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South Korea Memorializes the American Military Experience

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Abstract

South Korea has become another nation in the global statue wars movement. This movement advocates the removal of statues honoring persons viewed as not deserving respect. In South Korea, activists have called for the removal of statues of Korean Japanese collaborators and that of General Douglas MacArthur. At the same time statues have gone up commemorating individuals and social actions for justice. Victims of injustice, to include those of an American military massacre, have been recognized. These transformative changes were made possible by democratization in the 1990s. The country's previous authoritarian rule restricted the memorialization of the American military experience to a state-sanctioned narrative portraying America as savior. This article will demonstrate how memory sites and monuments from the authoritarian period reflected this narrative. They offered up a militaristic perspective of heroic battles and heroes, and expressed gratitude for humanitarian accomplishments. This is an accurate portrayal as the American military did demonstrate bravery, devotion to duty, and humanitarianism. However, the dark side to this remained hidden and its victims silenced. With the lifting of authoritarian control, preserved memory sites can now provide details to complete our understanding of the American military experience in South Korea.

Keywords: memorialization, monuments, memory, democratization, Korean War, Douglas MacArthur, Marilyn Monroe, No Gun Ri, orphans

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Introduction

This paper is an analysis of the dramatic change in South Korean memories and memorialization of the US military experience in Korea. While all the countries that have served under the United Nations flag in Korea are memorialized, the United States is memorialized the most. These monuments have the appearance of permeance, but in fact attitudes towards monuments and memorials change. Scholars such as Suhi Choi and Mikyoung Kim have documented changes in the politics of memory in South Korea, how events are remembered and memorialized. They focus on more recent expressions of counter and suppressed memories (S. Choi 2014a; 2019; M. Kim 2019; Cumings 2005). The analysis here takes a historical look at South Korean monuments representing official narratives and counter memories. It is a review of Korean monuments to the American military erected since 1945.

As a nation's attitudes towards monuments change, political actions may follow. In the United States this has resulted in the *statue wars*, with social protests resulting in the removal of many Confederate and other racist statues. These razed memorials were not so much about the past as the present when they were installed; they tell us more about those who erected them than those honored. The United Daughters of the Confederacy, responsible for many statues, used them to recast defeat as a noble cause, defending southern traditions and states' rights (Thompson 2022).[2] In South Korea, the statue wars have included demands to remove the General Douglas MacArthur statue and statues honoring Korean Japanese collaborators. Another outcome of these statue wars has been the erection of new monuments relating counter or suppressed memories. One example is the No Gun Ri Peace Park, recalling an American military massacre that took place there.

Across South Korea there are many war memorials to countries that served under the United Nations flag. The United States has the greatest representation, with about fifty major monuments honoring American military leaders, heroes, and war dead. The intent of this article is to let these monuments speak to us, helping us understand how South Korea

memorializes the American military and how this has changed over time. In the first phase, 1945–1995, the most common monument was government-built and presented the officially sanctioned narrative. The Republic of Korea (South Korea) Ministry of National Defense and military units under its command erected statues and monuments reflecting a narrative of American and South Korean forces at battle with a powerful communist enemy (Ministry of Patriots and Veterans Affairs 2010).[1] They relate American and South Korean military glory and hard-fought battles while reminding the public that South Korea is in a continuous state of war that requires preparedness. There are also publicly funded memorials that represent this official narrative, as well as statues recalling humanitarian efforts and commemorating individuals seen as loving Korea more than Koreans.

Since democratization in the 1990s, the South Korean government has erected monuments that expose the dark side of that traditional narrative. A diversity in memorialization has emerged creating a situation wherein heroes and heroic actions are still honored alongside counter memories. However, the standards for erecting monuments to the American military have become more difficult. The Korean American Friendship Society (Hanmi uho hyeophoe) sponsored a statue of General Walton Walker, who had led the Busan perimeter defense in the Korean War, and offered it to several locales. But unable to find a home for it, they were forced to place it on an American base (Choi 2014a, 102–105; Cho 2008, 62).[2] In another change, a trend in constructing statues to attract tourists suggests a move away from traditional memorization. In this paper representative examples

1. *Korean War Memorials in Pictures: Remembering UN Participation 60 Years Later* (Ministry of Patriots and Veterans Affairs 2010) is a beautifully illustrated book that lists 31 monuments and statues honoring the US military. The author's analysis of the *Pacific Stars and Stripes* newspaper from 1945 to 2021, as well as other sources, identified additional monuments. Of the 31 monuments the Ministry identified as dedicated to US involvement in the Korean War, 19 were erected by South Korea's Ministry of National Defense or individual military units.
2. Ashley Rowland and Hwang Hae-Ryn, "Korean War Hero Honored with Long Awaited Statue," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, June 30, 2008, 8.

of both traditional and alternative memorials will be discussed.

If one looks at South Korea and its war memorialization one will discover that more than any other nation, South Korea expresses and offers material gestures to thank foreigners who came to its defense in wartime. The South Korean government and organizations have staged numerous thank you events. Noteworthy among such efforts is the "Revisit Korea" program, which brings Korean War veterans to Korea, paying a portion of the airfare and the cost of a four-star hotel lodging. As American veteran William McCulloch put it, "I've been to France and Germany and Italy and so on and they all are appreciative of US help, but the way South Korea has set up this revisit program is unique." Another veteran responded that "Koreans just can't stop saying thank you" (Kwon 2013, 155–156).

