

# The Influence of Statues on the Domestic and International Dynamics

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## ABSTRACT

*This paper discusses the influence of statues on the domestic and international dynamics within and among nations by conducting a comparative analysis on the creation of the Statue of Peace (Pyeonghwauui sonyeosang) and the Vietnamese Pieta and the impact of its installation. In fine, this paper illustrates the orthodox and unorthodox utilizations of the general statue, as well as elucidates its impact in generating verbal and nonverbal conversations (e.g. through media); hence, allowing the emergence of unique interactions and construct of relationships among countries.*

**Keywords:** Statue of Peace, Vietnamese Pieta, domestic dynamics, international dynamics, South Korea, Vietnam, statues, international interactions

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Regardless of culture, race, and nation, statues have played a significant part in history, and their impact continues to persist to date. Statues often create subjective meanings based on the perception and perspective of their audience because of their unique ability to relay critical messages non-verbally or scripturally. They use symbols, figures, and carefully chiseled facial expressions. As a result, the responses and commentaries of audiences serve as a means of communication on domestic and international scales. While standing as important media for communication, statues also hold a prominent role in their existence as educational resources. Despite the existing disputes regarding the assessment of historical accuracies of several statues – for instance, the controversial

bronze statue of Joseph Stalin in Berlin<sup>1</sup>, which commemorated, popularized, and continuously constructed a positive reputation for a vicious leader who was guilty of victimizing 20 million civilians during his reign<sup>2</sup>, – they successfully provide the historical context and essence of their embodied moment in history. The following paper explores the historical context, significance, and influence of statues domestically and internationally. Utilizing the Statue of Peace and the Vietnamese Pieta as primary examples, the paper will discuss the extent and limit to which a statue can possess in terms of national and internal communication. A comparative analysis between the two predominant figures will be stated, the purpose being to collate the diverse types and general strength dynamic of relationships, whether it is positive or negative, strong or mild, that statues can bring rise to. In addition to the analysis, the influence of the countries' history, the unique vision for a country's future, and overarching themes within cultures will be discussed as part of the exploration of the assets influencing the significance of statues in terms of their use as a means of domestic and international communication. Statues influence the domestic and international relationships within and between borders, as they serve as a critical mechanism for

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<sup>1</sup>Alberto Frigerio. "The Fate of Statues of Stalin in post-Soviet Countries: Some Critical Reflections on the Management of Contested Cultural Heritage." *Heritage and Society*. 12, no. 2-3 (2019): 136-150.

<sup>2</sup>Dongho Chun. "The Battle of Representations: Gazing at the Peace Monument or Comfort Women Statue." *Positions*. 28 no. 2 (2020): 363–387.

communication, allowing interaction among countries.

## **2. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF STATUES AND HOW THEY ARE USED TO ESTABLISH POLITICAL STATEMENTS ON THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL**

Ranging from motifs of celebration to commemoration, statues stand as a symbol of various messages and concepts both at the global and domestic levels. While it is customary for statues to relay a festive and jubilant theme, sculptures are progressively being utilized as powerful instruments to address social injustice and reveal political declarations in contemporary society. Not only do statues publicize a political message, they also embody the history of a nation by standing as figures for remembering the past.<sup>3</sup> Statues can play a significant role in the diplomatic relations of a country. An example of a statue that harms the international reputation of a country is that of King Leopold II of Belgium. His statue is proudly displayed in a public park in the city of Ostend, Belgium. Many argue that because of his abysmal human rights record in the Congo, having a statue of the King displayed proudly in public is akin to having a statue of Hitler in Berlin. Leopold's regime led to the brutal deaths of an estimated 10 million Congolese and the suffering of countless millions more. A country's international standing can be hindered or helped simply by who they uphold as national heroes.<sup>4</sup> In this manner, the physical presence of statues matters because their presence signifies that a nation gives credence to the message and story incorporated within the statue as part of their history. Looking at a parallel understanding of statues, they impact domestic and global relations because the response of a governing body or a nation's leader to the absence or presence of a statue influences the creation and progression of

<sup>3</sup>Alex von Tunzelmann, *Fallen Idols: Twelve Statues That Made History* (London: Headline Publishing Group, 2021), 19-20.

