spread of disease (in fact, in Korea the rate of venereal disease expanded exponentially with the presence of US forces), but they increasingly put American men in control of Korean women's bodies. This control was predicated on and reinforced by orientalist attitudes of sexual promiscuity and disease, and the result was a

⁷³ Soh, *The Comfort Women*, 224.

system of widespread sexual abuse that was allowed to continue for years under the tacit approval of the United States military.

In the years following the end of the Second World War, the rising threat of Soviet expansionism, either imagined or justified, in a new world order proved to be an ample enough justification for turning a blind eye to many of the war crimes of the previous five years. Some, like the Holocaust, were persecuted harshly in the Nuremberg trials, but other instances of war crimes from the Axis *and* Allied powers remained untouched by any legal apparatus for decades and sometimes not at all.⁷⁴ In the case of the Korean Comfort Women, this political context of a global struggle against the proliferation of communism dictated which war crimes were to be brought up on a national scale and persecuted. Unfortunately, the case of the Comfort Women fell in the column of war crimes that would not be politically expedient to discuss in the 1950s. Another uncomfortable truth that was largely responsible for the lack of legal persecution immediately following the end of the Second World War against Japan was that, like many of the Korean elite, Americans were directly responsible for the perpetuation of these systems of sexual abuse in Korea. Historian Carlin Meyer succinctly expresses the rationale for this lack of expediency regarding legal action:

It would surely have appeared unseemly for the Tribunal to prosecute when occupation forces initially endorsed and partook of a system of "entertainment" not dissimilar to the comfort system, whose premises - that warriors have

⁷⁴ The most obvious example being the integration of Nazi scientists doing pioneering work on V2 rockets prior to the Axis defeat in the Second World War. Many of these scientists were taken in by the United States and their expertise was redirected in aiding American efforts at creating nuclear weapons in the face of a conflict with the Soviet Union. This integration of scientists was referred to as "Operation Paperclip" by the American Joint Intelligence Objectives Agency. A contemporary work that provides a good overview of particularly this operation is: Annie Jacobsen, *Operation Paperclip: The Secret Intelligence Program That Brought Nazi Scientists to America*, First ed. 2013 (New York: Back Bay Books, 2015).

uncontrollable sexual appetites which would otherwise be unleashed on local women - were strikingly similar.⁷⁵

In the interest of both the United States and Japan, the legal discussion of the use of Comfort Women during the Second World War, and the continued but altered system in the years immediately following 1945, was never brought to light. For American military leaders, pragmatism outweighed a legal or moral impetus. In the case of Douglas MacArthur, the Supreme Allied commander in the Pacific, his vested interest in the revitalization of the Japanese economy and country meant that it would not be expedient to praise the country with one hand and persecute its widespread sexual abuse with the other. The result was simply a silence in international discussions. One could make the argument that such a silence in international courtrooms regarding the Comfort Women was simply a result of a lack of knowledge about the system by the American military. However, this was not the case. A series of documents, ranging from a military report in 1945 titled *Amenities in the Japanese Armed Forces*, to interrogation reports of comfort women themselves, *Interrogation Report No. 49* and *Psychological Warfare: Interrogation Bulletin No. 2*, all attest to the fact that the United States military was fully aware of the institutional nature of sexual slavery implemented by the Japanese military.⁷⁶ Koreans were preoccupied with the outbreak of the Korean War and Japan was more concerned with re-building of its cities that were destroyed by American bombs. For many

⁷⁵ Carlin Meyer, "Crimes Against Humanity Women: The Uncomfortable Stories of 'Comfort Women,' - A Review Essay," review of *Comfort Women Speak: Testimony by Sex Slaves of the Japanese Military*, ed. Sangmie Choi Schellstede, *New York Law School Journal of Human Rights* 17 (2001): 1027.

⁷⁶ Photographs of comfort women have also been found in collections at the Public Record Office in London, the US National Archives, and the Australian War Memorial. Tanaka, *Japan's Comfort Women*, 85-86.

of the women who were involved in the Comfort Corps of the Japanese military or the institutionalized prostitution under American oversight, their experiences remained untold.

The Korean war may have been reduced to a stalemate by 1953, but that did not mean that the American military presence in Seoul was reduced. The presence of the American military in Korea steadily grew from 1945 onward, and today, the United States possesses the largest foreign military base in the world, Camp Humphreys, located near Pyeongtaek. The desire for Korean independence ran strongly throughout the peninsula, and in 1948, after a series of presidential elections and constitutional assemblies, the Republic of Korea was deemed its own independent and sovereign nation. However, this did not mean that American military forces disappeared until the renewal of violence with the intrusion by the North several years later. As Bruce Cumings notes, contrary to popular belief in the United States, American soldiers remained a constant presence on the peninsula through the conclusion of the decade. Korea may have been a sovereign and independent republic by 1949, but that did not necessarily mean that the American military was prepared to leave either. The task of reconstruction transformed into a process of integration. On a surface level, American forces had done their job in the Pacific and had happily returned to the United States. But “In reality, they never left.”⁷⁷ Instead, there remained a substantial force of logistical service members in the peninsula, “American advisers were all over the war zones in the South, constantly shadowing their Korean counterparts and urging them on to greater effort.”⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Bruce Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun: A Modern History* 2nd ed. (New York; London: W.W. Norton and Company, 2005), 245.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

The American presence in South Korea continued in the decades following 1953, when a formal armistice was declared, and it was the American military that represented American interests and American capital in country. The American presence in South Korea began with its provisional military governance in 1945 and formally ended three years later, but American military forces remained regardless; they remained with their money as well. In an economically devastated country after three years of civil war, the South, though better off than the North, still was in a state of economic destitution. The American military became *the* economic link between Uncle Sam and South Korea, “the American military commander controlled the entire U.S. aid program from 1951 to 1959.”⁷⁹

This American military presence never wavered, and U.S. Army bases began dotting the peninsula. With these bases came economic benefits and employment for locals in a variety of service positions, but also as a key link to American money. American GIs stationed on military bases throughout the country had incredible amounts of buying power in a post-war atmosphere such as Seoul in the 1950s. Meredith Lair’s description of the experiences of American soldiers stationed in Vietnam two decades later seems strikingly similar to those of American GIs in Korea after 1953, “a snapshot of the Vietnam experience captures something truly carnivalesque: a second life, a time outside time, in which appetites of all kinds – for food and drink, drugs, sex, and violence – were nourished and indulged.”⁸⁰ American soldiers were in a unique position, both with their familiar society reproduced on the base and yet at the same time, in a completely foreign land,

⁷⁹ Cumings, *Korea’s Place in the Sun*, 304.

⁸⁰ Meredith Lair, *Armed with Abundance: Consumerism & Soldiering in the Vietnam War* (North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 183.

where nearly everything was permissible. The coupling of de-humanizing perspectives of Asian peoples, steadily force-fed to them by American propagandists during the Second World War, and their superior positions of buying power, put them at the very top of any and all power hierarchies in the newly independent Republic of Korea.

But another integral element that facilitated the ability of American GIs to engage in sexual misconduct thousands of miles from their homes lies in the recreation of the American experience and life abroad. The Korean war has yet to be officially concluded and as recently as 2020, Kim Jong-un had been conducting nuclear missile tests in the region surrounding the Korean peninsula. But for all the specters of danger, life at an American army base in Korea past the 1970s and the conclusion of the Vietnam war, was remarkably tame.⁸¹ But regardless of the likelihood for combat, foreign military bases exist for the *potential* for violent conflict in a given geographic region, at least this is the justification as professed to the public both domestically and in their host countries. As Cynthia Enloe highlights, the entire structure of military bases serves to address this potential future combat, “it [a military base] is *militarized* insofar as most military decisions are judged by a principal criterion: how well does this proposed rule or practice serve that military’s priorities - not environmental priorities, not civilian democratic priorities ... and not women’s rights priorities.”⁸² The course of such thinking, according to American military and political planners, meant that things like soldier morale and the prevention of venereal disease were priorities. The intersection of sexual misconduct by

⁸¹ Throughout the 1970s US army bases within the Korean peninsula served as staging centers for military actions in Vietnam as well as logistics centers.

⁸² Enloe, *Beaches*, 129.

American GIs abroad and the desire of American policymakers to hold firm to their hegemonic global rule began in the Pacific compounded these issues.

In order to solve the problem of American GIs feelings lonely or depressed with their positions, one American soldier posted to Korea in the 1940s described it as the “Siberia” of occupational postings in Asia,⁸³ the United States military began investing massive sums of money to make the posting more attractive for soldiers to serve their terms there. These included massive monetary investments (the most recent 10 billion USD), and the inclusion of amenities to make Americans more comfortable during their postings, supposedly contributing to their overall morale and thus combat readiness. But one could certainly argue that the construction of golf courses, multiple one-story apartment buildings – an incredible luxury in one of the most densely populated countries in the world – and McDonalds, served a purpose other than combat readiness. This other purpose, as authors such as Mark Gillem and David Vine have highlighted, was the reconstruction of a fully-fledged American society abroad, or in the words of Mark Gillem’s monograph, a veritable *America Town*.⁸⁴

In an effort to make the conditions in the country more amenable for soldiers during their posting, one of the solutions that the United States military decided on was to integrate infrastructure to make tours of duty for soldiers in Korea “accompanied” rather than “unaccompanied.” The difference being “accompanied” postings were areas in which soldiers could bring their spouses and children to live with them. Gilem makes reference to Cynthia Enloe’s argument about the inclusion of women in to military bases as

⁸³ Ernest Kovats, *All My Love, Son: Letters from Korea* (self-published, 2005), letter dated December 23, 1946, 59 in Carruthers, “Latrines,” 127.

⁸⁴ Mark L. Gillem, *America Town: Building the Outposts of Empire* (Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).

stabilizing influences for both the soldier and single soldiers around them and that essentially, “Keeping soldiers happy on a foreign base requires keeping soldiers’ wives happy.”⁸⁵ The concern over the happiness of the soldiers in “unaccompanied” postings may be a point of concern for the military insofar as better conditions for families and “accompanied” postings are far more likely to have willing and happy soldiers living and working there. However, vestiges of military pragmatism about the physical health of soldiers were also an important factor in dictating policy moves such as the movement in Korea away from “unaccompanied” to “accompanied” postings. The family, as a stabilizing influence, is also more likely to reduce the number of soldiers frequenting brothels or local prostitutes and contracting venereal disease that would limit combat readiness. Again, we see the policy of the United States military nominally aiding in the reduction of their soldiers frequenting local brothels, but only as part of a larger policy in the maintenance and control of soldier behavior. In this instance, a larger policy goal of the United States military, to reduce the exposure of its soldiers to venereal disease, may have positively affected dynamics between American GIs and local prostitutes, but only because it contributes to the combat readiness of troops.

With the recreation of spaces, food, building and living standards so familiar to American service members in an entirely different country, such an environment may make soldiers feel more at ease, but they also meant that American ways of thinking persisted as well. Not only were they presented with living standards that were almost entirely unlike the host country itself, but whenever soldiers left their “little America,” and ventured into surrounding areas, many in Korea catered to American interests – an American soldier’s

⁸⁵ Gillem, *America Town*, 49.

salary was not something to ignore. Maria Hohn and Seungsook Moon point out that “American soldiers stationed abroad are not only far away from home but are also operating in a foreign environment where they feel both a sense of racial and cultural superiority.”⁸⁶ These conditions meant that American soldiers were free to have the comfort and stability of an American environment, but also the carnivalesque anything-goes environment that Meredith Lair describes, just outside of the gates. These cultural and racial superiorities are particularly exacerbated due to postings in the Pacific, rather than bases in Germany or Western Europe. These senses of entitlement conferred by a perception of racial, cultural, and monetary, superiority, continually produce conditions in which local women in Korea have been continuously subjected to sexual assault by American military personnel.

The question of how the United States has been able to divorce itself from a system of widespread sexual abuse is answered not by looking back into history, but by looking out the window of a United States Army subsidized apartment in Pyeongtaek, South Korea. Names like “Hooker Hill” and “Monkey House” have become common knowledge for US service members stationed in South Korea as these are areas where illegal prostitution has been quietly permitted by the Korean government. Though the use of “E-6,” or “entertainer” visas, many promoters are able to import economically disadvantaged women from surrounding areas to fill the niche of regulated but illegal prostitution.

⁸⁶ Maria Hohn and Seungsook Moon, “The Politics of Gender, Sexuality, Race, and Class in the U.S. Military Empire,” in *Over There: Living with the U.S. Military Empire from World War Two to the Present*, eds. Maria Hohn and Seungsook Moon (Durham;London: Duke University Press, 2010), 2.

