“UBIQUITOUS AND UNREMARKED UPON”: MILITARIZED PROSTITUTION AND THE AMERICAN OCCUPATIONS OF JAPAN AND KOREA

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of
The School of Continuing Studies
and of
The Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of
Master of Arts in Liberal Studies

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October 24, 2012
“UBIQUITOUS AND UNREMARKED UPON”: MILITARIZED PROSTITUTION AND THE AMERICAN OCCUPATIONS OF JAPAN AND KOREA

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ABSTRACT

This thesis employs feminist international relations theory to examine the United States’ reliance on foreign women to fulfill its international agenda. Specifically, this thesis parallels the development of military prostitution during the post-World War II American occupations of Japan and Korea with the evolution of the United States’ foreign policy in each country to identify the ways in which American government and military leaders depended on Japanese and Korean women’s sexual labor to sustain these multi-year military occupations and advance their strategic political and economic objectives in the region.

Beginning in Chapter One with an overview of feminist international relations theory, the thesis then explores the United States’ historical relationships with Japan and Korea in Chapter Two. Chapter Three provides an overview of the United States’ efforts to manage its soldiers’ use of prostitutes through World War II, emphasizing variations in American sociocultural attitudes toward—and methods of regulating—U.S. prostitutes, foreign sex workers, and their U.S. military patrons. Building on this historical and theoretical context, Chapters Four and Five proceed with the investigation of the concurrent evolution of the United States’ postwar foreign policy in occupied Japan and Korea, and military prostitution catering to American soldiers in both countries.
Broadly, the analysis finds that United States Occupation officials and military leaders, in coordination with Japanese and Korean officials, sought to regulate Japanese and Korean women’s sexual labor in ways that prevented American servicemen from contracting venereal diseases while still allowing the soldiers to fulfill their masculinized “sexual needs.” Although U.S. leaders were concerned with avoiding the appearance of American involvement in condoning or administering organized prostitution for the troops, they trumpeted their role in regulating Japanese and Korean prostitution when it could be used to demonstrate the United States’ progress in “democratizing” both nations. Additionally, the thesis concludes by drawing connections between post-World War II U.S. military prostitution in Japan and Korea with the thriving sex industries that continue to cater to American servicemen in each country today, emphasizing the necessity that policymakers consider the unique implications for foreign women of the American military presence overseas.
Paying serious attention to women can expose how much power it takes to maintain the international political system in its present form.

—Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases*
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my advisor, Professor Michael Wall, for devoting so much of his time to help me shape and refine this work. Without his thoughtful commentary and insightful guidance, the completion of this thesis would not have been possible.

I would also like to thank my husband, Harry Baker, whose unwavering patience, steadfast encouragement, and sense of humor were invaluable throughout this journey.

Finally, I would like to thank my parents, Kevin and Paula Burns, for their love and support during this—and every other—endeavor I have pursued.
CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ii

EPIGRAPH iv

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS v

INTRODUCTION 1

CHAPTER ONE: FEMINIST INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORY AND THE STUDY OF MILITARY PROSTITUTION 9

CHAPTER TWO: HISTORY OF U.S. RELATIONS WITH JAPAN AND KOREA 23

CHAPTER THREE: THE U.S. MILITARY AND PROSTITUTION THROUGH WORLD WAR II 59

CHAPTER FOUR: U.S. MILITARY PROSTITUTION IN OCCUPIED JAPAN, 1945-1946 69

CHAPTER FIVE: U.S. MILITARY PROSTITUTION IN OCCUPIED SOUTH KOREA, 1945-1948 100

CONCLUSION: WOMEN’S SEXUAL LABOR AND THE U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE ABROAD 127

BIBLIOGRAPHY 146
INTRODUCTION

Following the Allied victory in World War II, the United States emerged as a global “superpower” with international political and economic ambitions. Even before the war was over, U.S. government and military leaders foresaw this outcome and began to develop strategies that would enable the country to strengthen its influence among its allies, exert its power within Germany and Japan after their surrenders, and contain communism to those countries where it already existed. Central to achieving these goals would be the construction of a vast, international network of U.S. military bases and installations, which would serve as a “…stabilizing element…as well as a guarantor of an open, interdependent political-economic order.”¹ Officials believed that the physical presence of military forces stationed within the defeated nations and other geographically advantageous locations would deter future aggression and protect U.S. national security by demonstrating the United States’ force capabilities, enabling the military to respond to threats faster, and preserving U.S. hegemony within the “host” nations.² Although the United States had held territory abroad since acquiring the Philippines, Guam, and Puerto Rico from Spain in 1898, the post-World War II expansion of its military bases vastly exceeded previous U.S. efforts to increase its international reach. Indeed, the postwar extension of the United States’ worldwide military facilities clearly reflected the


² Ibid., 14.
country’s perception of itself as the protector of global democracy and national self-determination, particularly in areas seen as susceptible to communist influence.

Today, the U.S. military continues to station large numbers of troops at its facilities abroad, citing them as a necessary measure to protect U.S. national security and global alliances. According to the 2011 Base Structure Report and the Defense Manpower Data Center, the United States Department of Defense (DoD) currently commands more than 1.4 million active duty military personnel and over 45,000 civilian employees located at 611 sites in 39 foreign countries. The majority of the overseas sites are located in Germany (194 sites), Japan (108 sites), and South Korea (82 sites), though the report excludes Afghanistan and Iraq. Yet in recent years, this U.S. policy has received increasing scrutiny both nationally and internationally for the substantial economic, political, physical, and social costs it imposes on host nations; moreover, the inherent contradiction between the United States’ obtrusion upon so many countries and its claim to support self-governance and liberty has drawn considerable criticism.

Although most anti-base activism takes place within the host nations themselves, certain incidents occasionally have united the international community in decrying the

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3 Ibid., 1.

4 U.S. Department of Defense, Office of the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense, “Base Structure Report Fiscal Year 2011 Baseline,” 7, http://www.acq.osd.mil/e/download/bsr/bsr2011baseline.pdf (accessed January 11, 2012). “Site” is defined as a “physical (geographic) location that is or was owned by, leased to, or otherwise possessed by a DoD Component. Each site is assigned to a single installation. A site may exist in one of three forms: land only - where there are no facilities present; facility or facilities only - where the underlying land is neither owned nor controlled by the government; and land and facilities.”

5 Ibid., 7.

6 Calder, Embattled Garrisons, 2.
stationing of U.S. military forces overseas, subsequently bringing unwanted attention to the hermetic policies and procedures used by the DoD to manage its troops and bases. One such incident occurred in 1995, when three U.S. servicemen used a rented vehicle to kidnap and rape a twelve-year-old girl in Okinawa. The rape allegations ignited massive protests and rallies in Okinawa, and bolstered support for anti-base and women’s advocacy groups in the United States and Asia. While the DoD made an immediate effort to apologize for the incident and minimize its impact on U.S.-Japan relations, Admiral Richard C. Macke, then commander of United States forces in the Pacific, aggravated tensions between the countries by commenting to reporters that he believed the accused servicemen’s actions were "…absolutely stupid…For the price they paid to rent the car they could have had a girl."  

Instead of censuring the three young enlisted men as he presumably intended, Macke exposed what historian Bruce Cumings has called a “ubiquitous and unremarked upon” reality of U.S. military bases overseas: the existence of widespread prostitution.

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catering to U.S. servicemen. More troubling, however, was the casual way in which Macke, one of the highest ranking military officers in the country, implied the ease with which these men could—and should—have obtained a prostitute’s services, suggesting the U.S. military’s tacit approval of its members’ use of prostitutes. Likewise, Macke’s comment confirmed the popular assumption that military men, particularly those on long, unaccompanied tours of duty and deployments, require sexual access to women and will use whatever means necessary to fulfill their needs. Acceptance of this gendered assumption has enabled military prostitution to endure and proliferate around U.S. military sites overseas since their inception despite laws in the United States and many host nations making prostitution and the use of prostitutes illegal. Yet it is the complex interplay of racial and cultural differences, political and social inequalities, and economic asymmetry that uniquely characterizes the relationship between the United States and each host nation and that truly defines, and complicates, the nature of military prostitution.

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11 Saundra Pollock Sturdevant and Brenda Stolzfus, eds., *Let the Good Times Roll: Prostitution and the U.S. Military in Asia* (New York: The New Press, 1992), 309. Military prostitution is defined as “prostitution catering to, and sometimes organized by, the military.” In the United States, prostitution laws are determined by the states, and prostitution is illegal in all states except Nevada. However, federal law described in 18 USC §1384, “Prostitution near military and naval establishments,” imposes a fine and up to one year in prison for anyone participating, procuring, or encouraging prostitution “within such reasonable distance” of a military installation. This law, which has only been enforced within the United States, has typically resulted in the arrest of prostitutes rather than their patrons. Under the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), a servicemember could be indicted for misconduct under Article 134, which deals generally with offenses that bring “discredit” upon the armed forces, such as adultery and solicitation. In 2005, President George W. Bush issued an executive order adding a subsection to Article 134 of the UCMJ specifically identifying “patronizing a prostitute” as a chargeable offense.
Prior to the emergence of feminism’s “third wave” in the 1980s and subsequent feminist inquiries into the study and processes of international relations, a variety of factors permitted U.S. military prostitution to avoid critical scrutiny. Prostituted women’s lack of access to resources, the shame many of them feel because of their work, the widespread notion that military prostitution is a necessary evil not worthy of public attention, and the hidden nature of the processes through which the DoD, local military commanders, and host nation officials and proprietors regulate prostitution are but a few of the collective forces that have allowed U.S. military prostitution to operate in silence.\(^\text{12}\) However, feminist scholars and activists in the United States and its host nations have increasingly sought to raise international awareness of the plight of military prostitutes and highlight the direct and indirect involvement of the U.S. in facilitating the organization of prostitution for its troops.\(^\text{13}\) This thesis seeks to contribute to this effort by drawing upon feminist methodologies and international relations theory to analyze the U.S. postwar occupation of, and foreign policy relationships with, Japan and South Korea through the concurrent development of military prostitution catering to U.S. forces in each country. In doing so, this thesis additionally seeks to demonstrate how nations rely upon the acceptance of certain social and cultural constructions of gender to fulfill their


\(^\text{13}\) Katharine H.S. Moon, “Military Prostitution and the U.S. Military in Asia.”
foreign policy initiatives, and to expose the often obscure repercussions for women of the traditionally masculinized processes inherent in international relations.

Unlike many fields of research, feminism emphasizes the subjectivity and personal experience of the researcher as assets that should be acknowledged and used to provide important context for the findings of a study.\textsuperscript{14} According to J. Ann Tickner, a leading feminist international relations theorist, “…feminists believe one’s own awareness of one’s own personal position in the research process to be a corrective to ‘pseudo-objectivity.’” Rather than seeing it as a bias, they see it as a necessary explanation of the researcher’s standpoint….\textsuperscript{15} Here, in an effort to adhere to the fundamental practices of feminist scholarship, I acknowledge my unique standpoint as a military spouse and former civilian DoD employee in choosing to pursue the topic of U.S. military prostitution. Although I have not had direct contact with, or witnessed, sex workers or their patrons at U.S. military sites overseas, my personal and professional experiences have nonetheless inspired my interest in, and influenced my perspective on, constructions of gender within the U.S. military and defense establishment.

This study will begin in Chapter One with an overview of feminist international relations theory and significant insights from within the field on military prostitution in order to develop a conceptual framework for the analysis of U.S. military prostitution in post-World War II Japan and South Korea. In Chapter Two, historical background will be provided on the United States’ relationships with Japan and Korea through the end of


\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 28.
World War II, and the subsequent establishment of a significant U.S. military and diplomatic presence in both countries in the immediate postwar period. Next, Chapter Three briefly will explore the ways in which the United States government and military historically have responded to prostitution catering to American soldiers, both within the United States and overseas, with a particular focus on efforts to manage militarized prostitution during World War II. These chapters will provide the historical and theoretical background underpinning the analysis presented in Chapters Four and Five, which will examine the development of military prostitution for American soldiers in occupied Japan and Korea respectively, beginning with the traditions of female entertainers and history of militarized prostitution in each country, which served as both a justification and a mechanism for accommodating the sexual demands of the incoming U.S. forces. Furthermore, this analysis will compare and contrast the political, economic, and socio-cultural construction and evolution of military prostitution in each country, and parallels will be drawn with concurrent U.S. foreign policy initiatives. The focus here will be on the ways in which American foreign policy in occupied Japan and Korea was intertwined with the development of organized prostitution to support the U.S. military presence in both countries, and how prostituted women were impacted by—and able to influence—the actualization of these policies. Finally, Chapter Six will conclude the thesis’s investigation by reviewing the findings of the previous chapters, and inferring from this the possible ramifications of the U.S. military’s tacit support of its Asian host nations’ prostitution industries in order to reveal the ways in which state and foreign policy objectives are predicated upon specific beliefs about gender, often placing a
disproportionate burden on women despite their typically unequal representation in the
decision-making process.

In pursuing its national security and foreign policy objectives by stationing
military troops across the network of international bases it established after World War II,
the United States, with the complicity of host nation governments, continually has
jeopardized the physical and economic security of host nation women. As the U.S.
increasingly recognizes Asia’s ascendance in the twenty-first century by refocusing its
defense efforts around its Pacific bases, it is incumbent upon military and political leaders
to identify the unique effects of foreign bases on local women, as well as women’s
specific contributions to society and the economy, and subsequently account for these
factors in their policy initiatives.
CHAPTER ONE

Feminist International Relations Theory and the Study of Military Prostitution

Feminist Contributions to International Relations Theory

Because the ensuing investigation of postwar U.S. military prostitution will be heavily informed by feminist international relations theory and major works from that field on military prostitution, it is useful at this time to discuss feminism’s distinct contribution to the already vast, complex discipline of international relations. In the mid 1980s, the Cold War’s severely diminishing intensity encouraged critical challenges to traditional models of international relations theory; at the same time, the evolving feminist movement encouraged women to question the field of international relations as a whole, leading to the birth of feminist international relations theory.¹ Essentially, feminist international relations theory has “…introduced gender [emphasis in original] as a relevant empirical category and analytical tool for understanding global power relations…” and seeks to demonstrate the many ways in which gender relations are integral to international relations.² Here, “gender” is not used to describe the biological differences between males and females, but rather to denote the culturally shaped and defined characteristics associated with masculinity and femininity. Furthermore, feminists assert that it is necessary to highlight and examine women’s experiences, as well as the “gender hierarchies” that have privileged men’s perspectives and are inherent

² True, “Feminism,” 237-238.
within the traditional study of international relations, in order to achieve a true, comprehensive understanding of global politics.\(^3\)

It is argued that the need for critical feminist inquiry into international relations theory primarily is due to the preponderance of men throughout the field, as well as within the global organizations and governments that are responsible for international relations. According to Tickner, “…international politics is such a thoroughly masculinized sphere of activity that women’s voices are considered inauthentic.”\(^4\) This is largely the result of the widely held socio-cultural belief that men and women are inherently different, and certain innate qualities disfavor women’s study of and participation in arenas typically associated with men and masculinity, such as the military and foreign politics. However, the predominance of men in these organizations and within the international relations field, in combination with the dissociation of women from these arenas, has led to the false assumption within the field that men’s experiences can also be valid for women’s, and as such that women’s particular insights and activities are therefore not relevant.\(^5\) The subjugation or exclusion of women’s voices within the study and practice of international politics is an issue feminists seek to correct.

In an effort to explain the societal subordination of women and femininity, as well as “devalued masculinities” such as homosexuality, to a culturally dominant masculine

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\(^3\) Tickner, *Gender in International Relations*, xi.

\(^4\) Ibid., 4.

\(^5\) True, “Feminism,” 240.
ideal, sociologist R.W. Connell has developed the concept of “hegemonic masculinity.”

The Western masculine ideal is commonly “…associated with autonomy, sovereignty, the capacity for reason and objectivity and universalism, whereas the dominant notion of femininity is associated with the absence or lack of these characteristics.” Importantly, Connell notes that hegemonic masculinity does not preclude the existence of other masculinities, and suggests that the personalities of most men in society may not match the masculine ideal; instead, the ideal provides a model against which men may measure themselves and each other, and differentiate themselves from women. Certain institutions that are central to the study of international relations, such as the military, are characterized by their identification with, and perpetuation of, hegemonic masculinity. A significant portion of feminist empirical research, including several works on military prostitution, has focused on these organizations in order to rectify the preclusion of the masculine standpoint for women’s perspectives, and the subsequent absence or denial of women’s unique contributions.

Hegemonic masculinity has significant implications for the study of military prostitution and the United States’ postwar foreign policies in the Pacific. At the international level, hegemonic masculinity can be applied to the behavior of nations,

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7 True, “Feminism,” 246.


whose success is often measured by their power projection and non-reliance on other states. Following World War II, the U.S. exercised immense control in defeated Japan, which the United States hoped to remold in a way that would prevent Japan’s return to oppressive militarism, and liberated South Korea, which was seen as a weak state in need of U.S. political protection and economic assistance. The United States’ dominant position characterized its postwar relationship with Japan and South Korea and facilitated its political subordination of both countries’ governments to advance its own foreign policy objectives. At the state level, hegemonic masculinity provided the sociological justification for Japanese and South Korean national leaders to recruit women to entertain, or “comfort,” the incoming U.S. forces, often by linking their sexual service to patriotism and national reconstruction efforts. Additionally, masculine hegemony is illustrated at the local level through U.S. troops’ use of Japanese and South Korean prostitutes. Here, American soldiers concurrently demonstrated their personal masculinity and their country’s political and military control through their own sexual domination of the defeated nations’ women. Thus, the militarized prostitute is not only exploited by the man who buys her sexual services, but also by the occupying nation and her own state, both of which co-opt her in order to ease the foreign soldiers’ transition to the host nation, and to facilitate on-the-ground relationships between foreign soldiers and local citizens.

The applicability of hegemonic masculinity across all levels of society indicates an additional, relevant assertion made by feminist international relations theorists.

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10 Tickner, *Gender in International Relations*, 6-7.
Feminists reject traditional international relations models that promote a disciplinary division between international and domestic politics, or the public and private spheres, because this further removes women from visibility due to their almost universal association with the domestic realm. In contrast, feminist scholars contend that the individual, state, and international system are interrelated units, and thus they seek to theorize the relationships between gender relations, domestic activities, and international politics.  

Political scientist and feminist writer Cynthia Enloe encapsulated this belief in her ground-breaking work *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases* when she wrote, “the personal is political” and “the international is personal [emphasis in original].” For many, soldiers’ use of prostitutes is simply a private matter of men fulfilling their biologically driven sexual needs through women who have chosen to provide sexual services as a profession. Yet even this basic belief reflects gendered assumptions—that men are naturally compelled to satisfy their sexual urges, and that all prostitutes are “fallen women” who have independently chosen their line of work—that demand further examination. The next section will explore the unexpected relationship between military prostitution and international relations by first looking at how the military perceives and incorporates gender ideology for its own purposes, and then linking the military’s strategic construction of gender to foreign policy.

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Military Prostitution and International Relations

Throughout modern history, the military has fundamentally influenced societal definitions of masculinity. Because of the extraordinary physical and psychological hardships soldiers are expected to withstand during wartime, the military seeks to instill certain values and behaviors in its recruits as soon as they enter basic training, and it continues to reinforce these ideals among the military population by distinguishing itself as an institution and culture separate from civilian life. Conventional militaries have used intense initiation and training efforts, which frequently isolate recruits from society and require them to undergo harsh physical and mental exercises, to ultimately inspire camaraderie, self-discipline, aggression, and emotional restraint among soldiers. Although the military has devised an image of masculinity best characterized by the archetypal warrior figure to model particular traits that may be necessary in war, the public perception of the military as a male-dominated sphere has resulted in the conflation of the military’s hypermasculine ideal with the wider social definition of “masculinity.”

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13 Many similarities exist in the training, customs, and sociocultural perceptions of militaries around the world and throughout history. Because the focus of this thesis is on the post-World War II United States military, general references to “the military” in this chapter are used to describe features and practices common among contemporary Western militaries, unless otherwise noted.


“masculine,” society has therefore promoted and legitimized a form of hegemonic masculinity. Sociologist and political scientist Paul Higate has compared the reciprocal relationship between military culture and hegemonic masculinity, asserting that “Traditionally, the casual sexism, competitiveness, and celebration of aggression and the domination of others that are characteristic of hegemonic masculinity have been explicitly and unambiguously reflected in military culture. Similarly, militarism…has represented an affirmation of the legitimacy of hegemonic masculinity.”

In addition to its broad influence in creating and maintaining hegemonic masculinity, the construction of a hypermasculine military identity also contributes to the production and preservation of dominant cultural beliefs regarding femininity.

The military’s effort to transform recruits into “warriors” whose values and behaviors align with the hegemonic masculine ideal has required the concurrent development of multiple definitions of femininity against which men may prove their masculinity. According to Enloe, “Just as important to the maintenance of military life as has been the ideology of manliness, just as important as parades, alliances, and weaponry have been certain feminized ideas: ‘the fallen woman,’ ‘patriotic motherhood,’ ‘marital fidelity,’ ‘racial purity,’ ‘national sacrifice,’ and sexualized ‘respectability.’” However, the variety of classifications and duties ascribed to women by the military—and reinforced in a hegemonically masculine society—underlies a fundamental conflict in its

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philosophy regarding male sexuality and soldiers’ relationships with women. While a soldier’s honor is partially based on disdaining feminine things, which are considered unmanly and contemptible, it is also the soldier’s duty to protect the “virtuous wives and mothers” chastely waiting at home.\textsuperscript{19} Tickner suggests that “Building on the notion of hegemonic masculinity, the notion of the citizen-warrior depends on a devalued femininity for its construction. In international relations, this devalued femininity is bound up with myths about women as victims in need of protection….\textsuperscript{20} Here, women are both romanticized and subjugated to serve the military’s dual purpose of providing its soldiers with a justification for war and bolstering their sense of dominant, masculine power.

In spite of such idealization of the “victimized” woman for whom the soldier risks his life, military training and culture is infused with sexualized language used to encourage male soldiers’ aggressiveness and machismo while elevating them above the subordinate feminine sphere. Such gendered language is reflected by senior officers who taunt soldiers with feminine epithets, such as “pussy” or “woman,” as well as marching chants like the following: “This is my rifle, this is my gun/This is for fighting, this is for fun.”\textsuperscript{21} Likewise, the physical sexual exploitation of women—the logical extension and actualization of such gendered, misogynistic language—is considered “…an integral part of the military construction of masculinity and aggression against enemies…” and further

\textsuperscript{19} Brock and Thistlethwaite, \textit{Casting Stones}, 77.

\textsuperscript{20} Tickner, \textit{Gender in International Relations}, 58.

promotes the patriarchal bonding of men through the mutually shared experience of dominating women. In her study of female sexuality in the United States during World War II, Marilyn Hegarty notes that military culture encourages men to “…act with impunity because acts of aggression (including rape) are linked to traditional images of what it is to be a warrior, because of women being seen as men’s property, or because women fear to speak out.” However, the military’s implicit advocacy of its soldiers’ sexual use and deprecation of women—evidenced through its systematic use of misogynist language and training to uphold the warrior archetype—presents a significant ideological conflict to the glorification of the virtuous wife and mother in need of the soldier’s protection. In order to reconcile these diverging beliefs regarding femininity, the military tacitly categorizes women “…as either respectable or unrespectable, virtuous or evil, deserving or undeserving of protection…” and thus determines the soldier’s dealings with women based upon their culturally defined “caste.” This has the effect of reducing unique, individual women into the stereotypical image applied to all women throughout her “category.” Furthermore, women are encouraged by military institutions, and society at large, to reinforce these subjective boundaries between them through the ways in which they behave and relate to men, their style of dress and makeup, the social establishments they frequent, and their moral and sexual self-perception. The military’s

22 Brock and Thistlethwaite, Casting Stones, 71-72.


24 Brock and Thistlethwaite, Casting Stones, 16.

25 Enloe, Maneuvers, xiii; Brock and Thistlethwaite, Casting Stones, 78.
characterization of women by their sexual and social relationships with men—and society’s acceptance and maintenance of this division—creates the circumstances in which military prostitution can originate and thrive.

Because of the military’s stratification of multiple definitions of femininity to support the warrior paradigm to which its soldiers aspire, prostitutes play an essential role in enabling the military to sustain its internal culture and pursue its international objectives. Countries worldwide have and continue to anticipate and tolerate military troops’ sexual exploitation of women, and subsequently expect prostitutes—as stereotyped “fallen” women—to provide the “escape valve” for soldiers’ to fulfill their sexual needs. This is especially true when troops are stationed or deployed for long, “unaccompanied” tours in foreign countries where they may be unfamiliar with the local language and culture, and thus more prone to feelings of isolation, boredom, and loneliness. Under such circumstances, the provision and availability of prostitutes additionally serves to “protect” the host nation’s “respectable” women from the soldiers’ presumably rapacious sexual appetites. Thus, prostitutes service both the foreign military as well as the host country by occupying the “hybrid spaces” surrounding military facilities where the boundary between civilian society and the military is blurred, and

26 Brock and Thistlethwaite, Casting Stones, 71, 95.

27 Ibid. 76. Brock and Thistlethwaite also note that “Sex industries around U.S. bases are an accepted fact of military life…” and “…strip bars and brothels around military bases occasion few protests, even though sex industries around American bases flourish. Sex industries on U.S. and NATO bases in affluent European countries also seem to raise barely an occasional outcry as local citizens look the other way.” The authors attribute political activism in Asia against U.S. military bases there to negative attitudes among host nation citizens in Asia toward the United States troops.
providing a buffer between the foreign soldiers and local citizens. Nevertheless, militarized prostitutes are denigrated by soldiers, who often view them as racial and cultural inferiors existing merely to fulfill their sexual desires, and by their own country, which disparages them for their line of work, as well as for having intimate relationships with the foreign “occupier” or “enemy.” Despite the widespread presence of prostitution around military installations abroad, and the military’s and host nations’ tacit approval of soldiers’ patronage of sex workers, prostitutes remain marginalized by society’s traditional association of prostitution with venereal disease and immorality, as well as the negative social, political, and economic issues prostitutes’ existence represents to the military and the host nation.