State-Sanctioned Narrative, 1945–1995

What may be the first monument to the American military indicates the South Korean social value of demonstrating gratitude. In World War II, Kim Duk-hyun, a government worker in Namhae, began a personal crusade to commemorate American sacrifices in that war. At great self-sacrifice and physical injury, Kim spent eleven years trying to realize his quest for a monument honoring an American bomber crew killed when their plane was shot down over Namhae. On August 7, 1945, Kim had been awakened by a large explosion. At work that morning he overheard a Japanese official tell of an American aircraft crash and Japanese soldiers recovering equipment, but leaving the bodies out in the open. Kim organized a small party that went to the crash site on Mt. Mangun and buried the airmen. He also collected personal items for later identification and placed a simple wooden cross at the mass grave (Volpe 1992, 15–16).[3]

But one villager informed on Kim, leading to his arrest and incarceration as an enemy collaborator. A brutal interrogation left him with one hand permanently deformed. Then, on August 15, 1945, he awoke to

3. "Korea Readies Memorial to U.S. Airmen," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, September 3, 1956, 9.

find his jail door open and his jailers gone. A short time later, US occupation forces arrived, and Kim visited the regional office to share details of the burial. The regional governor, US Army Captain Charles DeLaney, accompanied Kim to the crash site. Captain DeLaney verified the aircraft as an American B-24 bomber named Lady Luck II of the 868th Bombardment Squadron. Lady Luck II and a second Okinawa-based B-24 were on a night mission attacking Japanese shipping. The second bomber sank an enemy ship and safely returned to base, while Japanese antiaircraft fire brought down Lady Luck II (George and Stauder 1965, 16–18).

An American recovery team removed the eleven bodies and they were returned to the United States for burial. This could have been the end of Kim's role. However, he wanted to do more for those who gave their blood in Korea's liberation. Also, he thought of his brother, forced into the Japanese military, who lost his life in a plane crash in Myanmar (Burma). Kim set a personal goal of erecting a permanent monument paying tribute to the bomber crew. To save money for the memorial he gave up smoking and drinking, but encountered serious roadblocks. In April 1948, when he tried to take a stonemason to the site, they were stopped by leftist guerrillas occupying the mountain. Then during the Korean War, the North Korean People's Army temporarily occupied Namhae and Kim was again taken into custody for expressing favorable attitudes towards the American enemy.

Following the Korean War, Kim received government approval to erect a memorial. His grassroots campaign succeeded and in November 1956, a 12-foot-high granite stone monument was dedicated. The dedication ceremony included 600 villagers and distinguished guests. The monument inscription expressed Kim's feelings: "As a token of our gratitude to, and in memory of these brave warriors." Kim led annual ceremonies at the memorial until his death in 2010, when his son, Kim Jong-ki, assumed responsibility for them.[4]

A good example of government-funded and state sanctioned narrative can be seen in a memorial at the Osan battlefield. In 1982, the South Korean Ministry of National Defense erected statues here and in 2013 opened a UN

4. "Koreans Honor 11 U.S. Crash Victims," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, December 6, 1956, 9.

Forces Battle Memorial Hall. This impressive structure contains exhibits detailing the Battle of Osan in the Korean War. While conforming to the narrative of the US it deviates somewhat in assigning credit to the United Nations, though it was a US action (Ministry of Patriots and Veterans Affairs 2010, 44–47; Hollis 2008, 79).

Early on July 5, 1950, Task Force Smith (named after its commander Lieutenant Colonel Charles B. Smith) with about 400 officers and enlisted men established a blocking defense to halt the southward advance of the North Korean People's Army. Task Force Smith set up their position overlooking a road just north of Osan. Not long after, a column of North Korean tanks appeared. Lacking effective anti-tank weapons, Task Force Smith was overpowered. Realizing the situation was hopeless, Smith ordered an orderly withdrawal, but this soon turned into chaos. Those able to escape made their way to Osan and their hidden trucks. American losses were about 60 killed and 82 captured (32 of these later dying in prisoner of war camps) (Tucker 1995, 327–330).

Task Force Smith and the Battle of Osan would be among the first engagements commemorated after the war. In 1954, American soldiers constructed a stone obelisk monument and interpretative signage at the Osan battlefield. Today, this stone obelisk stands on the west side of the highway across from newer monuments.[5]

Despite being one of the world's poorest countries in the late 1950s, the Republic of Korea erected impressive statues honoring American military leaders. The first and largest of the statues paid respect to General of the Army Douglas MacArthur, and his role in the Incheon amphibious landings. The MacArthur statue was followed by statues honoring Lieutenant General John B. Coulter and General James A. Van Fleet. Both served in the Korean War and were heavily involved in South Korea's social and economic recovery. Coulter and Van Fleet considered Korea a second home, a place they loved (Ministry of Patriots and Veterans Affairs 2010, 100–101).

President Syngman Rhee had advocated for public contributions to

5. "'Monument to Courage' Dedicated in Korea Town," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, October 8, 1954, 8.

erect a MacArthur statue. The statue was to be much larger than life befitting a military and political hero. With the Incheon landings in 1950, General MacArthur had transformed a southward retreat into a rapid advance north. MacArthur also represented an ideological position, that the war could have been won had President Truman allowed him greater latitude of action. President Rhee also believed that unification by military action could have been achieved. South Koreans, remembering MacArthur's military success, contributed about US$80,000 to erect a 15-foot-tall statue of the American general in Incheon. Dedication ceremonies took place on September 15, 1957, the anniversary of the Incheon landings. Located in the city's Jayu (Freedom) Park, it stands on the high ground of Mt. Eungbong (Ministry of Patriots and Veterans Affairs 2010, 58–61).[6] The pose has MacArthur with binoculars, viewing the Incheon operations. General MacArthur's commander-in-chief, President Harry S. Truman, is honored with a bronze statue in Imjingak Park. A plaque at its base informs us that his quick decision to send military forces to Korea contributed greatly to saving the Republic of Korea (Ministry of Patriots and Veterans Affairs 2010, 80–85).

