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Permanent War: Oppositional Memory Work and North Korean Human Rights*

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As part of the ongoing exploration of cosmopolitan memory and human rights first pioneered by Ulrich Beck, this study analyzes the cosmopolitan potential of the advocacy efforts of the North Korean Freedom Coalition. Highlighting the close relationship between acts of remembrance and human rights, this prominent US-based network of non-profit groups maintains a complex assemblage of virtual as well as despatialized real world memory apparatuses that draw upon, repackage, and disseminate the trauma of North Korean defectors. However, this memory work is not oppositional enough. The coalition's members are creating a databank of trauma caused by the North Korean state but are willfully suppressing the trauma that their own nations have caused in the region. In particular, their treatment of the Korean War indicates the persistence of national and even hegemonic frameworks of remembrance. This case suggests that cosmopolitanism, far from being inevitable, is vulnerable to new forms of co-option.

Keywords: *North Korean refugees, oppositional memory, North Korea Freedom Coalition, human rights, Korean War*

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Introduction

Ulrich Beck argued that the formation and struggle of cosmopolitan actors is a question that needs to be answered systematically at the empirical level: "How do cosmopolitan coalitions nationally and internationally…become possible and powerful? And how can correspondingly powerful anti-cosmopolitan coalitions be overcome?" (2014, p. 168) This paper responds to Ulrich's call to action by looking at the cosmopolitan potential of East Asian war memories. This is a difficult question because war memories are one of the areas where state-centric frameworks of remembrance remain dominant. This is doubly so in the case of the Korean peninsula, which is locked in a conflict that has never ended. How can war memories transcend the nation-state? Which actors are facilitating this transformation and which actors are hindering it? What kinds of strategies do they use?

Oppositional memory work, an ideological commitment to decenter the state and Western hegemony, is an important pathway by which war memories break free of state-centric frameworks and may explain the success of the national and international cosmopolitan coalitions described by Ulrich. Accordingly, this framework is applied to an empirical study of the advocacy efforts of the North Korea Freedom Coalition (hereafter NKFC), a major transnational network of organizations dedicated to improving the human rights conditions in North Korea.[1] Avowedly cosmopolitan, this organization is a useful case study of the complex interplay between human rights advocacy, memory work, and the Korean peninsula's condition of permanent war. What kinds of memory apparatuses does the coalition employ? How does its commemorative strategies create or utilize cosmopolitan memories? Finally, is it challenged by anti-cosmopolitan coalitions?

This analysis of the commemorative practices of the NKFC and its constituent members—which occur both in the real world and virtual spaces—suggests that cosmopolitan memory formation is definitely occurring. These groups utilize many of the strategies of oppositional memory work to highlight the crimes of the North Korean state. In doing so, they deliberately de-historicize trauma and mix different eras together, in essence creating a shared past of suffering that transforms how people perceive and respond to

[1] We acknowledge that the field of North Korean human rights is broad and diverse. The NKFC, while prominent enough to be the subject of a detailed case study, should not be construed as representative of all North Korean human rights work. Indeed, we must be critical of the NKFC's hegemonic claim to represent virtually all of the major players (see North Korea Freedom Coalition 2017a).

one another. However, we also find important limits to the memory work of the NKFC. In particular, the obfuscation of the Korean War in the coalition's commemorative activities reveals a strong undercurrent of parochialism. Many of the coalition's members are still fighting the Korean War, even if they carefully omit mention of it from their activism. Human rights as a concept is cosmopolitan but as a practice it is often anchored to the nation state or imperial-style universalisms. This makes the memory work of human rights organizations vulnerable to co-option by the very forces that oppositional memory seeks to interrogate. Paradoxically, Ulrich's cosmopolitan and anti-cosmopolitan coalitions, although distinct in theory, are deeply interpenetrated in this case study.

Cosmopolitan War Memories and Human Rights

Even today, in an era where "banal cosmopolitanism" is blurring the distinctions between our economies, food cultures, and societies (Beck 2006, p. 10), war memories remain firmly embedded in state-centric frameworks of remembrance. In the case of the Pacific War, for example, Japan prefers to focus on its own victimization while the Western Allies ignore their continuation of imperialism in the postwar period (Fujitani et al. 2001, p. 9; Jager and Mitter 2007, p. 7). Beyond specific narratives, official remembrance of war serves to reify the nation as the most important container of human existence. Looked at critically, the exhibits, captions and even the layout of most war monuments and museums are meant to convey the idea of the nation as something worth sacrificing one's life for or even killing for. Yet, for most visitors, a monument to the nation's war dead seems completely normal, a fact that evokes Billig's (1995, p. 144) concept of banal nationalism, the process whereby "the nation is mindlessly remembered." This is hardly surprising, considering that the "state remains relevant both as the carrier of the brunt of warfare…and as the major producer and choreographer of commemoration" (Winter and Sivan 2000, p. 38).