The supposed need to ensure that military forces have access to women’s bodies becomes an issue of international relations through the series of policies, agreements, and negotiations made between the foreign occupying force and the host nation to assure this need is met. As Enloe indicates, “…we need to think carefully about militarized prostitution because calculations about it have shaped foreign policies and international


29 Höhn and Moon, “Introduction,” 2-3; Enloe, Maneuvers, 63; Brock and Thistlethwaite, Casting Stones, 78. According to Höhn and Moon, “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.” Brock and Thistlethwaite note that “Military policies governing contact with prostitutes vary from country to country. Factors affecting them include the location of the military base (whether within the borders of the home country or part of a military occupation), the race to which the soldiers belong, and relations between countries.”
alliances.”

Yet the military’s efforts to effectively regulate prostitution and soldiers’ use of prostitutes have varied significantly based on the nature of the relationship between the occupying country and the host nation, the racial and cultural differences among soldiers and local citizens, and less traceable factors such as the individual personalities of local military commanders and government officials who negotiate prostitution policies. Moreover, the military’s stance toward prostitution has been marked by fragmentation and ambivalence; although prostitutes are perceived to be a necessary evil to provide soldiers with sexual entertainment and affirmation of their masculinity, they also have been blamed for decreasing soldiers’ effectiveness on the battlefield through the spread of venereal disease. Thus, the military and the host nation must continually renegotiate the formal policies and informal arrangements that organize and regulate militarized prostitution in order to accommodate the unique needs of the community surrounding the military encampment and to ensure the health and fighting

30 Enloe, Maneuvers, 51.

31 Höhn and Moon, Over There, 21-22. Regarding the post-World War II U.S. military presence abroad, Höhn and Moon assert that “…the U.S. military displayed a colonial perception that women of occupied territories in Korea, Japan, and Germany should be sexually available for GIs…just as women of color had been expected to be available to U.S. military personnel during America’s empire building in the nineteenth century and early twentieth centuries…Although prostitution was prohibited in the United States and the U.S. military was legally bound to this prohibition, military commanders closely collaborated with local authorities to ensure a system of highly regulated prostitution to protect the health and welfare of soldiers and their combat readiness.” Emphasizing the impact of race in shaping the relationship between American soldiers and host nation sex workers, they further note that, “Racial hierarchies…informed how the United States dealt with prostitution and cohabitation. In particular, military commanders were acting on widely shared assumptions about the segregation of the races. Those assumptions…found their legal expression in Jim Crow anti-miscegenation laws….”

effectiveness of the troops. While prostitutes are central to this process, their doubly subordinated status as females and as “fallen women” has allowed government and military officials, as well as researchers and scholars, to ignore their voices and contributions to the actualization of such policies.

As the role of prostitutes in enabling the establishment and maintenance of international military bases has become increasingly visible through feminist scholarship, activists, researchers, and the media have turned their attention toward investigating the United States’ responsibility for the prostitution industries surrounding many of its overseas military facilities. Such research is the culmination of early feminist international relations theorists’ endeavors to trace the gendered ideology embedded in the traditional study of international relations and apply a feminist perspective to matters of foreign policy. However, in *Sex Among Allies*, a landmark study of military prostitution in U.S.-South Korea relations during the Cold War, Katharine H.S. Moon suggests that

…the ‘gender lens’ alone fails to address the political context in which international institutions…seek to control women and gender constructs for the sake of pursuing their ‘militarizing objectives.’ Since the institutionalizing of military prostitution involves a social, economic, and political process, overseas military prostitution must be examined in the context of interaction between foreign governments and among governments and local groups…In the process, we may find that women are more directly involved in international politics than through their part in gendered schemes of power, that their relationship with foreign soldiers personify and define [emphasis in original], not only underlie, relations between governments.33

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With its expansive network of international military bases, as well as its perpetual position at the forefront of global politics, the United States has relied extensively on women to maintain the “superpower” status it achieved following World War II. Yet the labor of prostituted women servicing U.S. military personnel at overseas bases has remained virtually imperceptible as a result of social and political processes that marginalize prostitutes as “fallen women” and systematically conceal soldiers’ patronage of the prostitution industry. Nevertheless, the perceived need by the U.S. military and its host nation counterparts to provide prostitutes as a sexual outlet for troops stationed abroad has influenced the political, economic, and social relationship between these governments, while determining the nature of and sustaining the U.S. military presence in these foreign locations.

Pacific Asia has remained essential to U.S. international relations and foreign policy since World War II. Specifically, the United States’ increasing involvement in Korea and the defeat and subsequent occupation of Japan presented opportunities for the U.S. to dramatically expand its power and subdue the threat of communism in the postwar years. As the next chapter will discuss, the U.S. sought to establish a military and diplomatic presence in these countries that would ensure its political and economic hegemony.
CHAPTER TWO

HISTORY OF U.S. RELATIONS WITH JAPAN AND KOREA

As indicated in the previous chapter, feminist models of international relations theory assert that the individual, state, and international domains overlap, and thus the nature of the personal, private interactions between their citizens often characterizes the diplomatic relationship between nations. Moreover, the sociocultural perceptions and prejudices harbored among nations against one another are influenced and reflected by individuals across all levels of societies. These perspectives are largely informed by the countries’ history of, and ongoing, official and unofficial contact, the essence of which broadly defines their relationship at the international level and continuously shapes their foreign policy toward each other. Therefore, in order to understand the political, economic, and social circumstances under which U.S. military prostitution was established in postwar Japan and Korea, as well as the cultural beliefs that framed the interactions between U.S. servicemen and Japanese and Korean sex workers, it is necessary to provide the historical context of the United States’ relations with these countries prior to 1945.

Japan

Japan’s contact with the West began in 1543, when Portuguese traders landed at Tanegashima Island, south of Kyushu, inaugurating a century of cultural and commercial exchange between Japan and several European powers. Most notably, the Europeans introduced firearms and Christianity to the Japanese during this time; while the Japanese were most impressed with, and able to improve upon, the weaponry, Christianity
experienced moderate popularity among Japan’s peasants and feudal landholders due to the efforts of European Jesuit missionaries, who began arriving in 1549.\footnote{Marius B. Jansen, \textit{The Making of Modern Japan} (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 5-7.} Despite its initial reception of Western visitors, Japan remained wary of these “barbarians” and progressively isolated itself from foreign influence during the Tokugawa Shogunate, which ruled from 1603 through 1868. Shortly after establishing power, the Tokugawa Shogun’s government, or \textit{bakufu}, became increasingly concerned with the impact of foreign trade and Christianity on the Japanese populace, and particularly on the \textit{daimyo}s’ loyalty; consequently, a series of edicts intended to limit Christianity’s influence and tighten control over trade with Catholic Portuguese merchants were issued throughout the early 1600s, including the expulsion of all Christian missionaries in 1614.\footnote{Ibid., 76. \textit{Daimyo} were feudal lords and key agents of the Shogun who ruled over provincial centers. Jansen notes that in 1590, prior to the Tokugawa Shogunate, Toyotomi Hideyoshi had issued orders against propagandizing Christianity.} In 1637, an unexpectedly intense uprising of Japanese Roman Catholics on the Shimabara Peninsula caused additional alarm within the \textit{bakufu} and accelerated the shift toward controlled isolationism.\footnote{Ibid., 77. Although Japan would “close” its borders to most foreign countries, it continued to allow controlled contact and trade with the Chinese, Koreans, and Dutch.} By 1639, the Shogun had issued several major decrees that essentially culminated in Japan’s adherence to \textit{sakoku}, a closed-border policy that severely restricted
its contact with foreigners and remained in place for nearly two hundred years.\textsuperscript{4} With
the exception of the Dutch, whose trade was limited to Deshima, a man-made island in
Nagasaki harbor, and who provided the Japanese with piecemeal information about
European developments, Japan refused contact with the West after 1640 in an effort to
promote traditional Japanese culture and maintain internal harmony.\textsuperscript{5} Because the
Japanese economy had matured to the point of self-sufficiency at this time, the decision
to close its borders to foreigners had minimal impact on the country’s prosperity and
allowed Japan to experience a relatively peaceful period during the eighteenth century in
stark contrast with much of the West, which was concurrently plagued by conflict.\textsuperscript{6}
However, the ongoing battles being fought in Europe and America, as well as the
Industrial Revolution, enabled the Western nations to greatly improve their war-fighting
technology; ultimately, these innovations would allow the Europeans and Americans to
force the Japanese to open their country to foreign commerce in the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{7}

Propelled by its desires to gain new markets for its ever-growing capital, establish
a stopover on its route to China, and fulfill the essence of “manifest destiny” by
conquering the “final frontier” of the Pacific, the United States maintained a steadfast

\textsuperscript{4} Ibid., 78-79. Jansen gives details of the five decrees that resulted in \textit{sakoku}, beginning in 1633,
which forbade Japanese ships to be sent overseas, decreed death to Japanese who returned to Japan from
abroad, ordered reporting of suspected Christians, limited trade to five authorized guilds, demanded all
foreign ships be sent to Nagasaki, forbade the employment of Japanese seamen on foreign ships, and
strengthened prohibitions on Japanese Christians.

\textsuperscript{5} Ibid., 92.

\textsuperscript{6} Ibid., 257.

\textsuperscript{7} Ibid., 93.
interest in developing a commercial and political relationship with Japan.\textsuperscript{8} Between 1790 and 1853, twenty-seven ships from the United States visited Japan, and all were turned away.\textsuperscript{9} However, under the implicit threat of military action, Commodore Matthew Perry and his visually impressive “Black Ships” succeeded in “opening” Japan in 1854, as Japan recognized it could no longer ignore the United States’ superior naval power, and secured provisions in the Treaty of Kanagawa for a U.S. consul to be stationed in Japan and the use of two ports for American ships. Four years later, Japan and the United States would sign the Treaty of Amity and Commerce, which provided for the opening of five additional ports by 1863, allowed foreigners into Osaka and Edo, permitted extraterritorial rights for Americans, imposed import and export tariffs to protect U.S. trade interests, and established Japanese and American consuls in Washington and Edo.\textsuperscript{10} The U.S. achievements were quickly followed by demands from other Western nations for equal terms of access to Japan.\textsuperscript{11} Despite the belief among some prominent Japanese that their technology, government, and culture would prevail over the Western encroachment, the influx of foreign commerce and influence into Japan sparked by

\textsuperscript{8} Walter LaFeber, \textit{The Clash: U.S.-Japanese Relations Throughout History} (New York: W.W. Norton, 1998), 9-12. LaFeber notes, “The opening of Japan thus resulted from both the U.S. quest for China’s trade and the technological breakthroughs…of the 1840s. Japan…was the key…” because of its significant natural coal supply.

\textsuperscript{9} Ibid., 10.

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., 22.

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., 15. The treaties signed between the Western nations and Japan were all considered “unequal” treaties in that the West dictated the treaty terms and benefitted from their provisions, while the Japanese received little, or nothing, in return.
Perry’s successful foray, as well as mounting internal social and economic issues, presented serious challenges to this assumption.\textsuperscript{12}

Seeking to distinguish itself from “European imperialists,” and reflecting its own history as a former colony, the United States’ initial policy toward Japan precluded the use of force—after Perry’s implicit threat in 1854—or cooperation with European powers. However, at the behest of expansionist Secretary of State William Seward, the U.S. reversed this policy in 1864 and collaborated with the British, French, and Dutch to use military force to extend trading concessions they had gained under a series of commercial treaties signed with Japan in 1858.\textsuperscript{13} Moreover, internal social and economic issues that had been mounting since the mid-1700s progressively weakened the Shogunate’s ability to respond to foreign threats.\textsuperscript{14} The increasing aggressiveness of Western imperialism, in combination with the Shogun’s inability to resist the powers’ demands through diplomatic or military means, inspired a sense of urgency among several powerful anti-Shogunate daimyo, who believed immediate action was necessary to protect Japan’s sovereignty.\textsuperscript{15} Their efforts resulted in the Meiji Restoration of 1868, which theoretically returned Japan to direct imperial rule. Adopting the slogan “Rich country, strong army” (fukoku kyōhei), the Meiji leadership sought to protect itself from

\textsuperscript{12} Jansen, \textit{The Making of Modern Japan}, 286-288.

\textsuperscript{13} LaFeber, \textit{The Clash}, 27-29.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 16-17. LaFeber indicates that Japan’s domestic problems, stemming from the mid 1700s, included low agricultural production, natural disasters, increased taxation, the rise of a new merchant class that challenged Japan’s feudal system, rising inflation, and frustration and restlessness among the samurai.

the West by initiating a series of political, economic, and social reforms designed to “modernize and industrialize the country and to achieve equality with and acceptance by the West.”¹⁶ Although the Japanese sought to adopt and adapt those institutions and processes that had made Europe and the United States internationally dominant, they were acutely suspicious of the West’s motives in Japan and determined to avoid China’s disastrous experience with Western imperialism. Thus, Japan’s primary objectives became the creation of a military and industrial complex that could defend the country against the West, and to dismantle the unequal treaties imposed on Japan in order to achieve political and economic parity with Europe and the U.S.¹⁷

Under the Meiji leaders’ strategy, Japan experienced rapid development through the remainder of the nineteenth century and began to garner recognition and respect, as well as fear and racial contempt, from its Western counterparts. In addition to replicating successful domestic programs from Europe and the United States, Japan sought to replicate the West’s foreign policy, specifically imperialism, to advance its international position. Driven by fears that the West was encroaching on territories too close to Japan and that foreigners aimed to dominate Japanese trade, as well as a need to refocus popular attention away from internal crises, Japan began considering its geographical neighbors as targets for its imperialist ambitions in the 1880s.¹⁸

¹⁶ Ibid., 3. Meiji translates to “enlightened rule,” suggesting the revolutionary and transformative objectives of the Meiji leaders.


¹⁸ LaFeber, The Clash, 41-42.
backward and susceptible to foreign invasion—which presented a potential threat to the Japanese home islands—Japan hoped to assert its supremacy on the Asian continent.19 Japan’s first opportunity to do so surfaced in 1894, when it initiated war with China in a veiled effort to strengthen its foothold in Korea, over which China had maintained suzerainty since the seventh century. Despite having signed a treaty in 1882 with Korea vaguely suggesting that it would provide assistance if Korea was militarily threatened, the United States ignored Korean requests for support against Japan; this was, in part, a reflection of the United States’ increasingly favorable opinion of the Japanese, who were sometimes referred to as “Yankees of the East,” and its admiration of Japan’s attempts to Westernize, which elevated them above other Asians in Americans’ perception.20 Ultimately, Japan was able to overwhelm the vast Chinese forces, already weakened by years of ineffective government and Western exploitation of China’s resources. Japan’s success in the first Sino-Japanese War seemed to vindicate the Meiji leaders’ approach to modernizing the country, and the resultant Treaty of Shimonoseki garnered for Japan an indemnity payment and territorial concessions from China, including Taiwan and the Liaodong Peninsula, in addition to the same trading privileges granted to Western powers.21 Shaken by Japan’s substantial economic and territorial gains, which threatened their own ambitions, Russia, Germany, and France intervened in Japan’s postwar negotiations with China, advising Japan to return the Liaodong Peninsula “for the peace

19 Hanneman, Japan Faces the World, 3.
21 Hanneman, Japan Faces the World, 5.
of Asia;” unable to contravene the tacit threat underlying the request of the “Triple Intervention,” the Japanese complied but harbored strong resentment and outrage over this incident for generations.22

Ten years after its defeat of China, Japan achieved a major victory against Russia, with whom Japan had gone to war in 1904 following a breakdown in negotiations over Russian access to naval ports in Asia and the countries’ competing imperial ambitions in Korea and Manchuria. According to the terms of the peace settlement—brokered by President Theodore Roosevelt, who received a Nobel Peace prize for his role—the Japanese received Sakhalin Island, a protectorate in southern Manchuria, and the removal of Russian forces from the Japan Sea.23 Furthermore, Japan’s defeat of Russia, a traditional global power, signaled a substantial shift in the international balance of power in Asia, as well as in the United States’ perception of Japan.24 The U.S., having recently acquired the Philippines from Spain and wanting to protect the “Open Door” policy in China, viewed Japan’s preeminence in the region as a considerable threat to its interests; yet, unable to match Japan’s military power in the region, the U.S. relied heavily upon diplomacy and bilateral concessions to protect its economic and territorial interests in

22 Jansen, The Making of Modern Japan, 433. Jansen references the Japanese term, gasshin shotan, used to describe the popular outrage against the Triple Intervention. The term describes the hero’s patient wait for revenge in a famous Chinese novel.

23 LaFeber, The Clash, 83. In the Taft-Katsura Agreement, a confidential memorandum between U.S. Secretary of State William Howard Taft and Prime Minister of Japan Katsura Taro in July 1905, the United States also recognized Japan’s sphere of influence in Korea in exchange for Japan’s recognition of the U.S. sphere of influence in the Philippines.

Asia. Moreover, despite its significant acquisition of land and heightened international stature in the aftermath of the war with Russia, Japan’s failure to negotiate an indemnity payment, as well as the Western powers’ cautious, muted response to Japan’s victory, provoked bitterness among the Japanese population toward the West’s racially-charged treatment.

Japan’s sense of resentment and antagonism, paralleled by increasing nationalist and militarist sentiments, escalated throughout the early twentieth century, and eventually came to characterize its relationship with the United States during this time. Rising yet relatively marginal Japanese immigration to the United States’ west coast, particularly California, between 1880 and 1908 led xenophobic Americans to describe the influx of Japanese and other Asians as the “Yellow Peril;” such nativism, in addition to California’s efforts to segregate white and Asian schools and the 1907 “Gentlemen’s Agreement” circumscribing Japanese immigration to America, brought the United States and Japan to the verge of war. In 1910, the United States further eroded its relationship with Japan when it sought to finance railways in Manchuria and place them under the provisions of the Open Door policy, hoping to exclude Japan from participation in the railroad operations. This attempt by the U.S. to undermine Japan’s influence on the

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25 Ibid., 8. The Open Door policy refers to the understanding among imperial powers that each had equal access to economic opportunities within China, while no country would seek outright political or territorial control of the country.

26 LaFeber, The Clash, 84; Hanneman, Japan Faces the World, 5.


28 Ibid., 95. Japan had gained control of the Russian-built South Manchurian railway as an outcome of the Russo-Japanese War.
Asian continent—particularly in Manchuria, where Japan was dominant—incited
Japanese diplomats to ally with Russian officials to protect their respective regional
interests by dividing Manchuria into two spheres of influence, and thus eliminate the
potential for additional foreign involvement. Likewise, Japan seized the opportunity to
renegotiate the terms of the economic and commercial treaties with the West that had
been in place since the 1860s, enabling Japan to realize the Meiji objective of regaining
full control over its foreign trade.

Immediately following the outbreak of World War I in 1914 and the subsequent
preoccupation of the European nations with the conflict, Japan used the occasion to again
expand its presence on the continent and continue to build its international status. As a
supporter of the Allied Powers, Tokyo declared war on Germany and occupied German
possessions in China and the Pacific, the former of which allowed it to further entrench
itself within Chinese territory. Shortly thereafter, Japan issued the Twenty-one
Demands to China, essentially requesting that the Chinese give to Japan former German
rights on the Shandong Peninsula and provide additional concessions in southern
Manchuria and eastern Mongolia, as well as other “requests” that would have severely

29 Ibid., 96.

30 Ian Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy, 1869-1942: Kasumigaseki to Miyakezaka* (London: Routledge, 1977), 49-50. In 1911, the Japanese signed a treaty with the Americans that provided concessions on previously established tariffs that protected American trade in Japan; in return, Japan promised to restrict emigration to the U.S. The British and other Western powers followed the American lead, returning to Japan control over its foreign trade.

impinged on Chinese sovereignty had they all been accepted.\textsuperscript{32} Although the United States initially opposed the Twenty-one Demands—and Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan warned Japan that the U.S. would not recognize any actions that violated Chinese sovereignty—the Americans’ entry into the war in 1917 resulted in U.S. acquiescence to Japan’s mandates.\textsuperscript{33} The ensuing Lansing-Ishii Agreement of 1917 confirmed Japan’s “special interests” in China due to its geographic proximity, but rhetorically upheld the Open Door policy of equal opportunity among the imperial powers for commerce and industry in China and, in a secret protocol, assured Japanese non-intervention in U.S. and Allied interests in China during the war.\textsuperscript{34} Despite some setbacks, Japan experienced profound economic growth during World War I as it profited from the sale of combat materiel to the warring nations while undercutting their advantage in Asian markets.\textsuperscript{35} Japan’s international ascendance, rooted in Meiji-era reforms, was reflected in its inclusion as one of the five great powers at the Paris Peace Conference, making it the “first non-white race recognized by the white nations to deserve top-five ranking.”\textsuperscript{36} However, this distinction ultimately meant little after Japan’s proposal for a statement of racial equality was rejected, despite a majority of delegates voting in favor of it.\textsuperscript{37}

\textsuperscript{32} Hanneman, Japan Faces the World, 6; Jansen, The Making of Modern Japan, 515.

\textsuperscript{33} Jansen, The Making of Modern Japan, 516.

\textsuperscript{34} LaFeber, The Clash, 116.

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 120; Hanneman, Japan Faces the World, 6.

\textsuperscript{36} LaFeber, The Clash, 120.

\textsuperscript{37} Jansen, The Making of Modern Japan, 517.
With Europe overwhelmed by the physical and economic consequences of the war, the United States and Japan emerged as the primary regional leaders of the 1920s. Though their interests remained inextricably linked—Japan depended on the U.S. export market and for raw material and capital to fuel its industrial and imperial growth, while the United States required Japan’s amity in order to protect its interests in the Pacific—mistrust between Washington and Tokyo increased throughout the decade. Despite the financial gains both countries had reaped during World War I, Japan and the United States fell into recession by 1921, though Japan experienced a more severe economic collapse as the Western nations closed markets that they had opened to Japan during the war.\textsuperscript{38} In the same year, the U.S. succeeded in convincing Japan to accept an agreement limiting the total tonnage of its capital warships to three-fifths’ the size of the United States’ and Britain’s in exchange for an American promise to halt further fortification of its Pacific bases.\textsuperscript{39} This settlement—the Washington Naval, or Five-Power, Treaty signed as part of the greater Washington Conference attended by multiple European powers in 1921—reflected the postwar international movement toward avoiding armed conflict. However, the United States further and critically undermined its tenuous relationship with Japan when Congress passed the 1924 Immigration Act, which prohibited Asians and other non-white peoples from immigrating to the United States under the provisions set forth in the Exclusion Act.\textsuperscript{40} The Act’s implications of

\textsuperscript{38} LaFeber, \textit{The Clash}, 132-133.

\textsuperscript{39} Jansen, \textit{The Making of Modern Japan}, 520.

\textsuperscript{40} LaFeber, \textit{The Clash}, 145.
American racism and disregard for the Japanese amplified Japan’s historical sense of mistrust and alienation from the West, and drove Japan toward the ultra-nationalism and militarism that would characterize its domestic and foreign policies throughout the remainder of the interwar years.41

The collapse of the United States’ stock market in 1929 and the subsequent worldwide economic depression gravely impacted Japan, which had only begun to recover from its post-World War I recession, the closure of Western markets following the war, and the Exclusion Act. Widespread domestic tensions and economic suffering, in combination with Japan’s perception of American racism and its sense of isolation from the international community, enabled Japan’s emperor and military to emerge as a symbol of the nation’s unique identity and commitment to establishing itself as a global power.42 Moreover, the military had steadily gained political power within Japan since the late nineteenth century, holding nearly one-third of civilian government posts and exercising virtual veto power over the creation of new cabinet governments.43 The military’s overwhelming popular support and legislative standing, as well as reinvigorated Chinese nationalism that threatened Japan’s leadership in southern Manchuria, provided the impetus for the “Manchurian Incident” of 1931, in which Japanese forces stationed in southern Manchuria—the Guandong Army—made the unilateral decision to attack local Chinese troops after falsely accusing the Chinese of

41 Ibid., 145.
42 Hanneman, Japan Faces the World, 39.
43 LaFeber, The Clash, 163.
bombing the Japanese-controlled South Manchurian Railway.\textsuperscript{44} Within days of the initial attack, the Kwantung Army established control over most of Manchuria.\textsuperscript{45}

The Manchurian Incident set into motion the series of events that would ultimately cause the United States and Japan to go to war in 1941. Exemplifying its disregard for the civilian government in Tokyo, the military’s decision to act independently in Manchuria revealed the discord between civilian and military leaders, as well as the overall weakness of Japan’s civilian officials. Consequently, the Manchurian Incident precipitated a “diplomatic revolution” in which Japan’s military took control of the nation’s foreign policy and sought to establish Japanese hegemony in Asia.\textsuperscript{46} Japan’s transformation of Manchuria into a puppet state, Manchukuo, epitomized this shift. In addition, the prevailing international reaction to Japan’s actions in Manchuria was negative, with the League of Nations formally denouncing the formation of Manchukuo and demanding that Japan withdraw its forces; however, Tokyo ignored the League’s demands, which also contributed to Japan’s eventual withdrawal from the League in 1933.\textsuperscript{47} The United States, not a member of the League of Nations and mired in the Depression and isolationist sentiment, responded by issuing the Stimson Doctrine, in which Secretary of State Henry Stimson stated that the U.S. would not recognize any agreements between China and Japan that limited free commercial interaction in the

\textsuperscript{44} Jansen, \textit{The Making of Modern Japan}, 577-580.

