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Publication Date

2026-03-16

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A Standpoint Analysis of U.S. Military Infrastructure and Influence in Korea After the Korean War

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Abstract: U.S military technology introduced after the Korean War reshaped political authority and land use in South Korea. This paper utilizes Standpoint Theory to dissect how military infrastructure increased U.S. geopolitical influence while affecting Korean civilians and land ownership.

INTRODUCTION

The Korean War was one of the most primitive conflicts of the Cold War and permanently reshaped the political and military landscape of the Korean peninsula. Although the war ended with an armistice rather than a formal treaty, the geopolitical effects continue to shape Korea today. The United States held a long-term military presence in South Korea even after the war, through defense alliances, military bases, and technological infrastructures, which were used as a precaution to prevent any further conflict between North and South Korea. The division of North and South Korea was strongly influenced by the tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union. Both powers supported opposing ideas, morals, and political systems. In this sense, military tools and infrastructure became instruments used by powerful nations to maintain geopolitical influence. As of today, approximately 28,500 U.S. troops remain stationed in South Korea, making it one of the longest U.S. overseas military deployments (Yeo, 2014). Science and technology studies emphasize that technology is not a neutral tool, but is closely connected and can alter political and social power structures. The Standpoint Theory argues that knowledge is socially situated and that selective communities often have unique insight into how the system of power operates, due to their direct experience of its consequences. Looking at the military infrastructure from the perspective of Korean civilians helps reveal how these technologies shape everyday life in ways often overlooked in geopolitical discussions. Another useful viewpoint for understanding these relationships is the patriarchal triad of sovereign authority, property, and personhood. This framework explains how political power is maintained through the interactions of state authority, control over resources, and recognition of certain individuals within society. These military technologies can reinforce relationships by strengthening state power, transforming land and strategic property, and shaping how communities are treated in a political system. In this paper, we will examine how the US military infrastructure and technologies after the Korean War reinforce sovereign authority, and how it is affecting Korean civilians, using the Standpoint Theory and the patriarchal triad framework. This analysis will explore how military technology contributes to South Korea's global political influence. This work is in partial

fulfillment of the ENGR184 course using the blueprint curriculum in Ref [1,2] and captured in a collection [3].

METHODS

In this study, we will be applying qualitative analysis using the theoretical framework introduced in the ENGR184 course. The main framework used in this essay is Standpoint Theory, which emphasizes that knowledge and social systems are shaped by individuals' positions within a power infrastructure. According to this theory, marginalized communities often have an important insight into the social system, stemming from direct experience and its impact.

This analysis will also use the patriarchal triad framework, which includes sovereign authority, property, and personhood. Sovereign authority refers to the power exercised by the government and political institutions. Property refers to the ownership and control of land and resources. Personhood refers to how individuals or groups are recognized and their value within this political system. This framework will help explain how political power, control over the land, and social recognition of communities interact with technological systems, such as military infrastructure.

Military technology after the Korean War, such as radar systems, surveillance, and communication networks, gave the United States technological superiority. As a result, these systems allowed the U.S. to maintain a strong presence in South Korea and influenced geopolitical relationships in East Asia at the time. Furthermore, the expansion of military bases transformed Korean land into strategic military property. By examining these developments from the perspective of Korean civilians, this study analyzes how military infrastructure reinforced geopolitical power, while also considering the social inequalities created by these changes.

RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

Military technology played a major role in establishing US influence in South Korea after the Korean War, however, during the Cold War, the United States possessed advanced military technology, such as radars, surveillance and communications that allowed it to coordinate military operations and maintain strategic present in East Asia. These technologies supported South Korean government while also countering the influence of the silver union in China in the region.

From the perspective of the patriarchal triad, these technologies supported sovereign authority. They allowed the United States to exercise geopolitical power beyond U.S. territory. Military infrastructure enabled a strategic alliance and projected power across the Korean peninsula. The continued presence of approximately 28,500 U.S. troops in South Korea shows how military technology and infrastructure remain central to this relationship (Yeo, 2014).

Property and Land Dispossession

Military infrastructures have also reshaped the relationship between technology and property in South Korea. The construction and expansion of these military bases require large areas of land that were converted into strategic military property. One of the most significant examples is Camp Humphreys in Pyeongtaek, which has grown into the largest overseas US military base (Hwang, 2023).

The expansion of US military bases often requires displacing local residents and converting farmland into military installations. From the perspective of Korean civilians, this meant losing land that once sustained local agriculture and community livelihoods. To them, these military installations signify more than national defense; they also demonstrate how geopolitical power can transform land ownership, prioritizing strategic military interests over the needs of the local population.

David Vine, in his research on overseas military bases, explained that large military installations often reshape local communities and use land while serving the strategic interests of powerful nations (Vine, 2015). This illustrates how technology infrastructure can reinforce the relationship between political authority and property.

Personhood and the Standpoint of Korean Civilians

Standpoint highlights how advanced technological systems can affect marginalized communities differently than those who design or control them. While military infrastructure is often seen as necessary for national defense and regional security, Korean civilians living near military bases experience the impact of these infrastructures directly.

Shirts has shown that materialized landscapes in South Korea illustrate how the military disrupts local communities through displacement, environmental impacts, and economic reliance on military-related activities (Lee, 2023). These communities typically have limited input on decisions related to the construction or funding of these military installations.

Damn, point: military technology is not just a defense system, but a structure that affects their daily lives, economic opportunities, and land ownership. These experiences revealed how technology systems can reinforce unequal power structures, even when they are developed for border and political goals.

Long-term Geopolitical Consequences

The technological aspects of alliances formed during the Korean War also contributed to the long-term division of the Korean Peninsula. The rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union helped create two opposing political systems in North and South Korea. Military technology and infrastructure became tools for both sides to maintain influence and security in their respective regions.

More than 70 years later, the Korean Peninsula remains divided, and military infrastructure continues to play a major role in maintaining the region's geopolitical balance. This continued United States presence in South Korea shows how technological systems created over 70 years ago during the Cold War continue to influence international politics today.

CONCLUSIONS

The Korean War showed how technological systems are linked to political and social power. This essay uses Standpoint theory and the Patriarchal trade framework. It will show how the US military infrastructure in South Korea reinforces ties between sovereign authority, property, and person.

Military technologies also enabled the United States to maintain global geopolitical influence and support national defense during the Cold War; however, the construction of military bases also transformed Korea's land into strategic territory and affected the communities where these installations are now located. From the standpoint of Korean civilians, military infrastructure represents not only a technological system, but also a structure that has shaped land orders and community life.

Technology developed for security or defense can also reinforce geopolitical hierarchy and replace local communities. Continuously proving that technological systems advancements are deeply embedded in the structure of power.

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