<sup>4</sup>Tunzelmann, *Fallen Idols*, 23.

national and international conflicts.<sup>5</sup> Today, one of the more prominent objectives of a statue is opening a means to communicate with the past, present, and future. The paper will move on to discuss the two primary statues, which are embodiments of the aforementioned prominent objectives of statues. The first work of discussion will be the Statue of Peace, a commemorative figure of South Korea's victimized women during the Second World War. The work serves as a preeminent symbol of the political expression of South Korea. The statue is an expression of the Korean government and its stance in favor and protection of its victimized citizens under the brutal Japanese Imperial rule, and the resolve of the comfort women organizations fighting for their proper apology and moral compensation. The second work to be discussed will be the Vietnamese Pieta, a statue to commemorate the massacred civilians and the victims of sexual violence courtesy of the South Korean soldiers during the Vietnamese War. The work pertains to the political statements of contrite and penitent which the Korean-Vietnam Peace Foundation feel for the victimized Vietnamese and the efforts of the Foundation to reveal and spread awareness of the issue on a global scale.

## **3. THE STATUE OF PEACE (SONYEOSANG)**

In Jongno-gu, Seoul, South Korea, perched in front of the Japanese Embassy in Korea is the Statue of Peace, one of the most prominent statues in Korean history. Created by Korean artists Kim Seo-Kyung and Kim Eun-Sung, the Statue of Peace, otherwise known as the 소녀상 (sonyeosang), is a bronze statue that depicts a Korean girl dressed in the traditional Korean attire, the 한복 (hanbok).<sup>6</sup> The girl is depicted sitting alone on a wooden chair. From a distance, the sculpture looks like one honoring traditional South Korean customs; however, the reality is that the statue is worth much

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 23.

<sup>6</sup>Dorothea Mladenova. "The Statue of Peace in Berlin: How the Nationalist Reading of Japan's Wartime "Comfort Women" Backfired." *The Asia-Pacific Journal*. 24, no. 4 (2022): 1-28.

more than what it is perceived at first glance. The Statue of Peace serves as a critical symbol of the women that were victimized under the abuse of the Imperial Japanese Army from 1932 to 1945.<sup>7</sup> During the Second World War, the soldiers of the Imperial Japanese Army sexually abused vulnerable Korean women. Most of the time, those who were exploited were young, underage girls, the youngest recorded as eleven years old, who were unable to speak out due to their lack of social power. An estimated total of 200,000 women and girls, mostly Korean, were forced to work at front-line brothels, both pre and post-World War II.<sup>8</sup> Labeling these women as “comfort women,” a euphemistic term for a prostitute, the soldiers ruthlessly raped and abused the women as means of entertainment. Until Kim Hak-soon, a Korean human rights activist broke her silence by publicly testifying of her cruel experiences as a sex slave in August 1991,<sup>9</sup> the issue was kept secret in Korean society. Ms. Kim’s heartfelt testimony, “I am Kim Hak-soon. I was abducted at the age of 16 by the Japanese army to become a comfort woman. I tried to escape, but I was quickly caught. They raped me while I was in tears. I was only seventeen at the time,” encouraged several other survivors of the heartbreaking incident to step up and fight for their rights; hence, the statue was created as an embodiment of the collective effort of the victimized women. In simple terms, the Statue of Peace symbolizes the vulnerability of the victimized women of sexual slavery, who were forced to work in brothels for the Imperial Japanese

Army.<sup>10</sup> Designed for the delivery of this very purpose, every aspect of the Statue of Peace is undoubtedly a critical symbol that tells stories and the history behind the piece. Seated with a tall posture, the young girl faces forward, and her expression is one of resolve. The young girl’s small fists are clenched, and the heels of her delicate feet are raised, with a bird placed on her shoulder. Her expression is one that relays the collective determinism for all “comfort women” as they demand a proper apology. Her fists are clenched in frustration and perseverance: frustration that nobody stood up to protect the women, perseverance in hopes of bringing the women a better justified and peaceful future. Her feet raised in grief for the countless girls that were unable to return home. The raised heels also symbolize the pain for those women who returned home due to the ceaseless abuse by the Imperial army and were unable to enjoy the solace of returning to their families. The small bird is yet again an important symbol: not only does the creature stand for the long-deserved freedom and glistening hope, but it also stands as one of spiritual connection that links the surviving victims to ones that have passed away.<sup>11</sup> Despite the dispute regarding the installment of the Statue of Peace in front of the Japanese Embassy, the statue was successfully perched across the building on December 11th, 2011.<sup>12</sup> The first successful installment of the statue encouraged a start to what would be the creation and placement of a total of 47 copies of the statue: 40 models within and seven sculptures allocated outside the South Korean borders.<sup>13</sup> With

