TOWARD AN ANTHROPOLOGY OF LANDMINES:
Rogue Infrastructure and Military Waste in the Korean DMZ

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"This is the saying you hear all the time: 'If you run, it'll take five minutes; if you walk, it'll take ten.'" This is how Mr. Hong, a farmer and resident of CheongJeon-ri, a rice-growing village located in Cheolwon County, Gangwon Province, South Korea, explained the distinctive habitus of people living just five kilometers from the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ).[1] This seemingly mundane phrase proved to be more like a riddle, whose answer was connected to a weaponized, postwar landscape in which landmines, as Mr. Hong put it, "continue to go and lie in wait" (*kyesok maebokharŏ dŭrŏgayo*). He went on to explain that when the swampy wetlands of Cheolwon freeze over in the winter, the landmines become "useless objects," since their trigger mechanisms won't be able to detect human footsteps. With the frozen ground holding them in place, it doesn't matter if one runs or walks through a minefield to cover the same distance. This conversation took place in March 2015, after the spring thaw, so Mr. Hong offered to accompany me across a frozen minefield the following winter, personally guaranteeing my safety.

The next day, driving north from Cheolwon toward the Civilian Control Zone (CCZ), a militarily restricted area south of the DMZ, I was in a minivan with urban South Koreans who had heard Mr. Hong's statements. We joked about running across the minefields, visible along the side of the road. In the three years that I had been traveling to the CCZ and neighboring areas with

ecological researchers and others, mine warning signs and information notices had rarely warranted a second glance. Especially as I became accustomed to the scenery, they rapidly receded into the background, reduced to visual static that had become as unremarkable to me as they were to my colleagues, who, when I asked them about landmines, would say, "oh, yes, there are so many mines around here," without further elaboration. Now, instead of being no-go zones or abject wastelands, minefields had transformed into tantalizing spaces of human crossing, predicated on an understanding of mines as actants whose agency could be anticipated and even overcome. This bit of local knowledge altered the landscape and opened up alternative ways of seeing and understanding movement and mobility in the border regions of South Korea. Through my travels in the DMZ borderlands and conversations with residents of CheongJeon-ri, I began to understand landmines, in their persistent, if hidden, existence, as infrastructural, albeit emitting a different kind of ambient noise or background hum than that of conventional infrastructures.[2]

Mr. Hong's description of mines "lying in wait" invoked their agency as predators seeking to ambush their human targets, and yet the local saying he cited also obliquely pointed toward the entanglements of landmine-predators and human-prey, in which the former's seasonal behaviors and ecological affordances affect how the latter navigates its everyday surroundings. Even as the notion of landmines as lying in wait could be dismissed as an anthropomorphic projection, by taking into consideration the mine as an actant, which operates with a simple mechanism that is precisely calibrated for a human trigger, this essay asks how ethnographic attention to mines and humans as cohabiting and coconstitutive of a shared ecology might contribute to an anthropological analysis of landmines and explosive remnants of war (ERW). Instead of presupposing the suspension of human agency so common in scholarly and humanitarian approaches to landmines, I argue that a science and technology studies–inspired framework can offer a more complex view of how mines are "enacted in practice" (Mol 2002, 152). I develop the concept of *rogue infrastructure* to capture the volatile materiality of mines and their heterogeneous natural, cultural, technical, and political entanglements, which can generate unexpected agencies and affects among the humans they exist alongside.

There are obvious physical risks involved in conducting an ethnography that takes the materiality of landmines seriously, and I have yet to take up Mr. Hong's offer to cross a frozen minefield. I nevertheless suggest that a materialist-discursive approach to landmines may be indispensable to understanding the coexistence of

mines and humans, productively complicating both humanitarian approaches that frame them as toxic remnants of war and postcolonial critiques that frame them as traces of imperial power and ongoing violence.

Despite a wide engagement with militarism and militarization in anthropology (e.g., Gusterson 2007; Lutz 2007), few anthropologists have focused on mines (or weapons, for that matter) and their materiality.[3] One exception is David Henig (2012, 23), who, based on research in mine-infested areas of postconflict Bosnia, calls for anthropologists to attend to "military waste," including landmines and ERW, suggesting that "an anthropology of military waste can shed light, not just on the ways that mines and military debris pose a hazard of explosion and other dangers, but also on the emotional distress that the waste provokes in people who dwell alongside it." In a similar vein, Yael Navaro-Yashin's (2012) ethnography of life in Northern Cyprus analyzes the ruins of war through the lenses of abjection and melancholia, asking how war's detritus and debris become affectively charged, while Christina Schwenkel (2013, 137) describes ERW in Vietnam as "ambiguous, abject matter out of place."

I depart from these melancholic and abject framings by attending to the posthuman performativity of mines as actants in human-nonhuman networks, in which the material-affective relations of mines and humans prove to be volatile and even counterintuitive. Humanitarian and postcolonial analyses that trace histories of mines as "imperial debris" (Stoler 2008) of U.S. empire and its "slow violence" (Nixon 2011) are certainly not to be discounted. Villagers who live among mines see their own experiences in this light, linking everyday anxieties and mine deaths to U.S. empire and unending war. Yet, theoretically and politically, this constitutes only part of the story and, as I will argue, reduces the politics of mines to one in which mines act as proxies of state violence to which local residents are passively subjected.

My analytical approach draws on Karen Barad's (2003) "posthumanist performativity" to suggest how life in militarized ecologies entails human-nonhuman intra-actions that defy straightforward moral evaluation. For Barad (2003, 812), intra-action constitutes a "new understanding of causality itself," an imminent approach that views subjects and objects through a "relational ontology." Thus, rather than agency being distributed through objects that mediate a self-knowing subject's intentions, subject and object come into existence through their concrete, performative relations. To think of landmines through a relational ontology means refuting the notion that either mine or human are ontologically pre-given. Rather, landmines, which were emplaced as an articulation of sovereign power,

become, over time, unpredictable and deterritorialized through their ecological entanglements and evolving relations with humans and nonhumans.

In some respects, Alfred Gell (1998) in *Art and Agency* anticipated my attempt to theorize the agency of mines. He famously used the example of Pol Pot's soldier laying mines to illustrate his theory of distributed personhood, in which the primary agency of the soldier was distributed to the secondary agent of the mine. For Gell (1998, 20–21), the antipersonnel mine presents a particularly suitable analogy because, although it may seem to be a "mere lethal mechanical device" that "*could not help* exploding," it is, in fact, what makes Pol Pot's soldier a "very malign" agent. Gell's model of agency, however relational and recursive, still depends on a linear and hierarchical connection between primary agents and secondary agents, in which "social agency manifests and realizes itself, via the proliferation of fragments of 'primary' intentional agents in their 'secondary' artifactual forms." In this framing, the political and moral implications of mines are presupposed in that they constitute extensions of the evil intentions of Pol Pot's soldiers.