An important exception to this has been the memory of the Holocaust. As Levy and Sznaider (2002, p. 88) have argued, the spread of Holocaust commemorations outside of the ethnic and national boundaries of the original perpetrators and victims suggests that the container of the nation-state is being cracked. Moreover, this traumatic memory has contributed to the creation of cosmopolitan morality by becoming a "global icon" of human rights (Levy and Sznaider 2004, p. 152). Beck likewise argues that Holocaust

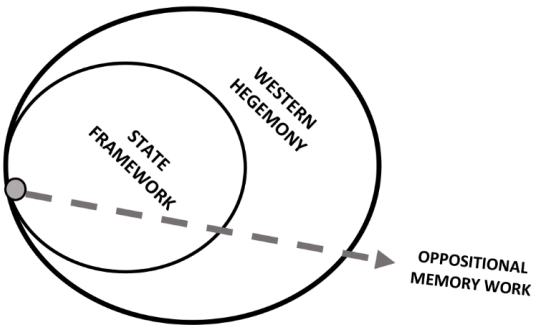

Fig. 1.—Oppositional Memory Work – Concentric Challenges

memories have contributed to the emergence of a cosmopolitan common sense that erodes traditional conceptions of national sovereignty (Beck 2006, p. 69). Thus, our world order is inexorably experiencing a shift in emphasis from international law to human rights (Beck 2000, p. 83). Yet, the Holocaust, although it occupies a privileged position in discussions of cosmopolitan memory, is not the only example. As we have argued elsewhere, East Asian war memories also possess cosmopolitan potential, but the process of breaking national frameworks of remembrance is not easy.[2]

A key component of the process of creating cosmopolitan war memories in East Asia is oppositional memory work. Described by Fujitani, White, and Yoneyama (2001, p. 24) as "works that seek intellectual and cultural diversity and that endeavor to decenter the United States and Europe," oppositional memory activism seeks to rescue marginalized memories from oblivion. In doing so, this memory activism faces a twofold challenge. First, the curators of national frameworks of memory actively resist the inclusion of ethnic, gender, or regional identities that unsettle the state's core myths. The second problem is the legacy of Western imperialism and Eurocentrism, which continues to shape East Asia's memory dynamics. Thus, oppositional memory work can be conceptualized as pushing against two interlocked spheres of domination—one emanating from indigenous state structures and the second emanating from the West (see Figure 1). Key examples of this oppositional approach include Aiko's (2001) work on Korean conscripts in the Imperial Japanese army who were subsequently condemned as war criminals by the Allies, and Dong-Choon Kim's (2007) work on South Korean leftists who were murdered by the ROK Army with American

[2] For a more detailed treatment of this see Soh and Connolly (2014).

complicity during the Korean War.

How do these groups counter state-centric memory? Simply conducting archival work is not enough. Rather, collective memories must be generated by physical configurations of matter and rituals that are performed on a regular basis. We use the term *memory apparatus* to describe the array of instruments used by the state and non-state groups to create, propagate, and mold memory, which includes monuments, public festivals, textbooks, statues, graveyards, museum exhibits and even courts of law. Oppositional memory work attempts to create space for critical remembrance by directly attacking state apparatuses, re-programming them, or creating alternatives. Recent examples of this bottom-up memory work in Korea includes the widespread use of the yellow ribbon to commemorate Sewol ferry victims, and the placement of a comfort women statue outside of the Japanese consulate in Busan by a coalition of civil society groups in direct disavowal of the 2015 Korea-Japan comfort women agreement.

Ultimately, this process of oppositional memory contestation has a synergistic relationship with human rights activism and the formation of cosmopolitan morality. Because oppositional memory workers share a commitment to rescue all marginalized identities, not just their own, it facilitates transnational cooperation and the creation of shared narratives. In particular, oppositional memory activists strategically embrace human rights language to expand their networks and mobilize support beyond ethnic and national boundaries but, in doing so, their patchwork of compromises often end up creating cosmopolitan memory apparatuses, such as the Ring of Honor in Bergen County, New Jersey (see Soh and Connolly 2014, p. 397). These cosmopolitan monuments, which deliberately juxtapose the unique traumas of Irish, African-American, Jewish, Armenian and Korean victims, among others, embody in material form what Beck refers to as a key element of cosmopolitanism: "The affirmation of the other as both different and the same" (Beck 2006, p. 58). By forging connections with distant allies on the basis of shared yet distinct traumas, oppositional memory work transcends the nation and makes cosmopolitan morality possible.