Thanks to a steady stream of American GIs from nearby military bases, the infrastructure, and relationships between this type of regulated prostitution and US service members is the most recent evolution of the Comfort Women system of decades ago. Instead of being physically kept as slaves, many of these women are kept under conditions of debt bondage similar to the economic system of sharecroppers of the 19th century south; many club promoters charge hidden fees or deduct money from a woman's paycheck rendering her unable to pay off her debt to her employer. This form of debt bondage or slavery is both perpetuated by and essentially paid for, by American service members. In a modern capitalist consumer culture, one votes with one's dollars. Regardless of the US Army's policy of regarding well known red-light districts as "Off-Limits," the robust market for sex in South Korea around army bases indicates that soldiers are not listening.⁸⁷

Both the United States military and the Korean government contributed to a high level of oversight and direct intervention into the regulation and control of prostitution and abuse. In the 1940s, elite Korean leaders were instrumental in directly assisting in this process, both furnishing physical locations in which these sexual unions could take place, but also in framing the invasive and degrading process of STD examinations as an effort to eradicate a "national disease," justifying and framing the process as necessary for "the sake of the *Democratic* nation."⁸⁸ The fundamental issue preventing the persecution of the American military's sexual abuse in Asia from 1945 and throughout the 1970s is that to do

⁸⁷ "USAG Humphreys Off-Limits," US Army Garrison Humphreys: The Army's Home in Korea. Page last modified September 8th, 2020. <https://home.army.mil/humphreys/index.php/about/us-army-garrison-humphreys-and-area-iii-limits-information>.

⁸⁸ A similar sense of patriotic language pervaded in the RAA's description and acquisition of women for institutionalized prostitution in Japan in the same time period immediately following American occupation. John Dower notes that this patriotic impulse was so strong in Japan that "some claimed to be attracted not so much by the assurance of food and shelter as by the appeal to give their bodies "for the country."" Dower, 127; Lee, 465.

so requires a blunt confrontation of ingrained patriarchal and capitalist tenants of the United States military. The pending case in the High Court of South Korea points to the issue of US military prostitution being taken more seriously as an issue, but without more a comprehensive acknowledgement by the United States that their military actively has a problem with the fostering of attitudes and perceptions that *lead* to sexual violence, plaintiffs will consistently face an uphill battle in the courts with the American military and their funds tipping the scales in their favor.

Japan: Sexual Assault Politicized

*Announcement to New Japanese Women! We require the utmost co-operation of new Japanese women who participate in a great project to comfort the occupation forces, which is part of the national emergency establishment of the postwar management. Female workers, between 18 and 25 years old, are wanted. Accommodation, clothes and meals, all free.*⁸⁹

Forty-two years after the implementation of the Japanese “Prostitution Prevention Law” in 1958, the Organization of the Human Rights Watch reported that “A wide range of sexual acts, however, have remained outside the purview of prohibitions on prostitution, and businesses involving the sale of such services are regulated.” The report further outlined that this has resulted in a thriving “sex entertainment business,” where individuals can circumvent the law by falling under Japan’s “Entertainment Business Law.” And despite the law passed in 1956 that specifically made established prostitution illegal in the country, a measure adopted in order to, in the words of a director of teacher’s Union Takada Nahoko, “improve sexual morals,”⁹⁰ the Human Rights Watch report notes that “a number of brothels continue to operate throughout the country.”⁹¹ Not only do these locations operate fully as brothels, but law enforcement generally “turn a blind eye to the violations of the law.”⁹²

The issue of prostitution and sexual politics posed some of the most pressing questions for the recently independent country in the years following their independence

⁸⁹ Tanaka, *Japan’s Comfort Women*, 146.

⁹⁰ Sarah Kovner, *Occupying Power: Sex Workers and Servicemen in Postwar Japan* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2012), 134.

⁹¹ Human Rights Watch, *Owed Justice: Thai Women Trafficked into Debt Bondage in Japan* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2000), 25.

⁹² *Ibid.*

from American Provisional government administration. Even after Americans had given up their positions as occupational authorities, the regulation and involvement of US service members “remained disproportionately significant in the debate over criminalization.”⁹³ The complex interplay of how sex, gender, morality, and nation-building conflated in the years following the American occupation of Japan has had lasting and profound implications for how sex work and sex-workers are viewed and seen in Japanese culture today. But because of the tightly wound links between the American military and the Japanese sex-industry, both during and after the occupation period, these issues were never fully domestic. The legacy of the United States military in Japan has affected all colors of life, from building contracts to music culture, but in the case of sexual regulation, misconduct, and control, it remains part of a larger issue in the Pacific where the U.S. “still [tolerates] sex work around overseas bases and [seeks] to protect its own soldiers from prosecution for sexual violence.”⁹⁴

An acknowledgment of the sexual misconduct of American GIS in the post-war occupation of Japan needs to be made, but it needs to be made with an understanding that leaves room for agency and nuance for Japanese women as well. Historians such as Brian Walsh may be charged with underemphasizing the impact of sexual misconduct by American forces, whereas other scholars such as Ruth Lawlor may present a too simplistic presentation of how the dynamics between soldiers and Japanese sex-workers negatively affected locals. In this particular case, although an argument can be made that the interactions between the United States military and local Japanese women in the sex-industry throughout the occupation period and thereafter represented an exercise in

⁹³ Kovner, *Occupying Power*, 124.

⁹⁴ Kovner, *Occupying Power*, 157.

unbalanced gender and power dynamics that resulted in instances of sexual misconduct on a widespread scale, there were also opportunities for agency couched in larger systems of oppression. Sarah Kovner notes that in regard to academics evaluating the presence of US forces and sexual misconduct, “they focus on violence, humiliation, and dehumanizing medical treatment as intrinsic to the Occupation.”⁹⁵ These evaluations leave little room for how, in the midst of a more broadly defeated society, women in these positions were “uniquely empowered, with control over their fortunes, their families, and their fates.”⁹⁶ It would be disingenuous to present or portray the experiences of the majority of the Japanese women engaged in sex-work during the occupation as generally positive, but to not include those that were similarly distorts a more complicated reality.

The Japanese relationship with sexuality was in some ways similar to that of Korean sexuality but contained some key differences. A pervasive characteristic of East-Asian sexuality that was present both in Korea and in Japan was the necessity of women to adhere to strict rules regarding romance and sex as well as acknowledge the importance of filial piety rooted in a highly patriarchal society. John Dower notes that ““Good” women were taught that they were inherently inferior to men; that their entire lives were subordinated to the patriarchy of three generations (father, husband, and in old age, son).”⁹⁷ These cultural and social standards, initially beginning during the Meiji Restoration (1867)⁹⁸,

⁹⁵ Kovner, *Occupying Power*, 157.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 162.

⁹⁸ These social and cultural standards governing sexuality represented a unique Japanese blend of Confucian values and Bushido principles. Mark McLelland believes that the standards outlined in this civil code functioned as “a tool in the broader project of modernity that sought to apply to the population as a whole a fusion of Confucian-inspired *samurai* values, which stressed the superiority of men over women, and Victorian ideas about the importance of monogamy and chastity.” Mark McLelland, “Kissing Is a Symbol of Democracy!’ Dating, Democracy, and Romance in Occupied Japan, 1945-1952,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 19, no. 3 (2010): 510.

were then “reformulated” by the state in order to dictate modern sexual and social conventions between men and women in Japan during the 1940s. In turn, the family as a unit was then devoted to the higher calling of the state and the emperor. This layered hierarchy that placed women in Japan to be both subservient to husband, son, and father, was also in effect in Korea during the 1940s, but the additional layer of devotion of the family unit to an imperial power certainly was not. This devotion to the Japanese emperor may have been nominal in the case of subjugated Koreans, submitting to the abstract power in a token sense, but for many Japanese women, this placed them at the very bottom of the social and gender hierarchy.

The familial devotion to the Japanese emperor by the Japanese also represents another distinction in the relationships of Korean people to sexuality compared with those of the Japanese. From as early as the first Sino-Japanese War (1894), and particularly with the defeat of Russia in the Russo-Japanese War (1905), the Japanese and others had begun to see the country and its people as a power to be reckoned with in the Pacific. As mentioned in the previous section, Orientalizing attitudes leveled by Western powers were the result of this expansionism, replete with de-humanizing characteristics, but the Japanese began to see themselves differently as well. Their own imperialist ventures throughout the Pacific placed them as the most important regional power in the Pacific other than China or Russia. With the colonization of the Korean peninsula in 1910, there existed plenty of colonial subjects for the Japanese to measure their own superiority against. As Hiroshi Fukurai and Alice Yang note, “Rather than incorporating the Western concept of race and its racial classification which was based on tenuous phrenological and phenotypical differences, Japan's racial classification of group membership infused the

concept of race with that of ethnicity based on a common ‘blood,’ imagined ancestry, and shared national identity.”⁹⁹ This difference in conception of racial classification had particularly important ramifications for how the Japanese understood and engaged with sexuality and prostitution. A sense of racial superiority intertwined with the sanctity of blood relationships made their colonial rule particularly harsh in Korea, but also justified the repeated and institutionalized system of sexual slavery in the 1930s and 40s.

In contrast to the Japanese construction of racial classifications and standards, their relationships with modern prostitution had more in common with the West than their own original invention. Some authors, such as Robert Kramm, highlight the link between the influences of western imperialism to the incorporation of global European standards of prostitution from Berlin or London in the period following the Meiji Restoration(1868).¹⁰⁰ The desire to be on par with other imperialist powers led the Japanese to adopt their own understandings of racial and sexual standards that colored their interactions with their Pacific neighbors, contributing to much of the sexual abuse during the 1940s. The rationale in procuring women from other Pacific countries to serve as comfort women for the Japanese military had much to do with the racial understandings that had evolved in the decades prior to the war and the patriarchal standards that demanded Japanese women to be chaste and devoted wives. They clearly could not fulfill this role residing in comfort stations. The Japanese emulation of racialized and imperialist thinking borrowed from the West is no more clearly expressed than the Eugenics law passed in 1940 that echoed the

⁹⁹ Hiroshi Fukurai and Alice Yang, “The History of Japanese Racism, Japanese American Redress, and the Dangers Associated with Government Regulation of Hate Speech,” 45 *Hastings Const. L.Q.* 533 (2018): 538.

¹⁰⁰ Robert Kramm, *Sanitized Sex: Regulating Prostitution, Venereal Disease, and Intimacy in Occupied Japan, 1945-1952*, Asia Pacific Modern Series (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2017), 6.

Nazi ideology on controlling miscegenation and eliminating mental illness.¹⁰¹ The Japanese were highly concerned about how their women were treated, both in a vision that emphasized filial piety rooted in intense patriarchal systems that was similar to that of Korean society, but largely overcast with a unique adoption of imperialistic tendencies of Western powers that made its relationship to American soldiers and their desire for sex fundamentally different.

Another key difference that had an impact on the relationship between U.S. service members and the Japanese people were the pervading racist stereotypes that soldiers and administrators had adopted regarding their supposed “superhuman” characteristics. In this regard there were similarities between attitudes to Koreans and the Japanese, of overarching orientalist attitudes, but American GIs were not fighting the Koreans or Filipinos in the Second World War. The Japanese had earned their right in the international community as a powerful and significant imperialist power in the “co-prosperity” sphere in East Asia that would serve as a bulwark against Western influences. Americans approached the war in the Pacific with increasing determination, discovering that the Japanese would prefer to die in banzai attacks or inhabit tunnel networks on islands such as Iwo Jima, than surrender to American forces.

Propagandists in the United States opted for dualistic interpretation of the Japanese. If the Germans were the “Huns,” then the Japanese were simultaneously weak and stupid monkey-like creatures and at the same time, fierce and fanatical super-human soldiers. One American soldier described civilians in Okinawa during the occupation period in terms that echoed this belief that the Japanese were far from human, “The most amazing thing is that

¹⁰¹ Tanaka, *Japan's Comfort Women*, 32.

you never hear a whimper out of them. The bones may be sticking out of their arms or legs from compound fractures, sometimes their eyes or part of their faces are shot away yet they never cry or complain.”¹⁰² But regardless of the imagery, weak or the ultimate fighter, the Japanese were consistently portrayed as un-human. These types of propaganda pushed by the United States during the Second World War were, according to John Dower, “surprisingly adaptable.” Following their defeat in 1945, the images of the subhuman Japanese soldier who fought until they were quite literally dead, morphed into different racist perceptions that were instrumental in the mental re-shuffling that had to occur for the United States to “win the peace” in the Pacific: “to the victors, the simian became a pet, the child a pupil, the madman a patient.”¹⁰³ Japanese women were also subject to this consciously retrofitted perception of the now conquered, becoming subject to the Orientalizing sexual gaze, but also the status of a defeated people.

In the days right before the arrival of the American military, the Japanese government discussed the potential issue of widespread sexual violence that American service members might inflict on Japanese women. Ironically, the Japanese military government was well aware of the potential for this behavior due to their own military committing the very same crimes in China several years prior.¹⁰⁴ Despite misgivings by

¹⁰² Paul to Margaret Skuse, June 24, 1945, box 23, James Thomas Watkins Papers in Carruthers, *The Good Occupation*, 95.

¹⁰³ John Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), 13.