President Rhee ordered the erection of a second large statue honoring Lieutenant General John B. Coulter. Dedicated in October 1959, the statue remembers an officer better known for his work to improve the Korean economic situation than his military achievements. Coulter first came to Korea in January 1948, serving as 7th Infantry Division commanding general, and then deputy commander of US Forces in Korea until their deactivation in 1948. With the outbreak of the Korean War, Coulter returned to Korea in June 1950 and led troops in delaying actions before becoming commander of IX Corps, leading forces north as part of the Naktong breakout. In early 1951, he assumed duties as deputy commander of the US 8th Army and liaison officer to President Syngman Rhee, with whom he established a warm relationship. Coulter retired in 1952.[7]

6. "MacArthur Statue Unveiling Set On Inchon Landing Day," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, September 13, 1957, 8.
7. "ROK Citizens Honor Gen. Coulter with Statue," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, October 23, 1959, 2.

Once retired, Coulter became director of UNKRA (United Nations Korean Reconstruction Agency). The UNKRA led a massive reconstruction program, rebuilding educational, industrial, mining, housing, and health facilities. Coulter headed UNKRA from May 1953 to its termination in 1958. The agency provided nearly US$200 million dollars in aid (about US$1 billion today), achieving impressive results through the use of local labor and construction materials. Coulter also served as president and chairman of the Board of the Korean Cultural and Freedom Foundation until 1956 when poor health forced his resignation.[8]

The Lieutenant General Coulter statue, first installed at the Yongsan rotary, had to be relocated with construction of the Third Namsan Tunnel in 1977. A rededication ceremony was held at its new location in Seoul Children's Park. This was an appropriate spot given Coulter's support for UNKRA children and family-related projects.[9]

The General James A. Van Fleet statue, unveiled on March 31, 1960 at the Korean Military Academy, recalls his role in the creation of a modern ROK Army. A plaque in Korean and English records that General Van Fleet is considered the "father of the Korean Army," having led the Republic of Korea Army modernization program (Ohl 1995, 345–346). When General Van Fleet replaced General Mathew Ridgway in April 1951 as commander of the US 8th Army, he made reequipping the ROK Army a major priority. He supported programs that would prepare it for national defense when American forces were reduced or withdrawn. Among the improvements were the establishment of a War College, and the Korean Military Academy. By the time of his departure from Korea in February 1953, the ROK Army had reshaped itself. Van Fleet was unable to realize a personal goal, to locate the remains of his son, Captain James A. Van Fleet, Jr. In 1952, Captain Van Fleet's plane had been shot down over North Korea. His remains have yet to be found. General Van Fleet had a deep love for Korea and its people, calling the nation his second home. In his speech when leaving for the United States, General Van Fleet remarked, "I shall not ask you to give me back my

8. "Gen. Coulter Assumes ROK Economic Post," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, October 4, 1959, 2.
9. "Coulter Statue to Be Moved," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, January 18, 1977, 11.

heart, I leave it with you."[10]

Van Fleet's close relationship with Republic of Korea continued after his military retirement. In May 1954, President Dwight D. Eisenhower dispatched him to Korea and Asia to review the region's military assistance needs. The visit gave him an opportunity to visit his old friend and admirer Syngman Rhee. The following year, General (Retired) Van Fleet spoke before the first Korean Military Academy graduating class, expressing his high regard for Korea. Van Fleet also served with private organizations assisting Korea, as well as heading the American-Korean Foundation, an organization offering Korea relief funds and which played a major role in establishing The Korea Society, with a mission of promoting friendly United States-Korea relations. Van Fleet served his home country 38 years in the Army, then devoted 40 years to Korea, his second home.[11]

The ROK Army has recognized soldiers who went beyond their expected duties and displayed strong commitment to the Korean people. On March 5, 1951, it dedicated a monument to Lieutenant Colonel Lloyd H. "Ditty" Rockwell, senior adviser to the Republic of Korea Army from 1949 to 1951. The stone monument standing in a Jeonju park bears the inscription: "Chief Advisor Lt. Col J.H. Rockwell, Your Great Efforts for Our Division, ROK Army, Will Remain Shining In Our Division's History Forever." Rockwell had devoted himself to preparing the ROK Army and then fighting alongside it in battle. After the Korean War he had stateside assignments, but had such a strong desire to return to Korea that he reenlisted as an enlisted soldier, a master sergeant. Back in Korea in 1957, he spent much of his off-duty time assisting a Daejeon orphanage.[12]

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10. William Claire, "Van Fleet Doesn't Know Where to Settle," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, April 5, 1960, 2; "8th Army Leader Says Good-Bye, Promises Return," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, January 29, 1953, 1; Joseph McChristian "The Legacy of General James Van Fleet," May 17, 2016, Van Fleet Foundation.
11. "Retired General Returns to Help South Korea," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, September 15, 1959, 19.
12. "ROK Erect Monument in Honor of 'Ditty' Rockwell," *Council Bluffs Nonpareil*, May 13, 1951, 1; "Twice Honored By ROK, Soldier Again In Korea," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, November 11, 1957, 7.