\textsuperscript{45} Hanneman, \textit{Japan Faces the World}, 39.

\textsuperscript{46} Peter Duus, \textit{The Rise of Modern Japan} (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1976), 205.

\textsuperscript{47} Hanneman, \textit{Japan Faces the World}, 41-42.
Although the acquisition of Manchuria had demonstrated Japan’s military capabilities while expanding its colonial holdings and access to raw materials, the international backlash intensified Japan’s sense of isolation from the United States and the West, as well as the belief that it “had to fight against hostile powers to protect [its] national interests.”

Japan’s relationship with the United States deteriorated in the aftermath of the Manchurian Incident, as Tokyo increasingly perceived any criticism of its foreign policy as obstructionist and subsequently disregarded international reaction to its operations. Using its stronghold in Manchuria as a foundation to extend its efforts in China, Japan had grown wary of the potential for conflict with the Soviet Union, with which it had long competed, that such maneuvers could cause. As a result of this, as well as widespread fear and mistrust of Soviet communism, Japan agreed to sign an Anti-Comintern Pact with Germany in 1936, in which both countries secretly agreed to come to each other’s aid if either country was attacked by the Soviet Union. However, by aligning with Nazi Germany, Japan further alienated itself from its former allies, Great Britain and the United States, and set the stage for its entry into World War II as an Axis power. Shortly thereafter, Japan faced escalating tensions with China, where Nationalist and Communist forces had resolved to cooperate in order to prevent further

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49 Hanneman, *Japan Faces the World*, 42.

Japanese encroachment into Chinese territory.\textsuperscript{51} The intense hostility between Japan and China ultimately evolved into war in 1937. Although Japan achieved numerous victories in the first year, its determination to fight a “war of annihilation” against the Chinese required more manpower and material resources than Japan was capable of supplying on its own; consequently, Japan grew more reliant on oil and other imported goods from the United States, and thus more vulnerable to sanctions the U.S. might punitively impose.\textsuperscript{52} Moreover, the maltreatment and, in some cases, murder of Americans in China by the Japanese military—exemplified by the 1937 sinking of the U.S. gunboat \textit{Panay}, in which three Americans were killed and victims were reportedly machine-gunned in the water—encouraged U.S. officials to harden their stance against Japan’s aggression by augmenting the American naval fleet in the Pacific in 1939.\textsuperscript{53}

Despite the United States’ relatively minimal efforts to discourage Japan from extending its offensive in China, in late 1938 Japan’s Prime Minister issued a proclamation stating that Japan sought a “New Order” in East Asia; notably, this policy explicitly asserted Japan’s intention to establish its political and economic dominance over China, and directly defied the Open Door principles.\textsuperscript{54} Again, Washington responded by transferring additional resources to the Pacific Fleet. Moreover, it formally provided Japan the requisite six-month notice announcing that the United States planned

\textsuperscript{51} Hanneman, \textit{Japan Faces the World}, 54.

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., 56; LaFeber, \textit{The Clash}, 188.

\textsuperscript{53} LaFeber, \textit{The Clash}, 187-189.

to terminate its 1911 trade treaty, a move that carried the implicit threat of U.S. economic sanctions against Japan.\(^5\) Nevertheless, as Hitler’s blitzkrieg disabled much of mainland Europe by mid-1940, Japan perceived an opportunity to advance its position in China by pressuring the war-torn European nations with colonial holdings in Southeast Asia to provide Japan with access to these territories and resources.\(^6\) Japan solidified its stance against the United States when it formally joined the Axis powers in the Tripartite Pact in September 1940. Although Japan’s alliance with Germany and Italy was a calculated move aimed at the United States, Japanese leaders hoped it would deter the U.S. from further attempts to block Japan’s progress in China by confronting Washington with the threat of a two-front war.\(^7\) However, Japan’s attempt to intimidate the United States only increased friction between the two countries and impelled the U.S. to further tighten its trade restrictions on exports to Japan, including a severe embargo prohibiting critical exports of steel, scrap iron, and aviation fuel.\(^8\)

Throughout 1941, Japan and the United States moved closer to war in spite of diplomatic efforts on both sides to avoid this outcome. Japan, realizing that it would be unable to sustain its venture in Asia without oil and other materiel imports from the United States, decided to occupy the remainder of French Indochina in order to seize the resources needed to maintain its operations—such as oil, rubber, and tin—and to use as a

\(^{5}\) LaFeber, *The Clash*, 189-190.


launch pad for further encroachment into Southeast Asia. President Roosevelt responded by issuing an executive order placing a total embargo on exports to Japan, severely impacting Japan’s supply of oil and effectively eliminating its ability to launch any offensive operations after January 1942. Though both sides continued their efforts to negotiate a compromise, Japan actively prepared for war with the United States in October 1941. Facing the possibility of internal collapse and the loss of its territorial possessions on the Asian mainland as a result of the U.S. embargo, Japan determined to launch further attacks in Southeast Asia to secure necessary resources while incapacitating the U.S. Pacific fleet’s ability to respond; subsequently, Japan initiated a massive surprise attack against U.S. forces at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on December 7, 1941, as well as locations throughout the South Pacific. According to historian Mary L. Hanneman, the decision was made to attack Pearl Harbor because “…Japanese planners believed a quick preemptive strike was necessary to destroy as much U.S. fighting potential as possible…The hope was that the U.S., already a reluctant fighter, would be weakened and brought to the negotiating table, now ready to compromise, and Japan could avoid a lengthy war.” Nonetheless, Japan’s devastating attack on Pearl Harbor was a complete strategic failure, as it did not cripple the Pacific Fleet or compel the United States to negotiate, and instead galvanized public opinion in favor of war; indeed,


the U.S quickly declared war against Japan and officially entered World War II as an Allied Power on December 8, 1941.\textsuperscript{63}

Although Japan achieved a series of victories in the first six months of fighting—by May 1942, it had taken possession of American and European holdings stretching from Burma to Wake Island—the United States reversed the Pacific War’s momentum following a substantial defeat of Japanese naval and air forces at Midway Island in June 1942.\textsuperscript{64} Throughout 1943 and 1944, the U.S. military carried out an “island hopping” campaign, in which it strategically regained control of certain Pacific islands from Japan while closing in on the Japanese home islands.\textsuperscript{65} However, the exceptionally brutal fighting that occurred between Japanese and American forces demonstrated both sides’ commitment to enduring significant losses in order to achieve victory. Because he believed “…the Japanese would resist an invasion down to the last man, woman and child,” President Harry Truman ultimately chose to use the atomic bomb to quickly secure Japan’s surrender rather than incurring significant casualties through an American invasion of Japan.\textsuperscript{66} On August 6, 1945, the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, instantaneously destroying the city and killing approximately eighty thousand

\textsuperscript{63} LaFeber, The Clash, 228.

\textsuperscript{64} Hanneman, Japan Faces the World, 72-73.

\textsuperscript{65} Ibid., 74.

residents. Three days later, a second atomic bomb was released in Nagasaki, instantly killing at least forty thousand people. Moreover, the Soviet Union declared war on Japan and invaded Manchuria, the Kuril Islands, and Korea in the interim between the atomic bombings. In response to the Soviet entry into the war and the massive devastation wrought by the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan’s Emperor, Hirohito, announced the nation’s surrender via radio broadcast on August 15, 1945.

Through the end of World War II, American public opinion was decidedly anti-Japanese, a sentiment reflected in national polls and official statements alike; however, in an effort to learn from the disastrous aftermath of the World War I settlement for Germany, the United States sought to reform and, to some extent, rebuild Japan through democratization and demilitarization. Although the Allied Occupation was formally under the authority of the eleven nations of the Far Eastern Commission, the United States was in virtual control with General Douglas MacArthur designated the Supreme Commander of Allied Powers (SCAP). The first American occupying forces arrived in


68 Ibid., 4.


70 Ibid., 515-516.


72 Hanneman, Japan Faces the World, 84. The acronym “SCAP” referred to both MacArthur and the Occupation Headquarters itself.
Japan on August 28, 1945, and the Japanese surrender was signed aboard the battleship *Missouri* five days later.\(^73\)

**Korea**

Prior to the era of Western imperialism in the late 1800s, Korea was an intensely insular and ethnically homogenous nation heavily influenced by neighboring China, to which Korea became a tributary state in the seventh century, with China taking control of Korean foreign relations.\(^74\) Occupying a small peninsula surrounded by larger countries, Korea faced the threat of invasion throughout its history. Despite being invaded by Japan in the late sixteenth century, Korea preserved its political and cultural foundations, as well as its close relationship with China, and experienced considerable institutional stability and societal continuity through much of the Chôson Dynasty, which ruled from 1392 until 1910.\(^75\)

By the mid-nineteenth century, as the Western powers sought to expand their economic opportunities through imperialism, Korea’s longstanding isolationism became increasingly vulnerable to foreign demands for commerce. British ships surveyed Korea’s coast in 1832 and 1845, followed by the French in 1846 and the Russians in 1854; all were denied trading rights with Korea, which proclaimed it had no interest in opening its country to Westerners, who were generally perceived as “barbarians.”\(^76\)

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\(^73\) Ibid., 86.


\(^75\) Ibid., 4.

\(^76\) Ibid., 228.
Koreans further opposed contact with foreigners after learning of China’s ruinous experience in the Opium Wars of 1839-1842 and 1856-1860.77 With China considerably weakened, the Taewŏn’gun, father of and regent for Korea’s adolescent King Kojong from 1863-1873, determined that Korea needed to strengthen the monarchy’s power, rid itself of Christian missionaries, and reorganize its tax system in order to resist the West’s encroachment.78

Contact between the United States and Korea began shortly thereafter, when the U.S.S. General Sherman, a heavily armed American merchant vessel, sailed into Korean waters in 1866. Despite requests that they leave, the crew fired into a crowd of Koreans and damaged nearby property; however, when the ship was marooned in shallow water several days later, the local Korean governor ordered it destroyed and the crew killed.79 The United States responded in 1871 by sending a sizeable expedition under the command of Admiral John Rodgers to investigate the incident and take punitive action against the Koreans. After receiving no response from the Korean government to a letter demanding an explanation for the U.S.S. Sherman’s disappearance, American forces attacked the city of Kangwha, but were forced to retreat due to the unexpectedly strong Korean resistance and lack of official authorization to proceed further into Korea.80 The Taewŏn’gun proclaimed Korea’s victory over the Americans and reiterated his

77 Ibid., 228.
78 Ibid., 231.
80 Seth, A History of Korea, 232.
commitment to modernization, reform, and rigid opposition to foreign interference in Korean affairs, though this “victory” would serve as a false indicator of Seoul’s ability to repel Western encroachment.\textsuperscript{81}

In 1873, the Taewŏn’gun was forced to resign as regent when his son, Kojong, reached adulthood and was able to fully assume his role as king. Upon taking personal control of Korea, Kojong was immediately confronted with mounting pressure from Japan to establish diplomatic ties between the two countries.\textsuperscript{82} Having undergone major political and social transformation as a result of the Meiji Restoration, Japan was determined to become an imperialist power like the Western nations and asserted its influence among its geographic neighbors in East Asia, particularly Korea, which it viewed as “a dagger pointed at the heart of Japan.”\textsuperscript{83} Following Korea’s refusal of Japanese envoys announcing the new government and imperial restoration in 1869 and 1870, Japan sent a warship to “survey” Korean waters in 1875, and invited Koreans aboard to view the modern, Western-inspired vessel.\textsuperscript{84} However, when the Japanese ship later entered a forbidden area near Kangwha Island, Koreans fired at it, provoking the Japanese to attack; additional forces were sent from Japan to fortify those already in Korea, and the Meiji leaders subsequently demanded that Korea open itself to trade and

\textsuperscript{81} Ibid., 232.

\textsuperscript{82} Michael J. Seth, \textit{A Concise History of Modern Korea: From the Late Nineteenth Century to the Present} (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010), 13.

\textsuperscript{83} Ibid., 22.

\textsuperscript{84} Ibid., 12.
diplomatic relations with Japan. As a result, Kojong signed the Treaty of Kangwha with Japan in 1876. The treaty had significant implications, as it ended Korea’s isolation and recognized Korea as an independent state, undermining the traditional tributary relationship between Korea and China; moreover, the Treaty of Kangwha provided an opening for other foreign powers to exert their influence within Korea.

Despite his father’s strong stance against foreign involvement in Korea, Kojong was considerably more receptive to commercial and diplomatic entreaties from abroad, and developed a particular regard for the United States. Kojong’s favorable impression of the U.S. was initially inspired by an essay written by Huang Zunxian, counselor to the Chinese legation in Tokyo, that suggested Korea should ally with the United States because it was a “…powerful industrial and anti-imperialist power…founded upon Christianity, which usually supports weaker nations against strong oppressors.” In addition, the advice of Chinese viceroy Li Hongzhang, who advocated Korean “self-strengthening” through the careful selection and implementation of certain Western institutions and customs, further swayed Kojong’s opinion in favor of the U.S. Thus, Kojong played a central role in facilitating and promoting Korea’s first treaty with the United States, signed in 1882, which then became a model for additional treaties between

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85 Ibid., 13.
86 Ibid.
88 Seth, A Concise History of Korea, 14-15.
Korea and other Western powers. Although Korea’s treaty with the United States contained fourteen separate articles, from the Korean perspective the most substantial article was the first, which stated, “If other powers deal unjustly or oppressively with either Government, the other will exert their good offices, on being informed of the case, to bring about an amicable arrangement, thus showing their friendly feelings.”\(^89\) For Kojong and the Korean leadership, the “good offices” clause was critical for ensuring Korean sovereignty and security because it signified American assistance against foreign threats. According to historian Yur-Bok Lee, Kojong “…interpreted the good-offices provision to mean that the United States would guarantee the territorial integrity and political independence of Korea by taking sides with Korea in cases of foreign aggression or oppression. They sincerely believed that the American ‘guarantee’ was not only a legal but a moral commitment.”\(^90\) However, the United States merely interpreted “good offices” to imply friendship between the two nations, as well as American diplomatic support for Korean independence; indeed, the United States did not intend any assurance of physical or monetary provisions to protect Korea in any part of the 1882 treaty.\(^91\) This fundamental misunderstanding over what the United States was obligated to provide to Korea had substantial ramifications for the foreign policies of, and relationship between, the two nations through the end of World War II.

\(^89\) “United States-Korea Treaty,” May 22, 1882, United States Statutes at Large 23, pt. 2.


Although the United States had actively endorsed the treaty with Korea and indicated that it supported Korean sovereignty, the U.S. quickly assumed a passive role in Korean affairs as American economic and political interests in Asia were diverted by events in Japan and China. This was first reflected by Congress’s almost immediate decision in 1884 to reduce the rank of the American representative in Korea to “minister resident,” as well as its subsequent appointment of low-level officials to the post, intermittently neglecting to staff the position at all.\(^{92}\) In addition, the State Department initially ignored requests from American officials in Korea to provide advisers from a variety of fields to bolster Korean self-government.\(^{93}\) Moreover, when the Korean government first invoked the “good offices” clause of the 1882 treaty following Britain’s illegal occupation of Port Hamilton (Geomun-do) in 1885, U.S. Secretary of State Thomas Bayard asserted that the treaty did not empower or obligate the United States to interfere on Korea’s behalf.\(^{94}\) The United States’ indifference toward Korea, evident in its apathetic efforts to establish a diplomatic presence and failure to provide basic political assistance, was further exemplified in its reaction to Korean requests for support during the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895. Despite repeated Korean invocation of the “good offices” clause, as well as a British proposal that the United States join it and


\(^{93}\) Ibid., 55.

several other powers to intervene against Japan on behalf of Korea, President Cleveland and Secretary of State John Gresham refused to do more than apply diplomatic pressure on Japan, contending that further action would have broken with traditional American policy in Asia which, according to Gresham, was to avoid any “embarrassing participation” in guaranteeing the territorial integrity of distant states.\(^{95}\) Yet Kojong’s confidence in Korea’s relationship with the United States remained steadfast, with Kojong asserting to U.S. diplomat Horace Allen in 1900 that Korea felt as if America was its “Elder Brother.”\(^{96}\)

Following China’s defeat in 1895, the United States maintained its reserved stance toward Korea, allowing Japan to exert increasing control there. The lack of American interest in Korea, especially in the decade following the Sino-Japanese War, was related to the negligible amount of trade occurring between the two countries in combination with the United States’ evolving foreign policy, which increasingly accepted Japan as the dominant power in Asia. Though the United States had primarily sought to establish formal relations with Korea for potential economic and commercial opportunities, American trade with Korea averaged $200,000 per year between 1894 and 1904, and accounted for less than one-hundredth of one percent of U.S. foreign trade.\(^{97}\) Thus, American business interests in Korea were minimal and gave Washington little incentive to protect them if better prospects became available. At the same time, Japan’s


\(^{96}\) Ibid., 22.

\(^{97}\) Jongsuk Chay, “The United States and the Closing Door in Korea: American –Korean Relations, 1894-1905” (Ph.D. Diss., University of Michigan, 1965), Appendix A.
ascendance to regional power and China’s concurrent decline refocused the United States’ foreign policy toward cultivating and maintaining its relationship with Japan to the detriment of its relationship with Korea. This trend was exacerbated by the Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902, in which Great Britain recognized Japan’s special interest in Korea and implied British approval for Japanese domination of the peninsula.98 As the Western powers chose to align themselves with an ever more powerful Japan, whose military and economic leverage demanded their consideration, Korean sovereignty became increasingly vulnerable to Japanese efforts at establishing hegemony on the Asian continent.

By the early 1900s, the United States had clearly demonstrated that it was unwilling to provide more than minimal diplomatic or moral assistance in support of Korea, despite such implications in the 1882 Korean-American treaty. In 1904, mounting tensions between Japan and Russia over control of ports and territory in Northeast Asia ultimately resulted in war between the two countries; Korea initially declared neutrality, but once again remained hopeful that the United States would protect it from the imperialist ambitions of the two warring nations.99 To this end, the Korean government made six appeals to the United States between September 1904 and December 1905, none of which succeeded in obtaining American aid.100 In addition to the already drifting American interest in Korea, President Theodore Roosevelt’s favorable opinion of Japan,

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99 Ibid., 25.
100 Ibid.
which he perceived to be an important check on Russian influence and an asset to the balance of power in Asia, disinclined him to protect Korean independence if it contradicted Japanese strategy.\textsuperscript{101} Several months prior to Japan’s victory over Russia, the United States and Japan concluded the Taft-Katsura Agreement, which recognized Korea as part of Japan’s sphere of influence in exchange for Japanese recognition of American interests in the Philippines; here, the United States’ tacit acceptance of Japanese control over Korea essentially allowed Japan to proceed unchallenged on the peninsula.\textsuperscript{102} Subsequent to the formal conclusion of the war in September 1905, Japanese troops entered Seoul and forced Korean government officials to sign a Treaty of Protection, making Korea a protectorate of Japan and transferring all foreign relations to Japanese control.\textsuperscript{103} In response, the United States and other countries closed their legations in Korea, officially ending diplomatic relations with the country.\textsuperscript{104} Having initially perceived the United States as a benevolent partner in reinforcing Korea’s independence, many Koreans felt especially betrayed by the United States’ collusion with Japan; that the U.S. legation was the first to depart Korea only reinforced their perception of American duplicity.\textsuperscript{105} With no foreign interference hindering its advances, Japan brutally consolidated its power on the peninsula and formally annexed Korea in 1910.

\textsuperscript{101} Ibid., 24.

\textsuperscript{102} Seth, \textit{A History of Korea}, 253.

\textsuperscript{103} Ibid., 254.

\textsuperscript{104} Ibid.

As a result of the Japan-Korea Protectorate Treaty of 1905, no official communication occurred between the United States and Korea until Japan’s surrender to the Allied Powers in August 1945, ending World War II. Despite the lack of a formal diplomatic presence by the United States, American missionaries remained in Korea during this time and became an important channel of international communication and information for Koreans outside the control of the colonial Japanese government. Also noteworthy is the American influence on the March First Movement, a national Korean resistance effort against the Japanese colonial government that emerged on March 1, 1919. Inspired by the events at the end of World War I, particularly President Woodrow Wilson’s Fourteen Points and his assertion of “national self-determination,” representatives of Korean nationalist groups developed and signed a declaration of independence and a petition for Korean sovereignty to be delivered to the Japanese and American governments. Widespread demonstrations in support of the nationalists’ cause occurred throughout the country and continued for several months. Although the movement failed to gain substantial attention from the Western powers or remove Japan’s colonial authority, it did motivate and consolidate Korean nationalists while embarrassing

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107 Ibid., 68.

108 Seth, A Concise History of Modern Korea, 47.

109 Ibid., 48.
Japan’s leadership, forcing it to reform its most severe policies within Korea following a very brutal crackdown.\textsuperscript{110} Regardless of the United States’ longstanding indifference toward Korea, the onset of World War II redirected American attention to the peninsula as the necessity of preparing for a new international balance of power in the postwar years became apparent. At the forefront of the United States’ concerns was the extent to which Soviet influence would spread, particularly in Eastern Europe as well as Asia, where Japan’s predicted defeat would leave a vast power vacuum. As early as 1943, the State Department identified Soviet control of Korea as a probable threat to security in the postwar Pacific.\textsuperscript{111} In response, President Franklin Roosevelt initially proposed the establishment of a multipower trusteeship in Korea, possibly involving China, Russia, the United States, and Great Britain, that would prepare Korea for self-government, promote continued great power cooperation, and limit Sino-Russian friction.\textsuperscript{112} The possibility of trusteeship was first publicly alluded to in the aftermath of the Cairo Conference between the United States, Great Britain, and China, in which the three countries declared that “…in due

\textsuperscript{110} Michael E. Robinson, \textit{Korea’s Twentieth Century Odyssey} (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007), 48-49.


course, Korea shall become free and independent.” While the United States liberally interpreted “in due course” as an undetermined amount of time in which it would guide Korean political and economic development through the trusteeship—Roosevelt originally envisioned a forty-year period of “tutelage”—Koreans construed the phrase to imply immediate independence. Similar to the misunderstanding over the “good offices” clause of the 1882 Korean-American Treaty, the United States’ vague political terminology and lack of concern for the Korean perspective would culminate in the substantial divergence between Korean expectations for American support and the United States’ actual course of action.

Following the Cairo Conference, no overt policy decisions were made regarding Korea until the issuance of General Order No. 1, instructing Japanese forces to surrender to the Allied Powers, on August 17, 1945. The suddenness of the Japanese surrender after the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, in addition to the concurrent Soviet entrance into northern Korea, generated a sense of urgency among U.S. officials over how to prevent the Soviets from fully penetrating the entire Korean peninsula. Subsequently, several officers on the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee devised a

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114 Seth, A Concise History of Modern Korea, 84.


boundary at Korea’s thirty-eighth parallel that roughly divided the country into U.S. and Soviet occupation zones and gave the U.S. control of Seoul; however, the closest U.S. military forces were in Okinawa and would take several weeks to reach Korea and secure the proposed American zone.\textsuperscript{117} Despite having the opportunity to occupy all of Korea in the interim, the Soviets accepted the United States’ plan to split the country at the thirty-eighth parallel, with the Soviet Union occupying the northern half and the U.S. controlling the southern portion.\textsuperscript{118} Michael Seth emphasizes the hastiness of U.S. officials’ decision to divide Korea, as well as their ongoing lack of consideration for the country and its people, asserting that it “… is important to note that the thirty-eighth parallel was an arbitrary line on a map and did not correspond to any geographical, cultural, or historical division of the country. It cut across the two provinces Kyŏnggi and Kangwon, across counties, and across natural geographic features. Korea had been a unified country since the seventh century; no Korean had ever proposed a division of their land.”\textsuperscript{119} Without consulting or informing the Korean population beforehand—and in spite of the declaration of an independent People’s Republic of Korea on September 6, 1945, which the U.S. refused to recognize—the United States commenced its occupation in the south on September 8, 1945, with Lieutenant General John Hodge commanding the American forces there.

\textsuperscript{117} Seth, \textit{A History of Korea}, 306.

\textsuperscript{118} Ibid., 306-307. Seth indicates that Stalin may have agreed to the 38th parallel division, rather than ordering the Soviet occupation of the entire peninsula, with the hope of securing a Soviet role in the occupation of Japan and even of Germany, as well as his possible desire to avoid a conflict with the U.S. over Korea.

\textsuperscript{119} Ibid., 307.
Conclusion

The arrival of the United States in Japan and Korea in the 1800s substantially altered the course of these countries’ evolving political and economic circumstances, and ultimately forced these otherwise insular nations into the Western-dominated global arena. Although the United States originally perceived Japan to be an inferior and backward state, its relationship with Japan was characterized from its inception by tensions stemming from the two nations’ struggle to become dominant in the Pacific region. Japan’s rapid and effective program of reform during the Meiji era made it a regional power by the early twentieth century, demonstrated by its victory in war over Russia in 1905 and later by its inclusion as one of the “Big Five” at the Paris Peace Conference following World War I. Moreover, Japan’s efforts to “westernize” in the image of the United States and Europe garnered the admiration of some Americans. Yet Japan’s relationship with the United States was undermined by American racism and arrogance, exemplified by the U.S. government’s efforts to limit Japanese immigration and hesitance regarding Japan’s military and imperial success. Japan’s resulting skepticism of American sincerity and goodwill fostered a persistent suspicion of the West, and inspired Japan’s unreserved attempts to expand its control over the Asian continent. However, Japan’s inability to independently sustain its operations and refusal to capitulate to the United States’ demands eventually provoked its attack on Pearl Harbor, initiating the Pacific War. The United States’ use of the atomic bomb to secure Japan’s surrender, and the Allied Powers’ subsequent decision to occupy the country, created an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty among surviving Japanese citizens, who
described the feelings of exhaustion, despair, and psychic collapse of the immediate postwar period as the “kyodatsu condition.” The resultant U.S.-led occupation of Japan marked the end of these countries’ historical relationship as political and economic competitors for Pacific dominance, and the beginning of Washington’s ascent as a principal regional power with Japan as its acquiescent Asian partner.

