

Resurrecting Prostitutes and Overturning Treaties: Gender Politics in the “Anti-American” Movement in South Korea

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Although recent expressions of “anti-Americanism” in South Korea have alarmed policy makers in Seoul and Washington and aroused fears about declining popular support for the bilateral alliance, they are understandable manifestations of civil society activism, which has grown since democratization began during the late 1980s. This paper analyzes anti-Americanism as a dynamic coalition movement accompanied by the all of internal competition, conflicts, and contradictions that characterize such movements. In the process, some actors and issues have become high priorities, whereas others have been marginalized or silenced. Professor Moon examines kijich'on (camptown) prostitution around U.S. military bases in Korea as a case study of how power conflicts within the coalition movement, which are focused on nationalism and gender, have exploited and shut out the very people who served as its initiators and early leaders.

ON OCTOBER 28, 1992, in Tongduch'ŏn, the Korean town that houses the U.S. Second Infantry Division, Yun Kūmi, a young prostituted woman, died at the hands of Kenneth Markle, a private in the U.S. Army. She was found “naked, bloody, and covered with bruises and contusions—with laundry detergent sprinkled over the crime site. In addition, a Coke bottle was embedded in Yun's uterus and the trunk of an umbrella driven 27 cm into her rectum” (Rainbow Center 1994, 8). Before her death, she was called, like the thousands of other *kijich'on* (camptown)¹ women who have serviced U.S. soldiers since the 1950s, *yanggalbo* (Western whore) by Korean society. After her brutal murder, she was extolled as *sunkyŏlhan ttal* (pure daughter of Korea) by her compatriots. Before her murder, the life of a camptown prostitute was understood and accepted as short, nasty, and brutish, a necessary cost of maintaining the tens of thousands of U.S. service personnel (overwhelmingly male) who safeguard South Korea's national security. Soon after her death, the National Campaign

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¹Literally, *kijich'on* means “military base village” in Korean. It refers to the local towns and areas adjacent to U.S. military compounds. In this paper, the terms *kijich'on* and *camptown* are used interchangeably.

for the Eradication of Crimes against Korean Civilians by U.S. Troops, the first national organization formed to uncover, monitor, and demand official accountability for U.S. military crimes and abuses against Koreans, was established. Thus, criticisms of Korea's relationship with the United States that had been floating around in the general public found political shape and focus: a social movement aimed at criticizing and transforming Korea–U.S. relations.

In recent years, “anti-American” (or anti-troop)² sentiments and activism in South Korea have become a source of tension between Seoul and Washington. In the winter of 2002–03, the world witnessed massive street protests and candlelight vigils among Koreans as they expressed grief over the killing of Sin Hyosun and Sim Misun by a U.S. armored vehicle in June 2002 and objected to the way the U.S. Forces Korea (USFK) addressed the homicide case in the U.S. military court. On one hand, people wondered why and how the longtime ally against communism could turn so unabashedly anti-American, and Korea observers in both countries worried that such public demonstrations would hurt the alliance between the two nations, destabilize economic relations, and give North Korea an opportunity to divide and conquer South Korean public opinion.³ On the other hand, Korean observers noted that unlike the radical and at times violent anti-Americanism of the 1980s, the current version was mainstream, mostly law abiding, and reflective of the vast generational, social, and political changes that had taken place within Korean society in recent years.⁴

But criticism of the U.S. bases and the terms of the bilateral alliance did not arise out of the blue or in reaction to isolated events. There are numerous reasons for the spread of anti-American sentiment in Korea, including historical grievances that have accumulated over decades, the mismanagement of public concerns by both the U.S. military and the Korean government, and transnational forces that have facilitated the rapid exchange of political opinion and rhetoric (K. Moon 2003). But most significantly, since the democratic movement of 1987 and the end of Cold War in the West, the Korean public has become an active and vocal player in national security discourse and policy formulation, organizing civil society organizations (CSOs) to address the role and conduct of U.S. troops and the shortcomings of the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) in terms of the exercise of Korean sovereignty, bilateral military sales, and U.S. policy toward North Korea. Such citizen activism was part of a larger push during the

²In this paper, the term *anti-Americanism* refers to public criticism of Korea–U.S. relations, U.S. policies toward the Korean peninsula, and the role and conduct of U.S. troops. The term is a misnomer and, in most cases, denotes criticism of the United States (*pi-mi*), not hatred or ill will (*pan-mi*). I also use the terms *anti-American* and *anti-troop* interchangeably because, even if participants are not against the United States, they have some complaint regarding the U.S. military forces, whether it is their presence, their strategic and tactical role, the terms of their presence (the Status of Forces Agreement), or their conduct.

³See CSIS (2003) and Eberstadt (2002).

⁴See CSIS (2004).

1990s to create nongovernmental organizations to address citizens' rights and welfare. For example, 74.2 percent of Korean CSOs were established between 1987 and 1996, with an upsurge during the mid-1990s. Between 1993 and 1996, 62 percent of organizations advocating citizens' rights were established, as were 51.4 percent of environmental organizations, 48.9 percent of youth organizations, and 44.8 percent of human rights organizations.⁵

Although the violence and suffering endured by Korean women who sexually service American servicemen are not the sole causes of the anti-troop movement in Korea, these women's lives and deaths have captured the public's attention and galvanized collective outrage against both real and perceived U.S. military abuses of power and privilege in their host country. Private Markle's murder of Yun Kūmi in 1992 is a case in point. Later, in 1995, the Korean media and public were up in arms over the alleged sexual molestation of a Korean woman by a U.S. serviceman and ensuing violence between Koreans and U.S. personnel inside a Seoul subway train. The media generated much heat and misinformation about the couple and the incident without noting the particulars of their relationship—the man and woman were married and engaging in a public display of affection (*New York Times*, August 24, 1995; *Donga Ilbo*, August 25, 1995). But the general public's quick response of anger and affront reflected an acute sensitivity to a history of sexual privilege over Korean women by foreign men in uniform, whether Japanese during the period of colonialism or American since the signing of the Mutual Defense Treaty of 1953, which established permanent U.S. military bases. Five years later, the murder of another prostitute, Kim Sōnghui, by Private Christopher McCarthy generated more criticism of U.S. troops and the command's irresponsible handling of the case.⁶ Not only activists but also officials and analysts for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade have acknowledged the undeniable link between the abuses and violence (both alleged and proven) against Korean women, especially camptown prostitutes, and anti-troop sentiments and activism.⁷

The case of militarized prostitution demonstrates the openings for and limitations on civil society development in Korea with respect to women's participation, the integration of women's issues into the agendas of CSOs, and gender-sensitive policy outcomes. I argue that in the context of democratic

⁵See H. Kim (2000, 603).

⁶McCarthy admitted to strangling Kim in February 2000, although he stated that he had not intended to kill her. The Korean court tried, convicted, and sentenced him to eight years in prison. His appeal led to a two-year reduction. While under U.S. military custody (in accordance with the SOFA in force at the time), McCarthy escaped on the day of his trial before the South Korean court. He was recaptured about eight hours later. Citizens were outraged by the bungling of the case and exerted more pressure to revise the SOFA so as to strengthen Korean legal authority and custody over alleged American perpetrators.