Not all monuments of gratitude are impressive statues; Koreans have also expressed thanks through simple monuments and gestures. A humble thank you can be seen at Jangpa-ri, where a 1960s American painted sign on an abandoned schoolhouse reads, "Sponsored by the Officers and Men of the 1st Bn., 23rd Inf, 2nd Inf. Div. LTC Michael J. Horan, Commanding." American troops are long gone from Jangpa-ri, but an unknown person has maintained the sign. In retirement, Horan kept up his community involvement, serving as mayor of St. Pete Beach, Florida from 1992 to 1996. A Colonel Michael J. Horan Park in that city respectfully carries his name.[13]

Among those said to have loved Korea more than a Korean was naval intelligence officer Lieutenant William H. Shaw. Shaw was born in Pyongyang in 1922 (his Korean name was Seo Wiryum) to Christian missionary parents. Shaw attended Pyongyang High School and then returned to the United States. In World War II he joined the US Navy, serving on a PT (patrol torpedo) boat. With his release from naval duties in August 1946, he accepted a teaching position at the ROK Naval Academy. Shaw taught at the academy for three years and then left to pursue a doctoral degree from Harvard's East Asian studies program. He planned to obtain his degree and return to Korea. However, when North Korea invaded the South in 1950, he told his wife and two children that helping his brothers in Korea defend freedom was more important than continuing his studies (Millett 2005, 127).

William H. Shaw rejoined the navy, serving as an intelligence officer on General MacArthur's staff. His ROK Naval Academy teaching time had acquainted him with the Incheon tides, critical knowledge for the amphibious landing plans. Following the amphibious assault, Lieutenant Shaw went ashore on an intelligence-gathering mission. On September 22, 1950, while attached to the 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines in Seoul, Shaw became aware of an incoming US artillery barrage. He ran among the houses and stores warning civilians to take cover. Out in the open and

13. Author visit to Jangpa former school building, September 2018; "Obituary: Col. Michael J. Horan Sr.," *Tampa Bay Weekly*, September 20, 2005, https://www.tbnweekly.com/beaches-beacon/article.

exposed, a North Korean sniper killed him with a single shot.[14]

Following the Korean War, Dr. Baek Nak-jun, who would become the first president of Yonsei University, heard Shaw's moving story and believed it important to tell. Dr. Baek and 61 other citizens raised money to build a monument in Nokbeon-dong, at the site of his death. Dedication ceremonies took place on September 22, 1956, the sixth anniversary of his death. The monument stood there until 2010, when it was relocated to a specially constructed memorial area in Eunpyeong Peace Park, Seoul (Ministry of Patriots and Veterans Affairs 2010, 102–105).

Shaw and his missionary family would be honored with additional memorials. In 1957, a chapel named after Shaw was built on a hill above Mokwon University in Daejeon. His parents, William E. and Adeline H. Shaw, came back after the war to teach and work with Korean War widows. Shaw's widow, Juanita Shaw, performed twelve years of missionary work in Korea. The William H. Shaw Chapel burned down in 1988 and was replaced by a larger University Chapel. Outside this chapel are monuments honoring William Shaw, his parents, and widow.[15]

The Korean War produced many heroes, only a few of whom are memorialized in monuments. One of these is Major General William F. Dean. Dean fought against the North Korean People's Army not as a general but as an infantryman. On July 3, 1950, Major General Dean and his 24th Infantry Division arrived in Korea. Over seventeen days he led the division in five blocking actions. North Korean advances pushed the division ever further south to Daejeon. Major General Dean left his command post for the front lines, urging his men to keep up the fight. By July 20, the situation was desperate and the general chose to fight as a foot soldier. Along with aide First Lieutenant Arthur M. Clarke and his Korean interpreter, "Jimmy" Kim, he became a tank hunter. The trio spotted an enemy tank and Dean ordered a 75mm gunner to fire on the target but he missed (in fact the tank

14. "Korea War hero Commemorated with Monument," *Korea Herald*, June 23, 2010, https://www koreaherald.com/view.

15. Hee-Joong Yun, "Who is William Hamilton Shaw," last modified June 22, 2011, https://www.heejy.site/WHSb081203.htm.

was already out of action). Dean next organized a second tank-hunting crew, comprised of Lieutenant Clarke, staff officer Captain Richard Rowlands, a South Korean ordnance officer, and enlisted personnel from his command post. The team found a 3.5-inch bazooka and a tank target. The soldier firing the bazooka missed, but they fought on while under sniper fire. They encountered another enemy tank and under Dean's directions the bazooka gunner put three rounds into the tank, destroying it and its crew.

Their actions had no impact on the enemy advance; the American forces were being overrun. They had to retreat again. Major General Dean and a group of 17 survivors escaped to the east. Lieutenant Clarke, who was driving the lead vehicle, made a wrong turn and drove into enemy territory. Near a North Korean road block, the group abandoned their vehicles and took to the hills. During a rest stop Dean heard the sound of a creek off the road. Going to fetch water he fell down a steep slope and was knocked unconscious. Clarke and the others searched, but could not find him, so they resumed their flight and in two days reached friendly forces. When Dean came to, he was in pain with a broken shoulder and all alone.

For the next thirty-five days Dean walked, hiding from the enemy. On August 25, he believed he was near the American front lines when he encountered two South Korean civilians. He offered them cash and gifts if they led him to US forces. They offered to help, but instead turned him over to the enemy and each collected about five dollars in reward money. Dean became a prisoner of war, spending more than three years in captivity. While a prisoner he received the nation's highest military award, the Medal of Honor. Later he would reply modestly that he did not deserve it (Dean and Worden 1954, 30–44).[16] His heroism did not go unchallenged, with some critics arguing that a general should be leading his troops not fighting alongside them (Ricks 2012, 123).