¹⁰⁴ As historian John Dower notes in his authoritative work, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II*, “Urban families were urged to send their womenfolk to the countryside. Women were advised to continue to wear the baggy *monpe* pantaloons of the war years rather than more enticing feminine attire. Young girls were cautioned not to appear friendly. Still, it was taken for granted that foreigners would demand sexual gratification. The question was simply: who would provide it.” The fear of allied troops violating Japanese women was a central concern for the Japanese government who eventually exploited the strong sense of self-sacrifice and patriotic fervor of lower-class women to participate in a newly minted and domestic “Comfort Corps.” Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 124.

some of the Japanese cabinet and comments about the “strict morals” of the Allied soldiers, they decided to establish a system of institutionalized prostitution, based on the exact specifications of their own comfort stations used in the War to mitigate the potential for sexual violence: “GIs paid their money at the front desk and received a ticket and a condom. They gave the ticket to the comfort woman that served them. This procedure replicated that used at the Japanese military comfort stations during the war.”¹⁰⁵

This system, harkening back to the standards of the comfort stations established throughout the Pacific by the Japanese, appeared justified after the arrival of the American forces. In a personal journal entry, one observer who witnessed the final formal surrender ceremony aboard the USS *Missouri*, related that later that day he had attended a meeting called for by General MacArthur “concerning some reported rape cases on the part of Marines.”¹⁰⁶ The issue of sexual misconduct by American servicemen in the immediate days following the occupation appeared, at least to higher ranking American officials, a clear and definite issue. Despite reports, for example from the *New York Times* in 1945, that “our army has conducted itself with amazing decorum and lack of display of any kind of antagonism,” the rosy picture of occupied Japan that some newspapers seemed to have was far from the truth.¹⁰⁷ One Navy Lieutenant even remarked that “After all we have said about the Japanese looting of Nanking, Manila and so on, it certainly is a shame to realize that we are no better.”¹⁰⁸ Instead of the morally upright forces that some of the Japanese officials had expected, American occupation soldiers appeared to be, in these instances,

¹⁰⁵ Tanaka, *Japan's Comfort Women*, 147.

¹⁰⁶ Robert L. Eichelberger, *Our Jungle Road to Tokyo* (New York: Viking Press, 1950), 264; Eichelberger Diary, September 2, 1945, box 1, Robert L. Eichelberger Papers, in Carruthers, *The Good Occupation*, 88.

¹⁰⁷ Frank L. Kluckhoh, “First Impressions of Conquered Japan: A correspondent sees a proud land and a people with many problems which we share,” *The New York Times*, (New York, NY), Sep. 9, 1945.

¹⁰⁸ M.Sgt. John C. Plock to Cpl. Harold Kahlert, September 11, 1945, Harald P. Kahlert Papers, WVM in Carruthers, *The Good Occupation*, 88.

more conquerors than moral exemplars, which is exactly what had been related to them by the war department prior to their arrival in the Pacific. In the “Pocket Guide to Japan” for the use of American military personnel, soldiers were instructed to say, “‘We come as conquerors but not as oppressors.’ Take that as your motto. Make it the key to your conduct.”¹⁰⁹ The lines between conqueror and oppressor were clearly more ambiguous than the war department had intended. It also comes as no surprise that amidst the less than explicit orders from Pacific-wide command, local commanders, and general literature from the war department, GIs found themselves in positions to interpret instructions as they pleased.

The Japanese government found some small measure of control in who they chose to be part of the newly created Japanese “Comfort Corps.” The women in this case were drawn from prostitutes already working in Japan and any number of other women who were willing to participate for promises of meals and a small wage – an enticing offer for anyone in a post-war nation.¹¹⁰ The administration of this domestic replication of the “Comfort Corps” was under the directive of the “Recreation and Amusement Association”(RAA) and was facilitated by members of the Japanese business elite involved in the bar, restaurant, and entertainment industry along with the Japanese police – all funded by the Japanese government.

This retrofitted system of domestic prostitution for American GIs was made possible only with the knowledge and approval of the Japanese government. No longer

¹⁰⁹ *Pocket Guide to Japan* Prepared by Army Information Branch, I. and E. Division, A.S.F., United States Army, For the War and Navy Departments, Published by Naval History and Heritage Command, November 20, 2017, Page 3 <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/library/online-reading-room/title-list-alphabetically/p/pocket-guide-japan.html>.

¹¹⁰ It is important to note that many of these women were also coerced by the Japanese authorities and few if any received the wages that they were promised.

allowed to utilize the foreign women of Korea, Taiwan, China, Dutch East Indies, and the Philippines, the Japanese government turned to the lowest rungs of the socioeconomic ladder within the country itself. Destitute women throughout Japan responded to the ads by the RAA, many of which were couched in the nationalist rhetoric that was similarly seen in Korea under the Syngman Rhee administration years later and found some method of meager income. Legal and regulated prostitution in Japan persisted until 1958, but for years following 1945 American commanders and local officials sparred over policy and legislation regarding prostitution. Ever vigilant for the potential for VD to sideline forces from potential combat readiness, official U.S. policy was that prostitution was forbidden, but instead of a directive coming from General MacArthur, the ranking commander in the region, it was up to the local divisions to formulate, and enforce policy to this broader goal. The outcomes varied wildly from division to division, some successfully curbed their soldiers' sexual desires through heavy handed directives from commanders such as "completely shutting down all brothels" in Hiroshima, while others provided free condoms.¹¹¹

More generally, though likely less effectively, army pamphlets framed the interactions between GIs and local women as dangerous and potentially violent; one army pamphlet noted that any "Geisha" would be willing to "slit your throat" and that soldiers should "Stay away from the women of Japan - all of them."¹¹² The official policy presented by MacArthur's office and in army literature then stood in direct conflict with the developments of the RAA and local commanders on the ground. Even in literature such as the soldier's *Guide to Japan*, soldiers were warned that "Japanese prostitutes are almost

¹¹¹ Kovner, *Occupying Power*, 29.

¹¹² Ibid.

universally infected with venereal disease,” and to “Keep away from prostitutes and pickups,” which was the best way to avoid contracting disease. According to the guide however, “The next best way is to use prophylaxis properly and promptly.”¹¹³ One consistent and significant outcome from the various methods and forms of post-war prostitution in Japan post 1945, RAA activities and others included, was a lasting and profound effect on how American GIs viewed Japanese women. Dower highlights this change, “The ubiquitous sexuality linking conqueror and conquered had far-reaching ramifications insofar as American perceptions of the defeated nation and its people were concerned. To some members of the occupation force, native women came to be regarded as little more than available sexual objects.”¹¹⁴

It is even more significant then, that while American GIs may have come to understand their relationships between Japanese women and themselves as highly hierarchical and built on perceptions of orientalist superiority, at the very same time, American officials in Tokyo espoused almost radical notions of gender equality. In 1946, General MacArthur set out to complete one of the most important tasks of the Occupation period, the drafting and publishing of a new Japanese constitution. This process brought into sharp focus many of the fundamental differences between American and Japanese culture, with the issue of imperial power as a keystone piece of Japanese legal structures and society deeply troubling to Americans who had grown up in a constitutional republic that possessed a distinct distaste for monarchy. Initially, the MacArthur government had requested a version of a new constitution from Japanese authorities themselves, supposedly content as long as it had incorporated specific standards set forth by MacArthur himself.

¹¹³ *Pocket Guide to Japan*, 71-72.

¹¹⁴ Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 138.

As John Dower notes however, “Even here, the usual incongruities were apparent.”¹¹⁵ American officials, in clear positions of power and control, ordered the Japanese to “adopt democracy by their ‘freely expressed will.’”¹¹⁶ The charade of allowing the Japanese to formulate their own constitutional revisions was quickly shut down by MacArthur. Instead, a motley crew of American and European lawyers, academics, editors, businessmen, and journalists were tasked with more specifically delineating the finer points of MacArthur’s general requirements for the Constitution.

The draft of the Constitution that the committee eventually produced (and forced through to publication) was the product of a collection of young and capable individuals who believed that they were in “an extraordinary position to lift oppression and institutionalize democracy.”¹¹⁷ Outside of the considerations of cultural imperialism evident in the drafting of another country’s constitution (with little or any oversight from the people themselves), the document also highlights how, on an international stage, American officials saw themselves as the defenders of the Japanese people: “the government, not the people, was resisting such change.”¹¹⁸ More specifically, as the constitution reflects, American authors of the constitution and officials in the occupation government saw themselves as safeguarding the rights and liberties of the Japanese people, and Japanese women in particular. Beate Sirota, a woman on the drafting committee, helped to ensure that specific clauses of gender equality were preserved and codified in the

¹¹⁵ Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 348.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 366.

¹¹⁸ Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 372.

final draft of the document. As a result, “one of the strongest equal-rights provisions in modern constitutional law” was cemented into the new liberal constitution of Japan.¹¹⁹

One may view this as a successful insurance of the equality of the sexes for Japanese society or of the impact of cultural imperialism nakedly expressed by American policymakers, but it also speaks volumes about the incredible disconnect between idealized American democratic principles, and the very real behavior of American GIs stationed in Japan, and more generally, in the Pacific. With one hand, the Occupation government believed that the Japanese society had placed women in positions of “legal and marital oppression,” while the other hand less than enthusiastically tackled the issue of sexual misconduct of their soldiers by passing out prophylactics and patronizing RAA sponsored brothels.¹²⁰ A *Times* article published in 1946 even related, “Since U.S. occupation troops in Japan are unalterably determined to fraternize, the military authorities began helping them out last week by issuing a phrasebook. Sample utility phrases: ‘You’re very pretty’ ... ‘How about a date?’”¹²¹ This selective concern over publicly espousing liberal standards about the treatment of Japanese women rang hollow when American soldiers very clearly had failed to internalize these optimistic standards of behavior with local women. Furthermore, this rhetoric, of publicly expressing concern over the treatment of

¹¹⁹ Article 24 of the drafted Constitution stated: “Marriage shall be based only on the mutual consent of both sexes and it shall be maintained through mutual cooperation with the equal rights of husband and wife as a basis.” With regard to choice of spouse, property rights, inheritance, choice of domicile, divorce and other matters pertaining to marriage and the family, laws shall be enacted from the standpoint of individual dignity and the essential equality of the sexes.” *The Constitution of Japan Promulgated on November 3, 1946; Came into effect on May 3, 1947* Published by Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, February 27, 2001, https://japan.kantei.go.jp/constitution_and_government_of_japan/constitution_e.html.

¹²⁰ Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 366.

¹²¹ *Time Magazine*, July 15, 1946 in Cynthia Enloe “It Takes Two,” in Hohn and Moon, *Let the Good Times Roll*, 22.

local women while failing to address underlying behavior within the military that caused local women harm, became a hallmark of such dynamics in the Pacific.

It is important to note here one of the more recent developments in the historiography of American GI sexual misconduct in the Pacific, and in Japan in particular, during the Second World War. Several authors, particularly Brian Walsh, in recent research regarding the post-war period in Japan have focused on one of the continually pervading myths regarding sexual assault in the Pacific theater, namely that there was widespread rape at the hands of American GIs immediately following their occupation of nations such as Korea and Japan. A more common understanding of the immediate post-war period is reflected in the scholarship from the early 1990s and 2000s where the savage nature of American soldiers in the Pacific is highlighted.¹²² It is important to both acknowledge that based on more recent scholarship, these claims are exaggerated in quantifiable terms, but also that, at the same time, sexual assault at the hands of allied forces *did* happen and did so in a highly troubling frequency.¹²³ Further complicating these numbers are instances in which women did not report their experiences of sexual assault to authorities, or cases in which women were simply not in positions to report sexual misconduct or they would risk losing their single source of income.

¹²² For example, see Kovner, *Occupying Power*.

¹²³ For example, Walsh cites John Dower's standard *Embracing Defeat*, among other works, that report incredibly high numbers of sexual assault at the hands of the United States military. Walsh notes, "In terms of scale, the figure cited by Dower and many others would mean that there were more than 700,000 reported rapes of Japanese women during the Occupation. Thus, judging from the sheer numbers of incidents, the U.S. Occupation of Japan would have been one of the worst occurrences of mass sexual violence in the history of the world." Though Walsh downgrades the level of sexual violence by American service members to a degree that some still would hesitate to agree with, his broader conclusion, that the general numbers seem to be wantonly inflated and not rigorously analyzed from a qualitative perspective, is well taken. If some of the quantitative questions of underreporting, censorship, or burying of reports by the military are of less concern than raw numbers by Walsh, a middle ground seems most appropriate for understanding the scale of the violence in this case. Walsh, "Sexual Violence," 1203.

Like in Korea, several years after 1945, the Japanese government changed tacks when it came to the issue of prostitution. Moving away from the initial flurry of advertisements and job postings describing the work of Japanese comfort women for occupation forces as patriotic service to the country, by 1956, the Japanese government had reframed the place of prostitution in the public discourse. With the introduction of the “Prostitution Punishment Bill,” there was a concerted effort by officials to rebrand prostitution with U.S. service members and local Japanese men alike, as a “social evil.”¹²⁴ Though this bill eventually passed in the Japanese legislature, there still remained the issue of American presence in the country. Much like the situation across the East Sea, American service members served as both financial benefactors to the Japanese economy and clients of local prostitutes. Another inauspicious characteristic of the relationship between the United States military, and that of all its post-war allies where military bases remained, was highlighted by Japanese human rights advocates following the passage of the bill. Minister of State Hamamura Shiro replied to a human rights lawyer, Inomata Kozo, that crimes committed by U.S. forces during their stationing in on the island, “might have been overlooked.” He went on to imply that, “Japan’s Cold War alliance precluded prosecuting servicemen.”¹²⁵

These relationships, both political and economic, had a massive impact on the ways in which semi-sovereign nations in the immediate post-war years engaged with and persecuted U.S. service members in cases of sexual assault. The bill passed in 1956 did not address the issue of American service members patronizing Japanese prostitutes or addressing the issue of sexual assault, and even worse, it failed to benefit the demographic

¹²⁴ Kovner, *Occupying Power*, 129.