⁷Based on author's interviews with officials and researchers from the Republic of Korea and a review of internal government documents in Seoul, spring 2002.

consolidation, particular features of the anti-troop and women's movements have narrowed the political space for gender-specific activism and women's leadership in addressing the rights and needs of the very women whose lives are most intimately affected by the presence and conduct of U.S. troops. Specifically, gender politics and the organizational structures of the CSOs in the anti-American movement have abetted the marginalization of militarized prostitution as a political cause. This is a result of the diversification and mainstreaming of women's issues and activism and the actions of CSO leaders who push a "masculinist-nationalist" agenda—aimed primarily at rapid reunification, complete withdrawal of U.S. troops, and a fuller assertion of Korean sovereignty—while subordinating camptown women's grievances to conceptions of nationalism. I will show that the *kijich'on* movement has been orphaned by mainstream women's organizations in some ways but has been adopted by nationalist groups that have instrumentalized the plight and suffering of prostituted women for their own political ends.

Policy debates among CSOs about *kijich'on* prostitution have tended to focus on the bilateral relationship between Korea and the United States rather than the specific social costs of the U.S. military presence or both governments' failure to observe the rights and welfare needs of prostitutes and other local camptown residents. This is particularly problematic given the current demographic diversity of the *kijich'on* residents, especially women in militarized prostitution. Since the mid-1990s, women from the Philippines and the former Soviet countries have been brought into these areas to serve as cheap labor in the sex and entertainment industries around the camptowns. At the same time, the number of Korean women in the sex industry has declined considerably. In Kyŏnggi Province, where 65 percent of the 34 major U.S. military installations are based, the number of Korean women working in bars and nightclubs declined drastically, from 1,269 in 1999 to 386 in 2001 (Saewoomtuh 2001a, 77). The majority of women coming into contact with U.S. soldiers are foreign nationals, often illegal (undocumented) and therefore lacking legal agency and political legitimacy in Korean civil society. Despite the increasingly multinational, multicultural, and multilayered legal (and illegal) arrangements in place in the *kijich'on* areas, Korean activists continue to criticize the United States for degrading and violating *Korean* women's dignity and human rights. Policy proposals reflect this nationalist and bilateralist perspective.

WOMEN, GENDER, AND CIVIL SOCIETY

Democratization and civil society development are not gender-neutral processes. Current feminist examinations of gender, women, and civil society in South Korea approach the issue from two contrasting perspectives. The first emphasizes the limited participation of women and the marginalization of women's issues since democratization began in 1987. For Lily Ling (2000), it

is the invariability of masculinized cultural norms and political practices in state–society relations—despite rapid socioeconomic change in much of East Asia—that compromises the development of democracy and civil society. In particular, she criticizes the “hypermasculine” developmental state for its domination of society. For Seungsook Moon (2002), it is not only the Confucianist political culture but also the more immediate legacy of androcentric and masculine practices under authoritarian rule (and the resistance movements against them⁸) that have limited women’s access to politics and attention to gender-specific issues in the political arena.

The second perspective takes a more optimistic approach—namely, that women and women-oriented organizations have played a significant role in developing civil society and furthering democratic consolidation. This perspective highlights the contributions of the women’s movement to institutional changes in government, especially legal prohibitions against discrimination and the extension of new rights and protections, as well as women’s increased access to governmental bureaucracies and funding for women’s issues (R. Lee 2000; Chung 1997; S. Moon 2002, 489–92).

Other scholars emphasize that the inverse is also true: Civil society can be good for facilitating women’s political participation. According to Larry Diamond, “[B]ecause of the traditional dominance by men of the corridors of power, civil society is a particularly important base for the training and recruitment of women (and members of other marginalized groups) into positions of formal political power” (1994, 9–10). Aili Mari Tripp bears witness to this in her research in Africa, observing that “[p]olitical openings of the early 1990s changed the face of the women’s movement . . . , making it possible for the formation of new nonpartisan organizations geared toward lobbying, civil education, and leadership training, emboldening women to run for office” (2000, 146). Indeed, many of today’s prominent South Korean women in politics and government got their political start as leaders of CSOs and educational institutions.⁹

Both the optimistic and pessimistic interpretations are partially correct. Women’s activism has increased and women-oriented issues in Korea have benefited from civil society activism since 1987, yet women continue to be the weaker sex in terms of their economic and political power and influence in Korea’s fast-changing democracy. What both perspectives share is an overemphasis on the state as an agent of exclusion and marginalization (for pessimists) or of inclusion and empowerment (for optimists). This tension reflects the current tendency in

⁸See Insook Kwon (2000) on the masculinization of the student/democracy movement.

⁹For example, Yi Mikyŏng, a second-term national legislator, and Han Myŏngsuk, the first minister of gender equality and a former legislator. Following the election of Roh Moo Hyun to the presidency in 2003, Han became the new minister of environment, and Chi Uihui, another longtime women’s rights activist, became the new minister of gender equality. Kim Sukhui, an academic from Ewha Womans [*sic*] University, served as minister of education under former president Kim Young Sam.

research on women and democracy to position women between the two extremes of insider and outsider, between institutional mainstreaming and autonomy on the margins (Jaquette 2001, 115–17).

From the optimists, we tend to learn about successful issues but not about those that have been neglected or pushed out by civil society actors and therefore never given the chance to contend for serious state attention. Understanding how and why some women's issues and organizations have become insiders or remain outsiders *within the world of CSOs* is important for understanding how disparate concerns become issues for collective social action and appear on the policy agenda of the state. Studying actors and issues that have been less successful in achieving institutional attention may shed light on the uneven and variable nature of democratic consolidation and civil society development. Jongryn Mo observes that “different levels of democratic consolidation can exist in different political areas within a given type of democracy. The rules of one policy area may be widely accepted while the rules of another policy area may lack such consensus” (1999, 310). I would add that this observation also applies to politics within civil society. The legitimacy of an issue, goal orientation, pluralism, cooperation, and the building of social capital may be more developed in some areas and among some organizations (and members) but lag in others.

It is my contention that before we focus on the state, we need to address how and why certain organizations' agendas and political interests rise from the grassroots to the institutional level. This is particularly important with respect to the civil society movement in Korea, which is dominated by coalition activism. Many CSOs come together to lend resources, legitimacy, and audience to an issue. In the process, there is intense competition over issue articulation, goals, and strategies. Thus, before women's groups can negotiate with the state, women-oriented concerns must be negotiated among civil society groups. In the process, we may find that “early risers” do not necessarily get to shape the political and policy content of the movement—that conflict over what constitutes legitimate issues and actors, and gender biases even among “progressive” groups hinder the progress of submovements such as the *kijich'on* movement.

This is particularly ironic in light of the pioneering work done by advocates for *kijich'on* women since the late 1980s. My Sister's Place, established in 1986 in Durebang, was the first counseling and advocacy center to address the needs of camptown women and one of the first to raise violence against women as a political issue. In the immediate aftermath of Yun's death, civic groups in Tongdunch'ön, such as the Tongdunch'ön Citizens' Committee, taxi unions, teachers' unions, and student associations, as well as advocacy groups and nongovernmental organizations from Seoul, joined forces in early November 1992 to protest GI brutality, the failure of local police to investigate and push for custody, and the lack of investigative work and pressure by the mass media (Yi Kyochöng 2002; Chön 2001, 100–103). These groups staged large demonstrations at the front gates of the U.S. Second Infantry Division and initiated

petitions decrying U.S. troop violence against civilians and calling for a fair investigation and redress of the murder. In particular, they demanded that the Korean government have jurisdiction over the case and custody of Markle.