Permanent War

Before zooming in and examining the cosmopolitan memory work of the NKFC in detail, it is important to reiterate the link between contemporary North Korean human rights issues and war memory. The "problem" of North

Korea stretches back to the Korean War, which resulted in three million casualties. The Korean people were indelibly shaped by the trauma of the conflict and it has become an important part of national identity on both sides of the border.[3] The trauma for other participants, particularly China and the United States, can be seen by the fact that public commemoration was slow to develop in both countries (see Edwards 2010, p. xlvii). This paper uses the concept of *permanent war* to emphasize how the root logic of the Korean War has continued to fester, not only preventing a "working through" of memory but even contributing fresh traumas as a result of ongoing security competition.

Although large-scale fighting concluded with the Armistice on July 27, 1953, the conflict on the peninsula itself never officially ended. This mutual state of permanent war has been problematic in the South, where universal conscription has generated a host of human rights concerns, but in the DPRK the strain of prolonged mobilization is unprecedented. Although the North was arguably more prosperous than the South until the 1970s, an aging infrastructure, creeping levels of malnutrition, a military first policy, and a loss of Soviet subsidies at the end of the Cold War were compounded by a series of natural disasters in the 1990s that resulted in the Great Famine, also known as the Arduous March, in which an estimated 600,000 to 1.5 million people died and tens of thousands of others fled the country (Fahy 2015, p. 4). Even though the DPRK opened up somewhat to the outside world out of sheer necessity, it nevertheless maintained high levels of war readiness and devoted large amounts of resources towards developing a nuclear deterrent. This seemingly irrational behavior of the North Korean regime is actually deeply imbricated with the legacies of total warfare. The UN Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the DPRK (2014, para. 25), for example, admits that "the current human rights situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has been shaped by the historical experiences of the Korean people." These factors include "the division imposed on the Korean peninsula, the massive destruction caused by the Korean War and the impact of the Cold War." In fact, invasion fears have heightened since the fall of the USSR, exacerbated by US President Bush's decision to label North Korea as one of the "axis of evil" in 2002. The result is a country perpetually prepared for war. In 2006, the country possessed the fourth largest military in the world (in

[3] An example of this is the long-running controversy over the General MacArthur statue in Incheon, where violent clashes between South Korean conservatives and liberals occurred in 2005 and 2012 (Demick 2005, JoongAng Daily 2012).

terms of personnel), even though its population is ranked 51st and its GDP a mere 115th (Scobell and Sanford 2007, p. 1, Central Intelligence Agency 2017).

Compared to war memories in Europe, where the geopolitical reality of WWII has grown distant from daily lives, the tension between North and South Korea and their allies gives a strong sense of immediacy to war memories. The following case study of the NKFC explores the intersection of permanent war with the memory practices of human rights organizations. How does this coalition of organizations active in the field of North Korean human rights "remember" the Korean War in their commemorative practices and memory apparatuses? Can we generate cosmopolitan memory from a war that has not ended?

The North Korean Freedom Coalition (NKFC)

Overview

Originally founded by the Defense Forum Foundation in 2003, the NKFC is an international network of groups campaigning for North Korean human rights. Although much of the NKFC's work focuses on the rescue and resettlement of North Korean defectors, it also encompasses a broad range of human rights issues, especially religious freedoms. Moreover, in 2016 the NKFC created a special working group on gender issues (see Working Group on North Korean Women 2017). Broadly speaking, this coalition has been influential in shaping US human rights activism towards North Korea (Chubb 2014, p. 241). Among its accomplishments was the successful push for the 2004 North Korean Human Rights Act in the US Congress. Describing itself as a nonpartisan organization, the NKFC consciously utilizes highly cosmopolitan language centered on universal human rights. Among its key goals is the desire to "bring freedom, human rights, and dignity to the North Korean people" (North Korea Freedom Coalition 2017a).

Membership

The NKFC prides itself on a diverse and international membership. As of May, 2017, there are 63 public members of the NKFC (see Table 1).[4] In

[4] This number does not include an undisclosed number of private members, who wish to keep their participation secret for security reasons.