The multiplicity of mines and their heterogeneous agencies I am interested in are better captured by Bruno Latour's (1999) model of distributed agency than in Gell's distributed personhood. The former does not grant moral responsibility to particular actants in the network, whereas Gell (1998, 21) turns to an extreme example of violence to illustrate how mines are "moral entities" whose secondary agency, literally scattering violence across the landscape, "turned [Pol Pot's soldiers] from mere men into devils with extraordinary powers." Shifting from Gell's hierarchical distributed personhood to Latour's symmetrical, distributed agency introduces other relations beyond Gell's narrowly circumscribed soldier-mine nexus. In particular, the fact that an antipersonnel mine has an average lifespan between fifty and a hundred years, introduces us to the uncertain spatiotemporality and historicity of mines, in which their distributed agency can be redistributed over time.

Following a brief overview of the South Korean DMZ region, I trace the performative intra-actions of humans and landmines but am less concerned with the normative intentions of mine layers and more with how the persistence of mines in postwar landscapes generates unanticipated affects and relations. Rogue infrastructures foreground the spatiotemporal contingency of mines and their accumulated effects. The roguishness of mines is related to their status as matter out of place and their ability to deprive humans of agency—but also, and more significantly for my argument, to their unintended affordances and ecologically

embedded ontologies. Rogue infrastructure attempts to capture the multiplicity of mines in their intra-actions with humans as area-denial weapons, indiscriminate and antihumanitarian political agents, military property, useless waste, and valuable natural resources. As I explore, mines may be implicitly connected to sovereign power and imperial geopolitics, but they can also exceed expected technological and political determinations.

PURE NATURE OR POLLUTED NATURE?

This essay is based on ethnographic research from October 2011 to September 2012, as well as shorter periods of research in July 2013 and March 2015, with ecologists and local residents that focused on the social, ecological, and political transformations of the South Korean side of the DMZ, which has, since the end of the Cold War, become identified as a haven for biodiversity.[4] Fieldwork entailed trips into what is referred to by South Korean bureaucrats as the "DMZ region," which encompasses the DMZ as well as the adjacent CCZ and the Border Area, two administrative zones defined in relation to the DMZ and historically characterized by high concentrations of military activity and economic underdevelopment. In the village of CheongJeon-ri and the surrounding areas of Cheolwon County, nature has become an explicit matter of concern for various parties, including state bureaucrats, environmentalists, ecologists, and tourist developers.
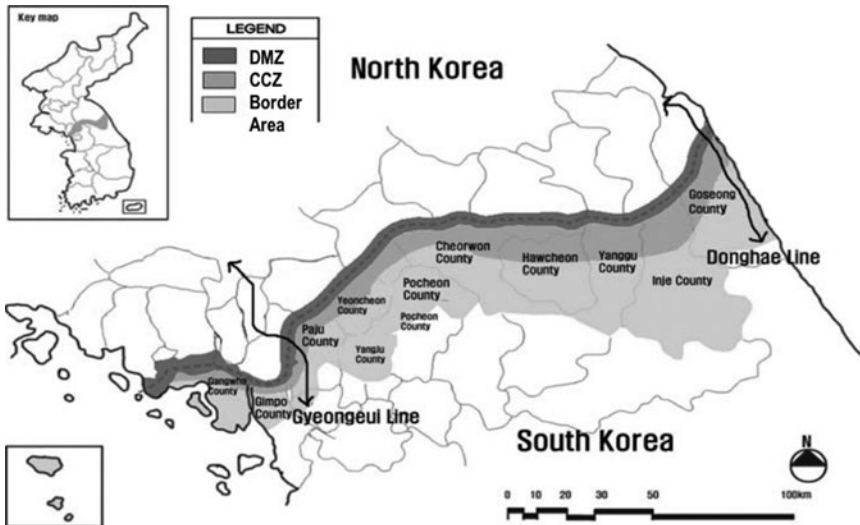

Figure 1. The DMZ borderlands. Figure adapted from "Status and Ecological Resource Value of the Republic of Korea's De-militarized Zone," by Kwi-gon Kim and Dong-Gil Cho, http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11355-005-0006-0. Reproduced with permission from Springer.

Residents of Cheolwon have been suspicious, if not hostile, to the ways in which politicians and environmentalists have recast the DMZ as a site of rare ecological value. In South Korea and internationally, a narrative of the DMZ as having "returned to nature" has gained currency, even as its contamination by more than 1 million landmines is the precondition for its purported ecological purity. Since 2009, through the branding mechanism of the so-called Peace and Life Zone, or PLZ, the central and regional governments have been investing in ecotourism projects capitalizing on the DMZ's associations with untouched nature and the fact that it has become a sanctuary for dozens of rare and endangered species. These projects exist in tandem with efforts on the part of policymakers who have sought to establish a peace park or ecological preservation zone in the DMZ for at least two decades.[5] In conjunction with these efforts, villagers are effectively being asked to frame themselves as "local people" (*chiyŏk chumin*) with local culture, which can lead to economic development in the form of ecotourism.

Among the state representatives, environmental NGOs, and local people who comprise the network of actors engaged in the DMZ's ecological futures, a predictable pattern of competing interests has evolved. These were readily apparent to me at a public hearing regarding plans for a bicycle path across the eastern part of the DMZ region. Convened by the DMZ Peace Forum at the South Korean National Assembly in October 2011, the opening panel featured bureaucrats, academics, and environmentalists who discussed the pros and cons of the proposal, reproducing conventional discourses of conservation and development. Three male villagers from Hwacheon County, Gangwon Province, had come to attend the meeting, but they were not included on the expert panel of speakers.

In the presentations, an official from the Ministry of the Environment presented the centrist position by foregrounding PLZ tourism as a "win-win" opportunity for both conservation and development interests. This market-based vision proved anathema to the deep-ecology views of the activist presenters, who insisted that the cycling route was not only illogical and difficult to traverse, given the area's mountainous terrain, but also threatening to habitats of endangered mammalians like the goat-like amur goral (*sanyang*). These male activists in their thirties, who represented the DMZ research teams of Seoul-based environmental NGOs, warned that naive desires for economic development among local residents would lead to dire ecological consequences. One environmentalist concluded his presentation by deploying the charged creole word *nodaji* to describe

the CCZ as a natural "bonanza" (*nodaji*), and admonished locals and the state to abide by the rule of "no touch!"[6]

During the discussion period, the older men from Hwacheon were incensed by the environmentalists' declamation, in English, of "no touch!" These villagers, who identified themselves as local people, asked with heightened emotion: "Are the *sanyang* more important or the humans living in these areas?" They took offense to the ecologists' summary discounting of their intimate knowledge of nature (*chayŏn*), as well as to the condescending insinuation that the locals were "ruining" nature out of ignorance. As I came to understand, the category of "local people," which may have once been a technocratic vehicle to include villagers as stakeholders in DMZ schemes, now also serves as a politicized identification for residents of the DMZ region, who are critical of state and NGO projects that seek to capitalize on or conserve the DMZ's nature.