<sup>7</sup>Jimin Kim, Beverly Milner Bisland, and Sunghye Shin. “Teaching about the Comfort Women during World War II and the Use of Personal Stories of the Victims.” *Asian Literature in the Humanities and the Social Sciences*. 24, no. 3 (2019): 58-63.

<sup>8</sup>Park Boram, “Deciphering symbolism of girl statue,” Yonhap News Agency, September 6, 2016, Accessed May 20, 2022. <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20160906000200315#:~:text=The%20girl's%20quest%20for%20freedom,already%20passed%20away%2C%20Kim%20said>

<sup>9</sup>Chun. “The Battle of Representations,” 363.

<sup>10</sup>Oumaima Latrech, “The brutal history behind the Statue of Peace in South Korea,” Korea Talk Talk, May 2, 2021, Accessed May 20, 2022. <https://www.korea.net/TalkTalkKorea/English/community/community/CMN0000006268#:~:text=The%20E2%80%9Cstatue%20of%20peace%20E2%80%9D%20symbolizes,compensation%20from%20the%20Japanese%20government>.

<sup>11</sup>Boram, “Deciphering symbolism of girl statue.”

<sup>12</sup>Korea Verband, “My Little Statue of Peace,” Brochure, 2016.

<sup>13</sup>Mikyong Kim. “Memorializing Comfort Women: Memory and Human Rights in Korea-

the “Little Statue of Peace” movement in action, the statue is currently influencing and expanding its way onto the global stage. This started with its official publicization in other countries, with the starting two replicas of the Statue of Peace set in the Tempelhof Field, Berlin, Germany, and in Oakleigh, Melbourne, Australia.<sup>14</sup> The kickstart to the spread of the Statue of Peace and its history elicited a response of distaste from the Japanese government. Several protests against the installation of the bronze statues arose due to the growing global awareness. In addition to the disapproval of the installation of future replicas of the Statue of Peace, the Japanese government and media have urged for the original statue – perched in front of the Japanese Embassy – to be removed.<sup>15</sup> In essence, the statue has malaffected South Korea’s relations with Japan because it further intensified the pre-existing post-World War II tensions between the two countries.<sup>16</sup>

#### 4. THE VIETNAM PIETA (INFORMATION)

On April 26th, 2017, in the village of Gangjeong-dong, Jeju, titled the “island of peace,” perched at the St. Francis Peace Center was the Vietnamese Pieta (a statue of commemoration for the victims of sexual abuse from the South Korean soldiers during the Vietnam War) (1955-1975).<sup>17</sup> The statue is the

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Japan Relations.” *Asian Politics & Policy* 6, no. 1 (2014): 83-96. <https://doi.org/10.1111/aspp.12089>.

<sup>14</sup>Marisa Wikramanayake, “What Oakleigh and Seoul now have in common,” *The Sydney Morning Herald*, December 1, 2019, Accessed May 20, 2022. <https://www.smh.com.au/world/asia/what-oakleigh-and-seoul-now-have-in-common-20191127-p53eop.html>.