Table 1
The Public Membership of the North Korean Freedom Coalition

American Anti-Slavery Group	Korean Dream
Awareness Respect Compassion (ARC)	Korean Freedom Council (KFC)
China-e Lobby	Korean Freedom Democracy League of America
Christian Solidarity International	Korean War Abductees Family Union
Christian Solidarity Worldwide-USA	Korean War POW Affairs
Citizen's Coalition for Human Rights of Abductees & North Korean Refugees	Leadership Council for Human Rights
Coalitions for America	Life Funds for North Korean Refugees
Coalition for North Korea Women's Rights	National Association for the Rescue of Japanese Kidnapped by North Korea
Commission to Help North Korean Refugees	National Council for Freedom and Democracy
Committee for the Rescue of Korean War POWs	North Korea Network
Council for Human Rights in North Korea	**North Korean Refugees in the United States (NKinUSA)**
Defense Forum Foundation	New York Commission to Help North Korean Refugees
Emancipate North Koreans (ENoK)	North American Religious Liberty Association
Exile Committee for North Korean Democracy	OneFreeKorea
Fighters for a Free North Korea	Open Doors USA
Freedom for North Korea Refugees of Minnesota	PSALT
Freedom Society of America	**PSCORE**
Free North Korea Radio	Religious Freedom Coalition
Free the North Korean Gulag	Salvation Army, U.S.A.
Genocide Watch	Save North Korea
Georgetown University THiNK (Truth and Human Rights in North Korea)	Schindler's Ark
GW THiNK (Truth and Human Rights in North Korea)	Simon Wiesenthal Center
Helping Hands Korea	Southern Baptist Convention, ERLC
Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights	Southern Democratic Alliance (Japan)
Human Rights Coalition-USA	StandToday.org
Human Rights Without Frontiers	The Israeli Jewish Committee Against the Gas Chambers in North Korea
Institute on Religion and Democracy	THiNK (There is Hope in North Korea)
Institute on Religion and Public Policy	The Wilberforce Forum
International Korean War Memorial Foundation	United For North Korean Freedom
Jubilee Campaign USA	Women4NonViolence in Peace + Conflict Zone
Korean-American Freedom Fighters Movement	318 Partners
Korean Congress for North Korean Human Rights	

* Groups written in bold are organizations run by defectors.

oppositional memory work, the weight of numbers is an important way whereby associational life demonstrates its power, so it is not a coincidence that the NKFC includes this list of members at the bottom of all its letters to policymakers and other advocacy efforts. Yet, the membership list is more complicated than it looks. There is a huge diversity in the size, resources, and popularity of the groups listed, ranging from the Defense Forum Foundation, which received $222,461 in 2015, to the Freedom For North Korean Refugees Minnesota, which received a paltry $2,886 (Find the Company 2017a, 2017b). However, the use of alphabetical order to list the coalition's members downplays these differences in power, effectively transforming the largest and the weakest groups into equivalent voices. Yet, subtle hierarchies are also evident. Only some of the groups have URL links provided on the NKFC website. More interestingly, the organizations run by defectors are marked apart from the rest with an asterisk. By doing so, the NKFC is overtly linking its legitimacy to the victims it ostensibly serves. This closeness to trauma is an important consideration of all memory work and a key element in the elaboration of cosmopolitan morality.

Cosmopolitan Memory Apparatus(es)

Although the coalition seeks to improve North Korean human rights in the present and prides itself on being action-orientated, it nevertheless engages in extensive memory work. It is no exaggeration to say that the NKFC and its member organizations are themselves strands of a globe-spanning memory apparatus that seeks to recover, preserve, and disseminate the marginalized memories of the victims of the North Korean state. Preserving and performing victims' trauma through films, audio recordings, artifacts, and testimonies coincides with and assists human rights work in the real world, particularly as a mobilization tool but also as evidence for legal prosecution in the future. This commemoration is also seemingly done for its own sake. For example, North Korea Freedom Week 2016, which was held in Seoul, featured a small shrine established by North Korean defectors to their compatriots who had died attempting to smuggle information out of the country. This event then concluded with an exhibition of the thousands of items that had been smuggled out of the DPRK, including a ridiculous government textbook, a North Korean cell phone, and a lighter with a Chinese brand name allegedly made in a prisoner camp (Scholte 2016).

An important point to make about the memory work of the NKFC is that it is despatialized and dematerialized compared to traditional forms of

oppositional memory. Unlike comfort women organizations, for example, which dedicate themselves to creating and defending commemorative statues in the real world, the NKFC exemplifies what can be described as *virtual* memory apparatuses. The websites of these human rights organizations play a very similar role to monuments in the real world in that they introduce visitors to complex historical traumas in a simplified fashion, using text, images, and videos to explain what happened, why it happened, and what should be done about it–particularly in the form of virtual donation boxes for visitors. The NKFC website is the primary virtual apparatus—buttressed by its long list of member organizations, lists of resources, and an archive of past activities—but there are also links to many of the websites of member organizations. These virtual memory apparatuses are networked to a degree that real world monuments cannot be. Simply clicking a link can move the visitor from a European-based organization defending religious freedom to a Japanese group seeking the return of kidnapped fishermen and school children. Indeed, the nationality of some of these groups are not readily apparent to a casual visitor. Thus, this circle of networked virtual memory apparatuses allows us to experience a multiplicity of perspectives from North America, Asia, and Europe almost instantaneously. This banal cosmopolitanism appears to underscore the NKFC's own appraisal of its membership: "Members are from all political parties and religious faiths and have many different views about North Korea, but share one thing in common: all believe that promoting human rights for North Korea must be the central focus of any and all policy towards North Korea" (North Korea Freedom Coalition 2017a).