Yet even as local people rejected the notion of an untouchable or pristine DMZ nature, many could not deny that the DMZ's amplification in the national and international ecological imaginary had brought significant economic investments to Border Area communities. Agricultural profits have been declining due to free-trade agreements and ecological stresses attributed to climate change, and some locals have begun to align their views with provincial and county officials who actively promote the DMZ brand. CheongJeon-ri itself was dubbed an "eco-peace village" in 2007, and its proximity to the winter habitats of endangered cranes and to the Korean War battleground of Baekmagoji, along with its signature rice variety, form part of bureaucrats' visions of how DMZ tourism can cater to multiple tastes and interests—military, historical, ecological, recreational, and even agricultural, in the form of pastoral farm stays. Landmines and unconfirmed minefields have no place in these market-driven visions, except as part of the aesthetic frisson of the DMZ as a forbidden zone. Mine warning signs are ubiquitous fetish objects in the visual culture of the DMZ, but the actual existence of mines in tourist areas is barely remarked on, and mine-risk education nonexistent.

In DMZ tourist venues, actual mines are relegated to the past, much as they are sidelined in bureaucratic models for the peaceful utilization of the DMZ. This despite, or perhaps because of, the fact that clearing the more than 1 million landmines from the DMZ would take an estimated 489 years. In addition, although the activism and research of NGOs like the Peace Sharing Association (PSA; formerly Korean Campaign to Ban Landmines) has gone on since the late 1990s, few South Koreans are aware of the existence of mines in so-called rear areas, south of the DMZ, where, by South Korean government estimates, there
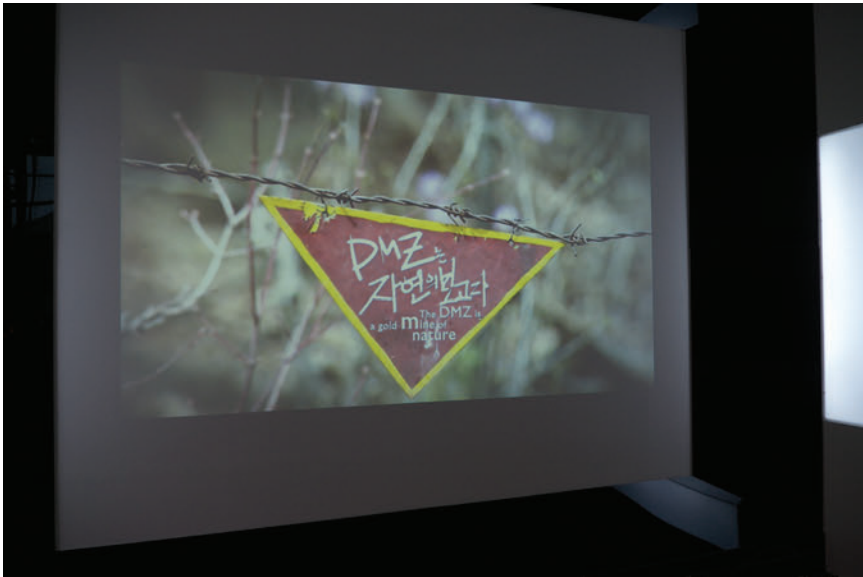
Figure 2. "The DMZ is a gold mine of nature." (The Korean reads, "The DMZ is Nature's treasure trove.") Still from promotional video shown at the 2012 World Conservation Congress, Jeju Island, South Korea. Photo by Eleana Kim.

are 1,100 "planned" mine fields (meaning laid by the South Korean military, and therefore documented) and 208 "unconfirmed" ones. According to the expert deminer Kim Kiho, when U.S. forces were drawn down in the 1970s, they left behind as many as 200,000 mines, the locations, types, and numbers of which were never shared with the South Korean military (Korea Landmine Removal Research Center 2008).[7]

Comprehensive government statistics on landmine casualties do not exist, but estimates by the PSA count 1,000 civilian casualties, and 2,000 to 3,000 military casualties. South Korean activists and NGOs associated with the PSA have brought increasing attention to landmine victims in recent years, victims who, they argue, have suffered in silence for too long. In a 2011 survey—the first of its kind—three-quarters of the 228 respondents who had survived mine accidents said they did not report the incidents to the government because 1) they didn't know how to seek compensation; 2) they feared retribution from the local military battalion; or 3) they were led to believe that landmine accidents were their own responsibility (Lee 2013).

In response to dominant narratives of the DMZ's nature, locals frequently mobilize examples like the U.S. use of napalm defoliants during the war, the

annual spring burnoffs set by both North and South Korean militaries in the DMZ (to ensure clear sight lines), and landmine pollution to illustrate the fallaciousness of any view of nature in the DMZ area as pristine or originary. As one elderly resident of CheongJeon-ri insisted, the DMZ should be viewed as a "new eco-system" (*saeroun saengt'aegye*) rather than a restored one. And, evoking the ubiquitous conflation of peace and nature when it comes to the contemporary DMZ, another resident suggested that "someone should research how it is that a place brought about by war has become connected to peace. In Cheolwon, this connection to nature is considered nonsense." Mr. Hong echoed these and other residents in his description of the miserable (*hansimhan*) conditions and victimization of local people whose lives at the front lines of the unending Korean War have been excluded from South Korea's highly celebrated modernization. Discourses reinforcing these themes have been well rehearsed during the past decade by residents and NGOs who highlight the sacrifices of local people in the face of state indifference. These collective histories of restriction, marginalization, and death are also often cast in an anti-imperial register that locates mines and their victims in a broader framework of the Cold War and U.S. political and economic hegemony.