¹²⁵ Kovner, *Occupying Power*, 132.

of Japanese women that it had purported to help. Not only did it fail to protect women from the moral dangers of selling sex, which is what the government had hoped, but it also made the profession altogether more dangerous for women themselves.¹²⁶ Little changed for Japanese women in the sex industry because the government failed to address the overarching problem related to a lack of income that drove many women in to the profession in the first place. Instead, the prostitution bill of 1956 simply stigmatized the profession further and left little protection from either the government or law enforcement; women became “ever more marginalized, even while remaining essential to the process of reimagining a new Japanese nation.”¹²⁷

This new nation of Japan, no longer in a position to hold to previous imperial ambitions, was eventually subject to the whims of another empire – the Pax Americana. Though Japanese human rights advocates and politicians saw clearly in the 1950s, with only several years of U.S. Military presence on the archipelago, they were quick to note the potential for problems in sharing a space with another country. Regardless of the intentions of any given host country, they are constrained by the international legal mechanisms that were put in place by the United States in the immediate post-war years, and in many cases, instances in which countries such as South Korea, Japan, and the Philippines desperately needed American capital and defense.

In 1960, the Eisenhower administration renewed the previous 1951 U.S. – Japan Security Treaty into what is now referred to as the U.S. – Japan Status of Force Agreement. These status of force agreements (SOFAs) were the primary diplomatic tool that the United

¹²⁶ There was a “steady rise in rapes since 1949, there was a dramatic increase in 1958 to more than 8500, a 60 percent jump over the year before.” Kovner, *Occupying Power*, 137.

¹²⁷ Kovner, *Occupying Power*, 138.

States used in the post-war era to ensure protections for their soldiers, military bases, and operations all over the world. These treaties, however, often signed under the auspices of a mutualistic relationship between the United States and a host country, have more often proven to be a persistent reminder of the neo-colonialism of the United States during the mid-20th century. As David Vine describes, these treaties often reflect an inverse power imbalance between host countries and the U.S., “the greater power of the United States relative to the host, the shorter the SOFA, placing fewer restrictions on the military and its personnel.”¹²⁸ In most cases, SOFAs set in place by the United States shield US service members from local laws, relying on U.S. Military courts to adjudicate and carry out justice in cases from parking tickets to rape or murder depending on the particular SOFA. Understandably, some nations with previously established SOFAs with the United States have expressed their concern for the established protocols regarding interactions between United States service members and their local populations. Organizations linked to the United States that provide information for potential spouses of service members are well aware of this tension, which is to say that the United States military and governing structure is without a doubt aware as well, “Some new SOFAs have been negotiated, but DOS negotiators believe a gap has emerged between the comprehensive provisions desired by the U.S. (and provided for in many of the earlier-era agreements and prescribed in the GST) and those to which host countries today are willing to agree.”¹²⁹

¹²⁸ David Vine, *Base Nation: How U.S. Military Bases Abroad Harm America and the World* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2015), 266.

¹²⁹ Deborah A. Bradbard, Rosalinda Maury, Amber L. Pitoniak, *Understanding Status of Forces Agreements (SOFA): Removing Barriers to Military Spouse Employment Overseas* (New York: Institute For Veterans and Military Families; Syracuse University; J.P. Morgan Chase, 2018).
Understanding Status of Forces Agreements – Removing Barriers to military spouse employment overseas – Part of the Employment research series by the Institute for veterans and military families.

These agreements between nations have relegated sexual misconduct to the political, divorcing instances of sexual assault and rape from highly personal and intimate matters to levels of political power discourse between two countries. Cynthia Enloe reminds us that sexual relationships, even consensual ones, let alone rape, are inherently politicized, “Many women and men would also prefer to think of sexual relationships as existing in the intimate realm of personal desire and attraction, immune to political manipulation.”¹³⁰ But by adhering to standards of international treaties that place U.S. Service members in the position to rape a schoolgirl in Okinawa in 1995 and not allow Japanese police access to rape suspects, make these instances entirely political.¹³¹ The sexual and the intimate become the public and the politicized, with sensitive cases of sexual assault serving to be opportunities for American politicians to both reinforce their claim to hegemonic authority on a global scale, and to remind host countries of their true positions. Japan may have officially received independence in the early 1950s, but the relationships to the United States remained, and if anything, grew from that point on. Robert Kramm relays that, “Politically, economically, and especially militarily, Japan stayed under the aegis of U.S. hegemony.”¹³² Though many in Japan may look on the SOFA and provisions within the agreement negatively, especially aspects of the agreement that infringe on Japanese sovereignty, many are reticent to broach the subject of renegotiation. The international security afforded by the agreement and protection of the American nuclear umbrella stand in the way of Japanese politicians who wish to make demands of the United States regarding the sexual violence perpetrated by its armed forces. China and North

¹³⁰ Enloe, *Bananas*, 9.

¹³¹ Vine, *Base Nation*, 266.

¹³² Kramm, *Sanitized Sex*, 219.

Korea pose very tangible threats to Japan in the region thus placing the country in an inferior bargaining position diplomatically. The security and presence of the United States military pose compelling and difficult roadblocks for Japanese politicians to circumvent if they wish to address the deeply imbedded issue of sexual assault committed by foreign soldiers in Japan.

Though the United States military and its service members held relative positions of power in relation to the conquered governments of Korea, Japan, and the Philippines, it would also be unjust to portray them in positions that lacked agency. For many women in the Pacific, prostitution offered opportunities for income in an otherwise devastated economy and country following occupation. Though these women (and sometimes men) were operating under conditions where they were the lowest in a *perceived* hierarchy by American GIs, they were able to use stereotypes and prejudices to their advantage. Many leveraged these preconceived notions of their society and their sexuality to entice and attract GIs and their money.¹³³ Furthermore, some Japanese women, formerly relegated to the lowest rungs of the Japanese sociocultural ladder, experienced newfound purpose and value in being desired by American men. As Michiko Takeuchi summarizes, “the pan-pan girls [Japanese prostitutes] not only reinforced but sometimes also contested and even took advantage of the existing sexual politics to serve their individual interests through their performance.”¹³⁴ In all cases between the women of host countries and American GIs, there existed racial and gender hierarchies mediated by the conquer/conquered binary. But just as these discriminations and performances of power did not appear equally across the

¹³³ Michiko Takeuchi “Pan-Pan Girls” Performing and Resisting Neocolonialism in the Pacific Theater – U.S. Military Prostitution in Occupied Japan, 1945-1952,” in Hohn and Moon, *Over There*, 103.

¹³⁴ Takeuchi, “Pan-Pan Girls,” in Hohn and Moon, *Over There*, 93.

region, women themselves similarly responded in a variety of ways. Undoubtedly the women of the Pacific who were forced either by a government or by hunger to engage in prostitution with American GIs, their reasons and responses to American presence in these areas were, and still are, multifaceted.

The Philippines: Gramsci is not Dead¹³⁵

I had just recently lost my cherry. I couldn't do what he wanted. He had already had sex with me. His penis couldn't enter because it was too large. I cried. He said, 'Why are you crying?' He was a sadist. He pushed my head into the pillow so I wouldn't be able to yell. He pressed the pillow down hard on my chest. He took my clothes off. He did all kinds of things to me. I cried. I said, 'I'll call the OMP. I'll have you arrested.' ... He said, 'Okay, I'll go back to the Penthouse. I'll get my money back.' ... He said I didn't let him have sex, but he had already finished on me... They wouldn't believe me. They believed the customer. I cried and cried. ... I cried even harder because I would have to pay the money and he had already had sex. I paid the amount in one month. Of course, they subtracted it before giving me my commission.¹³⁶

This passage from 18-year-old Lita, whose experiences with an American service member are related above, offer a horrifying description of just how personal systems of hegemonic control can manifest. Though considerations of the projection of American power and influence abroad, both historical and contemporary, tend to be considered at a macro for in this case, regional level, we cannot forget that the construction and maintenance of such hegemonic control happens at a highly personal and individual level. The collection of these systems and experiences, considered together, may lead us, rightly, to conclusions about patterns of behavior across international borders but they simultaneously remain rooted to lived experiences. Lita's experiences which began working in bars for United States service members at 14 while uniquely her own also testifies to the larger presence of American military forces in the Pacific more generally.

More so than the relationships of either Korea or Japan to the United States, the relationship of the Philippines to the United States military and government, most explicitly

¹³⁵ Some authors, such as Richard J.F. Day contend that the theories of hegemony produced by Gramsci are no longer viable for understanding or evaluating power relationships and hegemonic dichotomies in the present day. Day, in the title of his work in fact, asserts that "Gramsci is Dead." Richard J. F. Day, *Gramsci Is Dead: Anarchist Currents in the Newest Social Movements*, (London; Ann Arbor, MI: Toronto: Pluto Press; Between the Lines, 2005).

¹³⁶ Sturdevant and Stoltzfus, *Let the Good Times Roll*, 81-82.

represent the aspect of Gramsci's model of hegemonic construction related to a given country "[consenting] to the rule of the state's government."¹³⁷ This is not to say that the Philippines or its inhabitants deserve condemnation or criticism for being an active partner in the subordinated relationship of a country under the hegemonic control of the United States. There were lofty aspirations of Philippine independence voiced initially by those in power. Brigadier General Steve Mellnik, for example, remarked on the 4th of July 1946, "As the morning wore on, patches of blue sky appeared and an occasional beam of sunlight touched the U.S. flag atop the flagpole. I thought of this day's historic significance: after almost fifty years of close association, a powerful nation was granting freedom to a small partner!"¹³⁸

This notion of freedom, however, would be more accurately described as the beginning of a neocolonial relationship that would make the entire nation entirely dependent on American money and resources for decades to come. Such a dynamic, built on the previously direct colonial control, became then reinforced more intensely after the granting of independence when the capital, Manila, was essentially reduced to rubble by Japanese and American bombings. One soldier described the sad state of the capital after "liberation" from the Japanese on February 6th, 1944, "So great was the glare of the dying city that the streets, even back where we were, were alight as from the reflection of a reddish moon. Great sheets of flame swept across the roof-tops, sometimes spanning

¹³⁷ Kurtz, "Hegemony and Anthropology," 109.

¹³⁸ Steve Mellnik, *Philippine Diary 1939-1945*, (Toronto: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1969.), 314.

several city blocks in their consuming flight.”¹³⁹ Another soldier was more succinct: “Manila is a blazing inferno.”¹⁴⁰

Several treaties negotiated between the Philippines and the United States in 1946 (including the Philippine Trade Act and the Military Assistance Agreement) were framed as examples of a future relationship that was no longer colonial, but rather mutualistic in nature. The reality, however, was that the signing of these documents occurred under conditions where the newly “independent” country was economically and physically devastated by a brutal occupation and war. More coercive than mutualistic, these treaties cemented an invasive neocolonial relationship between the Philippines and the United States that did not occur in similar situations between post-war Korea and Japan. Aida Santos describes the effects of these treaties in economic terms, “This ‘special relationship’ turned out to be special for the U.S. interests; for Filipinos, it was a slow economic death.”¹⁴¹ What had begun as an inappropriately described mutualistic relationship between two “independent” powers, had blossomed in to a situation of economic dependency in which Philippine women and their physical and economic safety were seen as acceptable concessions for some measure of economic and national sovereignty. Women like Lita, now a middle-aged woman, are currently reaping the effects of a neocolonial relationship that had been sown nearly a century ago.

Of all the countries in the Pacific, the one with the most experience with American colonialism and military presence is undoubtedly the Philippines. Extended contact with

¹³⁹ Robert Eichelberger to Emma Eichelberger, February 6, 1945, in Luvaas, *Dear Miss Em*, 211-12 in James M. Scott, *Rampage: MacArthur, Yamashita, and the Battle of Manila* (New York; London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2018), 205.

¹⁴⁰ Entry for February 5, 1945, Robert Kentner diary, in Scott, *Rampage*, 196.

¹⁴¹ Santos, “The Base Issue,” in Hohn and Moon, *Let the Good Times Roll*, 34.

Western (largely European until the United States) colonialism and the armed resistance to such imperialism had profound impacts on how Filipino society understood and dealt with masculinity and sexuality moving into the 20th century. For years following the annexation of the Philippines by American forces (1899), Filipino forces led by generals such as Macario Sakay, conducted a guerilla war with American forces until 1902.¹⁴² These efforts proved ineffective and the Philippines became a direct colony and then eventually a commonwealth of the United States in 1935, with the legal promise from President Franklin D. Roosevelt (FDR) and the American legislature that the country would transition to independence over a ten-year period.

Filipino independence, however, was not established due to a surprise attack by the Japanese in 1941, which was successful in gaining control of the country by 1942. A section of the Filipino population never fully capitulated to the Japanese and continued to engage in guerilla actions against their new leaders as they did with American officials. As was the case in Korea however, there remained a sizable population that saw collaboration with the Japanese forces to be the most effective means of national independence. It is important to note that in the case of the Philippines, more so than in Korea for example, the claims of the Japanese to be “liberating” Asiatic countries from the yoke of Western imperialism in the name of Pan-Asianism were, on paper, more accurate in this case.

Different from the gunboat diplomacy that opened ports for economic exploitation of Asian countries by Western powers, the Philippines were directly administered by the

¹⁴² It is also important to note that the Moro rebellion, led by Muslims in the southern portion of the Philippines continued until 1913. The Moros were an ethnic group within the Philippines that had resisted imperialism and colonialization since the time of the Spanish in the 16th century. Over 400 years of experience fighting guerilla warfare against logistically superior groups did not end with their actions in 1913 but continued following the capture of the Philippines by the Japanese in 1944.