The NKFC also engages in real world memory work, albeit in the form of the mobilization of bodies and materials at specific periods of time instead of permanent memorials. The cornerstone of this memory work is the annual North Korea Freedom Week, which is held alternatively in Seoul and Washington, DC. The first Freedom Week was held in 2005 to celebrate the passing of the North Korean Human Rights Act. The most recent Freedom Week, held in Washington from April 23 to 28, 2017, featured a World Congress of North Korean Defectors, a North-South Unification Concert, and a protest outside the Central Chinese TV station (North Korea Freedom Coalition 2017b). These commemorative events not only include official members of the coalition but also other groups and activists—such as the Committee for Human Rights in North Korea, the Isabella Foundation, and a variety of Korean NGOs. Thus, an already inclusive organization must make itself even more accommodating to ensure that its commemorative events are

attended.[5] Since 2009, these week-long events have been complemented by an annual Save North Korean Refugees Day, held every September 24.[6]

Perhaps the most important component of the NKFC's memory apparatuses are the defectors themselves, whose testimonies are stored in virtual repositories and reproducible with the click of a mouse.[7] Defector performances also take the form of photographs, art, music and even dancing. Formal testimonies, particularly before the US Congress and other legislative bodies, are a favored tactic of the NKFC because they allow this trauma to be interjected directly into the political process. Such testimonies, which describe the pain and suffering of defectors in great detail, often leave policymakers visibly moved. In 2014, Shin Donghyuk's testimony, translated by an affiliate of the NKFC, was described as "powerful" and possessing the power to "not only mobilize but shock us into further action" (Congressman Christopher H. Smith in the US House Committee on Foreign Affairs 2014, p. 62). At a subsequent hearing, Congressman Ted Yoho admitted "my wife and I watched a video the other day of the young girl that came through China [from North Korea] and told a very compelling story that would bring tears to anybody's eyes" (US House Committee on Foreign Affairs 2017, p. 63). These tears, evoked by the commemoration and performance of trauma, are suggestive of a cosmopolitan outlook where "the old differentiations between internal and external, national and international, us and them, lose their validity" (Beck 2006, p. 14).

A cosmopolitan outlook does not simply appear on its own. Rather, recordings, images, and stories of trauma play an important role in making it possible. The NKFC's memory work employs trauma, which the coalition's affiliates have painstakingly rescued from oblivion, to deliberately break down the barriers of understanding between people across ideological, national and racial boundaries. A key message, reiterated in endless ways by these memory apparatuses, is that the suffering in North Korea is not occurring to "foreigners" but to fellow humans. Thus, Emancipate North Koreans (2017a) self-consciously specifies that one of its primary objectives is "to help break down barriers between North Korean defectors and 'others.'" A more revolutionary example of this cosmopolitan outlook is Awareness

[5] Attendance is an important indicator of strength. Thus, two busloads of British veterans were opportunistically included in the NKFC's event at the 2016 Freedom Week (Scholte 2016).

[6] For the events of last year's Save North Korean Refugee Day see North Korean Freedom Coalition (2016).

[7] For example, the Coalition for North Korean Women's Rights (2017) has an extensive library of interview videos.

Respect Compassion (2017), a small NKFC member organization based in the United States, which specializes in making crafts for "oppressed, abused, and neglected groups." Among the causes that it supports are North Korean refugees, Syrian refugees, American Indian children, abused women, orphans, and abused animals in local shelters. By including animals in its advocacy, and giving them just as much prominence on their website as other oppressed groups, Awareness Respect Compassion adopts a perspective of suffering that transcends barriers of race, gender, nationality and even our own species.

North Korean trauma helps the NKFC break down barriers of race and nationality but pre-existing cosmopolitan memories are also useful reinforcements. The Holocaust, in particular, is a powerful symbol of suffering that is frequently appropriated. Indeed, the names of several organizations in the NKFC directly evoke Holocaust memory, such as Schindler's Ark and the Israeli Jewish Committee Against the Gas Chambers in North Korea. As well, the Simon Wiesenthal Center, whose associate dean, Rabbi Abraham Cooper, sits on the NKFC's board, is an NGO dedicated to preserving and promoting Holocaust memory. Cooper himself draws close parallels between Nazi crimes and the DPRK, claiming that he has "personally debriefed North Koreans who ran gas chambers in the gulag" (as quoted by Simon Wiesenthal Center 2014). This use of Holocaust memory is also evident in the case of Schindler's Mission to Rescue Refugees from Prosecution and Starvation, a project of 318 Partners (Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission 2010, p. 16). A similarly named project is also operated by Save North Korea (2017). Collective memories of the Stalin-era gulag system and the Soviet Union are also repeatedly mobilized, often in conjunction with the Holocaust or African-American slavery.[8] Thus, the website of Emancipate North Koreans (2017b) asks its visitors: "Did you know? These [North Korean] camps have existed 2x longer than the Soviet Gulag and 12x longer than Nazi concentration camps." The NKFC website has a link to a publication by one of its members, Human Rights Without Frontiers, entitled "Comparative Analysis of Concentration Camps in Nazi Germany, the Former Soviet Union and North Korea" (North Korea Freedom Coalition 2017c). Thus, the case of North Korea is both described by this cosmopolitan memory and, by being repeatedly framed and reproduced as a crime against humanity or even genocide, it is itself in the process of

[8] Among references to African-American slavery, the underground railroad is a frequently used motif (see North Korea Freedom Coalition 2017b).

becoming a de-nationalized trauma that symbolizes the importance of human rights.