<sup>15</sup>Sarah Kim, “‘Comfort woman’ statue riles Japan and Abe in particular,” *Korea JoongAng Daily*, July 29, 2020, Accessed May 20, 2022. <https://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/2020/07/29/national/diplomacy/Japan-comfort-women-statue-Shinzo-Abe/20200729183900403.html>.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Huh Ho-joon, “Vietnam pieta: a last lullaby for peace in Vietnam, on Jeju Island,” *Hankyoreh*,

creation of two Korean sculptors named Kim Seo-Kyung and Kim Eun-Seong. The Vietnamese Pieta has an official Korean title known as 베트남 피에타. It is a bronze statue depicting a woman, and cradling in her arms is a newborn child. With both the mother and the infant’s eyes closed, the statue stands as an explicit publicization resource for the tragic period of the civilian massacre of the Vietnam War. During the mid-Vietnamese War, in the year of 1963, the Republic of Korea dispatched more than 300,000 troops to support the US-backed Republic of Vietnam (i.e., South Vietnam) in its fight against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (i.e., North Vietnam). Out of the five Allied countries – Australia, New Zealand, Philippines, and Thailand, the Republic of Korea – the Republic of Korea emerged as the second-largest foreign force active at the site, with approximately 320,000 soldiers sent as support. Consequently, the powerful support bestowed substantial authority upon the South Korean troops and the constituent members. Despite the power originally given to be used as a means to protect and give justice to the Vietnamese people, the authority was abused for a distinct cause. This cause was the civilian massacre and the sexual exploitation of Vietnamese women and children. In the 20 years of the Vietnamese War, in the 74 villages of Phong Nhị and Phong Nhất, and 135 villages of Hà My, ROK soldiers caused 87 civilian massacres, with an approximate number of 9000 Vietnamese villagers killed as a result of the attacks. Suspecting the innocent villagers as insurgents serving as “spies” of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, the ROK soldiers mercilessly carried out their attacks. Not only were the ROK troops responsible for the cruel attacks on civilians, but also for the targeted women and children who emerged as victims of sexual violence by the male soldiers. During their time of service, several South Korean soldiers and other personnel sexually assaulted and raped Vietnamese women and children. Some of the victims were as young as

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April.27, 2017, Accessed May 20, 2022. [https://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english\\_edition/e\\_international/792542.html#:~:text=%E2%80%9CVietnam%20Pieta%2C%E2%80%9D%20a%20statue,th e%20%E2%80%9Cisland%20of%20peace](https://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_international/792542.html#:~:text=%E2%80%9CVietnam%20Pieta%2C%E2%80%9D%20a%20statue,th e%20%E2%80%9Cisland%20of%20peace).

12 or 13 years during the tragic incident.<sup>18</sup> Statistically, it has been recorded that the approximate number of Vietnamese women that were raped were in the tens of thousands. The casualties kickstarted by the sexual violence were immense: labeled as the “Lai Đại Hàn,” meaning “mixed blood” in Vietnamese. The victimized women and their families struggled to live under the social stigma. The Lai Đại Hàn were outcasted into the margins of society, surviving in poor, rural communities, facing social exclusion and lack of access to basic living services, such as education. They were forced to endure in silence. The Lai Đại Hàn and their offspring spent several decades in painful solidarity and suffering from no promised closure. The Vietnam Pieta is a monument embodying several symbols, with its most prominent objective being an apology towards the massacred Vietnamese civilians and the unjustly stigmatized Lai Đại Hàn community. The general purpose of the statue is said to be aimed at remembering the countless mothers and babies who were victimized during the conflict. The goal is to comfort the spirit of the War’s sacrificed mothers and their offspring. When one bypasses the language constraints of the statue, it conveys a message of atonement, not through simple words but by force carried by its presence and placement. The external design of the Vietnamese Pieta is endowed with immense power. The statue elicits empathy from its audience. The statue depicts a mother with a pained yet subtly accepting expression, holding her small child close to her chest. Half of her body is submerged beneath a structure with flowers and rocks; her arms cradle the infant as if she is attempting to protect the child from sinking into the vines. As described, the Vietnam Pieta uses the concept of “death” at an intimate level. The execution of the concept is visual rather than verbal. The sculpture displays the fate of the Vietnamese victims without showing the situation with grotesque or violent scenes. Despite