American government prior to the Japanese invasion. This in no way detracts from the clearly imperialistic aims of the Japanese in invading the country and seizing power, but it did give Japan more rhetorical ground to stand on in their international justification of the annexation. Finally, in 1945, American forces recaptured the Philippines and instituted military control and presence until Filipino independence in 1946.

The period of time between the establishment of the “independent” state of the Philippines in 1943, the Second Republic, (in reality a puppet government run by the Japanese military), and the Third Republic in 1946 remains an important moment of liminality in Philippine history. For the collaborationist government of the Second Republic, input in the day-to-day operations and overall policy was ultimately a farce and the writing and ratification of a newly minted Constitution for their “independent nation” was passed with the “ink barely dry on the document.”¹⁴³ A primary goal of the Japanese administrators of the nation was to essentially “undo” the colonial indoctrination that had been done at the hands of the American government. Though the Philippines may have effectively been under martial law during the Second Republic with the Japanese military dictating policy and operations, their justification for the invasion was still couched in the rhetoric of liberation from Western imperialism. Japanese General Hayashi Yoshida noted that the United States had led the country down the path of “deceit and misguidance.”¹⁴⁴ This type of language can be similarly observed in the ways in which the United States drafted the new 1946 Constitution of Japan, espousing moralizing rhetoric while at the same time practicing the opposite. The case of the Japanese in the Philippines represents a

¹⁴³ Luis H. Francia *A History of the Philippines: From Indios Bravos to Filipinos* (New York: The Overlook Press, 2010), 182.

¹⁴⁴ Francia, *A History of the Philippines*, 182.

more extreme example of the two where Japanese rule appeared “despicable to ordinary Filipinos.”¹⁴⁵

Though the invasion of the Japanese in 1942 brought new colonial administrators to the Philippines, if anything, the exploitation of the female Filipino population increased rather than declined in the 1940s. Just as the Japanese military had done with other regions in South-east Asia, the Philippines were similarly targeted as countries to procure comfort women for the Japanese military. Instead of engaging in underground “invisible” prostitution that American imperial system demanded in order to occupy the higher moral ground in the international community, the Japanese simply engaged in direct and uncompromising sexual abuse of the local population. Tanaka provides an explanation for this unconcerned behavior by the Japanese, “Both in China and the Philippines, it seems that the Japanese did not even try to conceal what they were doing to the civilians. The main reasons for such direct action by the Japanese troops in the Philippines may lie in the fact that the anti-Japanese guerilla movement was strong and widespread throughout the occupation period.”¹⁴⁶

Of the three countries in the Pacific considered in this study, the Philippines was the country that had the longest and most profound relationship with the United States prior to the Second World War. The administration of the country by American soldiers and officials in the 19th century afforded a sounding board for colonial policies and methods of control that were then transplanted and retrofitted in the 20th century throughout the Pacific in U.S. occupied territory. As early as 1899, the United States army was aware of, and

¹⁴⁵ Francia, *A History of the Philippines*, 183.

¹⁴⁶ Tanaka, *Japan's Comfort Women*, 48.

desired to control, the outbreak of venereal disease among the troops stationed on the islands. These perceptions of Filipino women, and Asian women more broadly, set the stage for further Orientalizing perceptions of women in Korea and Japan decades later. Consequently, it is essential to fully understand the dynamics between the United States military in the Philippines prior to the Second World War in order to fully understand the development of trends and modes of thinking that persisted despite an interlude of Japanese control of the country.

The dualistic notions of hypersexuality coupled with childlike dependence characterized American perceptions of Filipinos at the turn of the century.¹⁴⁷ These understandings placed Filipinos in a subservient position that women in Korea and Japan were subject to following their military administration decades later, but the beginning of this type of Orientalizing began in the Philippines in the previous century. The malleability of perception of the Japanese that Americans utilized, from superhuman warriors to the domesticated sub-human pupil after the war, never fully developed in the relationships of American GIs to Filipinos. The lack of military power and presence put American perceptions of Filipinos in closer relation to the perceptions of Korean women following 1945.

But for being initially involved in the Philippines in the 19th century, the language used by officers on the islands is nearly identical to language echoed in Seoul and Tokyo decades later. As Paul Kramer notes, one American officer in the Philippines in 1899, Major Sweet, was quick to echo the sentiment of hyper-sexuality and immorality of the

¹⁴⁷ Gladys-Pamela Miranda Nubla, "Children of Empire: Postcolonial Agency, Sexuality, and Filipino/American Contact Zones," PhD diss., (University of California, Berkley, 2014) 1-2. Nubla argues that these perceptions of Filipino women in particular have hampered the agency of Filipinos in the post-colonial period.

native population, he recounted that American soldiers had “fallen heir to the lax moral conditions incident to the Philippines and Oriental countries generally.” He goes on to describe his efforts at controlling and regulating prostitution in the first few years of the 20th century by deporting women known to have tested positive for “so-called Asiatic disease.”¹⁴⁸ This language was nearly identical to that of future colonial administrators in military provisional governments in Korean and Japan. Sweet’s almost fanatical devotion to curbing the immoral practices of Filipino women eventually led him to institute a “course of regulation, restriction, and control heretofore unknown in their lifetime.” For brothels, he deemed it prudent to institute a “system of strict surveillance, exacting restriction, inspections and control and punishments.”¹⁴⁹ Major Sweet’s enthusiasm in his task to address the “problem” of prostitution at the turn of the century in the Philippines can be understood as a microcosm of the attitudes and methods of control that typified military policy in the region decades later. Above all, it was about control.

Going hand-in-hand with the much longer colonial presence of Western power in the Philippines compared to such developed in Korea and Japan was the presence of a deeply ingrained notion of Catholic sexuality, far different from those of other Asian countries. Western missionaries from various religious sects have conducted extensive missions throughout Asia, but the Philippines in particular, with its nearly 400-year relationship to Spanish and then American colonialism, has a fundamentally different cultural and social relationship to sexuality than the countries of Korea or Japan.

¹⁴⁸ Paul Kramer, “The Darkness that enters the Home: The Politics of Prostitution during the Phillipine American War,” in *Haunted By Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History* ed. Ann Laura Stoler (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2006), 367.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

Whereas filial piety remains an important distinguishing characteristic of Korea and Japanese culture that mediates perceptions and expectations of sexuality even today, it is the relationship to highly patriarchal notions of Catholic sexuality that typified Filipino relations in the 18th and beyond. François-Xavier Bonnet notes that in the Philippines, “The society, deeply rooted on a patriarchal tradition, condemns the sexual relationships before marriage, disapproves the nocturnal outings of the young girls without a chaperon and above all considers the prostitution as a moral aberration.”¹⁵⁰ Though relationships to sexuality in these three Asiatic countries differ in the origins of disapproval and shame, they are all deeply tied to notions of national shame and immorality. For American GIs however, these subtleties were not of immediate concern; it was far more important to address the moral aberration that prostitution represented.

In yet another portent of what was to develop in Korea and Japan after 1945, the American military attempt to deal with the results of venereal disease among its soldiers failed. STD testing measures proved ineffective, as were the fully fledged deportations of women who tested positive. Underlying economic situations that placed Filipino women in positions that forced them to sell their bodies to American GIs to subsist were never addressed. This failure, coupled with the underlying demand for sexual services by American GIs, meant the occupation simply went underground, and afforded less safety for Filipino women. More generally, efforts directed at targeting prostitutes themselves rather than pursuing policies that would address underlying economic conditions that drove women to the profession became the easiest solution for governments. Unfortunately, this became the *modus operandi* for countries beyond the Philippines and the United States

¹⁵⁰ François-Xavier Bonnet, "From Oripun to the Yapayuki-San: An Historical Outline of Prostitution in the Philippines." *Moussons (Marseille)* 29, no. 29 (2017): 1.

both historically but also contemporarily. In outlining the specificities of the dynamics involved in Filipino prostitution, one must not forget how these issues speak to the global scale of the problem. However, more specific to the case in the Philippines, within the invasive testing procedures themselves, there existed implicit and racialized assumptions about Filipino health, sexuality, and morality. Kram notes that “The first principle of the system was that the prostitute was the perpetual and exclusive source of contagion.”¹⁵¹ The implicit conclusion that ran parallel to this line of thinking was that it was the singular and exclusive fault and responsibility of the prostitutes themselves that they had acquired some venereal disease. American GIs in this regard were infallible.

Eventually, calls for the regulation of prostitution turned in to calls to make the occupation fully illegal. In 1917, the red-light district in the capital of Gardenia was officially closed and just a year later in 1918, Filipino Senator Manuel Quezon noted in a conversation regarding prostitution, though measures to ban legalized prostitution in the capital may prove effective, “the closure of the district of Gardenia will allow the propagation of prostitution and the venereal diseases from Manila to the other provinces of the archipelago.”¹⁵² Senator Quezon’s prediction proved to be entirely true. American soldiers continued to engage in illegal prostitution and misconduct in the surrounding provinces until the invasion of the Japanese army in 1942. Similar processes were seen in Korea with the abolition of legalized prostitution in 1948 and in 1953 in Japan. Fears of the immorality of the institution and the danger to the readiness of American GIs appeared to be driving factors for the abolishment of the institution across the Pacific. But just as these efforts created other issues and dangers for Filipino women before the Second World

¹⁵¹ Kramer, “The Darkness,” in Stoler, *Haunted By Empire*, 373.

¹⁵² Bonnet, “From Oripun to the Yapayuki,” 15.

War, they remained afterwards as well. In truth, “regulated vice” had not been eliminated from these nations following the outcry from local governments and international human rights critics, they had simply touched on the solution, which was “making regulation invisible.”¹⁵³ The enduring legacy of unequal diplomatic treaties, specifically the provision allowing for the leasing of land for U.S. military bases, meant that though prostitution may have been deemed illegal and forced outside of governmental oversight, its main clients, U.S. service members, remained a consistent presence in the country.

In 1992 both the Subic and Clark Air Base in the Philippines were closed under a renegotiation of a previous agreement the Filipino government and the United States signed in 1947 which included provisions allowing for continued military presence and leasing of space for installations. Compounded by the eruption of Mt. Pinatubo 1991, which severely damaged the bases, the agreement was not renewed and led to the closures of the two military bases. The removal of United States military forces on the island was seen in a positive light by the Filipino government and many citizens. In negotiations to renew the treaty, the Philippine Senate described the U.S. military presence as “a vestige of

¹⁵³ Kramer, “The Darkness,” in Stoler, *Haunted By Empire*, 394.

colonialism and an affront to Philippine sovereignty.”¹⁵⁴ This success was short lived, however. In 2012, the Philippine government renegotiated a treaty with the United States military which allowed the military to begin reusing the previously closed military bases of Subic and Clark in order to supply and supplement U.S. military exercises which had been continuing the island with permission from the government since 1999. Filipino security expert, Herbert Docena remarked that the complex network of military facilities and presence in the Philippines that the military has managed to establish again after 2012 means that the army has “everything – and arguably more – than it had in Subic and Clark.”¹⁵⁵ The economic situation that predicated the unequal agreements with the United States military and the freshly “independent” country of the Philippines meant a level of economic dependence on American capital and presence that the country was not able to go without after the closure of Subic and Clark.

The practice of allowing the U.S. forces to continue to train in the country even after the decision to not renew the base leases is reflective of the tenuous position that the Philippines occupies in the global economy today. In the Philippines according to the World Population Review, “The GDP per capita is low, and the infant mortality rate is high. Most of its citizens lack access to healthcare and higher education as well.”¹⁵⁶ The United States military functions as a major economic force. Soldiers spend their paychecks in the country and comprehensive building projects offer temporary jobs for laborers and more permanent jobs within military facilities, all resulting in a situation of economic

¹⁵⁴ David E. Sanger, “Philippines Orders U.S. to Leave Strategic Base at Subic Bay,” *The New York Times* (New York, NY), Dec. 28, 1991. <https://www.nytimes.com/1991/12/28/world/philippines-orders-us-to-leave-strategic-navy-base-at-subic-bay.html>.

¹⁵⁵ Vine, *Base Nation*, 308.

¹⁵⁶ “Human Development Reports: Human Development Index,” United Nations Development Programme, 2020, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/indicators/137506> cited in “Third World Countries 2021,” World Population Review, 2021, <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/third-world-countries>.

dependence. Outside of the obvious potential for the infringement of sovereignty, it is more often Filipinos themselves that are harmed by the relationship. It is true that the economic boost of GI money into the economy certainly benefits large groups of Filipino individuals, but for others, such as Madelin, a girl who worked as “bar girl” servicing American military personnel in the 1980s and 1990s, the presence of the American military may have meant a job, but it just as easily meant the potential for wage-slavery and life-long echoes of sexual trauma.

Madelin, whose family nearly always was in want of food and who lived in constant poverty, recalled that “I studied until grade three but did not finish. How could I? It was difficult. You go to school without food, and nothing your teacher says stays in your head because of the hunger.”¹⁵⁷ Though jobs working as prostitutes under the auspices of being a “bar girl” at a local establishment meant the potential for employment, the potential for exploitation by the bar owner, clients, or even other women working at the bar was an ever-present reality. Another Filipino woman forced into prostitution, Glenda, remarked, “If it were possible, I wouldn’t do it. But there is nothing the women can do to earn a living. The work in the club is dirty because you’re not respected by the Americans. They really look at you like pigs.”¹⁵⁸ In many cases, the situation for Filipinos who are engaged in the sex-industry has been reduced to a simple calculus of either risking starvation or begin employment in the industry with an acknowledgement that sexual abuse and exploitation will almost be guaranteed.