War Memories

The NKFC's memory apparatuses and commemorative practices appear cosmopolitan in that they use the language of human rights to break down the dichotomy of us/them while preserving and disseminating the trauma of North Korean individuals. However, their memory apparatuses are not truly oppositional because they stop short of questioning US hegemony in the region or even remembering its violence. Indeed, the condition of permanent war on the peninsula presents a challenge to most members of the NKFC, who are thus revealed to be still deeply embedded in traditional state-centric patterns of war remembrance.

An important exception to this is Women4NonViolence in Peace + Conflict Zone, which explicitly criticizes the US as a human rights violator and views human rights violations in the DPRK in the context of war. The group's website has two sections dedicated to North Korea but there is also a section dedicated to comfort women, or 'Pan-Pan' women, who were prostituted by US occupation forces in postwar Japan. There are also links to sexual crimes committed by US military personnel in South Korea, Okinawa, Japan, and the Philippines (Women4NonViolence in Peace + Conflict Zone 2017). This oppositional approach to war memory allows human rights activism to transcend the container of the state and encourages a critical appraisal of the nation-state as well as the regional hegemon. Unfortunately, this group is a rarity in the NKFC.

Abductee, prisoner of war, and defector groups in the NKFC also mention the Korean War in their commemorative activities, on their websites, or even directly in their names and mission statements, but they do not use an oppositional memory approach. Rather, these groups are trying to work through trauma using nationalistic or parochial frameworks. For organizations such as Korean War POW Affairs, International Korean War Memorial Foundation, Committee for the Rescue of Korean War POWs, and the Korean War Abductees Family Union (KWAFU) the war has never ended because family members remain in captivity or their remains are unrecovered. Yet, these groups experience the need to reach out to other organizations as allies, both domestic and foreign, so they often employ cosmopolitan language. For instance, the National Association for the Rescue of Japanese Kidnapped by North Korea (NARKN) takes this approach on its homepage

(2017), which emphasizes its cooperation with victims' families from other countries and situates its work in cosmopolitan language: "[We are] vigorously seeking not only the rescue of all the Japanese and South Korean abductees but liberation of all the oppressed people in North Korea." At times this trauma sharply turns against the groups' own governments—for not doing enough. When testifying before the US Congress in 2006, the Director of the Korean POWs Affairs, himself an escaped POW, sharply criticized the South Korean government for not rescuing its countrymen but warmly praised "all those United States soldiers who made the ultimate sacrifice and tried to preserve peace and freedom of Korea" (Oral testimony of Cho Chang Ho before the US House Committee on International Relations 2006, pp. 41–2).

However, the memory work of these abductee and POW groups, as well as defector organizations, is often highly parochial, perhaps inevitably so because of their close association with traumatized families and survivors. Thus, although they criticize particular governments, their primary frame of reference remains the nation-state—which is privileged and distinct from foreigners and the Communist or non-Christian others. The website of the Citizen's Coalition for Human Rights of Abductees & North Korean Refugees (2017), for example, prominently shows the image of an extended family holding a South Korean flag in their hands, a testament to the power of banal nationalism rather than banal cosmopolitanism. Arguably, this banal nationalism is found on other NKFC websites as well. The Defense Forum Foundation, for example, has a banner on its website (2017) that openly proclaims: "Keeping America strong. Promoting Freedom, Democracy and Human Rights Abroad." Perhaps the most extreme instance of banal nationalism is a booklet by PSCORE, which begins with a description of the DPRK by Christopher Hitchens that dates back to 2001: "No food and no culture. No future and no past." Then, after blaming North Korea for the ongoing risk of war, the brochure's final argument in favor of reunification is "to strengthen Korea as a single nation" (People for Successful COreanREunifcation 2011, pp. 3, 6).

Elsewhere in the NKFC, there is a curious silence about the Korean War. For example, the coalition's homepage says nothing about the DPRK's history before the mid-1990s. Indeed, many of the organizations involved in the NKFC commonly truncate the history of the DPRK to varying degrees, with most beginning their re-telling in the 1990s, when North Korea was suffering through famine. Because these groups are focused on pressing human rights violations in the present, their lack of historical curiosity may seem justified.