A disabled North Korean tank became a Daejeon memorial to Dean. On its turret an inscription read, "Knocked out on 20 July 50 under the

16. Regarding "Jimmy" Kim, the interpreter's real name is unknown. Americans often gave Koreans nicknames rather than try to pronounce Korean names, thus giving them second-class identities.

supervision of Maj. Gen. W. F. Dean." It was removed in 1977 and today Major General Dean and his tank-hunting team are remembered in Daejeon's Bomunsan Park, with a monument and statue depicting four soldiers, one holding a 3.5-inch bazooka. A second monument in the park remembers the United Nations Forces and the 24th Infantry Division. A plaque informs one that "The 24th U.S. Division—the vanguard of the U.N. Forces—first engaged the enemy at Osan on July 5…The 24th Division, outnumbered, staged a furious defense" (Ministry of Patriots and Veterans Affairs 2010, 110–111).

Building- and place-naming are another way of memorializing. In 1963, President Park Chung-hee renamed a Seoul Hill as Walker Hill. The renaming paid tribute to General Walton Walker, commander of the US 8th Army at the outset of the Korean War. General Walker effectively organized the Busan perimeter defense and breakout to the north, but would die in a vehicle accident near Uijeongbu on December 23, 1950. A five-star hotel, the Walker Hill Hotel (today the Grand Walker Hill Seoul), was built on the hill. It offered US troops and foreigners entertainment and recreation. The beloved American musician Louis "Louie" Armstrong performed at its formal opening on April 10, 1963.[17]

When constructed, Walker Hill had five separate hotel units each named for an American general: Douglas House (Douglas MacArthur), Matthew House (Matthew Ridgway), James House (James Van Fleet), Lyman House (Lyman Lemnitzer), and Maxwell House (Maxwell Taylor). Today, only the Douglas House, with extensive renovations, survives. The 8th Army leased the Matthew House for American servicemembers. Guests had access to the night club, swimming pool, skeet range, tennis courts, and horseback riding.[18]

Another hero of the delaying actions of July 1950, Colonel Robert R. Martin, is remembered with a Cheonan city park named in his honor.

17. "Walker Hill Dedicated By ROK," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, December 28, 1962, 6; "Satch's Horn Launches Seoul's GI Palace," *Chicago Daily News*, April 9, 1963, 2.
18. "Vegas of Orient Readied in Korea for U.N. Forces and Foreigners," *Dallas Morning News*, January 16, 1963, 2; "Walker Hill: Korea's Sinless Tourist Lure," *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 1, 1963, 16.

During the intense Battle of Cheonan, Colonel Martin, commanding the US Army 34th Infantry Regiment and fighting as an infantryman, took up a position to attack North Korean tanks entering the city. As an enemy tank approached, he let loose with a bazooka round, just as a sniper fired on him. Martin was hit and killed, and would be posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross. The Korea Freedom League, Cheonan chapter, made possible the park and several monuments (Yu 2017).[19]

A Diversity of Narratives, 1996–2021

Democratization in the 1990s had a transformational effect on memorialization and memory site preservation in South Korea. With newfound freedom of expression, memories could be heard. A diversity of memorialization followed with counter-memory sites and more traditional memorials. Two sides of the American military experience were remembered, positive and negative. At a peace park, visitors now can learn of an American military massacre. Further, existing monuments are questioned with some protests calling for their removal.

In the early 2000s the MacArthur statue in Incheon's Jayu Park became what Suhi Choi terms an "embattled memory" (Choi 2014b, 191–198).[34] Protestors saw General MacArthur as a general who put his ambition to become US president ahead of Korean needs. They challenged MacArthur's revered status and uncritical perceptions of the United States. On Sunday July 17, 2005, demanding the removal of the MacArthur statue, they hurled rocks, bottles, and eggs at it. Then in September 2005, protestors showed up again and clashed with MacArthur defenders, including ROK Marine veterans, and elderly Koreans. Riot police intervened and more than 20 were injured. The statue was eventually cleaned up and still stands today (Jang 2005).

Around the time of the MacArthur statue protests, the Korean American Friendship Society was having difficulties finding a home for its

19. "DSC Awarded To Colonel, KIA," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, July 8, 1950, 1.

General Walton Walker statue. Several locations were offered the statue, which had cost about US$770,000. The United Nations Cemetery in Busan turned it down, stating that Walker was only a symbol of the United States and not the United Nations. An offer to Daegu City was met with civic group protests and the mayor's rejection. The statue ended up at the American base at Yongsan in Seoul, and in 2017 was relocated to Camp Humphreys (Brown 2017).

A powerful expression of a counter memory can be found at Nogeun-ri (No Gun Ri), located 230 kilometers southeast of Seoul. The No Gun Ri Peace Memorial, opened in October 2011, documents an American military massacre of Korean civilians. It honors the victims, mostly women, children, and elderly, who died of gunfire huddled together in the twin tunnels of a railroad bridge.