the lack of depictions of violence, the emotions etched into the faces of the mother, and the baby alone personifies the victims of the incident. The faces display calmness and reluctance in accepting their unjust maltreatment. The statue relays the central message of promoting peace to prevent outcomes such as similar incidents in the future. In essence, the sculpture derives from the efforts undertaken in South Korea to address and redress the wrongdoings committed by the ROK military during the Vietnam War. It relays apologetic expression and also promotes peace on several levels. These levels include peace for the dead, peace among the living, and peace between the two countries – South Korea and Vietnam. Despite its successful placement in Jeju, the Vietnamese Pieta faced several hardships and obstacles in reaching its current state. Due to the statue being created during the term of former president Park Geun-hye, the ROK Ministry of Defense justified that all operations conducted in Vietnam were necessary in the context of guerilla warfare. The ministry continually defended the Korean soldiers by stating that the Korean soldiers were conditioned to suspect everyone as potential enemies during the Vietnamese War. The officials justified their cruel acts by stating that the soldiers did not have time to think about the Vietnamese women and civilians who were forced to shelter them during the War. Although there was no direct addressing of the sexual violence toward the Vietnamese women and children, the Ministry of Defense continuously denied the wrongdoings of the army. During former president Park Chung-hee’s rule, South Korean troops were sent to fight the National Liberation Front, otherwise known as the Việt Cộng. Being the daughter of Park Chung-hee, it has been alleged or assumed that president Park Geun-Hye attempted to cover up her father’s flaws during his time of rule. Due to the constant denial, the Vietnamese Pieta was blocked several times from being sent to Vietnam. The South Korean Ministry of Defense prevented the full-size model of the statue from being sent to Vietnam, but in October of 2016, the statue made a partial trip. Instead of the original full-scale bronze cast, which measures a height of 150 centimeters and weighs 150 kilograms, a small size model was to be installed at the museum of Da Nang in its place.

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<sup>18</sup>Wayne David, “It’s time South Korea recognised allegations of sexual violence in Vietnam,” Independent, February 28, 2021, Accessed May 20, 2022. <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/south-korea-vietnam-war-sexual-violence-women-b1806764.html>.

## **5. A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE STATUE OF PEACE AND THE VIETNAMESE PIETA AND THE DOMESTIC/INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION ELICITED AS A RESULT OF THE TWO STATUES**

Although the Statue of Peace and the Vietnamese Pieta share common qualities, such as the historical set-up and location of creation, the two are dissimilar in many aspects. The aesthetics and the incorporation of symbols of the two statues and their physical designs are divergent. The design of the Statue of Peace possesses strong external emotions and relays explicit meaning. For instance, the expression sketched onto the young girl's face is determination and rage, all of which are considered "loud" emotions. The statue was created to clearly demand a proper apology from the Japanese government and military, and the resolve of the comfort women is reflected in the design. In addition, the Statue of Peace incorporates symbols, such as the lifted heels, to intensify the message within the work of art: the fight for justice. The emotions that the statues appeal to are generally anger and frustration. In contrast, the Vietnamese Pieta's design possesses subtle and heartfelt emotions, like a lullaby. The expression on the mother and the child's face is peace and reluctance, opening a means of interpretation for its audience. Rather than demanding a direct apology, the statue instead induces penitence by appealing to the audience's empathy. The Vietnamese Pieta also uses symbols, but it is used to explain the incident further. Instead of directly incorporating objects that remind the audience of the massacre, the Vietnamese Pieta uses death as a theme to subtly relay its primary message of peace promotion. In addition to the comparative design, the starting points of the two statues are also notably distinct. While the victimized Korean comfort women themselves created the Statue of Peace, the Vietnamese Pieta was erected by an organization from South Korea, the perpetrating country, as a notion of apology. Due to the difference in the history of the statues, both the domestic and international communications among the countries persisted in being resultantly disparate. The domestic relations within South Korea existed primarily between the South Korean government and the comfort women organization. Since Ms.