It would be disingenuous and empirically incorrect to suggest the United States military has single-handedly shaped the present country conditions in the Philippines where

¹⁵⁷ Sturdevant and Stoltzfus, *Let the Good Times Roll*, 50.

¹⁵⁸ Sturdevant and Stoltzfus, *Let the Good Times Roll*, 112.

women like Madelin and Glenda were routinely exposed to monetary and physical control and abuse. But while the United States military is not entirely responsible for the present state of the Philippine economy or conditions, the military does have a vested interest in being a present and consistent force in the country. As an international organization that fits into the Gramscian understanding of hegemonic power structures, the United States military does not have a vested interest in addressing the present conditions in the Philippines. The inherent abuse present in the system of prostitution in the Philippines, which is bankrolled by American dollars and patronized by American soldiers, contributes to a cyclical model of economic dependence by Filipinos. Countries in weaker economic positions are more likely to acquiesce to foreign demands or transgressions, and in this case, the potential loss of one of the steadiest streams of capital in the United States military, has created a situation where the Philippine government, like the Korean government decades ago, is ultimately willing to allow women's bodies to be used and abused in the pursuit of broader economic goals. In order to maintain a level of homeostasis between both governments, and in a Gramscian sense, a level of hegemonic control of the Philippines by American influences, the sexual abuse of Filipino women is simply an acceptable cost.

In the 1940s and 1950s, the sexual misconduct engaged in by the United States military was seen as highly offensive to local communities. It was not the disapproval of local populations however that fundamentally drove the United States to engage with the practice in a different way, though some attention may have been paid by officials to the disapproval of locals only insofar as a negative relationship with such communities would make their military occupation more difficult, or in simply terms, the goals of the state. It

was the question of military readiness that drove the change in policy and base culture. Moral and cultural standards of such behavior were changed, but not an iota more than necessary to reach the level of moral or cultural acceptance that the state required to function effectively in the region.

Decades later, the “base culture” that facilitates illegal prostitution and sexual misconduct at the hands of United States service members has proven to be morally questionable, but ultimately acceptable in the purview of the State. To the degree that such activities do not inherently harm hegemonic control in the region, and in fact, appear to reinforce such control, the state does not have an interest in addressing such issues in military culture. Even when gross violations of laws occur within a host country and there is fervent and public outcry, this does not necessarily mean that fundamental changes in policy occur. Underlying economic or political relationships may dictate the level of what “acceptable” intervention may be.

This very dynamic can be observed in the handling of the 2006 Subic Base rape accusation which garnered significant international press, where an American Lance Corporal, Daniel Smith was convicted, and then subsequently acquitted, of raping Suzette Nichols in the back of a van while three other marines cheered him on. The United States military utilized a provision in the “Visiting Forces Agreement,” a less invasive and permanent legal agreement between two nations very similar to a SOFA, to retain custody of Smith and others while they awaited trial. Critics of the acquittal decried the lopsided VFA as an infringement on Philippine sovereignty and in the wake of the Subic rape case, demanded the agreement be rescinded or amended. One lawyer remarked, “The VFA has been widely and rightfully criticized as an onerous agreement that has paved the way for

the permanent presence of US troops in the country under the guise of year-round military exercises and training.”¹⁵⁹ However, even years later, the Philippine government has yet to make changes to the agreement and as recent as 2014, the US Ambassador to Manila, Phillip Goldberg, remarked that the VFA was “a pillar of our relationship and a source of stability in the region.”¹⁶⁰ One may then be led to the question of what “stability” is being preserved when American soldiers can engage in sexual misconduct in local countries and be acquitted for their wrongdoing while being protected by their government. It is clear that factors beyond judicial justice are at play in the diplomatic posturing of the two nations.

How sexual misconduct is addressed after the fact illustrated the power dynamics at play. The role of the court is one of the most fundamental avenues in bringing individuals into the orbit of state control. In this sense, even before United States service members arrive at a trial for sexual misconduct, their presence in American courtrooms or in American jail cells is a blow to national sovereignty of the host nation and simultaneously an important function of maintaining American hegemony globally. Gramsci argues that “The school as a positive educative function, and courts as a repressive and negative educative function, are the most important State activities.”¹⁶¹ If the Philippines is unable to utilize one of the “most important” structures of state power within their own borders, it is clear that their sovereignty in this sense is being eroded in favor of American hegemonic influences which are more broadly secured across the globe through SOFAs (or even in this case a VFA).

¹⁵⁹ “Aquino rejects scrapping of VFA,” *The Manila Times*, (Manila, Philippines), Oct. 21, 2014, <https://www.manilatimes.net/2014/10/21/news/top-stories/aquino-rejects-scrapping-vfa/135758/>.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ *Prison Notebooks*, 258.

The governments like the Philippines ultimately walk a fine line. The presence of the United States military brings financial benefits but also allows for the sexual misconduct within their society. Such dynamics can be understood as well in the words of Gramsci. These people and their relationships to the United States are essentially preserving hegemony that is “protected by the armour of coercion.”¹⁶²

Today, the bases in the Philippines help to maintain a “subeconomy whose main components are the purchase of sexual labor; entertainment, smuggling of arms, drugs and extortion.”¹⁶³ These present-day conditions are the result of decades of influence by the United States government and more broadly support the goals of maintaining hegemonic control in the Pacific and specifically in Korea, Japan, and the Philippines.

These camp-town subeconomies necessitate a degree of toleration by both host nations and the United States military and result in subcultures that negatively affect local women. As Walden Bello notes, in these countries, “the degradation of women forced into sexual labor is institutionalized in a multimillion-dollar entertainment industry that enjoys the blessing of the U.S. military hierarchy.”¹⁶⁴ In the Gramscian sense, hegemony is directly related to economics and relations of production. In the case of the United States military and sexual relations to local women in the Pacific, the subeconomies that direct and perpetuate the camp-town culture so harmful to women in these regions represent one of the building blocks of the American hegemonic project in the Pacific. The army, not a

¹⁶² *Prison Notebooks*, 263.

¹⁶³ It is important to note that the two primary bases of Subic and Clark had been closed in 1992 but subsequently reopened in 2012 with approval of the Philippine government for limited use by the US military. The culture surrounding the bases however, had experienced little change. Walden Bello, “From American Lake to a People’s Pacific,” in Sturdevant and Stoltzfus, *Let the Good Times Roll*, 16.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

military force, but as an international organization, is in a unique position to implicitly and explicitly exert power military as well as buffer counter-hegemonic reform in these areas.

If outright violations of sovereignty such as the sexual violation of host women are now no longer tolerated by a broader international legal community (though one could argue conduct such as this still *does* in fact persist without the United States accepting responsibility), such practices have evolved and morphed in to more subtle but no less troubling practices. Human trafficking in Asian countries is a truth that is both acknowledged and at the same time, ignored by the United States. Women from countries such as the Philippines are routinely trafficked throughout the Pacific to countries such as Japan and Korea, often in order to be prostitutes in these further economically developed countries. This adds a further dimension to the already multistranded topic of domestic prostitution within these countries. For example, a Human Rights Report published in 2000 estimates that there are approximately “150,000 non-Japanese women employed in the Japanese sex industry, primarily from other countries such as Thailand the Philippines.”¹⁶⁵ Though there are organizations and individuals committed to fighting against the development of human trafficking in the contemporary world, at the same time, the United States military, remains one of the most important and influential powers in the continuation of the practice in the Pacific.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁵ Human Rights Watch, *Owed Justice*, 25.

¹⁶⁶ For example, the network of human trafficking in the Pacific includes the transportation of women from the Philippines to South Korea for sexual services, generally around U.S. army bases. Immediately following the closure of the Subic and Clark bases in the Philippines, the number of unemployed Philippine women rose to 53.2% and the number of trafficked women, often done by American service members themselves, rose exponentially. Prostitution in the Philippines did not disappear after the closure of the bases however, and after the signing of 2012 agreement, it appears that the institution is showing no signs of stopping. Donna M. Hughes, Katherine Y. Chon, and Derek P. Ellerman remark that “The U.S. military bases in South Korea form a hub for the transnational trafficking of women from the Asia Pacific and Eurasia to South Korea and the United States. Over the past six decades, U.S. troops have used an estimated 1 million Korean women in prostitution. During the 1990s, increasing numbers of women from

the Asian Pacific and Eurasia, particularly the Philippines ... were trafficked into bars and brothels around the military bases in South Korea." The connections between the development of prostitution linked to the United States military in Korea, Japan, and the Philippines provide compelling areas for further research. Donna M. Hughes, Katherine Y. Chon, and Derek P. Ellerman, "Modern-Day Comfort Women," *Violence against Women* 13, no. 9 (2007): 901.

Conclusion: The “Ethical State?”

When it comes to the issue of addressing the United States military’s sexual misconduct in the Pacific today, it is absolutely critical to understand its origins, the reasons for its perpetuation, and the highly gendered atmosphere where it occurs. Sexual misconduct by American service members abroad actively harms individuals and communities in ways that reverberate intergenerationally. The potential for sexual trauma is heightened for local women when they are in economically disenfranchised positions within societies and countries that are beholden to American money. In these cases, power differentials and hierarchical relationships between soldiers and local women are brought into even sharper contrast. Each instance of sexual assault or misconduct may be highly individual and personal, but it is also clear that this issue is anything but small in scale.

If one engages in an even cursory search on the internet about the United States military and sexual misconduct in the Pacific, one is met with articles such as, “South Korean woman accuses US service member of sexual assault, police say,”¹⁶⁷ “No Rape, No Base, No Tears,”¹⁶⁸ and “Rape Victims Viewed as ‘Dirty Women.’”¹⁶⁹ According to the department of defense, in 2019, there were 6,797 cases of sexual assault among active-duty military personnel. Of this number, 87% were committed against men and women within the military itself; the remainder of cases, 884, were committed against

¹⁶⁷ “South Korean woman accuses US service member of sexual assault, police say,” *Stars and Stripes* online, October 19, 2020.

<https://www.stripes.com/news/pacific/south-korean-woman-accuses-us-service-member-of-sexual-assault-police-say-1.649101>

¹⁶⁸ Jessie Kindig, ““No Rape, No Base, No Tears,”” *Jacobin* online, last modified November 29, 2019, <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2019/11/night-american-village-review-okinawa-base>.

¹⁶⁹ Guia Abad, “Rape Victims Viewed as ‘Dirty Women,’” *Bulatlat* online, last modified May 6, 2006, <https://www.bulatlat.com/news/6-12/6-12-dirty.htm>.

“civilians/foreign nationals” or against unknown individuals.¹⁷⁰ Upon reflection of these numbers, it is clear that sexual assault in the United States military even in contemporary terms is a fundamental problem.¹⁷¹ At a glance, these reports and instances of sexual assault within the United States military may seem peripheral to the problem of sexual assault among women in host countries on foreign bases – certainly 87 percent is greater than 13 – but couched within instances of sexual assault among the United States military are the incubated attitudes that lead to rape of schoolgirls in Okinawa and the abuse of women in debt-bondage in the Philippines.¹⁷²

A Korean woman, Ms. Pak, who worked as a prostitute in South Korea in the 1970s and 1980s remarked in an interview, “When I first entered this world, I thought Americans were well educated and great people.” She then went on to describe a story that one of her friends had told her about an American soldier, “Like once, an Amore cosmetics saleswoman was walking to her job one day. On the way, she saw an American GI burning trash; but it had a strange odor. She smelled hair burning, so she got suspicious. She called the police. They found him burning the body of a woman. He had killed her in a fight.”¹⁷³ Ms. Pak’s personal experiences with American GIs seemed to continue to contradict her first notions of how Americans behaved, “I think some Americans try to trick us and use

¹⁷⁰ Brenda Duplantis, “Facts on Military Sexual Trauma and Statistics,” Hill and Ponton Disability Attorneys, last modified September 18, 2020, <https://www.hillandponton.com/facts-on-military-sexual-trauma-and-statistics/#:~:text=Statistics%20on%20Military%20Sexual%20Assault%5B5%5D&text=In%202018%2C%2020%2C500%20service%20members,the%20highest%20level%20since%202006>.

¹⁷¹ Not only is the internal system of reporting and accountability highly flawed and often places women in difficult positions regarding their future careers in the military itself, but it often favors silence and compliance over justice. These standards are highly contentious and there is a myriad of firsthand reports by women in the military describing these encounters and their difficulty in navigating a reporting process that almost would inherently damage their careers. Include some examples here.

¹⁷² It is also important to note that the number of 13 percent is likely lower than the true number of women who have experienced sexual assault as the statistics surrounding reporting of sex crimes, as a general rule, are consistently underreported.

¹⁷³ Sturdevant and Stoltzfus, *Let the Good Times Roll*, 213.

us. American GIs treat us this way because we're poor, uneducated, and have to make money through this kind of life.”