One farming couple told me, after reminding me that the United States used napalm not only in Vietnam but also in Korea, "If you ask the local people, they'll say, 'what nature?'" And, "Everything's been ruined, frankly. America has ruined everything." They link U.S. culpability directly to President Bill Clinton's refusal to sign the International Mine Ban Treaty of 1997. Since then, each subsequent U.S. president has invoked Clinton's "Korea exception" as justification for maintaining a stockpile of antipersonnel landmines in the event of another war on the Korean peninsula. This position is premised on the false assumption that mines exist only within the DMZ, and not in civilian areas, and is morally buttressed by the U.S. commitment to "humanitarian mine action" in developing nations. Yet border residents view the Korea exception as tacitly underwriting the South Korean state's longstanding indifference to civilian mine victims, whose rights to compensation were only legislated in late 2014.[8] For these reasons, residents' accounts and NGO narratives depict the DMZ borderlands as a space of exception in which national division and Cold War politics render mine victims a kind of bare life, neither recognized by the state as war victims nor as citizens deserving of compensation (Agamben 1998).

Recent developments are transforming the Border Area from a static space of Cold War–era walls to a site of potentially global flows in anticipation of a

unified peninsula. Even if the flows northward across the DMZ are not yet real-izable, the branding of "peace and life" has generated new circulations of capital between Seoul and the economically depressed border villages. Developments in Cheolwon in particular entail the building of new infrastructures and the recon-nection of old ones, designed to bring more metropolitan Koreans (and inter-national tourists) to the border, as well as to improve rail and road links between Gangwon Province and the megalopolis of Seoul. These linkages are now bringing more civilians into proximity with the military infrastructures of the CCZ and DMZ, which constitute integral parts of national security but are also framed as tourist spectacles. They include military observation posts expanded into tourist observatories, former U.S. army barracks converted into overnight hostels, and underground tunnels dug by North Korean soldiers to cross into South Korea opened to organized tour groups. Although mines and minefields may be more difficult to package as tourist attractions, they are, nevertheless, infrastructurally foundational to the DMZ region and its militarized naturecultures.

LANDMINES AS ROGUE INFRASTRUCTURE

Recent anthropological scholarship on infrastructure has tended to focus on urban or cybernetic systems, and less frequently on military infrastructures, de-spite the military roots of the term (Petroski 2009). A central premise of these studies is that infrastructures constitute and reflect fundamentally modern pro-jects, entailing the construction and maintenance of systems and exemplifying human mastery over nature, with attendant aesthetics of modernity, progress, and futurity (Larkin 2013). If we take this to be true, then landmines might easily be seen as anti-infrastructural in their intended, normative function as explosive devices categorized as "area-denial weapons," in U.S. military terminology. They are often laid to destroy or prevent access to critical infrastructure and to disrupt, block, or divert flows of people, resources, supplies, or commodities. Mines are at once singular and multiple, with one mine suggesting the existence of others, and their discovery typically leads to the sequestration of space, in the form of minefields. Thus, in postconflict settings, mines and the suspicion of their exis-tence continue to restrict human mobility and land use and impede or prevent the repair or maintenance of basic infrastructure in what Jon Unruh, Nikolas Heynen, and Peter Hossler (2003, 858) call a "switch from an intentional to an unintentional remaking of nature."

In this way mines foreclose, especially for people living among them, the economic, social, affective, and aesthetic possibilities afforded by infrastructure.

Landmines' long lifespans can affect the health, livelihoods, and economic development of postconflict societies for generations. Moreover, the political economy of mine contamination and mine removal depressingly reinforces global patterns of environmental racism and inequality, starkly illustrating not only the uneven distribution of economic resources to clear mines but also the disproportionate physical and psychic burdens shouldered by the most politically, economically, or racially marginalized groups (Nixon 2011).[9]

A view of mines as merely anti-infrastructural, however, would fail to account for the unintended effects of mines, especially as mines and minefields persist and change over time in specific ecologies, generating novel configurations among humans and nonhumans. Following Brian Larkin's (2013, 329) definition of infrastructure as "matter that enable[s] the movement of other matter," I emphasize how landmines may disable systems, but also how they, like other infrastructures, "produce environments" (Carse 2014, 6) and come to enable the movement of other matter.

My invocation of roguishness highlights mines' aberrant and unpredictable behaviors, which can seem arbitrary and volatile (see also Dawdy 2008). I focus less on their illegitimacy in relation to normative or sanctioned operations and more on their inherent instability and indiscriminateness, something that renders them abhorrent in humanitarian terms and also potentially undermining of sovereign legitimacy. Roguishness in my usage also draws significance from the notion of rogue states that became integral to the ideological consolidation of U.S. power in its post–Cold War imperial formation. The rogue moniker vilified states viewed as nonconformist, and operated to exclude and delegitimize sovereign powers so as to reassert the norm of U.S. hegemony, even as, under its own terms, the United States and its allies must be viewed as the first rogue states (Derrida 2005, 102). Moreover, identifying such supposed rogues justified the proliferation of militarization in the name of global security. Rogue states are also importantly associated with so-called blowback, in cases such as Afghanistan and Iraq, where covert operations, the arming of Cold War allies, and shifting political priorities ultimately lead to those very arms being used against the former benefactor (Johnson 2001).

We can interpret landmines in South Korea as rogue in precisely these terms. Laid by the United States during the Cold War and subsequently abandoned, mines are disavowed by the United States, even as the country continues to stockpile them for future use on the Korean peninsula. Uncontrollable, indiscriminate, and antihumanitarian, mines are also proving to be environmental blow-

back, in the form of a weaponized nature that repels human passage and occupation, as well as undermining the moral legitimacy of the state's monopoly on violence. The insecure and uncertain environments of the DMZ borderlands exemplify for residents the limits of South Korean state sovereignty and the rogue power of U.S. empire, but they also exceed political and ideological designs. In the more-than-human natures of the DMZ, wild boars may be at the top of the food chain (next to the apocryphal Siberian Tiger), but landmines in fact supersede them, while simultaneously rendering the environment safe for nonhuman flourishing.[10] In rogue infrastructures I locate unforeseen agencies and affects of human-mine intra-actions among humans who may avoid, harvest, disable, dismantle, and circulate them and mines that can lie in wait, freeze, corrode, move, explode, or self-neutralize.

WEAPONIZED LANDSCAPES IN THE CIVILIAN CONTROL ZONE

Cheolwon County is located in Gangwon Province, where the vast majority of mine accidents and deaths have taken place in areas close to the thirty-eighth parallel. During the latter half of the Korean War, after the Chinese People's Army entered the conflict, the most brutal battles for position were waged in places like Baekmagoji (White Horse Hill), leaving behind tons of spent artillery, landmines, and other military waste. In February 1954, the area later designated as the CCZ was secured by the Eighth U.S. Army to house the heavy artillery and armed troops disallowed in the DMZ proper. Oversight of the CCZ was handed over to Republic of Korea (ROK) forces in 1958, and since that time, the majority of the 600,000 South Korean troops and the roughly 50,000 U.S. troops (now 28,500) have been housed in the CCZ, along with military facilities and training grounds. Between 1959 and 1973, the South Korean government moved civilians into the CCZ for both economic and ideological purposes, allowing some former residents to return to extant villages and assigning others to reclaim land in new settlements. These propaganda villages were established under the rubrics of "CCL north-facing villages" (*mint'ongsŏn pukbang maŭl*), "strategic villages" (*chŏllyak maŭl*), and "reunification villages" (*t'ongilch'on*) (Kim 2011).