But, in fact, the NKFC and its members are not ignorant or too busy to pay attention to history. As we have already seen, they employ all sorts of cosmopolitan memories to support their advocacy work, ranging from references to African-American slavery, Soviet gulags, and the Holocaust. In 2010, the NKFC even forayed into more mundane WWII memory work, publically protesting Stalin's inclusion on the National D-Day Memorial (North Korean Freedom Coalition 2010). Genocide Watch, meanwhile, evokes the North Korean "genocide" of the 1950s, which wiped out "one of the largest Presbyterian Church groups in the world" (Genocide Watch 2016). At their most extreme, some of the Christian groups in the NKFC draw upon historical narratives that evoke medieval crusades: "Realizing that the battle for freedom in North Korea…is a spiritual battle fuels our prayers and ignites our actions. We need to turn toward God for the strength to continue in this fight" (Wright 2007). Frequently used incidents from Biblical history include references to Exodus, manna, and the figure of Moses (see Prayer Service Action Love Truth for North Korea 2017). Therefore, it is clear that the decision *not* to talk about the Korean War is deliberate rather than incidental.

This lacuna of war memory, which erases the violence of US hegemony, results in interesting tensions and contradictions. Thus, One Free Korea devotes an entire section of its website to satellite imagery of the North Korean Air Force, repeatedly criticizing the regime's decision to purchase military aircraft at the height of the famine (One Free Korea 2007). This only appears nonsensical until you remember that US airpower devastated the country during the Korean War. In an interview given afterwards, USAF General LeMay boasted: "So we went over there…and eventually burned down every town in North Korea…and some in South Korea, too…. Over a period of three years or so, we killed off—what—twenty percent of the population of Korea as direct casualties of war, or from starvation and exposure" (Kohn and Harahan 1988, p. 88). Indeed, the B-29, a signature bomber of the latter part of the Pacific War and the air war over North Korea, has the dubious distinction of being the aircraft that killed the largest number of civilians in history (Sandler 1999, p. 174). Today, US strategic bombers are still regularly threatening the DPRK (Voice of America 2017). Forgetting the war and its terrible legacy makes it easier for the members of the NKFC to sustain their preferred narrative of good versus evil.

Nevertheless, the condition of permanent war sometimes peaks through the coalition's advocacy work. NKFC members often admit that regime change and reunification is their ultimate goal—what Beck would call a universalizing goal rather than a cosmopolitan one (see Beck 2006, p. 51). For

example, the president of the Council for Human Rights in North Korea, testifying in Canada, concluded his speech by insisting: "Some 60 years ago Canada volunteered in the Korean War in order to defend the same values. The mission isn't finished just yet, in the sense that the northern part of the Korean Peninsula is still not free, not democratized" (Kyung B. Lee testifying before the Parliament of Canada Subcommittee on International Human Rights 2011). Instead of critically interrogating the metanarratives surrounding the war, the NKFC and its allies end up integrating them into their crusade to bring change to North Korea. It is still a matter of good (us and the North Korean defectors) vs. evil (DPRK). Thus, the NKFC and its affiliates begin each North Korea Freedom Week with a church service and a visit to the Korean War Memorial where, in very parochial language, they "honor those who sacrificed for South Korea's freedom" (see Scholte 2016, p. 1). Another interesting illustration of this attitude occurred in the US House of Representatives on June 18, 2014, when, in the middle of a hearing on human rights abuses in North Korea, Congressman Tom Marino interrupted to nostalgically wonder "if Truman would have listened to MacArthur, would we be where we are at today?" (US House Committee on Foreign Affairs 2014, p. 67). This wistful imperial fantasy of MacArthur being allowed to take the war to China—which probably would have involved the use of atomic weapons against Communist armies—suggests that a failure to atone for or even acknowledge past acts of violence is endemic in much of the human rights work focused on North Korea. In the end, this global memory apparatus is not only meant to preserve and disseminate memories of trauma, it is also envisioned as a war-winning instrument of regime change.[9] Perhaps the NKFC does not talk much about the Korean War because it is still fighting it?

Bruce Robbin's definition of cosmopolitanism, derived from a memorable comment by his ten year old son, is that it involves a process of overcoming the dichotomy of "I'm great, you stink" (Robbins 2012, p. 4). The memory work of the NKFC certainly does this in regard to individual victims from North Korea but it stops short of critically interrogating the role of US hegemony in the region or even admitting past human rights abuses by the ROK or the USA. Parochial patterns of remembrance lurk beneath the surface and, more dangerously, a powerful sense of superiority is created through the systematic forgetting of the Korean War itself.

[9] For another example of a call for regime change see the oral testimony of the vice chairman of NARKN before the US House Committee on International Relations (2006, p. 35).