The underlying issues of poverty and lack of access to education compound issues of sexual exploitation because often women such as Ms. Pak have little recourse for other economic opportunities. Instead of gainful employment, they are forced to engage with one of the only sources of capital that has remained consistent in each of these countries – prostitution for American soldiers. When General Hodge, the commander of American forces in Korea in 1947 expressed concern that that Koreans were incensed by their “superior attitude,” it is unfortunate that this sentiment could just as easily be applied to Korea decades later. Ms. Pak went on to say, “They [American GIs] say they don't hit women when they're drinking in their own country, but they can do as they please since they are in Korea, a poor country.”¹⁷⁴ Despite the situation of women like Ms. Pak, Lita, and Glenda, there still existed a parallel optimism from local women that they possessed the ability to affect change, “We may be poor, but we will live on our own power.”¹⁷⁵

Several women who have harnessed this optimism in an attempt to make changes to this these systems of oppression have created grassroots organizations to combat these types of behavior. Local organizations have taken notice of the sexual misconduct perpetrated by American service members. Claims therefore that internal policy change within the military is the only potential source for fundamental shifts in sexual misconduct would be to undermine the impact and agency of Korean, Japanese, and Filipino peoples. In Okinawa, the “Okinawa Women Act Against Military Violence” is an organization that was founded after the rape of a 12-year-old schoolgirl by three American soldiers and

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

opposes the presence of the United States military in the region. The organization has attempted to branch movements throughout the Pacific to record instances of sexual violence against local women by United States military officials, organize letter writing campaigns, and stage protests against the presence of the United States military in the region. Clearly sexual misconduct by the United States military in the Pacific is recognized and remains a significant concern. What remains to be seen, however, is if the military itself has a vested interest in addressing the underlying issues that lead service members into brothels in the first place.

That vested interest seems mired in the dynamics of gender relations. Such dynamics are inherently political, used in equal parts to display power and reinforce a sense of superiority of one party over the other. In the realm of international relations, the dynamics between individuals become representative of larger posturing about sovereignty.¹⁷⁶ The actions of American GIs who are shielded from social and societal expectations in their superior positions abroad, protected by the United States political position, are free to violate sovereignty with impunity. Though politicians in the White House may decry these actions, in order to maintain the capitalistic and hegemonic presence in other countries across the world, they must do what is unsavory, they end by protecting and vouching for the actions of soldiers abroad. Any concession in this regard would implicitly weaken the United States' position in international politics both diplomatically and economically. When a soldier is abroad, American GIs are “artificially

¹⁷⁶ These dynamics are not exclusively related to the United States military, some of the most egregious violations of sovereignty can be seen within the diplomatic department of the US – see the manslaughter charges of diplomats as recent as last year – but because of both the far-reaching and widespread presence of the United States military, these instances happen more often and in more egregious nature in the Military than anywhere else.

freed from customary social and legal constraints.”¹⁷⁷ It appears that the “War Zone Wonderland” that Meredith Lair described when discussing the Vietnam war is neither temporally nor geographically constrained.

What remains consistent is the presence of United States soldiers and the insulated nature of their gender dynamics. These are changing over time, but compared to American society at large, there is more resistance and far more excuses to cling to established militarized masculinities hidden under the auspices of “tradition.” The result is a concerning potential for institutionalized sexual abuse by the United States military in the 21st century.¹⁷⁸ In the case of countries in the Pacific, the wartime atmosphere that offered ample opportunities for circumstances where abuse could occur is not the everyday reality. The military subculture that makes such sexual abuse possible has not been stamped out, it has been restrained. Such levels of abuse by the United States in the Pacific manifest themselves far less explicitly due to contemporary political, military, and economic situations.

The failure to recognize, accept, and address the sexual abuse by the United States military in southeast Asia and elsewhere in the decades following the Second World War is largely due to two factors, each hiding in plain view. The International Court of Justice has a long history of arbitrating and litigating war crimes from around the world, but significantly, it has failed to hold the United States accountable due to their privileged status in the international security community. Laws such as “The Hague Invasion Act” passed by the Bush administration in 2002, part of the larger “American Servicemembers

¹⁷⁷ Jeff Bennett, “Abu Ghraib: A Predictable Tragedy?” In Hohn and Moon, *Over There*, 369.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid. The behaviors of those that committed abuses in the Abu Ghraib prison were not necessarily isolated instances, but what one can expect when there is a “situation that [allows] sexual and sadistic themes already present in the U.S. military subculture to be both literalized and officially operationalized.”

Protection Act of 2002,” authorize the “use of military force to liberate any American or citizen of a U.S.-allied being held by the court” as well as “restricts U.S. participation in United Nations peacekeeping unless the United States obtains immunity from prosecution.”¹⁷⁹ Though the United States is subject to the conclusions and the verdicts of the ICJ, it importantly holds veto power within the United Nations Security Council which effectively has the potential to negate any ruling from the ICJ that is unfavorable.

These legal statutes underline the clear inability for the international community to hold accountable United States service members even today, let alone individuals or organizations from the 1940s. This exclusion from accountability is in large part due to the financial dependency of the United Nations and its associated agencies. According to a report by the American Congressional Research Service regarding UN funding in 2018, the United States provided the bulk of funding for the General Assembly, Security Council, Secretariat, International Court of Justice, special political missions, and human rights entities, making the United States the “single largest financial contributor to the United Nations.”¹⁸⁰ The inability of this international organization to appropriately hold its largest financier accountable for its own actions may come as no surprise but is lamentable when seeking to apply concepts of justice equitably across nations.

The American hegemonic tendency in the post-war period to physically integrate into other countries in the form of military bases, many of which are tied economically to

¹⁷⁹ “U.S.: ‘Hague Invasion Act’ Becomes Law,” Human Rights Watch: White House, Human Rights Watch. Published August 3rd, 2002. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2002/08/03/us-hague-invasion-act-becomes-law#>.

¹⁸⁰ Luisa Blanchfield, “U.S. Funding to the United Nations System: Overview and Selected Policy Issues,” (Congressional Research Services Reports: CRS Report for Members and Committees of Congress. Updated April 25, 2018) <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/IF10354.pdf>.

host countries, speaks to the other contributing factor of a failure to address US military misconduct.

Both Korea, Japan, and the Philippines have long standing relationships with the United States. Even if the Japanese and Korean governments wanted to move forward with charges of sexual misconduct by the United States military from the post-war period, though they have very little political ability in the United Nations to do so, there are contemporary economic reasons holding them back. David Vines notes that Japan has paid more than any other host country to support United States military infrastructure than any other country since 1972.¹⁸¹ The relationship between the Japanese government and the United States military is thus so tightly wound, that any international action coming from Japan to address the behavior of American service members in institutionalized prostitution and the RAA is unlikely. The potential to lose such a profitable relationship for Japanese elites and the government or the protection afforded by the United States military against potential threats from China, stymies any persecution.

Similarly, in South Korea, the economic relationship between the United States military and the government provides a strong bulwark against any sort of legal justice. The construction of massive building ventures by the United States military has frequently caused tension between the citizenry of South Korea and its higher political offices and elites. Generally, those not in favor point to negative spillover, noise pollution, and wastefulness as reasons to not move forward whereas many elites point to the potential for economic growth. What many Korean officials and elites neglect to highlight is the implicit

¹⁸¹ Vine, *Base Nation*, 270.

connection between economic growth and a politically advantageous position for Korean officials in dealings with the United States.¹⁸²

The Philippines, more so than either Korea or Japan, remains one of the few countries to negotiate their way out of hosting American military bases. The decision to not renew the longstanding leases of the Subic and Clark bases served as a moment of resistance to American hegemonic control in the region, but the subsequent signing of the VFA ensured that American soldiers, American weapons, and American money were still a persistent force in the nation for years to come. In spite of continued reports of sexual misconduct by American service members and the sexual and financial exploitation of prostitutes afraid of being socially ostracized, physically hurt, or going further in to debt bondage, President Rodrigo Duterte's defense minister remarked as recently as this year that "The Philippines defense apparatus want to keep the VFA as it has been vital in boosting the capabilities of under-resourced Philippine forces through dozens of annual joint training exercises."¹⁸³

In all three of these countries, official prostitution is illegal, yet in Korea, Japan and the Philippines, there remains an active market for underground prostitution and human trafficking. Though systems of institutionalized prostitution are no longer legal in many parts of the Pacific, they persist though illegal means, both magnifying the potential for abuse and exploitation.

¹⁸² Gillem, *America Town*, 21.

¹⁸³ Reuters Staff, "Philippines' Duterte tells U.S. 'you have to pay' if it wants to keep troop deal," *Reuters Manila*, (Manila, Philippines), last modified February 12, 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-philippines-usa-defence/philippines-duterte-tells-u-s-you-have-to-pay-if-it-wants-to-keep-troop-deal-idUSKBN2AC1K2>.

The sexual conduct of the United States military in foreign countries, and particularly in the Pacific, is a multi-generational issue, compounded by the negative perception of women in a global trans-national world, which affects their physical as well as mental safety. In an increasingly globalized world, the United States military sexual misconduct has not disappeared in Asia, though the military has offered token pieces of literature and guidance to highlight that soldiers should not engage in such behavior.¹⁸⁴ The global hegemonic power of the United States is represented by the American flag and men in Carhartt military boots sleeping in single story suburbanized military bases, but its true power lies in the economic and conceptual dominance that these symbols of authority represent. More theoretical and conceptual economics aside, the presence of a global trade network vouchsafed by the American military presence abroad has presented a harrowing decision for many economically disadvantaged women in the Pacific.

The rhetorical claims by the United States military that sexual misconduct is “inconsistent with Army values” does not appear to reflect the historical reality in the Pacific. Gramsci writes “every State is ethical in as much as one of its most important

¹⁸⁴ Despite resources presented by the United States military that claim that “One assault is too many,” according to reports from the Department of Defense, there have actually been tens of thousands of instances of sexual assault every year just within the military *itself*. Nearly 76% even go unreported and “less than half” of female surveyors had confidence in the chain of command to report their assaults. It is exceedingly clear that despite the United States military’s efforts, sexual assault remains actively widespread within the organization itself. Though it is difficult to speculate regarding the frequency of sexual assault on women in local populations where the United States military is due to the tendency for such crimes to be unreported, if the quantifiable numbers of sexual assault within the military itself are any indication, the issue has yet to be resolved. “Military Sexual Assault Fact Sheet: Statistics from the 2016 – 2019 DoD SAPRO Reports and their appendices/annexes, unless otherwise noted,” *Protect Our Defenders* online, last modified, August 2020. <https://www.protectourdefenders.com/factsheet/>.; Ella Torres, “Military sexual assault victims say the system is broken,” *ABC NEWS* online, last modified August 28, 2020, <https://abcnews.go.com/US/military-sexual-assault-victims-system-broken/story?id=72499053>.; Norah O'donnell, Kristin Steve, Megan Towey, Adam Verdugo, Len Tepper “Military's system to combat sexual assault is broken, survivors say: ‘It's so much bigger than it seems,’” *CBS News* online, last modified November 18, 2020, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/military-sexual-assault-survivors-broken-system/>.

functions is to raise the great masses of the population to particular cultural and moral level, a level (or type) which corresponds to the needs of the productive forces for development, and hence to the interests of the ruling classes.” Gramsci’s view can be applied to the apparatus of the United States army operating within the Pacific and the entire army structure as well. The attempts to limit widespread sexual misconduct by American GIs in the immediate post-war period (as in the period where the army attempted to regulate and control the process of prostitution directly) was reflective of a desire by the state (i.e. the United States government) to raise the “level” of culture and morality within the army to an acceptable range in order to be successful in maintaining hegemony and status in the international community. “Army values” decrying sexual assault may be what are espoused contemporarily, but they are values that the state, and thus the military, has little interest in realistically addressing until they become a potential detriment to their economic and hegemonic control of a given nation.

We see this reflected in the effort by commanders and administrators to limit the amount of venereal disease present within their armies, and subsequently, be at an acceptable level of combat readiness. These actions represent less a desire to address sexual misconduct fundamentally and *in toto*¹⁸⁵, but more so, to “elevate” soldiers to a “particular” level of morality and culture only insofar as maintenance of hegemonic power within the region can be secured. The evolution of *how* the United States military has addressed the issue of sexual misconduct and prostitution in the Pacific, from unregulated, to directly administered, to legally abolished but tacitly and illegally maintained, simply proves the point that Gramsci highlights. Sexual misconduct continues to occur because it is not *seen*

¹⁸⁵ *Prison Notebooks*, 220.

as an issue that needs to be addressed either morally or culturally in the eyes of the United States military (or in this case the “State”) which explains why significant action has yet to be taken to address the problem.

In the eyes of American soldiers in the years after 1945, men often felt as though they were owed something as liberators, whether that be souvenirs or sexual gratification from women in liberated countries. This perspective has changed over time, with the United States military’s attempts to encourage service members to engage more fruitfully with local culture, cuisine, and people. But for some in the military stationed on bases in the Pacific, these racial and social dynamics have not disappeared; some soldiers still believe that they are owed a pound of flesh – sometimes literally. Though social conventions have morphed over the years with Pacific nations gradually gaining sovereignty over their countries and people, oftentimes SOFAs hamstring the amount of oversight that countries like Korea, Japan, and the Philippines have over the conduct of American soldiers in their country.

The evidence presented in this work does indeed reflect that the current global hegemon, the United States, actively maintains the status quo within the international community through ideologies that both create and in turn, reinforce, cultural hegemony. These ideologies that present and reinforce global standards in the interests of the United States provide maintenance of the current capitalistic and hierarchical standards. Such ideologies can range from fashion trends¹⁸⁶ to video games¹⁸⁷ and are presented in ways that are palatable to the general public in order to maintain a given status quo that is

¹⁸⁶ Diana Crane, "Gender and Hegemony in Fashion Magazines: Women's Interpretations of Fashion Photographs," *Sociological Quarterly* 40, no. 4 (1999): 541-63.