CheongJeon-ri, established in 1967 by 150 former soldiers, was one of 111 such CCZ villages intended to counteract propaganda villages in the North and to reestablish agricultural production, particularly in the central area of the peninsula, Korea's historic rice bowl. These first settlers were lured with promises of land and secure livelihoods and found themselves subject to a strict screening process to ensure their patriotism and ideological commitments. That the farms

established in the CCZ took the form of Israeli kibbutz-style collectives is a fact celebrated in official narratives, although residents in CheongJeon-ri explained that it was necessitated by the state's control of land and the settlers' lack of prior agricultural experience. At a time when South Korea was less economically developed than its northern nemesis, these farms were meant to serve as visual displays of South Korean prosperity and wealth for the workers in the socialist farms visible across the border.

In CheongJeon-ri, military training exercises and war-game operations took place around and often in farmers' rice paddies. Residents endured relentless loudspeaker propaganda broadcasts between North and South, as well as mandatory curfews and lights out at dusk. The village was not electrified until 1975, and any change to the buildings or infrastructure of the village required explicit permission from the military authorities under the Military Installments Protection Law. Most significantly, residents signed memoranda of understanding (MOUs) with the local battalions indicating that any injuries or deaths would be the sole responsibility of the victim. Those who complained or defied this order were at risk of expulsion from the village.

Once the war-ravaged territory had been securely reclaimed, the state reneged on its promise to reward the sacrifices of the first settlers with land ownership, in light of complicated land disputes that arose in the 1980s between locals and title holders who came back to claim their property. Today, local residents own less than 30 percent of the land in CheongJeon-ri, meaning that the majority are tenant farmers unable to benefit from the boom in real-estate prices in the CCZ and Border Area, especially during the optimistic Sunshine Policy decade just after the end of the Cold War (1998–2008), when reunification seemed on the horizon. In conversations with long-term residents, the "huge sacrifices" they had made were explicitly linked to this betrayal on the part of the state and its refusal to compensate landmine victims. As Mr. Bae, who moved to CheongJeon-ri with his parents as a fifth-grader in 1968, explained to me, "When we came in, they gave us these conditions—even if you are to die, don't say a single word––and we signed the MOUs. If a landmine accident occurred, we agreed not to ask about government responsibility. That's what we signed. But if you think about it, we locals were totally ignorant and scared of the military. Therefore, even if someone died from a landmine, we'd promised not to say a word, and no claims were filed."

With the end of the authoritarian regimes in the 1990s, and the village's release from the CCZ in 1998, residents no longer felt obligated to keep silent

about mine accidents and deaths, especially because the promise of land ownership had been broken by the state. They sought monetary compensation for themselves and their deceased relatives, but the courts determined that the statute of limitations for filing a claim had passed, leaving already impoverished survivors without legal recourse. This troubling history has fueled the oppositional yet ambivalent politics of residents in CheongJeon-ri, who are at once staunchly patriotic anticommunists, proud of the role they played in South Korea's agricultural revival and nation building, but also deeply resentful of the state and its broken promises.

As this brief account attempts to convey, in the South Korean borderlands, especially during the Cold War, territorial security took precedence over human security in a decidedly illiberal space. The infrastructure of the border is organized around containment and comprises checkpoints, road blocks, tank barricades, dams, reservoirs, defunct rail lines, barbed wire, and landmines, as well as well-guarded military service roads, barracks, and training grounds. Residents of CCZ villages like CheongJeon-ri were held captive to disciplinary, militarized modes of sovereign power that rendered them internal primitives excluded from the nation's rapid and highly celebrated capitalist successes. Since the 1980s, many of the checkpoints have moved northward, shrinking the CCZ by half, and freeing the villages from the most onerous militarized restrictions. Although CheongJeon-ri is now administratively part of the nonmilitary Border Area, minefields and military infrastructures continue to be salient features of the landscape.

THE MATERIALITY OF MINES

The uncertainty of where mines are, their ability to "lie in wait" and ambush their victims, and their volatility as explosives produce psychic effects that render them effective area-denial weapons. Mines are, however, also technical objects, composed of physical materials that have specific qualities, characteristics, and values. Not only can they become "useless objects" when Siberian winds bring a deep freeze to the central plateau of Cheolwon, but their mechanisms can also erode, rust, or become defective, depending on variables such as time, weather, soil composition, and exposure to water. The expert deminer Kim Kiho showed me M3, M2, and M16 antipersonnel fragmentation mines, which are encased in steel and feature pressure pin triggers at the end of a fuse rod, which is about the diameter of a thick marker. When triggered by a tripwire or by the pressure pins, the M16 "Bouncing Betty" is designed to launch about one meter into the air and explode shrapnel to a radius of thirty meters. If the steel fuse rod has

been weakened by rust and corrosion, however, it is easy to sever it from the body containing the explosives, effectively disabling the mine. In the late 1960s, U.S. forces laid about 310,000 mines of this kind in the DMZ area. Kim Kiho estimates that only 20 percent of these mines have a lifespan of more than twelve years.

The M14 antipersonnel mine, also known as the "toe-popper," has a very different technology. At four centimeters in diameter with plastic housing, it contains a tiny amount of metal, making it difficult to detect with a metal detector (though later models include a washer that allows for easier detection). If it is buried more than a few inches under the ground, it is unlikely to be triggered by a human footstep, yet it is buoyant in water and therefore can travel within the many wetlands, streams, and irrigation channels of the DMZ borderlands. These are the mines that Kim Kiho finds hidden in the reedy banks of rice paddies, and they are the most widely distributed mines in the DMZ and surrounding areas. The plastic casing grants the mine a lifespan of one hundred years, and weighing only three ounces (whereas steel mines weigh a pound or more), they are more mobile, especially during the Korean monsoon season (*changma*), which brings torrential rains, runoff, and mudslides to the peninsula in July and August. In August 1998 alone, seven incidents of mines accidentally carried away by floods were reported at both U.S. and South Korean military sites (KCBL 1999). Mine accidents are also more frequent during the summer months, sometimes involving M14 mines but also North Korean "Schu" mines that are encased in wood and easily carried downstream across rivers and streams that transect the border.