Conclusion

Cosmopolitanism is often considered to be something future-orientated: "There is no memory of the global past. But there is an imagination of a globally shared collective future" (Beck 2002, p. 27). However, the memory work of the NKFC and its affiliates suggest otherwise. By memorializing the suffering and torment of individual North Koreans, NGOs conducting advocacy against the DPRK are adding these historically specific traumas to a long litany of earlier atrocities and genocides. In aggregate, the Holocaust, comfort women issue, the atomic bombings of Nagasaki and Hiroshima, and Soviet/North Korean gulags constitute a memory of a globally shared past—one of pain and death at the hands of the nation-state. This shared pantheon of suffering is at the heart of the cosmopolitan project because it makes our unique experiences mutually intelligible across national boundaries. Yet, there are clear limits to this cosmopolitan memory formation. The NKFC and its affiliates are creating a databank of state-inflicted trauma but, in doing so, are willfully suppressing the trauma that their own nations have caused in the region. In effect, their oppositional memory work only goes halfway. It critiques China and the DPRK and even the governments of the US and ROK for not doing enough to help defectors…but it almost never questions the legacies of Western hegemony in the region. Of course, all cosmopolitan memory is de-historicized, but by truncating the Korean War from its collective memory work, the NKFC is complicit in undermining the very cosmopolitanism that it avowedly supports. Thus, this work should be seen as a critical exploration of the liminal space between cosmopolitan theory, where universal human rights concepts occupy an important place, and cosmopolitan practices or outputs, which inevitably occur in a landscape indelibly configured by American hegemonic power.

This study also raises an important theoretical question. While it seems fairly straightforward that collective memories of de-historicized suffering and trauma provide a useful vocabulary to promote and illustrate the idea of human rights, it is not entirely clear if human rights themselves are cosmopolitan. Beck argues that there are "Zombie categories" or concepts that "embody nineteenth-century horizons of experience" (Beck and Willms 2004, p. 19), which inhibit our thinking in the present. An example of this might be a statistician trying in vain to determine the nationality of a product that was actually made by a transcontinental production chain. Yet, when we look at human rights advocacy in detail, it is apparent that the practice is deeply integrated with the contemporary interstate system. Human rights are

defended by states. Strictly speaking, transnational activism and pressure from the United Nations only exists to remind these states about their human rights responsibilities. Even the most radical innovation, the responsibility to protect, or R2P, simply transfers the responsibility for protecting the citizenry from one state to all states. At the end of the day, the NKFC and its affiliates employ elaborate memory apparatuses to commemorate North Korean human rights violations—and in doing so they assist in the formation of cosmopolitan memory—but their primary legal and political work is centered on the idea of a state, preferably a strong one, that can govern its people and maintain law and order. The NKFC, like other human rights organizations, is cosmopolitan in its appeals for financial assistance and networking, and even willfully violates the sovereignty of particular states, like the DPRK, but it cannot be extricated from the overall state-centric human rights framework. Therefore, are contemporary human rights a zombie category?

Finally, a few words are in order about resistance. Cracking the container of the state is not easy, particularly when it comes to commemoration: "Critical memories are also constantly imperiled by the reactionary responses of conservative political forces, especially those seeking to preserve various kinds of nationalist nostalgia" (Fujitani et al. 2001, p. 22). In the case of the DPRK, this resistance is often extreme—shootings by border guards, executions, and imprisonment. However, it is important to note the more subtle threats as well, which emanate from within. As we have seen, many of the groups in this case are extremely parochial but still employ human rights language. In the end, the NKFC and many of its allies are calling for the destabilization and collapse of a rival nuclear armed state. And, with reunification, the subsequent colonization of an entire society by Southern elites. And many members of the NKFC even hope for the destabilization of China in the future. For example, one of the authors of e-China Lobby is surprisingly blunt when she frames her activism as defending against "the assault on Christianity and the values of the West that is endemic across the world, and recognizes that the point country for that assault is Communist China" (The China e-Lobby 2011). That this process will occur in the name of universal human rights and through the circulation of cosmopolitan memories and symbols should not blind us to the troubling inconsistencies and parochial agendas that lurk beneath the surface. Just as nationalism was historically hijacked by many different groups in a range of contexts, both to emancipate as well as to dominate, our study suggests that cosmopolitanism, or at least its appearance, has become a convenient resource for competing

forms of associational life in contemporary world politics. Even if we are witnessing the irreparable cracking of the container of the state, traditional configurations of power and domination are adapting as well, becoming all the more dangerous because of their newfound subtlety. Empire existed before the state, and it will likely exist after the state as well. Ultimately, this complex interpenetration of cosmopolitan and anti-cosmopolitan tendencies in the same coalition, as illustrated in the case of the NKFC, makes Ulrich Beck's call for a systematic and large-scale investigation of the struggle between these forces more important than ever.

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