Kim's public testimony of 1991, the surviving comfort women and their families have made a continual effort in demanding a proper, official apology from Japan. From the beginning, the South Korean government and the public both did not overtly acknowledge the incident. Due to the lack of attention, the organization launched the *수요집회* (*suyo-jibhoe*), meaning Wednesday demonstration in Korean, in action. The weekly protest held in the presence of surviving comfort women happened every Wednesday, with its first demonstration on January 8th, 1992. With the collective effort of the supporters of the comfort women and their justice, over 1500 demonstrations will occur by 2021.<sup>19</sup> As a result of their persistence, the incident gained more public support and attention; hence, the Korean government conceded that the issue was valid. Former president Moon Jae-in publicly announced the acceptance and resolution of the issue. Overall, tensions within the Korean borders did meet an incline, but it is coming towards a mutual understanding between the comfort women organization and the South Korean government. Further, international relations regarding the Statue of Peace arose primarily between South Korea and Japan. The issue's prevalence further intensified the pre-existing conflicts between the two countries. Due to the violent history of Japan's colonial rule between 1910 to 1945, the relationship between South Korea and Japan has persisted in being unideal. When the Statue of Peace was erected in front of the Japanese Embassy in South Korea, the Japanese government and media responded negatively. The Japanese government demanded the statue be taken down, arguing that the statue was unjust. The Korean activists' demands for a formal apology and financial compensation were deemed unjust by the Japanese government, as the requests conflicted with earlier decisions. On June 22nd, 1965, the No. 8473 treaty between the two countries was signed in Tokyo, the document addressing the "agreement

<sup>19</sup>Jang Pill-su, "Wednesday demonstration for "comfort women" victims hit 1,500 mark," July 15, 2021, Accessed May 20, 2022. [https://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english\\_edition/e\\_national/1003715.html](https://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_national/1003715.html).

on the settlement of problems concerning property and claims on economic co-operation.”<sup>20</sup> The Japanese government proclaimed that all compensations were made in the 1965 agreement and that no further monetary recompense was required from Japan’s end. Despite the Japanese government’s dismissal of the comfort women’s demands, the stance of the organization persisted. On December 28th, 2015, the 2015 Japan-Korea ‘Comfort Women’ Agreement was announced, with Tokyo issued an official apology and a 1 billion yen fund to help comfort women victims to South Korea. Both sides promised an “irreversible” end to the dispute; however, the victims rejected the settlement, stating the lack of sufficient consultation between the Korean government and the comfort women during the process of negotiation. Along with the thickened domestic tensions, 20 plaintiffs, including 11 women who were forced to work at the Japanese military brothels during the War, sued the Japanese government in 2016 through the January ruling. In response to the lawsuit, Japan’s Chief Cabinet Secretary, Katsunobu Kato presented the Japanese government’s disapproval of the situation: “the January ruling was against both international law and bilateral agreements, and as such was extremely regrettable and unacceptable.” After the January ruling, the Japanese government strongly asked that the South Korean government take appropriate steps to correct the state of the international violation. In response to Japan’s request, the South Korean government denied their official intervention with the comfort women organization. Despite the Japanese government’s disapproval and dispute regarding the compensatory and penitence conflict, with the birth of several new copies of the Statue of Peace and their emerging influence in action, the comfort women continuously fight for their justice, further intensifying international tensions between South Korea and Japan. In comparison to the domestic relations of South Korea, the response of the Vietnamese government to the creation of the Vietnamese Pieta was relatively positive and mild. The result is due to two main reasons: the history of South Korean troops’ support during the

Vietnamese War and the existing salient economic dynamic between the two countries. South Korean troops took a crucial role in the victory of South Vietnam in the Vietnamese War. Not only did South Korea support Vietnam with approximately 300,000 soldiers as the second-largest contributor of the Allied countries, but Korean soldiers also sacrificed themselves in the battle for Vietnam’s victory, with 5000 ROK servicemen killed, 16,000 injured, and 50,000 affected by the dioxin-contaminated herbicides. In essence, the Vietnamese government desired to avoid any dispute regarding the South Korean soldiers and their presence during the Vietnamese War, as they had conclusively benefitted from Korea’s support. Hence, there was little to no domestic conflict regarding the Vietnamese Pieta. The Vietnamese government expressed no emotion towards the Lai Đại Hàn and their attempts to publicize the issue, as the Vietnamese society was generally unkeen towards the outcast group. As a result of the positive perspective of South Korea and the stigma toward the Lai Đại Hàn, there was a lack of domestic communication regarding the erected statue in Da Nang. In addition to the lack of information regarding the incident within Vietnam, the expression of opinions is difficult in Vietnam due to its political restraints. Vietnam, being a socialist country, enforces a limit on voicing opinions and accessing social media. With the Vietnamese government’s focus on national unity and reconciliation after the Vietnam War, their motto being “Shutting doors on the past, opening doors on the future,” the victims of the crimes committed by the ROK Army have been condemned from sharing their stories, as they were considered to be part of the “past” that needed to be shut for the success of Vietnam. Despite the oppression, certain Vietnamese groups did express persisting attempts to publicize the issue. Between September 11th and 17th of 2016, a Vietnamese newspaper titled the ‘Tuoi Tre’ published seven stories about the testimony and activity of survivors of civilian massacres carried out by South Korean soldiers during the Vietnam War. As evident by such efforts, a mild internal conflict still existed within the Vietnamese borders. In contrast to domestic communication in Vietnam, internal conflicts arose within South Korean borders. In May of 1999, the magazine Hankyoreh 21 published a series of reports based on the