In addition to the estimated 300,000 M14 landmines, antitank mines are also widely distributed in the DMZ area, including older steel-encased mines (M15 and M6) and the newer plastic M19. Given their large size (thirty-three centimeters in diameter) and weight of four to six pounds, they are relatively easy to detect and disable, but antipersonnel mines are strategically planted around them to deter their removal.

Kim Kiho explained that, despite his preliminary findings regarding the longevity of steel fragmentation mines, South Korean military authorities are loath to approve more extensive research because of the implications: either they would have to replace the defective mines or they would have to remove them completely. The lack of knowledge concerning mines' locations and *technical* efficacy, even as it undermines the legitimacy of the state in the eyes of antilandmine activists and local residents, constitutes a crucial aspect of the mines' *tactical* efficacy for the state, which uses them and their fearful consequences to limit

human mobility and agency. The persistence of landmines in the DMZ region highlights the ambiguous heterotopia of the South Korean DMZ, which is at once a site of military skirmishes as part of the ongoing war and a postwar emblem of peace and life. Even as soldiers clear minefields for the building of tourist sites and the reconnection of prewar infrastructures, South Korea does not engage in humanitarian demining, nor does it offer risk education for local residents or tourists visiting the CCZ in increasing numbers.

FROM RECLAIMING LAND TO HARVESTING MINES

According to CheongJeon-ri residents, the first settlers cleared more than 18,000 mines, losing twenty-five people within the first few years. In total, between forty and fifty residents suffered death or maiming from mine accidents between 1968 and 1999. Some of these occurred while clearing mines and reclaiming land, others during daily activities like gathering firewood or food. These two activities were also related, as during the first few years, before people learned where the landmines were concentrated, it was common for women collecting wild herbs and mountain vegetables for mine victims' funerary banquets to perish from landmines while foraging.

In 2012, I spoke with four residents for whom landmines were indelibly connected to kinship, loss, and landscape. For one resident, Mrs. Kim, her father-in-law's death in 1998 suggested that local knowledge of landmines was not sufficient to avoid being ambushed by them. He was killed gathering firewood on his way back from visiting his father's tomb. Even though he followed the same path every year, he was unaware that the local battalion had laid fresh mines the previous autumn. A powerful explosive scattered his remains across the landscape, leading his relatives to surmise that a plastic antitank mine killed him. The plastic casing would have been more difficult for him to detect with his walking stick, and the load of firewood would have made his weight heavy enough to set it off.

Mines can function effectively as area-denial weapons when their existence is discovered, most tragically after someone has been killed or injured. Then, as now, when residents discover mines, they are required to report them to the local military battalion, which cordons off the area with barbed wire and mine warning signs. As these "unconfirmed minefields" (*mihwag'in chiroebat*) proliferated across the DMZ region, they became infrastructural over time, since, due to the army's limitations of equipment, manpower, and expertise, they remain uncleared and legally off limits. Yet the ability of mines to deter human trespass is also viewed as a form of social control, surveillance, and dispossession, which some

villagers resist, especially as they are loath to let perfectly good land remain uncultivated. According to a recent news report, in another border village, local residents are considered "foolish" (*pabo*) if they report mines to the local military battalion, because it means that the unconfirmed minefield will remain unproductive for an indeterminate amount of time (Yoon, Ch'ae, and Kwon 2014). Villagers sometimes breach the boundaries of these fields to cultivate them, entering into a tug-of-war with soldiers who reinforce the barbed wire or attempt to fine the farmers for trespassing.

These fields might then be considered the "negative space" of the DMZ region, where mines or the suspicion of them restrict movement and land use. Some unconfirmed minefields have become literal wastelands, where residents or visitors dump trash and junk, creating what one NGO calls a "ticking time bomb," with literally tons of discarded consumer goods, including refrigerators, car engines, and other detritus, at risk of creating a massive shrapnel explosion if the mines underground are set off (Green Korea United 2010). Thus, although landmines are precisely designed for human triggers, once emplaced, their ontological instability creates opportunities for the reterritorialization and deterritorialization of space.

Landmines as rogue infrastructure not only affected the spatial organization of the border villages but also created other infrastructural relations, especially during the early years of the settlement in CheongJeon-ri. According to residents, the idealism of President Park Chung-hee's Israeli kibbutz-style farms did not suffice to overcome the challenges of establishing regular crop production. In the absence of government support and on the brink of starvation, most people struggled financially and supplemented their income by collecting *sintchu*—a residual loan word from the Japanese colonial era that came to refer to brass artillery shells, as well as any kind of military waste, including steel, barbed wire, or the metal parts and explosive compounds of landmines—to sell on the black market.[11] As one resident described it: "If you sold those things, like spent shells, barbed wire, you could bring in a lot more than from farming. And if you cleared mines, there were explosives inside, and *sintchu*. If you took it all apart, then you could go somewhere and sell it and that was more than you could get from farming. So farming took a back seat."

Whereas the first settlers were hailed as heroes for their sacrifices in the name of state-sanctioned land reclamation, after a few years, those very same acts of mine clearance became criminalized when locals began harvesting and selling military waste for their exchange value. *Sintchu* and scrap metal served as currency

and commodities in poor communities, and especially around the DMZ borderlands in the postwar period, when people traded brass artillery for alcohol or rice, or turned artillery shells into cigarette ashtrays and other household containers. Scrap metal of all kinds was also currency for children who bartered their findings with traveling peddlers in exchange for taffy (*yŏt*). Thus, in conditions of extreme poverty and resource scarcity, especially during the South Korean developmentalist period, the political ecology of the borderlands was one in which military waste became a kind of natural resource gleaned from former battlefields. Harvested metals, especially steel, were melted down and eventually molded into the steel bars and I-beams that reinforced the concrete high-rise buildings emblematizing the rapid urbanization of South Korea in the 1960s and 1970s.

Mines connected people and economies through commodity exchange and the reclaiming of land that had been enclosed by the state. Whereas misery and tragedy may have constituted the affective core of many mine stories I heard, mines also appeared at unanticipated moments, pointing toward their relational ontologies. These dynamic entanglements of mines and humans were most strikingly evoked by Mr. Lee, whose account of crossing into a minefield conveys how "human agency itself may be derived in significant measure from things" (Puskar 2014, 519). In contrast to humanitarian accounts that foreground victims and their restricted agency, here minefields constitute the literal ground for an expanded sense of personhood, spatial control, economic possibility, and psychic deterritorialization. Mr. Lee described the moment that he first trespassed into an active minefield:

> I was sharpening a scythe nearby and suddenly I heard an explosion. Two men had gone into the minefield, and I thought, "Aah, they stepped on a mine." I went out to see, and one was down, and the other was thrown behind him. With those two people injured like that, suddenly I'm walking in the minefield. I went in just like that, and I ask myself, "Am I OK?" I looked up just like that, and "Yeah, I'm OK." The person who had been thrown backwards is up and walking. [I ask him,] "Are you OK?" [He says,] "Yeah, I'm OK." At that moment, my overwhelming fear turned into ecstatic joy [*hwanhŭi*], and I helped the one who had been injured out of the field. It was plastic—he had a plastic prosthetic leg, so I gave him $30 to get a new leg, and I cleared the remaining one hundred meters of the field.