Initially, Korea’s impression of the United States was characterized by optimism, as Korea specifically sought to establish diplomatic relations with the U.S. ahead of any other Western power because of its belief that the U.S., as a former colony itself, would empathize with Korea’s desire to assert its independence. Although the United States was primarily interested in economic and commercial opportunities, Korea perceived the U.S. as an international partner in establishing and maintaining Korean security and sovereignty. However, as Japan’s prominence in Asia increased throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the United States neglected its relations with Korea, as well as any obligations it implied in the 1882 treaty. As a result of the United States’ growing indifference toward Korea and the Taft-Katsura Agreement recognizing Tokyo’s special interests there, Japan was able to force Korea into accepting protectorate status in 1905 before fully annexing it in 1910; subsequently, the United States and Korea had no official relations between 1905 and 1945. The inequality of political, economic,

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120 John W. Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (W.W. Norton & Company: New York, 1999), 88-89. In describing the origin and use of the term kyodatsu to describe the psychological condition of Japanese in the postwar period, Dower writes, “Originally…[kyodatsu] had been a clinical term used to describe physical or emotional prostration in individual patients. Only after the surrender did it gain wide usage as a way of characterizing the ‘distracted’ and ‘dejected’ condition of the people as a whole. It was widely believed…that this despondency posed the greatest of all possible dangers to the country….”
and military power between the U.S. and Korea enabled the United States to adopt an indifferent posture toward Korea prior to 1905, and resulted in feelings of betrayal and resentment among Koreans, who had expected Americans to protect and ensure their independence. Nevertheless, World War II renewed American interest in Korea as the U.S. sought to contain the spread of communism in Asia by establishing a presence within the former Japanese colony. Again, however, the United States ignored the Korean populace, which favored self-governance and independence, and imposed its own agenda by splitting Korea with the Soviet Union and establishing a joint trusteeship there. From its inception, the United States’ relationship with Korea was defined by its inequity of power, demonstrated by Washington’s egoism and severe lack of concern for Korean self-determination.

Following World War II, the United States’ hegemony over a defeated Japan and vulnerable Korea allowed it to carry out its political agenda in each country with minimal resistance. It is within this historical context that the next chapters will examine the United States’ postwar occupation of Japan and Korea through the concurrent emergence of military prostitution catering to American servicemen in order to lay the groundwork for the subsequent analysis of U.S. Cold War foreign policy in Asia relied upon the sexual labor of Japanese and Korean women.
CHAPTER THREE

THE U.S. MILITARY AND PROSTITUTION THROUGH WORLD WAR II

Before undertaking an investigation of U.S. military prostitution in the postwar occupations of Japan and Korea, it is necessary at this time to provide some background information on the official military policies that regulated American soldiers’ solicitation and use of prostitutes, as well as the unofficial practices used by U.S. military commanders to manage their troops’ patronage of prostitutes at home and abroad during World War II. Although the tendency of official U.S. military policy was to prohibit American women’s sale of sexual services to soldiers within the United States, in overseas locations, unauthorized systems and procedures evolved within deployed military units that facilitated U.S. soldiers’ access to local prostitution; these processes became embedded in the daily routines of U.S. overseas encampments as the war progressed, and shaped American soldiers’ expectation that local women’s sexual labor would be made available to them. Importantly, both the U.S. military’s official prostitution policies and the informal procedures of commanders in the field would substantially influence the ways in which postwar American military officers at all levels responded to and managed soldiers’ access to and use of Japanese and Korean prostitutes during the occupations.

The inconsistent and sometimes contradictory efforts of the United States defense establishment in managing American soldiers’ use of prostitutes at home and overseas during World War II are reflective of the competing demands confronting military commanders on the ground and officials at home. Specifically, military officers and War
Department leaders struggled to balance soldiers’ supposedly masculine need for sexual satisfaction—and their subsequent solicitation of prostitutes—with the necessity of maintaining a positive public image of servicemen as healthy and morally sound. The problem was complicated further by the negative impact of widespread VD on troops’ effectiveness in the field, as well as U.S. military and government leaders’ qualms over white soldiers’ intimate relationships with non-white women in foreign countries. As various authorities attempted to deal with each of these issues, a patchwork of official and unofficial policies, regulations, and procedures regarding soldiers’ use of prostitutes developed within the United States and in overseas locations where American troops were deployed.

Since the Civil War era, and the infamous emergence of General Joe Hooker’s “girls,” social reformers, health professionals, military officials, and others had expressed concern regarding the moral and physical consequences of U.S. soldiers’ patronage of prostitutes. Their anxiety over this issue intensified during World War I, as the U.S. government sought to keep its soldiers “fit to fight” by preventing their exposure to the medical and moral threat of prostitution by convincing the troops that sexual restraint was a “virtue comparable to patriotism.” Progressive era reforms and military requirements

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2 Ibid., 90; Höhn and Moon, “Introduction,” 22. Tanaka asserts that VD reamined “quite a serious problem among the U.S. forces stationed in Africa, the Middle East, and India” throughout World War II.


thus merged into what became known as the “American Plan,” a program through which social activists and the military established recreational facilities for soldiers’ use, increased police enforcement of prostitution laws, and treated servicemen’s venereal infections.\(^5\) The efforts of World War I officials and reformers to reinforce gender norms that viewed female sexuality as disruptive—and specifically blamed prostitutes for male soldiers’ physical and moral deterioration—extensively informed the attitudes and initiatives of their World War II counterparts.\(^6\) Interestingly, Hegarty asserts that these earlier views were modified to some extent during World War II to pragmatically account for white servicemen’s naturalized sexual impulses, leading to subsequent efforts to provide preventative and prophylactic treatment to these men; however, the sexuality of women and nonwhite servicemen continued to be perceived as abnormal and destructive to social order.\(^7\)

Traditionally, the regulation of all forms of prostitution in the United States was handled at the state level; however, in 1940, the military medical services, the Public Health Service, and the American Hygiene Association took an initial step toward regulating prostitution on a national basis with the development of the Eight-Point Agreement.\(^8\) Essentially, the agreement called for effective police enforcement of prostitution laws, medical care for servicemembers and civilians diagnosed with VD, and


\(^7\) Ibid., 43-44.

\(^8\) Kovner, *Occupying Power*, 20.
“contact tracing” of the sexual partners of infected servicemen by military medical officers and local public health officials. Military authorities made little effort to enforce the provisions of the Eight Point Agreement; as a result, in 1941, Congress passed the “May Act,” which allowed the Secretary of War to prohibit prostitution in areas “within such reasonable distance” of military posts when it was determined to be “needful to the efficiency, health, and welfare” of the Army and Navy. Domestically, the May Act was intended to serve multiple purposes. First, it placed responsibility for the negative outcomes associated with soldiers’ use of prostitutes—namely, high rates of VD and the appearance of immoral conduct—solely on prostitutes by prohibiting their sale of sex in certain areas near military posts; it did not mention or prohibit by law servicemembers’ purchase of sexual services in those same areas. Thus, the May Act protected the public’s perception of soldiers as morally respectable while attempting to combat high rates of VD among U.S. servicemen by exclusively punishing women, and thus linking the “prostitution problems” such as VD and immorality solely with women sex workers. By essentially blaming prostitutes for infecting the nation’s military men with VD, the May Act further allowed the military to reinforce traditional categorizations of women as “respectable” or “disreputable” based on their social and (perceived) sexual relationships with men, and whether those relationships supported, or hindered, the war

9 Hegarty, Victory Girls, Khaki-Wackies, and Patriotutes, 165-166.

10 The May Act of 1941, Public Law 163, 77th Cong., 1st sess. (July 11, 1941).


12 Yuki, “Japanese Feminism and Commercialized Sex,” 36.
effort. Yet the May Act was invoked infrequently and largely unsuccessful in reducing VD rates among troops at home. Nevertheless, the War Department, mindful of the need to maintain a positive image of American soldiers among the U.S. population in support of the war effort, rhetorically adopted this strict stance against American women’s sale of sex to military personnel, exemplified in the May Act, from the war’s outset and maintained this attitude throughout World War II.

Despite the War Department’s official position against U.S. soldiers’ use of prostitutes, enforcing a universal policy prohibiting prostitute use among troops scattered in remote locations throughout the world, including those near war fronts, proved impossible. Furthermore, such a policy contradicted the hegemonically masculine expectation among male military and defense officials that soldiers, stationed far from home in foreign, potentially hostile environments, would require and seek out ways to fulfill their sexual needs. The disparity between official policy regarding soldiers’ use of prostitutes at home and abroad is most apparent in the War Department’s mass distribution of condoms and chemical disinfectants to its overseas forces, as well as instruction provided to deployed soldiers on the appropriate application of chemical disinfectants.

13 Hegarty, *Victory Girls, Khaki-Wackies, and Patriottes*, 87. In her discussion of the May Act, Hegarty notes that many women were arrested as prostitutes simply for acting or appearing to be promiscuous, despite lack of evidence that they had been involved sexually with a servicemember.

14 Ibid., 37-39; Tanaka, *Japan’s Comfort Women*, 91. Tanaka notes that the May Act was invoked at Fort Bragg in North Carolina and Camp Forrest in Tennessee, but suggests that the complicity of some commanders at U.S. military posts in frequenting local brothels and even organizing prostitution prevented widespread domestic invocation of the May Act’s provisions.

15 Ibid., 87, 91. Tanaka writes that “…senior staff of the War Department were clearly aware that it would be quite difficult to suppress the sexual desire of soldiers stationed in overseas theaters of war....”
prophylaxis after intercourse and the establishment of “prophylaxis stations” in red-light
districts frequented by U.S. soldiers in foreign countries.\textsuperscript{16} Such dissemination of
prophylactic and chemical materials to soldiers stationed within the United States never
occurred.\textsuperscript{17} As historian Yuki Tanaka suggests, “…the War Department formally
maintained an ‘official policy’ not to allow its troops to use prostitutes regardless of their
location, while in reality it took pragmatic measures to prevent VD among the forces
stationed outside the U.S. by providing individual ‘prophylactic kits’ as well as setting up
‘prophylactic stations.’”\textsuperscript{18} Implicit in this action is tacit official approval of deployed
servicemen’s use of prostitutes as long as each servicemember took the necessary
precautions to protect himself against VD. Moreover, it is evident that the War
Department’s primary objective in regulating the sexual activities of overseas troops was
to prevent VD, which could seriously impact soldiers’ ability to fight, rather than to
prohibit their use of prostitutes.

Because of the variable and unfamiliar environments U.S. soldiers inhabited when
deployed abroad, commanders in foreign locations developed multiple methods of

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 89-91. According to Tanaka, condoms and chemical units were ultimately provided to
overseas troops for free after VD rates remained high when condoms and disinfectants were sold at cost. In
1942, 14,700 condoms and 14,700 chemical units were transported by air to fourteen troop locations in
South America, Africa, and India. In addition, within one week in 1942, 465,000 condoms and 315,000
chemical units were shipped from the port of New York to unspecified destinations. Based on Tanaka’s
estimates from official documents, the “allocation of prophylactics would consume a staggering $34
million of the military budget each year,” beginning in 1943.

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 91. Tanaka suggests this is partially due to the assumption that soldiers in the United
States could easily access and purchase prophylactics on their own, though a correlated assumption was
that those soldiers would use such items with girlfriends or wives rather than prostitutes.

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid. Chemical prophylactic treatment to prevent infection required injecting a disinfectant into
the urethra and holding it for five minutes before urinating it out.
managing troops’ patronage of sex workers and reducing VD while government officials at home acquiesced to, and hid from public knowledge, the commanders’ decisions. Many of these measures are documented in a 1943 report written by Major William Brumfield, who conducted field investigations in Central Africa, the Middle East, and India.\(^\text{19}\) According to Tanaka’s review of Brumfield’s report, many unit commanders in these areas took responsibility for either directly or indirectly controlling local prostitution for U.S. soldiers.\(^\text{20}\) Among the units that Brumfield studied, two arrangements for organizing prostitution were predominant: in some cases, U.S. soldiers were ordered to use only selected brothels from those already in existence within the vicinity of their camp; in other instances, private owners built brothels near U.S. military posts specifically for soldiers’ use.\(^\text{21}\) Under both arrangements, however, American medical officers conducted VD examinations of the women in brothels identified for U.S. soldiers’ use and facilitated prophylactic treatment for soldiers who patronized the brothels.\(^\text{22}\) In spite of commanding officers’ efforts to regulate soldiers’ use of prostitutes and to suppress VD through medical exams of prostitutes and easily accessible prophylaxis treatment, Brumfield’s report indicates VD rates remained high among

\(^{19}\) Ibid., 92. Although Brumfield’s report is limited to these geographic areas, U.S. troops in the Caribbean, Latin America, and South America used similar methods to regulate prostitution for American soldiers. See Tanaka, *Japan’s Comfort Women*, 99-105.

\(^{20}\) Ibid.

\(^{21}\) Ibid.

\(^{22}\) Ibid.
troops in the areas he studied.\textsuperscript{23} In the conclusion of his report, Brumfield suggested that current regulations be revised to officially authorize commanders in the field to initiate measures to control VD as they deemed necessary based on local conditions, regardless of whether those measures were considered appropriate in the United States.\textsuperscript{24}

Essentially, Brumfield asserted that official policy be rewritten to align with the unofficial practices already in use throughout foreign locations where U.S. troops were deployed. Notably, Brumfield’s suggestion relies heavily on language relating to VD and the troops’ health but avoids mentioning measures related to the regulation of prostitutes or prostitution; the exclusion of “prostitute” or “prostitution” here indicates the extent to which the U.S. government opposed official involvement in the regulation of prostitution for American soldiers, and used ambiguous language to conceal its prostitution policies within medical policy and VD terminology. However, there is no indication that U.S. defense leaders or policymakers acted on Brumfield’s recommendations, but rather chose to continue providing prophylactics while upholding the formal policy against soldiers’ use of prostitutes despite their knowledge of officers’ blatant disregard for this policy in the field.

Such hesitance to break from traditional policy condemning prostitution, as well as official denial of soldiers’ widespread patronage of prostitutes, were common reactions among many senior U.S. government leaders, who sought to ensure that national policy

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\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 97. According to Brumfield’s report, the VD rate for U.S. troops stationed in Cairo in 1942 was 87.92 per thousand per annum; 104.96 per thousand per annum for U.S. troops in the Persian Gulf Service Command; and 218.4 per thousand per annum for U.S. troops in the U.S. Services of Supply in Karachi.

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 98.
regarding military prostitution reflected American social mores and preserved the public’s support for the administration’s foreign policy and the positive perception of U.S. military personnel. However, Tanaka indicates that religiously devout soldiers who bore witness to their comrades’ actions overseas—and subsequently wrote letters of complaint to clergy and members of Congress—presented a significant challenge to the War Department’s façade. Consequently, the War Department attempted to conceal such accounts of deployed soldiers’ use of prostitutes from becoming public, and minimized official awareness of the situation when questioned by members of Congress and military chaplains. In addressing accusations suggesting that it condoned soldiers’ use of prostitutes, the War Department often dismissed the charges by citing reports from commanders in the field refuting that such conditions existed; in one instance, the War Department claimed that “through some error [emphasis in original]” prostitution became easily accessible to troops in an overseas location, and that steps had been taken to close the brothel in question. According to Tanaka,

…the War Department maintained a dual policy in responding to various allegations…On the one hand, official policy promoted a ban of any form of organized prostitution controlled by U.S. forces. On the other hand, such activities were not only massively condoned but institutionally supported, above all through the mass provision of prophylactics for overseas troops, but also through a practice of cover-up to shield against complaints.

In realizing that it likely could not prevent soldiers stationed abroad from seeking out women—including prostitutes—to fulfill their sexual needs, yet also needing to comply

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26 Ibid., 107.
27 Ibid., 107-108.
with traditional American sexual mores that condemned prostitution, the War Department chose to give the public impression that it prohibited any type of militarized prostitution for U.S. troops by allowing largely out-of-sight commanders in the field to regulate localized prostitution for their soldiers. In doing so, defense officials were able to maintain the idealized popular perception of the physically fit, morally sound American soldier while also enabling those soldiers to fulfill their “manly” need for sexual gratification; moreover, the U.S. could bolster its national reputation by asserting that official policy forbade the exploitation of women through organized military prostitution, even if reality did not align with policy.

Throughout World War II, the military maintained this dual approach of upholding prostitution legislation and condemning American women’s sale of sexual services to soldiers within the United States while unofficially allowing U.S. commanders in charge of units deployed overseas to develop their own policies and procedures to manage their troops’ use of prostitutes. This dichotomy was the result of the military’s efforts to balance its need to present a positive public image of its forces as morally upstanding, with the belief that its soldiers “naturally” required and would seek out sexual access to women, including prostitutes. As World War II came to a close in August 1945 and the United States prepared to occupy Japan and Korea, this dual policy would inform U.S. military officials’ response to the widespread availability of Japanese and Korean sex workers to American soldiers, as well as the military’s efforts to effectively regulate the troops’ solicitation and patronage of prostitutes within each country while minimizing the visibility of their actions to the American public.
CHAPTER FOUR

U.S. MILITARY PROSTITUTION IN OCCUPIED JAPAN, 1945-1946

This chapter will trace the history and evolution of prostitution servicing the U.S. military in post-World War II occupied Japan and will place it within the context of the United States’ foreign policy objectives for rebuilding Japan as a democratic, capitalist state under the leadership of SCAP. Although Japanese women sold their sexual labor to American soldiers throughout the period of occupation—and some continue to do so today—this chapter focuses on the unique period immediately following Japan’s surrender in August 1945 through the spring of 1946, during which time Japanese authorities organized prostitution services specifically for American forces with tacit approval from U.S. occupation authorities. It will highlight the involvement of American military and government officials in influencing the construction and regulation of prostitution for U.S. soldiers, as well as the adaptation and ultimate disbandment of organized military prostitution to meet SCAP’s political and social reform agenda.

Beginning with an overview of Japan’s history of licensed sex work and militarized prostitution for its own soldiers, the chapter will then examine how these methods were merged with those of the American occupiers and supplemented with new

1 Although the Occupation of Japan also involved military forces from Australia, Canada, Great Britain, India, and New Zealand—referred to as a whole as the British Commonwealth Occupation Force (BCOF)—these troops did not arrive in Japan until February 1946 and never amounted to more than 25% of the total U.S. forces in Japan. Thus, while acknowledging the role of the BCOF in the Occupation and in patronizing Japanese sex workers, this chapter focuses on the predominant role of the United States in overseeing the Occupation and shaping policies related to military prostitution for its forces.
procedures that enabled Japanese and U.S. authorities to establish and administer prostitution for American servicemen during the first year of the Occupation. In doing so, this chapter seeks to demonstrate the ways in which the similar gendered assumptions of Japanese and American military and government leaders blended with their postwar objectives and attitudes, culminating in the manifestation of widespread prostitution servicing U.S. troops and reflected in both countries’ efforts to control Japanese women through official policies and informal processes.

**Organized Prostitution in Japan’s History**

Japan’s first “pleasure district,” a government-regulated quarter where prostitutes were confined and allowed to sell their services, was established in Kyoto in 1589. Under the subsequent authority of the Tokugawa Shogunate, the creation of additional licensed prostitution quarters—most notably the Yoshiwara in present-day Tokyo—continued throughout the early seventeenth century. Although some licensed sex workers obtained “elite” status and achieved notoriety among contemporary Japanese, most women who sold their sexual labor were part of a substantial yet inconspicuous population that defied exclusive classifications and encompassed a variety of professions, including waitresses, bath attendants, maids, and geishas. Thus, despite the creation of

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4 Ibid., 11. Kovner emphasizes that the main role of geisha was not to provide sexual services, although in some instances they did; instead, geisha were trained in conversation, poetry, singing, and dancing.
licensed quarters for legalized prostitution, sex work took many forms and occurred in various locations throughout Tokugawa-era Japan.

By the late 1800s, the Meiji leaders’ desire to emulate the West, influenced also in part by increasingly popular social reform movements that sought to prohibit prostitution, resulted in government efforts to reorganize Japan’s licensed prostitution system. In seeking to replicate European models across all areas of society, the Meiji officials adopted a multitude of Western regulations regarding sex work, including mandatory medical examinations of prostitutes; however, in Japan as in Europe, these invasive and humiliating exams were largely ineffective in identifying or preventing the spread of venereal disease (VD), and primarily contributed to the public association of disease and uncleanliness with prostitution. The profound sensitivity of the Meiji leadership to Western perceptions of Japan, and its subsequent impact on the lives of Japanese sex workers, was further demonstrated in the aftermath of the Maria Luz incident of 1872. In this case, several indentured Chinese laborers aboard a Peruvian ship, Maria Luz, at the Japanese port of Yokohama escaped and swam to a nearby British vessel, claiming maltreatment and demanding to be freed from their contracts. When a Japanese court declared the laborers free after hearing their case, the Peruvian ship captain challenged the decision by comparing the trade and treatment of indentured laborers to that of

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Fujime Yuki, “The Licensed Prostitution System and the Prostitution Abolition Movement in Modern Japan,” Positions 5, no. 1 (Spring 1997): 136. Although the term “sexually transmitted infection” (STI) has widely replaced the terms “sexually transmitted disease” (STD) and “venereal disease” (VD) in contemporary usage, this thesis will use “venereal disease” or “VD” when describing infections primarily spread through sexual behavior, as it was the term used—officially and informally—during the period of study.
prostitutes in Japan’s licensed quarters.⁶ Embarrassed, the Japanese cabinet quickly liberated indentured prostitutes in the pleasure districts.⁷ Shortly thereafter, the Ministry of Justice incongruously reasoned that because farm animals could not be expected to repay debts to creditors, neither could geishas or licensed prostitutes.⁸ Although this decree enabled prostitutes to escape their indenture contracts if desired, it did not ban prostitution, and the use of such contracts was ultimately reinstated in 1875.⁹

As Japanese overseas commerce expanded in the late 1800s and early 1900s, sex workers played a central role in these developing transnational markets. Prostitutes known as karayukisan—“Japanese prostitutes who went abroad”—were mainly young rural women recruited by “sexual entrepreneurs” and sent to work in foreign locations throughout Asia where Japan recognized trade and diplomatic interests.¹⁰ According to sociologist John Lie, “The export of karayukisan often preceded Japanese trade abroad and Japanese prostitutes earned critical foreign exchange in the early period of Japanese industrialization.”¹¹ Despite being of such vital economic importance, karayukisan were an embarrassment to the image-conscious Meiji leadership, which in 1899 began

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⁷ Ibid., 97.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., 98.

¹⁰ Lie, “The State as Pimp,” 253. Although karayukisan were sent abroad to perform sexual labor, their client base consisted of both Japanese and local nationals.

¹¹ Ibid., 253. Karayukisan, who were largely recruited from families in poor agricultural villages, sometimes sent money home to their families. In addition, the entrepreneurs that recruited them profited from their sexual labor in foreign locations, and sometimes opened their own brothels abroad.
requesting that its consuls encourage these women to return home. In collaboration with local authorities, and at the behest of other colonial powers who declared that Japanese sex workers were not welcome in their territories, some Japanese consuls abolished prostitution houses employing karayukisan and sent many women back to Japan.  

In contrast to its apologetic stance regarding karayukisan, the Japanese government extended the system of licensed prostitution within its own colonies. Beginning with its introduction in Taiwan in 1895, licensed prostitution was administered in Korea by 1916 and continued to follow Japan’s imperial expansion across Southeast and East Asia throughout the 1920s and 1930s. At the same time, Japan’s rapid domestic industrialization created modern, urbanized metropolises in which changing notions of sexuality and femininity became intertwined with the new “café culture,” an eroticized atmosphere centered on cafés and café waitresses. While it was not mandatory that these women sell their sexual labor, many of them likely chose to do so. By 1936, estimates suggest there were twice as many registered café waitresses nationwide as licensed sex workers. These young women, operating outside the

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12 Vassilios Bill Mihalopulos, “Finding Work Through Sex: Transforming pre-war Japanese female migrant labourers into prostitutes, 1870-1930” (Ph.D. Diss, New York University, 2001), 329. British colonial authorities in Singapore were among the most vocal opponents of the karayukisan trade.

13 Kovner, Occupying Power, 13.

14 Ibid., 13-14.

15 Kovner, “Base Cultures,” 780.


17 Kovner, “Base Cultures,” 780.
licensed prostitution system and thus illegally engaging in sex work, became a target of both licensed prostitutes, who viewed them as competition, and Japanese proponents of abolishing prostitution, who perceived the waitresses’ behavior as subverting traditional Japanese mores.\(^\text{18}\)

Yet the same factors underlying the creation of karayukisan and café waitresses—namely, Japan’s aggressive imperialism, industrialization, and modernization—also led Japan to commit one of the most egregious and far-reaching human rights violations against women in modern history. With the intensification of Japan’s war effort in China in the 1930s, the Japanese military organized divisions of “comfort women” (ianfu) to service the sexual needs of its military officers and enlisted soldiers stationed abroad.\(^\text{19}\) Although official records documenting the creation of the “comfort divisions” (iantai) are scarce, it is believed that the first “comfort station”—the name applied to the various accommodations where comfort women lived and provided their sexual labor—was established by Japan’s navy as early as 1932 in response to the expected influx of Japanese soldiers following the Manchurian Incident.\(^\text{20}\) However, Japan’s comfort women system did not expand significantly until after the Nanjing Massacre in 1937.