Others, such as Kim Yonghan of P'yŏngtaek/Osan, where U.S. forces are housed at Osan Air Base, traveled to Tongduch'ŏn to learn how to "do activism" regarding U.S. bases issues and to help publicize the unjust death of Yun. Through his humble start in Tongduch'ŏn, he helped initiate and lead a nationwide movement of camptown residents and activists calling for the consolidation and closing (*panhwan* or "return-of-land" movement) of various U.S. installations in Korea.¹⁰ Many other nongovernmental organization leaders got their start or received substantive grassroots training in Tongduch'ŏn, particularly in the many counseling and advocacy centers that grew throughout the 1990s, such as Saewoomtuh, established in 1996. For example, several active members of Women Making Peace, a major feminist peace organization established in 1997, and Magdalena House, a shelter for women working in the sex industry, began their work on women and violence at My Sister's Place or Saewoomtuh. All of these centers have sponsored Korean and international academicians, artists, religious activists, and members of the media who, through their interactions with prostitutes and their advocates, have helped raise awareness of camptown concerns, gender relations, sexual labor, and national security. They have also helped to create national and transnational networks of activists, advocates, sex workers, and academics to address the concerns of militarism, sexual violence, human trafficking, and human rights.

In addition, the counseling center workers and local advocates who have seen the needs of camptown women firsthand have forged a critical mass of individual and organizational connections that have shaped other larger civic and human rights movements. (Some address Korea-U.S. relations in particular, whereas others cover a range of issues.) For example, Chŏng Yujin, a staff member at My Sister's Place during the early 1990s, helped establish and lead the National Campaign for the Eradication of Crimes by U.S. Troops, the first civic monitoring and watchdog group in Korea to chronicle and investigate crimes against Korean civilians by U.S. service members. Throughout the late 1990s, Chŏng explored the possibilities for peace activism in South Korea, and more recently, she joined the newly created National Human Rights Commission as a civil servant. The commission is the first-ever governmental body established to oversee human rights issues in South Korea.

Some of these camptown-based organizations have enabled the development of networks of social activists, university students, academics, and elected officials

¹⁰In return, the Korean government is obligated to provide 1,540,000 *pyŏng* of new land to the United States, to construct facilities necessary to accommodate those that are being moved, and to share military training fields with the USFK. See Republic of Korea Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (2002).

who have gained firsthand knowledge about the social and political impact of the U.S. troop presence on local residents. In general, they have helped to raise awareness of these issues both within and outside Korea. Advocacy groups such as My Sister's Place and Saewoomtuh sponsor university students who come to the camptowns to conduct their "membership training" or field experience.¹¹ These students, most of whom have never been exposed to *kijich'on* life and politics, serve as volunteers at the centers, participating in community programs; performing administrative work, outreach, and day care and tutoring for the children of prostitutes; and sharing meals and conversation with the camptown women. In this way, people outside the *kijich'on* have come to know something about the living conditions, stresses, hopes, and survival skills of the camptown residents. Consciousness of the relationship between militarization and women and the trade-offs between national and human security are two key lessons that have been learned through these camptown classrooms.

Although Korean society generally views the camptown residents as pariahs and has politically marginalized or ignored their concerns, grassroots persistence and dedication have fostered the development and transfer of civic leaders and women's issues to the national and international levels. Moreover, without the lives and deaths of camptown women to bear witness to the social and psychological cost of housing U.S. troops in Korea, and without the pioneering work of women's advocacy groups and residents' organizations, the contemporary social movement opposing the U.S. bases would lack moral authority. The head of the National Campaign has emphasized that local grievances and complaints prompt organizational activism and offer legitimacy to the social movement (author interview, Seoul, March 27, 2002).

In sum, the camptown advocacy groups have played an important role in developing civil society and democracy. First, they have recruited and trained new political leaders, one of the ten key contributions of civil society to democracy that Diamond (1994) enumerates. Second, by serving as living classrooms for activism with respect to national security and the U.S. troop presence, the camptown groups were the early risers that gave momentum to the "diffusion of a propensity for collective action ... to both unrelated groups and to antagonists" (Tarrow 1998, 144–45). In this regard, they have put gender bias, violence against women, and national security on the national political map, a marked change since the period of authoritarian rule, when national security issues were off-limits to independent public criticism. Third, women's advocates have helped to introduce new issues, such as anti-militarism and peace activism, to

¹¹*Membership training* refers to consciousness- and awareness-raising field trips and internships that were popular during the 1980s student movement (and continue today among university students). The aim was to break the division between the intellectual and educated elite and the masses in Korean society and to encourage students to witness, participate, and assist in the life and labor of factory workers and farmers. The membership training movement later diversified to include different field settings and social issues, including the *kijich'on* and related prostitution.

Korean civil society. Fourth, they have facilitated a change in the balance of power between the capital and the regions, prompting local governments and residents to articulate and press their interests with governmental authorities and Seoul-based CSOs.

DEMOCRATIZATION AND THE RISE OF THE ANTI-AMERICAN MOVEMENT

Environmental conditions conducive to violence against women and other abuses existed prior to Yun's murder and recurred after. A memorandum written by a civilian official of the USFK reveals that the military was aware of the potential for politicization as early as 1968: "It is easily conceivable that the large number of assaults by U.S. personnel against Korean national females, no matter what the provocation might have been given for these assaults, could be made into a major article condemning American brutality" (McReynolds 1968). In contrast to the public attention that Yun's death received, the *kijich'on* women who lost their lives to GI violence during the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s remained largely unacknowledged and unclaimed by the larger Korean society. For example, on July 13, 1977, an equally brutal and egregious murder took place near Kunsan Air Base, but it was barely noticed by the public. The official U.S. Air Force investigation report of the murder recorded the following observations:

Victim was possibly rendered unconscious either by a blow above the right eye, or by restricting the flow of oxygen to the brain with the scarf tied around her neck.... At some point Victim was conscious enough to grasp hair from her assailant's body with her right hand, which should have caused pain to her assailant. Due to the amount of Kleenex forced into her mouth, Victim again lost consciousness. Victim's assailant then apparently proceeded to stab Victim in the chest, stomach and vaginal area, while standing over her. It appeared that the assailant kneeled over Victim, pulled Victim's head up towards his chest and then stabbed Victim in her back ..., breaking the knife on the third thrust, leaving the knife blade imbedded in Victim's back....¹²

Why then, did public awareness of and political activism to address *kijich'on* conditions and women become a national affair only in the fifth decade of the U.S. troop presence in Korea?

Beginning in the late 1980s, democratization and the accompanying growth of "NGOism" created a political context in which the localized, marginalized,

¹²See U.S. Department of the Air Force (1977), obtained through the U.S. Freedom of Information Act.

privatized, and taboo reality of *kijich'on* women's lives could become public. In contrast, during the nearly four decades of military authoritarian rule in Korea, political expressions and activities criticizing the U.S. forces in Korea were suppressed by the state. Article 7 of the 1980 National Security Law, which addressed praise, encouragement, or sympathy toward antistate organizations, was "used to imprison people who [wrote] or disseminated material about the North Korean system of government, or ... criticized the South Korean government or the presence of U.S. armed forces in South Korea" (Amnesty International 1991, 6). In the larger context of limited rights and protections for regular citizens, those of *kijich'on* women were close to nonexistent. Generally, the government viewed military prostitution as a necessary evil to accommodate the social and sexual needs of U.S. servicemen, and it began to regulate the women systematically during the early 1970s (K. Moon 1997).