Suhi Choi in her book, *Right to Mourn: Trauma, Empathy, and Korean War Memorials* (2019), writes that under South Korean authoritarian rule, victims of the No Gun Ri massacre were silenced. They lacked the opportunity to publicly mourn the loss of loved ones or to receive victim recognition. Finally, in September 1999, an Associated Press (AP) account of the massacre made it public. The AP reporters drew upon the recollections of American Korean War veterans, declassified military records, and No Gun Ri survivor accounts. The AP reporters, including a ROK Army veteran, Sang Hun Choe, wrote that American troops massacred civilians at No Gun Ri between July 26 and 29, 1950. Their investigative reporting earned the reporters a Pulitzer Prize (S. Choi 2008; S. Choi 2019; Hanley et al. 2001; Hanley 2015).

In the United States, the AP reporting came under attack and its accuracy was challenged. Critics discovered that a veteran, who had recounted the machine-gunning of innocent Korean civilians, was in fact never there. In response, the reporters countered that he was only one of numerous eyewitnesses. The shocking revelations brought calls for the US Department of Defense to determine what had happened at No Gun Ri. A Department of the Army investigation concluded that there had been regrettable loss of life at No Gun Ri, but that American troops did not have orders to fire on civilians. The Army investigators concluded that an

unknown number of Korean civilians were killed by small arms fire, artillery, mortar fire, and aircraft strafing, but that the deaths were not deliberate acts. Despite the Army investigation that cited a large number of records, significant evidence was omitted. This included a July 26, 1950 letter from John J. Muccio, US Ambassador to Korea, to Dean Rusk, the assistant secretary for Far Eastern affairs. In his letter Muccio wrote of the US policy to shoot refugees. Survivors and bereaved families expressed disappointment that the investigators had not interviewed veterans who had been present at the massacre site (Department of the Army 2001; Shin 2010).

After the public release of the Department of Army's investigation report, President William J. Clinton acknowledged that at No Gun Ri civilians had been killed and issued a statement of regret, but no apology. The president went on to note the important US role in the fight for freedom that allowed for South Korea's present success. His statement received a positive reception in Korea, save for among No Gun Ri survivors, who wanted an apology and restitution.[20]

In 2005, the Republic of Korea conducted its own investigation and certified 163 killed and missing, and 55 wounded. The Nogeun-ri International Peace Foundation, based on its own research, has estimated the dead at 250 to 300.[21] Retired US Marine Lieutenant General Bernard E. Trainor pointed out that the numbers are just a matter of degree. The number killed is secondary to the overall wartime policies, to what degree were they carried out during the war, and how soldiers behaved. These questions were never adequately addressed and other atrocity claims ignored. The Republic of Korea Truth and Reconciliation Commission has identified 215 American incidents of unjustified attacks on South Korean civilians during the Korean War (Truth and Reconciliation Commission 2009, 369–369).

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20. Richard Pyle, "No Gun Ri Survivors Criticize Report," *San Francisco Chronicle*, January 12, 2001, A8.
21. Lee Byung-chan, "Nogeun-ri jaedan, gwageoseo teukbyeolbeop jejeong semina gaechwa" (Nogeun-ri Foundation Holds a Seminar on the Enactment of the Special Act on Past History), *Newsis*, October 15, 2012, https://n.news.naver.com/mnews/article/003/0004768541?sid=102.

No Gun Ri failed to have the dramatic impact of the massacre at My Lai in 1969 during the Vietnam War. At My Lai, photographic and written accounts detailed the murder of 506 people. Visual images of murdered women and children are difficult to ignore. While few were punished, and then only lightly, My Lai had a positive impact on America's military. Reforms and warfighter codes were put in place to prevent future My Lai's. However, No Gun Ri lacked such powerful images. Its documentation came from memory (S. Choi 2008, 368–369).

The No Gun Ri Peace Memorial and park has taken on the task of public education to prevent future massacres. This is accomplished at the park in a moving and emotional fashion. A tower memorial with a statue of refugees and two arches symbolizes the victims. A garden of mournful souls contains such sculptures as "Ordeal" and "Searching for Hope," in a setting that encourages reflection and remembrance. Close by is a cemetery with some victim remains reminding one of the loss and encouraging mourning and reflection. A museum exhibits copies of US military orders to shoot refugees. The actual massacre site, the twin tunnel railroad bridge, is nearby. This government-funded Peace Memorial Park is administered by the Nogeun-ri International Peace Foundation.[22]

Around the same time that No Gun Ri entered public awareness, the Jeju 4.3 Committee investigation came into being. This investigation examined the April 3, 1948 Jeju Uprising and government response. The uprising at Jeju was a protest against South Korean government repression of radical political activities and a show of resistance to the United Nations-backed elections that divided Korea into two countries. The Jeju 4.3 Committee found that the South Korean government and military, with US military approval, committed atrocities in putting down the protests.

On March 28, 2008, the Jeju Peace Park and Memorial was established to promote reconciliation and growth. This government-built park includes an April 3 Historical Center-Museum, a memorial tower, an altar, and several sculptures. Within the park is an evocative cemetery of empty tombs,

22. Oh Yoon-joo, "No Gun Ri Peace Park with Flowers, Trees, and Water in the Name of Love and Peace," *Hankyoreh*, June 13, 2019, https://www.english.hani.co.kr.

with tombstones for the 3,895 missing victims. The Jeju Peace Park mission closely mirrors that of the No Gun Ri peace efforts, with the goals of public education, healing the wounds of war, and bringing people together (S. Hwang 2016, 26–29; Yang 2018, 59–64).[23]

Another memorial and educational facility honoring massacre victims is scheduled to open in 2024. The Korean War Memorial Park for Civilian Victims will honor all the civilian victims of the war. It will be located in Daejeon at the site of a massacre of approximately 7,000 persons by South Korean police and military during the Korean War. Photographs at the US National Archives document the presence of American military officers who did nothing to stop the killings (*CBS News* 2008).[24]