<sup>20</sup>“Japan and Republic of Korea.” *Nations Unies — Recueil des Traités*. 583 no. 8473 (1966): 219-300.

investigation and interviews with the survivors from the five provinces where the South Korean military had operated, created by Ku Su-jong. The media publication brought rise to a campaign called the ‘미안해요, 베트남’ (mianhaeyo, petunam), in South Korea. Led by former president Kim Dae-jung, the South Korean government apologized for the “pain involuntarily inflicted on Vietnamese people by our participation in this unfortunate war,” in 2001. However, the campaign was not enough for those in South Korea calling for the full recognition of South Korea’s responsibility. In 2000, dozens of advocacy and human rights groups formed the Committee for Investigating the Truth about Civilian Massacres in Vietnam (베트남 양민 학살 진상 금융대책 위원회), renamed as the Korea-Vietnam Peace Foundation (한베 평화 재단) in 2016. Presided by Kang U-il, the organization promoted and continues to promote the confrontation of South Korea’s war crimes in Vietnam. The Vietnam Pieta contributes to its role by promoting an inclusive way of remembering, bringing together audiences separated by experience and geography. Created to serve as a mechanism for unifying internal South Korean conflicts, resolving international conflict, and alleviating domestic and foreign tensions, the Vietnamese Pieta persists as a prominent symbol of peace within South Korean borders. In addition to positive feedback from the Korean government, backlash arose from the former ROK service members in Vietnam. On June 27th, 2000, a couple of thousand former service members closed in and invaded the Hankyoreh headquarters and ransacked the newspaper’s offices to denounce the articles published in its magazines. Formerly in 1999, 16,000 ex-soldiers filed collective lawsuits before the Seoul Central District Court against American companies of Monsanto and Dow Chemical for utilizing toxic herbicides during the War and leaving long-term effects on the health of the South Korean soldiers. Hence, the veterans stated that negative coverage of the incident jeopardized their chances of being recognized as victims in ongoing court proceedings against the United States. Despite the decision made in 2002 in favor of military herbicide manufacturers, in 2006, the Seoul High Court granted compensation to almost

7000 veterans suffering from eleven different illnesses. Herbicides persisted as a severe issue, with several more protests caused by the Korean Disabled Veterans’ Association by Agent Orange in the Vietnam War happening in front of court buildings in South Korea. Ex-combatants have largely failed to be recognized as victims of the conflict. Most ex-ROK soldiers believed that part of the inability to be recognized was due to the publicization of the Vietnamese massacre by the Hankyoreh 21, the blame further intensifying domestic conflicts within South Korea. Conflicts arise when the Vietnamese Pieta enters international relations. The Vietnamese Pieta’s location at the St. Francis Peace Center in Kangjong village brought attention and commemoration to victims of a conflict buried mainly in South Korea’s official history; as a result, much disapproval was brought upon the Foundation by the South Korean governing body. In 2016, the Korea-Vietnam Peace Foundation sent the small-scale model of the Vietnam Pieta to the museum of Da Nang after several failures in sending the original statue due to the intervention of the Korean government. Despite the Foundation’s efforts to raise international awareness with the sculpture’s spread, the publicization of the Lai Đại Hàn faced difficulties due to the alleged opposition of former president Park Geun-Hye and the ROK Ministry of Defense. The Foundation was continuously met with challenges that transcended domestic cleavages between conservative and progressive political forces. In response to the government intervention, the Foundation organized a new project: a package peace tour group (평화 기행). The Korea-Vietnam Peace Foundation created a one-week trip program that gathers 20-30 South Korean participants at least twice annually to visit the monuments and Vietnamese Pieta in Vietnam. The Foundation generated the monuments, the two most important being placed at Hà My and Phong Nhị. Members of the package peace tour group paid respect to both survivors and the dead, with its first successful trip from March 8th to 13th of 2018. In parallel, the Korea-Vietnam Peace Foundation worked to encourage South Korean civil-society groups, schools, businesses, and private citizens to contribute to memorial services, such as sending sympathy flowers or gifts for the victims of the