However, legal and political conditions for independent civic engagement in foreign policy and national security improved markedly under the civilian presidential administration of Kim Young Sam during the early 1990s. Kim's administration emphasized democratization, diversification, and globalization of Korean society and its foreign policy, including new attention to "communal and societal security" (J. Lee 1999, 240). In contrast to the authoritarian past, Koreans no longer had to fear the state and silently endure personal costs in the name of national security. Since then, in addition to demonstrations and pamphleteering, citizens have begun testing the legal system to address their grievances and demand redress. For example, on July 19, 2000, the Citizens' Coalition for Economic Justice challenged the legality of the SOFA in South Korea's constitutional court. The brief alleged that the agreement "violates the Korean Constitution's provision on human dignity, equal rights, the right of criminal victims to testify in court, environmental rights, and the right to the pursuit of happiness."¹³

The case is striking for two reasons. First, rather than challenge the SOFA and the U.S. authorities on the streets, the case was the first institutional attempt to "de-link" national security agreements between two governments in order to ensure the protection of individual civil and human rights. In other words, national sovereignty could no longer trump individual rights, and Koreans were willing to put their legal system to the test. Second, the claim was filed on behalf of the common people living near the U.S. bases who had suffered loss or damage. Attorney Lee Sökyön, secretary-general of Citizens' Coalition, registered the claim specifically on behalf of the parents of the murdered prostitute, Kim Sönghui.¹⁴

¹³Citizens' Coalition for Economic Justice, "SOFA Constitutional Review/Claim Request," July 19, 2000.

¹⁴Ibid.

In tandem with this increased rhetorical and institutional openness at the central government level, the decentralization laws of 1991 and 1995 allowed for enhanced local autonomy and citizen participation in many areas, including national security. Since 1995, Koreans have been able to elect local and provincial officials for the first time in more than 30 years, and officials have been eager to promise economic development, improved social services, and stronger communities to their local constituencies. Compared to the authoritarian decades, when all local matters were controlled by the capital, in recent years, local authorities have begun to pay much more attention to resident-related policies in general and social policies in particular (J. S. Lee 1996, 68). Moreover, new laws to boost citizen access to information, government transparency, and self-governance have emboldened local populations around the U.S. bases to scrutinize and voice their opinions about the U.S. presence and the behavior of the troops.¹⁵

In contrast to the authoritarian period, when local officials suppressed residents' criticism of and protests against U.S. troops, decentralization has fostered cooperation among officials, residents, and activists to assert local power with regard to the U.S. forces and the central government. For example, starting in the spring of 2000, local government officials representing the U.S. base areas joined forces to pressure the central government for more funding and attention to economic development and environmental assessment. They submitted legislation outlining such ends, arguing that residents near the U.S. bases bear a disproportionate and undue share of the burden of maintaining the U.S. troop presence.¹⁶ This has been one of the most significant developments in Korea's rapid democratization process and represents a startling reversal of nearly fifty years of local government dereliction of duties toward what most of the nation deemed pariah communities.

Coalition activism explains how and why disparate activist groups, local officials, and residents have been successful in mobilizing public sentiment around this issue. The CSOs participating in the so-called anti-American movement represent a wide range of groups, ideological perspectives, issues, activist experiences, intensities of personal commitment, and political and policy agendas. The main constituency includes the National Campaign, women's groups, religious activists, law professionals, human rights organizations, consumer groups,

¹⁵Consider the Republic of Korea's Laws Relating to the Disclosure of Information by Public Organizations, which grew out of local-level initiatives pressing for citizen access to government information, as another aspect of democratic deepening in Korea that fosters citizens' demands for government transparency, accountability, and consultation on relevant issues at all levels of government. The law was established in December 1996 and has been applied since 1998.

¹⁶See the Republic of Korea, National Assembly, Bill 16102, "Migun kongyŏ chiyŏk chiwŏn mit chumin kwŏn'ik poho e kwanhan pŏmlyul'an" (Legislative Bill on Support to the USFK Regions and Protection of the Rights and Interests of Residents).

environmentalists, academics, radical students, peace activists, both progressive and conservative labor organizations, and local residents.

Small, localized groups have been able to voice their grievances and call for redress through larger, more well-known, and more powerful national mainstream nongovernmental organizations, such as the Citizens' Coalition for Economic Justice. These larger, more established groups, which include Korea's two main environmental organizations (Korea Federation of Environmental Movements and Green Korea United), have been able to broaden their scope by going into the field to investigate environmental issues related to the U.S. military in the camptown areas. Groups and individuals, both at the center and on the periphery of Korea's new civil society, have been busy creating a web of connections related to the U.S. military presence. Fred Rose emphasizes that such coalitions help decrease the parochialism and homogeneity among single-issue movements and enable formerly unconnected and opposing actors to "go beyond isolated interests or abstract values" that reproduce divisions (2000, 205). Moreover, engaging in coalition activism helps these individuals and organizations to share information, interpretive frames, methods of mobilization; to participate in protest and lobbying; to debate their differences; and to compromise and build trust and cooperation. These civic and political practices are considered crucial to the development of civil society and the strengthening of democracy (Diamond 1999, 242).¹⁷

Additionally, transnational networks of anti-base activists, particularly in Asia, have enabled Korean activists to address a broader audience, exchange organizing methods, and gain moral and political support. In this regard, transnational activism and solidarity around gender and women's issues have been indispensable in defining and shaping the larger social movement regarding U.S. bases in Asia. For example, starting in the late 1980s, Korean, Japanese, Filipina, and North American feminist activists began to exchange information, arrange mutual visits, and coordinate activities to address problems related to the U.S. troop presence and women and gender relations in each country or locale. Following the murder of Yun Kūmi in 1992 and the gang rape of an Okinawan girl by U.S. Marines in 1995, gender concerns related to the U.S. presence became national and international political issues in both societies. Starting with women's solidarity activism, the transnational networking of nongovernmental organizations and individuals has widened to bring attention to non-gender-specific issues and has given international legitimacy to what were once deemed local problems.¹⁸

¹⁷For a detailed discussion of the anti-American movement as a social movement in the context of Korea's democratic consolidation and civil society development, see K. Moon (2003).

¹⁸For example, in 1998, Okinawans formed the Han-Oki People's Solidarity for the purpose of educating themselves about U.S. military-related problems affecting Koreans and to network with peace activists in Korea, Taiwan, the Philippines, and Puerto Rico. Koreans have also visited Okinawa to explore issues related to the U.S. military presence in Okinawa and anti-base activism.

COALITION STRUCTURE, ISSUE ORIENTATION, AND THE MARGINALIZATION
OF CAMPTOWN WOMEN

Coalition politics can facilitate the cross-fertilization of issues, methods of activism, and disparate audiences. Because women's issues do not exist in a vacuum, such a multifaceted and integrationist approach to their recognition and analysis, as well as the public's response to them, may be necessary and constructive. However, coalition politics by nature is riddled with disparate and often competing organizational interests and conflicts over agenda setting, goals, methods of activism, and leadership. Though debates and compromises over these matters may be conducive to the generation of new democratic habits and the building of social capital among different groups and individuals,¹⁹ they also make it difficult to maintain a focused, sustained, and cumulative approach to addressing and advocating women's needs.