During the 1980 Gwangju Uprising, the United States military command allowed the deployment of the South Korean military, over which it then had operational control. Again, the United States was not directly involved, but could have done something to stop the brutal repression. Gwangju memorial sites function to remind us of the pain and suffering of state-sanctioned military violence (Katsiafic 2012; Cumings 2005, 382–383).[25]

When considering these indefensible acts by both Americans and Koreans, we should not lose sight of the numerous communist atrocities, for which there are also monuments and memorials. On Hill 303 at Waegwan, a prayer area and monuments pay respect to 41 1st Cavalry Division soldiers, taken prisoner and executed by North Korean troops on August 17, 1950. In more recent years, Korean social organizations have stepped forward with donations to improve the American constructed remembrance area and install a larger monument.[26]

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23. Hwang Keum-bi, "Jeju Citizens Demand U.S. Apology for Apr. 3 Massacre," *Hankyoreh*, April 9, 2018, https://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_national/839789.html.
24. Choi Ye-rin, "Researchers Excavate Remains of Korean War Massacre Victims in Daejeon," *Hankyoreh*, August 13, 2021, https://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_national/1007646.html.
25. "Defense Chief Makes First-ever Apology for Military's Bloody Crackdown On 1980 Gwangju Uprising," *Korea Herald*, February 9, 2018.
26. Allison Perkins, "One Man's Search to Unearth Tragedy," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, June 27,

At Paju is a memorial park that addresses American and Korean adoption issues. The Omma Poom (Mother's Arms) memorial is an interactive setting where Koreans adopted and sent overseas can search for their birth mothers. This setting asks us to confront Korean adoption history and the American role in it, such as American soldiers abandoning children they fathered in Korea. On September 12, 2018, this memorial opened at Camp Howze, a former American military base.[27]

Omma Poom was designed to serve as a meeting place for adoptees where families could come together. Korean adoptees were invited to send photos and letters. By its opening 650 messages had been received and were posted on a memorial wall. Those sending messages hoped that their birth mothers would read their letters and make contact. The messages can be heartbreaking. Su Lyn Weaver wrote her lost mother that she wanted "to learn what your favorite things are so that I could experience them too." Another adoptee vowed to search for her mother until "my last day." Others expressed things like "miss you every day," "a piece of me is missing," and "will never stop searching." Ho Yong-joo wrote "Dear Korea…this is a place for banished children to return, for the shattered mothers to grieve, for the first families to remember. You have welcomed us home with Omma Poom."[28]

In the park are two sculptures. Artist Kim Won-sook created "The Shadow Child" a mother with empty folded arms, looking down at her reflection in which she is holding her baby. A second sculpture is seashell shaped conveying the idea that when you put a seashell to your ear you hear a mother moaning her loss, with circles in the shell symbolize gathering, returning to your mother's arms.[29]

The American soldier is better known for his love of children than

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1999, 7.

27. "Park Dedicated to Adoptees Opens on Former U.S. Military Base in South Korea," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, September 27, 2018, 6.
28. Me&Korea, "Adoptee Voices," accessed January 3, 2022, https://meandkorea.org/adopteevoices.
29. Me&Korea, "Adoptee Voices," accessed January 3, 2022, https://meandkorea.org/adopteevoices.

fathering and leaving behind children. Nearly every American base in Korea had a supportive relationship with an orphanage. Some military personnel went well beyond giving money or helping at orphanages. In Gwangju, a monument dedicated on December 17, 2009, honors Colonel Russell Blaisdell, a US Air Force chaplain. His statue shows him with two children. Chaplain Blaisdell earned the nickname "father of a thousand" for saving a thousand Korean orphans.

Blaisdell's help on behalf of Korean orphans took a dramatic turn in December 1950 when Communist Chinese forces were advancing on Seoul. To protect these children Chaplain Blaisdell and his assistant, Staff Sergeant Michael Strang, took action. They gathered up orphans and took them to Incheon, planning to board a US Navy vessel bound for Jeju-do and safety. But the Navy was a no show. Blaisdell then contacted Gimpo (Kimpo) Airfield and persuaded the operations officer to provide 16 planes to airlift the orphans to Jeju-do. To get the children to Gimpo, Blaisdell commandeered US Marine Corps trucks, but traffic and poor road conditions delayed the convoy and they arrived two hours late. Fortunately, the aircrews had waited despite the danger of Chinese attack. On December 20, 1950, the airlift delivered 964 orphans and 80 orphanage staff to Jeju-do, where an orphanage was established. The successful rescue became known as Operation Kiddy Car (Ministry of Patriots and Veterans Affairs 2010, 142–143).[30]

Another memorial recognizing positive American military actions remembers Brigadier General Richard Whitcomb, an officer who was said to have loved Korea more than Koreans. In 2017, a building on the ROK Army Fifth Logistics Command facility in Busan was named the Gen. Richard S. Whitcomb Memorial Hall. Whitcomb played a significant role in Busan's postwar recovery. His greatest accomplishment a rapid and effective response to the massive Busan fire of November 1953.[31]

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30. Korean War Children's Memorial, "Chaplain (Colonel) Russell L. Blaisdell (USAF) and the Kiddy Car Airlift," accessed February 6, 2022, https://koreanchildren.org/docs/Blaisdell.htm.
31. "Tent Cities House Fire Victims," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, December 3, 1953, 6; ROK Drop, "Picture Of The Day: General Whitcomb Memorial Hall Opens In South Korea,"