Mr. Lee's father was an original settler who died from a landmine blast in 1970, when Mr. Lee was eight years old. The majority of landmine victims in

CCZ villages were adult men, and their households' primary breadwinners. Without compensation from the state, their surviving relatives became even more impoverished. The irony of his turning to clearing landmines after having lost his father to a landmine accident was not lost on Mr. Lee, who described his condition as "deplorable" (*hansimhan*). But, as the eldest son and head of his household, conditions of extreme poverty led him and many others to clearing mines and collecting scrap metal to survive.

Mr. Lee's transformative moment, in which his "overwhelming fear turned to ecstatic joy," however, casts his supposedly pathetic narrative in a different light. Rather than considering mine removal an abject activity to which poor people are "reduced," Mr. Lee's testimony describes a moment of expansiveness, of opening up to other modes of existence, suggesting how an "armed and dangerous" landscape (Nixon 2007, 169) can not only be disarmed but can also serve as a source of magical empowerment—a different kind of life—transforming a fear of death and trespass into ecstatic joy and spatial liberation. A framework of abjection might view the mine as "matter out of place," a transgressive object that psychically transforms the subject by dissolving boundaries between self and other. In contrast, rather than the mine as an ontologically pregiven object, it was the intra-action of mine and human—Mr. Lee's entering the minefield, "just like that," without consequence, the mines *not* detonating—that constituted this moment of joyful liberation. This was a transformative moment in which the enactments between Mr. Lee and mines became reconfigured and multiple, generating new political and economic possibilities.

Many of the mines that Mr. Lee cleared were plastic ones, which had no exchange value and were considered by residents as especially insidious, given the difficulty of detecting them. New infrastructural affordances and human-mine intra-actions emerged in the 1980s with the state's promotion of industrialized farming. Mr. Lee described how, with the arrival of a high-capacity backhoe that could dig up one cubic meter of earth at a time, he considered burying the plastic mines he had cleared. With the backhoe, it would be easy to bury the mines to a depth of two meters, where their ability to ambush their human targets would be mitigated. But given the unpredictability of mines and their long lifespans, Mr. Lee could not be certain that they would not eventually cause problems. He decided to report the mines to the local battalion, despite knowing that he might be cited for destruction of military property. Mr. Lee did not disguise his disdain for the soldiers who arrived, outfitted in specialized equipment, in contrast to his simple farm tools and well-honed wits: "These fifteen guys show up, well-built

soldiers. They are in full military gear, wearing metal helmets. Then they start trying to intimidate me, asking me where I got these mines from."

As Mr. Lee continued his story, it became clear that clearing landmines, for him, was an extension of the nation-building project, which he framed as an act of patriotic dedication. Yet the state criminalized this expression of nationalism. That he was ultimately acquitted and even received a formal apology from the local military battalion was a vindication of his efforts, but, as he put it, rather than an apology, he should have received an award. Mr. Lee, like the mines that I frame as rogue, embodied roguishness in his disregard for legal sanction and his insistence on the legitimacy of his own actions. As he put it, "I followed the proper procedures . . . who are they to tell me to follow the rules?" The violence of mines and the South Korean state's failure to protect its own citizens under its subordination to U.S. empire delegitimized the state in his mind, thereby justifying his own violation of the law.

By learning how to live with mines Mr. Lee earned a sense of personhood connected to social and ecologically embedded enactments of mines' multiplicity, as economic (mines as scrap), political (mines as military property), and moral (mines as indiscriminate weapons). Mr. Lee's roguish exhilaration and vindication are therefore difficult to reconcile with a model of subaltern resistance to the state or the transgressive potential of abject matter. In fact, Mr. Lee considered clearing mines to normalize his status as a citizen and patriot, whose labor contributed to the nation rather than threatening its security. From being criminalized to pardoned by the military, receiving this apology also served as a confirmation of his moral personhood, masculinity, and economic agency. The normalization of this militarized citizenship became, in the course of Mr. Lee's testimony, closely tied to a vision of the United States as a rogue power, articulated in a forceful critique of Bill Clinton's ignorance of U.S. mines existing in areas outside of the DMZ. Part of the affective charge in Mr. Lee's story of mine removal certainly had to do with the rush of having a near-death experience, but this experience is ultimately framed by the Korea exception and the residual thana-topolitics that lie at the heart of U.S. imperial relations with South Korea.

CONCLUSION

The South Korean journalist and DMZ chronicler Hahm Kwang Bok (2007, 161) depicts landmines in the DMZ area in a posthuman register, calling them "living creatures, intelligent, higher forms of life" (*chiroenŭn saengmul, chinŭng'ŭl katch'un kodŭngsaengmul*). If landmines think at all, however, they do so in a binary

way, as automated switches that respond to a certain degree of pressure, indifferent to the identity of the body producing the weight. Less like cyborgs than Jakob von Uexküll's tick, the landmine can lie in wait for years for the right trigger to set off its mechanism, which, when it is working properly, ignites an explosive precisely measured to blow off human toes, feet, or legs. The mine's agency is attuned to its victim's actions (stepping on it), and its effects are amplified by a victim's sudden evacuation of agency, that is, his or her inability to evade the instantaneousness of the mine's explosion. Rather then advocating an anthropomorphic depiction that risks fetishizing mines as intelligent or alive, I have offered a performative anthropology of landmines that attends to their ecological embeddedness and relational ontologies.

More generally, I have presented rogue infrastructures as a contribution to a broader literature on militarized environments (Tucker and Russell 2004), to move beyond the empirical question of how war and militaries affect nature and instead to ask how military infrastructures, including waste and weapons, are natural, cultural, social, and technical things that become consti-tutive elements of ecosystems. This question proves increasingly relevant as mil-itaries around the world are identifying decommissioned sites as ecologically valu-able spaces of wilderness (Masco 2006). As Peter Coates and his colleagues (Coates et al. 2011, 468) note, after the Cold War, militaries, particularly in the United States and Western Europe, embraced "military environmentalism" in their attempts to remediate heavily polluted areas, oftentimes by "trumpet[ing] ecologically flourishing features to counter the negative image created by toxic waste dumps, decaying military hardware, and deeply buried explosives."