In the anti-American coalition movement, women's organizations and human rights groups are not the primary players, in spite of the fact that women's activism on behalf of camptown women during the late 1980s and early 1990s served as a foundation for CSO opposition to U.S. power and privilege in Korea. Rather, since the mid-late 1990s, organizations and activists (as well as local officials) focused on environmental, legal, and reunification interests have shaped the movement's policy concerns, political rhetoric, and course of action. Specifically, Green Korea United, the Citizens' Coalition for Economic Justice, Lawyers for a Democratic Society (Minbyun), and the National Alliance for Democracy and Reunification of Korea (Chöniguk Yönhap) have played leading roles. The National Campaign has continued to serve as the main watchdog group and a clearinghouse for information related to USFK conduct toward Korean civilians, but with its small staff, the organization has had to rely on the human resources, organizational infrastructure, mobilization power, and constituent reach of other CSOs.

The prominence of these organizations reflects the multifaceted nature of the anti-American movement, but it also reflects two salient characteristics of civil society activism. The first characteristic is the proliferation and diversification of women's organizations throughout the 1990s, a change that has made the coordination of issues, goals, and methods of action among them more complicated and difficult. In short, the challenges and obstacles to achieving solidarity on specific issues have increased in tandem with the growth of civil society.

Koreans and anti-base activists from Vieques, Puerto Rico, have built bridges of cooperation and solidarity, made visits to the strafing ranges used by the United States, and publicly supported one another's protest movements.

¹⁹For a fuller explanation of this point, see K. Moon (2003).

Whereas women's activism in the military authoritarian period from the 1970s to the late 1980s focused mainly on labor rights, opposition to sex tourism, and the struggle against authoritarian regimes, the period since 1987 has been characterized by a wide and ever-growing array of concerns: equal employment, the environment, consumer rights, electoral participation, political reform, human rights, disability rights, sexual harassment, anti-militarism, peace, reunification, welfare provision, maternal care and the development of day care, abolition of the patrilineal family registry system, and more. Some of these issues were around during the earlier period, but the momentum, mobilization of resources, and media attention to these issues have been made possible by the new democratic environment.

Within the larger women's movement, there has also been a tendency toward less radical, more mainstream issue representation. According to Seungsook Moon,

In particular, the imperative to reach out to diverse groups of women in largely conservative local communities often means that these organizations start with less controversial matters such as the environment, consumer rights, and childcare, rather than issues such as sexual/domestic violence that speak directly to power relations between gendered individuals. (2002, 490).

This is a function of both the ascendance and dominance of the middle class and the increasing institutionalization of women's political roles and women's issues in the new political environment (R. Lee 2000; S. Moon 2000, 141). This contrasts with the earlier generation of the women's movement, which focused on working-class women and socioeconomic inequalities and gave rise to female leaders from the factories, slums, and farms (Chung 1997, 30). And although some highly visible female politicians and government officials received the bulk of their political training and experience through radical activism during the 1970s and 1980s, they have had to reflect and respond to a wider spectrum of political ideology and interests since assuming national public office. Under these conditions, spearheading the cause of prostituted women is not the way to win friends and influence people in the overwhelmingly male-led and hardnosed Korean political establishment.

The diversification and mainstreaming of issues are compounded by competing perspectives on the sex industry that are not easy to reconcile. For example, the debate about whether women are agents or victims, prostitutes or sex workers, which has been going on in Western academic and activist circles²⁰ has also been taking place in Korea in recent years, making agreement on how

²⁰See Kempadoo and Doezema (1998), part I.

to address the trafficking of women, camptown prostitution, and the sex trade in general more difficult.²¹ For example, in the fall of 2001, Korean women's groups and the Korean Women's Development Institute, a government-sponsored think tank for women's issues, made their first efforts to draft and propose the Special Act on the Prevention of Sex Trafficking to the National Assembly. Initially, the proposed bill emphasized harsher punishment for pimps, traffickers, and bar owners and the provision of protection and welfare services for victims of trafficking, particularly foreign nationals. It also deemphasized the punishment of prostituted women.

But there was disagreement among the women's organizations over the criminal status of prostituted women and the need for state-regulated sexual commerce. Many advocates for camptown women opposed the treatment of prostitutes as criminals and particularly opposed their institutional detention and imprisonment, whereas mainstream women's representatives advocated some type of detention and the retention of state-designated and regulated prostitution zones (M. Kim 2001, 27; author interviews, P'yŏngtaek, June 14, 2002). Contradictory provisions advocating both the punishment and protection of women resulted, together with feelings of rancor among the participating women activists.

In the 1990s, the "comfort women" (*chōngsindae*) movement became the focal point of aggressive activism with regard to militarism, sexual violence, and women's human rights. Although the leaders of this movement and those of the *kijich'on* movement initially attempted to join forces and work together for women's human rights, their differences over the moral legitimacy of the women in each category—former comfort women as chaste women who are forced into prostitution and slavery versus camptown women who are unchaste, voluntary participants in prostitution—ultimately split them apart. They "lost the opportunity to promote an expanded understanding of human rights that incorporates issues around human trafficking, sexual exploitation and violence into the mainstream of the women's movement" (K. Moon 1999, 326). As the comfort women gained ground nationally and internationally, they overshadowed the fledgling movement for camptown women's rights and welfare. These cases of conflict and competition are particularly regrettable, as the human, financial, and institutional resources available to address marginalized women's concerns in Korea are scarce in the first place.

The second characteristic of civil society activism is the tendency of Korean CSOs to adopt maximalist strategies and to engage in zero-sum conflict (Seong 2000, 101). Although Kyoung-Ryung Seong attributes this trend primarily to interest-based associations (e.g., labor and professional groups), the observation

²¹Sea-Ling Cheng's doctoral dissertation (2002) reflects these tensions and debates. Jae Hee Baek (2002) portrays the identification of self and other women as "prostitute," "sex worker," or "entertainer" among women in the camptowns.

also applies to many leaders of the anti-American movement. Such maximalist thinking is expressed (depending on internal politics) in terms of foreign policy goals such as the revision of the SOFA, the reduction or withdrawal of U.S. troops, resistance to U.S. hegemony, peace treaties between North and South Korea, and the reunification of the Korean peninsula. This reflects the continuing legacy of the antiauthoritarian and prodemocracy struggles of the 1970s and 1980s, during which time many in the CSO and activist communities tested their mettle or came of age politically. Their political environment was characterized by *tujaeng* (struggle or fight) and zero-sum stakes: life and liberty versus death or imprisonment; military versus civilian rule; dictatorship versus democracy.

Those who espouse maximalist strategies regarding the U.S. troops tend to be male. They disparage and disregard calls by some female activists to focus attention on individual human suffering, particularly that of camptown women who live with day-to-day forms of exploitation, social marginalization, and violence. Chŏng Yujin, cofounder and former leader of the National Campaign, recounts conversations and debates with male activist critics of the United States who argue that withdrawal is the “fundamental” issue and that rape, murder, sexual exploitation, and the abandonment of Amerasian children are “minor, personal” issues. They charge that the National Campaign is merely reformist, that it has neglected to put national reunification first and lead the cause for withdrawal. They also blame such reformism and the assertion of gender and sex issues for causing a split in the collective movement (Chŏng 2000a, 228–31).²²

Under such masculine nationalism, women’s suffering becomes a symbolic currency that is detached from their actual lives and needs. Chŏng, a longtime activist who started out at My Sister’s Place, passionately criticizes the male tendency to create a pecking order among activist causes, ranking issues such as the withdrawal of troops and national reunification at the top and putting individual human rights at the bottom (Chŏng 2000a, 231; 2000b, 94). In her written critique, Chŏng offers a biting challenge to those who value the withdrawal of U.S. troops above all else:

With no clarity about the timetable and method of a withdrawal, what are individuals who suffer the consequences of U.S. military misconduct supposed to do? Does it mean that only the imperialist U.S. military and the Korean government that shields it are to blame for the crimes (by the U.S.) that occur until the time of withdrawal? And that as long as progressive activists keep denouncing the U.S. military, they bear no responsibility [for allowing crimes to continue]? (Chŏng 2000a, 233; author’s translation).