The Busan fire struck on November 28, 1953, burning down a large section of downtown and leaving some 50,000 homeless, but fortunately with only three deaths. Brigadier General Whitcomb, commander of the US Pusan Section Base, immediately and without official authorization provided American supplies to the displaced victims, a violation of Army regulations for which he could have been punished. He opened up two large US Army warehouses to shelter refugees, while his engineers bulldozed debris and erected tent housing and set up kitchens to feed the displaced. The United States 8th Army overlooked his unauthorized actions and initiated a fund-raising campaign to aid the displaced. Over US$50,000 was collected. With these funds and military assets Whitcomb coordinated Busan's rebuilding and recovery.[32]

Whitcomb retired to Korea and with his Korean wife, Han Myo-sok, devoted himself to improving orphanage conditions. The couple also worked tirelessly to recover American Korean War remains from North Korea. Whitcomb kept up with American as well as Korean news, and workers at Seoul's Naija Hotel, the US Army recreation center, knew him as a regular who could be seen reading American newspapers over coffee. On July 12, 1982, while in line to pick up his American newspapers and mail at the Yongsan post office he had a heart attack, collapsing and dying in the arms of a chaplain standing behind him.[33] His widow carried on their humanitarian work. A five-minute video shown in the UN Peace Memorial Hall in Busan documents Whitcomb's Busan fire recovery efforts and orphanage support. In the video, Richard Whitcomb is described as the "father of the war orphans." The video goes on to say that he remains with us in our hearts and that he sleeps in the United Nations Cemetery at Busan.[34]

Inje has perhaps the most unusual and controversial American

December 30, 2017, https://www.rokdrop.net/2017/12/30/picture-of-the-day-general-whitcomb-memorial-hall-opens-in-south-korea.

32. "New Pusan," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, July 9, 1954, 19.
33. "Respected American and Soldier Laid to Rest," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, July 25, 1982, 6.
34. Video viewed by author at the UN Peace Memorial Hall, September 2018. Video available online at Yupyeonggi tv_UNPM, accessed February 8, 2023, www.youtube.com/watch?v=jbQ6uSM4Pho.

monument. A bronze Marilyn Monroe statue commemorating her visit to Korea and performance at the site in February 1954. Thousands of Third Infantry Division soldiers cheered Monroe as she sang that cold winter day, performing on a makeshift stage behind the Catholic Cathedral in Inje, one of ten performances she gave during her four-day tour of South Korea.[35]

Dedicated on December 21, 2017, critics have called the monument appalling. They especially decried the pose, taken from a scene in the film *The Seven Year Itch* (1955), arguing it has no connection with her Inje performance. This is the famous scene in which she is standing over a subway vent and a rush of air blows her skirt high. During her Korea tour she wore a skin-tight purple dress (despite the very cold weather), a pose that might also be considered provocative.[36] The statue's proponents claim that this unique statue will attract tourists. This is another example of memory site transformation, in this case a statue unrelated to heroes, the fallen, battles, or atrocities. The Marilyn Monroe statue is a fun and entertaining monument, its establishment representing change.

Conclusion

South Korean democratization in the 1990s transformed memorialization. With democratization came the freedom to challenge the existing American military narrative. With freedom of expression came the *statue wars* and a changing relationship to monuments. From 1945 to 1995 monuments adhered to a state-sanctioned narrative of the United States as liberator and defender against communism. Monuments honoring heroic military men and battlefield struggles served to memorialize the American military. They fostered a collective view of the war and of the positive contributions of the United States. Memorialization was also employed to remind the public that

35. "Marilyn Monroe Ends Korea Swing: Amid Flashbulb Farewell," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, February 21, 1954. 7.
36. "Controversial Marilyn Monroe Statue Goes Up in Inje County," *Hankyoreh*, January 3, 2021, https://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_national/826155.html.

the Korean War had not ended and continuing preparedness and sacrifices were required.

Monuments and actions reflect contemporaneous societal values. In South Korea, citizens make exceptional efforts to thank Americans and other United Nations veterans. South Korea stands apart from other war-ravaged nations by the expressed gratitude of its people. In multiple ways, including monuments, the nation and its people thank the United States and United Nations countries that came to its aid during the Korean War.

The end of authoritarian rule brought an openness and opportunity to address the past wrongs of both the United States military and the South Korean government. Memory sites honoring victims of American and South Korean massacres have been established and additional memorializations are forthcoming. These memory sites are intended to go beyond remembering the events and its victims and to function to bring people together to achieve peace and reconciliation. The civilian massacre site at Nogeun-ri (No Gun Ri) exhibits horrendous American military acts even as it seeks reconciliation. Memorials recalling atrocities are a part of South Korea's larger self-reflection. The Republic of Korea has joined other self-reflective nations such as Great Britain, the United States, and Germany. South Korea conforms to what retired General James N. Mattis has written about the United States, as "a country…willing to admit its mistakes, listen to its friends, and correct its ways" (Mattis and West 2019, 244).

With its prominence on the global cultural stage the Korean focus on addressing past wrongs and looking forward goes out to a huge audience. Hallyu (the Korean Wave), has provided a huge opportunity for Korea to advance human rights around the world. The calls for social justice, going beyond the status quo, and creating a better society are coming from groups such as BTS (Bangtan Boys). Their calls for social justice, self-empowerment, and inclusiveness, have resonated with their army of fans, generating support for organizations such as Black Lives Matter. With this social power and Korea's worldwide acceptance, a greater awareness of social problems and actions to solve them can be expected (Bruner 2020; Han et al. 2014, 230).

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