These examples recall what Joseph Masco (2006, 302) calls "mutant ecologies," and are sites where environmental despoliation, accumulation by dispossession (Harvey 2004), and global security converge (see also Kuletz 1998). If mutant ecologies are "cold war survivals" (Masco 2006, 311) of contaminated nature in the nuclear age, rogue infrastructures, instead of reconfiguring biological matter at the level of the molecular or the species, form part of the material transformation of landscapes that become infrastructural over time. They become significant naturalcultural elements whose multiple affordances divert and recompose human-nonhuman worlds.

Mines produce boundaries, lie in wait, and continue to create spaces of prohibition by fostering terror and inflicting trauma. They mediate relations between residents and military authorities, but they also can connect residents to broader networks of capital and offer for some "the possibility of economic pro-

ductivity" (Schwenkel 2013, 137). More than this, they are technical objects in living ecologies whose meanings and affordances emerge through their intra-actions with humans whose adaptations to mine-infested landscapes can also generate unexpected affects, values, and political subjectivities.

When I met Mr. Lee, he was mayor of district one of CheongJeon-ri, a position of prestige that he had earned despite, or perhaps because of, his criminal activity. His elected leadership suggests not only the shifting politics of the borderlands, from "propaganda villages" to normalized ones, but also a liberalization of citizenship for residents in the post–Cold War era. In the face of this trend, Mr. Lee insisted that, more than monetary compensation, mine victims deserved recognition as war heroes, with merits of honor bestowed by the state, for their sacrifices at the front lines of an unending war. Indeed, as mine stories proliferated within conversations purportedly about the DMZ's nature, I began to understand how the volatile, risky, and sometimes transcendent relations of mines and humans were not just about identifying the unethical and antihumanitarian nature of mines as indiscriminate weapons of war but also about acknowledging the complex political and historical subjectivities of people in civilian-military, supposedly postwar, de/militarized spaces, sometimes running, sometimes walking across unconfirmed minefields.

ABSTRACT

Drawing on research in the borderlands of South Korea near the Korean Demilitarized Zone, this essay analyzes the heterogeneous life of landmines in postconflict militarized ecologies. Humanitarian narratives typically frame mines as deadly remnants of war, which aligns with postcolonial critiques viewing them as traces of imperial power and ongoing violence. Given that landmines and other unexploded ordnance can remain live for up to a hundred years, I suggest that mines and minefields become infrastructural when their distributed agency is redistributed over time, bringing into view nonhuman agencies and affordances that might otherwise go undetected in humanitarian or postcolonial critiques. I offer the framework of rogue infrastructure to capture the volatile materiality of mines and their multiple natural, cultural, technical, and political entanglements with the humans who exist alongside them.
[landmines; infrastructure; militarized ecologies; Korea]

1. CheongJeon-ri and the residents' names are pseudonyms. I use the McCune-Reischauer transliteration system except for proper nouns.
2. The "DMZ region" is a South Korean bureaucratic invention that refers to the DMZ, CCZ, and the Border Area. In this essay, I refer to the "DMZ borderlands" to designate a geographic and cultural space where militarization and the national division have heightened significance for social, ecological, and political life.
3. Jon Unruh, Nikolas Heynen, and Peter Hossler (2003) provide a useful literature review of work in other disciplines, which tends to focus on humanitarian mine removal. See Bolton 2015 for an analysis of mines in the context of the revolution in military affairs.
4. There is an extensive literature in Korean on the DMZ. For English-language works on the DMZ's political and ecological value, see, for instance, Kim and Cho 2005 and Kim 2001.
5. North Korea has demonstrated intermittent interest, but typically insists that a peace treaty must precede any substantive discussion of establishing a peace park.
6. The invocation of *nodaji*/"no touch!" by the environmentalists connotes a complex, polyvocal set of relations, rooted in a history of foreign resource exploitation. *Nodaji* (translated as "gold" or "bonanza"), originated in a Japanese or Korean transliteration of the English words "no touch." Donald Clark (2003, 231) describes how foreign concessions at the turn of the last century brought American engineers of the Oriental Consolidated Mining Company to northwestern Korea who disciplined Korean miners not to pilfer mined gold: "Bullion boxes bore the words 'No touch'; and in fact, the frequently shouted words 'No touchee!' were so well known at Unsan [gold mining country] that they soon became part of the language."
7. The Korean DMZ contains at least 600,000 mines in the southern half and a reported 500,000 in the northern half, which ranks it among the highest concentration of mines in the world. U.S. and UN forces first deployed them during the Korean War, and Chinese and North Koreans captured and reused them before bringing in their own Soviet box mines. South Korean NGOs estimate an additional 600,000 mines outside of the DMZ, which include mines planted in the CCZ by U.S. forces, at least 120,000 of which were unrecorded and scattered hastily during the Korean War (Westover 1987), as well as those laid by Republic of Korea (ROK) battalions to heighten national security during the 1980s. With the softening of tensions between the two Koreas during the decade of the Sunshine Policy (1998–2008), the South Korean joint chiefs of staff began a process of mine clearance, especially in areas deemed militarily appropriate or prone to floods. Today, the South Korean state spends about $1 million on mine removal and has reportedly cleared 69,000 mines since 1998. Even though military and civilian accidents and deaths have numbered less than a dozen per year for the past decade, they continue to occur, as recently as August 2015.
8. After eleven years of lobbying by NGOs and National Assembly member Han Ki-ho, the first legislation to support (but not compensate) mine victims passed the South Korean National Assembly in December 2014. Victims began filing claims in early 2015, and their histories of trauma are entering into the public sphere, drawing further attention to the landmine issue. More recently, the maiming of two South Korean soldiers in August 2015 by a North Korean mine also brought public scrutiny to inadequate medical coverage and compensation for South Korean soldiers injured by mines.
9. According to the United Nations, mines can cost as little as $3 to produce, and an estimated $300 to $1,000 to remove.

10. It is widely agreed by locals and experts that only wild boars, and sometimes deer, can set off mines, designed as they are for human victims. Other animals would be too small or too quick to be injured by mines.

11. During the Japanese occupation of Korea, *sintchu* was collected from Korean colonial subjects, especially in the early 1940s, when brass bowls or cutlery were actively confiscated during the total war mobilization drives (Hurh 2011). These domestic objects were melted down and molded into munitions. After World War II and the Korean War, *sintchu* referred to any kind of metal alloy or scrap metal, though brass was still the most valuable.

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