Here, she places moral and political responsibility for creating conditions that engender crimes by U.S. troops against Korean civilians not only on the U.S.

²²See also Chŏng 2000b, 94.

and Korean authorities but also on activists who disregard and disparage the human rights of camptown residents, especially the prostitute population.

According to Chŏng, of all the concerns raised by anti-troop CSOs during the 1990s, those regarding camptown women's rights and welfare encountered the most resistance among the predominantly male-led leadership. Male leaders revealed their sexist bias, blaming *kijich'on* women for "volunteering" to consort with U.S. soldiers and thereby inviting danger upon themselves. They questioned the need for society to protect such "impure" women, even when they were the victims of crimes, and accepted the lack of societal attention to their needs as inevitable (Chŏng 2000b, 106). Kim Hyunsun, head of the Saewoomtuh counseling center and a leading figure in the *kijich'on* advocacy movement, believes that such moralistic and dualistic thinking abets the tendency among even progressive human rights activists to categorize individuals as "deserving of human rights protection," "deserving less protection," or "deserving no protection" (H. Kim 2001).

The maximalist tendency among CSOs and the nationalist inclination to subsume women's bodies and sexuality as collective property go hand in hand with the anti-troop movement. Because "fundamental," collective concerns such as reunification and national sovereignty rank at the top of the masculinist agenda, private, "individual" concerns are considered important only if they are useful for advancing the former. Chŏng (2000b) condemns this kind of "instrumentalization" (*toguhwa*) of individual and human rights among progressive activists as politically hypocritical and morally cruel. She condemns what some of her male colleagues have uttered—that the larger the number of victims (of U. S. servicemen), the more power for the nationalist cause (2000b, 92, 95)—and ultimately reveals the emptiness of the nationalist promise for women: Whether it is the nationalism of the right or the left, "nation" is not an inclusive concept. In both instances, women are excluded (2000b, 96; telephone interview with the author, Seoul, May 2002).

Masculinist nationalism is manifested in yet another way in the activism against U.S. troops: the question of who is the legitimate actor for the nation. Again, Chŏng notes, based on her extensive movement experience, that her male colleagues repeatedly emphasize that in activism concerning the nation and national sovereignty, men should be the leaders. This is their way of criticizing her organization, the National Campaign, for its all-female leadership. The gender-biased message is that men should be taking on the "important work on behalf of the nation" and that an organization run by women cannot be maximally effective in the nationalist cause (2000b, 99–100).

A tendency among nationalist (and internationalist) movements to subsume and deligitimate expressly feminist or women-centered interests has long existed in Korea and elsewhere.²³ Both the anticolonial independence movement and

²³See Alexander and Mohanty (1997). For an argument supporting the coexistence and synergy of nationalist and feminist movements, see Heng (1997) in the same volume.

the socialist movement of the 1920s and 1930s exhibited such tendencies despite their progressive rhetoric about the emancipation of women. Kenneth Wells (1999), for example, discusses the way in which male nationalist and socialist leaders regarded the *Kūnuhoe*, a socialist-nationalist women's organization that was active from 1927 to 1931, as a subsidiary movement and the way in which female leaders themselves came to uphold the view that national liberation was the "fundamental" issue rather than gender relations or specific women's issues. Women working for nationalist objectives "were hindered in their pursuit of an independent agenda by lack of support from other women, hostility from Korean men, the nationalists' stranglehold on the debate, and the subsumption of women's liberation under the socialist agenda" (Wells 1999, 193).

Feminist scholars of Korean history and society have remarked on the pattern of "androcentric citizenship" (S. Moon 2002) that continues to marginalize or dismiss women-centered standpoints and agendas at both the state and societal levels. Chungmoo Choi notes that Korea's colonial and anticolonial experiences gave rise to a national subjectivity "[that] has been exclusively a male subjectivity" (1998, 14). In critiquing the masculinist political culture of Korea's military authoritarianism after independence, Seungsook Moon describes how official or state nationalism under Park Chung Hee emphasized the androcentric national subject as citizen-soldier, with a stronger "militaristic tint" during the 1970s as military authoritarian rule became more severe (S. Moon 2000, 143–44). The progressive democracy movement of the 1980s was no different, as Insook Kwon (2000) cogently describes gender politics within the student movement as male-dominated and masculinist in its thinking and organizing. During the same period, when the Korean Women's Association United joined the National Federation of Nationalistic and Democratic Movements, the "center of all democratization and reunification movements" (Chung 1997, 28), in 1989, women faced familiar criticism from the predominantly male organizations for being "passive and formal." For the men, real politics was assumed to take place on the streets through demonstrations and confrontations with the government rather than by gradually improving the rights and interests that the women were promoting through legislation and system reform.

Despite the persistence of such masculinist thinking and strategizing, today, there is more room in the political arena for gender-specific concerns than was the case during the early twentieth century or during the predemocratic 1980s. For one, men and masculinist politics do not have a stranglehold on the anti-American or nationalist debate. This movement is neither ideologically dogmatic nor violence prone. It does not seek to revolutionize or fundamentally change Korean society, and it is a coalition movement that serves as an umbrella or clearinghouse for many types of political, social, and economic grievances and criticisms (K. Moon 2003). By definition and structure, it cannot claim to be one thing or another for a significant period of time. Rather, its very fluidity—in

personnel, leadership, agenda priorities, goals, tactics, and interdependent relationships between the center and the localities—has allowed the gender debates to surface. In addition, because the anti-American or nationalist movement is part and parcel of the process of democratic deepening, gender, along with the environment, regional autonomy, and other issues, is one of many legitimate public interests. As a consequence, women and women-specific issues have not been purged from the movement but rather have found varied ways to articulate and activate their concerns. The challenge today is more a matter of political contestation and less a matter of legitimacy.

FROM MOVEMENT POLITICS TO POLICY POSITIONS

In policy terms, “important work on behalf of the nation” has been conceptualized bilaterally as Korea versus the United States. Since the mid-1990s, the specific task for activists has been to push for the revision of the SOFA, which formally outlines both governments’ terms, duties, and obligations for the stationing of U.S. troops in Korea. The coalition movement for the revision of the SOFA, the People’s Action to Reform the SOFA (PAR-SOFA), has insisted that the Korean government’s jurisdictional and legal authority over alleged criminal cases involving U.S. troops be strengthened, especially in serious cases such as murder and rape. The PAR-SOFA efforts have included *kijich’on* women and children’s rights and welfare, but in the end, gender-specific issues have not yet gained prominence.