¹⁸⁷ Dima Saber and Nick Webber, "'This Is Our Call of Duty': Hegemony, History and Resistant Videogames in the Middle East," *Media, Culture & Society* 39, no. 1 (2017): 77-93.

beneficial to the preservation of the power, either monetarily or culturally, for the hegemon. The creation, maintenance, and mere presence of United States Army bases in foreign countries are examples of the success of this model of control in the international community in the 21st century. Even the personal experiences of academics today testify to the success of this model of cultural hegemonic control, “What struck both of us during our visit to It’aweon was how familiar it seemed, although neither of us had ever visited these clubs in Seoul before. ... both of us grew up in countries where the U.S. military presence had been part of everyday life since the end of the Second World War.”¹⁸⁸

The American military has become so ingrained in local cultures and economies that it may tempting to understand and explain its presence as a physical manifestation of imperialism in this region. However, if we are to follow the standards defined by Gramsci’s model of hegemony, we must also be aware not to substitute the term of hegemony as a stand in for simply “imperialism” or “domination” of other nationalistic forces.¹⁸⁹ The unique definition, construction, and use of the word by Gramsci existed in the very specific context of Italian politics at the turn of the 19th century. The general principles of the term as defined by him did have implications for the international scope, but they differed in focus than those of contemporary theorists concerned with American imperialism.¹⁹⁰ However, tenants of Gramsci’s overarching ideology of hegemonic formation can be

¹⁸⁸ Hohn and Moon, “The Politics of Gender,” in Hohn and Moon, *Over There*, 2.

¹⁸⁹ With this being said, the American military presence in the Pacific can *also* be understood as a manifestation of imperialism in this region, but to understand it *solely* as such a symbol waters down a more convoluted but ultimately useful understanding of international relations that better informs how to address these structures of hegemonic control.

¹⁹⁰ For example, Gramsci remarks, “Do international relations precede or follow (logically) fundamental social relations? There can be no doubt that they follow. Any organic innovation in the social structure, through technical-military expressions, modifies organically absolute and relative relations in the international field too.” In other words, the developments and relations between social groups domestically (i.e. nationally), precede changes in the international scope. *Prison Notebooks*, 176.

usefully applied to global hegemons outside of Italy and the early 20th century, with the understanding that such use must also be qualified.

Political Scientist Robert Cox notes that for a state to become globally hegemonic in the Gramscian sense, it “would have to found and protect a world order which was universal in conception, *i.e.*, not an order in which one state directly exploits others but an order which most other states ... could find compatible with their interests.”¹⁹¹ In this sense, the United States’ presence in Korea, Japan, and the Philippines was predicated in the post-war period as one of mutualistic development, and the reflection of contemporary business and political elites in each of these countries imploring the continued military presence of American troops is indeed “compatible” with their national interests of international security. Cox continues, remarking that countries operating under the auspices of a global hegemon, “try to incorporate elements from the hegemonic model without disturbing older power structures.”¹⁹² In the case of these three Pacific countries, there exists a continuous desire to incorporate and develop elements of American culture, society, and business into everyday life which consistently run into conflict with local powers either for or against this incorporation.

The mechanisms by which standards of global hegemonic control are maintained come in the form of international organizations.¹⁹³ These organizations, “embody rules

¹⁹¹ Robert W. Cox, “Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations: An Essay in Method,” *Millennium* 12, no. 2 (June 1983): 172.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

¹⁹³ Cox delineated five features of international organizations that aid in the process of exerting hegemonic control: “(1) they embody the rules which facilitate the expansion of hegemonic world orders; (2) they are themselves the product of the hegemonic world order; (3) they ideologically legitimate the norms of the world order; (4) they co-opt the elites from peripheral countries and (5) they absorb counter-hegemonic ideas.” Cox, “Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations,” 173. Regardless if one believes that the majority of international organizations exist to simply project and maintain global hegemonic power, the purposes of this research, it is exceedingly clear that the United States military is, in effect, an international organization according to conventional definitions as well as by the definition presented as

which facilitate the expansion of the dominant economic and social forces but which at the same time permit adjustments to be made by subordinated interests with a minimum of pain.”¹⁹⁴ When viewing the actions of the United States army within the Pacific during the post-war period, the American provisional military governments of Korea, Japan, and the Philippines all contributed to the expansion of domestic national interests abroad, and part of that acquiescence was related to the treatment of women in these areas. Official policy as previously outlined, certainly facilitated the expansion of dominant economic and social forces, and truthfully *did* “permit adjustments” to systems that were, if not unacceptable, highly contentious for local populations, i.e., the direct administration and control of domestic prostitution and forced immunization.¹⁹⁵

The presence of military bases and American GIs in international communities certainly represent the overarching success of a cultural hegemony that presents U.S. military forces as commonplace in foreign countries, but these reinforcing ideologies of cultural hegemony run even deeper than the presence of soldiers. The ideologies and culture that American service members bring with them when they deploy to foreign countries become ingrained as part of the status quo, even if they are nominally resisted. This is especially true in the case of sexual assault and sexual misconduct. Such behavior

such by Cox. The United States Army defines its own goal as “To deploy, fight and win our nation’s wars by providing ready, prompt and sustained land dominance by Army forces across the full spectrum of conflict as part of the joint force. The Army mission is vital to the Nation because **we are the service capable of defeating enemy ground forces and indefinitely seizing and controlling those things an adversary prizes most – its land, its resources and its population.**” (Emphasis added) In no uncertain terms, the army views and presents itself as a tool of hegemonic power in a global system. “The Army’s Vision and Strategy,” *U.S. Army* online, <https://www.army.mil/about/>.

¹⁹⁴ Cox, “Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations,” 173.

¹⁹⁵ Cox may have been describing international institutions that directly safeguarded financial systems abroad, such as the International Monetary Fund or the World Bank, which certainly do serve as prescient examples of these dynamics, but the United States military exerts similar if not greater power over economic developments due to the implicit (and at times explicit) connotation that its presence is linked to other broader economic or political ventures.

may be frowned upon by members of host nations and even internal levels of the hegemon itself, but regardless, it begrudgingly remains part of newly constructed, and globally hegemonic, status quo.

In these terms, Gramsci's theories of cultural hegemony accurately describe the current state of international relations. However, the contention that the construction of a global cultural hegemony using ideology rather than through violence or economic forces is less applicable in this particular case. The presence of United States military bases and soldiers abroad do represent the success of cultural hegemony in the reproduction of ideologies and structures that again reproduce the maintenance of power. For example, there are instances where "many military bases continue to be built for no other reason than simply inertia, rather than in a consideration of costs. As one scholar of these bases remarked of Congress, "Once a project is started, officials are 'extremely reluctant to stop for anything.'"¹⁹⁶ But these ideologies are presented and implemented with the unsaid coercive presence and implicit understanding between host country and hegemon, that violence is never necessarily removed from the equation. Because the injection of ideologies that build cultural hegemony abroad are mediated and supported, and in many cases brought by soldiers themselves, the silent understanding between sovereign powers is that there are unequal power relations at work. Missionaries or civilians are also part of international institutions that bring cultural hegemony to the Pacific, but men and women with uniforms and guns do so on a wider scale, and through more violent means. In this sense, Gramsci's contention that cultural hegemony is constructed using ideological power complimented by coercion, violence, or economic force, proves to ring true in the case of

¹⁹⁶ Vine, *Base Nation*, 251.

this particular research regarding sexual assault in the Pacific theater. Gramsci's general and overarching theory of cultural hegemony is particularly useful in understanding how the United States military participated in, and continues to participate in, the construction and maintenance of cultural hegemonic power in the Pacific through its handling of sexual assault claims.

American GIs are no longer committing sexual crimes at the rate that they were in the first few years of military occupation in Korea, Japan, and the Philippines, but they *have* engaged more intensely in illegal sexual exploits with local prostitutes in these various countries. Instead of committing crimes of a sexual nature, though these certainly still do occur, American service members simply provide the capital and the demand for human trafficking in the Pacific. Sexual assault is still sexual assault – but in 2021, it is mediated through a capitalistic notion of economic exploitation.¹⁹⁷

The American solution to legalized and institutional prostitution in the Philippines, Korea, and Japan was to make the practice invisible, making it more dangerous due to a lack of oversight. In 2021, multiple Asian countries are beginning to reap what was sown by the United States military over half a century ago. It is clear from the multiple and continued violations by American service members over decades of host countries, that American GIs are not in danger of even some of the most egregious sexual assault crimes.

¹⁹⁷ “USAG Humphreys Off-Limits,” *US Army Garrison Humphreys: The Army's Home in Korea*, last modified September 8th, 2020, <https://home.army.mil/humphreys/index.php/about/us-army-garrison-humphreys-and-area-iii-limits-information>. Instead of being physically kept as slaves, many of these women are kept under conditions of debt bondage similar to the economic system of sharecroppers of the 19th century south; many club promoters charge hidden fees or deduct money from a woman's paycheck rendering her unable to pay off her debt to her employer. This form of debt bondage or slavery is both perpetuated by and essentially paid for, by American service members. In a modern capitalist consumer culture, one votes with one's dollars. Regardless of the US Army's policy of regarding well known red-light districts as “Off-Limits,” the robust market for sex in South Korea around army bases indicates that soldiers are not listening. These ideas have not gone away but have transformed and contributed into the market for modern-day human trafficking.

Sexual assault claims are notoriously difficult to prosecute, and even within the United States military itself, existing structures of reporting mean that men and women must report such crimes to superior officers – sometimes the very people who have committed the act. Thus, in the case of rape and sexual assault, American service members are unlikely to be appropriately tried and punished for their illegal actions.

Without question, the instances of sexual assault and rape at the hands of United States service members, either internally or against local populations, are egregious acts of sexual violence. These crimes can and should be tried in courts of law and organs of the international community to redress such transgressions. However, if one chooses to focus on the specific instances of sexual assaults--their trials, their outcomes, and their emotional and physical trauma--a far more insidious and widespread process by the United States military will remain out of focus. The response, or lack thereof, by the United States military and government is not the primary focus of academic research regarding this topic. Because such crimes as sexual assault are highly emotional and violent affairs, this tends to overshadow the larger and more comprehensive system of sexual assault that followed the United States military wherever it goes. This research is not necessarily centered on the testimonies and experiences of individual survivors who experienced this trauma, though such stories are absolutely integral to legitimating and presenting the larger argument, it is focused on the response by the United States government *to* these accounts and actions. Ultimately, regardless of how effective or how intensely the United States military prosecutes these crimes or puts in place token efforts or programs to combat sexual misconduct abroad, their continuation inherently perpetuates the process of building and maintaining cultural hegemony abroad.

Though it would be difficult to argue that the United States military has had an active role in the maintenance of cultural hegemony through the actions of its soldiers and their sexual misconduct in Korea, Japan, and the Philippines, it would be far easier to dispute that the agency in this situation lay singularly with the military. While Gramsci has highlighted important dynamics present within hegemonic systems that actively reinforce the status quo, he failed to account for the ability for groups or individuals to engage within those established institutional systems to resist those very standards.¹⁹⁸ This cannot and should not be ignored when considering the present case. True the United States army, and by extension, the United States government, is clearly in the position of the bulk of power in this dynamic, but Korean, Japanese, and Filipino governments and women themselves have not stood idly by while these coercive and misogynistic standards persist. Various women's rights organizations have challenged the overreach by the United States in relation to sexual misconduct and as mentioned previously, there have been successes at the national level in resisting American military presence in these countries.¹⁹⁹ The global forces of militarized masculinity, economic inequalities, patriarchal systems, and the exertion of American hegemonic control over the countries of Korea, Japan, and the Philippines and over the bodies of the women in these countries may appear too daunting to make any fundamental change. At the most basic level, an acknowledgement of the reality of these situations in the Pacific and the role of the United States military in the

¹⁹⁸ For example, Jim Glassman utilizes sections of Gramsci's own works in the Prison Notebooks to illustrate how resistance to established hegemony can be resisted from within the very system, "The breadth and depth of challenges to this hegemony, moreover, are evident not only from the activities of the Red Shirt movement and regional discontent in Northern and Northeast Thailand but from the resistance of working-class women to attempts to police their sexuality and limit their consumerism." Jim Glassman, "Cracking Hegemony in Thailand: Gramsci, Bourdieu and the Dialectics of Rebellion," *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 41, no. 1 (2011): 25.

¹⁹⁹ The most obvious of the army being denied a renewal of their leasing contract for the Subic and Clark air bases built on the island of Manila in the Philippines.

economic and physical exploitation of women from these areas remains a necessary starting point for future change. In the meantime, the women of these countries continue to, as they have done for decades since the 1940s, fight against economic and sexual exploitation through volition and power of their own making. In the words of Lily, a woman who worked in the clubs catering to American GIs in the Philippines, “All of our lives we women must be strong inside. We must fight. We must not be afraid.”²⁰⁰

²⁰⁰ Sandra Sturdevant and Brenda Stoltzfus, “Disparate Threads of the Whole: An Interpretive Essay,” in Sturdevant and Stoltzfus, *Let the Good Times Roll*, 327.

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