\(^\text{20}\) Ibid., 253; Yoshimi Yoshiaki, *Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery in the Japanese Military During World War II* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 43. It is believed that the first comfort station was established in Shanghai as Japanese military units were dispatched there in significant numbers following the First Shanghai Incident. Yoshiaki suggests that the initial comfort stations were large enough to occupy several buildings.
Facing international condemnation for its soldiers’ brutal treatment of Chinese civilians in Nanjing, and concerned with maintaining order among the troops within occupied China, Japanese military leaders determined that the provision of easily accessible women “comforters” for deployed soldiers would channel the men’s sexual energy and masculine aggression into a controllable outlet. Thus, the Japanese military used coercion and deception to compel as many as 200,000 women from its colonized and occupied territories, including Korean, Chinese, Taiwanese, Filipina, Australian, and Dutch women, to sexually service Japanese troops in overseas locations. Forced to accompany the military units to which they were assigned, comfort women endured appalling conditions and were raped repeatedly on a daily basis as Japanese soldiers waited in line at the comfort stations to receive the women’s “services.” The Japanese military’s use of the comfort women system continued throughout World War II; at the war’s conclusion, many of the surviving comfort women were killed, while others were abandoned across various fronts in Asia and the Pacific, suffering significant psychological and physical health problems resulting from the horrific treatment they experienced.

21 Yoshiaki, *Comfort Women*, 49-51. It is worthwhile to note that Japanese military leaders also sought to control the spread of VD through the use of comfort women, who received periodic medical examinations from military doctors.

22 Yoshiaki, *Comfort Women*, 93. Estimates of the number of comfort women vary greatly; the greatest proportion of comfort women were Korean. Japanese prostitutes were also recruited, but were reportedly reserved for officers’ use, paid two to three times more, and given better treatment than their non-Japanese counterparts, according to Lie, “The State as Pimp,” 255.

23 Lie, “The State as Pimp,” 255.

24 Ibid., 255.
It is important here to distinguish between the methods used by the United States in managing prostitution for its military and those used by Japan. In contrast to the United States, where laws regarding prostitution were handled at the state or municipal level and the sale of sex was generally illegal, Japan had practiced licensed prostitution since the sixteenth century and established government policies for regulating professional sex work and licensed women, primarily through contracts and required medical examinations. The creation of the comfort women was, in many ways, an extension of Japan’s expansive bureaucracy and existing system of licensed prostitution to its colonies and occupied territory throughout Asia, where “inferior,” colonized women were used to service Japanese soldiers’ needs, and thus advance the war effort by boosting troop morale.25 The situation in the United States differed drastically in that no historical precedent or contemporary official government support existed for state-organized prostitution; in fact, the trend was for policy to prohibit prostitution altogether, even when reality diverged from that official position.26 However, both the United States and Japanese officials shared a strong desire to limit the spread of VD among their soldiers—and saw prostitutes as the primary point of infection—in order to preserve their militaries’ physical readiness. Thus, with the United States preparing to deploy thousands of soldiers to support the Allied Occupation of Japan, two different philosophies regarding the official administration of prostitution and various models for accommodating the sexual needs of military personnel converged.

25 Ibid., 254-255.

26 Kovner, Occupying Power, 21.


Prostitution and American Foreign Policy in Occupied Japan, 1945-1946

Given the particularly brutal nature of the battles that occurred between Japanese and American forces during World War II, the imminent U.S.-led occupation created widespread anxiety and fear among the Japanese population. Surviving Japanese, especially those living in cities and port towns where U.S. troops were expected to arrive, were terrified of the potential for “mass rape” of the nation’s women and girls by the foreign soldiers; many fled their homes for remote rural areas, while some neighborhoods preemptively formed “vigilance corps” of adult men to protect local women.\(^{27}\) Japan’s government—possibly remembering the atrocities its own soldiers committed against women in defeated and colonized territories—also was deeply concerned with protecting Japanese women against sexual violence, and began to discuss ways of managing the incoming troops’ sexual needs shortly after the surrender.\(^{28}\) The Japanese government’s solution reflected its historical experience in organizing women to provide sexual gratification for the military: on August 18, 1945, the Police and Security Department of the Ministry of Home Affairs telegraphed governors and police chiefs in all prefectures outlining instructions for the establishment of “comfort facilities” for foreign soldiers.\(^ {29}\)

\(^{27}\) Tanaka, Japan’s Comfort Women, 112-113. The terror among Japanese civilians was due, in part, to wartime propaganda that depicted the foreign troops as murderous, rapacious barbarians.

\(^{28}\) Lie, “The State as Pimp,” 256.

\(^{29}\) Kovner, Occupying Power, 22. Although many “comfort facilities” were designed specifically to sell sexual services to American soldiers, it is important to note that this term also described establishments that did not sell sexual services but catered specifically to American soldiers other “needs,” such as beer gardens, dance halls, bars, and restaurants. Dower provides additional historical context to the Japanese government’s decision to create special comfort facilities for the American troops, noting that “special pleasure quarters had been set up for foreigners immediately after Commodore Perry forced the country to abolish its policy of seclusion….” See Dower, Embracing Defeat, 126.
Notably, the message urged that such preparations be done quietly so as not to arouse public unrest, and stated that “…this scheme will be implemented for the purpose of protecting Japanese women;” it further stipulated that women to staff the facilities should be recruited from among the geisha, licensed and unlicensed prostitutes, waitresses, barmaids, and streetwalkers.\footnote{Tanaka, Japan’s Comfort Women, 134.} According to Michael Molasky,\footnote{Michael Molasky, The American Occupation of Japan and Okinawa: Literature and Memory (New York: Routledge, 1999), 111.}

This list of preferred candidates…accords with the Japanese government’s declared goal of building a ‘female floodwall’ in order to “preserve the pure blood of one hundred million.” Stated more bluntly, their policy aimed to sacrifice the “unchaste” female population (most of whom were assumed to be from the lower classes) in order to protect the “girls of good homes” from the hordes of rapacious foreign soldiers expected to occupy the nation.\footnote{Ibid., 142. According to Dower, the Japanese government’s role consisted primarily of formally endorsing the comfort facilities project and providing loans and police support. This was due in part to the influence of General Kawabe Torashiro, an officer who had met with MacArthur to arrange Japan’s surrender, who returned to Tokyo and urged the government not to become directly involved in managing the comfort facilities, possibly to avoid offending the Americans.}

Thus, the Japanese government plainly implied that some women—specifically sex workers and other supposedly prurient women, particularly those from the lower classes—were less worthy of protection and would be readily sacrificed to defend the nation’s “virtuous” women.

In Tokyo, the task of creating comfort facilities was assigned to the Metropolitan Association of the Restaurant and Bar Industry, which officially established the Special Comfort Facilities Association on August 23, 1945; shortly thereafter, it was renamed the Recreation and Amusement Association (RAA).\footnote{Ibid., 142.} The Ministry of Finance initially
offered to provide 100 million yen for the organization, although 30 million yen sufficed for the RAA to begin its operations.\textsuperscript{33} On August 28, RAA executives and women who had been recruited to staff the first comfort facilities attended an inauguration ceremony at the imperial palace, where the women were praised for their “spirit of self-sacrifice” and the executives proclaimed, “we hope to promote mutual understanding between [the Allied occupation forces] and our people, and to contribute to the smooth development of people’s diplomacy and abet the construction of a peaceful world.”\textsuperscript{34} Here, the intention of the RAA executives and the Japanese government to use prostituted women’s sexual labor to facilitate Japan’s political relationship with the United States is apparent. However, the state was unable to recruit enough women by relying solely on former prostitutes and geisha and began to use deceptive advertising to draw young women, particularly those who had been impoverished by the war, into prostitution for the occupation soldiers.\textsuperscript{35} Many RAA advertisements in newspapers and on billboards offered free clothes, food, shelter, and wages for “special women employees” to “comfort

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\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 143. Dower, \textit{Embracing Defeat}, 126. Dower notes that future prime minister Ikeda Hayato, then Director of the Tax Bureau, stated that “a hundred million yen is cheap for protecting chastity.”

\textsuperscript{34} Molasky, \textit{The American Occupation of Japan and Okinawa}, 109; Dower, \textit{Embracing Defeat}, 128. Scholars note that Japanese police and labor brokers were primarily responsible for recruiting women to work in the comfort facilities; while appeals to the women’s patriotism were sometimes used, the recruiters relied heavily on promises of daily food provisions to secure the women’s labor, as Japan experienced severe food shortages in the immediate aftermath of the war.

\textsuperscript{35} According to the 1947 United States Strategic Bombing Survey, two of Tokyo’s most well-known red-light districts, Yoshiwara and Tamanoi, were destroyed by firebombing during the war. In 1945, only 50 out of 3,000 sex workers remained in Yoshiwara. See Kovner, “Base Cultures,” 789.
the occupation forces.”36 One typical advertisement declared, “We seek pioneers from the new women of Japan to help establish and participate in a major undertaking related to the well-being of the occupation troops. Our organization has been established to resolve matters of national urgency presented by the postwar situation. Wanted: Female office workers. Ages 18-25. Room, board, clothing, and other amenities provided.”37 Thus, from its inception, the Japanese government-sponsored RAA—reminiscent of Japan’s wartime comfort women system in Asia—deceivingly used nationalistic language to attract young women left destitute by the war’s devastation, and systematically exploited their sexual labor for the American occupation forces in order to “protect” other Japanese women and facilitate its political relationship with the United States.

Despite the RAA’s issues with recruiting enough women, it had little difficulty purchasing properties to convert into comfort stations given the physical devastation wrought by regular bombings during the war, and with the aid of former brothel owners it quickly renovated a variety of buildings, including warehouses, restaurants, and factory workers’ dormitories, into RAA facilities.38 An establishment called Komachien was reportedly the first RAA comfort station to open, notably, on August 28—the same day as the RAA’s inauguration ceremony, as well as the arrival of two hundred technical experts from the United States Army sent to prepare for General MacArthur’s landing


two days later. Indeed, some members of MacArthur’s advance party reportedly visited Komachien that same day.

According to Michael Schaller’s history of the Occupation, the combination of MacArthur’s “imposing personality” and Washington’s diminished interest in Japan after the war allowed MacArthur to exercise substantial independence in making decisions and guiding policy, particularly in the first eighteen months of the Occupation. Schaller describes MacArthur’s daily routine as “invariable,” noting that he was driven from the American Embassy in Tokyo to SCAP Headquarters each day and only entertained guests at lunch, though he rarely socialized with Japanese officials and saw little of Japan beyond his regular commute. Among SCAP’s first decisions in Japan was to govern the country indirectly by utilizing the existing Japanese government, rather than directly governing through a military administration as in postwar Germany; to facilitate this method of management and execution of SCAP’s policies, MacArthur created a dozen special staff sections paralleling Japan’s cabinet structure. Communication between


40 Tanaka, *Japan’s Comfort Women*, 147. Tanaka notes that on August 30, the day that U.S. occupation forces arrived, Komachien remained the only open RAA comfort facility in Tokyo. It was subsequently flooded with American soldiers, and the 38 women working there were required to service all customers. Tanaka reports that the number of men these women serviced each day typically ranged from 15 to 60.

41 Ibid., 22-23.

42 Ibid., 23. The circumscribed nature of MacArthur’s existence in Japan suggests a lack of interest in the Japanese people, and a single-minded focus on carrying out the business of reconstructing Japan as he planned with minimal input from the Japanese.

43 Ibid., 27-28.
SCAP and the Japanese government occurred through the Central Liaison Office, though Schaller writes that MacArthur often preferred to rely on loyal subordinates and old acquaintances he recruited for high-level SCAP positions instead of the technical experts and specialists in the staff sections. Consequentially, SCAP’s operation provided the Japanese government significant flexibility in how its officials managed their American overseers, and enabled Japanese leaders to interpret and implement SCAP reforms without intense scrutiny.

The initial response of U.S. Occupation officials to the RAA reflected the inchoate nature in which the U.S. military regulated prostitution for its overseas troops during World War II, as well as the military’s emphasis on preventing VD rather than prohibiting its troops’ use of prostitutes. Despite existing military regulations against the encouragement or fostering of prostitution, in late August 1945 a Special Services officer of the Eighth Army, Colonel Wilson, reportedly gave permission to the RAA to operate under the supervision of U.S. Military Police. SCAP, however, did not immediately issue any official orders regarding soldiers’ purchase of sexual services or prostitution, despite commanders’ persistent requests for a clear directive banning fraternization between servicemen and Japanese women. Official jurisdiction over prostitution and VD issues came under both the U.S. Far East Command, which was broadly responsible

44 Ibid., 28.
45 Ibid.
47 Kovner, Occupying Power, 29.
for all servicemen in East Asia, and the Public Health and Welfare (PHW) section of SCAP, led by Dr. Crawford Sams, a “career military surgeon,” and consisting of civilian officials in charge of the Japanese population’s physical health. These authoritative offices diverged in their approaches to prostitution and VD; while the Far East Command perfunctorily promoted abstinence among all U.S. military personnel, the PHW pragmatically sought to decrease soldiers’ and Japanese citizens’ VD rates by modernizing Japan’s ability to detect and treat VD across Japan’s entire population.

However, in addition to the Far East Command and PHW, the variable opinions among individual army, navy, and air force commanders regarding prostitution, as well as the processes they developed to manage their soldiers’ use of prostitutes, perhaps had the most direct influence on the daily patterns of interaction between American soldiers and Japanese sex workers, as these commanders’ orders—or lack thereof—defined how their soldiers interacted with the local population.

Prominent historians on the subject agree that American officials at all levels were aware of the widespread availability of licensed and unlicensed prostitutes, the organization of prostitution through the RAA in Tokyo, and the frequent patronage of sex workers by U.S. troops from the first day of occupation. Nevertheless, the varied responses among commanders and lack of a coherent, unified policy regarding soldiers’ use of prostitutes issued by SCAP obscures the exact extent to which American civilian and military officials were directly involved in administering Japanese prostitution for

48 Ibid., 24.
49 Ibid.
U.S. servicemen in Japan. Lie, for example, suggests that the U.S. military command’s involvement in facilitating soldiers’ access to prostitution comprised, at minimum, “informed passivity, if not outright complicity.” Tanaka boldly asserts that “…independent of the Japanese scheme, U.S. occupation forces from the beginning planned not only to tolerate organized prostitution but to regulate it in ways that would satisfy their troops,” citing American military officials’ immediate inspections of Tokyo’s red light districts and subsequent establishment of prophylactic stations in those areas as evidence.50 Kovner, however, presents a more nuanced perspective, indicating that many U.S. military commanders denounced their soldiers’ use of prostitutes and considered prostitution an “endemic problem that plagued their troops,” and found it “impossible to mount a unified or even coherent response.”51 Indeed, it is plausible that each of these assertions is accurate, given the varied, unpredictable, and uncoordinated nature of the U.S. military’s efforts to respond to and manage American soldiers’ use, and Japanese women’s sale, of sexual services. Essentially, many U.S. military leaders viewed their soldiers’ use of prostitutes and the resultant spread of VD to be serious but inevitable problems; however, military commanders and government officials believed, as they did during World War II, that prohibiting soldiers’ use of prostitutes was an implausible solution, and instead sought ways to decrease VD rates among the troops by making prophylactic treatment accessible to soldiers and regulating prostitutes, who were seen as the primary source of soldiers’ infection.

50 Lie, “The State as Pimp,” 258; Tanaka, Japan’s Comfort Women, 151.
51 Kovner, Occupying Power, 24.
Given the lack of a universal order from SCAP regarding American soldiers’ use of prostitutes, U.S. commanders and individual units initial efforts to control the spread of VD among their troops appear to have been influenced by the methods used by U.S. military officers in overseas locations during World War II. According to Tanaka, U.S. Army officers inspected Tokyo’s red-light districts and set up prophylactic stations shortly after the first contingents landed in early September 1945.\textsuperscript{52} Within a month, the First Cavalry Division had established four prophylactic stations in “major prostitution areas of Tokyo” where servicemen could also acquire free condoms; yet, by the end of September, a senior medical officer from the division reported that the stations were providing 7,000-10,000 prophylactic treatments each week and were already running short of supplies.\textsuperscript{53} The Navy, taking a more direct approach to staving off VD, reportedly installed a prophylaxis station inside a Yokosuka brothel known to service its sailors.\textsuperscript{54} According to an observer of the brothel’s operation, the navy enlisted men would “…pay the ten yen to the Japanese operator and then go with the girl to her room…When the men returned they were registered and administered prophylaxis by navy corpsmen.\textsuperscript{55} In addition, existing Japanese law required licensed prostitutes to receive examinations by government personnel each week, and compelled them to

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{52} Tanaka, \textit{Japan’s Comfort Women}, 151.
\item \textsuperscript{53} James H. Gordon, “Conference with Major Philip Weisbach, MC, CO, 15\textsuperscript{th} Med Squadron, 1\textsuperscript{st} Cavalry Division,” September 30, 1945, NDL 1374C, Reel 775024, in Kovner, \textit{Occupying Power}, 27.
\item \textsuperscript{55} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
undergo treatment at a hospital if found to be infected. Yet, in spite of this and the U.S. commanders’ efforts to ensure all troops received prophylactic treatment and condoms, VD rates steadily rose among American military personnel throughout the first two months of the Occupation, more than doubling from 26.84 per 1,000 in early September to 56.39 per 1,000 in late October 1945.

In response to the ballooning VD epidemic, and in support of its mission to protect the health of the Japanese population, PHW undertook an investigation in late September 1945 of the current procedures used by Japanese physicians to examine prostitutes and treat women diagnosed with VD. Their findings indicated that the conditions of the hospitals and the procedures used to examine women, as well as the type, availability, and use of drugs to treat infected women, were below American medical standards. Moreover, PHW officials were concerned that Japan’s system of testing and treating VD was limited to sex workers, thus reinforcing the traditional belief that prostitutes were to blame for the existence and spread of disease while neglecting to examine or treat the infected male population. As a result of PHW’s investigation—and reflecting the seriousness of the VD situation at the time—occupation authorities issued

56 Tanaka, *Japan’s Comfort Women*, 156.

57 Ibid., 155. Ratios reflect VD rates in the U.S. Eighth Army.

58 Kovner, *Occupying Power*, 25. According to Kovner, American medical officials surveying Yoshiwara Hospital found its clinical standards to be poor, and the hospital itself to be “filthy and disorderly,” with insufficient exams conducted and drugs administered only until patients were symptom-free. However, the American officials were also largely oblivious to the medicine shortages, miserable working conditions, and overwhelming caseload their Japanese counterparts faced.

59 Ibid., 26.
a Potsdam Order, which allowed them to make policy without having to consult with the
Japanese government, releasing SCAPIN-153 on October 16, 1945; this directive
required both Japanese and U.S. authorities to report all cases of VD among the Japanese
population while also expanding and intensifying standards for VD examination and
treatment.\textsuperscript{60} Lieutenant Colonel James H. Gordon, a VD control medical officer in PHW,
spearheaded the implementation of many of the reforms, ensuring that new VD
examination requirements were published and promoted, and increasing the number of
VD clinics staffed by qualified Japanese medical professionals throughout the country.\textsuperscript{61} Again, despite PHW’s efforts to improve and modernize Japan’s regulations and methods
for conducting VD examinations and treating those infected, VD rates among U.S.
soldiers continued to rise.\textsuperscript{62}

Through the end of 1945, PHW and the military command continued to use what
power they had to expand and enforce VD control regulations with the intention of
curbing the ever-growing rate of VD among both the Japanese population and U.S.
servicemen. In early November, the Eighth Army authorized the use of drugs, including
valuable penicillin, from its own reserves to be used as anti-VD medication by Japanese
health agencies under the direction of PHW.\textsuperscript{63} Subsequently, PHW issued an order to
Japanese health officers regarding the use and distribution of the penicillin that, in part,

\textsuperscript{60} Tanaka, \textit{Japan’s Comfort Women}, 156; Kovner, \textit{Occupying Power}, 26. SCAPINs were orders
issued to the Japanese government by SCAP for implementation.

\textsuperscript{61} Tanaka, \textit{Japan’s Comfort Women}, 157.

\textsuperscript{62} Ibid., 157.

\textsuperscript{63} Ibid.
stated, “…supplies will be used only in the treatment of individuals who represent a potential source of venereal disease to personnel of the occupational forces,” implying that only sex workers would be given access to penicillin. Moreover, Tanaka asserts that in December 1945, SCAP ignored instructions from Washington insisting that U.S.-produced penicillin not be used to treat Japanese or Koreans due to the shortage of penicillin in the U.S., and continued to provide penicillin as an anti-VD medication to Japanese sex workers. Such measures undertaken by SCAP and the military command to provide Japanese prostitutes with effective anti-VD medication suggests the importance these officials placed on ensuring the health of the women from whom American soldiers purchased sexual services. The varied, mounting regulations targeting the spread of VD, as well as the Eighth Army’s decision to release penicillin for the sole use of Japanese women sex workers, reveal the significance of the VD problem among U.S. forces in the early months of the Occupation, as well as the inability of PHW and military commanders to control the spread of disease or soldiers’ patronage of Japanese prostitutes. In combination with the provision of penicillin to treat women who sexually serviced U.S. forces, SCAP issued the “Complementary Regulation for the Venereal Disease Prevention Law” on November 22, mandating doctors who diagnosed VD to report the Japanese patient’s personal details—including name and occupation—to the

64 Ibid.

65 Ibid., 158.
local government, which in turn was required to order any infected person involved in sex work to be admitted to a hospital free of charge, if necessary.\footnote{Ibid.}

With the substantial amount of activity within SCAP and among U.S. military commanders devoted to minimizing the spread of VD and regulating Japanese sex workers, it is interesting to note MacArthur’s muted response through the end of 1945 to U.S. servicemen’s use of prostitutes and the VD epidemic among his troops. Several factors may have contributed to this, including MacArthur’s personal belief in the futility of prohibiting prostitution and fraternization, as well as his desire to maintain an appearance of order and control to his counterparts in Washington. However, MacArthur was likely well aware of the situation early in his command, despite his circumscribed daily routine; in fact, his first meeting with General Eichelberger, commander of the Eighth Army, following the surrender ceremony on September 2 was to discuss several reported rapes allegedly committed by U.S. Marines in Japan.\footnote{Ibid., 123.} Two weeks later, MacArthur’s headquarters summoned the head of the Tokyo Bureau of Epidemic Protection to determine areas of Tokyo that would be best for officers, white, and African American soldiers, respectively, to go to purchase sexual services.\footnote{Kovner, \textit{Occupying Power}, 26. As Kovner and other noted scholars on the subject assert, American beliefs about race influenced the regulation of military prostitution. The military’s segregation extended to soldiers’ use of prostitutes, as particular brothels and clubs catered specifically to white or African American servicemembers. This segregation of women and brothels based on the race of the soldiers they served was replicated in South Korea, as well. See Moon, \textit{Sex Among Allies}.} Although MacArthur executed his authority with as much independence as possible, and
experienced little of Japan beyond his sphere in Tokyo, it is almost certain that he was aware of American servicemembers’ solicitation of Japanese prostitutes and their commanders’ variable degree of involvement in organizing and regulating the sexual interactions of U.S. troops and Japanese sex workers.

Perhaps the most revealing evidence of MacArthur’s perspective is his reaction to repeated suggestions that he outlaw prostitution in Japan as a means of controlling American soldiers’ patronage of prostitutes and the spread of VD. As late as 1947, and again in 1950, MacArthur rejected proposals for SCAPINs that would direct the Japanese government to outlaw prostitution or solicitation, likely because he believed that such orders would be unenforceable and unsuccessful.69 MacArthur’s position was supported and likely informed by PHW, which opposed the prohibition of prostitution, and also by his close advisor, Chief of Intelligence Charles Willoughby, who asserted that such laws had “…never…stamped out or seriously approached the eradication of venereal disease.”70 In a 1967 Esquire profile of MacArthur, his aide-de-camp Faubion Bowers quoted the General, once explaining his refusal to ban Japanese prostitution, as saying, “My father told me never to give an order unless I was certain it would be carried out. I wouldn’t issue a no-fraternization order for all the tea in China.”71 Yet, as Kovner points

69 “Check Sheet,” October 6, 1950, USNA, RG 331, SCAP, Public Health and Welfare Section, Preventive Medicine Division, Folder 37, in Kovner, Occupying Power, 36.


out, “It is interesting that...MacArthur conflated a law that would have banned prostitution with an order prohibiting fraternization—as if they were the same thing—so central did sex work become in relations between the occupiers and occupied.”

Furthermore, MacArthur’s conflation of prostitution with fraternization exemplifies the extent to which American officials and military personnel associated all Japanese women—particularly those who consorted with U.S. soldiers—with prostitution, lending credence to the hegemonically masculine assumption they shared with their Japanese counterparts that women of the “conquered” nation are obliged to sexually service the “victorious” nation’s military men.

Though MacArthur’s personal beliefs affected his political decision-making as SCAP, his responsibility to fulfill the program of reform for postwar Japan set forth by Washington, as well as his aspiration to run for the presidency following his assignment in Japan, sensitized him to American public opinion of his leadership and further influenced his policy agenda. Thus, by early 1946, several concurrent events compelled MacArthur to end his initial silence on the persistent problems of prostitution and venereal disease. In postwar Japan, as in World War II, chaplains and devout soldiers in the U.S. military formed a consistently solid resistance to their counterparts’ frequent use of prostitutes. After a letter written by Navy chaplain Lawrence Lacour—in which Lacour professed “personal knowledge” of a brothel being run by the Navy for its

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72 Kovner, Occupying Power, 36.