Some women’s organizations, including Saewoomtuh, tried to assert *kijich’on* women and children’s interests in the CSO debates as late as July 2000, just before the last round of SOFA negotiations between Korea and the United States was about to take place (Saewoomtuh 2000). Noting that the public and anti-troop activists were all overlooking the very population that has been most physically and historically affected by American servicemen’s behavior—*kijich’on* women—they criticized not only the U.S. military but also the prejudice and ignorance within Korean society toward these women. They endorsed SOFA provisions that would give the Koreans greater power over troop-related crime cases, especially the investigation of cases involving Korean civilians, and demanded the incorporation of protections for camptown women and children: job training and funding of social welfare programs for *kijich’on* women; the elimination of government-sponsored examinations for sexually transmitted diseases, which are mandated for all women working in camptown bars and clubs; financial support from the U.S. authorities for the living and educational costs of Amerasian children in Korea who have been abandoned by their American fathers; the incorporation of the needs of women and Amerasian children into the economic development plans of local towns following any future U.S. troop withdrawal or base consolidation; the enforcement of HIV/AIDS tests for U.S. service

personnel in Korea; and sexual violence and crime prevention-training programs for U.S. troops (Saewoomtuh 2000; PAR-SOFA 2000; Yi 2000).²⁴ Unlike most of the PAR-SOFA activists, however, they were emphatic that the SOFA is neither the sole source of the *kijich'on* women's problems nor the answer to them. These women leaders called for legal and institutional accountability by both the U.S. and Korean authorities to recognize and protect women's human rights (Saewoomtuh 2000; Yi 2000).

The revised SOFA, which took effect April 2, 2001, reflects two of these concerns, but in ways that women did not bargain for. It outlines twelve major crime categories, including murder and "egregious rape," for which Korean authorities can take a U.S. service member into custody at the time of arrest and indictment rather than after the conclusion of the legal proceedings. But even in such cases, a number of conditions must be met.²⁵ Concerned Korean women's organizations took issue with the revised provisions, officially opposing the ratification of the SOFA at a hearing before the National Assembly. First, they argued that the notion of egregious rape is confusing and nonsensical, questioning the possibility of nonegregious rape. They also argued that the particular conditions for custody upon indictment make it nearly impossible for American rape suspects to be apprehended and detained by the Korean police because of the usually witness-free, he said/she said nature of the crime. In addition, they challenged, how would authorities determine what kinds of evidence indicate egregious rape? From their perspective, these revisions would continue the history of ignoring sexual violence and crimes against camptown women, leaving the burden of proof on them, offering loopholes for U.S. servicemen, and allowing camptown women to suffer injustice (Lee Kim 2001). Their demand for the creation of articles mandating regular examinations of servicemen for HIV/AIDS as a way to protect the health of camptown women was met halfway. The revised SOFA does not stipulate that the U.S. military will conduct regular check-ups, but it promises to share quarterly statistical information on troops with HIV/AIDS with the Korean government.²⁶

²⁴See Saewoomtuh Counseling Center (2000).

²⁵See the Agreed Minutes to the Agreement under Article IV of the Mutual Defense Treaty between the Republic of Korea and the United States, Status of U.S. Armed Forces in the Republic of Korea, as amended January 18, 2000. Article 22, 5:2 states, "In cases where the Republic of Korea authorities have arrested an accused who is a member of the United States armed forces or the civilian component, or a dependent at the scene of the crime, in immediate flight therefrom or prior to the accused's return to U.S. control and there is adequate cause to believe that he has committed a heinous crime of murder or an egregious rape, and there is necessity to retain him for the reason that he may destroy evidence; he may escape; or he may cause harm to the life, person, or property of a victim or a potential witness, the United States military authorities agree not to request transfer of custody unless there is legitimate cause to believe that a failure to request custody would result in prejudice to an accused's right to a fair trial."

²⁶See the Understandings to the Agreement under Article IV of the Mutual Defense Treaty between the Republic of Korea and the United States of America regarding Facilities and Areas

None of the PAR-SOFA coalition organizations were satisfied with the revisions, and they collectively stated their opposition to the ratification of the revised SOFA before the National Assembly. They demanded another round of revisions to more substantively address their initial calls for change. But a comparison of environmental and women-related issues reveals that the politics of issue salience among CSOs affected agenda setting at the policy level. Despite all civic groups' discontent with the revisions, the environmental interests had their issues addressed by the Korean negotiators, debated by both negotiating teams, and incorporated into the revisions, whereas women-related issues received barely any attention at the policy level. Green Korea United and the Korea Federation of Environmental Movements were established only in the mid-1990s, in contrast to the camptown women's centers, which were organized years earlier. Environmental issues gained serious public attention and popularity only in the 1990s, whereas the plight of camptown women has been synonymous with the fifty-year history of U.S. troop presence in Korea. The contrast is stark: Environmental issues quickly rose to the surface of public consciousness and came to represent anew the degradation and destruction of Korea by U.S. forces, whereas the camptown women—and the metaphorical degradation they represented—remained below the surface.

The environment was never a substantive topic during the SOFA discussions between Korea and the United States, but it became "crucial" in the mid-1990s (CSIS 2001, 5). During earlier attempts to renegotiate the SOFA (1995–96) and at the outset of the previous negotiating round (summer 2000), the Korean government had pushed for the discussion of a broad range of issues, particularly the environment and labor rights (of Korean nationals working on U.S. bases), but the U.S. government had been willing to discuss only the issue of criminal custody. It was the intense activism of environmental groups through public awareness efforts, media reports, and government lobbying (particularly through the new Ministry of Environment) that led to the official adoption of the environment as an indispensable agenda item. Neither civic groups nor the new Ministry of Gender Equity made any such concerted effort to include women's issues. Moreover, organizational leadership was a significant factor: Green Korea United assumed the first coordinating role in the PAR-SOFA and housed the coalition headquarters in its offices at the outset of the movement. Although the camptown women victimized by U.S. troop abuses served as a rhetorical catalyst and provided activist training for the larger anti-troop and SOFA revision movements, their interests did not rise to the top of the CSOs' agendas and, in turn, received no substantive attention from policy makers.

and the Status of United States Armed Forces in the Republic of Korea and Related Agreed Minutes, amended January 18, 2001, Article 26: 3.

Moreover, the bilateralist framing of the camptown issues among the coalition leaders failed to reflect the current realities and interests of a significant segment of camptown society. As mentioned earlier, the demographic composition of the camptowns today is multinational. Women from foreign countries, not Korean women, constitute a large majority of sex providers and entertainers for the U.S. troops, but this reality remains invisible in the political contestation between the coalition activists and the South Korean government and U.S. authorities. In addition to the women, male migrant laborers from abroad, particularly from Southeast and South Asia, work and reside in or near some of the camptowns. They also patronize the local camptown bars and clubs. These foreigners increasingly constitute the civilian population of the camptowns. Yet Korean activists' demands in the last ten years have remained steadfastly nationalist. Their focus on the revision of the SOFA as a way to increase the protection of Korean citizens' rights and welfare assumes that only Koreans and Americans reside in these locations and that only Korean civilians are the victims of alleged crimes and misconduct by U.S. personnel. Moreover, the bilateralist and nationalist framing of issues and policy proposals has made it difficult for counseling centers and other care providers in the camptowns to advocate forcefully for a human rights agenda for women, including foreign women.

THE IMPACT OF ACTIVISM ON CAMPTOWN WOMEN

In some ways, *kijich'on* women and related issues have become less invisible and marginalized since the 1990s. Through the nationalization of *kijich'on* realities that were once eschewed as private and peripheral, murder and other types of violence against camptown prostitutes have become a cause célèbre for the revision of the SOFA. *Kijich'on* women have been interviewed on national and international television, and documentary films and academic studies about their lives have been publicized in mainstream society. Some local governments housing the U.S. bases have helped to fund social welfare projects for camptown women through the counseling and advocacy centers (author interviews with Saewoomtuh staff, 1999–2002). Volunteer medical professionals offer periodic health care to *kijich'on* women and children, while university students and religious groups continue to support them morally, politically, and financially.