massacre. The Foundation's ultimate goal is to place a Vietnam Pieta in the various localities where the war crimes were committed. Despite the prevalence of activists from South Korea and their eagerness to engage in shaping the recollection of the War, there is a lack of international recognition for the incident. For instance, South Koreans who travel to Vietnam do not look to visit the monuments because they lack knowledge of the ROK's Army massacre. The situation is mirrored in Vietnam, as local Vietnamese citizens are unaware of the incident themselves. Since diplomatic relations in the 1990s, Hanoi and Seoul have stressed the importance of the two countries' future rather than history. In a 2004 interview with the Korea Times, former President Tran Duc Luong mentioned that Vietnam and the ROK had become each other's important partner, despite their unhappy history. Shortly after the interview, South Korea and Vietnam proved to share a crucial economic dynamic: their trade volume is over 3 billion dollars. South Korea became Vietnam's fourth-largest commercial partner. In 2015, South Korea and Vietnam signed a free trade agreement; South Korea emerged as Vietnam's second-largest trading partner, with Vietnam being South Korea's third-largest export destination. As such, Seoul and Hanoi's unequal partnership developed into an advanced industrialized nation and an emerging economy, constructing a severely difficult atmosphere to further raise the issue of comfort women and the civilian massacre of the past, as the appraisal of the conflict may potentially adversely affect the pivotal relationship of the two countries. Despite its placement in the two countries, the limitations, such as the previously mentioned government intervention, derives the statue from its original purpose: being a transnational symbol among South Korea and Vietnam. As a result of the unwillingness of the Vietnamese government to publicize the incident and the efforts of the South Korean government to disclose the information, the Vietnam Pieta lacks a place in the collective consciousness in both countries. In short, the Vietnam Pieta does deserve recognition for manifesting less common ethics of remembrance. It allows for the commemoration of others other than the ROK's own 5000 soldiers who could not return home, honoring the Vietnamese civilians who perished at the hands of the ROK military in unlawful killings and acknowledging both the

short-term and long-term harm caused by sexual violence in Vietnam. The Vietnamese Pieta is an invitation rather than a resolution for the past that the citizens in Seoul and Hanoi are refusing to acknowledge. As the gesture of embrace that the Vietnam Pieta expresses and extends is regarded as a rare attempt toward recollecting a neglected facet of the conflict, the "injustice of forgetting" prevailing in both countries should be overcome when the opportunity is given. By acknowledging the existence of the incident and the significance of the Vietnam Pieta, both countries can utilize the statue to alleviate tensions on both domestic and international levels.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Statues occupy a significant role in both domestic and international communication. Its presence holds the potential to elicit both efficacious and adverse responses from a range of countries, regions, and communities. Statues can generate new relationships or bring old relationships together; statues can induce conversations, especially those that go unnoticed or were veiled due to oppressive government law, preference, or rule. Statues can relay significant unifying and juxtaposing themes depending on the type and unique purpose. Furthermore, analyzing the statues by researching crucial assets of the statues, such as interpreting symbols and understanding the historical contextualization, statues provide a tool for understanding power dynamics on a global scale. In essence, statues provide a critical mechanism for interaction in official organizations and nonprofit social advocacy groups. This allows for the emergence of unique interactions among countries. In conclusion, statues significantly impact domestic and international relations and the creation or continuation of existing communication.

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