73 Schaller, The American Occupation of Japan, 23. Describing MacArthur’s perspective of the SCAP assignment, Schaller writes, “For a general whose only remaining promotion could be election to the presidency, these circumstances seemed ideal. Much of what MacArthur did and said over the next several years had as large an American as a Japanese audience.”
servicemen—was published in the *Minneapolis Star-Journal* in November 1945, New
York Representative W. Sterling Cole demanded an investigation of the situation,
drawing national attention to the issue.⁷⁴ Subsequently, the Tokyo-Yokohama Chapter of
the Army and Navy Chaplains Association submitted recommendations to SCAP in
which they “severely condemned the widespread practice of military-controlled
prostitution in Japan,” asserting that it contradicted War Department policy and
contributed to the troops’ moral degradation.⁷⁵ Although PHW continued to oppose the
prohibition of prostitution as an effective means of combating VD, MacArthur was
nonetheless embarrassed by the Congressional uproar over Lacour’s letter and the
chaplains’ report.⁷⁶ At the same time, SCAP was in the process of drafting the new
Japanese constitution, which provided for “nominal sex equality” in accordance with
Washington’s objective of enfranchising Japanese women as part of its postwar
reforms.⁷⁷ The visibility of prostitution in Japan, between the state-sponsored
organization of prostitution for American soldiers and the vast number of women
working in the sexual service industry, seemed a direct contradiction to this goal.⁷⁸ Thus,

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⁷⁴ “Navy Control of Vice Scored: Probe Demanded of Charge of Sponsoring Jap Brothel,” *The
library.lausys.georgetown.edu/news/docview/542875744/1367DE6BA1D310EACAC/1?accountid=11091


⁷⁶ Ibid., 161.


⁷⁸ The Ministry of Labor estimated that there were 500,000 prostitutes in Japan in 1946. See Lie,
“The State as Pimp,” 258. Although it is unclear how many women the RAA employed, estimates suggest
it had as many as 70,000 women working in its facilities at its peak.
in early January 1946, SCAP advised Metropolitan Police Headquarters of plans to abolish Japan’s licensed prostitution system and recommended that existing contracts with prostitutes be annulled and abrogated.\textsuperscript{79} To give the measure added credibility among the Japanese population and to prevent the perception of unilateral decision-making by SCAP, the timing of the announcement reportedly was planned to coincide with the submission by four Japanese NGOs, including the Japan Woman’s Christian Temperance Union, of a joint petition requesting the abolition of all licensed prostitution.\textsuperscript{80} In late January 1946, SCAP formally issued SCAPIN-642, which abolished all laws licensing sex work, stating that it was “in contravention of the ideals of democracy” and “inconsistent with the development of individual freedom throughout the nation.”\textsuperscript{81} Moreover, the order abrogated all debt contracts and prohibited brothel owners from “enslaving” women.\textsuperscript{82}

Despite SCAP’s likely intentions in abolishing Japan’s centuries-old licensed prostitution system—freeing women from the sex industry, and thus reducing the number of accessible prostitutes for soldiers, as well as VD rates—this initial effort had little success in meeting any of these objectives. Although MacArthur’s order was widely reported in the United States and hailed by Americans and some Japanese as an important measure in protecting women’s rights, newspaper accounts gave U.S. citizens a false

\textsuperscript{79} Tanaka, \textit{Japan’s Comfort Women}, 161; Soh, “Military Prostitution and Women’s Sexual Labour in Japan and Korea,” 48.

\textsuperscript{80} Soh, “Military Prostitution and Women’s Sexual Labour in Japan and Korea,” 48.

\textsuperscript{81} Kovner, \textit{Occupying Power}, 30.

\textsuperscript{82} Ibid.
impression that all forms of Japanese prostitution had been made illegal. Moreover, the timing of the order, made within weeks of the Japanese Emperor Hirohito’s denial of his divinity and a SCAP order to remove Japanese militarists from public positions, all were exploited by SCAP to demonstrate its progress in “democratizing” Japan. However, MacArthur’s order, which only abolished licensed prostitution and related indenture contracts, had no impact on the many unlicensed prostitution businesses—including the RAA—or the innumerable streetwalkers selling their sexual labor to U.S. servicemen throughout Japan. Indeed, the order had minimal effect on the licensed brothels as well, as the Japanese government simply registered them under new, ambiguous classifications such as “special eating and drinking shops” with women “voluntarily” employed by proprietors. Furthermore, the persistence of widespread prostitution catering to the U.S. troops despite SCAP’s order was most apparent in the continually high VD rates among American forces throughout early 1946: by March, there were 233 cases of VD per 1,000 U.S. troops.

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83 Tanaka, Japan’s Comfort Women, 161.

84 Schaller, The American Occupation of Japan, 42; Tanaka, Japan’s Comfort Women, 161. Hirohito’s denial of his divinity is the subject of debate among historians and other scholars, as his “renunciation” of his divine status was crafted by SCAP officials and exploited as a demonstration of American progress in Japan.

85 Kovner, Occupying Power, 30. It is questionable whether SCAP officials truly believed the abolition of licensed prostitution would resolve the problems related to servicemembers’ patronage of sex workers; however, it is likely that they believed abolition would at least give the impression to the American public and to Washington that SCAP did not support widespread, government-sanctioned prostitution.


Thus, in response to the failure of the January order designed to decrease prostitution and reduce VD among U.S. servicemen, SCAP issued another measure in March 1946—shortly after public disclosure of the draft of Japan’s new constitution—which placed “off limits” all businesses associated with prostitution, including RAA facilities.\textsuperscript{88} In doing so, MacArthur sought to redirect criticism from Washington and the American public regarding servicemen’s solicitation and use of prostitutes away from SCAP and the U.S. military command and on to individual soldiers, Japanese law enforcement, and sex workers.

Rather than reducing or eliminating widespread prostitution in Japan, the abolition of the licensed prostitution system and placement of all brothels “off limits,” SCAP’s efforts merely decentralized sex work throughout the country, driving the industry “underground” by encouraging the proliferation of streetwalkers and challenging the Japanese government to reinstate the order that government regulation and administration of prostitution allowed. Hoping to retain some control over increasingly widespread and scattered prostitutes, the Japanese government devised multiple methods for regulating the entertainment industry “in a way that accommodated sex-work businesses without legally recognizing them.”\textsuperscript{89} Yet the sudden emancipation of tens of

\textsuperscript{88} Tanaka, \textit{Japan’s Comfort Women}, 162.

\textsuperscript{89} Kovner, \textit{Occupying Power}, 86. Kovner asserts that the “1947 Adult Entertainment Law, the Food Hygiene Law passed that same year, and the 1948 Venereal Disease Prevention Law, in addition to many local regulations together created an ambiguous and transitory regulatory environment.” The efforts of Japanese officials to regulate sex work in spite of abolition likely reflect the widespread feelings of embarrassment and shame among the Japanese population resulting from the visibility and pervasiveness of prostitution—previously been kept in confined, limited areas—which served as a constant reminder of the nation’s defeat.
thousands of licensed prostitutes and RAA workers in the first three months of 1946 resulted in “legions” of freelance prostitutes, known as pan-pan, selling sex on the streets and in bars in the former licensed quarters and base towns throughout Japan; most notably, the scattered nature of prostitution following abolition made the enforcement of VD regulations significantly more challenging. However, U.S. occupation authorities continued to attempt to administer VD control measures on Japanese sex workers throughout the occupation period, primarily through mass “roundups” of suspected prostitutes who were then subjected to medical examinations for VD. Takeuchi asserts that the “…roundups of women were carried out by the Military Police in cooperation with the Japanese police and were carefully designed so as not to provoke any antagonism toward the U.S. Occupation Forces.” Notably, the beginning of nationwide systematic roundups coincided with an order by the Headquarters of U.S. Army Forces, Pacific, to end the forced issue of prophylactic kits and treatment of soldiers, which was believed to be an ineffective measure in preventing VD among U.S. troops. This order, in addition to the enforcement of systematic roundups of suspected women, exemplifies the U.S. military’s inability to effectively control its soldiers’ access to and solicitation of


91 Takeuchi, “Pan-Pan Girls in the Pacific,” 88. Although the roundups targeted Japanese sex workers, any woman suspected of prostitution could be detained and forced to undergo a medical examination. The roundups caused substantial embarrassment and anger among the Japanese, though resistance to such measures were largely futile.

92 Ibid., 88.

93 Ibid.
prostitutes, and its subsequent decision to manage the spread of VD almost completely through measures controlling Japanese women.

Following MacArthur’s abolition of Japan’s licensed prostitution system and the placement of all sexual comfort facilities “off limits” in early 1946, the pan-pan came to epitomize militarized sex work through the remainder of the U.S. occupation of Japan. Dower describes the pan-pan as “tough, vulnerable figures remembered for their bright lipstick, nail polish, sharp clothes, and sometimes enviable material possessions…the leaning figure in the dark, wearing a kerchief, handbag on her arm, often lighting or smoking a cigarette.”94 Indeed, the exaggerated, westernized dress and manner adopted by the pan-pan to attract their American customers, and their increased visibility throughout Japan’s cities and base towns as a result of the decentralization of sex work, made the prostitute one of the most memorable and controversial symbols of Japan’s defeat and postwar occupation.

Conclusion

As the American occupation of Japan commenced in late August 1945, both countries took for granted that the occupying military troops would require and demand access to women’s bodies due to the prevalent hegemonically masculine belief in Japan and the United States that victorious, male soldiers necessitated sexual gratification from the conquered nation’s women. The subsequent efforts of both countries to regulate prostitution for American soldiers reflected their historical traditions in managing sex work and their socio-cultural perspectives on prostitution. Moreover, the distinct position

of Japan and the United States in relation to each other politically and economically in
the immediate postwar period shaped the ways in which each country sought to
administer prostitution for the U.S. forces.

This chapter has traced the intersection of these factors in occupied Japan by
examining the evolution of SCAP’s and the Japanese government’s efforts to regulate
prostitution, manage soldiers’ patronage of sex workers, and limit the spread of VD. It
has shown that, initially, the Japanese government hoped to channel the foreign soldiers’
sexual desire toward “unchaste” women by creating special comfort facilities specifically
for U.S. troops. This chapter has further indicated that these brothels were allowed to
operate under the tacit approval of SCAP through early 1946, although American
servicemen also patronized sex workers from Japan’s traditional licensed quarters, as
well as streetwalkers, in addition to the women employed by the special comfort
facilities. Furthermore, the orders and processes utilized by individual military
commanders in efforts to manage their soldiers’ use of prostitutes—primarily through the
installation of prophylaxis stations and provision of prophylactics to soldiers soliciting
sex workers—influenced the patterns of interaction between the foreign soldiers and
Japanese prostitutes, and determined the actualization of SCAP policy on the ground.
However, escalating VD rates and criticism from the American public over the military’s
possible involvement in administering prostitution, as well as the need to demonstrate
improvements in women’s rights as part of Japan’s “democratization” and MacArthur’s
desire to maintain his image among the American population and officials in
Washington, caused SCAP to abolish Japan’s centuries-old licensed prostitution system
and place all brothels “off limits” in order to remove any semblance of the military’s participation in managing the Japanese prostitution industry. Despite this initiative, VD rates among American soldiers remained high throughout the remainder of the Occupation; moreover, sex work became decentralized after 1946 and relied heavily on various ambiguous regulations, in addition to systematic “round ups,” that increasingly sacrificed women sex workers’ rights but allowed militarized prostitution to continue without suggesting the Japanese government’s or SCAP’s approval of it.
CHAPTER FIVE

U.S. MILITARY PROSTITUTION IN OCCUPIED SOUTH KOREA, 1945-1948

On the morning of October 22, 1992, the brutally beaten and mutilated body of Yun Kum-I, a twenty-six year old kijich'on sex worker in a Tongduch’ŏn club catering to American servicemen, was discovered by her landlord.¹ Yun, “naked, bloody, and covered with bruises and contusions,” was found with a cola bottle embedded in her uterus and the shaft of an umbrella driven twenty-seven centimeters inside her rectum; in addition, laundry detergent had been sprinkled over her body and throughout her rented room.² Private Kenneth Markle, a twenty-year old medic with the U.S. Second Infantry Division, was convicted of Yun’s murder and sentenced to life in a Korean prison, though Markle later appealed the verdict and received a reduced sentence of fifteen years’ imprisonment.³ Although the sheer cruelty and violence that resulted in Yun’s death is striking—even more so given that it was committed by a U.S. soldier against a civilian

¹ Kijich’on, or military camptown, refers to Korean villages that have developed around the main U.S. bases and depend almost entirely on the U.S. military economy. Typical kijich’on have commercial districts filled with clubs, bars, brothels, convenience stores, and other businesses that revolve around the primary industry of “selling sex to soldiers.” Tongduch’ŏn, originally a sparsely populated agricultural village, is a city north of Seoul that has housed four different U.S. infantry divisions since the end of the Korean War. Considered strategically important for the defense of Seoul against potential North Korean aggression, Tongduch’ŏn is also one of South Korea’s largest and most notorious camptowns. See Katharine H.S. Moon, Sex Among Allies.


citizen of an American ally—public attention to it remained localized and politically contained. Indeed, violent crimes committed by American GIs against camptown women have been “common through the decades of the U.S. presence” in Korea, though only recently have such incidents received national and international consideration.⁴ Bruce Cumings, a noted scholar of East Asian history, has called South Korea’s conspicuous camptown prostitution industry “the most silent exchange;” both obvious and soundless, it has defined generations of U.S. soldiers’ memories of South Korea while, like Yun Kum-I’s death, simultaneously escaping the broader American civilian population’s awareness.⁵

According to some estimates, more than two hundred fifty thousand women have worked as prostitutes for American soldiers in South Korea since 1945.⁶ Cumings has thus described Korean women’s sale of sexual services to U.S. military personnel as “the most common form of Korean-American interaction,” and has suggested that the only constant element in post-World War II Korean-American relations is “the continuous subordination of one female generation after another to the sexual servicing of American males.”⁷ However, the political, economic, and socio-cultural processes that define these

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⁴ Katharine H.S. Moon, “Military Prostitution and the U.S. Military in Asia.” Moon cites the belated “mainstreaming” of women’s human rights issues and the cultural treatment of sex workers as dirty, diseased societal outcasts—particularly in Korea—as the primary reasons for the lack of public or political concern for the safety and health of prostituted women.

⁵ Bruce Cumings, “Silent But Deadly,” 170.


interactions have continually evolved in response to, and often in spite of, the changing relationship between Washington and Seoul, the various circumstances under which U.S. troops have been stationed in Korea, and the tactical decisions made by U.S. military commanders, diplomats, and Korean government officials to regulate the relationships between Korean women and American GIs. Anthropologist Chunghee Sarah Soh has hence identified four distinct phases of U.S. military prostitution in South Korea based on significant shifts in U.S.-Korea relations that subsequently impacted the complex ways in which American military personnel and Korean prostitutes engaged in sexualized interactions.\(^8\) Soh’s research, in addition to that of other academics who have studied U.S. military prostitution in South Korea, indicates that camptown prostitution emerged during the Korean War and consolidated throughout the 1950s, marking the second phase of militarized sex work in postliberation Korea.\(^9\) Indeed, the considerable long-term effects of *kijich’on* prostitution on South Korea’s society and economy, as well as its relationship with the United States, has made the *kijich’on* the primary focus of most contemporary scholarship on militarized prostitution in South Korea.\(^10\) However, this

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\(^9\) Although other scholars do not break down the evolution of *kijich’on* prostitution as distinctly as Soh, their work alludes to the same phases and associated developments. See Katharine H.S. Moon, *Sex Among Allies*, and Seungsook Moon, “Regulating Desire, Managing the Empire: U.S. Military Prostitution in South Korea, 1945-1970,” in *Over There: Living with the U.S. Military Empire from World War II to the Present*, ed. Maria Höhn and Seungsook Moon (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2010), 39-77.

\(^10\) See Katharine H.S. Moon, *Sex Among Allies*; Seungsook Moon, “Regulating Desire, Managing the Empire”; and Sturdevant and Stolzfus, *Let the Good Times Roll*. 
emphasis on *kijich’on* sex work tends to diminish the importance of the first phase of U.S. military prostitution in Korea—during the American occupation after World War II—in which U.S. military authorities and their Korean counterparts laid the foundation for the eventual establishment of the *kijich’on*.

This chapter seeks to contextualize the evolution of U.S. military prostitution in South Korea by examining its origins during the American occupation between September 1945 and August 1948, and placing these developments within the broader framework of the United States’ postwar foreign policy objectives regarding Korea and Pacific Asia. As in the previous chapter’s analysis of militarized prostitution servicing American soldiers in postwar Japan, this chapter will begin with a brief historical overview of prostitution and women’s sexual labor within Korea, paralleling this with Korea’s history of political subordination to, and colonization by, stronger Asian states. Next, it will describe the circumstances under which the U.S. military was able to occupy the southern half of the Korean peninsula in the aftermath of World War II, and the subsequent efforts of the United States Army Military Government in Korea (USAMGIK) to regulate Korean prostitutes’ sexualized interactions with U.S. GIs. Furthermore, it will trace the tacit and overt involvement of American and Korean government and military officials in shaping Korean women’s sale of sexual labor in ways that would best serve the perceived masculine needs of U.S. servicemen while facilitating the United States’ political and economic interests in Korea.
Women’s Sexual Labor and Prostitution in Korean History

The development and structure of Korean women’s organized sexual labor has been heavily influenced by the country’s history of subordination to dominant foreign powers—particularly China and later, Japan—in addition to its adoption of and adherence to Neo-Confucianism since the end of the fourteenth century. The exploitation of Korean women’s sexual labor by foreign nations began during the Goryeo Dynasty (918-1392), when the Korean peninsula came under Mongol domination and the state was subsequently forced to assemble groups of young women to send as “tribute” to the Mongol Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368) for more than eighty years.11 Despite the demise of both the Goryeo and Yuan dynasties, Korea’s Choson Dynasty (1392-1910) continued to recruit and send Korean tribute women to China’s Ming Dynasty (1368-1662) until 1521.12 Furthermore, thousands of Korean women were captured during the Manchu invasions of Korea in 1627 and 1636; when some of these women returned to Korea, they were rejected by their families and society for being “defiled” while held in captivity, and many hanged themselves in response.13 The social repudiation of these women reflects the preponderance of Neo-Confucianism in Korea, which has flourished there since the


beginning of the Choson era.\footnote{Brock and Thistlethwaite, \textit{Casting Stones}, 36. Korean scholars returning from China introduced Neo-Confucian philosophy to Korea during the Goryeo Dynasty. It was established as state ideology at the beginning of Choson rule.} Neo-Confucian philosophy perceives women to be “activators of male desires” and places extreme value on female chastity; thus, in order to protect women’s chastity and control their “chaotic” sexuality, the female body is considered the property of the male members of the household, and women’s movement beyond the home can be severely restricted.\footnote{Ibid., 38-39.} Regardless of the circumstances under which a woman’s virginity was lost outside the socially acceptable confines of marriage, Neo-Confucian Korean society considered the woman to be dirty and immoral, and marginalized her as an outcast.

Interestingly, Brock and Thistlethwaite note that sex industries are often found where significant restrictions on female lives exist, revealing a masculinist double standard regarding expectations for male and female sexual behavior.\footnote{Ibid., 39.} The Korean institution of \textit{kisaeng}, which originated in the Goryeo period and thrived throughout the Choson, exemplifies this.\footnote{Soh, “Women’s Sexual Labor and State,” 172.} Similar to geisha in Japan, \textit{kisaeng} were registered female performers who received formal training in the arts, literature, and music in order to entertain male customers at court feasts and other parties.\footnote{Ibid.} Though they often served the \textit{yangban}, an elite ruling class comprised of landowners, officials, and scholars, \textit{kisaeng} were nonetheless ostracized by Korean society because they sometimes provided sexual
services for compensation. By the mid-fifteenth century, however, kisaeng increasingly operated as sex workers for government officials in provincial towns and soldiers stationed along district borders; accordingly, the traditional function of the kisaeng underwent a gradual transformation from that of skilled entertainer to courtesan, with prostitution characterizing the kisaeng’s role by the time King Kojong reigned. The existence of kisaeng reflects the socially-constructed dichotomy between “good” Korean women, who preserve their virginity until marriage, and “bad” Korean women, who are unchaste and may sell their sexual labor for profit, while indicating the entrenched societal double standard—rooted in Neo-Confucian philosophy—that accepts Korean men’s non-marital sexual activity while condemning the same behavior in women.

Although “kisaeng” increasingly became synonymous with “prostitute” by the late nineteenth century, a modern form of commercialized, licensed prostitution did not exist in Korea until relations with Japan were formalized in the 1876 Treaty of Kanghwa. As the Japanese subsequently founded settlements in Korean port cities, they transplanted their traditional system of licensed prostitution to these communities, establishing pleasure quarter districts and importing karayukisan to provide sexual

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19 Lee, “The Construction of Military Prostitution,” 457. Lee emphasizes that the kisaeng’s traditional role was not that of a sex worker. She writes, “These entertainers were not perceived as mere sexual objects easily purchased in return for money, which is the contemporary perception of prostitutes, but rather as a symbol of sexuality for pleasure.”

20 Soh, “Women’s Sexual Labor and the State,” 172. King Kojong’s reign began in 1863, although he did not assume direct rule until 1873, and ended in 1907.

21 Ibid.
services there. However, Japan’s increasing control over Korea enabled it to quickly expand and embed its practices for regulating and administering prostitution throughout the peninsula. In 1904, the Japanese Embassy in Korea enacted Kyungsung Consulate Order No. 3, officially authorizing the existence of prostitutes and classifying them as “workers who make money in return for selling sex to anybody who is willing to pay for [it].” Following Japan’s annexation of Korea in 1910, responsibility for issuing laws regulating prostitution was transferred from councils within Japanese communities to provincial Police Administration Bureaus, with each province’s chief of police able to designate and control the pleasure quarters in his jurisdiction. Six years later, the Japanese colonial government passed a series of regulations that effectively consolidated licensed prostitution nationwide, including the system’s hallmarks of compulsory VD examinations, official registration procedures, and detailed standards for the management of sex workers. Notably, during the 1920s and 1930s, some resistance to licensed prostitution developed among Korean Christians, who sought to abolish the system, and *kisaeng*, who formed self-governing labor unions in an effort to demand better working conditions; eventually, Korean prostitutes were successful in swaying the colonial

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22 Ibid.


24 Ibid., 458.

25 Soh, “Women’s Sexual Labor and State,” 172. These regulations included: Laws Regulating Houses of Assignation and Prostitutes (Government General Police Administration Division Ordinance No. 4); Inn Control Regulations; Restaurant and Bar Control Regulations; and Geisha, Shakufu, and Geisha House Control Regulations.
government, which instituted a one-day leave system in 1935. Nevertheless, the success of the prostitution abolition movement and the collective action of the kisaeng was limited by the social marginalization of sex workers, as well as both groups’ failure to merge with the broader Korean nationalist struggle of that period. Furthermore, as Soh suggests, Japan’s licensed prostitution system was grafted firmly within Korea shortly after colonization, and by the 1930s Koreans under Japanese rule became “fully acculturated as main actors” in the colonial government’s state-administered form of prostitution.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the Japanese government’s imperial ambitions, combined with its perceived need to channel its troops’ masculine sexual aggression while combating the spread of VD, resulted in the establishment of military “comfort stations” throughout Japan’s colonies and territories by the late 1930s. Japan’s colonization of Korea facilitated its mobilization and coercion of Korean girls and women to serve as “comforters” for its troops, and Koreans comprised the vast majority of comfort women for Japan’s soldiers. Moreover, young Korean women were deemed especially desirable as comfort women by Japanese officials because they were believed to be sexually inexperienced and therefore uninfected, yet able to withstand VD if an infection were to develop. Although many Korean comfort women did not survive the

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27 Ibid.
war, some returned to Korea only to find themselves, tragically, working as prostitutes
for the American occupation forces after World War II. Indeed, the highly regulated,
government-controlled system of licensed prostitution introduced to colonial Korea by
Japan remained intact upon the arrival of U.S. occupation forces in September 1945, and
substantially influenced USAMGIK’s initial efforts to regulate Korean sex workers, as
well as American troops’ interactions with them, in a way that aligned with U.S. foreign
policy in Korea.

**Prostitution and American Foreign Policy in Occupied South Korea, 1945-1948**

In contrast to the obeisant demeanor exhibited by the defeated Japanese
population toward the American occupation forces who arrived in August 1945, the
Twenty-fourth Corps of the Tenth Army, assigned postwar occupation duty in liberated
Korea and commanded by General John R. Hodge, debarked from their carrier vessels on
September 8th as Japanese police on horseback worked to contain boisterous Korean
crowds. The unwelcoming disposition of the Korean populace reflected its feeling of
resentment toward the United States for assuming that it would require “preparation”
before it could assume independent self-governance, and Koreans’ humiliation at having
yet another foreign power impose its will upon their nation. Although State Department

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30 Soh, “Military Prostitution and Women’s Sexual Labour in Japan and Korea,” 46.

31 Unless otherwise noted in this section, “Korea” refers to the southern zone, below the 38th
parallel, occupied by the United States between 1945 and 1948.

32 Bruce Cumings, *Korea’s Place in the Sun: A Modern History* (New York: W.W. Norton &
Japan, U.S. occupation forces were “accosted” by “…men who bowed and asked what it was the
conquerors wished.”