The agency of camptown women to describe and define their needs and to develop constructive skills has also improved. In some of the counseling and advocacy centers, they engage in arts and crafts and thereby build friendships, raise funds by selling their products, and explore their own creative powers. Women in the Saewoomtuh crafts groups have been particularly resourceful, operating a flower-making cooperative and putting on art exhibitions in recent years. Some of the more articulate women have been encouraged and trained by staff members to participate in peer outreach and counseling, research on

local conditions, and international conferences. In a bold attempt at inclusiveness, staff members at Saewoomtuh also conducted a survey of thirty *kijich'on* women to gather their views on the main issues addressed in the proposed bill for the prevention of sex trafficking. The vast majority opposed the detention and institutionalization of women and supported harsher punishment for pimps, traffickers, and consumers of sex. Noting that “[t]here has been no instance where the opinion of the sisters were reflected in the law-making and revision processes of the enactment of the law against sex trafficking,” Saewoomtuh hoped to have the voices of the *kijich'on* women—“sisters”—reflected in the legislation (Jung, Kim, and Kim 2001, 86).²⁷

However, despite the new public attention and the efforts of nongovernmental organizations to empower camptown women, violence—verbal, economic, psychological, and physical—has remained a daily phenomenon in many of these women’s lives. Alleged murders by U.S. personnel continue to go uninvestigated. Camptown women’s advocates contend that for every one case that receives media attention and legal redress, there are many others that never even reach the initial stage of police investigation (Saewoomtuh 2000; author interviews with Saewoomtuh staff, P’yŏngtaek, June 7, 2002). Moreover, most elderly women who have left the sex trade confront poverty and social abandonment. The stigma of the camptown women, children, and their localities still resounds in the larger society.

Despite the spread of democracy to the camptown areas, residential empowerment has not reversed the marginalization or exclusion of these women. The enhancement and assertion of local power through democratization and decentralization has allowed new groups of local elites with recognizable resources, such as capital, development ideas, legal expertise, and political backing, to shape policy agendas. Camptown women do not possess such resources. Moreover, for local politicians, there is little political cache in advocating for camptown women’s rights and needs, although in the context of anti-American activism, highlighting the negative social consequences of the U.S. troop presence can generate valuable political capital. Even those who have led protests on behalf of murdered women such Yun Kumi or Kim Songhui have not looked into or advocated for the camptown women who are still living, even though the latter may be bona fide constituents (Author interviews, P’yŏngtaek, June 7, 2002).

Students of democratic consolidation point out that a maturing democracy is one in which civil and political society (elected officials) work together to channel, articulate, and institutionalize disparate, parochial, and loose or free-floating ideas and concerns among the public. For example, Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan state, “Political society—informed, pressured, and periodically renewed

²⁷See Jung, Kim, and Kim (2001, 77–86).

by civil society—must somehow achieve a workable agreement on the myriad ways in which democratic power will be crafted and exercised” (1996, 18). But how hypermarginalized groups such as the prostituted women in camptowns are to inform, pressure, and periodically renew political society remains in question.

Perhaps the dearth of female public officeholders has helped to perpetuate the marginalization of camptown women’s issues. According to recent research on women and democratization by Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart (2001), antiegalitarian political culture appears to be the strongest obstacle to women’s political participation. In this respect, Korea is no exception. As of 2000, Korean women had the lowest share (5.9 percent) of national legislators among the noncommunist countries of East Asia (Jaquette 2001, 118). Even decentralization and local autonomy—which many women had hoped would mean easier access to elected office because of lower levels of competition and entry barriers compared to national politics—have yielded minimal political representation for women. Mikyung Chin observes that in the first local election in 1991, “Women won only 0.9 percent of the seats at both the county and provincial levels, and the number of women victors increased to only about 1.5 percent in the 1995 elections. Given the all-out efforts that women made to gain local representation, these results are extremely disappointing” (2000, 102). Of course, there is no certainty that under more egalitarian conditions, female politicians at any level would be more likely than men to address the camptown women’s concerns, as prejudice against “taboo constituents” such as the *kijich’on* women limit the ways in which “democratic power will be crafted and exercised” by women and for women.

CONCLUSION

The role and plight of the *kijich’on* advocacy movement within the larger coalition efforts to ensure citizen participation in foreign policy confirms Sydney Tarrow’s observation that “the power to trigger sequences of collective action is not the same as the power to control or sustain them.” Tarrow goes on,

Internally, a good part of the power of movements comes from the fact that they activate people over whom they have no control. This power is a virtue because it allows movements to mount collective action without possessing the resources that would be necessary to internalize a support base. But the autonomy of their supporters also disperses a movement’s power, encourages factionalization, and leaves it open to defection, competition, and repression. (1998, 23)

With respect to democratization and women, Georgina Waylen notes that “there is no necessary connection between playing an important part in any stage of the

process of democratization and having any particular role during the period of consolidation” (1994, 329). Taken together, Tarrow’s and Waylen’s comments illustrate that, ironically, the very success of early risers in motivating citizen action and transforming larger political processes and agendas leads to less and less leverage over the direction of political action and policy outcomes.

Additionally, the *kijich'on* movement’s inability to play a prominent role in the larger coalition movement is attributable to the fact that social movements in Korea, including the women’s movement, have been moving away, both ideologically and structurally, from a focus on *minjung* (common, downtrodden masses) toward *simin* (citizen) since the mid-1990s (S. Kim 1997). The emergence of hypermarginalized camptown women as a focus of political concern in the early 1990s occurred within a civil society context that still held onto its *minjung* legacy. But as Namhee Lee notes,

[T]he shift from *minjung* to *simin* displaced the poor and the marginalized in the social and political discourse. The true *minjung* who could not revert back to their non-*minjung* identity in the changed sociopolitical reality of South Korea would have to construct their emancipatory narrative on a different terrain, that of articulating the issues largely on the basis of interest (as a right-bearing and right-claiming citizen, for example). (2002, 156)

As I argued earlier, the very notion of *kijich'on* women as rights-bearing and rights-claiming citizens is unstable and vulnerable to manipulation and instrumentalization by more powerful forces in civil and political society.

Rather than being an open marketplace for political interests and ideas, civil society has great power to decide who belongs and who does not, whose grievances and pains are worthy of collective attention, and whose case presents organizations and their leaders with enough political capital to challenge state authorities. This presents a problem for expanding the boundaries of civil society and political participation in general, for those who lack the educational, political, economic, and social resources to claim and exercise their rights are left out in the cold.

The tendency among contemporary anti-American activists to sideline camptown women’s lives beyond symbolism and political manipulation reflects gender, class, nationalistic, and ethnocentric biases among the many self-declared progressive activists, and it supports Jaquette’s prediction that the future does not necessarily promise anything better for women’s political participation in new democracies: “[N]ationalism and identity politics can ‘capture’ gender politics” (2001, 121). When the purpose of civil society activism is to assert national identity and claim collective liberation from victimization by greater forces, it is relatively easy to “establish symbolic linkages between the nation and sexuality, the divided people of Korea and the trespassed and violated [woman’s] body”

(Grinker 1998, 100). It is only in such a context that a *yanggalbo* such as Yun Kūmi could be posthumously rehabilitated to command reverence and sympathy from the surviving members of the national body. But reverence and sympathy do not necessarily translate into rights, equal access, and protection under law for the living.

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