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planners began discussing various proposals for the United States’ postwar involvement in Korea as early as 1942, and the establishment of Korean independence “in due course” was alluded to at the 1943 Cairo Conference, the unilateral U.S. decision to partition Korea at the thirty-eighth parallel and occupy the southern half of the peninsula was made hastily, leaving USAMGIK rather unprepared for its mission of assisting Koreans in creating an independent government.\textsuperscript{33}

Despite the surrender of Japan’s colonial government in Korea, USAMGIK inherited and initially retained the robust system of licensed prostitution created by Japanese colonial authorities. Moreover, the economic and political upheaval in Korea that followed the Allied defeat of Japan compelled countless women to enter into private prostitution simply to make ends meet; indeed, the majority of Korean women involved in prostitution during the American occupation were not licensed prostitutes, but impoverished expatriates displaced during colonial rule or married women trying to support their families.\textsuperscript{34} USAMGIK’s initial response to the proliferation of prostitution following the arrival of American troops—to place all brothels “off limits”—reflected the U.S. military’s historical desire to maintain its servicemembers’ health and effectiveness by preventing the spread of VD, as well as a broader concern among military officials

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 188-190. Initial U.S. policy was to first occupy Korea and then to see if a trusteeship could be worked out between the Russians, the British, and the Chinese.

\textsuperscript{34} Seungsook Moon, “Regulating Desire, Managing the Empire: U.S. Military Prostitution in South Korea, 1945-1970,” in \textit{Over There: Living with the U.S. Military Empire from World War II to the Present}, eds. Maria Höhn and Seungsook Moon (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2010), 45. Moon notes that many of these expatriates had worked as “dancers” in Shanghai and Manchuria during the colonial period.
regarding the unsanitary living conditions and hygienic practices of many Koreans.\(^{35}\) On September 11, 1945, the military government opened the Office of the Corps Surgeon in Seoul and established the Bureau of Public Health and Welfare two weeks later.\(^{36}\) Under the leadership of these departments a number of medical and health initiatives commenced, including removal of the ineffective “off limits” policy and its replacement with the examination of bars and restaurants by medical inspectors, as well as medical examinations of licensed prostitutes in the pleasure quarter brothels by VD control officers.\(^{37}\) Furthermore, soldiers were required to obtain condoms and prophylactic kits prior to receiving passes to leave their units, and those who returned inebriated or after curfew were given mandatory treatment at prophylactic stations.\(^{38}\) As the U.S. military command worked to delineate its role and function as an occupation government, and with the shape of its future involvement in South Korea still uncertain in the first few months of its existence, these basic efforts by the Bureau of Public Health and Welfare and the Office of the Corps Surgeon appeared adequate to identify sources of VD and


\(^{37}\) Ibid., 462; Seungsook Moon, “Regulating Desire, Managing Empire,” 44-45. Military officials admitted the ineffectiveness of “off limits” postings, noting the continual movement of prostitutes from “off limits” areas to “on limits” locations and the difficulty of ensuring all servicemen were consistently made aware of all areas that were off limits. See McNinch, “Venereal Disease Problems,” 149, http://history.amedd.army.mil/booksdocs/korea/recad2/ch4-2.html (accessed June 18, 2012).

\(^{38}\) Seungsook Moon, “Regulating Desire, Managing Empire,” 45.
combat its spread. Yet as the United States’ occupation of South Korea evolved, so too did its methods for regulating prostitutes and minimizing the incidence of VD.

In mid-December 1945, the foreign ministers of the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Soviet Union met in Moscow to discuss a variety of issues that had surfaced in the aftermath of World War II, including the status of Korea. At the conclusion of the ten-day conference, the three powers agreed to establish a provisional Korean democratic government, which would be created following a Joint American-Soviet Commission’s consultation with Korean political parties and social organizations. The Moscow Agreement additionally included a provision for the creation of a four-power trusteeship for Korea lasting up to five years. The first meeting of the Joint Commission occurred in Seoul on March 20, 1946, at which time the Soviets asserted that only those Korean political parties and social organizations that approved of the Moscow Agreement, including trusteeship, should be consulted by the Joint Commission; although Communist groups in both North and South Korea had recently reversed their position and accepted the Moscow Agreement, this action would exclude the many Korean democratic parties that remained opposed to trusteeship.

With the United States fearing the exclusion of these groups would result in a

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40 Ibid. The Korean reaction to the Moscow Agreement was negative across the political spectrum. Rees writes that Koreans objected violently to trusteeship, which was commonly seen as a “virtual great power protectorate” over Korea. However, in early 1946, Communists in North and South Korea reversed their position and accepted the Moscow Agreement, including trusteeship, presumably as a result of pressure from Moscow.

41 Ibid.
Communist-dominated government, and thus unwilling to accept their prohibition, the Joint Commission deadlocked and adjourned on May 8, 1946, perpetuating the division of Korea and the drift towards the creation of two Korean states.\(^{42}\)

As the polarization between the Soviet and American commands in Korea intensified, USAMGIK began to pursue additional policies to regulate Korean prostitutes, suggesting both the ineffectiveness of its original measures in preventing the spread of VD and its perceived need for more long-term solutions with the prospects of further occupation and trusteeship at hand. In March 1946, Public Health and Welfare augmented its medical examinations of individual licensed prostitutes by initiating collective VD testing and treatment for all registered women.\(^{43}\) Furthermore, in accordance with SCAP’s abolition of laws licensing prostitutes in Japan in January 1946, USAMGIK released Regulation No. 70, “The Prohibition of Trafficking of Women and Girls or of Contracts for Such Trafficking,” on May 17, which prohibited the sale of women and the contracting of women for sale.\(^{44}\) However, this law—like its equivalent in occupied Japan—was deceptive in that it did not prohibit prostitution, but merely regulated the agreements arranged between sex workers and their employers.\(^{45}\) Its effectiveness additionally was limited by the fact that most American soldiers in Korea patronized the many available streetwalkers and other unlicensed women, and had

\(^{42}\) Ibid., 88.
\(^{44}\) Ibid., 466.
\(^{45}\) Seungsook Moon, “Regulating Desire, Managing Empire,” 44.
minimal contact with the relatively small number of registered sex workers for whom Regulation No. 70 was applicable.\textsuperscript{46} Indeed, the most common sites for U.S. military personnel to come into contact with prostitutes were not the traditional pleasure quarters, but instead were the typical “entertainment establishments” that catered to American soldiers—bars, cabarets, and dance halls—where private prostitutes often congregated.\textsuperscript{47} In spite of USAMGIK’s efforts to manage interactions between GIs and Korean prostitutes, the number of these businesses nearly doubled in 1946, indicating their escalating popularity among and use by American troops, and suggesting a correlated increase in the number and availability of prostitutes.\textsuperscript{48}

In his history of occupied Korea, Cumings posits that “…Koreans were the prime historical actors in this period, shaping American…power to their ends and generally ignoring all the ‘externals’…unless they appeared to serve Korean purposes.”\textsuperscript{49} It is therefore necessary to recognize the significant role Korea’s elite leaders played in promoting USAMGIK’s efforts to regulate Korean prostitutes and U.S. soldiers’ purchase

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{46} Ibid., 49.
\item \textsuperscript{47} Ibid., 48
\item \textsuperscript{48} Lee, “The Construction of Military Prostitution,” 464. According to Lee, “The 59 bars, 12 cafes, and 14 cabarets recorded in May 1946 almost doubled by the end of the year when 81 bars, 29 cafes, and 29 cabarets, and 5 dance halls for soldiers were recorded.”
\item \textsuperscript{49} Cumings, \textit{Korea’s Place in the Sun}, 186. Although USAMGIK maintained control over Korea below the 38th parallel during its occupation, it made an effort to construct a separate, centralized Korean regime acting under U.S. guidance. Although the United States initially sought to leave the Japanese colonial administration intact, Koreans violently objected. In February 1946, a Representative Democratic Council was formed, and in August, an Interim Legislative Assembly with forty-five elected members and forty-five appointed officials was established. These political bodies were dominated by anti-communist conservatives and struggled with factionalism and lack of Korean popular support.
\end{itemize}
of sexual services. The implicit approval and direct assistance of these elite leaders—conservative, wealthy landowners who formed the base of the USAMGIK-endorsed Korean Democratic Party (KDP)—were necessary for the successful implementation of the American military government’s policies aimed at controlling sex workers.  

Principally, these Korean leaders supported the American military command’s collective examination of prostitutes. Their acquiescence reflects, to some extent, the continuity between the Japanese colonial government’s administration of a system of licensed prostitution and USAMGIK’s similar initiatives to prevent VD through the control and regulation of sex workers. According to Lee, Korea’s mainstream media reinforced the identification of prostitutes as the primary malefactors in spreading VD, referring to it as a “national disease” that threatened Korean citizens, as well as the nation’s “democratic” future. Although Korean officials did not venture to create an organization paralleling Japan’s RAA, two dance halls—where a significant number of prostitutes gathered—were designated for the use of American military personnel shortly after the arrival of U.S. forces.  

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50 Ibid., 192; Lee, “The Construction of Military Prostitution,” 464. Following the end of Japanese colonial rule, the KDP was formed among staunchly conservative Korean leaders—some of whom had collaborated and cooperated with Japanese colonial officials—opposed to Communism. Because of its anti-Communist stance, the KDP enjoyed the support of the United States, though many Koreans disapproved of the party due to some of its members’ affiliation with the Japanese. The KDP supported Syngman Rhee in the presidential election of 1948, and in 1949 merged with other Korean political parties opposed to Communism.


52 Ibid., 465.

53 Ibid., 464.
establishment of one of the dance halls as part of a coordinated espionage effort with high-ranking Korean officials, who sought to exploit information gathered from U.S. troops who patronized the dance hall and its collocated prostitutes in order to undermine USAMGIK.\(^5^4\) In any case, the historical social marginalization of sex workers in Korea as immoral purveyors of disease, as well as the legacy of the Japanese colonial administration’s system of licensed prostitution, facilitated Korea’s elite leaders’ support for USAMGIK’s control of Korean prostitutes in ways that best served the interests and needs of the American military command and, by extension, themselves.

By 1947, a series of developments in both Japan and Korea amplified Washington’s interest in the peninsula while increasingly solidifying Korea’s division into two separate states. First, policymakers in Washington were cultivating a new foreign strategy that combined the containment of communism with the revival of Japanese industry as the driver of the regional economy—a policy that came to be known as the “reverse course.”\(^5^5\) Korea would be a cornerstone of the policy’s success, as its proximity to and historical relationship with Japan made it a palpable component in fueling Japan’s economic recovery, while its juxtaposition with Soviet-dominated northern Korea made it an essential bulwark against the spread of communism further into the Pacific.\(^5^6\) At the same time, however, the U.S. War Department was concerned


\(^5^5\) Cumings, *Korea’s Place in the Sun*, 210.

\(^5^6\) Ibid.
about rising VD rates among American troops in Korea. Military officials expressed concern about the lack of “moral” feminine companionship for soldiers stationed in Korea, many of whom were young, unmarried men, as well as the impact of the language barrier in hindering troops’ ability to socialize appropriately with young Korean women. To counteract this problem, the War Department issued the Army VD Control program, which sought to reduce the incidence of VD among soldiers by advocating for continence and providing instruction and educational materials in order to prevent VD among soldiers who had already been exposed. Subsequently, in February 1947 General Hodge issued Circular 26, containing VD control measures, to commanding generals and officers for immediate implementation. In compliance with the Army’s emphasis on continence, soldiers received training in sexual morality, citizenship, personal hygiene practices, and VD prevention procedures; likewise, soldiers who contracted VD received treatment and, later, were sent to the Rehabilitation Training Center in Chinae, where they were given forty-nine hours of training per week to decrease their promiscuity. Furthermore, in order to encourage soldiers’ participation.

57 Seungsook Moon, “Regulating Desire, Managing Empire,” 46.


59 Seungsook Moon, “Regulating Desire, Managing Empire,” 46.

60 Ibid.

61 Ibid., 47. The Rehabilitation Center in Chinae opened on November 4, 1947.
in “wholesome” recreational activities, the military organized and promoted athletic events, movies, sightseeing tours, and religious services.\textsuperscript{62}

It is interesting to note that in contrast to Japan, where chaplains and devout servicemembers vocally opposed the U.S. military’s involvement in prostitution, USAMGIK co-opted this group by including the Corps of Chaplains in its newly appointed VD Control Councils. Another component of the Army VD Control program, the councils were also comprised of commanding officers, the Special Services Division, the Provost Marshal, and the Medical Department, and met on a monthly basis to contemplate more effective strategies to decrease VD rates.\textsuperscript{63} The inclusion of the Corps of Chaplains further demonstrates USAMGIK’s promotion of continence and Christian sexual morality as a means of reducing VD among soldiers stationed in Korea. In addition to these measures aimed at decreasing U.S. troops’ use of prostitutes, the VD Control Section was created under the authority of the Bureau of Public Health and Welfare in May 1947; it subsequently expanded the program of medical examinations to incorporate additional categories of women who officials believed were likely to sell sex to soldiers, such as dancers, “bar girls,” and waitresses.\textsuperscript{64} Those who complied with the examinations and were found to be healthy received “certificates of health,” while women who refused or were diagnosed with VD were forced to undertake treatment or

\textsuperscript{62} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{63} Lee, “The Construction of Military Prostitution,” 463. The Special Services Division provided entertainment and recreational facilities.

\textsuperscript{64} Ibid.; Seungsook Moon, “Regulating Desire, Managing Empire,” 47.
were imprisoned. Thus, as Korea became increasingly instrumental to the United States’ Cold War foreign policy in the Pacific, the concurrent need for a comprehensive program to control VD—including the regulation of Korean women through physical examinations and issuance of health certificates, and the education and medical treatment of U.S. military personnel—shifted to the forefront of USAMGIK’s agenda.

Relations between the United States and the Soviet Union continued to deteriorate through the remainder of 1947. Following a meeting of the Joint American-Soviet Commission in May, the two powers were unable to reach a compromise on the consultation of Korean political parties and adjourned in July with no progress made. After Washington’s failure in August to secure Moscow’s consent for four-power discussions on the basis of free all-Korea elections to be supervised by the United Nations (UN), the U.S. determined to take the issue of Korean unification to the UN. Ultimately, on November 14, 1947, the UN passed a broad U.S. resolution on Korea, providing for the creation of a United Nations Temporary Commission on Korea (UNTCOK) to observe free, all-Korean elections to be held prior to March 31, 1948, after which a Korean national assembly and national government would be created. Notably, on the same day, USAMGIK proclaimed its most far-reaching policy on Korean prostitution to date—Public Act 7 (PA 7), which abolished the institution of licensed

66 Rees, A Short History of Modern Korea, 89.
67 Ibid., 90.
68 Ibid.
prostitution established by the Japanese colonial government. The law, analogous to that issued by SCAP in Japan in early 1946, gave the misleading impression that all forms of prostitution in Korea had been abolished; however, PA 7 generated a similar outcome as the Japan law, in which the dismantling of organized, licensed prostitution merely resulted in the vast proliferation of private prostitution and the scattering of sex workers throughout the country. Nevertheless, USAMGIK used the law to promote its democratizing influence within Korea, including within its justification for PA 7 that it eliminated the Japanese colonial state’s “evil customs” while advancing “equality between men and women.” Yet, USAMGIK’s exploitation of PA 7 as an example of American liberal democracy’s progress within South Korea is ironic given that prostitution and concubinage had been outlawed in North Korea a year earlier, at the same time that formal legal equality for women was established in that zone.

The U.S. military government’s efforts to manage prostitution in the aftermath of PA 7 exemplify the implicit contradiction between its desire to publicly present a strict stance against prostitution and its surreptitious objective to manage American soldiers’ sexual needs through the effective regulation of prostitutes. The profusion of private prostitution that resulted from PA 7 made the oversight and control of sex workers, no

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69 Seungsook Moon, “Regulating Desire, Managing Empire,” 44. Public Act 7 became effective on February 14, 1948.

70 Lee, “The Construction of Military Prostitution,” 466. According to a contemporary Korean newspaper, *Puin Ilbo* (19 November 1948), cited by Lee, the number of prostitutes increased from 2,000 to 50,000 within the first nine months after official abolition.

71 Ibid., 468; Seungsook Moon, “Regulating Desire, Managing Empire,” 44.

longer concentrated in the pleasure quarters, more difficult. This is especially true considering that from the beginning of the American occupation, a multitude of Korean women, many of whom would not classify themselves as prostitutes, intermittently sold their sexual labor in order to support their families. According to Seungsook Moon, "Regulating Desire, Managing Empire," 45-46, many of these women did not identify themselves as prostitutes and instead saw their involvement as an aberration or temporary sacrifice to be made in the face of dire poverty.

Accordingly, the stereotypical perception of prostitutes—as licensed women working in brothels or for pimps—never fit the majority of women in occupied Korea who sold sexual services to soldiers, and the fluidity of their movement in and out of sex work consistently challenged USAMGIK officials seeking to regulate prostitution and prevent VD. Because the U.S. command had thus lost its ability to easily characterize and identify licensed sex workers following PA 7’s implementation, one might conclude that military authorities came to view all Korean women as potential prostitutes.

Indicating the military’s implicit preference for regulated prostitution as opposed to abolition, military officials and VD Control Councils repeatedly cited PA 7’s "scattering" of prostitutes as a reason for continually high VD rates among U.S. servicemen. In response, USAMGIK initially refocused its VD reduction efforts toward recreational programs for soldiers. However, two significant factors continually undermined the success of this initiative: first, facilities for these recreational activities

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73 Seungsook Moon, “Regulating Desire, Managing Empire,” 45-46. Moon asserts, “It is likely that many of the women who were engaged in prostitution in one way or another did not identify themselves as prostitutes and instead saw their involvement as an aberration or temporary sacrifice to be made in the face of dire poverty.”

74 Ibid., 49. Moon notes that during the late 1940s, 1 in every 333 soldiers stationed in South Korea received VD treatment, and reported VD rates were 100 per 1,000 soldiers per year.

were insufficient due to logistical issues with importing necessary equipment and constructing the sites, and second, “legitimate” existing entertainment facilities outside military posts such as dance halls and service clubs often served as points of contact between private sex workers and military personnel. Consequently, less than three months after PA 7 became effective, the Provost Marshal of the U.S. military police organized “vice squads” in Seoul and Pusan to arrest streetwalkers, who were then physically examined for VD and given treatment under detention if found to be infected. The creation of vice squads, as a method of managing U.S. soldiers’ patronage of sex workers and associated high rates of VD by targeting any suspicious woman, is redolent of the “round ups” initiated in Japan following SCAP’s abolition of licensed prostitution there. Moon underscores the significance of U.S. military officials’ desire to maintain control of prostitutes in spite of abolition, asserting that “what is obscured in the presumed causality between the decrease in the military’s control over prostitution and the growth in VD rates is the naturalization of the male soldiers’ sexual demands (emphasis added), which continued to generate the supply of private prostitution in the context of mass impoverishment after the end of public prostitution.” Indeed, the military’s ongoing provision of prophylaxis and repeated efforts to criminalize and control Korean prostitutes contradicted and undermined its advocacy of continence and

76 Seungsook Moon, “Regulating Desire, Managing Empire,” 48.
78 Seungsook Moon, “Regulating Desire, Managing Empire,” 50.
use of recreational programs to manage servicemen’s sexual activities while implying its tacit acknowledgement of soldiers’ masculinized need for sexual gratification.

Although Soviet-dominated North Korea ultimately rejected the November 1947 UN resolution on Korea and refused to recognize UNTCOK, UN-supervised elections were held throughout South Korea on May 10, 1948. The UN declared these elections valid, and subsequent events hastened the creation of two separate Korean states.\(^79\) In the South, elected representatives formed a National Assembly, adopted a presidential constitution, and voted for Syngman Rhee to become the first President of the Republic of Korea (ROK), which was formally inaugurated on August 15, 1948.\(^80\) With the creation of the ROK, American military government authority in Korea ended, although U.S. troops remained there until June 1949.\(^81\) Predictably, after the termination of USAMGIK, the military’s remaining control over Korean prostitution quickly disintegrated.\(^82\) Moreover, the Korean government refused to punish or detain violators of PA 7, allowing prostitution to spread rapidly; indeed, unit commanders began to complain about prostitutes gathering outside the gates of military installations to solicit American servicemen, and soldiers began using cartons of cigarettes as payment for

\(^{79}\) Rees, *A Short History of Modern Korea*, 91.

\(^{80}\) Ibid.

\(^{81}\) Ibid., 93.

\(^{82}\) Seungsook Moon, “Regulating Desire, Managing Empire,” 50.
prostitutes’ sexual services. \(^8^3\) Given the military’s loss of control over prostitution and the Korean government’s refusal to enforce PA 7, military officers cleaved to VD-reduction efforts among soldiers for the remainder of U.S. troops’ presence in the ROK, including the continued provision of prophylaxis, recreational programs, and training in military mores and ethics. \(^8^4\) However, after the end of USAMGIK rule, the military’s efforts to stem the spread of VD were somewhat cursory and largely ineffective in achieving their objective, reflecting more broadly the United States’ diminishing interest in South Korea once its occupation there had ceased. \(^8^5\) Nevertheless, the return of American troops to the Korean peninsula following North Korea’s invasion of South Korea one year later would reignite and solidify the existence of prostitution catering to U.S. soldiers in South Korea, based on the foundations laid during the U.S. military government’s occupation of the peninsula between 1945 and 1948.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has traced the parallel development of the United States Army Military Government in Korea’s foreign policy and its efforts to regulate prostitution during the American occupation of South Korea from September 1945 through August

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\(^8^3\) Lee, “The Construction of Military Prostitution,” 471; Moon, “Regulating Desire, Managing Empire,” 50. Lee suggests that the Korean government’s refusal to enforce PA 7 was linked to its “stubbornly uncooperative attitude” toward U.S. military authorities and the implementation of laws created by USAMGIK. Korean officials’ opposition to PA 7 may also have been related to entrenchment of prostitution within society, and a correlated disinterest in prosecuting those involved.


\(^8^5\) Rees notes that in June 1949, the Joint Chiefs assessed that Korea had “little strategic value” for the United States, and that military commitment there was ill-advised. Furthermore, in a speech made by Secretary of State Dean Acheson, South Korea was excluded from the United States’ “defense perimeter” in the Pacific, suggesting that it would have to rely on the UN and its own forces for self-defense.
1948. Upon its establishment, USAMGIK inherited and retained the system of licensed prostitution originated by Japanese colonial authorities in Korea, and subsequently initiated multiple efforts to prevent American soldiers from contracting VD from Korean prostitutes, including inspections of brothels and medical examinations of sex workers. However, these initiatives were largely unsuccessful because many Korean women—who likely would not have identified themselves as prostitutes and did not “fit” the military’s stereotypical image of prostitutes—sold their sexual labor to American servicemembers in order to financially support their families, and only intermittently engaged in sex work as needed. Thus, USAMGIK’s preliminary efforts to identify and regulate sex workers, based primarily on licensed women in the traditional pleasure districts, were ineffective.

As the American occupation became further entrenched within Korea, U.S. military authorities diversified their methods for reducing the incidence of VD among soldiers. In combination with “wholesome” recreational programs and the promotion of continence and morality, military officials provided prophylactic materials and treatment to soldiers suspected of participating in sexual activity with a prostitute. Furthermore, USAMGIK abolished laws licensing prostitution, and ultimately abolished the institution of licensed prostitution in an effort to discourage women from selling sexual services and repress the organization of licensed women in brothels. Yet, the military’s contradictory policy of advocating for abstinence while continuing to provide soldiers with prophylaxis undermined its efforts to minimize VD. Moreover, its abolition of public prostitution—a partial ploy to demonstrate USAMGIK’s progress in bringing democracy and equal rights for women to South Korea—merely resulted in the immediate proliferation of private
prostitution and the additional loss of the military’s oversight of Korean sex workers. Ultimately, USAMGIK’s various efforts to reduce VD among its soldiers were unsuccessful, as VD rates among troops stationed in South Korea during the occupation remained steadily high.

It is important to note that despite the U.S. military government’s abolition of licensed prostitution, its policies regarding the regulation of Korean sex workers laid the foundation for *kijich’on* prostitution, which emerged and consolidated during the decades of U.S. presence in South Korea following the Korean War. Indeed, American military officials’ tacit preference for regulated prostitution—epitomized through organized medical examinations of licensed prostitutes and the issuance of “health certificates”—rather than prohibiting sex work, and evidenced in their complaints over their loss of control following PA 7’s “scattering” of prostitutes, suggests the military’s belief in its soldiers’ masculinized right to have access to the sexual labor of uninfected foreign women. In the next chapter, the implications of this hegemonically masculine assumption for American foreign policy will be explored through a critical comparison and analysis of the past two chapters’ findings on U.S. military prostitution in Japan and Korea after World War II.
CONCLUSION

WOMEN’S SEXUAL LABOR AND THE U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE ABROAD

In April 2012, the American public was shocked and outraged when the media reported that as many as eleven Secret Service members—including several senior agents—and ten military personnel, sent to Cartagena, Colombia in advance of a scheduled visit there by President Obama, had patronized local strip clubs and consorted with prostitutes in their hotel rooms. Although the Secret Service and military made immediate efforts to admonish those involved and took disciplinary action against them, their attempts to characterize the incident as an isolated event failed after the media exposed the agents’ tongue-in-cheek motto, “wheels up, rings off.”¹ In fact, the only reason the incident in Colombia became known to the media was because hotel staff reported the American agents to the U.S. Embassy after one man became involved in an argument over payment with a prostitute. However, the public’s stunned, angry reaction to the “Secret Service scandal” indicates the lack of awareness outside certain communities—particularly hegemonically masculine institutions—of the availability and extent of prostitution catering to American military and government personnel in foreign locations around the world. It can be further inferred, then, that even fewer Americans are aware of government officials’ and military officers’ involvement in negotiating the provision of foreign women’s sexual labor for U.S. servicemembers deployed overseas,

and in regulating the interactions of American soldiers and local prostitutes in ways that are intended to help facilitate the United States’ foreign policy objectives in those countries. Yet, as the previous chapters have demonstrated, the often clandestine arrangements that determine the processes through which women’s sexual services were and continue to be regulated and made available to American soldiers and diplomats are fundamental in shaping and maintaining the United States’ presence overseas. Indeed, the evolving relationships between the U.S. and its host nations have required the continual renegotiation of the conditions under which militarized prostitution exists in order to sustain its “silent” operation, reflect changes in the political and economic status of each country, and facilitate the United States’ foreign policy objectives. The inverse relationship between the importance of women’s sexual labor in managing the presence of U.S. soldiers overseas and the American public’s limited awareness of the issue begs further inquiry.

Cynthia Enloe provides a useful metaphor to demonstrate the consequences of omitting certain topics from “official” accounts of history and international relations. She describes an “unrealistic war museum,” in which the traditional exhibits highlight soldiers’ heroic combat and housewives’ dedicated homefront sacrifices, but exclude the brothels, dance halls, sex workers, prophylaxis stations, and medical examinations that constitute a part of the daily patterns of interaction between soldiers and local civilians during war and militarized peace; thus, the unrealistic war museum modifies reality to
match societal expectations. Enloe suggests that “a museum curator—or journalist, novelist, or political commentator—who edits out sexuality, who leaves it ‘on the cutting-room floor,’ gives the audience a skewed and ultimately unhelpful account of just what kinds of myths, anxieties, and inequalities are involved fighting a war or sustaining a militarized form of peace.”³ With the construction of a more realistic “war museum” in mind, the two preceding chapters traced the development of U.S. military prostitution in occupied Japan and South Korea after World War II, and paralleled this with the concurrent development of American foreign policy within these countries in order to establish the association between interstate relationships and the actions and interactions of individuals, a key assertion of feminist international relations (IR) theory. This chapter expands the discussion by returning to the fundamental principles of feminist IR examined in Chapter One and broadly applying them to the previous analysis of U.S. military prostitution in postwar Japan and South Korea. In essence, it seeks to realize this thesis’s overarching objective of strengthening and refining feminist analysis of foreign policy by examining how and why governments use women as instruments of foreign policy.⁴ Beginning with a summary of U.S. military prostitution in occupied Japan and South Korea, this chapter then focuses on the significance of women’s sexual labor in establishing and maintaining the U.S. military presence overseas. Lastly, this chapter

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³ Ibid.

⁴ The language used to describe this thesis’s purpose is adapted from Katharine H.S. Moon’s characterization of her research objective in *Sex Among Allies*. See Katharine H.S. Moon, *Sex Among Allies*, 12.
will conclude with a brief discussion of the current situation and future of militarized sex work catering to American soldiers stationed or deployed in Asia.

**Summary of U.S. Military Prostitution in Occupied Japan and South Korea**

Following its victory in World War II, the United States commenced military occupations of Japan and Korea (below the thirty-eighth parallel) in an effort to shape the national governments of each country in ways that would best facilitate U.S. interests and solidify the United States’ regional influence. However, the arrival of large numbers of American military and government personnel—as many as three hundred fifty thousand in Japan and seventy thousand in Korea—imposed significant physical and economic burdens on both countries, including the handling of the incoming soldiers’ presumed masculine sexual needs. For Japanese officials in particular, the effective administration of the American troops’ sexual demands was a principal concern given the brutal nature of Japan’s battles with the U.S. during the war, as well as Japanese soldiers’ sexual abuse of women in occupied and colonized territories.

Japan’s history of state-organized licensed prostitution strongly influenced its decision to preemptively create special comfort facilities throughout the country, exemplified by the Recreation and Amusement Association (RAA) in Tokyo, specifically catering to American soldiers’ entertainment interests and sexual desires. By attempting to staff the comfort facilities with women already involved in sex work or employed in the hospitality and entertainment industries, Japanese leaders hoped to channel the U.S. troops’ sexual demands toward “fallen” or “unchaste” women, and to therefore protect “respectable” women from the foreign soldiers’ expected rapaciousness. However,
widespread poverty in the immediate postwar era drove many desperate women from all socioeconomic backgrounds into prostitution as a way of making ends meet, resulting in a substantial population of streetwalkers in addition to traditional licensed sex workers and unlicensed women employed by the comfort facilities.

Despite requests from military officers for guidance regarding soldiers’ solicitation of prostitutes, SCAP initially did not issue any policies on Japanese prostitution or the establishment of special comfort facilities, leaving individual commanders to manage their troops’ use of prophylaxis and patronage of prostitutes, and SCAP’s Public Health and Welfare section (PHW) to regulate VD treatment and prevention among the Japanese population. Although PHW officials endeavored to improve and modernize Japan’s medical practices and hospital facilities, medicine and equipment shortages, as well as physical devastation from the war, made this effort difficult. This, in combination with military commanders’ inability—or unwillingness—to prevent their soldiers from soliciting sex workers or to ensure their proper and consistent use of prophylaxis, resulted in very high VD rates among U.S. forces in Japan through the end of 1945. Moreover, the military’s increasingly direct role in setting up prophylaxis stations, monitoring troops’ use of prophylactics, and supervising the medical examinations of sex workers gave the impression that the U.S. military was involved in administering prostitution for its soldiers, inciting devout servicemembers and chaplains to protest. As Washington became aware of the high VD rates among soldiers stationed in Japan, as well as complaints about the military’s alleged participation in managing brothels for the soldiers, SCAP decided to abolish all laws
licensing prostitution in January 1946. Though this order appeared to represent significant progress in democratizing Japan and expanding women’s rights, it merely resulted in the creation of new, ambiguous regulations that allowed sex work to continue and thrive. Recognizing abolition’s failure to diminish the availability of prostitution, decrease American soldiers’ solicitation of prostitutes, or reduce VD rates, SCAP placed all brothels “off limits” in March 1946. Subsequently, private prostitution proliferated throughout Japan, with individual, unlicensed women known as “pan-pan” congregating in urban areas and base towns to sell their sexual labor to U.S. troops. The military’s ability to regulate the pan-pan and ensure that they were free of infection was severely weakened, given the scattered nature of prostitution following abolition and the “off-limits” order. As a result, the military resorted to the use of “round ups,” in which any woman suspected of prostitution could be detained, medically examined, and given treatment if found to be infected. Nevertheless, abolition enabled SCAP to prevent the American public from suspecting U.S. military and government officials’ involvement in administering organized prostitution or its toleration of U.S. servicemembers’ use of prostitutes; indeed, it gave the impression that SCAP was cracking down on prostitution and advancing women’s rights in its efforts to democratize Japan, whereas, in fact, abolition had made prostitution more difficult to regulate.

Although no state-sponsored organization of sex work catering specifically to the U.S. military was created in the southern zone of occupied Korea, USAMGIK inherited the system of licensed prostitution established there by the colonial Japanese government. Thus, both public prostitution, centered on brothels in designated pleasure quarters, and
unlicensed, private prostitution from individual streetwalkers were available to the American occupation forces in Korea. After briefly placing all brothels “off limits” as a means to prevent the spread of VD and control soldiers’ use of prostitutes, USAMGIK rescinded this ineffective order and resorted to sanitation inspections of brothels, bars, and restaurants, as well as systematic VD examinations of licensed sex workers. Furthermore, soldiers were provided with prophylactic kits and treated if found to be infected. In accordance with SCAP’s abolition of licensed prostitution in Japan, USAMGIK issued Regulation No. 70 in May 1946, which regulated the trafficking and contracting of women for sale. However, Regulation No. 70 had a minimal effect on the availability of prostitution in Korea and proved inadequate in decreasing VD rates among American servicemembers or their use of prostitutes; thus, as the United States’ interest in Korea as a bulwark against communism’s expansion escalated in 1947, it modified its program for VD reduction by targeting U.S. troops.

Under the provisions of the Army VD Control Program, the military sought to decrease soldiers’ use of prostitutes by promoting the practice of continence and offering “wholesome” recreational programs and entertainment. Furthermore, the program allowed for the creation of VD Control Councils, consisting of members from multiple military departments charged with devising more effective VD reduction policies, and the establishment of the VD Control Section under the Bureau of Public Health and Welfare, which expanded the system of medical examinations to include women working in multiple industries related to hospitality and entertainment. Yet, in spite of USAMGIK’s multipronged approach to reducing American soldiers’ patronage of sex workers and to
decreasing VD rates, these efforts were undermined by logistical issues with obtaining the necessary equipment and facilities for the recreational programs, the military’s contradictory policy of promoting continence while continuing to provide prophylaxis, and the fluidity of Korean women’s movement in and out of sex work. Consequently, in November 1947, USAMGIK officially abolished Korea’s system of licensed prostitution in Public Act 7, linking the decision to the United States’ efforts to democratize Korea and eliminate the colonial remnants of Japan. However, USAMGIK’s abolition of licensed prostitution in Korea resulted in a similar outcome to that which occurred in Japan, as private prostitution increased and scattered throughout the country. The military blamed PA 7 for its loss of control over sex workers, who were no longer required to receive medical examinations or register for licenses, and thus the loss of its ability to effectively regulate Korean prostitutes. In early 1948, military officials sought to regain a modicum of control over Korean sex workers by organizing “vice squads” to identify and detain streetwalkers so that they could be examined and treated for VD. However, the establishment of the ROK in August 1948 and the new government’s refusal to enforce PA 7 reinforced the military’s sense of powerlessness. The U.S. military command continued to view Korean prostitutes solely as sources of American soldiers’ infection; despite efforts to reduce troops’ use of prostitutes through the Army VD Control Program, USAMGIK inherently assumed that soldiers would patronize prostitutes and primarily sought to protect U.S. troops from contracting VD, rather than preventing their solicitation of sex workers or assisting women in leaving sex work through aid and employment programs.
Women’s Sexual Labor, the U.S. Military, and American Foreign Policy

Modern social constructions of gender and hegemonic masculinity have contributed to the societal double standard that often accepts—and is sometimes surprised by and critical of—men’s frequent sexual activity as an inherent biological need while repudiating the same behavior in women; this dichotomy is especially apparent in military men’s use of prostitutes, as the soldier exemplifies the hegemonic masculine ideal and is thus expected to demonstrate his sexual prowess, while the prostitute epitomizes the morally deficient “fallen” woman and is marginalized by society for selling her sexual labor. The societal normalization of this double standard previously enabled U.S. military prostitution to operate in relative silence, without significant public or academic interest for decades. As Katharine Moon asserts, much of the public remains unaware of military prostitution, which has otherwise become “so commonplace that people rarely stop to think about how and why it is created, sustained, and incorporated into military life and warfare.”

However, with the onset of the feminist movement in the 1970s and feminism’s subsequent entrance into the field of international relations, as well as the emergence of international women’s human rights movements and the United States’ diminished dominance over its host nations since the 1990s, military prostitution increasingly has become a focus of feminist IR research and international activism.

Indeed, feminist IR challenges traditional IR perspectives and explanations by placing women and questions about women first in an effort to “re-think why activities

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5 Katharine H.S. Moon, “Military Prostitution and the U.S. Military in Asia.”
6 Ibid.
traditionally associated with women or femininity seem irrelevant or insignificant in the context of international politics,” and thereby reveal a more complex, realistic understanding of international affairs and foreign policy. Thus, by making women sex workers who catered to American soldiers the focus of this study of the post-World War II occupations of Japan and Korea, we gain a more comprehensive understanding of the gendered context in which foreign policy decisions were made by all three countries, as well as insight into the unique burdens women confront during wartime and militarized peace. Furthermore, we obtain important background information on the contemporary sex industries in both Japan and South Korea, which continue to cater to American soldiers stationed in each country today.

Although only Japan’s government officials made explicit, systematic efforts to organize women’s sexual labor specifically for the American occupation troops in advance of their arrival, it is likely that U.S. military leaders and Korean authorities also assumed, from prior experience and sociocultural beliefs about men’s natural sexual needs, that the incoming soldiers would desire and seek out sexual gratification from local women, presumably prostitutes. Top U.S. military officials’ silence regarding soldiers’ use of prostitutes in the opening days of the occupations indicates their shared acceptance of the belief that a soldier’s sexual activity was a personal, private issue that should be handled at the lowest possible levels and carried out as discreetly as possible. Furthermore, their lack of official guidance conformed to the military’s traditional

approach toward deployed troops’ use of prostitutes, which upheld abstinence and anti-fraternization as official policy, but inconsistently enforced this and relied on unit commanders to manage issues arising from their soldiers’ patronage of sex workers.\(^8\)

The absence of an official prostitution policy, as well as the classification of VD regulations and related treatment programs under the inconspicuous departments of “Public Health and Welfare” in both Japan and Korea, added to the invisibility of the processes through which U.S. military prostitution was administered in each country.

For U.S. military leaders, minimizing the spread of VD among American occupation soldiers—rather than prohibiting troops’ use of prostitutes altogether—remained their primary objective in regulating prostitution and managing interactions between servicemen and sex workers. Indeed, occupation officials never seriously considered prohibiting prostitution, suggesting their tacit acceptance of soldiers’ patronage of sex workers.\(^9\) The military authorities’ efforts to reduce and prevent VD were largely influenced by the prevailing socio-cultural stereotype in all three societies of prostitutes as carriers of disease; this perception facilitated the development of anti-VD measures that sought to “protect” soldiers by targeting sex workers, who were required to prove their health through invasive medical examinations and faced detention and forced treatment if found to be infected.\(^10\) In contrast, U.S. soldiers were not compelled to demonstrate their lack of infection prior to engaging in sexual activity with a prostitute,

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\(^8\) Enloe, *Maneuvers*, 52-53.

\(^9\) Takeuchi, “‘Pan-Pan Girls’ in the Pacific,” 100.

and were provided with prophylactic treatment following intercourse to prevent contraction of disease.\footnote{Ibid., 28.} As VD rates among American troops remained high, Occupation authorities increasingly viewed all Japanese and Korean women as potential sources of soldiers’ infection, and subsequently instituted more expansive anti-VD programs among women, including round-ups and unannounced examinations, in an effort to identify and treat the origins of servicemen’s VD.\footnote{Ibid., 33, 41. Seungsook Moon, “Regulating Desire, Managing Empire,” 50.} Significantly, these actions were carried out with the consent of, and often in coordination with, Japanese and Korean law enforcement and government officials.\footnote{Kovner, Occupying Power, 42; Lee, “The Construction of U.S. Military Prostitution,” 464.} Although the complicity of Japanese and Korean authorities in assisting American military leaders in regulating prostitution and implementing anti-VD measures can largely be attributed to their historical experience and weakened political and economic status during the period of occupation, their participation demonstrates the extent to which the establishment and maintenance of militarized prostitution involves negotiations between the foreign power and the host, or occupied, nation. Notably, though women and their sexual labor are the crux of these discussions, women’s voices were often entirely excluded from this process.

Despite the trend among U.S. military leaders in occupied Japan and Korea to seek greater control over women’s sex work as a means of limiting the spread of VD, the decisions of SCAP and USAMGIK to abolish licensed prostitution indicate the interrelationship between foreign policy at the international level and the behavior of
individuals in private interactions, specifically the sexualized encounters of prostitutes and soldiers. In Japan, SCAP’s issuance of the order to abolish the country’s centuries-old system of licensed prostitution was done in response to the continuing escalation of VD rates among troops stationed there, as well as the increasing visibility of widespread prostitution in Japan to the American public and government officials in Washington.\(^\text{14}\)

Although USAMGIK did not abolish Korea’s system of licensed prostitution until almost two years after SCAP, its decision was made against a similar backdrop of continually high VD rates among U.S. soldiers and the inefficacy of the American military command or local Korean officials to contain the pervasive prostitution industry or prevent VD.\(^\text{15}\)

Yet, interestingly, both SCAP and USAMGIK publicized their resolutions to abolish Japan’s and Korea’s licensed prostitution systems, linking these decisions to the broader United States foreign policy objectives of “democratizing” the two countries and expanding women’s rights.\(^\text{16}\) The timing of the issuance of the abolition orders in each country—shortly after the negation of the Emperor’s divinity in Japan, and in Korea on the same day as the U.N.’s passage of a broad U.S. resolution on Korean elections—further demonstrates how the military commands used this step to advance the United States’ broader international agenda. Thus, militarized prostitution, usually a matter privately negotiated between military authorities and local officials in an effort to shape the occupying forces’ presence in a foreign land and to normalize patterns of interaction.


\(^{15}\) Seungsook Moon, “Regulating Desire, Managing Empire,” 44.

between soldiers and sex workers, becomes visible in the global arena when national leaders choose to link it to foreign policy and the ongoing international relationships between states.

Although women and their sexual labor have been integral in sustaining and shaping the U.S. military’s presence in host and occupied nations, both the silence with which militarized prostitution operates and its obscurity beyond the base towns where it flourishes conceal this, as well as other unique effects of wars and foreign military occupations on local women. Significant differences in the effects of the U.S. military’s occupations and deployments on individual women exist based on the nature and reason for the military’s presence in the host nation as well as each woman’s specific circumstances. Yet, several broad issues that primarily impact women can be identified in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between militarized prostitution and U.S. military occupations and deployments. The imposition of a large number of foreign soldiers, imbued with the hegemonically masculine ideals of military culture, by the occupying nation on a host nation’s civilian population constitutes a form of structural violence, with particular ramifications for local women. For example, the potential for rape by the incoming soldiers is a threat that principally affects

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17 Höhn and Moon, “Introduction,” 19. The authors note that racial differences between the occupying military and host nation, the length of deployments and whether or not soldiers are accompanied by family, the branch(es) of the military being deployed, and the spatial arrangements governing how the U.S. garrison and surrounding community interact all shape the impact of the U.S. military presence overseas. For example, the U.S. Air Force, with its “generally better-educated personnel,” is commonly viewed in a more positive light than the Army or Marines.

18 Peter Iadicola and Anson D. Shupe, Violence, Inequality, and Human Freedom (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 31. According to Iadicola and Shupe, structural violence is when harmful action results from the hierarchical ordering of categories of people.
women by inhibiting their social freedom in the public sphere, and thus maintaining and extending the prevailing hierarchy between men and women.\textsuperscript{19} Indeed, postwar Japanese government officials acknowledged this threat and sought to counteract it through the establishment of special comfort facilities. However, as the actions of officials in Tokyo further demonstrate, in the re-structuring of power relationships that occurs when a foreign country imposes its military upon another, women—especially those of lesser socioeconomic status, who are most likely to turn to sex work—are subordinated further to the men of both the foreign occupying power and those of their own nation, as well as economically advantaged women who seek to separate themselves from and construct themselves against these “fallen women.”\textsuperscript{20} Because society already marginalizes prostitutes, those in power are willing to sacrifice these women to satisfy the foreign military’s sexual needs in order to protect the nation’s “respectable” women; subsequently, sex workers are typically offered minimal political, economic, or physical protection.\textsuperscript{21} This societal perception exemplifies another pervasive form of structural violence against women, as it refuses to recognize the unique economic impacts of war on women, which may compel them to enter sex work in order to make ends meet. With

\begin{footnotes}
\item \textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 32.
\item \textsuperscript{20} Enloe, \textit{Maneuvres}, 52.
\item \textsuperscript{21} A multitude of academic works note both the prevalence of physical violence against military prostitutes in Japan and South Korea, as well as other international locations where U.S. military forces have been stationed, and the infrequency with which these crimes are reported or their perpetrators prosecuted. Many of these works cite the political dominance of the United States over its host nations, negative societal attitudes toward prostitutes, and the Status of Forces Agreements (SOFAs) often signed between the U.S. and its host nations—which typically ensure U.S. military jurisdiction over alleged crimes committed by American servicemembers in foreign countries—as primary causes. See Höhn and Moon, \textit{Over There}; Sturdevant and Stolzfus, \textit{Let the Good Times Roll}; and Enloe, \textit{Maneuvres}.
\end{footnotes}
widespread casualties among the male population following war, surviving women are often confronted with the loss of their husbands’ financial income while still bearing responsibility for themselves and their children; moreover, with the economic upheaval caused by war, especially if extensive physical damage is incurred in the woman’s community and nation, opportunities for gainful employment outside of sex work may be scarce.22 Yet, when these formerly “respectable” women resort to sex work out of financial necessity, they are immediately re-categorized by society as depraved, immoral “whores” and by the foreign military as carriers of infection that threaten the health of the troops; nevertheless, both the host nation and the occupying forces also tend to view these women as a “necessary evil” in satisfying the male soldiers’ naturalized sexual demands and protecting the nation’s “good girls.”23 Hence, the interplay of enduring gendered stereotypes and expectations that idealize the hegemonically masculine warrior archetype and marginalize women sex workers, as well as the structural violence embedded within hierarchical social systems that presents distinct problems for women in militarized environments, are merged within the context of United States military

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22 Donna Pankhurst, “Sexual Violence in War,” in Gender Matters in Global Politics: A Feminist Introduction to International Relations, ed. Laura J. Shepherd (New York: Routledge, 2010), 149. Pankhurst notes that a “political and social backlash against women is common” in the aftermath of war.

23 Regarding the societal taunting and degradation of military sex workers, Lee and other researchers note that in South Korea, camptown sex workers have long been referred to as yanggalbo, “Western whore,” or yanggongju, “Western princess.” In addition, Seungsook Moon describes stoneings of military prostitutes by children in South Korea, while Sarah Kovner discusses at length how Japanese sex workers were viewed with “antipathy” by the majority of the postwar Japanese population. See Lee, “The Construction of Military Prostitution,” 434; Seungsook Moon, “Regulating Desire, Managing Empire,” 46; and Kovner, Occupying Power, 71.
occupation to create and perpetuate organized prostitution catering to American servicemembers.

**Current Status and Future Implications of U.S. Military Prostitution in Pacific Asia**

Global economic and political transformations since the end of World War II that have bolstered the international power of both Japan and South Korea have likewise altered the construction of the sex industries servicing American soldiers in these countries. With better economic, education, and social opportunities available to them, Korean and Japanese women have been able to abandon sex work; today, women who have migrated from the Philippines, Taiwan, Thailand, the former Soviet Union, and other developing countries comprise the majority of sex workers and entertainers for U.S. troops in South Korea and Japan.\(^2^4\) Although some of these women choose this line of work, many are lured under false pretenses by sexual entrepreneurs, who may tell them they will work as “dancers” or “hostesses,” thereby purposefully deceiving the women by concealing the true nature of the job they will be expected to perform—selling their sexual labor—through the use of vague and deceptive language. That many of these women are victims of international sex trafficking, and thus face multiple legal and economic barriers if they seek to leave prostitution, adds to the complexity of the multicultural and transnational environment in which militarized sex work exists.\(^2^5\) However, the extensive prostitution available to American soldiers in Japan and South Korea only occasionally and briefly draws the attention of American citizens and the

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\(^{2^4}\) Soh, “Military Prostitution and Women’s Sexual Labour,” 49; Moon, “Military Prostitution.”

\(^{2^5}\) Brock and Thistlethwaite, *Casting Stones*, 4.
media. While Katharine Moon attributes this to the gradual and incomplete “mainstreaming” of women’s human rights, Maria Höhn and Seungsook Moon argue that the unfamiliarity of most Americans with the realities of military life—both in the United States and overseas—as well as the media’s emphasis on troops’ heroism and their families’ sacrifices, rather than the impact of U.S. bases and American troops’ actions on host nations, have resulted in widespread public ignorance of U.S. military prostitution.\(^\text{26}\)

Regardless of the reason for this prevailing societal unawareness, its perseverance suggests the American public’s lack of interest in events beyond the United States’ borders, as well as the perpetuation of the social marginalization of, and disregard for, all women involved in sex work and the subsequent endurance of extant processes that continue to ensure the silent operation of militarized prostitution.

During a visit to Camp Smith, Hawaii in May 2012, Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta asserted that, over the next decade, the United States planned to expand its military presence in the Pacific in response to the abating conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as Washington’s perception of Asia’s rising international power.\(^\text{27}\) Although Panetta stated that U.S. policy was shifting away from the establishment of permanent U.S. bases in favor of a mobile, rotation-based approach, he nonetheless noted that more soldiers would be deployed throughout the Pacific and Asia, despite the presence of three

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\(^\text{26}\) Maria Höhn and Seungsook Moon, “Empire at the Crossroads?” in Over There: Living with the U.S. Military Empire from World War II to the Present, ed Maria Höhn and Seungsook Moon. (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2010), 397; Katharine H.S. Moon, “Military Prostitution.”

hundred thirty thousand U.S. civilian and military personnel already there. While this strategic shift to more rapid, short-term deployments is, at least partially, a political effort to deflect accusations of U.S. neo-colonialism and exceptionalism, the consequences of repeatedly sending unaccompanied soldiers on such temporary assignments is not likely to improve the relationship between local citizens and American troops. Indeed, the deployment of soldiers on multiple short-term rotations without their families often inhibits the servicemembers’ ability to become comfortable in the host society and creates conditions conducive to excessive drinking, prostitution, and violence; subsequently, the likelihood that the military will seek to provide emotional and sexual services to these soldiers through the labor of local women potentially will increase. As the United States refocuses its foreign policy away from Iraq and Afghanistan—two nations that have defined and characterized its international presence since the turn of the century—and toward the dynamic, unpredictable circumstances in an increasingly powerful and influential Asia, policymakers and military officials should give serious consideration to the short and long term impact of American soldiers’ presence on the region’s women, who will bear significant and unique burdens from this policy shift, and recognize that the quotidian interactions between these women and U.S. troops will indisputably shape and influence the United States’ international relationship with its Asian counterparts.

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28 Ibid.

29 Höhn and Moon, *Over There*, 403.
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